The Portrayal of Sexual Intercourse on Television: How, Who, and With What Consequence?

Keren Eyal

Interdisciplinary Center (IDC)
Herzliya, Israel

Keli Finnerty

Department of Communication
Pepperdine University

This study examines televised portrayals of sexual intercourse. Programs ($N = 152$) representing the overall television landscape are assessed for the presentation of intercourse acts, the characters who engage in them, and their consequences. Results indicate that 16% of characters involved in sexual intercourse acts on television are teenagers or young adults. Female participants are more attractive and more likely to be victims of sexual crimes than male characters. Consequences of sexual intercourse portrayed are mostly emotional in nature and tend to be more positive than negative in valence. Positive consequences tend to be transient whereas negative consequences are presented as more enduring and emotionally impactful. Though HBO includes the greatest number of shows with sexual intercourse acts, few differences across channels are observed in the presentation of sexual intercourse, indicating a

Keren Eyal (Ph.D., University of California, Santa Barbara, 2004) is Lecturer in the Sammy Ofer School of Communications at the Interdisciplinary Center (IDC) Herzliya. Her research interests include media content and effects, with a focus on youth socialization.

Keli Finnerty (Ph.D., University of Arizona, 2007) is Assistant Professor in the Communication Division at Pepperdine University in Malibu, California. Her research focuses on media literacy and the effects of sexual media messages on adolescents and emerging adults.

Correspondence should be addressed to Keren Eyal, Sammy Ofer School of Communications, Interdisciplinary Center (IDC), P.O. Box 167, Herzliya 46150, Israel. E-mail: keyal@idc.ac.il

fairly uniform portrayal. Findings are discussed in light of theory, past content analyses, and implications for viewer effects.

Communication scholars have long been interested in tracking sexual content on television, with the belief that a more complete picture of the content can allow for a better understanding of its effects on audience members. Content analyses of sexual messages have focused on specific genres or time slots, including soap operas (Greenberg & Busselle, 1996), music videos (Baxter, De Riemer, Landini, Leslie, & Singletary, 1985), movies (Gunasekera, Chapman, & Campbell, 2005), and prime-time shows (Kunkel, Cope, & Colvin 1996). Others have examined sexual content across the entire TV landscape (Fisher, Hill, Grube, & Gruber, 2004; Kunkel, Eyal, Finnerty, Biely, & Donnerstein, 2005). These studies have led to the conclusion that the amount of sexual content on TV has been considerable and increasing over the years (Greenberg & Woods, 1999). Within a few years, the percentage of TV programs containing sexual content significantly rose from 56% in the 1997–98 television season to 70% of shows in 2004–05 (Kunkel et al., 2005).

In addition to examining the frequency of sexual portrayals on television, studies have examined the nature, or context, of such messages. Identifying the relationship between people involved in sexual behaviors and tracking sexual health topics are some themes examined in this body of research. Overall, studies have consistently shown that talk about sex and sexuality is more common than sexual behaviors, with more than two thirds of television shows containing sexual talk (Fisher et al., 2004; Kunkel et al., 2005; Pardun, L'Engle, & Brown, 2005). Studies also have found that sexual behavior typically takes place between unmarried adults (Greenberg & Busselle, 1994; Greenberg et al., 1993; Gunasekera et al., 2005) and that risks associated with sexual activity (e.g., contraction of a sexually transmitted disease [STD], unplanned pregnancy) are seldom depicted on television (Gunasekera et al., 2005; Kunkel et al., 1996).

Research has established that exposure to sexual content in entertainment programming can contribute to a young person's sexual socialization and that adolescents turn to magazines and television as central sources of information about sex and contraception (Sutton, Brown, Wilson, & Klein, 2002). Considering the embarrassing nature of sexual topics, adolescents may often prefer the more discrete and confidential information that they can obtain from media over conversations with health professionals about this topic.

Although content analyses have provided insight into how sexuality, in general, is depicted on TV, knowledge is lacking about the portrayal of sexual intercourse and its outcomes. Among sexual topics, intercourse— and specifically, risky intercourse behavior—is an important sexual behavior to observe on TV as it relates to a multitude of sexual health outcomes,

to be addressed next. A young television viewer will have many opportunities to come across this behavior. In the 2004–05 TV season, slightly more than 1 in 10 programs (11%) included sexual intercourse portrayals (Kunkel et al., 2005). As entertainment programming attempts to target the greatest number of people while avoiding offending viewers, TV shows are rarely explicit in sexual intercourse portrayals. In fact, sexual intercourse is less common than other sexual behaviors depicted on TV such as passionate kissing or touching of others' intimate body parts; intercourse is often strongly implied rather than actually depicted on screen (Kunkel et al., 2005). Because of this unique status of intercourse among all sexual behaviors, its context of presentation may be distinct from the overall pattern of messages about sexuality in the media. Moreover, as compared with such behaviors as kissing and petting, intercourse carries with it higher risks of STD contraction and pregnancy. The intimate nature of this behavior can also carry heightened emotional and social implications. The fact that adolescents are likely to pay especially close attention to portrayals of intercourse makes the examination of messages about this behavior important.

To date, limited knowledge is available about the characters that engage in sexual intercourse on television and their experienced outcomes. Yet theory suggests that it is the contextual features of intercourse portrayals on television that drive viewer effects (Bandura, 1986). Therefore, this study provides more insight into these portrayals by answering questions derived from media effects theories about how sexual intercourse is presented on television, who engages in it, and what consequences they face from it.

THE PORTRAYAL OF CONSEQUENCES OF SEXUAL INTERCOURSE ON TELEVISION

There is a wide range of consequences that can result from sexual intercourse, including emotional reactions (e.g., guilt, regret), effects on social relationships (e.g., improvement or deterioration of a relationship with a partner, peer, or parent), and physical outcomes (e.g., becoming intentionally or unintentionally pregnant). Outcomes can be long-lasting or transient, positive or negative, insignificant or seriously impactful on people's lives. For example, major public health concerns involve the rates of unplanned youth pregnancy and STD contraction in the United States (Alan Guttmacher Institute, 2004; Fox, 2004; Kaiser Family Foundation, 2005). Considering the high rates of casual sexual relations in which young people engage (Paul, McManus, & Hayes, 2000), it is important to consider the messages to which they are exposed in the media about the

outcomes of such behaviors, as these may directly and indirectly affect their behavioral choices.

As is discussed next, the portrayal of such consequences of intercourse on television can affect viewers' attitudes toward sexual intercourse; their outcome and risk expectancies; and, in turn, their sexual behavior. Yet content analyses thus far have only begun to scratch the surface in terms of how the consequences of sexual intercourse are presented on television. Most studies have not considered the varied outcomes that can potentially result from intercourse. Rather, with few exceptions (Cope-Farrar & Kunkel, 2002; Kunkel et al., 1999; Kunkel, Cope-Farrar, Biely, Farinola, & Donnerstein, 2001), studies tended to focus on the valence of consequences, grouping together all outcome types portrayed in each television program. For example, in their assessment of the valence of consequences to sexual intercourse, Kunkel and colleagues (1999, 2001) found that whereas consequences were positive in less than one fourth of the programs, the majority showed either no consequences to sexual intercourse or consequences that were primarily negative. The current study adds to Kunkel et al.'s findings about program-level assessments of consequences by documenting consequences to specific acts of intercourse and the participants who engage in them within the programs.

Similarly, in a content analysis of prime-time programs that feature teens or young adults, Aubrey (2004) found that only slightly more than one third of the scenes with sexual content made some mention of consequences to sexuality. Of these consequences, 88% were negative, with the vast majority being emotional and social (disappointment, feeling guilt or anxiety, humiliation, and rejection). Fewer than 1 in 5 references resulted in physical outcomes (unwanted pregnancy, contraction of an STD, and physical abuse by a sexual partner), and less than 1 in 10 were punitive (punishment by others for engaging in a sexual act). It is important to note, however, that like Cope-Farrar and Kunkel's (2002) study, this study also was not tracking the specific consequences of the act of sexual intercourse. Aubrey explored the consequences of *any* sexual references. These were defined as portrayals of talk or behavior about sexuality, sexual activities, sexual suggestiveness, or sexual relationships within scenes, thus precluding direct comparisons with the studies just noted (Kunkel et al., 1999; Kunkel et al., 2001). The current study adds to Aubrey's findings by capturing the full range of consequences of sexuality portrayed in programs.

