Shame, Blame and Contradictions in Protectionist Anti-Sexualisation Discourses on Girls' Dress

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Abstract

In the new millennium a media discourse has arisen in the Anglophone press that discusses girls' dress as 'sexualising'. 'Protectionists' have come to build a causal link between 'harms' that may befall girls and the clothing that they wear. The tone and content of these discourses has in turn been criticised by 'liberal' academia. It condemns these as further placing girls at harm through a disproportionate focus on girls' activities and sartorial self-expression, creating an air of self-surveillance. This thesis argues that this can cause harm in two ways. Firstly, the fear and management of sexualisation may displace public discourses about the actual abuse of children that happens in and outside of the home. Secondly, this is particularly advantageous for boys and men, who are now excluded not only of responsibility, but from the discourse altogether. Non-protectionist feminist scholarship further recognises a contradiction within anti-sexualisation debates. Protectionist writers set themselves up as authorities on the cultural perspective of the care for girls and place girls simultaneously as impressionable, immature and untrustworthy, and hence in need of regulation, but also as alluring and corrupting and hence implicated in their own sexual victimisation.

This thesis adds to the existing liberal debates by undertaking a systematic study of select government reviews, newspapers and populist manuals. While sexualisation as a topic has enjoyed scholarly investigation, this thesis examines these protectionist contradictions in sexualisation discourses through a specific analysis of dress as a social communicator and point of contention through cultural and fashion theory. This thesis places itself within non-protectionist feminist research which critiques protectionist propensity for equating innocence with purity and sexual inactivity in a moralistic enterprise, which criticises and shames girls in their dress and considers them corrupting of others' innocence.

For Alma and all girls

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Introduction

While fashionable dress has, throughout history, created consternation, outrage and even calls for legal restriction, it is the dress of women and girls in particular that has been a contentious topic at certain points in time. In the last century, the ‘flapper’ styles of the 1920s and the miniskirt of the 1960s both caused a commotion, while the emergence of the ‘glamour model’ style, later in the century, created some concern. Since the advent of the mass media, a discourse around so-called 'sexualised' fashion has arisen and been discussed periodically. While the topic itself is not new, the second millennium has brought a growing focus on the 'sexualisation' of girls below the age of consent. The discourse around the sexualisation of girls situates various aspects of modern life, but especially clothing and make-up, as having a harmful effect on girls' healthy development. These harms[1] are said to range from poor body image to others far more extreme, such as prostitution. Since the early 2000s an extensive body of literature and other media has been published in Europe, America and Australasia, to advise policymakers, teachers and parents on these issues. Populist manuals for parents and daughters[2], newspaper articles and government reviews[3] all propose a direct causal link between sexualised dress and harm to girls' healthy development. I propose to call this body of publications 'protectionist anti-sexualisation literature'. It is concerned with the sexualisation of society, of popular culture in general and, most importantly, of dressed appearance. The main aim of this thesis is to contribute to existing

1 Throughout this thesis I will refer to as 'harms' the list of negative effects that sexualisation is said to cause. The term is a nod to the 'harm debate' around pornography which has its origins in the 1960s and 1970s second wave feminism, and continues today in discussing 'online harms' (Wright, 2020).

2 (Atkins Wardy, 2014 Brooks, 2008; Carey, 2011; Durham, 2009; Hamilton, 2008; Olfman, 2008; Oppliger, 2008; Tankard Reist, 2009)

3 (APA, 2007; Buckingham et al., 2010; Kiely et al., 2015; Papadopoulos, 2010; Rush and La Nauze, 2006)

'liberal'[4] sociological discourses, which critique protectionist approaches to sexualisation, by situating the study within Cultural Studies and Fashion Theory. The objectives here, which support this aim, are to analyse, critique and study protectionist discourses around sexualisation, applied specifically to girls' dress, and to appraise contradictions in these discourses that simultaneously place dressed girls as victims of sexualisation, but also as sexualised subjects, and to critique the protectionists' position of power and the rhetoric they use.

In 3.2 I will examine how anthropologists used to examine traditional 'dress', while theorists in the fields of cultural studies and sociology have concerned themselves with ‘fashion’. A similar dichotomy can be observed in the study of the sexualisation of girls' dress. While the sexualisation of culture has been examined by scholars such as McNair, Attwood and Smith and the sexualisation of girls by gender studies scholars such as Ringrose, Egan and Hawkes, the intersection of these subjects with 'dress' and 'fashion' has really only been addressed in individual articles in recent years (see for example Edwards, 2018; Vänskä, 2020). This thesis contributes to scholarship by performing an extensive investigation of girls' dress as the central tenet in debates around sexualisation. It furthermore aims to illustrate that these debates were a 'trend' and an accepted approach in the early millennium in the Anglophone West and that the link which was built between the dress of girls and the harms they encounter was upheld, world-wide, by a layered mechanism and through various modes of publication.

The protectionist authors examined in this thesis do not provide one co-ordinated definition for sexualisation. They do however all consider sexualisation to be dangerous[5].This thesis will address how sexualisation can only really be analysed through what it is seen to cause. Sexualisation, as understood by the protectionist sources discussed here, is said to interfere with a girl's healthy development by causing a variety of harms. Some sources imply that this can lead to disrupted healthy development, eating disorders, hypersexuality, prostitution, sexual violence, paedophilia and finally, in the

[4] I use the word liberal here in its usual context to mark feminist, left leaning ideology. While some non-protectionists make a point of not calling themselves liberal because of possible misappropriation by the right as a kind of Laissez-faire attitude, I find the term to be useful in maintaining its connections to wider 'liberal' social and political attitudes.

[5] See for example Durham, 2009; Hamilton, 2008; Olfman, 2008; Oppliger, 2008

furore around a specific case, murder[6]. This thesis will examine the seeming causal link that protectionist texts imply with the above harms. While these are discussed as being caused by sexualisation rather than dress, I would argue that dress is central to sexualisation discourses, as it is seen as the container of sexualisation. This thesis will furthermore examine how sexualisation discourse is specifically implied through the way in which protectionist texts are written, in the rhetorical language used.

This thesis identifies and analyses similarities in the protectionist elements in a selection of published sources, comprising government reviews, protectionist manuals and British newspaper articles. As a contribution to scholarship around sexualisation, this thesis maintains that protectionist elements pose a problem as they endorse the policing of girls' dress and clothing in order to protect them. What protectionism refers to, in this instance, is a specific tendency within some writing to suggest that girls can be protected from harms by turning the focus on girls themselves rather than the surrounding social contexts. This means that protectionist discourses generally suggest that girls' dress practices and clothing choices, in particular, should be limited in order for them not to inspire harassment and violence against them. This thesis will analyse and question the protectionist elements in the source texts through the lens of Foucauldian ideas on the panopticon and self-regulation, where the girl "becomes the principle of [her] own subjection" (Foucault, 1977: 201). One of the themes this thesis identifies in a number of sources studied is the way in which protectionism appears to add to pressures on girls through a culture of victim-blaming.

This thesis is not concerned with children's sexual behaviour, but rather with the way in which adults have articulated a specific discourse around sexualisation and its causes. This thesis will critique and reflect on how protectionist writers set themselves up as authorities on the cultural perspective of the care for girls. Protectionist texts routinely conflate concepts around sexuality and do not sufficiently interrogate sexual identity, sexual exploitation and sexism. This thesis places itself within non-protectionist feminist research

[6] See for example APA, 2007; Atkins Wardy, 2014; Brooks, 2008; Carey, 2011; Durham, 2009; Hamilton, 2008; Olfman, 2008; Oppliger, 2008; Papadopoulos, 2010; Rush and La Nauze, 2006; Tankard Reist, 2009

(Buckingham et al., 2010; Egan and Hawkes, 2010; Kiely et al., 2015) which critiques the protectionist propensity for equating innocence with purity and sexual inactivity in a moralistic enterprise, which criticises and shames girls and their dress and considers them agents in the corrupting of others' innocence.

That the topic of sexualisation of children and young people gained such prominence early in the millennium and continues to cause concern is understandable, given the vulnerable nature of children and the position of the writers as involved adults and often as parents themselves. The protectionist texts examined in this thesis are clearly written with these concerns for the welfare of children in mind and this thesis expresses equal consideration towards the wellbeing and safety of children and young people. This thesis tasks itself with critiquing certain facets of these protectionist propositions and how they have reached their conclusions. As one of the aims of this thesis, mentioned above, it will appraise contradictions in protectionist discourses which place girls as vulnerable in being sexualised, sexually harassed or violated, while simultaneously berating them for their dress and implicating them in their own harm. This thesis not only scrutinises these contradictions in protectionist ideology but also the authors' methodological approaches. Protectionist methodology becomes problematic especially when it comes to dressed appearance, given its lack of engagement with fashion theory or popular culture discourses in these sources. As discussed above, one of the aims of this thesis is therefore to critique protectionist discourses and rhetoric with regard to girls and their dress. Relating to this, an objective of this thesis is to understand how the protectionist discourses impact upon the shaming of girls. Since such books are not written for girls directly, protectionist discourses could cause harm through the way in which parents engage with their daughters rhetorically or by placing sanctions. I will also argue that protectionist discourses encourage a general focus on girls as the primary subjects of sexualisation. The sexualisation debates ignore boys in two ways. On the one hand they are ignored as objects of sexualisation. Boys and their dress are not seen as something that could potentially be sexualised. Secondly, boys and men are not directly addressed as the subjects of sexualisation; as the ones that sexually objectify or assault girls.

This thesis can be considered as interdisciplinary in that it utilises scholarship from various disciplines, such as feminism, cultural studies and fashion theory. I have chosen this approach to demonstrate how it is not only possible but also necessary to interrogate a subject such as the sexualisation of girls from various angles. This thesis is written from a feminist perspective. It utilises feminist scholarship as its theoretical framework and locates protectionist debates on sexualisation within changing political climates and their interplay with feminism. It also aims to make apparent the divisions within feminism. This thesis furthermore contributes to feminist scholarship by engaging in the debate around sexualisation by building a critique of certain patriarchal power structures and how these are upheld by protectionists in policing girls' dress. I first began to articulate ideas around girls and sexualisation during the writing of my MA thesis on the controversies surrounding American child beauty pageants. The origins of my interest in how girls' dress is scrutinised, however, go back as far as my own memories of growing up in 1990s Scandinavia. I observed this as a poignant time in re-articulating Scandinavian ideas of equality as second-wave feminist views began to be challenged ideologically, but also sartorially, by a younger generation of girls influenced heavily by the ‘Girl Power’ phenomenon (Harris, 2004) and third-wave feminism (Heywood and Drake, 1997). In Scandinavian society, where I saw the appearance and reputation of equality to be strong, second-wave ideas gave the impression of being extreme, outdated, restrictive and shaming of the dress of younger women, while second-wave feminists' own style of dress appeared frumpy. It was therefore challenged by many younger feminists who still fought for equality, but did this while wearing more modern, 'sexualised' styles of dress. This is where I place the roots of 'double pressure' – a principle which I conceive in this thesis. Double pressure operates on girls by putting pressure on them simultaneously from two sides. They are required to manage personal preference and media and peer influences whilst negotiating and participating in the ongoing feminist project.

During the writing of this thesis scholars in various fields begun to examine the discourse around sexualisation of girls (see for example Duchisky, 2013; Egan, 2013; Kiely et al. 2015). It is worth highlighting the journal

“Sexualities” which published a special issue on “Debates on children’s ‘sexualisation’ in media culture” (2020) with an introduction by fashion theorist Annamari Vänskä, emphasising specifically “sexualised fashion” and children (Vänskä, 2020: 1). The timing of this publication confirms both the topicality of the investigations in this thesis, but also the ongoing interest that it inspires. Over the course of writing this thesis, the #metoo movement began to heavily influence public discourse. This was seen in the reactions and reporting on violence and homicide of women (such as the Sarah Everard case in the UK). I would argue that the shift in public perspective and the language used means that books such as the populist manuals examined in this thesis would not be written in the same manner anymore. In fact, it may be that this type of literature has shifted online altogether. This places this thesis as retrospective, in which it examines a timeline in history, though very recent. This does not mean that the problems described in this thesis have been eliminated, but rather that their consideration and expression will have changed. This will be examined in detail in the conclusion in 'Avenues for Further Research'.

Important Definitions for this Thesis

At several different points, and central to its investigation and arguments, this thesis deals with contested terminology. As there is often little agreement on singular definitions for the terms, 'sexualisation', 'protectionism', ‘girl’ and 'dress', they are outlined here to demonstrate my understanding and the context in which I use them within this thesis. They are also discussed in greater detail in later chapters in the context of protectionist literature and media.

The concept of 'sexualisation' is young in academic terms and so definitions vary, which attests to the contested and contradictory nature of what is considered 'sexualisation'. Foucault argues that the sexuality of children and young people “has become, since the eighteenth century, an important area of contention around which innumerable institutional devices and discursive strategies have been deployed” (1978: 30). While he wrote of “the sex of children” (1978: 29) alluding to their experienced *sexuality*, rather than

sexualisation, which is seen as imposed, his remarks are useful in building a timeline of the discourse around sexualisation as a subject. Anti-sexualisation writers often refer to our society as increasingly *sexualised*. Our society is becoming increasingly “pornographised” (Smith, 2010), and normalises sexual strategies previously seen as “hypersexualised” (Egan, 2013). One taboo that remains, however, is children's sexual behaviour and subsequently, as discussed in this thesis, the sexualisation of children. Girls are in a particularly compromised position within the history of sexualisation, as they are both child and female. They fall to the intersection of the “hystericisation” of female sexuality (Foucault, 1978: 104) and the composition of the taboo of childhood sexuality (Foucault, 1978: 30). This explains the particular alarm surrounding discourses around the sexualisation of girls.

Sexualisation of contemporary society, also dubbed 'striptease' culture, has been discussed by theorists such as media sociologist Brian McNair (2002) and cultural studies scholar Feona Attwood (2009). While coming from different fields, both Attwood and McNair suggest that the mainstreaming of pornography is what has created the sexualisation of culture. As access to pornography has become easier, other areas of culture have become influenced by its distinctly sexualised aesthetic. As sex has become central to a person's self-expression, the boundaries between public and private have begun to blur (Giddens, 1992; McNair, 2002: 98). Since sexiness has begun to mark “what is significant, good and worthwhile about contemporary life” (Attwood, 2009: xvi), sex or sexiness are also increasingly seen as “indicating superficial glamour, empty pleasures and cheap thrills” (Attwood, 2009: xvi). Attwood specifically criticises the American Psychological Association (APA) Review of 2007, examined in this thesis, for not making use of the wealth of enquiries into aspects of sexuality developed within academia. These protectionist anti-sexualisation narratives rely heavily on the simplified assumption that the sexualisation of culture is “worthless and harmful” (Attwood, 2009: xvii), something this thesis will appraise in a more nuanced manner.

Considering the sources used in this thesis, 'sexualisation' is firstly defined by protectionist government reviews. These definitions are then picked up by the populist manuals, and finally problematised by the non-protectionist

government reviews and scholars (Buckingham et al., 2010; Kiely et al., 2015). The definitions and especially the disagreements around them will be addressed in more detail in the next Chapter. I do however want to note here the definition for sexualisation originating in the *Australian Review,* as the earliest published of the analysed texts, as “the act of giving someone or something a sexual character” (Rush and La Nauze, 2006: 1). This idea of imposing a sexual character specifically onto young people was continued by the 2007 *APA* and the 2010 *British Review,* noting that sexualisation leads to a person’s value coming “only from his or her sexual appeal or behaviour, to the exclusion of other characteristics” (APA, 2007: 1; Papadopoulos, 2010: 25). The academically thorough 2015 *Irish Review* - which actually interviewed young people and which can be seen as non-protectionist due to how it addresses sexual harassment and violence as a problematic specific to gender inequality, rather than girls' dress - addressed age by suggesting sexualisation as having occurred when a young person's “physical maturity outstrips their emotional maturity” (Kiely et al., 2015: 52). To attest to disagreement even within non-protectionist academics, I would note that scholars such as Ringrose contest this by arguing that current sexualisation discourses are riddled with moralising and class-based rhetoric of panic, around “age-appropriate sexuality” (2013: 43). The *Scottish Review* also notes that there are considerable difficulties within the protectionist logic, which does not provide “examples that would help to explain what a sexual *but not sexualised* representation would be like; and by default, the two concepts seem to become conflated” (Buckingham et al., 2010: 13). In this thesis I will use 'sexualisation' specifically in the context of dress which is in some way revealing and is therefore considered to invite sexual interest.

The term 'protectionism' is widely used in an economic context as “a theory or system of protection”, specifically protecting “domestic industries from foreign competition” (Corporate Financial Institute). While this definition operates within an economic context and is thus not directly comparable, I would argue that the scope of texts and discourses that will be identified as 'protectionist' here constitute a method. While it is impossible to find a categorical definition for 'protectionism' within sexualisation discourses, the term

is repeatedly used by scholars to describe specific discourses around the protection of girls and boys from sexualisation. This mode of protectionism centres around recognising children as vulnerable and unknowing and "scholars broadly clustered as protectionist make the argument that there is a need for boundaries for young girls against the sources of sexualization" (Egan and Hawkes, 2009: 389). Sexualities scholars Hawkes and Egan furthermore specify that sexualisation is taken to be a damaging and "unwanted consequence of the 'modern world'" that cannot be avoided, and the protection of the child, by adults, is "the only recourse" (2008: 193). Gender studies scholars Renold and Ringrose take a more radical stance and suggest that protectionism in the context of sexualisation "ignores girls' sexual agency" (2011: 391) as it focuses on protection through setting confines, rather than through education and empowerment. In this thesis I would like to locate protectionism within populist debates around sexualisation as found in the sources, as protectionism often coincides with alarmist rhetoric and lacks thorough academic investigation. Furthermore, Egan suggests that central to the protectionist endeavour is a contradictory position whereby "sexualisation is everywhere and unyielding but advocates have somehow escaped its influence and can help you fix the situation" (Egan, 2013: 47). While protectionism does not align neatly with left or right leaning political ideologies, three out of four UK government reviews on sexualisation were commissioned by the Conservative Government (Papadopoulos, 2010; Mason et al., 2011; Bailey, 2011) and there is consensus within certain texts that non-protectionists are aligned with a more liberal perspective. The term 'liberal' may only be used with reservation, as the non-protectionists in this thesis do not define themselves this way in the context of sexualisation discourse. As mentioned above, 'liberal' is often used as a rhetorical tool in protectionist texts to refer to an unconcerned, 'anything goes' ideology, not defined in precise terms. How protectionism operates in practice within sexualisation discourse will be examined in detail in Chapter 5.

As this thesis centres around the dressed bodies of girls, it is important to define how the term 'girl' is used in the context of this thesis. There is no legal definition for a girl in any of the Anglophone countries represented in the sources, so the concept of 'girl' becomes socially, culturally and historically

relative and fluid. For the purposes of this thesis, I will count girls as female beings from birth to age 16 with significant subdivisions. After 16, girls will become 'young women'. This is to demarcate the age of consent and other major rights gained at 16, even though this is below the legal age of maturity. While this stands at 18 in all Anglophone countries, it is an inconsistent concept. In the UK, for example, while the law protects young people under the age of 18 in some ways - for example prostitution is illegal before legal maturity - at the same time young people between the age of 16 and 18 can leave home, become employed, join the military, marry, drive a car, consume alcohol and provide sexual consent. Specifically for the purposes of this thesis, I want to flag the rights to marriage and the age of consent which are set at 16 everywhere in the Anglophone West[7]. The age of consent and the ability to marry are also central to the United Nations agenda in protection of the girl-child, as they are seen to significantly interfere with girls' healthy development (UN Women). In this thesis I discuss girls between the ages of zero and seven as girl-children. Girls between the ages of eight and twelve, I will refer to as tween-girls. Between thirteen and fifteen, girls are teen-girls. One of the contradictions examined in this thesis is the inconsistency in these texts around what they mean by 'girl' and this lack of clarity produces a misunderstanding about what is meant by the ‘girls’ who are being sexualised or need protecting. Some protectionist texts discuss a five-year-old girl in one sentence and move onto a teenager in the next. The reasons and consequences of this lack of clarity will be discussed in Chapters 4, 5 and 9. This thesis will differentiate whenever possible and indicate a lack of clarity when it arises.

This thesis focuses specifically on 'dress' as the central subject of sexualisation. It is dress which becomes sexualised and dress which in turn sexualises girls. In protectionist discourses dress, clothing and fashion often become conflated, so it is useful to outline their differences for clarity. Fashion scholars Joanne Eicher and Mary Roach-Higgins suggested in 1965 that the term 'dress' could be interchanged with other terms used by social scientists such as clothing, appearance, adornment or cosmetics. Since then, Eicher and Roach-Higgins stress that they prefer to use 'dress' “in a more specific way than is possible with these other terms” (Eicher and Roach-Higgins, 1995: 1). Thus,

[7] Tasmania is the only Anglophone exception where age of consent is set at 17 years.

the dress of an individual becomes “an assemblage of modifications of the body and/or supplements to the body” (Eicher and Roach-Higgins, 1995: 1). This includes a long list panning through “coiffed hair, coloured skin, pierced ears, and scented breath...” to “jewellery, accessories, and other categories of items added to the body as supplements” (Eicher and Roach-Higgins, 1995: 1). Earlier, in 1985, notable fashion scholar and feminist activist Elizabeth Wilson had defined dress by discussing the boundaries that it sets for the physical body: “Dress... links the biological body to the social being, and public to private” (Wilson, 1985: 2). This explains why the ‘wrong’ kind of dress raises emotions and questions about purity and morality. Wilson notes that in all societies, women, men and children have always been ‘dressed’ in some way. This ‘dress’, which takes on forms from body modifications to clothing, from hairdressing to jewellery, fulfils many “social, aesthetic and psychological functions” that denote boundaries, for example between the adult and child (Wilson, 2003: 3).

Eicher and Roach-Higgins note that a key feature of fashion is “introduction, mass acceptance and obsolescence” (1995: 10). Of the relationship between fashion and dress, Wilson argues that “fashion is dress in which the key feature is rapid and continual changing of styles. ...in modern Western societies no clothes are outside of fashion; fashion sets the terms for all sartorial behaviour” (Wilson, 1985: 3). While the sexualised dress discussed by the protectionists is often not fashionable dress, it is a component of a fashion system. One of the central arguments of the protectionists, which will be expanded on in chapter 5, is that in the past such clothing and dress was not available to young girls but has now become so. This encompasses what I call 'feminine' or 'girly' dress. Usually, in the West, a skirt is seen as a gendered item as it is predominantly worn by women (Bolton, 2003) just as the colour pink has a particularly gendered association (Paoletti, 2012). These are often discussed by protectionists as 'sexualising' rather than gendered, which will be discussed in detail in Chapter 7.

Importantly for the concept of dress, fashion and their academic study, as fashion scholar Joanne Entwistle (2000) notes, is the division in the literature. The literature on fashion, which examines the system around the subject, its

ideas and aesthetics, is produced within the fields of sociology, cultural studies, costume history or psychology and does not tend to focus on the “mechanisms by which fashion translates into dress in everyday life” (Entwistle, 2000: 3). Fashion, within this literature, becomes rather abstract and theoretical in its explanations of its movements. The field has, however, evolved through the scholarship of dress historians who investigate how fashion is evoked by women in their daily dress choices (Woodward, 2007). I interpret the dress discussed in protectionist sources to mean a particular trend of revealing and body-enhancing clothes available on the high street, aimed at pre-pubescent and pubescent girls, as this is sexualised dress as understood in light of the definitions above. Protectionist texts, especially the manuals, regularly criticise *fashion*, but what I will stress in this thesis, is that what they are really castigating is sexualised dress.

Thesis Structure

The first two chapters of this thesis introduce sources, outline the methodology and examine the theoretical framework upon which this thesis is built. This thesis utilises as its sources three types of text. Five Anglophone government reviews, eight populist manuals and articles from two newspapers were chosen from between the years 2005 and 2015 and analysed for protectionist discourses on sexualisation. Discourse analysis was used to investigate these sources thematically in order to identify common topics which would lead to a thematic comparative analysis in chapters 5-10. Specific to this thesis, the methodology also includes a critique of the methods used by the protectionist sources. This allows for a comprehensive analysis investigating not only the content of the sources, but also analysing why their methods of data collection further add to the problematic nature of the protectionist arguments. Foucauldian articulations of discourse and discourse analysis form the basis of the methodology and theoretical framework of this thesis. His dictions on 'truth', 'power' and 'sexuality' (1978) reveal how ideas held as essential are constructed and upheld. Stuart Hall's work on representation (1997) demonstrates how the field of cultural studies was formed to question traditional subjects and

methodologies, while Judith Butler's theory of performativity (1990, 1993) which changed the landscape of how gender is contextualised in essentialist terms, leads us to an examination of feminism as a theoretical framework of this thesis.

Chapters 3 and 4 examine underpinning literature on feminisms and childhood. Both chapters outline an overall chronology of the history and changes in women's rights and childhood and how these have been articulated in girls' dress. Feminist theory in Chapter 3 highlights the rift between socialist second-wave feminism and other, newer feminisms which negotiate women and girls' social positions in an increasingly capitalist and neo-liberal landscape. This introduces the ideas upon which the protectionists base their discourses towards sexualisation, as empowerment has shifted from collective feminist action towards individualistic expressions engaging with dress. Chapter 4 examines social attitudes towards innocence. It addresses how adults have constructed a notion of childhood as romantic and sexually innocent, but how simultaneously innocence has been eroticised. This chapter analyses how attitudes towards children have been harnessed as a useful social mechanism and political tool. It does this by stressing the difference between the needs, wants and behaviour of actual children; and childhood, the constructed, symbolic, idealised concept harnessed by the protectionist agenda.

Chapter 5 begins the analysis of the sources by focusing on protectionism. It reflects the themes of the previous chapter on childhood and innocence by examining a contradiction in protectionist discourses. On the one hand, protectionists consider childhood to be 'natural', so therefore absolute and unchanging. On the other, there is an adult tendency to construct childhood as romantic and to reconfigure it to fit the ideas of the times. Furthermore, this chapter will examine how, although sexualisation as a phenomenon is not new, the discourse surrounding it has become more visible since the new millennium. It examines instances when anxieties surrounding children and their sexual objectification can be seen as universal and how politicians can use childhood as part of their rhetoric and standpoint in courting voters.

Chapter 6 introduces the very basis of the protectionist argument which relies on the idea that 'sexualisation' has direct harmful effects on girls' healthy development. This chapter will comprehensively examine definitions of

sexualisation within protectionist texts which do not seem to reach agreement. It will analyse what is seen to cause sexualisation. In turn it will investigate how sexualisation is seen to cause various harms ranging from bad body image and eating disorders to far more disturbing effects.

Chapter 7 continues the analyses of the three different types of sources by examining how sexualisation is seen as absolute in its power. It analyses the ways in which it appears that in protectionist texts *any* item of dress can be placed as sexualised object, thus steering the discourse around sexualised dress in an alarmist direction and showing how sexualisation is used as an all-encompassing term within these three types of text. This chapter will introduce two concepts. As a contribution to knowledge, I have coalesced amorphous notions that were appearing in different writings into more concrete ideas that I have named 'three layers of sexism' and ‘double pressure’. These were formulated to name specific sequences of events and specific environments within which sexualisation and the protectionist texts operate. 'Three layers of sexism' traces the historical and contemporary patriarchal structures which set up girls to fail with regard to their sexual expression. 'Double pressure' specifically addresses the contradictory demand girls are under to simultaneously represent themselves as feminist while following sexualised media and peer influences.

Chapter 8 will focus particularly on dress as a vessel of sexualisation. While sexualisation has been discussed in the media extensively, the discourse does not usually examine dress specifically. This chapter will investigate protectionist discourses surrounding dress as specifically negative and how they place girls' interest in shopping for clothing as inherently negative behaviour. Make-up is analysed in its own section in this chapter, as it is presented in protectionist discourses as specifically sexualising and evidencing a loss of innocence in its wearer. Make-up and clothing are also often discussed as having a contaminating effect on their wearers and their friends. This chapter will also analyse how protectionist texts imply that girls unwittingly create themselves as a seditious influence on boys who will have their sexual innocence corrupted by seeing girls in sexualised dress.

Chapter 9 analyses the intersection of discourses of sexualisation with

concepts of social class. This chapter will examine how sexualisation and consumption are often used interchangeably, resulting in the discourses becoming very far-reaching. Protectionists tend to lose focus and become alarmist over various aspects of class-based taste and consumption. This chapter will also return to discussions about protectionist writers themselves. Questions around social class will be addressed by analysing the authors' attitudes towards taste, morals and ideas of 'propriety' where they are central to misunderstandings surrounding sexualisation. This leads to an investigation of who protectionists see as affected by sexualisation and who is called to upon combat it.

The final chapter of this thesis returns to Foucault's articulations about self-surveillance and examines introspection and shame within sexualisation discourses. This chapter determines how, by focusing on girls and their dress, protectionist discourses encourage self-sanctioning by girls. This chapter draws on the trope of Lolita (Nabokov, 1955), as a sexualised child, to understand how the focus on girls and their sexualised dress eclipses a discourse on who it is that is feared to abuse them within the causal link that protectionism constructs. This chapter finishes with an examination of derogatory and shaming language used by protectionists which poses a central contradiction. On one hand protectionists, by definition, aim to protect girls; however, on the other, they also berate them for their dress, thus suggesting girls' implication in their own harm.

The Conclusion will examine the central themes covered in this thesis and review the key findings. It will go onto reflect on the methodology and analyse the possible limitations that this has set for the research. This thesis will conclude by examining avenues for further research, so that the investigation of protectionist discourses around girls' sexualised dress can be continued within the academy.

Chapter 1

Methodology

1.1 Introduction

This chapter will outline the sources used in this thesis, which consist of three different types of texts that critique the phenomenon of sexualisation from different perspectives. This thesis will examine English language government reviews from three continents which were commissioned to provide advice to educational establishments and commerce, English language populist manuals which profess to give a voice to concerned parents, and articles from two UK newspapers, the *Daily Mail* and the *Guardian,* which report on government reviews and wider discussions on the sexualisation of girls' dress. This chapter outlines each type of text in its own section and will substantiate the methodology behind how many and which texts were relevant to this thesis, with reference to the academic discussions thereof.

This thesis uses discourse analysis as a central methodological approach, as it explores “discursive commonalities” (Pickering, 2008: 69) in the protectionist elements in these texts to reveal how they have constructed ideas and 'truths' around the sexualisation of girls' dress. The discursive commonalities found in the protectionist texts initiate and form the various themes which are interrogated by the thesis and build the basis for a critique of protectionism. Considering the feminist perspective from which this thesis is written, discourse analysis provides an appropriate methodological framework which links the methods outlined in this chapter to the theoretical underpinning of Foucauldian 'discourse' as a reproducing process that normalises existing attitudes, discussed in the next chapter. Uncovering existing patriarchal

attitudes around how sexually 'innocent' girls are expected to present themselves is relevant to this thesis in challenging how protectionist texts require girls to police their dress. These discourses will be examined against the three sources, which present very different datasets. While the government reviews are designed to be analytical, the populist manuals ‘heartfelt’ and the newspapers informative, their similarities in style and message will be scrutinised across their disparities.

1.2 Government Reviews

It has been suggested that the sexualisation and commercialisation of children has become a momentous area of study since the 1990s (Kiely et al., 2015: 18). This has prompted governments to commission inquiries into the problems that are seen to affect children and especially girls. Between 2006 and 2015 nine government reviews were compiled in the Anglophone world that have come to my attention, which examine various aspects regarding children and sexualisation. All are listed here, chronologically, with the five Reviews used for this thesis in bold. A rationale will follow for the selection of samples for this thesis, accompanied by short summaries of critiques of said reviews to further justify their specific significance. The analytical chapters will perform a comparative discourse analysis of the protectionist and non-protectionist themes arising in the five reviews, comparing and contrasting the discourses in the three types of sources.

Rush and La Nauze (2006), Australia: *Corporate Paedophilia: Sexualisation of Children in Australia*

American Psychological Association (2007), USA: *Report of the APA Task Force on the Sexualisation of Girls*

Byron (2008), UK: *Safer Children in a Digital World*

Buckingham, David (2009), UK: *The Impact of the Commercial World on Children's Wellbeing*

Buckingham et al. (2010), UK (Scotland): *Sexualised Goods Aimed at Children*

Papadopoulos, Linda (2010), UK: *Sexualisation of Young People Review*

Mason et al. (2011), UK: *Children, young people and the commercial world*

Bailey, Reg (2011), UK: *Letting Children be Children*

Kiely et al. (2015), Ireland: *The sexualisation and commercialisation of children in Ireland: an exploratory study*

The reviews were chosen for detailed analysis to represent five different Anglophone countries, providing a cultural and geographical balance, ranging across three continents. Adding more reviews to the sources would likely have resulted in repetition[8]. Three of the above reviews can be considered protectionist: the 'Australian', the 'American', and the 'British' review by Papadopoulos. For purposes of counter-argument, the 'Scottish' and 'Irish' Reviews were chosen. They can be considered non-protectionist, as they focus on educational goals as opposed to sanctions, while also building a scholarly critique of protectionism. For the sake of clarity and as there are multiple authors to the papers, the reviews will be referred to throughout this thesis by their country of origin, except for the *APA Review*[9].

The earliest of the reviews, to which all subsequent reviews refer, is provocatively titled *Corporate Paedophilia: Sexualisation of Children in Australia* (2006) and will subsequently be referred to as the *Australian Review.* It was published by an independent policy think tank, the Australia Institute, and authored by Emma Rush and Andrea la Nauze. The writers are scholars in the

[8] A further avenue of exploration could be to undertake a comparative study of the two British reviews, (Buckingham et al., 2010) and (Bailey, 2011) which were commissioned a year apart by different governments.

[9] The 'American Review' will be referred to as the *APA Review* as this was commonplace throughout other texts as well and because the American Psychological Association as an institution is well established and their research widely used.

fields of philosophy and ethics, and economics, respectively. They contextualise their title choice by noting that “corporate paedophilia is a metaphor... to describe the selling of products to children before they are able to understand advertising and thus before they are able to consent to the process of corporate-led consumption” (Rush and La Nauze, 2006: 1). Concentrating on consumption, methodologically the *Australian Review* analyses the content of teen magazines and focuses on the physical appearance of children within these. In this Review, children are seen to be sexualised through the wearing of clothing and accessories, posing for photographs in an implied suggestive manner, and the applying of make-up; all of this is seen to lead to physical, psychological, and sexual harm (Rush and La Nauze, 2006: 35-46). The *Australian Review* has been criticised by scholars especially for its failure to distinguish between sexualisation and sexuality (Bragg *et al*, 2013; Duschinsky, 2012; Vanwesenbeeck, 2009). It implies that all sexual representations are 'sexualising', and therefore objectifying and conclusively harmful, which is also how this Review fulfils the characteristics of protectionism outlined in the introduction.

The *Report of the APA Task Force on the Sexualisation of Girls* was published in 2007 by the American Psychological Association at the recommendation of the APA’s Committee on Women in Psychology. The central tenet of this American Review, called the *APA Review* from here on, was to examine how prevalent sexualising messages in the media were, and what their impact on girls would be, paying attention to the roles played by ethnicity and socio-economic status (APA, 2007: v). Methodologically the APA investigated the media in its various forms, societal messages that contribute to the sexualisation of girls and “intrapsychic contributions”, which relate to the self-objectification of girls through wearing sexualised clothing (APA, 2007: v). The *APA Review* has been widely criticised by scholars for failures in its methodology (see for example Buckingham et al., 2010; Egan and Hawkes, 2009; Egan, 2013). Lerum and Dworkin (2009) argue that the *Review* focuses too much on the idea of 'sexualisation' and 'sexual objectification’ but is missing a distinct definition of these terms. Boys’ sexual objectification is implied as unlikely, if considered at all, and scholars highlighted the highly simplistic

causality present in the *APA Review,* which ignores any possibility for sexual agency (Bragg et al., 2013; Buckingham, 2011; Egan, 2013).

The British *Sexualisation of Young People Review* (2010)**,** written by psychologist Linda Papadopoulos, was commissioned by the British Home Secretary Alan Johnson as an independent review of the impact of sexualisation of young girls in the context of violence against women. It is worth noting that this investigation, from now on referred to as the *British Review,* was led by a 'celebrity psychologist' academic, known for contributions to reality television. This could be seen as paradoxical, as the influence or dominance of celebrity culture was brought up in problematic terms throughout this review. The *Review* looked at the “hyper-sexualisation” and “objectification of girls” but also the “hyper-masculinisation of boys” (Papadopoulos, 2010: 3). Methodologically the *British Review* was intended to be “a critical, thorough and comprehensive desk-based review of available data on the sexualisation of young people”, including Anglophone government research and statistics, lobby group publications, academic journals and existing interviews with young people (Papadopoulos, 2010: 17). The *British Review* has received criticism for its questionable evaluations of literature and lack of thorough academic investigation (Murch, 2010; Phoenix, 2011; Smith and Attwood, 2011). While the connections made by the *British Review* between a sexualised landscape and violence against women can be seen as insightful, it did also have victim blaming properties (Bragg et al., 2011). These contribute to the Review as falling under protectionism and will be further analysed in chapters 7 and 10.

For the purposes of this thesis, I have chosen the Papadopoulos review over the *Bailey Review* (2011) which was commissioned a year later by the UK coalition government's Secretary of State for Education, Michael Gove, and written by Reg Bailey, Chief Executive of the Mother's Union[10]. Though commissioned by a new government, the *Bailey Review* heavily echoed the Papadopoulos *Review*. However, the *Guardian* newspaper, which will be introduced as a source below, discusses the *Bailey Review* frequently and I will deploy it in line with this discussion.

[10] The Mothers' Union is an international Christian Charity designed to support families. It was founded in 1876 and its mission statement sets forth the maintaining of traditional, Christian family values to help those who have met with adversity.

The report titled *Sexualised Goods Aimed at Children* was conducted by a team of researchers for the Scottish Parliament (Buckingham et al., 2010) and will subsequently be referred to as the *Scottish Review* (2010). The study focused on clothing, cosmetics and consumables, and on how "the potential meaning of goods can depend very much on how they are displayed and labelled in stores, where they are located, and the publicity material that surrounds them" (Buckingham et al, 2010: 17). This *Scottish Review* interacted directly with young people aged 12-14 years, from a variety of socio-economic backgrounds. The team found that "children recognise and understand these issues [of sexualisation] in different ways from adults" (Buckingham et al, 2010: 3), and that "children are not in any sense simply the dupes of marketers, although neither are they wholly free to make their own choices and decisions" (Buckingham et al, 2010: 4), a complexity this thesis also recognises. It is worth noting the thoroughly different reception that this *Review* received when compared with the *British Review* and the other protectionist ones before it. The *Scottish Review*, led by Dr David Buckingham, himself a leading academic in the field of childhood studies, and supported by a team who also had extensive experience in relevant fields, received recognition for its academic practice and complexity (Phoenix, 2011).

The *Sexualisation and Commercialisation of Children in Ireland: an Exploratory Study* (2015) by Kiely et al. aimed to: "comprehensively review the literature on the sexualisation and commercialisation of children" (Kiely et al, 2015: 2); analyse critically the different ways in which 'childhood' is seen in academia, policy making and popular discourses; find out views held by parents, young adults and stakeholders; and review critically what the actual 'problems' with sexualisation are seen to be, and, in doing so, make recommendations for practice and policy in Ireland (Kiely et al, 2015: 2). Methodologically the *Irish Review* is similar to the *Scottish*. It reviewed various secondary sources and supplemented these with interviews with parents and young adults. While the *Irish Review* was not able to include interviews with children, it recognises that the interviews with young adults are not methodologically of the same value (Kiely et al, 2015: 10). The *Irish Review* emphasises that anti-sexualisation discourses in general discuss sexualisation

and commercialisation as an essentially negative 'problem'. The *Irish Review* further stresses that discourses around sexualisation should rather focus on challenging gender inequality and misogyny, rather than child protection, due to the gendered nature of the problem of sexualisation (Kiely et al, 2015: 5). To my knowledge there is no criticism of the non-protectionist reviews. This may be because they were in part executed as a criticism of previous reviews which exhibited protectionist traits. One of the aims of this thesis is to contribute to the field by examining these two reviews critically and comparatively, in comparison to the heavily critiqued protectionist reviews.

1.3 Populist Manuals

Populist manuals present a genre of book publication which is a combination of personal experience, advice and research. They are usually written by someone with personal and professional experience of the subject. Populist manuals on sexualisation, like the ones below, are published in order to pass on personal advice from one parent or professional to another, to present supporting research or arguments and to support and encourage parents to discuss difficult topics with their children. What sets them apart distinctly from academic publications is that they are not peer-reviewed, so their nature is largely personal and opinion-based, while any research that might be included may not have an academically informed origin. Around the beginning of the millennium, there was an abundance of books of this genre. Two key deciding factors when choosing the ones to be reviewed in this thesis were whether the word 'sexualisation' featured in the title or in the description of the book and, as this thesis is underpinned by fashion theory, whether the cover depicted girls in 'sexualised' dress. These features were useful in initially assessing the overall message of the book textually, visually, and later in analysing in depth the discourse contained within it[11].

[11] There was no ideal way to search for populist manuals on the topic of sexualisation, as search results on Worldcat, an extensive online library catalogue, and on the British Library catalogue were not able to distinguish between academic and non-academic work. However,

Fig 1. Covers of populist manuals with 'gendered' and 'sexualised' covers.

these catalogues and academic work on sexualisation (see for example Ging, (2013), Egan (2013) and McGladrey (2015)) revealed a series of titles that came up repeatedly. I wanted to pursue a further examination of these populist manuals to see why they might have been important and relevant for other scholars. In addition to these I sought out other titles by noting Amazon and Google's 'recommendations of similar titles'.

Fig 2. Covers of populist manuals with more 'gender-neutral' covers.

The final selection of books, above, were divided into two categories. The first five books (fig.1) were chosen, as they looked, from the title, abstract and cover, to be very similar in their protectionist style. I chose five to demonstrate that there is a genre of these kinds of books and that they are very similar in tone and message (see Pickering, 2008: 57, for rationales of choosing sample size in the next section on newspapers). These books by Tanith Carey (2011), M. Gigi Durham (2008), Maggie Hamilton (2008), Sharna Olfman (2008), and Patrice A. Oppliger (2008) seemed to represent an alarmist discourse, where girls on the cover are displayed in a sexualised manner and the title of the book sounds sensationalist. The second group of three books was selected to provide a counterbalance to the first. These books (fig. 2) took a more neutral approach in their cover visuals. Melissa Atkins Wardy's (2014) book was chosen as the picture on the cover represents idealised, 'make-up free' girlhood, in opposition to those images used on the covers of the *Lolita Effect* and *Where Has my Little Girl Gone?* that show girls applying make-up. The cover of Karen Brooks' publication (2008) has a 'gender neutral' colour scheme, not featuring pink, and avoids the word 'sexualisation'. It depicts both boys and girls but does focus on girls as the problem in its discourse. Melinda Tankard Reist's edited book (2009) presents itself as an academic collection through its format and use of

academics among writers and advocates; however, it is not peer-reviewed.

It is important to acknowledge the demographic positions of the populist writers as the creators of these discourses, since it places them in a position of power in moulding and maintaining the narrative around girls and appropriate dress. The next chapter examines the themes of power and truth, which become central to underpinning the protectionist discourse. These address middle-class authority, examined in the context of feminism in Chapter 9. Three of the writers of the populist manuals examined in this thesis hold professorial positions in the United States. Meenakshi Gigi Durham is a professor of journalism and mass communication with a joint appointment in gender, women's and sexuality studies. She is of Indian origin, the only writer of colour, and has two daughters. Patrice Oppliger is an assistant professor of communication and Sharna Olfman is a professor of clinical and developmental psychology and a clinical psychologist. Maggie Hamilton, Karen Brooks and Melinda Tankard Reist are all Australian writers and media commentators. Brooks has a PhD in humanities and two children. Mother of four, Tankard Reist, calls herself a “pro-life feminist” (Devine, 2012). Tanith Carey is a well-established British journalist and author who contributes to the *Daily Mail, The Guardian* and *The Daily Telegraph*. She is a mother of two daughters, whom she often references in her writing. Melissa Atkins Wardy is an American speaker, media consultant and author and mother of a daughter and a son. Her book is based on promoting a 'redefined girlhood' to parents with a further commercial element of blogging, selling merchandise with girl-positive messages, swapping parenting strategies with other concerned families, organising petitions, writing letters to corporate offenders and raising awareness through parent workshops and social media. In her text she often promotes her own products. All writers' educational and professional backgrounds allude to a middle-class identity.

The writers of three of these manuals, Durham (2008) Oppliger (2008) and Atkins Wardy (2014), each use the APA definition for sexualisation, while Brooks (2008) uses one of the Australian Review's (2006) and Olfman (2008) builds on both the *British* and the *APA* definition. While Tankard Reist, Hamilton and Carey do not give outright definitions, all texts work from the premise that

sexualisation is a new phenomenon affecting children more than in previous generations and that media and marketing are the main affecters of this change. All texts address parents and sometimes their daughters and are written in a personal tone which I see as speaking *with* their readers rather than to them. While all texts are academically referenced, they are not peer reviewed and reference mainly non-academic sources.

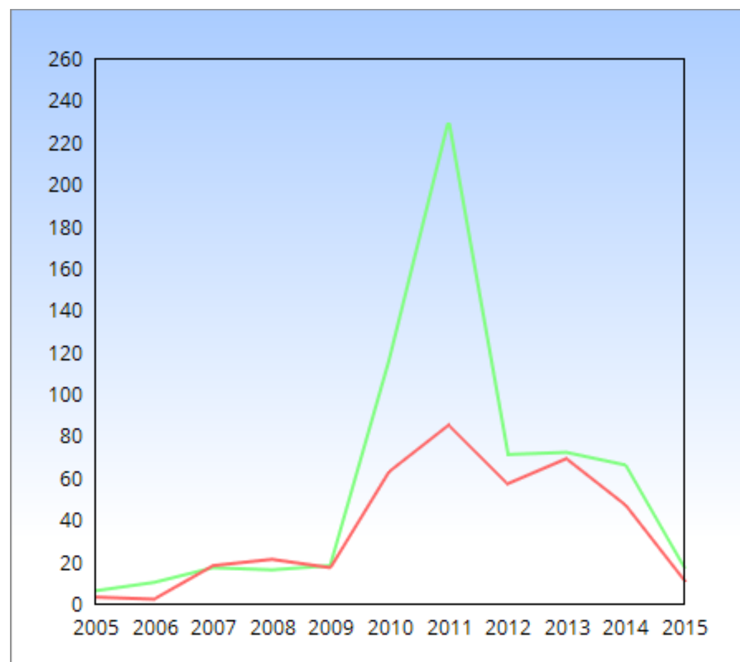
1.4 Newspaper Articles

Newspaper articles were included in this study as they are widely read in everyday life and have the potential to reach a broader audience who do not seek to read specifically about sexualisation. I would suggest that journalism works in a complex relationship with public discourses, both reflecting and shaping them, and reporting on phenomena that are formulated in official capacities in layman’s terms.

The method for selecting the newspaper articles for examination in this thesis took on the most quantitative or statistical approach of all the methodologies. On the 26th of May 2015, a LexisNexis[12] search was conducted in order to identify UK newspapers that reported most often on the topic of sexualisation between 2005 and 2015. As with the other sources, government reviews and populist manuals, which were published between 2006 and 2015, a ten-year timeframe between 2005 and 2015 seemed a rational, even numbered period which was easily referable and comprehensible for the newspaper articles (Pickering, 2008: 57 or van Zoonen, 1998). A peak in reporting that sits roughly half-way through the ten-year period in 2011, which is discussed below,

[12] LexisNexis is an online service database for news and business research where company, demographic, and country information can be used as search criteria. This search, used for the thesis, was undertaken with two sets of combined search terms - 'Sexualisation *and* Girls' and 'Sexualisation *and* Children'. Children as a search term was added to see whether the discourse was gendered. The search terms were fed into two separate search boxes and combined with an ‘*and’* denoting that I wanted both words to appear in the search. The terms were then searched for 'in headline and lead paragraph' and in UK publications. In order to keep the results and the focus of the research manageable decision was taken to restrict this to UK publication; searching outside of the UK scope would have posed problems with the research area and results becoming unmanageably large.

supported “wider conclusions” about the reporting on sexualisation being a timely topic (Pickering, 2008: 57). Initially ten articles, one for each year were selected from two newspapers. However, in the process of writing it became apparent that other articles had material that was useful. Considering the need for more citations and the wealth of text available (Pickering, 2008: 57), a further ten articles from each newspaper were selected. This brought the total to 40 articles.



Graph a. (Green denoting the search term 'children AND sexualisation' and the red 'girls AND sexualisation').

The LexisNexis search furthermore revealed the *Daily Mail*[13] and *The Guardian* returned the most search terms, which I will from now on use for the purposes

13 I will use the *Daily Mail* franchise, including *Mail Online,* as the newspaper source. While the articles reviewed have had different authors, and sometimes it may be important to talk about the specific author, or to position the author, as a whole, I will talk about this as being the voice of the *Daily Mail*. This positions the *Daily Mail* as a coherent in terms of the discourse. This is done also with the understanding of the *Daily Mail* as a British institution that has a particular reputation. The *Mail on Sunday*, even though featuring under the same banner in the LexisNexis search will not be included in the thesis as its content originates from a different editorial team.

of this thesis. These two very different newspapers present useful sources due to their contrasting demographics. In their analysis of demographic data, gathered in 2004, Duffy and Roden note that *the Guardian* readership reportedly includes a high proportion of Labour Party supporters, whereas the *Daily Mail* readers appear to vote in favour of the Conservative Party (Duffy and Roden, n.d.: 18). *The Guardian* has a large London readership who invest in education. The largest proportion of the *Daily Mail* readers live in the South-east of England and showed a lower interest in matters concerning education. Over a quarter of the *Daily Mail* readers are reported to be over 65 years old. *The Guardian* has a younger readership with over a quarter of its readers being between 25 and 34 years old (Duffy and Roden, n.d.: 20).

Paradoxically, in 2014 British writer and activist Owen Jones began a petition entitled 'Stop the *Daily Mail* sexualising children' (Jones, 2014). He drew attention to the rhetoric and imagery with which the newspaper reported, especially, on the girl-children of celebrities, sexualising them while criticising sexualisation. This contradictory setting provides fertile ground for further exploration and critique of the *Daily Mail's* protectionist discourses, a dichotomy which will also be expanded on in Chapter 4.

While the role of the *Daily Mail* in protectionist discourse appeared rather obvious in its populist and inflammatory tone, *the Guardian's* response within journalism features as a slightly more complex contribution in this thesis. While *the Guardian* provided non-protectionist and informative articles which simply reported, mainly, on the publication of the government reviews, it also featured protectionist articles on sexualisation with a similar rhetorical style as in other protectionist sources. One of these is from Tanith Carey (2011) who also contributed to the *Daily Mail* and authored one of the populist manuals analysed in this thesis. These articles will be discussed in terms of a 'liberal' newspaper contributing to the protectionist discourse in the analytical Chapters.

The exact LexisNexis search results are located in the appendices; however, the significant finding was that the incidence rate for the search terms 'Sexualisation *and* Girls' and 'Sexualisation *and* Children' can be seen to peak in British newspaper reporting in 2011. It is highly likely that this reflects the two government reviews, the *British* (2010) and the *Scottish* (2010), that were

published the year before. The Bailey Review (2011) commissioned a year after the *British Review*, was published in June of 2011, adding to the media discourse, and refreshing the topic in the press. *The Guardian* particularly picked up on this and published a lot of content on the 'sexualisation of children' after June 2011.

1.5 Analysis of the Sources

The starting point to the examination of the source material for this thesis was the gathering and analysing of underpinning academic literature. These texts, discussed in depth in the theoretical chapters 2, 3 and 4, exposed themes which could be identified in examined government reviews, populist manuals and newspapers outlined above. The scholarly material around sexualisation informed the way in which themes were selected for comparative analysis. In the discursive chapters these were then analysed to see how they discussed the sexualisation of girls in relation to dress and dressed appearance.

The methodological examination of the three different kinds of sources utilised approaches outlined by grounded theory (Strauss and Corbin, 1998) as these presented some clear and systematic techniques. The recognised steps of “coding” and “memoing” (Strauss and Corbin, 1998: 70-71) were used throughout. 'Coding' was the process which facilitated the naming and grouping of concepts and recurring phrases, while 'memoing' recorded my own thoughts as a researcher throughout the process of examining sources for later use as analysis (Strauss and Corbin, 1998: 70-71). During this process 'in vivo' coding was also used. This refers to the practice of elevating a phrase to a concept (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). For example, “Letting Children be Children”, a catch phrase used by former British Prime Minister David Cameron, became the heading and focus of section 5.4, as the phrase became representative of the general discourse of childhood innocence as a natural, biological state of being. During the initial reading and 'coding' (Strauss and Corbin, 1998) of the

materials, subject position and subject formation, my own and that of the writers, was taken into account. Because the central tenet of Foucauldian discourse challenges the idea that anything could be essential or unchanging, the subject position of the writers of the protectionist texts was important to analyse, as was done above. I have also addressed my own subject position and locate this thesis within current feminist discourses in Chapter 3.

This thesis uses discourse analysis as its primary methodological approach. The way in which discourse is articulated by Michel Foucault (1972) will be examined in depth in the following chapter. However, leaning on his ideas of power, knowledge and construction, this thesis is methodologically concerned with analysing the ways in which the examined texts create discourse. Foucault describes discourse as operating when "practices... form the objects of which they speak" (1972: 49). As I am writing from a feminist perspective, discourse analysis was appropriate as it examines structures that appear essential and allows their construction to be challenged analytically. I would like to build on Foucault's ideas in the light of Phillips and Hardy's description of discourse as "the power of incomplete, ambiguous and contradictory text to produce a social reality that we experience as solid and real" (2002: 1-2). Phillips and Hardy's emphasis on "ambiguity" and "contradiction" are important as these terms come up repeatedly with regard to protectionist discourses examined in the analytical chapters. The language in the populist texts is used in a very rhetorical way, 'rhetorical' here referring to the art of argument. These both produce and reproduce discourse around sexualisation. Philipps and Hardy also describe discourse analysis as "three dimensional", encompassing text, discourse and context (Philipps and Hardy, 2002: 4). This thesis analyses individual texts, such as the source material discussed in depth in this chapter or scholarly material on sexualisation discussed in the two literature review chapters. It then finds discursive commonalities between these two types of text. Finally, this thesis provides an analysis of the discursive commonalities connecting this analysis to the wider discourse around the sexualisation of girls' dress and protectionism.

What is important regarding this thesis is that while it focuses solely on written texts that report on sexualisation, these texts will have been written in

response to visually seeing girls in sexualised dress. Gillian Rose, drawing on Foucault's work, notes the importance of discourse analysis as it reveals constructed ideas around 'truth' (Rose, 2007:140). In her articulations of visual culture, she stresses the complexity of discourse analysis as it is concerned with researching images that "carry little inherent meaning" (Rose, 2012: 4). Maria Sturken and Lisa Cartwright underline the idea that "meaning does not reside within images but is produced at the moment that they are consumed and circulated among viewers" (2001: 7). It is the way in which images of sexualised girls have been produced and circulated that has produced the protectionist discourse analysed in this thesis.

1.6 Critique of the Methodology used by the Sources

The previous sections of this chapter introduced the rationale and methods, why and how the sources in this thesis were chosen for examination. While this thesis will critique protectionist texts throughout, adding to existing scholarship on the topic, the focus here will be on critiquing how protectionist texts themselves collate and assimilate their sources and why their methods of data collection further add to problems within their arguments. It is a process formulated for my own specific research and will build a detailed contextual critique. I wanted to include this in my methodology section, in order to establish and expose, from the very beginning, the problems in the framework of the protectionist methodology. This will further address their discourse as a whole, thus allowing for a fuller critique of their approaches to sexualisation.

Many of the protectionist texts used in this thesis have been critiqued by academics such as Bragg and Buckingham (2013), Buckingham (2011), Egan (2013) and Kiely et al. (2015) – some of whom also wrote reports themselves. I find their critiques very valuable and have drawn many of the same conclusions. These scholars have also appraised the methodologies used by protectionists. I will assess these critiques alongside my own analysis and evaluation of these

sources in the relevant analytical chapters, 5-10. Critiquing government reviews is different from the examination of populist manuals and newspapers as the focus is not on tone or personal experience, but rather on how they may have failed in academic practice in comparison with other academic texts.

At the very core of methodological problems within the sexualisation discourse is the fact that sexualisation is not defined in concrete terms within the examined texts**.** Definitions given for sexualisation are usually vague and they are inconsistent from one source to the next. This makes sexualisation entirely open to interpretation and this is why 'sexualisation' is convenient and easy to apply to any kind of cultural text, event or piece of clothing in a way that will then suit the person making the argument. This is methodologically advantageous for protectionists, as sexualisation can hence be seen to encompass a wide variety of objects and representations, to always be seen as present. This will be further investigated in section 7.2, which reviews protectionist texts and images in which the sexualised depictions can be interpreted as very subjective. The main hypothesis used by protectionist anti-sexualisation advocates is that sexualisation was less of a problem ‘before’, and after a 'shift' (*the Guardian*, 2011) has become more problematic, hence needing intervention. While the claimed effects of sexualisation, such as teenage pregnancy, can be counted and thus analysed statistically, sexualisation itself cannot be quantified, which means that protectionists often resort to singular examples in order to 'prove' the presence of sexualisation. I have also observed that examples used across the sources repeat themselves, raising the question of how substantial the reach of sexualisation may be.

Danielle Egan observed this trope in her book *Becoming Sexual* (2013) and criticised analysts, who often begin their sexualisation critique with the media but then, instead of creating an analysis of cultural production, turn their attention to individual cases (2013: 21). This is called “unit of analysis” by methodologists, involving focusing on an individual instead of on the cultural industry, or disciplinary distinctions “e.g., psychology versus sociology, cultural studies, or media studies” (Egan, 2013: 21). Egan argues that this logic becomes shaky when you “map the epistemological and empirical assumptions at work in the literature” (2013: 21). In other words, protectionist writers may

choose singular cases as their objects and build their hypotheses on these individuals' adversity coming from sexualisation. This poses a methodological problem. As noted above, because sexualisation is not defined in definite terms, anything can be placed as a sexualising medium, so any item or phenomenon can be seen to fulfil the unit of analysis. Theorists such as Brian McNair agree with protectionists that the 'sexualisation of culture' has increased (2002). This means that there is more sexual imagery and content which the general public, and so also children, can come across. Where scholars such as McNair (2002), Attwood (2009) or Smith (2010) disagree with protectionists is that this 'sexualisation of culture' does not necessarily cause risky, dangerous or violent sexual behaviour. What this thesis would like to argue, is that the methodology of protectionists here is inconsistent. If they choose to include the 'sexualisation of culture' in their unit of analysis, then it is possible to argue that sexualisation poses a greater problem than it has in the past. If, however, they were to include what they consider to be *causes* of sexualisation, such as child sexual exploitation through prostitution or engaging in sexually problematic behaviour which may lead to teenage pregnancy, in their unit of analysis, it might appear that sexualisation is decreasing (Egan, 2013). Lacking clarity in the unit of analysis and definitions becomes advantageous as it can be interpreted to fit the agenda.

I would argue that protectionists use examples relating to singular elements, such as items of clothing or goods, in lieu of performing an analysis of structural problems affecting children, such as poverty or gender inequality. Two cases that demonstrate how sources examine singular cases over wider structural problems to support this broad discussion are presented here, while more examples will be analysed in Chapters 5 - 10. In 2011 the Little Miss Naughty[14] underwear range, which was aimed towards tween and teen girls in the UK and US, included underpants and lined (dubbed by the *Daily Mail* (Shipman, 2011) as 'padded') bras, mainly in pale lilac hues with the cartoon 'Little Miss Naughty' logo. Three sources (Durham, 2009; Hamilton, 2008; Shipman, 2011) from Britain and the US, spanning the distance of two continents, mention this, even though it appears to be a standalone example

[14] Little Miss Naughty is a character in children's book author John Hargreaves' 1981 *Little Miss* series. The character is known for playing practical jokes on others.

which was taken out of distribution very fast. In 2006 the British based supermarket Tesco launched the Peekaboo Pole Dancing Kit, which was an exercise pole geared towards young women or girls. Much alarm was raised around what age the product was marketed to. After the *Daily Mail* described it as, among other things, “destroying children's lives” (Fernandez, 2006), it was quickly removed from distribution. Despite the ambiguity of its target consumer and its very short-lived availability, it was discussed by five sources spanning both America and Britain (Durham, 2009; Fernandez, 2006; Hamilton, 2008; Olfman, 2008; Papadopoulos, 2010). While this is not an example of dress, I wanted to include it here as it is demonstrative of the problematic way in which protectionists compile their sources as proof of increased sexualisation. I also wanted to compare and contrast the underwear range and the pole dancing kit as both of the items were removed from distribution very quickly. This seems to suggest that these cases of sexualising items were one-off incidents of questionable judgement which were intercepted speedily.

One of the central examinations in Egan's *Becoming Sexual* (2013) is her discussion of the *petitio principii* within anti-sexualisation discourses which connects to ideas around power and truth discussed in the next Chapter. For the purposes used here, I would like to turn to James Welton's text where he sums up *petitio principii* as “committed when a proposition which requires proof is assumed without proof" (Welton, 1905: 279). Antonio Gramsci described the same phenomenon in his articulations on the contradictory nature of 'common sense'. He described it as "a chaotic aggregate of disparate conceptions, and one can find there anything one likes" (Gramsci, 1971: 422). This relates closely to the protectionist justifications for restrictions examined in this thesis, which rely on a 'common sense' link between gender, violence and dress. Gramsci further describes 'common sense' as "crudely neophobe and conservative" (Gramsci, 1971: 423). This again links with ideas around political aligning of the protectionists with 'traditional', or 'right leaning' ideas of a 'natural order of things' or 'essentialism'. These can be seen as opposing 'liberal', left wing feminist ideas about 'social constructionism' and 'anti-essentialism' which challenge power structures and a 'cultural hegemony'. This will be investigated in detail in the next chapter.

These ideas around 'essentialism' are closely related to 'circular reasoning', where 'truth' is essential and therefore the reasoner begins, with what they endeavour to end with (Dowden, 2003). I would also like to link it with 'sequential referencing', discussed below, as both build their arguments on essentialist assumptions. In the case of the anti-sexualisation discourses analysed in this thesis, 'common sense' and *petitio principii* work in practice in the following way. Some protectionists work from an assumption that the study of sexualisation itself risks further sexualising children (Papadopoulos, 2010: 74), so such studies are therefore not only not needed, but are in fact in themselves harmful. Furthermore, there is an implication that the longer sexualisation is allowed to continue, the more harm is done to children (Rush and La Nauze, 2006: 41). Examining the practice of *petitio principii* in anti-sexualisation discourses is important to this thesis because it means that the protectionist structures underpinning the protection of girls may in fact reveal a deployment of an oppressive truth that further overwhelms the very girls it seeks to protect.

