

Interdisciplinary Summit on Children and Screen Time

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Frequently Asked Questions

About Screen Time and Kids

Cognitiveⁱ

- **Do baby videos and touch screen apps make babies smarter?**
Infants under about 2 years of age learn little from baby videos. Time spent with screen media takes away from valuable time spent playing with physical toys and social interactions leading to poorer language and cognitive development. There is very little research on the effects of touch screen apps on cognition and learning in infants, so we do not yet know whether there may be positive or negative effects of using them.
- **Is reading development influenced by TV and computer games?**
Educational programs and games can increase children's interest in reading and also teach valuable literacy skills. Large amounts of TV viewing during the years when children are learning to read, however, are associated with poorer reading achievement.
- **Can screen media teach specific cognitive skills?**
Yes. Numerous experiments have shown that young adults can acquire increases in particular attentional, spatial, and memory skills from playing computer games that emphasize those skills. There is some evidence that this finding applies to children as well.

Media Multitaskingⁱⁱ

- **Is all this multitasking with media causing us to become more distracted, more impulsive, and to learn more poorly?**
We do not yet know. Researchers are just beginning to look at younger people to determine whether the brain and behavioral differences show up before the media multitasking behavior develops (which would suggest that a pre-disposition leads to media multitasking), or whether media multitasking precedes the brain and behavior differences (which would suggest that heavier media multitasking may cause the differences). It is also likely that these phenomena feed into each other. Until we do know, we would be wise to be thoughtful about our media multitasking behavior.
- **Is all multitasking—not just multitasking with media—associated with these cognitive, psychological, brain, and academic differences?**
These findings are specific to when people multitask with multiple media streams. However, there are plenty of studies showing that when we learn under conditions of distraction (whether or not media are involved), our learning is shallower and less flexible.

- **What should I tell my child who is highly confident that she studies better with the TV on in the background?**

Confidence and performance are not always related. Just because someone is confident in their ability to multitask with media doesn't mean that they are good at it. In our review paper, we discuss many studies demonstrating that students' ability to learn with media in the background is impaired. There are many examples, including studies showing TV in the background impairs students' ability to comprehend information and respond accurately and quickly to homework questions. Likewise, responding to instant/text messages during studying has been shown to dramatically slow down students' ability to complete homework.

Social Mediaⁱⁱⁱ

- **What do adolescents do with social media?**

Adolescents use social media for a variety of activities, including sharing information, self-presentation, and interacting with others. Much of their interaction on these platforms is with peers from offline lives; however, depending on the affordance of the particular platform (e.g., Twitter), they may also interact with other individuals not in their offline friend network.

- **How have social media changed adolescents' peer interactions?**

It is certainly true that social media have led to wider social networks than before. They have also led to peer interactions that are often more immediate, exaggerated, and public. We need more longitudinal research to understand whether these wider networks provide youth with the intimacy and support they need to navigate the challenges of adolescence and emerging adulthood.

- **Have social media interactions made youth more lonely and depressed?**

This is a complex issue, and the research suggests that for some youth, social media interactions can present risks. For instance, online bullying, often displayed through social media, is associated with more depressive symptoms than traditional bullying. Additionally, as social media are increasingly used through mobile technologies, they may result in changing sleep cycles for adolescents, which may contribute to depression. Teens who report having mobile devices in their bedrooms and leaving them on at night sleep less than those who turn them off. Lack of sleep is related to depressive symptoms, loss of memory, problems at school, motor vehicle crashes, and other serious issues.

Youth Well-being^{iv}

- **Does "constant connectivity" via smartphones make youth anxious, depressed and/or contribute to other forms of ill-being?**

Youth differ in their experiences of smartphones and social media. While it is the case that some youth who are heavy users of social media exhibit anxiety, depression, and lower life satisfaction, it is also the case that youth who use social media are reported to have increased self-esteem and social confidence, and reduced depression. How youth use digital media — the apps, platforms, and activities they engage in — the interactions they have with peers online, and how they respond to their online experiences inform whether their media use supports largely positive or negative outcomes.

