

Spanish Children as Captive Market of Screens

by

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Some years have passed since the time when the Spanish child audience lived totally absorbed by a few programmes for children, and the situation is no longer the same. The number of channels has increased, as have the digital terrestrial nets. Things have changed, but it is not clear whether they have improved. Recent papers on the child audience of “generalist” television, called this to distinguish them from pay channels, local televisions and terrestrial digital TVs, show that children still are, even more so than in the past, a captive market of screens¹, the same as before although with different traits. Supply in television has considerably diversified, especially those interests linked to the small screen: Recorded films, electronic games and Internet pages are present in an important proportion in today’s leisure time. What other features describe the present situation as far as the trends in television viewing by children are concerned?²

Some time ago, a group of scholars and researchers from several universities – including the ones who wrote this paper – began a thorough study of TV consumption habits in Spanish children (They are considered similar to children’s viewing habits in other European countries, and, in any case, the study will contribute to an integrated study of child audiences in the European Union). Part of these papers was carried out

¹ On this point, we refer to the pioneering research work in Spain on the issue of children’s audiences in which certain aspects on this market are analysed to call it “captive”. PÉREZ ORNIA AND NUÑEZ LADEVÉZE: “Programación infantil en la televisión española. Inadecuada relación entre oferta y demanda” (Programmes for Children in Spanish Television. Unsuitable Relationship between Supply and Demand) in *Telos*, nº 54 (January- March 2003: 103-115).

² Project PB98-0785-C02-01 on “Estudio de la oferta y de las preferencias temáticas de la audiencia televisiva infantil en España” (Study of Supply and Preferences of Children Audience in Spain), included in the Programa Sectorial de Promoción General del Conocimiento, financed by Comisión Interministerial de Ciencia y Tecnología. Also Project SEJ2004-00268-SOCI on “La televisión y la audiencia infantil en España. Criterios y contenidos de la programación y pautas de conducta” (Television and Children Audience in Spain. Criteria and Contents in Programming and Behavioural Guidelines); project SEJ2005-05805-SOCI on “Producción de los contextos de recepción de la audiencia infantil en España: el lugar de la familia” (Production in the Context of Reception of Children Audience in Spain: the Role of the Family); and project 06-HSE-0108-2004 of Comunidad Autónoma de Madrid on “La televisión y la audiencia infantil en la Comunidad de Madrid. Criterios y contenidos de la programación y pautas de conducta” (Television and Children Audience in Madrid. Criteria and Contents of Programmes and Behavioural Guidelines).

with financing from non-profit private institutions. Some of these works containing data obtained at the early stages of the research have already been published in specialized journals³.

A postgraduate course focused especially on the training in methodology applied to mass media communication has made it possible to develop some research papers by postgraduate students for the achievement of the Advanced Studies Diploma, and some doctoral dissertations are already at an advanced stage. This paper is one more sample of the task being carried out and the persistence in the analysis of this issue, undoubtedly relevant for the education of young generations.

It is evident that we are facing a problem that cannot be ignored. The dependence on television that children have shown in the past decade is totally significant, at least in quantity (This has been studied in depth. The qualitative approach has not). Further, there are now generational groups (or socialized groups)⁴ under its influence and this is something new that did not happen in the past. The statement “My son no longer plays, he just watches TV” is not the reflection of a more or less sporadic situation in some environments (sometimes a humoristic comment) but has become a widespread fact accepted by most without surprise, as something general and impossible to change. The author who made this sentence popular by using it on the cover of one of his books⁵ wanted to underline the change that was taking place. This was not beneficial to those who suffer from it.

The direct influence of this controversial but ubiquitous mass media which is not socially rejected in practice is manifested, as her work suggests - in the fact that it is used as a major source of entertainment for children, because “the TV fills most of the children’s leisure time (that is a lot) and that was previously spent in playing”. But the most worrying fact is that “parents stimulate and facilitate their children’s prolonged exposure to the screen, although it is paradoxically they who feel more alarmed by the negative effects they supposedly blame the TV for” (VALLEJO-NÁGERA, 2006:14). It could be said that this is one of the several contradictions perceived in our society that cause the general mistrust of those who analyse it from a distant and critical perspective.

