



Sexually Related Content on Television and Adolescents of Color: Media Theory, Physiological Development, and Psychological Impact

Enid Gruber; Helaine Thau

The Journal of Negro Education, Vol. 72, No. 4, Commercialism in the Lives of Children and Youth of Color: Education and Other Socialization Contexts. (Autumn, 2003), pp. 438-456.

Stable URL:

<http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0022-2984%28200323%2972%3A4%3C438%3ASRCOTA%3E2.0.CO%3B2-Q>

The Journal of Negro Education is currently published by Journal of Negro Education.

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/about/terms.html>. JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use provides, in part, that unless you have obtained prior permission, you may not download an entire issue of a journal or multiple copies of articles, and you may use content in the JSTOR archive only for your personal, non-commercial use.

Please contact the publisher regarding any further use of this work. Publisher contact information may be obtained at <http://www.jstor.org/journals/jne.html>.

Each copy of any part of a JSTOR transmission must contain the same copyright notice that appears on the screen or printed page of such transmission.

The JSTOR Archive is a trusted digital repository providing for long-term preservation and access to leading academic journals and scholarly literature from around the world. The Archive is supported by libraries, scholarly societies, publishers, and foundations. It is an initiative of JSTOR, a not-for-profit organization with a mission to help the scholarly community take advantage of advances in technology. For more information regarding JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

*Sexually Related Content on Television and Adolescents of Color: Media Theory, Physiological Development, and Psychological Impact**

Enid Gruber and Helaine Thau

This review examines differential impact of sexual content in the television media on adolescents of color. Drawing from available evidence in media use theory and content analyses, physiological development, and psychological impact, we argue that adolescents of color may be more vulnerable to sexual media messages and the presumed negative consequences for their sexual beliefs, attitudes, and engagement in sexual behaviors. The developmental tasks of the adolescent period may place adolescents of color at increased risk due to earlier pubertal development, greater desire for acquiring sexual and health information, and the need to identify role models to support identity development.

Despite rapid technological changes and new entertainment media products available in the marketplace—despite the pervasiveness of computers, handheld devices, the Internet, CD and DVD players, MP3 devices, and the like—American adolescents still spend more time in front of televisions than in using any other form of entertainment media (Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation/Children Now, 1999). Between the ages of 8 and 18, American children are exposed on average to almost 8 hours of media each day, more than 40% through television. Among parents, educators, physicians, and public health personnel, there is a concomitant concern with the nature of the content available on television, especially sexually related content. Researchers have documented the increased prevalence of sexual communication and more explicit visual portrayals of sexual behavior in televised media (Kunkel et al., 1999). This more sexualized television fare has gained attention at a time when rates of adolescent pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections remain unacceptably high (Center for Disease Control [CDC], 1995, 1998; Fleming, 1996; Ozer, Brindis, Millstein, Knopf, & Irwin, 1998). Consequently, it seems natural to question whether the values and behaviors presented in public entertainment media are having an unhealthy impact on the children and adolescents who consume them in such large quantities.

The evidence also suggests that African American and Hispanic youth have higher rates of daily media exposure than Whites do, as well as higher percentages of youth who consume in excess of seven hours of media each day (Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation/Children Now, 1999). On average, these youth spend over an hour a day more than White

*This work was partially supported by the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development grant RO1-HD38906, "Adolescent Sexuality and Television." Our thanks to Joel Grube, Ph.D., principal investigator, for his support, and Lisa Harris for her clerical and research efforts.

adolescents watching television. Although sexual content in the television media has the potential to affect any age group, adolescents may be a particularly vulnerable population because adolescence is a critical developmental period when gender roles, sexual attitudes, and sexual behaviors are being shaped (Committee on Communications, 1995). If adolescents of color are more likely to be exposed to sexually related television content due to higher rates of media use, then it seems reasonable to question whether they would be more vulnerable to the potentially negative consequences of that exposure.

This review will attempt to examine the question of differential impact of sexual content in the television media on adolescents of color. Drawing from available evidence in media use theory and content analyses, physiological development, and psychological impact, we will attempt to argue that adolescents of color may be more vulnerable to sexual media messages and the presumed negative consequences for their sexual beliefs, attitudes, and engagement in sexual behaviors.

Prevalence of Sexual Content in Television

Analyses of the content of broadcast television programming indicate that, on average, adolescent viewers see more than 140 incidents of sexual behavior on prime-time network television each week (Louis Harris & Associates, 1988), with portrayals of 3 to 4 times as many sexual activities occurring between unmarried partners as between spouses (Greenberg et al., 1993). In addition, as much as 80% of all movies shown on network or cable television stations have sexual content (Kunkel et al., 1999). While adolescents may be exposed to sexual content on television through the depiction of sexual behavior, provocative clothing or gestures, disrobing or degrees of nudity, it is much more likely that they will hear talk about sex than see visual depictions of it. An analysis of a composite week of broadcast programming in 1999 indicated that of the 56% of programs that contained some form of sexual content, more than half included a verbal exchange about sex (i.e., comments about a character's own or other's sexual interests; talk about intercourse that has occurred; flirting or sexual overtures; sexual innuendo; sexual advice) as compared to only 23% that actually presented instances of sexually related behavior (Kunkel et al., 1999).

The same can be said for music videos, a staple of the adolescent media diet: roughly 6 out of 10 videos portray sexual feelings and impulses through lyrics, and a substantial minority display provocative clothing and sexually suggestive body movements (Baxter, DeRiemer, Landini, Leslie, & Singletary, 1985). Other research documents types of sexual dress and behaviors depicted in music videos, including sexual dancing, scant clothing, heavy cleavage, fondling, sex talk, and simulations of oral sex, masturbation, and intercourse (Jones, 1997). These findings indicate that sexually suggestive features are present throughout the music field, even in Country and Western music videos, although fondling, sex talk, and simulated sexual activity were most common in the Hip-Hop and Rap categories, which are more likely to appeal to minority adolescents.

Trend research indicates that over the past two decades, sexual talk and behavior have become more common as well as more explicit on prime-time television (Huston, Wartella, & Donnerstein, 1998). Adolescents now have greater access to R- and X-rated movies through pay TV channels and videotape rentals. Soap opera storylines have also become increasingly sexual (Greenberg & Woods, 1999), with romantic subplots involving teen-aged characters to draw in adolescent and young adult audiences. Sex is an increasingly popular topic on the talk show circuit, and the newer genre of reality TV often deals with explicitly sexual topics and interactions. Overall, content-based research indicates that adolescents are exposed to escalating levels of sexually related content in American televi-

sion and related media, conveying messages often counter to the sexual values of their elders and the larger society.

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND MEDIA THEORY

While it is commonly assumed that television conveys messages that influence children's values and expectations about the larger world and how they should behave in it, there is little empirical research on the impact of sexual content (Gruber & Grube, 2000; Huston et al., 1998). Television's influence can be examined through visual, nonverbal communications as well as verbal interactions, but causation is difficult to prove with a medium that is so pervasive.

