

## Sexual Socialization Messages in Mainstream Entertainment Mass Media: A Review and Synthesis

Paul J. Wright

Published online: 25 March 2009  
© Springer Science + Business Media, LLC 2009

**Abstract** Results of recent research on the effects of the mainstream entertainment mass media on youth sexuality indicate that studies that do not take care to link particular types of media content to conceptually related outcomes are likely to yield results inconsistent with theoretical expectations. The purpose of this article is to facilitate content sensitive research by providing a review of the literature that researchers can use as a reference point when considering which questions to pose in their efforts to assess the effects of sexual entertainment media content on young people. Key results of content analyses of sexual portrayals in programs popular with adolescents across the entire television landscape, in prime-time programming popular with adolescents, soap operas, music videos, talk shows, feature length films, and magazines targeting adolescent and young adult females and males are presented, differences and similarities across genres are highlighted, and implications for future research are considered.

**Keywords** Sexual socialization · Mass media · Adolescents

Social scientists have devoted much time and effort over the years attempting to answer questions about the social determinants of adolescent<sup>1</sup> sexuality and have identified several key social variables such as parental supervision and monitoring (Hogan and Kitagawa 1985), socioeconomic status (Miller 1998), religiosity (Werner-Wilson 1998), and educational involvement (Manlove 1998). It is only in recent years, however, that the scientific community has seriously considered the

<sup>1</sup> The terms “adolescent” “teen” and “teenager” are used interchangeably to refer to youth approximately 13–18 years of age.

P. J. Wright (✉)  
Department of Communication, University of Arizona, 825 E. 5th Street,  
Apt 333A, Tucson, AZ 85719, USA  
e-mail: pwright@email.arizona.edu

mainstream entertainment mass media as a possible additional key factor influencing the sexual formation and sexual decision making of American adolescents (Kunkel et al. 2005).

There are several reasons why the mass media may play a significant role in the sexual socialization of adolescents in the US (Huston et al. 1998). First, adolescents spend a great deal of their discretionary time attending to mass media known to possess sexual content. For instance one study found that 9th grade teens on average watch 10 h of music videos a week (Robinson et al. 1998) and according to Greenberg and Busselle (1996), at least 34,000,000 adolescents are regular soap opera viewers. A study by Davis and Mares (1998) found that nearly 50% of teenagers watch talk shows either sometimes or every day during the school year and during the summer the percentage increases to 68%. Similarly, there is little doubt that adolescents spend a significant amount of time watching prime-time programming (Cope-Farrar and Kunkel 2002; Eyal et al. 2007; Ward 1995) and Nielson data places teen prime-time network viewing alone at about 12 h a week (Nielson Media Research 2004). Finally, although adolescents spend the most time with television, they still allocate significant amounts of time to other entertainment media as well (Pardun et al. 2005). For example, national data gathered by Roberts and Foehr (2004) found that adolescents spend about 20 min a day watching movies, 29 min a day watching videotapes, and 44 min a day reading magazines and other print media.

An additional reason why it might be expected that the media serve as a key teen sexuality informant is that adolescents themselves acknowledge that they turn to the mass media for information about sexuality. For example, a national study carried out in 1993 found that teens aged 13–15 ranked the mass media as their fourth most important source of sexual information and teens aged 16–17 ranked the mass media as their third most important source of sexual information (Sutton et al. 2002). Similarly, a national study carried out in 1998 found that teens aged 13–18 ranked television, movies, and magazines as more useful sources of information for how to talk about sex than parents, religious leaders, counselors, and therapists (Sutton et al. 2002). Finally, while media messages play a role in adolescent socialization in many areas, the socializing impact of the media is particularly potent in areas where adolescents' personal experience is limited (Huston et al. 1992) and young teens especially have limited personal experience with sex (Brown et al. 1990).

In December of 1997, the Kaiser Family Foundation brought together some of the most respected media scholars to explore the reasons for the paucity of research on the effects of sexual media on adolescents and to make suggestions for future research in this important area of youth scholarship. The report that resulted from this conference (Huston et al. 1998) and the Surgeon General's call to action to promote sexual health and responsible behavior (Office of the Surgeon General 2001) has in recent years led to an increase in empirical data regarding the effects of sexual media content on adolescents (Kunkel et al. 2005). Although very valuable, much of this research has been cross-sectional (e.g., Taylor 2006; Zurbriggen and Morgan 2006) and has been carried out with convenience or regional samples (e.g., Aubrey 2007; Brown et al. 2005; Kim and Ward 2004). Two recent national, longitudinal studies, however, have generated the most externally and internally

valid data to date demonstrating that exposure to mass media is positively and almost certainly causally related to adolescent coital behavior, non-coital sexual behavior, and pregnancy (Chandra et al. 2008; Collins et al. 2004).

Although the empirical value of these findings is of paramount importance, the methodological contribution made by these studies may even be of greater consequence, as both studies found that overall exposure to television was not predictive of sexual outcomes but that a sophisticated indicator of exposure based on content analytic measures designed to detect the nature of sexual messages on television (Kunkel et al. 2003) was highly predictive of adolescents' sexual behavior and the results of that behavior. These results suggest that studies of mass media sexual socialization need to be content specific. In other words, analyses of the effects of mass media on adolescent sexuality that follow the cultivation paradigm (Gerbner et al. 2002) and do not take care to link particular types of media content to conceptually related outcomes are likely to be unfruitful. Although there is certainly a degree of sexual message continuity in the various entertainment mass media commonly attended to by adolescents (e.g., the portrayal of pre-marital sexual activity as normative, Pardun et al. 2005), there are also some key content differences across genres and types within genres and researchers need to be aware of these differences when designing effects analyses.

The purpose of this paper is to facilitate content sensitive research by providing a review of the content literature that researchers can use as a reference point when considering which questions to pose when designing studies of the effects of sexual entertainment media content on adolescents. Specifically, key findings of content analyses of sexual portrayals in programs popular with adolescents across the entire television landscape, in prime-time programming popular with adolescents, soap operas, music videos, talk shows, feature length films, and magazines targeting adolescent females and males are provided, interpreted, and synthesized, and the research implications of these findings are considered.<sup>2</sup>

## Television

### Programs Most Popular with Adolescents Across the Entire Television Landscape

As a complement to their composite week sample of television programming for their comprehensive study of sex on television, Kunkel et al. (2003, 2005) for the 2001–2002 and 2004–2005 television seasons also sampled three randomly selected episodes of the 20 programs most frequently viewed by adolescents aged 12–17, according to Nielson data. Several interesting findings emerged from the analyses of these programs, which were primarily situation comedies (e.g., *That 70s Show*, *Family Guy*) and dramas (e.g., *24*, *Lost*).

---

<sup>2</sup> The content analyses chosen for review were selected because they investigated mainstream entertainment media genres and vehicles known to be popular with adolescents. However, it is acknowledged that pre-teens and youth in their 20s may also frequently attend to many of the genres and vehicles reviewed here.

To start, programs popular with adolescents were more likely to feature sexual behavior and sexual talk than television programs industry wide. To illustrate, in 2004–2005, teens' favorite programs averaged 6.7 sexual scenes per hour while the average number of sexual scenes industry wide was 5.0. On the other hand, programs most watched by teens were less likely to feature sexual risk and responsibility themes than programs across the entire television landscape. Of programs with sexual content, in 2001–2002, 12% of the teen sample featured a risk or responsibility message while the industry wide average was 15%; in 2004–2005, 10% of the teen sample mentioned sexual risk or responsibility whereas the industry wide average was 14%. Similarly, the percentage of scenes featuring a risk or responsibility theme during programs with intercourse related content decreased from 2001–2002 (45%) to 2004–2005 (25%) while the percentage of intercourse scenes involving characters who were not in a relationship increased from 2001–2002 (33%) to 2004–2005 (50%).

