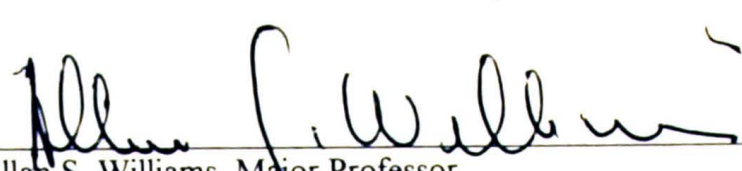# A REVIEW OF CURRENT LITERATURE
ANALYZING CONTENT AND DESIGN OF MODERN ELECTRONIC
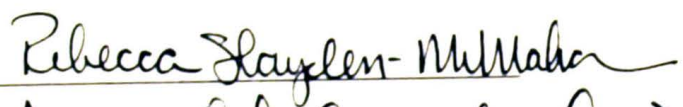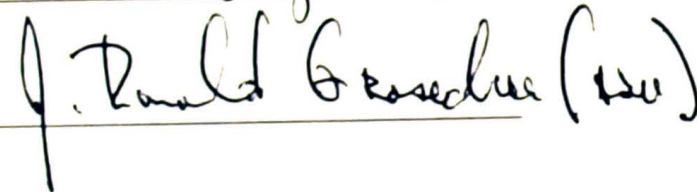## AND PRINTED MEDIA INFLUENCING ADOLESCENT PROMISCUITY

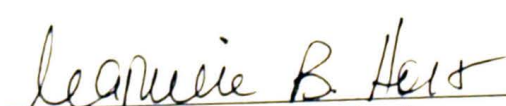GLADENA GRIFFIN CHADWICK

To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a field study written by Gladena Griffin Chadwick entitled "A Review of Current Literature Analyzing Content and Design of Modern Electronic and Printed Media Influencing Adolescent Promiscuity." I have examined the final copy of this field study for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Education Specialist, with a major in Administration and Supervision.

_____
Allan S. Williams, Major Professor

We have read this field study
and recommend its acceptance:

_____
Rebecca Haylen-McMahon

_____
J. Ronald Grosechue (for) By permission

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Date _July 15, 1996_

A REVIEW OF CURRENT LITERATURE
ANALYZING CONTENT AND DESIGN OF MODERN ELECTRONIC
AND PRINTED MEDIA INFLUENCING ADOLESCENT PROMISCUITY

A Field Study

Presented to

the Faculty of the Graduate School

Austin Peay State University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Education Specialist

by

Gladena Griffin Chadwick

March 1996

DEDICATION

This field study is dedicated to my parents

Mrs. Louise Rothrock Griffin

and

The late Mr. James Fraser Griffin

who instilled in me at an early age the value of an education

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

A REVIEW OF CURRENT LITERATURE
ANALYZING CONTENT AND DESIGN OF MODERN ELECTRONIC
AND PRINTED MEDIA INFLUENCING ADOLESCENT PROMISCUITY

An Abstract

Presented to

the Faculty of the Graduate School

Austin Peay State University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Education Specialist

by

Gladena Griffin Chadwick

March 1996

ABSTRACT

This field study was conducted to review how literature deals with the impact modern media has on adolescent promiscuity. The rationale for this study was developed after an informal survey of adolescent magazines intended for pre-teen and teenage female audiences. Additionally, interest in media effects on teenage promiscuity was aroused after homebound teaching observation speculated generally on what types of afternoon and prime time television viewing was made available to adolescents.

Several aspects of modern media including television, videos, music, and printed media were examined to determine the effects of media on the attitudes and behaviors of today's adolescents. The available research on topics such as learned effects of the media, sexuality through the media, and relationships through the media were also discussed.

According to researchers, adolescents need guidance during the turbulent teenage years. Researchers suggest not only should schools provide adequate guidance programs but also parents should take an active role in their teenager's life. Attitudes of the entire family are paramount in the developing of sexual promiscuity and teenage pregnancy.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

A Carnegie Corporation study found the time teenagers spend with their families consists primarily of eating or watching television (Bennett, 1994). The average child spends more time in the first fifteen years of life watching television than going to school (Liebert et al., 1982). The average American preschool child watches more than twenty-seven hours of television per week or about four hours per day (Bennett). The majority of American teenagers spends an average of 1.8 hours per week reading, 5.6 hours per week on homework, and about twenty-one hours per week watching television (Bennett). In contrast to the three hours per day teenagers spend watching television, adolescents spend an average of five minutes per day alone with their fathers and an average of twenty minutes per day alone with their mothers (Bennett). If these estimates are true, exposure to television viewing over long periods of time may have an adverse effect on children's lives and values. A 1991 survey reveals only 2 percent of the respondents believe television should have the largest influence on children's values, but 56 percent of those surveyed think television does have the greatest influence on these developing values--even more persuadable influence than do parents, teachers, and religious leaders combined (Bennett).

Although numerous studies have been conducted on the effects of television violence on children and youth, little research exists on the effects of sexually explicit television material on children. This lack of concrete research is perhaps due to the idea of soliciting child participants for such studies as being a violation of deeply held values (Liebert et al., 1982).