There is some evidence that television viewing may have an effect on the development of children's ability to decode and reproduce nonverbal communication, especially emotional expressions. Coates and Feldman (1995) report that children in grades 2 to 6 who view greater quantities of television (i.e., 10 hours per week) are less skilled than lighter viewers at regulating their personal expressions of emotion to others. This may result in lower levels of social competence. School-age children who are more frequent television consumers also show less complexity in their understanding of how nonverbal emotional displays of others may be interpreted (Feldman, Coates, & Spielman, 1996), making them less likely to comprehend conflicts between discrepant cues. Since television tends to present a highly simplistic view of emotional life, heavy TV viewing may also consequently contribute to an inaccurate belief that television's depictions of emotions and behaviors are realistic representations of how the world works.

Cultivation theory (Brown, 1993; Brown & Steele, 1995; Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, & Signorielli, 1986) suggests that frequent viewing increases the likelihood of the adoption of expressed values and beliefs that will ultimately alter actual behavior. When applied to children's television consumption, it relies on the concept that higher rates of viewing should bring about greater changes in values, beliefs, and resulting behaviors. In regards to viewing sexual content, some researchers have suggested that greater exposure should lead to greater acceptance of narrow gender stereotypes (Walsh-Childers & Brown, 1993). But other evidence suggests that exposure to media content is not equivalent to paying attention to that content (Ward & Rivadeneyra, 1999), especially in an adolescent population where multiple media consumption is common and television use acts as a background to other activities like homework or eating. Research into the impact of televised alcohol advertising (Grube & Wallack, 1994) suggests that level of attention and emotional response can mediate the influence of a message, as can level of identification with the communicator.

Social learning theory (Bandura, 1977, 1986; Newmark-Sztainer, 1999; Ward & Rivadeneyra, 1999) posits that people learn from observing others' behavior and will practice those behaviors if rewarded and reinforced. When applied to sexual television content, adolescents are assumed to observe sexual values and practices that appear to be rewarded by greater social popularity with the opposite sex. Consequently, adolescent viewers would be encouraged to embrace these values and try to emulate the behaviors to gain social acceptance with peers. Another view suggests that exposure to sexual content induces emotional and physiological arousal requiring response or expression that may be associated with cognitive scripts or schemas of behavior (Huston et al., 1998). From this theoretical stance, televised sexual content may induce adolescents to follow stereotypical sexual scripts emphasizing male dominance, female submission, and the primacy of sexual attractiveness.

Several of these theories have had support in the area of exposure to violence in the media (Clark, 1993; Comstock, 1991; Eron, 1995; Rich, Woods, Goodman, Emans, & Durant, 1998) where the majority of media research has been conducted. Sexual activity, however, is not learned by observation and modeled in the same sense as aggression or violence. Sexual activity is more reliant on verbal interchange and agreement between partners whereas violence may be random, silent, and independently initiated. In almost every culture, sexual behavior is considered normative and acceptable for adults, and has positive social values attached to it (i.e., reciprocation of affection, marriage, having a family), as well as negative ones (i.e., unwanted pregnancy, unwed parenthood, sexually transmitted disease). In contrast, violence is usually non-normative and conveys less socially accepted values. Thus, it is questionable the extent to which theory and findings on the impact of media violence can be applied to sexual content in media (Gruber & Grube, 2000).

Adolescent Receptivity to Media Messages

Adolescence is a key period of development for self-concept, gender roles, sexual attitudes, and practices (Committee on Communications, 1995). Growing awareness of the larger society and their place in it feeds adolescents' desire to experience new ideas and activities, and to frame a persona not cast in their parents' image. Television and other entertainment media are then readily available sources for learning and behavioral modeling. Survey data show that adolescents' access to and use of media as sources of information are substantial. In one national study (Roberts, Foehr, Rideout, & Brodie, 1999) 9 out of 10 American children reported living in homes with 2 or more television sets, 97% had videocassette recorders (VCRs), 75% had access to cable television, and more than half had a TV in their own room. Further, more than 80% of adolescents report that their peers find out "some" or "a lot" about issues like sex, drugs, and violence from TV shows, movies, and other entertainment media, with 10% of teens surveyed acknowledging that they have learned more about AIDS from these media sources than from their parents, school personnel, religious clergy, or friends (Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation/Children Now, 1999).

Early adolescence is a time when children move toward formal operational thinking including thought that is more abstract and complex reasoning abilities (Blos, 1979; Kohlberg, 1976). These newly acquired skills in mental agility enable the adolescent to comprehend more advanced conceptual ideas involving the interpretation of mixed messages such as metaphor, sarcasm, and satire (Sternberg & Nigro, 1980), concepts to which they are exposed repeatedly during television viewing. Further, adolescents are also beginning to develop the capacity for metacognition (Flavell, 1985; Lapsley, 1990). This skill involves "thinking about thinking" in both the capacity to reflect on the content to which they are attending, and in the capacity to consider how they think of others and what others think of them. This newly acquired framework may make adolescents particularly vulnerable to the material they view on television, as they are in a state of cognitive developmental flux and are primed to absorb the material they witness in their television viewing. Adolescents are endeavoring to form more solid, developed conceptions of themselves and may use their television viewing as a modality for that identity formation.

In addition, adolescents begin to have more varied attention skills to facilitate focusing on relevant information while screening out irrelevant information (Casteel, 1993). As part of this process, adolescents acquire the capacity for divided attention, in which they engage in simultaneous activities, for example, watching television and doing homework. Because this is a newly emerging skill, it is likely that many young adolescents have not refined the capacity to pay divided attention. If the television is on, they will tend to

listen with most of their attention capacity. The ability to pay divided attention places the adolescent at greater risk for acquiring messages from television exposure as it increases the likelihood that even background data may be absorbed into the consciousness of receptive young people.

What is done with acquired information is the crux of behavioral decision theory (Beyth-Marom, Austin, Fischhoff, Palmgren, & Jacobs-Quadrel, 1993; Beyth-Marom & Fischhoff, 1997; Byrnes, Miller, & Reynolds, 1999) which posits that adolescents are beginning to develop critical thinking in which they make judgments about informational meanings and how it relates to other information encoded in memory. Thus, as the adolescent developmentally progresses, he or she is better able to think about and consider the media content to which they are exposed. Whereas the younger adolescent engages in more dichotomous thinking, determining that situations are either right or wrong, the older adolescent can consider multiple meanings and gradations of meaning, enabling him or her to formulate more complex thoughts about what they are viewing. Dialectical thought (Basseches, 1984) is the growing awareness that most problems do not have a single solution and that most forms of problem solving must be conducted with crucial pieces of information missing. This skill also does not develop until early adulthood, increasing the probability that adolescents are particularly vulnerable to the information they are exposed to because they are likely to use it as a basis for decision making without the cognitive ability to consider other decision-making pathways.

During this developmental period, there is also an increase in the ability to understand the discrepancy in cues between verbal messages and tone of voice. Examples include sexual innuendoes and double entendres, where the adolescent is progressively able to discern multiple meanings and comes to feel that he or she is "in on the joke" understood by more mature or informed others. If risk is connected to the realization of emerging cognitive skills and drives for identity development, then adolescents will be more attentive—possibly even hyperattentive—to the messages they encounter in their media exposure.