Only recently have researchers begun to look at the consequences tied specifically to the individual acts of sexual intercourse portrayed in the media. In a content analysis of the most popular movies of the last 20 years, Gunasekera et al. (2005) found that 89% of sexual intercourse acts resulted in no clear consequences. They found that portrayals of negative sexual

consequences such as HIV or STD transmission and unplanned pregnancies were entirely absent from the movies, and that very rarely did characters experience social problems (e.g., social discomfort or marital problems as a result of unfaithfulness) as a result of the act.

In sum, it appears that the study of sexual consequences in the media is beginning to garner more attention among scholars. Our study seeks to examine televised portrayals of acts of sexual intercourse on television with a specific focus on the full range of consequences that result from these acts and the characters that experience these outcomes. The study also takes into consideration theoretically important contextual elements related to the consequences of sexual intercourse shown on television beyond their valence.

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES ACCOUNTING FOR THE EFFECTS OF TELEVISED SEXUAL CONTENT

Among the theoretical perspectives that account for the relationship between exposure to televised sexual content and viewer effects is social cognitive theory (SCT). The theory focuses on the context of portrayals, including the role models viewers encounter on television (Ward, 2003) and the context of the viewer (Bandura, 1986). SCT focuses on behavioral outcomes and recognizes the role of attitudes and emotions that are affected by media portrayals and that can mediate subsequent behaviors (Bandura, 2001). Beyond mere amounts of exposure, the theory also accounts for the role of the viewer's environment and personality in mediating viewing effects. It considers contextual elements in mediated portrayals, including characteristics of the models who engage in behaviors and the environment within which they are embedded. Viewers interpret media messages based on their predispositions, previous experiences, and the societal norms with which they are familiar. To a large extent, they pay attention to and learn from portrayals based on these background factors; their past experiences; and personal factors such as aspirations, desires, and goals. For example, research based on SCT has examined the age of characters engaged in various behaviors as similarity between them and viewers in such variables can increase attention and, as a result, the viewer effects of the portrayals.

Among the contextual variables of central importance to SCT is the presentation of behavioral consequences for models in the media. The theory explains not only that modeled behavioral consequences have the potential to encourage or inhibit a viewer's own behavior but that the contextual elements of these consequence portrayals are also important in understanding the potential effects that they can have on viewers (Bandura, 1986; McDavid, 1964). SCT explains that observation of models in the media

may lead viewers to form rules of behavior that can serve as a guide for future action, especially if they are seen to be attractive or successful and if the viewers do not already have personal experience with the modeled behavior (Bandura, 1986).

Specifically, the theory asserts that when exposed to vicarious positive consequences, disinhibition of formerly inhibited behaviors, or motivation to engage in new behaviors, can occur. Conversely, it explains that people often refrain, or are inhibited, from engaging in or endorsing a behavior after they observe models who experience negative consequences for their actions (Bandura, 2001). Inhibitory effects, in particular, have been found to occur when models' behaviors are punished by others or when models punish themselves by engaging in self-critique or by displaying guilt or self-loathing (Bandura, 1977). Recent research has shown that this type of an inhibitory effect can occur for emerging adult viewers. For example, Finnerty (2007) found that exposure to portrayals of negative sexual consequences on television can lead emerging adults to espouse greater intentions to avoid risky sexual intercourse (i.e., casual sex and sex without protection).

In light of SCT's assertion that behavior can be both enhanced and repressed through the viewing of portrayed consequences (Bandura, 1977), it is evident that the study of the specific consequences for sexual intercourse portrayed on television warrants more attention. Exposure to televised models who engage in sexual behaviors can shape outcome expectancies (Aubrey, Harrison, Kramer, & Yellin, 2003; Martino, Collins, Kanouse, Elliott, & Berry, 2005) and influence subsequent viewer behaviors (Brown et al., 2006; Collins et al., 2004). It is important that, although viewer effects just discussed occur at the individual level, they can also affect the sexual couple and thus are relevant in the context of sexual intercourse and sexual behavior in general. Long-term socialization effects of exposure to sexual television portrayals might affect how a sexual partner is chosen and how the interaction with this person eventually leads to the sexual relationship. Viewers' perceived norms and risks associated with intercourse can lead to various interaction patterns with sexual partners, such as avoiding discussions of sexual health or avoiding asking the partners to use precautions during sex, resulting in dyadic behaviors that pose risks to the health of both partners and their future partners.

EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE REGARDING THE EFFECTS OF CONSEQUENCES PORTRAYED ON TELEVISION ON VIEWERS

Inhibitory and disinhibitory effects and the study of vicarious consequences have been of central interest to media researchers with regard to portrayals

of social behaviors as, depending on their consequences, they have the potential to either promote or deter viewers' inclination to personally engage in the behavior. It is therefore important to consider the consequences of sex portrayed in the media, as sexual intercourse, in particular, can result in a variety of outcomes. Whereas studies have identified causal connections between the viewing of vicarious consequences and subsequent thought or action on the part of the viewer with regard to violent mediated content (Bandura, Ross, & Ross, 1963), researchers have only recently begun to consider the role of consequences in sexual outcomes (Collins, Elliott, Berry, Kanouse, & Hunter, 2003; Eyal & Kunkel, 2008; Finnerty, 2007; Martino et al., 2005). These investigations indicate that outcomes of intercourse experienced by characters on television can indeed affect viewers. For example, Eyal and Kunkel found that among emerging adults, viewing television dramas that displayed negative emotional consequences for intercourse (e.g., feeling guilt) led to more negative attitudes toward premarital sex as compared with pre-exposure attitudes. Exposure to a show portraying negative consequences of sexual intercourse also led to significantly more negative moral judgments of the characters that experienced these outcomes as compared with viewers who were exposed to portrayals of positive consequences for intercourse.

Collins et al. (2003) found that watching an episode of the sitcom *Friends* that focused on an instance of condom failure which resulted in pregnancy led to 17% of adolescents reporting that they had learned something new about condom use from the show. Those adolescents who did not watch the episode did not report a change in their knowledge of condom effectiveness. Martino et al. (2005) found, through a longitudinal design with a large, nationally representative sample of adolescents, that those with greater exposure to sexual content on television had fewer negative outcome expectancies for sexual intercourse, defined as beliefs about the potential negative emotional, social, and health consequences of sexual activity. Having fewer negative outcome expectancies, in turn, was a marginally significant predictor of greater likelihood of initiating intercourse. Martino et al. suggested that this marginally significant finding may be partly because they did not distinguish between programs that portrayed negative versus positive consequences for sexual behavior. They stated that more detailed knowledge of televised consequences may provide clearer support for the mediating role of outcome expectancies.