Significance of the Problem

The rise of teenage promiscuity has become an overwhelming problem for school officials as well as for others working in social institutions. Pressures on adolescents from many sides to engage in pre-marital sex seem to compound the problem. In addition, increases in sexually explicit programming of the electronic media and in sexual overtones contained in adolescent oriented print media appear to have added to the troubling problem of teenage promiscuity.

As a high school librarian, this author has observed trends in print media directed at female pre-teen and teenage audiences becoming more sexually explicit in format and design. This author's informal content analysis of magazines intended for female adolescent audiences has supported her observations. In addition, this writer has worked with pregnant teenagers and teenage mothers in a homebound teaching situation and has witnessed alarming trends in sexually explicit and sexually suggestive programming for afternoon and prime time television directed at pre-teen and teenage audiences.

Educators have tested many educational, social, and cultural programs which promise to reduce the problem of teenage promiscuity. However, none of these promises involving adolescent training programs has apparently come true A look at the effects of modern media on teenage promiscuity is essential for understanding the problem of adolescent sexual behavior.

Statement of the Problem

The problem to be investigated in this study is to determine the results research has shown concerning the effects of modern media on adolescent attitudes and

behaviors influencing teenage promiscuity. Many experts agree trends in both electronic and print media would seem to indicate a change in youths' attitudes toward promiscuity. This study will concentrate on the media effects of teenage promiscuity

Definition of Terms

Adolescent magazines are printed periodicals designed in appeal and format for persons especially between the ages of eleven and nineteen.

Electronic media, referred to in this paper, are any form of media transmitted by way of television, radio, film, video, computer, or recordings.

Erotic touching, according to Lowry, Love, and Kirby (1981), is the interpersonal touching which has clear sexual overtones. These demonstrate or intend to demonstrate sexual love, and these overtones arouse or express sexual desire.

Media is referred to in this paper as either television, printed media, or any other forms of mass communication. Media is the process in which professional communicators design and use media to disseminate messages widely, rapidly, and continually in order to arouse intended meanings in large, diverse, and selectively attending audiences attempting to influence the audience in a variety of ways.

Media literacy is the art of deconstructing television which involves knowing how to interpret techniques used in the editing of film to make a television show.

Media's portrayal of sex is both literal and perceived. Sometimes this is an innuendo; sometimes this is body contact as on soap operas; sometimes this is alluded to more than visually portrayed as in talk shows.

Obscenity, as defined by the Supreme Court in Miller v. California, 1973, is material which is judged offensive by local authorities according to standards which prevail in a given community.

Prime time is television programming between the hours of 7:00 p.m. and 9:00 p.m.

Teenage pregnancy is the state of unborn young within the body of a young person between the ages of eleven and nineteen.

Teenage promiscuity is the lack of selectivity or discrimination, especially in sexual relationships, among young persons between the ages of eleven and nineteen.

Teenage sexuality is sexual activity relating to a young person between the ages of eleven and nineteen.

Sexually inexperienced is not having engaged in sexual intercourse.

Sitcoms are situation comedies on television, referred to in this paper, which fall into two categories:

1) Wholesome sitcoms promote family values such as honesty, integrity, and interdependence upon one another. These types of sitcoms also tend to hold parental decisions in high esteem.

2) Racy sitcoms are risqué or suggestive and ridicule family values such as honesty, integrity, and interdependence upon one another. These types of sitcoms have a tendency to portray parents as stupid, helpless, and incapable of making wise decisions.

Limitations of the Study

This study will be limited, for the most part, to the holdings in the Austin Peay State University Woodward Library.

CHAPTER 2

Review of Related Literature

Introduction

The increased television episodes of implied, sexual acts and sexual themes included in soap operas, rock videos, talk shows, product advertisements, and situation comedies have led researchers to speculate on the correlation between television's sexually-oriented shows and the television shows' influences on increased teenage promiscuity. During the mid and late 1980's, teenage promiscuity and teenage pregnancy prevention programs of all types were initiated and expanded nationwide (Males, 1993). However, birth rates among school-age mothers increased 20 percent, reversing twenty-five years of decline (Males). The United States continues to lead the western world with the highest rates of pregnancy, abortion, and childbirth among teenagers (Males). Swisher (1994) relates statistics reported by the Center for Disease Control showing by the end of the senior year in high school, 29 percent of all students will have had four or more sex partners. Jipping (1990) reports 75 percent of America's youth will have had sexual intercourse before they leave their teenage years. Each year, 1.2 million girls under the age of twenty become pregnant (Jipping), and 43 percent of all adolescent girls will have been pregnant at least once upon reaching their twentieth birthday (Shapiro, 1993). The most troubling trend, according to Shapiro, is the large jump in sexual activity among teenagers under the age of sixteen.

Overview of Television Media

Many of the wholesome sitcoms which once aired during prime time have been replaced by what some would view as racier shows such as "Cybill" and "Roseanne" (Silver, 1995). As a Wall Street Journal news story states in a recent headline, "It's 8 p. m. Your Kids Are Watching Sex on TV" (Silver, p. 62).

