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Foreword

Promote or Protect? That is the theme of this sixth Yearbook from the International Clearinghouse on Children, Youth and Media. The reality the title seeks to capture is briefly this: Modern information technology and the deregulation and increasing commercialization of the media sector that followed in its wake have changed the face of the media landscape quite dramatically. The volume of media content seems to know no limits. A good share of the people in this world – albeit far from all – have access to an abundance of information and entertainment via television, books, periodicals and the Internet.

Among media consumers, young people have increasingly attracted media industries' interest, both because they are major consumers of the media and because they hold the key to future markets, as well. With the above-mentioned changes in the media landscape, media producers, both commercial and public, have focused their energies on "winning" youthful audiences.

Meanwhile, there is increasing concern – on the part of parents, teachers and policy-makers alike – about the influences that mass media, particularly television and the Internet, exert on young viewers and users. Such concerns have been voiced as long as modern mass media have existed, but they have intensified.

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child provides a framework for these issues through its Article 17, whereby signatories to the Convention pledge to ensure that children in their countries have *"access to information and material from a diversity of national and international sources, especially those aimed at the promotion of [their], spiritual and moral well-being and physical and mental health"*. Toward this end, the signatories further commit themselves to *"encourage the development of appropriate guidelines for the protection of the child from information and material injurious to his or her well-being"*.

For a number of years now, there has been widespread discussion of how laws and self-regulation may be applied to limit the dissemination of "injurious" media content. In recent years, however, the emphasis has shifted somewhat from

legislation and prohibition toward an emphasis on the responsibility of adults – adults within the media, in the schools and in the home. And, there is a growing emphasis on the importance of media literacy. Consequently, "protection" no longer is viewed exclusively in terms of keeping children away from certain content, or vice versa, but is also a question of strengthening children in their role as consumers of the media. "Media literacy" means having an understanding of how mass media work, how they produce meaning, how the media are organized and knowing how to use them wisely. In short, it is seen to empower people to be both critical thinkers and creative producers of an increasingly wide range of messages, using images, sound and language. Aspects of media literacy, not least in the context of media education, have been the subject of several previous publications from the Clearinghouse.

The question of how to achieve effective self-regulation continues to occupy policy-makers on both national and regional levels, not least in the European Union. There is a widespread conviction that it is possible to protect children, their well-being and human dignity while preserving fundamental democratic principles like freedom of expression. But the question of whose responsibility it should be to see that self-regulation is put in place and develops, that is, whether the responsibility rests with government, the media industries, with voluntary organizations or with families, has surfaced again and again. The contribution of the research community has been to evaluate the efforts made to date; the conclusions these studies give rise to are there to guide future efforts.

Many recent books and articles have treated one or the other of the themes, "protect" or "promote". The focus commonly rests on media literacy/media education or on regulation. Seldom do we see efforts to cast light on both, which may be seen as two faces of the same coin. That, however, is the meat of this present Yearbook, *Promote or Protect?* Here, the Clearinghouse has asked scholars from different parts of the world to examine these two concepts from a variety of vantage points. The introductory chapter invites reflection and explores new approaches to the concepts. The focus in subsequent chapters turns to concrete examples and the lessons they afford. It is our hope that the experience recorded here will contribute positively to ongoing work to improve children's and young people's situation in their contacts with mass media as well as the media environments to which they are exposed.

Let me conclude by thanking, on behalf of the Clearinghouse, all the contributors who have made this Yearbook possible and thanks, also, to UNESCO without whose financial support the book would never have seen the light of day.

Göteborg in February 2004

Ulla Carlsson
Director

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Promote or Protect? Perspectives on Media Literacy and Media Regulations

Introduction by Cecilia von Feilitzen, Scientific Co-ordinator
of The International Clearinghouse on Children, Youth and Media

Economy, politics, culture, and people's everyday life are in most societies increasingly dependent on and adapted to the media; at the same time we to a greater and greater extent use the media as resources. This medialization process is reinforced by strong tendencies of media globalization and the rapid development of new information and communication technology. The media are constructing images of reality and fantasy, and recurrent patterns of such images. With increased medialization, some of these patterns are more and more often regarded problematic – be it gratuitous representations of physical violence, violent or too much pornography, too much and biased advertising, stereotyped, humiliating portrayals of children, women, ethnic and linguistic minority groups or other countries, racism and hate. However, we wish for both entertaining and informative media contents to contribute to constructive intercultural dialogue, democracy, citizenship and human rights.

Concerns about the problems and potential harmful media contents are all over the world met with discussions and suggestions, and in some places establishment, of different counter-measures. On the one hand, the increasing medialization has generated an intensified debate about the importance of *media literacy* – i.e., ways to promote children's and young people's media competence in the form of media education and media participation, as well as through increasing media awareness among parents, teachers, media professionals, politicians, voluntary organizations and other adults.

On the other hand, the explosive media growth has, in fact – in spite of the neo-liberalization or so-called deregulation of national media in many countries during the last two decades – also regenerated and intensified discussions about *media regulations* on national and international levels. By such regulations are in this context primarily meant measures of protecting children and young people – and adults – from potential harmful contents by means of laws, age limits, ratings/classifications, filtering, time schedules, watersheds, warnings, labelling, codes

of media conducts, etc. But media regulations also include efforts to improve children's and young people's media environment, for example, by offering media contents of high quality and diversity.

The ambition of this Yearbook is to contribute to reflections on the whole range of 'measures' in relation to children, young people and media. What do scholars say about the roles of parents, of media education in and outside school, of media professionals and of media regulations? Media researchers – and also lawyers, regulators, international civil servants, media professionals, and voluntary groups – were invited to present all-embracing thoughts or concrete empirical findings and case studies related to this complex area. Naturally, in a single volume there is only room for a few examples representing a few countries. Although no generalizations can be made across cultures and borders, it is our hope that this multiple approach and many-sided collection of articles will appear fruitful for stimulating further research and debate on the topic.

In the first article, *Media Regulation, Self-Regulation and Education: Debunking Some Myths and Retooling Some Working Paradigms*, the author *Divina Frau-Meigs* gives a broad critical account of several aspects of this complex of problems from a European/French perspective. She makes an evaluation of the impact of regulation, self-regulation and education and points at their inconsistencies. She finds that there is need for developing a more coherent and efficient set of policies, which are at the same time a variety and composite of different sustainable solutions over time, adapted to the changing environment. With respect to the fundamental right to freedom of expression and the similarly fundamental rights of children, the state tends to favour self-regulation of the media, semi-controlled by the state, with the paradoxical result that deregulation is fostered by the regulator. But the self-regulation solutions of 'watershed or the family hours', 'parental warnings', 'ombudsmen' and 'technological filtering' rest on ideals that do not correspond to reality. Media reception patterns in most families are not helped by these measures. And classification of contents, performed by the media themselves and not harmonized across television networks or different media, lacks transparency at all levels. The most efficient solutions seem to be those emerging from the constraints of regulation, such as production and broadcasting quotas of national products, and taxes or percentages of benefits channelled to audiovisual and cinema production funds.

As for media education, the author continues, it is not established in school in most countries – instead popular culture is mostly kept out of school – and where media education is included, its pedagogy rests on different grounds and is not assessed, creating a veritable confusion. In addition, media education is, if it exists, implemented almost solely in secondary education, although it would be more effective among younger children. Sometimes media education or media literacy tend to be implemented outside the school system with all sorts of local initiatives but without national focus. Media literacy has to be placed on an educational continuum, Divina Frau-Meigs says, within which decision-makers, educators, producers and broadcasters, and parents all play an active role. She con-

cludes her article by making a range of recommendations concerning how to reach a balance between media environmental protection and sustainable development where accountability should be shared by all parties.

The following articles of the Yearbook focus on and exemplify the roles of these parties as they are today. Let us start with media education and media literacy, illuminated by nine articles.

Media education, media literacy and awareness-raising

David Buckingham and Kate Domaille present under the heading *Where Are We Going and How Can We Get There? General Findings from the UNESCO Youth Media Education Survey 2001* a worldwide survey of the scale and reach of media education in school. The survey is based on answers from 38 countries, as well as on an extensive review of print and web-based materials related to media education. The authors stress that there is an extraordinary dearth of systematic, reliable research in this field, and as such the responses and material they have gathered are bound to be partial and impressionistic.

One of the authors' overall findings is that media education has made very uneven progress. Where media education exists at all as a defined area of study, it tends to take the form of an elective or optional area of the secondary school curriculum, rather than a compulsory element. In this situation, the development of media education frequently depends upon the initiative of committed teachers, often working in isolation. The most urgent need identified in the survey is for sustained, in-depth teacher training. Meanwhile, arguments for media education have generally met with indifference or even resistance from policy-makers, which is why media education, among other things, suffers from a lack of funding, a lack of recognition, and lack of basic equipment and resources. However, in spite of these pessimistic facts there is also a gleam of hope: the survey displays a high degree of commitment on the part of the media educators, even if this is not yet recognized by policy-makers or by the educational world in general. Teachers have, for example, themselves formed supportive networks and associations in several countries. Media education also tends to move away from an approach based on 'inoculation' towards one based on 'empowerment', that is, the notion that media education should aim to defend or protect young people against media influence seems to have lost ground in several countries in recent years (although it is still remaining in other countries), while the more contemporary definition of media education seems to be based on notions such as 'critical awareness', 'democratic participation' and even 'enjoyment' of the media. The needs for the field to expand and develop are addressed in the concluding section of the article.

David Buckingham and Kate Domaille also underline that there is need for another survey on media education or media literacy efforts outside the formal

education system, which they believe are happening in several countries and which their study does not cover. In many countries, the most interesting and productive work within media education might be found, for example, in local youth and community-based projects and/or led by non-governmental organizations.

The Clearinghouse has presented concrete examples of the situation of and approaches to media education and media literacy in earlier Yearbooks. In the 1999 Yearbook, for example, perspectives from Canada, South Africa, Australia, Europe, Latin America and India were included, as well as a range of examples of children's and young people's participation in the media, which have implications for media education and media literacy. In this the 2003 Yearbook, further approaches are introduced, from the USA, Europe, Japan, South Africa and Latin America, among other countries. At least two aspects could be said to characterize these examples, as has been shown in previous Yearbooks, as well. The first aspect is, what David Buckingham and Kate Domaille also point at, that media education is not confined to the school situation only. On the contrary, the less 'Western' these education initiatives are, the more likely they are to take their starting-point in other societal contexts than school. Secondly, the below-mentioned approaches often use other expressions than media education, above all the concept of (critical) 'media literacy'. This concept has different meanings in different countries and cultures. 'Media literacy' often refers to the knowledge we ought to get both in and outside school and, continuously, when we are adults. 'Media literacy' implies that we all must be media literate. Furthermore, the meaning is often that we all must learn to use media, understand how the media function and how they construct images of the world, in order to participate in the societal process towards increased democracy. The right to media literacy thus means social justice also for the oppressed and marginalized groups in the community.

Let us see how the perspectives on media education and media literacy can vary in different social contexts, according to the following articles.

Despite being probably the most media-saturated country in the world, it is for an outsider often difficult to discover what kind of media education, if any, is going on in the United States. *Joanne Lisosky* tells in *Managing without a Mandate: The Grassroots Momentum of Media Education in the USA* that people in the United States *are* concerned about media literacy education, although there is no federally mandated media education initiative. Instead there is a wide array of governmental and non-governmental advocacy grassroots organizations that have managed to broach the topic with modest success, differently in different states. Besides giving an exemplifying overview, the author also presents findings of a four-year project addressing the issue of media violence for developing a media literacy curriculum in the state of Washington to be presented in the Seattle public schools. The research clearly demonstrates the substantive value of media literacy education in US schools.

