**CHILD AND MEDIA**

**Introduction**

The presence and intensity of media influences of television, radio, music, computers, films, videos, and the Internet are increasingly recognized as an important part of the social ecology of children and youth, and these influences have become more visible and volatile in recent decades. Research that explores the level and effects of media influences calls for measurements of the quantity and character of exposure to a variety of potentially overlapping media sources, an analysis of the content of the media output, and examination of the social context and relationships that are associated with the media experience.

Additional effort is needed to develop theories that can identify underlying processes and mechanisms that link media influences to outcomes. Outcomes in turn call for tools that can measure, evaluate, and help explain how certain media experiences influence, and are influenced by, health and behavioral factors as well as cognitive and developmental processes. Methodologies from a variety of disciplines of communications, economics, neuroscience, pediatrics, and psychology, to name a few have been applied to these questions, and a strong body of research and valuable findings has emerged. Nevertheless, the field isrelatively young and many methodological and theoretical questions remain, even as new digital technologies continue to pose unique challenges to researchers.

While current media studies focus on the social environment of the millennium generation, there is nothing new in adults being worried about corrupting influences on young people. Early Greek philosophers argued about the relative merits of a focus on rhetoric in the education of their youth at the expense of reason and understanding.

When novels were first published during the eighteenth century, many people were concerned that readers, especially the young, would be corrupted by the licentious and immoral behavior described, as well as by the indolent lifestyle they perceived novel readers to follow. By the twentieth century, the potential causes for concern had proliferated dramatically. Today, media experiences seem to expand by the month, and while much of the concern about their influence on young people may represent older worries in new forms, the media ecology of today is children and youth also presents a new frontier that offers unique challenges for research studies.

A child born in the 1930s might have spent as much as several hours a week listening to the radio; reading comic books, newspapers, or magazines; or watching a film at a local theatre. Since television was first introduced in the 1950s, the number of hours young people spend interacting insome way with media, as well as the range and capabilities of the many devices and activities that could be considered media experiences, have increased to an extent far beyond the imagining of today is grandparents when they were young. Children today use electronic media from two to five hours daily, and infants even in uteroóare regularly exposed to a variety of mediastimuli. This pervasive experience has raised many questions about how media exposure, content, and context influence young people is health, development, and behavior.

Researchers are increasingly concerned not only with how much time children spend with the media in general, but alsowith how they apportion their exposure over different sources and types of media. Furthermore, interest is growing in examining how the experience with media exposure, content, and context has changed over the decades in response to new media features and technologies as well as reflecting other social and economic trends. As an increasingly pervasive and vibrant part of the social ecology of children and youth, media influences have drawn the attention of parents, practitioners, and policy makers who seek to curb risky exposures as well as to identify ways to promote positive media practices that can foster healthy development.

**Unit one**

**CHILDREN AS ACTIVE MEDIA CONSUMERS**

**1. Media and Its function**

**1.1 .media**

Media is the plural of the word medium. Media are the vehicles or channels which are used to convey information, entertainment, news, education, or promotional messages are disseminated. Media includes every broadcasting and narrowcasting medium such as television, radio, newspapers, billboards, mails, telephone, fax, internet etc (the main means of mass communication). The mass media occupy a high proportion of our leisure time: people spend, on average, 25 hours per week watching television, and they also find time for radio, cinema, magazines and newspapers. For children, watching television takes up a similar amount of time to that spent at school or with family and friends. While school, home and friends are all acknowledged as major socializing influences on children, a huge debate surrounds the possible effects of the mass media and findings both in favor and against effects are controversial. The question of effects is typically raised with an urgency deriving from a public rather than an academic agenda and with a simplicity which is inappropriate to the complexity of the issue (we do not ask of other social influences, what is the effect of parents on children or do schools have an effect which generalizes to the home or do friends have positive or negative effects.

**1.2. Function of media**

**Mass Media have made the World Smaller and Closer**: The speed of media has resulted in bringing people across the world closer. Let us take an example. When you watch a cricket match between India and another country in England, Australia or New Zealand, live on television, you feel you are part of the crowd in that stadium. Events, happy or sad, happening anywhere can be seen live. Sometimes we feel that the entire world is one big family. You might have heard the term “global village”. It means that the whole world is shrinking and becoming a village. Wherever we go to any part of the world, we see the same products such as soft drinks, television, washing machine, refrigerator etc. and the same type of advertisements. Similarly, the World Wide Web and internet have brought people and countries much closer.

**Mass Media Promotes Distribution of Goods**: Mass media are used by the consumer industry to inform people about their products and services through advertising. Without advertising, the public will not know about various products (ranging from soup to oil, television sets to cars) and services (banking, insurance, hospitals etc.) which are available in the market as well as their prices. Thus mass media help the industries and consumers

**Entertainment and informative**: Mass media is one of the best means of recreation. Television, radio, internet are the best means of entertainment and extremely informative. Social media keeps us up to date with the happenings around the world.

We can sum up the functions of media as:

[1] Media provide news and information required by the people.

[2] Media can educate the public.

[3] Media helps a democracy function effectively. They inform the public about government policies and programs and how these programs can be useful to them. This helps the people voice their feelings and helps the government to make necessary changes in their policies or programs.

[4] Media can entertain people.

[5] Media can act as an agent of change in development.

[6] Media has brought people of the world closer to each other.

[7] Media promote trade and industry through advertisements

[8] Media can help the political and democratic processes of a country.

[9] Media can bring in positive social changes.

**1.3 Theoretical Issues**

**SOCIOLOGICAL THEORIES OF COMMUNICATION:**

The sociological approach to communication theory is based on assumption that there exists a definite relationship between mass communication and social change. Some of the relevant theories which are going to be discussed here are:

[1**] The cultivation theory**: It was developed by George Gerbner in 1967. It is based on the assumption that mass media have subtle effects on audiences who unknowingly absorb the dominant symbols, images, and messages of media. He calls it “cultivation of dominant image pattern”. According to this theory a long persistent exposure to TV is capable of cultivating common beliefs about the world.

**[2] Social Learning Theory:** It is one of the most widely used theories in mass communication. According to this theory the media are active but subtle educators in teaching readers, viewers, listeners about the world. An important component of this theory is that it explains how people can learn from observations alone.

**[3] Agenda Setting Theory:** The term was coined by Maxwell McCombs and Donald L Shaw in 1972 in the context of election campaign where the politicians seek to convince the voters about the party’s most important issues. This theory tries to describe and explain as how stories are selected.

(a)Packaged and presented- a process known as Gatekeeping,

(b) By resulting agenda

(c) How this agenda affects what people think about the relative importance of the issues presented. This theory also “predicts” that of particular news item is presented prominently and frequently by the press, the public will come to believe that it is important.

**[4] Play Theory:** In this theory of mass communication William Stephenson counters those who speak of the harmful effects of the mass media by arguing that first and foremost the media serve audiences as play experiences. Even news papers, says Stephenson are read for pleasure rather than information or enlightenment. He sees media as buffer against conditions which would otherwise be anxiety producing. The media provides “Communication-pleasure”

**[5] Uses and Gratification Theory:** This theory has emerged out of the studies which shifted their focus from what media do to the people to what people do with media (katz,1959). The uses approach assumes that audiences are active and willingly expose themselves to media and that the most potent of mass media cannot influence an individual who has “no use” for it in the environment in which he lives. The uses of the mass media are dependent on the perception, selectivity, and previously held values, beliefs and interests of the people.

**1.4 .Types of Media**

We can start our discussion of media by defining and describing different kinds of media that children are using today. Modern media comes in many different formats, including print media (books, magazines, and newspapers), television, movies, video games, music, cell phones, various kinds of software, and the Internet. Each type of media involves both content, and also a device or object through which that content is delivered.

**A.Print Media**

The term 'print media' is used to describe the traditional or "old-fashioned" print-based media that today's parents grew up with, including newspapers, magazines, books, and comics or graphic novels. Historically, only wealthy publishers had access to sophisticated type-setting technologies necessary to create printed material, but this has changed in recent years with the widespread accessibility of desktop publishing software and print-on-demand publication services such as Lulu.com (LINK). More recently, electronic book readers such as the Amazon Kindle which store hundreds of books on a single device and which allow readers to directly download books and newspapers have become popular.

**B. Television**

Television has been entertaining American families for over fifty years. In the beginning, there were few programs to pick from, but today, there are literally hundreds of general and specialty channels to choose from and thousands upon thousands of programs. Where it was once the case that programs had to be watched at the time they were broadcast on a television, this is no longer the case. Today, viewers can summon a movie or television episode whenever they want, through many cable or satellite services' pay-per-view or free on-demand services. They may also download or stream episodes from the Internet and watch them on their computers. Viewers may use DVR (digital video recorder) devices, such as a Tivo to record programs at one time and watch them at another time. Viewers with certain cell phones may even watch programs through their cell phones.

**C.Movies**

Movies (films) are the oldest form of motion picture technology capable of capturing lifelike video-style images. Originally, movies could only be consumed at a neighborhood movie theater, but these days movies are widely available for people to consume in their homes, on their computers, and even in through their telephones. Commercial movies are broadcast on television, and via cable and satellite services which may feature High Definition (HD) video resolution and sound, essentially allowing the movie theater experience to be replicated in a home theater environment. Commercial movies are also distributed on DVD and Blu-Ray disks, which can be rented from stores and through-the-mail services such as Netflix, and through downloadable computer files, which can be legally downloaded from movie rental services such as Amazon and iTunes or streamed through Netflix or on-demand cable services. Home movies produced by amateurs with inexpensive video cameras are now also widely available through video sharing websites such as YouTube.com and Vimeo.com.

**D. Video Games**

Available since the early 1980s, video games have only grown in popularity among youth. Today's games make use of advanced graphics and processors to enable three dimensional game play featuring highly realistic landscapes and physics simulations, and the ability to compete against other players through a network connection. Modern video games are immersive, exciting and increasingly interactive. Players feel like they really are in the situation because of the life-like graphics and sounds. Through video games, youth can extend their pretend play, as they become soldiers, aliens, race car drivers, street fighters, and football players.