Stedman (as cited in Lowry, Love, and Kirby, 1981) suggests the illusion of reality found in the daily routine pattern of the daytime soap operas is not found in prime time programming which counters the thread of reality with its preemptions and reruns. Instead of television being a more or less accurate reflection of distorted reality, in some cases television has *become* the reality against which the real world is compared (Stedman). The media view of the world has become more real than the real world itself (Harris, 1989). Teenagers listen to people on television talk of purposely bringing a baby into the world with no family to support the child while much of the time the television audiences cheer the speaker's "courage" in publicly going against the social norms (MacArthur, 1994).

As children mature and increase television viewing time, part of the perceived reality arising from the experiences is known as "television literacy" (Harris, 1989). This involves, among other things, knowing how to interpret general techniques used in the editing of a film to make a television show. Very young children may misinterpret what they see on television because of failure to understand such editing techniques (Harris). People's minds create a reality about the world based on their experience with the media. This mental reality then becomes the basis for both desirable and undesirable behaviors, and the mental reality results in numerous effects influencing their lives (Harris).

Change in the Nature of Mass Communication

Mass communication in the form of print media has been with us almost since Gutenberg's invention of movable type and the printing press in 1456. However, the nature of mass communication has been radically changed during the 20th century by the advent of broadcast media, especially television (Harris, 1989). Television has transformed the day-to-day lives of more people in the last forty years than has perhaps any other invention in human history (Harris). Radio and the print media have been greatly changed by television as well (Harris). In a U.S. poll conducted in 1987, 68 percent of those polled reported watching television to be their main source of pleasure, followed by spending time with friends, helping others, and taking vacations (Harris). Besides changing the way people spend their spare time, television has also revolutionized the way they think and the way they view the world (Harris). The media are not only the "magic windows" on the world but also are the way people learn about the world (Harris). To underestimate the dramatic extent to which radio, television, cable, satellites, and the videocassette recorder have changed the ways youth relate to each other and to other generations is difficult at best (Schultze et al., 1991). New communications media do much more than enable masses of young people to absorb the same entertainment simultaneously; mass communication isolates youth from the more traditional worlds of previous generations including the daily lives of their own parents (Schultze et al.).

Parents undoubtedly bear some of the blame for the great generational divide mentioned above (Schultze et al., 1991). Instead of creatively involving youth in adult tasks and responsibilities, parents often find turning their children loose in the adolescent world much easier and less time-consuming than using good parental nurturing skills (Schultze et al.). Many parents are entirely preoccupied with pursuing

the illusive "American Dream" to have time and energy left for nurturing their children, and, as Schultze et al. also observe, their actions suggest the parents of today would rather have Hollywood raise their children than to handle the task themselves

As long as families, schools, neighborhoods, and churches do not help provide healthier, more inviting, and more personal ways of meeting these psycho-relational needs of adolescents, the media may play an overbearing role in determining what the youth of today deem worthwhile and significant (Schultze et al., 1991). John MacArthur (1994), noted author and college president, concludes as the community conscience vanishes, society becomes more corrupt and more tolerant of worse demoralization. The rapid erosion of social standards regarding obscenity and moral propriety provides abundant evidence of this phenomenon known as moral decay (MacArthur). What was shocking and unacceptable to the majority only a decade ago is now standard practice on network television (MacArthur). Lewd humor which would have been judged inappropriate by most people outside the locker room earlier is now the main attraction in teenagers' entertainment while people appear on televised talk shows just to delight in their own depravity (MacArthur).

Research on Effects of Media

Little academic research has been done in the area of how children and youth process soap opera sex, talk show sex chatter, and sex crimes reported on the news All the handicaps of communication research are multiplied when one attempts to pursue the effects of obscenity on children. One cannot imagine a researcher assembling a "control" group of children and bombarding them with concentrated doses of obscenity in order to measure the effects obscenity plays in developing children (Lowenstein and Merrill, 1990). Yet, researchers are moving ahead

cautiously with certain conclusions emerging. In the absence of observational evidence, an abundance of speculation exists. However, most psychologists who contend pornography has no ill effects on adults believe pornography has harmful effects on children (Lowenstein and Merrill). Children, the psychologists maintain, do not yet have the perspective to compare pornography with traditional views of sexual experience and are not yet mature enough to control sexual feelings once they have been aroused (Lowenstein and Merrill).

A recent study by Jane Brown, professor of Journalism and Mass Communications at the University of North Carolina, examines how middle-class teenage girls react to sex in the media. Three types of viewers have been identified including sexually inexperienced teens who find the whole thing "disgusting", "intrigued" girls who "take it all in" and buy into the television sex fantasy, and "critics" who tear irresponsible sexual messages to shreds. "The media are so compelling and so filled with sex, it's hard for any kid, even a critic, to resist," states Brown. "I think of the media as our true sex educators" (Silver, 1995).

Apparently, many young people agree with Brown's conclusion. A child advocacy group in Oakland, California, polled 750 children ages ten to sixteen. Six out of ten of those surveyed said sex on television sways youth to have sex when they are too young to understand the implications of sexual activity (Silver, 1995). Some television shows do promote teenage abstinence or conversations about the consequences of sex, but these programs are the exception rather than the rule (Silver).

