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From Barbie with love: Implications of the mixed messages from America's plastic sweetheart

A Capstone Project Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements of the Renée Crown University Honors Program at Syracuse University

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Honors Capstone Project in Advertising

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Abstract

As a controversial, yet influential icon in American society, Barbie doll sends a variety of mixed messages to young girls. She is an icon of feminine perfection. She represents ambitious, working women. She presents reality with a completely unrealistic body type. This study determines the potential effects of Barbie doll on individual knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors.

Data was collected through one-on-one interviews with young girls and their parents. Each responded to a series of questions regarding their perceptions and feelings towards the doll. They also reacted to several commercials, each depicting the mixed message that the doll sends. Finally, the respondents created collages representing the real world and Barbie's world. The data was analyzed and organized according to the themes that emerged.

Research themes brought new topics to light that predict the effects of Barbie doll. Effects on knowledge tended to indicate that individuals have come to view Barbie primarily in terms of appearance. Behavioral effects tended to be primarily positive, however, there was concern over the lack of parental influence in terms of behavior. The attitudinal effects were the most negative, but the effect was not as severe as previously thought. The combination of these potential effects, as well as new themes that emerged from the research add to the discussion about Barbie's role in our society.

This study complicates the conversation about Barbie and has implications for how the doll is marketed. In order to maintain ethical boundaries in the advertising industry, it is important for advertisers to consider the effects of their actions. Since Barbie is a form of mediated content, everything about the doll sends a message to her target. The results of this research should encourage marketers to consider the doll's role in young girls' lives. This research suggests that transforming Barbie's existing negative messages into positive messages can change her role into an encouraging and inspiring model.

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Introduction

Statement of Problems

She's perfect. Long hair. Tiny waist. Legs for days. Born in 1959 but doesn't look a day over 25. Everything from her dog "Fluffy" to the convertible she drives is a shade of pink. She began her career as a fashion model, but has also been a lifeguard, police officer, and every existing medical profession. She's a career woman, but she makes time to date her boyfriend and help her teenage sister. Everyone knows her. Many want to be her. She both creates and reinforces feminine perfection. Since Barbie Doll first entered the marketplace, she has been a controversial icon in American society.

Barbie appears at a crucial point in her target's development when she is used as an aspirational role model. The doll has come under scrutiny from scholars, the media, and parents due to the potentially negative message the doll has the dolls sends to her target (Rogers, 1999). As a society, we try to protect vulnerable populations, such as children, from the harmful effects of everything. However, many argue that Barbie can also have a positive impact in her ability to teach girls how to be an adult. Few concrete conclusions, positive or negative, have been reached regarding the effects of Barbie Dolls.

Research Objective

Identify the potential effects of Barbie on the knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors of her target.

Significance of Research

Commercial speech enjoys some constitutional protection under the First Amendment. Advertising messages that are not misleading or deceptive and speak for lawful products and services are able to share their messages. Advertisers may continue to do so so long as there is no substantial government interest stopping them (Middleton & Lee, 2011). The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) is responsible for such regulation. The FTC is particularly concerned about advertising to children because they may be more susceptible and vulnerable to the messages of advertisers (Federal Trade Commission, 2001). The government works to protect its citizens, especially vulnerable populations such as children.

However, due to the freedom provided by First Amendment, the law does not always fully protect its citizens. Therefore, I would argue, the advertising industry must constantly reflect upon itself in order to maintain its own ethical boundaries. Members of the industry must consider the potential effects of these claims on vulnerable audiences. Barbie is a perfectly legal product and usually her advertising contains truthful messages directed at young girls. However, what is Barbie saying to young girls in terms of what it means to be a woman in our society? This research will clarify the ethical gray area of advertising to young girls during the time when they are beginning to be molded into the adults they will be in the future.

Chapter 1: Theoretical Framework

Scholars have provided a variety of theories on the effects of mediated content on audiences. These theories provide the context for interpreting Barbie's impact on her audience and can help explain her complex role in society. Each theory is interpreted based on the objective of this study, and thus applied to its effect on the knowledge, attitude, or behaviors of the audience in question.

Cultural Icon Theory – Knowledge

According to Mary F. Rogers, being a cultural icon is more than just widespread recognition. Barbie's role as cultural icon is revealed through "identification...as fans, collectors, designers, or consumers; it means keen interest or sometimes dedication, even obsession and addictions; it means small social worlds building up around the icon..." (Rogers, 1999, p. 6). Over her lifetime, Barbie has stretched beyond the confines of her "fashion doll" self to have other meanings because she appeals to the desire for fantasy (Stern, 1998).

Iconography is indicated by the culture surrounding the icon. Young girls create a culture of play around the doll by acting out stories that are important to them. Adult collectors accumulate Barbies as a way to relive a safe portion of their lives (Stern, 1998). Many collectors create scenes with their Barbies –from religious nativity scenes to exotic erotic scenes (Stern, 1998). Barbie offers an escape for these people because they can put her in any scenario. While this research will not focus on adult use of Barbie, this indicates Barbie's power as an imaginative plaything. For her primary target, Barbie becomes more than a simple toy for children to play with. She is transformed into the protagonist of her own

social world. As a cultural icon, Barbie impacts audience's knowledge of her role in society.

Agenda Setting and Framing Theory – Knowledge

In "Mass Media Influences on Sexuality," Jane Brown presents several theories that attempt to explain the relationship between people and the media. The Agenda Setting and Framing Theories provide that "the media tell people both what is important in the world around them, and how to think about the events and people who inhabit that world" (Brown, 2002, p. 44). This theory says that the media has the power to dictate what issues should be discussed (Brown, 2002). This is good for society when it brings new issues to light that have not been previously discussed. However, this can be detrimental when it reinforces stereotypes and does not provide alternative views. As a form of mediated content, Barbie impacts the knowledge of audiences by providing both positive and negative issues to be discussed.

Third Person Theory – Attitude

Since Barbie has achieved icon status, it is crucial to examine the effects of her constructed world. In "The Third Person Effect in Communication," W. Phillips Davison presents his third-person effect hypothesis. This theory predicts, "that people will tend to overestimate the influence that mass communications have on the attitudes and behavior of others" (Davison, 1983, p. 3). In other words, individuals believe that persuasive communication has a greater effect on others than themselves. The third person theory affects audience's attitudes about the media's effect on themselves versus others.

Cultivation Theory – Attitude

The cultivation hypothesis was developed by Gerbner, Gross, Mogan, and Signorielli (1981). They studied television's effect on audiences with respect to the cultivation of perceptions about the real world. According to their research, the more media an individual consumes, the more likely the individual is to believe the content represents real life (Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, and Signorielli as cited in Heintz-Knowles, 2000).

Jane Brown applies this theory to sexuality by citing several studies that found a correlation between the frequency of television viewing and initiation of intercourse of high school students. However, it is uncertain whether or not the TV viewing caused an increase in sexual behavior or the sexually active teens were attracted to a relevant program (Brown, 2002). This theory could potentially be applied to Barbie by researching how continuous exposure to the doll causes young girls to believe her she is an accurate representation of adulthood. This affects the audience's attitudes about the line between what is real and attainable in our society. This is problematic when we consider behavioral effects of media.

Social Learning Theory – Behavior

Social Learning Theory predicts “that people will imitate behaviors of others when those models are rewarded or not punished for their behavior.” (Brown, 2002, p. 44). Brown suggests that the media provides “scripts” that people can follow and use in their own lives. The likelihood that a viewer will imitate the behavior they observe in mediated content increases when the viewer identifies with the mediated model. The effect will also increase if the model is

rewarded for such behavior. Viewers will avoid the behavior if the content depicts negative consequences of behaviors. However, the issue with the scripts is that oftentimes television shows do not portray the potentially negative consequences or punishments of certain behaviors (Brown, 2002).

Applying the Theories

These theories show that the media and mediated content plays a strong role in peoples' lives by giving them the knowledge to discuss relevant topics, shaping attitudes and perceptions of the world, and affecting behaviors. Barbie is unique in that she is a product for personal use (where the child can her own script), but also a media vehicle with pre-determined messages (provided by her advertising, magazines, movies, and other forms of media content). Unlike other mediums, Barbie is both a tool to create situations as well as an aspirational model to live up to.

To apply the theories to Barbie we will predict the effects of Barbie's media output by closely examining three different television commercials. Two commercials are for a recent line called "Barbie, I Can Be" which promotes various career-oriented dolls. One is targeted to adults and shows a live-action female pilot, ballet dancer, veterinarian, teacher, and artist who aspired to be something great when they were growing up. The ending line says, "When I grow up, I can be anything...and that's everything." The other is targeted towards children and shows a young girl's excitement and acting out scenes with the babysitter "I Can Be" doll followed by the dentist "I Can Be" doll. The last commercial is for "Barbie Stylin' Salon" which promotes the beautification aspect

of the doll. These commercials were chosen because they represent the two seemingly contradictory characteristics of the doll: beauty and ambition.

When one considers the three commercials under the lens of the Agenda Setting and Framing Theories, the “I Can Be” commercial brings to light a new and different perspective on Barbie that is separate from previous messaging. This commercial is likely targeted towards adults and attempts to convince them to consider that Barbie is a powerful tool to help children achieve their dreams. When one examines “Barbie Stylin’ Salon,” it is possible that a negative effect can be predicted by the Agenda Setting and Framing Theories. The commercial is clearly directed toward children and features Barbie spinning around in a stylist chair to get ready to go to a party. This suggests that for children, an important part of their world is improving oneself to be able to go out.

Considering Cultivation Theory, one can examine the expectation that each commercial creates. “Barbie I Can Be” for children and “Stylin’ Salon” together create an interesting effect on the expectations for women. If children read the commercials as a societal norm for behavior, they see that having a job while being beautiful, with perfect accessories, and great hair are the norms for adult women.

Social Learning Theory says that children will mimic the behavior they see in these commercials. This means children will use the provided scripts to play with dolls instead of generating their own stories through imaginative play. All theories provide potential positive and negative effects of these particular commercials for Barbie. The only way to determine the real effects of these

commercials is a longitudinal study in which children respond to a variety of Barbie commercial messages.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Barbie's Body as Commodity

Barbie's marketing is perhaps even more controversial than the doll itself because, it provides a pre-prescribed way for the doll to be used. Instead of allowing the target imagine their own meanings for the doll, advertising offers a formula for how Barbie should be, implying the same for those who use the dolls as an aspirational role model. Advertisements are filled with words like "adorable, charming, glamorous, graceful, lovely, and romantic" (Rogers, 1999, p. 11). These are all adjectives that Barbie and her target audience must achieve. The jingle in an advertisement for "Day-to-Night Barbie" brightly sings "We can work from 9-5, then change in a sec for an evening with Ken" (Stern, 1998). In one sentence, the target has learned that in order to be successful, (like her role model, Barbie) she must have a job and make time for the man in her life. As "Police Officer Barbie," the doll complicates her message even further by taking on a traditionally masculine profession. However, she is not given typical equipment (no gun or handcuffs, but a form-fitting uniform) and comes with an evening gown to wear to the Best Police Officer Awards (Rogers, 1999). This communicates that Barbie can take on a man's role while still fulfilling the feminine ideal she has created. From the messages that Barbie sends the target audience learns that a successful woman is beautiful, charming, has a boyfriend, is career oriented, can have a traditionally masculine career while still being "girly," all while maintaining her 1 in 100,000 physique. When we consider the

meaning that has been infused into Barbie, especially by her advertising, her body becomes a commercial product and less of an innocent children's toy.

Debra Habedank, Director of the Childcare Education Program at North Dakota State University sees how marketing affects children. She believes the increased stimulation from the media causes sparks an immediate response from children saying "I want that toy." She also believes that media messages make things real for children as they can describe in detail the things that they have seen on television (personal interview, January 23, 2012). This suggests that media messages, especially toy commercials have a potentially invasive effect on young audiences who see an advertisement and have an immediate desire for the product. It is especially problematic if they associate exaggerated messages from commercials with reality because it may result in unrealistic expectations.

The Purpose of Play

Playing with toys is more than a simple way for children to pass the time. Children use play as a way to learn adult behavior through mimicry. Susan Ferguson (2006), author of "The Children's Culture Industry and Globalization: Shifts in the Commodity Character of Toys" argues, that toys have changed from their original purpose, "they no longer convey messages from adults to children about the future, adult experiences and/or emotions" (p. 1). The change, she argues, is that children do not engage in forms of play that mimic the "real worlds of family, households, and work" (p. 1). She also claims these toys, "stimulate rather than satisfy longing, by urging children to consume an endless array of add-ons, accessories and/or theme related media products" (p. 2). She believes

that since these toys encourage children to mimic the movies, TV shows, and other pre-prescribed media stories they no longer serve the function of communication tool from parent to child. Now it seems pre-packaged fantasy worlds speak to the child through these toys.

Debra Habedank intentionally incorporates a variety of creative toys into her childcare facilities. She believes that the most important thing that aids development is a variety of tools that encourages them to invent their own play situations. She has chosen not to include Barbie in the facility for a variety of reasons. First, she wants to provide opportunities for play that children might not get at home. Second, she strives to teach self-care skills through dramatic play. Lastly, she is concerned that the amount of media surrounding Barbie provides the pre-prescribed way of playing that Ferguson (2006) is worried about. However, she believes that the child ultimately chooses how they want to play with the doll, whether it's based on a commercial, or her own imagination (personal interview, January 23, 2012).

Anthropologists have argued about how modern society has changed familial roles. In earlier societies, children were expected to enter the adult world as soon as possible, in order to contribute to the family's income. Jules Henry (1965), wrote *Culture Against Man* in 1965 and his insight into American society still applies in 2012. He claims that now, adults are expected to enter the child's world and young people have no direct participation in the adult world since "...the realm of adult action that the child really wishes to enter is the world of impulse release" (p. 140). Henry (1965) and Ferguson (2006) insist that children

have no expectation to take on adult responsibility until much later in their lives. Children are not concerned with growing up and becoming adults, but instead seem to desire to remain in the child's world completely devoid of responsibility.

