

News from

ICCVOS

The International Clearinghouse on Children, Youth and Media

1 2004

Contents

Media for Children and Young People

Media Literacy and Children's
Participation in the Media

Children's and Young People's Media
Use

Media Violence

Coming Events

We welcome...

researchers, policy-makers, media professionals, teachers, voluntary organisations and interested individuals to the Clearinghouse information network. As a participant you will receive our newsletter and yearbook. Both publications (in English) include contributions of other network participants from all parts of the globe. (Participation in the network is free of charge.)

The value of the Clearinghouse as a forum rests in the breadth of its coverage and the commitment of its participants. In short: the more relevant information we gather, and the more who contribute from all continents, the better our services.

We are interested in research related to children, young people and media, with special attention to media violence, information about children's and young people's access to media and their media use, research and practices regarding media education and children's/young people's participation in the media, and in measures, activities and research concerning children's and young people's media environment.

News briefs and short articles to our newsletter, "News from ICCVOS", will be greatly valued, as will notices of coming and recent conferences, seminars and other events; of new publications; and of active associations and organisations with children, young people and media in view.

We are also grateful for receiving relevant publications and materials — if possible, two copies of each, please! They will be documented at the Clearinghouse into a growing knowledge base for overviews, compilations and bibliographies of interest to various groups of users.

As for publications and materials in other languages than English, French, German and Spanish, we kindly ask you for complementary translations of the titles.

We look forward to hearing from you, not least regarding any requests or suggestions you may have concerning Clearinghouse services. And we hope that you will appreciate our efforts — as a means of making your own work known in wider circles, and as a way to keep abreast of others' work.

News from
ICCVOS

Published by

**The International Clearinghouse
on Children, Youth and Media**
at

Nordicom
Göteborg University
Box 713
SE – 405 30 Göteborg
SWEDEN

Web site:
<http://www.nordicom.gu.se/unesco>

DIRECTOR: Ulla Carlsson

To contact the Clearinghouse

EDITOR AND SCIENTIFIC CO-ORDINATOR:

Cecilia von Feilitzen
Tel: +46 8 608 48 58
Fax: +46 8 608 41 00
E-mail: cecilia.von.feilitzen@sh.se

ASSISTANT EDITOR AND INFORMATION CO-ORDINATOR:

Catharina Bucht
Tel: +46 31 773 49 53
Fax: +46 31 773 46 55
E-mail: catharina.bucht@nordicom.gu.se

SUBSCRIPTIONS AND DISTRIBUTION:

Free of charge for individuals and institutions registered in the network of the Clearinghouse.
E-mail: clearinghouse@nordicom.gu.se

GRAPHIC DESIGN:

Roger Palmqvist

Media for Children and Young People

The 4th World Summit on Media for Children and Adolescents

The eagerly awaited 4th World Summit on Media for Children and Adolescents came off in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, on April 19-23, 2004. On the agenda were the rights of children and adolescents to quality media – “Media from All, Media for All” was the overriding theme.

Over 2,600 attendees from 70 countries were present at the Summit – producers, researchers, educators, journalists, publicity and marketing professionals, students, representatives of non-governmental organisations, national and international cooperation organisations, regulatory agencies, and funding institutions. Another estimated 2,000 persons have been attending the Summit on-line via real time web casts of each day’s principal sessions.

The sub-themes of the four main days were: One World, Many Voices; Media: Market, Audience and Values; Challenges to Quality, Alliances for Quality; and Commitments to the Present and Future. The lessons presented at the plenary sessions are published on the Summit web site, as are a great number of interviews and news. On the closing day the *Rio de Janeiro Charter* was adopted, available on the web site, as well. (The Charter is also placed on the Clearinghouse’s web site, go to “Declarations and Resolutions on Children & Media”.)

There was an Adolescents Forum too, with some 150 teenagers from different countries and cultures. This Forum demanded media that is truly from all, for all, and by all – media that are created by both adults and adolescents. Media should not work on young people’s behalf, but with young people, representatives said.

The Summit – chaired by Regina de Assis, MULTIRIO President, and co-chaired by Beth Carmona, TVE-Rede Brasil and Midiativa President – was supported by Rio Prefeitura Educação/MULTIRIO (Rio Prefecture of Education), Midiativa (Centro Brasileiro de Mídia para Crianças e Adolescentes; Brazilian Centre of Media for Children and Adolescents) and the World Summit on Media for Children Foundation (having promoted the previous Summits in Melbourne, Australia, 1995, London, the U.K., 1998, and Thessalonica, Greece, 2001).

The 5th Summit on Media for Children and Adolescents will take place in South Africa in 2007 hosted by The Children & Broadcasting Foundation for Africa (CBFA).

For further information, please go to: <http://www.riosummit2004.com.br>

• • •

Promoting Children's Quality Television in Brazil

In Brazil, 98 per cent of the population has television at home and this medium is children's and adolescents' main option for entertainment, leisure, and education. Only a few per cent have access to cable television, why the absolute majority is watching the so-called open channels. However, the quality of programmes on these open channels is often criticized.

In order to consider what can be done to improve the quality of media content that children and young people use, and to stimulate discussions for the 4th World Summit on Media for Children and Adolescents in Rio de Janeiro in April 19-23, 2004 (see the previous notice in this newsletter), an international seminar was arranged on December 9-11, 2003 in São Paulo, Brazil, for about 600 participants. Organiser was MIDIATIVA (Centro Brasileiro de Mídia para Crianças e Adolescentes; Brazilian Center on Media for Children and Adolescents) – together with LAPIC (Laboratory for Research on Childhood and Media of São Paulo University) and SESC (Social Service of Brazilian Business).

The topics discussed were: Children as media subjects, Children as media producers, Children as media characters and Children as media consumers. The event, which attracted much attention among the Brazilian public and media, was supported by a multitude of national and international organisations.

For more information, please visit:

<http://www.midiativa.tv/index.php/midiativa/content/view/full/531> (in Portuguese)

•••

The Radio Manifesto

Three years of discussions and workshops by children and youth around the world have resulted in a new international document, The Radio Manifesto, launched at The 4th World Summit on Media and Children in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, April 19-23, 2004.

The Radio Manifesto – addressed by young people to radio broadcasters – began in 2001 with youth radio broadcasters at Bush Radio in Cape Town, South Africa. Since then, the World Radio Forum has helped young broadcasters in other countries in Africa and the rest of the world to develop the text of their Radio Manifesto. Youth 8 to 18 years of age contributed from townships, remote villages, and the streets of capital cities, together with the new young citizens of emerging democracies. Their Manifesto proclaims strongly to radio authorities the rights, needs, and hopes of young people.

The completed Radio Manifesto was presented by World Radio Forum Director Sarah McNeill. It is an internationally recognized charter for children's and youth radio founded on principles of child rights and public service

broadcasting that will serve as an instrument for strengthening a child rights based approach to radio programming. Youth groups in many countries define what children and youth need from radio and what they want to hear on the radio. The Manifesto also calls for young people to have a strong voice in the formulation of radio broadcasting policy.

The Radio Manifesto is available at: <http://www.worldradioforum.org> The Manifesto is open for further contributions from child and youth's radio groups. If you would like your youth group to contribute to the Manifesto, contact Sarah McNeill at: smcn@worldradioforum.org

...

YES Baby – Television for New-borns

by ALINA BERNSTEIN

In December 2003, the satellite channel YES Baby started transmitting to new-borns in Israel, attempting to address children between their birth and age three, which is when HOP (the prime cable channel aimed at pre-school children) becomes part of Israeli children's staple diet.

The new channel's name is actually Baby, but all the names of satellite channels in Israel include "YES", the provider's name, in their title. YES Baby, which is unique in Israel and, as far as I am aware, in the world, is transmitted to satellite customers for an extra fee and accompanied by an interactive service to parents that includes further information and advice.

Showing a 24 hours' stream of programmes (without advertisements) a day, the channel is primarily based on pictures of nature and animals accompanied by classical music and no use of words – including, for example, *Halumot* (Dreams) that shows fish swimming on the screen; several imported programmes, such as the animation series *Mao & Mio*, *QuaQua* and *So Smart*, which present colors and shapes to children; and some Israeli-produced programmes, such as a programme with dolls titled *Bim and Bam Love Animals*, as well as *Be'yahad* (Together), advising parents on how to use the time they spend with their babies.

Negative Public Critique

Reactions from parents, educators, television critics and media researchers have been mostly negative although the channel operators claim to have consulted Israeli psychologists, music experts, and representatives of a European production company specializing in such programmes when planning the channel. However, some television critics claimed there is nothing wrong with a channel that helps to relax screaming babies, and I would add that babies who are surrounded by positive stimulation and lively communication will not come to any harm from watching a daily hour of this channel.

Nevertheless, most commentators agreed that YES Baby with its wallpaper/screensaver quality is harmful, not least as it turns children into telly addicts from a much too early age. The channel clearly rides on the success of videotapes such as *Baby Mozart*, which turns the notion that listening to classical music improves IQ (the intelligence quotient) into endless hours of catatonic gazing at a colorful screen. Indeed, and probably very much aware of this type of debate, the channel operators market it as an educational and enriching experience for babies, a means of getting acquainted with the world and absorbing knowledge – and not as the entertainment or distraction that it really is.

As one Israeli television critic noted, babies certainly do learn something from Baby – they learn to behave like their parents...

ALINA BERNSTEIN, Dr.
Film and Television Department
Tel Aviv University, Israel
E-mail: alinaber@netvision.net.il

•••

Dramatic Decrease in Children's Programming when U.S. Media Merge

How are the availability and diversity of children's television programming influenced by an increasingly consolidated media marketplace?

Children Now, an independent, nonpartisan research and action organization in the U.S.A., selected Los Angeles as a case for answering this question. Los Angeles is the second largest media market in the country and two duopolies (one company owns two broadcast stations in the same market) now exist among its television stations.

The study compares the children's programming schedules from 1998, when the market's seven major commercial broadcast television stations were owned by seven different companies, to 2003, which is after consolidation had reduced the number to five, that is, after the purchase of two independent stations by media giants that already owned stations in the city.

The study shows that the number of children's television series broadcast in Los Angeles was nearly half as many in 2003 compared with 1998. The number of hours each week devoted to children's programming had decreased by more than 50 percent. The number of stations broadcasting children's programming at any given hour had decreased as well, thereby reducing the diversity and availability of age-appropriate program choices for children. Most decreases occurred on stations that are part of media duopolies. Furthermore, the same children's programs were in 2003 much more likely to be repurposed, or aired on more than one channel or network, than in 1998. Most repurposing occurred between outlets that were owned by the same media companies.

According to the report, the results leave little doubt that concentration of media ownership diminishes the availability and diversity of programs for children.

Sources

Big Media, Little Kids: Media Consolidation and Children's Television Programming. Children Now, Oakland and Los Angeles, CA, 2003 (16 pp.)

Web site: <http://www.childrennow.org/media/fcc-03/media-study-highlights-05-21-03.cfm>

•••

HIP in Tanzania

In light of the facts that the number of HIV positive people in Tanzania is increasing and that information about HIV/AIDS and related issues generally is very scarce, the Health Information Project (HIP) has become a successful multimedia communication initiative targeting young people with positive, factual information about sexuality, reproductive health, life skills and job opportunities. HIP is entertaining and educating audiences throughout the country in 'edutaining' media formats that mirror youth culture and language. The project is executed by the East African Development Communication Foundation (EADCF), a non-governmental organisation with the goal to use mass media and other forms of communication to facilitate open talk – in order to empower individuals and communities.