Overall, then, the research on the influence of exposure to televised sexual consequences helps contribute to the growing body of evidence regarding the effects of exposure to sexual content on television (e.g., Aubrey et al., 2003; Collins et al., 2003; Pardun et al., 2005; Ward & Rivadeneyra, 1999), and specifically the portrayal of sexual intercourse,

on a variety of sexual attitudes and perceptions (Farrar, 2006; Taylor, 2005). This evidence is not surprising considering that television still is the dominant medium youth use and that it is a major source of sexual socialization information for them (Rideout, Roberts, & Foehr, 2005; Sutton et al., 2002). Still, research on the specific role of the portrayals of consequences of sexual intercourse on television on such outcomes is still in its infancy. As the evidence to date regarding the role of various outcomes of sexual intercourse presented on television in affecting audience members is mostly consistent with theoretical predictions (Collins et al., 2003; Martino et al., 2005), a continued and more detailed examination on the specific consequences of sexual intercourse portrayed on television is warranted. A richer rendering of consequences as this study aims to provide could allow for a better understanding of their effects on viewers. This information could serve to aid in the design of future research on the effects of exposure to sexual media content and in the interpretation of existing research within this area of study.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In specifically looking at the act of sexual intercourse, this study adds to past content analyses that have examined the consequences of more all-encompassing categories like sexuality (Aubrey, 2004) or sexual behavior (Cope-Farrar & Kunkel, 2002). The current analysis accounts for all acts of sexual intercourse and their consequences in a comprehensive sample of programs obtained from 10 different television channels. In addition to examining the frequency of occurrence of intercourse acts, this content analysis also takes into account many contextual variables that have the potential to influence viewer outcomes, as specified by previous research and social cognitive theory. The study thus first poses the following research question:

RQ1: What is the nature of sexual intercourse as portrayed on television?

In light of SCT's assertion that viewers are more likely to pay attention to models that are similar to themselves (Bandura, 2001), and consistent with research in the areas of ethnic and sexual portrayals (e.g., Greenberg & Busselle, 1996; Stern & Mastro, 2004), this study examines the age and physical attractiveness of characters engaged in intercourse. These variables have been suggested to influence viewers' identification with televised models—that is, the perspective taking of and absorption of viewers with the characters on screen (Eyal & Rubin, 2003; Harwood, 1999; Hoffner &

Buchanan, 2005). Viewers seek out characters that are similar to them in demographics and that are physically attractive, as these command greater attention from viewers.

In addition, this study compares the presentation of sexual intercourse behaviors of male versus female characters. Differences in the television show and commercial portrayals of the two groups have been documented across a wide range of topics, including physical attractiveness and occupational roles (Signorielli & Bacue, 1999), engagement in household chores (Scharrer, Kim, Lin, & Liu, 2006), and engagement in communication activities on children's shows (Aubrey & Harrison, 2004). Such differences in portrayals have been suggested to associate with differences in gender-role perception and the endorsement of gender stereotypes (e.g., Ward, Hansbrough, & Walker, 2005). Examining the presentation of gender in association with intercourse behaviors and decision making can serve as a benchmark to examining the effects of these portrayals on audience perceptions and behaviors in the realm of sexuality. As it is, sexuality is a topic laden with gender double standards (Darling & Hicks, 1983; Greene & Faulkner, 2005). The extent to which presentation of sexuality in the media can reflect, shape, or contribute to and perpetuate such double standards in reality is important to examine (e.g., Aubrey, 2004). The study thus asks the following:

RQ2: Who are the characters who engage in sexual intercourse on television, and are there gender differences in their portrayal in relation to sexual intercourse?

This study further examines various dimensions related to intercourse consequences, such as their duration and emotional impact on characters, as these and similar elements in mediated portrayals are likely to vary. Viewer effects—namely, promoting the engagement in or the refraining from engaging in various behaviors—might take place as a result of the combination of the contextual elements in portrayals shown to television viewers, and, of course, concurrently with viewer context, personality, and environmental factors (Bandura, 1986). Therefore, the following research question is posed:

RQ3: What consequences are portrayed on television as resulting from sexual intercourse and how are they presented (i.e., valence, duration, and emotional impact)?

Finally, this study examines differences across channels in the presentation of sexual intercourse acts. Although cultivation theory would argue that there is a consistent picture presented across all programming (Signorielli,

2000), some studies have identified differences across channel types in over-all sexual content amounts (Fisher et al., 2004). For instance, one study found that shows airing on cable channels average more than twice as many sexual comments and about six times as many sexual behaviors per hour of programming than network channels (Lampman et al., 2002). Thus, the fol-lowing research question is posed:

RQ4: What, if any, are the differences across channels in the presentation of sexual intercourse acts, the characters who engage in them, and the resulting consequences?

METHOD

Sample

This study reports on an original analysis of programs that were part of a sample collected and reported on by Kunkel et al. (2005). To represent sexual intercourse portrayals across the entire television landscape, programs coded in the current study are drawn from the composite week sample of the *Sex on TV 4* content analysis (Kunkel et al., 2005). Kunkel et al. (2005) analyzed programs randomly drawn from 10 channels (ABC, CBS, Fox, NBC, the WB network affiliate, PBS, Lifetime, TNT, USA, and HBO) between October 2004 and April 2005. A composite week sample was randomly constructed for each channel included in the study, spanning 16 hours a day between 6:00 a.m. and 10:00 p.m. All genres aired on these channels were coded except for daily newscasts, sport events, and children's programming. For a complete description of the sampling procedures, see Kunkel et al. (2005); Kunkel et al. coded 959 programs in their composite week sample.

As the focus of our study is on examining portrayals of sexual intercourse acts, only those programs identified by Kunkel et al. (2005) as including at least one instance of this behavior are used in the analyses. Kunkel et al. (2005) defined programs that include sexual intercourse-related content as those that included at least one of the following three elements: (a) talk about sexual intercourse that referred to "specific instances of sexual intercourse that have actually occurred" (p. 14), (b) portrayals of intercourse implied (i.e., situations in which the act of sexual intercourse itself is not depicted on screen but the unfolding of events that immediately precede or follow it are portrayed and "clearly convey the message that sex has occurred" [p. 15]), and (c) portrayals of intercourse depicted (i.e., situations in which at least some portion of the physical act itself is portrayed on the screen). Kunkel et al. coded some variables related to these behaviors (e.g., presence of drugs or alcohol, character relationship status), and our study delves

deeper into these portrayals, coding a multitude of variables (see next) related to intercourse behaviors. The analysis in our study focused on specific instances in which heterosexual intercourse was discussed, visually implied, or depicted, resulting in 152 programs identified by Kunkel et al. (2005).

Content Coding and Reliability

A group of eight undergraduate students served as coders for this project. Coders underwent a 7-week training on programs not included in the current sample. Upon establishing intercoder reliability, they spent approximately 7 weeks coding the actual sample. Each program was coded by one student. To establish intercoder reliability, 18 of the sample's programs (12%) were randomly selected throughout the coding process to be evaluated by all of the coders. Scott's pi was used to assess intercoder reliability (Potter & Levine-Donnerstein, 1999). For each variable, scores across all 18 programs were averaged to create an overall intercoder reliability score. Reliabilities are reported next in parentheses after each variable's description. As these values reflect, agreement among coders was high, with no variable exhibiting less than 81% agreement and nearly three-fourths of variables exceeding 90% agreement.

Units of Analysis and Measures

Act level measures. Coders identified each sexual intercourse act and coded it separately. If the same act of sexual intercourse was mentioned or revisited several times throughout the program, it was coded only once, with all information about this act featured throughout the program taken into account. Agreement among coders in identifying intercourse acts was high (Scott's pi $= .93$).

For each act, the *mention or presence of risk and responsibility (R/R) issues* (Scott's pi $= .99$) was coded. The importance of safer sex messages has been acknowledged in research, both in content analyses as well as in effects studies that have addressed the educational potential of the television medium in this context (Collins et al., 2003; Kunkel et al., 2005). Messages about safer sex, precautions, and the responsibilities associated with sex are important as they indicate to viewers the serious nature of this behavior as well as have the potential to affect self-efficacy perceptions related to sex (Martino et al., 2005). In this study, messages about sexual R/R are examined separately from the assessment of consequences of intercourse because R/R topics can precede the act of intercourse (e.g., a decision to use precautions can be made prior to engaging in intercourse). Examining R/R messages that are presented in the context of intercourse portrayals

or discussions specifically is important because the link between the act and the consequence is immediate and concrete, thus enhancing the learning potential, especially for young audiences. Assessing the extent of these messages in this study allows the researchers to examine whether different types of portrayals of sexual intercourse vary in the presentation of R/R messages. For example, do intercourse behaviors that take place in more risky situations—such as a one-night stand—mention R/R to a greater extent than intercourse behaviors that happen in the context of an ongoing relationship in which the partners should have knowledge about each others' sexual health history? Thus, the value of assessing R/R messages in this study comes not just from the ability to document their frequency but also their context in intercourse portrayals. Kunkel et al.'s (2005) definition of R/R issues was adopted in this study. It refers to (a) the mention or depiction of sexual precautions (e.g., the use of birth control methods); (b) the mention or depiction of risks and/or negative consequences of sexual intercourse (e.g., HIV/AIDS or other STD contraction, the mention of an unplanned or unwanted pregnancy); and (c) the mention or depiction of sexual patience, the importance of waiting to have sex, or maintaining one's virginity. Any R/R topic addressed within the program with regard to the intercourse act was coded.