There are of course many ethical difficulties in researching sexualisation of children first-hand due to their vulnerability and the need for protection. Egan (2013) notes that most of the popular literature on sexualisation uses adults' voices instead of those of girls and boys under the age of 16, but especially girl- and boy-children. She emphasises that “ignoring issues of methodology, [and] data findings of research from a variety of disciplines is dangerous because it silences the perspective and experiences of the very people that sexualisation activists want to protect – tweenage girls” (Egan, 2013: 35). *Petitio principii* in this case may also relieve some of the methodological burden of the research, as hard-to-access children do not have to be included in research. The *British Review* (2010) agrees with the methodological problems that arise from not being able to access children. The *Review* acknowledges, however, that there is a clear need to further gather empirical evidence, preferably “in the form of a large-scale longitudinal study”, which would observe in detail the effects of living in a sexualised culture that affects both boys and girls throughout their growth and development (Papadopoulos, 2010: 74). The problem is, however, that this type of a study would need to conquer “considerable ethical obstacles” in light

of how it might breach family privacy and “the risk of further sexualising child participants” (Papadopoulos, 2010: 74). It is particularly the fear of further sexualising children, that seems of worry to, and the recurring justification for, the *petitio principii*.

While the *petitio principii* suggests that evidence may not be needed for the basis of interrogations of sexualisation, what I have dubbed 'sequential referencing' presents a type of evidence based approach. The causal links that protectionist sources build between sexualisation and harm is at the very core of their argument. Problems arise with the causal link when it is built on a suppositional argument or when references are not provided. Here I will investigate a methodological trope where some of the sources cite each other in a sequential manner. The author(s) of one text, which might be discussing an issue for the first time, would make a claim or an implication. A later text would then cite the earlier one, but instead of simply citing the claim or implication, they would establish the argument as fact. This could be achieved by not including page numbers, so that the reader could not qualify exactly what the citation was, or by referencing vague concepts as entrenched. This is discussed in more detail below. These types of problematic methodologies in these texts underpin much of the critique in this thesis. All of this leads to the understanding that sexualisation as a concept and as a term remains 'fluid' and can thus be reinterpreted in various ways and utilised to fit the protectionist agenda, as will be further explored in Chapter 5.

The *Australian Review* was the first of its kind on the topic of sexualisation and is hence naturally used as a reference point for all others. It has, however, received criticism; for example, for its failure to distinguish between sexualisation and sexuality. Duschinsky (2012) appraised it for failing to maintain what 'natural', unaffected sexuality is, versus affected sexualised representation. This implies that all sexual representations are 'sexualising', and therefore objectifying and conclusively harmful (Bragg *et al*, 2013; Duschinsky, 2012; Vanwesenbeeck, 2009). The *APA Review* has also been widely criticised by scholars for failures in its methodology. Egan and Hawkes pointed out that the *APA Review* drew on findings from previous studies which examined phenomena other than sexualisation but used it to evidence sexualisation (Egan

and Hawkes, 2009; Egan, 2013). Buckingham et al. (2010) further noted that the majority of the studies that the *APA Review* uses relate to adults and not children. Lerum and Dworkin (2009) argue that the report focused too much on the idea of "sexualisation" and "sexual objectification" but was missing a distinct definition.

I want to bring up the *Australian Review* here as its position as the first published government review has informed all protectionist discourses that have come after it; hence it is central to critiques of methodology. The problems conceived in defining sexualisation by the *Australian Review* carry over to the *British Review* in a very concrete manner. Every citation of "premature sexualisation" or "sexualised" in the *British Review* refers to the *Australian Review*. This is a direct example of the discourse analysis discussed above, where "incomplete, ambiguous and contradictory texts... produce a social reality that we experience as solid and real" (Phillips and Hardy, 2002: 1-2). The sequence of reference used by the *British Review* appears to do this to gain credibility; however, this remains superficial and suppositional, as examined above by Duschinsky (2012).

The *British Review* (2010) also cites the *Australian Review* (2006) in relation to their claims about the prevalence of sexualised dress. In Chapter 6 I analyse examples of images given by the Australian Review that demonstrated how tween or teen girls were styled and dressed in magazines directed at their own demographic. I argue that the *Australian Review* built a rather overstated discourse around dress that would be hard pressed to be interpreted as sexualised. In Chapter 7, I then cite the *British Review* as stating that "there is... a trend for children in magazines to be dressed and posed in ways designed to draw attention to sexual features" (Papadopoulos, 2010: 7). This quote referenced the *Australian Review* as its source, though did not provide page numbers. Because it did not go into detail about what exactly in the *Australian Review* it referenced, I am going to propose that it was the examples of the magazine images analysed in the *Australian Review* (Rush and La Nauze, 2006: 7). I would argue that this is problematic in two ways. Firstly, as a specific reference is not provided, it makes the claim very general and open to supposition. I cannot claim that the *British Review* specifically referenced the

examples provided in the *Australian Review*. However, what happens here nonetheless is that when references are used in an indefinite manner, it is also impossible to prove that they have not provided evidence. Secondly, I would like to draw attention to the “unit of analysis” (Egan, 2013: 21) used here. The *British Review* speaks of a “trend”, when it refers to a few images provided in a *Review* written four years earlier on a different continent, but again as specific page numbers are not provided, it is not possible to be certain if there is indeed a trend that the *Australian Review* is able to present.

The *British Review* has received criticism for its questionable evaluations of literature and lack of thorough academic investigation (Murch, 2010; Phoenix, 2011; Smith and Attwood, 2011). Vares et al. (2010) noted many instances of conflation of concepts without analysis. For example, having access to the internet was seen to lead directly to exposure to pornography, a risk of being 'groomed', and an increased pressure to look 'sexy'. Similarly, they saw the equation of sexualisation with sexual bullying and violence as inflated. Murch (2010) saw the *British Review* as presenting the sexualisation of young people in the UK as a growing threat but lacking critical evaluation. Bragg et al. (2011) viewed it as being unsystematic and impartial and Smith (2010) implied it as doing a disservice to young people. While the connections made by the *British Review* between the sexualised landscape and violence against women are in line with non-protectionist ideology, it did also have victim-blaming properties (Bragg et al, 2011) which will be further analysed in chapters 5-10 of this thesis.

Finally, I would like to address the tone used in the protectionist publications which is used as a rhetorical tool to capture their audience and to raise alarm over the subject. While the above-critiqued government reviews, written by scholars, used formal, academic language, the tone used in the populist manuals and newspaper articles tends to lean toward the emotive. These are not academic publications and their motive is to appeal to a wider audience. The issue of tone and projected audience will also be raised in relation to specific examples later in the thesis. While it is not possible to know if all of the writers of populist manuals and newspaper articles are parents themselves, there are often references to their own children in these sources. This reflects on their motivation and rationale where the reason for a critique of

sexualised dress is less to produce a critical examination by building an argument using evidence and more to recount their personal experiences and perspective on sexualisation and children. These, I would argue, may aim to appease parental anxieties over the dress of girls, but may not practically help in the protection of girls, as I argue in Chapter 5.

What was most noticeable with regards to the tone used by the two newspapers, the *Daily Mail* and *the Guardian*, was that while both published column-style articles on sexualisation which centred around the personal opinion and experience of the writer, *the Guardian* also reported on the topic in a more matter-of-fact way. All *Daily Mail* articles featured emotive language and alarm, whereas a few *Guardian* articles took a more neutral approach to reporting factual details about the public discourse on sexualisation. This was evidenced especially in the discussion of former Prime Minister David Cameron's involvement in the sexualisation discourse, where *the Guardian* published articles with titles such as “David Cameron orders review into sexualised products for children” (Wintour, 2010), or “Media industry relaxed over Bailey report on sexualisation of children” (Sweeney, 2011). In contrast the *Daily Mail's* language appealed to emotions, with titles such as “Cocktail parties in stretch limos, catwalk shows and fake tattoos: The disturbing sexualisation of little girls revealed” (Tozer and Horne, 2011), or “The end of 'pester power' as David Cameron warns businesses over the sexualisation of children” (*Daily Mail*, 2011). The emotive tone is often present in protectionist discourses, but the newspapers and the populist manuals add to the problematic methodology; providing information which is presented as essentialist and the emotive language with which it is done appears justified considering the harm of sexualisation.

Chapter 2

Theoretical Underpinning

2.1 Introduction

This thesis, which falls within the overall discipline of Cultural Studies, is theoretically underpinned by constructed ideas of truth, power, gender and sexuality. This chapter will outline these theories to build a framework from which protectionist logic and discourse, examined in the analytical chapters, can be interrogated. I will begin by reviewing Michel Foucault's discourses around 'truth', power and sexuality (1972, 1978). An investigation into these socially constructed concepts will open by looking at Foucault's idea of discourse, and how this produces meaning and knowledge. This will lead onto a discussion on power structures. The thesis then examines Hall's *Theories of Representation* (1997), and briefly outlines the birth of British cultural studies and its broad arguments as context for Hall's work. His discourse on representation demonstrates how scholars in the field have come to question traditional subjects and traditional methodologies. Finally, the work of Judith Butler also forms a significant theoretical aspect of this study. Drawing on Foucault, Butler's *Gender Trouble* (1990) and *Bodies That Matter* (1993) set out to question sex, gender and feminism with the theory of performativity, which changed the landscape of how gender is spoken about. Butler's analysis is valuable for this thesis as it lays the groundwork for refuting ideas around girlhood having an inherent state.

2.2 Discourses on Truth, Power and Sexuality

Michel Foucault (1972) formulated the term ‘discourse’ to discuss social systems that produce meaning and knowledge, which are historically subject to change. Meaning is discursive and operates especially within language. Discourse affects materiality because it produces “practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak” (Foucault, 1972: 49). Discourse, or discursive logic, thus becomes a way to organise and neutralise knowledge in such a way that it becomes social fact. The logic, or 'truth' produced by a discourse is time and place specific, argues Foucault (1972). Discourses are produced by consequences of power within social orders. This power then establishes particular ways of legitimating truth and knowledge within the discursive order (Foucault, 1972: 49). Foucault's main argument in the production of discourse relies on a theoretical trope of reversing the order of the production of 'truth'. This means that nothing is treated as existing 'naturally', but, instead, cultural systems such as patriarchy create the existence of truthful ideas by naturalising them through repetitive discourse. Drawing on this proposal, this thesis will interrogate the idea promoted by protectionist discourses, that childhood is 'naturally innocent' and should hence be sartorially displayed this way. I will examine the idea of 'natural innocence' in Chapter 4, an idea that will be returned to in Chapter 7, where I argue that this is more of an ideal established by protectionists, rather than the realistic lived experience of girls. Instead of a 'truth' existing and producing discourse, Foucault theorises, the time and place specific rules and categories come *'a priori'*, *before* the discourse (Foucault, 1972: 127). Thus, discourse masks its construction and its power as the producer of knowledge and meaning. More importantly, this is how discourse establishes itself as ahistorical and essential (Foucault, 1972: 127). This will become especially obvious in the differences between protectionist and non-protectionist government reviews; protectionist reviews often refer to being 'innocent' or 'sexualised' as inherent qualities, without examining the discourses that have built these ideas. Non-protectionist reviews, again, aim to interrogate ideas that are held as essential, as will be discussed in more depth in Chapters 6,7 and 10.

In *The History of Sexuality, Part I* (1978), Foucault discusses ideas of

'truth' and suggests that 'truth' is not absolute. He addresses four key constituents of sexual oppression. The first one is the capitalist ideal, where heterosexuality is normalised as it produces a stable workforce (104). Secondly, excessive, or rather extramarital and non-reproductive female sexuality, is portrayed as ‘hysterical’, in order to restrain promiscuity in women (104). Thirdly, perversion, including homosexuality, is created as an aberration (105), and finally childhood sexuality is placed under rigorous control (104). The 'hysterization’ of women's bodies' and the control of childhood sexuality will be addressed throughout this thesis, as they demonstrate the origins of the alarm surrounding the sexualisation of girls.

Through the repetition of these 'truths' in society the meaning of innocence, for example, becomes fixed. These ideas will be analysed in Chapter 9. In a cyclical manner this 'truth' can be used as a conducive agent to political rationale, which, however, created the rationale in the first place (Foucault, 1972: 127). Writing specifically about discourses surrounding sexuality, Foucault proposes, that:

> The central issue, then, is… to discover who does the speaking, the positions and viewpoints from which they speak, the institutions which prompt people to speak about it and which store and distribute the things that are said. What is at issue, briefly, is the over–all ‘discursive fact’, the way in which sex is ‘put into discourse’.
>
> (Foucault, 1978: 11)

This discourse on sex is further expanded on by Foucault, in a chapter titled *Scientia Sexualis*, which emphasizes the practice of making experiences appear 'natural' and scientifically essential. He writes: “Between each of us and our sex, the West has placed a never-ending demand for truth: it is up to us to extract the truth of sex” (Foucault, 1978: 77). This means that according to Foucault sex is, on one hand, personal. How sex is practiced and experienced varies according to who is practicing it. However, on the other hand these practices are hidden behind a constructed general discourse on sex, which has, over centuries, normalised certain discourses, such as those concerning childhood innocence or women's hysteria, as noted above. The lived

experiences of women and children regarding their sexual interests have been constructed as ‘disordered’ and in need of medical and social intervention. This can again be seen to be reflected in the alarm surrounding the sexualisation discourse and the protectionist demand for intervention in the texts examined in this thesis.

The mechanism by which discourse hides its own construction is an important consideration theoretically, as, throughout, this thesis examines *adult* discourses on sexualisation. That is to say, the truths that are constructed in the discourses of the protectionists, may not reflect the lived experiences and desires of the girls that they speak about. Foucault argues, that 'truth' is an individual process, rather than an essential diktat (1978: 77-8). What this means for this thesis, is that truths created *about* girls need to be carefully examined, as lived experiences *of* girls may vary greatly from these ideologies. This practice of speaking on behalf of someone else is reminiscent of androcentric or patriarchal construction: “an immense apparatus for producing truth” (Foucault, 1978: 56). Foucault stresses the essential point, that “sex was not only a matter of sensation and pleasure..., but also of truth and falsehood” (1978: 56). While many societies viewed sex in terms of pleasure and art, as in the *ars erotica* (Foucault, 1978: 57), the West created around sex a *scientia sexualis*. This was uncompromising and constructed as a universal truth (Foucault, 1978: 57). The methodological problems and discursive conclusions this produces in relation to analyses of the sexualised dress of girls will be addressed in depth in Chapter 5.

Drawing on work by Ferdinand de Saussure ([1916]1966) and Jacques Derrida (1976), Foucault’s theory of the production of knowledge through power, underlies his argument on sexuality throughout his work, but is especially apparent in the *History of Sexuality, Part I* (1978). He analysed the 'juridico-discursive model' (Foucault, 1978: 82) of power as simple in its repressiveness. This mode of power operates in a linear fashion, from the top down, creating a supposed 'universal truth'. It is essentially juridical, based on right and wrong, law and taboo. Foucault argued that this type of conception of power, deriving initially from monarchic structures, entirely overlooks the manipulative nature of power that makes it accepted and so effective; disguised

by the 'polyphony' of the structures (1978: 82). Construction and manipulation are key here and are maintained through discourses operated not “by right, but by technique, not by law, but by normalization, not by punishment, but by control” (Foucault, 1978: 89).

In *Discipline and Punish* (1977), Foucault discusses ideas of power by using the metaphor of Jeremy Bentham's Panoptical Prison, and its role in producing and maintaining disciplinary power. Bentham's Panopticon firstly excludes inmates from each other and then places a guard in a position of surveillance where he cannot be seen, creating a constant possibility of surveillance, which operates outside any actual act of surveillance (Foucault, 1977: 199). This is what makes panopticism particularly calculating as it can inject the practice of control onto the object itself, without the need for a surveillant. In effect, power becomes automated here, “to arrange things [so] that the surveillance is permanent in its effects, even if it is discontinuous in its action; that the perfection of power should tend to render its actual exercise unnecessary” (Foucault, 1977: 201). This “architectural apparatus” becomes a “machine” that creates and sustains the power relation independently of the person who operates it, placing the inmates “in a power situation of which they are themselves the bearers” (Foucault, 1977: 201). The inmates assume simultaneously both the role of the prisoner *and* that of the guard and become the “principle of [their] own subjection” (Foucault, 1977: 201). The pressure of the surveillance acts even before an offence has been committed (Foucault, 1977: 206). This control assures and maintains its effectiveness with its “preventative character, its continuous functioning and its automatic mechanism” (Foucault, 1977: 206). These ideas of exclusion, surveillance and prevention will be linked to the disciplinary practices of sexual sanctioning in protectionist discourses in Chapter 10, where I will examine in detail how girls are socialised into experiencing shame over certain items of dress and practices.

Foucault proposes that what becomes important when assessing 'truth' is to identify who governs that truth (1980: 114). One of Foucault's key examples was the power of male doctors to be able to speak about 'mad' female patients in the late nineteenth century, but we can also observe official power structures

within sexualisation discourses. Adults have power to speak over children. The protectionist middle-class writers of populist manuals, government reviews and newspaper articles have power over parents. The power in determining what is appropriate and 'in good taste' is discussed in Chapter 8. Foucault further establishes power as a cyclical process and analyses the recurring and reproductive properties of power. He regards power as a “multiplicity of force relations” (Foucault, 1978: 93) within the culture in which they operate. This is a process or an organisation, rather than a singular force, that through various endeavours “transforms, strengthens, or reverses” power (Foucault, 1978: 93). Power, according to Foucault, does not consolidate everything beneath its invulnerable unity, but because it is always reproduced by all members of society: “Power is everywhere; not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere” (Foucault, 1978: 93). This cyclical reproduction of 'truth' means that whoever governs power can decide on the morality of that time and place and, relevant to this thesis, the morality of 'who' gets to wear 'what'. Depending on time, place and morality, propositions can be proven to be scientifically verifiable, or discredited by scientific procedures (Foucault, 1980: 114). This means in practice, that concepts such as sexualisation, the innocence of children, or modesty are not 'essential', but time and place specific concepts that are coined, reproduced and exploited by the ones in power.

This kind of discursive power also encompasses the tools and systems with which people are able to distinguish between statements that are true and false, *how* they are able to make this decision and *who* is ultimately in power and allowed to conceptualise what is 'true' (Foucault, 1980: 131). This idea of the universality of power will be useful when analysing concepts such as the performative nature of gender (Butler, 1990), or innocence as an intrinsic part of childhood and girlhood (Kincaid, 1998) as they are proposed in the protectionist literature that is the subject of analysis in this thesis. Chapters 4-10 show how these are often taken for granted within protectionist discourses. Anti-sexualisation rhetoric often presents a 'truth' about the nature of sexualisation. Because it is seen as intrinsically harmful within these dominant and subordinate discourses, this is accepted and reproduced by a society. Hence it

becomes very difficult to analyse the finer intricacies of how it operates, as was addressed in the last Chapter in the discussion of the *petitio principii*.

2.3 Representing Knowledge and Truth

Stewart Hall honed his ideas around representation, truth and knowledge as a member and director of The Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies at the University of Birmingham (CCCS)[15]. Hall wrote about hegemony, race and language use as they operate within frameworks of power, and political institutions. He analysed the production and consumption of culture, which he saw as the crucial ground of social activity. The 1960s in general saw the rise of cultural studies and the following decade saw feminist ideas entering the academy, at the same time as continental discourses around structuralism and, later, post-structuralism began to influence British critical thinking. Within culture, power relations would be established but also unsettled at the level of ordinary citizens. The theoretical framework and methodology of this interdisciplinary thesis falls broadly within the field of cultural studies, and the unsettling of power relations relates closely to the critique of protectionism in this thesis, which relies on upholding power relations and essentialist ideas about innocence, gender, taste and propriety.

Hall followed Foucault's theory of power. Power often appears as something that is dictated from the top downwards - from a monarchy, from the state, the ruling class and so on. However, as discussed above, Foucault (1980: 98) conceived of it as coming from multiple sites (Hall, 1997: 50). The power of which Foucault wrote, Hall sees as being upheld by a “punishment system”, that produces “books, treatises, regulations, new strategies of control and

[15] The subjects studied at The Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies at the University of Birmingham (CCCS), founded in 1964 by Richard Hoggart, included subculture, popular culture and media studies, and theorists associated with CCCS approached the study of culture from an interdisciplinary perspective incorporating diverse elements, such as post-structuralism, critical race theory and feminism, amongst others, drawing on traditional methodologies found in sociology. These aimed to radically question and challenge traditional ideas and practices of truth and knowledge.

resistance, debates in Parliament, conversations, confessions, legal briefs and appeals, training regimes for prison officers, and so on" (Hall, 1997: 50), as in the protectionist anti-sexualisation texts that are the subject of this thesis. Consequently, the analytical chapters 5-10 not only examine sexualisation in protectionist texts, but also the power these texts have in shaping ideas around sexualisation in general.

Furthermore, in efforts to control something like sexuality, or in the case of this thesis, sexualisation, an "explosion of discourse" is produced (Hall, 1997: 50). Hall lists media ranging from radio to sermons, from novels to counselling advice (Hall, 1997: 50) and notes that Foucault (1975: 27) does not deny positions of power, but rather highlights localised mechanisms which reproduce this power (Hall, 1997: 50). Hall notes that Foucault sees the body as central to how techniques of regulation are applied. This will be revisited in Chapter 4, particularly in relation to the ways Mary Douglas and Danielle Egan draw parallels between Foucault's theory and displacing wider cultural anxieties on girls' bodies through sanctioning their clothing.

Hall (1973) emphasized an exchange of cultural texts originating in theories of encoding/decoding as in 'reception theory', originally articulated by theorists, such as Theodor Adorno of the Frankfurt School. Hall became one of the main exponents of reception theory, emphasizing a reader's interpretation as they make meaning from language. Within the discourse of reception theory, the audience, reader or viewer does not just passively accept what is communicated but interprets the meanings of cultural texts based on their lived experiences and cultural background. The experience is time and place contingent. Essentially, the meaning of a text is created within the relationship between the text and the reader and is not inherent within the text itself. It becomes a social process, a 'cultural negotiation' (Gledhill, 1988) that is embedded in existing power formations (Hall, 1973). This is important in this thesis, and the protectionist discourses examined, as it aims to interrogate ideas upheld as inherent. The element of power formations will be specifically addressed within the examination of class and protectionism in Chapter 8.

Feminist media studies scholar Liesbet van Zoonen stresses the importance of Hall's articulations of encoding/decoding. She writes about media

as an important social technology of gender which accommodates, modifies, reconstructs and produces cultural outlooks of sexual difference (van Zoonen, 1994: 41). These discursive negotiations apply to all instances of mass communication as articulated by Hall (van Zoonen, 1994: 41). Importantly for this thesis, this does not only mean that the production of anti-sexualisation literature spans across various media forms but, because of Hall's model of encoding/decoding, the reception by readers is important in upholding ideas of the harms of sexualisation, and of childhood innocence and the specific protectionist practices in safeguarding it. These media, and their influence that van Zoonen talks about, take on many forms. Even though the idea of polysemy expects that the audience produces meaning, as opposed to being simply confronted by it, this is not exactly the case. Most texts will offer a "preferred reading or meaning" (Hall et al., 1980: 135). Because of the media's "economic and ideological location", this tends to reconstruct dominant values, exactly like the cyclical model of Foucauldian discourse (Hall et al., 1980: 135).

Hall's edited work *Representation* (1997), draws on Foucault's theories of discourse, discussed above, and on Saussure (1916) and Derrida's (1967) ideas of constructionism and logocentrism. Writing an analysis of Foucault's work, Hall investigates how representation through language is central to processes by which meaning is produced (Hall et al., 2013: xvii). Although this was originally published in 1997, Hall updated his text in 2013, building on his ideas of representation. In order to be able to 'make sense' of cultural texts, culture depends on its subjects being able to interpret things meaningfully in a similar manner (Hall et al., 2013: xix). Representation works through discourse, which is sustained through the "presence of shared cultural codes" (Hall et al., 2013: xxvi). Meaning, which cannot be stabilised, should not be thought of in terms of 'accuracy' or 'truth', but more in terms of "effective exchange", states Hall (Hall et al., 2013: xxvi). The discourse on representation recognises that difference persists between different people that communicate within the same culture (Hall et al., 2013: xxvi).

If meaning is not fixed, or inherent *in* things, but rather the result of social, cultural and linguistic conventions, it can never be fixed onto the material world (Hall, 1997: 23-4). Hall stresses the fact that "it is not the material world

which conveys meaning", but language and a symbolic visual system that we use to represent concepts (1997: 25). The people, the "social actors" use the "representational systems" to construct meaning and to communicate meaningfully about the world around them. This means that representation, and hence also understanding, is time and place specific. Meaning can thus never be "finally fixed" and is always subject to change (Hall, 1997: 32). In relation to this thesis, this does not deny the biological differences between sexes, or the physical vulnerability of children; it does however open the protectionist primary sources - which base their arguments on essential ideas about the innocence of children - up for scrutiny.

Hall states that it is through language and social interaction that children become not merely biological individuals, but "cultural subjects" (Hall, 1997: 22). They learn systems and conventions of representation, which enable them to operate as "culturally competent persons" (22). Importantly, Hall stresses, this is not because "knowledge is imprinted on their genes", but because they learn cultural conventions, becoming eloquent members of their culture (1997: 22). This is important in relation to this thesis, which examines the ways in which the 'innocence' of girls is articulated and defended in protectionist texts, as will specifically be addressed in Chapter 9. Contemporary patterns of cultural disapproval of sexualised clothing are founded in discourses that have been cultivated over centuries of thought and agreed practice, and their manifestation is examined in the anti-sexualisation texts with which this thesis is concerned.

If, as demonstrated above, meaning, representation and interpretation are not fixed, *who* is qualified to speak on subjects, becomes important. Throughout history the dominant classes have had more power to speak about certain subjects than other classes (Hall, 1997: 41). Just as discourse here "rules in" certain people as authorities on a subject, it "limits and restricts" any other way of conducting oneself or producing knowledge on the subject (Hall, 1997: 44). This explains how any approach to sexualisation other than a protectionist one may be seen not only as controversial, but potentially dangerous. This will be examined in Chapter 6 through the idea of the causal link and the idea of the *petitio principii* - discussed in the previous Chapter - whereby both rely on essentialist and 'common sense' discourses in

sexualisation.

Following Foucault, theorising on the evidence of a “universal truth” (1967: 57) which relies on experiences being essential, healthy, or unhealthy, alternative interpretations of sexualisation do not just question people's personal 'truths’ but may also destabilise the entire status quo by interrogating essentialism. The constructionist approach, which Foucault (1967: 57) addressed, relies on the idea that discourse, not 'things' in themselves, produce knowledge. This allows us to understand the concept of the 'sexualised girl', as she is specific to a particular “discursive regime” and period, as discussed by Hall (1997: 56). The 'sexualised girl', for example, could not have existed in a time and place that did not construct children as sexually innocent, as her sexualised representation would not have been seen as controversial or even dangerous, as will be outlined in Chapter 4. The 'sexualised girl' could also not exist in a time and place without patriarchal heteronormativity, that on the one hand may demand sexualised displays from women, while on the other also shame them for it. These ideas will be developed in Chapter 7 under the concept of 'double pressure'.

2.4 Social Construction of Sex and Gender

Judith Butler's corpus of work on gender highlights the importance on the development of thought around the position and rights of women, feminism itself, the rights of the non-heteronormative sexual community, and sexism in general. In her[16] body of work Butler examines and establishes performativity (1986), criticises the feminist project for being exclusionary (1990) and challenges the idea of gender as natural, essential, and biologically bound (1993). I will address her work thematically rather than chronologically, for clarity of my argument, but also because they are topics she comes back to and

[16] In 2020 Butler stated in an interview with the New Statesman (Ferber, 2020), that they use both she/they pronouns, but prefer the latter. As the bulk of this thesis was written before this date, I refer to them as she throughout; however, I want to acknowledge that were the research conducted today, the thesis would reflect the authors current, preferred pronoun.

builds upon, clarifying her argument as she develops it.

Butler's main theoretical task in *Bodies That Matter* (1993) was to undo essentialist ideas around gender, which she begins with her theory of the social construction of sex. According to Butler, even though sex is biological, the biological traits we count as denoting sex are culturally constructed, therefore making what we call 'biological sex' also a social construct. Or, as she articulates it, “the very boundary which is meant to protect some part of sex from the taint of constructivism is now defined by the anti-constructivist's own construction” (Butler, 1993: 10).

Building on the ideal proposition of the social construct of sex, she moves onto the performative nature of gender, suggesting that 'sex' does not denote gender, but is instead a “cultural norm which governs the materiality of bodies” (Butler, 1993: 3). Butler derived the theory of performativity from British philosopher J.L. Austin, whose ideas were further developed by Derrida in the middle of the 20th century. The theory of performativity, as discussed by Butler, begins by questioning the link between sex and the social performance of gender. Sex, for Butler, becomes a “regulatory ideal”, which is “forcibly materialised through time” (Butler, 1993: 1). In other words, the bodily materiality of sex is not normative, but becomes so through actions of repetitive restatement, in essence Foucauldian discourse (Butler, 1993: 2). Performativity, then, functions to state and reinstate the gender norms that have been attached to the sexes. Butler stresses, that unlike ‘performance’, which could be seen as a voluntary act, or one that is performed at a singular event, performativity is a continual practice where discourse ends up producing the very nature that it designates (Butler, 1993: 2). 'Being' a sex can inspire a performance, but performativity in fact produces the 'being'. Gender is therefore not as simple as performance, but gender comes into being through performativity. Performativity then works in a cyclical manner, where sex does not come to denote the gender of a subject, but instead gender forms through the “process of assuming sex” (Butler, 1993: 3). This cycle is socially reproduced, so that gender and sex become forcefully linked and the mechanism of gendering becomes hidden under a process that appears 'natural' and 'normal'.

Performativity does not deny agency from its subjects; however, it

recognises that “the subject who would resist such norms is itself enabled, if not produced, by such norms” (Butler, 1993: 15). The agency of performativity becomes important when considering the sexualisation of girls and the discourses around this. The theory of performativity questions our understanding of what a 'girl' is and provides the tools to interrogate the sexualised, gendered performances discussed in this thesis; but more importantly it lays the foundations for critiquing the essentialist arguments that the protectionist discourses rely on. This is discussed further in Chapter 4, which considers the social construction of childhood innocence and in Chapter 5, which examines how protectionists reproduce ideas of childhood innocence as essential.

Butler had previously begun to address notions of the performativity of gender in her 1986 article *Sex and Gender in Simone de Beauvoir's Second Sex* (1986) where she discusses de Beauvoir’s proposition “One is not born, but rather becomes a woman” (1973: 301). When Butler addresses de Beauvoir's theory of *becoming* a woman, she interprets it as a Sartrean 'project' that relies on acquiring a skill to be able to embody a specific “corporeal style and significance”, which also leaves it with a “voluntaristic” aspect (Butler, 1986: 36). However, it is not a choice in the traditional sense, but 'choosing' a gender “is understood as the embodiment of possibilities within a network of deeply entrenched cultural norms” i.e., performativity (Butler, 1986: 36). The arguments that Butler articulates here are central to a long-standing feminist effort to “debunk the claim that anatomy is destiny” (Butler, 1986: 35). In this essay Butler credits de Beauvoir with the speculative theory that if a female body can culturally lead one to become a 'woman', it is possible for it to lead to any other constructed gender. Being female, and being a 'woman', Butler and de Beauvoir argue, are two very different things. Importantly to the protectionist discussion in this thesis, Butler reminds us that the condition of being female is a corporeal one, whereas being a 'woman' encompasses “a variety of modes through which those facts acquire cultural meaning” (Butler, 1986: 36), an observation that is deeply relevant to the surveillance and regulation of dress considered here. Gender, specifically the female gender as centralised in de Beauvoir's discourse, thus becomes a fluctuating cultural interpretation of one's sex and

hence lacks constancy. This is useful for this thesis' framing of the discussion of the three types of text on sexualisation, because it demonstrates the need for interrogating the essentialist ideas upon which protectionists rely in their anti-sexualisation discourse. It stresses the need for contextualising sexualised dress within its 'cultural meaning', rather than seeing it as inherently harmful. Butler continuing the work of de Beauvoir is also an apt illustration of the need for continuous feminist engagement with investigating and challenging essentialism around gender and dress, to which this thesis contributes.

De Beauvoir's theory of gender as a ceaseless project draws from Jean Paul Sartre's concept of “pre-reflective choice”, which is an implicit and instinctive act which he terms “quasi knowledge” (Butler, 1986: 40). Butler interprets this as a not entirely conscious choice, but one “that we make and only later realise we have made” (Butler, 1986: 40). Therefore, gender norms are upheld by individuals through acts that disguise themselves. Butler sees this as an oppressive machinery that is perpetuated through individual participation on a large scale. If this large-scale participation is nothing more than a “thoroughly cultural affair”, then gender is not dictated by anatomy, and “does not seem to pose any necessary limits to the possibilities of gender” (Butler, 1986: 45). In other words, as gender is entirely constructed, it can be reconstructed in any different way. I will return to the idea of upholding norms through acts that disguise themselves in Chapter 10 where shame as a hidden control mechanism within protectionist rhetoric is examined.

Butler uses the works of both Foucault and French feminist theorist Monique Wittig, who coined the notion 'heterosexual contract' (Wittig, 1992), in her discourses about overcoming socially enforced gender roles, to show how de Beauvoir's work has been continued. Wittig challenged notions of sex as a natural attribute, focusing on exposing the ways in which politics were able to use biological discrimination when gender systems were established as operating on a binary (Wittig, 1981). Butler notes that when 'sex' is demarcated as biological sex, certain norms of differentiation are constructed. Furthermore, there is always already a political agenda present in what fuels the demarcation. This is important for this thesis, as it considers the different ways in which harm through sexualisation is discussed in protectionist literature with regard to boys

and girls. Butler proposes that Foucault and Wittig, in questioning the restrictive gender binary, discharge gender from sex in ways that might have been completely unimaginable to de Beauvoir, “and yet, her view of the body as 'situation' certainly lays the groundwork for such theories” (Butler, 1986: 45). These ideas are important here as they lay the foundation for questioning ideas of clothing as gendered or sexualised. Protectionist notions of the essential harm of sexualised clothing can be challenged, as will be done in Chapter 6, as the constructed structures of gender are disassembled.

In *Gender Trouble* (1990), Butler moves on from establishing gender as constructed and questions whether 'women' have enough in common as 'women' to constitute a feminist subject. Butler proposes that women do not produce feminism, but feminism, in fact, through its 'exclusionary aims' produces a category and subjectivity called ‘woman’ (Butler, 1990: 2). Furthermore, the 'presumed universality' of 'woman', the subject of feminism, is being undermined by its very self; that 'woman' becomes limited by feminism. This, however, is not to say that representational politics should be given up, because there is no current alternative (Butler, 1990: 5), but that fighting the patriarchy in this manner uncritically mimics its own strategy, “instead of offering a different set of terms” (Butler, 1990: 13). Angela McRobbie, reiterating Butler's discourse, suggests that this would also open the possibilities for a “radical critique” that would be able to operate and have an effect “right across the field of everyday life” (McRobbie, 2005: 69). I will return to McRobbie's contextualisation of dress and feminism in the next Chapter but note here that Butler and McRobbie's elaborations are central in helping to formulate a 'radical critique' in this thesis. Throughout the analysis I will argue that instead of looking at sexualisation from a traditionally patriarchal and heteronormative point of view, which objectifies girls through the male gaze - which in turn divides girls into innocent and deserving of protection, and sexualised and contaminating of others' innocence - girls' wants, needs and welfare should be brought to the forefront regardless of patriarchal norms.

Chapter 3

Dress and Feminism

3.1 Introduction

Susan Kaiser notes that both cultural studies and fashion studies developed in the latter half of the twentieth century, though the roots of both disciplines go much further back. What they have in common is the blending of various humanities and social sciences disciplines including art, art history, history, literature, sociology and anthropology and their related interdisciplinary fields, such as gender studies (Kaiser, 2012: 8). I would thus like to link this chapter to the previous one, which discussed the importance of this interdisciplinarity in fighting hegemonic ideas. The second-wave feminist movement of the 1960s and 1970s explored the complicated ways in which gender relations interplayed with "vectors of power" such as class, 'race' and so on (Kaiser, 2012: 11). This interplay of power relations is key to cultural studies, argues Kaiser, and these "subject positions organise identities, social relations, and the objects and images that culture produces" (2012: 11). This is relevant to this thesis which explores the intersection of childhood and femininity, dress and ideas of 'decency'. This chapter will specifically analyse feminist movements and dress in relation to ideas around class, neoliberalism, consumption and agency. All of these themes repeatedly occur in the sources used and influence their treatment of girls' sexualised dress.

This chapter will begin with an exploration of historical attitudes towards women, the body and dress. It will then move onto the relationship between fashion theory and middle-class second-wave feminism. This opens the discussion of the contested relationship of the second wave to dress, which

may well have informed the protectionist stance against sexualised attire. It continues by exploring the many forms of so-called third-wave feminism, its reaction to the second wave, and in turn the second-wave critique of it. This will lead onto an analysis of how neoliberalism and consumption influence ideas around agency and how these influence 'choices' in dress. This chapter will close by looking at anti-feminism and its backlash and how these are reflected in the way protectionists examine the sexualisation of girls' dress.

3.2 Dress, Second-wave Feminism and Middle-class Identity

“Fashion and dress have a complex relationship to identity”, Entwistle reminds us (2000: 112). “On the one hand the clothes we... wear can be expressive of identity” (Entwistle, 2000: 112) communicating our gender, our class and many more aspects. However, on the other hand, our dress cannot always be read, since it does not speak, and is therefore open to misinterpretation (Entwistle, 2000: 112). Historically there have been two different traditions of writing concerning fashion and dress. Anthropologists like Barnes and Eicher (1992), Polhemus and Procter (1978) and Cordwell and Schwarz (1979) have focused on 'dress' and 'adornment', while theorists in the fields of cultural studies and sociology have concerned themselves with ‘fashion’, beginning with Veblen ([1899] 2007), Simmel (1904) and Flugel (1930), and continuing with more modern fashion theorists such as Lurie (1981) and Wilson (1985). It is now widely accepted by dress and fashion scholars that all cultures dress the body and that this is intimately connected to the act of building and communicating identity (Entwistle, 2000: 42-3). Roach and Eicher see dress as the process of covering the body, as a supplement to an assemblage of modifications to the body (1965:1); while Elizabeth Wilson sees dress further as marking the boundary of the “self and the not-self” (1985: 3). Entwistle articulates dress as “part of the micro-order of social interaction and intimately connected to our

(rather fragile) sense of self" (2001: 48). Dress, as discussed in the introduction, is therefore not only a universal term applied by theorists to clothing and other adornment that is placed on the body, but one of the cornerstones that builds and communicates individual and group identities in society. Equally, referring to the analysis in the introduction, it becomes clear that sexualised dress is not an absolute, but rather a subjective interpretation tied to the person who is dressed, the person interpreting the look and the time and place where this happens.

When first encountering a stranger, their person still appears inaccessible; decoding their style of dress and appearance, in absence of other means, is a way of obtaining information about their identity. In *Adorned in Dreams*, Wilson (1985) linked this specifically to the anonymous nature of city living where judgements of fellow citizens had to be made in passing. Sociologists like Agnes Rocamora extend this idea to the internet age, within which the debates around sexualised dress also take place, where globalisation and anonymity exacerbate a culture of snap decision judgments based on visual appearances (Rocamora, 2002). Importantly, dress here becomes symbolic of the individual's morality and status, whether this is actual or contrived (Finkelstein, 1991: 128).

In *The Masque of Femininity* (1995), Efrat Tseëlon addressed historical ideas around dress and morality by examining how religious myths have influenced attitudes towards women's bodies and dress in the West. In the Judeo-Christian writings the woman "is portrayed as disguising behind false decoration, using her beauty and finery as a vehicle to dazzle men to their destruction" (Tseëlon 1995: 12). Eve, Lilith, Pandora and the Virgin Mary are well-known examples of archetypal women who carry an opposing image of 'right' or wrongful sexual behaviour, so to speak, that of the virgin or the whore. In the Bible, Eve – rather than Adam- was blamed for not withstanding temptation and hence causing the fall from Eden (the 'original sin'), so "as a descendant of Eve, woman was perceived to be more susceptible to temptation of the flesh and could also use her body to tempt men from the path of God" (Entwistle 2000: 148). A fear of the female body as the origin and location of desires and temptation was at the very core of this attitude towards women, and

the body had to be renounced for the sake of the soul. Although a sense of modest dress was required of women, one could say that *all* dress became problematic, as all dress touches the body. “A discourse of modesty and chastity in dress came to encode female sexuality. As a symbol of seduction and sin, the woman was redeemed in chastity and pardoned in modesty” (Tseëlon, 1995: 12). As the unadorned body became a source of shame after the fall from Eden, and as the fall from Eden is blamed on woman, “the links between sin, the body, woman and clothes are easily forged” (Tseëlon 1995:14). The ancient themes that Tseëlon examines can also be found in modern protectionist analyses of sexualised dress. Arguments over modesty, propriety and girls' role in maintaining these in the face of the opposite sex will be examined throughout this thesis, as will the Madonna-whore dichotomy where girls are divided into ‘sexualised’ or ‘non-sexualised’ without more complexity. The idea of all dress carrying the possibility for sexualised interpretation will specifically be interrogated in Chapter 7.

Centuries after biblical attitudes towards women's bodies were articulated, in his 1762 text *Emile*, Jean-Jacques Rousseau contended that “the whole education of women ought to be relative to men. To please them, to be useful to them, to make themselves loved and honoured by them” ([1762] 1909: 263). Infuriated by this argument, Mary Wollstonecraft argued that girls are "taught from their infancy that beauty is woman's sceptre, the mind shapes itself to the body, and, roaming round its gilt cage, only seeks to adorn its prison" ([1792] 2001: 38). Wollstonecraft was one of the first figures to openly champion women's rights. With her seminal work *The Vindication of the Rights of the Woman* (1792), she communicated her ideas around constructed gender, which would be echoed and developed in the 20th century by scholars such as Joan Riviere (1929), Simone de Beauvoir (1949) and Judith Butler (1990). While Wollstonecraft addressed beauty rather than dress, her ideas were important in laying the groundwork for particular discourses around women's dressed appearance and how their constrictive dress constructs women as people who cannot function properly. These were later echoed by feminist writers such as Germaine Greer (1970) who likened the woman with an interest in fashion to a eunuch. Such ideas will be addressed in protectionist discourses where

sexualised dress is paired not only with ideas of impropriety but also impracticality in Chapter 9.

Riviere wrote from a psycho-analytic position about “Womanliness as Masquerade” (1929). Her work was later discovered by feminists, and it is easy to link her ideas of ‘the masquerade’ with the biblical woman who disguises “behind false decoration” (Tseëlon, 1995: 12). Riviere outlined some of the early articulations of gender as performance, woman's submissive position within this, and dress as the vehicle through which all this could be upheld. Riviere theorised that the “intellectual” female patients whom she observed in her professional environment performed a “feminine masquerade” in order not to intimidate their male counterparts (1929: 303, 310). Ultimately however, Riviere saw all display of “womanliness” as a disguise and refused to enunciate a difference between “genuine womanliness” and the “masquerade” (1929, 38). This again links with Butler's (1990) articulations of performativity, but also with some second-wave feminists' ideas of femininity as 'unnatural'. These ideas are useful in this thesis in two ways. Firstly, Riviere links together feminine display and a kind of weakness that can be seen as unthreatening to men. I will examine protectionist articulations of feminine or sexualised dress as something that renders girls as impossible to take seriously in Chapter 8. Secondly, the idea that the “masquerade” or performance of femininity is 'unnatural' or 'put on' resonates throughout protectionist articulations. Just as femininity is proposed to be 'put on' or 'unnatural', scholars of masculinity such as Kimmel (1997) and Connell et al. (2005) argue the same of masculinity. The performance of gender is discussed across genders.

Two decades after Riviere, de Beauvoir touched on the topic of fashion in *The Second Sex* (1949). She wrote during the period of post-war rationing, which was also a time of recovery, allowing for more ostentatious looks, like Dior's New Look, to appear. Pamela Church Gibson notes that it was this confrontation of disapproval and fascination that drove de Beauvoir's thoughts on “the woman of fashion” (Church Gibson, 2012: 199). De Beauvoir's own relationship with dress in her writing is equally as sophisticated. While she speaks of women who adorn themselves as “erotic objects” (1949: 543) pandering to the male gaze - “for man she becomes flower and gem” - she

acknowledges the pleasure to be found in adornment "...and for herself also" (544). She does, however, make her position quite clear by stating that the elegant high-class fashions of bourgeois women are "narcissistic" (543) and will "thwart" women's projects for equality (543), linking it clearly to a patriarchal disposition and woman as trophy, as described in the writings of Thorstein Veblen ([1899] 2007) and Georg Simmel (1904). More subversive modes of dress she condemns to "asylums for the insane" (de Beauvoir 1949: 545). De Beauvoir furthermore likened the "woman of fashion" to high-class prostitutes (578) and again drew parallels between the consumption of fashion and sexual promiscuity. This is important in this thesis, as there is an overarching theme throughout the analytical chapters where protectionism builds a causal link between sexualised dress and hypersexual actions. Church Gibson, however, opens a conversation about de Beauvoir's own immaculate style of dress (Church Gibson, 2012: 199), while Wilson questions whether de Beauvoir's antipathy towards the new trends was because of her antipathy towards fashion and adornment, or because of its reinstallation of a class system after ostensibly democratic war years (1985: 100). I would like to point forward here towards later discussions of second-wave feminism and the complex and idiosyncratic relationship of the middle classes to this movement in Chapter 9.

Betty Friedan's 1963 seminal book *The Feminine Mystique* is often credited as sparking the second-wave movement in America and it addressed women's hidden discontent with their domestic role, something Friedan dubbed the "woman problem" ([1963] 2010: 8). Around the beginning of the second-wave movement the ideal for the American woman was that of a glamorous, well-dressed housewife, an image of feminity that encapsulates Friedan's critical subject (Friedan, [1963] 2010: 8). Along with Friedan, also notable in the fight against the male-centric world views and practices in the second-wave era were American journalists Susan Brownmiller and Gloria Steinem, and Australian writer and public intellectual Germaine Greer. While their work against sexual violence (Brownmiller, 1975), for equal employment and pay, for addressing racial inequality (Steinem, 1971 onwards) and challenging ideas of how men expected women to look and act (Greer, 1970), were invaluable, Brownmiller and Greer also received a great deal of criticism from the younger

generation of feminists, especially for their discourses around dress.

Greer set the tone for radical feminism of the 1970s with *The Female Eunuch* (1970), but her work can also be seen as central in fanning the flames "to the wrangles and disagreements around dress and self-representation" (Church Gibson, 2013: 350). While she can be seen as a central feminist figure in defining the anti-fashion rhetoric, it is especially her conflation of high fashion with dress that appears to ruffle feathers among feminist fashion scholars. Church Gibson writes in her critique of Greer's listing of sexualised fashion items, such as high heels, nail varnish or jewellery, "They are of course an integral part of the accoutrements of sexualised self-presentation– which is not to be confused with fashionability" (Church Gibson, 2013: 350). Church Gibson criticises the misleading theory that all interest in fashion equates to interest in sexualised dress, or indeed in sexual conduct itself. This is central to protectionist debates around girls' sexualised dress and will be further examined in Chapter 7 and 8. It will specifically address the misunderstanding whereby girls' interest in dress is often misconstrued as an interest in sex.

Wilson (1985) opened up fashion theory as a subject and began to close the divisive gap between feminism and fashion. In a similar manner to how Friedan and the other scholars cited drew attention to the way in which women were living in America at the time and subjected it to intellectual discussion, Wilson made dress a central, acceptable, academic debate. She argued against cultural critics who had neglected fashion in their studies of the postmodern ambiguity and democracy in cultural studies (Wilson, 1990). She called for a move that would depart from what she considered to be a "simple, moralistic rejection of fashion" (Wilson, 1992: 14-5) that has represented much of left-wing, radical thought and action. Instead, as a left-wing feminist and lesbian activist, she encouraged a discourse of fashion as a "cultural phenomenon" (Wilson, 1985: 10). Wilson stresses that second-wave feminists did indeed ask some pertinent questions about fashion; however, they did so with a clear bias, as they saw their own way of dressing as freely chosen and rationally superior to that of 'fashion victims' (Wilson, 1985: 242). This is central to the anti-sexualisation debates in this thesis, where protectionists examine their own taste in dress as 'natural' or freely chosen, while sexualised dress is seen as

'unnatural', 'deviant' and a result of negative influence. Protectionist debates around class and taste will be discussed in Chapter 8, and second wave feminist links around social class will be interrogated below.

In *Women and Fashion* (1989) Caroline Evans and Minna Thornton embrace Wilson's legacy and write about dress from a feminist point of view. They note that the first large-scale Women's Liberation Movement demonstration took place in Atlantic City in 1968 in a protest criticising the Miss America beauty pageant. This was also the site and the moment where the burning of bras (whether real or not) became the irremovable symbol of the movement. The feminists saw their reaction and refusal of fashion as a counter-attack against the stereotype of the female body as sexual object (Evans & Thornton, 1989: 3). At the beginning of the women's liberation movement, many feminists condemned the entire package of fashion. Feminist liberation meant breaking out of a “straitjacket of controlled femininity” (Evans & Thornton, 1989: 3). Fashion and cosmetics were seen as trivialities which functioned on a practical and ideological level in constructing a sense of “false femininity” (Evans & Thornton, 1989: 3). Femininity was seen as a construct which women were being forced to adopt and to dress up in. Becoming liberated and able to search for one’s authentic self meant taking femininity off, “getting out of it” (Evans & Thornton, 1989: 1).

The 'getting out of' a particular feminine aesthetic by second-wave feminists was closely tied to a middle-class identity. Second-wave feminism was historically accused of being protectionist, with middle-class women telling working-class women and women of colour what to do (hooks, 1984). This thesis will address class distinction in more depth in Chapter 8. Here, I would, however, like to build a discourse that links together women, dress, social class and taste in the context of feminist movements and the protectionists whose discourse of dress marks the anti-sexualisation debates. I would like to situate this thesis within an understanding of a predominantly hegemonic middle-class or class-influenced discourse around sexualisation and the appropriateness of particular behaviours. Fashion theorists (Crane, 2000; Entwistle 2000; Wilson, 1985) widely recognise the work of Simmel (1904) and Veblen ([1899] 2007) and later Bourdieu ([1979] 2010) as the early analyses on the place of fashion

and dress within class identities. Writing in and about the nineteenth century, Veblen regarded fashion as a tool for women to communicate the wealth, status, respectability and social identity of their husbands and fathers, as it afforded an indication of the pecuniary standing at first glance (Veblen, [1899] 1994: 103). In the middle of the twentieth century, Bourdieu argued that the middle-class was “haunted” by keeping up appearances and the judgements others would make of them ([1979] 2010: 253). Katherine Appleford agrees that the middle classes were markedly preoccupied with class distinction, social demarcation and difference as they strove to embody being of “sound character” and “reasonable competence” (2016: 170). Being unsuccessful in aspiring to middle-class norms could establish people as deviant and morally corrupt. This links closely to Foucault's (1978) articulations of deviancy explored in the previous chapter. Working-class conduct was viewed as “inappropriate and read as representative of a poor moral character” (Appleford, 2016: 170).

Appleford suggests that while sociologists such as Stephanie Lawler (2005), Beverly Skeggs (1997) or Vivian Burr (2003) do not specifically discuss the consumption of everyday dress, they do stress that there are notable class differences in the way women practice and consume dress and that fashion is very much concerned with class identity (Appleford, 2013). Skeggs writes about class discrimination from a cultural studies perspective, paying attention to how clothing affiliates middle-class women with each other. She stresses how the working-classes, irrespectively of race or ethnicity, have been vilified as pathological, threatening and behaving in a disrespectful manner (Skeggs, 1997). The separation between working class and middle-class becomes particularly central here as middle-class women establish working-class women as the “other” in relation to which they themselves appear “normal, appropriate and respectable” (Appleford, 2013: 123). In Chapter 9 I will analyse similar tendencies in the anti-sexualisation discourses where protectionists speak of other parents as in need of guidance, while awarding themselves a position of authority.

Wilson related feminist style to wider social structures and their link to the middle-classes and ideas of taste. She linked it directly with the style worn by intellectuals and “white-collar workers” of a certain status, thus bringing it back

directly to a middle-class aesthetic (Wilson 1985: 242). While Appleford was writing in 2013, decades after the second-wave movement, parallels can be drawn between the middle-class women of that period and the historical practices of second-wave feminism. I would also like to highlight that the protectionist writers analysed later in the thesis were writing at this time, in the middle 2010s. The “neutral colours and natural fabrics” which Appleford (2013: 126) described as being worn by middle-class women at her time of writing - in contrast to the “trend-led and conspicuous items” (2013: 126) worn by working-class women at that time, establish middle-class women as rational, sensible and functional, not just in dress, but in their contribution to society in general. This debate continues in sexualisation discourses where protectionist writers often emphasise an argument about the conspicuousness and impracticality of sexualised girls' dress. This often takes on a class-influenced dimension, where middle-class styles are framed as tasteful in comparison to 'other' more crass or 'skanky' (Oppliger, 2008) styles of dress. This will be further explored in Chapter 9.

Scholars have examined debates on the irrationality of dress (Blumer, 1995: 379; Bourdieu ([1979] 2010): 53) and Wilson (1985) argue that later nineteenth-century feminism was marked by its utilitarianism, justifying their clothing choices through function. This was a hangover from the Romantic era which advocated that nature was preferable (if not superior in ways) to the artifice of culture. This idea can also be seen in the next chapter where the natural character of childhood is harnessed, so romanticising it. A recurring theme within anti-sexualisation debates is the idea of function in dress. This will be examined in more detail in Chapter 9, but it is worth noting here that the overarching argument by protectionists is that sexualising dress is not only inappropriate, but also dysfunctional. This helps in steering anti-sexualisation away from a moralistic debate and into the realm of practicality -but also determinism, the idea that things are 'naturally' a certain way. I will also return to these ideas in the next chapter as Romanticism also heavily influenced child rearing, particularly in relation to how the 'natural' was consistently evoked when speaking about the wants and needs of children.

Wilson quotes philosopher Janet Radcliffe Richards, who examined

feminist attitudes to dress and proposed that underlying the feminist contempt for fashion and cosmetics is a confusion about “the natural person being the real thing” (cited in Wilson, 1985: 234). Wilson uses her ideas in the class context of the second-wave's functional and 'natural' dress choices and articulates it as women finding their true selves in nature (Wilson, 1985: 231). Radcliffe Richards sees this as a conservative feminist view, where “trying to make the most of oneself” becomes reinterpreted as giving a false impression, as being deceitful (cited in Wilson, 1985: 234). This links again with biblical, moralising ideas of women “disguising behind false decoration” (Tseëlon, 1995: 12) in an attempt at seduction, as discussed earlier. Wilson states that “human beings, however, are not natural. They do not live primarily by instinct. They live in socially constructed cultures” (1985: 234), adding that “dress is never primarily functional, and... it is certainly not natural... It is an art form and a symbolic social system” (Wilson, 1985: 244-45). Wilson concludes her analysis of the discourse on fashion and functionality by reminding us that “fashion is a branch of aesthetics, of the art of modern society. It is also a mass pastime, a form of group entertainment, of popular culture” (1985: 60). To forcefully link it to function misunderstands it profoundly and misconstrues its nature (Wilson, 1985: 60).

French philosopher Luce Irigaray also stresses the political force behind fashion as a cultural phenomenon. Her argument is that women's “economic, social, moral, sexual” values, cannot be seen as authentic, since the world within which they are shaped and practiced is constructed by men (Irigaray, 1985: 165). Brownmiller, who can be seen as extremist and operating on the fringes of the feminist project, emphasised the difference between ‘feminine’ and feminist women. She focused repeatedly on the idea that men's clothing is functional whereas women's clothing is “bad”, “frivolous” and “indulgent” because “the nature of feminine dressing is superficial in essence” (Brownmiller, 1984: 56). Film scholar Stella Bruzzi counters that these views rest on the “dangerous extrapolation” by Brownmiller, that emphasizing femininity in fashion is done because it corresponds with a male, rather than a female fantasy (Bruzzi, 1997: 121). Carolyn Beckingham discussed this in the context of feminine dress and women's ability to make authentic fashion choices.

> If anyone accuses us of only saying this because male chauvinists think we should, we can always ask how she knows she isn't saying the opposite because they think she shouldn't, and how she knows a desire to wear jeans all the time is any more authentic than a desire to wear something else.
>
> (Beckingham, 2005: 107)

Church Gibson suggests a new mode of looking at dress, using the theories of feminists such as Irigaray, Braidotti and Le Doeuff, who might perhaps be assumed to present dress on its own terms, as a feminine realm, rejected by masculine tradition (Church Gibson, 2013: 355). This is relevant in finding alternatives to the protectionist debate which still discusses dress from a male-gaze perspective.

3.3 Dress and Third-wave Feminism

When third-wave feminism emerged in the 1990s its aim was to incorporate a wider ethnic, cultural, religious and national variety of women and to redefine feminism as a global concern. It was a reaction to the second wave movement that was criticised for failing to include many feminists, such as those from ethnic minorities, working class backgrounds and lesbian women, but also those who wished to dress in a more feminine manner. The political aspirations and achievements of third-wave feminism were not as unequivocally defined as previous ‘waves’. The third wave did not primarily engage with dress; however, discussions were often hijacked by that subject.

Due to the multidimensional nature of the third wave, incorporating wider participation but also new methods of resistance, it is not always awarded the same credibility as a political movement. This led Ednie Kaeh Garrison to ask “who determines, and to what ends, the forms of political participation that matter?” (2007: 190). This is important in this thesis, not because sexualised dress in girls could be seen as political participation, but because the right to

dress in a feminine or sexualised manner should, according to third-wave feminists, not detract from a person being taken seriously. Also, the interrogation of protectionist critique as a feminist project to keep girls safe becomes an important aspect of the third-wave agenda.

The third wave of feminism was not like the resistance of the 1960s and 1970s, which was a concern for many second-wave feminists, including Angela McRobbie, who wrote specifically about girls. The third wave harnessed popular culture, and hence also dress, as its mouthpiece. Kristyn Gorton noted that third-wave feminism's attention toward dress and style are often not taken seriously because they are contrasted with the intellectual debates of the 1970s: “The personal has apparently triumphed over the political” (Gorton, 2007: 213). Gorton continues her argument by referring to Steinem's criticism, during the second wave, of how the media defines the feminist more by her style than her politics. This led Gorton to question whether this emphasis on fashion and style could lead to the de-politicisation of feminism. Or would it be possible that it has entirely changed the way in which feminism is political? (Gorton, 2007: 218).

Shelley Budgeon is, however, critical of the third wave and notes that it is a very difficult task to recognise the multiple positionings and experiences that make up women's lives, while at the same time limiting the ethics of inclusivity so that feminist articulation and identity can be defined and marked off (Budgeon, 2011: 289). The risk here with third-wave feminism, according to Budgeon, is that if membership and agenda are not explored properly, this kind of indiscriminate inclusivity may translate to any claim to feminist membership being seen as equally valid or radical, referring to political issues over sartorial, for example (Budgeon, 2011: 289). What this means in the context of this thesis is that while the consumption and wearing of sexualised dress by girls alone cannot be seen as a political statement, an appraisal of the protectionist critique of this dress becomes an important aspect of the third-wave agenda.

In *Third Wave Agenda* (1997) Leslie Heywood and Jennifer Drake state that in order for the third wave to be successful, it must consciously work with women's broad differences (1997: 9). Deborah Siegel, however, argues that although the common thread of gender inequality is acknowledged in the third

wave, it is sceptical of the idea that women have enough in common simply by being women anymore. Therefore a “foundational project” that would name shared themes has become too complex a venture for the third wave to pursue with confidence (Siegel, 1997: 57).

Developing from third wave, “Girlie feminism”, as proposed by Rebecca Munford, facilitates the conversation between second-wave feminism and popular culture, as it gives women the possibility to feel sexy, whilst being feminist (Munford, 2007: 273). This is important for this thesis as sexualised dress is criticised by protectionists as placing girls in a position where they will not be given intellectual credibility. This will be interrogated in Chapter 8. Munford reminds us that “Girlie” is often infantilised and dismissed as focusing on individual adornment; however, its goal is to challenge the inflexibility of the identity politics of the second wave, which are often reflected in protectionist ideas as well. Rebecca Walker notes that the 'flexibility', of which Munford spoke, does not fully articulate the extent to which “Girlie's” criticism of social norms translates on an institutional level into action (Walker, 1995). Munford admits that when Girlie concentrates on a critique of cultural manifestations of social norms, “rather than the institutions and economic structures that maintain them”, Girlie risks focusing on individual empowerment and, in the case of the sexualisation debates, prioritising dress over collective empowerment (Munford, 2007: 275). Munford stresses the difference between embracing “lip gloss” in order to change the valuation of “traditional femininity”, and campaigning for changes in public policy and legislation (Munford, 2007: 275).

Angela McRobbie (2004) sees the third wave and ‘Girlie’ feminism as not political enough in their actions and argues that girls are asked to withhold a critique in order to be viewed as modern, sophisticated girls. She sees these forms of feminism as ‘postfeminist’ (2004). Its premise depends on the idea that the feminist project has been completed and that gender equality is now the starting point for future endeavours, as will be examined in the next section. McRobbie argues that girls who practice third-wave feminism and Girlie feminism have to stay uncritical towards “dominant commercially produced sexual representations” which conjure resentment from the older feminists, as the younger generation of feminists endorse a “new regime of sexual meaning”

that is based on “female consent, equality, participation and pleasure” (McRobbie, 2004: 260).

Amanda Lotz (2007) stresses that ‘third-wave’ and ‘post-feminism’ often get used interchangeably. She notes that the older feminist generation may see consumerist feminism and post-feminism as synonymous, even though the former is a modern feminism with some capitalist traits, while the latter argues that the feminist project is no longer necessary (Lotz, 2007: 76). Lotz proposes that post-millennial feminism is an “intermezzo”, an in-between state “after sweeping adjustments with regards to women and the public sphere and yet before access to the same rights for all” (Lotz, 2007: 72). While this idea is now over a decade old it still holds today, particularly in light of Lotz’s proposal of a position that is in constant development. She stresses that a language needs building that can accommodate concepts such as “the colour pink [and] make-up”, as these concepts mean something entirely different now than they did before (Lotz, 2007: 72). This becomes important in this thesis where we consider the derogatory protectionist rhetoric towards girls who wear sexualised dress. In Chapter 8 this will be built on by opening a discourse to interrogate the sources and how they may be disruptive to the feminist endeavour of equality. This becomes central in protectionist sexualisation debates that look to polarise girls into those who dress modestly and are seen as not consumerist and as performing feminism correctly, and sexualised girls that are seen as 'lost' and as contaminating their peers.

