



Tracking Media Trends in Portraying Risky Behaviors

Development of a website for analysis of media content of public health issues

SUMMARY

In late 2006, the Annenberg Public Policy Center at the University of Pennsylvania launched a website, YouthMediaRisk.org, to make data and findings of the center's Coding of Health and Media Project (CHAMP) available to the public.

CHAMP is a large multi-year content analysis of health risk behaviors portrayed in popular:

- U.S. movies
- Television shows
- Music
- Music videos
- Internet use

The project examines trends in the use of tobacco, alcohol and other drugs, as well as sexual, violent and suicidal behaviors in media from 1950 to 2006. The study also assesses the modeling of these portrayed behaviors based on theories that the more a behavior is modeled to an audience, the more salient it may be to them, and hence more likely to be processed, remembered and reenacted.

The purpose of CHAMP is to use a rigorous methodology and sampling to track trends in risk-related behaviors as portrayed in the media over time so the potential positive or negative impact on adults and youth audiences can be evaluated. Real world consequences of media portrayal trends may include smoking, alcohol, sex and other drug initiation and use rates as well violent and suicidal behavior.

Results

In a report to the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF), the project team cited the following results:

- Since late 2006, YouthMediaRisk.org has provided scholars and practitioners with access to CHAMP's data on the health risk behavior content of U.S. popular media from 1950 to 2006. For each medium examined, the site:
 - Explains the coding methodology
 - Provides definitions of the behaviors that were coded
 - Lists research on health risks depicted in that medium

The website also provides a [list of the Annenberg Public Policy Center's publications](#) based on CHAMP data.

- Usage of the website grew from 1,024 visitors per month in 2007 to 3,909 visitors per month in the first 10 months of 2010. To publicize the site, the center advertised in several health and communications journals and purchased online advertising through Google Adwords.

Funding

RWJF provided a \$500,000 grant to support the development and maintenance of the website from December 2005 to November 2010. Annenberg Public Policy Center Funds were used for the development and analysis of CHAMP data.

Afterward

The website continues to operate and be updated with funding from Annenberg Public Policy Center. Researchers continue to publish CHAMP data and disseminate it on the website and encourage other scholars to post their data on YouthMediaRisk.org to be used for secondary analysis.

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BIBLIOGRAPHY

(Current as of date of the report; as provided by the grantee organization; not verified by RWJF; items not available from RWJF.)

Communication or Promotion

Grantee Website

www.YouthMediaRisk.org. Website created to disseminate the findings and data from the Coding of Health and Media Project (CHAMP). Philadelphia: The Annenberg Public Policy Center of the University of Pennsylvania.