While the nature of toys may encourage children to be mass consumers and offer scenarios to mimic other than their parents, it cannot be determined that this is actually how young girls play with the dolls. Rogers (1999) cites child psychologist Bruno Bettelheim who told Mattel, "Barbie is an excellent vehicle for girls to weave all kinds of fantasies in play therapy" (p. 24) He suggests that Barbie is a therapeutic tool with a variety of play possibilities. Rogers (1999) also interviewed parents and children with experiences with Barbie. She found that they played with Barbies in a variety of ways that focused on aspects of the doll other than her appearance. Barbie participates in a variety of situations and has a whole group of doll "friends" to contribute to her play possibilities. One mother commented on her daughters' play saying, "[they] learned a bit about how to relate to one another and how to socialize and be polite, I learned how girls play and develop, and it brought my daughters closer together" (p. 27). Another adult reflected on her experience playing with Barbie, citing the various situations she would place her in, "We would play teacher, race car driver, punk rocker, etc" (p. 29). Another Barbie fan stated "You controlled her life; it could go as good or as bad as you wanted it to..." (p. 28). These memories of playing with Barbie indicate that Barbie is transformed beyond a packaged storyline. She does in fact mimic some adult behaviors such as socializing, being polite, having different jobs, and experiencing the good and bad in life. We can see how those who play

with Barbie transform her “packaged identity” into one that more closely resembles the adult behaviors they trying to learn.

Tara L. Kuther and Erin McDonald (2004) also conducted a qualitative study called “Early Adolescents’ Experiences With, and Views of Barbie.” They conducted focus groups with twenty girls ages 10 to 13 years old. The focus groups centered on discussion on their experiences, opinions, and the respondents’ views of the impact of playing with Barbie on girls’ development. The researchers provided Barbie dolls to aid in observing behavior as well as to help illustrate feelings toward the doll (Kuther and McDonald, 2004).

The researchers observed and classified three types of play activities: imaginative play, torture play, and anger play. Imaginative play involved the creation of storylines that illustrated real or imagined life experiences. Researchers also found that all respondents participated in torture play which involved cutting off hair, painting, or removing appendages. Anger play was characterized by playing with the doll as a way to release pent up emotions. This is different from torture play because the respondents seemed to use Barbie as a tool to take out anger on a specific person in their life. The researchers concluded that respondents were “comfortable expressing hostile feelings through play” (Kuther and McDonald, 2004, p. 43).

Debra Habedank’s facilities at North Dakota State University feature a variety of sensory activities that encourage children to participate in imaginative play. This type of play helps children develop because it allows them to “act out

the great things that are happening in their lives as well as help them act out and deal with a crisis” (personal interview, January 23, 2012).

Heightened Body Image Expectations

When one considers the fantasy world in which Barbie lives, one assumes that Barbie is an entirely false icon. Nothing about the doll’s body can be considered a representation of what is real. However, In *Cyborgs and Barbie Dolls*, Kim Toffoletti (2007) discussed the iconography of the doll’s body. She argued that Barbie’s plastic body symbolizes the artificial and insincere, confirming Stern’s argument that Barbie is purely a false representation of the real world. However, Toffoletti (2007) also suggested that plastic also symbolizes the formative and creative (p. 69). If Barbie can be used for creation and the formation of something new, it suggests that her meaning can be transformed from fantastic and unrealistic to a representation of cultural expectations. Rogers (1999) confirmed this, arguing “a fantastic icon contributes to culture by exaggerating what is actual, possible, or conceivable. Such an icon invites fantasy by taking the as-if or fictive toward its outer limit.... Fantastic icons are capable of releasing people’s imaginations from the constraints of their culture’s definitions and requirements” (p. 3). While agreeing that Barbie functions as an item for fantasy, both authors suggested that it is precisely this fantasy that transforms our concept of what can be considered “real” in our society by allowing our imaginations to utilize Barbie to expand on what is possible.

The idea for Barbie originated when Ruth Handler saw her daughter playing with infant paper dolls and giving them adult roles. She wanted to create a

more realistic version of the paper cutouts for her daughter to be able to express her thoughts and feelings about being an adult. She proposed the idea for an adult doll with breasts to her husband, one of Mattel's founders. He was appalled at the idea of making an adult doll for children. Handler pressed him on the issue, believing if girls "got a grown-up doll with breasts, that it would ease their feelings about themselves" (Stern, 1998).

This decision resulted in the design for a doll that, studies confirm, has body proportions that are unrealistic, unattainable, and unhealthy. If Barbie were a real person, she would have a waist 39% smaller than an anorexic patient, body weight so low that she would be unable to menstruate, and "body proportions that fewer than 1 in 100,000 women have." (Dittmar, Halliwell, & Ive, 2006, p. 286). The decision to design the doll in this way complicates our vision of what it means to be a woman. Barbie was designed to represent a real woman's body. However, since she is also a fantastic icon, her body also exaggerates what we know is possible and potentially creates an unrealistic role model. Toffoletti (2007) expanded upon the reality versus fantasy argument by specifically stating her position on Barbie's body type, "She is neither a real nor unreal representation of the female body, but an appearance that changes the reality principle" (p. 72). In terms of physical appearance, Barbie certainly appears to be outside the realm of a reasonable person's reality.

However, Barbie's body becomes problematic when her target audience transforms this unattainable, unhealthy type into an ideal. While Barbie may have begun as a tool for young girls to understand and deal with their changing bodies,

we must consider the implications of placing Barbie's distorted dimensions in the hands of young girls who will express themselves with the doll. Due to Barbie's influence at a critical point in the lives of young girls, it is possible that the target has transformed the fantastic item into an idol or role model. Have we given girls the weapon to destroy themselves attempting to achieve the nearly unattainable "ideal body?"

Kuther and McDonald investigated the influence of Barbie by directly asking the target. Both boys and girls reported that Barbie impacts girls' self-concept. However, their opinions offer a range of different perspectives from "She was a good role model even though she was fake [and] kind of anorexic" to "Barbie is one of those things that never goes out of style. [She] is a great doll for girls to play with when they are little" (Kuther and McDonald, 2004, p. 48). One respondent (a boy) even recognized the negative influence on body image saying "Barbie dolls provide a false stereotype for people as it is physically impossible to attain the same body size as a Barbie doll" (Kuther and McDonald, 2004, p. 48).

Kuther and McDonald's research also shows that respondents recognize Barbie's role as a symbol of feminine perfection. Since they worked with an older group, their responses suggest awareness of a negative impact: that she is an image of perfection but is perhaps too perfect and therefore unattainable (Kuther and McDonald, 2004).

It is clear that Barbie is a fantastic icon, however, there is debate over her whether she is merely a false representation of reality, or if she helps recreate what is real in our society. There are complications with both of these roles. If she

encourages people to live in a fantasy world, her implications would center on Barbie fanatics who are detached from reality and possibly incapable of living, healthy productive lives. If she helps create a new standard for what we believe is real, Barbie also becomes an icon for what our society believes is feminine. Does Barbie create an impossible standard of feminine beauty?

Body Dissatisfaction

Helga Dittmar, Emma Halliwell, and Suzanne Ive (2006) designed and experiment to determine whether Barbie makes girls want to be thin. They measured the direct impacts on three different age groups of girls after viewing images of Barbie, Emme (an attractive, full-figured doll resembling the average U.S. woman) and neutral stimuli with no information about bodies. They asked the girls to respond after viewing the images using a body esteem scale and figure rating scale. The figure rating scale had drawings of female figures ranging from thin to obese body types. After reading or listening to a storybook that contained the images, the girls were asked to choose the figure that best reflected their present size, their current ideal body size, and their ideal body size as an adult. Then, girls were asked to answer questions to measure body esteem through a questionnaire, with statements such as “I’m pretty happy about the way I look” interspersed with neutral statements like “Children my own age like Harry Potter” (p. 286).

The study found that body dissatisfaction and increased desire for thinness was higher after girls had seen the Barbie doll images but not after seeing Emme compared with neutral images. The detrimental effects were especially prevalent

in the younger groups age five and a half to seven and a half. The effect was not seen in girls around seven to eight years old because they already have internalized standard of beauty that is not a direct response to stimuli (Dittmar, Halliwell, & Ive, 2006).

What was remarkable about the older group, however, was that they reported more extreme discrepancies between their actual and ideal body size. They also “reported a greater desire to be thin when adults after exposure to Emme dolls” (Dittmar, Halliwell, & Ive, 2006, p. 290). This indicates that the girls view the full figured doll as a possible, but feared future self, “implying a threat that they too, may end up not thin when they are older” (Dittmar, Halliwell, & Ive, 2006, p. 290).

The consequences from body dissatisfaction include depression and unhealthy eating behaviors. This study shows that girls’ body image is disturbed even earlier than previously thought (Dittmar, Halliwell, & Ive, 2006, p. 290). We can see that there are specific ages during which Barbie is most influential and another in which the beauty ideal has already been established. For advertisers, this means that mediated content has a detrimental impact on body satisfaction.

This qualitative study confirms some scholars’ views about Barbie play activities as well as revealing that girls do in fact see the positive and negative impacts of these dolls. However, this study does not account for the subconscious impact of the dolls on girls’ body image. It gives us a clearer picture of overall opinions of the doll however, it does not explain exactly *how* over time, Barbie influences her target’s developing self-concept.

In “Impact of ‘Ideal Models’ Being Portrayed by media on Young Females” Tariq Jalees and Hira Majid (2009) conducted a study of 202 female college students. This group is important to examine because they can show the impacts on adults who have consumed media in their childhoods. They developed a questionnaire based on a Likert scale and asked respondents to rate their feelings based on different variables. One hypothesis was that a relationship exists between women who compare themselves with an ideal model and their self-evaluation, self-improvement, and self-enhancement. This hypothesis was found to be correct and that a significant relationship exists between these variables and comparing oneself to an ideal (Jalees and Majid, 2009, p. 15). This means that media messages such as advertisements or products like Barbie do impact females’ concept of themselves. This study implies that when women compare themselves to an ideal image, it affects their desire to improve, enhance or causes them to evaluate themselves in terms of the model.

Jalees and Majid (2009) also hypothesized that a relationship exists between a high level of media exposure and feelings of depression, stress, shame, guilt, and body satisfaction. They found that high media exposure had little effect on feelings of guilt. However, high exposure had a moderate effect on feelings of depression, shame, and a significant effect on body satisfaction (Jalees and Majid, 2009). This shows that the media does influence females’ levels of body satisfaction and likely implies that their body satisfaction is lower when they are exposed to a large amount of media, especially if they contain “ideal models.”

Jalees and Majid (2009) finally combined two of their hypotheses and suggested that the females who have low body satisfaction may respond positively to products that have ideal female models who endorse or help sell them. They found that respondents with a low body satisfaction did respond more positively to models in the media. Furthermore, those with high body satisfaction responded less positively to the ideal model portrayals (Jalees and Majid, 2009, p. 16-17). This implies that ideal models have less influence on women who feel good about their bodies. Those with body dissatisfaction likely have low self-esteem and are more likely to be influenced by models in the media.

This study on self-concept variables is key to the body image impact of Barbie because we can see that ideal models such as Barbie can cause females to evaluate themselves and become obsessed with self-improvement. We can also see that media exposure effects negative feelings such as depression, stress, shame, and body dissatisfaction. These are very serious consequences of the media, especially on a target as young as Barbie's. The study also provides some hope in that the higher the body satisfaction a girl has, the less likely to feel badly after exposure to media. However, members of a young target that is still developing may not have enough self-confidence to avoid comparing themselves to Barbie's ideal image. Do girls 6-14 have high enough body satisfaction to be unharmed by Barbie's message?

Groesz, Levin, and Murnen (2002) conducted an experiment where they exposed girls and women to images and videos of thin models. The respondents' immediate ratings of body satisfaction were lower after viewing these images

compared with seeing images of average or fat women. The researchers noticed that this effect occurred more often in girls under age 19 (as cited in López-Guimerá et al., 2010, p. 394). Another study examined the effect over a longer term as effects of a short-term study say little about the long-term impacts of media. Hargreaves and Tiggemann (2003) exposed 17-year-olds to 20 television commercials that showed images of thin, beauty ideals. Those that reported the highest body dissatisfaction immediately after exposure also “had the highest level of body dissatisfaction and desire for thinness 2 years later” (as cited in López-Guimerá et al., 2010, p. 395).

Stice, Spangler, and Agras did an unusual study where they sent 219 adolescent girls a prize fashion magazine subscription for 15 months. They did not find any direct differences between the experimental and control groups. An interesting trend emerged among girls who had initially showed lower levels of social support. After a 20-month follow up, this group reported an increase in body dissatisfaction, dieting, and symptoms of bulimia. This shows that family and close friends play an important part in the internalization of beauty ideals (as cited in López-Guimerá et al., 2010, p. 395). This information implies that those with less external support are at higher risk for body dissatisfaction induced by the media and that a strong support system can help combat some negative effects

McKnight Investigators (2003) analyzed possible risk factors of eating disorders in young girls. They found that mass media influences girls potential for eating disorders in the future as a factor called “thin body preoccupation and social pressure” (as cited in López-Guimerá et al., 2010, p. 397). They sampled

middle and high school girls who said they “sometimes” or “often” read magazines that included diet or weight loss topics. These girls were “twice as likely to be engaged in unhealthy weight-control behaviors and three times as likely to be engaged in extreme weight-control behaviors five years later” (as cited in López-Guimerá et al., 2010, p. 397).