Learned Effects of Media

Watching years of television in which people engage in flirtatious or explicit behavior may lead youth to believe sex is pleasurable without one's having to bear any consequences ("As the World," 1992). Considerable disagreement exists among researchers concerning whether the media influence people to change their attitudes and their behaviors or whether the media simply mirror the changes in society (Swisher, 1994). In proportion to all television viewed, one study has found a strong correlation between the amount of sexually-oriented television watched and the probability that an adolescent has had sexual intercourse (Swisher). There is no question, however, teens learn about sexuality from the media (Swisher). Reporting television is equally or more encouraging about engaging in sexual intercourse, teenagers feel less pressure from their friends to have pre-marital sex than from sexually-oriented television (Swisher). Among high school and college students, a high television usage has been correlated with dissatisfaction regarding virginity (Swisher).

People seeing or hearing different versions of the same message in newspapers, on radio, on television, or in magazines are bombarded with messages from a variety of media; however, the difficulty lies in remembering exactly where they heard or saw a specific message (Lowenstein and Merrill, 1990). Communication research is a relatively young science and one made especially difficult by the complexities of the human mind which is the essential focus of much of the research (Lowenstein and Merrill). To know the exact content of a message in order to evaluate its effect on an audience is also important while innumerable personal variables cause the same message to have a different effect on different individuals (Lowenstein and Merrill)

Society is made up of a network of institutions, cultural beliefs, mores, and habits. Individuals live in environments in which certain ideas prevail and in which certain messages are sent (Bennett, 1992). These messages act to encourage or discourage particular attitudes and behaviors (Bennett). For example, an enormous difference in television messages exists when children hear television programs portraying honesty as the best policy and honoring the values of their fathers and mothers or when children hear the contrasting television messages telling them adultery is the norm and the breakup of a family is an expected occurrence (Bennett).

Determination of Attitudes and Behavior

Bennett (1992) maintains that the public air waves are not conducive to the moral and intellectual health of children. Studies confirm that what determines a young person's behavior in his academic, sexual, and social life are his deeply held convictions and beliefs (Bennett). These beliefs and convictions determine behavior far more than do race, class, ethnic or socioeconomic background (Bennett). Bennett also contends if a child's soul is not filled with virtuous, noble sentiments or if parents and educators do not attend to the better side of a child's nature, the void will be filled by something else. These matters are of overwhelming importance to children. According to Bennett (1992, p. 35), the Roman scholar Pliney the Elder stated, "What we do to our children, they will do to society." Today, adults see many children harming themselves and others as well as society in general (Bennett). Adults who are responsible for the nurturing of children need to act upon what society is collectively doing to children in the critical task of inculcating community values in an often hostile atmosphere (Bennett).

Today's youth are bombarded with sexual messages (Gore, 1987). While watching television, listening to music, looking through a magazine, or going to a movie, a teenager will most assuredly face the suggestion that sex at an early age is the accepted norm (Gore). Youth often select their friends among their peers on the basis of common tastes in entertainment. Increasingly, peer groups and the media are two sides of the same set of cultural values. For example, even youth from conservative religious backgrounds may learn more about sex from their peers and from the media than they will learn from their parents (McDowell Ministry as cited in Schultze et al., 1991). As youth interact with each other and with the entertainment industry, they form their own attitudes toward school, dates, parents, and values (Schultze et al.).

Some of the major sources of information about sex come from the media (Harris, 1989). Everything from the mildest innuendo on a network sitcom to the rawest pornography on X-rated video is contributing to society's perceived reality of what sex is all about (Harris). How people act on that information may have serious consequences in their lives (Harris). Sex also occurs in the media other than in explicitly sexual materials (Harris). For example, sex is rampant in advertising, particularly for products like perfume, cologne, and after shave (Harris). More than one-third of the ads for network programs appearing in TV Guide contain sexual elements such as "She's the world's sexiest photographer," or "These are the paper dolls and these are the people who control them. Racine uses her bed to build an empire" (Brown, 1988, p. 168). Sex in the media is not limited to explicit portrayals of intercourse or nudity but rather may include any representation which portrays or implies sexual behavior, interest, or motivation (Harris).

Impact of Learning About Sexuality Through the Media

According to numerous studies of teenage sexuality, American youth increasingly believe sexual behavior is merely a matter of personal choice (Williams, 1989). Rather than looking to adult values and mores, youth look to the media and their peers for appropriate sexual practices (Williams). As one sociologist suggests, young people consider it their right to engage in sexual relations (Williams). Youth believe they are entitled to have sex, and the popular culture seems to support their beliefs (Williams).

Since the arrival of broadcast media, standards have generally been more conservative for radio and television media than for print media (Harris, 1989). Sexually-oriented print media is usually easier to keep from younger children than is broadcast media (Harris). With the coming of widespread cable and videocassette technology in the 1980's, a somewhat double standard has arisen bringing greater permissiveness for cable and videocassette media than for network television (Harris). The logic of this practice lies in the fact that cable television and rented movies are "invited" into the home while network television programming is an "uninvited guest" (Harris).