Fisher et al. (2007) recorded programs from both broadcast and cable networks popular with adolescents during the hours when adolescents are most likely to be part of the viewing audience over two 7-week periods in 2001–2002 and 2002–2003 and found a significant increase in programs with sexual content related to nonheterosexuals (14.5% of programs in 2001–2002, 17.4% of programs in 2002–2003). However, as the authors of the study caution, quantity and quality are two different things, as critical analyses of television content have noted that nonheterosexuals on television are often portrayed as hypersexual, promiscuous and worthwhile for their comedic value only (Kielwasser and Wolf 1992).

In total, these results indicate that the television programs teens most enjoy may be featuring more casual sex, while at the same time reducing their emphasis on sexual risk and responsibility. Furthermore, while it may be true that non-heterosexual content on teens' favorite programs is increasing, it remains to be seen whether the nature of this content differs from the heterosexual content featured on television programs in the past.

### Prime-Time Programming Most Popular with Adolescents

A handful of studies in recent years have analyzed the sexual content featured on prime-time programs that according to Nielson data are most popular with adolescents (e.g., *Dawson's Creek*, *Charmed*; Aubrey 2004; Cope-Farrar and Kunkel 2002; Kim et al. 2007; Ward 1995). Similar to studies of prime-time programming in general (Lowry and Shidler 1993; Lowry and Towles 1989a; Sapolsky and Tabarlet 1991), these studies indicate that adolescents' favorite prime-time programs primarily feature sexually active unmarried characters (Cope-Farrar and Kunkel 2002) engaging in sexual encounters more for recreational than for relational or procreational purposes (Ward 1995) with little if any regard for sexual risks or responsibilities. As well as coding sexual content and context variables considered in prior prime-time research, however, several of these studies also employed novel measures that yielded new insight into the nature of sexual portrayals in prime-time programming.

Ward (1995) and Kim et al. (2007), for instance, created coding schemes that measured various sex role behaviors, attitudes, and scripts. Collectively, these studies found that sexist and stereotypical portrayals of heterosexuality dominate the prime-time programs most viewed by adolescents. For example, males on teens' favorite programs are often preoccupied by sex to the point of distraction and are frequently portrayed as valuing females primarily for their physical appearance. Additionally, males' masculinity on teens' preferred prime-time shows is often directly related to their sexual "conquests", and males are regularly shown using coercive and deceptive techniques to gain sexual access to women. Females, on the other hand, are often portrayed as willing participants in their own sexual objectification and are regularly depicted as desiring men primarily for their wealth, power, and status. In a similar vein, when men make sexual advances they most often do so in direct and obvious ways whereas women primarily engage in passive sexual strategies. Although Kim et al. (2007) did find some programming that featured female heroines (e.g., *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*) in active and assertive lead roles, analyses revealed that these brazen females reverted to the traditional "heterosexual script" in their sexual and romantic relationships. Furthermore, Aubrey (2004) found that when female characters on teens' favorite programs do deviate from the heterosexual script and initiate sexual behavior with males, they often experience disappointment, guilt and anxiety as a result of their sexual advances.

In sum, prime-time programs most popular with adolescents are likely to portray sex as risk free and recreational and to characterize male and female sexual roles and preferences in stereotypical ways. Although some shows have featured females in action oriented roles that run counter to passive stereotypes, these characters are likely to behave along stereotypic lines in their sexual and romantic relationships. Finally, when female characters do attempt to break out of their gender constrained roles and engage in agentic sexual behavior they often experience negative mental and social consequences.

### Soap Operas

Content analyses of sex on day time soap operas such as *Days of Our Lives* have been conducted since the late 1970s and the amount of sex on soap operas appears to have remained fairly steady over the years. For example, the soaps in a study of 1970s programs by Lowry et al. (1981) contained 6.5 references to or depictions of sexual behavior per hour, Lowry and Towles' (1989b) sample of soaps contained 7.4 references to or depictions of sexual behavior per hour, the soaps in Heintz-Knowles' (1996) study contained 6.1 references to or depictions of sexual behavior per hour, and Kunkel et al. (2005) sample of soaps contained 6.8 scenes per hour featuring references to or depictions of sexual behavior. Another finding consistent across studies is that sex on the soaps overwhelmingly occurs between unmarried partners (Greenberg et al. 1981; Greenberg and Busselle 1996; Greenberg and D'Alessio 1985; Heintz-Knowles 1996; Lowry et al. 1981; Lowry and Towles 1989b) and almost one of every ten extramarital encounters occurs between a married and an unmarried individual (Greenberg and Busselle 1996). Studies also

indicate that depictions and references to unmarried intercourse have increased since the 1980s (Greenberg and Busselle 1996; Greenberg and Woods 1999).

However, sexual relations between strangers (e.g., “one night stands”) are rare (Heintz-Knowles 1996) and many soap opera characters look down on the promiscuous and adulterous sexual escapades of their peers (Greenberg and Woods 1999). In addition, married couples on soap operas are happier with their sex lives than unmarried couples are (Greenberg and Woods 1999). Regarding sex roles and minority sexual behavior, studies show that females are just as likely as males to initiate sexual encounters on soap operas (Greenberg and Busselle 1996), but homosexual sexual activity is almost nonexistent (Greenberg and Woods 1999; Heintz-Knowles 1996). Finally, although soap operas are more likely today than in the 1980s and early 1990s to mention STDs and to incorporate sexual planning themes into their storylines (Heintz-Knowles 1996), risk and responsibility messages are still the exception on the soaps, not the norm (Heintz-Knowles 1996; Kunkel et al. 2003, 2005). For example Heintz-Knowles (1996), found that only 10% of sexual scenes in 1996 soap operas featured a risk or responsibility theme Kunkel et al. (2003), found that only 17% of soap operas that contained sexual content in 2002–2003 featured a risk and responsibility theme; and Kunkel et al. (2005) found that only 13% of soap operas that contained sexual content in 2004–2005 featured a risk and responsibility theme.

To sum up, the sexual landscape on soap operas is multifaceted. While sex outside of marriage is normative, sex between new acquaintances is rare. Furthermore, while adultery is a frequent occurrence, married partners are happier with their sex lives than unmarried partners. Also, contrary to prime-time programs popular with adolescents, soap operas are likely to feature sexually agentic females. However, soap operas rarely feature homosexual characters or risk and responsibility messages.

## Talk Shows

Daytime talk shows such as *Jerry Springer* are the target of much public hue and cry but are rarely studied by social scientists (Greenberg et al. 1997). The only data on the sexual content of daytime talk shows in the United States are those provided by Kunkel et al. (1999, 2001, 2003, 2005) as part of their larger analysis of sex on television and those provided by Greenberg and his colleagues, derived from a single sample of programs gathered between January 1 and August 25, 1995 (Greenberg et al. 1995, 1997; Smith et al. 1999). As Greenberg and Smith (2002) put it, when talking about the sexual content of daytime talk shows, “the bottom line is the absence of a body of...research findings” (p. 82). Nevertheless, some tentative conclusions about the extent and nature of sexual content on daytime talk shows can be drawn from the aforementioned studies.