Popular gaming consoles today include Nintendo Wii, Microsoft Xbox 360 and Sony Playstation III. There are also hand held consoles which enable mobile game play such as Nintendo's DS. As well, some video games can also be played on personal computers. Most video games use a hand-held device with buttons, joysticks, and other devices for manipulating the characters on the screen. However, the newer games systems use motion-detecting sensors, such as accelerometers which encourage players to move their entire body to complete game activities. For example, in Wii Tennis, a player swings his entire arm to have the player on the screen hit the tennis ball. Games such as the recently popular World of Warcraft are played in a networked universe shared simultaneously by thousands of gamers at once. Players may be across the street from one another or across the globe using the the Internet to participate in a shared three-dimensional world in which each player can control one or more avatars, and chat using text or voice.

**E. Music**

Music is another highly popular media entertainment. The advent of sound recording at the end of the 19th century ushered in the era of analog recordings, first on vinyl records and later on audio tape in the form of 8-tracks and later, cassettes. Starting in the 1980s, music started to be distributed in a digital format on CD-ROMs. The new format changed everything as digital music could be copied easily and without loss of fidelity. In the 1990s, it became possible to easily compress large digital music files using a technology called MP3, and for the first time, it became practical to share music over the newly invented Internet. An explosion of music MP3 file sharing occurred, first culminating in the [Napster](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Napster) file sharing website between 1999 and 2001. The problem was that all this music file sharing was illegal. The record companies sued, and Napster was closed down. However, the damage was done. An entire generation of children had learned that unlimited file sharing was possible and easy. These children were not deterred by the questionable legal status of their activities, and many new forums for file sharing, including the popular peer to peer [BitTorrent](http://www.bittorrent.com/) technology, were developed and continue to operate today.

**F. Mobile Phones**

Modern mobile or cell phones are more than simple telephones. Instead, they are multimedia communications devices. In addition to making telephone calls, today's phones enable [SMS](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SMS) text and [MMS](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Multimedia_Messaging_Service) photo messaging (the sending of email-like text messages and photographs from phone to phone). Many phones feature digital cameras, programmable ring-tones, Internet and email access, and music and video players as well. The very latest "smart" phones (such as [Apple's iPhone](http://www.apple.com/iphone/) even feature GPS (global satellite-based positioning) which enables the phone to know and broadcast its location on the earth, as well as downloadable software applications that transform the phone into a multipurpose device. With the right service plan and smart phone, it is possible to watch television shows on the phone, browse the Internet, or to use the phone as a portable GPS navigation unit.

**G. Software**

Personal computers and modern smart phones are general rather than single-purpose devices. They can be programmed to perform a wide variety of tasks. The software that provides the computer with instructions for how to perform these various tasks is itself a form of media. As children like to play computer games, a young person's computer or phone is likely to contain various game software titles. However, there are many other categories of software program that are available. For instance, young people may use software to edit and display digital pictures they have taken with their telephone or digital camera. They may also compose or edit digital video and sound recordings, or create visual art in the manner of paintings. Software programs are available to teach youth how to type; to provide help with homework; to teach a specific foreign language, or to guide users in the creation of a family tree, to provide just a few examples.

**H. The Internet (and other connected technologies)**

The Internet is a communications technology based on millions of interconnected computers capable of sharing data instantly. The Internet allows two kinds of communication to occur. Two-way communications are possible in both synchronized and asynchronous forms, allowing the Internet to replace traditional telephone technologies, which involve two-way synchronized communications, and bulletin boards, which involve two-way asynchronous communications. One-way communications such as television or radio broadcasts are also possible. All Internet communications, whether voice, video, or photograph, take place using a common digital transmission format. Although the network is world-wide in scale, the playing field is level enough so that individual people without much wealth or education can create and publish web pages for themselves, which are accessible around the world.

Most people know the internet through its most ubiquitous product, the website and the World Wide Web; the Internet protocol upon which all websites sit. Early websites were largely textual in nature with a few photographs for illustration purposes. Over time, websites have evolved into platforms capable of organizing and displaying all other forms of media we have discussed, including books and magazines, movies and television shows, telephone and textual communications, audio recordings and even software. Today, it is possible to watch television on [Hulu](http://www.hulu.com), or a friend's home movie on [YouTube](http://www.youtube.com); have a video conference via the [Skype](http://www.skype.com) service, check in with your boss regarding the latest sales figures on [Sales Force](http://www.salesforce.com/), read a book online at [Scribed](http://www.scribd.com/) and interact with friends in a wholly new way via [Social Media](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_media) websites such as [Facebook](http://www.facebook.com) and [Twitter](http://www.twitter.com) which have no pre-Internet antecedents

**1.5 Children’s Media Habits**

**How Development Influences Children’s Media Use and Preferences**

The media children use, and in particular their media preferences, are predicted in a large part by their developmental capabilities. Researchers have suggested that young children have a preference for media that can at least be partly incorporated into their existing framework and that they show lesspreference for extremely simple or extremely complex stimuli. This moderate discrepancy hypothesis predicts that at any given age, a moderate level of stimulus complexity is preferred and that this level increases as the child matures. First incorporated into Helson’s adaptation level theory on sensory habituation (Helson, 1948), the moderate-discrepancy hypothesis has proven to be a plausible explanation forbehavioral and sensory regulation (e.g., Berlyne’s general theory of curiosity, Berlyne, 1960) as well as a viable explanation for why the media preferences of children in various agegroups differ so greatly. After all, the perceived simplicity andcomplexity of media content changes dramatically as children mature.

Media content that is only moderately discrepant andtherefore attractive to 2-year-olds may be overly simple andthus unattractive to 6-year-olds.As such, in order to understand children’smediausageandpreferences, it is important to understand how children typically develop. To that end, we present a brief review of keydevelopmental characteristics of four periods across child-hood (i.e., infancy and toddlerhood, early childhood, middlechildhood, and adolescence) and hypothesize how thesecharacteristics influence children’s media use and preferences. We also present statistics regarding the amount of media thatis typically consumed during each period. In this article, wemainly present data from American media use studies.However, the media use patterns presented here are similar toother industrialized countries as well.

**1.5.1. Infants and Toddlers**

This age group involves children between birth and 2 years. Inthe first 2 years of life, children exhibit significant growth asthey move from relying on basic reflexes to engaging in morepurposeful behaviors around 18 months of age. When children are around 4 months of age, theybegin to exhibit some interest in televisionwatching. This onset is not accidental. At 4 months of age, the social smile emerges: infants start to laugh when they see or hear things they like. Atthe same time, their ability to detect cues in their environmenthas matured as has their ability to locate a sound in space byturning their head or eyes in the direction of the sound .In the first year of life, the orienting reflex mainly predetermines attention.

Infants are typically interested in suddenand novel sounds and movements along with bright colors. Inthe second year, attention becomes somewhat less influencedby novelty and more influenced by relevant and interestingcontent. By 18 months of age, their first problem-solving skills (means-end behavior) emerge, and with this, a preference forsolving simple puzzles and playing simple games alsoemerges. Infants and toddlers have limited language skills, although they begin to experience a word spurt of nearly 20new words per week around 18 months of age. At this point, they enjoy verbally labeling familiarobjects (boat, house, train) and creatures (dog, cat) that theyrecognize when presented with a storybook or audio visual media.

Media use for this age group is a rather controversial topic.Beginning with the introduction of Baby Einstein in the late1990s, media for the infant and toddler demographic havebecome an enormous international industry .And yet, many health care practitioners argue that we do not yet know enough about the (potentially negative) influence of media on this audience (e.g.,Christakis, 2009). These and other similar concerns have brought about an emergence of publicpolicy initiatives. For example, in the United States, the American Academy of Pediatrics discourages screen media exposurein the first 2 years of life (Council on Communications and Media, 2011), while France has taken the step of banningprogramming directed at infants. Yet, despite these efforts,recent data show that the average child under 1 year of age isexposed to nearly 1 h of television daily, and by 2 years of age,these rates are closer to 2 h of daily exposure.

To put this in a historical context, in 1971, the average age at which childrenbegan watching television was about 4 years old. As discussed, today it is 4 months (Christakis, 2009).Despite the relatively contentious debate on whether or notmedia is appropriate for this young audience, we do know thatinfants and toddlers exhibit very distinct media preferences. Forexample, this young audience prefers content that relies heavilyon music and song. We also know that content with salient formal features is best able to hold children’s attention. Thispreference wanes slightly as children become older toddlers (around 18 months old) and is replaced by interest in simple narratives. Given their limited cognitive and verbalskills, content that relies on slow pacing, familiar contexts, incorporates significant repetition, provides opportunities forverbal labeling, and incorporates simple characters is alsoappealing for this group.

**1.5.2 Early Childhood**

Early childhood covers children between 3 and 6 years old. During this period of time, children typically demonstrateegocentrism (i.e., an inability to separate their own perspectivefrom the perspectives of others) as well as perceptual boundedness (i.e., tendency to focus on immediately perceptibleattributes of an object, whereas other types of information areignored) and centration (i.e., tendency to focus on an individual, striking feature of an object, to exclude other less tricking information) (Bukatko, 2007). Early childhood ischaracterized by an inability to distinguish between fantasy and realities. Although as of 18 months, most children are ableto distinguish fantasy from reality in their own imaginary play, they are less able to do so when they need to judge the realitystatus of objects and stimuli in their environment, includingthe media.

Early childhood is also characterized by rapid emotionaldevelopments (Thomas, 2005). Newborns can produce facialexpressions associated with primary emotions such as joy, sadness, and anger. However, at the onset of early childhood, children start to experience so-called conscious emotions, suchas envy, guilt, and embarrassment. Conscious emotions differfrom primary emotions in that they require perspective-takingskills (e.g., the notion that someone is disappointed with you).By age 4 years, children are able to understand these morecomplex conscious emotions in others. However, their detection of emotions is still perceptually bounded. Children in thisage group are only able to recognize emotions based onexternal cues (e.g., crying; sad face) and not based on lessperceptual cues.