An important key to the HIP approach is its interactive participatory production process. The *Femina* magazine is the core of the HIP products. It has become the most popular magazine in Tanzania with a print run of 92,000 in 2004 and is in constant touch with the target groups, ensuring that the questions, needs and voices of young people shape the form and content of the magazine. Other media products are, for example: *Si Mchezo!* (No Joke), a magazine for rural, out-of-school youth; *Femina TV Talk Show* – the first talk show on television for and by youth; booklets; interpersonal face-to-face communication road shows; and an interactive and bilingual web site.

As HIP has expanded, so has its donor base. The core project *Femina HIP* is funded by SIDA (the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency) and other activities are funded by, among others, UNAIDS, USAID and RFE.

For more information:

EADCF
Dar es Salaam, Tanzania
Tel: +255 22 212 8265, Fax: +255 22 211 0842
E-mail: femina-hip@raha.com
Web site: <http://www.chezasalama.com>

•••

Soul City – Successful Edutainment in South Africa

The Soul City Institute for Health and Development Communication (IHDC) – a social change project and South Africa's premier edutainment project – produces TV and radio programmes and booklets. Soul City IHDC views good health as a product of not simply individual choices, but of an enabling environment in which the structural barriers to achieving health and development are removed. The Soul City IHDC subscribes to the principles of the World Health Organisation's Ottawa Charter. Established in 1992, it is a non-governmental organisation, and has had great success in among other things reaching young people with information about AIDS and youth sexuality.

Through drama and entertainment *Soul City* reaches more than 16 million South Africans. In April 2004, the *Soul City Series* no. 7 is on. *Soul City* has also been broadcast in many other parts of Africa, as well as in Latin America, the Caribbean and South East Asia. As for the edutainment directed at young people about AIDS and sexuality, an evaluation showed that 45 per cent of 16-24 year-olds who watched, listened to or read Soul City reported safer sexual behaviour, compared to 28 per cent of those who not had access to Soul City.

Soul Buddyz is a popular multimedia edutainment vehicle for children aged 8-12 years old, designed to promote their health and well-being.

For more information: <http://www.soulcity.org.za>

•••

Trendsetting in Zambia

Young Media is a youth-initiated and youth-managed non-profit organisation specialising in Behaviour Change Communication. It mainly produces two monthly newspapers, *Trendsetter* and *Trendsetters School*, targeted at 18-25 and 13-19 year-olds respectively. Both newspapers are operated entirely by young people, aged below 30. The main aim is to provide information to help young people adopt safe sexual behaviour. Approximately one in five youths in Zambia is HIV-positive.

Trendsetter's 10,000 copies are sold at a small fee, while *Trendsetters School's* 50,000 copies are distributed free to schools around the country.

The project started in 1997 and has eventually become a success, though it met resistance in its first years from parents and religious groups who thought the message was to encourage premarital sex. On the contrary, *Trendsetters* encourage young people to delay sexual initiation, promote abstinence and to use condoms or other contraceptives.

For more information: www.youthmedia.org.zm/trendsetters

•••

Media for Children in China – Some Reflections

by WANG CHENG

By the end of the year 2000, there were 657 TV stations, mostly local, in China, covering 93.65 per cent of its population, that is, some one billion people.¹ The China Central TV station (CCTV) as well as many local channels transmit programmes for children and young people. On CCTV, Beijing TV and cable TV, over 65 per cent of children's programmes in 1998 were imported from foreign sources. Most of these programmes were animated. However, television in China is managed by the State and except for animated programmes, most other children's programming is domestically produced.²

The Internet

The Internet was introduced in China in the mid-1990s, and Internet use among children has increased remarkably during the past few years. Many parents, especially those in the economy-developed regions, consider Internet use a necessary skill for children, just as playing piano and learning foreign languages.

Two obvious attractive features of the Internet are its many alternatives and its interactivity. For children, the interactivity of the Internet means that they can place something on the web and receive responses. In this way, they have the chance to communicate with others. Take the children's of CCTV web site, for instance, which has launched a picture-filling competition on the web. Children can use the colours and tools provided on the web to fill pictures in as they wish. After being submitted, their works can be displayed on the web as in an art exhibition. A young painter can have a good time appreciating his or her work on the web while also enjoying others' works. And even more, if his or her work is exceptional, he or she will be awarded with prizes or gifts. This point is of great importance to Chinese children. China is implementing the policy of family planning in order to keep its quickly increasing population under control. One couple can have only one child if there is no special reason according to the policy. Therefore, most families of the new generation have only one child, who has no possibilities of having a sister or a brother. The children may have little opportunity to communicate with companions of their age within their families as their parents had. The Internet may play a role in helping children get to know each other and enjoy themselves in their own ways.

At the same time, there is an enormous amount of violence published in media daily. Thus, although parents would like their children to use the Internet, they worry that their children may find undesirable information on the web.

Conflicts between Imported and Chinese Culture

According to a survey sponsored by the departments within Shandong Provincial Government in 2002,³ imported culture has a dominant position in

youth culture. The survey used questionnaires and face-to-face interviews with some 5,000 children in the major cities in the Province, such as Qingdao, Jinan, Yantai, Heze and Dezhou. The survey's findings show that many primary school students often watch imported films and cartoons, and regard, for instance, *Harry Potter* and *Stuart Little* as their favourites. Additionally, most children like collecting cards featuring characters in Japanese cartoons, as well as collecting gifts from McDonalds and Kentucky Fried Chicken. The children in the study said that the reason they are in favour of imported culture is that the techniques of expression are novel, and the stories are always interesting and full of imagination.

As a Chinese media professional, I must ask: Why do children lose interest in their traditions? How can we preserve the cultural diversity for them?

As we know, Chinese culture has a history of over 5,000 years. With its uniqueness, profoundness and continuity, this culture plays an important role in the overall oriental cultural system. Currently, even Hollywood, the giant of the world movie industry, has begun to seek stories from Chinese traditional culture. Take the Disney cartoon *Mulan*, for example. It is a folk story that can be traced to the Han Dynasty (206 B.C. - 220 B.C.) in China. The story is very popular in the Chinese children's parents' generation and earlier. Compared with that of the U.S.A., a nation just over 200 years old, the more than 5,000 years of China's history can offer both Chinese and international media producers abundant resources of original materials for their creative work.

But the problem is that the world is changing quickly. There are always conflicts between tradition and trend. Imported culture, e.g., overseas-produced films and books, may have a double effect on Chinese children. A positive effect is that the children can find something new and different from that in their own culture, which may broaden their views and enrich their experiences. And to a certain extent, it may be helpful to relieve the children's physical and psychological pressures during the process of their growing up.

The negative effect is that the imported films and books emerge in a culture that is quite different from the Chinese one. As the Chinese children live with and are unconsciously affected by Chinese traditions, they face strong conflicts between the different cultures. The children may not recognize the conflicts themselves, but the conflicts can contribute to a kind of unsteadiness in their mind. For example, some children blindly imitate the fighter characters in Japanese cartoons, fighting with each other and regarding the winner as a hero. The imported culture may distort their mind and lead them in a wrong direction, because they are unable to judge what is right and wrong in other cultures.

To Preserve Cultural Diversity for Chinese Children

To preserve the cultural diversity for children is, in a sense, to let them know the standard of the morality in their own culture. The standard will help children establish a balanced view of the world and of values. The traditions, based on their own cultural background, are the roots that allow children to grow up in the earth of the culture.

References

1. *China Radio and TV Annual 2000*, China Radio and TV Annual Press.
2. Goonasekera, Anura (2000) "Introduction", in Goonasekera, Anura et al. *Growing Up With TV. Asian Children's Experience*, Singapore, Asian Media Information and Communication Centre (AMIC), p. 1-11.
3. *Shandong Juvenile Study Journal*, April 2002.

WANG CHENG

Translator, Coordinator of Overseas Cultural Exchange, Member of the Board of Directors of Qingdao Children's TV Development Council, Cultural Project Manager of the Media and Communications Department
Qingdao, China
Tel: +86 532 309 2035, Fax: +86 532 580 2004
E-mail: henrywong188@yahoo.com.cn, wangcheng@qingdao.gov.cn,
henrywong@qingdaonews.com.cn

•••

Russian Children and the Problem of Media Regulation

by ALEXANDER FEDOROV

In March 2001, the Russian Ministry of Culture published *The Guidance on Age Classification of Audiovisual Products* (1, pp. 2-3), in which the main principles of regulation, transmittal and distribution of audiovisual products were designated. The following age ratings system were established:

- *For the general audience* (the audiovisual media text does not contain violence or cruelty, profanity or morally offensive expressions);
- *Parental guidance of children under 12 years* (parents can consider some audiovisual materials improper for children; the media text may contain profanity, mild violence without demonstration of bloodshed, a brief image of accidents, naked bodies, mild scenes of mysticism and horror);
- *No children under 16 years* (the audiovisual media text may include verbal mention or an evident image of suicide, death, crimes, violence, cruelty, mild sex, drug addiction, alcoholism or other "adult" plots, or strong language);
- *No audience under 18 years* (media texts for an adult audience only; obvious and realistic images of violence, drug addiction, alcoholism, sex, or coarse language).

According to the Russian Ministry of Culture, the classification is intended "to protect children and teenagers from audiovisual products that can harm their health or emotional and intellectual development, and to respect the opinion of

an adult audience disturbed by cruelty and violence and its influence on citizens against their will" (1, p. 2).

The general principles of application of the Ministry's document include full freedom of choice and media use for an adult audience under the condition of sufficient protection of children and teenagers, but also prohibits products promoting "war, violence and cruelty, racial, national, religious, class and other exclusiveness, and pornography – according to Article 29 of the Constitution of the Russian Federation and Article 31 of Bases of the Legislation of the Russian Federation about Culture" (1, p. 2). For example, *The Guidance on Age Classification of Audiovisual Products* (1, p. 3) forbids public distribution and demonstration of scenes of:

- sexual violence inflicted on children;
- unjustified details of sadism and excessive violence and cruelty, especially concerning children and animals; episodes of cutting up victims, torture, murder in especially fanatic ways; close-ups of tormented people and animals;
- violence over corpses;
- methods of manufacturing and using weapons and devices for tortures;
- glorifying chauvinism and national exclusiveness, racism, propaganda of wars and conflicts, appeals for violent overthrow of existing political regime;
- pornographic content, namely naturalistic detailed fixing of stages of the sexual act and the graphic demonstration of exposed genitals during sexual contact only for excitation of sexual instincts of spectators outside of any art or educational purpose; the naturalistic image of group sexual actions;
- detailed instructions or encouragements regarding crime and violence, and drug abuse.

Regulation in Practice

Apparently, many of these definitions are rather dim and indistinct, which in practice complicates the concrete classification of media texts and regulation in the media sphere. Worse, however, the document's requirements are simply not adhered to in the majority of Russian regions. The prospering piracy market of audiovisual productions makes it possible for a child or youth to buy or hire a videocassette, computer game, DVD, or CD with an "adult" age rating. Moreover, media content not intended for child audiences is shown on many Russian TV channels during daytime and early evening without any restrictions.

