

## DATA TRENDS

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Research continues to support a correlation between media exposure and increased aggressive and high-risk behaviors in children and adolescents. A recent article by Susan Villani, M.D., in the *Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry* (April, 2001) reviews studies conducted during the 1990s on media exposure and youth. Studies conducted over the past 10 years focus on media content and include: television and movies, rock music and music videos, advertising, video games, computers and the Internet. The author found no studies of computers and the Internet using reliable "research techniques" to date. Selected findings from recent studies reviewed are highlighted below.

- A 1999 study by the Kaiser Foundation found that more than 50% of 1,300 television shows contained sexual content, 66% of them were broadcast during prime viewing time and only 9% contained any reference to the risks or responsibilities associated with sex. In a related survey, 76% of teenagers reported that the normalization of sex on television and in the movies is one reason why teenagers have sex.
- Rich et al. (1998) found that 15% of music videos included overt acts of interpersonal violence. In over 80% of those videos, the aggressor was attractive, was three times more likely to be male, and victims were most often Caucasian females. On the whole, African-American males and females were overrepresented as both aggressors and victims when compared to U.S. demographics.
- A survey of data on 3,536 adolescents by Evans et al. (1995) concluded that "advertising is a more powerful influence [on teenagers decision to begin smoking] than exposure to peer or family smoking" (p. 398). Additionally, three studies (Altman et al., 1996; Schooler et al., 1996; Sargent et al., 1997) documented a correlation between cigarette advertisements and susceptibility to smoking among youth.

Villani concludes by calling for studies that focus on the *prevention* of the harmful effects of media on children and adolescents, and suggests that "Health care professionals, and particularly child and adolescent psychiatrists, should incorporate a media history into the standard evaluation of children and adolescents...for adolescents, this needs to include careful questioning about music preferences and the meaning of the music to the adolescents" (p. 400).

Full reference: Villani, S. (2001). Impact of Media on Children and Adolescents: A 10-Year Review of the Research. *Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry*, 40:4, 392-401

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