Today’s early childhood media market is one of the mostcompetitive and crowded markets across the media landscape.Media use reports indicate that children between 3 and 6 yearsold spend nearly 3 h per day using media (Common SenseMedia, 2011). Younger children (3 years) spend the majorityof their media time using television. As children get older (4–6 years), we see that they also begin to add video games totheir daily media diet (approximately 30 min per day).

Unsurprisingly, nearly no time is spent engaging in socialmedia use or other forms of interactivemedia use (e.g., Internetuse, text messaging) during early childhood.During early childhood, attention to media content increases dramatically. Thisreflects the rapid increase in children’s information processingskills and their improved vocabulary. However, their cognitiveand emotional capacity is still limited. Children in earlychildhood lack experience and semantic knowledge (e.g., grassis green; a chair has four legs), which can make processing newmedia content quite challenging. As a result, they typicallyprefer media content that relies on slow pacing, incorporatesrepetition, and contains simple characters in familiar contexts.These preferences may change at the end of early childhoodwhen children, especially boys, become more attracted to fast-paced media, more complicated characters, and adventurous contexts. The perceptual boundedness that is characteristic of earlychildhood also induces children to judge media characters onperceptually salient features, such as their appearance andperceptually visible motives and emotions. And, because of their in ability to distinguish fantasy from reality in media, fantasy characters are just as attractive and engaging as real-life characters. By the time they are 3 years old, childrenstart to make statements indicating attachment to televisionpersonalities. But they can be just as much or even moreattracted to animals or cartoon characters than to real-lifecharacters. Children in this age group are also very impressed by ‘special effects’ such as a character vanishing

Into a puff of smoke.

**1.6 .Media benefits and child development**

There are many negative messages about media, and how viewing and interacting with it might harm children. But children can also benefit from media. The benefits depend on how old children are, and what kind and quality of media they’re using.

**Young children**

If your child is aged under two years, using media with an adult can help keep him connected with people he loves – for example,  a fly-in fly-out parent. But if your child is aged under 18 months, he should use media only for video-chatting. If he’s aged 18 months to 2 years, he should use media only when you or another adult can use it with him.

**Older children and teenagers**

If your child is older, carefully chosen TV programs, movies, apps and computer games can offer many developmental and social benefits. These can have  more value through middle and later childhood. Also, [social media](https://raisingchildren.net.au/pre-teens/entertainment-technology/digital-life/social-media) can have social benefits for teenagers.

**How media can benefit children**

**Younger children** can get developmental benefits from using media. These benefits include:

* **literacy skills** – for example, children can start learning letters of the alphabet through programs like *Play School* and *Sesame Street*, or through educational computer games and apps like Teach Your Monster to Read
* **numeracy skills** – for example, children can start learning to count or identify shapes through programs like *Sesame Street* and *Play School*
* **Social skills** – for example, children can start learning how to cooperate by watching TV programs and using computer games and apps that show helping behavior. Examples include apps like Toca’s Tea Party and websites like [ABC for Kids](https://raisingchildren.net.au/_media/external-links/k/kids-abc).

For **older children**, the developmental benefits of media include:

* **intellectual benefits** – for example, children can develop problem-solving and critical thinking skills by playing computer games designed to develop these skills, or they can develop ethical thinking by comparing family values with values in fiction or documentaries
* **educational benefits** – for example, TV shows and movies based on books can encourage children to read
* **social benefits** – for example, joining online clubs can help children practice using social media safely, or playing computer games with friends and family can help them practice turn-taking and cooperation
* **Creative benefits** – for example, children can develop skills in imagination, art, video-modelling, music and media by using software and apps like My Story or Bubl Draw, or they might be inspired to make something by a TV show.

For **teenagers** the benefits of media include opportunities to develop or explore:

* reading, writing and critical thinking skills – for example, by using [blogs](javascript:void(0)) and [chat rooms](javascript:void(0))
* social connections – for example, by connecting with others on social media
* political and social awareness – for example, by watching news, current affairs and documentaries, or reading about issues online
* values – for example, by observing role models in the media
* new creative forms – for example, by learning to play the guitar using YouTube videos and a guitar tabs app
* support options – for example, by using peer-based or professional online counselling
* Forms of self-expression – for example, by contributing to debates on websites or creating content like blogs or short videos.

Children can be media creators, not just consumers. Making their own movies, taking photographs and doing other creative online activities can help them develop critical thinking, social, technical and artistic skills. This can also make them aware that their opinions and decisions matter.

**1.6.1 Helping your child get media benefits**

You can help your child get media benefits by being involved with your child and her use of media – for example, you can visit quality websites together, encourage your child to use educational software, and watch TV shows that offer extra learning opportunities.

When you’re watching TV and movies together, try discussing how the plot works, how your child feels about what’s happening, and what would happen in real life if you behaved badly or illegally.

You can also talk about how the people are actors, and how special effects make things seem to happen.

News programs can upset or worry children. You might choose not to share news programs with children under 8 years. For children aged 9-12 years, it’s a good idea to watch news together so you can talk to your child about news that he might find disturbing.

**Deciding what media is ‘good’**

Deciding whether a TV program, movie, computer game, app or website is good quality can be tricky.

**Other parents** and your child’s teachers can also be a useful source of information about quality media that’s good for children.

Content with **a good story that doesn’t depend on violence** for its entertainment value is always worth looking for.

You can also look for TV programs and movies that **give your child the chance to find out about new things** like places, animals, people, ideas, issues and cultures she couldn’t see or connect with otherwise. These can inspire her to try new activities and think about new ideas. This can be done through playing, creating something or finding out more about a topic.

Movies or TV programs with **good role models** can also positively influence your child. Good role models are people or characters who are doing things or behaving in ways that you wouldn’t mind your child copying, or that you’d like your child to copy.

Some movies and TV programs can expose your child to **diversity**, especially ethnic diversity, which is a good thing.

Software, apps and websites that get children drawing pictures or making up stories or rhymes can **foster creativity**. For preschoolers especially, this can also be a way for them to express ideas and feelings.

Computer games that give young children simple choices – choosing a character or finding a background for a picture – can also help your child make creative decisions. The more interactive computer games and websites are, the better they’ll be at helping your child learn more effectively.

[Avatars](javascript:void(0)) and games can give older children and teenagers the opportunity to **develop identity** and empathy by letting them ‘try on’ different physical and psychological characteristics.

[Screen time](https://raisingchildren.net.au/pre-teens/entertainment-technology/screen-time-healthy-screen-use/screen-time) is the time you spend on screen-based activities each day. Current guidelines recommend limiting children’s screen time and making sure it doesn’t take the place of enough sleep and other activities like physically active play, creative play and socializing.

**1.7 Children and Advertising**

**What is advertising?**

Advertising is a form of communication that promotes something—often a product or service that’s being sold.

Advertising is usually a child’s first introduction to being a consumer. Ads provide great information about products and help raise awareness of available choices, but it may be difficult for some children, especially younger children, to tell the difference between an ad and the other information around it. The best way for parents and other adults to teach children about advertising is to experience it with them. Spend time together looking at magazines, watching television, playing online, and walking through a store … and then talk with your children about what you’ve all seen.

Children’s Understanding of Purpose of Advertising All television commercials have the same primary goal that is, to influence the attitudes and behaviors of the viewers. Children due to their limited cognitive skills, unlike adults who understand that commercials aim to persuade people to buy the products that are advertised, do not perceive the aim of commercials which is “to sell” (Kunkel et al., 2004).

According to most researchers, in order for children to develop a critical and questioning attitude towards ads they must be able to understand the intention of the commercials (Bjurström, 1994).

Results of most studies demonstrated that most children develop the understanding of the intentions of commercials by the ages of seven to eight. Before these ages, children do not understand the ads or understand only a little (Bijmolt et al., 1988; Blosser and Roberts, 1985; Chan, 2000; Donohue, Meyer, Henke, 1978; Robertson and Rossiter, 1974; Oates et al., 2003; Vaccaro and Slanemyr, 1998). Butter et al., (1981) informed that children at the ages of four to five do not comprehend the reason why commercials are television. Young children, before seven to eight years old, view ads either as entertainment (e.g., “commercials are funny”) or as a form of unbiased information (e.g., “commercials tell you about things you can buy”) while at the ages of 7 to 8 they begin to comprehend the persuasive intention of commercials and indicate that commercial try to influence people to buy the advertised products.

**1.7.1. HELPING A CHILD TO THINK ABOUT ADVERTISING**

**TYPES OF ADVERTISING**

Advertising is all around us, from food packaging to TV programs to online websites. Because it can appear in so many different forms, it can be difficult for children to recognize when something is in fact an ad. The following are some of the most common types of advertising:

**A.TELEVISION**

TV is one of the main ways that companies advertise to children. It’s no surprise, then, that TV commercials are often children’s first experience with advertising. To help children distinguish between a program and a commercial, stations will often announce programming breaks, i.e., “After these messages we’ll be right back.”

**B.PRINT**

Children’s magazines are filled with ads for video games, toys, movies, cereals, snacks the list goes on. To help your child learn to tell the difference between ads and articles, encourage them to think about the following questions:

• Are advertisements labeled?

• Does this page tell you about a product?

• Is this page different in style and content from the rest of the magazine?

**C.ONLINE ADVERTISING**

The Internet is an interactive space. While on the web, children can play online games, chat with friends, enter a contest, etc. It stands to reason, then, that online advertising is also interactive. Banner ads are displayed on some of children’s favorite web pages, and can feature text, animated images, audio and video. Pop-up ads, which appear when you open a new browser window, are designed to drive traffic to certain websites or capture your email address. Bloggers including children may share their views on activities and products.Spend some time with your children online.

What sites do they visit?

What activities do they take part in?

Are these sites appropriate for your child’s level of development?

Do bloggers disclose if they get paid for talking about products?

