

# TRENDS & TUDES

Keeping you connected to today's youth audience

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**EDITORIAL**

## Our Take On It


**Chris Moessner**

 Research Director,  
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Having a catch in the empty lot down the block. A twilight run-and-flop down the Slip 'n Slide®. Cruising the neighborhood on banana-seated bikes. A front-porch gathering of Barbie® Dolls, with a potential Ken® invasion. This is a snapshot of A Kid's After School Life in the 1950's, 60's and 70's. And not just one kid. But usually a gaggle of three or four or five or six – an out-and-out neighborhood recess.

Then: PONG! And Space Invaders. And Coleco® Football.



And Donkey Kong... The late 70's and early 80's ushered in a myriad of video gaming platforms – everything from

portable to console to computer-based. America's fully-integrated youth became "plug and play."



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## Video Gaming: General and Pathological Use

 By **Suzanne Martin, Ph.D.**, Manager, Youth and Education Research  
 and **Koby Oppenheim**, Research Associate, Youth and Education Research

This month's issue of *Trends & Tudes* explores the role of video games in the lives of young people. The Harris Interactive Youth and Education Research Group, in collaboration with Psychology professor Douglas Gentile, Ph.D., direc-

surveyed 1,178 children and teenagers (ages 8 to 18) in January 2007.

### Average Time Per Week Youth Spend with Video Games

Eight in 10 American youth (81%) report playing a video game at least 1 time per month, with nearly all boys (94%) claiming to play. The average 8- to 12 year-old now plays 13 hours of video games per week; while the average 13- to 18 year old plays 14 hours of video games per week. There are large differences between boys and girls, as tween and teen boys average 16 hours and 18 hours per week respectively. Tween girls average 10 hours per week and teen girls average 8 hours per week.

8- to 18-year-olds who spend more time playing video games are more likely to:

- perform more poorly in school
- get into physical fights
- be physically heavier

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tor of the Media Research Lab at Iowa State University and the director of research for the National Institute on Media and the Family measured pathological video game use with an approach based on the DSM-IV pathological gambling criteria. Using Harris Interactive's YouthQuery<sup>SM</sup> online omnibus, we

### Coming Next Month


**Cyberbullying**

Who is doing it and how to stop it

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Barbie has given way to The Legend of Zelda: Phantom Hourglass. Frisbees® have flailed to the ground in favor of Final Fantasy XIII.

And parents – who previously had reached over and turned the channel when their own antennae called for it – now must consult a national ratings board to determine whether a particular game is “appropriate.”

*[Note to self: Now I’ll turn off my “Wonder Years” voice...]*

The youth of America are still playing and hanging out with friends, only now they get an opportunity to play all those games for real and make-believe through very realistic video games. They form tighter bonds with their favorite television, movie and sports franchises by “becoming” their favorite characters. Yesterday, Harry Potter. Today, Hannah Montana. Tomorrow, Tony Hawk.



In this survey we asked youth why these games hold their attention. Youth tell us that these games are cool, fun, life-like. They are a way to spend time with Mom and Dad, siblings or friends. They are also a way to compete with these same people in ways they can’t in real life. Having a like interest in a video game, especially one connected to a television show or movie, allows them to talk about that character with a friend.

*“I can play cartoon games with my favorite characters. I can learn more about my favorite character and if someone else liked my favorite character I could know all the answers when they asked me. Knowing my favorite character is something I can enjoy, good fun. That makes me happy!”*

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## Video Gaming: General and Pathological Use

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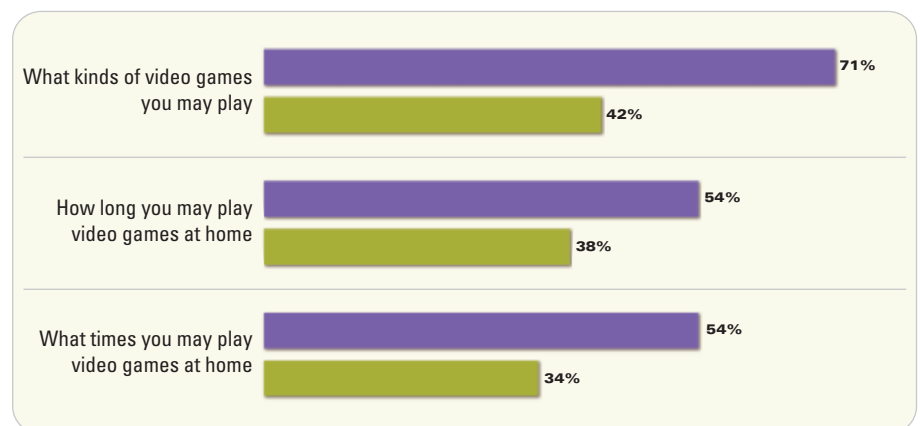
### Rules in the Household