3.4 Neoliberalism, Consumption and Agency

Wilson reminds us that already in the aftermath of the first wave of feminism, after women had won suffrage, many activists felt that their task had been completed (Wilson, 1980: 162). McRobbie (2009) argues that similarly, after the second wave, a social movement began which focused on neoliberal individualised agency, thus denoting an end to the need for feminism. It

appeared that women were now able to actively make choices, which meant that there was no more need for “angry styles” (2009: 47) of feminism, including the dress that symbolised it. Essentially, the very existence of feminism in the past had now rendered it obsolete (McRobbie, 2009: 47). Before and during the second-wave era Friedrich Hayek (*The Road to Serfdom*, 1944) and Milton Friedman (*Capitalism and Freedom*, 1962) wrote influential works on neoliberal economics. However, across the 1970s, neoliberalism moved from being an economic theory on the centre right, to being used as a critique of global capitalism more broadly. This was reflected in feminism, which by its nature is liberal and liberating; however, the shift in neoliberalism influenced its division into more radical forms and ones that appeared more moderate, or rather apolitical. These were specifically critiqued for their ability to hide the continued exploitation of women under a new agenda. What was seen as oppressive before, was now re-articulated as liberating (McRobbie, 2007a).

Recognising that the feminist project has *not* been completed, Rayna Rapp suggested that postfeminist 'depoliticisation' often presents itself as a “reduction of feminist *social* goals to individual 'lifestyle'”, including a depoliticisation over the choice of dress (1988: 358). Equally, Budgeon states that “post-feminism reduces politics to the right to self-expression” disregarding the substance (2011: 289). Simply because an act is experienced as resistant, does not mean that it is a feminist act (Budgeon, 2011: 289). Film scholar Diane Negra agrees that post-feminism steps away from political or economic analyses of feminist shortfalls and replaces them with “diagnostics of femininity”, hence dress (2009: 5). One of the central tenets of this thesis is to investigate and highlight how anti-sexualisation discourses rarely, if at all, discuss collective responsibility or structural inequality and sexism as the root cause for girls' abuse, but instead focus on a discourse that criticises dress and builds a causal link between sexualised dress and harms, as will be discussed in Chapter 6.

Drawing on Foucauldian ideas of the Panopticon, objectification, subjectification and 'choice' (1977), as discussed in the previous chapter, Rosalind Gill argues that there has been a shift from the “external male judging gaze to a self-policing narcissistic gaze” (Gill, 2007a). This becomes central to the analyses of protectionism in this thesis, as it becomes a powerful force that

is able to hide its own mechanism, as is the focus of Chapter 10. Gill proposes, that before the second wave challenged this, women were directly objectified in imagery and while the objectifying gaze has prevailed, it has now been internalised. The new narrative of choice and empowerment, and the regime of subjectification by the educated, liberated female, renders critique nearly impossible, argues Gill (2007a). Sexualities scholar Feona Attwood concurs, stressing the importance that the vision of 'sexual citizenship' does not slide back towards the “familiar westernized, masculinized, heterosexualized models which we have inherited” (Attwood, 2006: 92); this means that when it comes to the act of dressing for girls, viewing this solely as a sexualised undertaking will pull it back to a masculinised view - the 'male gaze' - and so deny girls' agency. This is a recurring theme within the protectionist texts examined in Chapter 7, which explore discourses on dress solely from a sexualised perspective. All acts of dressing are seen as a sexualised undertaking and all dress can be placed as a sexualising medium.

Christine Griffin explores the Girl Power phenomenon as a postfeminist institution characterized by contradiction (2004: 33). Because Girl Power, as articulated by the pop group Spice Girls, promoted a set of values centred around friendship over relationships and dressing to please yourself rather than men, Girl Power must also constitute the world as inherently 'postfeminist'; implying that girls are already equal to boys and so able to make these decisions without fear of losing social status (Griffin, 2004: 33). The question is not whether Girl Power is feminist, but whether the discourses through which Girl Power is constituted represented feminism as self-evident and at the same time redundant (Griffin 2004: 33).

Ellen Riordan, however, argues that the ability to consume Girl Power or female empowerment in various forms celebrates the successes that girls have already achieved, rather than encouraging girls to go further and to “seek power through direct economic and political means” (2001: 291). This does not greatly disrupt power relations (Riordan, 2001: 282). Instead, for Riordan, ‘Girl power’ reinforces the myth that young women are already “in control” of their lives. This obviously is a much more positive message of liberation, than the critical one that contemporary feminism offers (Whelehan, 2000: 30). Girl Power was a very

topical discourse in the late 1990s and the turn of the millennium, that has now been replaced with a different focus on celebrity culture, which is unfortunately outside the realm of exploration in this thesis.

Moving onward from Girl Power to discourses on popular culture and the fashion industry in general, McRobbie writes that being "'culturally intelligible' as a girl makes one ill" (McRobbie, 2009: 97). She assigns blame to the fashion industry and fashion photography for promoting disorders associated specifically with feminine development by promoting beauty regimes of "pain, self-punishment and loss" with which fashion images are connected (McRobbie, 2009: 99). She argues that women are encouraged to misinterpret these self-management rituals as empowering, reinforced by a discourse that suggests that "girls have never had it so good" (McRobbie, 2009: 98). Hilary Radner disagrees with Gill and McRobbie and notes that she does not regard the idea that women's empowerment is used against them and commercialised, to be a legacy of failed feminism, but rather of the neoliberal condition which is based on consumerism and individualism. This resonates closely with the sexualisation debate in which sexualisation often becomes an umbrella term for girls' consumer behaviour, whereas consumption is practiced equally by boys and girls, and should be criticised as such, as argued by Cook (2004) and Buckingham et al. (2010). This does not apply only to fashion consumption, but expenditures in general as will be expanded on in Chapter 9.

Radner notes that in the aftermath of the second wave, a new fashion-conscious movement was born, which she dubs 'neo-feminism'. Neo-feminism is often seen as a reaction to, and the opposite of, masculinised second-wave feminism (Radner, 2011: 9) in which "empowerment" and "self-fulfilment" are re-appropriated to coincide with and to celebrate neoliberal values (Radner, 2011: 2). Radner (2011) and Negra (2009) both argue that women are instructed from an early age in the art of how to become a woman through guiding them to make specific purchases. In essence, they argue, womanhood is a commodity that can be bought. Fashion scholars Evans and Thornton remind us that femininity is specifically "performed" through fashion (1989: 13). Choice, particularly within the practice of 'shopping', becomes a process where one can weigh and evaluate alternatives with the goal of making decisions that define an

individual's position as a consumer. This becomes the fundamental principle of neo-feminism (Radner, 2011: 6). Guided by an increasing need for new consumers in new markets, Radner argues that popular culture encourages the idea that fulfilling individual needs expresses good citizenship and a desire to share in a common culture (Radner, 2011: 11). The motto, "the personal is political", Radner notes, seemingly got confused in neo-feminism as the pursuit of self-gratification and the manifestation of individual fulfilment (Radner, 2011: 11). In neo-feminism young women thus participate in heterosexualised femininity, not through pursuit of motherhood and family, but through the "participation in consumer culture" (Radner, 2011: 13). This is central to this thesis as sexualisation discourses are also discourses on consumption and choice. On the one hand girls should be able to enjoy dress and consumption without the shaming rhetoric protectionism often attaches to it. On the other hand, however, a discourse must be built around questioning how much of this practice is really the influence of neoliberalism, which is more invested in capitalism rather than the empowerment of girls.

In 2009 McRobbie had similarly argued that the possibility for feminism to remain in circulation as an accessible political movement and collective goal had been undone and had become a collection of privatised and individualised experiences, such as the purchasing of clothing and styling in a sexualised manner in the name of empowerment (2009: 42). Roberts notes that many writers equate consumption directly with post-feminism (2007: 244). Negra also points out that the 'choices' post-feminism offers are very much tied to consumerism, and so it alienates groups of women whose economic power is not as strong; these have traditionally been women of working class origin and from ethnic minorities, "reinforcing racist and classist exclusions" (2009: 10). Post-feminism largely ignores inequalities between women, and this of course relates to their ability to consume dress as well (Negra, 2009: 12). It may be, therefore, that the third-wave project was unsuccessful in striving for greater equality and reappropriated as a neoliberal and neo-feminist undertaking ultimately concerned with consumption. In Chapter 9 this will be evaluated through examining how protectionist discourses often frame sexualised dress in a very class-judgemental way, where cheap clothing becomes inappropriate

and problematic and more expensive, middle-class styles are formulated as tasteful and appropriate.

In *Interrogating Post-feminism* (2007) McRobbie discusses the pitfalls that come with being a sartorially liberated young feminist. As neo-feminists, Girlie-feminists and third-wave feminists become more liberal in their self-expression through dress, the political goals of second wave feminism, along with its self-imposed modest or 'functional' style, becomes endangered. If the feminist herself was now able to dress in a sexually provocative way in the name of self- expression, women in advertising and media should also be able to. These activities presented themselves as being free of exploitation (McRobbie, 2007: 33). “The autonomous, calculating, self-regulating subject of neo-liberalism bears a strong resemblance to the active, freely choosing, self-reinventing subject of post-feminism” (McRobbie, 2007: 33). McRobbie thus highlights the trap of only performing cosmetic changes to the agenda. If women continue to partake in activities which can be exploitative, which look the same, and to which men react in the same way, it cannot constitute actual liberation. Here patriarchal power structures are not upheld directly by patriarchal oppression, but by neoliberalism. The outcome, however, is the same (McRobbie, 2007). Gill speculates that as women transform themselves and regulate all aspects of their conduct and concede their actions as voluntary, they become perfect subjects for neoliberalism (Gill, 2007b: 164).

bell hooks sees this way of looking at feminism as reflecting the middle-class nature of the second wave movement (1984: 27). And Garrison suggests not completely rejecting neo-liberal feminism, but questioning what would be a good tactic with which to counter late-capitalist consumerist logics that are reliant on the “commodification of resistance as a hegemonic strategy” (2007b: 189). Negra (2007) also highlights a contradiction of post-feminism that is central to it in terms of guilting women. While the pleasures and interests of female consumers are privileged commercially, they are simultaneously disapproved of societally (Negra, 2009: 7). This argument will be expanded to the sexualisation debate in Chapter 7, which proposes a 'double pressure' concept that articulates how women are encouraged to present themselves in a sexualised manner but are then reprimanded for it; a pattern that, in turn,

informs discourses around girls' sexualised dress practices.

3.5 Anti-feminism, Backlash and Protectionism

Preceding her earlier mentioned seminal work *Adorned in Dreams* (1985), in *Only Halfway to Paradise* (1980), Wilson explains the origins of the fracturing of the feminist project. Already in the 1980s she was able to identify the generational differences in women's desires towards, and identification with, feminism, as discussed earlier in relation to ideas of inclusivity within the third-wave movement. This is also reflected in the way the different 'waves' treat dress as a subject. Wilson suggests that feminism aimed to speak on behalf of all women, on behalf of half the population. However, not all women, and certainly not all men, support a movement that fights for the interests of women. As Wilson proposes "many women as well as men feel threatened rather than inspired by feminism" (1980: 204). What this has created is a crack in feminism that is being pried open wider by all sides in order to portray feminism as an agent for a small group of privileged (white, middle-class, heterosexual) women. Feminism is thus constructed as something that does not fight for the interests of the majority of women, and hence loses its credibility, which in turn, profits the patriarchy (Wilson, 1980: 204). The disagreements within the feminist project underpins the analysis in this thesis of how the criticism of girls' sexualised dress comes from protectionist *women*. This will be discussed throughout the analytical chapters, as gender locates much of the position that the protectionists occupy.

"The prevailing wisdom of the past decade has supported one [idea]: it must be all this equality that's causing all that pain. Women are unhappy precisely because they are free. Women are enslaved by their own liberation", wrote journalist Susan Faludi in 1991 in *Backlash* (1991:2). Social scientists Ann Oakley and Juliet Mitchell continued to explore this backlash in 1997 and three years later women's studies scholar Imelda Whelehan (2000) made

similar observations. Faludi (1991) contends that even though the backlash against feminism at that time was not an “organised movement”, it did not make it less destructive to women's rights. In fact, the actuality of feminism not having 'orchestration' or “a single string-puller” makes it harder to identify and may make it even more effective in its efforts (Faludi, 1991: 16). Faludi suggests that the backlash against feminism “succeeds to the degree that it appears *not* to be political, that it appears not to be a struggle at all” (1991: 16). In Chapters 5 and 10 I investigate similarities between ideas outlined in the backlash by Faludi, Oakley and Mitchell (1997) and Whelehan (2000) and the protectionist position. This becomes important in this thesis in questioning how conducive protectionism is to achieving equality, when some of its practices, like focusing on girls as a problem in sexualisation and sexually sanctioning them, draw parallels with a patriarchal process.

Faludi continues by arguing that the backlash is most powerful because it is 'private' and subjectifying, “inward turning”, and in this way women as the practitioners of feminism practice the backlash themselves and on themselves (Faludi, 1991: 16). These ideas are underpinned by Foucault's articulations of the panopticon and its ‘subjectifying’ power (1977) which was discussed in the previous chapter. In the context of this thesis, this would mean that the backlash rhetoric could operate by relieving the patriarchy and feminism from policing the attire of girls, as discussed in Chapter 10. Within sexualisation discourses the protectionists could be seen as backlash feminists, as they discuss girls' sexualised attire as women's liberation 'gone too far' and focus on modest dress as the object of keeping girls safe from sexual harassment and violence (Ringrose, 2013). Jessica Ringrose concludes by querying whether the backlash practice of turning control over dressing inward may be so successful because it appears to be a natural reaction to feminism that has gone too far, as opposed to an effort on behalf of the patriarchy to assert control (Ringrose, 2013).

3.6 Summary

This chapter reviewed literature by feminist scholars as it related to dress and attitudes towards women's adornment. This is important, as it investigates how the evolution of feminism has informed my own position, and the protectionist position towards girls' sexualised dress and the general era within which these debates are being held. This chapter began by exploring the origins of the stigma towards, and condemnation of, women’s dress and adornment which could be found in Judeo-Christian writings that laid the socio-cultural foundations for many problematic positions towards feminine attire in the present. This chapter then moved onto examining the intersection of second-wave feminism with fashion theory and how class is articulated through dress. This chapter analysed how women's dress and identity were intimately connected and how this became one of the most visible symbols within second-wave feminism, which is where the origins of protectionist ideology within sexualisation discourses can be found. It considered the pivotal moment when the second wave - and especially its relationship with dress- began to be seen by the younger generation as oppressive, and it reviewed how the third-wave feminist movement, which aimed at incorporating a wider ethnic, class and racial demographic, moved away from the political debates of the second wave towards a different, modern way of intervening in the public sphere. I analysed how the third wave also allowed for a more sexualised style of dressing in girls - however, not without a backlash. Finally feminist scholars noted how these modern styles of feminism were being commercialised in the form of neo-feminism and how feminism's continued need was questioned through post-feminism. This created a backlash against feminist ideas as the fracturing of the feminist project, especially over its lack of unity in relation to dress and consumption. The question remained whether some of the concerns over feminism, especially the feminism of the younger generation, lie with feminism at all, or indeed with neoliberal capitalism instead. With regard to the sexualisation debate, this chapter demonstrated the manifold positions within different waves and modes of feminism and considered how they continue to negotiate, but also to protect girls' dress, and has highlighted how this has informed and continues to inform the protectionist critique thereof.

Chapter 4

Childhood and Sexualisation

4.1 Introduction

> Although the children who are born into this world live and act as children and then leave childhood behind them, childhood is permanent. (Vänskä, 2017: 19)

This chapter will focus on literature covering the history of childhood and will examine how these scholarly attitudes came to inform discourses around the protectionist position concerning the sexualisation of girls. This chapter begins by looking at 'innocence' and the romanticisation of childhood. I will especially focus on the difference between actual children and the concept of childhood. Childhood, as a concept, is, among other things, the social, political and symbolic state of innocence which is marked by notions of play, nature and freedom from responsibility and sexuality. This innocence is attributed to children[17] who society views as impressionable, vulnerable and who are thus to be protected (Cunningham, 2005). These ideas underpin the remainder of the chapter, which moves on to look at how the instincts of actual children have been controlled, in order for them to behave in accordance with ideals of constructed childhood. I will then move on to look at contradictions in the perception of childhood when these are set against the actual lived experience of children. While sexual innocence is established as one of the cornerstones of

[17] Teenagers also come under the umbrella of protection as minors; however, the balance between innocence, responsibility, sexuality and protection shifts at this stage and is not as clear cut as with children.

childhood, it has also been eroticised in a way that both fascinates and garners disapproval. Finally, this chapter reviews literature on the ways in which childhood has been used for political benefit, but again, explores a dichotomy here, since childhood also inspires moral panic. These ideas will be examined very closely with regard to girlhood.

4.2 Innocence and the Constructed Romantic Childhood

The introduction outlined definitions for age stratification for girls; for the purposes of this chapter (and the thesis as a whole), I will apply these definitions to boys as well. While it is useful to try and 'age stratify' both children and young people, what this Chapter will focus on is *childhood*. As a concept, it is that social, political and symbolic state of innocence which is attributed to children – and to teenagers, who society views as impressionable, vulnerable and in need of protection (Cunningham, 2005). British social historian Hugh Cunningham notes of his book *Children and Childhood* (2005): "Both 'children' and 'childhood' appear in my title because we need to distinguish between children as human beings and childhood as a shifting set of ideas" (Cunningham, 2005: 1). These two concepts, children and childhood, often become conflated with each other. American academic James Kincaid proposes that the 'child' that is known now did not exist before the seventeenth century. While this interpretation has its contestants and is extremely simplistic, Kincaid sees it as useful to speak of an 'invented' childhood (1998: 53). When childhood is spoken of, it is supposed to encompass both boyhood and girlhood; however, Valerie Walkerdine argues that in practice it is always boyhood which is implied (Walkerdine, 1998: 256). Girlhood appears to come with its own unique challenges and, in a dichotomous way, to sit on the fence of innocence and vulnerability. That is why this theoretical framework incorporates literature also specific to girlhood. With girlhood, the age specifications also seem to blur. It is not always clear how old the 'girl' is, discussed in the

protectionist texts analysed here. I want to note this here regarding the end of this chapter, which specifically looks at the alarmist discourses surrounding girls and their dress.

As indicated, children and childhood often become conflated with each other. Not all people under the age of twelve are impressionable, non-sexual and enjoy play and nature, just as not all adults are steady, sexual, serious, and immune to vulnerability (Cunningham, 1991: 1). These specific assumptions show, however, that society expects children to enact childhood and adults are expected to be distinctly different from children. This is a useful notion for this thesis, as it exposes the varied moral positions around sexualisation as time and place specific and non-essential. Patricia Holland (1992) considered the continuity of childhood and adulthood. Holland, a scholar in the representations of childhood, evaluates the great efforts that are made to keep childhood and adulthood as separate as possible, despite the actual continuity of development and growth. “There is an active struggle to maintain childhood – if not actual children – as pure and uncontaminated” (Holland, 1992: 12-13).

Cunningham stresses that it is much easier to write with confidence about childhood than about children, as there is discord between the concept of childhood and the lived experience of being a child, and, too, around the way in which this has fluctuated over time (Cunningham, 2005: 2). We have children's diary accounts; however, these, argues British historian Carolyn Steedman (1982), are much more indicative of the expectations and desires of the adult reader and the genre of diary-writing than of the lived experience of being a child. Most first-hand accounts of the real, lived experiences of children are through the accounts of their parents, and, thus, mediated through adult eyes. These, in turn, are usually descriptive of a middle-class experience (Cunningham, 2005: 2). Chapter 5 will analyse in detail how protectionist discourses address childhood as 'natural' and essential while it is negotiated from a middle-class adult perspective.

Cunningham sees two distinct sources from which to study attitudes towards childhood. The first is parenting manuals, which this thesis also uses as a source, and which are key to the exploration of discourses of sexualisation. These parenting manuals depict optimised scenarios of how to construct

childhood in an ideal way. Although not necessarily reflective of actual everyday practices, they reveal a great deal about attitudes towards children and childhood (Cunningham, 2005: 3). Notions of what childhood should be like also trickle through into the practices and recommendations of governments, shaping the lives of the children of the given time and place (Cunningham, 2005: 3). Again, government reports on childhood are source material for analysis in this thesis.

Childhood innocence is often seen as 'truth' in an absolute way. Cunningham suggests that the history of childhood is frequently discussed as a history of progress, as society advanced in understanding the experience of being a child (Cunningham, 2005: 3). I would understand this to mean that in modern Western society where social mobility is possible, gender fluidity is gaining visibility and, in general, social structures are being questioned and dismantled, childhood innocence is something that remains constant and non-negotiable. This deterministic quality will be addressed throughout this thesis with reference to the reproductive and naturalising nature of Foucauldian discourse, as discussed in Chapter 2.

If we apply Foucault's ideas of the cyclical model of discourse (1972) to the conversation around childhood, we could conclude that childhood reproduces its own myth (in the Barthesian sense), thus naturalising it. It appears that in girlhood the trait of innocence becomes even more intensified, due to girlhood's intersection of childhood and femininity. American sociologist Erwin Goffman (1979) studied gendered representations in American advertisements in the 1970s and noted that women's positioning was often similar to children's, especially girls, in that it was rather playful, gentle and a little absent-minded. Goffman uses his theory of “hyper-ritualisation” (1979: 84) in this instance to describe a similar cyclical model to Foucault's discourse. When the archetypal representation of someone - in the case of this thesis, a girl - becomes recycled enough times, we come to see it as natural. In a similar exercise to that of Goffman, American media and gender studies scholar Sarah Projansky (2007) reviewed *Time* magazine covers over 80 years and noted how girls were illustrated. She remarks on the long- standing tradition of “focusing cultural attention on girls as problems, as victims of social ills, as symbols of

ideal citizenship, and as all-round fascinating figures" (Projansky, 2007: 42). Childhood, and especially girlhood, as demonstrated here, is treated as a symbolic, idealised state with performed innocence and vulnerability as its main objective.

Essentialist ideas about the child as being 'innocent by nature' saw their beginnings at the turn of the eighteenth century. British philosopher John Locke ([1693] 1969) described a child's mind as being a blank slate, a *tabula rasa.* A child would become educated into a conscious and critical person under careful regulation and schooling, so an ignorant, shameless, undisciplined child was a failure on the behalf of his parents, not the child himself (Locke, [1693] 1969). Locke and Rousseau ([1762] 1909) both saw a child's upbringing as the most important aspect of shaping its character. They moved away from earlier articulations on children and childhood, towards an understanding that children were slowly starting to be seen as separate entities who grew into adulthood with guidance and schooling (Cunningham, 2005: 44-9). However, while Locke emphasized discipline, Rousseau focused on nurture: tenderness in upbringing would lead to a tender adult. He was concerned that adults did not consider children as children, but as future adults ([1762] 1909). This was also reflective in many paintings of the era, such as those by van Dyck, where children were dressed as miniature adults. In fact, only in the 20th century did children begin to be dressed differently from adults.

In the 19th century a romantic view of the child formed. The child had a series of qualities implanted onto its public figure that could be celebrated: "naturalness, innocence, downright divinity" (Kincaid, 1998: 53). Rousseau came under fire for advocating the idea that children became virtuous only through the means of education, for the Romantics described children as "creatures of deeper wisdom, finer aesthetic sensitivity and a more profound awareness of enduring moral truths" (Grylls, 1978: 35). Cunningham notes the power of William Wordsworth's poems about children. He instilled them with godlike qualities and the very embodiment of hope itself (Cunningham, 2005: 71-2). Romanticism had little practical advice on childrearing to impart, however. Mothers, especially, were more preoccupied with whether their child was to survive at all, rather than how they were raised (Cunningham, 2005: 72).

Romanticism in this sense was thus much more a body of ideas proposed by middle-class men than an active and practical guide for day-to-day discipline (Cunningham, 2005: 71-2). I will return to this in the last section of this chapter, which examines how the politicisation of childhood does not necessarily translate into beneficial policy regarding actual children. This is important as it demonstrates the discord between the symbolic demands made upon girls versus how actual girls live. How discourses negotiate ideas around why actual girls wear sexualised dress, and how this in turn is interpreted by protectionists, will be analysed in Chapters 6, 7 and 9.

Valerie Walkerdine argues that before Romanticism, the symbolic ‘child’ spoken of was always implied to be a boy (1998: 256). Historical discourses around 'natural' childhood innocence seem to be rather gender- neutral in tone; however, girls were rarely mentioned by Rousseau and his contemporaries. Under the influence of Romanticism, the symbolic child, who had been the protagonist of the literature by Erasmus or Locke, was no longer necessarily male. Childhood increasingly became a sacred, innocent time for both boys and girls (Cunningham, 2005: 70). Walkerdine (1998) builds her argument around the idea that the 'naturalness' of the child is a myth. Addressing gender, she suggests that “the child”, who is really a boy, is “creative”, “naughty”, “playful”, “rule breaking” and “rational” (Walkerdine, 1998: 256). By contrast, the figure of the girl then “suggests an unnatural pathology” (Walkerdine, 1998: 256). The girl is seen to follow rules, to be good, well-behaved, but also irrational. “Femininity becomes the Other of rational childhood “(Walkerdine, 1998: 256). In this way, the girl becomes the symbol of “imprudent childhood” and a danger in her influence on 'normal' childhood (Walkerdine, 1998: 256). This opens the question of what happens to childhood when a Lolita-figure enters its hallowed halls. Walkerdine poses the question of what is allowed in, and what is to be kept out of, the fictional space of childhood. This will be scrutinised throughout this thesis in the source texts. Protectionism often considers sexualised dress to be deviant from 'natural', 'innocent' childhood and, as an extension of this, girls who dress in sexualised dress are seen as corrupting the sacred nature of childhood.

Cunningham notes that despite moves toward gender neutrality “people

were more likely to imagine the Romantic child as female rather than male, perhaps because boys in the flesh were never sufficiently socialised into acting in harmony with ideas of nature" (Cunningham, 2005: 70). In the 1830s, dresses and short hair were the norm for girls and boys, which created a gender-neutral look. Even though infants continued to wear long dresses, boys would later take on a new style at three years of age: trousers. Girls would continue to wear the style of infants, "emphasising the idea of childhood as the symbol of original innocence" (Vänskä, 2017: 24). Holland suggests that the transformation from child to adult is also signified by the transformation into the mutually exclusive gender categories of male and female (Holland, 2004: 187). When considering cross-gender relationships between adults and children, the image of a young boy can easily be seen to raise motherly instincts in the adult female viewer; in the case of a girl-child's image being viewed by an adult man, it departs too far from the familial or paternal. The girl-child is seen as attracting men in a potentially sexual manner (Holland, 2004: 188).

Holland reminds us that images depicting boys entering manhood are presented in various ways, sometimes comic or even threatening; however, reaching puberty for girls becomes only a matter of sexuality. Hence the picture of the girl in transition becomes "a taboo image" (Holland, 2004: 191). In myriad sexualisation debates, the site of conflict and concern is really that of the *girl's* body, which is inappropriately sexualised (Renold and Ringrose, 2011). Holland argues that from an early age, girls are encouraged to display their bodies in a playful, 'girly' way (Holland, 2004: 188). To be able to distinguish between childhood and adulthood and in order to keep them separate, childhood sexuality must be continuously repressed. In particular, girl-children must not be noticed as exploring their budding sexuality. They are, rather, desired to "*perform* childishness", completely oblivious of their sexual appeal (Holland, 2004: 180).

Karin Calvert describes childhood in the Victorian era as having an almost sacred character, associated with purity and innocence. Children were seen as unsullied by worldly corruption: "The loss of this childish innocence was akin to the loss of virginity, and the inevitable loss of childhood itself was a kind of expulsion from the Garden of Eden" (Calvert, 1992: 140). Childhood was

seen as a 'period of freedom' before the anticipated constraints of adult civilization, and so parents valued the 'childishness' of their children, their non-conformity to adult expectations (Holland, 2004: 17). As children's physical well-being improved through restrictions placed on child labour, their psychological development became the primary focus, though the sentimentalisation of childhood also helped to validate the increasing surveillance of and intervention into poor and working-class families by medics, reformers and teachers, disguising it as protection (Cunningham, 1991). It was not only the Victorian children of the upper classes who enjoyed protection, but *all* children, who were regarded as being entitled to what were considered the common elements and rights of childhood (Cunningham, 1991: 7). This links closely with the discourse on class and respectability discussed in the previous chapter, and also with that of feminism and dress explored in relation to protectionist literature in Chapter 8. These ideas of safeguarding, but also “surveillance” (Foucault, 1977) in the name of protection can be easily observed in the protectionist agenda analysed throughout this thesis.

Kincaid notes that even though the Victorians were rather “loud” in their “protestations” about the innocence of childhood, they also made the notion of the erotic dependent on the child (Kincaid, 1998: 52). This “bungling” of the innocent and the erotic has been problematic ever since (Kincaid, 1998: 52). Ideas of sexuality and childhood innocence are nowadays mutually exclusive of one another; sexualisation is seen to destroy natural innocence. Kincaid further proposes that the idea of the child and the idea of innocence became dominated by sexuality in the Victorian era. This was a negative sexuality, of course, but it was sexuality, nonetheless. “Defining something entirely as a negation brings irresistibly before us that which we're trying to banish” (1998: 55).

In the Edwardian era, nostalgia became an important aspect of how childhood was constructed. Summing up childhood innocence as a social concept, Jenkins writes, “Nostalgia is the desire to re-create something that has never existed before, to return to some place we've never been, and to reclaim a lost object we never possessed” (1998: 4). Holland agrees with Jenkins and suggests that children end up bearing the burden of nostalgia, as adults want to

remember their free and impulsive selves, whether in actuality or in nostalgic memory. This becomes clear in the alarm generated over the way in which real children are potentially uncontrollable. She concludes by proposing that “crises of childhood often turn out to be crises which are all too adult” (Holland, 2004: 16). Ideas of sentimentality and the protection of childhood link closely with the analysis of the protectionist manuals on sexualisation, which specifically evoke ideas of innocence and nostalgia. The premise that children should be protected from expressions of sexuality and nurtured in traditional ideas of innocence will be closely examined throughout the analytical chapters. These chapters will investigate ideas of romanticisation and sentimentality in anti-sexualisation discourses that often look back at the writers own 'more innocent' childhoods, and the common rhetoric of 'things were better then'. The social-class related nature of these discourses will also be addressed in Chapter 8, where I examine how protectionism within sexualisation discourses tends to be performed by middle-class women.

4.3 Control of the Instincts and Eroticised Innocence

Ideas around the separation of children and adults and the curbing of the childish instinct have been studied over the twentieth century. Philippe Aries' 1962 work *Centuries of Childhood* is, Cunningham suggests, a ground-breaking work on debates around childhood that still continue today. However, already in 1939, German sociologist Norbert Elias had articulated his thoughts on the differences in behaviour between children and adults in volumes of *The Civilising Process* (1939). Elias argued that over the course of human history and the 'civilising process', the gap in behaviour and the psychological structure between adults and children has widened significantly (Elias, [1939] 1978: xiii). This was also the elemental point of Aries' work. Control of the instincts became the central tenet of the 'civilisation process' (Elias, [1939] 1978: 141).

The seventeenth century, Foucault (1978) suggests, marked the beginning of an age of repression and the control of sexuality by the bourgeoisie. Speaking about sex openly became more difficult in this new era, with Foucault proposing that, in order to comprehend sex in real life, it had been necessary to first conquer it on the linguistic level, to "control its free circulation in speech, expunge it from the things that were said, and extinguish the words that rendered it too visibly present" (Foucault, 1978: 17). In relation to children especially, Aries observes that "an unwritten law of contemporary morality" is for adults to avoid any reference, especially in jest, to matters of a sexual nature when children are present (1962: 41). This will be addressed in Chapter 7 by examining how protectionist discourses address sexualisation in different ways in girls and in boys.

In his review of literature on pedagogy and child medicine from the eighteenth century, Foucault (1980) notes a contradiction already present in Victorian times: such literature addressed children's sexuality continuously, even though the purpose of the manuals appeared to be to *prevent* children's sexuality. The effect of the manuals, which in message are not too dissimilar to the populist manuals discussed in this thesis, was to stress to parents that the sexuality of their children constituted a fundamental problem, as it undermined their responsibility as parental educators. It also impacted upon children, pushing them to internalise their relationship with their own body and their possible expressions of sexuality as problematic. This caused a binary effect, whereby children became aware of their physicality as sexual beings and parents felt it necessary to police this awareness in their children. Foucault concludes by writing: "The result was a sexualising of the infantile body, a sexualising of the bodily relationship of parent and child, a sexualising of the familial domain" (Foucault, 1980: 120). Building on Foucault's ideas, Kincaid further highlighted the dichotomy of the eroticisation and protection from sexualisation of the child as being earlier in date than Freud's popularisation of these ideas in psychoanalysis (Kincaid, 1998: 55). This relates closely to the material analysed in Chapter 7, where girls' physical development is primarily interpreted from a sexual angle, and it appears that protectionist discourses can place all forms of girls' dress as being potentially sexualising in some way. This

focus on the sexual aspects to the detriment of others brings about a discourse where the very thing that is feared is in danger of being conjured up.

Egan and Hawkes (2008) note that the rise of the ‘purity movement’ in the middle of the nineteenth century offered solutions to the previously experienced contradiction of speaking about sexuality while maintaining the innocence of children. The movement was aptly named “enlightened innocence” and its goal was to offer “an education in purity... [that] quelled unrestrained sexual impulses through the imposition of moral persuasion and rational will” (Egan and Hawkes, 2008: 34). Jenkins (1998) and Kincaid (1998), as well as Egan and Hawkes, noted that the purity campaign harnessed childhood innocence to legitimate their cause and spread its message more broadly. In 1927 Margaret Sanger, American birth control activist, sex educator, writer, and nurse, wrote in *What Every Boy and Girl Should Know* that girls' and boys' sex drives were not comparable and that at their core, girls felt no “conscious desire for the sexual act” but longed instead for 'kisses' and 'caresses' (1927: 30). Christian pamphlets also promoted motherhood as opposed to an interest in sexuality, as a guide for girls (Douie, 1935: 14, 30). Similar to Foucault’s ideas are those of Egan and Hawkes, who stress the contradiction in social hygiene literature, according to which girls naturally desired affection and not sex but, if left to their own devices and untrained, would become promiscuous (Egan and Hawkes, 2008: 70). Ringrose compares the dichotomy of girls' passivity but simultaneous responsibility to how girls are addressed in schools' sex education. In a contradictory manner, girls are treated as passive receivers of sex; however, at the same time they are seen as responsible for “delaying and managing sexual conduct in heterosexual contracts” (2013: 43).

Pre-empting Ringrose, a decade earlier, Walkerdine (1998) discusses contradictions in agency where girls are, on the one hand, the virginal victims of the adult male gaze and desire, but on the other, the alluring seductresses. Culture produces girls as “ambivalent objects”; however, how real girls and adults live within this complex setting, and how their subjectivity is produced through it, has not yet been explored (Walkerdine, 1998: 257). This thesis analyses the same idea with regards to a protectionist discourse which often explores the sexualisation of culture and considers how this leads to a 'loss of

innocence' in children, rather than exploring how it concretely affects the everyday lived experiences of real girls. Holland touches on the same dichotomy, by pointing out that images of girl-children balance childhood and femininity in “contradiction and competition” (2004: 191). Here two viewpoints on the eroticised girl-child are created; either little girls' sexuality is natural, inevitable, and universal or the male gaze (Mulvey, 1975) reduces them to a Lacanian sense of the girl not existing in any way other than as myth and symptom of the masculine imaginary (Walkerdine, 1998: 259). These positions and propositions will be addressed in Chapter 7, where the same discourse will be examined in protectionist texts.

In *Theorising the Sexual Child in Modernity* (2010) Egan and Hawkes researched populist manuals and newspaper articles which reached a rather severe conclusion about childhood sexuality. They implied that childhood cannot incorporate sexuality; ergo, a child who expresses their sexuality cannot be a child any longer (Egan and Hawkes, 2010: 2). Egan stresses that the anti-sexualisation movement, a continuation of the purity movement, ends up unintentionally marginalising some children (girls, in the case of sexualisation), in order to protect others (2013: 106). She suggests that when childhood is conflated with innocence, any child who shows an interest in matters sexual, or consumes sexualising products, could be seen as being outside the realm of childhood, as they no longer appear innocent. Instead, they become a by-product of “cultural contamination” (Egan, 2013: 26). The protectionist practice of marginalising certain girls or holding them responsible for contaminating others and the racialised and social-class related aspects this takes on, will be examined in Chapter 8 where exclusionary discourses practiced by protectionists are analysed.

According to Egan, the denial exercised in the sexualisation discourse by, on the one hand, denying an obsession with eroticised innocence while consuming news stories of sexualised childhood, and on the other by shutting out certain girl-children from the protectionist discourse to save others, ends up meaning that we ignore actual childhood that falls outside of “our cultural fantasy” (Egan, 2013: 113). James Kincaid pre-empted, in *Erotic Innocence* (1998), the paradoxical effect that this has on us, as it imbues children with a

discourse on sexuality. This denial instantly links “children, sexuality and erotic appeal”, and leaves adults as its unclear creators (1998: 101).

Holland notes how we have become sensitised to sexualised images of girls and become trained to read pictures of girls in an erotic manner, by the imagery itself (2004: 188). She cites British writer and journalist Geraldine Bedell saying that when we become sensitised to the behaviour of paedophiles, we start seeing unhealthy images of children where previously we might have only seen cute ones (Holland, 2004: 188). Likewise, Egan suggests that the persistence of the “sexually endangered or defiled child” in news stories is in fact symptomatic of adults' personal unresolved conflicts, rather than a reflection on children's sexual behaviour (2013: 115). This “unresolved conflict” manifests itself as “loathing and guilt” as we construct “the sexualised girl and her innocent counterpart” (Egan, 2013: 115). Kincaid (1998) and Egan both draw our attention to the dichotomy of news stories about the defilement and sexual exploitation of the child's body and innocence (Egan, 2013: 113). While we are appalled by those accounts, we would not continue to revisit them if we did not wish to read about them, and moreover, the continued interest in the subject keeps it alive “so we can disown it while welcoming it in the back door” (Kincaid, 1998: 6). Egan concludes that in the context of news coverage about the sexual defilement of children, a protectionist discourse becomes paramount, which ironically ends up acting as a safe way to “endlessly look upon and think about the child and sex” (Egan, 2013: 113).

4.4 Childhood as a Useful Political and Social Mechanism

“The claim that childhood has been lost has been one of the most popular laments of the closing years of the twentieth century”- so David Buckingham opens his book *After the Death of Childhood* (2000: 3). Concerns over the loss of childhood innocence have been raised in various social domains, “in the

family, in the school, in politics... and the media" (Buckingham, 2000: 3). While childhood has always been treated with "fear, desires or fantasies", around the turn of the millennium, these debates became "invested with a growing sense of anxiety and panic" (Buckingham, 2000: 3). Children are seen as being under increasing threat of adult neglect and violence, but also in turn threatening adults with violence and being sexually precocious (Buckingham, 2000: 3). The media is implicated in a contradictory way, claims Buckingham. On the one hand, it is the foremost vehicle for the ongoing debate around childhood's changing nature, while on the other it often gets blamed for initially causing the problems, by inspiring violent behaviour through films and games, for showing too much sex and pornography and commercialising childhood (Buckingham, 2000: 4). In Chapter 5 these anxieties are examined in protectionist discourses, especially via the claim that the protectionists' own childhood was free of these complexities, as it raises questions over whether the social landscape has changed with regard to sexualisation and indeed whether protectionists are able to neutrally evaluate sexualisation, or whether it always falls victim to an alarmist discourse.

Television is particularly blamed for the disappearance of childhood; however, computers are seen to reinforce generational boundaries, with adults losing out (Buckingham, 2000: 5). Media theorist Neil Postman gives television the most responsibility for the beginning of the end of childhood. Because TV does not require a learned medium, it places the child on par with the adult. "With other electric, non-print media, television recreates the conditions of communication that existed in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries" (Postman, 1982: 80). TV does not segregate its audience, as all are equally equipped to consume it (Postman, 1982: 80). It is worth noting that Postman was writing in the early 1980s, before the internet era, however with a similar alarm to later populist writers addressing technical developments, as discussed throughout the analytical chapters. This is interesting in the context of this thesis, as the three sources analysed are all written and print media, thus not addressed to, nor accessible by, children in the same way as television and the internet. This raises questions over how valuable or reliable they are in examining children's culture, as their very subjects are exempt from them. This will be investigated

further in Chapter 5. Though Postman (1982) delivers a comprehensive historiography of childhood innocence, Buckingham (2000) cites Postman's '"moralistic alarm" (Buckingham, 2000: 27). Buckingham criticises Postman on his "moral conservatism" in his desire to return to a time marked by "good manners", "inhibition and reverence to sexuality", "standards of *civilite"*, "self-restraint in... language and style" and "deference and responsibility to elders" (Buckingham, 2000: 27). The markers noted by Postman and criticised by Buckingham will be directly addressed in Chapters 7 and 9, which evaluate the social class related elements of the protectionist writing and focuses on moral panic as part of sexualisation discourses, which present them as suppositional.

Buckingham (2000) notes that anxieties about childhood are often described as the 'death' of childhood. What is interesting here is the contradiction that is built up. On the one hand, the anxieties that are played out due to the impending death of childhood rely on the notion that innocence is the 'natural', intrinsic state of childhood; however, if childhood can perish, that in turn implies that it was a social and historical construct all along, upheld in arenas like the media (Buckingham, 2000: 6). On the other hand, Buckingham also notes that discourses on children are of two kinds. Those *on* children *by* adults for adults, for the purposes of academia, social policy or fiction, and those *by* adults *for* children, for the purposes of entertainment. Children themselves rarely participate in the creation of childhood (Buckingham, 2000: 8).

James Kincaid notes that the myth of childhood innocence 'empties' the child of its own political agency, so that the child - or rather childhood itself - can now ideally fulfil our 'symbolic demands'. Kincaid argues that "the innocent child wants nothing, desires nothing, and demands nothing" (cited in Jenkins, 1998: 1-2). Jenkins further remarks that "our modern conception of the innocent child presumes its universality across" time and place, era and culture (Jenkins, 1998: 15). When we want to prove that something is 'natural' and "so basic to human nature that it cannot be changed (the differences between the genders, for example), we point to its presence in our children" (Jenkins, 1998: 15). Childhood innocence thus becomes a cultural myth applied to children and reinforced through repetition (Jenkins, 1998: 1-2). This relates back to

Foucault's ideas on discourse, discussed in Chapter 2, and to the theme of romanticised childhood that runs throughout this thesis in the discussions on the destructive nature of sexualisation. Holland illustrates Kincaid's argument by applying it specifically to commerce, proposing that “in a world dominated by commercial imagery, a child claims to be outside of commerce; in a world of rapid change, a child can be shown as unchanging; in a world of social and political conflict, a child may be damaged but remains untainted” (Holland, 2004: 16).

Childhood is seen, therefore, as a territory that exists beyond the bounds of conflict. Childhood is rarely acknowledged as being time and place specific and as governed by language, gender, or culture (Holland, 2004: 111). We presume childhood to be so absolute that it cannot be politicised; however, Kincaid argues that almost all major political battles in the 20th century were fought “on the backs of our children” (Jenkins, 1998: 2). These include economic reforms of the progressive era that protected immigrant children from the sweatshop owners, campaigns to promote racial integration (with pictures of black and white children playing together) and modern anxieties about cyberspace and pornography (cited in Jenkins, 1998: 2). Because of the uncompromising nature of childhood innocence and the protection it inspires, Buckingham and Bragg cite Jenkins and remind us that discourses about the loss of childhood innocence can also be used as “politics of substitution… Campaigns against homosexuality are redefined as campaigns against paedophiles; campaigns against pornography become campaigns against child pornography; and campaigns against immorality and satanism become campaigns against ritualistic child abuse” (Buckingham and Bragg, 2004: 4). This oils the machinery for one of the concluding discussions of this thesis in Chapter 10, where there will be an exploration of how sexualisation is a convenient political agenda, as the welfare of children unites both the political left and right. As the innocence of children is seen as an absolute, policies referring to it can also be seen as undeniably necessary in their demand for support. This raises questions in the analytical chapters about whether protectionist discourses can be seen as primarily operating in order to protect girls, or if this “politics of substitution” renders protectionism vulnerable to

imposing other agendas in the name of protecting girls from sexualisation.

Political debates on children are often polarised and polarising. The conservative view is that children must be guarded from sexual knowledge in order for them to be able to preserve their innocence, whereas the liberal view often dictates that sexual oppression leads to all sorts of societal ills. Yet, both sides suggest they know what a 'natural' child is and needs, and 'construct' the innocent child to reflect and promote their motives (Buckingham and Bragg, 2004: 5). The sexualised girl threatens to jeopardise this as she is seen “as both threatened and threatening”; hence there is a call for harsher control of her actions and dress choices (Buckingham, 2000: 76). This will be specifically examined in Chapter 5, which analyses in detail how protectionism operates and who stands to profit from it. The sexualised girl becomes a sign, the emblem of the fractured, traditional middle-class nostalgic for past times, when “taste, status, age, difference, and control” were seen to be set and manageable (Egan, 2013: 8).

Egan argues that the sexualised white girl represents two different things to conservatives and feminists. For the conservative movement, she is the symbol of the fall of the traditional family and evokes nostalgia towards the past. For some feminists, the sexualised girl proves that feminism still has a long way to go in its fight for equality. She conjures up nostalgic feelings for the movement’s political past (Egan, 2013: 70). This was demonstrated in the previous chapter through particular discourses within second-wave feminism and could be argued to be reflected in the protectionist position as well, as will be investigated in Chapter 5. The image of the defiled girl-child grants 'public validity' in politics to some feminist policies in a postfeminist social landscape (Egan, 2013: 71). Egan argues that the girl whom the sexualisation narratives seek to protect is usually not real, but a metaphoric being, who symbolises traditional, wholesome culture. Within this “cultural defence mechanism” (Egan, 2013: 7), all white middle-class heterosexual girls can be seen as embodying the stereotype of the consequences of good girls going bad (Egan, 2013: 32). Egan suggests that economic instability and despair often give people a sense of impotence, which then gets displaced into xenophobia, racism and other forms of violence or discrimination (2013: 7). Reviewing two cases - the murder

of American child beauty queen JonBenet Ramsey and the kidnap of British child Madeleine McCann - Egan recalls the media frenzy surrounding them, elevating the victims to a level of celebrity and sanctity with books, websites and posters mourning their fate and searching for clues. She recalls just how powerful our attachment to the white girl-child is. She becomes an “object of protection”, “identification”, and a “site of collective mourning” (Egan, 2013: 72).

Holland stressed that when innocence is used as a political tool it is rarely done with the welfare of real children in mind (Holland, 2004: 20). Each generation will do and face things their parents did not, and the threat of these new imminent hazards, whether electronics or sexualised dress, makes legitimate the call for political and social action (Egan, 2013: 9). It is almost impossible to critique political sexualisation discourse - “after all, who can be for the sexualisation of young girls?” Egan asks (2013: 19). As authors have noted (Egan and Hawkes, 2009; Holland, 2004; Jenkins, 1998; Walkerdine, 1998), protectionist discourses derive from the philosophy that children are essential beings who are naturally unaware of sexual desire, capitalism and culture. This way of thinking, however, strips away the fact that childhood innocence is time-and-place specific, and in its flexibility as a social construct, can be moulded to profit political agendas (Egan, 2013: 25). For example, as an electoral promise, British Prime Ministerial candidate, David Cameron said he would ensure that “our children get a childhood” (Cameron quoted in BBC, 2010), echoing the innocence sentiment as a political tool. This means that anyone who were to doubt claims of abuse can be easily stigmatised as a danger to children. Bragg and Buckingham thus see the access of children to sexual knowledge as part of a more permissive culture, juxtaposed with rises in violence, drug abuse or young people's criminal activity (Bragg and Buckingham, 2013). Jenkins characterised this as an illustration of how children are used as “human shields” in the face of criticism (1998: 2) and Kincaid as a “repository of cultural needs or fears not adequately disposed of elsewhere” (cited in Jenkins, 1998: 4). These ideas of displacement will be raised in the protectionist discourses examined in Chapter 10 to evaluate how protectionists similarly uphold essentialist ideas of childhood and innocence.

Jenkins (1998) extends the discussion of childhood innocence as a

political tool to crime fighting and more specifically the construction of the paedophile as the embodiment of the ultimate evil. Responsibility has shifted away from the nuclear family and its emotional ties where, however, the majority of abuse originates (Jenkins, 1998). This relates closely to the ideas around displacement analysed in this thesis. Chapter 10 will specifically examine the political benefits to negotiating sexualisation as an issue of dress rather than sexual abuse. The fear and management of sexualisation can be seen as replacing public discourses about the actual abuse of children that happens in and outside of the home. Kincaid suggests that the complex social and psychological reasons and circumstances that lead to child abuse are displaced onto a single person, the paedophile. Anne Higonnet (1998) extends the discourse surrounding the paedophile to child pornography. Most important, she stresses, is to take into account the fact that “the overwhelming share of child abuse is not primarily correlated to pornography” (Higonnet, 1998: 177). Children are most likely to be abused by their fathers or stepfathers and the better the abuser is known to the child, the more likely the abuse is to be “prolonged and repeated” (Higonnet, 1998: 178). Higonnet's argument supports this thesis as it shows that anti-sexualisation discourses may in fact distract from pressing problems facing actual girls. Kincaid lists statistics detailing American society's welfare disasters which face so many children in their everyday lives and forcefully argues that there simply is no more justification in neglecting these real issues in favour of surveillance of paedophilia (Kincaid, 1998). Higonnet agrees- and provides an analysis of how actual children are neglected. She suggests that we replace the care for real children with the surveillance of website images out of convenience (1998: 189).

In 1966 anthropologist Mary Douglas argued that cultural concerns were often displaced onto the body and its potential corruption, as it is much more tangible, and more easily managed than large social shifts ([1966] 2002). The imminent threat of sexual corruption is needed in deflecting the truth that we live in a culture with “decreasing social safety nets, joblessness, eroding security for the middle class, environmental degradation, increasing isolation and insecurity, as well as a shrinking public sphere through which to voice our concerns” (Egan, 2013: 8). When we displace our impotence over such complex social

issues onto 'something more manageable and potent', such as onto the sexual and cultural corruption of the girl-child, we can voice our "rage, disgust, and anxiety" and believe in a fantastical future that is "free of such defilement" (Egan, 2013: 9). This process is easily reproduced as the child in the West is seen as someone who can absorb information, but ultimately is an empty screen onto which adults can project their social desires (Egan, 2013; Jenkins, 1998; Kincaid, 1998; Walkerdine, 1998). This is reflected in how sexualisation is reported. Egan notes that the press is much more eager to report on crimes committed by and towards children compared with "the rather mundane", however much more urgent are the dangers that are posed by "poverty, neglect, and lack of medical care" (Egan, 2013: 9). She notes that these policies are powerful as they inform policy making, what we consider normality or indeed abnormality, and how they impact the lives of girls directly (Egan, 2013: 9). The cost of this policy for girls is high, as it divides them into the innocent ones that must be and deserve to be protected at all costs, and the others who are seen as sexually corrupting and corrupted and thus not deserving (Egan, 2013: 9). In Chapters 5-10 this thesis will evaluate how protectionist discourses provide resources and solutions to the care of children and how they discuss moral panic discourses about paedophilia, sexualisation and online imagery.

Even though the sexualisation discourse in the media seems recent, a number of academics note that neither the moral media panic, nor the sexualisation of children, is by any means a new phenomenon (Buckingham and Bragg, 2004; Higonnet, 1998; Jenkins, 1998; Vänskä, 2017). Moral panics over troubled girlhood have been extensively theorised since the early 1990s. Brown and Gilligan's 1992 *Meeting at the Crossroads: Women's Psychology and Girls' Development*, for example, was a psychological analysis of how adolescent girls "edit their feelings and desires out of their closest relationships, fearing that honesty will breed conflict, and... lead to isolation and abandonment" (Brown and Gilligan, 1992: 7). Around the same time, American clinical psychologist Mary Pipher's *Reviving Ophelia* (1994) hit best-seller lists and presented a very troubled image of girlhood. "Interpretation seems to bring real consequences in its way," wrote Anne Higonnet in her 1998 book *Pictures of Innocence: The History and Crisis of Ideal Childhood* (1998: 133). By

“consequences” she suggested that the media produces an alarmist discourse in the wake of sexualised images of children and this panic often translates into policy (Higonnet, 1998: 133).

Girlhood studies scholars Aapola, Gonick and Harris (2005) divided the opposing discourses of successful and troubled girls that can be seen in academic writing and in the tabloid media as the “Girl Power” and “Reviving Ophelia” discourses. Their discussion of “Girl Power” hails young women “as the new success stories of contemporary times” (Aapola, Gonick and Harris 2005: 8) whereas “Reviving Ophelia” argues that contemporary society robs girls of their voices and leaves them “vulnerable, symptomatic, and psychologically damaged, [attesting] to the significance of this story of young women in crisis” (Aapola, Gonick and Harris, 2005: 9). It is this latter discourse that the protectionist writings refer to within sexualisation discourse, which will be explored and contrasted with other perspectives in Chapters 5-10. While of course there are real girls whose lives are unstable, establishing girlhood as a whole as something potentially worrisome, created a market for self-help literature aimed at solving problems associated with it. This initially helped conceive the protectionist literature of the new millennium, which is the focus of this thesis.

In the early 2000s the commodification of troubled girlhood took on the shape of populist manuals, but also novels with fictional narratives such as *Odd Girl Out* (Simmonds, 2003) and *Queen Bees and Wannabes* (Wiseman, 2002). These prompted American television and print media to send a message that strongly contradicted the traditional stereotypes of girls as “sugar, spice and everything nice” (Chesny-Lind and Irwin, 2004: 45). Chesny-Lind and Irwin (2004) discuss the phenomena of building a skewed view of girlhood in the American press by examining the foci of media reports. They noted the negative tone in which girlhood was often discussed and the way in which crimes that girls had committed, for example, were moralised over, rather than simply reported on (Chesny-Lind and Irwin, 2004). Girlhood studies scholar Shauna Pomerantz (2006) discussed the moral panic that girls' everyday wear has produced in the Canadian press. Drawing from the “Ophelia” phenomenon she says that “in trouble” and “out of control” are the discourses constructed about

teenage girls (Pomerantz, 2006: 175). This is useful in this thesis' discussion of the three types of protectionist discourses, which all derive from an idea of girlhood being in crisis in some way. Christine Griffin notes the long tradition of discussing girls only in terms of worry. She reminds us that young women were very rarely mentioned in early 20th century youth studies and when they were, the text displayed “a combination of anxiety and fascination over sexuality, especially young women's involvement in prostitution” (Griffin, 2004: 30). These discourses are helpful in examining the alarm, but also the fascination, present in protectionist discourses examined in the analytical chapters. Vares and Jackson also remind us that the very media that generates alarm over the premature sexualisation of girls ironically also acts as the source for it (2011: 134). Girls' sexuality is seen as risky and at risk; alarm seems to mark any discourses around the topic. Egan and Hawkes conclude that the lack of understanding of the general notion of 'sexualisation', moves feminist discourses away from challenging the patriarchy and “vilifies girls' sexuality as opposed to sexism” (Egan and Hawkes in Ringrose, 2013: 49).

4.5 Summary

Having reviewed the literature in relation to childhood, this thesis suggests that childhood is a phenomenon which, rather than existing as essential, universal, pre-determined and biologically determined, is socially constructed and built up through historically, socially and culturally influenced processes (Jenks, 1996). This chapter has particularly discussed how the 'myth' of childhood was created through the romanticisation of childhood and how a control of the instincts of children facilitated this. Childhood was established as a contradictory concept which is formed on the one hand as innocent, but on the other hand as captivating and eroticised. Another contradiction that was examined was that childhood was seen as 'natural' and an absolute, but it also lends itself to being a political mechanism, as it can be moulded to drive social motives. Ironically, these political agendas rarely address the hardship facing actual children and

are instead used as displacive “politics of substitution” (Buckingham and Bragg, 2004: 4). Finally, this chapter examined alarmist discourses that girlhood, especially, inspires which inform many of the protectionist texts examined in the upcoming analytical chapters.

Chapter 5

'Saving the Children' - A Critique of how Protectionism Operates

5.1 Introduction

While the previous chapters examined the theoretical and historical contexts of major themes that underpin sexualisation discourse, this chapter begins the analysis of key narratives surrounding the romanticisation of the past upon which protectionism builds its discourse of the critique of sexualisation. Gail Hawkes and Danielle Egan argue that, almost universally, the sexualisation of tween girls is taken to be damaging, and an “unwanted consequence of the ‘modern world’” that cannot be avoided; the protection of the child, by adults, is “the only recourse” (2008: 193). The first section of this chapter will examine two tenets upon which protectionists rely in their arguments against sexualisation. The first is to romanticise the past and to construct sexualisation as a new phenomenon, as recognised in the preceding chapter. This therefore suggests that in the past girls were able to grow and explore their sexuality 'naturally', but that this is not the case anymore. It then moves on to examine how the romanticism of childhood innocence poses a contradiction whereby children are seen to naturally desire certain kinds of dress; however, this aesthetic and the acceptability of these desires is defined by adults. In the second section, this chapter will analyse how sexualisation can be seen in its varied forms throughout history; however, the particular protectionist discourse surrounding sexualisation discussed in this thesis is very particular to the 21st century. The last section will focus on the discourses put forward by protectionists and how these specifically have bled into the political arena.

Politicians then harness the anxieties surrounding sexualisation discourse, and the ways it is proposed to place children in danger.

5.2 The Romanticised Past and Natural Childhood as Created by Adults

> This is not about being prudish or old-fashioned. It's about remembering the simple pleasures of our own childhood - and making sure our children can enjoy them too.
>
> (Cameron, 2010)

Many protectionist discourses analysed in this thesis base their argument on the postulation that 'in the past' girls were allowed to grow into their natural sexualities organically and without outside influences, but that now things have radically changed, meaning that the organic nature of this process has now become interrupted by sexualisation. While the emergence of the internet and social media can definitely be read as adding to the pressures placed on girls, I would wish for a more nuanced analysis from protectionists with regard to these claims. By speaking of 'the past', which protectionists imply to have been freer of sexualising influences, I do not mean to be imprecise, but to deliberately highlight the vagueness present in anti-sexualisation discourses. “In the past it was adult women who felt the imperative to look ‘hot’ and ‘sexy’; now this imperative is being adopted by younger and younger girls who will inevitably face the same feelings of inadequacy and failure to live up to an unrealistic ideal”, stated the *British Review* (2010: 10). However, it did not define *exactly* when in the past this age existed, when girls were free of the pressures of sexualisation through dress. The problems with this argument are twofold and therefore it becomes rather suppositional. By proclaiming 'in the past', the *British Review* relieves itself of having to provide evidence of the precise period in which innocent, uninfluenced girlhood existed. Because this period is in fact

hypothetical, it can always be reinvented to serve the purpose of the writer. I would argue that this is rather convenient, as it can then be repeatedly referred to as a 'golden age' of childhood, while forgoing an analysis of whether girls may in fact always have encountered sexualisation in some form or, if indeed the lack of sexual education in 'the past' may have hindered girls from exploring their sexuality organically. The second issue with the *British Review*'s statement refers to women's "imperative to look 'hot' and 'sexy'". I would stress here the word "imperative", as it demonstrates how dress and display are often spoken of as something compulsive. Colloquial phrases such as 'fashion victim', or the '*pressure* to look good' are indicative of this, will be analysed in section 8.2. Furthermore, dress and femininity often become equated with sexuality, so girls who dress in a feminine way become seen as sexualised, as will be examined in section 7.3.

In addressing the *myth* of 'things were better before', it is worth noting that anti-sexualisation discourse relies on the idea that the parents' own childhood was 'innocent', free of sexualisation and commercialisation, and that they knew its value and enjoyed it to the full. However, this too is suppositional. Many parents interviewed by The *Scottish Review* (2010) acknowledged similarities between their own and contemporary childhoods. Looking back at their own desires to be 'grown up', at goods such as dress or gadgets and at peer pressures, one parent even noted that "nothing's changed really" (Buckingham et al., 2010: 46). I would argue that this suggests a contradiction. Even though parents identified similar pressures in their own childhoods to those faced by their own children, they recognise their own durability in having dealt capably with these same pressures but fear their damaging effects in their own children. This is understandable, as parents obviously want to be cautious and protect their children from harm; however, the practice of constructing something as being fine for oneself, but seeing it as creating problems for others, echoes the 'othering' that will be further discussed in Chapter 9 in the context of social class and age.

The anti-sexualisation discourses present in the sources analysed in this thesis often discuss how the sexualising goods now on the market, especially make-up and dress which will be discussed in Chapter 7, are 'inappropriate' in

the face of the 'naturalness' of childhood. This suggests notions by protectionists of 'age-appropriateness' as a universally constant concept. In Chapter 4, I argued that they discuss a very narrow, white, middle-class, heterosexual, Western idea of ‘natural childhood’ that only applies, and appeals, to the taste of a privileged minority (see for example Egan, 2013: 81). The protectionists cited in this thesis work from a position that their readership has a rather homogenous idea of what is provocative, what is appropriate and what is healthy. I would like to echo the *Scottish Review* which proposes that this is problematic and simplistic, given the diversity of human sexuality (Buckingham et al., 2010: 21).

Atkins Wardy's book *Redefining Girly* (2014) discusses what might be appropriate for girls to wear:

> A short skirt or revealing bikini or high heels are fine for an adult woman, but not for a little girl. Sexuality is a great thing, when it is on your own terms. Women need the freedom to express their sexuality without being labelled or shamed for it, and girls need the freedom to come into this age on their *own* terms. Sexy is great; sexualisation is unhealthy.
>
> (Atkins Wardy, 2014: 166, emphasis added)

While I would propose that Atkins Wardy's regulations are entirely reasonable from a parent's point of view, I find issue with her rhetoric and discourse. I would argue that the above list of “short skirt”, “revealing bikini” and “high heels” evokes an alarmist rhetoric. It establishes the items as emblems of inappropriate, sexualised dressing by girls. Without giving definitions, Atkins Wardy establishes the concept of “sexy” as 'free of will' and “sexualised” as 'forced upon'. What I would argue is problematic here is how Atkins Wardy first assigns herself the authority to define what is authentically desired dress in both adulthood and childhood, but then in a contradictory manner invites girls to come to wearing this on their own terms. The girls' “own terms” she refers to, I would however read to mean 'her terms'.

In a *Daily Mail* article titled 'Pre-Teen Beauty Addicts', two female writers describe an 11-year-old girl's beauty regime. Her mother comments on this:

> In many ways she isn't a child at all. Her obsessions are clothes, hair and make-up. She adores pink clothes and goes out wearing tiny tops showing her tummy, skinny jeans and her Ugg boots. When I was her age, I wore jeans and jumpers and enjoyed playing outside.
>
> (cited in Appleyard & Nicholas, 2007)

The above quote opens a discourse whereby clothing itself is seen to have an ‘adultifying’ effect on children. As soon as the girl dresses herself in “tiny tops, skinny jeans and Ugg boots”, she does not just become the wearer of the items, but also the “grotesque” (Egan, 2013: 99), that they represent. I read this to imply that “playing outside” becomes constructed as symbolic of a healthy childhood. More importantly, as this cannot be negotiated while wearing the identified and disapproved-of clothing, they become mutually exclusive.