³ Among others, the following papers can be referenced: José Ramón PÉREZ ORNIA and Luis NÚÑEZ LADEVÉZE, cited in Note 1; NÚÑEZ LADEVÉZE and PÉREZ ORNIA, “Los gustos de la audiencia infantil y la producción televisiva. El conflicto pragmático de los responsables de la audiencia infantil” (The Tastes of Children Audience and TV Production. Pragmatic Conflict of those Responsible for Children Audiences), in *REIS. Revista Española de Investigaciones Sociológicas* nº 99 (July-September 2002, pp. 113-143); and PÉREZ ORNIA y NÚÑEZ LADEVÉZE, “Lo que los niños ven en la televisión” (What Children Watch on TV), in *Zer* n. 20 (2006, pp. 133-177). Also, Juan CANTAVELLA and Ainhoa TORRES, “Un Consejo Audiovisual que vele también por los más jóvenes” (An Audiovisual Council to Protect the Young), a paper presented at the Fourth International Congress of Ethics and Information Law, recently held and Published in *La ética y el derecho en producción y el consumo del entretenimiento* (Ethics and the Law in the Production and Consumption of Entertainment) (Valencia, Fundación COSO, 2006). Some data and thoughts that appear in the papers mentioned above have also been used here because every new piece of research that is published becomes the base and support for further research work that develops and improves the former.

⁴ Cfr. MONTERO RIVERO, Yolanda (2006): *Televisión, valores y adolescencia*. (Television, Values and Teenagers) Barcelona: Gedisa.

⁵ VALLEJO-NÁGERA, Alejandra (1996): *Mi hijo ya no juega, solo ve la televisión*. (My Son no Longer Plays. He just Watches TV) Madrid:Temas de Hoy.

Professors NÚÑEZ LADÉVEZE and PÉREZ ORNIA have studied this contradiction and, in one of their papers, (REIS, 2002) have coined the term “pragmatic dissonance” to explain the frequent contradiction between the ideas of a number of parents and educators and their behaviour in practice. They start from the idea that the contrast between criteria and behavioural patterns is something usual in social behaviour, as can be observed in many other fields: traffic regulations or tax payment, for instance. If the same approach is used for this issue, a contradiction can be noticed between what they say television “should be” and the use they make – the ordinary use – of this media. The higher the situation in the social structure the stronger the contradiction, as one of the scholars in the project suggests⁶.

WHAT IS SAID AND WHAT IS DONE

The programmes most commonly mentioned in surveys, those that seem to be more interesting and are therefore watched more assiduously by the audience, help in understanding this issue. It can be deduced from one of these outdated surveys (1998)⁷, the results of which have repeatedly appeared since then in other studies and have therefore long been accepted as a sound attitude, that the most interesting programmes, according to the criteria shown by the adults in the sample, are news programmes (Telediarios) at 46%. If the answers are accepted as a description of the viewers’ behaviour, this is what demands most of their attention (39.6%). If the criterion is the answers of those asked, documentaries would be second in the ranking (16.3%), seen by a remarkable number of viewers (9.3%).

If those who answered the survey are to be believed, sports programmes would be much lower in audience share than news programmes and documentaries. Only a few seem to be interested in them (3.3%), and they are a favourite for only a scarce audience (6.3%), along with contests and live programmes with a studio audience, interesting only for a minority (3.5%) but little viewed (3.1%). More recent surveys by CIS (for instance, the one conducted in 2000)⁸ confirm these data. If their results are accepted as descriptions, preferences were addressed to films (68.2%), news programmes and documentaries (58.1%) and comedies or soap operas (34.3%). However, it is obvious that these confessions are in marked disagreement with the actual, tested, behaviour of TV viewers. In the same period (1999-2000), the programme with the biggest audience was “Big Brother”, a reality show with some elements of a contest. It has nothing in common with other programmes people are proud of mentioning as hobbies⁹. The same

⁶ CALLEJO GALLEGO, Javier (1995): *La audiencia activa. El consumo televisivo: discursos y estrategias*. (Active Audiences. TV Consumption: Discourse and Strategy) Madrid, CIS, page 56.

⁷ Study 2272 by CIS in January, 1998 on “Hábitos de comportamiento ante la televisión” (Behavioural habits on TV). The sample included 6-18-year-olds living in Madrid and a complementary questionnaire filled in by parents.

⁸ (The broadest and the most complete one is the study 2391 by CIS in May 2000, carried out by professors NÚÑEZ LADEVÉZE y PÉREZ ORNIA on “La televisión y los niños: hábitos y comportamientos” (Television and children: habits and behaviour) with a national sample (excluding Ceuta and Melilla) of the population between 7 and 16, in which parents were also polled.