First, daytime talk shows are less likely to contain sexual content than soap operas, situation comedies, and dramas, and tend to be more likely to contain one or more risk and responsibility messages. For example, in 2001–2002, 96% of soap operas, 73% of comedy series, and 71% of dramas featured sexual content. Conversely, 65% of daytime talk shows featured sexual content (Kunkel et al. 2003). Correspondingly,

17% of soap operas, 8% of situation comedies, and 18% of dramas featured risk and responsibility messages in 2001–2002 while 28% of talk shows featured such messages. The numbers were similar in 2004–2005, although the same percentage of dramas had risk and responsibility themes as daytime talk shows (18%; Kunkel et al. 2005).

When discussions of sexual activity occur, they center on a range of issues, including pregnancy, sexual infidelity, rape, abortion, sexual advances, safe sex, and sexually transmitted diseases (Greenberg and Smith 2002). Discussions of sexual orientation occur about every tenth episode (Greenberg et al. 1997) and are typically catalyzed by a guest's disclosure that he or she is gay, transvestite, transsexual, lesbian, or bisexual. In terms of commentary accompanying these issues, Greenberg and Smith (2002) found that guests themselves received the most speaking turns (53%), followed by hosts (39%), and then audience members (5%). Interestingly, although it might be hypothesized that talk shows would provide a forum for expert opinion and analysis regarding sexual issues faced by guests, Greenberg and Smith (2002) found that experts received only 3% of speaking turns. Finally, although the sexual content on daytime talk shows often centers on sexual deviance, risky sexual practices, and sexual decisions many would find unethical, the reactions of the audience and the hosts to guests' sexual behaviors tend to be in line with "contemporary community standards"; for example, that prostitution is immoral and that husbands have no right to abuse their wives (Greenberg and Smith 2002, p. 83). Specifically, more than 80% of guests' responses and more than 60% of hosts' responses to guests' sexual behaviors were in line with contemporary community standards (Greenberg and Smith 2002).

In sum, while daytime talk shows may feature a variety of guests who engage in deviant sexual behavior, the predominant response to those behaviors is to condemn them, not condone them. Additionally, available data suggest that daytime talk shows feature less sexual content but place more emphasis on sexual risk and responsibility than other types of programs popular with adolescents.

## Music Videos

Studies confirm that sex is a "staple" in music videos (Smith 2005, p. 92). Sherman and Dominick (1986) reviewed 49 MTV (Music Television) videos from 1984 to 1985. They coded as sex acts ranging from flirtation and embracing to intimate touching and found that more than 75% of the music videos they sampled contained sexual content. Using a slightly less inclusive definition of sex than Sherman and Dominick (1986), Baxter et al. (1985) found that 60% of the 62 MTV videos in their 1984 sample contained sexual content (only sex acts that depicted actual sexual impulses were coded). Using the definition of sex employed by Baxter et al. (1985), Pardun and McKee (1995) found sexual content in 63% of the 160 MTV videos they taped during 1992. Although sex is common on music video aired on channels other than MTV (Durant et al. 1997), there are differences in the degree to which videos aired on particular channels emphasize sexual themes and images. Specifically, sexuality, and eroticism are most often a significant part of music videos aired on BET (Black Entertainment Television), followed by MTV, VH1 (Video Hits One),

and CMT (Country Music Television; Durant et al. 1997). Similarly, the amount of sexual content in music videos differs by their musical category, with hip-hop, rap, soul, and rhythm and blues videos tending to feature the most sexual content and country music videos tending to feature the least amount of sexual content (Durant et al. 1997; Jones 1997; Tapper et al. 1994).

When sexual behaviors are featured in music videos they are more likely to be suggestive than overt. For instance, Sommers-Flanagan et al. (1993) divided their sample of 40 videos into 313 thirty-second intervals and found that roughly 90% of the intervals contained implicit sexual acts such as pelvic thrusting and stroking, whereas only about 4% of the intervals featured explicit sexual acts such as the fondling of breasts, touching of genitalia, or sexual intercourse. Other analyses have yielded similar results. For example, both Sherman and Dominick (1986) and Baxter et al. (1985) found that the most common sexual behaviors in their samples were kissing, intimate touching and embracing, and physical flirting (e.g., through provocative dancing).

Regarding sexual values, Sherman and Dominick (1986) report that music videos emphasize sexual “titillation and physical activity” and only rarely allude to sexual commitment, intimacy, or responsibility (p. 91). In addition to their portrayal of sex as a harmless and exciting recreational activity, music videos also portray a one-sided, sexist, and dehumanizing view of female sexuality through regular portrayals of women as decorative sexual objects. “If there is such a thing as a typical music video” writes Arnett (2002), “it features one or more men performing while beautiful, scantily clad young women dance and writhe lasciviously...the women are mostly just props...they appear for a fraction of a second, long enough to shake their butt a couple of times, then the camera moves on” (p. 256). Content analyses have attempted to capture this element of music videos primarily by comparing the amount of revealing clothing worn by women compared to men and by comparing how frequently women are featured dancing sexually compared to men. For instance, Seidman (1992) found that women are nine times more likely than men to be attired in revealing clothing in music videos, Hansen and Hansen (2000) found that women are twice as likely as men to be attired in revealing garb in music videos, and Jones (1997) found that women were more likely to be shown dancing sexually than men in music videos. Finally, although most analyses of music videos have not specifically coded for heterosexual versus homosexual content, even a casual perusing of the literature reveals that sex in music videos is almost exclusively heterosexual. Two analyses that did code for these variables are Baxter et al. (1985) and Sherman and Dominick (1986). Baxter et al. (1985) found that 2% of the music videos in their sample featured sexual encounters with homosexual overtones; Sherman and Dominick (1986) found that only 10% of kisses and 15% of hugs took place between members of the same sex in their sample.

To conclude, although music videos across genres feature sexual portrayals, certain genres feature more sex than others. Also, music videos are relatively unlikely to feature or reference explicit sexual behaviors such as intercourse, although such behaviors are certainly implied by acts such as pelvic thrusting, which are commonly depicted. Finally, similar to comedies and dramas enjoyed by



adolescents, music videos emphasize a hedonistic orientation to sex, are sexist, and feature very little same-sex sexual behavior.

### Feature Length Films

Because the majority of feature length films target adolescent audiences (Doherty 2002) and because adolescents are frequent viewers of “R” rated movies (Greenberg et al. 1993), several youth oriented scholars have undertaken the task of analyzing the sexual content in popular films. Specifically, Abramson and Mechanic (1983) analyzed the top five rental films in 1959, 1969, and 1979; Greenberg et al. (1993) analyzed R rated films from 1982 to 1984 that were popular with teen audiences; Pardun (2002) analyzed 1995 films commonly viewed by teens; Bufkin and Eschholz (2000) analyzed the top 50 box office films in 1996; Dempsey and Reichert (2000) analyzed the most frequently rented films in 1998; and Gunasekera et al. (2005) analyzed 87 of the top grossing non-animated PG-13 and R films of all time (films debuted between 1983 and 2003). Although these researchers sometimes defined sex differently and often focused their critical lenses on different aspects and portrayals of human sexuality, several consistent results emerged across these studies.