- **How do digital and social media use affect relationships with friends and peers?**

Digital and social media positively support existing relationships by allowing friends and family to stay in touch, facilitating communication and closeness in a manner that is convenient to one's personal preferences (e.g., texting instead of voice calls). The downside to the ability to connect 'around the clock' is that youth can feel pressured to be always available, which can interfere with the development of healthy boundaries and a sense of autonomy.

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- **Do social media make young people more narcissistic and/or focused on their own self-image?**
Research suggests a connection between narcissism and use of social media; narcissistic people have been found to use social networking sites more often and in more self-promoting ways than less narcissistic people. However, it is unclear whether such social media use actually contributes to narcissism or whether already narcissistic individuals are drawn to social media. Qualitative research indicates that youth are often preoccupied with the potential benefits and/or negative consequences associated with their online self-image and content; this self-focused orientation is largely developmentally appropriate.

Anxiety and Depression^v

- **Should I be concerned about my children's use of social media?**
That depends on how much time they are spending and the content and context of that use. Social media provides a tool for youth to stay in touch with their friends and potentially deepen their peer relationships. But social media can also be a conduit for cyberbullying, which can be emotionally devastating. In addition, over-use of any media can interfere with other important activities.
- **What can parents do to help their children cope with scary movies or TV shows?**
Different strategies can be helpful for children of different ages. For young children (pre-school), give them your calm, warm attention, offer a favorite stuffed animal to hug, or distract their attention from the program. These noncognitive strategies work best for this age group. Older children (late elementary and older) are more likely to respond to cognitive strategies, so remind them that a fictional show is fake or talk to them about ways to keep them safe. It is typically very difficult to calm a child who has been frightened by something in the media. Therefore, the best strategy is to help your children avoid content that you would expect them to find frightening.
- **Does using social media increase the chances that my child will commit suicide?**
Suicide, like all human behaviors, is incredibly complicated and is not caused by a single factor. There seem to be some online behaviors or experiences that can increase the risk of suicide. Being a victim of cyberbullying, is one example, but experiencing any type of bullying is known to increase thoughts about suicide. The internet does provide young people with access to stories and conversations about suicide, but it may also be a source of social support and helpful information. Youth with existing thoughts of suicide or self-injurious behaviors are likely at greater risk for any potential online influences. As with many media effects, the impact of internet use on suicide depends on specifics of the individual and the online experience.

Addiction and Internet Gaming Disorder^{vi}

- **Is video game addiction real?**
Over 100 studies exist using different populations and various ways of measuring it, but the general consensus is that it does exist, at least for some small percentage of people, and that it can be treated. This was the view of both the American Psychiatric Association (DSM-5) and the World Health Organization (ICD-11 draft, at the time of this writing).
- **Is there an important difference between different manifestations of technology addictions? For example, is video game addiction the same as Internet addiction?**
We don't know yet. The existing research shows very similar patterns of dysfunctional symptoms and outcomes, so at this time it's unclear how distinct they may be.
- **How can I tell if my child is addicted to the internet or video games?**
Internet Gaming Disorder is defined by 9 symptoms, and there are simple scales out there that you can use (e.g., https://www.researchgate.net/publication/270652917_The_Internet_Gaming_Disorder_Scale).

Virtual Reality^{vii}

- **How mainstream is virtual reality (VR) technology really going to be?**
Support for the use of virtual reality appears to be advancing rapidly. Facebook spent two billion dollars to acquire Oculus VR. In addition, Oculus VR has partnered with Samsung to develop the Gear VR device—a VR headset that uses the owner’s smartphone as its computer. Given the coupling of VR with smartphones, there is an increasing probability that this technology will bring VR to more children both informally (entertainment) and formally (education settings).
- **Will virtual reality really be about anything more than games?**
In addition to non-gaming uses like virtual reality films, music entertainment, and sports, a variety of platforms have been developed for clinical assessment and intervention. Furthermore, VR is increasingly used for education and training.
- **Can the brains and bodies of children really cope with VR?**
A great deal of research is being done to look at what impact VR may have upon us as humans. In addition to research into potential issues of motion sickness, there are groups exploring the ways in which VR might impact the way humans interact in society. However, to date, there is no significant indication (or evidence-base) that supports the view VR will have negative impacts on children.