⁹ It is interesting to see the explanation of the international success of this problem based on the transactional analysis by VALBUENA et al.: “Los juegos comunicativos en *Gran Hermano*. Estudio desde el Análisis Transaccional” (Communicative games in *Big Brother*. Study from a Transactional Analysis). In *Doxa 5* (in print).

happens with sports broadcasting. This the major type of programme viewed by the adult population, although surveys show that not everyone admits this.

The conclusion drawn from these contradictions is that the criteria of the participants in the survey are not a description of their behaviour, and that there is a contradiction between their criteria and their behaviour that deserves some theoretical explanation. This dissonance that is frequently present in our societies could also be applied to the concerns parents have regarding their children's attention to TV programmes. A variation of the same fact is the gap between criteria and behaviour. In general terms, parents consider that their children should not watch precisely the programmes they watch. The contradiction between rules and actual behaviour has been called a "pragmatic paradox" by the promoters of this research. For instance, most parents (86%) complain about the negative habits children acquire due to their ordinary exposure to non-selective TV watching. However, it is also known through questions posed to viewers that 70% of them can watch TV as long as they want¹⁰, and only 6% confess that they are not so free because their parents decide which programmes they can watch.

Is there a reason for this incongruity? What is the reason for complaints if children do not do what parents say they should be doing? Why is the expressed criterion different to the actual behaviour? The explanation for this is not easy. Hypocrisy and negligence in responsibilities can be mentioned, though it is feared that the causes are more complex than they seem to be. From the data obtained from the research it can be observed that some considerations regarding the influence on children can be misleading. We are especially referring to the topical issue of programmes inducing children to violence. Some journalists and moralists, and it might be added that they count on the acquiescence of those responsible for children's education, have lately developed a discourse that tends to consider films and TV series the main agent of social aggression in new generations. According to this point of view, the main cause of children's behaviour is to be found in the mimetic effects caused by the repetition of violent actions and images seen on the screen.

VIOLENCE AND CHILD AUDIENCES

There are reasons for experts to disagree on the consequences that can be drawn from all this. It is true that the screen has made violent scenes popular to the extent that there is hardly any home in which the inhabitants have not become quasi-permanent watchers of them. Children watch them several times a day¹¹. After weeks or months, the

¹⁰ Apart from the survey and the studies mentioned, the press contains some additional and confirming data, although they do not have the academic reliability of the former, as in *El País*, which summarized several surveys of specialized organizations: 66% of parents do not control what their children watch. This means two out of three parents (4th April, 2006, page 16).

¹¹ The observatory created by the research group on Communication, Society and Culture (GICOMSOC) at Universidad Rey Juan Carlos, directed by professor Ricardo Pérez-Amat, showed a report on "Estudio marzo-noviembre: televisión e infancia" (Research on May-November: Television and Childhood) (November 2006) on the infringement of the European Directives concerning broadcasting violent scenes during broadcast time for children by generalist TVs in Spain. "Seminario Internacional sobre la Situación de la televisión y la infancia. Comparativa Italia y España" (International Seminar on the Situation of Television and Childhood), 17 November 2006.

accumulation is highly remarkable. Of course, this has not started just now, but has been happening for a long time. From the very beginning, there has been an insistence on certain actions, some from cinema patterns and others from comics. They are widespread in fictional television supply (and now in other types of media as well).

When the time comes to search for the causes of the presence of violence in today's society and parents are urged to control the perceived aggression, TV is blamed for this. This is an easy attitude that can also be used to avoid one's responsibility.

The truth is that finding a way to face violence in television to fulfil the existing European directives on children's protection is very complex. Many different approaches have to be taken into account, some of which try to be benevolent and may become counterproductive in the long run. In general, it would be politically correct to ask programmers to fulfil their task responsibly, with good will and the intention of contributing to the social welfare. These three things are necessary but rhetorical conditions. There are important social discrepancies in the diagnosis of causes and origins of violence. This is the underlying problem in a democratic society ruled by the principle of freedom of opinion.

The major problem stems from the fact that the opinions on the causes of violence and the effects of programmes are discrepant and the criteria on how to deal with them are irreconcilable. It is easy to agree on the rules for responsible programming from a deontological-professional perspective.

Everyone would probably agree on reaching an agreement, which, on the other hand, has already been signed by generalist¹² televisions. But facts show that this is not very effective and has only rhetorical value. Any ethical code that is adopted must necessarily be compatible with the freedom of opinion¹³, which confirms that freedom can be guaranteed when it is suggested that it can be silenced in the name of ethics, which is very often the private expression of an ideological point of view. This has been the case in Spain, in some public speeches by the Audiovisual Council in Catalonia¹⁴.