In a study examining the sources from which children and teenagers have acquired information about sex over the last few decades, Gebhard (as cited in Harris, 1989) has found children are learning basic facts about sex at an earlier age. In addition, Gebhard has found mass media, rising as an important source of such information, now ranks third nationally behind peers and parents in obtaining sexual information. Clearly a major source of information about sex, the media supplies information which society uses when constructing the reality of what sexuality, sexual

behavior, and values are all about (Schultze et al., 1991). The observation of Schultze et al. is youth very often seem to turn intentionally to the media for the guidance and support they fail to receive at home. The media connect the disconnected teenagers to other youth and to a handful of adults who seem to care about them personally (Schultze et al.). Television and film celebrities, rock stars, and disc jockeys can become important surrogates or mentors in the lives of adolescents (Schultze et al.)

Postman (1982) believes media have played an important role in the drive to erase differences between teenage sexuality and adult sexuality. With the current availability of television, sex is transformed from a dark and profound adult mystery to a product available to everyone (Postman). According to Postman, one of the consequences of today's media is a rise in teenage promiscuity and teenage pregnancy Births to teenagers constituting 19 percent of all births in the United States in 1975 indicate an increase of 2 percent over the statistic in 1966 (Postman). However, if one focuses on the childbearing rate among youth fifteen to seventeen, one finds this is the only age group whose rate of childbearing increased in those years with the increase amounting to 21.7 percent (Postman).

Although to sort out the effect of media from all other influences on a young person's life would be extremely difficult, researchers are beginning to find media environment affects a youth's own feelings about sexuality and subsequent behavior (Brown, 1988). Some preliminary studies in this area suggest sexual content in the media can affect what an adolescent thinks of his or her own sexual experiences. For example, in studies of adolescents and college students, Stanley Baran, a communication researcher at Cleveland State University, has found results which indicate adolescents who have positive perceptions of the sexual prowess and pleasure of television characters are less satisfied with their own initial sexual experiences

(Brown). In addition, Baran found the more realistic sexual experience the older adolescent sees on television portraying media characters as experiencing sexual satisfaction, the more the teenager is dissatisfied with remaining a virgin (Brown).

Childhood and adolescence are information seeking periods when the young person learns what to expect from the world and what the world expects from the young person (Roberts as cited in Greenberg, Graef, Fernandez-Collado, Korzenny, and Atkin, 1980). Especially for the content areas which are beyond the young viewer's immediate, personal, or probable experiences, television may prove to be a more prevalent input (Greenberg, Graef, Fernandez-Collado, Korzenny, and Atkin, 1980). Greater belief in the truthfulness of television content and the high level of television usage for the purposes of social learning or life learning places the young viewer as being prone to learn from such media content (Greenberg, Graef, Fernandez-Collado, Korzenny, and Atkin).

Impact of Developing Relationships Via the Media

From music television, hereafter referred to as MTV, as well as from films and recordings, different sectors of the youth-oriented entertainment industry often peddle alluring visions of identity and intimacy (Schultze et al., 1991). Much entertainment, therefore, is not really designed just for fun or pleasure (Schultze et al.). Instead, the purpose of a great deal of entertainment is frequently to develop dedicated patrons by offering what few seem to possess including the keys to knowing oneself and the techniques to becoming popular with peers (Schultze et al.). The electronic media, in particular, have established their own place in the youth culture as an important source of information which frequently functions as an alternative high school on life, and

young people often turn to these forms of media for guidance in developing meaningful identities and satisfying needs for intimacy (Schultze et al.).

Schultze et al. (1991) believe the success of the electronic media in providing social authority with young people depends heavily on the ability of the media to create special relationships with youth while the youth are establishing an allegiance with the media. Unlike the printed word and more like the spoken word, electronic mass communication creates a natural feeling of closeness bordering on intimacy between the media celebrities, the individual viewers, and the listeners (Schultze et al.). Radio and television inherently convey a sense of "immediacy" which leads one to believe the programming is taking place here and now when, in fact, much programming is pre-recorded and transmitted from great distances. Disc jockeys and video announcers are often trained to create this sense of intimate contact with the listeners and the viewers (Schultze et al.). By creating a sense of live, personal communication, the founders of MTV designed the network to seem as if the viewer and the veejay were together watching videos in the veejay's recreation room. Such electronic intimacy can rival the spontaneous atmosphere and personal communication of a live concert since no distance exists between the audience and the performer while an audience often diminishes the feeling of a one-to-one relationship between a performer and an individual audience member (Schultze et al.).

Youth will experience a developmental phase of life in which they naturally will seek meaningful, intimate relationships while building their identities and preparing for adulthood. Traditionally this demand for intimacy has been fulfilled by peers, parents, teachers, counselors, and other adults (Schultze et al., 1991) In the shift of social authority to the media, however, Schultze et al. believe young people are currently establishing new patterns of significant intimacy with people they have never met

including rock and music stars, radio personalities, sports heroes, and other entertainers. More than young males, young females integrate electronic creations into their personal surroundings and dreams by decorating their bedrooms with posters and memorabilia often by purchasing gossip magazines, biographies, and other "intimate" materials (Schultze et al.).