Sleep^{viii}

- **How long before bed should kids avoid using screens?**
Limiting screen time in the hour or two before going to bed can help with bedtime and sleep.
- **How can parents limit the use of their children's screens at bedtime?**
Parents should remember that they are key role models, and limit their own evening screen time, charge devices with screens in a ‘sleep-safe zone’, meaning not in a bedroom. Limiting screen time in the hour or two before going to bed can help with bedtime and sleep, but this is hard to “impose” if screen time use is already out of control! Start as young as possible with role-modeling and establishing family practices that everyone can follow. Make this an explicit part of the conversation about the bedtime routine. Also, ensure that the content of media exposure is age-appropriate.
- **How can I modify my screens to reduce disruption of sleep?**
Dim the screen or turn on system features that reduce blue light—for example, by using an app or modifying device settings. More evidence is needed to know exactly how well the features work, but limiting total light and blue light is a good start if devices MUST be used in the evening.

Obesity^{ix}

- **Is the relationship between time spent with screen media and childhood obesity correlation or causation?**
Many studies of screen media and other hypothesized outcomes are correlational — demonstrating that the two factors are related (correlated). Children who spend more time with screen media have greater body fatness at that time and in the future than children who spend less time with screen media. Those studies demonstrate that screen media time is a correlate and risk factor, respectively, but do not prove that it is a cause. A true causal relationship can only be demonstrated with an experiment. These types of experimental studies also have been done for testing the impacts of screen media exposure on obesity. Several randomized controlled trials, the strongest experimental design, have shown that programs to reduce time spent on screens has led to reduced weight gain in children, demonstrating a true cause-and-effect relationship.
- **How does screen media exposure cause obesity in children?**
The evidence to date suggests that screen media exposure causes obesity in children and adolescents via three main mechanisms:

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- Increased eating while using screens, possibly due to the types of high — energy foods and beverages that are consumed with screens, media acting as a trigger or prompt to eating, extending the duration of eating, or distracting from or obscuring feelings of fullness or satiety.
- Seeing advertising for high-calorie, low-nutrition foods and beverages that alters children's preferences, purchase requests and eating habits, and
- Disrupting sleep, which may affect appetite-related hormones, food choices, and more snacking and eating outside of normal mealtimes.
- **Does smartphone and other new digital media use cause obesity in children?**

Most of the research on screen time and obesity was completed before smartphones and other emerging digital media were widely used by children and adolescents. As a result, the specific effects of newer media exposure on eating, physical activity and obesity needs additional research in real world settings. However, many of the mechanisms linking screen media exposure to obesity, such as eating while using screens, advertising, and insufficient sleep, lead us to hypothesize that most emerging digital media, with their increased abilities for interactivity, immersion, involvement, mobility, and timely feedback, could have similar or even more profound effects on causing weight gain in children.

Driving Safety^x

- **Are laws effective at changing distracted driving?**

Yes. As with all laws, they must be clear and they must be enforced. As drunk driving enforcement showed, an increase in the enforcement of laws already on the books can change attitudes and behaviors.
- **Won't technology save us from distracted driving?**

No. By some estimates, even if we developed fully autonomous cars now, it would take 40 years for them to be pervasive. And technologies that distract us are getting even more attractive and attention consuming.
- **Is distracted driving really a problem?**

Yes. The United States is already one of the least safe industrialized countries from a crash-risk perspective. And it is getting worse despite improved vehicles, improved roads, improved emergency responses and better medical care following a crash. We are going the wrong way in terms of safety.