In these conditions, a code that might have more than a guiding orientation and become prescriptive could be interpreted as a restrictive procedure that could have limiting consequences for the freedom of expression. This would not be a problem if the reasons behind it were not the discrepancies between the relationship contents and violent influence on children, the distribution of responsibilities relative to children's protection and the diagnosis of the causes of violence, and there would be a social agreement on its origin and the way to face it. There is not such an agreement, however, and there are many interests and conflicting perspectives.

¹² Spain has reached several similar agreements. The first is dated 26 March 1993, and was promoted by the Ministry of Education and Science and subscribed by Television Española, Antena 3 TV, Tele Cinco y Canal Plus and all public companies in radio and TV dependent from Education councils in all Communities. For the compilation of regulations, cf. ARROYO ALMARAZ, Isidro (2006): *Ética de la imagen.*(The Ethics of Image) Madrid: Laberinto.

¹³ Excluding the Statute of Radio and TV, which also includes ethical regulations, the first TV code of conduct was passed by the Administration Board of Antena 3 on 18 August 1997.

¹⁴ In 2006 CAC urged the cancellation of the permission to COPE for broadcasting in Catalonia for restricting the commentators' freedom of opinion and the audience's right to be informed.

For instance, some feel that the most important thing is to make society aware of pedagogical campaigns, leading it to a plural, tolerant and democratic pattern. But others believe that such goals are merely rhetorical, even contradictory, because the main cause of violence is the destruction of the family environment, the environment of benevolence and permissiveness, indulgence in penal laws, the social acceptance of a relaxed sexual moral, or children's orientation to the least possible effort, which leads to the social forgetfulness of self-exigency and excellence. In such a predominantly environment, it is naïve for observers to expect that TV programmes do not reflect – even if it is referred to children's programmes – the weakening of values in which living in a community is based. For those who think this way, it is useless to limit TV viewing. It would only be considered a wishful declaration, which will never contribute to reducing the reasons for the expansion of violence.

There may not be a clear or single cause for violence, and it may also be that children have always been both victims and potential agents of violence whether or not they have been watching television, although society is now manifesting this ambivalence in a more evident way, perhaps because it was innocently thought that a generalized, free and compulsory education would be a remedy for all evils. Obviously, results have not been as good as many expected.

In our approach to the relationship between programmes and child audience, the most important thing is that we count on data and experience enough to understand that there are some conflicting trends. By underlining these differences the concept of pragmatic dissonance found in previous research becomes evident.

This concept shows that freedom is ambivalent, and ethical and pedagogical approaches are not the solution if there is not a social normative climate, freely accepted, that cares for the family and tends to consolidate the child's confidence in the soundness of his own family and school environment. Therefore, although it is common to hear disapproving voices that tend to solve and simplify this controversy by blaming TV, the causal relationship has not been proven: the research published to date (and there are more than a few publications) has not reached final conclusions.

Secondly, the concept of "violence" itself deserves some comment and in-depth analysis, and the hypothesis that some degree of latent aggression in humans has to be admitted. This aggression requires some means of expansion and escape to be neutralized. From this point of view some forms of representing violence, which can be considered *idyllic myths*, such as the naïve Manichaeism implicit in many children's tales transferred to TV stories, may have had the function in the past of compensating for and channelling aggression that may remain today. It is obvious that this violence, to be adapted to the sublimated children's mentality typical of children's tales, cannot be compared with the increase of explicit violence or sexual promiscuity in TV series or *reality shows*. In the first case, the Manichaean dissociation between good and evil does not lead to the reproduction of the system but to the identification with a pattern of behaviour rejecting the other. It leads to the distinction between good and evil, sometimes in a subtle way such as when the violence of those who are good is expressed through the grotesque effects of comicality. In these cases it can be concluded that the mythical dramatizing of violence covers a valuable social function to be considered independently from explicit violence.

In the second case, things are more complex. Good and evil are not dissociated but instead integrated. Active violence can justify the violent reaction, as in the case of self-defence, or can be interpreted as a description of the existing social reality. Ignoring it would also be meaningless for the child, because going without it could be counterproductive in the medium run¹⁵.

Thus, finding the fair balance in violence in children's programmes is not an easy issue. It is a problem in itself. And it is to be feared that on many occasions, the voices against programmers may be an answer, an easy way out of transferring personal responsibilities concerning the care, attention and protection of the child to impersonal and abstract instances: "programmers should be blamed for that", or "TV channels" or "announcers", despite the easiest solution: if children watch what their parents do not want them to see, it is sufficient to switch the TV off and they will stop watching it. A new dissonant factor and thus its analysis becomes as complex and confusing as the latest studies by these research groups show, aimed at analysing the difficulties that the social context imposes on those responsible for children's education to perform their task and apply the criteria that they express in surveys¹⁶.