I would propose that the supposition over the universality of 'what is appropriate' relies somewhat on a contradiction. In protectionist discourses it is often suggested that children naturally prefer to play with toys, and dress in clothing that is directed at their age group. They also suggest that the media interferes and corrupts this natural preference with inappropriate influences (APA, 2010: Brooks, 2008; Carey, 2011; Durham, 2009; Hamilton, 2008; Olfman, 2008; Oppliger, 2008; Rush and La Nauze, 2006; Papadopoulos, 2010; Tankard Reist, 2009; Wardy, 2014). What is deemed to be age-appropriate is, however, largely an adult construct, which is intertwined with concepts bound to place and social class. Herein, I would suggest, lies the contradiction: if allowed to grow up in a healthy manner, the child is seen to naturally gravitate towards age-appropriate goods, such as dress, toys or gadgets. These goods, however, are entirely constructed, produced and promoted as ‘natural’ by adults. The child is therefore expected to perform 'natural' childhood, when what is ‘natural’ is not constructed by the child, but by the adult. I would suggest that this goes beyond materials such as clothes and make-up. Even when children engage in imaginative play, there are themes that are seen by adults as 'natural' storylines and ones which may be deemed as 'inappropriate'. When these are overheard by adults, they may be responded to with 'Where has she/he picked that up?', to distance the 'natural' child from the 'unnatural' influence. As discussed in Chapter 4, the entire concept of childhood, what is appropriate and what is not,

is not only time and place specific, but more importantly, an adult construct.

Stephen Kline's book *Out of the Garden* (1993) highlights the notion of the idyllic childhood and prescribes a technology-free childhood surrounded by nature in one's own garden. The “changes in children's leisure pursuits (if indeed they can be proven to have occurred) are seen in isolation from other social developments” with the media being singled out as the one and only cause (Buckingham, 2000: 159). “Kline's 'garden'” notes Buckingham, “would appear to be literal as well as a figurative one; although where it leaves the millions of children who never had access to a garden is an interesting question” (Buckingham, 2000: 160). I would like to echo Buckingham's argument here, and to stress the paradox in this. The idea of the natural childhood shuts the most vulnerable children outside its myth. It leaves out children from financially disadvantaged backgrounds who grow up in inner cities and do not have idyllic outside space to play in, or live where it is too dangerous to do so.

“Young girls always want to dress up and emulate adults, and that's fine. But when the bulk of the range on offer is like this (two-inch heeled shoes for girl-children), then it is making our children grow up too fast” reported the *Daily Mail* in 2010, making three presumptions. Firstly, the *Daily Mail* raises concern that it is “the bulk” of young girls' clothing in stores which is sexualised. This speaks to the extent which sexualisation is feared by protectionists and seen as encompassing the majority of dress on offer. This, however, is open to interpretation and cannot be quantified, and hence directs the discourse over sexualisation into an alarmist realm. The second suggestion made is that the dress-up play of young girls could be seen as acceptable, however, only as long as it stays within the confines of “emulating adults”. I would argue that this is a problematic suggestion, since it implies a middle-class adulthood as opposed to the seemingly sexualised ‘celebrity’ adulthood with a lower-class aesthetic. This implication divides adults into 'appropriate' and 'inappropriate' ones, removing possibility for ambiguity, as will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 8. The final implication here, I would suggest, is that emulating the look of a sexualised individual with dress that is on offer 'grows-up' the child and shifts her interests in an inappropriate direction.

Hamilton (2008) also addressed the idea of children naturally growing into adulthood at their own pace, and criticised sexualisation for interfering with this. She explores this through writing about a digital make-over kit: "When the toy was trialled by a handful of small girls on a recent TV program, the make-overs these little girls chose made them look more like child prostitutes, with their kohl-rimmed eyes and disproportionately large red lips, than little girls at play" (Hamilton, 2008: 17). There are parallels here with Durham's description of a Cambodian child prostitute that will be discussed in Chapter 6. Hamilton's characterisation could also be compared with David Cameron's remarks on the "boob tube"; a rather outdated way of describing dress, as will be discussed below (Merrick, 2006). I would like to propose that "kohl-rimmed" is not a very contemporary way of describing eye liner either, which makes Hamilton's definition sound outdated in its alarm, rather than nuanced. The "disproportionately large lips" that she describes imply further the inappropriateness of the act of applying make-up. They are disproportionate to the girl's age, and so disproportionately sexualise her.

I propose that Hamilton's account reveals two problematic concepts: the first has to do with ability, the second with taste and prescribed childhood. The "kohl-rimmed eyes and disproportionately large red lips" could very well be telling of the girls' inexperience and their poor coordination with make-up, rather than a deliberate, sexualised attempt at emulating the look of a "prostitute". Hamilton laments the fact that the girls have lost their ability to play; however, I would argue that the uncoordinated, carefree smearing of make-up on one's face could be interpreted in a similar manner as children's messy outdoor play (advocated earlier by the mother in Appleyard & Nicholas (2007) and Kline (1993)), as well as a general fearlessness towards untidiness. I would argue that if the girls had produced perfectly contoured faces with skilled hints of enhancement, the level of competence would also have alarmed Hamilton, who could have then become anxious about the girls' possible lack of interest in anything else. The discourse around sexualisation often becomes alarmist as it fails to recognise its subjective bias. Fashion and beautification are seen as the *only* interests in a sexualised girl's life. Even if this is not true, the simplified discourse on sexualisation and its equation to sexualised dress, makes girls

appear one-dimensional in their interests and capabilities.

I would argue that there is a class dimension behind the makeover-kit not appealing to Hamilton's implied sense of taste. As will be discussed in Chapter 9, middle-class aesthetics are often placed as 'natural' by protectionists and hence children can, in a sense, be sexualised out of this natural preference. In his seminal work *Distinction* (1979) Pierre Bourdieu reminds us that ideas around taste and 'habitus' are often mistakenly seen as 'natural', as opposed to culturally developed. This can easily then be used for justifying social inequality, because it appears that some people are naturally disposed to a middle-class aesthetic while others are not (Bourdieu, [1979] 2010).

Hamilton opens up a conversation around how she does not see make-up as compatible with 'natural' childhood. She quotes Alana, an 18-year-old high school student interviewee. "Little girls are missing out on the *essence* of childhood. They're not outside and playing, they're wearing mascara and things" (2008: 25). Alana implies that make-up is not only irreconcilable with childhood but may in fact actively impair it by bringing it indoors from the 'natural' outdoors. This also creates a very clear binary: "wearing mascara" instantly negates "playing outside". This links closely with the earlier Appleyard and Nicholas (2007) quote and the discourse around women, the body and vanity discussed in Chapter 3. Historically and biblically there has been a stigma around make-up, specifically where women were seen to "hide behind false decoration" (Tseëlon, 1995: 12). In Chapter 9 I examine how middle-class taste romanticises 'nature'. These connect to the construct of make-up as artificial, which lies in contradiction with the child as 'natural'. As make-up is artificial, it could be suggested that anyone who wears make-up can be placed into the realm of the 'unnatural'. While Hamilton speaks about girl-children, I would like to draw the comparison with adult women as I see there to be a continuum. The made-up girl grows into a made-up adult woman who is pitted against the active, healthy woman who moves in nature. Her 'unnaturalness' becomes a sign of trickery and ability to deceive men in the hetero-romantic context. Ultimately, I would even argue that the pairing of a 'clean' face with nature and a 'made up' face with the unnatural echoes the Madonna-whore dichotomy where women are divided into fresh faced, virginal, active women and dishonest

whore-like, made-up women, consumed by vanity.

I see Hamilton's analysis as problematic[18], as it ignores issues of dexterity and taste, simplifies 'sexualisation' immensely, and raises questions about how we see, in this case, child prostitution. I propose that she builds too elementary a causal link by describing a child prostitute as someone with “kohl-rimmed eyes and disproportionately large red lips”. I would argue that building this visual link works in two detrimental ways. If “kohl-rimmed eyes” are what make a child a prostitute, then in return a child without kohl-rimmed eyes may not be identified as trafficked. It constructs trafficked girls who do not wear heavy make-up, or *look* like prostitutes, as somehow not in as serious a peril. Child sexual abuse and trafficking here become soft-pedalled as visual culture, rather than an illegal trade. This, I would propose, will be detrimental to the protection of children.

Similar to the quote from Alana above, Hamilton cites an interview with a teacher who expressed her dissatisfaction about girls’ clothing: “This isn't little girl's stuff, it's what 15-year-olds should be wearing” (2008: 21). Looking back to the earlier Hamilton quote about make-up and child prostitution, a third issue becomes apparent. She defines ideas of what children *should* be wearing and what childhood *should* be like. “Little girls are naturally drawn to a woman's world; however, this is no longer an organic process”, Hamilton states (2008: 17). This is a simple statement that begs a whole new set of questions. What is this “woman's world”? What is this “organic process” by which this is meant to happen, and most importantly, who is allowed to define how this organic process is to manifest itself? I argue that this suggests an 'othering' by protectionists, whereby she, Hamilton, accepts a position of authority in proposing what the organic process is by which girls may be drawn to a woman's world. Hamilton here captures a paradoxical position where “sexualisation is everywhere and unyielding but advocates have somehow escaped its influence and can help you fix the situation” (Egan, 2013: 47). I suggest that what makes this highly problematic is that Hamilton may see her

[18] I would like to link and point forward here to Chapter 9 and to the discussion around “symbolic violence” (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977: 4) in reference to the researcher's position of power. Bourdieu and Passeron argued that there is always an endemic risk for the researcher to legitimate and to impose their cultural understanding in an autocratic way through the production of codes and meaning (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977: 4).

ideas around this as natural and 'right', rather than situate them as specific to her white, Western, middle-class, heterosexual, hegemonic identity; her thesis being informed by these positions.

Hamilton continues, “Mothers complain to me all the time how hard it is to find a good range of age-appropriate clothes” (2008: 54). I would again like to raise the issue of the idea of “age-appropriate” being subjective to cultural and class related positionings. Hamilton proposes, “It's time to rethink what *we* want for our little girls... to ensure the richness of childhood isn't highjacked by a preoccupation with sex and shopping” (Hamilton, 2008: 20). I would argue that a contradiction arises here. On one hand Hamilton refers to an “organic process” that girls go through of their own accord, but then proposes that it is ultimately about what “*we”,* the parents, want their/our children to have. This relates to the above discussion of the 'child's own terms'. While children cannot, of course, have the same rights to decision making as adults, I want to highlight the discrepancy in this protectionist discourse. On one hand children are encouraged to express themselves “organically”; however, these wishes are only recognised as valid if they mirror the wishes of adults towards their children.

Brooks (2008) too explores the idea of adult persuasion of girls' desires; however, she is also very severe towards mothers.

> Women particularly channel their inner-little girl (the one who would have loved to have worn this stuff when she was that age) and buy our six-year-olds the little padded Bratz bralettes from Target, or leopard-skin print tops and leather skirts, heels and jewellery, and parade our kids in public.
>
> (Brooks, 2008: 79)

I read Brookes to imply, similarly to Hamilton above, that she discounts herself as a mother who would desire and consume these items but expresses worry over 'other' women who would behave this way, as will be discussed in Chapter 9. I would furthermore argue that there is a contradiction in Brookes' postulate. If the mother is playing out her *own* childhood fantasy, this means that there

once was, indeed, a girl-child whose 'natural' or 'organic' desire it would have been to own a Bratz bralette, or equivalent. As she – the mother – was not allowed nor able to do so in her own childhood, she is now making amends through the next generation and allowing her daughter to dress this way. Brooks, thus, suggests that no girl-child would ever 'organically' wish to own said bralette, while, in a contradictory way, builds her argument relying on the idea that there once was such a girl-child after all.

5.3 Sexualisation is not a new Phenomenon, but the Discourse is

> I used to love pretending to be my mum and would swirl around in front of her dressing room mirror wearing one of her outfits, but what we have now is a whole new, and unwelcome, universe.
>
> (Poulton, 2011)

Poulton's *Daily Mail* quote is typically illustrative of protectionist discourses that hark back to an undefined past in which childhood was innocent and not tainted with harmful influences. One of the central arguments by protectionists is that society and culture were not sexualised, or were less sexualised *before,* but have in recent times become more sexualised. As discussed in the introduction to this thesis, sexualisation is not unanimously defined, however. This means that it is sometimes hard to chart what exactly has become more sexualised, or in what way. Looking at how children were historically protected from sexual exploitation, a contradictory picture to the one to which protectionists turn, emerges. I would suggest that it is useful to recall at this point that it was only in the late nineteenth century that the age of consent for heterosexual intercourse was raised from 12 to 16. Eight or nine-year-old child prostitutes would also still have been common in mid-nineteenth century, according to Kehily and Montgomery (2002). This shows that while the sexualisation of mainstream

media or clothing may not have been a common occurrence, the way that children were sexually objectified and exploited was seen as, if not acceptable *per se*, then still excusable and legitimate or legal. The *Scottish Review* reminds us that "while the *public visibility* of the issue, and the terms in which it is defined, may have changed, sexualised representations of children cannot be seen merely as a consequence of contemporary consumerism" (2010, 10). The *Irish Review* develops this theme and stresses that they want to particularly highlight the new ways in which girls and their presentation have become the focus in discussions around sexualisation (Kiely et al., 2015: 28). In the subsequent chapters I would like to echo this, and throughout this thesis am investigating the ways in which concerns over girls and their wellbeing have been displaced from examinations of sexism or sexual exploitation by emphasis on how girls dress and wear make-up.

Some protectionist sources attempt to set a timeline for sexualisation in order to examine the changing nature of culture and society. In 2007 The APA noted, "Disney's female characters today (e.g.,The Little Mermaid, Pocahontas) have more cleavage, fewer clothes, and are depicted as "sexier" than those of yesteryear (e.g., Snow White, Cinderella)" (2007: 7). The *Little Mermaid* was released in 1989, meaning that it could be read that the APA sees the onset of the sexualisation of culture and of girls in the turn of the 1990s. I would read this to suggest that the alarm surrounding sexualisation may be of the new millennium, but the phenomenon itself is older. The *APA Review* continues:

> The sexualization of girls in clothing advertisements appeared at least as early as 25 years ago, with such advertisements as a girl in jeans, dropping her rag doll by her side, with the headline "13 going on 18" (1981), and the controversial Calvin Klein ad in which the 15-year-old Brooke Shields declared, "Nothing comes between me and my Calvins".
>
> (APA, 2007: 13)

I would like to begin an analysis of this quote by highlighting the rhetoric around time. The APA speaks of sexualisation beginning "at least" a few decades ago. This links to the point above about the vagueness of timelines. The examples of "the past" that the APA mentions refer to girls that are in their teens, so are just

outside of the majority of sexualisation of children discourses. However, these examples are also useful to look at because in cases of sexualisation there is often an implied continuum where the girl is seen as sexualised in her childhood and therefore engages in a hypersexualised display in her teens, inviting adult male interest, as previously discussed in Chapter 4. The APA does not define the term 'girl' in their *Review* and I would suggest that this becomes advantageous in raising alarm around sexualisation, as the term 'girl' is not only vague because it does not define age specifically, but is emotive in its reference to childhood.

The *APA Review* chose to use Brooke Shields as an example as she was seen as the quintessential sexualised girl-child in *Pretty Baby* (1978) and then grew into a vampy, sexualised teenager. She was seen as being 'ruined' as a child, which caused her to seek out hypersexualised displays later on in her girlhood. As in the example of sexualised teens above, the APA here speculates whether the onset of the phenomenon of sexualisation may even be further back, at the start of the 1980s. I would argue that finally the APA ends up contradicting itself by noting that “a focus on physical attractiveness is not new; over 3 decades ago, Unger (1979) argued that physical beauty can translate into power for girls” (APA, 2007: 17).

In her populist manual Oppliger (2008) discusses sexualisation discourse as a new phenomenon in American schools and addresses sanctioning practices within girls' peer groups. She begins by asserting that almost all teachers she interviewed, from middle school to college professors, expressed worries over how girls and young women dressed “now” (2008: 17-8). Oppliger interprets that “current fashions include tight, low-cut shirts that expose bras and cleavage and low-rise jeans that reveal thongs” (2008: 17-8). She then suggests that there is nothing new about revealing fashions, but that they are now being marketed to an increasingly younger demographic. I would argue that this reveals problematic assertions among protectionist discourses. Protectionists repeatedly express ideas of an innocent past where childhood and youth were uninfluenced and 'natural', as outlined above. Oppliger asserts that sexualisation is a new phenomenon; however, she is unable to offer any clear evidence for a timeline. She furthermore suggests that she finds it

“disturbing” that children's clothing ‘nowadays’ may be indistinguishable from adult clothing (Oppliger, 2008: 17-8). Thus, dress is established as something that is so intimately connected to girls' perceived sexual behaviour, that it becomes “disturbing” to compare it to adults' (Oppliger, 2008: 17-8).

Poulton addresses the timescale of sexualisation in the *Daily Mail* and places its origins somewhere in the seventies: “over the past three decades, Britain has experienced the deterioration of female ambition - and increasing sexualisation - as something more devastatingly powerful has blazed a trail: pretty but dumb girls” (Poulton, 2011). Further to reflecting on the onset of sexualisation, Poulton also speculates about how sexualisation affects the intellect of girls. Firstly, Poulton's assertions are not established by research, so we can only take her proposition as a rhetorical tool. Even so, I would propose that it becomes highly unsettling to the pursuit of gender equality that girls are shamed in such a fashion in a public forum. This thesis does not concern itself with the actual sexual behaviour of children, but rather the adult rhetoric surrounding the specific problem of sexualisation. I would, however, suggest that while this language is not in a forum where girls themselves would read it, it directly contributes to the problematic shaming properties of the sexualisation discourses. The cataclysmic power of sexualisation is implied here again, as will be discussed in Chapter 7. The sexualised, or “pretty” girl here is implied not to be capable of cerebration. Girls are constructed as being incapable of being well rounded, academically active, smart and capable beings whilst having an interest in dress also. “From the Page 3 girls of the seventies, the kiss and tell conquests of the eighties and Girl Power in the 90’s, young girls have had a series of defining, but ultimately limiting, role models for their world view” (Poulton, 2011). Here Poulton does give indication of how she places sexualisation for each decade; however, she does not address the times before the 1970s. That the article was written by journalist and broadcaster Sonia Poulton who was born in 1964 may give reason to why she forgoes the analysis of the decades before the seventies with the same tenacity as the subsequent ones. I argue that her comments leave doubt to whether sexualisation can so easily be identified as having begun at a particular time, or if indeed Poulton romanticises times before she was able to objectively investigate them as an

adult.

5.4 'Letting Children be Children'- Sexualisation on the Political Arena

> I am far from a prudish or frumpy mummy, trust me, but I believe in the sanctity of childhood and the right to the innocence that entails.
> (Poulton, 2012)

Ideas of “innocence” and the “sanctity of childhood” that Poulton refers to in an article in the *Daily Mail* in 2012*,* form the basis of protectionist anti-sexualisation discourses. Because childhood is implied to be inherently and universally innocent, it also makes for a firm footing in the political agenda of 'letting children be children'. To simplify the message and to appeal to readers and voters, media discourses on sexualisation are often made uncomplicated by taking on a highly sensationalised rhetoric. Karen Brooks captured the prevailing tone in her manual when she wrote, “Childhood today is disappearing; it's being consumed and consequently stolen from our children and us. It's being made sexy, toxic and hard work and we need to do something about it now” (2008: 34). Building a rhetoric where sexualisation is described as “stealing” childhood and “toxic” for them evokes feelings of alarm and uncertainty. Brookes also encourages adults to do something about it “now”, constructing sexualisation as outbreak-like that will grow exponentially if not dealt with as a matter of urgency. As will be discussed below, the term “toxic” is also used by former British Prime Minister David Cameron in his article on sexualisation, making ideas around harm a shared discourse. The *Irish Review* noted that the newspaper or magazine articles it had analysed shared the same tendencies towards sensationalism and “a strong investment in the notion of childhood innocence being eroded as evidenced by teenagers’ sexual

knowledge and activity" (Kiely et al., 2015: 58). The *Irish Review* also heavily criticised the media's sexualisation discourses for not questioning why the alarm is always about girls, or why culture upholds heterosexist and sexualised ideas in relation to young people, who themselves are rarely included in the conversation. Sexualisation discourses appear to focus more on exposure and explicitness as opposed to justice and equality (Kiely et al., 2015: 60) which make them politically polemic in the first place.

What makes the alarm surrounding the sexualisation of girls politically advantageous is that no 'responsible' adult is going to be *for* the sexualisation of girls. What I mean by this is that as sexualisation is constructed as a specific phenomenon which leads to harms, no accountable adult is going to place children in harm's way by backing sexualisation. The issue of sexualisation has united the political left and right, feminists and conservatives. Politically the issue has become a certain way to gain votes. This could already be seen in 2006, in then-conservative party leader David Cameron's electoral promises and the *Daily Mail's* reporting on them. Cameron's older daughter was two years old in 2006.

> David Cameron yesterday launched an attack on High Street stores for selling 'harmful and creepy' clothes which 'sexualise' young children... The Tory leader said retailers selling high-heeled shoes, 'boob tubes', padded bras and miniskirts to girls as young as six are harming society and robbing children of their innocence.
>
> (Merrick, 2006)

Echoing similar language to that used in reporting on conflict or war, the *Daily Mail* describes Cameron's actions as "launching an attack" on High Street stores for selling "harmful and creepy" clothing. The wording describes the speed and aggression with which the resolution to the problem of sexualisation needed to be found. I see moral panic discourses, as are examined in this Chapter, reflected in his rhetoric (Cohen, 1972). Establishing sexualisation as something that needs to be "attacked" before it can take hold suggests that sexualisation is an active force that needs more than simple defence or education to be combated.

Four years later, in February 2010, the *Daily Mail* published an article written by David Cameron (who became Prime Minister three months later) in which he compared sexualisation to "toxic waste" leading to physical illness, through which he established his fight against this metaphorical pandemic. "Premature sexualisation is like pollution. It's in the air that our children breathe... it doesn't matter if childhood asthma levels and bronchitis reach epidemic proportions. We slap controls on emissions. We penalise businesses that dump toxic waste" (Cameron, 2010). He goes onto appeal to parents to fight for their children's innocence and argues that sexualised marketing can harm the minds, but also the bodies of children. What I see as problematic here is that no examination of the ways in which the causal link of sexualisation would hurt children is undergone. The "toxic waste" comparison, though metaphoric, paints a graphic picture of sexualisation's harm. Cameron ends the article by presenting a series of rules to protect children from premature sexualisation and establishes the Conservative Party as superior in leading the Government in its quest to combat sexualisation (Cameron, 2010). Later the same year, Alan Johnson, the then-Home Secretary and Labour MP, commissioned the *British Review* (2010) in the run up to the 2010 general election, as the Labour Party was behind in polls and subsequently lost the election. Considering how vocal the then conservative party leader Cameron was on the issue of sexualisation of children, this suggests that both sides of the political spectrum in Britain were courting votes by raising the issue.

A year later, in 2011 Cameron's fight against sexualisation concretised as he commissioned the report titled "Let Children be Children" which was to "stop retailers selling inappropriate clothes for pre-teens and shield children from sexualised imagery across all media" (Guardian, 2011). It came as a response to the Mumsnet[19] campaign "Let Girls be Girls" a year earlier. The publishing of Cameron's report was also reflected in news reporting. Both the *Daily Mail* and the *Guardian*, who stand at the opposite ends of the political spectrum, reported with equal alarm. Tanith Carey, whose article I will return to in the section on make-up in Chapter 8, wrote in the *Daily Mail:* "In the week of a devastating report on the sexualisation of children, the Mail pays a disturbing visit to a

[19] Mumsnet is a British internet forum facilitating conversation between parents about their children. It was founded in 2000.

makeover and manicure salon for three-year-olds" (Carey, 2011a). *The Guardian* wrote in an editorial opinion piece which stated:

> The sexualisation of children should be a warning to the adult world. Its real significance is as an indicator of a deeper cultural shift... There is real public anxiety here, as the influential parenting website Mumsnet "Let girls be girls" campaign showed. And with good reason.
>
> (Guardian, 2011)

Both newspapers used alarmist language, such as "devastating report" and "disturbing visit", mirroring anxieties that parents might have with regard to sexualisation. In this rhetorical, alarmist model, sexualisation should be seen as a "warning", which, if not acted upon, would compromise the innocence and happiness and ultimately the safety of children. The discourse harnesses the false idea, discussed in Chapter 4 and earlier in this chapter, that in the past children were not sexualised, and now, after a "deeper cultural shift", they have become so. While I do not suggest that women do not experience pressures with regard to their appearance, and it appears that in this case protectionists observe these pressures to come down in age range through the beauty parlour aimed at girl-children, the discourse above lacks nuance. The above *Daily Mail* quote simplistically implies that girls would *only* suffer from being offered beauty treatments and that they *only* experience pressure in that particular experiential scenario. What I am particularly unsettled by here is the vehemence of the rhetoric and would like to argue that if words like "devastating" and "disturbing" are used in the context of a beauty parlour, what rhetoric may be left to describe more destructive phenomena? What the discourse specifically achieves here is to raise an alarm that will ensure political support for those who also recognise the "deeper cultural shift" and are prepared to tackle it "now" (Guardian, 2011).

Another year later, with Cameron now Prime Minister, the *Daily Mail* wrote that he "has made clear his personal commitment to tackling the exploitation of children through advertising and marketing" (Daily Mail Reporter, 2012). Cameron was described as committing to the cause "personally", thus evoking sympathies and support from other parents. As the parent of girls,he

had an especially vested interest that could be played upon to appeal to other parents. Sexualisation was established as a harm that deserves a politician's particular and intimate intervention. Without the special commitment children would be “exploited” by “advertising and marketing”. Using polemic rhetoric when reporting on physical sexual exploitation the *Daily Mail* draws parallels between physical sexual exploitation and marketing, much like the *Australian Review's* title: *Corporate Paedophilia*. I want to draw a comparison here with ideas reviewed in Chapter 9 on class where adults divide themselves into two camps: those who commit to resolving sexualisation and 'other' adults who are part of the problem of sexualisation. While I do not belittle the importance of providing children protection, I want to critique the emotiveness of the rhetoric and express worry over the effectiveness of the approach.

Reflecting on the 2006 *Daily Mail* Merrick quote, I would like to pay attention to the particular items of dress deemed sexualising. Here I argue that Cameron was definite with his description of sexualisation, providing a list of specific pieces of clothing, “high-heeled shoes”, “boob tubes”, “padded bras” and “miniskirts” and also remarked that these items are too provocative to be worn by “girls as young as six”. I will go on to address the problems posed by these specific kinds of guidelines in Chapter 10, but they are worth noting here. By listing items in this fashion, Cameron was able to give concrete examples of sexualisation which fed into an already established discourse around harmful sexualised clothing items. The problem I identify with this approach is that it constructs sexualisation as a danger concerning explicitness of the items of clothing, placing blame on retailers and advertisers for marketing these items. It does not, however, address gendered inequality present in wider society or the degrading language discussed in Chapter 10 used to create a discourse of shame towards certain types of girls' clothing, which, I argue will ultimately effect girls themselves.

These newspaper articles, discussed above, date from between 2006 and 2012, which on the one hand suggests that this particular political discourse around sexualisation was part of a wider political project around the positioning of certain value-based issues. However, it also proposes that sexualisation as a threat does not expire. In fact, the discourse around sexualisation appears to

change very little, if at all. In *The Lolita Effect* (2009), published three years after Cameron's first interview and three years before the second, Durham also waged the fight against the “boob tube”, or “tube top” (Durham, 2009: 21). I propose that the highlighted items of girls' clothing come in and out of trend and feature physically on and off the shelves of clothing stores according to changing seasons. However, Cameron is mentioning them specifically for their ability to evoke a sexualised image. Whether these items of dress were ever marketed to “six-year-olds” or are still being sold, as trends have moved on, becomes irrelevant. The sexualised image of alarm they create, lives on in the minds of the public, and helps in Cameron's fight evermore.

This fight against sexualisation is advantageous politically, as the combatting of sexualisation will never really be over and will thus always need leadership by a representative. Six years after launching his initial attack, then-Prime Minister Cameron re-confirmed his “personal commitment” to this issue, showing that his fight against sexualisation was long standing and sustained (Daily Mail Reporter, 2012). It could be argued that the Tories took advantage of Cameron's popular image while the party was in coalition in order to promote this platform as a wider social issue; however, his personal commitment to the fight against sexualisation also established him as politically important in the long term because it was him *personally*, who would ensure that the innocence of children will be preserved. Cameron, especially as the father of daughters, could thus be seen as connecting with families everywhere and taking active steps to protect children against heightened, systemic and commercialised sexualisation and the protectionist anxieties therein.

It appears, however, that he ran into the same problem as many others. Prime Minister Cameron's “war on the commercialisation and sexualisation [had] failed, according to parents” reported the *Daily Mail* in 2012. Because sexualisation is not a specified phenomenon with clear boundaries and can hence be declared as either 'happening' or 'not happening', it is very difficult to combat to everyone's satisfaction, or in any finite or quantifiable way. What I would like to argue that this approach may achieve, however, is to establish a prevailing association between certain types of girls' clothing and disapproval. This, I fear may very quickly lead to the girls who wear them becoming

castigated as well. In essence these girls then become seen as part of the problem of sexualisation, rather than victims of sexualisation.

5.5 Summary

This chapter analysed protectionism specifically and explored how it operates within sexualisation discourses. I began by examining protectionist illustrations of the 'past' which was constructed as more innocent, and a time and lives of children were safer (which bears very little relation to historical accuracy). This led to a discourse on what 'naturally' innocent childhood means. Often protectionists in the sources refer back to children's 'natural' desires or tastes; however, these aesthetics are created by adults. This poses a contradiction whereby if children desire middle-class aesthetics they are constructed as 'natural', however if not, they may become established as sexualised, 'unnatural' and therefore problematic. This chapter then moved onto examine where the onset of sexualisation is placed within protectionist discourses. There was no clear agreement on this, however it appeared that the protection of children through legislation had become stronger over time. This chapter concluded with an analysis of the political advantages that protectionist discourses on sexualisation bring. Anti-sexualisation can be beneficial in establishing credentials in protecting children from harm, though I propose, it displaces the protection of girls specifically with a public discourse on decency and the protection of children with an analysis of dress. I would argue that what makes these discourses problematic, is that political responses to sexualisation and the media's reporting on them tend to use the sexual imagery in the discourse as a polemic tool, rather than as an opportunity to discuss the sexism or misogyny in wider society.

Chapter 6

Sexualisation and the Causal Link as Constructed by Protectionists

6.1 Introduction

This chapter will introduce an analysis of sexualisation discourse in the three types of protectionist texts addressed here. It will examine two aspects of these texts; firstly, the chapter will review the definitions of sexualisation given by protectionists and secondly, it will analyse the causal link, proposed in the texts, between sexualisation and harm.

While there are many similarities between the various protectionist definitions of sexualisation, such as their establishment of sexualisation as harmful and an imposition on childhood innocence, especially for girls, problems arise when definite agreement is not reached and ambiguity obscures the discourse. This carries through to the analysis of the causal link as argued here. The three types of protectionist texts analysed all propose that sexualisation causes harms, ranging from bad body image to the threat of homicide; however, how sexualisation produces these outcomes appears inconclusive.

One of the discourses underpinning this thesis across the different forms of text is that of social class; specifically, the power distribution between middle-class protectionist writers, and the girls they describe as sexualised. While class will specifically be addressed in Chapter 9, I wanted to highlight early on how ideas around what is seen as appropriate behaviour are established and discussed.

6.2 Protectionist Definition of Sexualisation

The introduction to this thesis briefly defined the term 'sexualisation' and outlined some interpretations around this term. These were developed in the methodology chapter, which touched upon definitions for sexualisation provided by populist manuals. This section will now analyse these definitions in detail. Two themes emerge within these definitions: firstly, that sexualisation is imposed upon children by adults and secondly, that sexualisation becomes an all-encompassing force and the sole identifying characteristic of a person.

The *Irish Review* (2015) proposes that sexualisation began to be routinely defined in the mid-2000s (Kiely et al., 2015: 52). At that time the *Australian Review* (2006), the earliest analysed here, described sexualisation as “the act of giving someone or something a sexual character” and that it furthermore “captures the slowly developing sexuality of children and moulds it into stereotypical forms of adult sexuality” (Rush and La Nauze, 2006: 1). The *British Review* (2010) suggests that sexualisation is “the imposition of adult sexuality onto children and young people before they are capable of dealing with it, mentally, emotionally or physically” (Papadopoulos, 2010: 23). Similarly, the *Irish Review* defines sexualisation as having occurred when a child's “physical maturity outstrips their emotional maturity” (Kiely et al., 2015: 52).

Both the *APA* (2007) and the *British Review* (2010) suggest that sexualisation has occurred when “a person’s value comes only from his or her sexual appeal or behaviour, to the exclusion of other characteristics” (APA, 2010: 1; Papadopoulos, 2010: 25). The writer of the populist manual *The Sexualisation of Childhood* (2008), Sharna Olfman, begins her definition by stating that sexualisation has occurred when the girl’s value comes only from her sexual appeal; however, she also suggests that sexualisation teaches girls that their “primary worth is in their ability to be sexual objects for male pleasure” (2). She continues by stating that sexualisation teaches “boys that sex and violence are conjoined and that girls and women should be valued primarily for their ability to give them sexual pleasure”, going on to say that sexualisation isolates “sexuality from personhood and [compromises] the capacity for intimate and committed relationships”, treating “children as if they are sexually mature

because of the outward trappings of wardrobe, makeup, or precocious puberty" (Olfman, 2008: 2).

Like Olfman, the *Australian* and *British Reviews* focus on sexualisation as a force that is inflicted from the outside by using words "teach", "give", "impose" and "capture". Specifically, they seem to imply that sexuality is "captured" and sexualisation is imposed by adults onto 'innocent' children who do not yet possess a sexual character of their own. This appears persuasive and constructive to the protection of children, who are positioned as deserving to grow into their authentic sexual selves at their own organic pace. I would argue, however, that the authoritarian approach is problematic despite this seemingly unproblematic positioning. When sexualisation is seen as an outside force, it implies that it does not intersect with girls' own sexuality and/or wider culture. It renders it as wholly bad and hence not in need of any nuanced interrogation.

The *British Review* does note that the idea of sexualisation must not be indiscriminately applied to any expression of sexuality made by children, thus rendering them all as problematic (Papadopoulos, 2010: 23). The *Review* however relies on a questionable hypothesis, that commercial media can destroy what would otherwise be natural, healthy sexual development in children, as noted by Buckingham (2011). Duschinsky (2013) also argues that the *British Review* frames sexualisation in rather essentialist terms, as a threat to the innocence of girls. The *Daily Mail* discussed sexualisation in a similar manner to the *British Review*, regretting sexualisation's power of giving "girls an image of themselves which is based solely around their physical appearance" (Tozer and Horne, 2011). The word "solely" becomes a precarious part of the discourse here. The APA later in their *Review* suggests the consequence of presenting girls in such a one-dimensional way "rather than as complicated people with many interests, talents, and identities" is that "boys and men may have difficulty relating to them on any level other than the sexual" (APA, 2010: 28). These ideas around the Madonna-whore dichotomy are further expanded on in sections 7.3 and 8.5.

I would argue that the discourse around the words "solely", and "only", as cited above in the *APA* and *British Review*, as well as Olfman's use of "primary",

does two kinds of harm. Firstly, sexualisation is rendered as extremely simplistic, but all-encompassing. A nuanced interrogation of the term and the surrounding socio-political concepts and real world-implications are missing. As protectionist sexualisation discourses speak of girls simply as innocent or sexualised, all other characteristics and societal dimensions are excluded. Girls become sexualised through the discourse itself. Sexualisation becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. Sexualisation, or lack thereof, becomes the standard against which girls are measured. Ultimately, I would argue, it compromises girls' characteristics as multifaceted, opinionated individuals and instead reduces them to stereotypical symbols, incapable of desire or thought.

The APA quote above raises another problem within sexualisation discourses, which is the gendered aspect regarding how actively sexualisation is produced and reproduced. Girls “are seen” as sexualised and boys “may have difficulty” relating to girls as anything other than sex objects. This passive language renders sexualisation without a clear origin and relieves men of their part in this process. Boys are not discussed as actively interpreting girls as sex objects and they are not asked to treat all genders with respect towards the complexity of their person, regardless of how difficult this may be.

Steering the discourse away from the categorical ideas above, the *Scottish Review* (2010) begins its definition of 'sexualisation' by attesting to how problematic definitions are. It looks at goods “that emphasised body parts and shapes culturally associated with adult sexuality; and goods that duplicated styles currently considered fashionable for adults” (Buckingham et al., 2010: 5). However, it notes a complication with defining sexualisation. Protectionist texts, it identifies, often failed “to distinguish between material that is ‘sexualised’ as opposed to ‘sexual’ in nature” (Buckingham et al., 2010: 4). The authors note how the parents they interviewed for their review identified sexualisation as “harmful”; but what exactly this term meant was uncertain: “There was no unanimous response to any of the 'sexualised' products we presented to [parents], which revealed the difficulty of coming to agreement about the meaning of any single item” (Buckingham et al., 2010: 7).

Goods that referred directly to sex (such as a vibrator) were considered sexual in nature, while 'sexualised' goods (such as make-up directed at girl-

children) were more ambiguous since their definition also depended on other factors, such as the context within which they were presented. While the team deduced from their research that there were ‘sexualised’ goods aimed at children on the market, there were relatively few of them. They concluded that while “children might purchase goods in contexts surrounded by sexual imagery”, it was important to stress “that these products were not necessarily aimed at them” (Buckingham et al., 2010: 4). This means that while society in general might have become increasingly sexualised, it did not mean that there had been an increase in sexualised goods specifically aimed at children.

There are considerable difficulties within protectionist logic, in that it does not provide “examples that would help to explain what a sexual *but not sexualised* representation would be like; and by default, the two concepts seem to become conflated” (Buckingham et al., 2010: 13, emphasis in original). I argue that this stems from a traditional supposition that girls do not desire sex, as noted in Chapter 4, and that their sexual display is therefore by default sexualised and passive, as opposed to sexual and active. This was examined in Chapter 4 as a contradiction in social hygiene literature according to which girls naturally desired affection and not sex, but if left to their own devices and untrained would become promiscuous (Egan and Hawkes, 2008: 70).

This conflation runs through protectionist discourses, addressed in Chapter 5, that rely on the idea that girls must be allowed to grow organically into their authentic sexual selves without the influence and interference of sexualisation, but that any interest in sexual matters is seen as a sign of sexualisation. Chapter 7 further addresses the problematic discourse in protectionist literature which interprets interest in anything that goes onto the body as an interest in sexualisation. This poses the question: what would non sexualised interest in make-up, hair and dress look like? Or, indeed what would non-sexualised sexuality look like?

Buckingham et al. have found these conflations and contradictions to be commonplace in their research on sexualisation. Protectionist discourse routinely adopts the same criteria for the definition of what is 'sexualised' or 'sexually objectifying' content. “One study codes ‘women dancing sexually’, another looks at whether women are ‘suggestively dressed’, while another looks

at whether we see athletes' breasts or their faces" (Buckingham et al., 2010: 20). The approach taken by the Scottish research team, who systematically examine the conflations present in protectionist anti-sexualisation discourses can be compared with 'liberal' academic arguments such as those by Smith (2010) and Attwood (2006) who have analysed discourses around pornography and the sexualisation of culture. I found this to be useful in this thesis as it allows me to clearly identify the inconsistency in the protectionist argument and advocate, instead, for nuanced academic interrogation of the problem of sexualisation.

When concepts are taken from such a broad range of situations the argument loses focus. On the one hand it portrays sexualisation as something that is all encompassing and ever-present in women's and girls' lives. However, it also makes it appear as if sexualisation is simply a discourse based on moral panic and that it is possible to read into anything that women do, or onto how they are portrayed. These conflations, I argue, are very advantageous in capturing media attention, which is then able to displace its focus onto sexualisation rather than on structural sexism or sexual objectification of the female body. I would argue that this discourse very much invites disapproval which ultimately may lead to girls having their behaviour and dress sanctioned in the hopes of curbing sexualisation.

6.3 What Causes Sexualisation – What does Sexualisation Cause?

The *Irish Review* notes that in sexualisation discourses they had studied, the topic came up within the context of "suicide, child pornography on the Internet, sexual abuse, paedophilia, illegal drug use, prostitution, broadcasting, eating disorders, education and child trafficking" (Keily et al., 2015: 52). Egan agreed with this and noted that protectionist authors suggest that sexualisation creates a future of "self-doubt", "a lack of ability to form intimate relationships" and that it

“fosters self-destructive impulses such as binge eating, sexting, pregnancy, sex with older men, prostitution, and even suicide” (Egan, 2013: 21). These are characterised as “elastic discourses” (Keily et al., 2015: 60) by the *Irish Review.* “Such discourses... cover any kind of sexual expression and a whole set of concerns about different issues (e.g. body image, sexual violence) as effects and evidence of sexualisation” (Keily et al., 2015: 60). There may not be exact agreement on the definition of sexualisation in the examined sources, but there is agreement on where sexualisation comes from and how it affects girls, bringing about their own sexualisation. There are both material and immaterial origins of sexualisation, and these are often listed together in an impactful way that makes direct causal links between various phenomena. These rarely occur in newspaper articles due to the type of language used, but in populist manuals and government reviews, the origins of sexualisation are often listed, in a rather fast-paced manner, over the opening pages. I would like to present a typical rhetorical trope of long lists used to establish a causal link between sexualisation and harm. This establishes an alarmist tone and discourse, a provocative approach that omits building an argument using evidence and instead appeals to parents' concerns over the safety of their children.

The *APA Review* (2007) begins to define the phenomenon of sexualisation by listing goods that may harm girls on its very first page:

> There are many examples of the sexualization of girls and girlhood in U.S. culture. Toy manufacturers produce dolls wearing black leather miniskirts, feather boas, and thigh-high boots and market them to 8- to 12- year-old girls (LaFerla, 2003). Clothing stores sell thongs sized for 7– to 10-year-old girls (R. Brooks, 2006; Cook & Kaiser, 2004), some printed with slogans such as “eye candy” or “wink wink” (Cook & Kaiser, 2004; Haynes, 2005; Levy, 2005a; Merskin, 2004); other thongs sized for women and late adolescent girls are imprinted with characters from Dr. Seuss and the Muppets... (Levy, 2005a; Pollett & Hurwitz, 2004). In the world of child beauty pageants, 5-year-old girls wear fake teeth, hair extensions, and makeup and are encouraged to “flirt” onstage by batting their long, false eyelashes (Cookson, 2001).
>
> (APA, 2007: 1)

As we see from the quotation, goods, behaviours and representations are listed

without clear context and are implied to be inherently damaging to girls. I would argue that the list acts mainly as a rhetorical tool. When all the various 'harmful' concepts are grouped tightly together, it makes a bigger impact. The problem of sexualisation becomes seemingly tangible and substantial, and the reader is invited to add their own experiences and observations to the list. The sources as a rule fail to expand on *how* these goods cause sexualisation and how this leads to harm. The *Scottish Review* uses the same listing tool to demonstrate their criticism of the *APA Review*.

> Music videos are condemned for failing to show 'the concept of a whole person involved in a complex relationship with another whole person' (7), while dolls are condemned for not displaying 'healthy', 'normal' sexuality (14). Likewise, the report moves seamlessly from references to 'an objectifying television program like *Charlie's Angels'* to (in the next sentence) a discussion of pornography, as though there were no significant differences between them (29).
>
> (Buckingham et al., 2010: 21-2)

Central to the problematic with the APA and other protectionist texts lies the fact that "anything from pornography through to shampoo advertisements" (Buckingham et al., 2010: 20) can be placed as a sexualising medium. The APA's practice of grouping findings of varied material from very different studies together complicates the issue of defining sexualisation. I see this simplifying exercise to be very similar to the media treatment of girls who are established as 'only' innocent or 'only' sexualised, ignoring complex idiosyncrasies of their person, as addressed above. The practice should demonstrate that sexualisation is not one elementary issue that can be easily identified and confronted. Instead, I would argue the grouping together makes sexualisation appear as a uniform but simultaneously completely overwhelming force. This easily renders the discourse around sexualisation as without tenacity and susceptible to alarm.

In her populist manual *What's Happening to Our Girls?* (2008) Maggie Hamilton discusses a case study of child sexual abuse immediately before leading her reader into a discourse of commercial sexualisation. She builds a

causal link with sexualisation and a decline in imagination (56), slowing cognitive development (57), plummeting self-esteem (57), self-harm (58), cosmetic surgery (59), girls being socialised as objects (60), performance culture (62) and sexual assault (63). Sexual assault, according to Hamilton, is taking on new forms, as sexualised performance culture has made sexual offenders less empathetic towards girls and justifies their behaviour by referring to the sexually provocative presentation, ergo dress (Hamilton, 2009: 64). This idea of provocation by girls and their dress is also alluded to in the *APA Review* which sees sexualisation having negative effects “on others with whom girls have interpersonal relationships (boys, men, adult women), and on U.S. societal institutions” (APA, 2007: 4). This is highly problematic as the discourse on sexualised performance culture here comes to replace a discourse that would focus on the perpetration of sexual assault.

In the opening section of *Getting Real: Challenging the Sexualisation of Girls* (2009), Melinda Tankard Reist moves very quickly through topics that harm girls which appear unrelated and pulls them together under the umbrella of sexualisation, so implying a causal link. Sexualisation is paired with plastic surgery (8, 14), pornography (7), 'Playboy' or lads' mags in general (6), objectification (8), body dissatisfaction (9, 10), sexualised music videos (13), sexting (13), teen pregnancy - which is not seen as derivative of sexualisation, but is still mentioned together with sexualisation, thus implying a link (13) -and eating disorders (14). Tankard Reist discusses make-up as inherently sexual, rather than as a form of self-expression or creativity (17) and builds a causal link between the application of make-up and sexual activity by girls. This will be discussed in its own section in Chapter 8. Finally, a link is built by Tankard Reist between sexualisation and sexual abuse, physical and mental harm in the third world (19) and rape and sexual harassment (Tankard Reist, 2009: 20). These topics are addressed in more detail by Tankard Reist later in the book; however, within these analyses, their link is not established. They are left without context and their association with each other unclear. I would here like to echo Clarissa Smith's analysis of this kind of pairing within “pornographication” where she expressed concern over the conflation and alleged obviousness of said connections (2010: 106). I would argue that the pulling together of different

phenomena under the umbrella of 'sexualisation' also serves as a rhetorical tool, as the word itself invokes alarm. Smith suggests that the rhetorical tool is built “precisely so that the critics can avoid any of the particularities of sexually explicit media” (2010: 106). This means that the phenomenon of sexualisation does not need to be interrogated or located within a specific historical or cultural context relating to its production or consumption. This way, the solutions that protectionists may suggest for sexualisation do not have to take a stance within a complex political landscape.

In this thesis' analysis of the sources, the concept of sexualisation came up in contexts spanning subjects from lip gloss to human trafficking (Durham, 2008: 22-3) and was often used interchangeably with sexual objectification or sexual violence (Tankard Reist, 2009: 20). When it is not exactly clear what is being studied, the results will be highly subjective, as discussed under the 'unit of analysis' in the Methodology. The *APA Review* sees “the sexualization of girls as occurring along a continuum, with sexualized evaluation (e.g., looking at someone in a sexual way) at the less extreme end, and sexual exploitation, such as trafficking or abuse, at the more extreme end” (APA, 2007: 1). While it seems to be useful to create this idea of a continuum, as it shows how one societal aspect leads to another in a knock-on effect, and how these concepts are not unconditional, it can also, I suggest, produce the opposite effect. In some ways, grouping sexual objectification and trafficking under the same umbrella term of 'sexualisation' removes the distance between them and causes alarm at the lighter end, while seemingly reducing the seriousness at the more severe end of the spectrum. It also renders the entire concept of sexualisation so general that it becomes difficult to pinpoint where exactly the problem originates.

6.4 The Causal Link

The very basis of anti-sexualisation discourses can be found in the practice of building a causal link between sexualisation and harm. As examined above, protectionist literature claims that sexualisation leads, directly or indirectly, to various problems that encroach on healthy development, especially that of girls. This section will discuss these causal links in three parts where discourses are grouped together thematically. The first focuses on body image and eating disorders, the second on sexual behaviour and teenage pregnancy and the last on sexual crimes. They all aim to demonstrate how the causality is always implied, but that the discourse is missing an argument based on evidence. Duits and Van Zoonen (2006) and Egan (2013) stress the idea that popular culture is multi-layered and that a discourse that relies on building a simplistic causal link between sexualisation and harm ends up over-simplifying issues, not constructively negotiating them. The *Irish Review* critiqued discourses on sexualisation: “Eating disorders, depressions, suicide and sexual violence are blamed on it, whilst lacking systematic evidence to verify this link” (Keily et al., 2015: 51). Egan pinpoints the fact that within the anti-sexualisation discourses dress starts to function in a “metonymic fashion”, where it becomes “equated with action and later subjectivity (thong = sexualised action = sexualised girlhood)” (Egan, 2013: 91).

6.4.1 Sexualisation and Body Image

Girls' poor body image and the prevalence of eating disorders are often seen as direct results of sexualisation. The *Irish Review* identified that this link was often made in Irish print media (Keily et al., 2015: 57), and the *Daily Mail* reported on it with alarm, citing Dr Katherine Rake, chief executive of the Family and Parenting Institute. Rake suggested that sexualisation “results in low self-esteem, eating disorders and all sorts of psychological and health issues” (cited in Tozer and Horne, 2011). This was preceded by Durham, citing clinical

psychologist Mary Pipher's 1994 *Reviving Ophelia*: “Mediated images of sexuality have been identified as perilous to teens' healthy development, especially for girls” (Durham, 2008: 28). I would argue that taking this peril at face value is highly simplistic. Illnesses such as eating disorders are complex and deserving of a more nuanced discourse than that offered in populist discourses on sexualisation. Other factors, such as social positions or 'double pressure', which will be discussed in depth in Chapter 7, are foregone.

What makes Durham's account especially simplistic, is that Pipher addresses the complex societal pressures that girls face and how they affect their physical and mental health. Pipher (1994) considers family, school, environmental, financial and sexist influences to build a social critique that examines the results of the various impacts through the harms with which girls battle. Out of this extensive study, Durham, however, has only pulled out “images of sexuality”, thus highlighting one aspect over the various issues Pipher included in her inquiry (Durham, 2008: 28). What I would like to argue is that while there is ample discourse in academia around causality, and what affects “teens' healthy development” (Durham, 2008: 28), often protectionist anti-sexualisation literature appears to forgo this for the sake of a simplified and provocative discourse on sexualisation.

From the very beginning of her populist manual edited collection, Sharna Olfman predicts a direct link between sexualisation and a bleak future for a girl:

> When I witness a little girl who is sexualised – dressed in a crop top with a provocative phrase written across the backside of her shorts, her lips glossed and her hair streaked – her playful, curious nature is palpable just beneath the surface. But when a girl... is not rescued from these soul-destroying scripts, in 15 years they may become... a young woman with damaged self-esteem and an eating disorder.
>
> (Olfman, 2008: 3)

In this introduction Olfman describes a direct link between the wearing of a crop top, shorts with a provocative phrase across the back and lip gloss, which are seen as inherently sexualising, and damage self-esteem and cause eating disorders; however, she offers no description of exactly how one leads to the

other. Later in the edited collection Dr Margot Maine presents evidence of how media exposure to sexually presented female bodies – sexualisation – has led to girls adopting disordered eating habits in order to fit the stereotype (Maine, 2008: 63). What is problematic in Maine's discourse is that she states childhood causes of eating disorders - "biological predisposition, psychological vulnerability, painful emotional or developmental experiences, family dysfunction, psychological stressors, and cultural pressures" (Maine, 2008: 66) - but fails to define what sexualisation is and why sexualisation, specifically, becomes the most prevailing causation of eating disorders. Sexism does not enter Maine and Olfman's discourses at all, which I would argue is problematic. The myriad societal, familial and psychological factors listed above are arguably very complex to negotiate or to solve, and hence sexualisation becomes a convenient factor upon which to displace the causes of eating disorders. The specific avoidance of sexism as a cause for eating disorders, I propose, derives from a post-feminist thinking amongst the protectionists, that establishes men's influence in maintaining patriarchal power as no longer active. This means that girls would police their bodies themselves (Foucault, 1977). In a contradictory manner heterosexist society establishes slim bodies as normal (Grogan, 2017) and desirable, promoting trends of formfitting clothing through media and advertisements, while it simultaneously discredits and ridicules girls for dieting. I would argue that this is a form of gaslighting and leads to girls feeling as if they are 'set up to fail'. Ideas around this specific dichotomy will be discussed in Chapter 7, under theories of 'double pressure'.

What I would like to stress is the missing link between "the crop top", the shorts "with a provocative phrase written across the backside", the "glossed lips", "streaked hair" and eating disorders. It appears that while a causal link between various phenomena and eating disorders is built by Maine, the initial cause, the dress and representation of the girl, creates two kinds of discursive harm. Firstly, while I am not saying that sexualised dress is not problematic, I want to criticise how it is met with instant alarm and often removed, thus signalling to the girl that her choices are serious and problematic. In comparison similar situations involving boys do not create the same consternation, as will be discussed in the next chapter (Buckingham et al., 2010: 50). I would argue that

the combined act of removing dress from girls and the seriousness with which it is done sends the message that it is ultimately the dress that brings about the harmful eating disorder. Secondly, it dilutes the seriousness of eating disorders as a result of sexualisation, even though Maine did provide compelling evidence of the complex reasons for their origin. What Olfman could have done here is to point to Maine's research right at the beginning and leave out the simplified and provocative discourse around “crop tops”. Sexualisation discourses often operate with a shock value which is built by painting vivid mental images of sexually provocative girls. This demonstrates how protectionism ultimately focuses on girls as the origin and the solution to sexualisation and, I would argue, harms them in the process of blame and victimisation.

6.4.2 Sexualisation, Sex and Teenage Pregnancy

Sexualisation is seen to cause harm through inspiring sexual activity in young people. Girls are seen to excite sexual desire through their sexualised dress and what Bourdieu called 'habitus' (Bourdieu, [1979] 2010), which boys are seen as unable to resist (Buckingham et al., 2010; Kiely et al., 2015). Both parties are seen as too inexperienced to practice sex safely, therefore being in danger of causing an unplanned teenage pregnancy. In *What’s happening to our girls?* (2008) Hamilton simplifies the causal link as she discusses 'sexy' or teen fashions geared towards pre-teens. She does not specifically address girls, but it is implied that it is girls' dress that is problematic. She argues that “teen fashions lead to teen aspirations”, and that these trends impact on girls' self-image and how they should behave and look: “If sexy is in, then having sex is not a big deal” (Hamilton, 2008: 55). Hamilton here simplifies the causal link, implying that fashion, specifically, leads to uncontrollable and problematic behaviour. She does not define what age the girls are that she is discussing; however, “teen aspirations” would imply that she is talking about younger girls, in their tweens and under. As sexualised expression is seen as going against the innocent nature of girl-children, as discussed in the previous chapter, the

interest expressed in having sex can here be seen as quasi-pathological. I would emphasise that what Hamilton does here, in a rather polemic and overtly simplistic fashion, is to remove the distance between an interest in clothing and interest in intercourse. This link is very much representative of moral panic discourses. While there are plenty of causes of teenage pregnancy and teenagers' sexual behaviour, protectionist discourses appear to distil the issue down to the wearing of certain kinds of clothes. I would like to argue that this is detrimental to girls' happiness in two ways.

Firstly, limiting girls' freedom to choose their clothing will impact on girls' general freedom of expression. It may also incite victim-blaming, through the specific focus on the girl. In this case the girl could be seen as the 'victim' of teenage pregnancy, which she has caused herself by wearing sexually provocative clothing. Secondly, no conversation is had about lack of sexual education, contraception or shame and pressure surrounding sexual performance. Additionally, boys, men, the part they play, and their responsibility in fathering children with teenage girls is entirely overlooked by Hamilton (2008). The discourse that focuses on sexualisation eliminates the need for complex cultural examination.

In May 2006 the *Daily Mail* reported on the issue of sexualisation providing alleged evidence for a causal link with teenage pregnancy and abortion in an article:

> Official figures show the number of girls aged 14 and under having abortions has topped 1,000 a year for the first time. Sandra James, a member of the Royal College of Nursing's ruling council, has called on parents to boycott stores selling such [sexualised] clothes.
>
> (Merrick, 2006)

Here the *Daily Mail* builds a causal link between abortion rates and girls' clothing. By using terms such as “official figures” and by quoting an “expert” from the Royal College of Nursing, the *Daily Mail* endeavours to bring gravitas and fact to the forefront of its discussion. I would, however, argue that the causal link that is built is simply rhetorical. The *Daily Mail* completely forgoes an

analysis of how one aspect may lead to the other, and the link is built purely rhetorically by moving from abortion figures in the first sentence to clothing in the next. I would argue that this is a convenient trope as it simplifies having to interrogate more complex causes. The implication that is built by “the expert” in the above quote is that sexualised clothing directly leads to risky sexual behaviour. There is an indication that 'certain kinds' of girls have a poor sense of style and a bad sense of judgement and seek out hazardous sexual encounters that lead to unwanted pregnancies. The clothing itself seems to be conducive in contaminating its wearer with bad sexual decisions. The displacement of the problem that happens here, is that other, more grave factors, such as sex education or, again boy's and men's role in fathering chidren, are grossly ignored and, instead, sexily dressed girls are vilified. Repeated concerns have been raised over the lack of standardised and mandatory sexual education in British and American schools (Buckingham et al, 2010; Egan, 2013; Kiely et al., 2015). This has been repeatedly suggested to add significantly to damaging sexual behaviour in teens, stemming from a lack of knowledge rather than, as implied in the article, girls wanting to dress in a sexualised manner. Economic and social positions have also been entirely ignored in the 2006 *Daily Mail* article. Girls who do not enjoy a good level of education, come from poor or challenging family backgrounds, and who may have to rely on their sexual relationships financially (Egan, 2013), are surely in far more danger of suffering an unplanned pregnancy.

Five years later, during what was the statistical peak in news reporting on sexualisation, the *Daily Mail* picked up on the topic again and built a direct causal link between sexualisation and teenage pregnancy.

> The sexualisation of our girls explains so much about what is wrong with our society. Certainly, teen pregnancies - and the amount of them - are a direct response to making our children into sexual beings before their time.
>
> (Poulton, 2011)

The article did, however, continue providing an opportunity for much needed

complex sociological exploration by suggesting that “the abundant factor that determines teenage pregnancy, according to many sociologists and psychologists, is that of educational opportunity” (Poulton, 2011). The examination, however, was short-lived as the article deduced that girls find “academic ability” or hard work “not sexy” as it rarely leads to financial gain. “And that, sadly, is what sexualisation has taught our girls” (Poulton, 2011). This shows that in the end sexualisation, rather than social circumstances, is seen as the most prevailing force when it comes to teen pregnancy. It is sexualisation specifically that the *Daily Mail* discusses as veering girls away from education or work and towards irresponsible sexual activity which then leads to unplanned pregnancy. What makes this discourse simplistic is not just its direct association of the sexualisation of culture with teenage pregnancy without explanation of how one leads to the other, but also that girls are denied any ambiguity or complexity as people. In the Madonna-whore dichotomy girls are divided into the sexualised, sexually active teen mothers and the studious non-sexual ones. Within this discourse it becomes impossible for girls to, for example, enjoy schoolwork but also embrace their sexuality.

The *Irish Review* focused on the gendered nature of the discourse around sexualisation and teenage pregnancies. In interviews with parents, the research team noted “markedly unequal” ways in which boys and girls were held to a sexual standard and how girls' sexual behaviour was seen as more “risky” or “problematic” than boys' (Kiely et al., 2015: 124). These attitudes were summarised by one parent: “if a 15-year-old girl gets pregnant, it’s a disaster for her. If a 15-year-old boy becomes a father, it isn’t as big a deal” (Kiely et al., 2015:124). If we continue to operate on the premise that sexualised dress instigates teenage pregnancy indirectly by inciting sexual activity, the above quote implies the interference with girls' clothing. It is implied that sexualised dress can lead to catastrophic outcomes for girls, while having hardly any impact for boys. Where the onus should lie, however, is in conducting a rigorous examination of the sexist outcomes of the described scenario and how it catastrophically affects girls. It appears that 'sexualisation' as a buzzword here again comes to replace the more provocative but unequivocal term 'sexism'.

6.4.3 Sexualisation and Crime

Sexual abuse, prostitution, trafficking, paedophilia and finally homicide are at the extreme and serious end of conversations around sexualisation. Protectionists often establish these as the result of the sexualisation of girls' dress. I would, however, like to begin this analysis by echoing the *Irish Review's* concern over the fluency with which these crimes and sexualisation are pulled together.

> This is not to say that links, however inchoate or complex, do not exist, but rather to point to the ease with which crimes, such as child trafficking, can be conflated in public discourse with, or linked to, symbolic cultural acts or behaviours, such as young people dressing in a particular way.
>
> (Kiely et al., 2015: 52)

Discourses around sexism and the active role of gendered abuse are often not addressed and holding anyone specific as responsible is vague.

I would suggest that the most common argument in the three different types of protectionist texts analysed here is the direct link they build between the wearing of sexualised dress and sexual abuse and violence. Former British Prime Minister David Cameron addressed his concerns over this link by citing Dr Catherine White of The Sexual Assault Referral Centre at Manchester's St Mary's Hospital in an article in the *Daily Mail* in February 2010. As the number of victims of assault rose over the years before 2010, White "blamed clothing and music videos for the 'increasing sexualisation of children'. As she says: 'When you see a little girl wearing a T-shirt with a Playboy bunny, that's wrong, isn't it?'" (Cameron, 2010). White did not clarify whether the number of child victims or girl victims had risen and did also not distinguish between sexualisation and sexual victimisation; however, I did come to understand an implied direct causal link via the rhetoric. The *British Review* earlier the same month addressed the issue of sexual abuse by proposing that "there is a significant amount of evidence linking stereotypical attitudes to women's sexuality and sexist beliefs with aggressive sexual behaviour", citing ten

sources between 1982 and 2002[20] (Papadopoulos, 2010: 11). While the *British Review* spoke about 'women', they make the same link with 'girls' here: "By sending out the message that girls are there to be used and abused, there is a danger that we are turning boys into consumers of the female body, who see sex as a means of domination and control" (Papadopoulos, 2010: 66).