European Commission representative *Matteo Zacchetti* differentiates in his article *Media Literacy and Image Education: A European Approach* between 'digital literacy' – mastering the new digital technological tools – and 'media literacy',

implying the sensible and responsible use of these tools, a means of fostering a more critical and discerning attitude towards the media and of developing civil responsibilities. The European Commission has adopted the initiative of *e*Learning, of which one aim is to help people of all ages develop skills of analyzing, interpreting and evaluating image-based information. Media Literacy and Image Education concern us all, including children, parents and teachers, and should not be limited to the schools. It is a life-long process, requiring a coordinated approach that may involve grassroots, non-governmental organizations as well as media professionals. In 2002, the Commission launched within the *e*Learning initiative a study mapping extant practices in media education and related fields inside and outside the formal educational systems in Europe. Findings on and recommendations for how to support media literacy in the future are presented in the article. One conclusion is that media literacy is a key prerequisite for active citizenship. Another conclusion is that although a variety of players promote media literacy, the question arises as to how far national education supports media literacy and sees itself as responsible for it in the context of formal education.

The development of media literacy in Japan is analysed historically and in relation to international trends in the article *Media Literacy Initiatives in Citizens' Rights to Communication* by *Midori Suzuki and Kyoko Takahashi*. Media literacy initiatives started on a small scale in the late 1970s and early 1980s, primarily within the Forum for Citizens' Television & Media (FCT), with parents, teachers, researchers and media professionals concerned with media issues pertaining to children, women, and other minority citizens. 'Media literacy' implies citizens' rights to communicate via the media, or 'citizens' abilities to critically analyse and evaluate media, to have access to the media and to engage in active expression of their thoughts and views, producing social communications in a variety of forms'. Recently, the recognition that living independently in a media-saturated society requires media literacy among all human beings, both children and adults, has gradually become commonplace in Japan. The concept of 'protection' of children has in official documents transformed into the concept of children's 'rights'. That is, changing the media environment in which children live requires promotion of media literacy to establish the rights of children as individuals based on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, rather than through the use of 'negative' methods (such as the V-chip). Japanese media literacy initiatives also appear in lifelong learning, and are currently underway in schools at all levels. However, there is still a need for a paradigm shift, the authors stress. The tendency to think of passive audiences must change into a view of people as active and critical media readers.

Thomas Tufte writes in *Entertainment-Education in HIV/AIDS Communication: Beyond Marketing, Towards Empowerment* that the use of entertainment-education (EE) within primarily non-formal education – via radio and TV series such as *Soul City*, telenovelas, musical genres, theatre, talk shows, etc. – has been growing significantly over the past decade. EE is increasingly being used in addressing health-related issues, and the author pays particular attention to criti-

cally assess the potentials and limitations of this media practice in the combat against HIV/AIDS in South Africa. 'Media literacy' is, thus, less related to teaching school children about content analysis or media production, and more focused on addressing the barriers for and the quality and impact of EE. The ideal communicative scenario the article wishes to pursue is to deal with the challenge of providing an information- and dialogue-rich enabling environment, where the media text contributes to empowering the audiences in facing HIV/AIDS and fighting HIV/AIDS in everyday life. The author discerns three 'generations' within the development of EE, from social marketing strategies focusing on individual behaviour change to, secondly, the need to develop community-based strategies as a means to involve the audiences more effectively. Participatory communication and Paulo Freire's liberating dialogical pedagogy is, thus, finding its way into mass media-borne EE strategies. In recent years, a third generation of EE initiatives have emerged that give rise to hope. Still community- and dialogue-based, they focus less on information and more on the ability to identify the problems as well as solutions often related to structural problems. 'Communication for social change' is the key concept. Empowerment and understanding the 'culture of silence' among marginalized and deprived groups and populations lie at the core of the challenge.

However, regarding mainstream commercial television in Latin America, the prime purpose of media education is not to contribute to producing other educational or cultural shows – rather the goal is to give a new dimension to audiences' perception of television as a whole. This line of thought is advanced by *Guillermo Orozco Gómez* with the assistance of *Daniel Medina Jackson* in the article *A Pedagogical Deconstruction of TV Audiences in 21st Century Mediated Environments: A Latin-American Perspective*. A TV viewing pedagogy should help individuals make sense of themselves in the mediated world, understand better their status as audiences and eventually intervene in the unintended TV and audiovisual media informal learning processes to which most people as audiences, and especially children, are subjected in Latin America. Vital for this pedagogy is the fact that commercial television is out to conquer audiences – audiences are not born but made. Television plays an important role in shaping audiences' perceptions of the world; people certainly do learn from TV even if TV might not have a clear educational intent. The pedagogical challenge is to make sense of the multiplicity of elements and mediations that contribute to the understanding of audiences and their future emancipation. A TV viewing pedagogy from, with and for audiences must redefine the ways in which researchers and media educators assess audiences. Only after a precise description is it possible to produce change, and the educational project should orient its efforts toward the information-poor majority. When audiences can understand by themselves how TV is constituted and how it expresses itself, they can relate TV to their own lives, be motivated to talk and think television from a broad and inclusive perspective and incorporate new forms of interaction with the media.

Although the above-mentioned articles on media education and media literacy in certain respects instil some hope and partly are characterized by relative op-

timism, we also see that media education is far from established in the school and that there is a long way to go until the right of media literacy will be realized among all citizens, especially among minority, marginalized and information-poor groups and populations. The call of the past decades for media education and media literacy as a way of strengthening young people's relations with the media is, simply, not a reality for the absolute majority of children and youth in the world, or for that matter for most adults. As things now stand, media education or media literacy do not function so as to counteract undesirable influences in the media environment.

Another often-suggested solution to problematic media content associated with children's and young people's media use is to stress the responsibility of the parents. The next three articles based on data from eleven countries shed some light upon the role of parents and their media awareness – or media literacy – when it comes to their children.

Karin Larsson puts forward findings from a survey in five countries, Denmark, Iceland, Ireland, Norway and Sweden, in the article *Children's On-line Life – and What Parents Believe*. In these countries penetration of Internet is high. Almost all children aged 9-16 years use the Internet, 80 per cent have an Internet connection at home, and about one third go on-line at least once daily. The survey concludes that there are substantial differences between what children actually do on-line and what parents think they know about their kid's Internet use. Parents tend to underestimate the extent of children's on-line activities and are, above all, not aware of the social and interactive aspects, such as e-mailing, chatting, instant messaging and downloading music and software. Moreover, many parents do not believe that their child has come across pornography and sexual material on-line, when they in fact have. About 20 per cent of the children have met someone in real life whom they first got to know on-line, while only 4 per cent of the parents think that this applies to their children. The majority of parents claim that they often or sometimes sit with their child while he or she is on the Internet. However, the majority of children say parents never sit with them when they go on-line. The main purpose of the survey has been to provide knowledge as a basis for different awareness-raising efforts, such as a guide for parents and an education programme that will empower teachers and parents in helping children to become more competent, responsible and confident Internet users.

Similar results as regards the digital divide between parents and children are presented by *Angeline Khoo, Tyng-Tyng Cheong and Albert Liau* in the article *Understanding Our Youths and Protecting Them: Singapore's Efforts in Promoting Internet Safety*. The aims of two Singaporean surveys were, among other things, to study the level of awareness parents and children have of Internet problems and potential dangers, as well as their concerns in these regards. In general, parents tend to underestimate the extent of all their children's Internet activities, but overestimate their children's skepticism regarding the reliability of information obtained from the Internet. Another finding is that youths who enjoy better communication with parents are less likely to engage in risky Internet behaviours

than are other young people. The authors conclude that parents need to realize the importance of their role in ensuring their children's safe use of the Internet. Parents should also be encouraged to acquire surfing skills to equip themselves. The article highlights the efforts of a volunteer group, PAGi (Parents Advisory Group for the Internet), in implementing Internet public education initiatives in Singapore. However, it is evident that these initiatives cannot be shouldered by one agency alone, but require a multi-prong approach involving inter-agency and international collaboration.

Parents' and children's communication with each other about television and new information and communications technologies – computer, Internet, CD-ROMs, video games, computer games and mobile phones – is the theme of the article *Parents, Children and Media: Some Data from Spain, Brazil, Norway, South Africa and India* written by *Ferran Casas, Mònica González and Cristina Figuer.* Previous research shows that although media activities are often highly motivating for children, communication on these topics is too often lacking. The results of a survey in five countries in four continents presented in the article point at similar tendencies in all countries, although in each country some exceptions can be observed. Probably the most outstanding tendency identified is that parents in all countries tend to overestimate their own child's satisfaction with talking with family members about their media activities. The authors conclude that in many families a sort of generation gap appears with respect to media use. Parents do not seem to be able to understand their own child's interaction with media from the child's perspective. In such cases, some parents tend to deny the child's competences in relation to media, devaluating its worth and reinforcing the generation gap. For many children, adults may have low credibility as "experts" on media activities. Therefore, the authors say, parents cannot be considered the only ones responsible for children's media use. Parents need extra-family information and support to better interact with their children in relation to audio-visual media use. Parents also need to talk more openly and bi-directionally with their children – accepting that sometimes this may mean that the child teaches the adult about media, and frankly informs the adult about why it is so exciting. Only when the child perceives that the adult understands her or his point of view, can he/she accept the adult as an authority with referential power and, thus, with the influence to protect or empower the child in her/his media use.

The media: Self-regulation, co-regulation, regulation?

The articles so far clearly indicate that neither the school nor the parents are sufficiently prepared, aware or media literate to shoulder the whole responsibility for children's media use. What do parents and other adults themselves think? Is the responsibility theirs or is it the school's? Or should the media be more responsible in their outlet of media contents to users? If so, is self-regulation

satisfactory or should governments resort to legislative media regulations? But how will this be realized without circumscribing the principle of freedom of expression?

Naturally, answers to such questions will vary greatly from one country to another. They will also differ according to which media contents are under discussion.

Ulla Carlsson gives one example in her article *Attitudes toward Media Violence and Protective Measures in Sweden.* Here the findings of an opinion poll among adults in Sweden are exhibited. The first questions in the survey treat perceptions of the incidence of violence in the media, perceived influences of media violence, and the perceived relationship between media violence and violence in society. Many adults feel that violence occurs 'often' or 'very often' in certain media, and it is also common among respondents that they personally have observed displays of increased aggression in children as a consequence of depictions of violence on television and in films. A good share are also convinced that media violence can have negative influences on children and young people, although other factors, such as alcohol/drugs, parents and peer pressure, are considered more important with respect to the incidence of violence in Swedish society. Regarding the following question about different approaches to shielding children from depictions of violence on television, video and Internet, the vast majority of respondents prefer the measures of 'recommended age limits', 'rating and labelling', 'information campaigns targeting parents', 'warnings prior to and during television transmissions' and 'ethical rules by and for the media'. About two-thirds of the respondents also support the ideas of 'obligatory media education in school' and of 'legislation on obligatory film censorship'. 'Technical filters to block certain media content' is the least endorsed measure. Thus, different kinds of information as well as measures most often brought about by so-called self-regulation and co-regulation are preferred.

With the explosive media output, the discussions of media regulations have intensified in many countries, after a period of neo-liberalization and 'deregulation' in the 1980s. The following eight articles deal with different degrees of media regulations and from different perspectives.