A number of Deputies in the Russian Parliament (State Duma) have long expressed concern about this situation, occasionally trying to introduce bills regulating children's opportunities to use all types of media texts. However, none of these attempts has yet led to the passing of a law. According to Deputy of the Russian State Parliament V. Galchenko, negative influences of modern Russian television on children may result in antisocial behaviour and conflicts with the law. In order to change this situation, Galchenko proposed:

- the introduction of public control of television, that is, assignment of supervisory and monitoring functions to public councils;
- using such measures as self-regulation, that is, to allow the TV company define whether a programme is appropriate for a family audience and take into account the time of broadcasting (2).

An Urgent Need for Effective Media Regulation

In my opinion, the regulation of the time of programme transmittal is necessary in Russian television. By analogy with international practice, it is possible to suggest that Russian TV companies abstain from displaying intense violence from 6 a.m. to 10 p.m. Furthermore, they should use the age rating symbols in both the TV guides in the press and directly preceding the actual television transmittal.

It is necessary that establishments selling and hiring out videocassettes, DVDs, CDs and CD-ROMs observe similar rules of age restrictions. The customers must have the chance to read the specified age restrictions or the intended audience of a media product.

In a word, there is an urgent need for an effective system of media regulation in Russia.

References

1. "The Guidance on Age Classification of Audiovisual Products. Appendix N 1 for the Order of the Russian Ministry of Culture, N 392 (March 5, 2001)", in: S.V. Barkanov (ed.) *Video Satellite 2002*. Moscow: Third Rome, 2002, pp. 2-3.
2. Will TV Behave Responsibly? Description of a Round Table on TV and Law. http://www.narod-party.ru/news.asp?news_id=2167 (April 7, 2003).

Note

This article was supported by a grant from the Program of Individual Research of The John and Catherine MacArthur Foundation (grant N 03-77894-000-GSS).

ALEXANDER FEDOROV, Ph.D., Professor

President of the Russian Association for Film & Media Education
Member of the Russian Academy of Cinematographic Arts & Sciences
Taganrog Pedagogical Institute
Taganrog, Russia

E-mail: fedor@pbox.ttn.ru

Web sites: <http://www.mediaeducation.boom.ru>, <http://mediareview.by.ru/mediaeng.htm>,
<http://edu.of.ru/mediaeducation>

• • •

Media Literacy and Children's Participation in the Media

National Media Education Program in Argentina

by ROXANA MORDUCHOWICZ

The National Ministry of Education in Argentina recently created a national Media Education Program to coordinate various initiatives between the media and the schools across the country.

The program has the media industry as its main partners. All initiatives count on the participation of the television channels, radio stations, newspapers and cinema. The idea behind this is that one cannot work with media education without the media, and it is thus necessary to involve the media in the debates and projects. The Media Education Program makes it possible for the Ministry of Education to discuss media and educational issues with the industry. This is the first time in Argentina that the media have become directly interested in what education has to say. Media representations and youths' voices are often the main topics in these discussions.

The National Media Education Program coordinates several different projects, each with a different medium, covering all levels of education. The projects are based on the program's main goal: to consider *the students as cultural producers who know how to read different texts (media contents) and, certainly, how to produce them.*

The School Goes to the Cinema

The project "The School Goes to the Cinema" allows 10,000 secondary school students (13 and 14 years old) across the country from very poor neighborhoods to go to the cinema, during school hours, to see three Argentine films per year. After the film, the director, writer, actors and other professionals who took part in the film production talk with the students about the way the film was made. For most of the students it is their first time in front of the big screen.

The School Makes TV

The project "The School Makes Television" invites all 11- and 12-year-old primary students in urban schools to write a fictional story about a certain subject. Six stories from the entire country (one per region) are then produced as "advertisements" and shown on all Argentine TV channels for a month. In order to produce a story, a student needs to investigate, learn about publicity (be critical), conduct research on the issue and write the story. The subject in 2003 was "Thinking about the other". The task for the students was to investigate who "the other" is, and what "I and the other" means.

Moments of Radio

"Moments of Radio" invites primary schools in rural areas to write a story on "Legends and characters in my town". Twenty-three stories (one per province) are chosen and broadcast on all AM and FM radio stations in the country for a month on radio shows with the highest audience ratings. The project connects rural students with their roots and the elderly in their towns, and displays the value of their culture and traditions for the rest of the country (mostly the urban population, which ignores rural areas).

Journalists for a Day

"Journalists for a Day" invites all 16- and 17-year-old secondary students to write an in-depth report on a subject that interests them. A jury consisting of editors of all newspapers chooses some 70 reports from across the country. The first Sunday in December, the newspapers publish on a full page a report written by the students. In order to write their report, students read newspapers and professional reports, investigate the social problems affecting their own lives – and write.

Giving Children a Voice

It is hoped that students through this media education program already from primary school, will learn that they have a voice, that they will be able to study how the media function, and learn how to use them. And the entire Argentine society, no matter where one lives, will be able to watch a TV campaign written by small children, listen to rural traditions on the radio selected and expressed by rural children who do not normally have a voice in the public sphere, and read about what affects, worries and interests the country's youths.

The projects, giving unique opportunities to children and youths, and to the school and entire communities, count on the support and involvement of the media industry. Television provides airtime for the "advertising" campaign, radio offers time for the rural schools, and the newspaper association furnishes a full page one day of the year. Also, the projects are free of charge for the state.

For more information:

Web site: <http://www.me.gov.ar> (click on *Escuela y Medios*)

E-mail: escuelaymedios@me.gov.ar

Postal address:

Programa Escuela y Medios

Ministerio de Educación, Ciencia y Tecnología

Pizzurno 935. Of. 139

(1020) Buenos Aires, Argentina

ROXANA MORDUCHOWICZ, Ph.D.

Professor at Buenos Aires University

Director and Coordinator of the National Media Education Program

National Ministry of Education, Buenos Aires, Argentina

• • •

Media-Educ Observatory – New Database of Media Education Initiatives

In October 2003, a four-country consortium set up an online observatory for media education in Europe, entitled Media-Educ. It will establish a Europe-wide database of media education initiatives.

The Media-Educ Observatory has been set up to meet the great need for media education amongst young people. With varied motivations and goals media education initiatives are proliferating across Europe. There is, though, a shared commitment – to develop critical, analytic or creative skills in relation to the modern communications media. The key theme in Media-Educ's first year of operation will be evaluation.

By registering with the Observatory, media educators can become part of a growing network for dialogue, the sharing of practice, and the validation of outcomes.

Five organisations form the consortium that has set up Media-Educ; representatives from each organisation form the Steering Group:

- CLEMI – Centre de liaison de l'enseignement et les médias d'information, Paris
- BFI – British Film Institute, London
- CEM – Conseil de l'Education aux Médias, Bruxelles
- UCL-GREMS – Université Catholique de Louvain, Louvain-la-Neuve
- Zaffiria – Italie

An International Conference was held in Belfast, Northern Ireland, May 13-15, 2004, where media educators from across Europe debated the challenge and opportunities for media education.

For more information: www.Media-Educ.org

•••

ALLMEDIA – For Media Literacy in Europe

ALLMEDIA is a Swedish-based project involving five European countries, with the aim to create a pan-European non-profit network in bringing media literacy education to all pupils and students in Europe. Its goals are to stimulate growth in media literacy education, help people to be able to critically analyse and create messages, and bring together a diverse alliance of formal and non-formal educational organisations to a network.

An international conference will take place in Karlstad, Sweden, on September 3-4, 2004. This conference will present some of the important ongoing media literacy projects, and invite organisations to participate in the establishment of the European Media Education Network. (See also under "ComingEvents" on the Clearinghouse's web site.

For more information: www.allmediaeurope.org

•••

Children's Media Production in Lanalhue, Chile

by RAYÉN CONDEZA

In the rural areas of Chile, children between the ages of 6 and 14 study in public boarding schools far away from their parents. One of these schools is in Lanalhue, which means "lost soul" in the native language, situated 700 kilometers south of the capital of Santiago. The 90 pupils come from farmer families of extreme poverty. Seventy per cent of them descend from the native population. During the weekends, the pupils return back home and work in agricultural farming. Many of them have to walk an hour or more to get to school. The closest city is situated 16 kilometers away, but the children do not have resources to travel to the city.

In the face of the school's isolation and insufficient infrastructure, broadcast television and radio are the main ways of contact with the outside world. We went there with the purpose to teach the children to be radio reporters and to produce their own news about their school and community.¹

Children as Protagonists in the Production Process

The pupils did not have any experience of media education, media literacy or education in communication via media (von Feilitzen 2002)² Despite the educational reform that the government carried out in the 90s, a high correlation still persists between schools of extreme poverty and lack of education in media and technologies. In this case, the teachers needed support in learning how to use radio equipment. To help them, a method of teach-and-learn was designed.

The method solved the education problem of the teachers through the use of the children as protagonists in the process of radio production. The implied presumption is that media are a tool in the service of the basic human communication needs between persons and their surroundings in accordance with their own experiences, problems and interests. It implies acknowledgement of the significance of community and culture in each situation that is to be investigated. As communication educators we are more concerned with teaching the children to be protagonists in the whole communication process than focusing on the medium itself. Therefore the work centered on the children's active learning in being reporters.

Results

Educating the children to be reporters entails that we use the radio as a pretext to develop better skills in thinking in such areas as communication, expression, discussion, analysis of reality, selection and reproduction of events that are enduring and independent of the chosen medium. During the three days the project lasted, the children produced 33 minutes of news – broadcast on their own. They were able to define what news is, to report news items, to edit and finally also to record them.

To achieve this we organized different workshops for training: "The Ear", to develop the ability of monitoring; "Components of the Radio", to handle the language of broadcasting; "Expression", where the children learned how to breath and to announce; and, finally, "Interview", to handle the recorder, to interview and to relate histories through the radio.

Through teamwork and by assuming the real roles in a process of production the children had a meeting to discuss the important events in the area and to select the subjects for the programme. Then the children went out in the district to make reports: they made manuscripts, edited and recorded the news. The news was broadcast at school. The news was also transmitted to the whole rural district thanks to the radio station in the closest city, which became interested in transmitting the programme. The children walked all the way to the professional broadcasting studio to present it to the local community.



Child radio reporters in Lanalhue.
Photo: José Antonio Soto

Impacts of the Children's Experiences

The first emotionally moving indicator is the children's happiness, pleasure and satisfaction while learning. Even though the working day started early in the morning they insisted on working until eight o'clock in the evening.

"We threw ourselves out in the adventure of being reporters", they said.

When they understood that messages represent the reality in which they live they came to appreciate teamwork and expressed that they felt responsible and important. They articulated expressions, such as:

"I never thought that I would be capable of producing a programme."

"I've never felt intelligent before."

Another consequence is that the children developed a sense of utility in relation to their own community. They became conscious that even though they live in poverty, their surroundings are full of information and histories. They became aware of the necessity to document their daily life. This strengthens their identity:

"We discovered that our grandparents had to work with farming because they didn't have the opportunity to study. Those who were able to study didn't use uniform and went barefooted to school during the winter."

