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Barbie: A Negative Role Model

As decades have passed, Barbie has been every little girl’s favorite doll. Barbie’s long blonde locks, slim figure, and flawless facial structure appeal to every young girl who yearns for this doll. Though this doll is stunning in the eyes of many, she is a negative role model for young girls because of her unrealistic beauty standards and choice of provocative clothing.

The Barbie doll functions as a negative role model for young girls as a result of her unrealistic and unattainable beauty standards. Barbie has long drawn criticism for her unrealistic beauty (Crosley 78). For example, if Barbie were an actual person, she would be 5 foot 9 inches tall, and have a 39-inch bust, an 18-inch waist, 33-inch hips, and a size 3 shoe (Maine 3). Incidentally, the manufacturers of Barbie consider these dimensions those of “a full-figured woman” (Maine 12). Also, Barbie maintains a weight of 110 pounds (Maine 14). Moreover, if Barbie were a real woman, she would only be able to walk on all fours (Maine 13).

Unfortunately, these unrealistic and unattainable beauty standards create problems for young girls ages three to twelve, the demographic targeted by the manufacturer of Barbie (Maine 14). To illustrate, Slumber Party Barbie was introduced in 1965 (Maine 13). In the Slumber Party Barbie packaging, a bathroom scale permanently set at 110 pounds and a book entitled *How to Lose Weight* were included (Maine 13). Within the book, the directions read, “Don’t Eat” (Maine 13). Moreover, girls exposed to this Barbie doll reported lower body-esteem and greater desire for a thinner body shape than girls who had not seen this doll (Rogers 1). Currently, 99% of young girls ages three to ten own at least one Barbie doll (Rogers 20). What negative messages do these girls receive (subliminally or otherwise) from the Barbie dolls with which they play?

The Barbie doll may appear to have an innocent wardrobe, but it is really provocative, another characteristic that makes this doll a negative role model for young girls. When the Barbie doll was launched in 1959, the doll was wearing a tiny one-piece swimsuit and was recommended for girls ages three and older (Rogers 50). Over the past few decades, Barbie’s outfit of choice has generally had a sexual connotation. For instance, children and teens who had the chance to rate Barbie based on her newest short film, *Barbie: A Fashion Fairytale*, often referred to her with words suggesting “sexual content” as a direct result of the revealing clothing that she wore in the film (*Barbie: A Fashion Fairytale*). In addition, I believe that the Barbie doll illustrates inappropriate clothing when she wears short dresses and very high stilettos. In a photo that I found on *Google*, she is wearing a very short pink-striped dress with ankle-breaker heels (“What if Barbie”). These fashion choices probably leave at least some young girls with the image of the Barbie doll as a provocative individual.

In conclusion, the Barbie doll has become an icon to many young girls. This doll has striking features, a great body, and a lifestyle of which many are envious, but she is a negative role model for young girls due to her unrealistic and unattainable beauty standards and her provocative clothing. Therefore, I believe that young girls should not play with Barbie dolls because they negatively portray the average woman and may influence some young girls to become actual Barbie dolls in real life.

Works Cited

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