Slightly more than half of youth (56%) tell us that their parent or guardian restricts the type of games they play. Slightly less than half of youth say their parents have rules about how long they can play the games (46%) or are restricted by when or what time of day they can play the games (44%).

### Are there rules in the home you live most of the time, about...?

% Yes

■ Tweens (8- to 12-year-olds) ■ Teens (13- to 18-year-olds)



*Response options: Yes, No, Not sure.*

*Source: Harris Interactive YouthQuery<sup>SM</sup>, January 17 – January 23, 2007; 8- to 12-year-olds n=462 and 13- to 18-year-olds n=577.*

### Video Game Ratings

The Entertainment Software Rating Board (ESRB) ratings are designed to help consumers understand the content of computer and video games; however, they are poorly understood by teens and tweens. Half of tweens or less report being extremely or very familiar with the different ratings ESRB ratings when shown just the letter codes. Only 15 percent report being extremely or very familiar with all six game ratings and only 23 percent report being extremely or very familiar with the four main ratings. Teens report slightly higher understanding across the



different ratings especially in the Teen, Mature and Adults Only ratings.

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Kids also get to learn new skills or experience something that their own personal skills or the laws of gravity won't allow them to do – like skateboarding, driving a car 180 miles and hour or riding a broom stick while chasing the “snitch.” Maybe it is just assuming another identity for an hour, like Tony Stewart or James Bond or Super Mario.

My youngest daughter tells me that the games are challenging and it forces her to think strategically in order to beat the game or to simply improve her high score. But I also get to hear the screams of frustration when she can't press all the buttons at just the right time and “her car” goes careening into the wall at Daytona. And look out if we forgot to pack the car power adaptor for the long car rides and boredom sets in.

Ultimately, video games – and really all forms of electronic gadgets – are the alternative to boredom. Youth are looking to be entertained and ultimately be *happy*. For many kids, video games are a form of mood control. Some just want to “check out” for an hour.

Our YouthQuery survey found that the average American 8- to 18-year-old now plays 13.5 hours of video games per week. Further, I guess I am happy that I have two daughters instead of sons as these data show that there are large differences between boys and girls, with boys averaging nearly 17 hours per week and girls averaging 9 hours per week.

Dr. Gentile's analysis of these data shows that there is evidence that a non-trivial percentage of gamers can be considered pathological gamers (or “addicted,” to use the vernacular). To be considered pathological, the gaming must harm a person's functioning in several areas, such as social, occupational, school, or psychological functioning. According to Dr. Gentile, “People have been talking about video game ‘addiction’ since Pac-Man, but we have only begun studying it scientifically relatively recently. Until now, we have not

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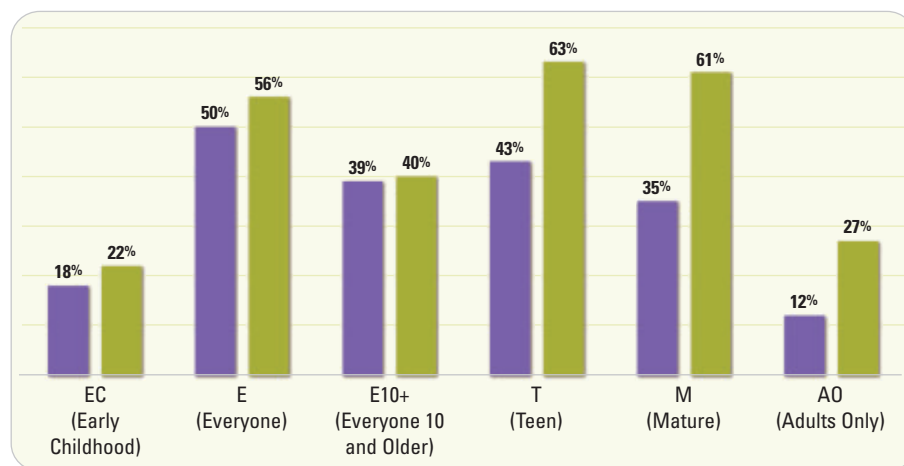
## Video Gaming: General and Pathological Use