The *timing* of each sexual intercourse act (Scott's pi = .91) was identified, noting if the act has just occurred or has taken place in the near or intermediate past or in the distant past (i.e., many years before the current time in the program). Five categories were used to represent this continuum with an additional category to be chosen when the timing of the act cannot be discerned from the show's content. The *relationship between the participants* engaged in the act of sexual intercourse (Scott's pi = .87) was coded to indicate if they were married, had an established sexual relationship with one another, were familiar with one another but were not involved in a sexual relationship prior to this act (e.g., a one-night stand between friends or coworkers), or have just met (i.e., participants had no established relationship of any sort prior to engaging in this act). Acts that involve *cheating* (Scott's pi = .97) were identified as cases in which at least one of the participants was known to be violating a mutually agreed-upon monogamous sexual relationship with a different partner.

Character-level measures. For each character who participated in the sexual intercourse act, coders identified *gender* (Scott's pi = 1.00) and *age*, operationalized as a child (up to 12 years of age), teenager (ages 13–17), young adult (ages 18–24), or adult (age 25 and older; Kunkel et al., 2005). If the character was not seen in the program and no information was provided about his or her age, an option of "can't tell" was chosen. In cases in which the sexual act has taken place in the past, both the age of the

characters at the act of intercourse, and, in the real time of the show was coded (Scott's pi = .90). Characters were coded each time they engaged in a distinct act of sexual intercourse, even if they had already been coded on another episode or even within the same episode.

For each character, coders identified if their participation in the act represented their *first time ever engaging in sexual intercourse* (Scott's pi = .99). If the act was nonconsensual (e.g., rape), each character was identified as either its *victim* or *instigator* (Scott's pi = 1.00). Finally, characters' *physical attractiveness* (Scott's pi = .85) was coded based on features such as body build and shape, facial and hair features, and clothing. Coders determined for each character whether the average viewer will infer that he or she is appealing or not. An attractive character was considered well groomed, pleasing to look at, and healthy-looking. An unattractive character had unbecoming or disfigured features, such as poor hair and skin. Also taken into consideration were comments made about or by this and other characters about their physical appearance. Categories included *very physically attractive, physically attractive, physically unattractive, very physically unattractive*, and *can't tell* (when the character was not present in the show).

Of importance, when latent variables were coded—such as character attractiveness and consequences' duration, impact, and valence, as discussed next—coders were instructed to identify objective patterns in the presentation (e.g., consequences were coded as conveyed by the characters on the show) rather than employ their own mental schemas and personal interpretations in making judgments (for a discussion of the coding of latent variables, see Potter & Levine-Donnerstein, 1999). In this way, coding should reflect a broadly shared meaning rather than be affected by a particular subculture's interpretations or by factors associated with the coders.

Consequence-level measures. Consequences were identified as any specific outcomes mentioned or depicted in the show as experienced by participants in the act of sexual intercourse. Consequences were coded for each character separately. First, the *category* of the consequence was identified. An exhaustive list of consequences was established based on past content analyses (Aubrel, 2004; Kunkel et al., 2005), and on survey research with college students in which they were asked to identify as many consequences of intercourse as they thought are possible (Eyal & Fox, 2005). When no outcome of the sexual intercourse act was identified for a character, "not known" was coded. Categories included (a) pregnancy (both planned and unplanned), (b) contraction or fear of contraction of STDs or HIV/AIDS, (c) physical sexual outcomes (e.g., orgasm), (d) emotional reactions (categorized as one of three distinct categories: 1. happiness and excitement; 2. distress, trauma, guilt, regret, shame, and discomfort; and 3. effects on self

esteem), (e) effects on the relationship with the partner (e.g., the characters become closer to one another or are torn apart), (f) effects on relationships with peers (e.g., peer approval or rejection), (g) effects on the relationship with a child or parent (e.g., approval or disownment), (h) institutional reactions (e.g., reactions from organizations, schools, or religious groups, such as formal sanctions, accusation or conviction of a sex crime), and (i) material outcomes (e.g., either getting or losing gifts, money, or a promotion). Agreement among coders on the consequence categories was high (Scott's pi = .95).

For each consequence identified, coders determined its *duration* (Scott's pi = .86) as the length of time that the outcome is likely to affect the character. Duration was coded as transient (e.g., an orgasm) or enduring (e.g., HIV/STD contraction). The extent of *emotional impact* of the consequence (Scott's pi = .81) on the character was coded as insignificant or meaningful.

Finally, the *valence* (Scott's pi = .96) of the consequence for the character was coded using the four category program-level measure employed in the *Sex on TV* studies (e.g., Kunkel et al., 2001). These included (a) primarily positive consequences (e.g., receiving peer approval, experiencing satisfaction); (b) primarily negative consequences (e.g., feeling guilt, experiencing lower social stats, damaging a relationship with one's partner); (c) neutral outcomes refer to the depiction of no clear consequences to the behavior; and (d) mixed, including a balanced presentation of both positive and negative consequences, such that a viewer would leave the show feeling ambiguous about the consequences of the act of sexual intercourse. Whereas Kunkel et al. identified the overall valence of consequences to sexual intercourse for the entire program, this study examined the specific valence of each individual consequence of sexual intercourse that was depicted within programs. Specific details on the range of consequences experienced by characters as a result of intercourse are missing when consequences are analyzed only at the program level. For example, an act of sexual intercourse might result in positive outcomes for one partner (e.g., peer status enhancement) but end negatively for the other (e.g., humiliation, lowered self-esteem). Viewers who focus on and identify with the two different characters would perhaps perceive a different message from the same act of intercourse.

RESULTS

The Nature of Sexual Intercourse Acts on Television

All 152 programs analyzed in this study were identified a priori as including acts of heterosexual intercourse. Within these programs, coders identified 281 unique acts of intercourse, averaging nearly 2 acts per program ($M = 1.85$,

$SD = 0.99$). To answer RQ1, the nature of presentation of sexual intercourse on TV was examined. Programs include between 1 and 6 acts of intercourse. Nearly half of all shows (45%) include only 1 act of intercourse, and only one in five shows (20%) include more than 2 intercourse acts. Few programs include any reference to R/R issues associated with any of the sexual intercourse acts portrayed in them. Use of sexual precautions is mentioned or depicted in 4% of acts, and risks or negative consequences of sexuality and concerns with sexual patience are each included in 0.4% of acts.

In examining the context of sexual intercourse acts depicted on television, this study finds that such acts take place between partners who are nearly equally in an established nonmarried sexual relationship with one another (29%, $n = 81$) as they do not have a previously established sexual relationship (32%, $n = 91$). Smaller and nearly equal proportions of intercourse acts involve married couples (15%, $n = 41$) as they do couples who have just met (14%, $n = 40$). These frequencies are different than expected by chance, as revealed by a chi-square goodness of fit test, $\chi^2(3) = 33.53$, $p < .001$, $n = 253$. In 10% of intercourse acts participants' relational status is indiscernible.