Parenting^{xi}

- **How should parents monitor and interact with their children around media?**

Research suggests that parents should not only watch TV, videos, or games with their children, but also talk about what they are seeing on the screen, try to help their child process it (especially if it's violent or inappropriate), and try to relate it to their child's life and experiences. This way parents can keep track of what their child is seeing and experiencing online, and the stage is set for the child to feel comfortable bringing their concerns and questions to parents when they encounter upsetting, confusing, or problematic content/social interactions as they grow older.
- **Why does media use become problematic in some children and families, but not others?**

Everyone's personality is different, and therefore everyone is going to develop their own particular media preferences, habits, and responses to media. In some families, children who are more difficult to parent might wind up having heavier media habits because it is used as a calming or behavioral tool. Some parents report using media as a way to escape challenging family dynamics — looking to their phone to avoid interactions. When media isn't monitored by parents, some children watch videos, find YouTube content, or play video games that are too mature or violent for the child's developmental stage, and this has been linked with more behavioral problems. Therefore, changing to more positive or prosocial content may be one of the most realistic ways for media-heavy families to influence their child's behavior.

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- **Have mobile devices made parenting harder or easier?**

While there's no research on this topic exactly, we do know that mobile device use by children is harder for parents to monitor and co-view. Parental controls and monitoring software/apps are increasingly available, but since none have been studied, parents will have to try them out and decide if they work for their needs. Parents also describe that mobile devices make work-life balance more feasible, but there's also a lot more work-life spillover that can happen as a result. Multitasking between the content of a mobile device (email, news, texting) and child behavior management is also described as particularly challenging.

Privacy^{xii}

- **What is “Big Data” and why should I be concerned about it?**

According to the American Institute of Physics, Big Data can be defined as “the data sets and analytical techniques in applications that are so large and complex that they require advanced and unique data storage, management, analysis, and visualization technologies.” These practices have affected a variety of fields, from banking to healthcare to demographic analysis, but Big Data's impact on advertising is especially profound, in that it affects all consumers — including children. The result is that we now face a complex set of online data collection, tracking, and targeting applications that monitor and monetize individual consumer behaviors as well as their interactions with friends and acquaintances. Additionally, by monitoring online, mobile, and in-store behaviors, marketers can now track the entire “path-to-purchase” process, collecting even more data and shaping our consumption patterns as well.

- **How can I tell if my child is being tracked and targeted?**

If your child is online, he or she is being tracked and targeted — from website to website, from app to video, and across all devices — from PC to tablet to smartphone and even television. In the process, the advertising and content your child views is increasingly personalized, based on detailed profiles that are being compiled and refined with every click and swipe, employing conversation surveillance and other web analytics to monitor in minute detail how youth are influenced and how they, in turn, influence their peers. With the growth of the so-called “Internet of Things,” moreover, children's daily tools and surroundings are becoming “smart,” monitoring, transmitting, and analyzing individual and aggregate data, and communicating with other objects using embedded sensors that are linked through wired and wireless networks.

- **How can we adequately ensure children's privacy protections in the big data era?**

We believe that a collaborative and coordinated approach can have real success in protecting children's privacy:

- **Health professionals** need to update their policy statements on children's media and advertising to reflect the contemporary, data-driven practices in the digital media system, identify the risks to privacy, and address the vulnerabilities of older children and adolescents.
- **Policymakers** should expand children's privacy safeguards to encompass data collection and marketing practices across digital platforms, including toys and other devices that are part of the “Internet of Things.”
- **Schools**, in collaboration with nonprofits and other institutions, should develop media education and digital literacy programs to help young people participate fully in the contemporary digital media culture, without compromising their fundamental right to privacy. Training children and parents in particular about privacy concerns and how to protect children's privacy could also fall in this domain of activity.

Digital Media Literacy^{xiii}

- **What specific competencies must young citizens acquire, and how do these competencies affect pedagogy?**

Young citizens must be equipped to learn anywhere, anytime so that they are able to responsibly and critically consume and create digital, multimodal texts. Rather than pedagogy being centered on the transmission of content knowledge through direct instruction by teachers, it must instead focus on empowering youth to navigate and participate in interconnected, often virtual spaces where they learn to

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contextualize, acquire, and apply content knowledge. These competencies require a more complex application of skills than traditional print-based literacy.