Based on the analysis of López-Guimerá et al. (2010) it is understood that, “Mass media are an extremely important source, if not the principal source, of information and reinforcement in relations to the nature of the thin beauty idea, its importance, and how to attain it” (p. 406). The authors note that a variety of factors that influence the effects of media (which medium, peer and social factors, and even ethnicity), but the key conclusion is that mass media provides a clear message that media can cause a lasting and detrimental impact on the body satisfaction of girls.

Chapter 3: Research Design

Research Questions

1. Effect on Knowledge: Cultivation Theory suggests that increased exposure to media messages leads people to believe that the media world is a true representation of the real world. What do girls learn from Barbie in terms of what a woman is supposed to be? In what ways does Barbie impact girls' body satisfaction?
2. Effect on Attitude: Barbie has become increasingly commodified in order to make a profit for the company. How do parents and children perceive her advertising and other mediated messages?
3. Effect on Attitude: With the debate between scholars over Barbie's role as an aspirational role model, in what ways is Barbie a role model for young girls? Do they identify with her?
4. Effect on Behavior: Since adults are essential to the development of children and a strong support system leads to the chance of reduced media effects, in what ways do parents participate in Barbie's world?
5. Effect on Behavior: Research indicates that patterns in children's play may either help them imagine the adult world, or draw them in to the fantasy world of pre-packaged, unimaginative stories. Do young girls play with Barbie in either of these ways? Does playing with Barbies provide them an opportunity to imagine their lives as adults? Is there anything positive or negative about this type of play?

Methods

One-on-one interviews with parents and children, interview responses to advertising, and collage creation were the methods used to collect data in this study. One on one interviews are effective for identifying attitudes, behaviors, and motivations. Collages are useful for identifying underlying feelings and attitudes that a respondent may not explicitly say in an interview (Davis, 1997). This

combination of methods allows for optimal insight gathering as it will retrieve conscious and unconscious knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors toward Barbie.

Participants

The snowballing method was used to select participants. The sample includes my personal network of friends and relatives, and members of their extended network that meet the guidelines prescribed below. Given the personal nature of this study, a random sample would be undesirable because it is necessary for the respondents to be comfortable participating. The snowballing method allows for familiarity with the interviewer, resulting in open and honest responses.

The sample includes seven girls ages nine to fifteen who have had experiences with Barbie doll. Interviews were also conducted with four parents of the children in the study.

Design

Interview sessions had three phases. The first was be a question and answer phase. In the second phase, parents and children were asked to respond to an advertisement. In the third phase, both parents and children created collages from magazine images to explain their relationship to Barbie. Each phase was audio recorded and transcribed.

In the one-on-one interviews, children were asked a series of questions pertaining to their views and experiences with Barbie. Parents were asked to evaluate the role that Barbie plays in their child's life. The interviews were

conducted in a familiar setting (i.e. the target's school, home, etc.) Children were provided a Barbie doll to illustrate their behavior.

Both children and parents were asked to react to two Barbie commercials. Children and parents each viewed a 2010 spot for “Barbie I Can Be...” a line of Barbie dolls who have different careers. Children and parents watched a different spot that was targeted towards their demographic (see figures 1 and 2). Then both watched the same spot for “Barbie Stylin’ Salon” (see figures 3 and 4).

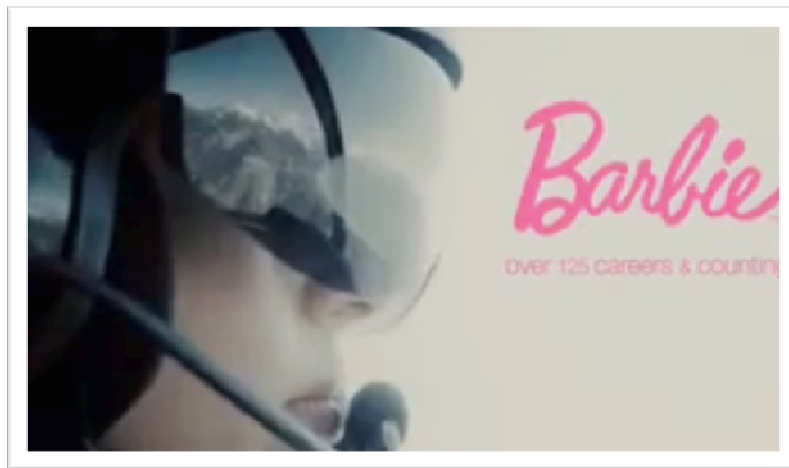


Figure 1: Parent's "I Can Be..."



Figure 2: Child's "I Can Be..."

Lastly, children created a collage to represent Barbie, and a collage to represent themselves, then they explained the similarities and differences. Parents created collages representing what they want their daughters to learn and what they think Barbie teaches.



Figure 3: "Barbie Stylin' Salon"



Figure 4: "Barbie Stylin' Salon"

Data Analysis

The triangular method of analysis was used to analyze the results from the three-part study. This method allowed for themes to be drawn from all phases in order to reach conclusions based on the study as a whole, rather than one specific piece.

Primary Research Variables

1) Variable: Knowledge

Determine how the doll impacts child's knowledge.

2) Variable: Attitude

Determine how the doll affects individual attitudes of parent and children.

3) Variable: Behavior

Determine the ways the doll impacts the behaviors of parents and children.

Chapter 4: Results

1. Effect on Knowledge: What do girls learn from Barbie in terms of what a woman is supposed to be? In what ways does Barbie impact girls' body satisfaction?

Answer: Girls learn that Barbie represents what is considered beautiful in our culture – skinny, blonde, tall, pretty, popular, nice. The doll aids in the formation of this beauty standard.

Respondents indicated a level of dissatisfaction (Answering primarily “no” when asked if Barbie made them feel good about themselves.) Parents expressed concern that Barbie may make young girls feel badly about themselves. It is important to note that the Third Person Effect played a role as most parents believed any negative effect from Barbie (made girls feel bad about themselves) could be felt by others, but not their daughter.

Barbie affects knowledge because her appearance reinforces a beauty ideal. A longitudinal study is necessary to determine whether or not the dissatisfaction parents believe girls may feel is related to their bodies.

2. Effect on Attitude: How do parents and children perceive her advertising and other mediated messages?

Answer: Parents perceive Barbie's message as primarily superficial – skinny, fake, stylish, ridiculous, phony. However, when shown the recent commercial featuring Barbie with different careers, they responded more positively – inspiring, encouraging, hopeful, and optimistic.

Children perceive Barbie's messages as fun and the ads make them want to play with the doll.

The recent advertisements with more positive messages had a positive effect on Parent's perception of the doll. For children, Barbie's advertisements affect their desire to purchase or play with the doll.

3. Effect on Attitude: In what ways is Barbie a role model for young girls? Do they identify with her?

During a specific time in a young girl's life, Barbie is an aspirational role model. However, there is a point when her negative qualities discourage girls from using her as a role model. Girls compare her to roles they typically look up to (older sister, older cousin) and they associate admirable qualities with her (pretty, smart). Younger girls (seven to nine years old) expressed that they wanted to be like her when they were little. Older girls (ten and older) who have become critical of the doll recognize her negative qualities (too skinny, unrealistic ideal). As a result, their responses were typically that they aspired to the doll when they were younger, or they didn't want to be like her at all.

In terms of identification, there are few ways in which girls identify with Barbie's persona. They identify with certain personality traits (friendly, nice) but tend to resist identification with her physical appearance. There was little correlation between the images they chose to represent themselves and the images they chose to represent Barbie, indicating a lack of identification.

Barbie affects attitudes because she is an aspirational role model. From the ages of five to eight, girls believe the doll is someone to look up to and want have similar qualities as her. Girls only identify with the doll in terms of certain personality traits, but do not identify with her physical appearance.

4. Effect on Behavior: In what ways do parents participate in Barbie's world?

There is little parental influence on behavior in Barbie's world. Parents do not participate or have a role in Barbie's world. They are rarely the direct decision maker in the purchase decision and they do not usually have a role in assisting with play activities or creating scenarios.

5. Effect on Behavior: In what ways do girls play with Barbie? Does playing with Barbies provide them an opportunity to imagine their lives as adults? Is there anything positive or negative about this type of play?

Barbie affects play behaviors because she is a tool that children use to model their world. Respondents played with Barbie in an imaginative way. They used both the "pre-prescribed" play that was advertised but also invented their own scenarios. Many respondents indicated that their characters were adults with careers and families. Sometimes play revolves around Barbie's appearance (playing dress-up, playing with hair). Play was generally described as a positive experience that allowed children to act out stories they were curious or worried about.

Chapter 5: Discussion

Theme: What girls know about Barbie is appearance related.

Description: Appearance is most prevalent in children's and parent's perception of Barbie. Discussions of the doll tended to center around what she looks like.

Most parents and children focus on the physical attributes of Barbie.

While some acknowledged personality traits she might have, the majority of reactions towards the doll and her advertising were based upon how she looks. If the doll were sold based on personality or character traits, significantly less emphasis would need to be placed on her appearance. Given the nature of responses, it might not be possible for Barbie to be much more than a pretty plaything.

- "They love that pretty, perfect, princess idea. They love that ideal of perfection when they're little. There are so many things for her; boyfriend, car, van, camper, and house things. She's got great accessories."
- "She's pretty. The commercials are catchy."
- "[If she were a real person] she'd be one of those popular cheerleader people and really pretty."
- "[If she were a real person] she'd be the ideal Hollywood person. Tall, skinny, and blonde. What everyone wants to be."

- “She would be really smart, really cool, really pretty. And tall.”
- “She would be really pretty. She would have bleachy, long blonde hair and a be wearing a pretty dress.”

Respondents acknowledged that there are some positive aspects to Barbie’s personality, but there was also a tone of resentment toward her perfect, cheerful attitude.

- “She doesn’t have a lot to say for herself. Whatever you want her to be, she can be.”
- “[If she were a real person] she would be really popular and cheerful.
- “She would be kind of cheesy and a little dingy – like she doesn’t know what she’s talking about.
- “She would be like the popular girls. Maybe kind of bossy. She’s be smart, nice and pretty.”
- “I’m similar to Barbie because I like to dress up and change clothes all of the time. I’m different because I’m not very tall.”

Theme: Barbie’s message is superficial.

Description: Parents appreciate the trend towards a Barbie with a deeper message, but have come to expect the “traditional” superficial messaging.

When asked to respond to the two commercials, there was a large contrast between the response toward “Barbie I Can Be” and “Barbie Stylin’ Salon.”

Parents’ first impressions were generally positive and even surprised to see an

advertisement that differed from the traditional advertising for Barbie. While the response toward the ad was generally positive, some parents believed it was deceptive that Barbie would send such a conflicting message.

- "I thought it was adorable. It had good messages for kids."
- "I was not expecting it to be for Barbie. It doesn't make sense to me. I don't think you can aspire to be Barbie like they're implying in this ad. I liked what they said, until they said it was for Barbie."
- "I thought it spoke to mothers, telling them to have dreams for their daughters and use Barbie as a tool to help them."

The first impressions of the ad are different from those for "Stylin' Salon." Even though the advertisement portrayed the typical, superficial Barbie, parents' responses varied and were not altogether negative.

- "That's hilarious. Little kids love to play that way. It's not a deep educational moment. It's not instilling dreams of their doctorate, but that's fun."
- "I feel kind of mixed because if I were a kid, I would think that's fun. But as a parent, it's not so great."
- "I like that it's not masked as something different. But it's already telling girls 'We're not good enough the way we are. We have to go get fixed up before we go to a party.'"

When asked to rate how well a variety of positive and negative words described each ad, parents rated all positive words for “I Can Be” as “fairly well” or higher. All negative words were rated as “not very well” or lower. When asked to respond to whether or not they felt a certain way after watching the ad, parents felt the negative word associations “skeptical” and “distrustful.” Parents also responded “yes” or “maybe” to all positive word associations. This indicates that parents had a mixed response to the advertisement. The general feeling was positive, however, some parents experienced skepticism or distrust. This may be attributed to this particular commercials’ emphasis on the non-physical aspects of Barbie. Parents seemed to believe that implying Barbie has value beyond appearance play was deceptive.

- “This commercial insinuates that Barbie is only used so that girls can accomplish anything they want to.”
- “Either the company believes their dolls, just by dressing up a certain way, can be role models. Or, they’re selling a dream or an image. It kind of makes me angry because Barbie is an unrealistic, plastic person and no one can be that.”

When asked to rate whether or not they felt positively or negatively about “Stylin’ Salon,” parents had negative feelings, but answers were justified by explaining that Barbie is meant to just “have fun.” All negative words were rated fairly well or higher. Most positive words were rated as not very well or lower except for “entertaining” and “fun.” This means that parents feel this commercial

lacks the positive elements of the other (such as “appropriate,” “honest,” or “worth remembering”). However, these negative feelings did not seem to result in passionately negative feelings towards Barbie and they considered the commercial “fun and entertaining.”

- “Barbies are fun. You step into their world and be a playful kid. You can try goofy things on them and they don’t mind.”
- “She’s a toy. Not a role model. She’s not educational.”
- “I feel the same about Barbie – she’s ready to party now because her hair is colored. She’s just about fun and surface stuff.”

Theme: Barbie does not help instill values.

Description: Most messages that Barbie sends are not in line with the beliefs and values mothers try to instill in their daughters.

The collages that the mothers made that represent the message Barbie sends. All collages focused on appearance (much like the ones their daughters made). They explained the collages in terms of Barbie’s exaggerated appearance and lifestyle. They described her as not real, fake, and unattainable. Their collages with the lessons and values they wanted for their daughters included being with family, using their mind, and being happy and healthy. Mothers took the approach to creating their collages to be as contrasting as possible.

- “The Barbie one is not very real. Barbie is a toy. It’s pretend.”