According to Schultze et al. (1991), MTV offers a complete audiovisual smorgasbord in a format aimed at the more prosperous and undiscerning white, middle-class viewer. The offerings vary from bulletins about upcoming rock music tours, to live broadcasts, to various youth events, to friendly on-air personalities, to back-to-back contests and promotions, to lots of sex and romantic suggestions, and to entertaining commercials as well as quiz shows.

An identity crisis usually characterizes the transition from youth to adulthood (Schultze et al., 1991). Not ready for full-fledged adulthood with adult rights and responsibilities yet beyond the innocence of childhood, youth do not know when and how to find their niche in adult society and increasingly live in their own generationally defined, media-maintained communities (Schultze et al.). Schultze et al. maintain that rarely is there a glimpse of self-sacrifice or long-term marital commitment found in modern media.

Far more than other forms of mass communication, the electronic media supply many appealing, alternative mentors and friends when the adult world seems unattractive (Schultze et al., 1991). Furthermore, electronic media fill the cultural void caused by the declining appeal and authority of local institutions (Schultze et al.). With traditional authority experiencing marked erosion, the electronic media regularly challenge conventional lingering traces of influences by offering youth non-traditional values, attitudes, and behaviors (Schultze et al.). As a result, many adolescents seem

to be sharply torn between the media world and local influences with its mores and values (Schultze et al.). In many homes, parents and teenagers argue about adolescent media. Parents seek to exert control over the area of media while children demand freedom to watch their own chosen films and listen to their own forms of music (Schultze et al.).

Impact of Music Media

Jipping (1990) relates how society is profoundly and pervasively influenced by music as much as by any visual media, yet society rarely thinks about the impact of music. Television producers and others depend upon the influence of music to sell people on whatever product the advertisers want society to accept and to consume at a given time (Jipping). Demski (as cited in Jipping, 1990) identifies music as one of the two most powerful influences on youth, while Davis (as cited in Jipping, 1990) declares songs are more than just mirrors of society but are potent forces in the shaping of society. Davis further says popular songs provide the primary equipment for living for America's youth. Aristotle declares music has the power to shape character; Plato feels when modes of music change, the fundamental laws of the state change with them; and Lenin states, "One quick way to destroy a society is through its music" (Jipping, 1990, p. 3).

Former director of the Eastman School of Music, Dr. Howard Hanson (as cited in Jipping, 1990, p. 4) concludes, "Music is a curiously subtle art with innumerable varying emotional connotations . . . It has power for evil or for good." Through experience and research, Jipping (1990) observes music as an extremely influential force on human beings. Rock music is a particularly powerful and influential form of music, especially on teenagers (Jipping). Perhaps the most obvious

reason for this reality is the sheer percentage of time young people spend listening to rock music (Jipping). Between the seventh and twelfth grades alone, studies show teenagers listen to an estimated 10,500 hours of rock music amounting to five hundred hours less than the total time they spend in school over twelve years ("What Entertainers Are" as cited in Jipping, 1990). Conditions under which many teenagers listen to rock music could enhance the music's impact as well. In testimony before the United States Senate Commerce Committee, professor of music history at the University of Texas Dr. Joseph Stuessy explains teenagers' use of the stereo, the headphones, and the rise in the volume and explains how these exclusionary conditions eliminate any competing or distracting input and enhance the impact of the music and its message ("Recording Labeling" as cited in Jipping, 1990).

Vulnerability to Media's Lure

The popular entertainment industry sees youth as a prime market, a distinct and ever-renewing demographic group possessing ample leisure time and spending money which result in soaring sales (Schultze et al., 1991). Further, because of their particular stage of life, adolescents have shown themselves to be especially susceptible to the marketing strategies of the entertainment industry, and the entertainment industry is adept at recycling timeless adolescent anxieties and hopes into easily adaptable fads and fashions (Schultze et al.). In doing so, the entertainment industry does more than provide diverting amusement for bored teenagers. To a surprising extent, young people rely on the industry's products to learn about life and society (Schultze et al.). Popular music, films, and television form an appealing, lively, cultural reservoir from which young people draw in their struggle to understand themselves and the world around them (Schultze et al.). Adolescents want guidance

through the turmoil of modern teenage life, and the entertainment industry willingly supplies them with false ideas of reality (Schultze et al.). These misleading impressions symbolically explain life and society and suggest immediate gratifying ways of understanding and responding to dilemmas and perplexities (Schultze et al.).

Young people are psychologically and sexually vulnerable because of the rapid hormonal changes they experience in the process of maturation. Physically capable of having sex and sometimes eager to do so while simultaneously admonished by adults to abstain, many teenagers suffer from an intense preoccupation with sex (Schultze et al., 1991). Teenagers' activities often revolve around the mating ritual called dating which encompasses clothing, cosmetics, social hangouts, concerts, movies, and school activities. Furthermore, rapid technological changes and economic specialization require longer periods of training outside of the family. Public secondary schools have become the accepted means of imparting the necessary social and vocational preparation. The current structure of this educational system appears to dictate that youth stay largely isolated from the rest of society with the exception of their association with their families and teachers. As a result, adolescents form most of their significant social bonds with peers who oftentimes fill the role of substitute parent (Schultze et al.). In many ways, these peers are as demanding on the teenager as any parent can be (Schultze et al.). Teenagers must fashion themselves and their future amid a maze of locker-lined hallways, shopping mall corridors, teenage hangouts, and new fads and fashions (Schultze et al.). Surveys do reveal teenagers suffer intense peer pressure to date and to engage in pre-marital sex as well as to use alcohol and drugs at a much earlier age than did their parents (Schultze et al.).