I would like to argue that what the above quotes by Cameron and the *British Review* have in common is the idea that women or girls' sexual display directly leads to violence - in essence, the claim that sexualisation causes sexual abuse and violence. The *British Review* also states that adults, including women "who viewed sexually objectifying images of women in the mainstream media were more likely to be accepting of violence" (Papadooulos, 2010: 11). I read this to mean that sexual provocation incites sex, and if sex is not forthcoming, violence is seen to ensue. What the *British Review* fails to address and interprets in a questionable manner here, is how "stereotypical attitudes to women's sexuality" may not directly *cause* "aggressive sexual behaviour"; however, both could be seen as a continuum of a gendered agenda which sidelines women's desires in favour of men's, and which furthermore see male desires fulfilled at the danger of violence to women.

What I would again see as a similarity in the above quotes is how they imply that in order to fight violence, images that sexually objectify women and girls need to be removed, or indeed women and girls forbidden from expressing their sexuality, instead of condemning violence against women. While I do not deny that music videos and the Playboy franchise sexually objectify women in a gratuitous manner, which is of course entirely different from women expressing their genuine sexuality, the solution of removing sexualised images again modifies women's representation and social space, as opposed to focusing on predatory heterosexual male behaviour.

One could build a comparison in representation in order to stress the illogic in the *British Review's* statement: Looking at sexually objectifying representations of men in the media does not regularly start a conversation

[20] See in Papadopoulos, 2010: Dean and Malamuth (1997); Malamuth and Briere (1986); Malamuth and Donnerstein (1982, 1984); Murnen, Wright and Kaluzny (2002); Osland, Fitch and Willis (1996); Spence, Losoff and Robbins (1991); Truman, Tokar and Fischer (1996); Vogel (2000)

about their safety. This opens a discourse about whether this is a sexual matter at all, or if we could dismiss sexualisation all together and begin a conversation about women's overall safety. Women certainly should be awarded protection in all circumstances. However, the way that protectionists propose this to transpire, I would argue, does not protect women and girls. The issue is hence not that sexualisation makes life unsafe for women, but that girls and women are already in a precarious position. 'Sexualisation' as a concept, I would argue, may in fact act as a mask for the discussion that should be had about gender-based violence.

The *British Review* builds a discourse around the idea of sexual "availability": "Sexualisation devalues women and girls sending out a disturbing message that they are always sexually available" (Papadopoulos, 2010: 74). I would now like to open a conversation about how this kind of analysis fits in with consent and laws around sexual conduct. While it is beyond the remit and scope of this thesis to provide a more detailed discussion of the legal specificities, and the legal systems may not be the same in the countries covered in this thesis, I still find an analysis of the British context important. I would argue that it is critical to interrogate the advice given by an official government review as it, in this instance, appears to make suggestions that do not readily meet criteria outlined in law. The UK Sexual Offences Act (2003) states that consent has been given "if (s)he agrees by choice and has the freedom and capacity to make that choice" (Sexual Offences Act, 2003). In essence, this means not only that consent can only be given out of free, uninfluenced and uncoerced choice but that the giver has to be over the age of consent in order to be able to do so. Most importantly, I want to draw attention to the act of *giving* consent. Consent is hence an act of permission that must actively be given and upheld in order to be valid. Therefore, the idea that girls would under any circumstances be sexually *"available"* is not a possible legal perspective.

Ideas around "availability" become even more problematic when age of consent enters the discourse. While paedophilia will be discussed below in detail, I wanted to include this conversation here as it continues the same rhetoric. The *Australian Review* quotes John McCarthy, from the Safe treatment

programme for sexual offenders in New Zealand, who suggests that individual girls may not be at risk of sexual abuse, but when children generally are “dressed up” and “wear make-up” this establishes sex offenders' desires as normal.

> As fast as we say it is not okay for men to have sex with children because children are not interested in sex, they get bombarded with images of girls looking older than they are... [sex] offenders ‘grow up’ the age of the girl in their mind and believe the girls are sexually available.
>
> (Rush and La Nauze, 2006: 39-40)

The British Review addressed sexual exploitation in a similar manner and moved from “availability” to “responsibility”: “When girls are dressed to resemble adult women, people may associate adult motives and even a sense of adult responsibility onto the child. … [it] may serve to normalise abusive practices such as child abuse or sexual exploitation” (Papadopoulos, 2010: 13). I see both above discourses on “availability” and “responsibility” as highly problematic as they both specifically address children. I read this to mean people under the age of 16, which in all the countries represented in the protectionist texts is the minimum for the age of consent. I would argue that this kind of rhetoric around “availability” and “responsibility” very directly implicates the victim of sexual exploitation in their own victimisation. It does this in discourses about adults, but especially, and more importantly, it is used in discourses about children who, due to being under the age of consent, cannot by law, under any circumstances, be “available” nor “responsible” for sexual interaction. I would once more stress my dismay over the fact that an official report, commissioned by a government, makes suggestions that do not adhere to laws. Further, I would suggest that this calls the entire protectionist endeavour greatly into question.

Comparing the *British Review's* treatment of girls within sexualisation discourse to that of boys, a clear shift in responsibility emerges: “We are turning boys into consumers of the female body” (Papadopoulos, 2010: 66). Girls are established as the ones who are sexualised, and boys are the ones who are

"being turned". However, there is no discussion of who specifically is doing the turning. The source of the problem is articulated as a "we", but is it "we" as protectionists, "we" as men or women, or "we" as all the above? This is left unresolved. The *British Review* further describes boys being seen as under "pressure" from outside forces to perform aggressive masculinity (Papadopoulos, 2010: 60-61). Boys "are told" that being manly is being in control of sexual relationships (Papadopoulos, 2010: 60-61). Boys are "encouraged" to establish their identity through their sexual acts (Papadopoulos, 2010: 60-61) and to treat women in a manner that impacts on gender equality and incites violence against women (Papadopoulos, 2010: 83). Boys are "made to feel" that the key to proving their manliness lies in treating girls as sex objects (Papadopoulos, 2010:30-31). Thus, sex becomes a demonstration of competence rather than an act of intimacy (Papadopoulos, 2010: 60-61). Furthermore, Egan suggests that boys become left on "the side" in reports about sexualisation because their (hetero)sexuality is presumed as active and present and hence not in need of protection (Egan, 2013: 64).

I would like to propose that the difference in language with which boys and girls are addressed in protectionist discourses is decidedly marked and that this is highly problematic. While boys were "pressured", "told", "encouraged" or "made to feel" in the *British Review*, in the Oppliger (2008) text, that will be closely examined in Chapter 10, girls are discussed as "hookers", "hoochies" and "skanks" - names usually reserved as slurs for sex workers. I would argue this exposes a highly problematic inequality where understanding and sympathy towards boys is not extended towards girls, who, in a contradictory manner, are addressed as the objects of protection within these discourses. Arguably, boys are not treated as active agents in interpreting girls as sexual objects, and the possible subsequent abuse because of this is not acknowledged in this discourse. I would further suggest that within this discourse boys in essence become the victims of sexualisation. While boys in the *British Review* are recognised as actively violent towards girls, they are barely addressed directly, nor is derogatory language used regarding their image or behaviour, despite the problems described. I argue that such an approach is advantageous in upholding patriarchal power structures, as this way a gendered perpetrator, or a

complex political system that upholds entrenched structural inequalities, does not have to be identified nor reformed. Changing deeply rooted social structures of power and abuse requires a completely different machinery than the one utilised to police the clothing of girls.

I propose that there is another shift in responsibility within the protectionist sexualisation discourse and that is towards parents. The *Irish Review* suggests that the way that parents' testimonials and psychologists are used in protectionist literature establishes sexualisation as a problem that can predominantly be fought by educating parents (Kiely et al., 2015: 58). The *Scottish Review* found similarly that mothers were seen by the interviewees as instrumental in the chain of events that began with acquiring sexualised clothing which then invited sexual violence. The media was equally seen by the *Scottish Review* as inciting sexualisation; victimising girls who do not know better. Girls were seen firstly as victims of the sexualisation process and secondly as "becoming the victims of male violence", or how it was phrased by some participants, attributing more affect to girls, "'asking for it'" (Buckingham et al., 2010: 76-77).

> This is a 'logic' that we strongly wish to refute. We do so partly on the grounds that it overstates the influence of the media and consumer culture, and misconceives the nature of male violence, but also on the grounds that it ultimately appears to *blame the victim* – and behind her, the mother, who is the one primarily perceived as responsible for encouraging or permitting such 'sexualisation'. As with many other debates about media effects, there is a danger here that the framing of the issue may distract attention from other, more fundamental – and perhaps more intractable – social problems.
>
> (Buckingham et al., 2010: 76-77)

What the *Scottish Review* implies by "social problems" is the infinitely complex web of socioeconomic circumstances, of social attitudes towards women in different social classes and cultures, of religious attitudes and of media influence on girls, but also on boys. To simplify the causes of sexual abuse to sexualisation ignores these. The *Scottish Review* also notes the tendency towards victim blaming that addresses girls as well as their mothers. The

daughter may be the one “asking for it”; however she would not have been “asking for it”, had her mother, who should have been a responsible adult, not let her. I would further argue that by shifting the responsibility of fending off sexual violence from the daughter to the mother, who are both female, acts in an advantageous manner for the patriarchy. When the onus of the discourse is kept on the female victim and female enabler, the male perpetrator becomes bypassed. This may also beneficially serve in upholding “lateral hostility” (Currie and Kelly, 2006: 156), which is common in subordinate groups, in fighting against each other as opposed to challenging their oppressor.

Furthermore, in addressing mothers as enablers of abuse, there is an implication that because they are women and may also have experienced sexual harassment in their lives, they should be able to guide their daughters first-hand in how to avoid it. Fathers are not addressed within the discourse as guides to their daughters' dress or behaviour. On one hand this is understandable, as they, as men, are seen as part of the group of predators. On the flip side, however, this can relieve them of responsibility and make it difficult to fault them for not interfering. The mother here becomes the one that is more able, but hence also responsible for keeping her daughter safe.

In Tankard Reist's 2009 edited populist manual, American clinical psychologist, researcher and feminist anti-pornography and anti-prostitution activist Melissa Farley, begins her essay '*Media Glamourising of Prostitution and Other Sexually Exploitive Cultural Practices that Harm Children'* by stating that children typically enter prostitution because of sexual or physical abuse by caregivers (Farley, 2009: 144). Farley continues to develop ideas of parental responsibility in children's sexual abuse. She addresses the sexualisation of girls in the same paragraph as prostitution, suggesting that popular culture “markets prostitution to girls as glamorous, fun, sexy and an easy source of income... As a result, children and their parents spend lots of money helping girls mimic smiling strippers and escorts”, which she calls the “mainstreamed mask of prostitution” (Farley, 2009: 144). This is done specifically through purchasing sexually provocative clothing and the application of make-up and hair maintenance, and through encouraging activities and hobbies that focus on appearance. Farley argues that as girls are now increasingly sexualised, they

are also increasingly going to be the object of men's desires and “a lucrative sector for the prostitution market” (2009: 144). Durham (2008) echoes Farley's discourse: “Most young girls (and boys) are sold into prostitution by parents because of sheer economic necessity or forced into sex work because they had to leave unbearable and abusive home lives, or are simply taken” (Durham, 2008: 208). Durham does address the underlying social and economic problems by suggesting that prostitution is a trade usually entered, or forced, into out of economic necessity. However, like Farley, Durham also continues straight into an alarmist discourse by stating that “the media's sexualisation of young girls positions them as willing and appropriate participants in sex work” (Durham, 2008: 208). I propose that this is highly problematic in how it masks and diverts the problem. It first builds a link between dire socio-economic circumstances and prostitution, so as to bring the nuanced argument first and to demonstrate an understanding of complexity towards the criminal practice of child trafficking. It then, however, creates a connection between prostitution and sexualisation, circumventing the initial causal link. Within this discourse it becomes easier to focus on the eradication of superficial problems, such as sexualised clothing, provocative self-presentation or practices and the media's sexualisation of girls, than to address complex social circumstances that manipulate people to turn to, or to turn their children to, the sex trade. This discourse completely forgoes an examination of who the consumers of prostitution are, the illegality of consuming child prostitution and its gendered nature.

Atkins Wardy also creates a simplified causal link between sexualised clothing and prostitution. She writes:

> What message do we give to our children and our society at large when we let them play at dressing up like hookers and sex workers? Maybe all of these sexualised clothes and toys and costumes come with a higher price than any of us are comfortable admitting. When we purchase them, we become a part of the system that feeds off turning young girls' bodies into sex objects. That system is full of marketers and pimps alike; the flesh of our daughters is their currency... we hear horror stories of girls as young as six or ten being sold into sex slavery, and a line of men out the door waiting to rape her. Outraged? You should be, and it happens right here in America.

> (Atkins Wardy, 2014: 128)

Atkins Wardy completely foregoes socio-economic circumstances and violence as causes of sexual exploitation. She does, though, very briefly name men as the demographic who sexually exploit children but omits a more complex interrogation of the significance of this in examining institutionalised sexism. Atkins Wardy initially stresses her own role as a mother in inciting sexual exploitation; "when *we* purchase [sexualised clothing], *we* become a part of the system". Through the rhetoric of "we" she also condemns other parents for their role in the sexual exploitation. Atkins Wardy's (2014) approach here keeps the problem of sexualisation firmly in the home and within the family where problems can be addressed on a much more personal level, such as through following advice from populist manuals. She makes the problem tangible and hence the solution to it becomes tangible as well, which is to address sexualised clothing first and foremost.

The discourse around parental liability continues in the *Daily Mail* in 2010, which as part of its contextualisation does address child prostitution as being legal in the past. Through this, it problematises the discourse of sexualisation as a new phenomenon, but the focus turns again towards the management of girls' dress.

> The age of consent used to be 13, with girls as young as nine being sold for sex in Victorian London. Do the mothers who dress their young daughters as sex objects want a return to those times? Of course not. So why do they think it's cute to dress their poppets in high heels and T-shirts bearing the slogan Little Miss Naughty?
>
> (Parsons, 2010)

As addressed in Chapter 3, Ringrose proposes that protectionist discourses often frame the sexualisation of girls' dress to be the result of too much liberation off the back of feminist gains (Ringrose, 2013). When this dress is then seen to lead to the sexual exploitation of girls, feminism and its liberal attitude to self-presentation becomes the culprit, rather than the patriarchal

practices that uphold possibilities to sexual exploitation (Ringrose, 2013). Echoing Ringrose's ideas, I would argue that in the above quote the discussion that should be had is one of the patriarchal exploitation of children. The focus should be on the fact that legislation allowed for a low age of consent, and that there was a demand for buying sexual services from nine-year-old girls. I would also like to stress the gendered aspect of this discourse. In Victorian England women had not achieved suffrage and legislation was the realm of men. Therefore, the turning back of the clock that the *Daily Mail* article refers to here is misguided, and a false parallel. Having girls wear sexualised clothing is not likely to incite child prostitution and sexual exploitation of minors, probably not in Victorian times, nor now. Giving white middle-class men singular power to decide laws concerning consent and the practice of purchasing of prostitution, however, I would argue would have an influence on these. Egan summarises ideas around the sexist focus in protectionist texts succinctly by arguing that the message that protectionists advocate is that girls' sexuality and hence also sexualised dress “equals danger, damage, work in the sex industry and social sanction. Within the protectionist discourse, sexual girls become the problem as opposed to sexism” (Egan, 2013: 30).

Durham begins her book *The Lolita Effect* (2008) by recounting how a 5-year-old girl coming to her house for Halloween candy dressed as a Bratz doll, in a “tube top, gauzy mini skirt, platform shoes and glittering eye shadow” (Durham, 2008: 21), reminded her of a Cambodian child prostitute whom she had seen when traveling (Durham, 2009: 22). “Women are battered, raped, sold and slain... all of these issues come up when I hear about three-year-olds wearing Playboy T-shirts to school” (Durham, 2009: 22-3). I would argue that while Durham may not suggest here that in order to prevent women and girls, world-wide, from being “battered, raped, sold and slain”, one must simply restrict girls from wearing “Playboy T-shirts to school”. However the rhetoric with its focus on the polemic image of a girl in a Playboy T-shirt, instantly builds a link between sexualisation through dress and sexual violence. While most examples used by protectionists in the sources focus on a white Western context, this one, using the South East Asian example does not take the opportunity to investigate fully the infinite complexities of third world poverty and

the institutionalised sexism and sexual exploitation it contributes to, adding to simplification of the protectionist discourse. What I would also argue makes this equation problematic is that she does not address that in practice there cannot be such a thing as a child prostitute. As children cannot consent to sex, any sexual interaction with them, in this case paid, counts as sexual abuse. What is also foregone in this discourse is that prostitution in South East Asia is largely consumed by white Western men. Instead Durham excludes them from the discourse completely and focuses on the 'prostitute' – read, trafficked child – and her dress.

With regards to paedophilia and the causal link with sexualisation the *Australian Review* notes that “although a direct causal link between the sexualisation of children and their vulnerability to paedophilia has not been proven, the possibility of such a link has already caused widespread concern” (Rush and La Nauze, 2006: 39). The *Irish Review* begins to dismantle this link by drawing attention to the long history of child sexual abuse in Ireland uncovered in the mid 2010s, which took place outside of so called 'raunch culture', before debates over girls' sexualised dress entered the media. The *Review* notes the Irish context of superficial parliamentary debates focusing on the dress of girls. According to the *Review* it remains unclear whether political objection to sexualised media and dress stems from their sexual explicitness or indeed “from the gender inequality/sexism/misogyny that characterises them” (Kiely et al., 2015: 53). I would hazard to suggest to the former, as this is where the focus of these debates lies, as also witnessed in the Cameron article at the beginning of this Chapter. The *Irish Review* concludes by pointing out a contradiction in the protectionist logic and practice. “Girls are either invisible in the debates, in the sense that politicians speak frequently about the sexualisation of children when they actually mean girls, or they are hyper-visible, in that their expression/subjectivity tended to be constructed as problematic” (Kiely et al., 2015: 53). Sadly, even debates that recognise systematic child abuse focus on the victims rather than the party that is doing the systematic abusing.

The *Australian Review* (2006) builds a direct causal link between sexual clothing and paedophilia citing a warning by the UK charity Kidscape, where

parental blame becomes obvious again. “Parents have to beware. If you dress your child up in a sexual way [you will] make them vulnerable [to paedophiles]” (Rush and LaNauze, 2006: 39). I would argue that the same way prostitution was panopticised above, this discourse turns the focus of paedophilia inwards to the home, the family and the wardrobe of the girl. In the case of prostitution, sexualisation assumed the position that in reality financial hardship has, and parents assume the position that pimps have. In the case of paedophilia, parents assume the position of the paedophile, as they are the ones grooming their children through dressing them and the paedophile himself is almost exonerated. This discourse simplifies paedophilia and prostitution infinitely, as now the problems that need to be resolved are dress and parents rather than motive and perpetrator. This idea will be further addressed in Chapter 9 looking at how 'other' parents and non-middle-class individuals bare blame for sexualisation.

I would like to look back at Holland's work in the previous chapter where she suggested that the perpetual discourse around sexualisation itself spurs a practice of looking for the unhealthy in images of children, where previously we might have only seen the ‘cute’. Holland argues that the imagery itself has trained us to read pictures of girls in an erotic manner (Holland, 2004: 188). I would suggest that it is precisely the continuous protectionist focus on sexualisation that conjures this. One begins to look for a sexual angle where there was not one before, not out of desire but out of suspicion.

When paedophilia is discussed as a cause of sexualisation in protectionist literature, the common example of the murdered child beauty pageant participator, JonBenet Ramsey, arises repeatedly. Karen Brooks raises JonBenet Ramsey in relation to dress and causality.

> We rail and despair against stories about paedophiles... Together we gather and talk in shocked whispers about the JonBenet Ramsey case, about teachers, clergy and family members abusing trust... We generate what some commentators refer to as 'sexual panic'... Then we go to the shops and buy bralettes and French knickers for our three -year-old daughters. We allow our nine-year-old to wear make-up and a midriff top to the mall.
>
> (Brooks, 2008: 45)

At this point I would like to note a methodological problem, which was discussed in in Chapter 1. Protectionist texts often recycle examples of sexualisation, which makes cases seem much more common than they may be. The Ramsey case is one that features in protectionist texts repeatedly. In the above quote, Brookes comes to analyse the example of a specific murder that occurred twelve years before she published her work. JonBenet Ramsey was killed in her home in Colorado at the age of 6 and it was alleged that she was raped and murdered by an intruder. The case was reopened during the writing of this thesis in 2016 where it was suggested she was not the victim of sexual abuse, and accidentally killed by her brother (The Case of: JonBenet Ramsey, 2016). What I would propose, given the developments of the case, is that the recurring analysis of her murder case may well be evidence of how few examples of sexualisation there are, and indeed how extraneous the link between sexualisation and homicide may be in this case. The way in which Brooks proposes causality between dressing and murder, in subject and rhetoric, removes the distance between a hobby practiced by adolescent girls the world over and the gravest form of crime resulting in death. There is no analysis of motivations or operating patterns of actual paedophiles, but rather outrage at pageantry and moralistic condemnation of pageant outfits.

What I want to draw focus to, is not further speculation about the murder case, but to highlight the alarming causal link that is built here between sexualisation, in this case within pageantry, and the alleged rape and murder of a child. Throughout, the analysis exclusively focuses on Ramsey's representation, as opposed to issues of a perpetrator. This alleviates the societal burden of trying to find a murderer, as it redirects focus elsewhere. Incidentally in the Ramsey case a murderer was never convicted, and instead media focus remained on the simpler task of policing the girls' clothing and hobbies: “JonBenet was living proof that sexualising young children and taking delight in how they look is not exclusive to a bunch of perverts and sexual deviants living in the shadows of society. She was found dead in her basement the day after Christmas” (Brooks, 2008: 77-8). Here again, the focus is taken off the perpetrator and brought to the parents and the victim. In essence, Brookes proposes that if you, as a parent, do not interfere with your daughter's wearing

of “midriff tops” and “make-up”, she may well end up dead in your basement. That Ramsey was found at Christmas adds a further layer of horror to the discourse, as Christmas awakens feelings of sentimentality and warmth. It is a time of year that families come together and especially children are remembered and gifted. For a murder to happen in a family setting at Christmas is especially powerful in evoking feeling.

6.5 Summary

This chapter examined two dilemmas that are marked in Protectionist discourses around sexualisation. Protectionists do not provide one co-ordinated and coherent definition for sexualisation, and so sexualisation can really only be analysed through what it is seen to cause. The first part of this chapter reviewed definitions for sexualisation which, though not systematically the same, reached agreement in some areas, such as that it is an imposition to children, especially girls and that it harms healthy development. Problems were posed, however, by the wide use of 'sexualisation' as a substitute for 'sexual objectification', 'sexual violence' or 'sexuality'. It remained unclear what sexual, but not sexualised, may be with regard to girls' dress. The second part of this chapter addressed the causal links associated with sexualisation and harms. Phenomena from poor self-esteem to homicide were analysed as a cause of sexualisation by protectionist texts, but were not fully analysed or substantiated. This meant that complex conversations and confrontations about the origins of prostitution, or sexual exploitation of children among other subjects, were not addressed; instead, the discourse was repeatedly directed back to girls' dress as inspiring harm.

Chapter 7

Concerns over Sexualised Dress

7.1 Introduction

Protectionist discourses on sexualisation describe it as “pollution” and as “toxic waste” (Cameron, 2010). It is said to be as “omnipresent as oxygen and as toxic as poison” (Egan, 2013: 20). The *Daily Mail* wants its readers to wake up and take action, so that they do not “sleepwalk... into a world where this [dress/sexualisation] is normal” (Daily Mail Reporter, 2010a). Protectionist texts on dress treat sexualisation as an all-encompassing force. Sexualising dress is often discussed as something apart from its wider social context, where other aspects of dress, such as trend or group affiliation, become insignificant. This chapter begins by investigating how sexualisation is subjective as a concept and examines how anything can be interpreted as ‘sexualising’ and ‘sexualised’. I argue that the examples discussed by protectionists are both subjective and alarmist and thus not conducive to a constructive discourse on girls and harms. This chapter then moves on to examine how, for girls, ‘growing up’ is seen only as sexual. Within this protectionist discourse, physical changes around puberty and expressing interest in teenage activities become interpreted as an interest in sex. The last section of this chapter examines two concepts which name, and so aim to articulate, the theoretical frameworks which operate within sexualisation discourse. 'Three layers of sexism' breaks down the climate within which girls' and women's sexual and sartorial expression can be used against them and 'double pressure' examines how, while girls can be seen to feel pressure to dress in a sexualised manner, they can simultaneously be seen to be pressured to dress modestly from a different direction. This set-up causes girls' sartorial choices to appear misguided no matter how they dress.

7.2 Anything and Everything can be Placed as a Sexualised Medium

The *Irish Review* speaks of an “elastic discourse” when it comes to the sexualisation debate. They characterise it as being “elastic enough to cover any kind of sexual expression and a whole set of concerns about different issues” (Kiely et al., 2015: 51). What this suggests is that protectionist discourses can make anything out to be a sexualising medium.

> Girls are sexualised to a much greater degree than boys... This is consistent with a now somewhat dated study of children’s television programming in the US, which found that of all commercials promoting products to enhance appearance, over 85 per cent were directed at girls rather than boys.
>
> (Rush and La Nauze, 2006: 5)

The Australian Review discusses products that “enhance appearance” as intrinsically sexualising. It further clarifies its methodological approach by stating that in its analysis of girls' magazines “material related to beauty (products, tips, make-overs), fashion (products, tips, admiration of), celebrities, or romance (crush) was identified as sexualising content” (Rush and La Nauze, 2006: 15). This approach by the *Australian Review* suggests that advertisement and representation of goods in girls' magazines that are associated with female consumers, and the performance and enhancement of a certain kind of constructed femininity, are described as intrinsically sexualised. While the Review makes its suggestions with the welfare of girls in mind, placing the above-described items as essentially erotic and sexual, suggests that girlhood is constructed as essentially erotic. I would argue here, that sexualisation may not be positioned as the real issue at the centre of this discourse, but rather that girlhood and femininity are problematised.

The APA Review continued by adding that “girls were encouraged to play dress up more than boys and that teachers encouraged girls in their dress-up games to play at being sexualized adult women. This often involved looking in mirrors, walking in ‘fancy’ high heels, and ‘vamping’” (APA, 2007: 15). If we

investigate this last statement, the first issue that arises for the APA is that "girls were encouraged to play dress up more than boys". While this does show that traditional gender divisions were upheld, it also seems to suggest that there is something essentially damaging about dress-up play. The fact that girls were encouraged to perform it more than boys would mean that girls were encouraged to perform behaviour that will be harmful to them. I would like to contest this and propose – along with many non-academic parenting blogs[21] – that dress up play is a wonderful opportunity for children of both genders to create imaginative and creative fantasy scenarios.

Moving on, the APA suggested, that "teachers encouraged girls in their dress-up games to play at being sexualized adult women". While the threat of paedophilia and sexual objectification is of course real for children, I would like to carefully consider whether this is really what is happening here. The APA suggests that the teachers' encouragement objectified and sexualised children and implicitly taught girls to self-sexualise through dress-up play. The APA continued to describe the scenario as often involving "looking in mirrors", walking in "'fancy' high heels", and "vamping"'. Here again the scenario is described as inherently sexualising; however, "looking in mirrors", for example, could constitute what Foucault describes as 'body', or 'identity work' (Foucault, 1978). This may be considered a vain and self-centred activity; however, it is not inherently sexualised. Finally, the APA is alarmed that girls were encouraged to walk 'in "fancy" high heels, and to "vamp". The Merriam Webster Dictionary described a 'vamp' as "a woman who uses her charm or wiles to seduce and exploit men" (Merriam Webster, na). I read this as explaining what the APA meant, and so it implied that girls were encouraged to act in a manipulative and flirtatious manner towards boys.

I would suggest that this may be an alarmist discourse as it imposes a sexual agenda onto something that is not an inherently sexual act. I would see this "vamping" as being a childish, or even humorous, way to exaggerate adult, feminine practices. Something that is adult may not be instantly sexualising. I would also stress that activities that boys undertake which are understood as adult or traditionally considered masculine in nature, such as display of

[21] See for example Zapata, 2020

aggression or strength in sports, are not seen as essentially sexualising. This shows how gendered the discourse around sexualisation is. Relating this to the following section that addresses boys' use of body spray, I would like to evoke the humour with which boys' experimentations are regarded, and how girls' actions tend rather to be met with alarm.

I would propose that in some protectionist discourses, such as the APA study outlined above, protectionists suggest that sexualisation may be a calculated practice by adults to groom children, or as the APA calls it “costuming for seduction” (APA, 2007: 7), as will be expanded on below. The *Scottish* team challenged this with their finding that suggested that sexualised goods on the market were possibly picked up by children, but that these were not aimed specifically at them (Buckingham et al., 2010: 5). This is important as it suggests that sexualisation would not be the “elastic” phenomenon that protectionists propose. It would not, in fact, be omnipresent and absolute in its reach, but, while it exists, it does so as an adult market and as something that children re-appropriate from adult practice. While this is not ideal and children may still come to harm through this type of sexualisation, it does throw into question the magnitude of the type of 'grooming' that protectionists suggest.

The APA address the complexities of tween underwear in their *Review* (2010). They argue that before 2010 a trend for the production of 'sexy' clothing for tweens and teens emerged. “The thong, an item of clothing based on what a stripper might wear, is now offered in “tween” stores as well as children’s wear departments, often with decorations that will specifically appeal to children” (APA, 2007: 13-14). The APA recount retail stores that sell “sexy lingerie such as camisoles and lacy panties” (APA, 2007: 13-14) to the tween demographic. They propose that these items would once only have been marketed to adults (APA, 2007: 13-14). While it is difficult to argue against the sexualising nature of the thong because it has so thoroughly been appropriated as a sexual item of clothing, I would like to complicate this argument. Through the pornification of fashion, items such as the thong are no longer only the prerogative of strippers. It also features in pop culture, in the Brazilian cut swimwear of the Kardashians and hit songs such as the Thong Song by Sisquo from the early 2000s. In the same way that the thong has moved from the sex industry to mainstream

culture, it may now be moving to a younger demographic. In fact, the thong has a long history of use and reuse across various social contexts, including loincloths in ancient Egypt, to Tarzan, to invisible wear designed to show minimally under clothing (Cole, 2010). I would also like to stress, considering protectionist writers' unfamiliarity with fashion theory, that the thong as known today was originally created as catwalk underwear by high fashion designers who wanted to avoid visible panty lines while showcasing their work. I would question the simplicity of the causal link that anti-sexualisation discourses build between the wearing of items and sexual activity, by invoking the words of a mother interviewed by the *Scottish Review*: "'It's not like she's about to have sex with somebody because she's wearing thongs, it's just a look'" (Buckingham et al. 2010: 48). This suggests that links between the cultural appropriation and reappropriation of a garment, and how it is perceived by different demographics at various points in time is very complex. Simplifying it in this manner may result in alarm rather than in a conducive, nuanced conversation about how to provide physical and mental safety for girls.

The *Scottish Review* also addresses boys' clothing; however the only example of sexualised boys' wear that they mention are low hung jeans, or 'sagging'. Trendy jeans brand (in 2010) Monkee Genes "appear to reveal parts of the male body associated with adult sexuality, such as stomach/midriff, hips or buttocks and buttock cleavage" (Buckingham et al., 2010: 33). While there are instances where low-hung trousers have been linked to homoerotic provocations (Cole, 2012), I would argue that the research team is not adequately informed of the historical connotations of fashion and dress in this case, and building a causal link without fully understanding the scholarship behind it. Where low hung jeans may appear inappropriate in the school environment, I would argue, at a rap show, they communicate a completely different image. Monkee Genes, which reference street culture, draw from the practice of low-hung trousers originally worn in American prison culture, where prison administered trousers only came in one large size. As shoelaces and belts were forbidden for security purposes, this meant that on most of the population they hung below their buttocks. This 'look' soon trickled into the mainstream, and low-hung trousers were re-appropriated as an item of street

fashion, denoting the wearers' struggle with the law (Price Alford, 2019). This means, that while wearing low- hung trousers may be inappropriate due to its criminal association, viewing it as a sexualising medium would be somewhat misguided.

The *Scottish Review* investigated the placement of 9- to15-year-old girls' swimwear and underwear on the floor of high street store New Look and noted that through their shiny and colourful appearance they draw in the eye of the shopper. The pieces were promoted as essential components of a fashionable look and gave the store a trendy appearance. This was, however, problematised by the research team, as “both swimwear and underwear are... presented as a key feature of fashionable outfits rather than placing emphasis on their functionality” (Buckingham et al., 2010: 35). While the above review and protectionist literature do not set fashion and functionality as mutually exclusive per se, there is a connotation whereby fashionable dress is spoken of as impractical, dysfunctional and vain. This has a long tradition in the work of writers, such as Flugel (1930) who articulated ideas around protection, modesty and display, Blumer (1969) and Bourdieu (1979) around “necessity” and Wilson (1985) around “functionality”. I would argue that often ‘functionality’ becomes a saving grace for protectionists when it comes to items of clothing otherwise deemed as sexualising. It seems to give the garment reason and relate it back to ideas of childhood activity, away from fashion's vices of vanity, wastefulness, and frivolity. However, functionality is difficult to define in absolute terms. All writers mentioned above relate their analyses of the functionality of dress back to its social agendas. While fashion scholars Roach and Eicher describe “functional” clothing as the “rational use of dress in goal-directed behaviour” that can also be “utilitarian and protective”, they too focus on the social agendas of dress (1965: 6).

Functionality, as well as whether or not something is seen as sexualising, is subjective. If we think about the fashion industry and its credentials as part of the arts, we quickly notice that fashion and functionality have been rather reluctant bedfellows. Wilson argues, that “dress is never primarily functional, and that it is certainly not natural” (Wilson, 1985: 244). If the function of a garment is to keep one warm, nothing other than thermals are functional. If,

however the function of a garment, in this case swimwear[22], is to make one appear trendy and expose the body in order to get a suntan, the garments described earlier *are* functional.

In the excerpt below the *Australian Review* (2006) examines examples of sexualised clothing advertisements. I would, however, question their sexualising nature, further suggesting that any item of clothing or pose can be seen as sexualising or sexualised.

> Clothing that emphasises specific parts of the body, often at the expense of inhibiting movement or comfort, can have a sexualising effect. For girls, examples include: bolero cross-over tops [Fig 3]... designed to emphasise the breasts of adult women... and rings on the fingers, again designed to attract attention to sexually differentiated features of adult women... As with clothing, poses that draw attention to specific physical features can have a sexualising effect. The demure pose [Fig 4] (downcast eyes... [is designed to] have the effect of drawing attention to the body). We are accustomed to seeing these poses adopted by adult models, but they are now being replicated by children, who have not yet developed the adult physical features such poses are calculated to show off.
>
> (Rush and La Nauze, 2006: 7, 9)

[22] Jennifer Craik has examined the history of swimwear and how it has been articulated as functional at times and in different activities. This could provide a further avenue for exploration here (Craik, 2003).

Figure 3. ‘I want cool kids’ casuals’, Myer catalogue

Figure 4. ‘Lazy days: chill out... dress up!’ fashion feature, *Barbie Magazine*

The *Australian Review* cited “bolero tops” as “designed to emphasise the breasts”. If we look at this statement from the perspective of fashion scholarship, the argument becomes simplified. Is the *only* design credential of a bolero to “emphasise breasts”? I would suggest that there may be a myriad of other reasons for designing and wearing said items of clothing. For example, a bolero or cross-over top may be chosen as a long-sleeved addition to a party dress, because it is form fitting and hence emphasises and displays the dress that is meant to be the main sartorial feature in a party look.

The *Australian Review* (2006) cited “rings on the fingers” as “designed to attract attention to sexually differentiated features”. Firstly, I would see fingers as being a “sexually differentiated feature of an adult woman” as a problematic interpretation, although, granted, this is subjective. While feminine fingers can of course be seen as a sexual feature, this interpretation suggests then that almost any part of the body can be placed as a sexually alluring feature by virtue of it being on a woman in a heterosexualised context. Secondly, I would, again, suggest that there may well be a plethora of other reasons for girls to wear rings, and for designers to create them as a fashion accessory. Jewellery is often worn to give colour, character and decoration to a look. It may therefore be that the stylist has chosen to add rings to the outfit to convey the idea that the outfit is designed to be worn at a special occasion. While I found no specific research, I would suggest that jewellery could also be considered a status symbol denoting the child's or her parents' buying power. Stacking rings were a fashion trend in the mid-2010s. I would like to question whether this was a 'stacked' attempt for girls and women to “attract attention to their sexually differentiated features”, or, indeed a trend that allowed for the wearing of filigree jewellery that is modern and less formal. While this kind of consumerist practice may not comply with ideas of what idealised childhood should be like, linking it quintessentially to sexualisation is a different matter altogether. Finally, the *Australian Review* cites the “demure pose” as being sexualising. I would like to propose this as a prime example of how anything can be seen as a sexualising medium. If even “demure”, the opposite of 'sexualised' is seen as sexualising, it is to be concluded that girls bodies are being read as essentially erotic regardless of what pose they adopt.

I would argue that the protectionist propensity of simplifying fashion and dress to an elementary sexual message is rather problematic in its alarm. It further suggests a lack of sensitivity towards fashion and dress as a subject. I would suggest, that this practice constructs what it argues to fight, as it sexualises fashion and dress by focusing on the sexual aspect exclusively. While the *raison d'etre* of protectionists is to protect girls, they may end up practicing this by limiting girls' social interaction or by removing items that they like to consume. I would argue that protectionist discourse operates here in a gendered manner by implying through action that girls and their dress are to be restricted. Protectionists propose regulation to girls' dress as opposed to interference with gendered harassment and violence. I would propose that this affects girls doubly. Firstly, they may suffer sexual bullying or abuse regardless of what they are wearing and secondly, they may suffer through having to give up items that are dear to them.

7.3 For Girls Growing Up is only seen in Sexual Terms

The *Irish Review* conducted interviews with young people and their parents and noted how gendered their concerns regarding dress were. The female participants reported having disagreed with their parents at least once over their dress, whilst it had never been discussed among boys and their parents. Or as one male interviewee eloquently suggested: "I don't know if there's such a thing as adult boys' clothes" (Kiely et al., 2015: 151). In Chapter 4 Patricia Holland discussed how gendered notions of childhood and innocence were. She further makes the connection between femininity being confused with sexuality; for girls, growing up is seen only in terms of sexuality. In a sense, they do not grow up, they just become sexy (Holland, 2004: 187). The APA observed this phenomenon of puberty in girls often being conflated with signs of sexual interest and thus sanctioned verbally. They noted that fathers especially were

criticising with “snide comments like ‘When did you start getting boobs?’” (APA, 2007: 140). This suggests that at least paternal body commentary “includes specific references to sexuality and that comments on a girl’s body are often conflated or experienced as comments on her sexuality” (APA, 2007: 15). Catherine Driscoll (2013) expresses concerns over girls' being able to grow up free from this type of controlling discourse, and she calls for feminist intervention as the girls' role is simplified to “represent both sex and gender”, so that they end up bearing “the symbolic burden of this representation for the social” (Driscoll, 2013: 291). She concludes by asking, “How it is that a girl playing at or dressed as a woman articulates sex in a way a boy playing at or dressed as a man does not – and most of all what [does] that say about the way we conceive and experience girlhood?” (Driscoll, 2013: 291). The *Irish Review* goes onto iterate the fact that boys wearing physically revealing clothing “e.g. trousers worn with underwear showing” or “boys dressing like men” is not given any attention. The *Review* especially criticises the protectionist discourse for ignoring “the wider systems of gender and power inequalities” (Kiely et al., 2015: 53). This opens a discourse about the way in which similar actions in girls and in boys are evaluated very differently and how centrally symbolic dress, and discourses around dress, are in upholding these “gender and power inequalities”.

The *Scottish Review* observed a similar propensity in their interviews: boys' consumption was “generally viewed with amusement rather than alarm, with considerable hilarity occasioned by the trend for pants showing above low-slung trousers or their use of hair gels and deodorants -‘you smell them before you see them!’ (Buckingham et al., 2010: 50). This draws attention to the suspicion with which girls' consumption and sexual practices are examined (Buckingham et al., 2010: 7). It is understandable that the ease with which boys' dress is handled cannot be extended to girls because they are viewed as vulnerable; however, I would argue that this perspective places girls in further jeopardy. I would propose that this gendered practice leads to 'double pressure', which will be expanded on below. As girls are not awarded the same approach to their dressing, they become tangled in a double bind. On one hand they receive social influences which encourage or pressure them to dress in a

sexualised manner, but on the other hand they receive a stern backlash from protectionists for doing so. Furthermore, I would argue, this dichotomy in attitudes which are communicated about the dress of girls and boys conveys to boys indirectly that their actions have fewer consequences, as they are approached with humour. This renders the discourse gendered again where girls are examined with caution and sternness, lending itself easily to alarm. Buckingham et al. concluded this examination by writing: "It is tempting to ask whether girls would be better served if more of this amused tolerance were extended to them, and more energy put into breaking the link between how girls dress and the violence they experience, than by the focus on sexualisation" (2010: 54).

The *Scottish Review's* interviewees "rejected the notion that they dressed in particular ways in order to impress or attract members of the opposite sex (only heterosexual attraction was mentioned), and boys in particular resisted the idea that they were impressed by girls who wear 'sexy' clothing or lots of make-up" (Buckingham et al., 2010: 71). The idea that boys rejected these styles brings up the negative response that girls receive if they present themselves in a 'sexy' way, examined later in Chapter 10 which explores sexual sanctioning. Discussing the application of make-up, "female participants insisted that it was not peers of the opposite sex whom they were trying to impress" but, instead, other girls (Buckingham et al., 2010: 66). This was explored in Chapter 3 through the discourses by Wilson (1985) and later Beckingham (2005), who both focused on fashion as an art form and a method of communication. I would add to this, that when fashion is regarded as a communicator, there appears to be less scope for misunderstanding when the communication is carried out amongst girls only. Girls are the ones who primarily present interest in dress, the ones that wear it and the ones who communicate its idiosyncrasies by following fashion online and in magazines. It hence seems incongruous to begin with a premise that it is firstly boys whom they try to impress with their dress.

The *Irish Review* elaborated on the assumption that girls communicate sexual interest with dress and discussed girls "ageing (themselves) up towards female adulthood" as a motivation for application of make-up (Kiely et al., 2015: 53). I would suggest that on the one hand, girls are very aware of the stigma of

sexualisation that make-up has, so they stress their interest in the non-sexual side of the practice, but on the other hand this idea of entering adulthood through make-up becomes important as well. It seems to be impossible for girls to 'play' at being adults without it being seen as sexualised. “Few parents are concerned when their little girls play with tea sets, push shopping trolleys or buggies, but when their dress... strays into the domain representing adult sexualities... then fear and unease is the likely result”, continued the *Irish Review* (Kiely et al., 2015: 53), highlighting the dilemma, alarm, and essential eroticisation of girls' bodies. The focus on make-up as a peer-bonding exercise here, however, highlights it as both craft and art form (Miller, 2013). Here, the bonding experience of applying make-up and discussing the results becomes more important than the effect that it may have as an agent to draw sexual attention. This idea will be further discussed in the next chapter under its own section on make-up.

“Anything that depicts or refers to a person's physical attractiveness appears to be seen as automatically sexualising. It is hard to see on this basis, how anything that people might do (or buy) in order to enhance their physical attractiveness would not be seen as sexualising” (Buckingham et al., 2010: 20). Protectionists often speak of the interest in beautification and enhancing femininity interchangeably with an interest in sexually attracting the opposite sex and sexual acts. This is a common occurrence in anti-sexualisation discourses where femininity and sexuality become conflated. Additionally, there is an implied passivity when it comes to female bodies and sexuality. A traditional idea that girls do not desire sex (Egan & Hawkes, 2008: 70), seems to be translated in a way where sexualised depictions of their body parts can by no means be desired by themselves, as they might invite male sexual desire. The idea of wearing sexualised dress because it is a trend, a marker of peer affiliation, or personal preference, without association with sexual action, becomes an impossibility within protectionist discourses.

The young people interviewed for the *Scottish Review* (2010) about the reasons behind their fashion choices suggested that guiding their decisions were aspects of self-confidence, peer affiliation, interest in trends and also financial possibilities. The *Review* stressed that the complexity behind their

purchasing choices evidenced a balancing act between demonstrations of individuality and affiliating with their peers. “Style, design and trendiness of products were also frequently identified”, noted the research team:

> Overall, the participants indicated that there is no single factor that determines purchases, as stated in this girl’s written response: “While shopping, the things that would impact my choices are: threading, colour/shade, does it go with other clothes which I got or like, patterns, who’s in the shop, who’s selling the products”.
>
> (Buckingham et al., 2010: 61)

I would like to refer back to Chapter 3 to conjure up discourses between fashion scholars and second wave feminists, who could not agree on the motivations of wearing feminine dress. Writers such as Brownmiller (1975) and Roberts (2007) articulated very stern views on how feminine dress oppressed women and dictated their social position because of its sexualising nature. I would argue that these ideas continue in the protectionist discourses, which simplify thinking on dress to the question of whether something is sexualising or not. In choosing a garment that could be deemed 'sexualised', other, more complicated, aspects such as “taste, fit, advertising and corporate capital, agency, group identification, biography, fantasy, history, gender, sexuality, race, religion, mood and... weather or event” (Egan, 2013: 131) are sidelined. While it is beyond the remit of protectionist writers to be experts in history and theory of fashion and dress, I do want to stress the centrality of dress in sexualisation discourses. For the most part, protectionist texts simply do not undertake research to the level that is required to make the assertions that they do. As protectionist writers research sexualisation specifically, not dress, their interests will lead them to one conclusion only: whether the dress in question is sexualising or not. If they studied dress itself, trend or peer affiliations, their positions and conclusions might be different. While it is understandable that authors of protectionist texts that focus on sexualisation cannot be authorities on dress, there are discourses that bridge this gap with complex analysis. Annamari Vänskä studied children's fashion adverts in *Vogue Bambini* and while her text on it discusses sexualisation, it is only one of the aspects that are

considered (Vänskä, 2017: 111). She builds nuanced enquiries evaluating intersections on taste, social connotations and trend throughout; a methodological approach that would lend welcome complexity to protectionist discourse.

Egan suggests that sexualised and sexualising goods seem to mute every other cultural form. Despite the plethora of cultural embodiments, such as “school messages”, “parental influence”, or the “various other ways in which a girl's eroticism is administered through enforced social obedience by peer groups” through sexual sanctioning, or colloquially “slut shaming”, the pull of sexualisation is seen as the most powerful (Egan, 2013: 27). Egan explores this argument from the opposite direction and focuses on girls and on how one-dimensional their person may present itself when only examined within sexualisation discourses. She suggests that girls' selfhood must not be lessened simply to sexualisation “or any other monolithic effect” (Egan, 2013: 6).

“Girls wear bikini tops and cut off jean shorts; however, they leave their shorts unzipped and fold down the opening on either side to expose their swimsuit bottoms. The goal, evidently, is to draw attention to the crotch,” wrote Beatrice Oppliger in her book *Girls Gone Skank* (2008: 10). I would argue that if one has no interest in dress, the only *evident* reason for folding down one's shorts may be “to draw attention to the crotch”. However, others with an interest in the topic may list a plethora of other reasons. These might include: to show off bikini bottoms in an accessorising way; to add colour and accent to the overall outfit; because celebrities do it; to get an even tan, and/or because it is more comfortable. The *Scottish Review* preceded Egan's observation stating:

> Girls operated a complex and multi-faceted system for classifying clothing, which reflected different values associated with both gender and social class. Significantly, clothes that many adults see as ‘sexualised’ were not seen as such by children, but rather as merely ‘cool’ and fashionable. ...some children were actively refusing adult perceptions of such clothes as ‘sexy’.
>
> (Buckingham et al., 2010: 25)

The above quote cites gendered and class values as bases for complex decision-making within choosing dress. In fact, the *Scottish Review* does not mention sexualisation, or appeal towards the opposite sex at all as something that children would have considered as part of their decision-making process. While this may still feature, it appears that there is much more of an intricate complexity and richness to both girls' and boys' decisions with regards to sartorial purchases than that which protectionist discourses account for, with their focus on sexualisation. These choices are further complicated by individual reasons for choosing items, to gatekeeping that influences which decisions they are able to make for themselves and those which are made by their guardians. Egan articulates this complex process of choice as young people finding both pressure and joy in “parental expectations, peer groups, and popular culture, and experience pleasure as well as pain in the secret garden of personal preference. They are subject to and subject others to and subvert conservative gender and sexual ideologies” (Egan, 2013: 58; see also Mitchell and Reid-Walsh, 2005). How girls choose their clothing, but also how girls negotiate their own sexuality are confusing and complicated undertakings but also complex and pleasurable. It would be naïve to suggest that the media has no impact on girls, but claiming, as protectionist anti-sexualisation authors propose, that girls have next to no agency in their clothing consumption, becomes very subjective when it is “weighed against the vast terrain of empirical literature” (Egan, 2013: 58). Here Egan refers to research attesting to children and young people's media literacy. The Scottish research team similarly drew attention to how advanced young people were in media literacy compared to older generations (Buckingham et al., 2010).

Throughout the sources, certain examples arise repeatedly, which add to the hyperbole around sexualisation as the rhetoric becomes alarmist in its disapproval of goods and presentations, rather than an examination of culture in a wider sense. The most obvious example is the Playboy franchise which sells an extensive range of goods across the world, from clothing and underwear ranges to school supplies and cookware. The link between the franchise of Playboy Magazine and its sexual content is eponymous. Eight sources across two continents analysed goods by Playboy in their texts, including the non-

protectionist *Scottish* and *Irish Reviews* (APA, 2007; Brookes, 2008; Buckingham et al., 2010; Durham, 2009; Kiely et al., 2015; Oppliger, 2008; Olfman, 2009; Papadopoulos, 2010).

The *Scottish Review* (2010), however, presented Playboy as an interesting example of how the misunderstanding over different motivations to dress arose, and further addressed how it continues to dominate protectionist discourses. The research team discussed the answer of a girl who refused the Playboy Bunny franchise, because she saw it as childish. Interestingly, and perhaps paradoxically, the symbol here is associated not with being too “adult”, but on the contrary with being “childish” (Buckingham et al., 2010: 63). It is outside the remit of this thesis to delve further into the idea of reappropriating cultural messages; however, I did want to point towards Michel de Certeau's work *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1980) where he, drawing on Bourdieu and Foucault, among others, examines ways in which people individualise mass culture. He suggests that while social sciences have always been able to study language, symbols and traditions of expression and communication that make up culture, there is no formal means of how to examine how people re-appropriate these Barthesian 'myths' and change their semiotic messages in everyday life. In the case of sexualisation debates, children and young people may re-appropriate brand messages in completely original ways, while removing their previous connotations for their generation. It is not always methodologically possible to interview children or young people, so in sexualisation discourses adults often speak for them. This creates a conflict where the middle-class adult interpretation of a fashion comes to speak for young people's style and taste. This establishes a limited and potentially erroneous discourse that may end up occluding or vilifying young people, their taste and dress practices. The *Irish* and *Scottish Reviews* had both interviewed young people themselves and, I would argue, present a much more balanced analysis than the protectionist reviews which didn't interview young people. The *Scottish Review* for example concluded that “young people’s choices in relation to sexualised goods reflected peer group norms, to do with inclusion and exclusion, and with feelings of comfort and confidence. These norms involved complicated value systems relating to taste, and to the perceived meanings of

particular objects or products” (Buckingham et al., 2010: 7).

The subject of self-confidence was also highlighted in the answers of young people who stated that “clothes, makeup, hair products and aftershave could sometimes boost their self-esteem by making them feel confident about fitting within their peer group or because they feel they are expressing their individual style which is comfortable for them” (Buckingham et al., 2010: 71). Importantly, peer affiliations and opinions were crucial and well considered, whereas there was less mention of worry about parental judgement. The subject of parental attitudes will further be discussed in section 8.2 but it is worth stressing here that adult perceptions over what clothing communicates were generally very different to their children's motivations, being about “developing self- confidence” and “the display of a healthy kind of sexuality, rather than seeing these activities as somehow sexualising or objectifying” (Buckingham et al., 2010: 73). Here, I would like to refer back to the discussion in Chapter 3 on Dress and Feminisms, and specifically Entwistle's articulations on identity (2000) and argue for a discourse in sexualisation that centres around the experiences of young people. Dress is not only intimately connected to the person wearing it, but also communicates their peer affiliation (Entwistle, 2000: 42-3). This means that while there will be aspects of dress by which young people affiliate with their family, their main motivation, as they themselves stated, was to “develop self-confidence”. While Entwistle acknowledges that clothes do not speak clearly and that misinterpretation can occur (2000: 112), I would suggest that in the case of sexualisation debates a golden mean could be found where young people would be part of the conversation when alarm is raised over matters affecting them.

7.4 Girls are set up to Fail – 'Three Layers of Sexism' and 'Double Pressure'

In this section I would like to introduce two ideas which I have dubbed the 'three layers of sexism' and 'double pressure'. What I have aimed to do by formulating these terms is to put names on specific sequences of events and specific environments within which sexualisation and the protectionist texts analysed in this thesis operate. This section begins by examining the 'three layers of sexism'. This describes the historical attitudes and actions which have led to certain sexist practices in modern society. The section will provide a historical context to the protectionist critique of sexualisation, but most importantly, will consider how girls' and women's lives operate within hetero-patriarchal society. This Chapter will then go onto analyse 'double pressure' which relates specifically to how I argue the protectionist critique of sexualisation increases pressures that girls already experience. This section relies more on building a theoretical framework of my own, rather than continuing the critique of the protectionist texts analysed in this thesis through extant scholarship. I want to address these issues here, after the last two sections which investigated how girls and their dress are so often scrutinised simply from a sexual perspective. 'Three layers of sexism' and 'double pressure' will give my claims context in which to understand further examinations of protectionist discourses.

I would argue that 'three layers of sexism' operates upon women from early childhood through to their adulthood. This makes it central to sexualisation debates, where protectionists often discuss a continuum where a girl-child is sexualised through sexualising dress and then becomes a hypersexual teenager and young adult. In introducing the 'three layers of sexism' I want to examine how it operates in a manner that sets women and girls up for failure regarding their sexual expression. Then I examine how this translates into reprimand over sexualised dress in protectionist texts. In my proposed model, the first layer of sexism is the practice of establishing women's sexuality as reprehensible in society, which is also reflected in attitudes expressed in protectionist texts which shame girls through their rhetoric (Oppliger, 2009). This

reprimand is achieved through the social construction of women's sexual expression as shameful through historical and religious ideologies, as discussed in Chapter 4. The sole aim of this first layer is to root the link between sexuality and shame. The second layer of sexism is the sexualisation and sexual objectification of women. This is distinctly gendered in particular ways. Women and girls are sexually objectified in the media and thus encouraged, if not indeed pressured, into presenting themselves in a sexualised manner. A sexualised image for women/girls is thus established as trendy, desirable and empowered in a way that is not the case for men/boys. This is also the premise in the protectionist texts examined in this thesis, which construct sexualisation as a new phenomenon, where in the 'past' these pressures did not exist (Buckingham et al., 2010). The third layer in this tripart model is the reprimand and sanction that women and girls suffer as a result of presenting themselves in a sexualised manner. This takes on many forms both historically and in contemporary society, and will be expanded on below (see for example, Oppliger, 2009). What makes this practice particularly manipulative is that women and girls are punished for something that they were encouraged or pressured to do in the first instance.

To start a comprehensive discussion on three-layer-sexism, I would like to begin by looking at historical constructs of women's sexuality. The first layer of sexism is rooted in historical and religious writings and specifically in the heritage pattern of Western Europe that demanded that women marry as virgins. Hanne Blank reflected on “the so-called paternity/property” which proposes that around the time agriculture was first conceived, mothers needed men to accept children they birthed as theirs, in order to secure a means of protection, food and shelter (2007: 25). This benefitted men as well. Self-interest encouraged them towards “ensuring the survival and success” of their offspring so that “one’s hard-won resources not be squandered or given away to unworthy recipients” (Blank, 2007: 26). Before the invention of paternity testing, constructing a concept of a woman’s virginity allowed verification that the child was related to the man the woman had married and thus could inherit the father’s property. Consequently, raising a virgin daughter became an advantageous bargaining tool when creating allies through marriage. Whilst

women in the West do not need to rely on a man for survival anymore, virginity still holds societal value as it is linked to better opportunities in terms of finding partners and ensuring a successful future (Blank, 2007). I would propose that the attachment of virginity to virtue and sex to shame also extends to the stigma around sexualised dress, because dress and sexuality are so closely entwined, as discussed by Tseëlon in Chapter 3. Thus, women do not even have to perform sexual acts in order to appear sexualised; simply presenting in this manner is enough to build the link with shame (Tseëlon, 1995). I propose that the first layer of sexism, as it is conceptualised and discussed here, is the practice of attaching shame to women's sexual desires and practices, and to their self-sexualisation through clothing and beautification. I would furthermore like to identify this as a gendered practice; as the *Scottish* (2010) and *Irish Reviews* (2015) recognise, these narratives do not apply to boys and men in the same fashion.

The second layer of sexism is the practice of sexualisation. This happens within modern culture which protectionists argue has become increasingly sexualised. This has been analysed by academics such as Church Gibson (2013), Lynch (2012) and McNair (2002) who examine the sexualisation of culture specifically through phenomena such as the 'porn chic' trend where a look more familiar from pornography is now being reappropriated by the mainstream. Protectionist sources propose that sexualised culture affects the media which then promotes a sexualised image and dress for both women and men (see for example Papadopoulos, 2010). Advertisements, music videos and tabloid press, among other outlets, frequently depend on the depiction of women in tight and revealing garments, heavily made up and performing sexualised posing (see for example Papadopoulos, 2010). Ringrose, quoted in the *British Review*, noted that "interviews with 14–16-year-olds whose online profiles 'raised issues around sexual representation and identity' found that girls are 'under particular and constant threat of failing to meet the pornified and hyper-sexualised visual ideals of "perfect femininity" online'" (cited in Papadopoulos, 2010: 43). This suggests the concreteness of the pressure of sexualisation. The APA also recognised this pressure, noting the social advantages girls look to gain by self-sexualisation. They suggest, that "keen

observers of how social processes operate, girls anticipate that they will accrue social advantages, such as popularity, for buying into the sexualization of girls (i.e., themselves), and they fear social rejection for not doing so" (APA, 2007: 17). The *British* and the *APA Review* both attest to the pressure that sexualised culture places on girls, but also to how girls perceive to gain advantage by conforming to it.

What happens after the promotion of sexualisation, I argue, is highly problematic and difficult to analyse in a coherent way, as it presents itself in such a contradictory manner. As discussed above, the *Reviews* did suggest that girls aim to adhere to the sexualised trend; however, instead of being lauded for achieving a sexualised appearance, they are reprimanded for it. This is what I dub the third layer of sexism, which in effect reveals how the system of sexualisation sets girls up to fail, presenting a contradiction. Something which was encouraged becomes negative when achieved. The APA argues that "sexualization and objectification undermine confidence in and comfort with one's own body, leading to a host of negative emotional consequences, such as shame, anxiety, and even self-disgust" (2007: 22). I would argue that it is problematic to claim that through sexualisation girls will "accrue social advantages", but that sexualisation also leads to a "host of negative... consequences". The *British Review* discussed this contradiction and the reversal which happens in sexualisation practice. "What we need to consider is how the effect of the media interacts with other factors (psychological, familial and social) to bring about a situation where young people's sexuality is commodified and ultimately used against them" (Papadopoulos, 2010: 64). Through this practice, it appears the media puts girls into a compromised position by promoting a mode of presentation for them that will have ultimately and inevitably result in criticism. This reprimand can be seen to take place in many ways. It presents itself as sexual sanctioning, a process in which the populist manuals analysed here also engage. It can be seen in how girls who dress in a sexualised manner are treated by their peers (Buckingham et al., 2010: 66-67) or how these girls see themselves. "Sexualizing treatment and self-objectification can generate feelings of disgust toward one's physical self. Girls may feel they are "ugly" and "gross" or untouchable" (APA, 2007: 22). I

would hence like to argue that the “social advantages” that the APA discusses are not achieved by dressing in a sexualised manner.

One point of comparison that could be made with this phenomenon would be with the 'glass cliff' theory. While it does not relate to representation, it illustrates another way in which women are 'set up to fail'. According to it, women in leadership roles, like female political election candidates or executives in the corporate world, are more likely than men to only achieve their leadership roles during periods of downturn or crisis (Bruckmüller and Branscombe, 2011). On the one hand this is because women are seen as being more empathetic and better in crisis and thus able to get the employees or voters to their side/pursue the desired result in any number of leadership scenarios. However, in practice this also means that they are in power exactly when the chance of failure is highest (Bruckmüller and Branscombe, 2011). What I propose by drawing parallels between the three layers of sexism in sexualisation discourse and the glass cliff theory, is that they both encourage women or girls to pursue something that they will 'fail' at. In sexualisation, after girls wear sexualised clothing they will be reprimanded for their dress. With the glass cliff, women are given responsibility for enterprises that will fail. What I would suggest makes these specifically contriving is that by setting women and girls up to fail themselves, it is possible to subjectify the failure. In essence, this practice becomes a form of victim blaming. What I further suggest is that this may become dangerous in various ways, for example in connection with sexual abuse, because if victim blaming becomes subjectified in one area, it may become easier to apply it to another one too.

In summary, the 'three layers of sexism' refers to the historical and societal construction that formulates women's sexual expression in a contradictory manner. On the one hand it is established as shameful, on the other it is promoted as a trend, but ultimately women are reprimanded in both direct and indirect ways for acting upon their sexuality or presenting themselves in a sexualised manner. The 'three layers of sexism' follows the sequence which sets women up to fail.

'Double pressure' operates within the societal demands and constraints set up by the 'three layers of sexism'. While 'three layers of sexism' presented a

system within which women will ultimately always fail with regard to their sexual expression, 'double pressure' relates specifically to how girls have to navigate a society which is invested in their defeat. This will, in turn, aid in upholding traditional patriarchal power structures. I begin this argument by proposing that both dress and fashion, when worn by girls, always present both pressure and possibility. It would be too simplistic to claim that girls are only empowered by dress or that they only experience pressures to wear certain styles, as the act of dressing in modern society is a multifaceted undertaking (see for example Rocamora, 2015). By extension, this applies to sexualised clothing as well. As outlined in the previous section, *what* constitutes sexualised dress is subjective. Here, I would like to refer back to the Egan quote cited earlier in this chapter, where she described the complexities of the empowerment felt by young people in finding their personal preferences with regards to clothing. She reiterated how they fight, but are also subjected to (and subject others to) traditional ideologies around sex and gender (2013: 58). Protectionist literature, I argue, takes a more uncomplicated, elementary approach to this complex issue. It relies, at its heart, on the notion that girls experience pressures to display themselves in a sexualised manner. They claim that girls receive media messages and encouragement from their peers, mothers, men or the beauty and fashion industry to dress and beautify themselves to look 'older' and 'sexy'. Conversely, it can therefore be suggested that 'modest' clothing relieves the pressure and provides girls with stress-free self-presentation.