Carmen Palzer and Alexander Scheuer at the Institute of European Media Law elucidate in their article the different concepts of *Self-Regulation, Co-Regulation, Public Regulation.* Even experts do not seem to use these and other concepts, such as self-monitoring or self-control, appropriately. However, the authors say, the precondition of a fruitful discussion about new regulatory approaches aimed at guaranteeing the protection of minors should be a common understanding of which model of regulation the respective terms paraphrase. Thus, this article starts by defining the different regulatory systems, including their key elements, followed by brief thoughts about their advantages and disadvantages. The article also gives some concrete examples of the different models in order to illustrate particularly the difference between the self-regulatory and co-regulatory models. An example of self-regulation is the Pan European Games Information (PEGI) system, a new age-rating system for interactive games, which is a purely indus-

try-based model. Two examples of co-regulation are the Dutch system for classification of audiovisual content and the German system for youth protection in the media field, where the "self-regulatory" bodies are co-regulated by authorities. Although both issues of self-regulation and co-regulation are becoming increasingly topical, the co-regulatory approach has recently been recognized as an essential way of implementing extant provisions within the European Community, the authors conclude.

Piermarco Aroldi compares specifically television regulation in seven countries in his article *The Protection of Minors – A Comparative Research on Television Regulation in Some European Countries*. The author describes the set of codes, from the European Union regulations in which each national legislation fits, to the constitutional laws, the laws on the protection of minors regulating radio and television networks, up to the guidelines, the codes of conduct and self-regulation carried out by single entities. Aroldi classifies the different national models according to regulation, self-regulation and co-regulation (here called 'control'). One conclusion is that there is a growing tendency towards co-regulation as a preferential way of guaranteeing the protection of minors. At the same time, however, the author observes that in practice the 'watershed' system (family hours) and the rating system (age and sometimes content classification of programmes) seem to converge, which is why the broadcaster's social responsibility and the family's educational responsibility seem to be destined to merge and cooperate, as well.

But how effective are rating systems? From another part of the world, the United States, *W. James Potter* criticizes the family viewing hours, the rating systems, as well as the V-chip – a filtering and blocking device for television – in his article *The Myth that the Rating Systems and V-chip Will Help Solve the Problem*. Regarding family hours, there is no time when children are not viewing television in large numbers. As for the rating systems, in the US they are developed wholly by the industry itself with no oversight (i.e., no co-regulation), and one must remember that the aim of the television industry is to attract large audiences to their programmes, not to discourage viewing. The ratings give insufficient information to viewers, are misapplied, and most people find them confusing and do not use them. As far as the V-chip is concerned, only a small minority of parents uses it. One part of the problem is that the programming of the V-chip according to the ratings is not simple, and the television industry has done little to educate the viewing public on how to use it. The author substantiates the arguments with a range of facts and research results.

However, not only industry-based self-regulation can be ineffective. Argentina is one of the most televised countries in the world and in this country all types of broadcasting activities (i.e., free to air/open television, pay television, radio, etc.) are regulated by the Federal Government. *Santiago Barilá* gives a detailed account in his article *Regulation of TV Contents in Argentina* of the current laws, obligations, and definition of violations of the laws. The Federal Broadcasting Committee (COMFER) has the exclusive power to enforce regulations governing contents, subject to judicial review. In addition, COMFER, TV networks

and producers have agreed upon and adopted a 'Guide for TV Contents'. COMFER and radio and television industry chambers have also adopted by agreement the 'Basic Guidelines for Broadcasting Contents'. Nevertheless, a study shows that COMFER's explanations of how a programme violates regulations tend to be vague and poor. And an investigation among parents and TV producers supports the notion that the generalized public opinion in Argentina is that regulations and their application do not help to encourage positive programming or to deter harmful contents on television.

In Ghana, media restrictions have been eased since the transition from military to constitutionally elected governments. *Audrey Gadzekpo* says in her article *The State of Broadcast Regulations on Children in Ghana* that media pluralism has broadened the information and entertainment options of citizens; however, broadcast policy has not kept pace with the rapid transformation of Ghana's airwaves. As in many other countries, there are increasing concerns about the deleterious effects of programming on especially children. More recently children's access to Internet pornography has been added to a growing list of concerns. Although children below the age of 18 years make up more than 45 per cent of the population, hardly any attempts have been made to address children's programming needs and to protect children from harmful broadcasts. Having conducted a study for the article, the author concludes that hardly any television and radio station has adopted the National Media Commission's existing guidelines referring to children, or has heard of the African Charter on Children's Broadcasting, which was ratified by the Commonwealth broadcasters in 2000. Both as regards broadcast regulations and the Internet, everyone thinks it is someone else's business to protect children. The absence of national broadcast policy in general, and, in particular, a policy regarding children and media use has meant that there is little participation of youth and children in the media, and very little children's programming.

In contrast, the next three articles featuring Australia point to a clear co-regulatory approach to audiovisual media regulation, including quotas for children's programming. *Des Clark's* article, titled *A Practical Response to Classification of Convergent Media in the Australian Context*, presents an innovation – combined guidelines for films and computer games – released in 2003. Australia is probably the only country in the world that has this combined classification system for the two media in question. Generally, Australia has a national classification scheme, which enables people to make informed choices about the media products they want to use. The Classification Board classifies publications, films and computer games before they can be sold, hired or publicly exhibited, whereas the Review Board reviews decisions of the Board. Previously, the Board used two quite different sets of guidelines for films and for computer games, respectively. However, as a consequence of the on-going media convergence a film can now contain a computer game, and a game can contain a film. The author has found that the community and industry both seem satisfied with the changes in the guidelines.

Suzanne Shipard gives an overview of the Australian regulation of radio and television in her article *A Brief Look at the Regulation of the Broadcast Media in Australia*. The responsibility is shared between the Australian Broadcasting Authority (ABA) as the government regulator and six different sectors of the broadcasting industry. One of many characteristics is that domestic Australian programmes must comprise at least 55 per cent of all programming. Regarding children, Children's Television Standards have been in place since 1984 based on the policy that children are entitled to be provided with quality, age-specific and comprehensive programmes geared to their special cognitive abilities and experiences. Television licensees are required to broadcast a minimum of 130 hours of programmes for preschoolers and 260 hours of programmes for older children up to 14 years of age. This means that all programmes for preschoolers must be Australian and 50 per cent of the time allotted to programmes for older children must be occupied by first release Australian programmes.

Also Internet content is subject of co-regulation in Australia, as accounted for by *Mike Barnard* in his article *Internet Content Regulation in Australia: A Co-regulatory Approach*. The ABA's responsibilities include: investigating complaints about Internet content; encouraging development of codes of practice for the Internet industry, registering, and monitoring compliance with such codes; providing advice and information to the community about Internet safety issues, especially those relating to children's use of the Internet; and undertaking supporting activities including research and international liaison. The principle of co-regulation reflects Parliament's intention that Government, industry and the community all play a role in managing Internet safety issues, particularly Internet safety for children.

Protect or promote?

The last article in the book, *Raising Media Professionals' Awareness of Children's Rights*, is written by *Aidan White,* the International Federation of Journalists. The author considers the fact that children and young people are seldom seen and heard in the media, reflecting a weakness that resonates through any discussion on media and the rights of children. Raising awareness about the rights of children and the promotion of children's rights is a challenge to media. Media must not just report fairly, honestly and accurately on the experience of childhood, the author says, but they must also provide space for the diverse, colourful and creative opinions of children themselves. At the same time, the media must be freed from the reins of political and economic control, which limit professionalism and undermine ethical standards. The author points to several delicate dilemmas facing the media professionals and which are dependent on their working conditions, the issues of standards, regulation and self-regulation, and their relations to economic, political and cultural institutions in society. Running throughout the article is the issue of how to balance the right to freedom of expression

and the rights of children. Media professionals can both give a voice in the media to children, listening to their views and aspirations, and protect the identity of children who should not be exposed to the glare of publicity.

The collection of articles gives rise to thoughts and questions. Is, for instance, 'promote or protect?' a pertinent dichotomy when discussing children, young people and their sometimes problematic relations to the media? Apparently, existing media education/media literacy initiatives and existing media regulations, at least judged from the examples represented in this book, are not mutually exclusive in the sense that one 'measure' seems to be sufficient to support children and young people in their interactions with the media. There is a need both for media education in school, different kinds of media literacy initiatives outside formal education systems, and life-long media literacy for all citizens, not least in the form of awareness-raising among parents and other adults. The responsibility for promoting and protecting children and their rights must also be shared by the media and politicians in the form of efficient kinds of media regulations. Due to, among other things, economic pressures and goals, sheer self-regulation of the media often seems insufficient. There is, in many countries, an intensified discussion of different co-regulatory models.

In conclusion, there is not only one path that must be tread – responsibility cannot be placed only upon the audience, parents, school, media or politicians – but all must cooperate to work for a more democratic media environment. Nor is there a sustainable solution that we can call either 'promote' or 'protect'. Protecting children and young people from possible deleterious media content, and from being abused and exploited in the media, is at the same time promotion. In the same vein, promoting children's and young people's knowledge about how the media function and how they construct images of people and the world, as well as promoting children's and young people's participation in the media, is protection.

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Media Regulation, Self-Regulation and Education

Debunking Some Myths and Retooling Some Working Paradigms

Divina Frau-Meigs

The tastes, preferences and references of young people in Europe are developing in a context of widely open mediascape, of massive imports from the United States and of recycling of cultural products on a variety of increasingly intrusive devices. A close look at the conditions of reception of young people in France reveals that they have acquired American "as seen on TV" tastes, without showing any particular leanings toward the United States (Frau-Meigs and Jehel 2003). The values associated with such tastes reflect the narcissistic interests of adolescence rather than a belief in the American lifestyle of individualism and competition. Young people tend to look for media characters of their own age with whom they can identify and whose situations they recognize. Their taste for media violence, real as it may be, is blurred by the fact that it comes packaged within a complex of human relations and aesthetic and kinetic sensations. When considering how these tastes affect their references in their own culture, the national terrain seems to hold its ground, with recognition of the role of the State and of education and an interpretation of violence as a social disease that can be prevented and cured. However, when issues of justice, police and the law are considered, French young people tend to subscribe to the procedures and behaviors of the United States, as seen on the screen.

These results show a partial erosion of emotional and cognitive references that can be associated with the socialization process due to media culture. They point to a situation of transition, with the co-presence of American cultural scraps and enduring blocks of national culture (Frau-Meigs 2001). The most striking fact is the dissonance between the values and behaviors resulting from their visual experience (or modified by it) and their interpretation of the deep meaning of the institutions they live with. This cognitive dissonance seems characteristic of a situation of cultural scrambling produced by an ill-mastered acculturation process (Lonner and Berry 1987; Varan 1998). As a result of this current state of acculturation, young people seem to be in a general state of confusion about their

values and this leads them to a feeling of powerlessness and of inarticulate and somewhat constrained consent.

Acculturation is not a new phenomenon nor is it good or bad per se, but due to globalization and the increase in media trade, its conditions of penetration and its working mechanisms need to be reassessed, especially in the light of the European Union situation (Demorgon et al. 2003; Frau-Meigs 2003a). Given the conditions in reception, what are the answers provided by the State, the family, the educational system – all the caretakers that revolve around young people?

These answers are framed within the Directive "Television Without Frontiers", with its broadcasting quotas and its financial support system for European production, buttressed by programs such as Eurimages (1988) and MEDIA (1990). They are also framed by the European Union Recommendation on the Protection of Minors (1998), calling for self-regulation of the media, and by the conclusions of the European Council (December 17, 1999), asking for renewed efforts in media education (Frau-Meigs and Jehel 2003: 88-91).