CHANNEL CRITERIA

This type of incongruity does not appear only in parental behaviour, but also in television. They leave their criteria aside when they plan their programmes for young children. They use grandiloquence in their declarations to the public (and why should a justification be needed if the public is precisely the audience that selects the programme?) in which programmers manifest their willingness to adapt to the needs of this segment of audiences at children's watching timetables¹⁷. A similar situation appears: what one says and does are different things; and the difference in this case is that there is no guarantee that what is sincerely said and not the practice of programming, which is evident in itself, but the programmer's criteria, influenced by some interests that they do not express or try to hide.

The contradiction among rhetorical effusions that have led to deontological agreements on the one hand and entrepreneurial practice adapted to the interest of offering the highest audience rate to advertisers on the other, has been evidenced in the paper already mentioned when it was confirmed that "timetables with the highest child audience rate did not have programmes for children"¹⁸.

¹⁵ On the socializing value of fictional stories on TV, cf. MONTERO RIVERO, Y. *op. cit.*

¹⁶ SEJ 2005-05805/SOCI "Producción de los contextos de recepción de la audiencia infantil en España: el lugar de la familia" (Production of Contexts of Reception of Children Audience in Spain: the Role of Families).

¹⁷ The report published by the Observatory of Universidad Rey Juan Carlos is essential: all offenders have signed an agreement on self-regulation. Therefore, the pragmatic dissonance affects both programmes and audiences, though the former, when they speak about the contradiction between what citizens declare in surveys about their programmes, does not coincide with audiometric records of the major programmes in audience.

¹⁸ They add: "Children – they state – are not a commercial *target* comparable to adult audiences; it is a specific group that, regardless their scarce purchasing power, discriminates or excludes the remaining audience from the watching where children programmes are being broadcast" (PÉREZ ORNIA and NÚÑEZ LADEVÉZE 2003: 112).

The paradox in the system is based on the fact that the supply is concentrated at wake-up time, a point of lower consumption (48.1%), but there is a lack of children's programmes at the times of the highest child audience.¹⁹

The latest analysis carried out by the same researchers pointed out that the sector of children's programmes is poor in variety of contents and genders, with a remarkable predominance of cartoons and a scarcity of educational programmes²⁰. Programming is complex and monotonous because of the repetition of the same types of programmes. Besides, it offers a high percentage of outdated products. "Children are offered contents with characteristics and structure that adults would reject", they state categorically.

All this confirms the conclusions of the study cited previously. It is not possible to find "original programmes, specifically designed for children, produced by channels, but in national channels, and these are an exception." The remaining cases are a collection of various mini-programmes gathered with some success in an "omnibus": they are bought from the major international producers, especially from the United States, and their low cost is due to the small amount of resources required to produce them. The lack of interest shown in making them is not justified. When the intention to serve this audience has been manifested and the imagination has been used to create high quality programmes, the results have been very valuable. This confirms the idea that there is a distance between the ideas that are emphatically defended and what is supplied daily.

There are more points collected by the research group that should be underlined. For instance, among the high percentage of fiction stories offered, it is surprising to see how many male characters have the leading role (81.8%) compared to 14.3% of females. It is true that this majority of male protagonists is linked to the literary and cinema tradition, in which men have the active role of hero and women are passive, waiting to be saved by them. But relegating women to secondary roles in such a remarkable proportion underlines the inertia in the trends followed by programmers and scriptwriters.

Indeed it is discrimination, although women are not ill-treated or despised. The fact that they are kept in secondary roles is a subtle way of expressing it. It can be observed

¹⁹ "On the one hand channels broadcast children's programmes when adults are not in front of the TV and when there is little children's consumption (hardly 6 minutes per child and day during the seasons 1999/00 and 2001/02) and, on the other hand, when children consume more programmes that are for adults or, in the best of cases, for families, knowing that children will watch what their family watches" (PÉREZ ORNIA and NÚÑEZ LADEVÉZE 2003: 112). This is not very different to what happens in other countries: In recent years, with the exception of Great Britain and the Scandinavian countries, there has been a trend of reducing children's programmes, cornered to some hours at breakfast time and mornings Saturdays and Sundays. The basic reason for this has been that both public and private television, especially private, have stressed the "generalist" side of their programming and have understood that children between 4 and 12 are the least relevant group of the population, representing but 10.1% of the Spanish population and between 6-7.5 % of the average television audience, depending on the season. Besides, children do not have an important direct purchasing power, although they induce their parents to buy". (Carmelo GARITAONANDIA et al.: "Las tecnologías de la información y de la comunicación y su uso por los niños y los adolescentes"(Technology of Information and Communication and their Use by Children and Teenagers), in *Doxa* nº III, 2005. Madrid, Universidad San Pablo-CEU: 51).