And other advertising are ONLINE PRIVACY, PRODUCT PACKAGING, MOBILE MARKETING, APPS, PRODUCT PLACEMENT, PUFFERY, SWEEPSTAKES, and FOOD MARKETING

**1.7.2 Negative Impact of Advertisements on Children:**

Although there are some positive effects of advertising on children, the fact is that advertising can also have many negative effects on young minds, especially if parents are not careful and do not teach their children that money is important. In many cases, the messages in the ads are misinterpreted and it results in children having the wrong beliefs about a large number of issues. Advertising influences their minds, creating a need for them to own the product they see. Flashy ads on TV, magazines, the Internet and other forms of media only generate impulse buying.

Parents who are unable to deal with increasing demands or temper tantrums have a tendency to give in to their children’s demands. This result in children getting used to the kind of lifestyle that is shown on television and other media forms. This creates the wrong impression on young minds that they will not be able to live a life that does not come with certain material things. Thus, it is certainly true that the power of advertising effects on children is one that cannot be ignored easily.

**Some of the negative effects of advertising on children include:**

* Advertisements encourage children to their parents to buy the products they see in commercials, regardless of whether they need them or not and whether they are useful or not. Many throw tantrums and use different tactics to force the adults to get them what they want.
* As mentioned earlier, children are likely to misinterpret the messages that are conveyed in commercials. Studies have shown that they also tend to focus on the negatives rather than the positive side of the messages.
* Flashy commercials and ads on TV, the Internet, magazines, etc. create a tendency for impulse shopping.
* Children tend to get attracted to high-end brands that advertise clothes, shoes and other products and disregard lesser-known ones that are not seen in ads.
* Many advertisements seen today involve dangerous stunts which children try to imitate as they do not understand the statutory warnings that come with the ads.
* With so many attractive commercials, marketing junk foods and unhealthy beverages, children’s health has been adversely affected. These ads encourage unhealthy eating, which in turn has led to an increase in obesity, diabetes, heart problems and other conditions in young children.
* Child advertising may impact self-esteem, making them feel inferior to other children if they do not have the latest products that are seen in commercials.
* Sexually suggestive ads are everywhere these days. This makes children objectify women and also allows them to think that looking or acting a certain way is the only way to make friends or be popular. These ads also make young girl’s body conscious and in many cases, can cause eating disorders like bulimia, anorexia, etc.
* With more commercials targeting children, reality and fantasy do not seem too different. This can cause a lot of confusion among children, distorting their sense of reality.

**What Can Parents Do?**

The first thing recommended by experts is reducing screen time. This way, parents can reduce the number of messages that young children are exposed to. Parents are also urged to keep track of what their children see when they are given time to watch television. Also, parents should not simply refuse when their children ask for something. They should ask them why they want that particular product and where they saw or heard about it. If they answer that they saw it on television or on the Internet, they should be told that the advertisers want them to want it and that they are trying to sell the product to them. This can lead to further discussion about advertising and how they work on the masses. The advertising effect on children can be limited. As mentioned, young children often believe what they are told by advertisements and do not have the ability to understand the difference between the TV show they are watching and advertising messages.

It is important for parents to limit the amount of commercial TV that their children watch. If they have a favorite TV show, a great way to ensure that they are not exposed to the commercials in between is to record it for them. They can also buy DVDs of those favorite shows, thus limiting their TV screen time and exposure to advertisements.

For children who are at school-age, it is important for parents to talk to them about the ads. Children should be encouraged to think about what all these advertisements are trying to say. The focus should be put on ads that children see most often, whether it is when they watch television or ads in brochures and magazines. There are two questions that parents should ask their children and that can get them thinking: What is being advertised? Parents should help their children identify the product that is being advertised and most importantly, the product information. For example – what is the product? What is its purpose?

What are the strategies advertisers are using to sell the product? Parents should help their children figure out how the advertisement is making the product more attractive. This helps in making the point that not everything that is seen on TV can be believed, especially when it comes to ads. It will help children develop a questioning attitude towards the claims that advertisers make. As mentioned earlier, with people becoming more open sexually, more and more advertisements are using sexually suggestive strategies to attract buyers. Children see these images on their TV screens, computers and magazines and it will undoubtedly have an effect on their young minds. It is important for parents to not only monitor their children’s screen time, but talk to them about what they see as well. Children do not know the difference between an ad on TV and reality, so it is crucial that they understand that what they see on TV is not really how people act (19). They have a tendency to mimic what they see and that is why parents need to be careful of what they are exposed to.

The goal should be to help children figure out the difference between the product information and the strategies used by advertisers to sell the product. To make sure that children process ads critically, they need to learn how to discriminate between content that is commercial and non-commercial and identify the persuasive intent of the advertisement. With so many advertisements popping up on TV and computer screens, magazines, billboards, etc., it is important to ensure that the images that children are being exposed to are monitored. Also, it should be reiterated that screen time should be kept to a minimum at all costs. There are many things that parents can do to ensure that the various marketing strategies used by advertisers do not have a negative effect on their children. The best thing that they can do is encourage children to go out and play, read, play indoor and outdoor games and socialize. Once they realize that they do not have to be glued to the TV to have a good time, they will spend less screen time and be less exposed to ads.

**UNIT TWO**

**2. CONTENT & INFLUENCE OF MEDIA ON ATTITUDES ABOUT SOCIAL GROUPS**

**2.1Effects of Media Racial and Gender Stereotyping**

**2.1.1. The Impact of Portrayals of Race**

Research empirically investigating the influence of media exposure on issues of race and ethnicity has long documented that media use meaningfully impacts the cognitions, emotions, and behaviors of audience members. Certainly, media are only one among a number of factors that contribute to perceptions regarding (and actions toward) one’s own and other racial/ethnic groups. However, theory and empirical evidence consistently demonstrate that the manner in which racial/ethnic groups are characterized in the media can harm or benefit different groups, depending on the nature of these depictions (alongside other social and psychological determinants). Consequently, it is both practically and theoretically important to both identify how and how often different groups are portrayed across the media landscape as well as to assess the ways in which exposure to this content influences media audiences.

Researchers who have documented racial and gender biases in media depictions of reality have long speculated about the implications for children’s feelings, beliefs, and attitudes. Content analyses of TV and magazine content in the United States continue to document underrepresentation and stereotyped representations of females and non-Anglo ethnic/racial groups. At the same time, surveys of non-Anglo children in the United States indicate a strong desire to see representations of their own group and an awareness of racial bias in news and entertainment depictions .

**2.1, 2. Stereotypical Portrayals of Women and Men**

**Media and gender**

There is a growing recognition in the social sciences, due in large part to the intellectual contributions of feminist theories, that gender differences (in contrast to biological differences in the reproduction organs) are socially constructed, learned sets of behaviors and perceptions. For example, while it is a biological fact that women can give birth, it is a social construction that women should be expected to be the dominant caregiver of children, and therefore to be nurturing, compassionate, and more communicative. Thus, learning the characteristics and behaviors “accepted” as masculine and feminine in a given society is a process that starts at birth.The role of media in such a construction of gender schemas and identities is particularly important, as much of media content presents characters that can be assigned to one of the two gender categories, be they humans, cartoon figures, animals, or science fiction characters.

The many studies that have examined media portrayals of females and males of all ages demonstrate that programs differentiate between the two quite systematically. On the whole, men are identified with “doing” in the public sphere and associated with such characteristics as activity, rationality, forcefulness, independence, ambitiousness, competitiveness, achievement, and higher social status. Women are associated with “being” in the private sphere and are characterized, generally, as passive, emotional, care-giving, childish, sexy, subordinate to men, and of lower social status. Popular media, as a general rule (but there are many exceptions, and these are growing gradually in number and scope), often define men by their action, and, in contrast, women by their appearance. Women’s external appearance continues to be presented as the most central characteristic of her essence from birth on. This emphasis is most commonly expressed through glorification of a particular beauty model, referred to as the beauty myth, that is highly Anglo-European in orientation and practically unattainable. External appearance is directly related to media’s over-emphasis on the portrayal of women as sexual beings whose central function is relegated to being objects of male sexual desire and pursuit. Thus, such dominant media messages continue to promote restrictive ideologies of femininity, glorify heterosexual romance as a central goal for girls, and encourage male domination in relationships. They stress the importance of beautification through consumption, while dismissing the validity of girls’ own sexual feelings and desires apart from masculine desire; and say nothing about all the many other aspects of women’s essence, capabilities, and potential contributions.

Furthermore, children’s popular television programs with global reach offer a significant under-representation of female main characters and under-development of female characters in general. Males – both young and old – are the main heroes of children’s programs. They succeed in overcoming everyday problems, deal successfully with all sorts of dangers, and have lots of adventures. Even non-gendered imaginary characters – such as creatures and animals – are considered “naturally” to be male, unless they are specifically marked as female through processes of sexualizing their appearance (e.g., hair ribbons, long eyelashes, colored lips, short skirts).

In this way, female characters continue to symbolize a deviation from the dominant-male norms and remain the second sex in the classical, inferior sense criticized in feminist discourse.

Most female characters in media texts aimed at children are there to be saved and protected by the males or provide the background for the adventure. Above all, their position is defined by their meaning for male heroes. Indeed, even educational pro-grams were found to have an under-representation of females as well as to employ traditional stereotypes. Certain symbols, such as horses, dolphins jumping in front of a sunset, bunnies, and flowers appear in these programs as they are gendered in our societies, and reinforced by market forces as “girlish.” Other areas, such as technology, action, or fighting, are almost always framed as male themes and pre-interpreted as masculine. Furthermore, advertising for children applies gendered clichés excessively in presenting goods for consumption by signaling gender intention via glittery or pink and pastel colors for girls and action-packed dark hues for boys.

Following this brief introduction, we turn now to consider whether such portrayals shape children’s perceptions of femininity, masculinity, and gender roles, and whether they contribute to young people’s emerging self-image and perceptions of sexual identity.

In general, media continue to present both women and men in stereotyped ways that limit our perceptions of human possibilities. Typically men are portrayed as active, adventurous, powerful, sexually aggressive and largely uninvolved in human relationships. Just as' consistent with cultural views of gender are depictions of women as sex objects who are usually young, thin beautiful, passive, dependent, and often incompetent and dumb. Female characters devote their primary energies to improving their appearances and taking care ofhomes and people. Because media pervade our lives, the ways they misrepresent genders may distort how we see ourselves and what we perceive as normal and desirable for men and women.