Analyses reveal that acts of intercourse that take place between characters who share different relational status (i.e., married, established, not established, and those who have just met) do not differ in the extent to which they include sexual R/R concerns, $\chi^2(3) = 3.16$, $p = .37$, $n = 253$, or in the number, $F(3, 249) = 2.06$, $p = .11$, and valence, $\chi^2(9) = 11.40$, $p = .25$, $n = 252$, of consequences that result from them. This is despite the fact that one might expect that people who had just met prior to engaging in intercourse would be shown mentioning different R/R concerns and experiencing different negative consequences than married couples, for example. Sex with a person one has just met puts the individual at greater risk of experiencing emotional outcomes such as guilt or regret (Abbey, Ross, McDuffie, & McAuslan, 1996; Paul & Hayes, 2002) and physical outcomes such as unplanned pregnancy or STD contraction (Catania et al., 1992).

The study also examined the prevalence of cheating involved in sexual intercourse acts on television. This was found to be the case in 25% ($n = 70$) of intercourse acts. The vast majority (92%, $n = 258$) of acts are consensual or mutually agreed upon by both participants, with few acts presenting rape or child molestation. About 5% involve a character who engages in intercourse for the first time. That is, 1 in 20 acts involves the virginity loss of at least one of the characters.

The Characters Who Engage in Sexual Intercourse on Television

In answering RQ2, a total of 562 characters were coded, with equal numbers of male and female characters ($n = 281$ each). This number includes all of the

characters involved in each of the acts of sexual intercourse that were coded in the sample. Of the characters whose age could be discerned (90% of all characters), 4 out of 5 (83%) are adults older than 25 years of age. One of every 10 characters (11%) is a young adult, and 5% are teenagers. When the age of both characters involved in the sexual intercourse act is discernible (n of acts = 253), the large majority of male–female pairs (90%, $n = 212$) are of the same age group, 6% ($n = 15$) involve an older man and a younger woman, and 3% ($n = 8$) involve an older woman (an adult older than 25) and a younger man.

Tests were conducted to examine the differences in portrayals of male and female characters who engaged in sexual intercourse on television. Results show that male and female characters who engage in sexual intercourse do not significantly differ in their age, $\chi^2(4) = 1.56$, $p = .82$, $n = 562$. Female characters do experience a significantly larger number of categories of consequences for their sexual intercourse behaviors than do male, $t(560) = -2.17$, $p < .05$, but it is important to note that whereas this difference is statistically significant, the actual difference between the two genders is minimal with both genders experiencing on average only one type of consequence per act of intercourse (male: $M = 1.00$, $SD = 0.82$; female: $M = 1.16$, $SD = 0.89$). Female characters are also significantly more likely to be portrayed as victims of (adjusted residual = 3.6), with male characters as the instigators of (adjusted residual = 3.6) nonconsensual sexual intercourse, $\chi^2(1) = 13.10$, $p < .001$, $n = 562$. It is again important to note that there was a very small frequency of nonconsensual intercourse acts identified in this study and this finding should be interpreted with caution. When characters' physical attractiveness is verifiable in the program, female and male characters significantly differ in their physical attractiveness, $\chi^2(3) = 31.72$, $p < .001$, $n = 492$. Although both male and females characters are likely to be mostly attractive, in general, female characters are more likely to be portrayed as very attractive or attractive (84%, $n = 213$) as compared to male (78%, $n = 186$), and female characters are less likely to be portrayed as unattractive or very unattractive (16%, $n = 41$) as compared to male (22%, $n = 52$).

The Consequences for Sexual Intercourse Experienced by Characters on Television

RQ3 focused on the portrayal of consequences of intercourse on television. Overall, coders identified 606 unique instances of consequences experienced by characters in these programs and grouped these into the various consequences categories detailed in the Method section. On average, there are two different consequence categories (e.g., pregnancy and guilt or STD

contraction and happiness) per program ($M = 1.91$, $SD = 1.22$) and intercourse acts result in an average of between one and two consequence categories ($M = 1.45$, $SD = 0.94$). Of the 606 identifiable consequences, the most common are emotional outcomes; happiness and excitement, and shame, guilt, and regret accounted together for 60% ($n = 364$) of consequences experienced by characters. Of these emotional outcomes, 73% are positive (happiness, excitement; $n = 266$) and 27% are negative emotions (guilt, regret; $n = 98$). Social outcomes are the next two most common categories of consequences, with effects on relationships with peers and relationship with partner each accounting for 10% of consequences ($n = 61$ and 59, respectively).

Pregnancy (7% of all consequences; $n = 44$) is always (100%) coded as enduring in duration and mostly (91%, $n = 40$) as having a significant emotional impact on characters. As both intended and unintended, wanted and unwanted cases of pregnancy were coded, this study identifies that about half (48%, $n = 21$) of all pregnancy instances are clearly positive for the characters and nearly half (46%, $n = 20$) are perceived negatively by the characters who experience them; in 5% of the instances ($n = 2$), pregnancy is greeted with mixed valence, and in 2% of cases ($n = 1$) the valence of characters toward their pregnancy can not be discerned. Three categories of consequences account for about 3% of the total number of consequences each: relationship with parents ($n = 20$), physical outcomes (e.g., experiencing an orgasm or lack thereof, $n = 19$), and being accused or convicted of a sexual crime ($n = 19$).

To continue answering RQ3, focusing on the nature of consequences of sexual intercourse, this study finds that slightly more than half (54%, $n = 329$) of identifiable consequences for sexual intercourse in this sample are positive and slightly less than half (44%, $n = 269$) are negative in valence. This distribution of positive versus negative valence is significantly different from that expected by chance, $\chi^2(1) = 6.02$, $p < .05$, $n = 598$. Very few consequences (1%, $n = 7$) are mixed in valence, equally positive and negative. Consequences are nearly as likely to be depicted as having a meaningful emotional impact on the characters that experience them (51%, $n = 306$) as they are to be depicted as having an insignificant emotional effect (49%, $n = 296$; ns as revealed by a chi-square goodness of fit test). More than half of identifiable consequences (58%, $n = 350$) are depicted as transient in duration rather than as enduring (42%, $n = 253$), $\chi^2(1) = 15.60$, $p < .001$, $n = 603$. It is not surprising that more than half of consequences experienced following sexual intercourse are transient, as more than half (55%, $n = 156$) of these acts are presented as happening in real time within the confines of the episode itself. Such portrayals do not leave much time to have passed between the act and its outcomes. In most cases, the narrative can only

imply that consequences are or are not likely to last a longer amount of time, rather than actually depicting their duration. Few acts of sexual intercourse (14%, $n = 39$) are presented in programs as taking place in the distant past (many years before they are addressed in the program), the intermediate past (i.e., occurring between several weeks to a few years prior to the episode; 19%, $n = 53$), or even in the near past (i.e., a few days before the show; 8%, $n = 23$).

Going into greater depth on examining the contextual features in the presentation of the consequences of sexual intercourse, this study finds that positively valenced consequences are most often presented as transient (77% of the instances in which intercourse resulted in positive outcomes, $n = 254$) and as emotionally insignificant (64%, $n = 209$). In contrast, negative consequences of intercourse are most often presented as enduring (66%, $n = 176$) and emotionally meaningful for characters that experience them (68%, $n = 183$). The differences in the presentation of valenced outcomes are statistically significant (Duration: $\chi^2[1] = 112.57$, $p < .001$, $n=596$, adjusted residuals $= \pm 10.6$; Emotional impact: $\chi^2[1] = 61.28$, $p < .001$, $n=595$, adjusted residuals $= \pm 7.8$).

Channel Differences in the Portrayal of Sexual Intercourse and Its Consequences

To answer RQ4, a channel comparison was conducted. The 10 channels employed in this study were divided into four groups: public broadcast (PBS), broadcast network channels (including ABC, CBS, Fox, NBC, and the WB), basic cable channels (Lifetime, TNT, USA), and premium cable (HBO). As no sexual intercourse acts were coded by Kunkel et al. (2005) on PBS shows, this category was dropped from analyses. HBO is the channel with the greatest number of shows including sexual content ($n = 27$, as identified by Kunkel et al., 2005). It is followed by the basic cable channels (Lifetime, 26; USA, 23; TNT, 18), and the broadcast networks (between 8 and 17 shows with intercourse acts in each of these channels).