Within the sexualisation discourses examined in this thesis, double pressure becomes the practice that, on the one hand, girls do experience pressures by the media, their peers and so on to present themselves in a sexualised manner, but on the other, I read the pressure set by protectionists for girls to wear modest clothing to also be problematic. As discussed in the previous two sections, which examined how subjectively a trend can be constructed as being sexualising (7.2), and how maturing for girls is constructed as mainly a sexualised undertaking (7.3), I argue that this pressure to conform to modest or innocent ideals is very tangible. I see the protectionist discourse as placing a distinct pressure onto girls to avoid certain kinds of dress. The dress to be avoided is discussed as 'sexualising' but is more specifically dress which

may invite attention (Buckingham et al., 2010:7), which is trendy (35) or expensive (30). These kinds of clothes were criticised by protectionists because of the financial investment and because of the stigma of vanity that still prevails regarding dress (Roach and Eicher, 1965: 38). They were seen as inviting bullying or discrimination for the same reasons (Atkins Wardy, 2014: 80-1). I would argue that girls were also sexually sanctioned in the protectionist discourse over wearing dress that was perceived to make them look older or more feminine (Atkins Wardy, 2014: 122), was revealing, or carried the trademarks of what is considered sexualised clothing. I would like to compare these protectionist critiques of dress with the debates between second- and third-wave feminists which were examined in Chapter 4. There I reviewed literature written by both second and third-wave feminists and analysed the distinct differences in how they related to feminine dress. Where the second wave reacted to old patriarchal norms by rejecting feminine dress, the third wave, in turn, reacted to the second wave's 'utilitarian' apparel by starting a more feminine and sexualised trend (Thornton and Evans, 1989). I recognise that intergenerational feminist debates were about adult women, and the 'double pressure' debate is between adults who are looking to protect underage girls. Protectionists have a valid point with wanting to guard girls from the pressures of sexualised dress in a time where social media engagement grows, and TikTok and other visual platforms become more popular. However, I would argue that the form the protection takes is not conducive to the feminist cause and is highly problematic for the intergenerational feminist project because the backlash which protectionists engage in rhetorically and discursively leaves girls in a precarious position. Girls become pressured to carefully navigate their budding sexuality, but also how they express themselves sartorially and how this is then perceived.

The *Scottish* research team attested to 'double pressure' regarding both genders:

> Across the interviews, the participants (teens) indicated the importance of treading a middle ground: caring about appearance but not wearing too much make-up, hair gel or aftershave and not having too much of a tan (particularly a fake tan); knowing what is trendy but not trying too hard to impress friends through purchases; wearing things that are neither too dull nor that stand out... not buying things at the cheapest stores but not

buying high- priced designer clothes either.
(Buckingham et al., 2010: 66-67)

I will come back to this quote in Chapter 9 where it will be examined specifically within the context of social class; however, here I wish to highlight how, although the Scottish Report addresses both genders, girls were reported to feel the surveillance of this so-called middle ground more actively. For girls there were more ways of “getting it wrong”, suggests the Scottish research team, that “the surveillance is concerned more with the body (correct display of the figure, face and hair) than for boys” (Buckingham et al., 2010: 66-67) and that “young people are aware of risks of appearing older through the use of sexualised products and generally having personal appearances misread... and these risks relate far more to girls than to boys” (Buckingham et al., 2010: 8). The *Scottish Review*'s account of girls' navigation of these pressures suggests not only that they are perceptive of risk, but also that they actively police their behaviour with regard to it.

I would now like to turn to examples in protectionist texts examined in this thesis which I read as demonstrating attributes of 'double pressure'. An illustration of this and internalised policing by girls is provided in an article *'The Cheapening of Childhood'* by Tanith Carey in the *Daily Mail* where she recalled a conversation with her daughter Clio following a visit together to a children's beauty parlour in Essex:

> Luckily, make-up is an issue we have talked about many times with her older sister Lily, nine, and my daughters have worked out for themselves that little girls are naturally beautiful... Until today, Clio has never seen so much pink in one place. She simply doesn't seem to know where to look. First, she gingerly tries the velvet throne for size and observes the manicure station. I'm relieved when she says: 'Little girls don't need make-up, do they mummy?'
> (Carey, 2011a)

Here, Carey indicates relief at the fact that her daughter is expressing traits in congruence with traditional middle-class values regarding childhood innocence

by seeking confirmation that “little girls don’t need make-up...?” I would like to build a different discourse where it may be possible to visualise this scene with an excited Clio amongst all the pink being able to indulge herself for the first time within the fantastical dream of abundance. At the same time, Clio remembers to curb her excitement and scrambles to find an acceptable answer for her mother. I would argue that this could be seen as a poignant demonstration of ‘double pressure’ as it upholds socially constructed ideas around display and gendered colours. One sector of society 'pressures' girls towards pink goods, while others steer them away. These divisions are also not arbitrary, as will be addressed in Chapter 9. Carey's daughter here ‘correctly’ performs middle-class values with her rejection of the beauty regime. Clio, with her comments, succeeds in performing innocent and middle-class childhood in rejecting the need for beautification, while unwittingly also reinforcing the rules that will follow her into maturity.

Further to 'double pressure' being the result of pressures relating to social class, to a specific kind of feminism and taste associated with both feminism and social class, 'double pressure' also relates to generational divide and the teenage experience. 'Double pressure' as it operates specifically after childhood in teenagers and their peer affiliations, I find, is quite evident. Teenagers are in a precarious position where they live at home and are under guardianship; however, they may spend more time with peers and certainly build significant cultures within this group. I would thus argue that a divide builds here, where objects and behaviours that teenagers would perceive to offer them a social benefit within the peer group, will raise alarm with their parents. Hence, they experience pressure from *both* sides to conform to *opposite* ideals. One comparison that could be drawn is with consuming or experimenting with recreational drugs or smoking and drinking. It could be argued that a stereotypical conflict between parent and teenager is one where parents inform and enforce rules against consumption, but where the teenager may procure social advantages within the peer group for participating in drug use. I find this example illustrative of 'double pressure' in its stereotype and simplicity ; however, I also want to use it as a counterargument to the anti-sexualisation discourse. Smoking, alcohol and drug taking are not only socially adverse

problems, but also harmful for the health, especially that of minors. Therefore, these substances are also noxious in a vacuum; in and of themselves, so to speak. Wearing sexualised dress becomes primarily a social concern within the protectionist discourses examined in this thesis. In essence, sexualised dress becomes problematic when it is problematised, and sexualised dress is primarily, initially problematised outside of the peer group. Protectionists often connect sexualisation to physical harm, such as in the causal links built in Chapter 6, or in David Cameron's newspaper article, discussed in Chapter 5, where he compares sexualisation to “toxic waste” (Cameron, 2010). “Toxic waste”, however, just as with illicit substances, is toxic regardless of who perceives it. I see all these juxtapositions as misguided endeavours at conflating sexualisation with concrete harm. This, again, could be related to the “displacement” (Egan, 2013) present in sexualisation discourses where girls' dress is problematised. Instead of the authors engaging with much more concrete harms, such as poverty, child sexual abuse or gendered patriarchal power structures, which affect girls' lives socially and psychologically, they focus on the propriety of girls' dress.

7.5 Summary

This chapter examined the discourses around sexualisation which construct it as an all-encompassing force, an extreme influence. I began by analysing how subjective sexualisation discourse is. I argued that the protectionist propensity of simplifying fashion and dress to an elementary sexual message is problematic in its alarm. It further suggests a lack of sensitivity towards fashion and dress as a subject. I would suggest that this practice ends up creating what it argues to challenge, as it sexualises fashion and dress by focusing exclusively on the sexual aspect. Next, this chapter examined how growing up for girls is often seen wholly in sexualised terms; examining how protectionists often spoke of girls' interest in beautification and enhancing femininity interchangeably with an interest in sexually attracting the opposite sex and

sexual acts. In anti-sexualisation discourses femininity and sexuality became conflated whereas the same was not true for boys. The last section of this chapter examined two concepts which named, and aimed to articulate, theoretical frameworks operating within the sexualisation discourse. 'Three layers of sexism' broke down the climate within which girls' and women's sexual and sartorial expression can be used against them and 'double pressure' examined how, while girls can be seen to feel pressure to dress in a sexualised manner, they could simultaneously be seen to be pressured to dress modestly from a different direction. This set-up causes girls' sartorial choices to appear misguided no matter how they dress.

Chapter 8

Dress as the Source of Sexualisation

8.1 Introduction

The introduction to this thesis examined the differences between the terms clothing, dress and fashion and, building on that, this chapter investigates the role of clothing, dress and fashion in anti-sexualisation discourses in detail. It is therefore appropriate to add additional context to show how protectionists use and reinterpret the terminology. Chapter 3 briefly touched upon Diane Crane's (2000) articulations of how most women do not wear fashion, but rather dress. I would argue that sexualised dress and clothing are not 'fashion', as they do not, in general, respond to high fashion. However, protectionists often use, or rather *misuse* the term 'fashion', and I interpret their use of it to describe clothing that 'people want'. As noted, this thesis examines the specific period between 2005 and 2015. While the dress discussed is not 'fashion', it may have been 'fashionable' at the time. More specifically, through these discourses it appears that the dress that was marketed at young girls during this time was sexualised. Sexualised dress appeared to have become part of a mainstream fashion system of which it had not previously been a part.

This reappropriation of the word 'fashion' by the protectionists also means that when they speak of 'fashion victims', as in section 8.2, they appear to use it to refer to victims of sexualisation. This builds a negative discourse around dress and frames it in terms of harm and danger. As within Foucault's (1972) theory on the cyclical nature of discourse, the rhetoric with which dress is described cements its troublesome status in a cyclical manner through repetition and neutralisation. Because certain elements of dress are established

as inherently harmful, this chapter moves onto examine how the right to dress in certain ways is reserved for the private space specifically. Protectionists also build a discourse which demands gratitude from girls to be able to dress the way they want. This chapter purposefully includes a section dedicated to protectionist analyses of make-up in order to examine how make-up, specifically, is seen as sexualising, as, unlike clothing, it is not 'necessary' in any capacity. This chapter closes with an analysis of how dress begins to embody almost active traits in anti-sexualisation texts, becoming contaminating. Within this discourse girls become not the victims of sexualisation, but active predators.

8.2 'Fashion Victims' - Negative, Compulsive Dress

In her book *Consuming Innocence* (2008) Brooks opens a conversation about “fashionable” dress and speculates over adults' motivations to dress their children this way. “The clothing may have been fashionable, but who wants fashionable on a child? A self-conscious adult, that's who – one who consciously or unconsciously feels she or he is in a parenting competition and that their child is their trophy” (Brooks, 2008: 79). I would first like to refer back to the introduction to this chapter and the discussion of how protectionists use language around fashion. Brooks may not be referring to the Western fashion system and its constantly changing high fashions; however, I do read a critique here about following trends and consuming dress that is updated regularly as it soon goes out of style. Two assumptions appear to arise within Brooks' assertion. The first places stigma on fashion through rhetoric and changing trends itself, as interest and participation in following trends is described as “self-conscious” and “competitive”. 'Fashion' and the idea of being “fashionable” become symbolic of vanity, insecurity and consumerist competition, as was discussed in Chapter 3, which examined attitudes towards 'fashionable' women.

Where I would argue Brooks' discourse exhibits protectionist traits is that it simplifies the discourse immensely. No other motivations apart from insecurity are provided for the desire to dress children in a “fashionable” manner and fashion as a source of joy is dismissed outright. I would argue that 'fashion' here becomes a displacement for anxieties over child-rearing and a competitive environment in general. Instead of examining ideas of children as status symbols and successful child-rearing as a wider symbol for correctly performed participation in upholding middle-class values, Brooks simply dismisses 'fashion'. I see this as highly problematic as it circumvents larger conversations around class, consumption and anxieties around upholding appearances.

I would also argue that seeing a “fashionable” child as a “trophy” strips the child of any agency in the matter and objectifies them. While the child may not have had any say in how they were dressed, this contention leaves no room for the child to enjoy “fashionable” dress. Brooks implies that fashionability must always be inherently uncomfortable for the child. This echoes the discourse covered in the chapter on Childhood, where children are seen as being distinctly different from adults. They are established as 'innocent', their desires existing outside of commerce, fashion or sexual display. Thus, as a child cannot be seen to desire the fashionable dress Brooks speaks of, it means that these desires must be imposed by the parents.

In her book *What's Happening to our Girls?* (2008) Maggie Hamilton also conflates 'fashion' with pressure and maturity, citing Debra, a community liaison officer and mother of two, who said, “'Puberty issues are happening much younger. Some girls are now fashion-conscious as young as 3 or 4'” (2008: 19). By talking about “fashion” as a “puberty issue” and something to be “conscious” about, Debra assigns dress an intrinsically negative tone. It is unclear here if Debra speaks specifically about the fashion cycle or about dress; however, in either instance clothing and trends are established as problematic. Hamilton uses Debra's postulate to bring dress into the realm of maturity, to be enjoyed after puberty, as if sophisticated skills were needed to negotiate it. I would argue that what this approach achieves is rather detrimental. It underplays the gravity of “puberty issues”, physical, psychological and social, reducing them to an elementary level. Furthermore, I would argue that sexualisation is again

conjured here specifically through its own discourse. The physical development of girls is reviewed in almost exclusively sexualised terms, relating to dress practices, and a discourse on constructive sexual education that de-stigmatises and de-sexualises puberty is foregone.

Echoing Debra in Hamilton's text, Brooks wrote that, “kids today are more than fashion-conscious: they become fashion victims” (2008: 66). The term “fashion victim” often gets colloquially used in the context of people, often 'fashionistas' or fashion students, who specifically consume high fashion and may suffer financially or physically (uncomfortable shoes, tight clothing, heavy earrings) as the result. It is also the title of Alison Matthew David's 2017 book charting the history of how dress has been used to injure and to kill, and what women have worn 'to die for' fashion. What Matthew David draws attention to is the idea of agency within fashion and how this is often misunderstood. While fashion may be physically uncomfortable, it can bring a sense of empowerment through quasi-sport-like competition of 'who is best dressed' and affiliation through mutual appreciation (Matthew David, 2017). What Brooks seems to imply with her articulation of the “fashion victim” is a lack of agency that children may suffer as the result of their interest in dress. Evidenced by what she says after the quote; by “kids”, she implies girls.

The Bratz Doll, a 21st century version of the Barbie doll with a colourful, trendy and revealing wardrobe, has become symbolic of all things commercialised and sexualised in girlhood. The dolls have disproportionately large heads and feet, and come with a very fashionable wardrobe, leaving Barbie looking rather old-fashioned. The dolls came under increasing media scrutiny and disapproval because of their suggested sexualised appearance and its influence on girl-children. Levin notes that “Bratz Dolls come with the slogan ‘The Girls with a Passion for Fashion’” (Levin, 2009: 80). She cites *Boston Globe* parenting reporter Barbara Meltz concluding “There is only one [Bratz] story line: girl as sex object” (Levin, 2009: 80). The “passion for fashion”, was here very hastily constructed as having a sexual dimension first and foremost. Bratz Doll style was polemically described as “hooker chic” by the *Daily Mail* (Poulton, 2011a). The article’s author, Poulton, goes further, describing them as a “sinister corporate move to corrupt young minds” (Poulton,

2011a). Eleven sources from three continents discussed Bratz in their texts, with several *Daily Mail* journalists picking up on the topic (APA, 2010; Atkins Wardy, 2014; Brookes, 2008; Buckingham et al., 2010; Durham, 2009; Hamilton, 2008; Kiely et al., 2015; Levin, 2009; McRae and Sears, 2007, Olfman, 2008; Papadopoulos, 2010; Poulton, 2011a; Rush & La Nauze, 2006).

In the above protectionist discourses fashion becomes something that girls are not seen to desire authentically. The *Daily Mail* continued the subject, citing Michele Elliot, of child protection charity Kidscape, who suggested that "Bratz dolls are little sexualised creatures which give the wrong message to kids... We have got children of 12, 13 and 14 who are ashamed that they haven't had sex yet. They think sex is the be all and end all" (McRae and Sears, 2007). I would argue that Eliot simplifies the discourse here immensely, as the direct causal link between the doll and copulation is uncomplicated in this argument. The article was responded to by a spokesperson for Bratz stating that “children see the dolls as being pretty rather than sexy” (McRae and Sears, 2007), thus beginning the task of giving them more dimension, something, I would argue, the girls who play with them should also be awarded. I would like to refer back to the analysis in Chapter 7 of how sexualisation is seen as all-encompassing, and the most prevailing force, eclipsing any other characteristic, such as 'pretty' or 'trendy'. This also echoes ideas around the female body as essentially erotic, discussed in section 7.3. where any kind of dress that coincides with adult styles is seen as sexualising girls and especially encouraging of sexual acts, rather than simply a style.

I would argue that this rhetoric is part of a wider trope within protectionist literature where adverse language is used to describe girls' interest in the way that they look. This trope will be investigated in more detail in its own section in Chapter 9; however here I want to briefly examine the practice of shaming. Protectionists tend to use shaming rhetoric, such as “fashion victim” as a tool to fight sexualisation. It appears that rather than focusing on the gendered nature of these discourses, where girls' dress is spoken of in a very different tone to boys', and rather than tackling the inherent inequality and its harmful effects that come from this, protectionists endeavour to keep girls safe by shaming them out of sexualisation. I would argue that this causes harm to girls on two levels.

Firstly, through this problematising rhetoric girls are socialised to feel shame over their consumption of fashion or dress and are compelled to give up this interest. But secondly, giving these up will hardly bring about equality or safety from sexual harassment or violence. Girls are thus left in a position where their interests are restricted, but to no avail, placing them in a lose-lose situation.

The APA continues the negative discourse around dress and fashion by discussing it as a constant preoccupation that brings its female subject under its control, moulding her into a sexualised object or, in other words, “costuming [her] for seduction” (Duffy & Gotcher, 1996 in APA, 2007: 7). The APA suggest that “Girls and young women are repeatedly encouraged to look and dress in specific ways to look sexy for men” (APA, 2007: 7). Similarly, the *Daily Mail* quoted then-British Prime Minister David Cameron speaking about the “worry” of girls towards dress who stated that “girls are encouraged to dress like women, wear lingerie and worry about what they look like” (Cameron, 2010). The *British Review* goes one step further and describes the practice of girls “present[ing] themselves as sexually desirable” as borderline compulsion.

> A dominant trend in magazines seems to be the need for girls to present themselves as sexually desirable in order to attract male attention. Worryingly, there is also a trend for children in magazines to be dressed and posed in ways designed to draw attention to sexual features that they do not yet have. At the same time, advice on hairstyles, cosmetics, clothing, diet, and exercise attempt to remake even young readers as objects of male desire, promoting premature sexualisation.
>
> (Papadopoulos, 2010: 7)

This statement is key to understanding the complexity of discourses around sexualisation and dress as it appears to be based on a series of contradictions. The *British Review* begins by proposing that girls who “present themselves as sexually desirable” in magazines do so out of a “need” to “attract male attention”. The quote establishes the girls in magazines as active in their endeavours to seduce the male readers, even though girls do not as a rule direct or style themselves for photoshoots. A misunderstanding and a conflation thus take place here. Girls are simultaneously established as active in their

seductive presentation, which they may not be in the setting of a photoshoot, and passive in receiving the male gaze. Girls are implied to have agency in their styling, which they do not necessarily have, but equally they are implied to become victims of the indoctrination of sexualisation, thus beginning to self-sexualise. The use of the word “need” suggests an unhealthy obsession with how they look and present themselves. This also implies that there is no genuine desire on the part of the girl in what she is doing, but that she simply acts obsessively. The idea of dress “remaking” girls reinforces girls' perceived lack of agency in the matter, literally conditioning them as 'fashion victims', here meaning victims of sexualised dress. A desire for dress is implied to happen with compulsion and without any possibility of enjoyment.

I would like to refer back to Egan's (2013) text discussed at the beginning of the last chapter, where she examined protectionist attitudes towards sexualisation as all-encompassing and cataclysmic. She suggests that we are led to believe, by protectionist discourse, that girls act like, and internalise the images of, celebrities they see in magazines as if they were them. Playing at or mimicking celebrities or models is considered especially dangerous, protectionist writings claim, as the consumption of dress will inevitably lead to the girls' transformation. “In effect, they become the grotesque” (Egan, 2013: 99). Girls are established as simultaneously impressionable, immature and untrustworthy, hence in need of regulation, but also as alluring and corrupting and hence accountable. I would argue that precisely this happens in the above quote. The *British Review* simultaneously establishes the girls as agents and victims. This is advantageous for protectionists as, in this way, the 'save the girls' rhetoric can be upheld through implying a sense of exploitation by men. Meanwhile, however, we do not have to completely sympathise with 'girlkind' after all, as they have clearly also played their part in their own exploitation, as protectionist discourses propose. This is beneficial to protectionist rhetoric because, as has been argued elsewhere in this thesis, policing girls' dress is far more uncomplicated than dismantling inequality in its complex forms.

Addressing the last sentence of the quote, if girls are given advice on beauty treatments and exercise routines in magazines geared towards girls themselves, how does this become primarily a concern over men? I would

argue that this relies on the misguided notion that dress is primarily performed for the benefit of men, a myth that is challenged time and time again by fashion scholars and feminist writers (for example Beckingham, 2005; Entwistle, 2000; Wilson,1985;) as examined in the literature review. I would particularly draw attention to the language used here and highlight the word “remake”. This proposes that magazines actively remodel passive girls without agency into sexualised Lolita figures whose sole purpose is to attract male attention. This negates any agency or interest on the girl’s part in choosing what she reads, how much “advice” she is interested in and how many of these ideas she may implement herself, and to what extent. In this scenario the girls are underestimated in their judgements and interests, and magazines instituted as paedophilic, “remaking” girls as victims of men's desires. This logic also overestimates men’s interest in dress, and that girls dress in order to capture men's interest, as opposed to dressing for their own satisfaction or that of other girls who share this passion.

I would like to highlight a foundational misunderstanding within protectionist texts here. These categorically imply a direct relationship between dress and abuse; however, I would like to suggest that the kinds of men who are accused of preying on girls who dress in a sexualised manner have no interest in whether the clothes these girls wear are trendy or part of a fashion system. I would even go so far as to suggest that they may not be interested in their dress at all. It is the protectionists who build the relationship between dress and the paedophile. I would also like to highlight the particular context of this thesis- that is,one written within a fashion university. Thinking of the students and teachers of institutions such as these and generally of those to whom dress is marketed, one can rather easily argue that dress is historically the domain of very specific identity formations[23]. Making the link to paedophilic men in this manner, I would argue, is misguided. If the actions of men towards girls become inappropriate, it would be much more relevant to interrogate these actions, as opposed to the girls' attire.

In the second sentence of the above quote, the *British Review* expresses alarm over the idea that children in magazines are styled to invite interest in

[23] For more on the complexities on this see: Breward, 1999; Cole, 2000

their sexual features. I would also like to question this, as there are no examples offered in the source. Which magazines are supposedly involved? Fashion magazines geared toward an adult female readership do not commonly feature children, as the clothing is presented to women and hence worn by women[24]. If the *British Review* is referring to magazines that are geared towards girl-children themselves, two issues still present themselves. The girls in these magazines may be posed and presented in ways that make them appear more mature; however, I would suggest that this is a common feature that is not based on sexualisation. Children's magazines, or ones geared towards tweens, have always featured stories that present items and fashions that may, in fact, originally be geared towards an older demographic (Hearst Magazines, 2012). I would like to propose that this is not done to sexualise children, but to give them a sense of maturity, to show that they are taken seriously. This does not have to equal sexualisation.

I would argue that statements and paragraphs like these, which are representative of other protectionist literature, are problematic in many ways. They offer no evidence for the alarm raised in them and make generalising comments about anxieties that are displaced. Furthermore, I would argue that these propositions are actively damaging to girls, as they look to problematise their interests in dress while also alleviating the blame of men and women in cases of inappropriate sexual conduct, as they replace the interrogation on sexism with a discourse on dress.

> I allow my daughter... I’ve let her have false nails on, recently my mum actually bought her little fluorescent pink high heels out of New Look. She loves going to school, she sticks in at her clubs, she doesn’t hang about the streets, I wouldn’t say that any of that is making her, a sexualisation, I think it's more about fashion and feeling nice about herself.
>
> (Buckingham et al., 2010: 47-48)

This was the account of a mother who was interviewed for the *Scottish Review*. Her comment is very valuable in challenging protectionist arguments. Anti-

[24] While it is outside of the parameters of the thesis to investigate the 'childified' woman, I would like to note that Morna Laing (2021) has examined this topic in depth.

sexualisation discourse relies on the idea that sexualisation through cosmetics and dress causes harm and harmful behaviour by girls. The mother quoted above suggests that 'sexualised' clothing, like the “fluorescent pink high heels out of New Look” that her daughter enjoys wearing have not impacted on her behaviour. In fact, she argues that the shoes are about following fashion and “feeling nice about herself”. The items deemed by others as sexualising did not harm the girl, but in fact brought her pleasure. What happens within protectionist discourses is that they encourage the monitoring and finally restricting of girls' consumables, but do not take into account that this leads to regulating and restricting the very people they were meant to protect. I would like to conclude this section by referring to a mother of sons interviewed in the *Scottish Review*: “since these goods are primarily aimed at girls, any intervention would also impact most heavily on them, and might end up reinforcing the attitudes it was designed to challenge” (Buckingham et al., 2010: 56). I would argue that the “attitude” that the mother describes here is essentially victim-blaming, or the practice of teaching girls to keep themselves away from harm. The practice of intervening on goods that the girls consume, I would argue, reinforces the idea that there is a problem with girls' practices that needs interfering with or rectifying. The discourse focuses once more on girls as problematic, but also as the solution to sexist attitudes, leaving patriarchal practices outside of the discourse.

8.3 Dress as Private and a Privilege

In 1975 Angela McRobbie and Jenny Garber wrote the seminal essay “Girls and Subcultures”. They wanted to address a missing dimension in cultural studies which had examined boys' subcultures and street culture. Within this discourse girls were only ever discussed as associating with subcultures via their boyfriends. However, McRobbie and Garber speculated that teenage girls’ invisibility in these accounts did not mean that they were not participating, but rather that their subcultural lives were being lived out in an alternative domain:

that of the home. This was due to two reasons, to keep girls from causing trouble on the streets and to keep them safe (McRobbie and Garber, 1975).

Ideas around privacy can be found throughout the protectionist discourses examined in this thesis. I would argue that because sexualised dress is seen to cause sexual harassment and abuse, it is seen as dangerous and thus in need of being kept out of public view. Writing about a children's beauty parlour for the *Daily Mail,* Tanith Carey opens a discourse about where it may be appropriate for girl-children to dress as they wish. “There's nothing wrong with children playing dress up in the privacy of our homes” (Carey, 2011a). Pre-empting this, Brooks articulated ideas of privacy and about children acting older and trying on adult identities in her populist manual. Brooks was concerned that this happens in public nowadays, rather than in the sanctity of the home (2008: 43). While Brooks wrote about “children”, she did imply girls through her examples. As with many populist manuals, the pairing of sexuality with dress and beautification continues in Brooks' book. “Young children shouldn't be wearing make-up in public. In private space, within the home (or a relative's or a friend's house), it's the parents' prerogative”, states Brooks (2008: 85). She then continues with tips on how girl-children could start with a little bit of make-up, with “lip gloss and a little eye shadow” being acceptable from age 10 and taking it from there (Brooks, 2008: 85). While I will discuss make-up specifically below, I want to use this example here due to its clear pairing of dress and private space, with sexuality. I propose that here Brooks speaks about make-up as if she was talking about the age of consent and sexual maturity. Make-up becomes a metaphor for sexual awakening. It is as if Brooks is saying that it is alright to start with kissing, then move onto petting as you get older, and so on. I would argue that this is infinitely problematic. Sexualisation is a subjective phenomenon and when it is concretised it may end up shaming girls and implicating them in their sexual objectification or harassment. This places girls in danger of being blamed for sexual violence. If it is possible to institute that girls may wear “lip gloss and a little eye shadow from age 10”, this implies that if they wear it at an earlier age, they can also be held answerable for sexual interest and abuse at this age. It is highly problematic to throw around vague guidelines because it always begs the question, who was, and by what

authority, allowed to set such guidelines initially, and who is, and by what authority allowed to police them? Finally, it also poses the question of who carries responsibility for abuse?

The *Daily Mail* reported on the British Retail Consortium's proposed protocol within the UK context in 2011. This coincided with liberal values becoming more pronounced within the political field, such as the preparation of the same sex marriage act, passed two years later. I would thus see these kinds of guidelines as concrete examples of the Conservatives' promotion of ideas and attitudes towards protecting 'family values' deemed important by their voters. The article noted that guidelines for a voluntary code of practice had been drawn up to guide commerce in matters of sexualisation of children, and

> ...warn that underwear ranges 'require the utmost care', ruling that 'knickers and pants must provide modesty. Thongs are not appropriate for children'... And in a crackdown on products which seek to treat girls like women, they say: 'Vests and crop tops should also be designed for modesty with no need for structural support... 'Under-wiring is not necessary or appropriate for the smallest cup sizes. First bras should be constructed to provide comfort, modesty and support but not enhancement. No mention should be made of enhancement or under-wiring in any children's ranges.'
>
> (Shipman, 2011)

Themes of "modesty" and "appropriateness" become central in the above article, whereas "enhancement" is constructed as negative in its sexualising nature. Similar language continued in *Retail Ireland Childrenswear Guidelines* a year later in 2012 and were designed to apply to children under age 12:

> Slogans and imagery are age-appropriate; that fabrics and cut should provide for modesty; that colour should be age-appropriate and suitable for the item of clothing; and that retailers should take great care where the design of underwear is concerned. Swimwear, the Guidelines state, should provide for modesty and should be age- appropriate. Footwear designed for everyday use should provide stability, and 'party shoes' in their decoration should be 'pretty' rather than 'adult.'
>
> (Kiely at al., 2015: 72)

I would argue that there is danger in these kinds of definite, yet vague, prescriptions on behaviour and adornment outlined by both the British Retail Consortium and in the *Retail Ireland Childrenswear Guidelines*. I would also like to suggest that these kinds of rules are counterproductive. They rely on the idea that everyone presumes to know what is sexualising or sexually provocative and what is not, yet these concepts are entirely subjective. This way any item of clothing, can be placed as the sexualising medium, establishing the girl as sexually provocative. And a sexually provocative girl can be implicated in provoking abuse. I would suggest that this also opens a conversation about the position of protectionism within the patriarchy. These kinds of guidelines that focus on the protected establish girls as either following the rules and 'innocent' and thus deserving protection from the protectionists and the patriarchy, or not following the rules and ‘not innocent' in which case their position becomes precarious.

Where there is a definite rule, such as “thongs are not appropriate for children”, I would argue that the danger of victim-blaming may grow even stronger. If there is a rule, but it was not followed, can the girl then herself be implicated? With vague rules, such as “knickers and pants must provide modesty”, where “modesty” is very much up to interpretation, an illusion of a rule is created. Modesty here becomes not about concrete ideas of fabric which covers the body in a specific way, but rather a buzzword that creates a political agenda. This makes it appear as if sexualisation is being resolved. Because there are guidelines, we will now need further guidelines that discuss what in fact is modesty and how it must materialise in fabric. Furthermore, I would like to stress again, that these recommendations do not come from within the fashion industry or from cultural studies scholars, and they certainly do not come from girls themselves. They come from retail consortiums or policy makers who may be entirely detached from young people's ideas of trends, what girls desire, or indeed need in terms of “structural support”.

What makes the setting of these guidelines so dangerous, is that they shift onto girls the responsibility not to provoke sexual attention. They are given vague guidance, but not actual steadfast rules. When there are no rules, there is also no way to follow them. Finally, girls can always be found to look sexually

provocative and be implicated in unwanted attention or even sexual abuse, as these guidelines can be interpreted by the authority that should protect girls in a subjective manner and possibly to their disadvantage. As explained in the 'unit of assessment' section in Chapter 1, the vagueness of ‘sexualisation’ means that it is always entirely open to interpretation and this is why it is convenient and easy to apply to any kind of cultural text or event or piece of clothing in a way that will then suit the person making the argument.

Within protectionist literature a further discourse emerges by which dress specifically is established as something that has to be earned, or something that girls have to learn to be able 'to handle', a concept also explored further in Chapter 10. In essence, dress becomes a privilege earned with maturity. Atkins Wardy describes girls' “glamour” make-over birthday parties, writing:

> This type of party sexualises our girls in birthday party form and age-compresses them with the message that socialising around drinks and beauty treatments is what women love to do. Now, I love my glass of Pinot and mani-pedi just as much as the next girl, *but*, I am thirty-five years old. When I was seven I was excited to be allowed to drink a can of Orange Crush. If we let our daughters act twenty years old when they are in second grade, then what's left? Where do they go? What boundaries are there left to push?
>
> (Atkins Wardy, 2014: 122)

Atkins Wardy appears to suggest that “socialising around drinks and beauty treatments” is essentially sexualising or 'adultifying'[25]. In a contradictory manner, however, activities described here are specifically performed within the confines of the beauty parlour. This is important because of the discourse that girls are confined to private spaces, where men or boys are not present, to practice dress and make-up, thus begging the question why this is sexualising. It proposes that when girls in adolescence, but also later on in life, get together to have beauty treatments, in a sense they engage in an activity that has an inherently sexual dimension. This is implied by the parallels drawn by the privacy of sexuality, that it is seen as a natural precursor to seeking

[25] The term 'adultify' is used exchangeably with the term 'parentify', both of which are used in social theory to describe a phenomenon usually applied to racialised girls who are treated as being more mature than they actually are (Epstein, Blake and González, 2017).

heterosexual attention and sexual activity. This completely negates girls' own desires and motivations to engage in the aforementioned beauty treatments. It also proposes a lack of awareness of the emotional labour that beauty treatments are associated with and the bonding experience they provide for many women (Black, 2002). This also opens a conversation about what constitutes private space. The beauty parlour was also discussed in the Carey example at the start of this section, so appears to be seen as a private space by protectionists. I would argue that as it is usually a location without heterosexual men, it is thus perceived as a homosocial space. This, however, suggests that it is not public spaces *per se* which are seen as 'dangerous' for girls by the protectionists, but perhaps it is the presence of heterosexual men.

Returning to the above quote, another claim by Atkins Wardy has to do with ideas of awareness, acknowledgement and gratitude. Atkins Wardy invoking her childhood pleasure in drinking Orange Crush almost proposes that children should feel grateful to be able to consume certain products because they were off-limits to their parents. I would argue that this practice adopts a contradictory trait. On one hand parents work hard to provide a better lifestyle for their children than their own; however, when this is achieved, they feel bitterness over the luxuries that their children are now able to have. Atkins Wardy continues with the idea that if girls are allowed to pursue their desires now, “in second grade”, they won't appreciate things to come. This proposition takes on similar contradictory traits to that of Victorian hygiene literature, discussed in Chapter 4, that claimed that girls naturally only desired love and affection but, contradictorily, if left undisciplined would act in a hypersexual manner (Egan and Hawkes, 2008: 70). If we apply this logic to girls' desires towards beauty practices that need to be restricted until they are “twenty years old”, it suggests the following: girls, as innocent and natural children, only desire natural beauty and find beautification naturally uninteresting. However, if left to their own devices, they overindulge in make-up. Their desire towards beautification must also be controlled in order for them not to become complacent and ungrateful. This attitude places girls as problematic figures whose frivolity needs to be controlled and limited. Ultimately Atkins Wardy's comments raise issues of being allowed to do something at a certain age and

about homosocial beauty practices, to conflate these issues simply to sexualisation markedly forgoes a nuanced conversation.

While I will move onto a section specifically examining make-up in protectionist texts, I wanted to include Carey's ideas here as they present a similar sentiment to Atkins Wardy's. Carey offers parents advice on age-appropriate clothing and proposes that parents "try not to make make-up and high heels part of the [girl's daily] ritual" (Carey, 2011a: 131). This again implies that dress is problematic and that it must be contained within a girl's life in order for it not to become an obsession, and in order for her to be able to appreciate it later on. It is as if Carey is talking about an addictive substance, such as alcohol. Enjoyed as an adult and in small quantities it brings joy, however exposing children to it is not just irresponsible, but potentially harmful. Brooks supports this rhetoric and also implies that beauty products are something that girls should grow into by citing "a British report in 2004 [that] claimed that three out of five 7-10-year-olds wore lipstick and perfume regularly" (2008: 84). I would like to question what the value of this finding is. What does this tell us? In a practical sense it only informs us about the dress practices of 7-10-year-old girls. However, the implications here are far more severe. As beautification is equated with sexual practices, this statement is meant to open a conversation about the dangers of daily sexualisation of this demographic. Brooks asks: "How can they look forward to their first facial, let alone first moisturiser, if they've been having them since they were seven?" (2008: 84). Here again, as with Atkins Wardy, there is the implication that girls may become unappreciative of the beauty treatments available to them in later life if they are exposed to them early.

I would like to question and challenge this logic and argue that it is highly problematic as there is a gendered dimension to it. Firstly, protectionist texts focus on an injunction on dress and beauty products, problematising them specifically. This, by proxy, then also problematises girls who like to consume them. Secondly, due to the gendered nature of these products and their consumer demographic, it renders this practice sexist. There is no equivalent for boys. One mother told the *Scottish Review* that she thought "boys are keener to stay boys for longer than girls want to stay girls. I think girls are desperate to be

women. I think that boys are actually quite happy kicking about the football and not really looking in the mirror all the time" (Buckingham et al., 2010: 50). There is no conversation had here where boys should not be allowed a football as this would ruin the sport for them as adults. Furthermore, this mother associates make-up with maturity, and football with childhood. However, her hypothesis is simply a social construct and not based on essential traits, or biology. This particular composition has become naturalised and neutralised through practice and repetition. We could compare beautification to other activities, such as dancing. Dancing can be sensual or even sexual and is thus disproved of in some cultures. However, in the liberal West within which these protectionist writers operate, all dancing is not instantly associated with maturity, sexuality and the sexualisation of children. The reason I am building this comparison, is not to claim that dancing is never a sexualised activity, thinking back at debates over twerking[26], for example, but to show how an activity that has this dimension is not *instantly* condemned in all its forms. Returning to the Brooks' reference to "three out of five 7-10-year-olds wore lipstick and perfume regularly", I would argue, if it had read that 'three out of five 7-10-year-olds like to dance regularly', there would not be the instantly attached moral condemnation.

8.4 Make-up

Make-up is an integral part of dress; however, it is very much under-researched in cultural studies, presenting an opportunity for further academic enquiry. Within the protectionist discourse on sexualisation, make-up specifically appeared to conjure very strong emotion. Make-up was treated very much like other forms of dress within these discourses, which met the subject with considerable alarm, while idiosyncrasies were not explored. Much like the discourse on dress in the previous section where 'fashion' and 'dress' were

[26] Twerking is a form of dancing which can be seen as sexually provocative as the movement centers around bumping the buttocks up and down. Teen pop star Miley Cyrus' dancing at the 2013 MTV Music Awards was famously interpreted as twerking and caused a wide discourse in the press over her sexualisation.

often conflated, intricacies between fashion make-up and celebrity make-up were not distinguished between by protectionists.

"There is no childhood, as things currently stand, it's straight from toddler to lip-pouting, eyeliner-flicked teenager" (Poulton, 2011). As this *Daily Mail* quote suggests, protectionist discourses consider make-up as especially sexualising as it instantly removes innocence from a girl and thus places her in the realm of sexualisation and harm. In another article the *Daily Mail* expressed "worry" over a trend for "seven to 12-year-old girls... spending £24.3 million a month on beauty products in the U.S. alone. And where the U.S. leads, Britain follows. Argos, Toys R Us and even John Lewis are already selling make-up for girls as young as five" (Carey, 2011a). Addressing roughly the same age range as above, I would like to focus on the word "worry" in this quote as it appeals to the emotions of the reader from the very beginning. The quote then moves onto making evaluations about taste and morals where the United States is established as setting a bad example. I would argue that there are also classed undertones where the British context is discussed through the example of retailer John Lewis. As John Lewis enjoys a reputation as a well-established middle-class institution, reporting the fact that "even John Lewis" is selling make-up for girl-children implies that maybe sexualising influences could be tolerated in retail reaching lower classes, but failing to shield middle-class girls is a problem unto itself. Protectionism here is able to critique not only the sexualisation of girls, but also express wider anxieties over the changing nature of the middle-class position. This will be specifically addressed in the following chapter.

The *Irish Review* cited the Irish Dancing Commission which has enforced new, tougher rules as to which kind of beautification they allow their competitors to wear. Fake eyelashes in dance competitions were banned "as a precautionary measure" (Kiely et al., 2015: 72). I would argue that the discourse in the quote that focuses on the *precautionary* measures speaks of a particular alarm when it comes to make-up. There is no elaboration in the text about what this precaution would be against, but the causal link between make-up and harms of sexualisation is established as so direct that it is seen as understandable that preventative statutes should be set in place before make-

up even touches a girl's face. It is perhaps the threat of permanent damage that justifies the “precaution” above. What makes make-up the cause of so much anxiety within the anti-sexualisation literature is the implication that once a girl is sexualised, she cannot be un-sexualised, her innocence is forever lost (Carey, 2011: 9). Carey (2011a) wrote about make-up and the permanent effect that applying it has on girls. She interviewed teachers who reported their frustrations towards girls who spent their breaks “applying lipstick and eyeliner” rather than playing in the playground (Carey, 2011a). She concluded by stating that “once the Pandora's box of beauty is opened, it can be hard to close again” (Carey, 2011a). This again speaks to the two implications in anti-sexualisation literature. The first one is the belief that make-up has an essentially negative nature, that the very act of “applying lipstick and eyeliner”, as opposed to playing in the playground, damages the girl or contributes to a less healthy childhood. How the physical link works, is left undisclosed. Secondly, this implies that sexualisation is all encompassing. Once a girl sexualises herself through the application of make-up, it is implied, she will lose interest in other activities.

In protectionist discourses on sexualisation, the writers frequently resort to evolutionary psychology and a quasi-second-wave feminist interpretation over reasons to wear, or not to wear, make-up. Within this discourse make-up is established exclusively as beneficial to heterosexual attraction and reproduction. The APA builds this kind of discourse early on in their *Review*. Analysing magazines, they argue that

> repeated attempts are made, in the form of advice about hairstyles, cosmetics, clothing, diet, and exercise, to remake the reader as an object of male desire. Nearly everything girls and women are encouraged to do in the line of self-improvement is geared toward gaining the attention of men.
>
> (APA, 2007: 7)

This postulate very much follows on from discourses in section 8.2 that analysed girls' dress as a mode of sexual attraction, using the term “remake”, which invokes ideas that the girl will be substantially and permanently changed. I view this as problematic and as much too simplistic a frame of reference. I lean

my argument on the literature reviewed earlier which constructs the act of dressing as a homosocial exercise, but also because it formulates girls as inherently sexualised in their inability to enjoy dress for any other reason than heterosexual attraction. Further on in their *Review*, the APA considers cosmetics and perfume to be “associated specifically with the desire to be sexually attractive, a desire that seems misplaced in pre-pubescent girls” (APA, 2007: 14). This means that make-up is situated outside the interest field of sexually immature girls. The discourse remains elementary as further reasoning for enjoying cosmetics is foregone.

In the chapter titled *'Do I let My Daughter Have Make-up?'* in her populist manual Hamilton begins by advising that:

> Perhaps it would help parents of little girls who want their own make-up if they knew that when a woman is sexually aroused the increase in her blood flow reddens her lips and cheeks, and makes her more sexually attractive. The reddish tones of lipsticks simulate this arousal. When women are turned on, their pupils dilate, making their eyes more prominent. Eye make-up is designed to create the same effect.
>
> (Hamilton, 2008: 24)

I would argue that the above quotation opens two problematic viewpoints: Firstly, if women wear lipstick solely as a sign of sexual arousal, this renders the application process a very deliberate act in inciting physical arousal. In the animal kingdom these displays of arousal are called 'presenting'. It frames sexuality as a visual performance which may exclude those who do not want to perform it in their desire for physical intimacy. It also negates the possibility for any other than heteronormative sexual attraction. The problem with going down the path of evolutionary psychology here is that making themselves out to look physically aroused, women would have to be able to rely on the postulate that heterosexual men will read their 'presentation' in the way that it was intended and respond to it accordingly. In practice this would mean that these make-up process' would need to inspire a physical response in men which would be reproductively useful. As a comparison, I would like to note that in 2018 MAC cosmetics produced 164 shades of lipstick. I would strongly question whether

these were all produced, and consumed, to inspire 164 different ways to portray female arousal. I would especially like to question what Hamilton's argument would be for the production of green lipstick.

The *Australian Review* pre-empted Hamilton's assertion, with references to the zoologist Desmond Morris's popular work *The Naked Ape* from the 1960s, published during the heyday of second-wave feminism. They write:

> Adult women use cosmetics to make themselves more attractive to men. Behind the assumption that more defined lips, more defined eyes and pinker cheeks are 'more attractive' lies the fact that cosmetics emphasise the secondary effects of sexual arousal. Lipstick mimics increased blood flow to the mucous membranes, and blush mimics temperature increase (Morris 1967, pp. 56-57, p. 89). Eye make-up emphasises pupil dilation. Sexualised girls wear make-up, and lip-gloss or lipstick is most evident, although blush and eye make-up is sometimes also present.
>
> (Rush and La Nauze, 2006: 9-10)

Given the methodological problematic that the very dated reference poses, I would like to focus on the last sentence specifically. The quote here describes sexualisation in very specific terms, something that was established as problematic in the first chapter of this thesis as definitions of sexualisation were shown to vary and the concept was deemed rather indefinite. The *Australian Review* describes a sexualised girl's make up: "lip-gloss or lipstick is most evident, although blush and eye make-up is sometimes also present". I would argue that the *Australian Review* here enters problematic territory as it presents a simultaneously definite but vague account. The sentence begins with "sexualised girls wear make-up". This seems to imply either that all girls who are sexualised wear make-up, which implies that the state of being sexualised is an absolute. Or we can also turn the postulate around in which case it would imply that all girls who wear make-up are sexualised. This would mean that as soon as a girl applies make-up, she is harmed by sexualisation. Most importantly this would also imply that she, herself, does the harm here.

The sentence then moves onto a rather vague description: "lip-gloss or lipstick is most evident, although blush and eye make-up is sometimes also

present”. This begins a sort of a ranking system for make-up, where lip-gloss is implied to be most usual, but least sexualising, with eye-makeup being less conventional and at the more sexualising end of the make-up spectrum. What poses a harmful notion here, I would argue, is the ambiguity of the concept. If anything can be placed as the sexualising medium and on the sexualisation spectrum, and sexualisation is seen to cause sexual violence as examined in Chapter 6, then anything can be seen as sexually provocative and thus also provoking sexual violence. Even though the *Australian Review* gives specific examples of what they perceive to be sexualising, the criteria are by no means steadfast or universal. The *Australian Review* thus adds new items to the subjective, and ever growing, list of harmful items. The more items the list quotes, the more ways there are prospectively for a girl to harm herself through self-sexualisation.

A similar pattern forms in a 2007 *Daily Mail* article where a husband and wife have an argument over their daughter’s beautification habits, published in the form of an open letter.

> Catherine says her husband David is unhappy about Bethany's obsession with beauty. 'He's always telling her: "You've got to be a child and that means you shouldn't be standing in front of the mirror putting make-up on." 'I wouldn't let her wear heels or low-cut tops because that definitely sexualises children, but I don't worry about Bethany wearing make-up.'
>
> (Appleyard & Nicholas, 2007)

The quote again highlights how differing opinions of what is sexualising and what is not, demonstrating the issue of vagueness within protectionism. The last sentence addressing “heels or low- cut tops” as “definitely” sexualising, but make-up as not of worry, shows two issues. Firstly, how differing perceptions of what is sexualising are, even within the same family, but secondly how there is a sense of essential authority on the issue. This is telling of how different cultures, genders and ages consume and perceive beauty products and judge them for their moral value. These various approaches are a social construct; decisions over what is acceptable beautification and what is not, are temporally

and spatially contingent. It is therefore impossible to build a universal and comprehensive picture of what sexualisation is, what transmits it and to what degree. This discourse keeps up the illusion of combating sexualisation when, I would argue, it simply causes confusion.

In her 2008 book, Brooks highlights the “tween boom” that emerged in the beauty industry, “with many businesses targeting young, insecure kids and offering temporary solutions to their body-image dilemmas” (2008: 83-4). Here Brooks failed to detect any enjoyable aspects in the consumption of fashion and beauty products. She, like other protectionist writers, proposes that beauty products are always linked to a specific need to fix something, as opposed to personal enjoyment in enhancement or display. Carey also discusses beautification in a negative tone throughout her book *Where has my Little Girl Gone?* (2011) and implies a causal link between wearing make-up and harm. She focuses on girl-children who have become make-up stars on YouTube: “While viewers tell them, ‘You're so cute,’ seeing small children applying full foundation on flawless skin and chubby cheeks is actually rather poignant. They are already infected by the notion that, however beautiful they are, it's not enough” (Carey, 2011: 135). She implies that make-up is not an interest in its own right, but rather a symptom of pathological insecurity, a disease that girls can become 'infected' with. Her view is also supported by the aforementioned 2007 *Daily Mail* article where a husband and wife write about their daughter’s make-up practices. “Surely... [the mothers of tween girls], could stop pandering to their daughters' unhealthy obsession with their looks and refuse to pay for it?” (Appleyard & Nicholas, 2007). Here again, make-up is described as an 'unhealthy obsession' further establishing girls as misguided in their interests, capable solely of worry over their sexualised image.

Carey continues: “What starts as lipstick and mascara for special occasion can quickly develop into a can't-do-without... It's true that make-up may make our girls temporarily feel good about themselves, but only because they are made to feel they are not good enough in the first place” (Carey, 2011: 137). What I would argue poses a contradiction here is when Carey suggests that the reason girls will only feel temporary happiness from make-up is because “they are not good enough in the first place”. Firstly, I would like to

propose that the language that she uses, sounds like she is describing the desperation of a drug addict, rather than a girl applying make-up for a "special occasion". I would suggest that this is rather an unproductive and alarmist discourse. Secondly and more importantly, I believe she hits the nail on the head, but misses her own argument; if girls only get temporary relief from societal pressures because "they are made to feel that they are not good enough in the first place", then surely tackling whatever it is that is making them feel inadequate in the first place needs to be absolute priority for protectionists. If make-up is only a temporary relief, then surely sanctioning it only provides a temporary solution.

The *Scottish Review* also problematised protectionist discourse by discussing their findings in relation to make-up. In contrast to Carey and Brooks, they discovered that "'having a boyfriend' was seen as largely a performance for pre-teens; while make-up was 'for themselves, it's not to attract boys', 'it's for the girls, it's for their friends'... a focus for play and with a positive function, rather than sexualising (much as the young people also argued)" (Buckingham et al., 2010: 47-48). It shows that both girls and their parents were able to identify the creative or playful side of wearing make-up and in fact it was seen as having a "positive function". While not elaborating on what this positive function may have been, I would read this to imply a healthy exploratory relationship with ones' identity, body and creativity.

In discussions around make-up, the idea of 'appropriateness' becomes central and is implied to be understood universally. This can be seen in the *Australian Review's* discussion of make-up tips given to girls by magazine *Total Girl*. The *Australian Review* argued that the advice "may be appropriate for the adult... but not for an eight-year-old girl" (Rush and La Nauze, 2006: 25). Comparisons around ideas of appropriateness in women of different ages continued in other protectionist literature: "It's a tough one to argue for many mums", writes Carey in her book, "because grown women can be improved by make-up in a way that children aren't. But little girls don't need makeovers because there's nothing wrong with them in the first place" (2011:137). In protectionist discourses and also in media-rhetoric, I would argue, make-up is often discussed in terms of a 'need' (Berry, 1994). It is considered something

that purely exists to inspire heterosexual attraction, as discussed above, but here *also* as something that fixes women's insecurities. This builds two contradictions. Firstly, make-up is established as a need that girl-children do not have yet, but if they wear it, it causes harm. This implies a logic whereby the consumption of a 'vanity product' that does not fall under the category of need, could be considered harmful. I would suggest that this logic could be applied to many other consumables including toys and technology, but rarely is. It seems that make-up specifically is singled out as something that is discussed as a non-need. Secondly, if make-up is something that girl-children do not need, this implies, in a rather sexist and ageist tone, that make-up *is* a need for older women. I would argue that this is a highly simplistic notion from journalist Carey, both postulating on tastes and interests of girls, and introducing rather problematic implications around how older women are deemed to be in need of improvement. I will come back to Christopher Berry's (1994) analyses of concepts of luxury in terms of "needs" or "necessities" and "wants" or "desires" later in the next chapter, that focuses on consumption, but wanted to note here how these articulations of 'want' and 'need' seem central within discourses on make-up.

Carey continues her thoughts by advising parents on appropriate make-up: "Send her the message that the best make-up protects and enhances, rather than covers and masks" (Carey, 2011: 138). I would like to remind at this point that her advice is not administered by make-up artists or persons from within the beauty and fashion industries. I would question whether make-up and beautification lie within her field of expertise in general. I would thus like to draw attention to her rhetoric here. I suggest that Carey uses a word such as "protect" to give the make-up she approves of more credibility. What I would argue is problematic is that she forgoes any interrogation of aesthetics here. Looking in from outside the fashion industry (and hence being likely less informed about trends), her judgements on taste may be entirely different to the girls of whom she speaks. I would also argue that there is a middle-class undertone here where subtle "protecting and enhancing" make-up falls under the sophisticated middle-class aesthetic and "covering and masking" make-up is seen as crass and low culture. Amusingly, I would like to add, I am certain that make-up which

“covers and masks” is also very apt at “protecting” the skin. I would suggest that 'double pressure' (as discussed in Chapter 7) is in force here again. On one hand girls may experience social pressures to wear make-up, but on the other they have to negotiate a fine line between wearing such that “protects and enhances” in the eyes of their parents, rather than “covers and masks”.

Carey ends her discourse with an even more severe suggestion: “show her that make-up isn't always attractive. Show examples of celebrities who look worse plastered with cosmetics and point out that boys are often frightened and put off by “war paint”” (Carey, 2011: 139). Further to exhibiting ageist and sexist attitudes here, Carey also builds a misogynistic discourse, I would argue. She encourages girls to transform and adapt their interests and behaviour to best please boys. This poses yet another contradiction; on the one hand, Carey, as is usual in protectionist discourses, encourages girls to be independent and to please themselves first and foremost, because pleasing the opposite sex as a priority would be evidence of sexualisation. However, here her advice is based exactly on that: “Boys are often frightened and put off by “war paint””. Ironically, pleasing boys suddenly becomes the saving grace to anti-sexualisation as it appears that girls' own agency is the biggest problem. Her approach becomes mercenary in that it can be harnessed for whichever side is convenient for the argument.

8.5 Contaminating Dress and Predatory Girls

In her populist manual *The Sexualisation of Childhood* (2008) Olfman suggests that sexualisation treats “children as if they are sexually mature because of the outward trappings of wardrobe, makeup, or precocious puberty” (Olfman, 2008: 2). Olfman's very definition of sexualisation already suggests that dress contaminates 'natural' behaviour, which is sexual innocence. Egan discusses the causal link that is built into anti-sexualisation literature between wearing clothing and worrying sexual behaviour, by suggesting that clothing is seen to

“contaminate” and “portend” promiscuous behaviour (Egan, 2013: 50). Within protectionist discourse, “sexual girls become the problem as opposed to sexism” (Egan, 2013: 30). As the girl in need of saving is always the metaphorical heterosexual, white, middle-class one, Egan argues that “gender and abhorrence”, or a detestation of girlhood become the issue instead of a critique of sexist gender stereotypes and structural inequity that are represented in the media (Egan, 2013: 30). Rather than deconstructing problematic representations of sexuality, gender or race and the intersection of these in the media, protectionists focus on issues seen to be affiliated with a certain type of “deviant or 'phallic' femininity” (Egan, 2013: 52), behaviour that would traditionally be seen as masculine, unrefined and crude.

I would suggest that ideas of “phallic femininity” (Egan, 2013: 52) can be linked with ideas of 'empowerment' and 'knowingness'; however, these come with 'crude' undertones. The *Irish Review* found that parents were often torn between wanting their children empowered and educated on sexualisation and being worried that this would render them 'knowing' in a way that would make the parents uncomfortable. Parents tended to divide children into two categories: sexually innocent and sexualised. Children's 'knowingness', 'tastes' and 'bodily agency' were viewed by parents as problematic (Kiely at al., 2015: 115), and the idea that once the 'knowingness' begins, innocence is forever gone was particularly strong. I would like to build a link between the 'knowing' child and the Madonna-whore dichotomy as it divides girls into binary categories with innocence as the dividing factor. The Madonna-whore dichotomy is repeatedly enforced within anti-sexualisation literature, and I would argue it is at the heart of its harm. Oppliger explicitly discusses her take on it within fashion by stating “Clothing today gives mixed messages. It blurs the line of virgin and whore” (2008: 13). While Oppliger might not imply that girls ought to be divided into the innocent and the promiscuous, she does appear to suggest that there is such a division. This would mean that there is a clear distinction between girls who are tastefully dressed, morally behaving, virgin-girls and the whore-girls who dress in a 'skanky' manner and influence their peers in a negative way. Describing a shopping trip to a clothing store for girls, Oppliger recalls herself blurting out: “I was not sure whether they were clothing or headbands” and

exclaiming: “Wow, look at those hoochie skirts” (Oppliger, 2008: 11). A young sales associate passed her by and Oppliger recalls being worried she had offended her. “Instead, she turned around, smiled wearily, and said, “I agree”” (Oppliger, 2008: 11). With the above statement, Oppliger further establishes that the sexualised fashions for girls are not only of worry to herself, but indeed, make other people, including those selling such goods, uncomfortable. This is advantageous, as she gets validation for her discourse.

Within protectionist discourse on sexualisation the symbolic properties of sexualised dress are often taken one step further and it is suggested that physical dress influences the behaviour of girls. Dress itself becomes credited with encouraging inherently dangerous, harmful and sexually destructive behaviours. The *Daily Mail* reported on the issue in 2011:

> The review [by Reg Bailey] found that 55 per cent of parents thought adult clothes styles for children 'encourage children to act older than they are'... It says: 'Sexualised and gender-stereotyped clothing, products and services for children are the biggest areas of concern for parents'... 'By far the most contentious issue has been the availability of bras and bikini-style swimwear for under 16s'... Mr Bailey's review calls for a ban on children's swimwear in shop-window displays next to 'sexy' adult clothing.
>
> (Shipman, 2011)

This quote cites the *Bailey Review* (2011), commissioned by the UK coalition government, supporting the manifesto of the Conservative and Liberal Democratic parties in the 2010 general election. This *Review* was much like the other government reviews used in this thesis and thus was not chosen to be analysed in full as a primary source. What this *Bailey Review* quote shows, however, is that a significant number of parents believe that clothing itself can inspire children to “act older than they are”. This makes it sound as if parents assign clothing itself a sort of psychological force able to manipulate their child to engage in age-inappropriate, sexual behaviour. It implies that a physical object can have an impact on someone's psyche and alter their behaviour. If the protectionist premise that dress influences behaviour is to be followed, this means that if it is possible to remove such clothing from girls and replace them

with different, age-appropriate items, it should be possible to influence their behaviour towards more age-appropriate non-sexual activity.

The *Bailey Review* also addressed “gender stereotyped” clothing and “bras for under 16's”. I read this to raise two issues and misunderstandings. Femininity and 'sexiness' are often amalgamated within discourses around sexualisation, where it is impossible to describe something inherently feminine without a sexualised undertone. As bras are the epitome of gendered clothing, they lend themselves very easily to an alarmist discourse. Bras can be seen as a sexualised item among the adult population, but they are also a practical undergarment. Denying girls under 16 this physical support (Shipman, 2011), is not only discriminatory and impractical for them, but ultimately contradictory in terms of the sexualisation discourse, as it achieves exactly what it sets out to dismantle. Formulating a practical garment as sexualising brings about the act of sexualisation and shows the girl's body as essentially erotic.

The contaminating effect that dress is assigned by protectionists, becomes paramount within this discourse. Not only is dress seen to influence its wearer, but just the proximity of sexualised clothes, or ones aimed at an older demographic, corrupts its neighbours. Bailey's call for a ban on children's swimwear placed in close proximity to sexy adult clothing in shop window displays implies that if age-appropriate clothing is presented next to sexualised adults' clothing, they too will receive a sexualised connotation, as if by proxy. The consumer could read it as adult clothing infecting children's clothing. This idea of infection and influence was discussed in relation to childhood in Chapter 4, where Foucault recounted practices of isolating children from one another. It is important to recognise that these ideas of contagion and confinement are not new, but also that their object changes according to time and place.

The idea of corrupting the innocence of other children takes on a particularly gendered nature within discourses where girls are seen to 'contaminate' boys with their sexualised dress. Here, boys become the victims of corruption by sexualisation and lose their innocence not by wearing, but by seeing, dress that is deemed sexualised. The *Scottish Review,* which interviewed teenagers and their parents gives an example of this from their interview with a mother: “Girls going to school with blouses open to their navel

or their skirts up to their bum... I'm thinking you're trying to attract my boy and I don't want my boy going out with a girl like you... I don't want my boy bombarded by those images... because he's not ready" (Buckingham et al., 2010: 53). The *Irish Review* noted a similar tendency to view girls' dressing as an 'agentic' attempt at making themselves specifically attractive to the opposite sex (Kiely at al., 2015: 116). The research team interviewed parents and noted this exchange between a couple with young children: "My wife's nephew now has stories of what girls wear, what signals they give out" to which his wife answered: "They're [girls] predatory now. The roles have changed" (Kiely at al., 2015:117). This places the girl as not just partially problematic in fighting her own sexual harassment, not just as active in inviting it, but as an active predator able to harm boys.

While some parents acknowledged the act of dressing simply as the following of trends, girls and their dress still dominated the conversation over sexualisation. "In much of the data, she is 'the knowing child', spoiled or corrupted by society but also capable of corrupting or spoiling others" (Kiely at al., 2015: 116), argued the *Irish Review*. Girls were established as the more susceptible target of sexualising influences. Within that context the sexualised or 'knowing' girls were presented as being a risk to boys. Boys were constructed as maintaining their innocence for longer. This poses a contradiction that runs throughout protectionist literature: On one hand girls are seen as the 'predatory' component that corrupts boys, however on the other hand parents express desires to regulate girls' dress in order to keep *girls* safe from harm (Kiely et al., 2015: 116-9). Boys were framed as "naturally sexual" and parents were concerned about their ability to control their sexual urges or contain their expectations towards girls within sexually saturated popular culture (Kiely et al., 2015: 119).