These policies tend to reflect the vision of governance promoted within the European union, which leaves a wide range of initiative to the individual States in the application of guidelines and recommendations. France is one of the countries that apply the Directive most severely, in open resistance to the quasi-monopoly of American fiction, in the name of pluralism and cultural diversity (Frau-Meigs 2002). Other countries, less keen on quotas, such as England, have moved toward implementing media education curricula in their schools. Assessing the French and the European situation – a good ten years after creation of these policies – allows for an evaluation of the impact of regulation, self-regulation and education, in a comparative perspective. However, the gaping discrepancies between the tastes of young people, the expectations of civil society, and the choices operated by decision-makers all seem to point to the need for developing a more coherent and efficient set of policies. This necessary retooling cannot be accomplished without a clear assessment of the received ideas on the family, the industry and the school system, not only around issues of violence but also around wider issues of socialization by the media.

Some myths of self-regulation and regulation

A large and wide discrepancy appears in Western countries when the State is dealing with the complex phenomenon of the tastes of young people and of their acculturation to image-and-action-driven programs, mostly American in origin. To justify the regulation of violence, the State refers to youth welfare and protection rights, often after public opinion has been stirred by triggering events, such as the case of little Silge in Norway, of Virginie Larivière in Canada or the killing of Nanterre in France. However this right runs counter the right to freedom of expression, which tends to overrule any other rights in democratic nations and

which is brought up any time public opinion or decision-makers require more regulation of the audiovisual sector, branding any move of the kind as censorship. Hence the solutions generally adopted to deal with violence on television all tend to favor self-regulation, semi-controlled by the State, with the paradoxical situation that deregulation is fostered by the regulator, the State thus disengaging itself from its engagements.

France has come up with a whole range of self-censorship solutions for media accountability, as have most European and North American countries: the family hour (prime time and its watershed), parental warnings (*signalétique* or parental advisories, with prior classification of programs), the ombudsmen (journalists acting as mediators between the network and public complaints) and technological filtering (scrambling, the V-chip) (Frau-Meigs 2004; Potter and Warren 1996). The underlying assumptions of these four types of solutions rest on a number of ideal claims that are being belied by the reality of reception patterns and the rapid evolution of society and technology.

Outdated family patterns

The reception patterns that justify the family hour and the advisories posit that an ideal family is watching the screen. The expectations weighing on parents are then enormous: they are expected to take full responsibility for the television consumption of their children. The logic of self-regulation does not question the sources of production prior to programming; it thrusts the burden of choice a posteriori onto the unwitting watchers.

These solutions posit that parents are watching television with their kids. But research shows that children often are alone with that uncanny nanny, two thirds of them watching programs not intended for them, and more than 10 percent of them staying tuned after the watershed. The deregulation frenzy of the 1980s, together with the surge in cable consumption, has played havoc with children's programming, which is in free fall on traditional networks (Frau-Meigs 2003b). These solutions also assume that parents are making educated choices with their children, using the specialized press and all possible parental guidance on a regular basis. Research shows that parents are less aware than their kids of the meaning of *signalétique*'s warnings, especially in troubled families, and that some children will use it to select programs not intended for their eyes. Parents are also rarely aware that they can have access to mediators and complain to the network or to higher authorities for audiovisual matters, such as the Conseil Supérieur de l'Audiovisuel (CSA). As for the scrambling devices, the assumption is that parents are apt programmers of complex machines and will adjust their selection criteria to suit the development of the child. Research shows that kids tend to be more proficient with this type of technology than adults and that when parents use filtering devices their purpose seems to be more the monitoring of time and phone and electricity bills than of content.

This ideal family does not stand in the face of reality. According to data from Union Nationale des Associations Familiales (UNAF), kids spend on average per year 154 hours of quality time with their parents versus 1,400 hours with their various screens and 850 hours with their teachers. Besides, approximately one family out of two is either divorced, extended or recomposed in our modern societies; those that stay together can be highly dysfunctional. So these solutions only serve those children who least need them, as their educated and watchful parents will always avoid the pitfalls of television over-consumption. The other family situations are not addressed by these solutions: parents are absent or gone, use television as a baby-sitter and cannot or do not want to antagonize their children.

An opaque audiovisual sector

With respect to the conditions of production and broadcasting, these solutions posit that the commercial and private sector will respond to gentle pressure. Decision-makers believe that the industry will risk losing highly profitable advertising slots in prime-time scheduling, that it will invest in the production of costly non-violent and original programming (when it can access cheaper packages from the United States) and that it will proceed to classify its own programs in all due transparency.

Less naively, decision-makers hope that classifying violent (or pornographic) content will be effective less in terms of declared benefits for parents than in terms of its hidden impact on industry practices. They think that the industry will eventually modify their trade patterns (diversify their sources of supply, scrap their stock of programs, etc.). They expect the same impact on producers, hoping they will modify their editorial lines and their scenario choices in order to avoid classification, thus effectively affecting content at the production level.

Research shows that most broadcasters have integrated parental warnings into their contracts with producers, with thresholds for classification clearly spelled out. However the cost, extent and weight of such a task have caused the networks to negotiate on their own terms, especially keeping a high hand on their criteria for classification. In the process they are both judge and party. As a result the committees they have set up, in France and elsewhere, lack transparency at all levels (choice of members, coding criteria). As for the role of mediators, within the public sector, in dealing with issues of violence and ethics in news and fiction, it remains to be given a real status, and a legitimacy all the harder to acquire as the journalists who volunteer as mediators are also both judge and party and are given little authority (Frau-Meigs and Jehel 2003).

The most efficient solutions seem to be those emerging from the constraints of regulation. Framing regulatory policies and directives, such as production and broadcasting quotas, taxes or percentages of benefits channeled to audiovisual and cinema production funds, etc., are starting to bear fruit. They have succeeded

in modifying some consumption patterns among young people, who, when given the choice, tend to select national products. Since 2000, French investments in the production process have started to bring profits, especially as far as cinema is concerned: more than 190 million entries (compared to 150 million in the 1990s), and more than 50 percent of French movies at the box office (compared to 30 to 40% in previous years). Public sector funding for European industry has increased by 13 percent in 2000-2001 (compared to 10% in previous years), France alone contributing more than a third of the total funding (Observatoire Européen de l'Audiovisuel 2003). The general trends confirm the national preference – production permitting: the privileged position of cinema in relation to television (which reflects choices of cultural exception), the drop in imports of American films, especially those aimed at prime time, a drop not compensated however by wider circulation of European productions, but by greater consumption of local productions (Frau-Meigs 2002).

A controversial definition of violence

In relation to content, the basic tenet posits that violence can be universally defined once and for all, a most thorny issue in the research world. Researchers, in their eagerness to provide data for decision-makers, have aligned themselves on quantitative procedures, like violent acts counts, frequencies, etc. (e.g., Gerbner et al. 1980). Their validity has been criticized, especially in France, where research traditions tend to privilege qualitative analysis. As for producers and broadcasters, they are alien to any notion of accounting, if not of accountability, though they have no problem with audience ratings. Since they classify their own programs (including films), in the long run, they determine what violence is for the general public, with the paradoxical result that they tend to be more censorial than the cinema classificatory commission! Besides, parental warnings, in France, seem to be relatively transparent, as all networks have adopted the same labeling icons (changed twice because of their lack of clarity), but in fact they are quite opaque because the criteria are not harmonized across networks, nor across media (cinema, video games, etc.), often unbeknownst to the public.

The recent evolution of news content blurs the issue additionally. News programs have been excluded from any classificatory effort, as they are constructed as part of the right to freedom of expression and the press. However, these programs have been increasingly broadcasting images of graphic violence, which causes people to evaluate them in polls as even more violent than fiction (and children tend to find their proximity and relation to reality quite shocking). The self-regulatory solution adopted, the call for "mediators" in public service networks, is bolstered by media accountability systems set up in English-speaking countries. But these self-elected mediators are not real third parties, are not trained for mediation, and, being journalists, can be suspected of practicing self-censorship, dependent as they are on the profession that feeds them.

Public perception adds another perplexing twist to the issue: people tend to confuse criteria for violence with those for vulgarity and sensationalism, which is to say what "aggresses" their sensitivity. They perceive less violence per se than do researchers in their counts; they are not as wary as researchers are of diluted and humorous violence, but they will denounce graphic news and info-trash as violent (Potter 2003). Their perceptions of the impact of violence also show a knowledge gap in relation to researchers: people in general emphasize imitative behavior, while researchers stress intimidation, fear factors and cognitive and emotional stress. This points to another difficulty in defining violence, due to its cultural variability within a country and across countries within a same regional area, as any quick comparison of film classification applied to a single movie across Northern America and Europe will show (Frau-Meigs 2004). The task of encoding tolerance thresholds for violence and consensus is difficult to achieve within the same country, let alone over the whole of Europe. The construction of the European Union and the context of globalization both push the States toward the logical quest for a uniform classification, but this runs the risk of accepting as criteria the most common denominators, thus falling short of local cultural expectations and of adequate filtering of obnoxious programs.

Implementing self-regulation solutions is therefore characterized by some measure of inadequacy and inefficiency, all the more so as they may become obsolete with respect to the most recent technological changes, affecting portable and broadband media. Current media conditions are already pointing to some loopholes. They are characterized by transfrontier exchanges of cultural products, in a neo-liberal economy, the consequence being that violence-driven programs are allowed to circulate without much control. The lack of international standards becomes glaringly abusive and unfair, as some countries are able to resist and others are not.

France and other States also ignore another media strategy, which is the tendency to create a coherent system of signs across media, establishing a sort of "media ring", a consciously organized circularity among media, especially those aimed at young people. Current marketing techniques and the industrial logic of minimizing risk and incrementing stock value of successful (and less successful) products lead to the widespread recycling of violent programs onto other media, such as video game boxes, the Internet, portable phones, etc. Controlling television alone is no longer sufficient, as it is difficult for any child to be free from these violent contents. Very few countries classify the other media, and even fewer do so within a uniform set of criteria. Great Britain and Canada do have parental warnings for video games; only the Netherlands has an established, yet at an experimental stage, system of cross-media classification, via a program set up by a private-public foundation, NICAM. The main drawback of that system seems to be its reliance on a technological solution (electronic questionnaires), which may lead to a total human withdrawal from the process.

Reception conditions within families reinforce the dependency toward the whole media ring: more and more children, regardless of class, find themselves

alone with violent programs. In some countries, like Great Britain or the United States, one child out of two has his or her own TV set and other media appliances, in what Sonia Livingstone (2002) has called the "bedroom culture". This culture places them beyond the pale of parental vigilance. It endangers the very idea of "watershed" and of the family hour, even if audience ratings point to a certain resilience of this ritual. The new media are endangering it even more: they aim at creating a continuous flow around children that cannot be accounted for in hours spent facing the screen but being immersed in it. In this digital context, ads and publicity breaks are upsetting as they interrupt the one-to-one interaction between marketers and consumer kids; so they tend to be erased, the program itself being an incorporated brand-carrier (Montgomery 2001).

However, despite these blatant disparities between sense and sensitivity in various Western nations, there seems to be a consensus on a few points: the need to protect children; the need to balance rights to expression with other rights, such as those of children; the preference for self-regulation and the refusal of censorship; the acceptance of a posteriori monitoring kept to its basics; the relative efficiency of quotas, especially in terms of national public tastes and expectations, if not in terms of financial profits.