This experience also allowed the children to open up a door to the future as they dream of being reporters as grown-ups. Perhaps the words of Magdalena 11 years old express the common feeling of what this experience meant for the pupils:

"It's unbelievable to feel like a reporter, because it allows us to see more than our own square meter."³

The method especially designed for this project⁴ has been acknowledged in different seminars and has been replicated by other universities in Chile because of its innovative focus on pupils' media production.⁵ To our country this method seems relevant, but we also need to promote other learning processes for children.

Notes

1. Part of the Catholic University mission is to contribute professionally to areas of great social need in the country. The project was carried out in July, 2002.
2. von Feilitzen, Cecilia (2002) Aprender haciendo: reflexiones sobre la educación y los medios de comunicación, *Revista Comunicar* 18, 2002, ISSN: 1134-3478, pp. 21-26.
3. A documentary for television was made based on the experience of the project. It shows the children in their learning process. The documentary was awarded an honourable mention at the "Festival de Video Educativo de Chile, Videas 2002". It has also been broadcast on television.
4. Condeza, Rayén (2002) "Producir para los medios: niños y niñas protagonistas y su relación con el desarrollo de habilidades afectivas y de pensamiento de calidad. Hacia una metodología de intervención educativa". A document written on account of the seminar "Radio, Ciudad y Educación" (Radio, City and Education), Santiago de Chile, August 2002, 10 pp. Institute of Media Studies, The Catholic University of Chile.

5. It can be added that this project, among others, was selected (out of 400 proposals) for exposition at the World Panorama Session at the 4th World Summit on Children for Media and Adolescents in Rio de Janeiro, April 19-23, 2004. One of the adolescents participating in the Lanalhue project was also the only Chilean young person taking part in the Adolescents Forum at the Summit (see the special notice on The 4th World Summit in this newsletter).

RAYÉN CONDEZA

Journalist, Master in Instruction Design, Lecturer in the Master Program in Communication and Education
Institute of Media studies, Faculty of Communications
The Catholic University of Chile
Santiago de Chile, Chile
E-mail: rcondeza@puc.cl
Web page: <http://www.puc.cl/fcom>

•••

The Young Web of Citizenship in Brazil

by RICARDO FABRINO MENDONÇA and RAFAELA LIMA

The Young Web of Citizenship is a net of information, culture and citizenship that connects young people in the nine administrative regions of the city of Belo Horizonte in Brazil. Based on a program in which adolescents aged 13 to 22 years develop abilities related to participation and communal mobilisation, the net promotes participation in and production of media.

The net benefits hitherto approximately 250 cultural groups and social institutions that develop socio-cultural products directed at young people in the city. These productions are coordinated by adolescents themselves with permanent support of a team of professionals. The weaving process has also mobilised more than 5,000 young people from communities spread across Belo Horizonte. Moreover, the information produced and transmitted via the media reaches more than 100,000 viewers, listeners, readers and Internet users of different ages and social conditions.

The Young Web of Citizenship is managed by a non-governmental organisation called the Communal Image Association (*Associação Imagem Comunitária*), which has been working since 1993 with ideas of media education and public participation in the media. The net was established in 2002, gathering youngsters from several previous activities promoted by the Communal Image Association. In order to construct the net, the adolescents have attended educational workshops and receive continuous advice from a professional team from the Communal Image Association. Articulating a wide range of projects in the area of culture and citizenship, the net allows disadvantaged adolescents to make their issues visible. In this process, they become protagonists of their citizenship by expressing their ideas in the public sphere.

Different Media Products

Sixty-six adolescents are responsible for local mobilisation and communal creation of the following media products:

- television programs (a weekly 15-minute program broadcast on local channels in Belo Horizonte)
- radio programs (a weekly 60-minute live program broadcast by the educational station Favela FM)
- newspapers (30,000 copies per edition; distributed freely in the public schools of Belo Horizonte every six weeks)
- a website: www.redejovembh.org.br
- a syndicate of news (weekly bulletins with information about communities and cultural manifestations, sent to conventional media)

The net will also publish two books: an Alternative Guide of Culture and Citizenship and a methodological book, *Mídias Comunitárias, Jovens e Cidadania* (Communal Media: Youngsters and Citizenship). The guide intends to present groups and institutions that promote culture and citizenship, and the book will present results of the establishment of the net, as well as ways of reproducing it in other contexts. There will also be a CD-ROM containing some of the net's productions. These products will be distributed freely to public schools and libraries in the city, and to civil organizations in the entire country.

All these actions have been possible thanks to sponsorship from the oil company Petrobras and other supporters (City Hall of Belo Horizonte, Federal University of Minas Gerais, Municipal Secretariat of Citizenship, Canal Saúde - Fundação Oswaldo Cruz, the National Ministry of Health, and the National Ministries of Justice and Communication).

Inclusion in the Public Sphere

The Young Web of Citizenship is a grassroots project, attempting to provide a deep and lasting transformation of society via cultural development. Education for communication and participation in the media is seen as an important tool that can generate opportunities that surpass hurdles to social and individual development. Results are already being reached. What can be observed are, among other things, the following consequences:

The Young Web of Citizenship is comprised of adolescents who live in areas of social risk – slums, *favelas* and areas characterised by problems of urban infrastructure and low-income population groups. An important result is, hence, the consolidation of a net of inter-community communication produced and managed by people who are frequently outside public spaces, including the traditional media. The project shows a way to overcome current forms of exclusion, such as the symbolic invisibility that outsiders face. The net is a space for expression that divulges issues and understandings of poor youngsters – all the net's media addresses issues, groups and spaces that they want to make visible. The web also presents opportunities for formal and informal education, social projects, and tips for preventive health and quality of life. Humor, critique and art are significant features of this way of producing

communication that attempts to represent a complex reality and overcome simplifications.

All the net's media products have had great feedback, which is evident in hundreds of phone calls, thousands of e-mails and increasing participation of different social and cultural groups. In addition, several themes suggested by the informative bulletins have acquired visibility in local and national conventional media.

Positive Impacts on the Adolescents' Development

Evaluation meetings (involving participants, parents, communal leaders and school members) and qualitative research inquiries have also pointed out that the participants in the net have shown improvement concerning: self-esteem; effective participation; will for teamwork; fluency of expression of their ideas through texts and audio-visual works; interest in and searching for information about subjects related to culture and citizenship; improvement of school performance (greater motivation and involvement in school and extra-curricular activities, bringing into class new topics and inquiries to be discussed). The adolescents have also become more involved in their communities, taking part in social projects and cultural groups in their neighbourhoods.

It must also be mentioned that several adolescents have got educational opportunities and opportunities to act professionally. They were invited to participate in other educational and cultural activities offered by Centro Cultural of the Federal University of Minas Gerais and to take part in internships and training periods at large audiovisual companies. Finally, it must be highlighted that the core group of adolescents most involved in the Young Web of Citizenship will receive a scholarship in order to enable other adolescents to work with media in 2004.

In sum, the Young Web of Citizenship has enhanced intense youth mobilization in social and cultural actions and has strengthened such projects leading to youth citizenship. When communication comes closer to youngsters, and their actions are given visibility, youngsters come closer to citizenship.

Recognition

The Communal Image Association, through the Young Web of Citizenship, has won the Award of Human Rights 2003 (Prêmio Direitos Humanos 2003), granted by the National Ministry of Justice. The net has also been considered a good social technology by UNESCO and Fundação Banco do Brasil. In addition, it was a semi-finalist in the National Itaú/UNICEF Award (for experiences of education and participation) and a finalist in the International Betinho Award for Communication (which gathered experiences that used information and communication technologies for the promotion of communal development and social justice). One of the television programs produced within the net was presented in Festival Internacional de Cinema do Rio 2003, the greatest event in Latin America in the area of cinematography. The Young Web of Citizenship has also received much attention from traditional local and national media.

RICARDO FABRINO MENDONÇA, Media Coordinator

and RAFAELA LIMA, General Coordinator

Associação Imagem Comunitária

Belo Horizonte, MG, Brazil

Tel/fax: +55 31 3224 3463, +55 31 3213 8299

E-mail: ricardofabrino@hotmail.com, rafaperalima@uol.com.br, aic@aic.org.br

Web site: <http://www.aic.org.br>

•••

Child Participation in Nepalese Media

by SAURAV KIRAN SHRESTHA

In Nepal, the media were established as a means of development after the re-advent of democracy in 1990. In the past few years, the media have played an appreciatory role in social, economic and political development. They have also contributed to assuring child rights and extending child-based issues to the people, society and the government. According to the study *Print Media Coverage on Child Issues (2002)*, conducted by the non-profit and non-governmental social organization Hatemalo Sanchar, newspapers are giving a relatively great focus to children's issues. However, more can be done. One important area is children's own participation in the media, which was found to be greatly neglected by the media.

'Participation' is an indivisible principle of democratic value. Likewise, the media are an important ingredient in increased democracy – undoubtedly, participation and media are co-related for this development. There is, thus, need for discussion about concrete implementation of child participation in the media.

A Workshop

In light of this state of affairs, Hatemalo Sanchar organized a one-day workshop on "Child Participation in Media" on June 22, 2003. Twenty-four representatives from different radio and television channels as well as daily and weekly newspapers took part. The media representatives were informed about the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and its articles related to the media. In addition, the media professionals presented their own opinions and suggestions regarding the situation of child participation, possibilities of child participation and various potential actions to enhance children's participation in the media. A report from the workshop contains all these opinions and suggestions.¹ I fully believe that this report would prove beneficial for different media houses, journalists, society and organizations working for children.

The workshop found that although the media have supported children's rights to expression by giving space to children's articles, letters, drawings, etc., in print media, as well as performances, interviews and telephone calls, etc., in broadcasting media, this type of child participation is indirect. Direct child participation was defined as physical involvement and participation in publication and broadcasting with the authority to forward one's own opinion in the decision-making process. There are a few examples in Nepal of such direct participation, such as *Hatemalo Child Radio Program*, broadcast by KATH 97.9 FM, produced and announced by children themselves, and *Hamro Pana* of Sunkesra magazine, edited by children. However, on the whole the

development of direct child participation in Nepalese media is only in a preliminary phase.

Recommendations

Some of the recommendations for promoting child participation in the media were: ensuring equal opportunity for children to participate directly in publication and broadcasting, and increasing space and time in the media with this in view; increasing the frequency of publications and programmes for children; and arranging provision for adequate remuneration and awards for children.

Other suggestions were, for example, that the media arrange radio and television training for children and that media personnel develop co-operative and liberal attitudes to materialize child participation. Furthermore, the government ought to include journalism courses in the school curriculum, publish resource books on journalism and the media, and establish compulsory rules for developing children's programmes and child participation in media houses.

One of the overall conclusions was that eligible and qualified manpower in the media field will develop and steer society and the country in a positive direction, if child participation is practiced in the media.

Note

The full report *Child Participation in Media. One-day workshop June 22, 2003* (8 pp.) can be obtained from the author.