First, although many parents are skeptical about the accuracy of movie ratings (Hagelin 2009), the amount of sex in popular films does appear to vary by rating. For instance, Pardun (2002) found little sexual content in her study, but her sample contained G rated movies such as *Pocahontas* and *Toy Story*, and the only R rated movie in her sample was rated R for strong language, not sex. On the other hand, Greenberg et al. (1993) analyzed movies rated R primarily for their sexual content (e.g., *Spring Break* and *Fast Times at Ridgemont High*) and the films in their sample contained 17.5 depictions of or verbal references to sex on average. Similarly, about one-third of the PG and PG-13 films in Bufkin and Eschholz’s (2000) sample contained a sex scene whereas of 57% of R rated movies in their sample contained a sex scene. Likewise, 23 out of the 25 movies in Dempsey and Reichert’s (2000) study contained at least one instance of sexual behavior and all the movies in their sample were either rated PG-13 or R.

When films are rated PG-13 or R for sexual content, there is also a fair chance that they feature partially nude actors, as every film analyzed by Greenberg et al. (1993) had at least one incidence of nudity (primarily shots of exposed female breasts) and approximately a quarter of the sexual scenes in Dempsey and Reichert’s (2000) sample featured nudity. Films with more restrictive ratings also appear more likely to feature and reference more advanced sexual acts, as approximately 50% of all sexual depictions and references in Greenberg et al. (1993) sample concerned heterosexual intercourse and 32% of the movies in Gunasekera et al. (2005) sample featured at least one depiction of heterosexual intercourse, with some films in the sample featuring up to seven depictions of heterosexual intercourse.

Another consistent finding is that popular films portray sex as an activity primarily engaged in by unmarried people. For example, 85% of the sexual acts

coded in Dempsey and Reichert's (2000) study occurred between unmarried partners and the ratio of unmarried intercourses to married intercourses was 32:1 in Greenberg et al. (1993) study. Similarly, Gunasekera et al. (2005) found that sex in popular film primarily occurs between partners who have only recently met and Bufkin and Eschholz (2000) report a similar pattern. Furthermore, the privileging of unmarried sex over married sex is not a new phenomenon; Abramson and Mechanic (1983) found that in the 1959 and 1969 movies they analyzed "almost all sexual partners knew each other for less than 1 month" (p. 194). Unlike in soap operas, on those rare occasions when married sex is featured it is portrayed as relatively mundane and lifeless (Dempsey and Reichert 2000; Pardun 2002). Finally, although not as many studies coded the age of characters engaged in sexual activity as did the marital status of actors engaging in sexual behaviors, available evidence indicates that popular films not only eschew married sex but also sex among the middle aged and elderly. For example, the average age of sexual participants in Greenberg et al. (1993) sample was 22.2 and almost 30% of the characters engaging in sexual activity in Dempsey and Reichert's (2000) sample were in high school or college.

Given that adolescents comprise a significant proportion of the popular film audience and that sex in popular films often occurs between the young and newly acquainted, it might be hypothesized that socially conscious Hollywood producers would see to it that their films include a fair number of sexual risk and responsibility themes. It might also be expected that an industry that is often attacked for being ultra-liberal (e.g., Eberhard 2004) would feature a fair amount of homosexual sex in its feature length productions. On the contrary, however, references to contraception are virtually nonexistent (Abramson and Mechanic 1983; Greenberg et al. 1993; Gunasekera et al. 2005), children resultant from pre or extramarital sex do not exist (Dempsey and Reichert 2000), HIV transmission or other STDs are not mentioned (Gunasekera et al. 2005), reference to homosexual sex is infrequent (Dempsey and Reichert 2000; Greenberg et al. 1993; Gunasekera et al. 2005) and when homosexual activity is depicted it tends to occur in devious contexts (Bufkin and Eschholz 2000). Finally, although the focus of only one study it is also worth noting that stereotypical depictions of rapists as deranged lunatics seems to be the modus operandi of popular films, which may countervail the fact that most rapes are committed by friends, dates, and family members (Bufkin and Eschholz 2000).

In sum, although analyses of sexual content in feature films are few in number, the studies that have been conducted span several decades, and the consistency of the finding of these studies makes it difficult to argue against their generalizability. Comparing popular film to popular television, Greenberg et al. (1993) argued that "Film...contains stronger messages about sexual activity and more concrete models and examples, in contexts more relevant to young viewers" (p. 56–7). This is an interesting observation for several reasons, three in particular: first, because popular films contain frequent references to and depictions of sexual activity but feature very few messages about the risks and consequences associated with being sexually active; second, because casual, non-committed sex is portrayed as more normative and satisfactory in popular films than married sex, a portrayal which contradicts empirical findings on sex in and outside of marriage (Dempsey and Reichert 2000);

and third, because popular films are mostly devoid of homosexual behavior and tend to depict homosexuality as the sexual preference of deviants.

### Magazines Read by Adolescent Females

Researchers who have conducted analyses of sex on television and in popular feature length films have primarily used quantitative content analytic methods and have focused the majority of their attention on the amount of sexual talk and behavior in these media. Researchers interested in the sexual content in magazines read by adolescent females, on the other hand, have primarily been feminist scholars who have focused their attention on the patriarchal and hegemonic social-sexual reality constructed by these magazines. Analyses of magazines mainly read by older adolescent females (typically referred to as “women’s magazines”) are reviewed next; analyses of magazines mainly read by younger adolescent females (typically referred to as “teen magazines”) are reviewed thereafter.

#### Women’s Magazines

Magazines such as *Cosmopolitan*, *Glamour*, *Allure*, and *Marie Claire* are primarily read by older adolescent females but there is evidence that girls as young as 14 also read these periodicals (Farvid and Braun 2006). Although rare, analyses that have attempted to quantify the amount of sex in women’s magazines have found that sexual content comprises much of the editorial content (e.g., McMahon 1990; Prusank et al. 1993) and that even articles with a primary theme other than sex still reference sexual behavior and other sexual issues quite frequently (McMahon 1990). Unlike television depictions of sex, descriptions of sex in women’s magazines are quite graphic. For example, an article about a 1980 *Cosmo* reader survey described readers’ experience with “Sex with More Than One Partner at the Same Time” and “Sodomasochistic Sex” (McMahon 1990) and a 2002 article in *Cleo* titled “7 Ways to Get Him Up!” advised readers that “another technique many males adore but are reluctant to express is having their partner maintain eye contact during oral sex” (Farvid and Braun 2006, p. 300).

Whereas women’s magazines consistently feature articles about sex and consistently describe sexual behavior in explicit language, they do not send consistent messages to their readers about sexual attitudes and values. An oft mentioned illustration of this inconsistency is found in women’s magazines’ prescriptions about the appropriate motivations for sexual activity. On the one hand, women’s magazines emphasize that love should not be the only motive for sex and that lustful sexual relations are not only desirable but necessary to make up for the sexual deprivation women have inflicted on themselves by reserving sex for love relationships only (Prusank et al. 1993). According to Prusank et al. (1993), “The new attitude seems to be to enjoy sex for its physical pleasure...without concern for a long-term relationship” (p. 312). At the same time, however, monogamous long-term relationships with men are described as necessary for happiness and

contentment and when women are encouraged to engage in lust-based sex in women's magazines there is often an insinuation that lustful passion should ultimately blossom into a loving and committed romantic relationship (Farvid and Braun 2006).