- “She looks like she’s not real. This is the image: the unattainable.”
- “Barbie outfits are sometimes ridiculous and the Barbie image is sort of ridiculous. But it’s not real. It’s pretend.”
- “I tried to find realistic looking picture of people when they grow up. The hair is not bleach blonde...and sometimes it’s not perfect. I want them to have an inner joy. I want them to use their brain in whatever field they go into. I like them to be crafty and figure out ways to do things themselves rather than just always buying something.”
- “[Here is a picture of] a mind filling up with knowledge. Here’s a more sensible meal and a more sensible body.”
- “This is a person being healthy. I want to you stay healthy, go to school and have positive relationships with people.”
- “I want them to be healthy inside and out.”

Theme: Barbie is an aspirational role model.

Description: During a specific time in a young girl’s life, she considers Barbie an aspirational role model and aspires Barbie’s unrealistic appearance. Her mother doesn’t believe this, indicating a third-person effect.

Younger children’s experiences with the doll confirm that Barbie is an aspirational role during specific time in the child’s life. When interviewed, there

was an inconsistency in the responses from eight to eleven year olds and the eleven and older girls. We can observe this tendency to treat Barbie as a role model through their play as well as responses to whether or not they want to be like her. It is interesting to note that most are hesitant to acknowledge directly that they want or wanted to be like Barbie. Most explained how they did when they were little but not anymore. Most of the reasoning was because they wanted to look like her and admired Barbie's long hair and extensive wardrobe. No one responded that they wanted to be like Barbie for deeper reasons such as "Because she is a doctor and I want to be a doctor." The younger group aspired to be like Barbie for material or appearance-based reasons. This is potentially dangerous for Barbie's target because, even with efforts to give Barbie more substance (a career, personality, etc.), children idolize her unrealistic, unattainable body.

The older group has clearly grown out of the phase when Barbie serves as an aspirational role model. It was much easier for girls to think of Barbies in terms of a family member. Most of the family members that the girls believed were like Barbie tended to be older family members whom they admired or looked up to as a role model.

- "When I was little, I thought Barbie was similar to my sister, because I always wanted to be like her. I compared her to the older sister type. Kind of like a role model."
- "I have a cousin who likes to dress up and kind of acts like Barbie. She's really smart and she dresses up. I think she's really pretty. She's older than me."

- “My teenage sisters, because Barbie is a teenager when I play.”
- “[My older cousin]– because she loves make up and has all the good clothes and is really cheerful.”
- “No, because I would always have her break the rules when I couldn’t. So she didn’t have any standards. I don’t think I would enjoy that. *[Barbie] kind of represents what I wish I could have done.*”
- She had freedom and could do whatever she wanted. She didn’t have rules and regulations and could go out whenever and with whoever she wanted. I had parents who told me what I had to do.
- “I play that they’re a lot older. I like to play that they have a different lifestyle than I do just to see what it would be like to be a different person.”
- “Yes, when I was little. Because she was really pretty. I wanted to be like her when I was little. She had lots of clothes.”
- “I did. She was always really pretty, always had best clothes and really long hair.”

Parents however, don’t believe that their children look up to Barbie. They acknowledge that she is fun to play with and that their daughter likes playing dress up or having Barbie act out different scenarios. When asked whether or not

they think girls look up to Barbie or her image, most parents denied the possibility. Their responses indicate concern about Barbie's image, but they do not believe this image affects their daughter.

- "No, I don't think they look up to Barbie."
- "Not really, I don't think my kids think they're going to look like Barbie when they grow up."
- "Nobody's as scrawny and built like Barbie, but I don't think little girls really care. They don't think 'Oh, I want to be like that.'"
- "It's fun to pretend she's an athlete or lifeguard or something. It's fun to envision the different roles Barbie can have and change into different costumes."
- "I don't know that Barbie makes her feel good about herself."
- "Her figure, big boobs, long legs, and perfect hair [could make girls feel bad about themselves.]"
- "Her unrealistic body image [could make girls feel about themselves]. If you try on the same clothes you won't look as good as Barbie does."

Theme: Identification with Barbie doll is low.

Description: Young girls may look up to the doll, but in terms of actually believing they possess the same qualities of the doll was rare.

We can see that there is a phase in which young girls look up to and want to be like Barbie. However, there are very few ways in which they actually believe they are similar to Barbie. At first, one may think that this is a positive effect, since girls don't try to identify with an unrealistic unattainable ideal. However, how can girls mimic their world through play if they don't truly identify with the tools they have to do so? This lack of identification may result in dissatisfaction in play because the doll does not represent their personal ideals and values. Most of the similarities the girls explain are related to personality traits, however, many differences are related to appearance. This may cause body dissatisfaction if girls do in fact attempt to compare and contrast themselves to the doll.

- "I'm similar because I'm friendly and happy. I'm not similar because I'm not always so cheerful and wanting to do different things.
- "I'm similar because I'm friendly. Not similar because I don't have as many clothes and I'm not really obsessed with fashion and changing my hair.
- "I'm similar because I really like to dress up and change clothes. I'm different because I'm not very tall...there's a lot of things. I guess they don't really relate to me very much."

- “I have long hair like some of my Barbies. I’m not similar because I don’t have a boyfriend and Barbie does. I don’t wear high heels.”

When asked to complete collages that represent Barbie and themselves, there were very few themes that overlapped between the two. Girls defined themselves with their likes and dislikes (sports, colors, special occasions), their experiences (traveling, books they’ve read), and important people to them (family, friends). They defined Barbie by her appearance (blonde hair, pretty, makeup). The only item that overlapped between the ones they made for Barbie and for themselves was certain apparel items. Many girls put pictures of scarves, jackets, sunglasses, or shoes on their own collage because they said they liked those items. They put pictures of high heels, revealing dresses, and words like “fashionista” and “glamour” on the collage representing Barbie. This indicates that girls tend to identify with Barbie based on a slight interest in fashion. It is important to note that the girls’ collages for themselves had more conservative fashion choices (such as running shoes instead of high heels).

The lack of correlation (other than fashion) reveals that girls barely identify with Barbie. Their own collages represented the deeper aspects of their character while Barbie’s represented her superficiality. The collages for Barbie did not reveal negative feelings towards Barbie. Girls tended to think of Barbie in terms of her appearance, not necessarily someone with a character they believe is similar to their own.

Theme: Mom is not involved in Barbie’s world.

Description: Outside sources contribute to how Barbie becomes a factor in her daughter's life.

Children are influenced by many external sources of information. They figure out what they want from their peers, their parents, and media messages. Children make decisions based on advertisements and their peers. If they decide they are interested in the product, all it takes is a simple "Mom, I want that," a trip to the toy store, and the child receives the toy. Perhaps parents are more permissive now than ever before, or perhaps parents do not want the child to feel disadvantaged in any way. When asked about how the decision was made to purchase a Barbie, most children asked for them as gifts. This means that parents are not directly involved in the decision process; Barbie is not usually a toy they choose for their daughter. If we assume that parents know what is best for their children, but are not filtering their children's desires based on the child's best interest, Barbie's advertising works like a "magic bullet" in communicating to children.

- "Usually Barbie is a gift my daughter asked for for her birthday or Christmas."
- "We make the decision based on seeing an ad that showed how one [Barbie] was unique and different than the dolls they have."
- "Their friends play with Barbies and they ask for them as gifts. Sometimes they'll see it on an advertisement."
- "I've bought Barbies because they asked for them. Most are given as gifts. Some are collector's items."

Since it is not a parent who makes the decision to incorporate Barbie into their daughter's life, it is important to consider how mothers feel about the company that influences their daughter. When asked about how they feel about Mattel, most mothers felt that "This brand has a name I can trust" with an average rating of 4.2 (on a scale of 1-5). The high level of trust could be due to the long history of the brand. Most mothers grew up playing with Barbie themselves. It could also be due to a quality product that can withstand lots of rough play.

However, when asked "Mattel's Barbie Doll has my daughter's best interest at heart," most mothers rated the statement very low, with an average of 1.4. This means that while they trust the brand, they don't believe Mattel truly thinks of what is in the interests of their daughter. This lack of belief in the company's ethics implies hesitation in allowing this doll influence their daughters. Combined with the fact that parents are not directly choosing Barbie as a toy for their daughters, this suggests that girls are isolated in their own world with Barbie.

To further widen the gap between Barbie's fantasy world of play and the responsible influence of a mother, most mothers are not involved in playing with Barbie. When asked about how they participated in Barbie play with their daughters, most mothers could not think of a specific time they had joined in the play. Children reported playing with another person, such as a sister or friend. This indicates that Barbie lives in a world of her own, which is almost free from adult supervision or guidance. Of course it would be unreasonable for children's play to constantly be under direct supervision. However, the fact that adults are

excluded from a world in which an adult doll controls the scenario, raises some concerns. This aligns with the idea from the literature review where children are free from the adult world of responsibility. Without this influence, children have the freedom to play as they wish, which might not always be in a deeply meaningful, educational way.

- "I didn't play with them often."
- "I didn't really play with them."
- "We didn't really play Barbies together."
- "I always played with my sister, not really alone."
- "I usually play with my neighbor."
- "I'd play with a friend or my sister."

Theme: Play is a positive experience.

Description: Girls engage in different types of play where they create their own stories for Barbie and also mix in the pre-packaged, advertised ideas.

This contrasts with concerns from literature review over concern of the packaged toys limiting imaginative play. This group clearly creates their own stories for Barbie. This group participated primarily in the imaginative play type described in the literature review. There was no indication of torture play or anger play. Responses are in line with Rogers' imaginative play patterns and indicate that children are in fact playing in a way that mimics the adult world, not simply impulse release. Children mix the pre-packaged play (going to the mall, going to pool parties, doing hair) with imaginative play (playing house, having a farm, being a doctor).

Girls seem to use the doll to mimic what is going on in their lives and imagine what life is like as an adult. The negative aspect of play however, is that many stories involve the physical or material aspects of Barbie (doing hair, going to the mall, etc.). The material aspects of Barbie do not actually contribute to their knowledge of the real world. However, it does allow them to fantasize which is a key aspect of development.

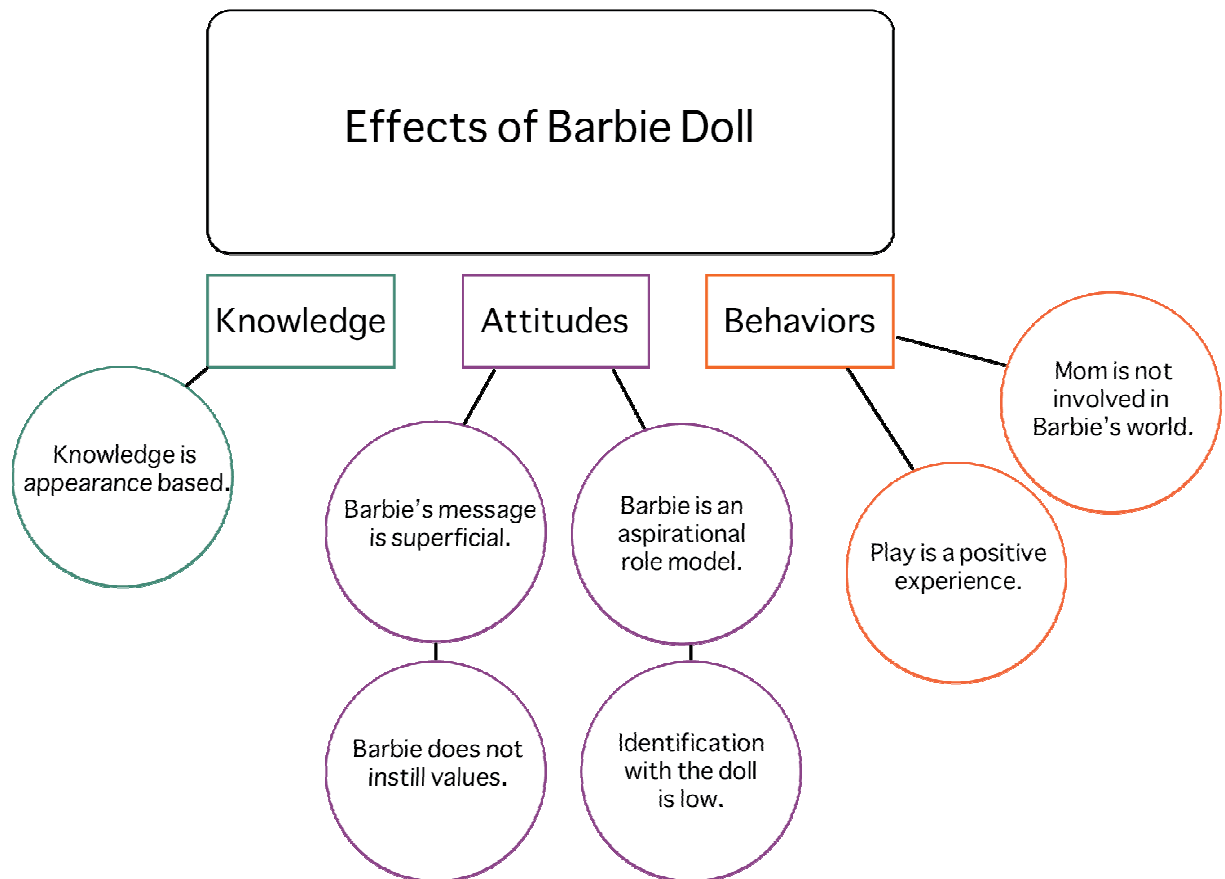
- “We had a house that we made so we played house. Someone was played the mom, someone played the kids.”
- “We’d play the same storyline. Teenage girls, go out in the cool car with their boyfriends. Go to a pool party. We had the car and a lot of clothes and shoes. We used to like to do her hair a lot so we had brushes.”
- “Usually play that we live on a farm because she has horses. We each have a horse. We both have kids. Her character has a diner. Mine is a doctor so I go over to give check ups. We pretend we’re just out of college and really close friends who live close to each other. Have back stories (her parents died, I have to go to California) to make it interesting.”
- “We dress them up in the fashion clothes. Make them walk like models. Eat dinner with family. Bike adventures, car trips. Going to Texas. We sometimes get lost. We’re working. Jobs like baby carrying. Friend

works at a diner. We have a ranch. Horse gets lost and we have to find it. Bid on horse. It's really fun."