²⁰ PÉREZ ORNIA and NÚÑEZ LADEVÉZE, 2006. This type of behaviour by TV channels cannot be observed in other countries. As it has been noted since Himmelweit's report, commercial TV channels agreed to broadcast at least three weekly hours of educational and informative programmes (HIMMELWEIT, OPPENHEIM and VINCE: *Television and the child. An empirical study on the effect of television on the young*. London, Oxford, University Press, 1958).

when there are fewer women than men among the protagonists in fiction, when female characters speak less than male ones or when their attitude is more passive and unexciting. The authors of this report state that “most products analysed present women in a family structure (they are married, they have children and responsibilities as a consequence of these functions) whereas men are more inclined to adventure and risk. Therefore, there is a double discrimination: the story (women have little or no value in the story) and in the programmes broadcast (women’s presence is objectively much lower).”

It could even be said that there is another pragmatic dissonance in collective behaviour: Society does not act in a way that is coherent with the principles expressed or the dissonance might lie in the fact that it is not admitted that, after all, it is harder for the audience to accept the values that the politically correct language is forced to put forward. The difference between the rhetorical “must” and the actual “is” in programmes becomes evident.

FOR ADULTS

The research shows that children watch TV at a time when they are free from their school activities (on some occasions at times when they should be doing their school assignments, or when they are doing them while they watch TV), regardless of whether those programmes are suitable for their age. Furthermore, there is a trend of watching programmes for adults, even those that either because of the time they are on (they have less time to sleep) or their content are clearly unsuitable for them.

In fact, the time children view more TV is *prime time* (21.00 to 24.00), which concentrates 25.3% of the time children devote to TV watching (see Graph 1). As far as programmes for adults that are regularly followed by children’s audiences are concerned (see Table 3), the interest in following “Big Brother”, whose first edition was fifth in the ranking of programmes watched by children between 4 and 12 (520,000 in total), and “The Simpsons”, an amusing cartoon not addressed to children, with 23.2% of child viewers (an average of more than half a million children at such an early age).²¹

The extreme permeability is causing serious conflicts in many young people. Perhaps it starts at very early ages and could be measured by lack of attention, or the parents’ attitude of not wanting to get into trouble: in fact, there are many parents who do not know how to, or do not dare, say “no” to inappropriate behaviour, and there is a lack of

²¹ Carmen PÉREZ-LANZAC, author of the essay *¿Qué estarán haciendo?*, (What are they doing?), said in a report for the newspaper *El País* that the young “are well informed but with frequent references to TV. They watch a lot of TELEBASURA” (Juan Jesús Aznárez: “La generación más libre” [The most free generation], 3 April 2006: 15). Secretary of State for Social Services, Family and the Disabled, Amparo Valcarce, recently stated that “more than two million minors are in front of the TV set after midnight” and blamed the “rapid changes experienced by the family and the school” for the excess of time children spend in front of it daily, which coincides with the access of women to the workforce” and factors such as the increase of mono-parental families (*El País*, 18 November 2006, page 82). These remarks caused the anger of a reader of those newspapers who, in a letters to the editor, replied: “Enough is enough! What has to be said, and better to say it in a loud voice, so that those who don’t know it yet can learn it is that the *only* responsible party, in this case irresponsible, for the fact that a child is watching TV at midnight are his parents. Is that clear? (26 November 2006: 20).

awareness of the risks for the youngest individuals in watching programmes designed specifically for adults²².

It is probably the lack of supply of programmes specifically designed for children, together with other factors such as the Internet, that has created a gap in television (the average in recent years shows the decrease in some minutes). Audience research studies show that teenagers and young people watch TV an average of 144 minutes a day, compared to the average of 218 minutes estimated for the general population.

In this sense, the manager of a company that conducts audience research has confirmed that there is a downward trend, and the figure mentioned above seems optimistic. He forecasts that this tendency will consolidate because the so-called third screens (computers, videogames, mobile phones, etc.) are receiving more and more attention²³.