ADOLESCENT DEVELOPMENTAL ISSUES AND MEDIA CONSUMPTION

Age or stage of development may not only influence exposure to, but also comprehension and interpretation of sexual content. Development of more advanced cognitive skills in the adolescent period allow for perspective taking, advanced planning skills, and more nuanced understanding of multiple meanings, sarcasm, and double entendres. In an early study of televised sexual innuendos (Silverman-Watkins & Sprafkin, 1983), 12-year-olds comprehended significantly less than 14- and 16-year-olds. All age groups, however, rated highly explicit innuendoes funnier than less explicit innuendoes. In a qualitative study of the use of sexual media content by adolescents aged 11 to 15 (Brown, White, & Nikopoulou, 1993), girls who were at an earlier stage of development tended to be disinterested whereas more mature young women actively sought out sexual content in the media as a means of "learning the rules, rituals, and skills" (p. 184) of romance and relationships. Other qualitative research has suggested that adolescents' media practice revolves around the identity formation process, providing sexual scripts and role models that teens use to explore possible selves (Steele, 1999).

In recent work on the development of unrealistically thin body ideals and purging behaviors among preadolescent and adolescent girls (e.g., Field, Camargo, Barr-Taylor, Berkey, & Colditz, 1999; Siegel, Yancey, Anehensel, & Schuler, 1999; Tiggemann & Pickering, 1996), the influence of media models is becoming increasingly apparent. Amount of time reported watching soap operas, serial dramas, or movies on television—programs

more likely to show women in stereotyped roles—was positively correlated with body dissatisfaction in Australian adolescent girls (Tiggemann & Pickering, 1996). Extreme thinness as depicted in movie and television portrayals, fashion models, clothing advertisements, and the personal characteristics of popular media personalities are thought to encourage inappropriate early dieting efforts and excessive attention to body image at earlier ages. Field and associates (1999) indicate that 6% of a sample of 9 to 14 year old girls reported “making considerable effort to look like females on television, in movies, or in magazines” (p. 1185). This media influence in turn predicted the use of laxatives or vomiting as methods of weight control in this prospective sample. It is interesting to note that some researchers report a healthier body image among African American girls (Siegel et al., 1999), based on their comfort with more normative African American body types.

These findings suggest that television may strongly influence adolescent girls’ ideals of sexual attractiveness and present compelling models for them to emulate at earlier ages than in prior generations. Indeed, recent television programming has presented a marked increase in adolescent-aged fictional characters that are central figures in storylines or episodes, as compared to earlier seasons when they were largely supporting characters for adult figures and family-oriented situation comedies (e.g., Greenberg & Woods, 1999). Network and cable television producers are targeting a younger population demographic, eager to take advantage of adolescent consumer dollars.

THE INFLUENCE OF GENDER, ETHNICITY, AND MINORITY STATUS

In addition to analyses of television broadcast content, correlation studies have linked sociodemographic factors to adolescents’ viewing comprehension and interpretation of sexual material in the medium. Gender-based research findings indicate that adolescent females choose network TV programming with more sexual content than do adolescent males (Greenberg & Linsagan, 1993) and spend more time watching it (Brown, Greenberg, & Buerkel-Rothfuss, 1993). Late adolescent males are more oriented than females to hardcore sexual content found in sexually explicit music lyrics and X-rated films (Buerkel-Rothfuss, Strouse, Pettey, & Shatzer, 1993). Heavy viewers of both genders are more likely to accept televised sex-role stereotypes as realistic as compared to less frequent viewers (Walsh-Childers & Brown, 1993).

There is some research available comparing media usage by ethnicity or race, but valid comparisons are difficult due to differences in access, language issues, and cultural variation. African American youth have been found to spend more time watching television than White or Hispanic peers, even after controlling for socioeconomic status (Blosser, 1988; Comstock & Cobbey, 1979). Adolescents of color are more likely to report watching television during meals than their White peers (Blosser, 1988) and among urban groups, it is their most frequent leisure activity (Larson, Richards, Sims, & Dworkin, 2001). Higher rates of viewing by African American adolescents, especially of sexually laden soap operas in the afternoon and prime-time hours, makes them more likely to see sexual content than other peers. Black adolescents are more likely to choose fictional programming with African American characters, and perceive those characters to be more realistic than their White peers do (Dates, 1980; Greenberg, 1993). African American and White youth may also find different features of video portrayals salient and disagree on story elements (Brown & Shulze, 1993; Steele, 1999). Similarly, they report watching more R-rated movies with less parental involvement or mediation. In a recent clinical study of sexually active African American adolescent females (Wingood et al., 2001), 30% of the 14- to 18-year-old sample reported exposure to X-rated movies, but no comparable data is available on other ethnic groups.

Social critics and commentators have also weighed in on television's role in American culture and its influence on underrepresented population subgroups. Stroman (1991) argued that television viewing plays an important role in the socialization of African American adolescents by providing knowledge and exposure to a worldview that is often not available to them in their immediate social environment. As an information outlet, this controversial viewpoint implies that television may present role models for aspiration and emulation that negatively affect adolescent attitudes, behaviors, and self-image by depicting unattainable goals or lifestyles. It has been suggested that historically, the television medium perpetuated racist views of American society that excluded people of color, denying minority children realistic portrayals and trivializing their participation in society (Downing, 2002; Gray, 1996). Even when African Americans and Hispanic Americans appear in the media, they often perpetuate racial stereotypes or present lifestyles and experiences that clash with the reality of lives led by most people of color. As such, television may act to differentially influence minority adolescents through variation in exposure, through differential interpretation, and through discriminatory portrayals that may disproportionately harm adolescents of color.

COMPARATIVE DEVELOPMENTAL TRENDS ACROSS ETHNIC GROUPS

Physiological development and its onset and pacing may also have a role in adolescents' attention to media messages. Recent national studies support anecdotal evidence that the onset of puberty is declining in both girls and boys in the United States. Improved nutrition, disease control, and sanitation are all contributors to this secular trend to the extent that we understand it (Eveleth & Tanner, 1990; Steinberg, 2002). In a sample of over 17,000 girls seen in pediatric practices (Herman-Giddens et al., 1997), girls were reported to be entering puberty at significantly younger ages than the standards published 20 years earlier in major medical journals. Further, African American girls were more advanced on all pubertal criteria than White girls were at comparable ages. Their results indicated that African American females entered puberty approximately 1 to 1.5 years earlier than their White peers and began to menstruate approximately 8 months earlier. Specifically, by age 8, almost half of all Black girls had begun pubertal development as compared to only 15% of Whites of the same age.

Similar developmental and ethnic differences have been examined in males. Computed estimates of the development of secondary sexual characteristics in boys from the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey III (NHANES; Herman-Giddens, Wang, & Koch, 2001) also suggest that age of initiation of sexual development has declined precipitously in American boys. This population-based sample representing over 16 million adolescent males between 8 and 19 years of age indicates that boys are significantly taller and heavier than prior NHANES samples and that the mean age of onset of male genital development is 1.5 years earlier than the standard set 30 years ago (Marshall & Tanner, 1970). In ethnic comparisons, as with females, African American males had an earlier average age of pubic hair development and genital growth than White and Mexican American peers. Here, by age 10, more than a third of African American boys had experienced pubic hair development as compared to 10% of White peers and 7% of Mexican American peers.