- **How are students' knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors changed through digital and media literacy?** Digital and media literacies take into account the full range of literacy skills needed to read, write, speak, view and participate in society. Research shows that digital and media literacy equip youth to critically navigate their digital lives and have positive impacts, as well as mitigate potentially harmful effects of participation in digital spaces. An extensive meta-analytic review found that these interventions counteract effects related to risky and anti-social behaviors, including violence and aggression, alcohol and tobacco use, body image, eating disorders and commercialism. Other studies show increased civic responsibility and democratic participation.
- **What are the best ways to assess students' digital and media literacy?** High stakes tests that define literacy and curriculum too narrowly, and contribute to rigid, outdated structures of schooling should be dismantled and replaced by structures that build and reinforce digital and media literacies. Such new structures provide for variability in context and community needs that one-size-fits-all approaches cannot. Funding mechanisms must also change to accommodate new structures for supporting literacy for a digital age.

Civic Engagement^{xiv}

- **How can we help teens understand the difference between real and fake news?** While there is no single magic bullet, parents and educators can work together to encourage teens to be critical consumers of media. Media literacy education is not new, but often gets overlooked in schools. Schools can adopt evidence-based media literacy curricula and invest in professional development for teachers. Parents can draw on publically available resources like the Washington Post's Fact Checker for checking out rumors and untruths related to politics and Common Sense Media's news and media literacy resources <https://www.common sense media.org/news-and-media-literacy>. NPR also has a great resource for discussion: <http://www.npr.org/sections/alltechconsidered/2016/12/05/503581220/fake-or-real-how-to-self-check-the-news-and-get-the-facts>. Parents can also talk with their older children about how social media platforms (like Facebook, YouTube and Snapchat) do not, but could, provide greater transparency in how information becomes part of a teen's feed. This aspect of media literacy (understanding how news is circulated) is particularly important in the digital age.
- **Doesn't participating in political activity online expose teens to risks?** It may, but part of becoming an adult is learning how to navigate and manage risk. Just as teens are learning to manage the risks of driving, unsupervised time with friends, and dating, they are also learning how to make good decisions about whether and how to share their opinions online, how to judge others' intentions in online interactions, and how to engage in dialogue without turning it into a battle of insults. Early research suggests that these are real challenges, but also skills that can be learned. Furthermore, for teens who are marginalized or frustrated, political activity can provide a constructive outlet for their critiques of society and can even provide a mechanism for making things better. Although this may come with risks, these risks can be managed, and it may be a good thing for teens to learn how to navigate risky situations during a time when they have supportive adults around to help them. Connect Safely is a website that provides good tips on how to engage young people in conversations about online risks: <http://www.connectsafely.org/author/anne>
- **Politics is so divided and hostile these days, especially online. Why should teens get involved?** Concerns about polarization are common, not just for teens. Many people prefer to avoid talking about politics altogether. But if a large number of citizens withdraw from political life, this makes the problem of polarization worse because we won't have any voices between the vocal extremes, and our democracy will suffer as a result. We need to support young people by listening to them and modeling ways to engage in conversations about sensitive issues. We also need to talk with young people about the values that lie behind what we believe so that they will also be able to participate in spaces where decisions about their world are made. Young people are experimenting with new forms of engagement, both on and offline, and

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it's important for our future that we support their efforts. Teenagers have the advantage of being relatively new to politics. Although this makes entry into politics challenging, it also allows for creative thinking and new models of engagement. If our political discourse is going to improve in the future, teens will need to be part of that solution.

Digital Inequality^{xv}

- **If immigrant and minority children have internet access on smartphones, isn't that good enough?**
No. Although internet access through a smartphone is better than having no out-of-school connectivity, there are many instances (e.g., writing an essay or creating a spreadsheet) where young people need the computing power of a desktop or laptop computer to succeed in school. Our research also shows that children who have mobile-only internet access go online less frequently and for a narrower range of learning activities than children who have access through a computer.
- **Do one-to-one laptop or tablet initiatives address these issues of digital inequity?**
Not totally. These initiatives are generally designed for classroom use. Even if students are permitted to take those devices home, children cannot use them to their full potential unless they have reliable, high quality broadband at home.
- **Why is equitable access to technology a developmental concern for children?**
As educational innovation becomes synonymous with technological innovation, enabling all children to have consistent, high-quality connectivity and opportunities to develop digital skills is crucial to ensuring equitable access to social opportunities, both now and in the future. Furthermore, as more resources and services migrate online, parents' connectivity is becoming increasingly important to ensuring that they can access the economic and occupational opportunities that increase family stability for lower-income children.

