

# Sexual Messages in Advertising and Other Media



KEY QUOTE: "Sexual content in mass media has been around as long as mass media itself," Arizona State professor Mary-Lou Galician, a researcher, author and media literacy advocate says. "The difference is the proliferation of it. We live in a 24/7 media world now. Take, as an example, the exploitation of Britney Spears, who is literally pulling off her clothes during her performances. Her real talent lies in being an objectified image. And it is an image, by extension, of our country around the world."

Source: <http://www.eastvalleytribune.com/index.php?sty=51589>

## INTRODUCTION

Now here is a topic that many educators may not feel comfortable addressing in the classroom. But the expression "sex sells," is certainly one that many advertisers believe in. Many state's [health teaching standards](#) include: "Analyze the influence of personal beliefs, culture, media, technology and other factors on health." Many will agree that messages about sex found in the media certainly communicate and educate to audiences. But what are students understanding? Is the message always correct? And is anything important left out of the message?

Educators and students should review media literacy ["core concepts"](#) as well as these [critical thinking questions](#) before proceeding.



[Downloadable news stories and other resources](#)

[Research Articles](#)

<p><a href="#">Study Confirms Movies with Sex Scenes Influence Teen Behavior</a></p> <p><a href="#">Girls as young as 6 want to be 'sexy,' study says</a></p> <p><a href="#">Sexual Content Proliferates</a></p> <p><a href="#">Teens learning about sex through magazines, not parents: study</a></p> <p><a href="#">Why Sex Sells</a></p> <p><a href="#">Study: Sexualized portrayals of females are norm in pop culture</a></p> <p><a href="#">What Media Teaches Kids About Sexual Health</a>(May 2011)</p> <p><a href="#">PTC criticizes heavy sexual content on TV</a></p> <p><a href="#">Media: one of the leading sex educators in the U.S.</a></p> <p><a href="#">TV Shows Spur Earlier Sex For Kids</a></p> <p><a href="#">Lolita at 5</a></p> <p><a href="#">Too Sexy, Too Soon</a> (Family Circle)</p> <p><a href="#">Editorial: Sex, sex and more sex. Got your attention?</a></p> <p><a href="#">PTC bashes TV's use of sex</a> (Aug 2008)</p> <p><a href="#">What's Missing About Teen Pregnancy in TV, Films?</a> (Newsweek)</p> <p><a href="#">Little Girls Gone Wild</a> -Marketing to little kids (Salon)</p> <p><a href="#">Patron Slapped by Industry Group for Sexy Ad Imagery</a></p> <p><a href="#">Sex Doesn't Always Sell</a></p> <p><a href="#">Goodbye to Girlhood</a> (Wash Post series)</p> <p><a href="#">Sexy media images linked to problems in girls</a></p> <p><a href="#">Girls gone wild: what are celebs teaching kids? Tuned in</a></p> <p><a href="#">Sexy, sassy, still in primary school</a></p> <p><a href="#">When ads say bad things to little girls</a></p> <p>Listen: <a href="#">Jean Kilbourne</a> how Big Media sexualizes children</p> <p><a href="#">So Sexy So Soon</a></p> <p>Listen: <a href="#">NPR : Media, Sex and Talking to Tweens</a></p> <p><a href="#">Teens Call Hyper-Sexualized Media Images "Normal"</a></p> <p><a href="#">Call to ban jeans ads</a> (Australia)</p> <p><a href="#">Celebrities make pregnancy glamorous</a></p> <p><a href="#">Fashion industry using sex to sell ad nauseam</a></p> <p>Article/study <a href="#">The Media Sex Relationship</a></p> <p><a href="#">What's a mom to do?</a></p> <p>Articles: Sex on TV Study (<a href="#">news stories</a>; link to research below)</p> <p><a href="#">Are teens overexposed?</a></p> <p>PR/study: <a href="#">Sex in ads improves men's purchase intent</a></p> <p>Article/study: <a href="#">Sex on TV 'wildly unrealistic'</a></p> <p>Article/study: Overexposed: <a href="#">teens, sex &amp; mass media</a></p> <p><a href="#">Environmentalists sexy ad outrages women In Mexico</a></p> <p><a href="#">New Dolce &amp; Gabbana racy ads controversy</a></p> <p><a href="#">Selling Sex to Kids</a></p> <p><a href="#">Sexy Jeans Ad</a> Rejected by Magazine &amp; Times Square</p> <p><a href="#">Critics: 'That's Too Hot' of Sexy Carl's Jr. Ad Is childhood becoming oversexed?