- Barbie says, "Do you wanna go to the mall. Other says "Sure I'd totally love to, let's go in my convertible." We had a convertible. An airplane. My favorite was the Barbie elevator that was part of a Barbie house. They all had names."
- "We'd ask the other to come over to our house and if they wanted to do each other's hair and go shopping. Pick out different clothes and outfits."
- "They go swimming. Sometimes the theme is jobs, they all have jobs – hair stylist, clothes designer. There's one where they're in college – they get in fights with each other, miss their boyfriends, or boyfriend goes to college, but they can't see their boyfriends because they have too much homework."
- "[My daughter] plays dress up. They have different careers. She does a lot of imaginative play and sometimes made accessories from scratch."
- "[My daughter's Barbies] have been everything from hairstylists to pig farmers."
- "She would play a lot of family scenarios with little kids."

Cognitive Map

The cognitive map shows the relationships among themes with their respective general effects (knowledge, attitudes, or behaviors). The research objective of identifying the effects of Barbie on the knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors of the target market has been met.



Chapter 6: Limitations and Conclusion

One of the limitations of this study is the small sample size. While it is a qualitative study and it is not necessary to have a large number of responses, more

people would have provided more perspectives. However, after a few interviews, it was easy to identify themes since patterns emerged within the responses.

Another limitation is the homogeneity of the respondents. Since the snowballing method was used to select participants, most of the respondents came from similar family types and socioeconomic backgrounds. Further research would be needed to identify the values and beliefs of a variety of different lifestyles. It would be interesting in the future to compare other and contrast the implications of other fashion dolls on a variety of demographic groups.

For a few of the interviews, parents were most comfortable remaining in the room for the child's portion of the study, this may have created a bias in the study because the parent's responses may have been a reaction to their child's. While the results seem consistent and do not appear to vary from parent to parent, it is important to note the potential of an altered response due to hearing their child's response.

Conclusion

This study brings to light some of the most problematic aspects of Barbie but also indicates that children do in fact see Barbie for what she is: a toy. One of the most problematic aspects is the fact that mothers seem to have so little influence in their daughter's experience with Barbie. It seems through advertising and various other media messages, Mattel has cut mom out of the play experience. Perhaps a new campaign could be more targeted towards parents to get them more involved with the controversial doll.

Parents also recognize that Barbie's message is superficial and appearance based and that the doll can have negative implications for their daughters. However, they were positively surprised when an advertisement encouraged their daughters to strive to achieve their dreams. Parents have come to expect the unattainable body image message, which does not align with the beliefs and values they try to instill in their daughters. It is possible that this sort of messaging in addition to more messages about personality and character (of the child, not necessarily of Barbie) could help reposition Barbie in the minds of consumers.

With the concern over the body image message of Barbie comes the concern of whether or not girls will idealize that and try to attain it. It was startling to learn that girls do indicate signs of using Barbie as an aspirational role model for a specific moment of their lives (around age six to eight). It is also problematic that mothers do not believe that children use Barbie as a role model (or are in denial that they do). Parents must realize the fact that there is a critical period in which children want to be like Barbie and take steps to ensure their child realizes that it is unattainable and unhealthy. It is not necessary to try to eliminate exposure to Barbie, but instead to let the doll start a conversation about what it means to be a healthy, beautiful adult.

Related to Barbie's role model status is girls' level of identification with the plastic doll. It appears there are very few ways in which girls believe they are similar to Barbie. This has both positive and negative implications. First, it is positive because girls recognize the negative aspects of the doll and avoid identification in this way. However, this has negative implications because girls

do not have a toy that represents their interests and values. Girls identify with Barbie in terms of character (being friendly or cheerful). If Barbie could somehow adopt more character traits, she would be more identifiable and perhaps become a more positive role model for young girls during the critical period.

In terms of play, results were inconsistent with previous literature in that children participate in a variety of play scenarios some which mimic pre-packaged play type, but most mimic important events or stories in their own lives. This is one of the most positive aspects of Barbie, because she is a tool that girls can use to deal with the events happening around them. This group of respondents demonstrated no forms of torture or anger play. This kind of imaginative play greatly aids in child development.

This study has uncovered a range of positive and negative effects of Barbie doll. The doll plays an important role in many young girls' lives as she sends messages about how one becomes a successful woman in our society. The study confirms that Barbie's appearance reinforces unrealistic standards. However, girls use Barbie as a tool to act out relevant scenarios. This study can help the lead the way to more positive message from Barbie.

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Appendix I: Moderator's Guide

1) Introduction:

- Who I am
- Purpose of Research: "The purpose of this session is to research the effects of Barbie doll for my Honors Capstone Thesis."

- Overview of Activities: Two interview sessions with 3 phases each (Questions, viewing and response, activity)
- Disclaimer: "The session will take less than 1 hour. The responses or quotes will not be linked to you or your child's identity in any way. The final study will not be used outside Syracuse University. "

2) Sign Consent Form

3) Describe Activities:

- "First I will interview you about your general perception of Barbie and ask you to respond to an advertisement."
- "Then I will interview your daughter about her thoughts about Barbie and ask her to respond to a slightly different advertisement."
- "Lastly, you both will have the opportunity to simultaneously do an activity, without working together however."

4) Parent Commercial Response to "Barbie I Can Be"

(http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D8yVcLO_VVQ)

1. What was your first impression after watching this ad?
2. Choose 5 words or phrases that describe this advertisement.
3. How do you feel about Barbie after watching this advertisement.
4. Please tell us how well you think each of the words listed below describes the ad you have just seen. If you think the word describes the ad extremely well, put a 5; very well, put a 4; fairly well, put a 3; not very well, put a 2; not at all well, put a 1.
 For me
 Irritating
 Entertaining
 Meaningful to me
 Phony
 Ridiculous
 Worth remembering
 Convincing
 Stupid
 Bad
 Honest
 Good
 Appropriate
 Fun
5. Yes/no/maybe did you feel the following after watching this ad.
 (Affective Response to ad):
 skeptical

distrustful
 irritated
 uneasy
 interested
 excited
 cheerful
 curious

6. What do you think the main message is of this advertisement?
7. Is this message in line with the beliefs you want to instill on your daughter?

5) Parent Commercial Response to “Barbie Stylin’ Salon”

1. What was your first impression after watching this ad?
2. Choose 5 words or phrases that describe this advertisement.
3. How do you feel about Barbie after watching this advertisement.
4. Please tell us how well you think each of the words listed below describes the ad you have just seen. If you think the word describes the ad extremely well, put a 5; very well, put a 4; fairly well, put a 3; not very well, put a 2; not at all well, put a 1.

For me
 Irritating
 Entertaining
 Meaningful to me
 Phony
 Ridiculous
 Worth remembering
 Convincing
 Stupid
 Bad
 Honest
 Good
 Appropriate
 Fun

5. Yes/no/maybe did you feel the following after watching this ad. (Affective Response to ad):
 skeptical
 distrustful
 irritated
 uneasy
 interested
 excited
 cheerful
 curious

6. What do you think the main message is of this advertisement?
7. Is this message in line with the beliefs you want to instill on your daughter?

6) Begin Parent Interview

1. Who buys Barbie for your daughter? How is this decision made?
2. How much of your daughter's time is spent with Barbie in a week?
3. What types of scenarios does she usually act out? How does she usually play? (Experience)
4. How do you play Barbies with your daughter? (Experience)
5. Indicate your level of agreement with the following statements (low agreement 1 – high agreement 5) to the following questions about Mattel and Barbie. (Attitude toward brand trustworthiness and identification)
 - This brand has a name you can trust.
 - This brand doesn't pretend to be something it isn't.
 - Mattel's Barbie Doll has my daughter's best interest at heart.
 - Barbie makes a statement about what is important in my daughter's life.
6. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements (Low agreement 1 - high agreement 5) (Self Concept of daughter):
 - Barbie instills confidence in my daughter.
 - When my daughter plays with Barbie, I am at ease.
 - Barbie plays a critical role in defining my daughter's self-concept.
 - Barbie is an instrument of my daughter's self-expression.
7. What aspects of Barbie, if any, make your daughter feel good about herself.
8. Do you think there are any aspects of Barbie that make girls in general feel badly about themselves?
9. Why do you think Barbie is popular among young girls? (Attitude)
10. Do you think your daughter looks up to Barbie or her image in any way? (Identification)
11. Have you noticed any changes in the way your daughter plays with toys as she gets older? (Identification)
12. If Barbie were a real person and your daughter had the opportunity meet her, what would Barbie say and do? (Perception)
13. If you could change something about Barbie what would it be and why? (Attitude)

7) Child Commercial Response to “Barbie I Can Be”

(http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D8yVcLO_VVQ)

1. What was your first impression after watching this ad?
2. Choose 5 words or phrases that describe this advertisement.
3. How do you feel about Barbie after watching this advertisement.
4. Please tell us how well you think each of the words listed below describes the ad you have just seen. If you think the word describes the ad extremely well, put a 5; very well, put a 4; fairly well, put a 3; not very well, put a 2; not at all well, put a 1.

For me

Irritating

Entertaining

Meaningful to me

Phony

Ridiculous

Worth remembering

Convincing

Stupid

Bad

Honest

Good

Appropriate

Fun

5. Yes/no/maybe did you feel the following after watching this ad.
(Affective Response to ad):

skeptical

distrustful

irritated

uneasy

interested

excited

cheerful

curious

6. What do you think this ad is trying to tell you?

8) Child Commercial Response to “Barbie Stylin’ Salon”

1. What was your first impression after watching this ad?
2. Choose 5 words or phrases that describe this advertisement.
3. How do you feel about Barbie after watching this advertisement.
4. Please tell us how well you think each of the words listed below describes the ad you have just seen. If you think the word describes the ad extremely well, put a 5; very well, put a 4;

fairly well, put a 3; not very well, put a 2; not at all well, put a 1.

For me
 Irritating
 Entertaining
 Meaningful to me
 Phony
 Ridiculous
 Worth remembering
 Convincing
 Stupid
 Bad
 Honest
 Good
 Appropriate
 Fun

5. Yes/no/maybe did you feel the following after watching this ad.
 (Affective Response to ad):
 skeptical
 distrustful
 irritated
 uneasy
 interested
 excited
 cheerful
 curious
6. What do think this ad is trying to tell you?

9) Begin Child Interview

1. How many Barbies do you have?
2. Demonstrate/explain how you play with Barbie. (Experience)
3. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements (Low agreement - high agreement 5) (Self concept)
 Barbie gives me confidence.
 When I play with Barbie, I am at ease.
 Barbie helps me express myself.
4. What aspects of Barbie, if any, make you feel good about yourself?
5. What aspects of Barbie, if any, do you think could make girls your age feel badly about themselves?
6. What do you think Barbie would be like if she were a real person? (Perception)
7. Do you want to be like Barbie? Why or why not? (Identification)

8. In what ways do you think you are similar/not similar to Barbie? (Identification)
9. If Barbie were a real person and you had the chance to meet her, what questions would you ask her? What do you think she would say?
10. Is there anyone in your family who you think is like Barbie? In what way? (Perception)
11. If you could change something about Barbie, what would it be and why?

6) Parent and child will work on creating collages from a variety of women's and children's magazines

- "Make a two sided collage."
- Children: "On one half, choose images that represent you. On the other half, choose images that represent Barbie Doll."
- Parents: "On one half, choose images that represent the lessons you want your daughter to learn. On the other, choose images that represent the message Barbie sends."
- After they create the collages, have them explain why they created their collages this way.

Appendix II: Consent Form

Consent Form: Attitudes and Perceptions of Barbie Doll

Date: 12/7/2011

I am an honors student working on my Honors Capstone Thesis at Syracuse University. I am inviting you and your child to voluntarily participate in a research project. The purpose of the study is to gather information regarding your and your child's perception and experiences with Barbie doll. You are selected as a respondent because you and/or your child and the target for Barbie doll.

If you agree to participate, your participation will involve answering a series of questions regarding your experience with Barbie doll and performing an activity. It should take no more than one hour. You may choose not to answer some or all of the questions. Please know that we are NOT seeking any personal information. All responses will remain CONFIDENTIAL and are for research purposes only.

Please note that your voice recorded while you perform the tasks, so that we can observe you as you do the task. These recordings will be heard project personnel, who will transcribe them, and then the tapes will be destroyed after the completion of this project on April 9, 2012. During this period only the principal investigator will have access to these tapes.

You may leave the research session at any time before completing it. There are no known risks from your participation and no direct benefit from your participation is expected.

Only the principal investigator, research team, and my faculty sponsor will have access to the information that you provide. You can obtain further information about the research by contacting me at lcapins@syr.edu or Dr. James Tsao at 315-443-7362.

We thank you for your time.

CONSENT STATEMENT:

I have read the above comments and agree to participate in this experiment as well as give permission for my child to participate. I give permission for myself and my child to be recorded, under the terms outlined above. I understand that if I have any questions or concerns regarding this project I can contact the

investigator at lcgapins@syr.edu or faculty sponsor: Dr. James Tsao at 315- 443-7362

(Participant's signature)

(date)

Appendix III: Data

Parent Results

Parent Commercial Response to “Barbie I Can Be”

(http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D8yVcLO_VVQ)

1. What was your first impression after watching this ad?

-I thought it was adorable. Good messages for kids.