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**Here are different ratings of computer and video games. How familiar are you with each of these ratings?**

% Extremely/Very Familiar

■ Tweens (8-12-year-olds) ■ Teens (13-18-year-olds)



Response options: Extremely familiar, Very familiar, Somewhat familiar, Not at all familiar.

Source: Harris Interactive YouthQuery<sup>SM</sup>. January 17 – January 23, 2007; 8- to 12-year-olds n=497 and 13- to 18-year-olds n=681.



Overall, slightly more than 4 in 10 American youth (44%) report that a parent has ever refused to let them purchase a game strictly due to the ESRB rating of the game. Males are more likely than females to report a parent not allowing them to buy or rent a game because of its rating, males 49 percent vs. females 37 percent. Over half of teens and almost one quarter of

tweens playing video games have bought or received a Mature rated video game. Perhaps an indication of parents' lack of understanding of ratings can be seen when looking at the number of teens and tweens reporting having bought or received a video game with a Mature rating. Almost one in five tweens (18%) and one in three (34%) teens received Mature rated video games as a gift. In addition, one in four youth (27%) have bought a mature video game. Few teens or tweens deceive their parents: only 1% bought a mature video game with their parent's money but without their knowledge. However, among youth who have bought a mature video game, 11% of tweens and 17% of teens bought an M-rated video game with their own money, but without their parent's knowledge.

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known whether this was a very rare issue or something that every parent needs to be concerned about. This study gives us the first national results, with about 8% of youth gamers demonstrating pathological play. Given that 9 out of 10 children play video games, this is not a trivial percentage of youth who are having real world problems because of their video game play.”

The world of today’s youth is fast paced and overly scheduled – kids expect the technology in their life to complement the quick pace. Video games helps fill the time between planned activities, school and sleep. Therefore, their technology needs to be quick, allow them to get things done quickly, keep them from getting bored, and can’t waste their precious down time.

However, the weight of the data also says that parents need to adjust their antennae to watch for a series of behaviors that might indicate serious problems which are real, not make-believe.

*Hey, has anyone seen my wall charger?  
The battery pack on my Nintendo® DS  
is running low and I gotta beat Tiger  
at Augusta!*



**Get Smart!**

Did you know that Harris Interactive conducts up to five free webinars a month? Spanning a variety of business issues facing a handful of industries, these one-hour interactive sessions allow you to catch up on the latest research advancement, proprietary industry findings, and best practices. Register for one or more sessions at <http://www.harrisinteractive.com/news/events.asp>. Visit often as our schedule changes weekly.

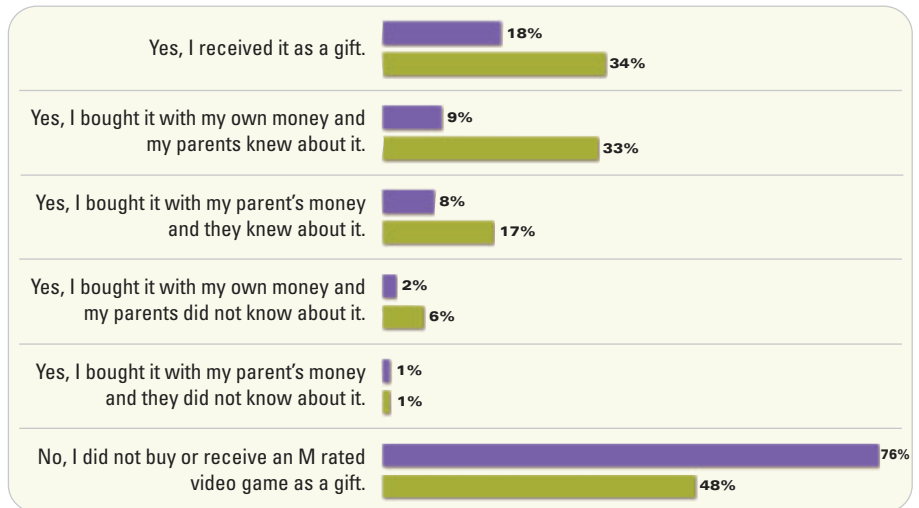
**Video Gaming: General and Pathological Use**

