

A study for the youth, parents, educators & media workers

Impact of Media on US Children* & Youth

How about Lebanon and the Arab Countries?

Part 2 Internet-Video

"I really want to move to Antarctica—I'd want my cat and Internet access and I'd be happy."

16-year-old HomeNet participant (1995)

Young people on average were online 17.7 hours per week, not including e-mail and IM (instant messaging) time.

The Internet, a global "network of networks" is not governed by a government or private entity. This vacuum leaves no checks or limits on the information maintained or made accessible to users. No person or entity owns the Internet, leaving no one accountable for the accidents which occur on its highways. (15)

The adult online industry (pornography) in the United States generated in 2002 approximately \$1 billion in revenues annually, and some in the industry expected this figure to grow to \$5 billion to \$7 billion over the next by 2007, barring unforeseen change.

Internet pornography is corrupting children and hooking adults into an addiction that threatens their jobs and families, a panel of anti-porn advocates told the hearing organized by Sen. Sam Brownback, R-Kan., chairman of the Commerce subcommittee on science. (Nov 2004)

Mary Anne Layden, co-director of a sexual trauma program at the University of Pennsylvania, said pornography's effect on the brain mirrors addiction to heroin or crack cocaine. She told of one patient, a business executive, who arrived at his office at 9 a.m. each day, logged onto Internet porn sites, and didn't log off until 5 p.m.

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MUSIC

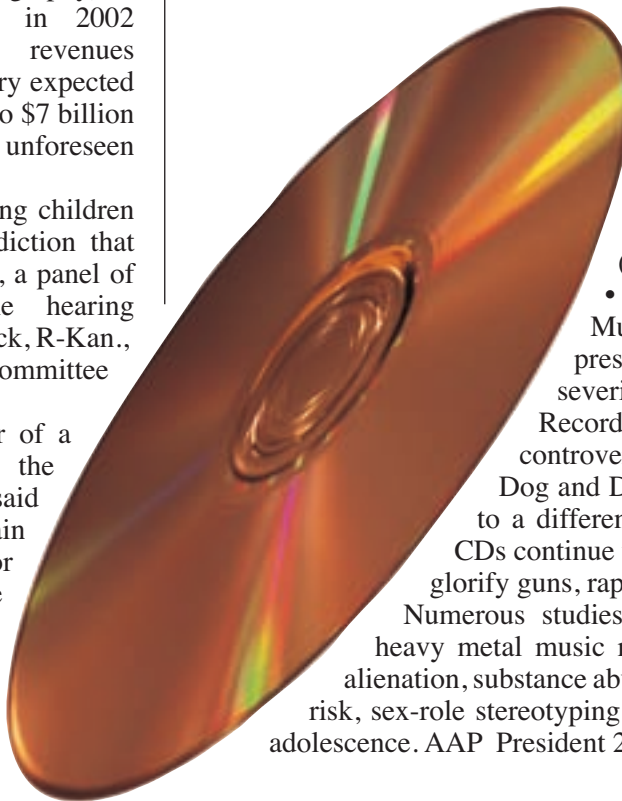
- The Parents Music Resource Center reports that American teenagers listen to an estimated 10,500 hours of rock music between the 7th and 12th grades alone - just 500 hours less than they spend in school over twelve years. (19)

- Entertainment Monitor reported that only 10 of the top 40 popular CDs on sale during the 1995 holiday season were free of profanity, or lyrics dealing with drugs, violence and sex. (19)

- A recent survey by the Recording Industry Association of America found that many parents do not know what lyrics are contained in the popular music their children listen to. (20)

- In September 1995, Warner Music Group bowed to public pressure and announced it was severing its 50% stake in Interscope Records, home to Nine Inch Nails and controversial rap artists Snoop Doggy Dog and Dr. Dre. Rap artists simply turned to a different distribution network and their CDs continue to hit the stores with lyrics which glorify guns, rape, and murder. (20)

Numerous studies indicate that a preference for heavy metal music may be a significant marker for alienation, substance abuse, psychiatric disorders, suicide risk, sex-role stereotyping, or risk-taking behaviors during adolescence. AAP President 2000



Teens report that they watch MTV because it helps them to understand the songs better, and to understand what the music is about. However, the content that the teens are tuning into is more than 75% sexual, with stereotypical portrayals of males and females (Greenburg and Hofschire 104). MTV uses sexual images of women through “short, sharp, shots of intense visual pleasure” to encourage viewers to watch closely and stay focused so that they do not miss anything (Sut Jhally “Intersections of Discourse” 153).

In one study, eliminating access to MTV decreased the frequency of violent acts among teenagers and young adults in a locked treatment facility.

Video Games

Video game revenues are \$10 billion a year, larger than that of television and movies, and they are increasing. Fantasy or human violence is the most popular type of video game among children, 50% of 4th graders choose “first person shooter” video games as their favorites. The average 7th grader plays these video games for more than 4 hours each week. AAP President 2000



In its first three months on the market, Grand Theft Auto: Vice City sold over 4.4 million copies. In this game, players have the opportunity to engage prostitutes, have sex with them and beat them to death to avoid

paying for sex.

Impact of video games and cyberspace violence

Among seventh-to-12th-graders surveyed, more than half play video games by themselves. In addition, over-dependence on video games can foster social isolation.

