

# Chapter 8

## Designing Against Hypersexualized Defaults: Trust, Credibility, and Ethical Implications in AI-Generated Avatars on Social Media

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### **ABSTRACT**

*This chapter addresses the proliferation of AI generated avatars on social media and the tendency of generative systems to reproduce hypersexualized femininity . Adopting a two layer defaults framework the authors analyze how synthetic defaults stemming from model priors and algorithmic defaults driven by platform visibility regimes jointly incentivize eroticized portrayals that undermine credibility . To proffer a practical alternative this chapter documents the design of Alicia which is a counter default avatar created through a two round Delphi study with seventeen*

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*experts . The study translates consensus into operational constraints such as functional styling and adult age coding and implements a consistency pipeline to resist identity drift . By mapping these decisions to relational outcomes the authors argue that resisting hypersexualization is a necessary condition for ethical relationship building in synthetic environments.*

## **INTRODUCTION: HYPERSEXUALIZED DEFAULTS AS A RELATIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE**

AI-generated avatars and virtual influencers are becoming increasingly visible actors in social media ecosystems, taking on roles traditionally associated with human creators: performing identity, narrating everyday life, endorsing brands, and sustaining follower engagement through seemingly personal and consistent presence. This shift matters for relationship building because audiences can develop parasocial relationships with mediated personas, and these bonds can influence attitudes and behavioral intentions. Research on influencer environments shows that parasocial relationships are associated with outcomes such as purchase intention and electronic word of mouth, while also interacting with persuasion knowledge (Hwang & Zhang, 2018). In the specific case of virtual influencers, recent work suggests that anthropomorphic indicators (e.g., perceived humanness, attractiveness, eeriness) and perceived autonomy shape parasocial relationship strength and related evaluations (Liu & Wang, 2025).

However, as AI avatars become more common, their design choices increasingly participate in and potentially intensify long standing problems of gendered representation online. Many feminine coded avatar depictions converge toward a narrow template: youthful appearance, idealized proportions, polished styling, and camera framing that emphasizes sexualized markers. In this chapter, these recurring patterns are conceptualized as hypersexualized defaults: outcomes that become easy to produce and easy to amplify due to the combined pull of generative model priors, cultural beauty/sexuality, and platform visibility incentives.

### **AI-Generated Avatars in Social Media and the Normalization of Default Femininity**

The normalization of default femininity in AI avatar culture is best understood as a platformed phenomenon. Social media visibility is uneven and often experienced as algorithmically governed, encouraging creators to interpret platforms as having implicit rules that reward some forms of self presentation over others (Bucher, 2012; Cotter, 2019). In parallel, platformization literature argues that cultural production

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