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**Have you ever bought or received a video game that was rated M (“Mature”)?**

*Please select all that apply.*

■ Tweens (8- to 12-year-olds) ■ Teens (13- to 18-year-olds)



*Response options: As above.*

*Source: Harris Interactive YouthQuerySM, January 17 – January 23, 2007; 8- to 12-year-olds n=462 and 13- to 18-year-olds n=577.*

**Violent Video Game Content**

Of those that have played video games, males are much more likely than girls to report playing more video games with violent content. Similar to previous Harris Interactive findings when youth claim little influence of advertising<sup>1</sup>, youth also claim little influence of violence in video games they play.



**% Who Have Ever Played Violent Video Games**

	Tweens (8- to 12-year-old)	Teens (13- to 18-year-old)
Male	89%	90%
Female	49%	62%

*Question:*

*Compared to other students your age, how much do you believe that you are influenced by the violence in the video games you play?*

*Response options:*

*A lot less influenced than other students your age, Somewhat less influenced than other students your age, Influenced the same as other students your age, Somewhat more influenced than other students your age, A lot more influenced than other students your age, I never play violent video games.*

*Source:*

*Harris Interactive YouthQuerySM, January 17 – January 23, 2007; 8- to 12-year-olds n=462 and 13- to 18-year-olds n=577.*

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## Video Gaming: General and Pathological Use

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### Pathological Video Game Use

Pathological video game use is becoming an increasingly important issue. Reports from Singapore and South Korea suggest that gaming addiction is real and on the rise. We took this opportunity to “take the temperature” of pathological video game use in children in the United States. About one third of males – regardless of age – report having felt “addicted to video games” compared to a little more than one in ten females.

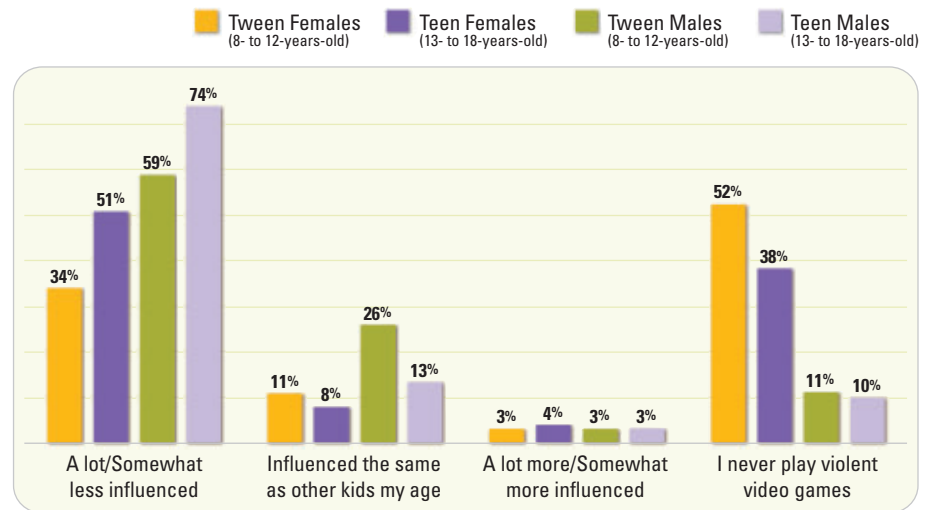
### How did we determine Pathological Video Game Use?

We measured pathological video game use with an approach based on DSM-IV pathological gambling criteria and determined that 8.5 percent of 8- to 18-year-olds can be considered pathological videogamers. To be considered pathological, the gaming must harm a person’s functioning in several areas, such as social, occupational, school, family, or psychological functioning.