Schultze et al. (1991) report that as early as 1929 an extensive research project investigating the impact of movies on young people reveals adolescents learn how to

dress, how to put on perfume and make-up, and how to practice rules of etiquette from watching movies. In addition, youth discover ways of attracting the opposite sex while cultivating techniques in the art of love making (Schultze et al.). Currently, research confirms adolescents continue to rely on popular entertainment in the form of music, movies, and television for information about everything from manners to religion (McDowell as cited in Schultze et al., 1991). Furthermore, despite today's enlightened sex education, teenagers still learn more about dating and sex from popular entertainment than from parents, teachers, and youth workers (McDowell).

Cognitive Processing and Media Influence

Thompson, Pingree, Hawkins, and Draves (1991) have found media researchers, in recent years, are focusing on the cognitive activities of viewers as a means of understanding the processing of television and the implications of these cognitive activities for effects. One important and useful distinction used in television is between activity-directed content messages and activity-stimulated content messages (Thompson et al.). Content-centered activities make sense of the intended meaning of the content by making necessary inferences about information not explicitly presented (Thompson et al.). Content-stimulated activities occur when viewers make connections to their past experiences, fantasize about being in similar situations, or become stimulated to independent thoughts losing the apparent meaning of the intended content (Thompson et al.). By shaping long-term orientations to communication, by helping to focus cognitive attention to incoming information, and by influencing the processing of messages from outside the family including mass media, the established family communication patterns affect the receiver behavior of the young person according to Thompson et al. Their study has involved adolescents'

responses to a music video dealing with teenage pregnancy. The music video was chosen because such videos are soaring in popularity among adolescents. Because many teenagers watch these videos daily, music videos are the subject of much public debate, particularly over the sex and violence shown in some of the videos as well as their potential effects on the teenage audience (Thompson et al.). Viewers' gratifications from music videos, their experience with sex and pregnancy as well as their family communication patterns all are related to two cognitive activities during viewing (Thompson et al.). These activities include thinking about the content of the music video and relating that content to the adolescents' own lives. Youth with more developed structures about sex and pregnancy are better able to relate to their own lives (Thompson et al.). One example is the video by Madonna entitled *Papa Don't Preach* in which a teenage girl becomes pregnant and tells her father she wants to keep the baby and marry her boyfriend (Thompson et al.).

Thompson et al. have observed that the girls find the video *Papa Don't Preach* more thought-provoking regardless of the kinds of gratifications they generally seek from music videos. On the other hand, boys, who overall report low to moderate attention to the video, relate that specific gratifications have a greater effect on processing activity. Although the authors of this study do not claim that one's experience with sexuality and pregnancy will affect cognitive activity during all or even most television messages, they do believe the results lend insight into the effects of a specific, content-related cognitive structure on message processing (Thompson et al.) In the study of Thompson et al., personal experience is used as a substitute measure for cognitive structure. Girls with more sexual and pregnancy experience associate this video about teenage pregnancy in a more personal manner by connecting it to their own lives (Thompson et al.)

among those not married to each other occurring at four to five times the rate found among married partners. In another study Greenberg et al. (1981) have found the one element which afternoon and evening soap operas have in common is the fact partners in intercourse are likely not to be married to each other. In addition, during a six-month period on one soap opera, the show's characters went through eight divorces, two bigamous marriages, four marriage separations, the planning of six other divorces while twenty-one couples were living or sleeping together out of wedlock (Brown, 1988).

Greenberg and D'Alessio (1985) derive several points from their study of soap opera viewing. First, women who are involved in sexual activity tend to be younger than their male partners with neither sex being the obvious initiator. Second, when there is a clear indication of an initiator, males are cast in the initiator's role more often than are females. Third, young adults are as sexually active as middle-aged adults. Fourth, people not married to each other are far more sexually active than married people, and, fifth, sex is clearly part of today's scene rather than a recollection of past conquests.

Impact of Teaching Society's Values Through the Media

One of the major concerns of society is mass media's role as a teacher of values or the passing of the social heritage from one generation to the next (Tuchman as cited in Harris, 1989). However, the content of this social heritage continues to be debated. With relatively few print media stories or radio or television broadcasts solely teaching values, television continues to teach values probably more than any other form of media (Harris, 1989).

Harris (1989) believes that the media may be perceived as mirroring the values of society in today's world. If sexual values are promiscuous in a society, promiscuity is reflected in that society's media (Harris). On the other hand, the media may be seen as a catalyst for value change in a society (Harris). Values in the media may not exactly reflect those prevailing values found in society but may serve as an instrument for moving society's values in a new direction (Harris). One of the concerns of media critics is that television strongly reflects the values of the New York and the Los Angeles communities where most programming originates cultivating large metropolitan values in the rest of the more conservative country (Harris).