-I like it, thought it was good. It encourages girls to be what they want to be dream about things that are bigger. And to have more depth. Had different professions – pilot, doctor. No men in it interestingly.

-Not expecting it to be for Barbie. Don't make sense to me. I don't think you can aspire to be Barbie like they're implying in this ad. Everything they said, they were making it all tie back into Barbie. All their hopes and dreams and then it's Barbie. Barbie doesn't have anything to do with what those people were saying. Liked what they said, up until they said it was for Barbie. Very conflicting.

-To the mothers. Do you have dreams for your daughter. Here's one way to show them the path. The nostalgia thing, you had Barbies, now look at how you can use this tool that you're comfortable with to help your daughters.

2. Choose 5 words or phrases that describe this advertisement.

-Hopeful. Optimistic. Confidence boosting. Nurturing toward children.

-Encouraging. Positive. Role Model. Mature. Real.

- A lot of Hope. Encouraging. Aspire. Work Hard. Conflicting.

3. How do you feel about Barbie after watching this advertisement.

-That was very wonderful. Counteracts the fashionista/sexy image of Barbie. Insinuates that Barbie is only used so that girls can accomplish anything they want to.

-Better because it represents not what Barbie looks like, but what Barbie is doing with her brain.

-Two ways. Either they (the company) really believe their dolls, just by dressing up a certain way can be role models. Or that they're selling a dream or an image. Kind of makes me angry because Barbie is unrealistic. She is this perfect little plastic person and no one can be that.

4. Please tell us how well you think each of the words listed below describes the ad you have just seen. If you think the word describes the ad extremely well, put a 5; very well, put a 4; fairly well, put a 3; not very well, put a 2; not at all well, put a 1.

For me 5, 5, 1, 5, 5 (4.2)

Irritating 1, 1, 4, 4, 1 (2.2)

Entertaining 5, 4, 2 (3.7)

Meaningful to me 4, 5, 1, 3, 3 (3.2)

Phony 3, 1, 5, 1, 4 (2.8)

Ridiculous 2, 1, 5, 1, 2 (2.2)

Worth remembering 4, 5, 1 (but memorable), 5, 2 (3.4)

Convincing 4, 5, 1, 3, 4 (3.4)

Stupid 2, 1, 5, 1, 2 (2.2)

Bad 1, 1, 4, 1, 1 (1.6)

Honest 3, 5, 1, 5, 1 (3)

Good 4, 5, 4 (well put together), 5, 4 (4.4)

Appropriate 3, 5, 1, 4, 5 (3.6)

Fun 4, 3, 2, 5 (3.5)

5. Yes/No/Maybe how you feel about feel after watching this ad. (Affective Response to ad):

not at all skeptical / very skeptical. Yes Slightly. No, Yes, No, Yes (Yes)

not at all distrustful / very distrustful Yes Slightly, No, Yes, No, Maybe (Maybe)

not at all irritated / very irritated No, No, Yes, No, Maybe, No (No)

not at all uneasy / very uneasy No, No, Yes, Maybe, No (No)

not at all interested /very interested Yes, Yes, No, Yes (Yes)

not at all excited / very excited No, Yes, No, No (No)

not at al cheerful / very cheerful Yes, Yes, No, Yes (Yes)

not at all curious / very curious Yes, Yes, No, No (Maybe)

6. What do you think the main message is of this advertisement?

-Barbies aren't always stereotypical sexy fashionistas. Can inspire little girls and promote careers and dream fulfillment and bright futures.

-That girls can be whatever they want to be.

-Barbie's company believes that they can create a doll with various clothes and children can play with that doll and pretend to be living that role in real life by play acting with that doll. In playing that role, perhaps they would aspire to be that profession.

-Little girls (should have included little boys) can be whatever they want to be. If they don't want to be a helicopter pilot they can be a ballerina

-Gives parents an idea of how to fulfill the dreams of their daughters.

7. Is this message in line with the beliefs you want to instill on your daughter?

-Yes – seemed to promote that whatever they really want to be they have the power to achieve. Showed different types of people, not all scrawny blondes. Weren't all size 0 blondes. More of a broad overview of humanity.

-Yes – it felt like it was asking girls to dream about their future. Being what you want to be. Being true to yourself and not worrying about appearance. About what you can do.

-I don't think there's anything wrong with pretending to take someone's temperature/pretending to play doctor/vet. Because I do think those are fine things to want to aspire to be. But I guess because of the image of Barbie, unrealistic physique and sometimes clothes aren't very modest. Certain parts I don't like and don't want for my children. Play aspect is fine, but image is not. You don't have to be perfect to be a doctor or an artist or all these different things.

-Yes, did really well, until it showed the typical female role of ballerina. Could have chosen non-traditional type role.

- No – I'm more concerned with their character rather than a job or career. Is it saying that I would want to fulfill the dreams of my daughters via Barbie?

Parent Commercial Response to "Barbie Stylin' Salon"

1. What was your first impression after watching this ad?

-Hilarious. Little kids love to play that way. Not deep educational moment. Not instilling dreams of their doctorate but that's fun. Kids love that.

-Barbie's a ding bat. Kind of mixed because if I were a kid I would think that's fun. But as a parent, it's not so great.

-Fun singing – you see Barbie right away. Not masked as something different. Seemed targeted at adults. Brings child in to get their eyes on there. Changing her up, changing her hair so she can go have fun for the night. We're not good enough the way we are. We have to go get fixed up before we go to a party. Hard to reach, perfect, made up image is hard for people to achieve that.

2. Choose 5 words or phrases that describe this advertisement.

-Playful. Silly. Fun. Fashion.

-Dumb. Fun. Simple. Playful. Creative.

-Fun. Fake. Happy. Phony. Sad (at such a young age they're already telling girls you have to get fixed up, have to change the way you are before you go out.) Already trying to say, you're not good enough.

3. How do you feel about Barbie after watching this advertisement.

-She's a toy. Not a role model. Not educational. She's a toy.

-Same – Barbie's ready to party, because now her hair is colored. Just about fun. Surface stuff.

-It's around everywhere, magazines, everywhere. Young children see on cartoons being told already, "you need to change. Do things different to get the most out of this world." Upsetting to think that's the message that this advertisement is trying to say.

4. Please tell us how well you think each of the words listed below describes the ad you have just seen. If you think the word describes the ad extremely well, put a 5; very well, put a 4; fairly well, put a 3; not very well, put a 2; not at all well, put a 1.

For me 1, 1, 1, 1, 1 (1)

Irritating 1, 3, 5, 5, 4 (3.6)

Entertaining 5, 5, 4, 1 (3.8)

Meaningful to me 1, 2, 1, 1, 1 (1.2)

Phony 3, 3, 5, 5, 4 (4)

Ridiculous 3, 3, 5, 5, 4 (4)
 Worth remembering 1, 4, 1, 1, 1 (1.6)
 Convincing 1, 5, 4 (to children), 1, 1 (2.4)
 Stupid 2, 5, 5, 5, 4 (4.2)
 Bad 2, 3, 4, 5, 3 (3.4)
 Honest 1, 5, 1, 1, 1 (1.8)
 Good 2, 4, 1, 1, 2 (2)
 Appropriate 3, 3, 1, 1, 4 (2.4)
 Fun 4, 5, 5, 4 (3.6)

5. Yes/no/maybe, rate how you feel about feel after watching this ad. (Affective Response to ad):
 not at all skeptical / very skeptical Yes, no, yes, yes, Yes (Yes)
 not at all distrustful / very distrustful Yes, no, yes, maybe, yes (Yes)
 not at all irritated / very irritated Yes Slightly, yes, yes, yes, yes (Yes)
 not at all uneasy / very uneasy No, no, yes, yes, no (No)
 not at all interested / very interested No, yes, no, no (No)
 not at all excited / very excited No, no, no, no (No)
 not at al cheerful / very cheerful Yes, yes, no, yes (Yes)
 not at all curious / very curious Yes, yes, no, no (Maybe)

6. What do you think the main message is of this advertisement?

-Barbies are fun. Step into their world and be a playful kid. Try goofy things on them and they don't mind. You can do that.

-You can have fun with Barbie by coloring her hair. And then she gets to go to a party.

-An important part of going out is making changes to who you are and what you look like so you are presentable to go out to be with friends, you have to do something to yourself first.

-Girls should stay home and wash their hair every night. Maybe we would all like to live in a Barbie World.

-Using Barbie to learn how to make yourself beautiful.

7. Is this message in line with the beliefs you want to instill on your daughter?

-Not exactly – not like I'm trying to teach them that's their goal in life. It's playful, it's not opposed. Not in opposition.

-No – It’s shallow. Not meaningful. One aspect of just plain simple fun that is in line. But not key values that I want my daughter to have.

-No.

-No, she doesn’t need to be a Barbie girls in a Barbie world.

-No – my daughters are so beautiful without having to color their hair or fix themselves up like that.

Begin Parent Interview

1. Who buys Barbie for your daughter? How is this decision made?

-I did, some for birthdays, got it if she wanted it/seemed reasonable. Tried to find and purchase dark haired Barbies.

-Grandmother, got it if she wanted it. Gift for birthday or Christmas

-Relatives, me, daughters buy with own money. Made decision sometimes based on seeing an ad that showed how one was unique and different than the dolls they have, helps them visualize a different way of playing.

-I do. Made decision because I played with Barbies, they have friends that played with them, asked for as gifts, sometimes ads. Like that you could change her up, wasn’t just one and done.

-Handed down from sisters. Bought because they asked for it or it was a collectors item. Most are given as gifts.

2. How much of your daughter’s time is spent with Barbie in a week?

-2-4 hours

-5 hours

-7-8 hours (“A lot”)

-2-3 hours

-3 hours

3. What types of scenarios does she usually act out? How does she usually play? (Experience)

-Dress up. Have different careers. Barbie boat, they’d go on cruises. Imaginative play. Sometimes made accessories from scratch.

-Made a house of a bookcase because I didn't want to buy the Barbie house (too expensive). Played house.

-“They've been everything, hairstylists to pig farmers. In a world of their own.”

-Like to play house. Adult Barbies would take care of babies. Family scenarios with little kids. Had a car.

-Family scenarios. Played with children dolls. Go to movies. Had dinner. Skiing. Biking. They'd get lost. Had swimming pool.

4. How do you play Barbies with your daughter?
(Experience)

-Played real life stories. Mom, dad and kids-like their daily life.

-I didn't play with them often. I would have been mom Barbie.

-I'd add weird things that weren't like the commercials they'd see. Have them go bowling, get jobs. “Once I told my daughter that one of her Barbies had scoliosis and she started crying.”

-Didn't really play with them.

-We didn't really play Barbies together. I may have acted out another character.

5. Indicate your level of agreement with the following statements (low agreement 1 – high agreement 5) to the following questions about Mattel and Barbie. (Attitude toward brand trustworthiness and identification)

This brand has a name you can trust. 5, 5, 4, 5, 2 (4.2)

This brand doesn't pretend to be something it isn't. 5, conflicted,
3, 5, 1 (3)
“not sure if message is supposed to be clean or edgy.”

Mattel's Barbie Doll has my daughter's best interest at heart. 1,
1, 2, 2, 1 (1.4)
“Cautious about which to select because I'm concerned
about some that might have immodest clothing.”

Barbie makes a statement about what is important in my
daughter's life. 1, 1, 2, 2, 1, (1.4)

6. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements (Low agreement 1 - high agreement 5) (Self Concept of daughter):

Barbie instills confidence in my daughter. 1, 2, 3, 2, 1 (1.8)

When my daughter plays with Barbie, I am at ease. 4, 5, 4, 4, 4 (4.2)

Barbie plays a critical role in defining my daughter's self-concept. 1, 1, 2, 1, 1 (1.2)

Barbie is an instrument of my daughter's self-expression. 4, 4, 4, 1, 3 (3.2)

7. What aspects of Barbie, if any, make your daughter feel good about herself.

-If it's a basic doll it's possible for her to feel good playing with the doll.

-Fun to pretend she's an athlete or lifeguard or something. Fun to envision the different roles Barbie can have. Fun to change and try on different costumes.

-“I hope/think Barbie does think she can be whatever she wants to be, but she doesn't always make the choices.” Nice that there's a line of young girl dolls for girls to play with. “Barbie needs more professional women, not just beautiful women.”

- [Long pause thinking] None. I don't know that Barbie makes her feel good about herself.

8. Do you think there are any aspects of Barbie that make girls in general feel badly about themselves?

-Yes, figure, so thin, big boobs, long legs, perfect hair. Lipstick on all the time.

-Nobody's as scrawny and built like Barbie. I don't think little girls really care. They don't think “Oh I wanna be like that.”

-Sure - unrealistic body image, clothes if you try the same clothes on you won't look as good as Barbie does. “What is the girl left to think, she can't wear it like Barbie does. “

9. Why do you think Barbie is popular among young girls? (Attitude)

-They love that pretty, perfect, princess idea. They love that ideal of perfection when they're little. Commercial's kind of catchy. She's perky and playful. So many things for her, boyfriend car, van, camper, house things. Great accessories.

-Young children love to do role playing. Imagine by themselves or play acting with doll, pretending. Playing and using imagination is something that's been going on for years. Barbie's another tool.

-She's pretty. The commercials are catchy. She's perky and playful and

-Parents played with them growing up. Friends pass toys around. Easy gift idea for girls around that age.

-It's existed for a long time. Mothers played with the doll and buy it for their daughters.

10. Do you think your daughter/girls in general looks up to Barbie or her image in any way? (Identification)

-No.

-Not really-I don't think my kids think they're going to look like Barbie when they grow up.