Analyses reveal only few significant differences across the different types of channels in the frequency and context of portrayals of sexual intercourse. Shows in the different channel-types do not differ in the average number of intercourse acts they include, $F(2, 149) = 0.92$, $p = .40$, or in the average number of consequence categories experienced by characters for these acts, $F(2, 149) = 1.23$, $p = .30$. Characters who engage in intercourse on these channels do not differ in terms of their age, $\chi^2(8) = 6.45$, $p = .60$, $n=562$, or gender, $\chi^2(2) = 0.00$, $p = 1.00$, $n=562$. Consequences portrayed for this behavior on the different channels do not differ in their duration, $\chi^2(4) = 5.84$, $p = .21$, $n=739$, or emotional impact, $\chi^2(4) = 2.28$, $p = .68$, $n=739$.

Only two significant differences emerge across these types of channels. One difference is in the portrayal of sexual intercourse acts that are sex crimes (e.g., rape, molestation), $\chi^2(2) = 7.21$, $p < .05$, $n=281$. An examination of the adjusted residuals reveals that basic cable channels present significantly more sexual crimes (16 of 132, adjusted residual $= 2.3$) and HBO presents significantly fewer crimes (0 of 48, adjusted residual $= -2.3$). The other difference is across the different channel types in the valence of consequences they present, $\chi^2(6) = 28.84$, $p < .001$, $n=739$. The broadcast networks present significantly fewer positive consequences (96 of 273, adjusted residual $= -3.9$) and significantly more negative consequences of intercourse (122 of 273, adjusted residual $= 3.6$). HBO presents significantly more positive consequences (73 of 117, adjusted residual $= 4.2$) and significantly fewer negative consequences (24 of 117, adjusted residual $= -3.9$).

DISCUSSION

By uniquely focusing on the TV portrayals of acts of sexual intercourse, their context, participants, and outcomes, this study adds to past content analyses that have considered general patterns of sexual messages (Aubrey, 2004; Cope-Farrar & Kunkel, 2002). By identifying important contextual features in the presentation of intercourse, this study's findings can be used to direct future experimental research on the effects of exposure to sexual television content by suggesting specific patterns of portrayals that may be associated with distinct beliefs, perceptions about, and attitudes toward sex. This study's sample is comprised of programs from the 2004–05 TV season that contain portrayals of intercourse (Kunkel et al., 2005). Study results provide an in-depth and extensive picture of how entertainment TV content presents sexual intercourse behavior.

This study finds that programs with sexual intercourse portrayals average two intercourse acts per program. Of importance, televised intercourse portrayals very rarely mention R/R issues, including mention and use of precautions, negative risks that may result from intercourse, and discussion of abstinence. Consistent with past content analyses (Fisher et al., 2004; Gunasekera et al., 2005; Kunkel et al., 1996; Will, Porter, Geller, & DePasquale, 2005), we find that these topics are present in less than 1 of every 10 shows on TV that contain sexual-intercourse-related content, even though R/R issues are directly related to intercourse behavior.

The very low rates of R/R messages in TV programs are important from an effects perspective. Recent research has found that televised portrayals of sexual R/R issues, such as the mention of condom use in programs, have the potential to increase viewers' knowledge about the effectiveness of

condom use (Collins et al., 2003) as well as their positive attitudes toward condom use (Farrar, 2006). Leaving out such messages from TV programs disregards the recognized educational potential of programs in this realm. This potential is important, as approximately 80% of youth pregnancies are unintended (Henshaw, 1998) and there are nearly 10 million new sexually transmitted infections annually among U.S. youth (Weinstock, Berman, & Cates, 2004).

Another contextual variable of importance is the relationship between characters involved in the act of intercourse as it inevitably involves varying levels of familiarity with partners' sexual history and health. It can also send important messages about the role of sex in relationships and set viewers' expectations about when this behavior is expected to take place in a relationship (e.g., Aubrey et al., 2003). Research has found that portrayals of casual sex, in particular, can lead viewers to endorse more sexually permissive attitudes (Taylor, 2005). Similar to previous studies (Greenberg & Busselle, 1994; Gunasekera et al., 2005), this study finds that characters who engage in intercourse on television are mostly acquainted with one another, yet unmarried. Although relatively few people who have just met are portrayed engaging in sex, they are not any more likely than other couples to mention R/R issues as related to their sexual behavior. This is despite the health risks associated with engaging in sex with a person one has just met. Research and theory also indicate that characteristics of the televised models are important in the media effects process (e.g., Bandura, 1977). This study assessed characters' age, gender, and physical attractiveness and finds that most characters who engage in sexual intercourse on TV are older than 25, yet 16% are teenagers and young adults. Although youth are less likely to encounter TV characters that are similar to them in age engaging in intercourse, such models are available, especially for those viewers who seek them out actively or have an interest in this topic. Although exceptional in the overall TV landscape, such attention-grabbing characters may have a significant impact on viewers, especially if viewers engage in relationships such as identification with or attraction to these characters. Research on reactions to persuasive advertising messages has illustrated the enhancing role of wishful identification—the desire to be similar to mediated personalities and their life situations—in making sense of media content (e.g., Aubrey & Harrison, 2004; Austin & Johnson, 1997; Pinkleton, Austin, & Fujioka, 2001).

Next, this study also examined sex differences in the televised portrayal of intercourse. Although Aubrey (2004) found that sexual behavior initiated by female characters was more likely to result in negative consequences, she found that male and female characters did not differ in terms of being the recipients of such consequences. Similarly, our study finds that although

female characters are likely to experience slightly more diverse consequences for intercourse behaviors than male, male and female characters do not differ in the consequences' valence. Some gender differences did emerge as female characters are more likely to be physically attractive than male characters. This finding is consistent with studies of gender stereotype portrayals (Signorielli & Bacue, 1999; Stern & Mastro, 2004), such as women's physical attractiveness (Elasmar, Hasegawa, & Brain, 1999). Similar findings have been found in the context of sexual presentations on TV (Ward, 2003). The current finding, coupled with the finding indicating that female characters on TV are more likely to be portrayed as victims of sexual relations than are male characters, may have important implications for effects; research has shown that watching TV clips featuring women as sexual objects led adolescents to more readily accept sexual stereotypes and stereotypical attitudes about women than exposure to nonsexual content (Ward & Friedman, 2006).

A central goal of this study is to characterize the complete range of consequences portrayed on TV as resulting from sexual intercourse. The study finds that most characters do experience consequences for sexual intercourse, but, on average, each character experiences only one outcome per act of intercourse. Television, then, presents a rather simplistic picture of intercourse by ignoring the fact that this behavior can potentially result in multiple concurrent consequences: positive and negative emotional, social, and physical outcomes. For example, relevant to youth, a person can gain social stature among their peers while feeling guilty or regretting having had engaged in sex. Televison largely ignores the complex outcomes of sexual intercourse.

Further presenting a simplistic picture of the consequences of sexual intercourse, only few types of outcomes are presented on TV, with a strong lead for emotional results, especially positive ones; happiness is the most frequently experienced televised outcome of intercourse. This is followed by effects on relationships with partner and peers and pregnancy (both intended and unintended). Additional possible outcomes, such as STD or AIDS/HIV contraction, orgasm, impact on relationship with parents, and material gains are largely ignored on TV, although they are identified by college students as common possible outcomes of intercourse (Eyal & Fox, 2005). Previous research focusing on at-risk behaviors has similarly found that only few categories of intercourse consequences are presented on TV (Will et al., 2005). Consistent with Aubrey (2004), few portrayed consequences to intercourse are physical. Only about one third of consequences are presented as negative, as found in previous research (Fisher et al., 2004).

The focus on emotional outcome portrayals on TV shows may impact the interpretation of these messages and enhance the potential for viewer effects.