A large number of effects concerning sex in the media has to do with effects on attitudes and values (Lowry, Love, and Kirby, 1981). A steady diet of viewing role models who engage in extramarital relationships influence and cultivate viewers' attitudes and values concerning what is "normal" and "proper" in society (Lowry, Love, and Kirby). One frequent concern is a desensitization to certain expressions of sexuality deemed by some to be "inappropriate" (Harris, 1989). For example, many parents may be concerned that television sitcoms showing teenagers who consider becoming sexually active contradict family-taught values against pre-marital sex (Harris).

The media can actually change one's values or attitudes rather than merely desensitize or reinforce an existing value or attitude (Harris, 1989). Perhaps teenage girls watching Mallory Keaton on "Family Ties" as Mallory considers having sex with her boyfriend may also come to adopt Mallory's values (Harris). This is especially likely to happen if the television characters holding those values are respected characters with whom viewers identify (Harris). Sexual promiscuity by a prostitute character is less likely to influence the values of a viewer than is promiscuity by a

respected suburban wife and mother (Harris). In addition, sex in the media, especially the more explicit varieties, removes some of the mystique and aura from what seems to be a very mysterious as well as an almost sacred activity (Harris). This argument holds that sex is very private and more meaningful if sex is not displayed so publicly (Harris).

CHAPTER 3

Conclusions and Recommendations

A September 1995 report on "Sex and the Mass Media", funded by the Kaiser Family Foundation, concludes that media's "love affair with sex and romance contributes to irresponsible sexual behavior among young people including unwanted pregnancies" ("Media Poor Role Model", 1996, p. 11). In terms of modeling behavior, Dr. George Comerci, president of the American Academy of Pediatrics, reports the older child particularly will repeat what he or she sees on television. As a result of what youth are seeing on television, adolescents develop a personal attitude about the life and world in which they live ("Media Poor Role Model").

Suggesting parents, educators, and youth workers should try to instill in young people respect for themselves and for their bodies, Swisher (1994) emphasizes that when sexual contact is associated with deeply held feelings, promiscuity is reduced. Schultze et al. (1991) suggest teenagers in the domain of romance are far more likely to find mature relational models in the local community where family, church, and school commitments deepen over time than in the power of the electronic media. Weak localities, on the other hand, relinquish their authority to peer groups and to the entertainment industry (Schultze et al., 1991).

Adolescents need guidance at many decisive points in their lives. In addition, youth need media programing which both directly and indirectly help to reduce the onset of pre-marital sex and the risk of unplanned pregnancy by focusing on

educational expectations and educational achievements as well as career preparation (Scott-Jones, 1993). These programs may reduce the risk of unplanned pregnancy indirectly by demonstrating to adolescents a positive focus for their lives (Scott-Jones). In addition, Scott-Jones contends that studies have shown adolescents who are performing well in school and who see formal education as a viable route to adult success have a reason to delay sexual activity and childbearing. School guidance programs, as well, need to emphasize the good things adolescents are capable of doing with their lives and need not to focus on the negative activities found in some adolescents' lives (Scott-Jones).

Educators must consider the meaning and value of school for adolescents. Schools currently may not appropriately educate and socialize adolescents for the transition into adulthood (Scott-Jones, 1993). At a time in adolescents' lives when they need more guidance from caring adults, youth may receive less attention from them (Scott-Jones).

Conduct-resolution workshops involving parents, students, school guidance counselors , and teachers should be conducted to teach young people how to determine reality from media reality. During these workshops and seminars, the masterful art of television psychology needs to be stressed, and methods should be taught to see through the guise of modern media. If workshops and seminars are not feasible, parents and school guidance counselors must be able and willing to interpret reality from media reality to young people.

Attitudes of the entire family are paramount in the developing of sexual promiscuity and teenage pregnancy. This author subscribes to the view of parents ultimately being in control of what their children watch on television as well as which books, magazines, records, and videos young people buy or rent. Parents retain the

right and hold the responsibility to decide what is viewed on the television screen in their home. In addition to television viewing, parents should be cognizant of what their children are absorbing via videos, recordings, and printed media. Not only should parents disallow certain elements into their home, but they should also teach their young person why certain media items are not in the child's best interest; moreover, parents should commit themselves to offering suitable substitutes for inappropriate media. By maintaining open communication and a well understood societal value system, families and communities can cultivate a discerning viewing style of modern media thereby perhaps diminishing the harmful effects of sexually-oriented media.

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VITA

Gladena Griffin Chadwick was born in Hopkinsville, Kentucky, on February 4, 1949. She attended elementary and junior high schools in the Paducah-McCracken County Kentucky School System and graduated from Paducah Tilghman High School in June 1967. The following September she entered Austin Peay State University in Clarksville, Tennessee and in August 1970 received a degree of Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education. She reentered Austin Peay State University in June 1972 and in August 1975 received a Master of Arts degree in Administration and Supervision. In September 1994 she reentered Austin Peay State University and in May 1996 received an Education Specialist degree in Administration and Supervision.

She is married to Philip Chadwick, biology teacher at Dickson County Senior High School in Dickson, Tennessee. They are the parents of two sons, Blake and Blair. She is presently employed by the Dickson County Board of Education as librarian at Dickson County Senior High School in Dickson, Tennessee.