Some myths in education

The school system, too, has its own set of received wisdoms in relation to its understanding of media education. It has fluctuated and, to some degree, continues to do so between three different pedagogical stances: the protectionist perspective (dominant in the 60s), the cultural perspective (dominant in the 80s) and the participatory perspective (promoted in the mid-90s). These perspectives tend to coexist, in a variety of combinations, in all Western countries. As a result great gaps exist between countries that fully include media education in their curricula, such as Austria and England, and those that resist such inclusion, such as France, Spain and Italy (Buckingham et al. 2002).

Contradictory pedagogical stances

These perspectives carry with them a whole set of pedagogical aims and methods that are not always mutually compatible. The protectionist perspective either focuses on the risks of manipulation (targeting advertising mostly) or uses audiovisual material as an illustration of the classical canons of some other branch of learning (literature, history, the arts). The cultural perspective too can use media in a traditional and illustrative setting, but it aims primarily at creating a critical citizenry and focuses on content analysis of audiovisual productions (Gonnet 1995). In France, it tends to privilege news, to the detriment of fiction, across media

(written press primarily, and increasingly TV and the Internet). The participatory perspective prefers to facilitate access to the means of production, and to empower young people via mastery of the tool. Familiarity with the techniques of audiovisual creation and production is supposed to bring about a critical reading of the media.

These perspectives all run against the stumbling block of evaluation of procedures and assessment of knowledge acquisition; their efficiency still needs to be proved systematically, beyond the measurement of students' enthusiasm. As a result, they are often considered with suspicion by the teaching body and the school administration. Besides, their full integration into the school system entails disruptions in a number of areas: pedagogical (how to evaluate?), legal (how to deal with copyright issues?), technical (how to keep up with advances in equipment?). As a result, the last two perspectives tend to be implemented outside the school system (e.g., by Centre de Liaison de l'Enseignement et des Moyens d'Information, CLEMI, and Centre d'Entrainement aux Méthodes Actives, CEMEA), with all sorts of local initiatives, but no national focus.

These perspectives tend to deny or exclude the actual media environment of youngsters, considered as much too popular or as too far from the higher objectives of education. As a matter of fact, the pleasure of young people – and the attendant motivation – seems to be a sure criterion for the exclusion of media from the school environment. Such an exclusion entails a number of deficits: the lack of decoding of fiction genres, the absence of clarification of confusing issues such as acculturation or violence, the misperceptions related to (self-)regulatory policies and economic production strategies, etc.

However, research shows how much enthusiasm media activities can create among young people: they can be reconciled with their everyday imagination and their cultural practices (Gonnet 2003; Jacquinot 2002). Censoring their media culture tends to make them feel guilty and uneasy: they cannot speak with adults of their basic preferences and references. This lack of communication, perversely, increases their dependency on media productions, whereas they could establish an aesthetic and critical distance if allowed to voice their tastes and their questions. Young people find themselves in a double bind of denial, which ties in knots their values and references, while not allowing them to criticize those fostered by the school system. This double bind can account for the two most common reproaches the teachers currently and recurrently aim at them: their deplorable state of *ennui*, or their crass incivility (Frau-Meigs 2001).

This double bind, unproductive as it is, fosters a rift of mistrust between the two parties concerned; it underlines the wider and wider discrepancy between the youngsters' life inside school and outside its protective precincts. The divergent missions of the media culture (entertainment) and the school culture (knowledge acquisition and social integration) are in no way clarified by these contradictory pedagogical stances. The media consumed by young people tend to foster values in direct opposition to those taught at school. Where education promotes discipline, work, long-term investment, critical distance, and evaluation, media (television especially) promote effortless success, instant gratification,

exposure of privacy, and glamorized perverse or violent behavior. Besides, media tend to introduce foreign values (mostly of American origin) into French and European society, whereas school tends to promote national values and attitudes, parochial and limited as they sometimes may be.

Ideal conditions of practice

In its relation to media and violence, the school system stands by its republican mission that legitimizes its historical roles of transmission and integration; it dismisses the competitive encroachments of media upon its own turf. The school also considers itself as a prime time harbor of peace against violence, and it traditionally requires weapons to be left at the entrance. Media and their entertainment stance are no more welcome than is real violence in that they are disruptive of the transmission of knowledge and of the integration of a whole population of youngsters. Transmitting knowledge works like a long-term self-regulating system, as it brings vigilance and critical distance; integrating young people diminishes the chances for aggression and racism. In the long run these strategies can deflect violence and the impact of media. Where the protection of children or child welfare is concerned, the school system acts as a buffer between the youngster and the outside world, especially the dysfunctional family; it can be very efficient in identifying abusive parents and ensuring psychological follow-up. In Western countries especially, it creates a real break around junior high school (the crucial years around pre-adolescence), when it strongly isolates children from their caretakers and from the conditions of production. In doing so, school seeks to increase the autonomy of young people while preparing them for their future choices in life.

This republican mission rests on ideal conditions of practice that are being constantly thwarted by incursions of reality in the protected space of the school. Violence has become the daily lot of school life, with around 80,000 officially reported aggressions in 2001-2002 (according to the French ministry database Signa), and it is less predictable than some years ago when it seemed to be confined to about a 100 high schools in impoverished suburban zones. School violence added to media violence, though one should not draw direct relations of causality, point to a similar mood: *ennui*, boredom packaged within a deep sense of loss of references, characteristic of anomie, of an acculturation process ill-mastered. This confirms the double bind of denial, the unbridgeable gap between the values taught by the audiovisual experience and the ones taught by the school experience, both vying for the child's attention on a daily basis. This gap undermines deeply the child's understanding of the school system and its purposes: transmission of knowledge remains a vague notion, often modified by the media experience; social ideals and values are disconnected from working conditions and everyday behavior and procedures. This lack of connection is particularly damaging in the case of young people who have learning problems and dys-

functional families. It can increase in cases of media over-consumption, which tends to decrease investment in schoolwork.

As for media literacy, research shows that, even though young people show a capacity to decode some media content, their spontaneous and familiar consumption does not necessarily lead to real knowledge, especially when they lack the intellectual and physical maturity to understand some content (violent or pornographic). They need adults to help them make sense of what they see. Besides, being familiar with the media does not necessarily cause children to resist their manipulation: seeing isn't believing, but seeing isn't switching off the screen either. Being aware of manipulation does not bring about the desire to extract oneself from the fluid media ring, as exemplified by the phenomena of fan cultures around some cult series or of the reality programming frenzies in Europe and Northern America (Frau-Meigs 2003c). Collateral gains, in terms of identity formation, group identification, and peer relations can be much stronger than all rational reasoning. And the school system is expected to mend the collateral damage…

It does so by adopting an entrenched, bunker-like position of refusal: the school system insulates children from the media and provides a derogatory clause to the otherwise pervasive market laws. This stance has the positive effect of providing respite and of delaying some of the impact of media on socialization. However, too much insulation can lead to a negative feeling of ossification that may warp the child-educator relation. When dealing with children's references and preferences, teachers have to accept the fact that they are not abandoning their authority as teachers or their responsibility as adults. They should assume their role of value transmitters, in an explicit, overt context of constant elucidation and interpretation of the media phenomena, as they are induced by the global market of programs and products that target young people and create their world culture. No wonder some countries are considering a return to "civics" (*instruction civique*) in their curricula, though it displaces the problem without solving it. It might prove more fruitful to insert within media education curricula the basics of laws and regulations concerning the right to expression and information as well as of youth protection issues, such as the right to your own privacy, to the control of your own image, etc. (Frau-Meigs and Jehel 2003).

Youth protection remains a valid mission of the school system, but it has to shed its paternalistic slough. Teachers need to be sensitized to what is at stake in the socialization and identity-formation of children. They must protect the psychological balance of the child (in relation to violence and other traumatic content) and his or her sensitivity (essential to the development of tastes, access to individual references, openness to others and cultural identity). They must also aim at accompanying the child in his or her own self-protection and empowerment.

Hence the crucial question remains one of the basic training of teachers, which is not always attuned to the child's development and to the new challenges set by media. Currently most media education curricula focus on secondary education. Necessary as it maybe, this training cannot do without reaching out also to teachers in lower grades, such as primary schools and even kindergarten. Re-

search shows that the impact of media literacy training is most efficient on children aged 9 to 12, when they are more likely to trust adults and accept rational knowledge; older age groups tend to be more preoccupied with identity formation and construction of otherness. At younger ages, adults can still vie with peers for influence, a possibility that dwindles when full adolescence kicks in.

Inordinate expectations

Laying the weight of the solution to all problems connected with the socialization of children by media on media education represents an expectation beyond the scope of the school, out of proportion with what it can do, that can only bring failure. Schools cannot be held responsible for all actions in this domain. The role of parents remains crucial, as does the part played by broadcasters, not to forget creators. All the actors present in the media world, close or distant from the child, need to be implicated.

Media literacy has to be placed on an educational continuum, within which parents, educators, broadcasters play an active role, which implies sensitizing them to issues of socialization, even training them. Media over-consumption is not the lot of children only: family environments of over-consumption may often lead them to it. Thus, educating children does not make sense if such steps are not framed within preventive family safety policies. In the context of dysfunctional families, however, the authority of the adult may not necessarily be that of the parent(s) only. Other places than the family home and other adults than the parents may be found. The environment of children in our modern societies is relatively rich in possible adult mediators: social workers, media center workers, resource center librarians, school psychologists, child welfare personnel, tutors for children under police protection, etc. As for places, regions and municipalities offer a variety of structures. They can play a key part in today's situation of governance, which fosters the autonomy of local players. They can provide special locations in school and off-school premises; they can give access to technological equipment (computers, DVDs, etc.). Some already help finance media programs, especially those related to e-learning. Some already support collective spaces (multimedia centers, libraries) that offer activities for young people and facilitate local school projects.

On the educational continuum, the media themselves can play an important role. Education is part of the obligations of public service radio and television, and media education should naturally find its place within this mission. In France, most of the producing and programming with educational content is shown on France 5 (one of the three public service channels, targeting pre-adolescents mostly). The channel works with parents, researchers and teachers to produce programs such as *Cas d'école* or *Les maternelles*, which build on the relation between children and their mothers.

Partnerships also exist with France 3 (the regional public service channel), the channel Arte, local radio stations and the regional press. National, yearly events

such as *semaine de la presse* (a week with the press), organized by CLEMI, provide an opportunity to bring them together in the public light. However, media education on television should not be constrained only to public service. Teachers and students are sensitive to analytical programs such as *Culture Pub* on M6 (the youth music channel), which reviews advertising throughout the world. The private sector has the means to produce entertaining programs that can also touch and educate a young public. This know-how ought to be tapped for the better decoding of some media productions, with the additional advantage that it would improve their somewhat damaged image (Frau-Meigs and Jehel 2003). Innovative programs and initiatives should be encouraged on all networks, including cable networks targeting children, possibly with tax breaks and other incentives. The planned arrival of digital television and of the Internet should not create delusions about the so-called *new* economy: it is still television that will be used as a test of people's tastes and as a financial lifeline for other media ring productions, as the AOL-Time Warner venture has recently proved. The media industry is caught in a co-dependency relation similar to that binding *haute couture* to ready-to-wear in the clothing business.

To mitigate the risk of seeing the family hour disappear on the new digital mediascape, the public service philosophy needs to be extended to the Internet, especially by creating and developing a public domain for youngsters, free from advertising and of unnecessarily shocking content. This public service zone could thus both preserve the period of latency so important for childhood and serve the desire for participation of adolescents (Frau-Meigs 2003b). The public sector and government decision-makers can also develop media resource centers and visual databases on the Internet, and make these available to educators. Such is the case in France with web sites such as eduscole (http://www.education.gouv/eduscole.fr), or with regard to UNESCO programs developed with the European Union, such as MENTOR (UNESCO 2003). Among the options now available to a larger public of teachers there is the DVD collection *Apprendre la television* (Learning about Television), the first volume of which is devoted to the news hour. Developed by INA (Institut national de l'audiovisuel) in partnership with CLEMI and tested by CEMEA, it offers navigational tools in a large database of audiovisual materials together with a series of exercises to be practiced in learning situations. It was first tested in real time with eight French cities connected via broadband Internet technically facilitated by a partnership with France Telecom.