A survey conducted by the Faculty of Media Studies in Navarre (2005), Spain, stressed this point: the results showed that those asked were more interested in other types of screens. Thirty-eight per cent chose Internet, compared to 32% who chose television, and a similar result was found for videogames (47% compared to 34%) and mobile phones (40% compared to 37%), even when the presence of these media is relatively new and no one knows where the trend will lead us, though it will certainly have important consequences.

A recent study by an international institution for telecommunications²⁴ warns about the profound change these media are generating at all levels. Television has been surpassed by the way young people use other screens. This study mentions that while minors (under 18) devote some 14 weekly hours to digital media, they use only 12 for television, and this, translated into minutes, means 120 compared to 103 (for newspapers and cinema they have only 17 minutes daily). This is but a confirmation of the trend shown above.

It seems obvious that this passive way of passing time is influenced by the reorganization of social spaces in society: first it was the countryside, with cultivated nature; then, parks for children with urbanized nature; but as urban civilization evolved, gardens were reduced and the street became more and more populated and dangerous (CANTAVELLA-TORRES, p.157). Screens provide the shelter and entertainment that before were found at home. Although the home space seems sedentary and passive, this is not due so much to television, which does not allow interaction. Other screens offer higher participation – one does not only switch them on and off.

Besides, this dependence often replaces other possible activities: talks with parents, study, sports, games, social work, personal relationships, etc. The difficulties parents find because of their professional activities lead to the reduction in the time they spend with their children. The papers mentioned show an especially marked dissonance between the criteria parents have for how their children's education and behaviour

²² The newspaper *El País* summarized the words of a document published by the Spanish bishops on union in the conduct, and sexuality is precociously stimulated in children (19 October 1993: 25).

²³ Luz Sánchez-Mellado: "Minúscula pantalla" ("Tiny Screen"), in *El País Semanal*, 20 November 2005: 45.

²⁴ Lara SRIVASTAYA and Tim KELLY (2006): *Informe Internet 2006: Digital Life*. Ginebra, Unión Internacional de las Telecomunicaciones (UIT).

should be, their use of television and the attention they actually devote to them. Other studies also show that the fewer modes of entertainment that are available, the higher the dependence on television (stated by 20.1% of those asked).

The result of this complex interdependence of forces acting in opposite directions is that children are brought up without stable references. Their universe of values changes with the change in contexts. In practice, parents cannot look after them and schools cannot guide them. The child faces the screen without constant, homogeneous, regulating criteria. In fact, almost 50% of Spanish children – and the proportion is higher in other European countries – have a TV set in their bedroom. A similar percentage states that they switch the TV on as soon as they get home²⁵. Consumption habits progressively shift from TV consumption to other means that enlarge the spaces of virtual realities such as video games, online chat programs such as *MSN Messenger*, the Internet and telephone resources. This trend supports impersonal interaction by groups and the isolation within the family, an increase in the lack of rules and misleading guidance. There is no one with the child to explain, comment, clarify, guide or suggest a point of view that could serve as a reference²⁶.

²⁵ This percentage will increase like in other Western countries, where they already talk about the “bedroom culture”.

²⁶ Rosa PINTO LOBO (2006): *La televisión en la familia. Guía para padres y educadores*. (TV in Family, a Guide for Parents and Educators). Madrid, Secretariado de la Comisión Episcopal de Medios de Comunicación Social.

Table 1. Average consumption in Spain regarding ages, season 2005/06

Targets	MMin
4+	226.01
4-12 years	143.92
13-24 years	145.46
25-44 years	203.91
45-64 years	267.16
+ 64 years	322.67
Men	204.49
Women	246.78

Graph 1. Distribution of TV consumption in Spain for children between 4 and 12 years old, from Monday to Sunday, considering viewing times, 2005/2006 season.

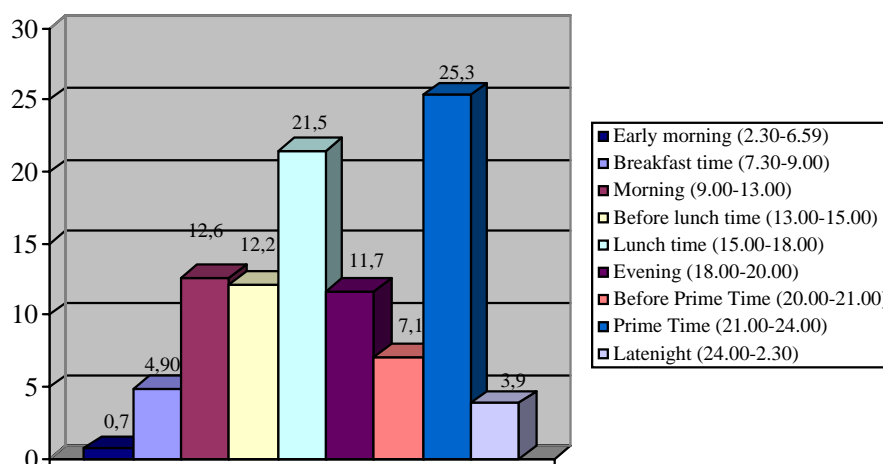


Table 2. Average TV consumption in Spain by children between 4 and 12 years old. Distribution by hour angles. 2005/2006 season. General TVs.