SAURAV KIRAN SHRESTHA

Program Manager
Hatemalo Sanchar
Kupondol
Lalitpur, Nepal
Tel: + 977 1 5547812
E-mail: hatemalo@mail.com.np
Web site: <http://www.hatemalo.org>

•••

Voice of the Children in the Philippines

In the Philippines, the most popular medium is radio, especially in remote areas where newspapers and television are not available. Every Sunday morning since 1999, a 30-minute radio programme – *Tingog sa Kabataan* (Voice of the Children) – is being aired on a local AM band radio station in the province of Cebu. It is the first and only radio programme in the area of Central Visayas that is produced *by* children (aged 9 to 18) *for* children. Its primary goal is to let children with experience of violence and abuse talk about and advocate for changes related to issues that affect them.

The programme, which started as a joint project of five NGOs with ECPAT-Cebu as the lead implementing agency, is much listened to and received an award from, among others, the Association of Broadcasters of the Philippines. The BBC, U.K., considers it one of the best practices in the combat against commercial sexual exploitation

The project has a direct effect on the children and youth who produce the programme, in the form of renewed self-assurance, and more participation at school and in the community. Indirectly, the programme serves other victims of child abuse, helping them to recover from their own experiences.

Children's way to participation in the radio production, as well as necessary factors for replicating the project, are described more in detail at:
http://www.ecpat.net/eng/csec/good_practices/radio_philippines.asp, where also the full report of the project can be accessed.

•••

Children in Newspapers – a Global Content Study

An international study of newspaper coverage of children found that nearly one-third (31%) of the articles about children portray them as "victims". The researchers were children themselves. Children aged 10-12 years in 70 classes from 24 countries read their local newspapers for one week, cut out, discussed and categorised into seven given categories the news articles they found portraying children. The second largest category was "Children in schools" (18%), followed by "Children are brilliant" (17%), "Children in politics" (10%), "Children as wrongdoers – breaking the law" (8%) and "Children helping others" (4%).

The goals of the project, headed by Magne Raundalen and Jan Vincens Steen, Norway, for The World Young Reader Network of the World Association of Newspapers (WAN), were to increase consciousness about children's diversity, and examine the way children believe that newspapers reflect this. It must be underlined that there is no statistical representativity of the study, as there was a self-selection of classes and, in most cases, the newspaper studied was the initiator or an active partner in the project – newspapers were asked to provide children with newspapers for free, and to give teachers copies of a manual describing how to organise the students' study of the content about children. It should also be noted that the week in which most classes undertook the work, 31 March to 4 April 2003, saw the beginning of the war in Iraq. The schools participating came from: Australia, Bangladesh, Belgium, Brazil, France, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, India, Jordan, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Mexico, New Zealand, Nigeria, Serbia-Montenegro, South Africa, Spain, The Netherlands, Turkey, the United Kingdom, and the U.S.A.

Not being a statistically reliable research project, the responses to the study nevertheless remind all those who work for newspapers that children are as diverse as their adult counterparts and that much remains to be done to satisfy their newspaper needs, the report says. The children participating gave

repeated recommendations that newspapers should give wider coverage to children's issues, in particular that "bad news" should be balanced with more examples of improvements in children's lives. Children also want to read more that touches on their daily lives presented in a way that is adapted to their level of understanding, or, as one class put it:

"More about children, children like us."

Source

The full report is available at: http://www.wan-press.org/IMG/doc/Child_Coverage_study_Final.doc

For more information, contact:

Jan Vincens Steen, Norway, Fax: +47 22 42 26 11, E-mail: jvs@mediebedriftene.no
or

Aralynn McMane, Director of Development and Education, WAN World Young Reader Network, 25, rue d'Astorg, 75008 Paris, France, Tel: +33 1 47 42 85 00, Fax: +33 1 47 42 49 48, E-mail: amcmane@wan.asso.fr

•••

New Publication from the Clearinghouse

Yearbook 2003

Promote or Protect?

Perspectives on Media Literacy and Media Regulations

Editors: Cecilia von Feilitzen and Ulla Carlsson
260 p., ISSN 1403-4700, ISBN 91-89471-23-7

For more information on contents and orders, please go to the
Clearinghouse's web site or e-mail to:
clearinghouse@nordicom.gu.se

Children's and Young People's Media Use

Research on Children and Television in Israel

by ALINA BERNSTEIN

The history of research into children and television in Israel seems to be closely related to the history of television in this country. The growing interest in the role of television in our children's lives reflects the entering of Israel, during the 1990s, to a multi-channel television environment.

The 1970s and 1980s

Television came to Israel relatively late, after a long public debate in which it was argued that television would have a harmful influence on society. The first Israeli channel – the public service Israel Broadcasting Authority (IBA) – started in 1968. However, the first television broadcasts were in fact the ones of the Educational Television (IETV), which started as an experimental venture in 1965. After a year of transmitting to 30 schools around the country it went on to transmit to 400 schools. Later, and till 1994, the Educational Television programmes were aired during the day on the same channel as the IBA. More recently they are also transmitted on the commercial channel, as well as on a thematic channel transmitted by cable. Importantly, to this day, and although the contents have changed considerably over the years, the Educational Television is still a branch of and mainly funded by the Education Ministry.

In this context it should be clear why much of the research until the early 90s, some of which was actually conducted by the research department of the Educational Television itself, focused on educational aspects of television and, for example, the interplay between watching television and literacy. Gavriel Salomon is an internationally renown researcher in this area and simply looking at a sample of the titles of his English language publications, as well as the journals they were published in, highlights the type of research I refer to (see Box 1).

To give just one example of the findings: In the 1984 'Television is "Easy" and Print is "Tough" ' Salomon found that children who believed themselves to be effective learners invested greater effort when a learning task was perceived to be challenging than when it was perceived to be easy. However, children with low self-efficacy invested greater effort when learning was perceived to be more attainable than challenging. In other words, high ability learners may invest more mental effort in a challenging task, such as reading a book, than in a task perceived to be easy, such as learning from TV.

Television in the 1990s

During the 90s, a major shift occurred in both the Israeli television landscape and, one could argue as a consequence, in the research into television and children.

In 1993, Israel's first commercial channel started broadcasting, and although this channel has become the most watched channel it does not carry much dedicated children's programming, except, as mentioned, the Educational Television programmes for a couple of hours daily. As far as children and youth are concerned the shift came about to a greater extent with cable and later satellite transmission. Cable penetrated very quickly during the 90s. In densely populated parts, like Tel Aviv and its vicinity, about 70 per cent of homes are linked to cable.

The first cable channel to target children and youth is simply called the Children's Channel. It started in the early 90s, as soon as cable did. For several years, it was the only channel carrying exclusively child-oriented programming and it aimed at all age groups.

More recently, channels aiming at specific age groups started transmitting. Relatively unique in this context is HOP, a cable channel for pre-school children – one of the few such channels worldwide (others are in Canada, Italy and Britain) – which started in February 2000. 20 per cent of the programming on this channel is produced in-house, mainly studio material. The other 80 per cent of programming is dubbed into Hebrew – in a country where all non-Hebrew speaking programmes for the adults are subtitled (and not dubbed). Interestingly, according to figures supplied by the channel, although their rating is, on average, 3.8 per cent, it reaches nearly 100 per cent of its target age group. Also interesting to note is the fact that the most popular programmes on this channel are the local ones.

Even more unique is the fact that in late 2003, the satellite company YES started transmitting a channel named YES Baby aimed at 0-3-year-olds. (See the separate article "YES Baby – Television for Newborns" in this newsletter, in the section Media for Children and Young People.)

Like in many other countries, Israeli children can now also watch several international channels, such as the Cartoon Network, Nickelodeon, CBBC on BBC Prime, and Fox Kids. Older age groups watch local youth channels such as YTV, and international channels such as MTV.

Research in the 1990s

During the 90s, Israeli children, as well as adults, have thus witnessed an amazing growth in television content – and, probably as a result of this, a growth in television research. This also applies to media research in general in Israel.

The consequences can be witnessed not exclusively in academic research. Popular international books about the effects of television on children and childhood have been translated into Hebrew during the 90s. Moreover, articles about the effects of television on children are regularly printed in popular newspapers and published in magazines aimed at parents and in professional journals aimed at educators. In the early 90s, they still represented an educational agenda but more recently their titles reflect a growing concern about the psychological and behavioral effects of television on children.

More recently – in May and June 2002 – the fact that many Israeli children watched a homegrown *telenovela* aired at 8 p.m. resulted in nothing less than a moral panic. Fuelled by newspaper and magazine articles, as well as radio and television items, heated debates took place reflecting a public concern about the harmful impact of television mainly when children watch

programming aimed at adults rather than children.

But if public concern and some popular media are still, to a large extent, 'stuck' in the effects tradition of media studies, academic research in the 90s is more complex. Indeed, if Salomon's work reflects some of the main concerns of the 70s and 80s then Dafna Lemish's work reflects those of the 90s. In the sample of her work (see Box 2) the now widespread interests by several researchers within the field of media studies are reflected – for example, interest in gender, globalization, reception analysis and the changing media environment. Also represented is the tendency to engage in comparative, international projects.

To give but one example of findings: Lemish's study (1997) of the reception of the WWF (World Wrestling Federation) programmes by 900 Jewish Israeli children aged 7-12 showed that boys were more likely to identify with WWF programming and were more likely to get in a fight in school. However, for most girls, opposing WWF served to reinforce their gender identity and separate them from the world of violence and force.

Increasing Public Interest

Lemish's recent book *Growing-up with Television* in 2002 may probably serve not only as the companion to an Open University course as intended but also as a bridge between academic research and the general public, which seems to be more and more interested in the role television plays in the lives of Israeli children.

Box 1. A sample of Israeli research into children and television during the 1970s and 1980s (Gavriel Salomon)

Salomon, Gavriel (1972) 'Effects of Encouraging Israeli Mothers to Co-Observe "Sesame Street" with their Five-Year-Olds'. *Child Development*, (3) 48, 1146-1151.

Salomon, Gavriel (1977) *The Language of Media and the Cultivation of Mental Skills*. Jerusalem: Hebrew University, a report submitted to the Spenser Foundation.

Salomon, Gavriel and Cohen, Akiva A. (1977) 'Television Formats, Mastery of Mental Skills and the Acquisition of Knowledge'. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, (5) 69, 612-619.

Salomon, Gavriel (1978) 'On the Future of Media Research: No More Full Acceleration in Neutral Gear'. *Educational Communication and Technology*, (1) 26, 37-46.

Cohen, Akiva A. and Salomon, Gavriel (1979) 'Children's Literate Television Viewing: Surprises and Possible Explanations'. *Journal of Communication*, 29, 156-163.

Salomon, Gavriel (1982) 'Television Literacy and Television vs. Literacy'. *Journal of Visual-Verbal Linguaging*, (2) 2, 7-16.

Salomon, Gavriel and Leigh, Tamar (1984) 'Predispositions about Learning from Print and Television'. *Journal of Communication*, (2) 34, 119-135.

Salomon, Gavriel (1984) 'Television is "Easy" and Print is "Tough": the Differential Investment of Mental Effort in Learning as a Function of Perception and Attributions'. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, (4) 76, 647-658.

Salomon, Gavriel and Shavit, Rona (1986) *The Role of Mindfulness in Televiewing and Reading: A Case of Bi-Directional Causality*. Tel Aviv University, School of Education, Report No. 8 45.