Research to date indicates that interactive media have an even more potent and lasting effect on violent behavior than passive media forms like television and movies. Several studies have shown that after playing violent video games, children and adolescents become desensitized to violence, have increased levels of aggressive thoughts and behavior, and act hostile toward others. AAP President 2000

Studies designed to test the theory that experiencing media violence leads to a catharsis, a reduction in actual aggression due to the vicarious release of hostility, actually found increased overt aggression because of lowered inhibitions after experiencing media violence. AAP President 2000



Perhaps the most insidious and potent effect of media violence is that it desensitizes viewers to “real life” violence and to the harm caused its victims. The more realistic, comic, or enjoyable the media violence, the greater the desensitization – video games that reward killing with points and higher levels of play are using better graphics capabilities to increase the gore, showing spraying blood and mangled body parts, or to personalize games with digital images such as recognizable faces on victims. AAP President 2000



Experimental studies have shown that after playing video games, young people exhibit measurable decreases in pro-social and helping behaviors, a 43% increase in aggressive thoughts, and a 17% increase in violent retaliation to provocation.

Research has indicated that playing violent video games accounted for 13-22% of the variance in teenagers’ violent behavior. By comparison, smoking tobacco accounts for 14% of the variance in lung cancer.

Video games are an ideal environment in which to learn violence:

- they place the player in the role of the aggressor and reward him or her for success at violent behavior,
- rather than observing part of a violent interaction, video games allow the player to rehearse an entire behavioral script from provocation to choosing to respond violently to resolution of the conflict – this is more effective learning than watching or rehearsing part

- of the sequence,
- video games are immersive and addictive – kids want to play them for long periods of time to become better. Repetition increases learning.

Recommendations

Starting when children are very young, most of their media use takes place in the home. Parents can help their children make better use of media by doing the following:

Make a media plan. Schedule media times and choices in advance, just as you would other activities. A media plan helps everyone to choose and use media carefully.

Set media time limits. Limit children's total screen time. This includes time watching TV and videotapes, playing video and computer games, and surfing the Internet. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends no more than 1 to 2 hours of quality TV and videos a day for older children and no screen time for children under the age of 2.



Set situation limits. No television or video games before school or before homework is done. Homework should be completed away from background television and other electronic images (such as computer visuals).

Set family guidelines for media content. Help children and teens choose shows, videos, and video games that are appropriate for their ages and interests. Get into the habit of checking the content ratings and parental advisories for all media. Use these ratings to

decide what media are suitable for your child.

Know the content of the shows, videotapes, and movies your children are watching and the Internet sites your children are visiting; give your approval or disapproval and discuss the reasons for your decisions. Be clear and consistent with children about media rules. If you do not approve of their media choice, explain why and help them choose something more appropriate.

Parents should establish healthy television-viewing habits in the preschool years. Young children's television viewing should be limited to educationally oriented programs. Programs watched should be geared to the age of the child, non-violent in nature and should reinforce language and social skills.

Keep TV sets, VCRs, video games, and computers out of children's bedrooms.

Instead, put them where you can be involved and monitor children's use. If children or teens are allowed to have a TV set or

other media in their bedrooms, know what media they are using and supervise their media choices. If you have Internet access, supervise your children while they are on-line.

Make media a family activity. Television and other media often provide opportunities to discuss important issues with your children.

Whenever possible, use media with your children and discuss what they see, hear, and read. When you share your children's media experiences, you can help them analyze, question, and challenge the meaning of messages for themselves and how it relates to your personal and family values. Try not to allow children to see shows known to contain violent content; when you encounter violence or material you find offensive. During a media activity, help children "talk back," or question what they see. Do this during a violent act, an image or message that is misleading, or an advertisement for an unhealthy product.

"Talking back," or asking questions about media messages, builds the lifelong skills your child needs to be a critical media consumer. Discuss how the media messages compare with the values



you are teaching your child. Explain the consequences of violence; for example, "Although the actor was not hurt, if this happened in real life the person would be in extreme pain for many months." Explain that violence is not the best way to resolve conflicts or to solve problems. Point out positive behavior, like examples of kindness, cooperation, and friendship.

Other points to watch for:

- Don't use television, videos, or computer/ video games as a babysitter.
- Turn the television off during mealtimes.
- Turn television on only when there is something specific you have decided is worth watching, not "to see if there's something on."
- Don't place the television in the most prominent location in your home.
- Watch what your children are watching.
- Be especially careful of viewing just before bedtime, as emotion-invoking images may linger and intrude into sleep.
- Learn about movies that are playing and the videos available for rental or purchase. Be explicit with children about your guidelines for appropriate movie viewing and review proposed movie choices in advance.
- Set a good example and limit your own television viewing & Internet use time.
- Never allow a child to arrange a face-to-face meeting with another computer user without parental permission
- Be especially careful of chatrooms. They can get into subjects that might be associated with sex or cults or groups that practice potentially dangerous rituals.
- Children should be instructed never to give out identifying information-- home address, school name, or telephone number.



GETTING INVOLVED:

There are many alternatives to using media for entertainment:

- Social and family activities (such as walks, picnics, parties, or camping)
- Sports
- Playing games (such as cards, board games, or outdoor games)
- Reading. Give children exposure to books. Read to them often and limit television time.
- Hobbies (such as painting, drawing, playing an instrument, or woodworking)

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