Similarly, while women are encouraged to be assertive with men and to demand that men respect them for their intelligence and accomplishments, they are simultaneously told that what men really care about is youth and sexual appeal and are given specific instructions about the steps they can take to turn themselves into the kind of sexual object that will catch a man's eye. For instance, women are taught by *Cosmopolitan* to pout when applying lipstick, to wear "tiny underpants and big sweat socks", to look for opportunities to be "glistening wet" such as exiting a pool or the ocean or to wear "a strand of pearls" and nothing else (Durham 1996, p. 24). But even when women are told overtly to sexually objectify themselves in order to attract a man, they are given the difficult task of being lady-like in their sexual objectification strategies. For example women are told that on first dates they should wear something sexy enough so that their date will want to sleep with them but not so sexy that he'll think "1,000 men" have already slept with them (Farvid and Braun 2006, p. 300).

Women are also admonished that they have only themselves to blame if their partner strays due to their lack of sexual attractiveness and sexual prowess. According to McMahon (1990), women's magazines stress that "loving consideration for one's partner, even an 'eagerness to please', is not good enough" (p. 389). As one safeguard against male infidelity, women are encouraged to invent original sexual tricks and maneuvers that will ensure that their partner will never lust after other women again (Farvid and Braun 2006). According to several authors (e.g., Durham 1996; Farvid and Braun 2006) the importance women's magazines place on females' sexual skill set is seemingly rooted in their belief that men are sex crazed maniacs who cannot possibly be expected to exercise sexual self-control, an assertion which raises yet another paradox: Why should women devote so much time and energy to attracting a male partner when men are so untrustworthy and sexually impulsive? In addition, women's magazines' "obsession" with accommodating men's sexual desires often translates into a lack of emphasis on how women can ensure that their own sexual needs are met, a disproportion that has drawn the ire of critical-feminist scholars (Farvid and Braun 2006). Last, same-sex sexual behavior is almost never mentioned in women's magazines, as editors seem to assume that their readers are exclusively heterosexual (Durham 1996). When female-female sexual inclinations are mentioned, they tend to be defined in terms of heterosexual curiosity rather than homosexuality (Gadsen 2002).

Finally, an analysis of women's magazines published from 1993 to 1996 (Walsh-Childers et al. 1997) found that topics such as rape, sexual abuse, and incest received limited coverage, as only 10% of the articles with sexual content in this sample contained any mention of these topics. On the other hand, Walsh-Childers et al. (1997) found that women's magazines are much more apt to engage sexual health issues such as pregnancy, contraception and sexually transmitted diseases, as 50% of the articles with sexual content contained at least some mention of these sexual health issues.

## Teen Magazines

Teen magazines such as *Seventeen*, *YM*, and *Teen* are read by millions of adolescents nation wide (Walsh-Childers et al. 1997) and place a heavy emphasis on sex (Duffy and Gotcher 1996; Evans et al. 1991). Teen magazines have devoted significant attention to sex since 1980 (Carpenter 1998), however, coverage of sexual behavior and other sexual issues has become more frank and explicit over the years (Garner et al. 1998). Similarly, while the sexual behaviors most frequently mentioned are fairly normative (e.g., flirting, kissing, deciding whether or not to have sex with a boyfriend), teen magazines also cover not-so-conventional behaviors and issues such as teenage stripping (Evans et al. 1991), not wearing panties to church or school, experience with sex toys (Duffy and Gotcher 1996), sex with older men, sex with cousins, males' attitudes about their penises, and talking too much while having sex (Garner et al. 1998). Premarital sex is assumed in teen magazines: the only questions are "where, when, and with whom" (Garner et al. 1998, p. 73).

Like women's magazines, teen magazines tout the value of physical attractiveness and emphasize the role sex appeal plays in attracting the right boy. For example, adolescent girls who skim the pages of teen magazines might see the following choice of articles: "Best Bikinis—Make Him Sweat"; "Killer Clothes—They'll Knock Him Dead"; "Flirty Dresses That'll Have Him at Your Mercy" (Duffy and Gotcher 1996, pp. 32, 40). If wearing the right dress or sexy sweater does not turn the head of the boy in question, teen girls are advised to turn the heat up a notch by, for example, offering their crush a glimpse of their panties (which readers are told can be accomplished by unbuttoning their dress, rolling down their boxers, and by wearing low cut pants) or stripping down to the "bare necessities" (Duffy and Gotcher 1996, pp. 38, 40). However, once the boy does go gaga, teen magazines assign adolescent girls the difficult task of transmuting his powerful sexual urges into idealistic conceptions of romantic commitment.

According to Garner et al. (1998), teen boys in teen magazines are portrayed as users and controllers of sex whereas girls are characterized as needing to negotiate boys' desire to use them sexually. On the one hand, then, adolescent girls may learn from teen magazines that they must be overtly sexual to attract boys, but on the other hand are also warned that boys' sexuality can be menacing and that it is their job to be "sex therapists" and "communication teachers" in order to show boys how to express their feelings in chivalrous ways (Garner et al. 1998, p. 68). Girls are given little advice on how to interpret and manage their own sexual feelings in teen magazines, because with the exception of using their physical attributes to attract males, teen girls are portrayed as being romantic and relational, but not sexual. According to Durham (1998), "girls learn to 'look sexy' but to say 'no'; to be feminine, but not sexual; to attract boys' desire, but never respond to their own" (p. 374). For instance, Evans et al. (1991) found that one *Sassy* magazine featured the teaser title "How to Flirt" on its cover while another issue had the teaser title "Talking Him Out of Talking You into Sex" on its cover (p. 106).

As with women's magazines, evidence suggests that teen magazines include very few references to same-sex behavior. For example, only one article in 30 mentioned

homosexuality in Evans et al. (1991) study of *Sassy*, *Seventeen*, and *Young Miss* and only 4.3% of sexual items coded in Carpenter's (1998) study of *Seventeen* mentioned homosexual content. Garner et al. (1998) argue that while teen magazines do not condemn homosexuality, its "absence can be seen as limiting or isolating young women with this interest" (p. 73). Finally, although Walsh-Childers et al. (1997) study of *Seventeen*, *YM*, *Teen Magazine*, and *Sassy* found that 42% of articles about sex in these magazines focused on sexual health issues such as contraception and unplanned pregnancy, Durham (1998) found that even articles about sexual patience and responsibility in teen magazines feature contradictory messages. For example, a 1996 article in *YM* cautioning readers to think hard before having sex with their boyfriend was:

accompanied by three photographs of a young girl, clad only in a bra and panties, posed provocatively on a bed – sitting, reclining, and ultimately curling up and covering her breasts with a pillow. In two of the pictures, her expression was coy and seductive; in one her eyes were closed and she was smiling in eroticized ecstasy. (p. 381)

Thus, while it is true that teen magazines devote a significant amount of editorial content to sexual health issues, the effects of messages regarding these issues may be muted by certain visual elements that accompany those articles.

To conclude, women and teen magazines share a great deal of sexual commonality but are different in several ways. Specifically, both place a relatively high premium on sexual health issues, contain graphic sexual descriptions, emphasize the inseparability of female physical appearance and female sexuality, and send mixed sexual messages. However, while both underscore the importance of male sexuality, women's magazines stress that females must develop their sexual repertoire to keep up with males' sexual passions, while teen magazines instruct their readers in the ways they might resist males' advances or channel males' sexuality into relational and romantic endeavors. Also, while women's magazines devote significant attention to females' needs for lust-based sex, teen magazines approach female sexuality primarily from a relational perspective.