Pubertal development—the growth of secondary sexual characteristics that herald the change from child to adult—can be a key factor in the way that the family and larger society respond to an adolescent. “Signs of physical maturation,” according to Smith, Udry, and Morris (1985), “result in the individual being perceived as sexually attractive and as a potential sex partner. . . . For both males and females, the interpretation of physical maturation involves a social process in which the individual assumes sexual roles and

develops sexual interests" (p. 184). Thus, this change is reflected in alterations in self-concept. When adolescents search for role models in their development of identity and social presentation, they look for qualities of similarity shared with influential others, such as common geographic origin, ethnic origin, eye or hair color, size, build, activities or interests, style of dress, etc. Another characteristic that may garner adolescent attentiveness to media models may be one's physiological development, a self-assessment that the adolescent's pubertal growth gives him or her greater kinship with attractive, if older, social models. Work with White adolescents (Smith et al., 1985) has suggested that level of pubertal development may be a more reliable predictor of sexual involvement than is age. It would follow from there that the earlier an adolescent develops secondary sexual characteristics, the more vulnerable an adolescent may be to negative or potentially harmful sexual content espoused or depicted by attractive models.

Trends in Sexual Activity among American Adolescents

Examination of available data on American sexual behavior (Smith, 1998) indicates that premarital sexual intercourse became increasingly common over the 20th century, especially in the adolescent age group. By the latter 1980s, more than half of all females and 6 out of 10 males aged 15 to 19 had engaged in premarital sex. Along with increases in intercourse rates, there has been a parallel decline in the average age of first intercourse and a rise in the number of lifetime sexual partners. While some statistical reversals occurred in the 1990s, these small declines still appear to be sputters in the delineation of long-term trends.

When examining ethnic differences (CDC, 1998), African American adolescents are significantly more likely to be sexually experienced (72%) than Hispanic Americans (52%) or Whites (47%). Recent data from a population-based Los Angeles sample (Upchurch, Levy-Storms, Sucoff, & Aneshensel, 1998) also indicates that African American adolescents have an earlier median age of first intercourse (15.8 years) than comparable Whites, Hispanic Americans, or Asian Americans (16.6, 17.0, and 18.1, respectively). Adolescents who have dropped out or do not attend school are 1.5 times more likely to be sexually active than in-school peers and have an earlier age of sexual debut (CDC, 1994a, b). Other recent research (Gates & Sonenstein, 2000; Schuster, Bell, & Kanouse, 1996) suggests that even among adolescent virgins (i.e., those who have not engaged in vaginal intercourse) an estimated 19-39% have experience with other intimate sexual behaviors such as masturbation, fellatio, or cunnilingus that carry risks of sexually transmitted infections.

As sexual activity has become more common among young people, negative consequences have risen as well. Among U.S. female adolescents aged 15-19, 93 per thousand become pregnant resulting in approximately 52 live births per thousand each year (Henshaw, 2001). The 19% of sexually active adolescents who report four or more lifetime sexual partners (CDC, 1995) are also at greater risk for contracting a sexually transmitted disease (STD), including HIV infection, with African American adolescents disproportionately represented among diagnosed cases (Conway et al., 1993; St. Lawrence et al., 1994). Overall, 25% of sexually active teenagers and 13% of all adolescents between the ages of 13 and 19 become infected with an STD each year, representing 3 million cases or about 25% of all new cases reported annually (Ozer et al., 1998). The available data suggest that while early sexual activity and its health and social consequences are pressing issues in the adolescent age group, African American adolescents are again at greatest risk.

DISCUSSION

In the half-century of television's history, we have seen great technological as well as social change that is often reflected back to us through the medium of television. Changes

in sexual mores, issues, and legal rights become the grist of television content, providing insight into popular culture, public opinion, and changing cultural values. Occasionally, television content may even nudge along social change by spotlighting issues and raising public awareness. To examine television's content is to highlight many of the social transitions that have occurred and been disseminated throughout American society. We have attempted to present a brief overview of selected programming, events, and sexual statistics in Table 1 covering the years 1950 through 2000, but make no claim as to its comprehensiveness. It provides a means of comparing trends in television programming and sexual content, selected social events that impacted on sexual behavior and attitudes in America, and trends in adolescent pregnancy and out of wedlock birthrates.

For instance, 1950s situation comedy brought us *I Love Lucy*, which depicted a married couple who produced a child yet slept in separate beds. Four decades later, *Ellen* showed us the evolution of a gay woman's awakening to her sexual orientation and *NYPD Blue* depicted what may be perceived as tasteful nudity and explicit sexual behavior in prime time. Episodic programs that portrayed the essential American family moved from middle-class, idyllic presentations like *Father Knows Best* to grittier, blue collar families with realistic problems in *All in the Family* and *Roseanne* where endings were not necessarily happy ones. All-White casts and White Anglo-Saxon Protestant values gave way to minority stories in *Julia*, *Chico and the Man*, *The Cosby Show*, and *The Oprah Winfrey Show* in the afternoon, giving faces and voices to other parts of America. More recently, a shift in target audiences has appeared, moving adolescents from secondary characters in family dramas to lead characters with dominant storylines, (i.e., *Beverly Hills 90210*, *The Fresh Prince of Bel Air*, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, and *Dawson's Creek*), responding to advertisers' desire to appeal to a younger demographic.

When we shift attention to trends in sexual behavior among American adolescents, the table presents comparisons of adolescent birth rates with the percentage of all adolescent births occurring out-of-wedlock in five-year intervals. The birth rate for all American women 15 to 19 years of age is a crude indicator of level of sexual activity along with relative contraceptive use. The rate sharply declined over time from a high of 90.3 births per thousand adolescent women in 1955 to 48.7 per thousand in the year 2000, which is attributed to moderate decreases in sexual activity, increases in condom use, and adoption of newly available hormonal contraception, implants, and injectibles (Ventura, Matthews, & Hamilton, 2001). Birth rates for African American adolescents (see Figure 1) have fallen more steeply than for other population groups, but rates for adolescents of color (i.e., African American, Hispanic American, and Native American groups) are still markedly higher than for comparable peers.

In turn, the percentage of those adolescent births, which are non-marital, has soared over the same time period, from 13.4% of all births to women 15 to 19 years old in 1950 to 78.7% of all adolescent births in 2000. The percentage rise in non-marital births suggests a strong shift in American sexual mores over the last half-century and an increased need for social, health, and other services to children living in single-parent settings (Ventura & Bachrach, 2000). While the rate appears to be declining for African American and Hispanic American adolescents (see Figure 2), the rate of births to unmarried adolescents of color is still higher than that of their White peers.