**Unit Three**

**3. INFLUENCE & EFFECTS OF MEDIA USE ON SELF, OWN CHOICES, OWN BEHAVIOR**

**3.1. Television Viewing and School Readiness**

School readiness refers to children’s abilities to engage in and benefit from formal schooling. This concept encompasses early academic skills as well as social and emotional development.The majority of research on media and school readiness has focused on the role of television in early childhood. More than 1000 studies, for example, have examined the influence of the television programSesame Street on children’s school readiness. The earliest of these studies was a pair of experiments testing the effectiveness of the first two seasons of the program. Results indicated that Sesame Streetviewers showed significant gains across a host of school readiness skills

**3.2. Television Viewing and Academic Achievement**

**Core Subject Knowledge**

Core subject knowledge refers to a broad array of information and skills that children are introduced to during formal schooling including literacy, mathematics, and science. The majority of research looking at the relationships between media use and core subject knowledge has focused on the role of television in middle childhood.

**3.3. Media Violence**

**Violence and aggressive behavior**

The question of violence in the media and its influence on children is probably the most widely researched domain of media influence. Studies over a span of three decades, beginning in the early 1970s, have shown that significant exposure to media violence increases the risk of aggressive behavior in certain children and adolescents. Other effects on children include desensitization to others' pain and suffering and the tendency to be fearful of the world around them, viewing it as a dangerous place. Research has also shown that news reports of violent crimes can traumatize young children**.**

**3.4. Television Viewing & Aggression**

When it comes to the effects of media on children, the influence of violent media on aggressive behavior has received the most research attention. Hundreds of correlational, experimental, and longitudinal studies have evaluated whether and how violent media exposure is related to subsequent aggression. These studies have typically looked at the influence of violent media exposure in middle childhood and adolescence (e.g., Gentileet al., 2004; Huesmann et al., 2003), although some studies have also investigated violent media effects in early childhood (e.g., Christakis and Zimmerman, 2007). The majority of studies have evaluated the influence of violent television content (e.g. Bushman and Huesmann, 2001) on aggression, although in recent years the influence of violent interactive media (e.g., video games and computer games) has received increased research attention (e.g., an derson and Dill, 2000).

While some studies have suggested no relationship between violent media exposure and aggression (e.g., Ferguson et al., 2011), most demonstrate that watching violent television or playing violent video games is positively related to aggressive behavior and may even lead to aggressive behavior later in life(e.g., Huesmann et al., 2003). Meta-analytic research supports this argument. Paik and Comstock (1994) conducted a meta-analysis to ascertain the effect size associated with violent movies and violent television programs, where as Anderson and Bushman (2001) were interested in the effect size associated with violent video games. Both analyses suggested small to moderate effects (i.e., r¼0.31 and 0.19, respectively) of violent media on aggressive behavior. Moderator analyses also indicate that the effects of media violence are stronger for boys than for girls and stronger for younger than for older children (Paik andComstock, 1994).

Several theories have been used to explain how violent media content can increase aggressive behavior. Two of the most widely used theories are social cognitive theory (Bandura, 2001) and desensitization theory. According to social cognitive theory, children learn behavior not only through their own experiences but also by observing others. When children see others behave in a certain way and subsequently being punished or rewarded for this behavior, children learn which behaviors are socially acceptable and which ones are not. These social cognitions then help guide the actual behavior of children. Desensitization theory, on the other hand, states that repeated exposure to media violence leads to a gradual habituation in response to displays of aggression. Over time and with increased exposure to media violence, children become more accustomed to aggressive behavior, which subsequently impacts moral judgments and behaviors. In light of the large body of research on violent media exposure and aggression, most media researchers today accept that violent media exposure plays a role in children’s aggressive tendencies. Many of these researchers also argue that both social cognitive theory or desensitization theory are fair explanations for this relationship. Yet, these same researchers acknowledge that there remain many unanswered questions. For example, we know little about which children are most susceptible to violent media exposure and also how family or peer environments may moderate this relationship. Research that seeks to identify who is most susceptible to the influence of violent media is a critical area for future research.

**3.5. Media Effects on Body Image**

**What is body image?**

Body imagedescribes one’s perceptions, feelings, and behaviors toward one’s body (Cash, 2004). our values and attitudes toward our bodies are shaped by the cultural group and society in which we live, our communities, our families, and our own individual, psychobiological makeup. These factors also are essential to how we use, shape, and are shaped by media. Media are onlyone of many sets of forces believed to impact our body image, but they are an increasingly powerful one.

Social psychologists have used various theories to demonstrate how those closest to us, such as our family members, mentors, and peers, as well as those we observe from afar in the media, can shape our body image anthropologists remind us, too, that aspects of our individual, social, and cultural identities (e.g., sex, gender, age, class, race, ethnicity, and sexual orientation) also can influence the way we perceive and manage our bodies (Paquette &Raine, 2004). Eating disorders, for example, are culture-bound syn-dromes (anderson-Fye, 2012a); they are intimately tied to how different cultures define social roles and appearance ideals and the extent to which those cultures value self-control and independence as key to success.

**Table 1. Social psychological theories relating to the socializing influence of media.**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Theory** | **Theorist** | **Argument** |
| **social Comparison**  **theory** | Festinger (1954) | People have an innate motivation to evaluate themselves through comparison with others. Upward social comparison (to those deemed superior or more  attractive, for example) can motivate people to improve themselves. |
| **social Cognitive**  **(Learning) theory** | bandura (1986; 2001) | People learn behavior and values by modeling others, noting what is deemed socially acceptable. this can happen by observing people in the real world or through mass media (and now, increasingly, through social media). |
| **Cultivation theory** | gerbner et al. (1994) | Repeated exposure to consistent themes (in television) can lead viewers to internalize those perspectives and accept media portrayals as representations of reality. |
| **super-Peer theory** | strasburger (2007);  Huang et al. (2014) | The media can act like a powerful peer, making certain (risky) behaviors and aesthetics seem normative. |

**Why does body image matter?**

Body image can have serious implications for people’s emotional and physical well-being, and it’s a crucial part of adolescent development (Markey, 2010). Research links body dissatisfaction with critical mental health problems, including eating disorders, low self-esteem, and depression (American Psychological association, 2007; grabe, Ward, & Hyde, 2008)

**When does body image develop?**

Young children’s body image begins to develop early along-side the growth of their physical, cognitive, and social abilities; even infants have a general sense of their bodies (slaughter &brownell, 2013). In their second and third years of life, children begin to develop awareness of their body size even further when carrying out tasks such as pulling out a chair from a table to sit down or knowing that a doll’s outfit will not fit them.almost as soon as preschoolers complete the developmental task of mastering a concept of their bodies, they begin to express concerns about their bodies, taking their cues from peers, adults, and media around them.

**The Role of “Traditional Media” in Children’s and Teens’ Development of Body Image**

Research on media and body image to date has focused heavily on “traditional” media, such as television, movies, music (videos/lyrics), magazines, and advertising.

For girls and women, media messages commonly emphasize the value of being young and beautiful — and, especially, thin. Female characters in family films, on prime-time television, and on children’s TV shows are nearly twice as likely to have uncharacteristically small waists as compared to their male counterparts (smith et al., 2013). Female characters with heavier body types are underrepresented in TV programming. Those who are depicted are more likely to be older and less likely to be portrayed in romantic situations than thin characters .

For boys and men, current mainstream media idealizes buff and toned bodies, placing great emphasis on fitness and muscularity. In the past four decades, representations of men in the media have become increasingly muscular and unrealistic. Today’s toy action figures, which are commonly marketed toward and played with by young boys, are far more muscular and superhuman than those sold in the 1970s. Their measurements now exceed even those of the biggest bodybuilders (Pope, olivardia, gruber, &borowiecki, 1999). The muscle size of male models in Play girl centerfolds also has increased in this same period of time (Leit, Pope, & gray, 2001). These studies reveal that body ideals for boys too have become increasingly unattainable over the years, emphasizing muscularity more ubiquitously and to boys of younger and younger ages.

**3.6. Media, Sex, and Sexuality**

Most children are exposed to sexual behavior for the first time through the media, often on television or on the internet, years before they attain the physical, social, and emotional maturity needed to be sexually active. They also lack opportunities to examine media images in comparison to real life around them, as most sexual behaviors are conducted intimately, in the private sphere. In addition, the dominant socializing agents of family, school, or religious institutions generally repress activity or discussion of sex.

In contrast, sex and sexuality are central themes of the content of many media products, either explicitly (in many websites and films broadcast on movie channels, off prime time, or on rented videos rated in many societies as films for adults only) or implicitly in a wide variety of programs of all genres. The content addressed or alluded to includes not only erotic behavior, but also references to sex-roles, intimacy and care, marriage, and family life. Analyses of sex-oriented themes on television suggest that the content and images divert greatly from reality. For example, most televised sex takes place outside normal marital or otherwise committed relation-ships, or involves some kind of financial engagement. Often sexual behaviors are entangled with violence, and intimate relationships on the whole are not necessarily presented as part of a warm emotional relationship. Sex is often portrayed as something that happens “spontaneously,” in the heat of the moment, without much planning. Attractive actors and actresses are depicted as being highly sexually active, but also highly sexually irresponsible. The potential negative implications of sexual relationships, such as undesired pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases, or emotional distress, are hardly ever presented. However, more than anything else, the argument has been made that television in particular offers young viewers heavy exposure to conversations about sexual desires and practices. Indeed, many television programs seem to be preoccupied with discussion of sex, thus stimulating young people’s naturally developing interest in it even more, and priming them to over-emphasize its centrality in human life.

Children’s media exposure to representations of sex has been blamed for a host of social ills, including the early onset of sexual activity and promiscuity, and the spread of teenage pregnancies and infectious diseases. More specifically, media productions are severely criticized on three counts: First, for cultivating a perspective that see children as sexual, and thereby putting them at risk of the ill intentions of sexual predators; second, for their effect on over-sexualizing young girls’ emerging self-perception and their understanding of society’s expectations of them and; third, for promoting self-objectification, particularly of girls. In short, media saturation with sexuality is accused of undermining children’s healthy sexual development and wellbeing.