### Magazines Read by Adolescent Males

Studies of sexual content in men's magazines are rarer than studies of sexual content in women's magazines. When analyses of men's magazines have been conducted, they have usually focused on sexually explicit magazines such as *Playboy* and *Penthouse* (e.g., Malamuth and Spinner 1980; Matacin and Burger 1987). Although Walsh-Childers et al. (1997) did examine coverage of sexual health issues in magazines geared toward men of many ages such as *Men's Fitness*, *Men's Journal*, *Esquire*, and *GQ*, only one study has examined the sexual content in "lad magazines", a genre of lifestyle magazines directed primarily at adolescent males (Taylor 2005).

Lad magazines are the male counter to magazines such as *Seventeen* and *Cosmopolitan*; they focus heavily on sex and feature numerous photos of

provocatively posed, scantily clad women but unlike *Playboy* and *Penthouse* do not feature photos of women's nipples or genitalia and are thus available for purchase by male teens of all ages (Taylor 2005). Lad magazines were popularized in Britain and debuted in the US in the 1990s; example titles have included, *Maxim*, *FHM* (*For Him Magazine*), *Stuff*, *Gear*, and *Blender*. Although not as popular today as they were in the late 1990s and early 2000s, lad magazines are still read by millions and *Maxim* magazine, the most popular lad periodical, continues to be one of the top selling men's magazines in the US (Carr 2006).

Taylor (2005) content analyzed four issues a year of three lad magazines (*Maxim*, *FHM*, and *Stuff*) from their respective debut dates in the US up until 2003. He found that while 41% of the articles about sex had "how to pleasure women" as their primary theme, closer inspection of the articles revealed that the underling motivation for pleasuring women was to receive sexual pleasure in return. For instance, men were instructed by *Maxim* that women would be more likely to give them oral sex if they were willing to put up with longer coital episodes. A more detailed inspection of the data also showed that articles about "how to please women sexually" may have really been attempts by the magazines to appeal to males' fantasies about women's "true" sexual desires, as these articles were more likely than other articles about sex to include discussions of anal sex, group sex, and bondage. Further evidence that the intent of lad magazines may be to titillate—not educate—comes from the fact that 89 of the 91 articles about sex were accompanied by a female disrobing, in the nude, or posing provocatively.

Similarly, although approximately 19% of articles about sex made some reference to lesbianism, all female-female sex acts were either accompanied by a male participant or a male voyeur. Male-male sex was never discussed. Finally, although Walsh-Childers et al. (1997) analysis of magazines targeting men of many ages found that 28% of articles about sex included at least some mention of sexual risk and responsibility, Taylor (2005) did not find any articles focusing on these issues in his study. This finding is especially interesting given that 19% of all articles about sex were about sex with women men had never met before.

In sum, lifestyle magazines targeting adolescent males have received scant research attention but available evidence indicates that these magazines privilege male sexuality over female sexuality, portray sex between strangers as normative, and assume that males' are not interested sexually in other males. Additionally, unlike other male oriented periodicals, lifestyle magazines targeting adolescent males contain little to no information about sexual risks or responsibilities.

## Summary and Research Implications

For ethical and procedural reasons, research on the effects of sexual media on youths under the age of 18 will usually be carried out using survey as opposed to experimental methods (Huston et al. 1998). While experimentalists can sift through various media messages to find just the right snippet to test the effect they hypothesize, survey researchers must ask participants to self-report levels of

exposure to different media and hypotheses about effects must be generated from assumptions made about the nature of the content in these media. Certainly, there are common sexual themes and portrayals in the entertainment mass media commonly consumed by adolescents. For instance, pre-marital sex is normative in teen preferred media and whether adolescents flip open the latest edition of an adolescent targeted magazine, watch a drama or sitcom, or relax with a few of their favorite music videos, they are likely exposed to heavily sex stereotyped portrayals of human sexuality. Consequently, research efforts targeting outcomes related to pre-marital sexual activity or beliefs about male-female sex roles may not need to develop media specific measures of exposure and may be able to provide support for hypotheses using global or composite measures of exposure to sexual media (e.g., Brown et al. 2005). However, the results of this review indicate that there are important differences in sexual portrayals and themes across media genres and within particular types within genres. Researchers need to be mindful of these differences when attempting to link particular exposure measures to particular sexual socialization outcomes.

For instance, female adolescents who primarily consume television dramas and comedies may learn that sex is a risk and responsibility-free activity. On the contrary, female adolescents who primarily read teen and women's magazines are exposed to a great deal of information about STIs, contraception, and unplanned pregnancy. Similarly, teenage males who find lad magazines insipid but enjoy daytime talk shows will be exposed to more risk and responsibility messages than their counterparts who have the opposite media preferences. Or consider sexual motives. Female adolescents who prefer prime-time programs may learn that sex is a recreational activity, female adolescents who prefer women's magazines may be confused as to whether sex is about lust or love, while teen magazine readers may adopt a relational orientation towards sex. Perceptions of homosexuality may also differ depending on which media genres adolescents most frequently attend to. Sitcom viewers may learn that homosexuals are eccentric, although harmless, while heavy consumers of feature length films may learn that homosexuality and deviance go hand in hand. As a final illustration, heavy soap opera viewers may develop positive attitudes towards marital sex while heavy film viewers may come to believe that marital sex is monotonous and unexciting.

## Conclusions and Limitations

Researchers from a wide variety of disciplines outside communication, including social and clinical psychology, public health, and human development, have in recent years become interested in the role of the entertainment mass media in the sexual socialization of American adolescents. While there are common sexual themes, representations and depictions in many mainstream media attended to by adolescents, there are also several key differences. The purposes of this paper were to elucidate these commonalities and dissimilarities and to provide a summary and synthesis of the content literature, thus providing sexual socialization researchers with a common reference point to consider when developing hypotheses about the



impact of exposure to various entertainment mass media on the sexual beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors of American adolescents.

The utility of the information provided in this paper is limited in several ways, however, and these limitations must be acknowledged. First, it must be stressed that content patterns do not equate to content effects. In other words, content analyses establish the message environment in a particular media genre but do not provide any information about the effects of that content. Although there are theoretical (Bandura 1986; Gerbner et al. 2002; Huesmann 1986) and empirical reasons (Chandra et al. 2008; Collins et al. 2004) to speculate that adolescents may adopt the values and behaviors presented in the sexual media they attend to, statements about the effects of specific sexual media messages simply cannot be made through content analysis research alone. Second, conclusions drawn about the nature of sexual media content in teen preferred genres based on studies carried out years ago may no longer be valid in today's media environment. For instance, prime-time lineups are quite dynamic and the past few years have seen an increase in reality shows such as *Biggest Loser* and *American Idol* and a decrease in traditional comedies and dramas such as *Friends* and *Dawson's Creek*. Finally, although the rise of the Internet and other new media technologies has not reduced the amount of time adolescents spend with traditional entertainment mass media (Homes 2008; Roberts and Foehr 2004), analyzing the sexual media content that adolescents are exposed to online and in other nontraditional venues must become a research priority for sexual socialization scholars. That the studies reviewed here do not consider the role new media technologies play in delivering sexual content to adolescents is a clear limitation.