Box 2. A sample of Israeli research into children and television from the

1990s to the present (Dafna Lemish)

Lemish, Dafna (1997) 'Kindergartners' Understanding of Television: A Cross Cultural Comparison'. *Communication Studies*, 48, 109-126.

Lemish, Dafna (1998) ' "Girls Can Wrestle Too": Gender Differences in the Consumption of Television Wrestling Series'. *Sex Roles*, (9-10) 38, 833-849.

Lemish, Dafna, Drotner, Kirsten, Liebes, Tamar, Maigret, Eric and Stald, Gitte (1998) 'Global Culture in Practice: A Look at Children and Adolescents in Denmark, France and Israel'. *European Journal of Communication*, (4) 13, 539-556.

Lemish, Dafna (2002) *Growing-up with Television: The Little Screen in the Lives of Children and Youth*. Tel Aviv: The Open University of Israel. (in Hebrew)

ALINA BERNSTEIN, Dr.
Film and Television Department
Tel Aviv University, Israel
E-mail: alinaber@netvision.net.il

•••

Born with the Screen

A national study of 1,065 parents of children as young as six months through six years was conducted and released in the U.S.A. in 2003. The survey used a so-called random digit dial telephone sample of households. Interviewers were asked to talk with the parent who spends the most time with the target child. The response rate was 40 percent.

A selection of findings:

- Children six and under spend an average of two hours a day using screen media – about the same amount of time they spend playing outside, and well over the amount they spend reading or being read to.
- New interactive digital media have become an integral part of children's lives. Nearly half of children six and under have used a computer (31% of 0-3 year-olds and 70% of 4-6 year-olds). Just under a third have played video games (14% of 0-3 year-olds and 50% of 4-6 year-olds).
- Even the youngest children – those under two – are widely exposed to electronic media. Forty-three percent of those under two watch TV every day. In any given day, two-thirds of children under two will use the screen media, for an average of about two hours.
- About a third of all 0-6 year-olds have a TV in their bedroom, about one in four have a VCR or DVD, one in ten have a video game player, and 7 percent have a computer. Thirty percent of 0-3 year-olds have a TV in their room, and 43 percent of 4-6 year-olds.
- In a typical day about one in four 4-6 year-olds uses a computer, and those who do spend an average of just over an hour at the keyboard. Nearly forty percent in this age group can turn the computer on by

themselves, and about as many can load a CD-ROM.

- Many children are growing up in homes where the TV is an ever-present companion: two-thirds of 0-6-year-olds live in homes where the TV is left on at least half the time or more, even if no one is watching, and one-third live in homes where the TV is on "always" or "most of the time" ("heavy" TV households).
- According to the study, children who have a TV in their bedroom or who live in "heavy" TV households spend significantly more time watching than other children do, and less time reading or playing outside. Children in "heavy" TV households are less likely than other children to be able to read at all.
- However, despite the plethora of new media, reading continues to be a regular part of young children's lives. In any given day, nearly eight in ten children six and under will read or be read to.
- Parents of young children appear to have a largely positive view about TV and computers. They are also far more likely to say they have seen their children imitate positive behaviors from TV, such as sharing or helping (78%), than negative ones, such as hitting or kicking (36%). However, a majority of parents (59%) say their 4-6 year-old boys imitate aggressive behavior from TV (vs. 35% for girls the same age).
- The vast majority of parents say they have rules about TV, including 90 percent with rules about what their kids watch and 69 percent with rules about how much they can watch. The study indicates the rules may have an effect, since children with time-related rules spend an average of almost a half-hour less per day watching TV than other children do.

Source

Victoria J. Rideout, Elizabeth A. Vandewater & Ellen A. Wartella: *Zero to Six: Electronic Media in the Lives of Infants, Toddlers and Preschoolers*. Kaiser Family Foundation and Children's Digital Media Centers, Menlo Park, CA, 2003 (38 pp.) available at: <http://kff.org/entmedia/loader.cfm?url=/commonspot/security/getfile.cfm&PageID=22754>

•••

U.K. Children On-line

An on-going research project in the United Kingdom explores the nature and meaning of children's Internet use. The project is part of the Economic and Social Research Council's E-Society Programme. An extensive survey of Internet-related attitudes and practices among 9-19 year-olds across the U.K. is being conducted during 2004. Before that, a qualitative study was performed and reported by Sonia Livingstone and Magdalena Bober, London School of Economics and Political Science. This report presents findings drawing on fourteen focus groups with a total of 55 children aged 10-19 years. Also, a selection of families was interviewed at home.

Based on the findings of this first qualitative study of the project, the authors offer recommendations to policy-makers, Internet service providers, teachers, parents and children.

The authors say, among other things, that while parents, teachers and others should continue to value children's Internet expertise, it should be recognised that children also need continued guidance in use of the Internet. Being able to make an informed evaluation of on-line sites and services is crucial if children are both to benefit from on-line opportunities and to avoid the dangers.

Moreover, the authors stress that an explicit negotiation of the balance between children's safety and children's privacy is important to the trust relationship between parents and children. Simply pressing for more parental monitoring, restriction and control could encourage children's evasion rather than their cooperation with attempts at Internet regulation in the home. While often naïve about threats to their privacy from external sources, children are fiercely protective of their privacy in relation to their parents. Thus, parents need more information, confidence and guidance so that they feel empowered to discuss the risks with their children, especially as they grow older.

An important point is also the authors' remark that young people's cynicism or lack of interest in political participation using on-line resources poses a challenge to policy-makers especially. It is particularly disappointing how few young people feel encouraged or inspired to create their own Internet content.

Source

Sonia Livingstone and Magdalena Bober (2003) *UK Children Go Online. Listening to Young People's Experiences*. Department of Media and Communications, London School of Economics and Political Science (41 pp.). The report is available at:
<http://personal.lse.ac.uk/bober/U.K.ChildrenGoOn-lineReport1.pdf>

•••

Young People, Media and Personal Relationships in the U.K.

A research report with the title *Young People, Media and Personal Relationships* written by David Buckingham and Sara Bragg, Institute of Education, London University, was published in November 2003 by the funders – the Advertising Standards Authority, the British Board of Film Classification, the British Broadcasting Corporation, the Broadcasting Standards Commission, and the Independent Television Commission, United Kingdom (120 pp.).

The report is based on a research project conducted by the authors between June 2001 and July 2003. The project entailed a review of current research literature; a qualitative study of interviews and other fieldwork activities with 120 young people aged from 9 to 17 and ca. 70 parents in the U.K.; and a questionnaire survey delivered in the schools to about 800 children aged 9 to 14.

It is not possible to summarise the findings in a short notice – interested readers are referred to the report. However, a sample of findings is:

- Whether or not children choose to do so, they frequently encounter sexual material in the media. Not only do children get access to sexual

material, they also actively seek it out. Many children claim to be able to subvert parental viewing rules.

- The children were generally critical of the sex education they received in school, and many found it embarrassing to be taught about such matters by their parents (although a great deal also said they learnt about love, sex and relationships from their mothers). The children preferred media in this regard, such as teenage magazines and soap operas – on the grounds that these were often more informative, less embarrassing to use and more attuned to the children's needs and concerns.
- However, children do not necessarily trust what they find in the media; they are often critical consumers. Moreover, the children often rejected overt attempts on the part of the media to teach them about sexual matters, and were sceptical about some of the advice offered (e.g., in problem pages or talk shows).
- Younger children do not always understand sexual references or connotations but often ignore or misinterpret references to sexual matters.
- The children made judgements about sex, not in the abstract but in the context of 'love and relationships'. They debated at length the motivations that led media characters to engage in sex and the consequences of their behaviour for others, and placed a strong emphasis on the need for trust, fidelity and mutual respect.
- Girls were more ready to express sexual desire in relation to media images than boys.
- The influence of the media depends heavily upon the contexts of use, particularly in the family. Different styles of parenting result in different responses to sexual material and different ways of coming to terms with it. Thus, the media do not have an autonomous ability either to sexually corrupt children or to sexually liberate them.

Source

The complete report is available on the funding organisations' web sites, for example at:
<http://www.asa.org.uk>

•••

Television and Children's Language Development

In March 2004, the National Literacy Trust – an independent charity in the United Kingdom founded in 1993 and dedicated to building a literate nation – published a research review titled *Television and Language Development in the Early Years: a review of the literature* (2004) (42 pp.). The study, written by independent researcher Dr. Robin Close, sets out to provide information on the following two questions:

- What does international research tell us about the relationship between

television viewing by children under five and their language development?

- Is there any evidence about the quantity of television viewing and the role of parents and carers, which would be helpful in either maximising the benefits (or mitigating the disbenefits) of television viewing in the birth-to-five period?

Source

The full report is available at: <http://www.literacytrust.org.uk/research/TV.html>

• • •

The Role of Media in Childhood Obesity

There is a rapid increase in obesity among U.S. children. The Kaiser Family Foundation, a non-profit, private operating foundation, released in February 2004 a review of more than 40 major studies on the role of media in this regard.

While there are many factors contributing to childhood obesity, this research review indicates that children's use of the media is an important piece of the puzzle. Most large U.S. cross-sectional studies and several longitudinal studies indicate that children who spend more time with the media are more likely to be overweight than children who spend less time with the media.

Exactly how media may contribute to childhood obesity has not been conclusively documented. Contrary to common assumptions, most studies have found only limited evidence for the theory that the time children spend with the media displaces time they would otherwise spend in more vigorous physical activities. There may be limitations to the measures used in these studies, and more research needs to be done in this area.

But in the absence of such research, it appears likely that the main mechanism by which media use contributes to childhood obesity may well be through children's exposure to billions of dollars worth of food advertising and cross-promotional marketing year after year, the report concludes. The number of ads U.S. children see on TV has doubled from 20,000 to 40,000 since the 1970s and the majority of ads targeted to kids are for candy, cereal and fast food. Furthermore, many of the advertising and marketing campaigns enlist children's favorite TV and movie characters

Source

The Role of Media in Childhood Obesity. Kaiser Family Foundation, Menlo Park, CA, 2004 (12 pp.), available at: <http://kff.org/entmedia/loader.cfm?url=/commonspot/security/getfile.cfm&PageID=32022>

• • •

The Role of Media in Childhood Obesity II

There are at least three hypotheses about the relationship between television

and video game use and obesity. First, television viewing and/or video game use is thought to be related to increased weight in children because time spent with these media displaces physical activity. The second hypothesis links television viewing, in particular, to increased caloric intake either from eating during viewing or as a result of food advertising on television, which tends to emphasize high-calorie, high-fat foods with poor nutritional content. The third hypothesis is that television viewing decreases metabolic rates.

However, although a fair number of studies that examine the relationship between television viewing and obesity in children and adolescents now exist, they have consistently found weak, if any, associations between the two phenomena, when controlling for the effects of socioeconomic status and ethnicity.

This is concluded in early 2004 by researchers at the Department of Human Ecology, University of Texas at Austin, U.S.A. They also present a study of their own, examining in 1997 the links between childhood obesity, activity participation and television and video game use in a national sample of 2,831 children ages 1 to 12. The study used age-normed body mass index (BMI) ratings. The families had also completed two time-use diaries.