Time	MMin
Total day	143.92
Early morning (2.30-7.30)	1.07
Breakfast time (7.30-9.00)	7.07
Morning (9.00-13.00)	18.09
Early afternoon (13.00-15.00)	17.63
Afternoon (15.00-18.00)	30.94
Evening (18.00-20.00)	16.88
Early prime time (20.00-21.00)	10.20
Prime time (21.00-0.00)	36.48
Late night (0.00-2.30)	5.56

Table 3. 25 Top programmes watched by Spanish children in 2005/2006.

Borttaget:

PROGRAMAS MÁS VISTOS POR LOS NIÑOS/AS DE 4-12 AÑOS EN LA TEMPORADA 2005-2006									
Título	Cadena	Duración	Día semana	Hora Inicio	Emissiones	AM(000)	AM%	Cuota	
1	LOS SIMPSONS	A3	00:28:59	.....SD	14:12:51	165	395,758	10,822	51,663
2	CRUZ Y RAYA SHOW	TVE1	00:54:48	....V..	22:09:19	22	332,27	9,089	34,169
3	LOS SIMPSONS	A3	00:27:12	LMXJV..	14:12:59	417	320,607	8,767	46,001
4	FUTBOL:LIGA CAMPEONES	.....	01:51:02	.MX....	20:45:22	23	283,596	7,76	30,02
5	SHIN-CHAN	A3	00:21:34	LMXJV..	13:18:13	40	267,925	7,349	45,113
6	AQUI NO HAY QUIEN VIVA	A3	1:36:00	.MXJ.S.	22:08:17	40	256,764	7,025	37,839
7	CAMERA CAFE	T5	00:34:45	LMXJV..	21:28:12	151	247,836	6,771	26,035
8	LOS SIMPSONS	A3	00:26:21	.....S.	21:53:48	29	247,433	6,76	28,745
9	LOS SIMPSONS	A3	00:26:21	.....S.	21:53:48	29	247,433	6,76	28,745
10	ANTENA 3 NOTICIAS 1	A3	00:46:44	LMXJVSD	14:56:50	287	244,949	6,7	33,633
11	AIDA	T5	00:66:06	.....D	22:05:57	24	238,557	6,545	31,967
12	AMERICAN DRAGON	TVE1	00:20:38	.....SD	10:12:05	76	235,605	6,444	29,517
13	LA BANDA DEL PATIO	TVE1	00:19:54	.....SD	10:43:33	79	233,33	6,382	30,121
14	CINEMATRIX	A3	02:24:25	.....S.	22:19:32	44	232,667	6,363	34,652
15	LOS SERRANO	T5	4,41875	.MXJ...	22:12:14	26	225,271	6,143	31,915
16	SHIN-CHAN	A3	00:23:31	.....SD	13:18:51	113	222,734	6,068	41,79
17	PASION DE GAVILANES	A3	01:06:36	LMXJV..	16:18:17	102	220,866	6,064	35,143
18	ART ATTACK	A3	00:21:03	LMXJVSD	22:12:12	122	214,984	5,892	30,197
19	ANKAWA	TVE1	02:05:36	..X.V..	22:12:12	20	213,748	5,846	30,391
20	AVENTURAS J.NEUTRON	A3	00:22:30	.....SD	9:47:21	119	208,833	5,691	30,45
21	BRANDY Y MR.WHISKERS	TVE1	00:20:31	.....SD	9:42:35	60	208,095	5,699	28,225
22	OPERACION TRIUNFO. ACADEMIA	LA T5	00:42:32	LMXJV..	21:27:15	6	205,236	5,651	21,885
23	PELOPICOPATA	A3	00:28:20	.....S.	21:48:38	20	203,746	5,579	28,712
24	ZONA DISNEY	TVE1	02:01:05	.....SD	9:05:02	80	195,457	5,346	27,684
25	OPERACION TRIUNFO	T5	02:36:37	....JV..	22:10:32	6	195,026	5,37	37,341