## References

- Abramsom, P. R., & Mechanic, M. B. (1983). Sex and the media: Three decades of best-selling books and major motion pictures. *Archives of Sexual Behavior, 12*, 185–206.
- Arnett, J. (2002). The sounds of sex: Sex in teens' music and music videos. In J. Brown, J. R. Steele, & K. Walsh-Childers (Eds.), *Sexual teens, sexual media* (pp. 253–264). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Aubrey, J. S. (2004). Sex and punishment: An examination of sexual consequences and the sexual double standard in teen programming. *Sex Roles, 50*, 505–514.
- Aubrey, J. S. (2007). Does television exposure influence college-aged women's sexual self-concept? *Media Psychology, 10*, 157–181.
- Bandura, A. (1986). *Social foundations of thought and action*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- 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*, 333–340.
- Brown, J. D., Walsh-Childers, K. W., & Waszak, C. S. (1990). Television and adolescent sexuality. *Journal of Adolescent Health Care, 11*, 62–70.
- Brown, J. D., L'Engle, K. L., Pardun, C. J., Guo, G., Kenneavy, K., & Jackson, C. (2005). Sexy media matter: Exposure to sexual content in music, movies, television, and magazines predicts black and white adolescents' sexual behavior. *Pediatrics, 117*, 1018–1027.
- Bufkin, J., & Eschholz, S. (2000). Images of sex and rape: A content analysis of popular film. *Violence Against Women, 6*, 1317–1344.
- Carpenter, L. M. (1998). From girls into women: Scripts for sexuality and romance in seventeen magazine, 1974–1994. *Journal of Sex Research, 35*, 158–168.

- Carr, D. (2006). The lads are getting picky. *The New York Times*. Retrieved Novemb 14, 2008 from [http://www.nytimes.com/2006/12/25/business/media/25carr.html?\\_r=2&fta=y&oref=slogin&oref=slogin](http://www.nytimes.com/2006/12/25/business/media/25carr.html?_r=2&fta=y&oref=slogin&oref=slogin).
- Chandra, A., Martino, S. C., Collins, R. L., Elliot, M. N., Berry, S. H., Kanouse, D. E., et al. (2008). Does watching sex on television predict teen pregnancy? Findings from a national longitudinal survey of youth. *Pediatrics*, *122*, 1047–1054.
- Collins, R. L., Elliott, M. N., Berry, S. H., Kanouse, D. E., Kunkel, D., Hunter, S. B., et al. (2004). Watching sex on television predicts adolescent initiation of sexual behavior. *Pediatrics*, *114*, 280–289.
- Cope-Farrar, K. M., & Kunkel, D. (2002). Sexual messages in teens' favorite prime-time television programs. In J. Brown, J. R. Steele, & K. Walsh-Childers (Eds.), *Sexual teens, sexual media* (pp. 59–78). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Davis, S., & Mares, M. L. (1998). Effects of talk show viewing on adolescents. *Journal of Communication*, *48*, 69–86.
- Dempsey, J. M., & Reichert, T. (2000). Portrayal of married sex in the movies. *Sexuality and Culture*, *4*, 21–36.
- Doherty, T. (2002). *Teenagers and teenpics*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.
- Duffy, M., & Gotcher, J. M. (1996). Crucial advice on how to get the guy: The rhetorical vision of power and seduction in the teen magazine YM. *Journal of Communication Inquiry*, *20*, 32–48.
- DuRant, R. H., Rome, E. S., Rich, M., Allred, E., Emans, S. J., & Woods, E. R. (1997). Tobacco and alcohol use behaviors portrayed in music videos: A content analysis. *American Journal of Public Health*, *87*, 1131–1135.
- Durham, M. (1996). The taming of the shrew: Women's magazines and the regulation of desire. *Journal of Communication Inquiry*, *20*, 18–31.
- Durham, M. (1998). Dilemmas of desire: Representations of adolescent sexuality in two teen magazines. *Youth and Society*, *29*, 369–389.
- Eberhard, J. (2004). *Liberal bias in Hollywood*. Retrieved November 14, 2008 from <http://www.intellectualconservative.com/article3576.html>.
- Evans, E. D., Rutberg, J., Sather, C., & Turner, C. (1991). Content analysis of contemporary teen magazines for adolescent females. *Youth and Society*, *23*, 99–120.
- Eyal, K., Kunkel, D., Biely, E. N., & Finnerty, K. L. (2007). Sexual socialization messages on television programs most popular among teens. *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media*, *51*, 316–336.
- Farvid, P., & Braun, V. (2006). 'Most of us guys are raring to go anytime, anyplace, anywhere': Male and female sexuality in Cleo and Cosmo. *Sex Roles*, *55*, 295–310.
- Fisher, D. A., Hill, D. L., & Grube, J. W. (2007). Gay, lesbian, and bisexual content on television: A quantitative analysis across two seasons. *Journal of Homosexuality*, *52*, 167–188.
- Garner, A., Sterk, H. M., & Adams, S. (1998). Narrative analysis of sexual etiquette in teenage magazines. *Journal of Communication*, *48*, 59–78.
- Gerbner, G., Gross, L., Morgan, M., Signorielli, N., & Shanahan, J. (2002). Growing up with television: Cultivation processes. In J. Bryant & D. Zillmann (Eds.), *Media effects: Advances in theory and research* (pp. 43–67). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Greenberg, B. S., & Busselle, R. W. (1996). Soap operas and sexual activity: A decade later. *Journal of Communication*, *46*, 153–160.
- Greenberg, B. S., & D'Alessio, D. (1985). Quantity and quality of sex in the soaps. *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media*, *29*, 309–321.
- Greenberg, B. S., & Smith, S. W. (2002). Daytime talk shows: Up close and in your face. In J. Brown, J. R. Steele, & K. Walsh-Childers (Eds.), *Sexual teens, sexual media* (pp. 79–93). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Greenberg, B. S., & Woods, M. G. (1999). The soaps: Their sex, gratifications, and outcomes. *Journal of Sex Research*, *36*, 250–257.
- Greenberg, B. S., Abelman, R., & Neuendorf, K. A. (1981). Sex on the soap operas: Afternoon delight. *Journal of Communication*, *31*, 83–89.
- Greenberg, B. S., Siemicki, M., Dorfman, S., Heeter, C., Stanley, C., Soderman, A., et al. (1993). Sex content in R-rated films viewed by adolescents. In B. S. Greenberg, J. D. Brown, & N. Buerkel-Rothfuss (Eds.), *Media, sex, and the adolescent* (pp. 45–58). Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press.
- Greenberg, B. S., Smith, S. W., AhYun, J., Busselle, R., Rampoldi-Hnilo, L., Mitchell, M., et al. (1995). *The content of television talk shows: Topics, guests, and interactions*. Menlo Park, CA: Kaiser Family Foundation.