International comparisons indicate that American television content is highly sexual relative to that of other countries, with emphases on casual sex between acquaintances rather than spouses, and little attention to health issues, birth control, or safe sex practices (Lowry & Towles, 1989a, b). Our teen birth rate is the highest among all Western industrialized nations (Moore, Miller, Gleib, & Morrison, 1995) and we are least likely to provide sex education, contraception, or abortion services to our youth. Television, thus, is a

TABLE 1

Selected Trends in Television Programming and Adolescent Birth Characteristics 1950–2000

SELECTED TRENDS IN TELEVISION PROGRAMMING			SELECTED TRENDS IN AMERICAN SEXUALITY		
TITLE/AIR DATE ¹	GENRE	CONTENT FEATURES ¹	TIMELINE	BIRTH RATE 15–19 YEARS (PER 1,000) ⁸	% NON-MARITAL BIRTHS 15–19 YEARS ⁸
Amos 'n Andy (1950)	Sit	N, M First all Black cast, racial stereotyping - removed in 1953 ²	1950	81.6/1000	13.4%
I Love Lucy (1951)	FS	N Produced child, slept in separate beds			
The Adventures of Ozzie & Harriet (1952)	FS	N			
Father Knows Best (1954)	FS	N	1955	90.3	14.2
My Three Sons (1960)	FS	N, A	1960	89.1	14.8
Peyton Place (1964)	Soap	T, D, S, A First prime-time soap opera ³	1965	70.5	20.8
Rowan & Martin's Laugh In (1968)	V	T, D, S, M			
Julia (1968)	Sit	N, M			
The Flip Wilson Show (1970)	V	N, M	1970	68.3	29.5
All in the Family (1971)	Sit	N, T, S, M Dealt with racism & homosexuality ⁴			
M*A*S*H (1972)	Sit	T, S, M First example of the "dramedy" ⁵			

1973: ROE v. WADE					
Chico and the Man (1974)	Sit	N, M, A (A in last season of shooting)			
The Jeffersons (1975)	Sit	N, M Featured television's first interracial couple ⁶	1975	55.6	38.2
Charlie's Angels (1976)	D	T, D, S			
Three's Company (1977)	Sit	T, D, S	1980	53.0	47.6
1981: LAUNCH OF MTV					
The Cosby Show (1984)	FS	M, A			
Oprah Winfrey (1986)	T	T, M, A First African American woman to host show	1985	51.0	58.0
Roseanne (1988)	FS	T, S, A Featured TV's first on-air same sex kiss ⁷			
1990: CHILDREN'S TELEVISION ACT					
Fresh Prince of Bel Air (1990)	Sit	M, A	1990	59.9/1000	67.1%
Beverly Hills 90210 (1990)	Soap/D	T, D, S, A			
1992: NIELSEN'S BEGINS COLLECTING HISPANIC DATA					
NYPD Blue (1993)	D	T, D, S, M, A Explicit sex scenes with nudity in prime time			
Ellen (1994)	Sit	T, S Came 'out of the closet' in later seasons	1995	56.8	75.2
Buffy the Vampire Slayer (1997)	D	T, S, D, A			
Dawson's Creek (1998)	Soap/D	T, D, S, A Portrayal of adolescence			

(continue)

TABLE 1
Selected Trends in Television Programming and Adolescent Birth Characteristics, 1950–2000

TITLE/AIR DATE ¹	SELECTED TRENDS IN TELEVISION PROGRAMMING		SELECTED TRENDS IN AMERICAN SEXUALITY	
	GENRE	CONTENT FEATURES ¹	TIMELINE	BIRTH RATE 15–19 YEARS (PER 1,000) ⁸ % NON-MARITAL BIRTHS 15–19 YEARS ⁹
Sex in the City (1998)	Sit	T, D, S		
Will & Grace (1998)	Sit	T, D, S Revolves around openly gay characters		
Boston Public (2000)	D	T, D, S, M, A	2000	48.7 78.7

KEY:

Genres:

D—Ongoing Drama; **FD**—Family Drama; **FS**—Family Sitcom; **Sit**—Situation Comedy; **Soap**—Soap Opera; **T**—Talk Show; **V**—Variety Show

Content Features:

A—Central adolescent characters/issues; **D**—Provocative dress; **M**—Minority performers/issues; **N**—Little/no sexual content; **S**—Sexual behavior; **T**—Sexual talk

¹Tvtime.com. (n.d.). Multiple retrievals on January 15, 2002, from <http://www.tvtime.com>.

²Poussaint, A. (2000). *Why is t.v. so segregated?* Retrieved February 13, 2002, from the Family Education Network Web site: <http://familyeducation.com/article/0,1120,45-21679,00.html>.

³Gerace, A. (n.d.). *Peyton Place*. Retrieved January 15, 2002, from <http://www.tvtime.com/tvtime/servelet/ShowMainServlet/showid-6169/>.

⁴Gerace, A. (n.d.). *All in the Family*. Retrieved January 15, 2002, from <http://www.tvtime.com/tvtime/servelet/ShowMainServlet/showid-201/>.

⁵M*A*S*H. (n.d.). *M*A*S*H*. Retrieved January 15, 2002, from <http://www.classic-tv.com/top100/>.

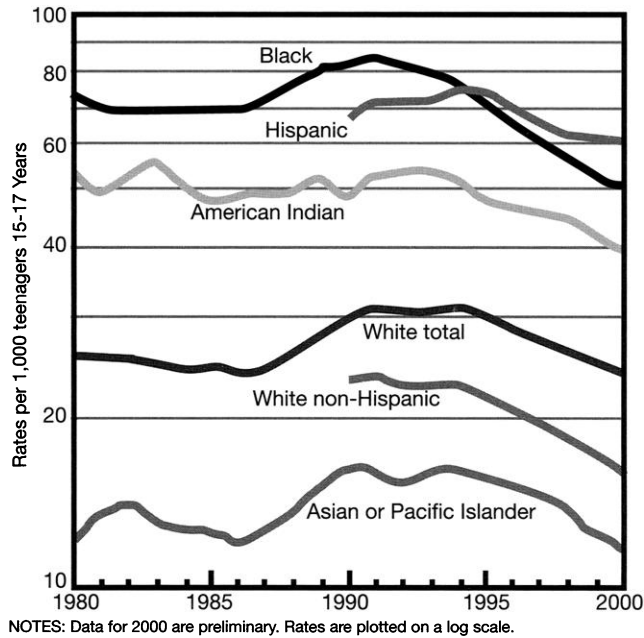
⁶Tvtime.com. (n.d.). Retrieved January 15, 2002, from <http://www.tvtime.com/jeffersons>.

⁷Warm, S. (2003, April). *All my children: A lesbian kiss to build a dream on?* Retrieved January 15, 2002, from <http://www.afterellen.com/TV/amc-kiss.html>.

⁸Ventura, S. J., Mathews, T. J., & Hamilton, B. E. (2001). Births to teenagers in the United States, 1940–2000. *National Vital Statistics Reports*, 49(10). Hyattsville, MD: National Center for Health Statistics.

FIGURE 1

Birth Rate for Teenagers 15–17 Years by Race and Hispanic origin: United States, 1980–2000



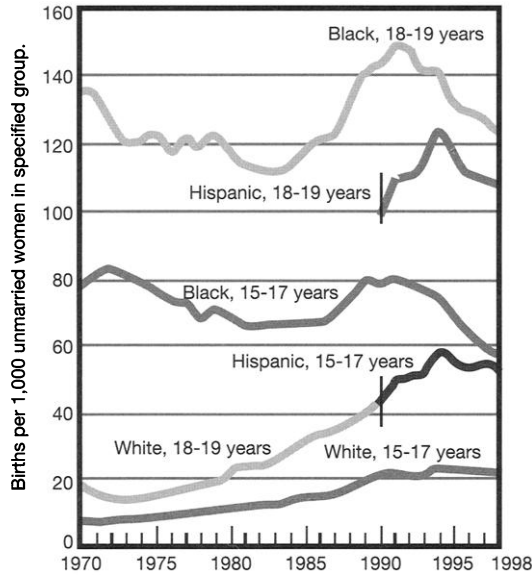
NOTE: The figures do not reflect actual 2000 U.S. Census, which were not available at time of publication. From "Birth to Teenagers in the United States, 1940–2000," by S. J. Ventura, T. J. Matthews, & B. E. Hamilton, 2001, *National Vital Statistics Report [Center of Disease Control]*, 49(10). Reprinted with permission of the author.

hallmark of the contradictory messages we give adolescents about sexual behavior and it should not surprise us that adolescents are eager to learn and practice these misanthropic lessons.