Information provided by such portrayals about individuals' emotional states is likely to increase identification and empathy for characters, defined by Zillmann (2006) as "a noticeable increase of excitation" and "feeling with, or feeling for, the other individuals" (p. 157). Such emotional appraisals and connections have been found to work alongside, and sometimes even override, cognitive appraisals in youth interpretation of TV messages. For example, Hobbs, Broder, Pope, and Rowe (2006) and Austin, Pinkleton, and Fujioka (1999) identified viewers' emotional reactions to media messages—including identification and wishful identification—as playing a central role in their interpretation and liking of and reactions to advertisements. The message interpretation process model also allots a central role to such emotional reactions in media effects (e.g., Austin et al., 1999).

Adding to the simplistic presentation of the consequences of sexual intercourse on TV, this study finds that outcomes are presented in a formulaic fashion so that negative outcomes are mostly long-lasting and emotionally impactful, whereas positive ones are largely short-lived and emotionally insignificant for characters. Of importance, SCT suggests that sexual actions that result in a single negative consequence that is of short duration for the model are less likely to inhibit or deter viewers' own behavior than are consequences that are long-lasting in duration or that result in more than one outcome, such as effects on the individual as well as on other people (Bandura, 1986). In the context of *risky* sexual encounters, a more influential portrayal likely to deter viewers from engaging in such behavior, or that would lead to greater deliberation prior to engaging in such behavior, would be one that emphasizes strong, long-lasting, and negative consequences of intercourse with broad impact spanning personal, social, emotional, and physical domains. As noted, such portrayals are extremely rare on TV shows.

Finally, consistent with cultivation theory's predictions (Gerbner, Gross, & Morgan, 2002), and based on the variables examined in this study, we find that different TV channels present sexual intercourse in a rather uniform manner. One difference identified is that the broadcast networks present fewer positive and more negative consequences of sexual intercourse, whereas HBO exhibits the opposite trend. Research on other media content, such as advertising to children and demographic diversity representation, has identified differences between the broadcast networks, basic, and premium cable (e.g., Kubey & Shifflet, 1995; Kunkel & Gantz, 1992), but this does not seem to be the case when it comes to the portrayal of sexual intercourse. Rather, findings here are more consistent with Signorielli and Bacue's (1999) claim that "the world of TV is formulaic driven, designed to appeal to the widest possible audience at the least possible cost" (p. 540).

Overall, young TV viewers are receiving a rather consistent picture of sexual intercourse, one that presents it as an activity that results in few,

often positive, consequences. This picture also conveys that sex involves minimal risks, few of which are physical in nature, such as STD contraction. It is important to recognize that viewer interpretation of even these fairly consistent portrayals is likely to differ based on viewer context, environment, and experiences. Still, it should not be surprising that youth who are exposed to large amounts of sexual TV content, and those who are more involved with the content, have more sexual experience and a greater tendency to hold the position that sex is primarily a recreational activity (Ward & Rivadeneyra, 1999).

Future research would benefit from a continued examination of televised portrayals of sexual intercourse and, specifically, acts that involve unique circumstances, such as cheating. Research should examine channels directly targeted at youth, such as MTV, BET, and VH1, which are missing from the current study. These channels have been found to include considerable amounts of sexual portrayals (Seidman, 1992; Smith, 2005) and may reveal different portrayal contexts for sexual messages as well, further illuminating the landscape of sexual intercourse portrayals to which youth are exposed on TV. From a developmental perspective, it would be important to discover which contextual elements of sexual intercourse acts are likely to draw adolescents' attention and lead them to have greater involvement, and perhaps learn from them. Examples are acts that include teen characters and those that involve a first-time sexual intercourse encounter (i.e., virginity loss). From a social cognitive perspective, it would be interesting to isolate those acts that receive greater emphasis or focus in programs, as these are likely to draw more attention from viewers. Experimental research that examines the effects of various contextual elements in the mediated portrayal on audience members' emotional, cognitive, and behavioral outcomes is also a natural follow-up to content analyses such as this, which characterize the portrayals of sexual intercourse.

REFERENCES

Abbey, A., Ross, L., McDuffie, D., & McAuslan, P. (1996). Alcohol and dating risk factors for sexual assault among college women. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, *20*, 147–169.

Alan Guttmacher Institute. (2004). *U.S. teenage pregnancy statistics: Overall trends, trends by race andethnicity and state-by-state information*. Washington, DC: Author. Retrieved March 2, 2004 from http://www.guttmacher.org/pubs/state_pregnancy_trends.pdf

Aubrey, J. (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., & Harrison, K. (2004). The gender-role content of children's favorite television programs and its links to their gender-related perceptions. *Media Psychology*, *6*, 111–146.

Aubrey, J., Harrison, K., Kramer, L., & Yellin, J. (2003). Variety versus timing: Gender differences in college students' sexual expectations as predicted by exposure to sexually oriented television. *Communication Research*, *30*, 432–460.

Austin, E. W., & Johnson, K. K. (1997). Effects of general and alcohol-specific media literacy training on children's decision making about alcohol. *Journal of Health Communication*, *2*, 17–42.

Austin, E. W., Pinkleton, B., & Fujioka, Y. (1999). Assessing prosocial message effectiveness: Effects of message quality, production quality, and persuasion. *Journal of Health Communication*, *4*, 195–210.

Bandura, A. (1977). *Social learning theory*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Bandura, A. (1986). *Social foundations of thought and action: A social cognitive theory*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Bandura, A. (2001). Social cognitive theory: An agentic perspective. In S. T. Fiske, D. L. Schacter, & C. Zahn-Waxler (Eds.), *Annual review of psychology* (Vol. 52, pp. 1–26). Palo Alto, CA: Annual Reviews.

Bandura, A., Ross, D., & Ross, S. A. (1963). Imitation of film-mediated aggressive models. *Journal of Abnormal & Social Psychology*, *66*, 3–11.

Baxter, R., De Riemer, C., Landini, A., Leslie, L., & Singletary, M. (1985). A content analysis of music videos. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, *29*, 333–340.

Brown, J., L'Engle, K., Pardun, C., Guo, G., Kenneavy, K., & Jackson, C. (2006). Sexy media matter: Exposure to sexual content in music, movies, television, and magazines predicts black and white adolescents' sexual behavior. *Pediatrics*, *117*(4), 1018–1027.

Catania, J., Coats, T., Stall, R., Turner, H., Peterson, J., Hearst, N., et al. (1992). Prevalence of AIDS-related risk factors and condom use in the United States. *Science*, *258*, 1101–1106.

Collins, R., Elliott, M., Berry, S., Kanouse, D., & Hunter, S. (2003). Entertainment television as a healthy sex educator: The impact of condom-efficacy information in an episode of *Friends*. *Pediatrics*, *112*, 1115–1121.

Collins, R., Elliott, M., Berry, S., Kanouse, D., Kunkel, D., Hunter, S., & Miu, A. (2004). Watching sex on television predicts adolescent initiation of sexual behavior. *Pediatrics*, *114*(3), 280–289.

Cope-Farrar, K., & Kunkel, D. (2002). Sexual messages in teens' favorite prime-time TV programs. In J. Brown, J. Steele, & K. Walsh-Childers (Eds.), *Sexual teens, sexual media* (pp. 59–78). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.

Darling, C. A., & Hicks, M. W. (1983). Recycling parental sexual messages. *Journal of Sex & Marital Therapy*, *9*, 233–243.

Elasmar, M., Hasegawa, K., & Brain, M. (1999). The portrayal of women in U.S. prime time television. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, *43*, 20–34.

Eyal, K., & Fox, J. A. (2005, April). *A relationship between television exposure and young adults' perceptions of sexual behaviors*. Paper presented at the annual conference of the Broadcast Education Association, Las Vegas, Nevada.

Eyal, K., & Kunkel, D. (2008). The effects of television drama shows on emerging adults' sexual attitudes and moral judgments. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, *52*, 161–181.

Eyal, K., & Rubin, A. M. (2003). Viewer aggression and homophily, identification, and parasocial relationships with television characters. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, *47*, 77–98.