Results indicated that while television use was not at all related to children's weight status, video game use was: Children with higher weight status played moderate amounts of electronic games, while children with lower weight status played either very little or a lot of electronic games. This curvilinear relationship was valid for children under age 8. Children ages 9-12 with lower weight status used the computer (non-game) for moderate amounts of time, while those with higher weight status used the computer either very little or a lot. Results also indicated that children with higher weight status spent more time in sedentary activities than those with lower weight status.

There are too few studies of the relationship between children's video game use and weight status to put these findings in a larger empirical context, the researchers say. It might also be that television use is related to weight status only among children and adolescents older than 12, while video game play is related to weight status only among younger children.

The question also remains if obese youth may turn to television as a result of social isolation – because of obesity. In sum, more research is needed.

Source

Elizabeth A. Vandewater, Mi-suk Shim, Allison G. Caplovitz (2004) "Linking obesity and activity level with children's television and video game use", *Journal of Adolescence* 27, pp. 71-85, available on-line at: <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/journal/01401971>

• • •

Media Violence

“Media Degeneracy”: A Cause of School Failure and Juvenile Delinquency?

by CHRISTIAN PFEIFFER

This article was first published in the German newspaper Die Zeit, No. 39, 2003. By publishing it in News from ICCVOS, the author hopes to find other researchers, who are also working in the field. Everyone who is interested in getting more information about the research project described in the article, please, contact the author by e-mail (c.pfeiffer@kfn.uni-hannover.de).

The article says, among other things, that at least one fifth of German males aged 12 to 17 have fallen into a state of “media degeneracy”. Their leisure time is dominated by viewing action and violence films and playing PC games that are unsuitable for minors. This affects their social life, mental development and school achievement. At the same time crime rates have increased – and to a much greater extent among boys.

Inspired by an on-going field experiment in the U.S.A. focusing on voluntarily restricted television viewing among children and being carried out by scientists at Stanford University, a similar study conducted by neurobiologists, media scientists and criminologists is underway in Germany. Other initiatives are needed, as well.

Family Müller has just taken delivery of a new television. Its predecessor is only a few years old and still works, but it seemed like time for a change. Because the shop didn't offer much for the old one, it ends up in the room of thirteen-year-old Max. This means no more arguments over the choice of viewing, and Max is happy because he can at last watch what he wants.

Events like this must be a frequent occurrence in German households. According to data from media education researchers at Medienpädagogischer Forschungsverbund Südwest, about half of all German children aged 13 to 15 now have a television in their own room, rising to just under 70 per cent for 16 to 17s. Even among German six-year-olds the figure is one in four. The data also show striking differences between eastern and western Germany. Some 55 per cent of eastern German children aged 6 to 13 are proud to call a television their own, compared with 28 per cent in the west.

“Media Degeneracy” – Especially among Male Adolescents

TV-happy parents who shrug and ask “So what?” should perhaps be pointed to the many representative surveys that have been done on child and adolescent media consumption. These show that giving children their own television raises daily viewing time by about an hour – from two-and-a-half to about three-and-a-half hours on workdays and from four to five hours at weekends. That's more time in front of the television than in the classroom – bearing in mind that most German children have half-day schooling and that there is no school at all for 135 days a year.

The 135 mornings when German children can stay in bed have another affect. Boys in particular tend to spend the previous evening watching TV late into the night and without adult supervision – taking the opportunity to see films that cannot be shown before the eleven p.m. watershed, because child welfare experts have rated them unsuitable for minors. Recent surveys reveal that 56 per cent of boys aged 12 to 17 frequently watch films of this kind. The figure for girls is only 25 per cent. And this is not all: Boys predominate among those who watch television most. In a representative survey back in 1998, 18 per cent of male ninth graders (around age 13) said they watched more than four hours' television a day, as against 13 per cent of girls. On top of this, two-thirds of boys regularly play computer games that are rated unsuitable for minors and hence banned for under-18s. Again, only 14 per cent of girls play games of this kind.

Taking all three aspects together, we can fairly state that at least a fifth of males aged 12 to 17 have fallen into a state of "media degeneracy". Their leisure time is dominated by viewing action and violence films and playing PC games that are unsuitable for minors.

Consequences to Social Life, Mental Development...

And what does this mean for those affected? First of all, their social life atrophies. Children who spend more than four hours of their leisure time in front of the television or a computer literally miss out on life. They have no time left for training with the football team and learning how to be good losers at the Sunday match. They have no time to rehearse with a band or orchestra and so miss out on the joys of putting on a good show with friends. And for want of time to fall out with a best friend, they never learn what it means to make up and bury their differences. As a result, their social skills remain underdeveloped. Even if they spent their time watching Astrid Lindgren films, the outcome would be the same. Practice only makes perfect if it takes place in real life, not in fantasy.

Children who watch hours of television each day barely have time to make a proper job of their homework. They also get too little exercise, which is bad for the mind as well as the body. Neurobiologists have shown that children's mental development suffers if they have too little opportunity for physical rough and tumble. We should also heed what neuroscientists report about the effects of excessive television on learning in children and adolescents. They tell us that what children hear at school or take in while doing homework is initially committed to short-term memory. The process of transfer to long-term memory and so to retained knowledge takes at least twelve hours and critically depends on what emotional experiences the child undergoes in the hours after learning in school. The brain responds highly sensitively to strong feelings. It concentrates its memorisation efforts on more emotionally moving experiences.

Spending one's afternoon completely spellbound by disturbing, shocking film scenes will effectively swamp out anything previously committed to short-term memory. Curricular knowledge pales against the emotive power of film images. And anyone who makes the added mistake of watching a horror or action film shortly before going to sleep massively impairs the sleeping brain activity needed to establish long-term memories. Neuroscientists stress that both dream-intensive REM sleep and deep, non-REM sleep have an important role in consolidating memories. We do indeed learn in our sleep – but only if we avoid disturbing images beforehand.

... and School Achievement

Given this knowledge and the data on juvenile media consumption, one trend made visible by school statistics over the last decade comes as no surprise: boys are doing worse and worse at school. Ten years ago, girls predominated among early school leavers by 52 to 48. By 2002, boys were "leading" on this count by 64 to 36. The imbalance in eastern Germany is even bigger, at 66 boys to 33 girls. In eastern Germany, the proportion of school leavers comprising adolescents leaving school early is 12 per cent – significantly higher than the 8 per cent recorded in the west. Eastern German girls achieve a larger share of *Abitur* (roughly, A-level) passes than their western counterparts (57 versus 52 per cent). Boys also make up a clear, 60-40 majority among pupils required to repeat a school year. Finally, male *Gymnasium* (grammar school) pupils lag behind girls by 0.4 of a grade.

Other factors no doubt contribute to the emergence and growth of these performance differences. One is the large influx in the nineties of immigrant ethnic groups in which boys tend to be spoilt while girls are expected to be highly disciplined. Consequently, gender differences in school achievement are even more pronounced among, say, Turkish than among German children. All the same, the neurological findings leave little doubt that differences in media consumption between boys and girls are a key factor.

Increasing Crime Rates

Besides school achievement, there are growing discrepancies between boys and girls in other areas, as police and crime statistics show. The difference in crime rates between male and female adolescents has increased continuously since the mid-eighties. Crime among girls has risen significantly. The number of girls aged 16 to 17 with a police record as crime suspects has gone up from 2.1 per cent to 3.7 per cent. But the increase among boys is far stronger (from 7.0 per cent to 12.5 per cent). The differences come out even more strongly if we focus on violent crime. Here, the gender difference in figures for recorded crime suspects has grown almost threefold since the mid-eighties. This should come as no surprise, as bad marks are known to increase the risk of sliding into juvenile crime. Those who lack success at school simply seek it elsewhere.

There is manifestly a further link between excessive consumption of violent films and juvenile delinquency. Findings from more recent studies imply a small, high-risk group of five to ten per cent of male adolescents for whom such films directly affect their liability to commit acts of violence. For these juveniles – considered at particularly high risk due to family and social factors such as domestic violence, emotional neglect or failure at school – excessive portrayals of violence can serve as immediate models for identification and action. An extreme example is the 19-year-old school student Robert Steinhäuser from Erfurt in eastern Germany: after failing at school, the fan of first-person shooter computer games and aggressive music ran amok in his school, killing sixteen people.

Research on Voluntarily Restricted Viewing

So what can be done? American scientists at Stanford University are attempting to find an answer. An interesting field experiment is currently underway at two schools there. In a project coupling written information for parents with carefully prepared teaching units in schools, nine-year-old children were asked to voluntarily restrict their television viewing. An equally

sized control group of nine-year-olds at other schools are not involved in the media education experiment. After six months, pupils at the trial school showed a marked reduction in television use and significantly lower aggression, while the control group showed no change. Preliminary findings as to whether pupils at the trial school have also improved their school performance are anticipated.

The Stanford scientists' experiment inspired a group of German neurobiologists, media scientists and criminologists from Delmenhorst, Magdeburg and Hannover to plan an even larger pilot study in the states of Lower Saxony and Saxony-Anhalt. As well as 9-year-olds, our study will also include school students aged 12 and 15 so we can systematically explore the chances of motivating children, adolescents and their parents to make more sensible use of the media. Our hopes of achieving positive results with this project are not only based on the encouraging findings of the Stanford experiment. They also draw on the fact that various parent-teacher grassroots action groups have recently come into being in Germany with the aim of combating media degeneracy among children and adolescents. An initiative of this kind has come into being in Osnabrück under the aegis of the Catholic women's network, and groups of parents with children at several schools have joined forces in the Elsterwerda district in the south of Brandenburg. These parents are aware of one crucial thing: It is not enough to remove the TV from children's rooms and to monitor their PC use more closely. We need to give children and adolescents enjoyment in life to prevent them from devoting their leisure to questionable media consumption.

Public Debate and Plans for Reform

Even if the project fully attains its objectives and is copied nationwide, the problems we have described will only be partly solved. To break the links between media degeneracy among children and adolescents and its consequences, we need both public debate on the topics we have touched upon and systematic plans for reform. For example, the specifically German imbalance – where children and adolescents spend more time in front of the television or computer screen than they do being taught in class – can be changed to lasting effect by significantly increasing the number of all-day schools. This would be of particular help to children and adolescents from families who for financial or other reasons are unable to offer attractive alternatives to prevent media degeneracy. The "Schau hin" ("Look!") media education initiative started by Germany's Ministry for Family Affairs and the ZDF television channel is another step in the right direction. It could be supplemented by a series of short informative television spots educating parents in the right and wrong ways to deal with children – in general and not just as relates to television and home computers – along similar lines to Germany's long-running and successful public education broadcasts on driving skills.

When I was still Minister of Justice in Lower Saxony, I tried out another way to improve protection of minors in the media. The sixty leading advertisers in private television received a letter from me in which I began by explaining the facts presented in this article. Based on these arguments, I then asked the companies if they would consider refraining from advertising in adult-rated late-night violent and horror films. To my delight, Volkswagen, Toyota, Microsoft, Hansa Saturn and twelve others were readily prepared to join an initiative of this kind. The great majority either refused or failed to reply, however. I also advocate a radical policy in support of these various approaches: banning television broadcasts of films that the national board of

film classification has issued with an '18' certificate due to their unsuitability for minors. Adults who really want to see violent excesses and hardcore porn can go to the cinema or obtain films on video. The presence of televisions in children's bedrooms leaves no other option in my view if we want to protect our children from the destructive power of such images. We only need to take seriously the message Johann Wolfgang von Goethe left us 200 years ago in the second of his *Zahme Xenien* or 'Tame Epigrams':

Talk nonsense with impunity
Write it where'er you want.
It can do no harm nor injury
Nor cause undue affront.