The evidence reviewed in this article collectively suggests that adolescents of color may be more vulnerable than their peers to exposure to sexual content in the television medium as well as the negative consequences that may result from that exposure. African American and Hispanic American youth consume greater quantities of televised content than White youth at a time when levels of televised sexual content are escalating and increasingly explicit. In turn, heavier users of television have been found to have lower social competence in emotional expression and are more likely to accept depicted sex-role stereotypes as realistic compared to lighter viewers. African American adolescents report higher levels of TV consumption during meals and as a leisure activity, watch more soap operas and R-rated movies, view more minority-oriented fare, and are more likely than White adolescents to perceive fictional minority characters as true to life. Further, the developmental characteristics of the adolescent period that potentially make this age group more vulnerable to sexual messages on television may place adolescents of color at increased risk due to earlier pubertal development, greater desire for acquiring information from this highly available source, and the need to identify role models not present in their proximal community.

FIGURE 2

Birth Rates for Unmarried Teenagers: United States, 1970–1998



Source: See table 3.

Note: U.S. Census revised to include Hispanics in 1990. Trends are similar for Hispanic, 15–17 years and White, 18–19 years after 1990. From "Nonmarital childbearing in the United States, 1940–1999," by S. J. Ventura & C. A. Bachrach, 2000, *National Vital Statistics Report [Center of Disease Control]*, 48(16). Reprinted with permission of the author.

When we consider the potential vulnerability of adolescents of color to sexual content in television, it is important to acknowledge how little research has been conducted on ethnic minorities in this field. We need to understand the media consumption habits of more neglected subgroups of youth like Asian Americans, Native Americans, Arab Americans, and immigrants. Gay and bisexual adolescents have also been neglected when media is assumed a critical contributor to the development of a homosexual identity. Other shortcomings are apparent in the body of existent media research. Most content analyses have emphasized programming on the major television networks and cable stations, ignoring different perspectives and values presented in foreign language programming and paid advertising for sexual products or services (i.e., birth control pills, condoms, feminine hygiene products, lingerie, and dating or matchmaking services).

While we have presented a case that portrays African American adolescents as more vulnerable to televised sexual messages and more likely to become sexually active, there is yet little evidence that addresses whether sexually related content indeed causes any escalation in sexual debut or activity. Researchers in the field have repeatedly called for longitudinal studies to be conducted on sexual content in television as the best means of addressing the issue of causation versus association. Public attention to the decades of work on violence in the media may cause us to apply simple explanations based on degree of exposure that do not encompass the nuances and complexities of sexual interactions.

Parallel work conducted on the impact of drinking portrayals in dramatic television programming and televised alcohol advertising (Grube & Wallack, 1994; Wallack, Cassidy, & Grube, 1990) has provided a model for appropriate longitudinal designs to examine this question. Early findings indicate that higher consumption of televised alcohol advertising by young adolescents results in more positive attitudes toward drinking and greater intentions to consume alcohol. Drinking behavior modeled by influential role models further appears to influence drinking intents and pro-drinking attitudes. Their work has also shown that attention to alcohol advertisements by adolescents directly increased their alcohol consumption (Grube, Madden, & Friese, 1996). We hope to be able to test similar hypotheses about televised sexual content in the near future as we collect our second wave of longitudinal data in the coming year.

In becoming more aware of the content of media messages around us, we should educate others to realize that our children and adolescents are being exposed to large quantities of questionable media content that adults may consider harmless entertainment. Until more is known about the influence of televised sexual content on adolescent sexual attitudes and development, there are resources available that can aid educators and parents in working with youth being inundated with media messages about sex. Selected sources presented in Table 2 address parent-child communication about contraception and sexual

TABLE 2
Recommended Sources For Educators And Parents

AUTHOR/SPONSOR	TITLE/PUBLICATION	WEB ADDRESS/TELEPHONE
American Academy of Pediatrics	Sexuality, contraception and the media: Policy statement. (1995). <i>Pediatrics</i> , 95, 298-300.	www.aap.org/policy/re0038.html Telephone: (847) 228-5005
American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry	The influence of music and music videos	www.aacap.org/publications/factsfam (Scroll to Numerical, select #40) Telephone: (202) 996-7300
Children Now	Research reports on children and the media	www.childrennow.org Telephone: (510) 763-2444
Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States (SIECUS)	Teens talk about TV, sex and real life	www.siecus.org/teen/index.html (Scroll to Family Newsletter, select #2) Telephone: (212) 819-9770
Advocates for Youth	Talking with TV: A guide to starting dialogue with youth. (1996).	www.advocatesforyouth.org/publications/talkingwithtv/ Telephone: (202) 347-5700

issues, the development of skills for critiquing and evaluating media messages, and recommendations from health professionals about media use and adolescent health. Our goal should be to challenge adolescents to question what they see and hear in the media, and to help them integrate this thoughtful analysis into their media choices and consumption.