One mother of two boys and a girl who was interviewed for the *Irish Review* expressed her thoughts which appeared deeply problematic with regard to girls:

> I think, number one, the girls are going out there and they're presenting themselves like that and the poor boys haven't a hope... they don't even

> know what their responses are because they can't control them. I have both... boys and a girl. I keep saying to my daughter, "Do not go out looking like you're looking for business – because you'll get it!" ...Yeah, the boys are responsible to some extent, but I do think it's shoved in their faces.
>
> (Kiely et al., 2015: 118)

The above extract, I would argue, presents a sexist double standard which makes the contradiction around girls and sexualisation clear. On the one hand they are seen as predatory, but on the other, they are asking for implied violence or harassment with their choice of dress. The idea that boys have sexualisation "shoved in their faces" by girls relieves them in part of the responsibility of sexual advances or sexual violence. In this particular instance, the mother describes this as "looking for business". While the expression might simply mean 'attention', it could be interpreted as prostitution. I relate this to a shaming expression from the mother who warns her daughter that if she goes out looking like a prostitute, she will be asked to prostitute herself. This is another example of the shaming narratives that aim at rolling over the bulk of the responsibility onto girls.

I would see that the above discourse operates on three contradictions that have to do with agency. Firstly, agency is stripped from both girls and boys where girls are seen to 'become sexualised'. Girls are here seen as having their innocence corrupted by outside forces that sexualise them. Boys are seen as without agency as sexualisation simply happens to girls, as opposed to them 'actively becoming recognised as sexual objects by the opposite sex' attributing responsibility to them in performing the male gaze (Mulvey, 1975).

What happens thirdly is that the 'sexualised girls' are now given a kind of 'semi-agency'. Within this premise they are still seen as having lost their innocence through sexualisation, through no fault of their own. They are, however, seen to actively engage the attention of the opposite sex, "looking for business" (Kiely et al., 2015: 118). Boys are also seen as kind of semi-agentive in responding to stimuli. Though this is framed as involuntary and spurred by innocent curiosity, "natural sexuality" or, "not being able to control" themselves (Kiely et al., 2015: 118). The contradiction that is built here is that on the one

hand girls are seen as innocent victims of sexualisation; however, they are simultaneously active seductresses, having agency. Boys are seen as innocent beings, however, able to become corrupted by girls into losing control over their sexuality.

Finally, girls are established as actively predatory in their sexualised dress. At this point the protectionist consortium has at times attributed no agency to girls in their sexualisation, then given them some agency or even full agency in corrupting the sexual innocence of others through their display of sexualised dress. Boys however maintain their semi-agentive status as they are at no point held to full responsibility over possible sexual harm that they might commit towards girls. I would argue that protectionist logic fails at its core as a contradiction. Protectionists want to regulate the dress of girls in order for girls not to be predatory towards boys in their sexualised dress. Simultaneously these same protectionists want to regulate girls' dress in order to keep *girls* safe from predation. Where the predatory activities directed towards girls come from remains unaddressed.

I would argue that protectionist literature has the tendency to adopt the same paradoxical traits applied to discourses around prostitution; on the one hand the woman is the victim of bad circumstances and male lust, on the other a threat to moral and respectable families (Egan and Hawkes, 2008). The sexualised girl becomes the modern age “fallen woman” and “symbol of cultural decay” (Egan, 2013: 24). There is no saving her and she is irreversibly ruined (Egan, 2013: 21). “My experience was a stark warning that it wasn't possible to shield my girls completely – and a reminder that once gone, innocence was lost forever” (Carey, 2011: 9). The dogmatic idea of a girl coming 'undone', and being lost forever, as outlined by Carey, is quite alarming. It has echoes of the language used to describe prostitution, the “fallen woman”. The *Irish Review* reminds us that at the heart of the sexualisation debate lies the idea that girls' relationship to sexuality is measured against innocence. Innocence becomes the epitome of purity, but it is also passive in its sexual inactivity. This undermines the right of girls to sexual agency and positions them as either innocent or corrupted, as discussed in the literature review on Childhood. This dichotomous positioning denigrates their character and may thus compromise

their access to protection (Kiely et al., 2015: 43-4). I would argue that the protectionist discourse, illustrated by Carey above, ultimately portrays girls as weak and poor in judgement, rather than vulnerable. I relate this back to section 7.2 where I argued that protectionists simplify the sexualisation discourse to a dichotomy where, in a contradictory manner, girls are established as impressionable, immature and untrustworthy. This places them as in need of regulation. Simultaneously, if they do not respond to the regulation of their sexuality, they can also be socialised as alluring and corrupting and hence accountable, hence beyond being able to be saved from sexualisation.

8.6 Summary

This chapter examined clothing, dress and fashion as the most central subjects of the protectionist discourse on sexualisation. In the first section, dress, or certain kind of dress was established as dangerous in its capacity to invite harm to its wearer. Dress was discussed as negative, the desire for it as compulsive and the girls participating in its consumption as victims. Because certain dress was established as inherently harmful, this chapter moved onto examine how the right to dress in certain ways was reserved for the private space. The home and beauty parlours specifically were discussed as homosocial environments without heterosexual men who may be predatory, and thus these were seen as safe spaces for girls to exercise dressing up or wearing make-up, although this was not without its problems either, as the visiting of beauty parlours and the right to wear make-up were viewed as such a privilege that they ought to be met with gratitude. Protectionist analyses on make-up were discussed in the next section, and I wanted to separate some of the discourses specifically, as I see make-up as the extreme embodiment of sexualisation and there would thus be much scope for further exploration in future studies. I see a gradation in the conversations around sexualisation where dress can be sexualising but needs a discourse as girls have to wear it, while make-up is unnecessary so therefore inherently sexualising. This chapter concluded by examining ideas around

agency. Within this discourse girls became predatory towards boys. They were no longer discussed as the victims of sexualisation but socialised as active agents in their contaminating dress in threatening the innocence of boys. Girls were established as simultaneously impressionable and immature and hence in need of regulation, but also as alluring and corrupting and hence accountable.

Chapter 9

Class and Consumption

9.1 Introduction

Consumption becomes a central theme in sexualisation discourses since the clothing which girls wear needs to be purchased, making it a prerequisite for protectionist readings thereof. It appears that protectionists often conflate ideas of consumption and sexualisation, which seems to confuse the investigation around sexualisation and veer the discourse into different territory. Do the problems addressed by protectionists centre around sexualisation, or around consumer culture and neoliberal capitalism, or do they position the two as symbiotic? This chapter will investigate ideas of the class-conscious identity of the protectionists within anti-sexualisation discourses, their taste and patterns of consumption, and will also examine consumer culture more broadly. The chapter begins with a general investigation around sexualisation as part of consumer culture. It then moves onto ideas of middle-class preferences which are regarded as the standard for good taste, morally correct behaviour and propriety with regard to class, age and gender. Finally, this chapter examines how sexualisation is established as always concerning 'other' people, those of a lower class or lower age, but never oneself or one’s family.

9.2 Sexualisation and Consumption

Colin Campbell notes that sociological debates over class and consumption can be dated to the late 1970s (Campbell, 1995: 98). Linking back to Hall, this is when the BCCC examined youth and subcultures and began to recognise the consumer as critical, active and creative (Campbell, 1995: 98). Campbell also notes that the rise of feminism had a great impact on the sociology of consumption, with McRobbie making early inquiries in the field (McRobbie and Nava, 1984). “Contemporary society is essentially a consumer society” (Campbell, 1995: 99). In relation to dress, Campbell notes that consumption practices are a “significant component of human life, yielding experiences that are meaningful and important to those who 'follow fashion', or who 'live to shop' (Cambell, 1995: 100).

Historically there were two main justifications for keeping children away from commerce. Children were seen as “tender, impressionable, vulnerable, pure, deserving of parental protection and... easily corrupted by the marketplace” (Jordanova, 1989: 20). In some Christian theology children are portrayed as being in a “sacred state of life”, and an ideological interpretation saw them as “naturally” incompatible with a commercial world (Jordanova, 1989: 20). At certain points of time these various socio-political, religious and/or philosophical positionings and attitudes have meant that children's relationship with the economy is a site of tension as they transition from the domain of “nature” as children, into the domain of “culture” as adults, as articulated by the Romantics (Jordanova, 1989: 20). I would argue that these ideas still hold strong, leaving a lasting legacy on contemporary attitudes to children and commerce. While Western women are largely able to make their own purchasing choices, girls may not do this as they, for the most part, have no independent income. It is, however, important not to eliminate girls’ agency altogether, as this operates on a spectrum. Some girls may have no influence over what they wear, while others have complete self-determination. This tension and ambiguity are often reflected in protectionist discourses that treat girls in a contradictory manner as the victims of sexualisation *and* commercialisation (as discussed in the previous chapter), but demand that they be able to handle the attention that comes with the wearing of certain forms of

dress, as will be discussed in the next chapter.

The *Irish Review* noted the gendered nature of the conversation around consumption and sexualisation: “The most striking difference between how participants defined commercialisation and sexualisation was the relative gender-neutrality implicit in the former, compared with the almost exclusive focus on girls and clothing in the latter” (Kiely et al., 2015: 113). Sexualisation and consumerism are often part of the same conversation. Instead of discussing the consumption of clothing, the sexualisation of clothing and the wearer become the focus. Girls' shopping practices are seen as the result of sexualisation rather than neo-liberal capitalist consumer culture. The *Sottish Review* noted that parents interviewed for their study did see that “in relation to *goods*, ...key issues were around commercialisation and corporate/consumer culture rather than sexualisation” (Buckingham et al., 2010: 46). In a wider consideration of manufacture and production in a neo-liberal context, issues like striving towards a more ethical way of consuming clothing, workers’ rights, waste, pollution and the carbon footprint are universal necessities (Fletcher and Grose, 2012). The conflation of consumerism with sexualisation in this instance is not advantageous to the greater discourse, as it fails to address the prevailing issues, and replaces nuanced analysis with disapproval, a leitmotif common to protectionist treatment of these subjects. This confusion is also employed as a rhetorical tool, such as the *Australian Review's* name *Corporate Paedophilia*. The *Review* rather provocatively draws a parallel between consumption, specifically the consumption of clothing, and exploitation and danger. Within such rhetoric, the purchasing of clothing is implied to be the result of manipulation and abuse.

The *British Review* (2010) notes: “In the current environment, teen girls are encouraged to look sexy, yet they know little about what it means to be sexual, to have sexual desires and to make rational and responsible decisions about pleasure and risk within intimate relationships” (Tolman, 2002 in Papadopoulos, 2010: 23). This quote begins by looking at trends, stating that “looking sexy” is “encouraged”. This means that teenage girls are spurred on to purchase and wear dress that is “sexy”. The implication then becomes that the consumption and wearing of said sexualised dress must relate to “sexual

desires"; that the dress that is worn must have a relation to sexuality. The quote goes onto imply that the girls consuming these products may not be able to negotiate their awakened sexuality nor be able to manage responses to it. Sexualisation of dress is seen as harmful because it awakens sexual desires and comes with an implied responsibility, especially for girls.

Chapter 4 examined how childhood has traditionally been seen as existing outside f commerce and sexuality. Protectionism hypothesizes that children's, especially girls', desires towards commerce and sex awaken through negative adult interference which must be held at bay for as long as possible to preserve authentic, innocent childhood. I would argue, however, that this may rather be representative of *adult* desires to appear virtuous and moral. This also poses a contradiction. Relating to ideas in the previous chapter, protectionist adults see themselves as existing outside the influence of sexualisation, as unaffected by sexualisation in their childhood as there would not then have been 'unnatural influences' and their sexual and commercial awakening would thus have been 'natural'. In a contradictory manner, these protectionist adults do blame adult influences in their childhood on their sexual and commercial cravings in their adulthood. This creates a type of merry-go-round, where it is assumed that children are born as a *tabula rasa*, and it is only through adult pollution that they become corrupted. This, of course, would relieve adults of the responsibility of admitting to their sexual and commercial desires, as they are, by default, a product of in this cyclical protectionist model.

Commerce engulfs every aspect of modern life, and it is very difficult to separate any one aspect of life from it. Play, dress up play, sexuality, puberty, attraction and idolisation cannot be separated into categories of their own that will enjoy organic, unaffected influence from commerce. I would suggest that consumerism has become less of a political choice and more a part of everyday living. Clarissa Smith, invoked in Chapter 5 for her discussion of the 'pornographication' of culture, specifically questioned how it is that sex could live outside of the commercialisation that envelops all other areas of modern life.

> Just like any other academic, my life is entirely commercialized, from the foods I ingest, the clothes that keep me warm, to the music, books and films which entertain me; there is no pleasure, no emotion, no physical sensation that is not commercialized, and while I might want to claim that my sexual self is some sort of authentic real me, the idea that this can be separated out from all the other ways in which I exist in this world, to be unsullied by commercialism, is ridiculous and simply a means of replacing analysis with condemnation.
>
> (Smith, 2010: 107-8)

Drawing on Smith, I would argue that if sexualisation and the pornographication of culture is to be examined as an entity around which to build a discourse, the terminology that characterises much of the conversation needs to be challenged (Smith, 2010: 108). Protectionist discourses need to differentiate between general capitalist citizenship that everyone, including boys, participate in, and the particular problem of girls' consumption of sexualised clothing, rather than see all consumption of girls' dress as sexualisation. Within protectionist discourse girls, specifically, become symbolic of childhood innocence which is seen to include a natural rejection of commercial desires. Thus, girls are specifically tasked with upholding the myth of the ‘natural child’ leading a life outside of commerce. As the focus of sexualisation is on girls, if girls then do not conform to the image of the 'natural child', they become the object of alarm, and their sanctioning becomes the solution to the problem. What is problematic about this, I would suggest, is its gendered nature by which girls seem to be held to higher standards than other members of society. After all, the discourse in protectionist literature is never around consumption in general, but specifically on girls and what *they* consume.

Whereas Smith made a compelling argument that it is impossible to separate sexual citizenship from one’s commercial citizenship, Brian McNair goes one step further and reminds us how capitalist citizenship and progressive values in practice become conflated. “Markets are blind, and commodities do not have morals,” argues McNair (2012: 7). He suggests that the “erosion of heteronormativity and patriarchy” and rights gained by women and sexual minorities from these erosions have been able to advance further in liberal and democratic societies in which the sexualisation of culture has also been most

visible (McNair, 2012: 7). “Capitalism, on this evidence, appears to be the optimal mode of production for the generation not only of economic wealth and cultural liberalism, but of sexual equality and progress” (McNair, 2012: 7). McNair recognises that there is a way to go before capitalism treats citizens equally, but he also addresses 'double pressure' as explored in this thesis, although he doesn’t name it as such. While the sexualisation of culture and commodification of sex will exploit some, it will liberate others (McNair, 2012: 8). McNair concludes his argument by suggesting that anxieties over the sexualisation of culture are understandable, and “change is often threatening” (McNair, 2012: 9). However, the positive developments and equality in gender relations and sexual rights are bound together with the rise of capitalism. One cannot have one without the other (McNair, 2012: 9).

There is often a harking back to an imaginary 'Golden Age' in which culture was not contaminated by commerce, similar to that of the idealised past childhood examined in Chapter 4. Much like Christopher Berry’s (1994) articulations of concepts of luxury in terms of "needs" or "necessities" and "wants" or "desires", this divides goods into "true needs" and "fantastical" "false needs" which imply a “wholly rationalistic model of human behaviour” which constructs the child as "incompetent" and "irrational" (Buckingham, 2000: 150). Berry reminds us, that even when discussing “need”, it is subjective, “embedded in culture” and therefore always “relative” (Berry, 1994: 219). When discussing the role of advertisements or commercial involvement in children's television programmes, the scale of commercial involvement has increased; however, to imply that this proposes a form of exploitation would be misguided (Buckingham, 2000: 159). One could ask here whether children are any more vulnerable to commercial influences than adults, or whether they would merely be victims of processes from which they will not benefit. As Buckingham noted, “the construction of children as the pre-eminent focus of concern would seem to underestimate their capacities, and to preclude more realistic strategies for dealing with change” (2000: 159).

One of the main ways for young people to affiliate themselves with each other and with celebrities that they admire within capitalist culture is through brand affiliation and consumer culture, denoting connection to 'fashion tribes' or

subcultures (Ross and Herradine, 2011). Children pick up on specific brands that celebrities or athletes wear and want to demonstrate sophistication and maturity through wearing the same insignia. This discourse, however, is also heavily gendered (Grant and Stephen, 2005), where girls specifically are seen as coming to harm through this brand affiliation. It appears that when boys were seen as participating in commercial culture, it was viewed simply as consumer citizenship; however, when girls did the same, it was juxtaposed (and indeed conflated) with sexualisation.

> Like daughters, sons were seen as not grasping the sexual meanings of goods or advertisements, or not (yet) aiming to impress girls, instead connecting to brands and to idols or role models. (Again, we might note the value judgments built into responses to consumption: while boys had 'role models' like Beckham, girls were 'obsessed with celebrity culture', and so on).
>
> (Buckingham et al., 2010: 50)

I would argue that this reaffirms the gendered nature of sexualisation discourses. Consumerism and the following of adult role models here becomes equated with sexualisation in girls, but however not in boys. Furthermore, equating sexualisation and consumerism raised alarm around commerce. I would argue that this may ultimately make the anti-sexualisation agenda appear even more imperative as more issues come under its umbrella. Campbell adds an important argument to the above discourse as he speaks of the "wearer perspective" when it comes to the consumption of clothing (Campbell, 1995: 110). He notes that "what it says" varies greatly over time and depends entirely on who does the interpreting (Campbell, 1995: 110). I would argue that this is critical as the "wearer perspective" of the girls is usually missing in protectionist discourses; hence, also missing is why and how girls spend their money, or the money of their parents.

In *Sold Separately* (1993) Ellen Seiter criticises the snobbery around children's programmes, that she argues, is based on inarticulate middle-class, male dominated values. She stresses that the middle-class market is just as commercial as the working-class toy market, but is based on a different

aesthetic (Seiter, 1993: 6). Seiter comes back to the gendered aspect of the discourse and notes that male critics often condemn women for their participation in consumer culture, while assuming that they themselves are not implicated in it (1993). Buckingham points out the irony in adults criticising children for being consumerist, as the means with which they consume comes by and large from adults (Buckingham, 2000: 165).

I would like to address the above claim about children's consumer practices and turn the argument on its head. I would argue that it is not consumerism that made girls' practices appear problematic, but rather girls' practices that made consumerism appear problematic. In short, protectionism problematised girl-culture rather than consumer culture. There was "a tendency to view girls' purchases (which tend to be more frequent, but of lower-cost goods) as more indicative of negative values such as materialism than boys' more focused investment in high-value items" (Buckingham et al., 2010: 47). Addressed in this manner by the *Scottish Review*, this again opens the question of 'it is not what is being done, but who is doing it' that poses the problem. I would argue that protectionism here becomes gendered, as similar practices by both genders are treated in very different ways. I see this as a critique of girl-culture or girlhood where the practices and conventions marking it are seen as troubling. Commercialisation, handled as sexualisation, becomes established as a problem concerning girls, who will become the targets of protectionism's sanctions.

9.3 Middle-class Taste and Morals

In Chapter 3 I examined ideas of class and taste proposed by Simmel (1904), Veblen ([1899] 2007), Bourdieu ([1979] 2010), Skeggs (1997) and Appleford (2013). They all concern themselves with ideas of middle-class distinction and the practices of keeping up appearances. Bourdieu, especially, demonstrates how central to the development of socio-cultural identities consumption patterns

are, as he focuses on “the dynamics of taste” and the logic that goes into consumption (Lury, 1999: 81). Bourdieu, early in his career, paid attention to the consumption of everyday objects like dress and fashion. These had been ignored by other academics; however, they would provide great insight into “contemporary patterns of consumption” (Rocamora, 2002: 351). Though not in relation to dress and fashion, Bourdieu also addressed the positionality of the researcher (see Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977; Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992), while Bourdieu and Passeron analysed “symbolic violence” (1977: 4) in reference to the researcher's position of power. They examined the idea that there is always an endemic risk for the researcher to legitimate and to impose their cultural understanding in an autocratic way through the production of codes and meaning (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977: 4).

As discussed in the Methodology about positionality, the protectionist writers cited in this thesis are generally white, middle-aged, middle-class heterosexual women with higher education. They do not work within the fashion industry or within the academic discipline of fashion studies. In *Fashion and its Social Agendas* (2000) Diane Crane stresses the importance of acknowledging this stratum of society in analysing fashion. Middle-aged women spend less money on clothing and focus more, for example, on leisure activities (Crane, 2000: 165); therefore companies that target this middle-aged, middle-class group of women, avoid trends and fads “in favour of a variety of relatively simple clothes” (Crane, 2000: 166). This postulate applies very well to protectionist writers who often seem to imply the vanity and vapidness of fashion as they focus their attentions elsewhere.

Appleford provides specific examples of middle-class women's consumption that establish their buying choices as ethical and sustainable in contrast to the working-class woman who buys her fashion more “cheaply” (2013: 126). Middle-class purchases, in comparison, are denoted by “practicality and longevity”, focusing on aspects such as “quality, cut and classic styles” (Appleford, 2013: 126). This produces a contradiction of sorts where, on one hand, fashion itself is considered unnatural, but, on the other, middle-class taste in fashion is seen as 'logical'. Entwistle (2000) links these ideas of ‘natural’ taste and class by describing habitus as a “seemingly natural bodily demeanour we

learn as members of a particular family/class" (135).

Much like protectionists, second-wave feminism prided itself in its disassociation with fashion, as discussed in Chapter 3. Church Gibson reminds us that fashion has divided feminists and threatens "to fracture further the increasingly fragile feminist project, already under siege in the age of a supposedly empowering and stoutly contested 'postfeminism' with shopping and sexuality very much to the fore" (Church Gibson, 2014: 193). Many writers have linked fashion and class stratification (Crane, 2000; Kaiser, 2012: 483; Veblen, [1899] 2007). Already, in 1899, Veblen viewed changes in fashion to be the result of a "a class struggle for social superiority" (Veblen as by Kaiser, 2012: 483).

In an article on sexualised fashion trends that young women adopt, Church Gibson quoted Diane Crane, who disclosed that "the majority of women are not interested in fashion" (Crane, 2000: 241). By this she referred to artful images of 'high fashion' in fashion magazines, rather than an implied indifference to high street 'fashion' or dress, as discussed with regard to sexualised dress, that does not follow the fashion system per se. Church Gibson suggests that there was a recent evolution in dress in the new millennium. She describes the emergence of a new type of self-presentation, one that is removed from high fashion, but instead follows celebrities and pop-culture influencers. This has a very different 'agenda', that has a "separate system and circuits of promotion, dissemination, and consumption" (Church Gibson, 2014: 190-1). While there is still class snobbery present, "there are nevertheless new movements around and within that system. Most significantly, the new fashion system... can challenge the unofficial autocracy of the fashion world" (Church Gibson, 2014: 198).

This 'pornostyle' presents the body in a highly sexualised manner and can be observed on the High Streets in the West, as "many young women now dress in this 'sexy' style, which has little to do with the diktats and demands of high fashion, but is concerned with the emulation of particular celebrities, those celebrities deemed to be *sexy* rather than those praised by the fashion press for their style" (Church Gibson, 2014: 191). While the celebrities that Church Gibson refers to do wear designer clothes and expensive accessories, they

have made admissible a 'sexy' look, including high and platform heels, short skirts and revealing tops, much like the 'boob tubes' discussed in Chapter 5. While these items of dress have been with us for a long time, “what is new is its appearance on so many perfectly respectable young women” (Church Gibson, 2014: 191). It-girls and celebrities inspired their followers to create a type of self-presentation that “challenges and coexists with what is normally seen as 'fashion'” (Church Gibson, 2014: 191).

Church Gibson postulates that scholars may have been silent on increasingly sexualised dress, as the subject of social class is so provocative and divisive (Church Gibson, 2014: 204). Within protectionist discourses this is evident, as the excessively complex issue of dress becomes displaced and simplified as sexualisation. Due to the lack of engagement with fashion scholarship within the anti-sexualisation ranks, dress has become a subject that is seen as dangerous, as influencing girls physically, emotionally and socially and must therefore be carefully sanctioned. Connecting with Cameron's discourse on sexualisation in 2006, the *Daily Mail* identified a series of ‘sexualised’ clothes in an article:

> Three years ago, High Street chain BHS withdrew a range of knickers and padded bras aimed at preteen girls, carrying a Little Miss Naughty logo, after widespread criticism from parents. Next was criticised for selling shirts for girls under six with the slogan, 'So many boys, so little time', which were subsequently withdrawn in 2002. Last year, Asda withdrew a range of pink and black lace lingerie, including a push-up bra targeted at nine-year-old girls, following complaints. A range of girls' underwear was also removed from the Argos Additions catalogue after pressure from parents and politicians. It included G- string pants and padded bras for nine-year-olds emblazoned with the phrase 'I Love Me'.
>
> (Merrick, 2006)

While lists like the one above are usual in protectionist discourses, as discussed in Chapter 5, I would like to focus on class in the above discourse, which has to do with how the underwear is described. While it is not possible to see the items of clothing and undertake a visual analysis of them, the rhetoric here is worthy of enquiry. Using the word “knickers” for example to describe underwear, gives

it an informal, 'cheap' tone. Gender and sexualities scholar Debbie Ging pointed out in regard to the class discourse within clothing and sexualisation, that “what lies behind a lot of the moral outrage is a classist disdain for cheap, ‘slutty’ clothing, while more upmarket stores are free to sell their tween ranges of tasteful *broderie anglaise* bras without any flak from parents” (Ging, 2013).

Skeggs (1997) highlights how the media anthologises the working-class female body that is seen as sexually excessive, while Renold and Ringrose (2011) and Egan (2013) discuss the media-fuelled alarm over sexualisation as a white, middle-class one which flourishes around discourses of the sexualised working-class girl. She is “pitted against the middle-class norm of developmentally appropriate (hetero)sexuality”, suggests the *Irish Review* (Kiely et al., 2015: 37). A participant interviewed by the Irish research team suggested that there is a big class divide when it comes to clothing. Addressing the controversy around class and fashion, she suggested that “the children who don’t have much money will be more into the sexualised clothes than the children who probably can shop in Brown Thomas [high end department store akin to London’s Selfridges]... You would never see that exploitation in the more expensive shops” (Kiely et al., 2015: 120).

While high fashion could be the saving grace within anti-sexualisation discourses due to its credentials as an art form with a middle-class following (Loscheck, 2009), it too poses problems for protectionists. Crane suggests that high fashion is deliberately not meant to be understood by all consumers of fashion, which gives it its exclusive status (Crane, 2000). Even the *Scottish Review* (2010), which throughout critiqued protectionist discourses, accredit some dangers to high fashion. In the methodology section of this review “goods that duplicate styles currently considered ‘high fashion’ for adults” was given as an example of sexualisation (Buckingham et al., 2010: 30). Here, an interest in high fashion becomes misconstrued as an interest in sex, as opposed to art. Clothing within the fashion system becomes inherently problematised. The Scottish research team did not specify which high fashion styles were spoken of, which again suggests that judgements were made in a generalising manner.

Whereas at the beginning of this chapter, fashions that were associated with lower social classes were discussed as sexualised in nature, and working-

class girls, specifically, were seen to be in need of regulation in this respect, here, high fashion clothing receives the stamp of sexualisation too. I would argue that this is for two reasons. Firstly, because sophistication or maturity in high fashion is confused with sexuality. Secondly, the consumption of high fashion involves a greater financial investment, thus indicating that the person purchasing high fashion demonstrates great interest in it, and willingness to spend considerably on it. This sets girls in a double bind where it appears that they cannot win either way, as in 'double pressure' discussed in Chapter 7. In protectionist discourses, working class clothing is often seen to be 'in bad taste' and sexualising; however, here high fashion is also seen as too sophisticated and expensive and therefore prematurely sexualising.

9.4 Dress and Propriety

The construction of the working class, the poor, the colonial and non-white immigrants “as more bodily, bawdy, and wanton” (Egan, 2013: 81) and the social sanctioning of their sexual practices has long historical roots in the Anglophone West (Walkerdine, 1998). Sexualisation discourse feeds off the middle-class sexual fixations that have existed since the 18th century (Mort, 2000; Egan and Hawkes, 2010). Egan argues that the middle-class perceptions regarding the sexual practices of the 'poor' have been established as a truth and have thus come to underpin “social movements (social purity, hygiene and eugenics), disciplines (hygiene, medicine, criminology, sociology, and psychology), and institutions (public health and social work)” (Egan, 2013: 82). Sexualised forms of dress and behaviour have been presumed to mark characteristics of working class and poor neighbourhoods. Parents have thus, in a racist and classist way, been marked as inept in protecting their children from 'evil' (Cross, 2004: 11).

Ideas of dress and propriety can be seen reflected in protectionist discourses. Brooks argued, that:

> We're dressing children like adults again. Instead of fashions that acknowledge and celebrate childhood (or are at least age appropriate), we have racks of clothing in department stores and boutiques that turn our children into 'Mini-Me' – tiny versions of ourselves.
>
> (Brooks, 2008: 31)

Brooks begins her argument by leaning on the idea that it is inherent that children's clothes be distinguishably different from adults' clothing. She criticises "Mini-Me" styles of clothing which do not delineate stylistically the non-sexual child and the sexual adult. She implies that childhood and adulthood are two distinguishable life-stages, especially through their association with sexuality, and hence clothing marking them should also be differentiated. It is almost as if the impropriety of the material dress could leak into the child and turn the child's behaviour into a version of adult behaviour, as discussed in the previous chapter.

Moving forward Brooks builds the argument about children's clothing reflecting adult tastes, rather than children's desires, in essence the "Mini-Me" effect. She describes a bikini: "Like all the clothing for tots and certainly a great deal for tweens, it's designed to cater to adult tastes, desires and the sense of style they want their kids to project. It's all about *them*" (Brooks, 2008: 79). Brooks is critical of the described style and censors the adult who is also the buyer of the garment. I would, however, suggest that this poses a contradiction. I would hazard to argue that if Brooks in fact *liked* what the children were wearing, she might suggest that it was representative of the children's authentic taste and desire. There is also an implication here of a class discourse that will be expanded on in the next section. It appears that often middle-class clothes for children are seen as authentically of their own desires, whereas lower-class or sexualised dress is seen as reflective of inappropriate parental tastes. This sort of ambiguity was discussed in more detail in relation to make-up in Chapter 7, along with the problems it presents to the discourse.

A further issue to class, gender poses a problem in discourses around consumption. The *British Review* (2010) suggested that "if we are going to address this issue [of sexualisation] then young people need to develop and grow in surroundings where they are admired for their abilities, talents and

values” (Papadopoulos, 2010: 6). I would argue that the “abilities, talents and values” which the *British Review* mentions link with Crane's (2000) analysis of how middle-aged women focus their attentions and activities away from dress and fashion. Further evidence of this is the *British Review's* invitation for girls to “value their bodies in terms of their ability” (Papadopoulos, 2010: 11, 15). This establishes a middle-class agenda that draws attention away from stylisations of the body and interest in dress and towards perhaps an active, nature-bound lifestyle, reflective of ideas around the naturalness of childhood innocence, discussed in Chapter 4. This also continues the idea of sexualisation making girls 'one dimensional' to the detriment of all other characteristics other than sexualised dress, as discussed in 7.3. An interest in dress seems to exclude the girl from any other fields of interest such as sport or academia. All ambiguity or dimension is foregone in the protectionist discourse.

There have been many attempts to erect boundaries between the bodies of the practices of the members of the middle-class and the 'other', but these have rarely succeeded. “(E.g., neither in terms of sexual exploitation by middle-class men in cases of rape or harassment of women, nor in cases of consensual sex with secret affairs, or phantasies for girls from the other side of the tracks etc.)” (Egan, 2013: 98). The white bourgeois body has been established as hygienic, pure and emblematic of rationality and restraint. The middle-class child has come to denote purity, innocence, and “the bright future of the nation” (Egan, 2013: 82; see also Egan and Hawkes, 2010; Walkerdine, 1998). Egan argues that it is crucial to unpack ideas of how adults read girls in terms of motivations, desire, and the future, through their taste in questions and discussions of sexualisation (Egan, 2013: 82). She further stresses the importance of recognising that these anxieties are embedded in “middle-class presumptions about the eroticism of the poor”, and hence not an authentic reflection of girls who are working-class (Egan, 2013: 83).

The *Scottish Review* (2010) discussed sexualised trends within their research on young people and noted how the desire to look attractive was carefully balanced with ideas of modesty and propriety. In Chapter 7 I examined a quote by the Scottish research team which described how carefully girls negotiated “treading a middle ground” when it comes to dressing (Buckingham

et al., 2010: 66-67), such as caring about appearances, but not making oneself up too heavily. The ones who would “get it wrong” or “go too far”, who would wear their skirts too short, too much makeup or over the top jewellery, would be considered “chavs” or “neds” (Buckingham et al., 2010: 66-67). Girls were reported to feel the surveillance of this “middle ground” more actively than their male counterparts. For girls there were more ways of “getting it wrong”, “and the surveillance is concerned more with the body (correct display of the figure, face and hair) than for boys” (Buckingham et al., 2010: 66-67).

What is striking is how aware teenage girls were of how to navigate the use of sexualised dress. There was evidence of both self-regulation and regulation by peers in using derogatory expressions such as “chav” or “ned” to shame other girls about their social class as displayed through dress. Drawing on discussions of class in Chapter 4, I suggest here that ideas of appropriate childhood and sexual display have been passed down from the regulating adult to the self-regulating child. This is advantageous in protectionism as the mechanism of sexual sanctioning is able to ultimately hide itself, as girls begin to practise surveillance on each other - and eventually themselves. Construction and manipulation of sexual sanctioning are maintained through discourses operated not “by right, but by technique, not by law, but by normalization, not by punishment, but by control” (Foucault, 1978: 89).

9.5 Sexualisation Happens to, and is Caused by, 'Other People'

Bourdieu ([1979] 2010), Elias ([1939]1978) and Gronow (1997) all stress the constructed and powerful influence of the middle-class authority that is exercised through the policing of acceptable taste. Elias furthermore focuses on the act of shaming of those who do not present themselves in an acceptable (middle-class) manner ([1939]1978: 113). Egan and Hawkes (2008, 2010) compare middle-class protectionist discourses to the social hygiene movement

of the turn of the last century, stressing the importance and power of middle-class intervention, without which children were believed to descend into degeneracy (Egan and Hawkes, 2008, 2010). Egan argues that even though men were included in instructions concerning 'behaviour', 'taste' or 'child rearing', it was middle-class women who were central in creating the social agenda within movements that were set up to protect both children and women from the harms of sex (Egan, 2013: 97, see also Egan and Hawkes, 2010; Mort, 2000). This is important with regards to this thesis as it is specifically this identity formation which makes up protectionists. Egan argues that like earlier movements, sexualisation discourse is haunted and upheld by the 'othering' of the working-class and their “corrupting quality”, although in sexualisation literature the problem is no longer “urban working-class displays” so much as “popular culture” (Egan, 2013: 89). What has distinctly changed, argues Egan, is that, within the current movement, only girls are seen to be at risk (Egan, 2013: 89, see also Reynolds and Ringrose, 2011).

Beverly Skeggs (1997) and journalist Owen Jones (2011) have written extensively on the vilification of the working-class. While Jones can especially be evoked in discussions around shaming rhetoric, as in his work *Chav* (2011), Skeggs writes on class discrimination from a cultural studies perspective, paying attention to how clothing affiliates middle-class women with each other and 'others' working-class women. She stresses how the working-classes, both black and white, have been vilified as pathological, threatening and without respect. Respectability, in this model, becomes something that the legitimate and valued middle-classes have, that 'others' do not, communicating this in their taste (Skeggs, 1997).

Throughout the twentieth century, the “myth of childhood innocence” has also aided in erecting and preserving these “cultural hierarchies” where popular culture has been dismissed “in favour of middle-brow or high cultural works” that have been regarded as more fitting for children (Jenkins, 1998: 14). When “threat to children” is evoked, social reformers are able to justify their own position as “cultural custodians” (Jenkins, 1998: 14). Anxieties about violence, sexuality and morality are linked to definitions of what is good taste and artistic merit where “taste distinctions get transformed into moral issues”, around

protecting the purity of children (Jenkins, 1998: 14). Once the innocent child has been conjured, it is difficult to get to the root of these cultural issues from a neutral perspective (Jenkins, 1998: 14).

Anti-sexualisation discourses often rely on the implication that sexualisation is something that is done by, and happens to, 'someone else'. This was evident in the *Scottish Review* (2010) where “one mother insisted that ‘I’ve brought my boys up to respect women regardless of what they’re wearing’... There was some sense here that *their* boys were not the problem” (Buckingham et al., 2010: 51). This is a recurring theme where protectionists see the children of other people affected by sexualisation, whereas their own enjoy 'healthier' influences. In her populist manual *The Lolita Effect* (2008), Durham described her daughter's 'morally correct' dress-up play:

> My six-year-old daughter loves to play dress-up. She'll layer on gauzy garments, sling a tool belt across her shoulder, slip on plastic high-heeled shoes, and crown it all with a cowboy hat or a chef's tongue. She'll stand in front of the mirror and preen. She knows she's gorgeous – not because she's conforming to some media-inspired ideal, but because she's taking pure sensuous pleasure in the joy of self-adornment without self-consciousness.
>
> (Durham, 2008: 217)

This paragraph showcases a clear displacement of the problem of sexualisation. It is other people's daughters whose dress-up play might be sexualised, or corrupted by media influences, but not her own. Choosing only feminine garments would be 'unnatural' and sexualising; however, Durham's daughter’s composition appears 'natural' in its fluidity. Femininity is established as an oppressive artificial social construct in comparison to the above dress which reflects a child's true nature. Durham uses words like “pure” and “sensuous”, evoking ideas of childhood innocence and 'natural' awakening to distance her daughter's activities from 'other', 'sexualised' girls' dress-up play. Her daughter's innocence and fluidity in choosing elements from both genders, or that are gender neutral, in her dress-up play further helps reaffirm an educated, Western, middle-class identity. Within it, gender divisions are

constructed as fluid, in comparison to a working-class style emphasising overt femininity, where the hair and the make-up may be seen as extravagant or garish. A common symbol that arises to denote specifically feminine dress is the use of the colour pink. If girls' toys or clothing are criticised for being gendered, what is often implied is that they are pink.

Preceding Jo Paoletti's book *Pink and Blue* (2012), Swedish social anthropologist Fanny Ambjornsson's wrote *Pink, The Dangerous Colour* (2011). She discusses why this colour in particular is so charged with emotion. The foundations of Ambjornsson's argument are that pink is associated with a working-class aesthetic, cuteness, stereotypes of femininity and the role expected of little girls. This is why pink puts so much pressure on the modern parent. “To the parents of little boys pink isn't even a colour. The boy must be distinguished from girls”, states Ambjornsson (Ambjornsson in Kauhanen, 2011). The parents of little girls have to make the decision whether to dress their daughter in the gender- and working-class- specific pink, or to guard her from harm by shopping for clothes in the valuable and dignified primary colours. In her book Ambjornsson describes how the parents of small children behave as though the colour of their clothing determines their social status, sexual orientation and style for the rest of their lives. Pink is the colour of the uneducated working-class, according to Ambjornsson (2011). “The poor dress their children in pink – their daughters, that is” (Ambjornsson in Kauhanen, 2011) she concludes.

By describing her daughter's gender fluid dress-up choices, I read Durham as suggesting that she has succeeded in bringing up a girl-child who is outside of the influence of sexualisation. This suggests that she is an authority on the matter, who, in a contradictory manner, has been able to escape the all-encompassing influence that sexualisation is said to have on others. Here protectionists capture a contradictory position where “sexualisation is everywhere and unyielding but advocates have somehow escaped its influence and can help you fix the situation” (Egan, 2013: 47). Sexualisation, signified by its gendered traits pink and ‘girly’, remains a working-class issue of taste.

Chapter 1 briefly addressed ethical concerns with interviewing children and how these influence methodology and outcomes. I would now like to

address discourses that quote and analyse young people's experiences. Methodologically it is useful to include young peoples' views, as they are closer to childhood than adults. However, this may be misleading as it may give the *appearance* of interviewing children, and so gaining ethnographic information. Young people are not children anymore, hence their views will reflect only their specific subject position. Discussing issues facing teenagers but conflating their harms to children may result in an alarmist discourse.

An example of using teen voices instead of children's can be found in Maggie Hamilton's populist manual *What's Happening to our Girls?* (2008), where she spoke to teen girls about the commercialisation of childhood. Missy, aged 15, expressed her concern: “They're like so young and innocent and they should be doing what little kids should be doing, but it's like parents and the media influencing them so much” (cited in Hamilton, 2008: 18). Telling about this exchange was the fact that Missy was distinctly worried about girls younger than herself. She did not express worries over her own childhood, thus placing herself and her peer group outside of the reach of sexualisation, something the *Irish Review* also noted to be common in their research (Kiely et al., 2015: 152). Almost all of their female interviewees suggested that children currently dress in an inappropriate or sexualised manner, something they themselves did not do at that age. They characterised those younger than themselves as being “passive recipients of negative marketing and cultural influences” (Kiely et al., 2015:148). What this shows is again the tendency for commentators or interviewees to rate themselves as being aware and able to combat sexualisation, but not awarding other people the same command, awareness or agency.

In 2000 Buckingham wrote about the idea of 'it's not me, it's someone else' in his academic study *After the Death of Childhood,* which was a review of recent changes both in childhood and in the media environment. He theorised on the displacement of negative effects of television, pointing out that many children are aware of adult disapproval of them watching 'too much' television and may be aware of some of the arguments made of TV's negative effects. Buckingham argued that a kind of 'othering' happens, where children keenly exempt themselves from negatively being affected by their favourite TV shows

but assert that their younger siblings might copy what they watch (Buckingham, 2000: 113). In the same way adults tend to “displace the 'effects' of television onto children”, with the implication that they are outside of risk, children imply that the effects of TV apply “to those much younger than them” (Buckingham, 2000: 113).

Ten years after Buckingham articulated his theories about 'othering', the research team of the *Scottish Review* (2010), led by Buckingham, interviewed young people between the ages of 12 and 14. They argued that guidelines would be needed for age groups that were younger than themselves, in this case, for children under the age of 12. Their sentiments were much like those of teenager Missy, interviewed by Hamilton above. The *Scottish Review* noted “a form of displacement onto younger children that is typical of children and young people’s responses to questions about media regulation and the understanding of media messages” (Buckingham et al., 2010: 65). This suggests that young people practice displacement the same way as adults, for example with regard to class. I would ask if this may be in order to establish themselves as older and more mature, through expressing worry over the immaturity of people younger than them. The teens in the *Scottish Review* were eager to affirm their competence in understanding and deciphering sexual connotations of specific products. “They strongly rejected the idea that regulation was necessary in order to protect *them* and argued that they should have the right to make their own decisions (and mistakes)” (Buckingham et al., 2010: 8 emphasis added), further adding to the idea that they were not in need of protection, but 'other' young people and children were.

While young people were confident in their own judgements about children younger than themselves, they also expressed similar confidence in their opinions about adults. They suggested that labels could be placed on products with sexual connotations, such as those with the Playboy bunny logo, to administer guidelines to unknowing adults. The adults seen as in need of guidance bought 'chavvy' clothing for children who were, for example, primary school aged. The participants also included on their list of people needing regulation adults “over the age of 40” who bought clothes to wear themselves, that were designed for young people (Buckingham et al., 2010: 74).

I would argue that this leads to a cyclical trope within sexualisation discourses. Adults become worried about the sexualisation of children. Children themselves worry about other, younger children or those from working-class backgrounds, and finally children worry about adults, as they see them as out of touch with trends. This externalisation of sexualisation begs the question, how does sexualisation manifest as a problem when no-one sees themselves affected by it? Or rather, if I think you are affected by it and you think that I am affected by it, but neither of us think we, ourselves, are affected, is either of us affected?

A year after the *Scottish Review* was published, journalist Owen Jones' *Chavs* (2011) became central in popular discussions of social class in the British context. Jones' (2011) key argument was that the stereotyped 'chav' is used as a fig leaf by the government to evade genuine engagement with economic and social problems and to explain and excuse increasing inequality. I would like to compare the alarm which Jones describes regarding the working class and their presentation in *Chavs* to the protectionist sexualisation discourse examined here. I would argue that both can be seen as examples where thorough engagement and examination are foregone in favour of disapproval. In *Chavs,* Jones addresses this disapproval and 'chav-bashing' which takes place by the middle-class, but also within working-class societies. He sees it to originate in the age-old divide between those want to strive towards “respectability” and those seeking to uphold 'working-class pride' through deriding it (Jones, 2011: 136). This 'inverted' pretension or arrogance also works as an expression against those who are perceived as “stuck up” (Jones, 2011: 136). I would argue that there are some parallels here with 'double pressure' and the burden of pleasing one’s peers, discussed earlier in this thesis.

The *Scottish Review* (2010) found a tendency for young people to not self-identify as working-class, but to see others this way, due to the stigma that was attached to class-conciousness. This displacement occurred though derogatory language used towards the perceived working-class:

> It was generally considered normative not to display too much of the body or to draw attention to oneself through hair, make-up and accessories. Apparent ‘failures’ of taste or style were typically seen to be characteristic of *other* people, who were often referred to in derogatory terms relating to social class (such as ‘chav’).
>
> (Buckingham et al., 2010:7)

Many of the young people interviewed for the *Scottish Review* came from households that could be considered working-class, based on their parents’ professions. According to description given to the researchers, some of the participants in the study labelled others as 'chavs'. However, in a contradictory manner, the young people stated that neither they themselves, nor anyone they knew, was a 'chav'. Buckingham et al. suggest that further research is needed on how discourses using derogatory language, such as 'chav', marginalise and segregate young people (Buckingham et al., 2010: 68). How potentially sexualised products were read differently as 'tasteful' or 'slutty', implied a distinct division of people into socio-economic class structures. This ended up positioning working-class girls in particular need of regulation, as discussed in the previous chapter (Buckingham et al., 2010: 68, see also Egan and Hawkes, 2008). Girls themselves described the dress of 'working-class' girls in a perfunctory manner, summarising that “wearing sexualised products, (only) signalled the desire for sexual activity” (Buckingham et al., 2010: 71; see also Egan, 2013: 81). The gendered dimension continues as girls are divided into responsible and irresponsible; those “who are seen to navigate choices successfully, as responsible ‘citizen- consumers’, and those who are seen to lack the discipline to make good choices” (Buckingham et al., 2010: 75). The *Scottish Review* suggest that “none of the participants said they were making the wrong decisions themselves; however, they all mentioned others (unanimously identified as ‘chavs’ or ‘neds') who were seen to be acting inappropriately for their age, both through their purchases and their behaviour” (Buckingham et al., 2010: 64).

The *Irish Review* (2015) looked at how parents displaced the problem of sexualisation and found a similar pattern. So-called 'sexualised’ goods here became a problem concerning *other* people, of a minority of seemingly

'irresponsible' parents and/or with implied working-class backgrounds. This was "used as a mechanism through which some parents defined their own identities and values" (Kiely et al., 2015: 131). In this case sexualisation does not only become a problem of poor taste and judgement that can be seen as harmful to society at large, but specifically anti-sexualisation, the condemning of sexualisation, establishes a person as responsible with good taste and morals. An example of this can be seen in Poulton's 2011 *Daily Mail* article: "As far as what our children wear, the parents... have a huge amount of influence... Parents now will bow and break under the pressure of pester power. Not me. Ask my daughter" (Poulton, 2011). This was also reflected in the *Irish Review*, which showed that most parents considered themselves "effective informal educators" (Kiely et al., 2015: 140).

I would like to suggest that this opens, on one hand, an issue of tutelage whereby it becomes acceptable to question 'other' people's choices and actions in the name of protection, both young and old, On the other hand, this discourse becomes very problematic for those who "are seen to lack the discipline to make good choices" (Buckingham et al., 2010: 75). If they are seen to make bad choices, but out of their own free will, this places the responsibility of 'making good choices' and keeping oneself safe also onto the shoulders of girls themselves, as possible abuse and harassment can now be seen as the result of the girls' lack of good choices. As discussed in the previous chapter protectionism divides girls into 'good' - worthy of protection - and 'bad' – those who have made questionable choices and who now need to be isolated from 'good girls (and boys)' so as not to corrupt them. I would argue that this is reminiscent of victim blaming narratives and ultimately fails to protect all girls.

The discourse, according to which 'someone else' or 'other' people are affected by sexualisation, can also be applied to the definition of sexualisation. In essence, 'other people's clothes are sexualising, but mine are not'. This way, sexualisation can be established as abstract. It can always be seen as happening to others and being performed by others. Within this illusory discourse the mercenary position rears its head again. Any girl can be viewed as either sexualised or not sexualised, as the definition can be remoulded and applied as is advantageous. I would argue that it becomes a question about

who is doing something, as opposed to *what* they are doing. In essence, 'sexualised' becomes one more dimension of how an already vulnerable sector of society, namely, underage, working-class girls are vilified, controlled and isolated from the rest of society.

9.6 Summary

This chapter investigated discourses on sexualisation, consumption and the class-related and gendered stigma contained by this discoursal intersection. While protectionist discourses acknowledge that both boys and girls are consumer citizens in modern capitalist society, it was specifically girls' practices that were met with alarm (Buckingham et al., 2010: 47). Girls' buying culture was seen as an extension of their sexualisation rather than of neo-liberal capitalist consumer culture, which meant that within protectionist discourses girls were held to high standards in asking them to refuse commercial culture. The conversation around sexualisation and protectionist discourse thus gained another dimension when considered alongside a class-related discourse. Middle-class taste and purchasing habits were regarded by protectionists as aspirational and 'natural'. This meant that styles that were regarded as sexualising were seen as inappropriate and 'unnatural', as opposed to having a ‘different’ but still valid aesthetic or subcultural origin. Finally, sexualisation and its harms were seen as a problem affecting 'other people', usually those of a lower class or age by both protectionists and their subjects. This raised the question, that if sexualisation is always seen as affecting someone else, but this person also does not see it as affecting them, and it seems that no-one ever sees its effects on themselves, what does this tell us about the nature of sexualisation? Given this, I would argue that sexualisation when placed within its capitalist and class context becomes symbolic of a loss of middle-class practices, values and taste and thus ripe for protectionist alarm.

Chapter 10

'The Lolita Excuse' - Naming, Shaming and Self-Regulation

10.1 Introduction

While the safeguarding of girls is the objective of protectionism, the approach taken by protectionist sources examined in this thesis is often, I would argue, problematic. Disparaging language is used in relation to girls and their dress in these sources, which creates an air of shame and sanction around sexualisation, and ultimately around the girls themselves. This chapter will begin by looking at shame as a social construct and a tool which has become a driving force in internalising sanctions over sexualised dress. I will also examine how shame and sanction are internalised by girls and how they subsequently regulate their own behaviour. This chapter will then move onto analysing the 'Lolita Excuse', by which girls are established as active agents in their sexualisation and are hence responsible for policing their dress and behaviour. Finally, I will look at demeaning and derogatory language used by protectionist writers and how this furthers the stigma and shame around sexualisation.

10.2 Shame and Internalisation

Shame is a social construct. Sociologists Erving Goffman (1967) and Thomas Scheff (2000) treat shame as an essentially social and reflexive emotion that is dependent on others' valuations. Sociologically this means that individuals interpret and react to situations in two ways. On one hand, by acknowledging other people's appraisals during social interactions, and, on the other, by performing pre-emptively according to their anticipations or imagined reactions from general society. “Therefore individuals can experience shame without ever having received negative feedback but simply from the assumption that if others were to know... they would react with condemnation, disapproval or disdain” (Weiss, 2010: 288). This links with Foucault's ideas about the panopticon and how people can internalise control within society, even pre-emptively. In this model, it then becomes possible to get rid of a controlling 'task force', which both drains resources and, more importantly, exposes authority. In the case of sexualisation, protectionists or patriarchal structures could be seen as the 'task force' which may become exposed as the authority that polices girls' dress. By making power subjectified here, and so moving the act of policing to girls themselves, it is easier to mask the authority or the 'oppressor'. It is thus possible on one hand to blame girls themselves for making bad choices that lead to harms, but also to identify girls themselves as the regulatory force, as if there is no-one telling them what to do and they come to regulate themselves all on their own. Through sexual sanctioning and the repeated implication that sexualisation influences girls' behaviour in a negative way, protectionism achieves exactly the kind of climate Weiss described, where girls will feel shame even when they have received no direct “negative feedback” (2010: 288).

Writing about the stigma surrounding the reporting of sexual abuse, Weiss (2010) argues that individuals who act in a way that is different from expected gender roles can experience shame, because, for example, they have failed to meet the ideal form of femininity. I would like to extend this to the sexualisation debate for two reasons. Firstly, 'sexualisation' is often conflated with or seen to lead to sexual violence, and secondly, the shame patterns described by Weiss (2010) appear to behave in the same way as the results of

protectionist anti-sexualisation, as will be discussed in detail in 10.3. For example, girls who act differently to traditional feminine gender roles, “such as being sexually aggressive or reckless”, may be seen as more responsible for falling victim to sexual violence, or feeling deserving of it (Weiss, 2010: 288). This is directly comparable to the 'asking for it' narratives discussed in the previous chapter. I would like to draw a parallel here with sexualised dress. If a girl's dress fails to meet the “demure, virtuous, or at least modest” standards implied by protectionism (Weiss, 2010: 288-9), she may become labelled as sexualised and so stigmatised as a bad influence on other girls (Ringrose, 2013: 48).

I would like to propose that the blame narratives within protectionism can become particularly problematic within the culture of shame that they uphold, as girls may become less likely to report sexual violence or to obtain counselling. Many victims of sexual violence do not report the crime to the police, as they are afraid that the 'appropriateness' of their actions or clothing preceding the attack will be questioned (Weiss, 2010). Girls are aware that so called 'reckless' behaviour could implicate them in their victimisation (Weiss, 2010: 295). I would like to include sexualised dress in this idea of reckless behaviour as it is seen to cause all manner of harm by protectionists, as discussed in Chapter 6. I would therefore propose that it may well be that protectionist discourses influence girls’ confidence in reporting crime, as the narratives of responsibility perpetuate ideas of dress provoking sexual abuse.

These blame narratives gain a further dimension of harm even after the effect. Rape, specifically, is set apart from other violent crime, suggests Weiss (2010). Not only does rape have devastating effects physically and emotionally on its victims, but the culture around rape also instigates the specific fear, that this crime in particular “defiles, devastates and disgraces them as a woman” (Weiss, 2010: 296). While I do not want to align protectionist ideas of girls in sexualised dress with becoming victims of rape, I would like to suggest that these become two ends of the same spectrum, especially as protectionism builds a causal link between the two, as explored in discussions in Chapter 6. Furthermore, I would argue that this interpretation of defilement and disgrace can also relate to protectionist ideas of loss of childhood innocence, making

girls particularly vulnerable to the shaming properties of sexual violence and rape. I read Weiss' investigation to suggest that shaming narratives cause devastation on two levels: they damage experiences of womanhood, as well as come with an expectation of feeling shame over the crime suffered, fuelling a discourse of silence and humility for the victim of abuse.

My final point within shaming practices looks at a particular style of sexual sanctioning or sexual shaming. I refer to the discourse that will be unfolded in section 10.4 on sexual sanctioning practices, which looks specifically at shaming through derogatory descriptions of promiscuity and prostitution. Within this discourse, sexual promiscuity in girls, particularly, is implied to be negative, as it does not comply with demure and innocent ideas of femininity and childhood. Terms such as 'hooker', 'hoochie', 'skank' and 'prostitute' are used by protectionists. While I would argue that these are applied without deeper understanding of their etymology and idiosyncrasy, and in a colloquial manner, the terms do imply that the girl has 'done something', rather than that 'something has happened to her'. There is not enough space to unpack these terms in detail here;however, I do want to use them to refer back to the discourse that treats boys as victims of sexualisation and girls as predators, as discussed in section 8.5. I will look at these terms and their place with sexualisation discourses in more detail in section 10.4 below. Contextualising this kind of use of language, it becomes apparent that boys are seen as victims and girls are spoken to and about in a very unsympathetic manner. In Weiss' study of victims of sexual violence some reported feeling discouraged from reporting the crime because of their awareness that women who make set allegations are “often the ones who are disparaged or stigmatised for having “started it”” (2010: 297). Weiss notes that “the stigma of being labelled a *whore* can be an effective deterrent preventing victims from reporting sexual victimisation” (Weiss, 2010: 298). I would argue that being labelled with synonyms for whore - 'hooker', 'hoochie', 'skank' and 'prostitute' – is equally problematic.

The *Scottish Review* discussed how their young interviewees had noted “a negative stance towards people who ‘show themselves more’” (2010: 70). Girls avoided revealing dress to not show their bodies too much. This was

reportedly done because revealing clothing was seen as distasteful, rather than because the girls would have said they felt insecure; “Wearing products that are considered ‘sexy’ (according to peer norms) was defined as uncomfortable in most contexts by the girls we interviewed, because of their desire to not stand out and to not ‘show off’ their bodies” (Buckingham et al., 2010: 70). A final risk examined by Buckingham et al. relating to sexualised goods, such as clothing, was a perceived danger of gaining a bad reputation. Across the interviews conducted, young people indicated that wearing certain kinds of clothing in a particular way was seen as signalling sexual availability. The team noted the link between dress and sexual violence, and the tendency among participants to describe this as ‘asking for it'. They furthermore stressed the tendency of victim blaming in the young people's accounts (Buckingham et al., 2010: 72). I would argue that sanction unfolds in a paradoxical manner here. It may be that girls engaged in self-sanctioning out of fear of being labelled as sexualised and to be seen as 'asking for it'.

This quote, from a parent interviewed for the *Irish Review*, illustrates the convention of subjectifying the fight against sexual threat. “I would say to her, “Be careful. I’m not saying you deserve anything that would happen to you, but you have to be careful”” (Kiely et al., 2015: 118). I would argue that being “careful” is a subjective concept which can easily be interpreted to encompass a range of safeguarding tactics. I would furthermore suggest that ideas of girls having to be “careful” are very much ingrained into culture and thus hide their own mechanism of surveillance in a manner analogous to that of Foucault's Panopticon. This discourse makes it seem as if there should be no harm in practicing caution. This, I would propose, is misguided and detrimental to the feminist project. The rhetoric in the above quote is based around the idea of 'care', appearing benevolent. This is understandable, as parents are concerned. Sexual sanctioning, however, is widely practiced as a shock tactic; in essence, to shame girls into subjugation through which their own safety can be guaranteed. This will be specifically addressed in section 10.4. Furthermore, what shaming appears to achieve is to shift control to the girls through implying that it is their choice of dress that places them in a vulnerable position, rather than (abusive) behaviour or the patriarchal power structures that sanction

access to their bodies. Though Foucault does not address sexual shaming specifically, I would like to use his ideas of self-sanction to explore this issue. “This architectural apparatus” is a “machine for creating and sustaining a power relation independent of the person who exercises it” (Foucault, 1977: 201). In this way the protectionists place the girls “in a power situation of which they are themselves the bearers” (Foucault, 1977: 201). This is particularly advantageous for boys and men, who are now excluded not only from responsibility, but from the discourse altogether.

The protectionist literature examined in this thesis suggests that harms which befall girls, such as bullying and abuse among others, are direct results of sexualisation, as examined in Chapter 6. The literature implies that these practices were carried out exclusively by men, and that sexualised girls were particularly vulnerable to male violence. Not once, however, did the literature suggest sanctions on male behaviour. Where any intervention was proposed with regard to boys, this was done through a rather sympathetic discourse and a recommendation of education, discussed in 8.5. This practice was particularly unbalanced, considering that protectionist literature suggested girls were to be subjected to dress codes and retailers who sold sexualised goods to legal action and fines, as outlined in Chapter 7. What this appears to mean for girls (in this case, I would say, teenage girls) in the real world is that they become entangled in a double bind. On one hand they are the victims of what is described as an increasingly sexualised culture (Papadopoulos, 2010) and the possible pressures it sets upon their self-presentation. On the other, they are subjected to scrutiny when they respond to this trend by dressing in a sexualised manner. This double bind or 'double pressure' was addressed in section 7.4. As Foucault (1977) suggests with regards to the Panopticon, by directing the scrutiny over sexualised dress to be practiced by girls themselves, it is possible to increase its efficacy. The girls whose sexualised bodies play out on the public field assume “responsibility for the constraints of power; [s]he makes them play spontaneously upon [her]self; [s]he inscribes in [herself] the power relation in which [s]he simultaneously plays both roles; [s]he becomes the principle of [her] own subjection” (Foucault, 1977: 201). In essence, protectionism succeeds in keeping girls’ wardrobes modest through the power

of their own control.

Discussing Jeremy Bentham's panopticon prison, Foucault writes, that "the constant pressure acts even before the offences, mistakes or crimes have been committed" (1977: 206). This links to the discourse on shame as it operates in a passive manner; a person does not have to be actively shamed in order to internalise something as shameful (Weiss, 2010: 288), which is again advantageous in 'outsourcing' - or rather 'insourcing' the shame of sexualisation onto girls themselves. Protectionism then "assures its efficacity by its preventative character, its continuous functioning and its automatic mechanism" (Foucault, 1977: 206). What this means for girls who are old enough to choose their own clothes is that they are now caught up in a continuous self-censorship with regards to so-called sexualised goods that they may want to consume, or so-called sexualised dress they may want to wear. In fact, this can happen before any sanctions have been voiced. The "preventative character" of protectionism assures that shame can be subjectified, not by actively telling girls to be ashamed of their sexualised presentation, but by the mere culture within which they grow up that communicates this on a subconscious level. Whereas in the panoptic prison the prisoner becomes the automated guard, in protectionist anti-sexualisation discourses and rape culture, the victim becomes her own surveillant.

Through its interviews with young people, The *Scottish Review* (2010) found that girls are themselves very aware of the implications that befall them from wearing clothing that is deemed sexualising: "Young people are aware of risks of appearing older through the use of sexualised products and generally having personal appearances misread. The perceived risks ranged from paedophilia to general risks about reputation and misjudgements; and these risks relate far more to girls than to boys" (Buckingham et al., 2010: 8). In fact, "girls in particular felt there was a risk of attracting older men through sexualised products, but they also mentioned feelings of being at risk generally because of their age and gender" (Buckingham et al., 2010: 72). This shows that young people, and especially girls, view the dangers of sexualisation in the same way as anti-sexualisation literature. The evidently simplified causal link that anti-sexualisation literature builds in order to protect children and young people,

outlined in chapter 6, is equally internalised by young people themselves. The Scottish research team concludes by stating that "The [12-14 year old] participants indicated that it was important to know the consequences of dressing in sexually provocative ways" (Buckingham et al., 2010: 65). This suggests that the shaming narratives around sexualisation appear to have been successful in the manner that shame has indeed been internalised by girls themselves. What is advantageous with regards to the monitoring process here is that it does not have to happen externally anymore. Girls may begin to regulate their own wardrobes within this atmosphere of reprimand and could also potentially shame each other for wearing sexualising dress. I would suggest that this will benefit traditional patriarchal structures, as victim blaming in cases of sexual violence may be internalised through the internalisation of the shame of wearing sexualised dress. I would question if the sexual sanctioning and consequent internalisation of shame may in fact do the exact opposite of what it set out to do and instead of protecting girls it would displace the blame from the abusers onto victims themselves.