-I suppose some girls see the image of Barbie and look up to that.

11. Have you noticed any changes in the way your daughter plays with toys as she gets older? (Identification)

-Yeah, stopped playing with certain things (barbies) as they got older. Switched to American Girl dolls change dolls. As they got older wanted more scenarios for them to enact.

-They lost interest in baby dolls/stuffed animals. Barbie held their interest longer because she grew up with them. Explore and peek into adult world. Could pretend she was going off to college. Can't do that with a baby doll or a robot. "Barbie allows them to peek into a grown up world and just pretend what it would be like."

-No

-Yes, play changed. Barbie was naked at first, and then dressed later on. Tried different things. Got more imaginative as she grew up.

12. If Barbie were a real person and your daughter had the opportunity meet her, what would Barbie say and do?

(Perception)

-Barbie would be cheerful, happy, tell the girls they're beautiful and that they can do whatever they want to and oh by the way if you want beauty tips you want. "Kind of fakey but positive, not super meaningful."

-I think she would be nice. Be like first commercial. Teach them to work hard and do what they're good at. She wouldn't be all scandalous.

-She would be like the ads. Like image mattel is trying to say. She would say "You can be whatever you want to be and you can dream whatever you want to dream and become it." She would be dressed perfectly and have a good figure. Wouldn't be overweight or have bad acne or bad hair. She would look pretty darn close to perfect. Or the image is portrayed by the dolls.

13. If you could change something about Barbie what would it be and why? (Attitude)

-Different Clothes. Different shapes. Different age. She's maybe 21, have one that's 35 that's not so skinny. "One that's more like their mother as opposed to one that's more like their mother."

-Wouldn't change anything. I don't think they're bad.

-Like to see her with a bigger waist. "I would like to see her as a dirty dishwasher blonde hair instead of a bleach blonde hair." Various roles/jobs, nothing wrong with that physician, vet, maybe not model. Shape and image needs to be more average. They don't look like the average person.

-More natural Barbie – more proportional. Not so much sexy clothing.

-More basic dolls. Differentiation between working Barbies vs. party Barbies.

Child Results

Child Commercial Response to "Barbie I Can Be"

(http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D8yVcLO_VVQ)

1. What was your first impression after watching this ad?

-It's more realistic, if it's a supermodel or superstar, not everyone can be that. Pizza chef or vet, people can actually do that. So I think it's more positive.

-I would want to get it and play with it and I'd think it was cool.

-All the different things Barbie had and could do. All the different careers are cool.

- Music is kind of annoying. The girls talk weird and have a high pitched voice.

2. Choose 5 words or phrases that describe this advertisement.

-Fun.

-Cool. Fun. Playful.

-Fun. Cheesy.

-Jumpy. Pop-outey. Bright colors.

3. How do you feel about Barbie after watching this advertisement.

-More on the positive side. Sort of makes me want to buy the doll.

-That's she's a good role model. Kind of inspires kids because 'I can be anything I want to be.'

-It's cool that there are still more still things coming out – costumes.

-Makes me want to play Barbie

4. Please tell us how well you think each of the words listed below describes the ad you have just seen. If you think the word describes the ad extremely well, put a 5; very well, put a 4; fairly well, put a 3; not very well, put a 2; not at all well, put a 1.

For me 1, 5, 4, 4, 4, 5, 1 (3.4)

Irritating 4, 3, 3, 2, 3, 3, 3 (3)

Entertaining 2, 5, 4, 4, 5, 2, 5 (3.9)

Meaningful to me 1, 3, 3, 3, 2, 5, 3 (2.9)

Phony 4, 4, 4, 2, 1, 2, 4 (3)

Ridiculous 4, 1, 3, 1, 3, 4, 5 (3)

Worth remembering 2, 5, 2, 2, 1, 5, 2 (2.7)

Convincing 2, 5, 4, 4, 5, 4, 3 (3.9)

Stupid 2, 3, 1, 2, 4, 2, 2 (2.3)

Bad 3, 1, 2, 1, 5, 3, 1 (2.3)

Honest 2, 4, 1, 4, 5, 1, 4 (3)

Good 3, 5, 4, 5, 5, 3, 3 (3.2)

Appropriate 5, 5, 4, 5, 5, 1, 5 (4.3)

Fun 4, 5, 4, 5, 5, 1, 5 (4.1)

5. On a scale of 1-5 rate how you feel about feel after watching this ad. (Affective Response to ad):
- not at all skeptical / very skeptical no, no, yes, no, no, no, yes (don't know they threw the pizza, don't know how she spun pizza on her finger) (No)
 - not at all distrustful / very distrustful no, no, no, no, no, no, no (No)
 - not at all irritated / very irritated maybe, no, no, no, no, no (No)
 - not at all uneasy / very uneasy no, no, no, no, no, no, no (No)
 - not at all interested / very interested no, no, maybe, maybe, yes, no, yes (No)
 - not at all excited / very excited no, no, maybe, maybe, yes, no, yes (Maybe)
 - not at all cheerful / very cheerful maybe, yes, yes, yes, yes, yes, yes (Yes)
 - not at all curious / very curious no, maybe, yes, no, yes, no, yes (Maybe)

6. What do you think this ad is trying to tell you?

-That you can be whatever you want to be and do whatever you want to do.

-When kids are young they can dream what they want to be and follow their dreams.

-To buy the Barbie.

-Buy the Barbie and have fun.

Child Commercial Response to "Barbie Stylin' Salon"

1. What was your first impression after watching this ad?

-Fun, jingle is fun. Fun to do her hair and make it different colors.

-Cool and I would want to play with it.

-Came out with stuff to do their hair.

-It would be fun to dye their hair.

2. Choose 5 words or phrases that describe this advertisement.

-Fun. Cheerful. Happy.

-Cool. Interesting. Fun.

-Fun. Creative. Childish.

-Really short. Song gets stuck in head. Cheerful. Jumpy

3. How do you feel about Barbie after watching this advertisement.

-Kind of what my mom said. That you have to get ready in order to go out, which is the negative part about her. But positive because it's fun to do her hair and play with her. Instead of doing stuff to your own hair. It's fun to practice on Barbie, when you can't do it to yourself. Girls being stereotypical girls.

-Makes me think that I can (nothing else)

-There's a lot of different things she can be.

-Fun to dye their hair, I would want to play that way.

4. Please tell us how well you think each of the words listed below describes the ad you have just seen. If you think the word describes the ad extremely well, put a 5; very well, put a 4; fairly well, put a 3; not very well, put a 2; not at all well, put a 1.

For me 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 5, 1 (3)

Irritating 2, 3, 1, 2, 4, 2, 1 (2.1)

Entertaining 1, 3, 4, 5, 5, 3, 4 (3.6)

Meaningful to me 1, 1, 3, 2, 3, 5, 3 (2.6)

Phony 2, 3, 2, 3, 4, 3, 4 (can you really dye their hair?) (3)

Ridiculous 2, 4, 2, 2, 3, 2, 2 (2.4)

Worth remembering 2, 2, 1, 2, 2, 5, 3 (2.4)

Convincing 2, 5, 3, 2, 4, 3, 3 (3.1)

Stupid 2, 1, 1, 3, 3, 4, 1 (2.1)

Bad 3, 1, 1, 1, 4, 3, 1 (2)

Honest 3, 4, 3, 1, 2, 1, 4 (2.6)

Good 3, 5, 3, 4, 5, 1, 5 (3.7)

Appropriate 5, 5, 3, 3, 5, 1, 5 (3.9)

Fun 2, 5, 4, 5, 5, 1, 5 (3.9)

5. On a scale of 1-5 rate how you feel about feel after watching this ad. (Affective Response to ad):

not at all skeptical / very skeptical no, no, maybe, no, no, no, yes
(not sure if you can actually dye hair)

not at all distrustful / very distrustful no, no, no, no, no, no, no

(no)

not at all irritated / very irritated no, maybe, no, no, no, no, no
 (no)
 not at all uneasy / very uneasy no, no, no, no, no, no, no (no)
 not at all interested / very interested no, no, yes, maybe, yes, no,
 yes (maybe)
 not at all excited / very excited no, maybe, yes, yes, yes, no, yes
 (yes)
 not at all cheerful / very cheerful maybe, yes, yes, yes, yes, no,
 yes (yes)
 not at all curious / very curious no, maybe, yes, no, yes, no, yes
 (maybe)

6. What do think this ad is trying to tell you?

-You can do her hair, how you want to. How you can't do to yourself. Her hair is long so you can do whatever you want with it; dye it. She's your practice person for what you can't. Fun to dream about how you can style her hair.

-That you can have fun playing with the toy.

-Same thing as the other. Go out and buy the dolls.

-To buy the doll so you can dye their hair.

Begin Child Interview

1. How many Barbies do you have?

-8

-A bag full. 15

-10 girls, 3 boys

-There's lot's. Probably 12-14

-15

-Bucket full. Probably 10 or so.

-They were handed down from sisters. We have a lot. 50-60.

2. Demonstrate/explain how you play with Barbie.
 (Experience)

-I'd play with my sister. Had a house we made. Played house. Someone was mom, someone was the kids.

-Always played with my sister, not alone. We'd play the same storyline. Teenage girls, go out in the cool car with their boyfriends. Go to a pool party. We had the car and a lot of clothes and shoes. We used to like to do her hair a lot so we had brushes. Didn't have that many accessories.

-Usually play with neighbor Ellie. I have my own doll at her house that I play with. Usually play that we live on a farm because she has horses. We each have a horse. We both have kids. Her character has a diner. Mine is a doctor so I go over to give check ups. Pretend we're just out of college and really close friends who live close to each other. Have back stories (her parents died, I have to go to CA) to make it interesting.

-We dress them up in the fashion clothes. Make them walk like models. Eat dinner with family. Bike adventures, car trips. Going to Texas. We sometimes get lost. We're working. Jobs like baby carrying. Friend works at a diner. We have a ranch. Horse gets lost and we have to find it. Bid on horse. It's really fun.

-Barbie says, "Do you wanna go to the other. Other says "Sure I'd totally love to, let's go in my convertible." We had a convertible. An airplane. My favorite was the Barbie elevator that was part of a Barbie house. They all had names.

-I played with a friend or my sister. We'd ask the other to come over to our house and if they wanted to do each other's hair and go shopping. Pick out different clothes and outfits.

-They go swimming. Sometimes the theme is jobs, they all have jobs – hair stylist, clothes designer. There's one where they're in college – they get in fights with each other, miss their boyfriends, or boyfriend goes to college, but they can't see their boyfriends because they have too much homework.

3. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements (Low agreement - high agreement 5) (Self concept)
 Barbie gives me confidence. 3, 3, 3, 2, 1, 2, 4 (confident but not because of Barbie) (2.6)
 When I play with Barbie, I am at ease. 4, 5, 4, 4, 3, 5, 5 (4.2)
 Barbie helps me express myself. 4, 5, 5, 1, 1, 2, 4 (3.1)

4. What aspects of Barbie, if any, make you feel good about yourself?

-I don't know if she does make me feel good about myself.

-I guess there are some ways. I'd like to be kind of like her in some ways.

-I don't think she really makes me feel good about myself.

-No. They don't make me feel bad about myself, but they don't make me feel good.

-The way they're so cheerful. And Fun. Nothing really goes wrong, they're never sad.

-The act of playing with her. Dressing her up and pretending that she is how I would want to be in the future.

-Yes – when I do a good braid in their hair. When I cut their hair and it looks good.

5. What aspects of Barbie, if any, do you think could make girls your age feel badly about themselves?

-Probably. Girls who are not as perfect as Barbie. I really never thought about that way. How they're perfect. Pretty hair, eyes, clothes. Last month I started to think about how she's perfect.

-How she's so skinny. How she looks.

-How pretty she is all the time. She always appears so perfect and can do anything.

-They might think they're not as pretty as Barbie. I don't.

6. What do you think Barbie would be like if she were a real person? (Perception)

-One of those popular cheerleader people. Really pretty.

-Ideal Hollywood person. Tall skinny blonde. What everyone wants to be. Not very much personality. Other people can decide her storyline. She doesn't have a lot to say for herself. Whatever you want her to be she can be.

-Really smart, really cool, really pretty. And tall.

-Pretty. Bleachy long blonde hair. Pretty dress.

-Really popular and cheerful.

-Cheesy. A little dingy, doesn't really know what she's talking about.

-Probably like the popular girl. Maybe kind of bossy. She'd be smart, nice, and pretty.

7. Do you want to be like Barbie? Why or why not?
(Identification)

-Yes, because that's kind of the culture's definition of what's beautiful so part of every girl wants to be like her. But no because I don't want to try to be the stereotype.

-No because I would always have her break the rules when I couldn't. So she didn't have any standards. I don't think I would enjoy that. But that kind of represents what I wish I could have done.

-Kind of. I think they're kind of drama queens so in that way I wouldn't. But I like to dress up and change clothes. Playing with one another.

-No. she's just really skinny and I don't want to be. It's bad to be really really skinny. I don't really like, bleach hair.

-Yes, when I was little. Because she was really pretty. I wanted to be like her when I was little. She had lots of clothes. I don't really want to be like her now. I don't really care about her anymore. I think she's kind of for little kids.

-I did. She was always really pretty, always had best clothes and really long hair. Not anymore because she seems a little too materialistic. I wouldn't really dress like how they make Barbie dress now.

-I've never thought about being a Barbie. Maybe. But they have annoying little sisters in my game.

8. In what ways do you think you are similar/not similar to Barbie? (Identification)

-When I think of Barbie I think tall, skinny, blonde, tan. I'm pretty much the opposite of all of those. Maybe not all. But most.

-I'm different in that she had freedom and could do whatever she wanted. Didn't have rules and regulations. Could kind of go out whenever and with whoever she wanted. I had parents who told me what I had to do. She didn't ever have to go to school.