REFERENCES

- Bandura, A. (1977). *Social learning theory*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Bandura, A. (1986). *Social foundations of thought and action: A social cognitive perspective*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Basseches, M. (1984). *Dialectical thinking and adult development*. Norwood, NJ: Ablex.
- Baxter, R. L., De Riemer, C., Landini, A., Leslie, L., & Singletary, M. W. (1985). A content analysis of music videos. *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media*, 29(3), 333–340.
- Beyth-Marom, R., Austin, L., Fischhoff, B., Palmgren, C., & Jacobs-Quadrel, M. (1993). Perceived consequences of risky behaviors: adults and adolescents. *Developmental Psychology*, 29, 549–563.
- Beyth-Marom, R., & Fischhoff, B. (1997). Adolescents' decisions about risks: A cognitive perspective. In J. Schulenberg & J. L. Maggs (Eds.), *Health risks and developmental transitions during adolescence* (pp. 110–135). New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Blos, P. (1979). *The adolescent passage: Developmental issues*. New York: International Universities Press.
- Blosser, B. J., (Fall, 1988). Ethnic differences in children's media use. *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media*, 32(4), 453–470.
- Brown, J. D. (1993). Theoretical overview. In B. S. Greenberg, J. D. Brown, & N. L. Buerkel-Rothfuss (Eds.), *Media, sex and the adolescent* (pp. 19–25). Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press.
- Brown, J. D., Greenberg, B. S., & Buerkel-Rothfuss, N. L. (1993, October). Mass media, sex and sexuality. *Adolescent Medicine: State of the Art Reviews*, 4(3), 511–552.
- Brown, J. D., White, A. B., & Nikopoulou, L. (1993). Disinterest, intrigue, resistance: Early adolescent girls' use of sexual media content. In B. S. Greenberg, J. D. Brown, & N. L. Buerkel-Rothfuss (Eds.), *Media, sex and the adolescent* (pp. 177–195). Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press.
- Brown, J. D., & Schulze, L. (1993). The effects of race, gender, and fandom on audience interpretation of Madonna's music videos. In B. S. Greenberg, J. D. Brown, & N. L. Buerkel-Rothfuss (Eds.), *Media, sex and the adolescent* (pp. 264–276). Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press.
- Brown, J. D., & Steele, J. R. (1995, September 29). *Sex and the mass media* (Report No. 1093). Menlo Park, CA: Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation.
- Buerkel-Rothfuss, N. L., Strouse, J. S., Pettay, G., & Shatzer, M. (1993). Adolescents' and young adults' exposure to sexually oriented and sexually explicit media. In B. S. Greenberg, J. D. Brown, & N. L. Buerkel-Rothfuss (Eds.), *Media, sex and the adolescent* (pp. 99–112). Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press.
- Byrnes, J. P., Miller D. C., & Reynolds M. (1999). Learning to make good decisions: A self-regulation perspective. *Child Development*, 70, 1121–1140.
- Casteel, M. (1993). Effects of inference necessity and reading goal on children's inferential generation. *Developmental Psychology*, 29, 346–357.
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (1994a). Current trends in sexual behaviors and drug use among youth in dropout prevention programs—Miami, 1994. *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Reports*, 43(47), 873–876.
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (1994b). Health risk behaviors among adolescents who do and do not attend school—United States, 1992. *Morbidity And Mortality Weekly Reports*, 43, 129–132.
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (1995). Trends in sexual risk behavior among high school students—United States, 1990, 1991, and 1993. *Morbidity And Mortality Weekly Reports*, 44(7), 124, 131–132.
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (1998). Trends in sexual risk behavior among high school students—United States, 1991–1997. *Morbidity And Mortality Weekly Reports*, 47(36), 749–752.
- Clark, C. S. (1993). TV violence. *CQ Researcher*, 3, 267–286.

- Coats, E. J., & Feldman, R. S. (1995). The role of television in the socialization of nonverbal behavioral skills. *Basic and Applied Social Psychology*, 17(3), 327–341.
- Committee on Communications, American Academy of Pediatrics. (1995, February). Sexuality, contraception and the media. *Pediatrics*, 95(2), 298–300.
- Comstock, G. (1991). *Television and the American child*. New York: Academic Press.
- Comstock, G., & Cobbey, R. E. (1979). Television and the children of ethnic minorities. *Journal of Communication*, 29, 104–115.
- Conway, G. A., Epstein, M. R., Hayman, C. R., Miller, C. A., Wendell, D. A., Gwinn, M., Karon, J. M., & Petersen, L. R. (1993). Trends in HIV prevalence among disadvantaged youth. Survey results from a national job-training program, 1998–1992. *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 269(22), 2887–9.
- Dates, J. (1980). Race, racial attitudes, and adolescent perceptions of Black television characters. *Journal of Broadcasting*, 24(4), 549–560.
- Downing, J. D. H. (2002). Racism, ethnicity, and television. Retrieved October 27, 2003, from the Encyclopedia of Television archive on the Museum of Broadcast Communications Web site: <http://www.museum.tv/archives/etv/topframe.html>.
- Eron, L. D. (1995). Media violence. *Pediatric Annals*, 24(2), 84–87.
- Eveleth, P., & Tanner, J. (1990). *Worldwide variation in human growth* (2nd ed.). New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Feldman, R. S., Coats, E. J., & Spielman, D. A. (1996). Television exposure and children's decoding of nonverbal behavior. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 26(19), 1718–1733.
- Field, A. E., Camargo, C. A., Jr., Barr-Taylor, C., Berkey, C. S., & Colditz, G. A. (1999). Relation of peer and media influences to the development of purging behaviors among preadolescent and adolescent girls. *Archives of Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine*, 153, 1184–1189.
- Flavell, J. H. (1985). *Cognitive development* (2nd ed.). Englewood Cliff, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Fleming, M. (1996). *Healthy youth 2000: A mid-decade review*. Chicago: Department of Adolescent Health, American Medical Association.
- Gates, G. J., & Sonnerstein, F. L. (2000). Heterosexual genital sexual activity among adolescent males: 1988 and 1995. *Family Planning Perspectives*, 32(6), 295–297, 304.
- Gerbner, G., Gross, L., Morgan, M., & Signorielli, N. (1986). Living with television: the dynamics of the cultivation process. In J. Bryant & D. Zillerman (Eds.), *Perspectives in media effects* (pp. 17–40). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Gray, S. F. (1996). *Recognizing stereotypical images of African Americans in television and movies*. Retrieved October 27, 2003, from the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute Web site: <http://www.yale.edu/ynhti/curriculum/units/1996/3/96.03.05.x.html>.
- Greenberg, B. S. (1993). Race differences in television and movie behaviors. In B. S. Greenberg, J. D. Brown, & N. L. Buerkel-Rothfuss (Eds.), *Media, sex, and the adolescent* (pp. 145–152). Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press.
- Greenberg, B. S., Stanley, C., Siemicki, M., Heeter, C., Soderman, A., & Linsangan, R. (1993). Sex content on soaps and prime-time television series most viewed by adolescents. In B. S. Greenberg, J. D. Brown, & N. L. Buerkel-Rothfuss (Eds.), *Media, sex and the adolescent* (pp. 29–44). Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press.
- Greenberg, B. S., & Linsangan, R. (1993). Gender differences in adolescents' media use, exposure to sexual content and parental mediation. In B. S. Greenberg, J. D. Brown, & N. L. Buerkel-Rothfuss (Eds.), *Media, sex and the adolescent* (pp. 134–194). Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press.
- Greenberg, B. S., & Woods, M. G. (1999). The soaps: their sex, gratifications, and outcomes. *Journal of Sex Research*, 36(3), 250–257.
- Grube, J. W., Madden, P. A., & Friese, B. (1996, June). *The effects of television alcohol advertising on adolescent drinking*. Poster session presented at the annual meeting of the Research Society on Alcoholism, Washington, DC.
- Grube, J. W., & Wallack, L. (1994). Television beer advertising and drinking knowledge, beliefs, and intentions among schoolchildren. *American Journal of Public Health*, 84, 254–259.
- Gruber, E., & Grube, J. (2000). Adolescent sexuality and the media: a review of current knowledge and implications. *Western Journal of Medicine*, 172, 210–214.

- Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation/Children Now. (1999, March). *Topline report from: Talking with kids about tough issues, A National Survey of Parents & Kids* (conducted September 15–October 13, 1998). Menlo Park, CA: Author.
- Henshaw, S. K., (March, 2001). U.S. teenage pregnancy statistics with comparative statistics for women aged 20–24. New York: The Alan Guttmacher Institute.
- Herman-Giddens, M. E., Slora, E. J., Wasserman, R. C., Bourdony, C. J., Bhapkar, M. V., Koch, G. G., & Hasemeier, C. M. (1997). Secondary sexual characteristics and menses in young girls seen in office: a study from the pediatric research in office settings network. *Pediatrics*, 99(4), 505–512.
- Herman-Giddens, M. E., Wang, L., & Koch, G. (2001). Secondary sexual characteristics in boys: Estimates from the national health and nutrition examination Survey III, 1988–1994. *Arch Pediatric Adolescent Medicine*, 155, 1022–1028.
- Huston, A. C., Wartella, E., & Donnerstein, E. (1998, May). *Measuring the effects of sexual content in the media: A report to the Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation* (Report No. 1389). Menlo Park, CA: Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation.
- Jones, K. (1997). Are rap videos more violent? Style differences and the prevalence of sex and violence in the age of MTV. *The Howard Journal of Communications*, 8, 343–356.
- Kohlberg, L. (1976). Moral stages and moralization; the cognitive-developmental approach. In T. Lickona (Ed.), *Moral development and behavior* (pp. 31–35). New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
- Kunkel, D., Cope, K. M., Maynard-Farinola, W. J., Biely, E., Rollin, E., & Donnerstein, E. (1999, February). *Sex on TV: Content and context* (Report No. 1458). Menlo Park, CA: Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation.
- Lapsley, D. K. (1990). Continuity and discontinuity in adolescent social cognitive development. In R. Montemayor, G. R. Adams, & T. P. Gullota (Eds.), *From childhood to adolescence: A transitional period?* (pp. 183–204). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Larson, R. W., Richards, M. H., Sims, B., & Dworkin, J. (2001). How urban African American young adolescents spend their time: Time budgets for locations, activities, and companionship. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 29(4), 565–597.
- Louis Harris & Associates, Inc. (1988). *Sexual material on American network television during the 1987–88 season*. New York: Planned Parenthood Federation of America.
- Lowry, D. T., & Towles, D. E. (1989a). Prime-time TV portrayals of sex, contraception, and venereal diseases. *Journalism Quarterly*, 66, 347–352.
- Lowry, D. T., & Towles, D. E. (1989b). Soap opera portrayals of sex, contraception, and sexually transmitted diseases. *Journal of Communication*, 39, 76–83.
- Marshall, W. A., & Tanner, J. M. (1970). Variations in the pattern of pubertal changes in boys. *Archives Disease in Childhood*, 45, 13–23
- Moore, K. A., Miller, B. E., Gleib, D., & Morrison, D. R. (1995, June). *Adolescent sex contraception and childbearing: A review of recent research* (Report No. 1995–04). Washington, DC: Child Trends.
- Newmark-Sztainer, D. (1999, February). The social environments of adolescents: Associations between socioenvironmental factors and health behaviors during adolescence. *Adolescent Medicine: State of the Art Reviews*, 10(1), 41–55.
- Ozer, E. M., Brindis, C. D., Millstein, S. G., Knopf, D. K., & Irwin, C. E., Jr. (1998). *America's adolescents: Are they healthy?* San Francisco, CA: University of California, San Francisco, National Adolescent Health Information Center.
- Rich, M., Woods, E. R., Goodman, E., Emans, S. J., & Durant, R. H. (1998). Aggressors or victims: Gender and race in music video violence. *Pediatrics*, 101(4), 669–674.
- Roberts, D. F., Foehr, U. G., Rideout, V. J., & Brodie, M. (1999, November). *Kids & media @ the new millennium* (Report No. 1536). Menlo Park, CA: Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation.
- Schuster, M. A., Bell, R. M., & Kanouse, D. E. (1996, November). The sexual practices of adolescent virgins: Genital sexual activities of high school students who have never had vaginal intercourse. *American Journal of Public Health*, 86(11), 1570–1576.
- Siegel, J. M., Yancey, A. K., Aneshensel, C. S., & Schuler, R. (1999). Body image, perceived pubertal timing, and adolescent mental health. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 25, 155–165.

- Silverman-Watkins, L. T., & Sprafkin, J. N. (1983). Adolescents' comprehension of televised sexual innuendoes. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology, 4*, 359–369.
- Smith, E. A., Udry, J. R., & Morris, N. M. (September, 1985). Pubertal development and friends: A biosocial explanation of adolescent sexual behavior. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior, 26*(3), 183–192.
- Smith, T. W. (1998, December). American sexual behavior: Trends, socio-demographic differences, and risk behavior (GSS Topical Rep. No. 25). Chicago: *National Opinion Research Center, University of Chicago*.
- St. Lawrence, J. S., Reitman, D., Jefferson, K. W., Alleyne, E., Brasfield, T. L., & Shirley, A. (1994). Factor structure and validation of an adolescent version of the condom attitude scale: an instrument for measuring adolescent's attitudes towards condoms. *Psychological Assessment, 6*(4), 352–359.
- Steele, J. R. (1999). Teenage sexuality and media practice: Factoring in the influences of family, friends, and school. *Journal of Sex Research, 36*(4), 331–341.
- Steinberg, L. (2002). *Adolescence* (5th ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Sternberg, R. J., & Nigro, C. (1980). Developmental patterns in the solution of verbal analogies. *Child Development, 51*, 27–38.
- Stroman, C. A. (1991). Television's role in the socialization of African American children and adolescents. *Journal of Negro Education, 60*(3), 314–327.
- Tiggemann, M., & Pickering, A. S. (1996). Role of television in adolescent women's body dissatisfaction and drive for thinness. *International Journal of Eating Disorders, 20*, 199–203.
- Upchurch, D. M., Levy-Storms, L., Sucoff, C. A., & Aneshensel, C. S. (1998). Gender & ethnic differences in the timing of first sexual intercourse. *Family Planning Perspectives, 30*(3), 121–127.
- Ventura, S. J., & Bachrach, C. A. (2000, October). Nonmarital childbearing in the United States, 1940–1999. *National Vital Statistics Report [Center for Disease Control], 48*(16).
- Ventura, S. J., Matthews, T. J., & Hamilton, B. E. (2001, September). Birth to teenagers in the United States, 1940–2000. *National Vital Statistics Report [Center for Disease Control], 49*(10).
- Wallack, L., Cassady, D., & Grube, J. W. (1990). *TV beer commercials and children: Exposure, attention, beliefs, and expectations about drinking as an adult*. (Available from AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety, Falls Church, VA)
- Walsh-Childers, K., & Brown, J. D. (1993). Adolescents' acceptance of sex-role stereotypes and television viewing. In B. S. Greenberg, J. D. Brown, & N. L. Buerkel-Rothfuss (Eds.), *Media, sex and the adolescent* (pp. 117–133). Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press.
- Ward, L. M., & Rivadeneyra, R. (1999). Contributions of entertainment television to adolescents' sexual attitudes and expectations: The role of viewing amount versus viewer involvement. *Journal of Sex Research, 36*(3), 237–249.
- Wingood, G. M., DiClemente, R. J., Harrington, K., Davies, S, Hook III, E. W., & Oh, K (2001). Exposure to x-rated movies and adolescent's sexual and contraceptive-related attitudes and behaviors. *Pediatrics, 107*(5), 1116–1119.

AUTHORS

ENID GRUBER is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Child and Adolescent Studies at California State University, Fullerton and the Director of the CSUF Project on Adolescence and Media; egruber@fullerton.edu. Her interests include adolescent sexuality, media influence, and other adolescent risk behaviors.

HELAINÉ THAU is a Research Associate with the CSUF Project on Adolescence and Media; hthau@comcast.net. Her interests include adolescent risk behaviors, media influence, and music video influence on adolescence.