Global Perspectives^{xvi}

- **What do we mean when we speak of educational opportunities provided by children's digital engagement?**
There is a wide variety of interpretations for what educational opportunities might mean, e.g., that digital technologies serve as tools to enhance learning; prepare children for the workforce to enhance their future employability; facilitate the inclusion of communities of marginalized youth; etc. Different societies have different goals and may try to implement them differently.
- **What is the potential downside of educational opportunities provided by children's digital engagement?**
There are concerns that the use of digital technologies in educational systems will intensify the existing academic pressures on children in some technologically advanced societies; that technologies will be used for excessive testing and invasion of students' privacy; that educational systems will rely even more on data and metrics for policy making at the expense of other considerations; that use of digital technologies will bring risks that outweigh the opportunities; and that the socioeconomic and digital divide between populations will grow, rather than shrink.
- **What do we expect research to focus on when examining children's uses of digital technologies in different countries around the world?**
Poor countries are in dire need of research that will help find ways to increase equality in children's access to digital technologies and educational resources. Ironically, wealthy countries, are seeking research that will guide concerns about excessive screen time spent by children, overexposure to commercial content, and the dangers posed by technologies for autonomy and privacy.

Violent Content^{xvii}

- **How much time should children spend consuming media?**

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends no screen time for children under 18 months old, and no more than 1 hour of screen time per day for children less than 5 years old. For children ages 6 and older, consistent limits on screen time and the types of media should be enforced, and media should never take the place of adequate sleep or physical activity.

- **I have heard the phrase, “Correlation does not equal causation.” Can violent video games cause aggressive and violent behavior?**

Experimental studies can establish cause and effect, and many experiments have shown that exposure to violent media can cause children to behave more aggressively. For ethical reasons, it is more difficult to study violence in experiments (i.e., severe acts of physical aggression that can lead to injury or death). But correlational and (especially) longitudinal studies can provide good tests of causal theories, and they have consistently shown support for a causal link between exposure to violent media and violent behavior.

- **Isn't it true that only a small proportion of children and adolescents are affected by violent media? In other words, aren't most young people immune to the harmful effects of media violence?**

To be sure, not all children are equally affected by violent media and there are a variety of factors that can help lessen the risk (e.g., parental involvement, school-based interventions). However, no group is entirely immune from the impact of violent media (e.g., girls, nonaggressive children).

Cyberbullying^{xviii}

- **What is cyberbullying?**

Cyberbullying is defined as “willful and repeated harm inflicted through the use of computers, cell phones, or other electronic devices.”¹ It can involve targeting a victim through the use of messages, pictures, and social media, through any digital device.

- **Can monitoring my child's phone keep them safe from cyberbullying?**

Using parental monitoring software, or apps, can help keep you informed about what your child is doing online when they're using their phone. But these apps don't take the place of conversations with your child about online activities and problems. Apps alone won't prevent cyberbullying, but they may let you know about problems after they've happened. Teaching children how to use digital devices can reduce the chances of cyberbullying involvement. And, of course, it's important to remember that there are many computers and devices in many places that any child can use. But like most social problems between kids, it's impossible to avoid it with 100% certainty. Discussing common problems online, and how to address them, can help children cope with cyberbullying if it should happen.

- **How can I help my child if he or she is being cyberbullied?**

The most important help a bullied child can have is support. That may mean spending time with friends; getting emotional support from their family; and/or getting professional support from their physician or counselor. Spending some time off-line can help as well, especially if that time is spent in fun activities with family and friends. Cyberbullying and bullying commonly overlap, so the older a child is, the more likely it is that the two types of bullying are happening simultaneously. Bullying and cyberbullying are both serious, and they can both result in social, emotional, and academic problems. Take either problem seriously if it occurs.

¹ Patchin, J. W., & Hinduja, S. (2006). Bullies Move Beyond the Schoolyard: A Preliminary Look at Cyberbullying. *Youth Violence and Juvenile Justice*, 4(2), 148–169.