</a></p> <p><a href="#">Just the Facts of Life: porn in the digital age</a></p> <p>Lesson plan: <a href="#">Social Influences</a> (grade 7)</p> <p>Lesson plan: <a href="#">Sex in Advertising</a> (grade 11-12)</p> <p><a href="#">Parents' Dilemma: Keeping Kids from Sex on TV</a></p> <p><a href="#">Magazines Upping The Cleavage Quotient To Boost Sales</a></p> <p><a href="#">The disappearing tween years</a></p> <p><a href="#">Sex In Advertising</a></p> <p><a href="#">Sex in Advertising</a> (A History)</p> <p>Website essays: <a href="#">Take it off: Sex in Advertising</a></p>	<p><a href="#">Young people not greatly affected by sexually explicit media: study</a></p> <p><a href="#">Sex in movies pushes kids to have sex earlier</a></p> <p><a href="#">Magazine trends study finds increase in advertisements using sex</a></p> <p><a href="#">Sexy songs have detrimental effect on kids</a></p> <p><a href="#">UB study finds media sexualization of women outranks men</a></p> <p><a href="#">Hollywood over-sexualizing teen girls: report</a></p> <p><a href="#">Influence of New Media on Adolescent Sexual Health: Evidence and Opportunities</a></p> <p><a href="#">Study Reveals New Data on Screen Sexiness</a> (April 2011)</p> <p><a href="#">Sexualised Teen Girls: Tinseltown's New Target</a> (PTC Study, Dec. 2010)</p> <p><a href="#">Study: exposure to sexual content not to blame for teen sex rates</a></p> <p><a href="#">Study shows sex sells, sometimes</a></p> <p><a href="#">Sex images in media harming kids' mental health</a></p> <p><a href="#">New Research Shows Sex in Movies Doesn't Lead to Box-Office Success</a></p> <p><a href="#">Children Who View Adult-targeted TV May Become Sexually Active ...</a></p> <p><a href="#">TV, Low Self-Esteem, and Family Problems Lead to Early "Sexual Debut"/ study abstract</a></p> <p><a href="#">Sex on TV Increases Teen Pregnancy, Says Report/Study links teen pregnancy to sexy TV shows /</a></p> <p><a href="#">TV habits, risk of pregnancy linked</a></p> <p><a href="#">Effects of a Peer-Led Media Literacy Curriculum on Adolescents' Knowledge and Attitudes Toward Sexual Behavior</a></p> <p><a href="#">and Media Portrayals of Sex</a></p> <p><a href="#">Study: Profit Motive Behind Sexualization of Tween Girls</a></p> <p><a href="#">Sexualization of Girls Is Linked to Common Mental Health Problems in Girls and Women-Eating Disorders</a></p> <p><a href="#">Sex in ads (apparently) doesn't sell (to women)</a></p> <p><a href="#">"Sexy Media Matter: Exposure to Sexual Content in Music, Movies, Television, and Magazines Predicts Black and White Adolescents' Sexual Behavior,"</a></p> <p><a href="#">Movies 'condoning sex and drugs'</a></p> <p><a href="#">Violence and Sex in Television Programs Do Not Sell Products in Advertisements</a></p> <p><a href="#">Impact of the media on adolescent sexual attitudes and behaviors</a></p> <p>Explicit media can lead to permissive attitudes about sex (<a href="#">study</a>)</p> <p>Verbal sexual content on TV more powerful than visual images (<a href="#">study</a>)</p> <p><a href="#">Teens overexposed to media sex</a></p> <p><a href="#">Linking Exposure to Outcomes: Early Adolescents' Consumption of Sexual Content in Six Media</a> (Mar.2005)</p> <p><a href="#">Teens, Sex &amp; The Media</a></p> <p><a href="#">Teenagers and the Media: A Media Analysis of Sexual Content on Television</a></p> <p><a href="#">Professor studies sexuality and social messages</a></p> <p><a href="#">Can the mass media be healthy sex educators?</a></p> <p>Kaiser Research: <a href="#">Sex in TV 4</a> (2005); <a href="#">Sex on TV 3</a> (2003); <a href="#">Teens, Sex &amp; TV</a> (2002);</p> <p><a href="#">Sex on TV 2</a> (2001) <a href="#">News Graphic</a></p> <p>Research (Mediascope) <a href="#">Teens, Sex &amp; The Media</a></p> <p><a href="#">Calvin Klein ads</a> (warning: some may find material here objectionable)</p> <p>YSL <a href="#">ad</a> and <a href="#">website</a></p> <p><a href="#">Sexism and sexuality in advertising</a></p>
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Curriculum: [Youth Talk Back: Sex, Sexuality & Media Literacy](#); [Teacher Guide](#)

Downloadable book with activities/resources: [Media, Sex and Health: A Community Guide for Professionals and Parents](#)

Lesson Plan: [Reality? TV: What is the media using sex to sell you?](#)

Website/resource: [SexInAdvertising.com](#)

Website/resource: [MediaRelate](#): Understanding Media Images of Love, Sex & Relationships/[MediaRelate](#): teaching resources

Website/resource: [Teen Aware: Sex, Media & You](#)

Student handout: [Sex, Violence and Advertising](#)

### [Sexualized Images in Advertising](#)

There can be no denying that “sex sells.” This article explores how advertisements in mainstream magazines have increasingly relied on the explicit sexualization of both men and women to sell products.

### **Recommended texts/videos:**