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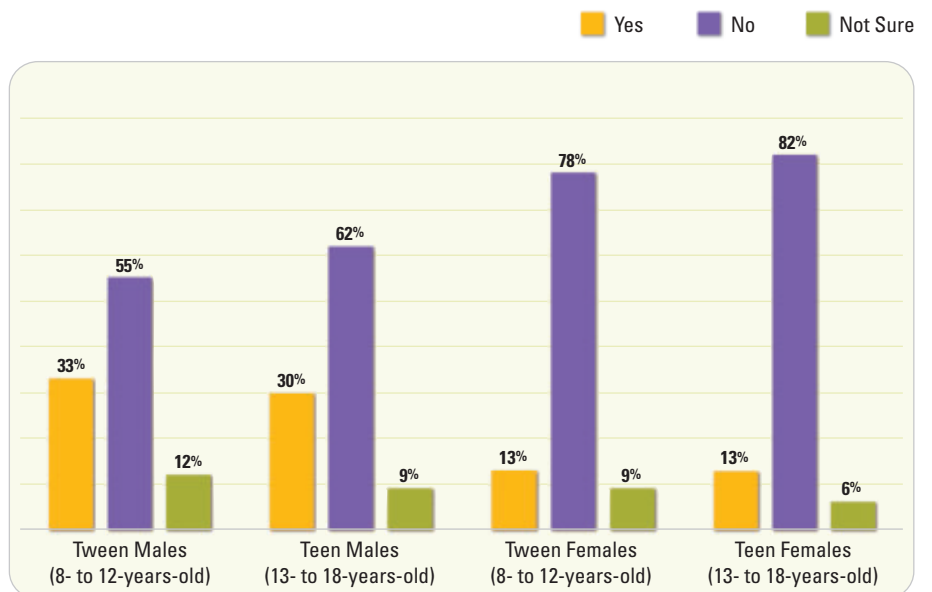
## Compared to other students your age, how much do you believe you are influenced by the violence in the video games you play?



Response options: A lot less influenced than other students my age, Somewhat less influenced than other students my age, Influenced the same as other students my age, Somewhat more influenced than other students my age, A lot more influenced than other students my age, I never play violent video games.

Source: Harris Interactive YouthQuery<sup>SM</sup>. January 17 – January 23, 2007; 8- to 12-year-olds n=462 and 13- to 18-year-olds n=551.

## Have you ever felt like you were addicted to video games?



Source: Harris Interactive YouthQuery<sup>SM</sup>. January 17 – January 23, 2007; 8- to 12-year-olds n=462 and 13- to 18-year-olds n=577.

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## Video Gaming: General and Pathological Use

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Dr. Gentile clarifies, “It is important that people realize that playing a lot is not the same thing as pathological play. For something to be an addiction, it has to mean more than you do it a lot. It has to mean that you do it in such a way that it damages your life. This is why we based our definition on the way pathological gambling is diagnosed in the DSM-IV (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual IV – where all psychiatric problems are defined). Almost one out of every ten youth gamers show enough symptoms of damage to their school, family, and psychological functioning to merit serious concern.” To be classified as a pathological gamer, youth needed to report exhibiting at least 6 of the following 11 symptoms.

1. Over time, have you been spending much more time thinking about playing video games, learning about video game playing, or planning the next opportunity to play?
2. Do you need to spend more and more time and/or money on video games in order to feel the same amount of excitement?
3. Have you played video games as a way of escaping from problems or bad feelings?
4. Have you ever lied to family or friends about how much you play video games?
5. Have you ever stolen a video game, from a store or friend, or have you ever stolen money in order to buy a video game?
6. Do you sometimes skip household chores in order to spend more time playing video games?
7. Do you sometimes skip doing homework in order to spend more time playing video games?