10.3 The 'Lolita Excuse': Victim-blaming and Self-regulation

I would argue that it is not coincidental that 'Lolita' lives on so strongly in popular culture. The term 'Lolita', as coined by Vladimir Nabokov in the eponymous novel (1955), refers to a coquettish tween-girl who seduces older men. The precocious young girl fascinates and horrifies people through her agency and victimhood, and Lolita continues to be a controversial and infinitely problematic figure. Most telling of this is perhaps the legacy of referring to sexualised girls as 'Lolitas'; however, 'Humbert Humbert' is not as readily used to describe a hebephilic[27] man. The title of this chapter 'The Lolita Excuse' directly refers to

[27] Technically Humbert Humbert was hebephilic as Lolita was not a child, but in early adolescence. While there is not enough scope in this thesis to investigate this further, I would like to note that protectionist discourses on sexualisation do not distinguish between paedophilia and hebaphilia when discussing 'inappropriate' sexual interest in minors. I see

the title of Gigi Durham's populist manual *The Lolita Effect* (2008). What Durham refers to as 'The Lolita Effect' is the idea that girls are being encouraged by the media and consumer culture to adopt a sexualised image and invite sexual harassment and abuse. What I refer to as the 'The Lolita Excuse' in this thesis, is the argument that protectionists can frame girls as seductive Lolitas, whose sexual or sartorial interests need to be restrained rather than focus on dismantling gendered, patriarchal structures that are harmful. *Lolita* (1955) the book focuses on the psychopathology of a middle-aged man and makes few indications as to how Lolita herself feels. There is a parallel between how protectionist texts also do not really consult how girls themselves feel. Protectionism advocates vigilance, which often takes on the form of shaming (Oppliger, 2008), by parents over their daughters' activities and attire. In this thesis I argue that these protectionist practices cast girls in a contradictory role where they are established simultaneously as impressionable, immature and untrustworthy, and therefore in need of regulation, but also as able and accountable.

Protectionist literature is written out of concern for the welfare of girls; however, the solutions it offers are usually directed at limiting girls' representation and social space (this is in relation to attending parties or being able to get home safely from activities). Girls are established as simultaneously victims of an institutionally sexist practice of abuse, but also as seductive 'Lolitas' who invite sexual interest. The term 'rape culture' was coined by American feminists in the 1970's and encompasses society's attitudes towards sexual violence and victim blaming (Smith, 2004). Rape culture in practice teaches women to regulate their behaviour in order not to fall victim to sexual violence, as opposed to teaching men to observe consent. Rape culture is also based on two misconceptions. The first is that women and girls are able to reduce sexual offences by behaving or dressing differently (Kiely et al., 2015: 52). This is intimately tied to the second myth – or rather statistical anomaly – which is 'stranger danger'. It is not that stranger danger does not exist, but rather that protectionist texts focus on it as a priority, skewing the idea of what abuse is. While these examples refer to women rather than girls, they become

this as a rhetorical tool which allows the term paedophile to be used in a colloquial, and also polemic manner.

part of the same discourse. Where rape culture describes the focus on educating women to avoid sexual violence, the victim blaming narratives in sexualisation discourses centre around educating girls not to dress a certain way to avoid being 'sexualised' or sexually victimised. Girls are warned not to dress in a sexualised manner in order not to invite the interest of dangerous men in public, while in truth sexual violence is tied to engrained ideas of power, oppression and rights to someone else's body. In reality, most girls are abused by someone known to them, someone from within the family or circle of trusted people[28] (Kiely et al., 2015: 162-3).

The *British Review* analysed studies that reveal attitudes[29] towards rape culture and cited a 2009 Home Office survey that found that:

> 36 per cent of people believed that a woman should be held wholly or partly responsible for being sexually assaulted or raped if she was drunk, while 26 per cent believed a woman should accept at least part of the blame for an attack if she was out in public wearing sexy or revealing clothes… 20 per cent [of people] believe that it is OK under certain circumstances to hit a woman if she is wearing revealing or sexy clothing.
>
> (Papadopoulos, 2010: 12, 20)

While the above quote concerns adult women, I wanted to include it within this discourse on girls for two reasons. Firstly, throughout the protectionist texts there has been a blurring of childhood and teenhood, and I would argue that this could also be interpreted as a blurring between teenhood and adulthood. This also relates back to how hebaphilia blurs the line of pubescence and adulthood. This would mean that teenage girls who look older may encounter similar attitudes towards their victimhood. Secondly, while the above attitudes may not be as severe towards girls as they are towards women, I would argue that they act as a kind of pre-emptive warning for girls. They communicate to

[28] While there is unfortunately no scope to investigate this further, I did want to come back to the relevance of the characterisation of Nabokov's Humbert Humbert whose grooming of Lolita fits the statistical attributes described here. He befriends the family, becomes engaged to the mother, and after her death grooms the pubescent Lolita as his sexual victim.

[29] This thesis is written in a changing political climate where the #MeToo movement and the killing of Sarah Everard are shifting the focus from victims to perpetrators socially, but also legislatively. This means that the protectionist sources examined here may seem outdated and, I would argue, may very well not be written from this perspective anymore.

them what is to come and socialise them into believing they should avoid drinking and dressing in a sexualised manner in the future, to avoid potential future harms on their adult selves through their girlhood behaviours.

Another aspect which furthers the victim blaming element of sexualisation is a vagueness associated with terminology and rules. Chapter 6 discussed the subjectivity around the term 'sexualisation' and section 8.4 discussed how guidelines were sought from authorities to restrain the sale of 'sexualised dress'; however, this was a difficult task due to the subjectivity of what can be considered sexualising. I would argue that the problem here is not that girls and their dress are regulated, or that they are regulated in a way that boys are not. Instead, I would argue that the rules that girls are given with regard to what is sexualising are so vague and subjective that any item of clothing can be placed as sexualising, as discussed in section 7.2. I would argue that this is beneficial in upholding patriarchal structures of victim blaming. The lack of a coherent definition for sexualisation makes sexualisation entirely open to interpretation and this is why it is convenient and easy to apply to any kind of cultural text or event or piece of clothing in a way that will then suit the person making the argument. It may thus also lead for it to be impossible to prove that someone was *not* dressed in a sexually provocative manner.

The British Review encourages self-regulation in the following way:

> The argument is that, once they understand what society expects of them with regard to gender roles and standards of behaviour, children start to internalise those expectations and create their own rules. They then, in effect, start to ‘police’ themselves in line with these self-imposed standards, adapting and monitoring their own behaviour without the need for reassurance and reinforcement from outside.
>
> (Papadopoulos, 2010: 26)

The British Review as a protectionist text, of course aims to protect children, first and foremost. However, I would argue that this hypothesis is problematic in many ways. “What society expects of [girls] with regard to gender roles and standards of behaviour” can refer to either side of the idea of 'double pressure'. Are girls thus expected to adhere to the modest role, promoted by

protectionists? This seems to be the positive stance here. Or, does it mean the opposite, whereby girls may start to comply with sexualised trends communicated to them by the media and advocated by some peers? If the former, this could mean that blame for sexual abuse would also fall on the shoulders of the girl. Because she is able to police her own behaviour and dress but has failed to dress in a modest way and has fallen victim to sexual abuse, she only has herself to blame. Furthermore, the proposition contained within this quote is problematic as, in a sense, it contradicts itself. On the one hand "children [are encouraged to] start to internalise those expectations", however, on the other, to "create their own rules". I would argue that this is reminiscent of the seemingly contradictory discourses around childhood innocence, which were discussed in 5.2. Children were expected to prefer a specific kind of idealised representation set by adults but have to come to this on their own. In this case, a similar pattern emerges where a set of boundaries is set for girls, but it is also expected that they come to find the boundaries and observe them themselves, because this way it appears that these boundaries are 'natural' and breaking them would be unnatural. When a girl is then found in an unnatural situation, such as in danger of sexual violence, she can be seen as implicated in putting herself there.

This can be evidenced in Maggie Hamilton's populist manual *What's Happening to our Girls* (2008), where dress becomes something that girls have to be mature enough to "handle" because of the attention they might suffer as the result. Hamilton observes that "Not only are some men and boys likely to regard little girls wearing cosmetics differently, there's a vital question of whether a young girl can handle the attention she receives" (2008: 24). What is problematic here is the gendered nature of expectations of responsibility that dress, or in this case specifically make-up, brings with it. Girls are placed as the ones responsible for "handling the attention". Hamilton continues to develop the idea of self-regulation and writes about dating relationships between tween girls and older boys. While writing from a perspective of protection of girls, Hamilton's words "boundaries not only protect girls, they teach them how to regulate their own behaviour" (2008: 48) also carry marks of victim blaming. As the regulation of behaviour is shifted onto girls, the potential victims, the blame

can thus also be moved onto them as they were unable to carry out the regulation. I would again like to evoke Foucault's articulations of the panopticon and self-surveillance here (1977); in practice this means that the regulation of behaviour is the responsibility of the girls, as opposed to men. This relieves men of their responsibility of seeking consent and shifts the responsibility of regulation off the shoulders of the adults and onto the shoulders of the girls. This, I would argue will eventually lead to the girls internalising the practice of regulation, thus making the regulatory power of shaming invisible in society.

The *Scottish Review* noted that mothers became, in a sense, an extension of girls' self-regulation. In general, I would argue, protectionist literature is primarily aimed at mothers, thus including them in furthering self-regulation. One mother stated: “Well you don’t need to worry about a wee boy dressing to look older and looking tarty or anything” (Buckingham et al., 2010: 52). By comparison, specific kinds of clothes for girls were viewed as being undesirable, because they can be looked at in a sexual manner. This may lead to attracting attention that the girl may lack the maturity to be able to handle. “I don’t want her to go to school flashing flesh and attracting people that maybe she couldn’t deal with at that age” (Buckingham et al., 2010: 52) as one mother articulated. Atkins Wardy also suggests mothers ask their daughters to

> give some critical thought to how others might interpret her outfit, and how she is prepared to handle herself should unwanted attention or negative situations arise... [for example] getting hit on by older guys. While the latter is inappropriate, she needs to be prepared to control her reaction to it so that she can walk away safely without further harassment.
>
> (Atkins Wardy, 2014: 104)

Here the contradiction arises again, that while it is made clear that it is the “older guy” who is behaving inappropriately, the advice is directed to the mother to pass onto her daughter. Renold and Ringrose criticise protectionist discourses for precisely this contradiction, pointing out that they ignore girls’ sexual agency, rights and pleasure, reinforcing the gendered binary of “active, predatory male sexuality in contrast to girls’ non-agentic sexuality” (Renold and Ringrose, 2011:

391). Despite this, the focus on girls and their dress as a problem remains. This raises questions about the gendered direction of protectionist texts: where are the populist manuals, government reviews and newspaper articles directed at boys and their parents? A similar pattern emerges when looking at young people's exposure to pornography. On one hand girls are seen as more susceptible to sexualisation; however, on the other they are awarded with more maturity to “manage” situations, such as coming across pornography. The *Irish Review* interviewed a mother of a 15-year-old-girl who “adopted less strict monitoring practices, preferring instead to trust her daughter to manage the situation” (Kiely et al., 2015: 135). This seems advantageous in upholding traditional patriarchal structures, especially victim-blaming, as girls can be established as simultaneously impressionable, immature and untrustworthy, and hence in need of regulation, but also as able and hence accountable.

The APA suggests solutions to sexualisation through physical activity[30]. A “pathway to less risky sexual behaviour via sports participation is through the decreased feminine gender role orientation of girl participants” (APA, 2007: 36). The *APA Review* proposes “risky sexual behaviour” to be a direct product of femininity, as discussed in 6.3. Femininity can, however, be combated with sports which paradoxically have regularly been discouraged or even limited for women historically (women were forbidden from forming football clubs and so on). The APA further argued that self-objectification limited the manner and effectiveness of the physical movements of the girls (APA, 2007: 21). The APA concluded by suggesting that “girls and women who are physically active and confident are more able to defend themselves from physical attack and abuse” (APA, 2007: 21). I would argue that this makes a problematic proposition. Implying that girls who are sporty are better able to fend off abuse suggests that girls ought to keep up their fitness in order to fight off sexual predators. Failing to do so would then be the result of sexualisation and ultimately a failure on the girl's part. Significantly the APA does not discuss how, or by whom, girls come

[30] While it is beyond the scope of this thesis to investigate links between sexualisation and sports further, I want to contextualise this topic within wider historical and contemporary discourses. The idea of fighting female hypersexuality through sports participation can be directly compared to 19th century practices of suppressing male sexual urges through rigorous exercise (Foucault, 1978). In a more contemporary concept, we see studies of why girls in the UK are reluctant to continue with sports (Women's Sports Foundation, na) The idea of 'throwing like a girl' has also been investigated within queer theory which examined ideas of demonisation of anything feminine (Young, 2005).

to be in a position of danger of sexual assault in the first place.

10.4 'Hooker', 'Hoochie', 'Skank' - Derogatory Language in Protectionist Discourses

> The result (of sexualisation) is a generation of girls who are wide-eyed and vacant with cinched-in waists and aimless smiles. They are all BRAT-itude and no substance.
>
> (Poulton, 2011)

Sexual sanctioning, or what is colloquially known as 'slut shaming', is the practice of insulting girls by insinuating promiscuity through terms such as 'slut', 'skank' or equivalent. The practice operates on many levels. First, sexual activity and especially promiscuity is established as shameful in girls; subsequently, the girl (who is seen to dress in a sexualised manner) is punished by name-calling and social exclusion. This does not mean that she is in fact promiscuous, rather she may simply be dressed in a manner which is deemed to attract sexual attention. Patrice Oppliger's book *Girls Gone Skank* (2008) is a extreme illustration of the discourse around sexual sanctioning within protectionist literature. Not only does she use the word 'skank' in the title of her book, but derogatory and sexually shaming language is rife throughout. “American Apparel's spring 2006 catalogue featured skanky photographs on skanky models wearing skanky clothes,” writes Oppliger (2008: 12). Skank has become a colloquial term for “a person and especially a woman of low or sleazy character” (Merriam Webster), and I would add, dresses in non-middle-class style and in revealing clothing. Skanky, then, is essentially trashy and cheap, lacking sexual morals. While Oppliger may not imply it, the rhetoric in her language can be read in a problematic way, where her judgement is not only about girls' taste in dress but implies judgement about girls' social class and sexual behaviour; I would go so far as to say that this has implied undertones of lacking hygiene. Sexual behaviour is brought into the foreground and, I read,

the girl is established as flawed in her choice of partner(s). The discourse remains problematic also in its gendered nature, as there is no sartorial male equivalent to 'skanky'. As Church Gibson notes of sexualised dress, “this look is confined to young women; there is no masculine equivalent” (2014: 191). Girls' dress, but not boys', is seen to signify sexual decision making, and also vice versa. Sexual decision making, or heightened sexual activity is also implied to influence girls' taste in clothing. Therefore 'skanky' clothing can be read as particularly problematic.

What makes these terms especially premeditated and shaming is held within their implication of intent. A 'whore', 'hooker', 'hoochie', 'skank' and 'prostitute', I would argue, is not just a sex worker, which can be a woman who, due to possible economic problems, sells sexual encounters for fiscal profit. The proverbial 'whore' instead represents a woman who has forsaken cultural morals for financial gain. It can also be applied indiscriminately, for example the colloquial term 'corporate whore'. The ’whore’, therefore, has more stigma, as her intent is based not on desperate circumstances, but on intentional financial gain off the back of immorality. Labels such as these can function as controlling agents to women and girls, who do not perform sexuality within appropriate norms. This links with the ideas of dress practices and stereotyping that will be discussed in 10.4, where girl-children are describes as “prostitots” (Oppliger, 2008) and teenagers as “kinderwhores” (Durham, 2008). The possibility for victims of sexual abuse to be negatively labelled, can also contribute to their shame and inhibition to report crime. Finally, according to Weiss (2010), these sanctioning mechanisms work to threaten women’s and girls' identities, their sexualities and their sexual reputations. By upholding discourses of being “deserving, disgraced, or defamed” (Weiss, 2010: 299), these narratives function by subjectifying shame.

> Low riding jeans and navel piercings on more “voluptuous” females draw attention to the excessive weight in the stomach area rather than looking attractive or cool. …, perhaps it is progress that women and girls of all shapes and sizes are comfortable enough with their bodies to let it all “hang out”. Another example of skanky is when older women dress too young. It is not particularly attractive when they expose stretch marks, leathery patches of skin from sun overexposure, and varicose veins.

(Oppliger, 2008: 11)

I would like to begin analysing the above quote by drawing attention to the multitude ways in which Oppliger reproaches her subjects and how, what is colloquially known as, 'fat shaming' and ageism run rife through her description. Although her populist manual is directed at the parents of girls, here she includes a critique of women of all ages. What I would argue is interesting about this account is Oppliger's rhetoric which emanates a sort of fascination, caught between disapproval but also admiration for the women's nonchalance in the face of outside judgement, highlighting the contradictions that often arise in protectionist texts. Church Gibson (2014) considers this phenomenon of letting it "hang out" in relation to 'sexy' styles on the high street and the pornification of culture in general. She suggests that it must be stressed that many girls and women appear to choose to ignore traditional conventions of exercise and diet. They do not seek to conform to the standards of the unobtainable celebrity body. They will however still enjoy wearing the kinds of revealing clothes discussed here, which "results in the extensive display of expanses of flesh, transgressive bodies exposed in a kind of carnivalesque confrontation of bourgeois norms" (Church Gibson, 2014: 201). While the term "transgressive body" is often applied to gender non-conforming bodies, I would read it here to mean the larger body (Richardson, 2010). It is transgressive because it does not conform to the law of conventional beauty which is the slim figure (Grogan, 2017). By "carnivalesque confrontation of bourgeois norms", Church Gibson most likely refers to the disruption and mockery this aesthetic makes of 'middle-class taste'. Oppliger and other protectionists seemingly do not discuss how the wearing of provocative or revealing clothing may in fact be a "confrontation of bourgeois norms". This is rather meaningful, as it becomes a visual challenge to the privileged middle-class that is placing itself above the influence of sexualisation and is hence quick to advise on style. It is valuable here to keep in mind the question: who gets to establish what is appropriate attire, for any age group, and why?

Church Gibson wrote about the late comedienne Joan Rivers and her show *The Fashion Police* where the affluent, middle-class Rivers would pass

judgement on celebrity fashions, along with a panel of celebrities. The show was in good humour; however the segment titled *Starlet or Harlot*, I would argue, was problematic in many ways. Church Gibson writes that middle-class viewers mock the 'trashy' or 'lower-class' tastes and representations of the young starlets featured on *Fashion Police*[31] (Church Gibson, 2014). This is very much like anti-sexualisation discourses where the middle-class protectionist writers execute their authority through the shaming of working-class tastes, as examined in Chapter 8. While Church Gibson (2014) problematises the conversation over the dress of prostitutes, she does propose a sense of agency within the 'starlet's'' dress and interprets it as a distinct challenge to bourgeois taste. Conversely, however, despite their large followings and the cultural and sartorial capital the 'starlets' possess, they are set up as the object of middle-class condescension (Church Gibson, 2014: 197). Similarly to the rhetoric in the *Starlet or Harlot* discourse, Oppliger turns to girl-children. “The new term coined for this trend, ‘prostitot,’ blends ‘prostitute’ and ‘tot'”, she observes (Oppliger, 2008: 15). “Prostitot refers to little girls who are dressed like adult women in the sex trade” (Oppliger, 2008: 15). Here the term 'prostitot', in a shaming manner, links the girl-child's attire rhetorically with ideas of prostitution, and the dress styles associated with women engaged in the sex trade.

Durham builds a very similar discourse: “The turn of the new millennium has spawned an intriguing new phenomenon: the sexy little girl” (2008: 24). Durham goes onto recount some of the “kinderwhores” of the new millennium and includes in her list singers Britney Spears and Christina Aguilera, Brooke Shields in the 1978 film *Pretty Baby* and child beauty pageant contestant JonBenet Ramsey. These examples are brought up by other writers as well and are of course not meant literally; however, the rhetoric makes an impact (APA, 2010; Atkins Wardy, 2014; Brookes, 2008; Durham, 2008; Olfman, 2008; Oppliger, 2008). I would argue that two issues arise within this discourse. Firstly, the term “kinderwhore” or 'childwhore', very effectively shames the girls in question as it draws a direct comparison with the sex trade. I would furthermore suggest that the language used here evokes a particularly insulting response by using slang. I propose that it also ends up shaming the girls who

[31] See also discussion around 'symbolic violence' (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977: 4) and the power position of the researcher in the last chapter.

consume the singers' music by proxy, as it shames their taste in role models. I would like to point out the effectiveness and extensiveness of this kind of language used in these practices and to question the ways in which protectionism sees itself as conducive to the protection of girls whilst practicing this kind of shame-based discourse. While I already expanded on the use of 'whore', I would like to highlight the rhetorical difference between prostitute and whore, to stress how Durham builds a specific picture of a sexualised girl. While the term 'prostitute' can still be linked to ideas of trafficking and desperation, 'whore' does not have the same air of anguish about it. While Durham may imply that girls are simply presented in this way when dressed in the accoutrements of a sexual adult, I would argue that an element of judgement remains in the rhetoric which suggests a knowing child who might be corrupting of others.

The second issue with the term 'kinderwhores' has to do with the word ‘Kind’ – German for child. None of the young women in question were children at the time but rather in their teens, and of the examples discussed, only JonBenet Ramsey was a child. Atkins Wardy also mentions Britney Spears and Christina Aguilera but extends her list with the Spice Girls and Pussycat Dolls, as she places the onset of the concept of sexualisation within the mid-1990s media (2014: 164-5). The examples of the two girl-bands are again used by other writers repeatedly (Olfman, 2008; Rush & La Nauze, 2006; Buckingham et al., 2010; Durham, 2008; Oppliger, 2008; Brookes, 2008; Papadopoulos, 2010). Though a point is to be made about their influence on a distinctly tween fan base, all of the afore mentioned girl-band members themselves were well into their teens. Describing the girls as children however raises alarm. This kind of blurring of the line between child and teen, that I first addressed at the beginning of this thesis, is very common. There is, of course evidence of sexualisation of girl-children and of ‘childification’ of adult women in the media (Laing, 2021), however, protectionist anti-sexualisation literature always speaks of 'girls'. They do not differentiate between the ages of the girls in question, which present large differences. It appears as if toddlers and teenagers merge within the discourse. This is conducive to moulding the discourse to fit the agenda, and I would argue that this particular shaming practice fuels the

Madonna-whore dichotomy. Rather than challenging the inherent sexism present in the discourse, it shames girls and women who are in a vulnerable position and subjectifies blame over sexual objectification, bullying and abuse. Comparing girl-children to prostitutes forgoes any consideration of how women, girls and girl-children end up in the sex trade, how voluntary their participation in it might be and how destructive this may be for them socially, mentally and physically. The term 'prostitot', in a sense, ends up trivialising prostitution by linking it to a distasteful style rather than to a potentially exploitative industry.

As ‘starlet’ styles trickle down to schoolgirls, this creates tensions within the school environment where their dress may become heavily scrutinised, as Oppliger highlights in her account of a ten- or 11-year-old girl. “One fourth-grade teacher I interviewed told a story of an extremely bright girl who came to her fifth-grade graduation in a skanky dress. Other girls were calling her “hoochie”. However, she seemed to be ok with it” (Oppliger, 2008: 17-8). I would propose that Oppliger's statement is concerning in many ways. Firstly, that Oppliger, or the adult teacher she cites, calls the girl's dress 'skanky' suggests a sexual sanctioning propensity that I read as particularly condescending. As the teacher is in a position of power, I would argue her reproach is especially demoralising. Secondly, the teacher then recalls the girl's peers calling her 'hoochie'. Again, I do not read Oppliger to condemn this. In fact, I would argue that there is an implication of it being almost acceptable or certainly an expectable a reaction from her peers.

Oppliger concludes her analysis of the situation by stating that the girl “seemed to be ok with” being called “hoochie”. Not only does she imply that the 'sexualised' girl is misguided in her dress, but also misguided in her reception of people's reaction to it. I read this to suggest that, within the protectionist discourse, there was an expectation that the girl should have internalised the embarrassment over her dress, to the extent that she should also have internalised the knowledge not to dress the way she did in the first place, or at least the idea that if she dressed in a sexually provocative way, then she should (expect to) feel shame over it. I believe that Oppliger’s underlying intention is to criticise the system that produces these clothes and also the system that produces the desire for such clothes; that sees the girls as the victims of the

system and wishes to defend them against it. However, her rhetoric makes this very hard to deduce. I would argue that this is what makes protectionist discourses so problematic. It is not clear from her text that she would be interrogating the inherent sexism in shaming and name calling, instead Oppliger directs her rhetoric and attentions repeatedly to the girls and their dress, an approach typical to protectionist texts.

The *Daily Mail* similarly utilises a discourse of dignity, or lack thereof, about girls who dress in a sexualised fashion. “By flaunting themselves like this they lose not only the respect of men, but their own self-respect, too”, wrote Parsons in the *Daily Mail* in 2010*,* making a tight connection between dress, sexual behaviour and the respect that women are awarded. I read similarities here with Oppliger’s text, especially in its discourse on self-respect which echoes of ideas of subjectification. Parsons, much like Oppliger, implies that not only should girls receive admonition from men, but they should internalise this reprimand as well. I would argue that the rhetoric around “self-respect” is especially problematic and very similar to ideas surrounding 'natural' childhood. In Chapter 4 I examined childhood as a social construct with its characteristics as specifically a middle-class composition and my analyses of the contradiction in protectionist texts which establish children as ‘natural’, as long as they come to prefer the ‘natural’ childhood that is a middle-class construction in 5.2. The same rationale appears to apply to the idea of “self-respect” here, where girls are encouraged to respect themselves; however, this respect must coincide with specific middle-class ideals. The rhetoric becomes particularly advantageous in its ability to turn control inward, but also in the sense that if someone fails to show respect through wearing modest clothing, not only are they an embarrassment to society, but ultimately to themselves.

Melissa Atkins Wardy's *Redefining Girlhood* (2014) picks up on the theme of respect in relation to sexualised dress. Addressing sexual shaming, she describes a conversation she had with her tween-aged daughter about fashionable, Halloween-style “Meanie Monster” dolls:

> ...girls who dress like that often don't have full and happy hearts, and they use clothing like that to get attention and make themselves feel full.

> We talked about the difference between feeling valuable because other people find you pretty and feeling valuable because you know you are full of awesome. (I was very careful not to use pejoratives or slut-shame the dolls, but in all honesty “cheap hooker” is what was going through my head.) I told Amelia that she would not be allowed to dress that way when she is a teen and that she might find it hard to earn the respect of her college professors and future employers or employees if she dresses like she is ready to party instead of work hard.
>
> (Atkins Wardy, 2014: 80-1)

I would postulate that many mothers may understandably think this way, and indeed many employ practices of this kind of dress-based disapproval. Atkins Wardy did specifically say that she avoided “slut-shaming” the dolls; however, I want to pick up on her rhetoric which steers the conversation in a reprimanding direction with a gendered focus on girls. Both Atkins Wardy and Parsons in the *Daily Mail* (2010) above propose that revealing dress is a pathological symptom of poor self-confidence and attention seeking. I understand that the writers discuss dress which is deemed as inappropriate, however, it is implied that feeling value through positive feedback over one's looks does not lead to having a “full and happy heart”. Being “full of awesome”, then is offered as the pathway to feeling meaningful. It is, however, unclear what this “awesome” should contain, but there is a distinct implication that it does not extend to certain dress choices and display practices.

Atkins Wardy is clearly reprimanding, though claiming to be “careful” not to, admitting that “cheap hooker” was her first thought at seeing the dolls. I would argue that one of the interesting traits of this passage is that Atkins Wardy indicates that she is familiar with sexual sanctioning. She, thus, actively places herself in a feminist position in a way that other protectionists may not have done. As such she sets herself not just above sexualisation, as she is able to critique it, but also above other protectionists, as she would be able to critique their methods as well. Atkins Wardy continues by telling her daughter that it would not inspire respect from her elders if she were to dress in the aforementioned manner. Instead of discussing why judgement was passed on dress in this particular case, or how this may link with wider issues over sexism in society, she pre-empts her daughter's possible future wishes towards her

dress and forbids these. I would argue that this is again telling of the focus within protectionism, which centres around girls and restricting their behaviour and their dress to the detriment of a wider discussion of gendered violence or sexist attitudes which uphold patriarchal structures.

Later in her book, Atkins Wardy advises her daughter that as she grows older it is not really appropriate to judge people by what they wear, but that what we wear does send a message “about how we feel about ourselves and what we want others to think about us” (2014: 170). Where she ends up sexually sanctioning girls once again is with her implication, often present in protectionist discourses, that girls should really limit their sartorial expression so as not to be seen as a collection of body parts. She uses the passive tone here again, and so forgoes a conversation about who does the objectification. She does not discuss the role of men in sexually objectifying girls. Instead, again, the responsibility is shifted onto the shoulders of girls, who must appear modest, so as to not inspire sexual interest and implied violence. She concludes by stating, “One low cut shirt or miniskirt does not undo a girl, but the judgement and harsh comments they elicit can” (Atkins Wardy, 2014: 170). I would argue that this comment further stresses girls' responsibility in managing their image. I also read this idea of the “undoing” to imply again the dogmatic idea of the girl who once sexualised, is forever lost, as discussed in Chapter 8.

10.5 Summary

This chapter focused specifically on the linguistic methods employed by protectionists in challenging the sexualisation of girls, which very often, as evidenced, are based on shaming and socialising girls to police their own dress. This chapter begun by analysing research on shame which suggested that shame can become a social mechanism which influences behaviour even without direct sanction. What this meant in terms of the sexualisation discourse is that girls may limit their sartorial expression even without directly being

shamed over it. Simply by living in society with an air of disapproval, sexualised self-presentation can be internalised as shameful. This was evidenced as the *Scottish Review* research team found girls to be very aware and responsive of these social manifestations. This chapter then moved onto looking at the 'Lolita Excuse', which examined how the focus of sexualisation narratives is on girls and their dress, which is seen as provoking sexual interest and potential abuse. This chapter also analysed the shaming and derogatory language used in protectionist anti-sexualisation discourses. Terms alluding to prostitution were used in sanctioning fashion to further add reprimand to practices around sexualised clothing. I argued that this was particularly demeaning to girls, as it added to the gendered nature of sexualisation discourses that construct girls as problematic in their dress, and ultimately continued victim blaming narratives present in protectionist rhetoric.

Conclusion

Reviewing Key Findings

This thesis set out to examine a growing focus on the 'sexualisation' of girls below the age of consent. This discourse around sexualisation, peaking in the first fifteen years of the new millennium, established various aspects of modern life, but especially clothing and make-up, as having a harmful effect on girls' healthy development. The harms caused by sexualisation were said to range from bad body image to others far more extreme, such as prostitution. In response to this, the Anglophone world of Europe, America and Australasia published an extensive body of literature and media, which this thesis examined. More specifically, populist manuals for parents and daughters (Atkins Wardy, 2014; Brooks, 2008; Carey, 2011; Durham, 2008; Hamilton, 2008; Olfman, 2008; Oppliger, 2008; Tankard Reist, 2009), newspaper articles (particularly in the UK publications the *Daily Mail* and *The Guardian),* and government reviews (APA, 2007; Buckingham et al., 2010; Kiely et al., 2015; Papadopoulos, 2010; Rush and La Nauze, 2006;) proposed a direct causal link between sexualised dress and harm. These aimed to advise policymakers, teachers and parents to discuss with girls how to combat the harms that sexualisation was said to cause. The protectionist discourses around sexualised dress were concerned with the sexualisation of society, of popular culture in general and most importantly, with dressed appearance. One of the foremost aims of this thesis was to examine the causal link that protectionists built between sexualised dress and harm and through this to contribute to existing 'liberal' sociological discourses. These critiqued protectionist approaches to sexualisation by situating the study within Cultural Studies and Fashion Theory. Supporting this aim, the thesis' objectives were: to analyse, critique and study protectionist discourses around sexualisation, applied specifically to girls' dress,

to appraise contradictions in these discourses that simultaneously placed dressed girls as victims of sexualisation but also as sexualised subjects, and to critique protectionists' position of power and the rhetoric they used.

Due to the danger in protectionist discourses of the causal link between sexualised dress and harms that could befall girls, dress became emblematic of girls' commercial and sexual victimisation, capable of damaging them physically, emotionally and intellectually, and putting their future as healthy adults in danger. One of the initial challenges with interrogating protectionist discourses was that they did not provide one co-ordinated and coherent definition for sexualisation. As protectionists did not reach agreement in the definition, it only became possible to analyse sexualisation through the harms that it was seen to cause. Some sources went to extremes and implied that sexualisation was able to interfere with a girl's healthy development by causing eating disorders, hypersexuality, prostitution, sexual violence, paedophilia, and finally even the furore around a specific murder (see for example APA, 2010; Atkins Wardy, 2014; Brooks, 2008; Carey, 2011; Durham, 2008; Hamilton, 2008; Olfman, 2008; Oppliger, 2008; Rush and La Nauze, 2006; Papadopoulos, 2010 ;Tankard Reist, 2009). While protectionist discourses implied that these harms were caused by sexualisation rather than dress specifically, I argued that dress was the most central element and object of sexualisation discourses, and so cannot be divorced from the protectionist project.

Through identifying and analysing similarities in the protectionist texts, this thesis demonstrated how protectionist practices are problematic, as they repeatedly maintain the link between the protection of girls and the policing of their dress. As a contribution to scholarship this thesis established protectionism specifically as a tendency to suggest that girls can be protected from harms by turning the focus on the girls, who suffer harassment or abuse as the result of their sexualisation, as opposed to the perpetrators of the abuse. In order to critique these discourses, this thesis analysed and questioned the protectionist elements in the sources through the lens of Foucauldian ideas on the panopticon, where the girl “becomes the principle of [her] own subjection” (Foucault, 1977: 201). Adding to existing scholarly investigations of

sexualisation, one of the central tenets of this thesis was to identify how protectionism appears to add to pressures on girls through the use of shaming language regarding girls and their dress, and through this uphold a culture of victim blaming. This thesis furthermore examined how the discourse of sexualisation was specifically implied and upheld through the rhetoric used by protectionists.

Theoretically this thesis did not set out to investigate children's sexual behaviour, but rather how adults constructed a specific discourse around sexualisation and its causes. Drawing on Foucault's and Hall's articulations on power, this thesis observed how these were reflected in the ways protectionist writers positioned themselves as authorities on the cultural perspective of the care for girls. This thesis furthermore criticised how protectionist writers, in this position of power, routinely conflated concepts around sexuality. I argued that protectionists did not sufficiently interrogate intricacies around sexual identity, sexual exploitation and sexism. This thesis aligns itself with, and contributes to, non-protectionist, feminist scholarly research (Egan and Hawkes, 2009; Kiely et al., 2015; Ringrose, 2013). With the intention of critiquing the protectionist tendency to equate innocence with purity and sexual inactivity, this thesis argued that the protectionist equation in turn became a harmful moralistic enterprise, which criticised and shamed girls in their dress and established them as corrupting of others' innocence. While sexualisation as a topic has enjoyed scholarly investigation, this thesis examined protectionist contradictions in sexualisation discourses through a specific analysis of dress as a social communicator and point of contention, adding new knowledge to the field of study of sexualisation.

Throughout, this thesis did not aim to question whether protectionist texts were written out of care for the safety of children, but rather tasked itself with critiquing certain facets of protectionist practice. One of the objectives was to appraise contradictions in protectionist discourses. These texts often placed girls as vulnerable in being sexualised, sexually harassed or violated, however they simultaneously berated them for their dress and thus implicated them in their own abuse. This thesis furthermore scrutinised protectionists' methodological approaches which were often problematic, especially when it

came to dressed appearance, given the protectionists' lack of engagement with fashion theory or popular culture. One of the contributions of this thesis is thus its critique of protectionists lack of convergence with dress theory, as dress was the central point of contention in sexualisation discourses.

As noted, this thesis places itself within feminist scholarship by researchers such as Egan (2013), Kiely et al. (2015) and third wave feminist discourses, by engaging in the sexualisation debate, and by building a critique of certain patriarchal power structures and examining how these are upheld by protectionists in policing girls' dress. These structures pertain specifically to how power is held by people of authority, in the case of the sexualisation discourses, by protectionists. Sexualisation discourses furthermore uphold wider social predispositions of victim blaming. To challenge these practices, this thesis utilised feminist scholarship as part of its theoretical framework. This thesis also aimed to make apparent divisions within feminism through engaging with academic literature analysing the foci and changing philosophy throughout the different waves of feminism, as discussed in Chapter 3. Protectionist debates in this thesis were negotiated within a changing political climate which allowed for increasingly critical feminist examination of narratives of victim blaming.

This thesis began by outlining its methodology. This was important, as it introduced the plethora of sources used, the rationale behind selecting them and how comparative discourse analysis would be utilised to identify common topics. Specific to this thesis, the methodology also included a critique of the methods used by the protectionist sources. This allowed the thesis to contribute to the field by not only analysing the content of the sources, but also addressing how the methods of data collection further add to problems in the protectionist arguments. These problems began with protectionists not presenting a coordinated definition for sexualisation, a vagueness which could then be harnessed as a methodological and philosophical tool. As was examined throughout the thesis, something that was ambiguous or indefinite could easily be interpreted to suit someone's purposes, as was the case in protectionist texts. This made sexualisation very easy to read into various cultural texts and for it to come to encompass a wide variety of objects and representations. While it was possible to quantify statistically the claimed effects of sexualisation, such

as teenage pregnancy or even sexual abuse, the presence of sexualisation itself could not be measured. This led to methodological problems directing protectionists to observe singular examples in order to 'prove' the presence of sexualisation. The "unit of analysis" now focused on individual cases, instead of structural problems or the cultural industry. This thesis evaluated how this skewed the discourse around sexualisation, where individual items of clothing came to be held as examples of the harm girls would suffer; conversely, however, wider social inequalities affecting girls were neglected in protectionist discourses. As no categorical definition for sexualisation was reached, a wide variety of phenomena could be seen to fulfil said unit of analysis. Further problems with this methodology could be observed especially in how the government reviews would lean on each other for citations. The authors of an original text would make implications or not make clear their sources, and when a later text would cite this, it would establish an argument which was implicit to begin with. The trope '*petitio principii*' was discussed in the methodology to demonstrate how some protectionists authorised the harms of sexualisation as 'common sense' and therefore positioned them as not in need of interrogation (Dowden, 2003). I thus argued that all of these precarious methodological tropes including the tone used by some protectionists which tended to lean towards the emotive, rendered the protectionist analysis of sexualisation problematic in its essentialism.

The critique of 'essentialism' and 'truth' continued in the theoretical framework. Critically analysing Foucauldian discourses formed the basis of the methodological and theoretical frameworks of this thesis. Contrary to the essentialist approaches reflected in protectionist discourses, Foucault argued that "practices... form the objects of which they speak" (1972: 49). Using this anti-essentialist approach, this thesis examined that rather than sexualising dress being a concept which can be recognised universally, protectionist discourses place certain dress as sexualising, thus creating and upholding the discourse and its essence. Investigating Foucault's analyses of 'truth', 'power' and 'sexuality' revealed how these discourses were constructed and upheld by protectionists by articulating 'sexualisation' as a universal concept and placing themselves as the authorities on the subject. Building on Foucault's articulations

on discourse, theories of representation (Hall, 1997) and performativity (Butler, 1990) underpinned the general examinations in this thesis on how protectionist anti-sexualisation discourse is not centred around examining children's sexual behaviour, something that could be seen in essential terms, but rather how adults had constructed a specific discourse around sexualisation and its causes.

The themes of constructed gender and childhood innocence, explored in early chapters, were used to identify common themes between historical articulations and protectionist discourses in the main body of the thesis. Feminist scholarly literature on dress became central to the theoretical underpinning of this thesis as it investigated how the evolution of feminism informed my position as a writer, the protectionist position towards girls' sexualised dress and reflected the general era within which these debates were held. The feminist theory reviewed in this thesis covered discourses spanning from Judeo-Christian articulations on seduction and sin (Tseelon, 1995), through 18th century ideas of girls' beautification (Wollstonecraft, 1792) to an analysis of the common themes found within second-wave feminism which questioned gender and how this related to dress. Important in examining feminist theory was to analyse critically how women's dress and identity were intimately connected and how this became one of the visible symbols within second-wave feminism, which is where the origins of the protectionist ideology within sexualisation discourses can be found. This thesis specifically analysed the causal link that protectionists built between the dress of a girl and her apparent sexual behaviour or vulnerability to sexual harms, in Chapter 6. Chapter 9 analysed ideas of 'naturalness' in dress, which stem from the Romantic era, but that were also echoed in certain facets of the second-wave position. These were identified as reflected in ideas around childhood innocence and class-related taste underpinning protectionist texts. This thesis further analysed how the younger generation of feminists began to be critical of second-wave feminism's relationship with dress. Younger feminists interpreted second-wave articulations around their desire for 'feminine' dress as oppressive and shaming. This dynamic could also be seen as reflected in the protectionist discourses. This thesis reviewed how, as a means of incorporating a wider

intersectional following, the third wave feminist movement moved away from the political debates of the second wave and used interventions within the public sphere, something reflected in the avenues for further research suggested at the end of this conclusion. This thesis also analysed how the third wave allowed for young women to express their sexuality through dress. These ideological changes and lack of unity in relation to dress and consumption created rifts between feminists which was also harnessed as a backlash against feminism more generally. Both the second wave and protectionist sources in this thesis reflected concerns over sexualised dress, but often these critiques became concerns over consumer culture in general. The conflation of the two topics raised the question whether some of the concerns over feminism, especially the feminism of the younger generation lay, in fact, with feminism at all, or indeed with participation in consumer culture.

This thesis examined literature on childhood as a phenomenon which, rather than existing as essential, universal, pre-determined and biologically determined, is socially constructed, built up through historically, socially and culturally influenced processes (Jenks, 1996). This 'myth' of childhood was especially reflected in protectionist discourses and was created through romanticisation and a control of the instincts. Historically childhood often embodied contradictions as it was formed on the one hand as innocent, but on the other hand as captivating and eroticised. I would argue that the same fascination was often reflected in protectionist texts which potentially sexualised girls through the act of focusing on all aspects sexualised. Another contradiction that was examined was that childhood was seen as 'natural' and an absolute, but it also lent itself as a political mechanism to be moulded to drive social motives. Ironically, these political agendas rarely addressed the hardship facing actual children and were used as displacive “politics of substitution” (Buckingham and Bragg, 2004: 4).

At the root of the protectionist philosophy was the idea that sexualisation leads directly to harms, however, as noted above, problems arose with defining what exactly sexualisation is. 'Sexualisation' was often used interchangeably with 'sexual objectification', 'sexual violence' or 'sexuality'. It remained unclear what was sexual, but not sexualised, with regards to girls’ healthy development,

and how this may be reflected in their choice of dress. A central argument put forward in this thesis became: as sexualisation is impossible to define in definite terms, it is also impossible to *disprove* its presence. Sexualisation could be defined as an 'elastic' discourse (Keily et al., 2015: 60). This elasticity of definition around sexualisation also fuelled the contradiction where, on the one hand childhood was constructed as 'natural' and an absolute, but on the other it could also lend itself to a political mechanism, to be moulded to drive social motives. These, however, rarely addressed hardships facing actual children and could hence be used as displacive “politics of substitution” (Buckingham and Bragg, 2004: 4). This thesis particularly discussed how this 'myth' of childhood was created through the romanticisation of childhood. Drawing on such theories, Chapter 7 examined how protectionist discourses endeavour to keep children from harm. I proposed that they do this by replacing a focus around the protection of girls with an analysis of their dress. I argued that what makes these discourses problematic, is that political responses to sexualisation and the media's reporting on them relied on the use of sexual imagery in the discourse as a polemic tool upholding a visual link between how girls dress and the harms they experience. This thesis argued that what is missing in such discussions is a constructive and rigorous critique of gender inequality, sexism and misogyny. While it may not be realistic to expect protectionists to challenge complex structural inequalities such as the origins of sexual exploitation of children, this thesis maintained that anti-sexualisation discourses remain problematic as they repeatedly circle back to girls’ dress as implicating them in harm.

The thesis examined how comprehensive the sexualisation phenomenon was according to protectionists. This thesis argued that protectionist discourses suggested a lack of sensitivity towards fashion theory or dress as a subject. Protectionists often spoke of girls' interest in beautification and enhancing 'feminine attributes' interchangeably with an interest in sexually attracting the opposite sex and sexual acts. I argued that protectionist discourses did not include any nuanced analysis of dress, its origins or social agendas. Instead, they simplified fashion and dress to an elementary sexual message, making the discourse polemic in its alarm. As a contribution to the field of feminist studies

on sexualisation and to better evaluate the aforementioned problems, this thesis examined two concepts which named, and so aimed to articulate, theoretical frameworks operating within the sexualisation discourse. 'Three layers of sexism' broke down the climate within which girls' and women's sexual and sartorial expression could be used against them and 'double pressure' examined how girls can be seen to feel pressure to dress in a sexualised manner, while simultaneously be seen to be pressured to dress modestly by some feminists. This 'set up girls to fail' as their sartorial choices could be made to appear misguided, depending entirely on who was interpreting their dress.

Dress is the most central aspect in sexualisation. It is dress which is sexualised, and which sexualises. Protectionist discourses discussed many types of dress from a negative angle, girls’ desire for them as compulsive, and girls participating in their consumption as victims. This thesis examined how protectionists did not address the gendered nature of these discourses, in which boys' dress was spoken of in a very different tone. I argued that the inherent inequalities and harmful effects that come from the focus on girls as central to anti-sexualisation discourses, were overlooked entirely. In chapter 10 I addressed the derogatory language used in protectionist discourses, proposing that such rhetoric was utilised to intimidate girls away from sexualised dress. Through this an atmosphere of shame was created which kept girls safe from the harms to which sexualised dress was seen to lead. I demonstrated that this caused harm to girls on two levels. Firstly, through this problematising rhetoric an air of shame was constructed around the consumption of dress. While this should apply only to sexualised dress, I suggested that the attachment of shame to dress may extend to all dress. As the protectionist rules as to what is sexualising and what is not were inconsistent and uncertain, this could translate into girls avoiding demonstrating interest in dress altogether, in case any of it could be seen as sexualising. Secondly, I argued that giving up these sartorial interests would hardly bring about equality or safety from sexual harassment or violence. Girls were thus left in a position where their interests were restricted, but to no avail, placing them in a lose-lose situation. Because certain dress was established as inherently harmful, protectionists proposed that the right to dress in certain ways should be reserved for the home or beauty parlours, thus

omitting heterosexual men who might be predatory. This, however, was not met without problems as visits to beauty parlours were viewed as a privilege, but also a problem, to be met with gratitude and carried out with caution. I argued that this placed girls in a pressured position. They were expected to acknowledge the taboo around dress by keeping it private and be thankful for having access to make-up and dressing up at all. The right to dress freely raised questions around agency. This thesis examined how this became problematic and contradictory within protectionist discourses, where girls were sometimes seen as predatory towards boys. Girls were established as simultaneously impressionable, immature and untrustworthy, and hence in need of regulation, but also as alluring and corrupting and so implicated in their own sexual victimisation. Some writers constructed girls as no longer victimised by sexualisation, but as active agents who threatened the innocence of boys. This posed a contradiction that ran throughout protectionist literature: Girls were seen simultaneously as 'predatory', but also in danger, with their dress needing regulation (Kiely et al., 2015: 116-9). While I recognised that these two ideas were not mutually exclusive *per se*, it remained contradictory that boys' behaviour as a threat to girls was not addressed directly.

While protectionist discourses acknowledged that both boys and girls were consumer citizens in modern capitalist society, it was specifically girls' practices that were met with alarm (Buckingham et al., 2010: 47). Girls' buying culture was seen as an extension of their sexualisation rather than of consumer culture. This meant that some protectionist discourses held girls to very high anti-commercial standards in asking them to decline shopping. The conversation gained another dimension with a class-related discourse. Middle-class taste and purchasing habits were regarded by protectionists as aspirational and 'natural' (Crane, 2000). In comparison, this would place working-class girls' dress choices as problematic, 'unnatural' and often 'inappropriate', as opposed to having a 'different' but still valid aesthetic or subcultural place. Finally, this thesis examined how in protectionist texts sexualisation and its harms were seen as a problem affecting 'other people', usually those of a lower class or age. This raised the question: who is it that protectionist discourses see as being affected by sexualisation? I analysed that

if sexualisation is always seen as affecting someone else, but this person also does not see it as affecting them, and it seems that no-one ever sees its effects on themselves, what does this tell us about the nature of sexualisation? This thesis argued that sexualisation, which within protectionist discourses is discussed as a harm to the healthy development of children, is an abstraction and a symbol for a loss of middle-class practices, values and taste. I would thus like to place myself and this thesis within non-protectionist scholarship on sexualisation and borrow Smith's articulation of this practice as “replacing analysis with condemnation” (Smith, 2010: 107-8).

This thesis closed by returning to Foucauldian ideas of self-surveillance, investigating this specifically through the ways protectionist discourses, whether deliberately or not, emphasised shame which influenced behaviour even without direct sanction; whereby girls may limit their sartorial expression even without directly being shamed over it. I argued that this can be seen as a useful mechanism for protectionist practice and upholding protectionist ideas. As girls internalised shame with regard to their dress, a controlling 'task force' which would restrict their sartorial expression was no longer needed. This thesis argued that on a practical level this policing of dress would drain resources and more importantly expose the regulating authority. I argued that on a societal level this would be advantageous in upholding traditional patriarchal values. When girls internalise control over their attire and self-expression, boys and men become increasingly excluded from responsibility over sexual objectification and violence. They in fact become invisible within discourses of victimisation and thus become excluded from them altogether. The final chapter examined the 'Lolita Excuse' by further highlighting problematic protectionist discourse, which on one hand focused on girls and their dress as provoking sexual interest and abuse, but on the other recognised girls as vulnerable children. 'Lolita', as well as other shaming terms alluding to seduction and prostitution, were used in building a sanctioning narrative around sexualised dress. I argued that the rhetoric in some protectionist discourses and the practice of using shaming language about girls and their dress was demeaning, and that this added to the gendered nature of sexualisation discourses that constructed girls as problematic in their dress, often implicating them in their

sexual victimisation.

Reflection on Methods

As its methodology this thesis used discourse analysis of three different types of text: government reviews, newspaper articles and populist manuals, published between 2005 and 2015. The parameters of the investigation were dictated by the ten-year-period which appeared most active in publishing protectionist anti-sexualisation material. The starting point to the examination of the source material for this thesis was the gathering and analysing of underpinning academic literature discussed in chapters 2-4. This exposed themes which could be identified in the above examined sources. The scholarly material around sexualisation informed the way in which themes for comparative analysis were selected for the discursive chapters 5-10. These were then analysed to see how they discuss the sexualisation of girls in relation to dress and dressed appearance.

This thesis used discourse analysis as its primary methodological approach. Discourse, as articulated by Michel Foucault (1972), leaned on ideas of power, knowledge and construction. These Foucauldian articulations of discourse formed the basis for investigating how protectionist texts have established childhood in this thesis. It allowed this thesis to examine childhood as constructed, and, especially, to analyse the construction of girls' sexualised dress as symbolic of loss of sexual innocence. Ideas of power and knowledge allowed this thesis to examine the position of protectionists as figures of authority and use the idea of *petitio principii* as it examines structures that appear essential. Further, it allowed their construction to be challenged analytically. While this thesis did not analyse language *per se*, it examined its impact and explored how protectionist texts were written in a manner that inspired a particular, alarmist response. This thesis used a “three dimensional” approach in discourse analysis, encompassing text, discourse and context (Philipps and Hardy, 2002: 4) by analysing individual texts, such as the three

types of sources or scholarly material on sexualisation. It then found discursive commonalities between these three types of texts. Finally, this thesis provided an analysis of the discursive commonalities connecting these analyses to the wider discourse around the sexualisation of girls' dress and protectionism.

As this thesis examined the construction of childhood and the dress which visually symbolises it as sexually innocent, it noted the importance of discourse analysis as it revealed constructed ideas around these perceived 'truths'. While this thesis focused solely on written texts reporting on sexualisation, these would have been written in response to visual material of girls in sexualised dress. This thesis argued that the discourse built around sexualised dress, and especially the shaming rhetoric often used by protectionists, attached problematic meaning to it. It was hence the circulation, consumption and subsequent conversation around girls in sexualised dress that produced the protectionist discourse analysed here.

The volume of texts dealing with sexualisation from a protectionist viewpoint published since the turn of the millennium appeared to be tremendous. This initially posed a challenge in how to curate this vast, interlinking body of material which all referenced each other sequentially. The time period of 2005-2015 gave this thesis clear parameters, as it was able to encompass all of the major government reviews published on sexualisation of children and encircle newspaper articles and populist manuals in a logical manner. There was no reason to go beyond the time limit. In fact, ten years produced a tremendous amount of material; however I did not want to reduce the time frame for two reasons. Firstly, it demonstrated that this particular sexualisation discourse was a short-lived phenomenon, and secondly the peak of newspaper reporting fell neatly in the middle of this time period to 2011, demonstrating a rise and fall in reporting. To curb the expanse of the material, this thesis utilised two newspapers, eight populist manuals and five government reviews. I would argue that this sample was vast though purposeful. If this study was undertaken again, it might be beneficial to find a methodology which would limit the amount of source material. This could, for example mean a study which only compares government reviews, which would make it more manageable. This brevity, however, may result in not being able to demonstrate tenacity and

complexity to the same extent due to the homogeneity of the source material.

The initial decision made at the beginning of this research process was whether to utilise published material as sources or to undertake interviews and execute qualitative experiential research. As vast as the sources in this thesis are, it appeared that these were still controllable. Using only interviews as source material would have simply reflected personal perspectives and opinion. Furthermore, undertaking only ethnographic research in the field of sexualisation which presents very vulnerable and sensitive, and therefore emotive and at times polemic subject matter, may have made this research project impossible to control. One of the key aspects of why the method of discourse analysis of three different types of text was successful and appropriate in this thesis, is because it enabled me, as a researcher, to navigate what is at times quite formidably sensitive terrain. It was thus also possible to situate this thesis in the shifting academic climate, and a general media climate where lived experiences may at times take priority over the more objective. This can be seen, for example, in how auto-ethnography has become more popular as an academic method over the course of the process of writing this thesis.

Limitations and Avenues for Further Research

In the introduction I briefly addressed the origins of this thesis and my own subject position. I wrote my MA dissertation addressing the controversies around child beauty pageants, and the initial inquiries to why 'sexualised' dress in girls raises the alarm I encountered personally growing up in 1990s Scandinavia. The generational divide where I observed girls of my generation being castigated verbally by their mothers and older feminists was similar to the derogatory rhetoric observed in the populist manuals examined in this thesis. Considering an alternative approach to the methodology of this thesis, these origins would lend themselves with ease to an auto-ethnographical investigation. This could be extended to a wider ethnography interviewing women about their experiences of the sexualisation of dress when they were

young, as well as to include voices of the older generation of women and their observations of the changing landscape of feminism. On a theoretical level this is already very much echoed in this thesis in Chapter 3 on Feminisms. Auto-ethnographies and ethnographies come with a host of ethical considerations, however. Women may be able to recount their relationship with dress and sexualised dress; however, they cannot speak on behalf of the age group which protectionist anti-sexualisation discourses discuss. This may skew the memories and perspectives when they are conveyed by an adult with considerable life experience. Conversely, it may be too contentious to interview girl-children, tween and teenage girls about such an emotive subject which may subject them to confront sexual content. While ethnographic research in this field would be a very interesting methodology, it also comes with limitations which may be outweighed by the approach taken in this thesis, which was able to utilise a wide variety of texts reflecting many voices.

This thesis specifically examined sexualisation discourses in the Anglophone West between the years of 2005 and 2015. This was a very fruitful period for investigation as the topic of sexualisation was particularly widely represented during this time by texts such as the three types of sources analysed in this thesis and the academic material that has since been published in response to it (see for example Duschinsky, 2012). The approach to investigating protectionist anti-sexualisation discourses in this thesis did come with limitations which are telling of the time in which it was written. During this period most of the alarm around the use of social media had not yet materialised, and this I would see as one of the foci to which the investigation would pivot if it was undertaken now or in the future. One of the largest shifts in media analysis of the topic which has since transpired was the extent of the #metoo movement which became prevalent in 2017. Because of the very visible cases of sustained sexual abuse by men of power, such as Weinstein, Epstein and Crosby, and other prevalent individual cases like the murder of 33-year-old London-based marketing executive Sarah Everard, the tone of reporting on sexualisation, sexual objectification, harassment and violence towards girls and women shifted greatly. I would argue that there has been a clear shift away from girls and women, with a renewed focus on men's behaviour. I believe that

while this refocusing does not mean that the protectionist sexualisation discourse could not take place today, the type of derogatory language used in some of the protectionist manuals examined in this thesis and the focus on how girls become implicated in their own sexual harassment and violence through wearing sexualised clothing throughout the protectionist texts, could not take place without considerable criticism.

The #metoo movement has received criticism for not acknowledging clearly that it was initially created by a woman of colour in 2006. Since then, I would suggest, the movement, as well as the wider media landscape, has begun to recognise the need for feminist intersectionality. While this thesis touches upon race and ethnicity as well as class within sexualisation discourse, a clear avenue for further research would be to bring these as central to the discourse. Scholars such as Ringrose (2013) and Egan (2013) recognise that girls of colour are particularly adversely affected by sexual objectification due to being positioned as vulnerable through their age, gender and ethnicity; however, they do not explore this in more detail. Further enquiry could be made by investigating approaches in government reviews from non-anglophone countries. This would further inform whether the sexualisation discourse is specifically culturally bound to the Anglophone world or exists in a wider global context.

Ideas around gender identity and sexual orientation are also not featured in the anti-sexualisation literature examined. The girls whom protectionists address are categorically implied as to be heterosexual and to be performing their assigned gender. I would argue that because it is feminine dress that is particularly problematised in sexualisation discourses, this also explains why boys and their sexualisation is not addressed. This could be a further avenue for research and has in fact begun to be addressed, for example by Vänskä (2017). The sexualisation discourses examined in this thesis also do not address disability in any manner and an investigation of how disabled bodies sit at a contradictory intersection of being seen as particularly vulnerable, however not vulnerable to sexualisation, due to their perceived asexuality. A further avenue of research would be to undertake the study of sexualisation specifically with these intersections in mind. I would argue that these have not been

examined before, and that the sexualisation discourse has been so white, heteronormative and middle-class focused because these traits also mark the children who have historically been constructed as innocent (Cunningham, 1998).

During the process of writing this thesis, sustainability in fashion has received increasing attention, especially through activism by young women such as Greta Thunberg, who coincidentally was the gender and age of which the protectionist discourses spoke. While the sources investigated in this thesis do examine consumption, and often conflate consumption and sexualisation as examined in Chapter 8, a further avenue for research could be how specifically fast fashion and cheap fashion are discussed as sexualising. Chapter 9 examined the clear intersection between social class, taste and perceived sexualisation. The middle-classes are seen to consume dress that is in better taste and more ethical, but which could also be seen as more sustainable (Crane, 2000). Therefore, the intersection between class, taste, sexualisation and sustainable consumption of dress used by the middle-class to demonstrate ethical consumption practices as a status symbol, could be an interesting further area of research.

List of Illustrations

Figure 1 – Covers of Populist Manuals; 'Gendered'

Atkins Wardy, Melissa (2014), *Redefining Girly: How Parents can Fight the Stereotyping and Sexualising from Birth to Tween*. Chicago: Chicago Review Press.

Carey, Tanith (2011), *Where has my little girl gone?: How to protect your daughter from growing up too soon.* Oxford: Lion.

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Figure 2 – Covers of Populist Manuals; 'Gender Neutral'

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Figure 3 - 'I want cool kids' casuals', Myer catalogue, P. 6

Figure 4 - 'Lazy days: chill out... dress up!' fashion feature, *Barbie Magazine,* P. 9

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Appendices

'Sexualisation *and* Girls' was found in Newspaper articles a total of 393 times in newspapers between 2005 and 2015 (see Table (x)), while 'Sexualisation *and* Children' was reported on a total of 632 times in the same period (see Table (y)). Mapping these instances onto a graph (see graph (a) and table (z)) revealed the concentration and fluctuation across the period.

Table (x)

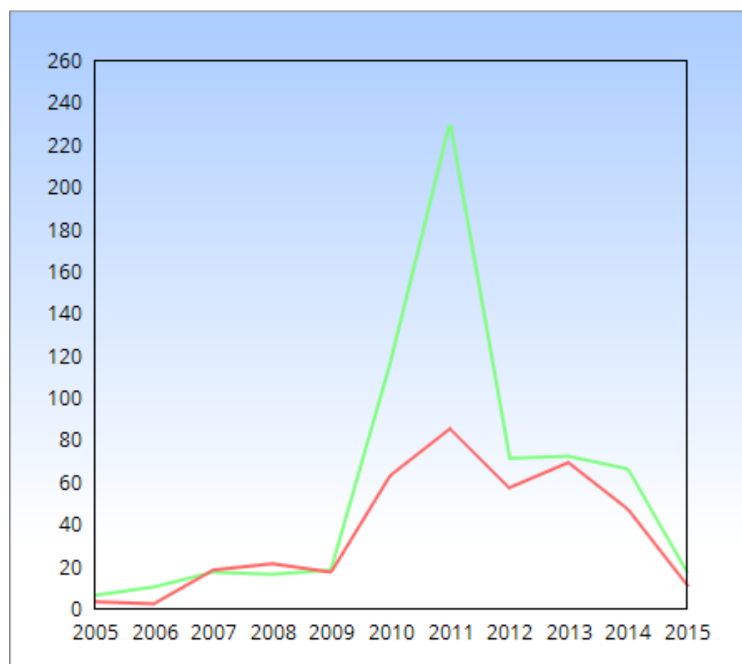
Sexualisation and Girls

Newspapers	Amount of Articles
Mail Online	36
The Daily Mail and Mail on Sunday (London)	30
The Daily Mirror and Mirror on Sunday (London)	30
The Guardian	29
Telegraph.co.uk	27
The Sunday Times (London)	19
The Daily Telegraph (London)	15
The Sun	15
The Times (London)	15
The Observer	13

Table (y)

Sexualisation and Children

Newspapers	Amount of Articles
The Guardian	58
The Daily Mirror and Mirror on Sunday (London)	47
telegraph.co.uk	38
The Daily Telegraph (London)	31
The Daily Mail and Mail on Sunday (London)	30
Mail Online	30
The Times (London)	29
The Sunday Times (London)	27
The Sun	19
The Belfast Telegraph	18



Graph (a) (green denoting the search term 'children AND sexualisation' and the red 'girls AND sxualisation')

Table (z)

	Sexualisation and Girls	Sexualisation and Children
2005	3	6
2006	2	10
2007	18	17
2008	21	16
2009	17	18
2010	63	166
2011	85	229
2012	57	71
2013	69	72
2014	47	66
2015 -October 26th	11	17