Finally, to accommodate the dual requirements of freedom of expression and of child welfare, the most elegant and least painful solution entails the participation of artists and creators themselves. Some writers and filmmakers are willing to meet children in the schools and to develop materials with them, such as Quentin Blake or Lionel Delplanque. Partnerships of this kind and with other media professionals need to be given more opportunities to develop and to gain visibility, via youth film festivals for instance, such as the one held yearly in Barcelona by the Observatori Europeu de la Televisió Infantil (OETI).

What are the recommendations? Reaching a balance between media environmental protection and sustainable development…

This critical analysis does not radically call into question the solutions that democratic societies have come up with over the years. It tries to show their inconsistencies, their need to be updated and adapted to a changing environment; it also warns against the illusion of a single solve-it-all approach and points toward a variety of sustainable solutions over time. Self-regulation, regulation and educational bodies seem to ignore each other; they all function on premises and solutions that ignore recent developments in preferences, references and needs among young people and their various caregivers. The gaps and discrepancies in the missions and functions of these entities are not bad per se; they each fulfill a task in society and introduce some flexibility in the social fabric – which justifies their very existence. However if the gaps turn into chasms, and the discrepancies into disparities, they may well prove to be dysfunctional and destructive of the feeling of trust citizens place in their decision-makers and their institutions.

Hence no viable solution can come as a single panacea; only a composite patchwork can provide satisfaction to each and all, with their different life patterns, needs and expectations. This should come as a warning against the current temptation for the State to disengage itself from its duties, including its arbitration competence, and rely heavily and only on self-regulation. Implementing a balanced governance and moving toward a viable co-regulation system as promoted by the European Union, both imply the need to call on all major actors in the media environment (decision-makers, producers and broadcasters, educators and parents, not forgetting researchers), and to hold them accountable. Hence changing paradigms from a protectionist view of the media environment to a more participatory sustainable development view requires some fine-tuning in all the sectors considered:

1. Self-regulation and mediation must be given real means. This can be achieved by giving more legitimacy to the status of mediators, with in-depth training and independence; creating and maintaining debate around guidelines and codes of ethics within the profession; including consumers and members of civil society in monitoring committees; homogenizing classificatory criteria within networks and across media, with more transparency.

2. Regulatory pressure must be kept on, especially by turning issues of violence (but also pornography and advertising) into public health matters. This implies that several entities must look after the media environment and promote its sustainable development, not just the ministry for communication and culture (when it exists) but also the ministries for health, family, education, youth, etc. Cross-sector bodies must be created to help these administrations work together and act as liaison agencies. Classificatory efforts must be supported as an aid to adult decision-making, not as censorship, and they need to be monitored from outside the industry as well as from within, not entrusted to a technological device. Members of associa-

tions representing civil society should be incorporated in regulatory bodies such as CSA, and these should increase their communication toward civil society, with an established bureau of complaints and the publication of annual reports.

3. Public service activities and public domain productions must be supported financially and legally to allow for advertising-free zones and pluralism of programs and content in the media fodder. The public service must slough off its protectionist paternalistic robes to endorse those of diversity and plurality and to address issues of socialization crucial to all, issues such as acculturation, equity, gender, etc. It should take the lead in offering programs that decode media productions, as in the case of *Arrêt sur Images* on France 5 in France. It should be given access to educational channels in the bouquets being prepared for digital television.

4. Media education must be promoted on a larger, coherent national scale. It can best accommodate the balance in paradigms, between an environmental perspective that pushes for control and protection, and a sustainable development view that promotes empowerment and participation of all actors involved, especially young people. Media literacy should therefore address non-canonical issues that preoccupy public opinion and youngsters (violence, advertising, identity, etc.); it should not underplay and despise young people's pleasure, taste and curiosity but encourage them in the direction of more autonomy, more diversity and more self-esteem; it should emphasize selective patterns of media consumption together with media use for opinion formation and citizenship. The objectives in the long run should be to make young people aware of their rights, their tastes, their national and European references, and their capacity to express themselves through media and with media.

5. Research must be developed and extended, especially in terms of media acculturation and socialization of children, beyond controversies of effects and/or uses and gratifications. This research should be led within a comparative framework, among the different countries of the European Union, and in collaboration with North America. It would provide regional and longitudinal databases for use by decision-makers and other interested parties. It seems urgent to bridge the knowledge gap between researchers and members of the public, especially in their respective perceptions of violence and of media impact, and a special effort should be made to disseminate results using understandable and yet not oversimplified language.

6. A European Foundation for Media and Youth should be established, to act as interface and to foster dialogue among the different entities, private and public, as well as the various actors (decision-makers, producers and broadcasters, educators and parents, researchers). It should endeavor to create synergy among existing regional and national foundations and research

centers. It should take the initiative to promote research in areas of public concern or interest (violence, pornography, health, memory, cognition, etc.). It should monitor and evaluate independently media education, regulation and regulation, as well as produce international comparisons on all these issues and solutions.

7. As for violence in the media, campaigns to heighten or increase public awareness must be launched, directed toward all of the various actors, including decision-makers, producers and broadcasters who often consider themselves above the fray when in reality they are in the thick of it. These campaigns should aim at destroying a certain amount of perceived ideas, related to the critical analysis of the conditions of (self-)regulation and education, such as:
   - violent content is not necessarily the most graphic: softened violence can harden people or loosen their inhibitions at all ages, though the youngest are most at risk. So, parental warnings are not enough, especially if not accompanied by programming constraints aimed at maintenance of the family hour;
   - imitative behavior, harmful as it may be and alarming to public opinion, is only the tip of the iceberg: other consequences (effects on cognition, emotion, tastes, references, lifelong political stances, etc.) are less visible and yet affect individuals in the long run. So, preventive policies and educational strategies are very important and they should be analyzed less in terms of effects than in terms of risk management (Potter 2003);
   - the tastes of young people and their references do not alter drastically after adolescence: they affect their perception of the world (fear, inhibition, law and order leanings, etc.) throughout adult life. Thus, focalizing on young people is not enough;
   - the tastes of young people do not necessarily lean toward violence and violent solutions: they are framed by international strategies of supply rather than demand. Demand tends to lean on issues such as family, friendship and identity (Frau-Meigs 2003c). So, creators and producers all over Europe should be encouraged to meet that demand, for young people to find sources of identification and models of behavior related to the European values on which their future rests;
   - the representation of violence is neither innocent nor neutral. This explains the various reasons for public opinion outbursts in France and in Europe: excessive representation in fiction, gratuitous graphics, recurrence of stereotyped formats, lack of context, law of the strongest, etc. Thus, while recognizing that violence is a part of life and should not be excluded from all representation, its place should be relative – other formats and human relationships should also find their place, especially with respect to conflict resolution (such as humor, intelligence, mediation, law, respect for others, etc.);

- violence is not for free: it has a cost in production and in distribution, a cost partly supported by viewers, which entitles them to ask for accountability (Potter 2003). The commercial encouragement of consumption comes with an assorted bag of accessories, one of which is the right of consumers to express their opinion. The argument of freedom of expression behind which producers and broadcasters shield themselves does not allow them to forsake all responsibility in its name. Thus, because freedom of expression may have secondary effects unrelated to it, in a situation of co-regulation, accountability should be shared by all parties, including producers and broadcasters.

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Where Are We Going and How Can We Get There?

General Findings from the UNESCO Youth Media Education Survey 2001

David Buckingham & Kate Domaille

UNESCO has had a long history of support for media education, as part of its broader remit in the field of information and communication. Most recently, there have been moves to develop a range of new initiatives in the field of 'youth media education', including publications, expert meetings and policy debates. One early initiative here was the commissioning of an international survey, undertaken by the authors, to assess the scale and reach of media education around the world. This was by no means an extensive or comprehensive survey, although the responses we received do provide a telling indication of the current state of the field, and throw up some broader issues for debate. This article presents a summary of some of the key findings.[1]

In June 2001, a questionnaire was sent to a total of 72 experts on media education in 52 countries worldwide. These individuals, who included academics, policymakers and educational advisers, had been identified by means of a review of existing print and web-based contact lists. In most cases, we contacted one individual in each country and requested them, should they not be in a position to complete the questionnaire, to pass it on to a relevant colleague. In a few cases (mostly larger nations), we contacted two individuals. By mid-October 2001, at the point the report was compiled, we had received 45 replies from a total of 38 countries, representing approximately a two-thirds rate of return by country. Most of the replies received were extremely comprehensive. In addition, we undertook an extensive review of print and web-based materials relating to media education. We drew on a small number of international edited collections of work in the field, and accessed other resources via relevant websites. This material was combined with additional publications and documents sent to us by our survey respondents.

Our questionnaire addressed three key areas, as follows:

1. Media Education in Schools: the extent, aims and conceptual basis of current provision; the nature of assessment; and the role of production by students.

2. Partnerships: the involvement of media industries and media regulators in media education; the role of informal youth groups; the provision of teacher education.

3. The Development of Media Education: research and evaluation of media education provision; the main needs of educators; obstacles to future development; and the potential contribution of UNESCO.

On the basis of this research, we believe we have been able to develop a reasonably authoritative overview of the current state of development of media education around the world. Nevertheless, it is important to recognise several limitations to our study. Firstly, we should acknowledge that it is genuinely difficult to obtain a complete overview. Education systems in many countries are diverse and fragmented; and media education tends to appear in different curriculum locations in different countries. Secondly, there is obviously a limit in the extent to which we should rely on published sources, official documents, policy papers, and so on. These provide recommendations for classroom practice, or representations of it, but they do not necessarily correspond to what is happening 'on the ground'. One of our key findings is that there is an extraordinary dearth of systematic, reliable research in this field; and as such, the responses and material we have gathered are bound to be partial and impressionistic. Thirdly, there is a risk that derives from the tentative and still somewhat 'pioneering' status of media education. We suspect that advocates of media education may be inclined to 'talk up' or exaggerate the extent of what is taking place, in the understandable hope that this will help to promote it. This should encourage us to take a somewhat cautious approach to some of the claims that are made.

One final caveat is worth noting here. Our research focused primarily on media education in *schools*. This does not at all imply a lack of interest in other potential sites of media education. Indeed, we suspect that in several countries (such as the USA or parts of Latin America) the most interesting and productive work is happening outside the formal education system, in the context of local youth and community-based projects. We included a question about this in our survey; yet it was quite striking that many of our respondents (who were mainly based in formal education) did not seem to know of any such work taking place. This may reflect the fact that basic information about such 'informal' media education initiatives has not yet been gathered or circulated, not least because this is such a decentralised and diverse field. However, it may also reflect a lack of connection between 'formal' and 'informal' media education of this kind.

On the basis of our analysis, this article begins by offering some very broad generalisations about the overall state of development of media education. This is followed by a discussion of some of the more specific issues addressed in our questionnaire survey, and by a summary of the respondents' recommendations for future action in the field. We welcome responses to this article, which would be of great assistance to UNESCO in developing its work.