A significant accumulation of evidence supports these claims. First, there is little doubt that children growing up in many societies around the world have access to a great deal of sexually oriented media content. The evidence of such exposure comes from a variety of sources, including commercial rating systems, as well as parents’ and children’s self-reports. Here, the same mechanisms explored in relation to media violence can be applied. In this regard, researchers have argued that media portrayals may affect behavior by inducing learning of new behaviors, reinforcing old ones, and/or converting existing behaviors to new ones. These kinds of changes can happen in various ways: a change in expectations regarding possible consequences of sexual behavior; identification with characters; removal of behavioral inhibitions; and assigning particular meaning to specific behavioral cues. As a result, it makes sense to assume that intensified exposure to sexual content may increase the chances of similar behavior, through imitation and/or sexual arousal and/or removal of inhibitions.

Second, several studies conducted in the USA that investigated possible correlations between viewing sexual programs and sexual practices found some evidence in support of effects. For example, the amount of viewing of sex on television and of adult-rated sexual content was related to the initial age of sexual activity (i.e., heavy viewers start being active sexually at a younger age); and intentional exposure to adult-rated violent sexual content by boys was correlated with a tendency to harass girls. Studies regarding exposure to sexual content and various risk behaviors (e.g., unprotected sex resulting in pregnancy or sexually transmitted diseases) conducted in the USA and Europe produced conflicting evidence.

Here, too, the direction of the sexual behavior–media exposure relationship is not clear-cut. Are adolescents who are sexually active attracted more to sex in the media or are those watching more sex in the media more sexually active? As with violence, there is agreement that both directions are in operation: as youth mature physically, sexual content on television becomes more relevant they seek out such content more actively, devote more time and attention to watching it, and thus become more influenced by it. Adolescents who were more sexually active seem to seek more sexually explicit media content, and in turn, media exposure seems to stimulate new sexual experiences.

**3.7. Media, Alcohol, and Smoking**

There has been a growing concern over the effects of media on children and young people’s developing habits of alcohol drinking and cigarette smoking. Young people’s substance abuse has become a matter of great concern in societies all over the world due to the variety of health consequences resulting from addiction. In addition, alcohol and drug abuse are associated with car accidents, aggressive behavior, sexual crimes, and domestic violence. In contrast to unhealthy foods, promotion of alcohol and cigarettes in children’s media spaces is restricted in many places, but is nevertheless pervasive in the general popular media consumed by children. Advertising messages are often associated with growing up and being “in,” as well as with providing a wide range of physical and psychological pleasures, including within intimate relationships.

Studies that tackled the complexities of the many issues involved here present evidence that exposure to messages promoting alcohol and cigarettes can encourage non-drinkers and non-smokers to hold positive attitudes toward these behaviors and to express an interest in drinking and smoking when they grow up. Young media consumers seem to be impressed by the positive advertising message that associates alcohol and smoking with “the good life,” adulthood, and independence. Higher exposure to advertising for alcohol drinking and cigarette smoking was also found to be associated with earlier initiation of these behaviors. Youth who are already drinking and smoking were influenced to change preferences to particular alcohol and cigarette brands.

There is also an indication that advertising is particularly effective when other socializing agents and social pressures – such as parents, educators, religious authorities, peers – are non-committal, or even users them-selves, and specifically at the beginning of the adolescent years. Here, too, gender plays a role, as males seem to be more prone to the influence of messages about drinking embedded in movies than females. Some scholars explain this finding by claiming that drinking is associated more with masculinity, and more specifically, getting drunk and losing control of one’s behavior is specifically perceived as non-feminine and inappropriate for young women.

In addition, as in earlier cases, we need to consider the socio-cultural context in which children are growing as well as their specific media ecology, as they learn to associate substance abuse with societal values and expectations. For example, aware-ness of the health hazards of smoking has gradually turned it into a much less glorified and popular behavior in certain societies, while it is still highly pervasive in others. Similarly, alcohol drinking is more popular among certain populations than others. In a related issue, prescription drugs are very aggressively promoted in the US media while being entirely absent in other societies. Thus, countries differ in expressing concerns related to media effects on unhealthy behaviors.

**3.8. Media, Obesity, and Eating Disorders**

Correlations found between media use and obesity is a relatively new and growing concern. This field of research has been supported by medical literature document-ing the increased prevalence of childhood obesity worldwide, its many physical and emotional health risks, and the national costs involved in its treatment. Children’s extraordinary weight gain is determined by a host of biological, social, and environ-mental factors. Media consumption, too, has been found to be among the contributing factors. For example, being overweight has been found to be associated with heavy television viewing (i.e., viewing more than 4‒5 hours per day).

Numerous explanations have been offered for how media use can be a contributing factor to being overweight.

One commonsense explanation is that most media-related engagements involve little physical activity and thus lead to weight gain. Two related popular claims offered are, first, media consumption displaces other physical activities (e.g., involvement in sports and outdoor play); and, second, limited physical activity as well as extensive media use can disrupt healthy sleeping patterns (e.g., over-stimulation before bedtime; less sleep due to media-related activities late into the night; sleep interrupted by receiving phone calls and texts). While these findings may hold true for all kinds of children, in the USA they were found to be the case for generally less active children – particularly girls and several minority groups. Programs that succeeded in reducing children’s viewing time, among other interventions, were successful in reducing body weight in children. While the accumulated evidence is quite convincing, it is also possible that a vicious circle is in operation here: overweight children prefer non-demanding physical activities, such as viewing television (and perhaps also eating during viewing), and thus television viewing reinforces their weight problems. A different argument suggests that media and food consumption often go hand-in-hand – through habits of eating mindlessly while engaging in media activities.

Examples in support of this explanation include: familial and social habits of eating in front of the television, in the movie theaters, and in front of the computer. In addition, viewers may simply be encouraged to overeat given the excessive food-related stimulants in commercials and in general media content.

While research in support of these commonsense explanations is still too limited to establish clear relationships that strongly support the claims, evidence seems to be increasing in recent years. This evidence has inspired several policy directives, including the following two American Academy of Pediatrics recommendations (AAP, 2003): Media use for the youngest children should not begin before the age of two; and, parents should limit the screen time of children older than two years to no more than two hours per day.

In addition to these two commonsense explanations and policy derivatives, the most studied hypothesis argues that it is advertising of unhealthy food that most impacts weight gain; particularly items containing high levels of sugar (e.g., sweets, cereals, soft drinks) and the unhealthy fats contained in many fast food meals. Advertising, and consuming, such unhealthy products constitutes a significant part of advertising directed at children in many countries around the world and has been a topic of much public debate and advocacy efforts in recent years.

The few studies that actually examined this issue indicated the effectiveness of such commercials on influencing children’s food choices, particularly when they are reinforced by a variety of promotional strategies (including prizes, cross-selling in various media platforms, adver games) and when they are not presented with counter-messages (e.g., advertising for healthy fruit). Even brief exposures to televised food commercials were found to be effective, and many argue that the intensive efforts to market food to children and youth have had a detrimental effect on their overall eating habits. At the same time, this type of study has been criticized for remaining quite narrow in its conception of direct and immediate effects, as well as for being disassociated from other factors in children’s lives and eating habits.

Assessing this hypothesis reminds us that, as in all other media-related issues, social and cultural contexts are extremely important considerations. For example, obesity rates have been documented as higher among low-income populations who are more dependent on cheap fast foods for their nutrition and who may be affected differently from other income groups by advertising. Given that racial differences are often entangled with social inequalities, it is no surprise that relationships between media consumption and obesity operate differentially for different races. For example, the obesity rate among Afro-American children is higher than for the majority Caucasian population in the USA, as is time spent with media, and with it exposure to unhealthy food commercials. Such a dynamic constellation of factors requires careful attention as we cannot generalize findings from one population of children to all children without taking into consideration racial and social-class differences.

In summary, then, researchers seem to agree that links between media use and obesity are somewhat elusive, and certainly cannot be reduced to a simple causal relationship. Furthermore, there are many limitations to existing research studies:

For one, great difficulties are involved in measuring children’s media use accurately. For example, how can researchers accurately measure the number of hours children are engaged with media? How can they accurately estimate the amount of exposure to advertisements? In addition, as we have argued above, many intervening variables need to be considered, such as family risk of obesity, race, class status, family nutrition awareness, and eating habits. The lack of longitudinal studies involved in examining these relationships over time, as well as the limited amount of research that considers all forms of media consumption beyond just television viewing, are also significant limitations.

**3.9. Sexting**

‘Sexting’ generally refers to the sending of sexually explicit images via text, email, MSN or through social networking sites. For example, this could be a picture of a young person exposing themselves or in a state of undress.

There could be many reasons why young people would want to take these sorts of pictures of themselves and send them to someone else. It could be that two young people who are in a relationship want to prove their love or commitment to each other; it could be that someone is looking to start a relationship with someone else or it could be that they find it exciting or want to show off.

Sexual images of people under 18 are classed as 'child pornography' and are illegal to have or to distribute. While 'sexting' may be seen as acceptable or fun to young people, it is important that both we and they know that it could result in immediate consequences within the school environment or more serious ones with the police.

**Top tips:**

 Talk to your children about sexting and the consequences - don’t wait for something to happen.

 Remind your children that once an image is sent, there is no getting it back.

 Stress to your child that once they have sent an image, or posted it online, they no longer have control of it, it could end up anywhere and anyone could see it.

 Make sure they take responsibility. Help them understand that they are responsible for their actions. That includes what they choose to do if they receive a sexually explicit photo. Have them understand that if they do receive one, they should talk to a trusted adult. Tell them that if they do send it on, they may be distributing child pornography – and could get in trouble with the police.