-Similar because I really like to dress up and change clothes all the time. Different because I'm not very tall, there's a lot of things. I play that they're a lot older and that they have a different lifestyle. I like to play

that they have a different lifestyle than I do just to see what it would be like to be a different person in my own imagination. I guess I don't really relate them to me very much.

-I'm similar because I'm friendly and happy. Not similar because I'm not always so cheerful and happy and wanting to go do stuff.

-I'm similar because I'm friendly. Not similar because I don't have as many clothes and not really obsessed with fashion. Not always changing my hair.

-Not similar because I don't have a boyfriend and my Barbie does. I have long hair like some of my Barbies. I don't wear high heels but Barbie does.

9. If Barbie were a real person and you had the chance to meet her, what questions would you ask her? What do you think she would say?

-“You can do anything you want to do. You can do anything in the world. Just live your dream.” I would ask her (I wouldn't want to be mean to her or anything) but I would ask “Why is being perfect so cool?”

-I'd ask how she is so happy all the time. She would say something really cheesy like “You just gotta put yourself out there and be nice.” She'd say, “You're so pretty” and try to make you feel good.

-I'd ask where she got all her materials (accessories). I think she would say something really cheesy and trying to be inspirational.

-“How did you get so famous.” “What is your job.” “Are you married?” “Do you have kids?” She would respond “She would have husband and kids because she's nice to people.” She would say she became famous by modeling. And that she loves the show that I'm hosting.

10. Is there anyone in your family who you think is like Barbie? In what way? (Perception)

-I can't think of anyone.

-When I was little, my sister because I always wanted to be like her. I compared her to the older sister type. Kind of like a role model.

-I have a cousin who likes to dress up and kind of acts like Barbie. She's really smart and she dresses up. I think she's really pretty. She's older than me.

-No.

-Maggie (older cousin) – because she loves make up and has all the good clothes and is really cheerful.

-4- year old cousin – because she wants to be like Barbie. Likes changing hair and having jewelry and dresses.

-My teenage sisters because Barbie is a teenager when I play.

11. If you could change something about Barbie, what would it be and why?

-She's super skinny and bleach blonde hair. Make her not perfect. Give her a big huge zit on her forehead.

-I think she's perfect. I probably wouldn't change anything about her because kids like her the way she is.

-I'd change that she wouldn't be portrayed as the same look every time. Always has the same look/face. Looks the same, just dressed differently. I'd give her different features. Give her a different height to appeal to kids that are short.

-Some have frizzy hair. They should make their hair good from the beginning because it's impossible to brush it otherwise.

Children's Collage Results

Represents Barbie

-“She has pretty blonde hair and a pretty nose and long eyelashes. She always has red lips. She has a pretty dress and long wavy hair. This looks like a Barbie shoe. She always has platinum blonde hair.”

-“I put the word sunny because Barbies are all sunny and happy and it's always summer in their world. I put this shoe because it's really girly. I put this lady relaxing on a lounge chair on the beach. And they party, so I put the word party. These Barbies are at a hair salon. And the bunny because it's a gentle animal that a lot of girls like. I put the jewel there because it's pretty and Barbies are pretty. I put the [martini] glass there because it was colorful and it added to the look.”

-“I put pretty because she's pretty. And fashion and glam because she's really fashionable. And thin because she's really thin. Inspiration because she seems like she's kind of an inspiration to some girls. I put clothes, a purse, and makeup because she has a lot of those things. Perfect, because she is. Different types of girls because you can make her be whatever you want.”

-“I put the word glamour because she’s so glamorous. She really likes makeup so I wrote down makeup girl. She’s always happy. She’s really pretty and...hot. Always wants kids to dream big. She’s cheesy, dumb, and cheerful. Did a picture of a girl with perfect hair. She’s a girly girl. She’s boy crazy. And she’s perfect. She’s inspirational. A role model. Beautiful. Fashionista. Friendly and skinny.”

-“Just has makeup and the hair things. A shoe for clothing because that’s basically what I think of when I think of her. Just fashion and the color pink. Just makeup and shoes.

-“I put a picture of color because I think they’re so colorful and bright. They like to show their personality really well. I put creative down and the color pink.”

-“For Barbie I think of glamour and festive. The main color I think of is pink so I have a lot of pink on there. Fashion. And rich because she has so many clothes.”

Represents You

-“I love flowers. And the colors green and blue. I love winter. And I love to swim. And I love summer.”

-“I chose the frog because I like touching them and they’re really fun to play with. Soccer ball – because I love soccer. And horses because when I went to my cousins house I rode her horse and it was fun. I like this kind of dog. The [tennis] shoe is really cool looking. I love the Geico commercials. Kermit the frog is funny. I made this guy wear a cheetah pattern and I cut out the cheetah hat for him to wear.”

-“I chose holidays because I like the holidays and Christmas. Then athlete and volleyball because I like to play volleyball. I think I’m helpful to others and I try to be fun. I like to travel to Florida and my cabin. I try to be hopeful and I try to work hard. I have a lot of love around me. And a picture of friends because I like to hang out with friends.”

-“I wrote down basketball, because I like to play basketball. I wrote down athletic. Wrote down fun, friendly. I like the holiday season. I’m loving and helping. And different.”

-“Eiffel Tower because when we went to Europe that was one of my favorite things. Shoes [tennis shoes] and the golf ball for sports. I spend a lot of time doing that [playing sports]. Hat and dress and sunglasses for fashion and clothes because those are fun.”

-“I like clothes. And purses and shoes and scarves. Like my sisters. I like to be creative. I like to play soccer and I like school. I’m Christian. My sister likes

Selena Gomez and Taylor Swift and I really like to be like her so I put those on there.”

-“This book says travel. When we went to Europe I spent a lot of time writing in my journal. Books for school. Music because I like music. Hunger Games because I just finished reading the book. An iPhone because I have an iPod and a phone, so combine them. Coach because I really like purses and I’ve been to NY a few times. Scarves because I really like wearing them. Smiling because I really like to smile.”

Parents’ Collage Results

Lessons from Barbie

-“Great depiction of Barbie, with a teeny weeny waist and long hair. She looks like a mannequin. She looks like she’s not real. I’m sure there’s a lot of computer editing. This is the image: the unattainable. A list style because she’s always dressed to the nines. Always has the right style. High heeled shoes because she’s always wearing heels.”

-“The Barbie one is not very real. Barbie is a toy. I picked a picture of a guy playing with the people because you can make them do whatever you want. A Barbie plane would be ridiculous and Barbie outfits are sometimes ridiculous and the Barbie image is sort of ridiculous and they can have any kind of career. But it’s not real. It’s pretend.”

-“This is what I think a real life Barbie would look like. [Skinny blonde, little red dress.] Fashion, my glamorous life, beauty, skinny girl. Dingy. Fake. Jewels. Happy. Idea. And Ken.”

-“I just found the one picture for what Barbie represents [Blonde model with pink lips and fingernails]. It says ‘Oops I smudged my mani on the way out the door’ that’s what Barbie kind of represents to me; just appearances with that.”

Lessons for your daughter

-“Tried to find realistic looking pictures of people when they grow up. The hair is not bleach blonde. It’s various shades of brown and blonde. They wear it up and down and sometimes it’s not perfect. Being full of joy, I want them to have an inner joy. Believe in giving because I want them to be giving people. I want them to use their brain in whatever field they go into, if it’s solving problems in business or environmental challenges. I like them to be crafty and figure out ways to do things themselves rather than always just buying something. Live for family – want them to be family focused rather than career driven. There’s a time to be career driven, but when you decide to start a family that needs to be the top priority. Artistry – taking pictures and seeing God’s creation around us.”

-“Here’s a mind filling up with knowledge. Here’s a more sensible meal and a more sensible body. Nice happy family. This was all playful but that got all covered up with all the sensible.”

-“This is a person being healthy, she’s stretching before she goes running. A girl saving money for the future. Friendships. Dream bigger. Be comfortable with who you are. Added volunteering. I want you to be happy, I want you to stay healthy, I want you to go to school. Family is important, having relationships with people. This is traveling, a picture of Venice.”

-“I have healthy food and exercise. Definitely Christianity. Family and home and being healthy are important. I want them to be healthy inside and out.”

Summary of Capstone Project

Mattel's Barbie Doll is an icon in American Society (Rogers, 1999). Due to her wide public recognition, she has a complicated role in society. First, she is a toy. Young children (usually girls) enjoy crafting imaginative play stories using Barbie as a character. She has a role as a form mediated content because of her extensive promotional and marketing accessories (product lines, movies, magazines, press coverage etc.). This complicated role becomes controversial when one considers the messages the doll sends. Barbie communicates a variety of complicated messages: her unattainable body; role as a single, working woman; fashion model image; experience in nearly every possible career; and a slew of other messages that appear with each new release of a doll. Since an impressionable target (individuals who buy and/or use the doll) receives these controversial messages, it is important to understand exactly what the impacts are on young individuals and their families.

Barbie has been analyzed and dissected by individuals, the media, and scholars. Many conclusions have been drawn, further complicating the meaning of the messages that the doll sends. Furthermore, in order to inform my future as an influencer of mediated content, I must discover for myself what my own ethical boundaries are. The objective of this research is to determine Barbie Doll's effects on her audience's knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors.

There are many theories regarding the effects of media and mediated content. These theories have been researched within specific parameters, but can be applied to a variety of different subjects, including Barbie. Cultural icon theory

says that Barbie has transformed into an icon, indicated by the social worlds that have built up around the doll (Rogers, 1999; Stern 1998). The agenda setting and framing theory says that media plays a role in determining what is important in a society (Brown, 2002). The third person theory says that people believe the media has a greater effect on other people (Davison, 1983). Cultivation theory (perhaps the most relevant to this study) says that the more individuals are exposed to media content, the more they believe the content to be a representation of real life (Heintz-Knowles, 2002; Brown, 1999). Social learning theory predicts that media affects behaviors when a strong identification with the media model occurs and people, as a result, imitate the behaviors they see in media (Brown, 2002). These theories help predict the effects of Barbie because all of the theories have an impact on what audiences know, believe, and how they behave as a result of the doll.

In order to have a thorough understanding of the academic interpretation of Barbie's societal role, a literature review will discuss what existing effects of Barbie have been uncovered. The review indicates themes with respect to Barbie's body as a commodity (Rogers, 1999; Stern 1998; Habedank 2012), the purpose of play in a child's life (Ferguson 2006; Habedank, 2012; Henry, 1965; Rogers, 1999; Kuther & McDonald, 2004), Barbie's role in causing heightened body expectations (Toffoletti, 2007; Rogers, 1999; Stern, 1999; Dittmar et. al., 2006; Kuther & McDonald, 2004), and discussion of causes and effects of body dissatisfaction (Dittmar et. al., 2006; Jalees & Majid, 2009). These form the groundwork for the complex discussion surrounding Barbie. As a commodity,

individuals essentially “buy in” to all the different aspects of her appearance. As a toy, Barbie plays an important role in helping children imagine and develop. She has the potential to redefine what we believe is “real” in our society and heighten body expectations. Lastly, a variety of studies (all of which vary in their scope and objective) suggest that Barbie does impact body dissatisfaction. The literature review indicates Barbie’s complicated role in society but does not confirm whether her impact is positive or negative.

The literature review reveals the existing discussion surrounding Barbie doll, however, the only way to determine the exact implications is through interaction with the users and buyers of the doll. This study focuses on primary research into minds of young girls and their mothers. One-on-one interviews were conducted to gauge perceptions of the doll. Both were asked to respond to several advertisements to Barbie doll (directed both towards children and to adults). Then, the respondents were asked to respond to a series of questions regarding their experiences with the doll. Finally, respondents created collages. One represented themselves or the lessons parents wanted their daughters to learn, the other represented Barbie. These methods led to a variety of themes pertaining to the knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors parents and children hold about Barbie.

These research methods were selected due to the intimate nature of the product. Interviews allowed for respondents to openly discuss their thoughts and feelings with the moderator. Responding to advertisements allowed respondents to immediately react to Barbie as mediated content. Collage creation effectively revealed sub-conscious effects of the doll that were not evident in direct analytical

responses. The collages allowed respondents to form free associations of themselves and Barbie, to macro level themes.

This research is significant because it confronts the ethical gray area that surrounds advertising to vulnerable populations, such as children. Barbie is a controversial product and previous research indicates that there are potentially harmful impacts on individuals and society as a result of experiences with the doll. There is also research suggesting her positive role in girls' lives. While the product is perfectly legal, that does not necessarily mean that it is ethical or acceptable to market a doll that potentially causes body dissatisfaction, a distorted perception of reality, and unrealistic expectations to someone who is not fully prepared for its consequences.

Primary research themes suggested that Barbie's message is even more complicated than previously thought. She impacts knowledge because her message is heavily based on appearance what the doll looks like. What young girls and their parents know about Barbie is grounded in what she looks like. She impacts attitudes of parents and children in different ways. Parents believe that Barbie's message is superficial and that the doll could not possibly instill values in their daughter. Children believe that Barbie is a role model during a critical period in their lives, although there are few ways in which they can identify with the doll. In terms of behaviors, few long-term behaviors as an effect of the doll have yet to be discovered. However, in the short term, play behaviors with the doll are largely positive for young girls. The study also found that mothers have

little to no role in Barbie's world. These conclusions have a variety of implications on society that are both positive and negative.

This project uncovers previously undiscovered themes and discussions surrounding Barbie doll. The results complicate the themes and expand upon topics within the literature review. The research can be used as a framework for further discussion on the doll and how these new themes can continue to be interpreted by scholars. This study can be used as a base for marketers to understand how their actions affect young girls and their families. It also offers insight into how marketers may transform the doll and her message to play a positive role in the development of young girls.