Farrar, K. M. (2006). Sexual intercourse on television: Do safe sex messages matter? *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, *50*, 635–650.

Finnerty, K. (2007). Risky sexual intercourse on entertainment television: Comparing audience responses to different types of negative consequence portrayals. *Dissertation Abstracts International*, *68* (07), (UMI No. 3274499).

Fisher, D., Hill, D., Grube, J., & Gruber, E. (2004). Sex on American television: An analysis across program genres and network types. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, *48*, 529–553.

Fox, M. (2004). *Half of Americans will get an STD – Reports*. Reuters Health. Retrieved March 2, 2004, from http://nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/news/fullstory_16232.html

Gerbner, G., Gross, L., & Morgan, M. (2002). Growing up with television: Cultivation processes. In J. Bryant & D. Zillmann (Eds.), *Media effects: Advances in theory and research* (2nd ed., pp. 43–67). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.

Greenberg, B. S., & Busselle, R. (1994). *Soap operas and sexual activity*. Menlo Park, CA: Kaiser Family Foundation.

Greenberg, B. S., & Busselle, R. (1996). Soap operas and sexual activity: A decade later. *Journal of Communication*, *46*(4), 153–160.

Greenberg, B., Stanley, C., Siemicki, M., Heeter, C., Soderman, A., & Linsangan, R. (1993). Sex content on soaps and prime-time television series most viewed by adolescents. In B. S. Greenberg, J. D. Brown, & N. L. Buerkel-Rothfuss (Eds.), *Media, sex, and the adolescent* (pp. 29–44). Cresskill, NJ: Hampton.

Greenberg, B. S., & Woods, M. G. (1999). The soaps: Their sex, gratifications, and outcomes. *Journal of Sex Research*, *36*, 250–257.

Greene, K., & Faulkner, S. L. (2005). Gender, belief in the sexual double standard, and sexual talk in heterosexual dating relationships. *Sex Roles*, *53*, 239–251.

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*, *98*, 464–470.

Harwood, J. (1999). Age identification, social identity gratifications, and television viewing. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, *43*, 123–136.

Henshaw, S. K. (1998). Unintended pregnancy in the United States. *Family Planning Perspectives*, *30*, 24–29, 46.

Hobbs, R., Broder, S., Pope, H., & Rowe, J. (2006). How adolescent girls interpret weight-loss advertising. *Health Education Research*, *21*, 719–730.

Hoffner, C., & Buchanan, M. (2005). Young adults' wishful identification with television characters: The role of perceived similarity and character attributes. *Media Psychology*, *7*, 325–351.

Kaiser Family Foundation. (2005, January). *U.S. teen sexual activity*. Menlo Park, CA: Author. Retrieved August 26, 2006, from: http://www.kff.org/youthhivstds/upload/U-S-Teen-Sexual-Activity-Fact-Sheet.pdf

Kubey, R., & Shifflet, M. (1995). Demographic diversity on cable: Have the new cable channels made a difference in the representation of gender, race, and age?. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, *39*, 459–471.

Kunkel, D., Cope, K., & Colvin, C. (1996). *Sexual messages on family hour television: Content and context*. Menlo Park, CA: Kaiser Family Foundation.

Kunkel, D., Cope, K., Farinola, W., 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., 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., Eyal, K., Finnerty, K., Biely, E., & Donnerstein, E. (2005). *Sex on TV4*. Menlo Park, CA: Kaiser Family Foundation.

Kunkel, D., & Gantz, W. (1992). Children's television advertising in the multichannel environment. *Journal of Communication*, *42*(3), 134–152.

Lampman, C., Rolfe-Maloney, B., David, E. J., Yan, M., McDermott, N., Winters, S., et al. (2002). Messages about sex in the workplace: A content analysis of primetime television. *Sexuality & Culture*, *6*(4), 3–21.

Martino, S., Collins, R., Kanouse, D., Elliott, M., & Berry, S. (2005). Social cognitive processes mediating the relationship between exposure to television's sexual content and adolescents' sexual behavior. *Journal of Personality & Social Psychology*, *89*, 914–924.

McDavid, J. (1964). Effects of ambiguity of imitative cues upon learning by observation. *The Journal of Social Psychology*, *62*, 165–174.

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 & Society*, *8*, 75–91.

Paul, E., & Hayes, A. (2002). The casualties of 'casual sex': A qualitative exploration of the phenomenology of college students' hookups. *Journal of Social & Personal Relationships*, *19*, 639–661.

Paul, E., McManus, B., & Hayes, A. (2000). 'Hookups': Characteristics and correlates of college students' spontaneous and anonymous sexual experiences. *Journal of Sex Research*, *37*, 76–88.

Pinkleton, B. E., Austin, E. W., & Fujioka, Y. (2001). The relationship of perceived beer ad and PSA quality to high school students' alcohol-related beliefs and behaviors. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, *45*, 575–597.

Potter, W. J., & Levine-Donnerstein, D. (1999). Rethinking validity and reliability in content analysis. *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, *2*, 258–284.

Rideout, V., Roberts, D., & Foehr, U. (2005). *Generation M: Media in the lives of 8–18 year-olds*. Menlo Park, CA: Kaiser Family Foundation.

Scharrer, E., Kim, D. D., Lin, L.-M., & Liu, Z. (2006). Working hard or hardly working? Gender, humor, and the performance of domestic chores in television commercials. *Mass Communication & Society*, *9*, 215–238.

Seidman, S. A. (1992). An investigation of sex-role stereotyping in music videos. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, *36*, 209–216.

Signorielli, N. (2000). Sex on prime-time in the 90's. *Communication Research Reports*, *17*, 70–78.

Signorielli, N., & Bacue, A. (1999). Recognition and respect: A content analysis of prime-time television characters across three decades. *Sex Roles*, *40*, 527–544.

Smith, S. L. (2005). From Dr. Dre to *Dismissed:* Assessing violence, sex, and substance abuse on MTV. *Critical Studies in Mass Communication*, *22*, 89–98.

Stern, S., & Mastro, D. (2004). Gender portrayals across the life span: A content analytic look at broadcast commercials. *Mass Communication & Society*, *7*, 215–236.

Sutton, M. J., Brown, J. D., Wilson, K. M., & Klein, J. D. (2002). Shaking the tree of knowledge for forbidden fruit: Where adolescents learn about sexuality and contraception. In J. D. Brown, J. R. Steele, & K. Walsh-Childers (Eds.), *Sexual teens, sexual media: Investigating media's influence on adolescent sexuality* (pp. 25–55). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.

Taylor, L. (2005). Effects of visual and verbal sexual content and perceived realism on attitudes and beliefs. *Journal of Sex Research*, *42*(2), 130–137.

Ward, L. M. (2003). Understanding the role of entertainment media in the sexual socialization of American youth: A review of empirical research. *Developmental Review*, *23*, 347–388.

Ward, L. M., & Friedman, K. (2006). Using TV as a guide: Associations between television viewing and adolescents' sexual attitudes and behavior. *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, *16*, 133–156.

Ward, L. M., Hansbrough, E., & Walker, E. (2005). Contributions of music video exposure to Black adolescents' gender and sexual schemas. *Journal of Adolescent Research*, *20*, 143–166.

Ward, L. M., & Rivadeneyra, R. (1999). Contributions of entertainment television to adolescents' sexual attitudes and expectations: The role of viewing amount versus viewer conceptual issues. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, *23*, 39–52.

Weinstock, H., Berman, S., & Cates, W. (2004). Sexually transmitted diseases among American youth: Incidence and prevalence estimates, 2000. *Perspectives on Sexual & Reproductive Health*, *36*, 6–10.

Will, K. E., Porter, B., Geller, E. S., & DePasquale, J. (2005). Is television a health and safety hazard? A cross-sectional analysis of at-risk behavior on primetime television. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, *35*, 198–222.

Zillmann, D. (2006). Empathy: Affective reactivity to others' emotional experiences. In J. Bryant & P. Vorderer (Eds.), *Psychology of entertainment* (pp. 151–181). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.