But nonsense put out for all to see
Takes on a life unto its own.
It holds the senses in its fee
And turns the intellect to stone.

CHRISTIAN PFEIFFER, Professor, Dr.
Kriminologisches Forschungsinstitut Niedersachsen e.V.
Hannover, Germany
E-mail: c.pfeiffer@kfn.uni-hannover.de

•••

TV Violence in New Zealand

In April 2004, a report on television violence in New Zealand was released by a working group established by the Minister of Broadcasting and representing broadcasters, regulators, producers, academics and community advocacy groups. The Working Group considered and reported on the findings of a research project commissioned from the Centre for Communication Research, Auckland University of Technology.

The last-mentioned research, studying eight TV channels in March 2003, concludes that television in New Zealand screens a similar amount of violence to that shown in the United States and United Kingdom. New Zealand levels of TV violence were found to be close to those in the comprehensive U.S. National Television Violence Survey (1994-1997) and the most recent British Broadcasting Standards Commission survey (2002), although slightly lower than those in the most recent U.S. Centre for Media Policy and Analysis survey (2002). The levels of TV violence in New Zealand were also similar to those of the only previous full academic project on television violence performed in the country in 1991.

As is usual in content analyses on TV violence, the study focused on acts of force (actually carried out or consisting of threats) that physically harms a human or other animate being. (Thus, acts against inanimate objects and psychological harm are not included.) New Zealand's high proportion of programmes originating from the U.S. is believed to contribute to its count of eight violent incidents per hour. Television One with much non-fictional programming and less American-originated material had the lowest levels of violence (just over 2 incidents per hour). TV2, TV3, Prime and SKY1 had between 6 and 8 incidents per hour. Most violence occurred on SKY movies (12 incidents per hour) and on Nickelodeon (13 per hour), which was

indicative of their respective genres of movies and animations. Moreover, free-to-air channels in some cases showed almost as much violent content in promotions, which generally occupy a maximum of about 5 minutes per hour, as are shown in the 45 minutes of programming in which they are embedded. Many of these promos are shown within the family hours.

The Centre's report also includes a review of hundreds of international studies from the past 50 years about the link between watching television violence and aggression. The researchers argue that the framing of the issue of TV violence should shift from the concept of effects, with its tendency to allude to a direct linkage between perception and act, towards the concept of risk. Television is but one factor in children's lives. While there does seem to be some connection between children who have had a violence-saturated media diet and aggression in later life, television is more likely to have a negative impact on children who grow up with a cluster of negative influences such as poverty, domestic violence, truancy, etc.

Finally, the researchers surveyed and evaluated regulations and measures related to television violence in New Zealand and other countries, such as television stakeholders' societal responsibility, programme classification systems, content labelling systems, a flexible watershed, and the need for media education as well as public education.

Sources

Towards Precautionary Risk Management of TV Violence in New Zealand. The Report to the Minister of Broadcasting of the Working Group: TV Violence Project, April 2004.

Barry King, Geoff Bridgman, Philippa Smith, Allan Bell, Andrea King, Sharon Harvey, Charles Crothers and Ian Hassall: *Television Violence in New Zealand: A Study of Programming and Policy in International Context.* Report on a Research Project conducted for the NZ Government Working Group on Television Violence, 2003. Centre for Communication Research, Auckland University of Technology, November 2003.

Both reports include recommendations and are available at: <http://www.tv-violence.org.nz>



Violence in Teen-Rated Video Games

In March 2004, three researchers at Harvard University, U.S.A., published the findings from a content analysis of the depiction of violence and blood in video games rated T (for "Teen") by the Entertainment Software Rating Board (ESRB). According to the ESRB, T-rated video games may be suitable for persons aged 13 years and older and may contain violence, mild or strong language, and/or suggestive themes.

The researchers created a database of all 396 T-rated video game titles released on the major video game consoles in the United States by April 1, 2001. For a more in-depth study, the researchers randomly sampled 81 game titles, played each game for at least one hour, and assessed the content.

The authors conclude, among other things, that there is a significant amount of violence, injury, and death in T-rated video games, and that the majority of these games provide incentives to the players to commit simulated acts of violence.

- For example, 94 percent of the 396 game titles received a content descriptor for violence, 25 percent content descriptors for blood, and only 4 percent no content descriptors for violence or blood.
- Of the 81 video games played, 98 percent involved intentional violence for an average of 36 percent of game play time, and 42 percent contained blood.
- More than half of the games depicted five or more types of weapons.
- The absolute majority of games rewarded or required the player to injure characters, approximately two thirds to kill, and nearly half to destroy objects.
- While playing, the researchers observed a total of 11,499 character deaths, occurring at an average rate of 122 deaths per hour. This included 5,689 human deaths, occurring at an average rate of 61 human deaths per hour.
- Overall, almost two thirds of the games depicted deaths to human characters, including the player, and about half of the games deaths to nonhuman characters.

Source

Kevin Haninger, M. Seamus Ryan and Kimberly M. Thompson (2004) "Violence in Teen-Rated Video Games", *Medscape General Medicine* 6(1), 2004 (6 pp.), available at: http://www.medscape.com/viewarticle/468087_1

•••

How Children Interpret Screen Violence

A study with the aim to investigate what elements within an image make a television or film scene seem violent to young people was conducted in the United Kingdom in 2003. The sample consisted of 83 children aged between 9 and 13 years who took part in group discussions. The ten groups were shown sets of clips taken from news, reality programming, soap operas, drama series, comedy, children's programming, and different films. Two of the groups also edited clips. The research, led by Andrea Millwood Hargrave, was commissioned by the British Broadcasting Corporation, Broadcasting Standards Commission, British Board of Film Classification and the Independent Television Commission.

The study shows that children of these ages are able to distinguish between fictional violence and violence that is 'real' on television, film, etc. Scenes that contain fantastical violence are considered less violent than scenes that contain violence recognisable as something that could occur (the last-mentioned scenes can also be included in drama series, etc). Of all the images of violence presented to the children, real events on the news were the most affecting, if the consequences of the violence involved other children or people with whom they could identify. Conversely the children empathise less with items on the news with which they cannot identify or which occur elsewhere in the world, unless that 'other' place is recognisable.

Children also make clear judgements about what they find is justified use of

violence, which in turn affects how violent an image is perceived to be. If the violence is considered as unjust or unfair, then the scene is considered more violent. The relationship between the protagonist and victim should be considered.

There are some key differences in the way in which children's reactions differ from those of adults.¹ The requirement that a depiction should appear realistic or seem as though it can happen is stronger for adults. And for an adult to describe a sequence as violent, the action actually needs to be seen. For children, the seen consequences of a violent action can be enough for them to deem it violent.

Note

1. Similar work was previously conducted among adults, see David E. Morrison et al. (1999) *Defining Violence: The Search for Understanding*. University of Luton Press

Source

Andrea Millwood Hargrave (2003) *How Children Interpret Screen Violence*. BBC, BBFC, BSC and ITC (89 pp). In late 2003, the Broadcasting Standards Commission and Independent Television Commission ceased to exist and their duties are assumed by Ofcom (the Office of Communications), the new communications sector regulator in the U.K. The full report is available on Ofcom's web site at: <http://www.ofcom.org.uk/static/archive/bsc/plain/pubs.htm>

•••

Children Watching War

A project by the Internationales Zentralinstitut für das Jugend- und Bildungsfernsehen (IZI), Germany, in co-operation with international researchers has been investigating children's perspective on the war in Iraq and television coverage of the war.

No. 16/2003/2 of the Institute's magazine *TelevIZion* presents the first results of the different studies in German. A corresponding English issue of *TelevIZion* was published in April 2004, No. 17/2004 E.

The results and conclusions will be discussed at an international workshop: "Children Watching War – What to do if the next war is coming?" The colloquium, which has invited presenters from Germany, Israel, Palestine, South Africa, The Netherlands, the U.K., and the U.S.A., will take place on June 15, 2004, during The PRIX JEUNESSE International Festival in Munich, Germany. The workshop is arranged by the IZI in co-operation with Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung (Federal Agency for Civic Education). (See also under "Coming Events" on the Clearinghouse's web site.)

Some glimpses of the studies and findings are available in English on IZI's web site at: http://www.br-online.de/jugend/izi/english/research/e_war.htm

•••

Coming Events

Information on coming international and regional conferences and seminars is continuously up-dated and presented on the Clearinghouse web site.

•••

The International Clearinghouse on Children, Youth and Media

In 1997, The Nordic Information Centre for Media and Communication Research (Nordicom), Göteborg University Sweden, began establishment of The International Clearinghouse on Children, Youth and Media (formerly the UNESCO International Clearinghouse on Children and Violence on the Screen), financed by the Swedish government and UNESCO. The overall point of departure for the Clearinghouse's efforts with respect to children, youth and media is the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The aim of the Clearinghouse is to increase awareness and knowledge about children, youth and media, thereby providing a basis for relevant policy-making, contributing to a constructive public debate, and enhancing children's and young people's media literacy and media competence. Moreover, it is hoped that the Clearinghouse's work will stimulate further research on children, youth and media.

The International Clearinghouse on Children, Youth and Media informs various groups of users – researchers, policy-makers, media professionals, voluntary organisations, teachers, students and interested individuals – about

- research on children, young people and media, with special attention to media violence
- research and practices regarding media education and children's/young people's participation in the media
- measures, activities and research concerning children's and young people's media environment.

Fundamental to the work of the Clearinghouse is the creation of a global *network*. The Clearinghouse publishes a *yearbook* and a *newsletter*. Several *bibliographies* and a worldwide *register of organisations* concerned with children and media have been compiled. This and other information is available on the Clearinghouse's *web site*: www.nordicom.gu.se/unesco

THE CLEARINGHOUSE IS LOCATED AT NORDICOM

NORDICOM is an organ of co-operation between the Nordic countries – Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden. The overriding goal and purpose is to make the media and communication efforts under-taken in the Nordic countries known, both throughout and far beyond our part of the world.

NORDICOM is funded by the Nordic Council of Ministers.

NORDICOM uses a variety of channels – newsletters, journals, books, databases – to reach researchers, students, decision-makers, media practitioners, journalists, teachers and interested members of the general public.

NORDICOM works to establish and strengthen links between the Nordic research community and colleagues in all parts of the world, both by means of unilateral flows and by linking individual researchers, research groups and institutions.

NORDICOM also documents media trends in the Nordic countries. The joint Nordic information addresses users in Europe and further afield. The production of comparative media statistics forms the core of this service.

The International Clearinghouse on Children, Youth and Media

A UNESCO Initiative 1997



Göteborg University



Nordic Council of Ministers

NORDICOM

Göteborg University

P.O. Box 713

SE - 405 30 GÖTEBORG

Tel. +46 31 773 10 00. Fax +46 31 773 46 55

E-mail: clearinghouse@nordicom.gu.se