- Greenberg, B. S., Sherry, J. L., Busselle, R. W., Hnilo, L. R., & Smith, S. W. (1997). Daytime television talk shows: Guests, content, and interactions. *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media*, *41*, 412–426.
- Gunasekera, H., Chapman, S., & Campbell, S. (2005). Sex and drugs in popular movies: An analysis of the top 200 films. *Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine*, *9*, 464–470.
- Hagelin, R. (2009). Really reviewing the movies. *The Patriot Post*. Retrieved March 9, 2009 from <http://www.patriotpost.us/opinion/rebecca-hagelin/2009/02/24/really-reviewing-the-movies.html>.
- Hansen, C. H., & Hansen, R. D. (2000). Music and music videos. In D. Zillmann & P. Vorderer (Eds.), *Media entertainment: The psychology of its appeal* (pp. 175–196). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Heintz-Knowles, K. E. (1996). *Sexual activity on daytime soap operas: A content analysis of five weeks of television programming*. Menlo Park, CA: Kaiser Family Foundation.
- Hogan, D. P., & Kitagawa, E. M. (1985). The impact of social status, family structure and neighborhood on the fertility of black adolescents. *American Journal of Sociology*, *90*, 825–855.
- Homes, G. (2008). *Under 35s watch video on internet and mobile phones more than over 35 s; traditional TV viewing continues to grow*. New York: Nielson Media Research.
- Huesmann, L. R. (1986). Psychological processes promoting the relation between exposure to media violence and aggressive behavior in the viewer. *Journal of Social Issues*, *42*, 125–139.
- Huston, A. C., Donnerstein, E., Fairchild, H., Feshbach, N. C., Katz, P. A., Murray, J. P., et al. (1992). *Big world, small screen*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.
- Huston, A. C., Wartella, E., & Donnerstein, E. (1998). *Measuring the effects of sexual content in the media*. Menlo Park, CA: 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. *Howard Journal of Communication*, *8*, 343–356.
- Kielwasser, A. P., & Wolf, M. A. (1992). Mainstream television, adolescent homosexuality, and significant silence. *Critical Studies in Mass Communication*, *9*, 350–373.
- Kim, J. L., & Ward, L. M. (2004). Pleasure reading: Associations between young women's sexual attitudes and their reading of contemporary women's magazines. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, *28*, 48–58.
- Kim, J. L., Sorsoli, C. L., Collins, K., Zylbergold, B. A., Schooler, D., & Tolman, D. L. (2007). From sex to sexuality: Exposing the heterosexual script on primetime network television. *Journal of Sex Research*, *44*, 145–157.
- Kunkel, D., Cope, K. M., Farinola, W. M., Biely, E., Rollin, E., & Donnerstein, E. (1999). *Sex on TV: A biennial report to the Kaiser Family Foundation*. Menlo Park, CA: Kaiser Family Foundation.
- Kunkel, D., Cope-Farrar, K. M., Biely, E., Farinola, W., & Donnerstein, E. (2001). *Sex on TV 2: A biennial report to the Kaiser Family Foundation*. Menlo Park, CA: Kaiser Family Foundation.
- Kunkel, D., Biely, E., Eyal, K., Cope-Farrar, K. M., Donnerstein, E., & Fandrich, R. (2003). *Sex on TV 3: A biennial report to the Kaiser Family Foundation*. Menlo Park, CA: Kaiser Family Foundation.
- Kunkel, D., Eyal, K., Finnerty, K., Biely, E., & Donnerstein, D. (2005). *Sex on TV 4: A biennial report to the Kaiser Family Foundation*. Menlo Park, CA: Kaiser Family Foundation.
- Lowry, D. T., & Shidler, J. A. (1993). Prime time TV portrayals of sex, "safe sex", and AIDS: A longitudinal analysis. *Journalism Quarterly*, *70*, 628–637.
- 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.
- Lowry, D. T., Love, G., & Kirby, M. (1981). Sex on the soap operas: Patterns of intimacy. *Journal of Communication*, *31*, 90–96.
- Malamuth, N. M., & Spinner, B. (1980). Longitudinal content analysis of sexual violence in the best selling erotica magazines. *Journal of Sex Research*, *16*, 226–237.
- Manlove, J. (1998). The influence of high school dropout and school disengagement on the risk of school-age pregnancy. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, *8*, 187–220.
- Matacin, M. L., & Burger, J. M. (1987). A content analysis of sexual themes in Playboy cartoons. *Sex Roles*, *17*, 179–186.
- McMahon, K. (1990). The Cosmopolitan ideology and the management of desire. *Journal of Sex Research*, *27*, 381–396.
- Miller, B. C. (1998). *Families matter: A research synthesis of family influences on adolescent pregnancy*. Washington, DC: National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy.
- Nielson Media Research. (2004). *2004 report on television*. New York: Nielson Media Research.

- Office of the Surgeon General. (2001). *The Surgeon General's call to action to promote sexual health and responsible sexual behavior*. Rockville, MD: US Public Health Service.
- Pardun, C. J. (2002). Romancing the script: Identifying the romantic agenda in top-grossing movies. In J. Brown, K. Walsh-Childers, & J. Steele (Eds.), *Sexual teens, sexual media* (pp. 211–225). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Pardun, C. J., & McKee, K. B. (1995). Strange bedfellows: Symbols of religion and sexuality on MTV. *Youth and Society*, 26, 438–449.
- Pardun, C. J., L'Engle, K. L., & Brown, J. D. (2005). Linking exposure to outcomes: Early adolescents' consumption of sexual content in six media. *Mass Communication and Society*, 8, 75–91.
- Prusank, D., Duran, R. L., & DeLillo, D. A. (1993). Interpersonal relationship in women's magazines: Dating and relating in the 1970s and 1980s. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 10, 307–320.
- Roberts, D. F., & Foehr, U. G. (2004). *Kids and media in America*. Cambridge: University Press.
- Robinson, T. N., Chen, H. L., & Killen, J. D. (1998). Television and music video exposure and risk of adolescent alcohol use. *Pediatrics*, 102, 1–6.
- Sapolsky, B. S., & Tabarlet, J. O. (1991). Sex in prime time television: 1979 versus 1989. *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media*, 35, 505–516.
- Seidman, S. A. (1992). An investigation of sex-role stereotyping in music videos. *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media*, 36, 209–216.
- Sherman, B. L., & Dominick, J. R. (1986). Violence and sex in music videos: TV and rock 'n'roll. *Journal of Communication*, 36, 79–93.
- Smith, S. L. (2005). From Dr. Dre to Dismissed: Assessing violence, sex, and substance use on MTV. *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, 22, 89–98.
- Smith, S. W., Mitchell, M. M., AhYun, J., Johnson, A. J., Orrego, V. O., & Greenberg, B. S. (1999). The nature of close relationships as presented in television talk show titles. *Communication Studies*, 50, 175–187.
- Sommers-Flanagan, R., Sommers-Flanagan, J., & Davis, B. (1993). What's happening on music television? A gender role content analysis. *Sex Roles*, 28, 745–753.
- Sutton, M. J., Brown, J., Wilson, K. M., & Klein, J. D. (2002). Shaking the tree of knowledge for forbidden fruit: Where adolescents learn about sexuality and contraception. In J. Brown, J. R. Steele, & K. Walsh-Childers (Eds.), *Sexual teens, sexual media* (pp. 1–24). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Tapper, J., Thorson, E., & Black, D. (1994). Variations in music videos as a function of their musical genre. *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media*, 38, 103–113.
- Taylor, L. D. (2005). All for him: Articles about sex in American lad magazines. *Sex Roles*, 3(4), 153–163.
- Taylor, L. D. (2006). College men, their magazines, and sex. *Sex Roles*, 55, 693–702.
- Walsh-Childers, K., Treise, D., & Gotthoffer, A. (1997). *Sexual health coverage in women's, men's, teen, and other specialty magazines*. Menlo Park, CA: Kaiser Family Foundation.
- Ward, L. M. (1995). Talking about sex: Common themes about sexuality in the prime-time television programs children and adolescents view most. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 24, 595–615.
- Werner-Wilson, R. J. (1998). Gender differences in adolescent sexual attitudes: the influence of individual and family factors. *Adolescence*, 35, 519–531.
- Zurbriggen, E. L., & Morgan, E. M. (2006). Who wants to marry a millionaire? Reality dating television programs, attitudes towards sex, and sexual behaviors. *Sex Roles*, 54, 1–17.