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	Pathological Gamers	Non-Pathological Gamers
	Average	Average
How often do you play video games?	5 or 6 times a week	Once or twice a week
How long have you been playing video games?	6.6 years	5.4 years
Do you have a video game system in your bedroom?	Yes 65%	Yes 41%
How long do you play video games on a typical week?	24.5 hours	12.1 hours
How familiar are you with computer and video game ratings?	Familiar with 4 out of 6 ratings	Familiar with 3 out of 6 ratings
Has a doctor or nurse ever told you or your parents that you have an attention problem, like attention deficit disorder (ADD) or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)?	Yes 22%	Yes 12%
What grades do you usually get?	Mostly B's	Mostly A's and B's

*The differences between pathological and non-pathological gamers are statistically significant.*

8. Have you ever done poorly on a school assignment or test because you spent too much time playing video games?
9. Have you ever needed friends or family to give you extra money because you spent too much money on video game equipment, software, or game/Internet fees?
10. How often are you successful at limiting how much you play video games?
11. Do you become restless or irritable when trying to cut down or stop playing video games?

On a national scale these data demonstrate that the amount of time spent playing video games is related to several important negative outcomes for youth, including poorer school performance, increased physical aggression, and

increased risk of overweight and obesity. Furthermore, those who meet the pathological criterion are showing evidence of damage in several areas of their functioning, including physical health and school performance. If video game trends in the United States match those of other countries that are farther along the “video gaming curve” increasing attention will be paid to pathological videogaming and intervention programs. Dr Gentile cautions, “we do not yet know who is at greatest risk to become a pathological gamer. This means that every gamer and parent should be alert for warning signs before it becomes a serious problem.”

#### Reference List

- <sup>1</sup>Martin, S. (2006) Advertising to Youth: What Youth Want and What Advertisers Need to Know. *Trends and Tudes* August Newsletter; [http://www.harrisinteractive.com/news/newsletters/k12news/Hi\\_TrendsTudes\\_2006\\_v05\\_i07.pdf](http://www.harrisinteractive.com/news/newsletters/k12news/Hi_TrendsTudes_2006_v05_i07.pdf)

# TRENDS & TUDES



## Dad, can I have the keys?

### AutoYOUTH<sup>SM</sup> 2006 Released

Sports car, SUV or Minivan? Standard radio or 6-disc CD-changer? Just how much influence do teens and young adults have on family vehicle purchase decisions?

**AutoYOUTH** is a joint effort between our Youth practice and Automotive and Transportation research groups, and the 2006 study is now available. This annual study collects and analyzes feedback from various youth segments concerning brand preference formation, early vehicle purchase influences, and new vehicle purchase intention by segment and brand. Some 2006 highlights:

- Honda is rated as the brand that extends the greatest outreach to young consumers.
- Interest in hybrid electric vehicles has shown significant gain year-over-year, with nearly one-half (49%) of young consumers showing interest in these types of vehicles.
- Males are much more “in tune” with the audio systems in their vehicles, showing higher awareness for most brands as well as a greater likelihood to purchase aftermarket components.
- The consumer shift toward MP3/iPod players is evident among this group as respondents are three times as likely to purchase an MP3/iPod player over a multi-disc CD changer from a third-party retailer.

To learn more about **AutoYOUTH**, contact us at **877.919.4765**.

## It's 8 a.m. – do you know what American kids are doing?

### YouthPulse<sup>SM</sup> 2006 Released

You need to know almost as much about the youth market as you would if they were all your own children. How they spend their time, how they spend their money, their hopes, fears and aspirations and which parts of the kid experience are totally different today than they were a decade – or even a year – ago. **YouthPulse** is the only study covering these topics and hundreds of others for kids from age 8 to 21, and the 2006 study is now available. To learn more about **YouthPulse**, contact us at **877.919.4765**.



## Ask a Question...

### ...Get an Answer

Have a burning question you would like to ask kids and teens? Here's your chance to submit a free question for our upcoming YouthQuery<sup>SM</sup> youth omnibus. Just send us an email ([HI\\_youth\\_research@harrisinteractive.net](mailto:HI_youth_research@harrisinteractive.net)) with your suggestion. We will pick one question each

month and then publish the results in the next issue of the newsletter. YouthQuery is your chance to ask one or a series of questions of 1,100 young consumers nationwide, and get accurate, projectable answers within days. To learn more about YouthQuery, contact us at **877.919.4765**.

## Contact Us

To make suggestions regarding this newsletter or to discuss a business issue involving youth or the people

and issues that influence today's youth, please contact us at **877.919.4765** or [info@harrisinteractive.com](mailto:info@harrisinteractive.com).

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