Overall findings

In many countries around the world, the past two decades have seen extensive and far-reaching changes in educational policy and practice. Despite this general climate of change, however, it would seem that media education has made very uneven progress. In many cases, one can see bursts of innovative activity that have not ultimately been sustained, while in others, potential advances on the level of national policy have subsequently been overturned. Some countries (such as Hungary and New Zealand) currently seem to be riding on the crest of a media education wave, although in others (such as Japan and South Africa) there is considerable frustration about the failure of policy-makers to address media education in any coherent way. In many developing countries, where educators are largely preoccupied with developing basic print literacy, media education is only just beginning to register as a concern, while in the countries where media education is most firmly established in the curriculum (such as Canada and England), there are signs of weariness among its most prominent advocates.

Where media education exists at all as a defined area of study, it tends to take the form of an elective or optional area of the secondary school curriculum, rather than a compulsory element. There is very little evidence internationally of systematic or extensive media education provision for younger children (under the age of 11). In many countries, there is considerable uncertainty about whether media education should be regarded as a separate curriculum subject, or integrated within existing subjects. It appears most frequently as a 'pervading' element of the curriculum for mother-tongue language or social studies (or its equivalent). In this context, however, it is often loosely defined, and is rarely assessed as such: in the words of our Scottish respondent, it is 'everywhere and nowhere'. Media education is also sometimes confused with educational media – that is, with the use of media technology for educational purposes. In these contexts, media education often appears to be regarded as a means rather than an end in itself. Only in a few countries does media education form a substantial, assessed part of the mother-tongue language curriculum (e.g., Canada, New Zealand, Australia) or a separate examined course (e.g., England).

In this situation, the development of media education frequently depends upon the initiative of committed teachers, often working in isolation. The most urgent need identified in our survey is for sustained, in-depth teacher training, both at initial and in-service levels. Even in countries where media education is comparatively well established, there are very few opportunities for training, and only a minority of teachers is reached by it. Meanwhile, arguments for media education have generally met with indifference or even resistance from policy-makers: many of our respondents suggested that media education was not really on the policy agenda in any form. As a result, media education suffers from a lack of funding, and a lack of recognition (for example, by universities); and particularly in poorer countries (though not only there), the efforts of teachers are hampered by a lack of basic equipment and resources. In general, there has been little sustained support for media education initiatives from the media industries or from regulatory authori-

ties; and with a few exceptions (e.g., Russia, England, Sweden), there has been an absence of basic research, particularly into questions about students' learning and about the effectiveness of media education programmes.

There are many reasons for this relative lack of progress, although a full discussion of these would take us beyond our brief here. Among those cited by our respondents are the relative – and in some instances increasing – conservatism of education systems; the continuing resistance to regarding popular culture as worthy of study; and the potentially threatening nature of the kinds of 'critical thinking' which are inherent to media education. These are all well documented in the media education literature.

The comparison with the rapid diffusion of information and communication technologies (ICTs) in education was also made by many respondents. Some argued that the massive injection of funding in this area offered considerable potential for developing creative work with media in schools (e.g., China, Hong Kong, Canada). In other contexts, however, the drive towards ICTs was seen to be undermining arguments for media education: in Japan, for example, the use of ICTs in education was seen primarily as a quick way of raising a 'tech-savvy' workforce, while in Denmark ICTs are largely the preserve of computer educators, rather than being addressed within a critical media education framework. However, several respondents suggested that this situation was likely to change over the longer term. They argued that the naive optimism about the power of technology that currently characterises the debate around ICTs would eventually give way to a more critical, questioning approach; and when this happened, media education was likely to have a great deal to offer.

Despite this rather bleak picture, our survey also suggests several grounds for optimism. Many of the questionnaire responses and much of the material we have reviewed display a high degree of commitment, and a lucid sense of the aims and objectives of media education. In many countries, media education is informed by a rigorous and systematic conceptual framework that is clearly reflected in teaching materials, syllabus documents, and the like. In general, there is a good deal of consensus among our respondents (and, by extension, among those active in the field) about the aims and characteristics of media education – even if this is not yet recognised by policy-makers or by the educational world in general.

In a number of contexts, teachers have formed supportive networks and associations that encourage the exchange of good practice, and the development of dialogue and debate on the future of the field. Many such associations publish newsletters or journals, and some sustain extensive web sites (e.g., Australia). In some countries, there are well-established partnerships with media producers and regulators, and successful instances of peer training (e.g., New Zealand, Australia, the work of the Children and Broadcasting Foundation for Africa, CBFA, in South Africa). Even in countries where media education is less well developed, there have been productive relations with broadcasters (e.g., Hong Kong); and publishing companies have been willing to publish textbooks and classroom resources (e.g., China, Japan, Malta).

It is both a source of strength and a mark of optimism that teachers are continuing to argue the case for media education in relatively difficult circumstances. In recent years, significant gains have been made in countries like Russia and Hungary that have seen the establishment of formal curricula in media education, due in no small part to the continuous campaigning of local teachers and practitioners. Despite the fact that many media educators are working in isolation, they are occasionally very effective in making their voices heard. They are also increasingly keen to engage in international dialogue, and to share approaches and resources. As a result, it is very clear what media educators need if the field is to expand and develop. These needs are addressed in the concluding section of this article.

Key issues

Aims of media education

Historically, media education has tended to move away from an approach based on 'inoculation' towards one based on 'empowerment'. These are admittedly loose terms, but they were recognised and used by many of our respondents. The notion that media education should aim to defend or protect young people against media influence seems to have lost ground in recent years. Even where our respondents recognised that this approach was still prevalent in their own countries (e.g., Hong Kong, USA), they tended to reject it or suggest that it needed to be superseded. The more contemporary definition of media education seems to be based on notions such as 'critical awareness', 'democratic participation' and even 'enjoyment' of the media. This emergent approach also affords a more prominent role for media production by students. In Spain, for example, media education is argued for in terms of students becoming 'critical citizens' and gaining opportunities to become part of a 'media community'; in Denmark it is seen as necessary 'in order to empower students as strong individuals in a democracy'; while in Sweden students engage in media education in order to help them in 'expressing themselves, their knowledge and their feelings'.

In several countries, the term 'media literacy' is used more widely than 'media education'. This reference to literacy is partly strategic, since it offers a basis for including media alongside print in the established mother-tongue language curriculum. This is where media education is most frequently to be found, even in countries where it is very well established (e.g., Australia, Canada, England). However, this use of the term 'literacy' also reflects a broader argument about the changing needs of learners in a media-saturated world. Several of our respondents insisted on the need for a broader conception of 'literacy' if education is to address contemporary realities (e.g., Japan). It is vital to emphasise here, however, that this notion of 'literacy' is not a functional or instrumental one: for nearly all our respondents, media literacy was very clearly defined as a form of *critical* literacy.

Several respondents also maintained that media education necessarily entails a more 'active', 'student-centred', 'participatory' pedagogy. Media education was, it was argued, a matter of 'learning by doing'; and it was an area in which teachers needed to recognise the considerable knowledge and expertise of their students. This was particularly the case in relation to students' engagement in practical media production, but it was frequently seen as a more general requirement. Here again, media education may be at odds with the predominantly conservative ethos of most education systems.

Of course, the history of media education is bound to be inflected by local and national contexts and concerns, and should not be completely subsumed under this 'grand narrative'. For example, the responses and material submitted from Ireland and Russia offered useful histories, which point to the diverse origins and traditions of media education in those countries. Different aims and approaches often exist side-by-side, with little attempt to bring them together. Indeed, given the relative novelty of media education in many contexts, it could be seen as distinctly counter-productive to seek to impose a singular model. A couple of our respondents criticised the prevailing tendency to look to models from 'Western' (or specifically English-speaking) countries.

Generally speaking, however, countries with a less well-established tradition of media education still seem to be informed by a perceived need to 'protect' young people from the media. For example, this aim is clearly apparent in the work reported by UNDA (the International Catholic Association for Radio and Television),[2] which was one of the few sources we were able to locate relating to Africa. Here, the aim of media education is to save young children from 'unsuitable material', or, in a more directly political vein, to ensure that they recognise the differences between imported culture and 'authentic' culture. However, these motivations are by no means confined to developing countries. The responses from the USA, for example, reflect the continuing influence there of an 'inoculative' approach in relation to issues such as media violence, drugs and sex.

Curriculum frameworks

If most practitioners are clear about the broad aims of media education, the extent to which these are translated into classroom practice is highly variable. Many countries have generalised policy statements from central government agencies, which require media education to be delivered as part of mother-tongue language teaching or in social studies (or related areas like political education or citizenship). However, this rhetorical certainty is often undermined by the lack of any follow-up strategy in the form of clearly assessed activities or models of student progression in skills and competencies (see below). These different locations for media education obviously have implications in terms of how its aims are defined. Media education often seems to be used as a pretext for work on language or social issues, and to be assessed in these terms; and as a result, aims specific

to media education tend to be marginalised. In more decentralised education systems (e.g., India, China, USA), there are often significant discrepancies between the aims of central government and those of local educators.

A clearly defined conceptual framework for the curriculum is obviously necessary, both in order to ensure that teachers and students are aware of the specific aims of the classroom activities they undertake, and in order to provide an agreed basis for assessment. Some of our questionnaire responses identified frameworks that are primarily defined in terms of skills or competencies, or in terms of content, while others suggested that no clear framework exists. However, many countries do now possess an explicit conceptual framework for the media education curriculum, and many respondents suggested that such a conceptual framework was necessary even if it was not already in place.

The frameworks developed by the Association for Media Literacy in Canada and the British Film Institute in England (which are closely related) have been very influential internationally, even in very different cultural contexts. Most countries that have an explicit framework use some variant of these, while some appear to have adopted one or other of them wholesale (in some cases via the translation of relevant textbooks). Broadly speaking, there are four key areas that emerge as the common conceptual concerns of media education, although they are often described or labelled in different ways. They can be grouped as follows:

1. language: media aesthetics – media as constructions – realism – narrative – conventions and genres (these issues are often addressed through student production)
2. representation: media messages and values – 'media and society' – stereotyping – selection and point of view
3. production: media industries/organisations/institutions – economics – professional practice
4. audience: personal response and involvement in media – consciousness of own media use – the role of media in identity

Among these, different areas tend to be prioritised in different contexts, not least as a result of the location of media education in the curriculum. Thus, while issues of 'representation' are fairly consistently addressed across the board, 'language' tends to be emphasised in the context of mother tongue language teaching, while 'production' often features more strongly in the context of social studies or citizenship education. With few exceptions (e.g., England, Canada, Australia), the area of 'audience' tends to be addressed through personal reflection on the part of individual students, rather than analysis of social differences among media audiences.

Some respondents were concerned about the dominance of what they regarded as 'Anglo-Saxon' or 'Western' models, and expressed the need to develop conceptual frameworks that were more appropriate to their educational and cultural

contexts. In the absence of support and resources to undertake this work, however, it is likely that these conceptual models will continue to be the most influential.

Learning and assessment

Predictably, only countries with the most developed media education curricula have clear specifications of the skills and competencies that are expected at different levels, and of how they are to be assessed. For example, these are very clearly defined in New Zealand's new technical and vocational curriculum in media, and in the new Hungarian curriculum. Respondents identified several overarching difficulties as regards assessment. In many instances, it seems that media education is included in curriculum documents, but is not separately assessed in its own right (or indeed assessed at all). As noted above, media work is frequently treated as a means to other ends (developing skills in written or spoken language, for example), in which case it tends to be assessed in these terms. Assessment frequently privileges written communication at the expense of other modes addressed in media education, and this seems to reflect a more general confusion about how 'media literacy' is to be defined in the first place. As a result, there is very little systematic attention to the question of learning progression.