**UNIT FOUR**

**CHILDREN AND THE INTERNET:**

**4.1. Internet Safety, Child safety on the internet**

The internet has the potential to offer children and young people a wide range of opportunities – to learn, to develop new skills, to keep in touch with friends and make new ones and to have fun. However there are concerns about both inequalities of access to the technology and the possible

Threats to children's safety

Threats can arise in the following ways:

* Children and young people inadvertently or deliberately accessing either illegal or inappropriate sexual or violent material – illegal material could involve children or adults.
* Targeting and grooming of children by predatory adults through chat rooms, possibly adults posing as children
* The abuse of children, in some cases in real time using web cams, in order to provide material for pedophile news groups
* The use of email, instant messaging etc to bully and harass other – this may be more likely to occur between children and young people

When somebody is discovered to have placed child pornography on the internet or accessed child pornography the police would normally consider whether the individual might also be involved in the active abuse of children. IN particular, the individual’s access to children should be established within the family and employment contexts and in other settings (e.g. work with children as a volunteer). If there are particular concerns about one or more specific children, there may be a need to carry out child protection enquiries in respect of these children.

Whilst specialist services may be more likely to come across children and young people who have been involved in either the production or use of pornography, all services have a role to play in enabling children and young people to use the internet safely, for example by providing information.

Guidelines for internet use by children and young people

* Place computers in public places where everyone can see what is being viewed
* Take an interest in internet use; talk to young people about what they've seen.
* Monitor time spent online to ensure it does not become excessive
* Educate young people to use the resource sensibly
* Help young people to become critical users; "...is this information true?"
* Warn young people about unsavory sites and discuss the issues involved
* Contact the Internet Watch Foundation if anyone finds any material you believe to be illegal
* Compile lists of safe sites and chat rooms
* Access chat rooms by checking if it is moderated and by whom and finding out if the chat room has a clear terms and conditions policy? Does it have appropriate access control and password verification? Does it remind users of safety issues? Does the chat room give young people genuine opportunities to interact and shape the chat?

To keep children and young people safe online ensure they are aware of safety tips or rules like the following. These tips will also need to be communicated in a way that does not scare children, but encourages them to take responsibility.

* Never tell anyone you meet on the internet your name, address, telephone numbers, or any other information, such as information about your family, where you live or the school you go to.
* Do not send anyone your picture, credit card or bank details without checking with a responsible adult.
* Never give out your password to anyone, even your best friends.
* Do not stay in a chat room if anyone says anything that makes you feel uncomfortable or worried and tell a parent/career if you see such material.
* Always tell an adult if you receive a message that is scary, threatening or rude, do not respond and log off.
* If you wish to meet someone you have met in cyberspace, ask a parent/career’s permission and then only when they can be present.
* Always be yourself and do not pretend to be anyone or anything you are not.
* Never open attachments to emails which come from people or sources you do not know. They may contain viruses and damage your computer.
* Learn your 'netiquette' widely accepted rules of behavior include some of the following. Typing in CAPITAL LETTERS looks like you are shouting so use asterisks for emphasis.
* Be aware that people online may no be what they seem, adults can pretend to be children with similar interests to yourself.
* Be polite when entering a chat room, check out what people are talking about before participating. Be careful not to use bad language, providers will terminate your account!
* When buying a computer, mobile phone, gaming device or any new technological item, ask a sales assistant which Internet safety devices are available to help manage your child’s Internet access. Install software that can filter inappropriate material and allows you to monitor what they are doing online.
* Finally enjoy your time on the internet but do not forget about all the other things you can do:  
  - share time with your family  
  - read a good book  
  - play with your friends  
  - participate in sport

**4.2. When Video Games are good**

**Positive Video Game Effects**

1. **VISUAL-SPATIAL SKILLS**

Playing video games has been associated with performance superiority and improvement on many visual and spatial tasks. Specific visual-spatial skills The Positive and Negative Effects of Video Game Play and tasks that incorporate those skills can be improved through games that require the player to practice extracting spatial information from the screen. Positive effects of video game play on visual-spatial skills have been found both in correlational studies (e.g., Green &Bavelier, 2003) and experimental studies (e.g., Okagaki&Frensch, 1994).

1. **Pro social Video Games**

Pro social video games are centered on helping other game characters, distinct from hero-centered violent video games in which the player's character kills (or helps another character kill) enemies. In the laboratory, pro social video game play has been shown to reduce aggressive thoughts, feelings, and behavior while increasing pro social thoughts, empathy, and helping behavior .Several studies have reported long-term effects of pro social video game play, finding increases in cooperation, sharing, empathy, and helping behavior in adolescents (Gentile et al., 2009) and increases in pro social behavior among children (Sestir&Bartholow, 2010). Playing pro social games not only increases pro social behavior but also decreases aggression. Research by Greitemeyer and Osswald (2009) found that even a brief pro social gaming experience leads to a decrease in the hostile expectation bias (a tendency to perceive other people's provocative actions as hostile instead of accidental) and in the accessibility of antisocial thoughts.

**C) Educational Video Games**

Educational video games have been found to be effective teaching aids in a wide range of domains. Video games reinforce the student's behavior often, are engaging enough for the student to play the games on multiple occasions, provide clear objectives, and require active involvement (Gentile and Gentile, 2008). Educational video games have been successfully used to teach students a Media and the Well-Being of Children and Adolescents number of school subjects, such as mathematics, reading, and biology (Murphy,Penuel, Means, Korbak, & Whaley, 2001; Corbett, Koedinger, & Hadley, 2001).

Employers have also recognized the power of the video games to teach and have incorporated games to teach employees needed job skills. For example, Volvo has used an online game to train car salesmen (Entertainment Software association, 2011b).

**D) Exergues**

Exergues can be classified as interactive video games that require some type of exercise to play. These games can take the form of traditional exercise, such as yoga or boxing, or can incorporate movement through more creative means, such as dodging a ball or jumping over an obstacle. Exergues research has focused on three areas: energy expenditure, activity time, and activity preference. 'The excitement provided by exergues contributes to all three areas, enabling players to get into the game and expend more energy, to play the game longer and with more frequency over time, and to prefer exergames over traditional exercise (Biddiss& Irwin, 2010; Graf, Pratt, Hester, & Short, 2009; Mellecker&McManus, 2008). Klein and Simmers (2009) found that even those with a low motivation to exercise were still willing to engage in an exergame. In a period in which American children spend more than six hours a day watching television and playing video games (Rideout, Foehr, & Roberts, 2010), it's no wonder that the preference for exergues in children has caused enthusiasm in parents and pediatricians alike. These video games do more than contribute to physical fit-ness; they contribute to psychological health as well. In a study conducted by Rosenberg et al. (2010), senior citizens living in a community had an increased quality of life and exhibited improvement in sub syndromal depression after only three months of playing Wii sports.

**4.3. Media and Pro-social Behavior**

Pro-social behaviors are those perceived to be desirable by society at large. For example, the following media contents have been evaluated as pro-social: contents that promote cooperation and mutual aid; expressions of regret for harm done; sympathy and empathy with another person’s situation or emotions; resolving conflicts; learning to persist in a task and to delay gratification; seeing things from another person’s point of view; controlling violent urges; expressing feelings; resisting temptations; and the like. In addition, contents that promote healthy nutrition and lifestyles and civic engagement would also be included in this concept.Researchers who believe that media can influence pro-social behavior argue that depictions of pro-social behavior in the media are more consistent with social norms than antisocial behavior, and as a result, imitations of these behaviors aremore likely to be received positively than imitation of antisocial acts (Rushton, 1979).

**Unit Five: Digital and Media Literacy Education**

**5.1 What is media literacy?**

Of com defines media literacy as the skills, knowledge and understanding that are needed to access, analyze, evaluate and produce media/communications. As with any concept, there exist a host of rival definitions. Over the past few decades the study of media literacy and various related and overlapping concepts, such as information literacy, computer literacy, library literacy, network literacy and digital literacy, have been pursued within separate academic disciplines, including media and communication, child psychology, education, library and information science. While confusing at first glance, a review of these competing concepts reveals that most ‘literacies’ are more or less synonyms, although some place more emphasis on the acquisition of technological skills whereas others tend to emphasize analytical skills. Accordingly, an early definition of ‘information literacy’ referred to the ability to obtain an independent view of news and events in a way that is similar to recent definitions of ‘media literacy’.

The occurrence in the literature of the precise term ‘media literacy’ only began to increase in the mid- to late 1990s (Bawden 2001). It is useful to distinguish between ‘skills-based literacies’, such as computer or library literacy, which essentially indicate a competence in handling information in a particular setting, context or format, and more general capabilities. These wider conceptions of information literacy stress capabilities beyond a simple competence in retrieving or communicating information.

The position taken here is that while it is not important to arrive at a precise definition, it is important that a broad approach is adopted. It must include all the skills-based literacies, but cannot be restricted to them, nor can it be restricted to any particular technology or set of technologies – understanding, meaning and context must be central to it. Media literacy should refer to a whole set of skills. It should include the ability to access information, but not be limited to it. It should incorporate both reading and writing – analysis and production. Fundamentally, it must refer to the skills that enable somebody to think critically.

**The Importance of Digital Literacy in K-12**

Beginning digital literacy programs in grades K-12 is essential. This introduction to digital media prepares young children and teenagers for the skills they need to engage in technology both safely and responsibly. What’s more, digital technology education empowers and educates children by providing them with the tools they need to thrive in an ever-changing digital world.

**What Is Digital Literacy?**

The incredible advances in technology have changed the way people communicate, interact and work, but that’s not all. Technology has also altered the way children learn. Digital literacy, also known as virtual learning and e-learning has the potential to improve lifelong learning.It involves learning through various technology platforms, such as computers, the internet, remotely, or a combination of all three. Becoming digitally literate means that students develop technological skills learn authorship rules, such as copyright and plagiarism, understand how to access online information and learn social responsibility while interacting on social networks.

As digital learning continues to expand, it’s important for K-12 curriculums to embrace new technologies. A study conducted by Learning.com from 2012 to 2017 found that 75 percent of fifth and eighth grade students were not proficient in 21st century technological skills. Above all, digital literacy is a key factor in education today. The future success of students depends on them becoming digitally literate. This involves developing skills and knowledge that enable them to safely navigate and discern all forms of digital technology. Knowing these IT skills allows students to learn traditional subjects in innovative ways through educational courseware and online resources.