Advertising and Marketing^{xix}

- **Does a child’s emotional and cognitive development affect their ability to understand and/or react to commercial messages?**

Yes, on both accounts. There is good evidence showing that children do not understand commercial messages at the same level that adults do. Specifically, younger children (i.e., those 8 or younger) are more likely to believe that the commercial messages they see are purely informative. There is also accumulating evidence that children’s development influences their ability to protect themselves from advertising messages.

- **Should we be concerned about advertising messages that are not targeted to children; for example, commercials for alcohol and nicotine products?**

Yes. For example, children and teens who see more ads for alcohol products are significantly more likely to start drinking at an earlier age, and teens who see more of these ads typically drink more.

Stereotypes^{xx}

- **How do media, especially those targeting children, portray various social groups?**

Media portrayals across a range of genres, including news and entertainment, tend to focus on stories about dominant group members. If at all present, marginalized groups (such as racial/ethnic/religious minorities, women, LGBTQ+ individuals, individuals with disabilities) are largely limited to stereotypical misrepresentations and peripheral roles. Such stories often focus narrowly on a single dimension of identity (for instance, a person’s disabilities) without recognizing that multiple aspects of identities co-exist simultaneously in complex ways.

- **What do we know about any negative consequences that media stories about social groups might have on children’s development?**

We know that the content and frequency of media stories that they consume impact children’s development. These stories shape young people’s shared norms, expectations, and attitudes about themselves and other groups around them. For instance, sexualization and objectification of girls and young women in the media have been associated with a range of negative outcomes, such as body dissatisfaction, eating disorders, appearance anxiety, depression, lower self-esteem, and reduced sexual well-being. The lack of representation of racial and ethnic minorities and the stereotypical portrayals, when they do appear, can lead to lower self-esteem among minority youth as well as alienation from them by majority groups.

- **Can media stories of social groups also lead to positive impacts on children?**

Recent research shows that counter-stereotypes and positive media portrayals can lead to better intergroup attitudes, healthy relationships with others, and greater empathy toward minority groups. Children from underrepresented groups have better self-concepts and increased self-esteem when they see complex and positive portrayals of their groups in media. Regular exposure to diverse and nontraditional stories help young people develop strong intercultural competencies and appreciation for difference, which are especially helpful skills while growing up in pluralistic multicultural societies.

Sexual Media^{xxi}

- **How much of an influence does sex in the media actually have on young people?**

Viewing sexual content is one of many risk factors in whether teens will begin having sexual intercourse at a young age (and the younger they are, the less likely they are to use contraception). Many other factors are involved as well—family factors, sex education, personality factors — but media can play a significant role, making youth act, sexually, like they are older than their years.

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- **Is exposure to sexual content more problematic in the digital age than it was previously?**

Although there have been no formal studies of sexual content in mainstream media since 2005, it is likely the answer to this is a resounding “yes.” Certainly, with all of the current devices available to most teens (smartphones, iPads, etc.), it is far easier to access sexual content than ever before, and youth are now also able to create sexual content, like sexts, that pose new risks.

- **Which teenagers are most affected by sexual media?**

The answer to this question is important and at the moment is not well understood. Much more research is needed. But it is clear that parents who co-view media content with their kids *and discuss what they’re viewing* are much more likely to have teenagers who wait until they’re older to begin having sex.

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 - ^v Hoge, E., et al. Digital Media, Anxiety, and Depression in Children.
 - ^{vi} Gentile, D.A., et al. Internet Gaming Disorder in Children and Adolescents.
 - ^{vii} Parsons, T.D., et al. Virtual Reality in Pediatric Psychology.
 - ^{viii} LeBourgeois, M.K., et al. Digital Media and Sleep in Childhood and Adolescence.
 - ^{ix} Robinson, T.N., et al. Screen Media Exposure and Obesity in Children and Adolescents.
 - ^x Atchley, P., Strayer, D. Small Screen Use and Driving Safety.
 - ^{xi} Coyne, S.M., et al. Parenting and Digital Media.
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