Teaching digital literacy in primary and secondary schools is all about understanding that today’s children need different types of skills and technological knowledge in order to think critically, evaluate their work and engage with a global community.

**5.2 Differences between Traditional Literacy and Digital Literacy**

When you think of traditional literacy, reading and writing come to mind. Learning phonics, sight words and eventually, reading literature. Today, students need more than the written word to succeed in elementary school, high school and continued education. Digital literacy expands the scope of traditional literacy. It encompasses e-learning skills that incorporate audio and video for strengthening thinking and learning in students.

When combining digital and traditional literacies, not only do students learn how to read and write, but they also learn how to expand their communication, language and media skills. They grow and engage the world through images, diagrams, audio and video media, taking their reading and writing skills to a higher level of learning. They also develop dynamic creativity that helps them think, communicate, design and engage in the world around them.

When reinforcing literacy skills, conventional teaching methods involve:

• Textbooks

• Workbooks

• Written tests

• Recitation

Digital literacy teaching methods expand on print literacy with the following tools:

• Cloud computing

• Courseware

• Multimedia slides

• Game-based learning

• Educational video

• Audio learning

• Digital production

• Interacting on digital devices

• Combining virtual and physical worlds

Conventional and digital literacy go hand-in-hand in the classroom, enriching your students’ creative thinking and integrating them into today’s digital world.

**Building Communication and Literacy Skills with Digital Media**

It’s important that educators expand their ideas about literacy. Children in grades K-12 adapt to technology naturally, making it the best time to teach Internet technology skills. It’s the time for them to create relationships between the written and visual word for better communication with others. Communicating through pen and ink is a lot different from communicating in the technological, visual world where children need to be aware of appearance, gestures, and the tone in which they speak. These qualities don’t matter in printed material, but they’re essential skills that student need to learn for effective communication today.

Traditional literacy is all about learning nouns, verbs, sentences, grammar, and reading and writing text. By taking a broader look at digital literacy, implementing technology in the classroom greatly enhances the learning experience beyond conventional literacy. This interactive visual media deepens understanding, thinking, and interpreting content, elevating your students beyond the confines of structured literacy.

**Introducing Digital Skills in Formative Years**

Making information technology an integral part of children's lives from a young age, enables them to access and become familiar with digitally interactive "smart" learning tools. In today’s digital world, teaching children IT skills in their formative years helps them evolve along with information technology. If learning platforms don't initiate digital literacy programs, students will become overwhelmed as technology advances.

Age or social standing shouldn't limit an increased understanding of digital media. Not all students have access to Broadband, electronic devices and computers at home, so schools play a large part in helping students who don’t have the same electronic devices, internet and computers of connected students. Introducing digital tools, apps and internet platforms to your students, helps close the digital divide that hinders achievement.

**Digital Literacy Goes Beyond Reading and Writing**

Advances in technology provide digital resources for education curriculums, which significantly contribute to digital literacy learning. For example, when students have digital tools available for writing assignments, they enjoy creating multimedia presentations that enhance their writing skills. The following digital tools help bring your students’ writing to life:

• Insert relevant videos

• Insert images

• Receive instant feedback with chat features

• Ability to search and attain facts instantly

• Edit spelling and grammar themselves

• Access to more experts and data

• Revise work without having to rewrite the whole paper

Familiarizing children with computers, software and mobile devices encourages them to use these outside of the classroom. That makes it second nature for them to learn on their own.

**5.3 Ways Digital Literacy Makes Learning More Effective**

Traditional classroom settings restrict the time and space of students’ learning capabilities. When you offer them technology tools, it opens the door to the whole universe. They can learn anywhere, anytime and about anything. It’s a way to extend learning beyond the walls of the classroom to help encourage a lifetime of learning and sharing knowledge.

**1. Take learning everywhere**

When your students learn how to use digital media, they can utilize this skill everywhere. Technology is all around them. For example, at home they probably have smart devices like mobile phones, tablets, computers, and other smart devices. Your students can take their knowledge with them, using their digital literacy skills for profound learning outside the classroom. The restrictions of time and space fall away, opening their minds to independent learning. They can continue their research and writing wherever they go, increasing their independent learning and inquisitive nature.

**2. Interact with peers**

Another benefit of harnessing new technology in the classroom, especially in older children is the interpersonal computing they can do. When students work on their assignments using cloud environments, they can interact with each other, reviewing, offering encouragement, and making suggestions. This not only helps motivate students to perform better, but it builds collaboration and negotiation skills that they can use throughout their entire lives.

**3. Constant connection with teachers**

On top of staying connected with their peers during assignments, teachers become even more important in web-based learning environments. They can access everything their students are doing, which helps evaluate their students’ learning potential; peer reviews and exactly what they’re are working on. Gathering this analytical data, helps assess each student’s performance and ability. Cloud computing gives teachers more visibility over their students’ progress.

**4. Work at their own pace**

Every student has different needs, whether in elementary or secondary school. E-learning allows students to work at a pace that’s comfortable for them. This helps relieve the pressure of keeping up with others in the classroom. You can track and intervene to adjust the material so that the student can successfully complete the assignment. As educators, by expanding instruction using digital media, you offer support for the needs of individual students. When they connect with their peers, it puts your students at ease, keeping learning fun and interesting for all ages.

Traditional thinking is that it’s easier to talk to the whole class, and have the students work on the same assignments. It’s difficult to provide personalized learning in a large classroom with specific time limits. Today’s digital literacy tools allows for personalized learning for all students. This means that students can work on different projects at the same time, completing them at their own pace.

**5. Decreases behavior issues**

When your students leave the classroom at the end of the day, they go home and text their friends, share photos and become instantly connected to the digital world. Since they’re accustomed to these constant personal connections, being in a confined classroom environment can cause frustration and boredom. For many students, they find release by acting out.

**Need for media literacy**

The UN Convention of Child Rights (1989) and the resulting UNICEF Oslo Challenge (1999) recognize the importance of media literacy education. The Oslo Challenge states that ‘the child/media relationship is an entry point into the wide and multifaceted world of children and their rights – to education, freedom of expression, play, identity, health, dignity and self-respect protection – and in every aspect of child rights, in every element of the life of a child, the relationship between children and the media plays a role.’

**Unit Six: Criteria for Quality Media**

**6. Criteria for Quality Media**

Perhaps the primary difficulty in developing media-related regulations is the vague-ness of the concept of quality media as a production aim best able to serve children. As we have noted, “quality” is often a matter of what is important in the eye of the beholder. According to children, for example, a quality television program, internet site, or mobile application is one that attracts and interests them. For parents and public organizations, quality may be determined by educational value; for industry production professionals, it may be measured by production values (such as use of famous actors, advanced camerawork and audio-visual effects, music, humor, and the like); for corporate or public executives a program’s sales or audience ratings are probably the most important in determining quality. Broadcasters in the USA often include popular cartoons and popular prime time series in their definition of “quality” television. In appealing for license renewal, they justify such programs in a variety of creative, yet some might say cynical, ways. An action-adventure cartoon is perceived as having positive value, because the protagonists defend their universe from others who want to destroy it thereby demonstrating concern for others and a distinction between good and bad; and a stereotypical situation comedy is presented as educational since it deals with everyday conflict within families.

The debate over the definition of “quality” in children’s media is dependent, to a large degree, on the conflict of interests of the various stakeholders. For example, for public or private educational broadcasters the question of broadcasting policy forchildren is very different since their view of educationally oriented television is usually influenced by the realities of functioning under severe financial constraints in an aggressively competitive market. Overall, there does seem to be some agreement among these various perspectives that quality media for children should be expected to abide by the following principles:

● Provide children with media content prepared especially for them without taking advantage of them; content that entertains but at the same time tries to advance children physically, mentally, and socially.

● Allow children to hear see and express themselves, their culture, their language and their life experiences through their media in ways that affirm their personal identity, community, and place.

● Encourage awareness and appreciation of other cultures as well as the child’s own.

● Offer a variety of genres and content and not just reproduce texts according to a successful formula.

● Deliver media content to children at times and through technologies that are accessible to them.

● Recognize differences between children that are a result of their cognitive and emotional development, talents, interests, personality characteristics, interpersonal relationships, and social environment.

● Take steps to protect and encourage content that reflects local and marginalized cultures and those with minority languages and needs.

● Avoid unnecessary presentation of violence, sex, and racism. Aunicef initiative to define quality media for children, with a specific emphasis on children being raised in low-resource societies and marginalized communities, established four overarching principles for quality media:

(1) Communication for children should be age-appropriate and child friendly;

(2) It should address the child holistically;

(3) It should be positive and strengths based; and

(4) It should address the needs of all, including those who are most disadvantaged.

More specifically, various criteria are often applied in assessing specific educational content, as in the following examples:

● Does the content invite children to see things they have not seen in the past, hear things they have not heard, and, most importantly, think or imagine things that they would not have thought or imagined before?

● Does the content tell a good story? Does it rely on the familiar in order to bridge the new and unfamiliar for young children? Are the verbal and visual components compatible?

● Does the content offer characters that children really care about? Is there a struggle between good and bad that is not too extreme? Are the children in the text capable of overcoming difficulties in a reasonable manner? Is the end of the story dependent on the generosity, fairness, honesty, caring, and responsibility of the main characters?

● Does the content avoid preaching to children or talking to them in a condescending manner?

● Does it avoid presenting adults as behaving in an unfair, irrational or foolish manner that undermines children’s trust in the adult world?

● Does the content expand the children’s world of experiences in an esthetically attractive way?

● Does the content include a degree of wit and humor that is not exploitive of others?

When a specific lesson is being promoted in the media text, there may be additional criteria used to examine its educational value:

● Is the educational lesson clear enough for the audience to understand?

● Is the educational lesson prominent, presented systematically, or as an integral part of the program?

● Is the educational lesson engaging and challenging for the audience?

● Is the educational lesson presented in a way that is deemed applicable by the audience?