In several instances, the difficulties of assessment have resulted in considerable frustration. In Chile, for example, the curriculum documents indicate that students should develop critical awareness and actively participate in creating media texts with a clear message; yet there are no defined criteria by which these skills are to be assessed. On the other hand, some respondents appeared to enjoy the freedom that came from a lack of such specification. In the language curriculum in New Zealand, for example, a lack of prescription was seen to allow for considerable flexibility on the part of teachers, while in Uruguay it has meant that media education can be an entirely creative venture, rather than having to be defined in terms of specific theoretical aims.

Some of this optimism derives from an understandable wish to savour what is possible, rather than continually balking at what seems difficult to achieve. In general, however, there is no doubt that the absence of structured assessment procedures has contributed to the lack of status afforded to media education. The fact that media education has largely been subsumed within the assessment procedures of other subject areas has left it continuously struggling for recognition in its own right. One can argue that assessment exerts a much more determining influence on classroom practice than any curriculum document, and as such should be prioritised. Yet even when the criteria for assessment are explicit, the resources and training that teachers require to implement it may still be lacking. 'Statements of intent' are clearly important, but they are not sufficient in themselves to bring about fundamental changes in practice.

Theory and practice

In many countries (with the interesting exception of some Latin American countries), media education is primarily defined as a 'critical' enterprise. Practical production by students is growing in importance, partly as a result of the dissemination of ICTs, but it still remains marginal in the large majority of cases, particularly where funding is limited. Even so, many of our respondents emphasised the need to integrate 'theory' and 'practice': while they recognised that students were highly motivated towards production activities, they also stressed the need for reflection rather than creative production for its own sake. The latter was seen to be a particular danger with the spread of ICTs, where there is a risk of encouraging a purely 'technical' emphasis on production, which is lacking in critical thinking or questioning.

Nevertheless, in some contexts (e.g., USA, Hong Kong, Canada), the separation between theory and practice was not always seen as negative, and several respondents were quite happy to encourage creative media production as a valid activity in its own right. Likewise, whilst the drive towards ICTs appears to prioritise technical competence with new technology, some educators did not see this as necessarily incompatible with the kinds of practical or creative tasks that were undertaken in a media education context. As we have noted above, some argued that the 'wiring up' of schools could usher in far greater prospects for media education at a later date, even if it did not appear to do so immediately. They argued that students would need some kind of critical competence in using ICTs (for example, in evaluating information encountered on the Web); and that enabling them to 'cope' with the new technology might eventually accelerate attempts to establish a more formal media education curriculum.

In some situations, the spread of ICTs, together with partnership projects with newspapers and TV stations, has led to a growing emphasis on the vocational (or pre-vocational) aspects of media education. This may well be a consequence of media education needing to account for itself in a new educational context characterised by a strong emphasis on technical skills and competence. In others, however, these developments have merely highlighted the division of skills in media teaching and learning. As one respondent put it: 'students have the technical know-how, but not the critical sense – with teachers it is exactly the opposite'. And despite gaining greater access to computers, even in industrialised countries schools are often woefully short of other kinds of equipment, such as television sets.

Ultimately, it is possible that the advent of ICTs will reconfigure the relationship between theory and practice in media education, and that it may result in a broader re-definition of the subject field. On the other hand, media education may well have a great deal to contribute to the development of critical educational thinking in relation to ICTs. There is a potential for dialogue here, which seems, at least at present, to be largely unfulfilled.

Partnerships

In principle, respondents accepted that partnerships of various kinds were a necessity for the future development of media education. However, their past experience of such partnerships was uneven.

With a few exceptions (e.g., Japan, Canada, New Zealand), there was very little evidence of regulatory bodies being interested or involved in media education, even though some were inclined to express support in principle. In terms of the involvement of media producers, there was considerable variation. In many instances, respondents reported that media companies were indifferent or even hostile towards media education; and in some cases, this was not confined to commercial companies, but extended to public service broadcasters also. On the positive side, several countries have 'Newspapers in Education' schemes; and elsewhere, there are projects in which children work alongside television or film producers. The Australian Teachers of Media (ATOM) sponsor annual awards, which acknowledge a strong and growing relationship between media providers and media educators. Positive partnerships of this kind offer clear gains in terms of providing access to knowledge about institutional practices and arrangements; in terms of sharing expertise and resources; and (in some instances) in terms of providing vocational advice. As most countries appear to be leaving behind the 'protectionist' approach to media education, the time is ripe for greater collaboration.

In poorer countries with a shorter history of media education, or with less interest from policy makers, the development of media education absolutely relies on such partnerships, as is the case with production-based projects in China and Hong Kong. In some instances, they are necessary simply in order to ensure the provision of basic resources (e.g., Mozambique).

However, several respondents expressed some scepticism about the value of such initiatives, and others pointed to the dangers of blurring corporate and educational objectives. These arguments clearly relate to broader concerns about the growth of commercial involvement in schooling. Some respondents argued that such partnerships should not be seen merely as a form of public relations for media companies, and that educational aims should be more strongly emphasised. By contrast, one of our Canadian respondents offered an extremely upbeat estimation of the value of such partnerships, which reflected few of these concerns.

One issue that was raised by several respondents here was that of copyright. While laws on this matter vary significantly, in some countries the work of media educators is significantly constrained by the unwillingness of companies and governments to waive copyright restrictions on educational use.

Training

The lack of appropriate training for teachers of media education was an almost universal complaint amongst respondents. The absence of a centrally organised

strategy meant that teachers were either training themselves or being trained in very *ad hoc* ways. At best, respondents were able to cite a few examples of university-level courses in their country, but the numbers of teachers being trained in this way were considerably short of the numbers required. It was frequently reported that centralised resources were being spent on ICT training, and that this was superseding any systematic attempt to educate teachers specifically for media teaching.

A high proportion of teachers of specialist media courses have no training beyond a few professional development days. A notable exception would be in Western Australia, where teachers must have a degree in the field and a postgraduate diploma in education and where only trained media studies teachers are appointed to teach the subject. More commonly reported was the case in South Africa, where specialist teacher training for media education is negligible. As in other contexts, teachers of media tend to possess literature degrees and extrapolate their media teaching from their experience with working with texts in literature. This is not only inadequate but often leaves teachers ill equipped to deal with the more sociological or practical dimensions of media education that most countries believe are important.

Even where media education is firmly established in the formal school sector, there is frequently a lack of specialist training for teachers. In Canada, after fifteen years of concerted lobbying, media education is now a mandated part of the curriculum. Yet the fact that there is almost no training means that it is very difficult to put the mandate into practice. In some European contexts (e.g., Denmark, England, Scotland), specialist media courses are now developing in schools. Yet this development has not been met with an increase in specialist teacher training. In England, there is only one specialist course in initial teacher training (for Media with English), with places for a few students each year. Given that more than 50,000 students follow specialist media courses between 14 and 18, the level of teacher training is very far from adequate to meet the demand for specialist teachers. There are Masters degrees and a number of distance learning diplomas available, but even this is not in line with the level of expansion in schools. In Greece, a new Media Literacy course designed for Second Opportunity Schools (a continuing education initiative) demands that teachers have initial training in journalism or communication studies and be required to undergo a specialist training programme intended to prepare them in the specific aims, content and pedagogical methods of media education. Yet initiatives like this are the exception. In general, teachers of media tend to have little or no formal training and find it hard to gain access to in-service training or further professional development.

This lack of training is being redressed in all kinds of ways. The worldwide growth of courses in media and communications at undergraduate level means that some teachers will now enter media teaching with a specialist background. There are a few examples of postgraduate courses (e.g., USA) or distance learning (e.g., Spain, England) being established to support the professional development of media teachers. But most often training is provided by less formal or-

ganisations and without substantial support from a centralised source. In some instances, training is provided by networks of teachers themselves: in New Zealand, Australia and Canada, for example, there are lively specialist subject associations which produce resources, run conferences and maintain dialogue among practising teachers via newsletters or journals. The dearth of training in other contexts has been addressed through a range of publishing initiatives: in Japan, China and Hong Kong, for example, commercial publishers have begun to address the lack of resources and training teachers face. One of the most repeated concerns here was that future training should focus on ways of applying media education principles to the new technologies, in order to counter the instrumental and uncritical approach that is seen to dominate much ICT training.

Needs and obstacles

Our respondents all recognised the importance of formal recognition at government level of the importance of media education as a key entitlement for all students. Most reported that their government pays some lip service to the ways in which students need to be equipped to cope with life in a multi-media world. But many fewer respondents were able to cite government mandates, which specify where in the curriculum and how specifically this might take place.

As we have noted, the most commonly expressed need was for specialist teacher training, and specifically for media education to be implanted in the first phase of teacher education. Continuous training is necessary to upgrade skills and practices, and to support the ongoing exchange of resources and strategies. In some poorer countries (such as India), the general infrastructure for training teachers is in need of a radical injection of cash in order to improve resources (for example, access to specialist publications and research). By contrast, in Japan it was argued that government's focus on technology had brought about a shift from a critical pedagogy to a training agenda; and in this context, a more 'low-tech' approach to media literacy work might be appropriate. In most countries, however, there is still comparatively little digital technology in schools, and this hinders the development of more practical approaches to media education.

One of the main needs expressed by many respondents was for an authoritative definition of the aims and conceptual basis of media education. While practitioners are generally very clear on these points, they have been less successful in communicating their ideas to politicians; and as a result, politicians tend to view media education with suspicion, or at least with indifference. Even in contexts where media education has quite a strong and established place in the curriculum, the lack of clarity regarding assessment often reduces it to a marginal subject that can be sprinkled across other subject areas and provided for without any specialist training. Most damning of all is that in a country like Australia, with quite a well established media education history, qualifications in media education are not counted for university entry. The low status of the subject

continues to make it difficult to argue for change, leaving educators in a position of lobbying for an area that has no formal recognition.

The absence of research was also registered as an obstacle. Most education systems that are centrally organised or that have centralised assessment tend to be innately conservative in their provision. Rigorous, academic research about the value and effectiveness of media education is necessary if governments are to be persuaded to change policy. Acting internationally would help local providers to draw on successful examples from other contexts, adding to the weight of the lobby for media education locally. Although such research has been undertaken in some contexts, it needs to be more effectively disseminated.

Where to next?

In summary, our survey identified a range of needs on the part of media educators, which might usefully be addressed both by national governments and by international agencies such as UNESCO. In the case of the latter, the following were identified as key areas, in a rough order of priority:

1. Training. The lack of training was identified by very many respondents as the main obstacle to future development. It was suggested that international agencies like UNESCO could provide training (via distance learning) as well as offering resources and support for local training initiatives.
2. Resources. Here it was suggested that international agencies should play a role in enabling educators to share resources, and in supporting those who could adapt and translate resources for different national contexts. A web site was seen as a key first step towards achieving this, and there was support for the establishment of an international 'Clearing House' in the field.
3. Lobbying. Many respondents expressed the view that authoritative statements about media education from a body such as UNESCO would assist their attempts to argue the case with national policy-makers. Past or existing statements of this nature could also be more widely distributed.
4. Research. It was argued that agencies such as UNESCO should facilitate the sharing and dissemination of existing research as well as supporting new research initiatives, both local and comparative.

In developing the above initiatives, respondents pointed to a number of concerns that would need to be addressed:

1. Media and ICT. While many respondents welcomed the possibilities of digital media, most argued that media education should encompass the full range of media; and they sought to distinguish their own position from what they saw as the uncritical euphoria surrounding ICTs in education.

2. A global perspective. Several respondents felt that there needed to be a genuine international dialogue about the full range of approaches to media education, rather than one dominated by English-speaking countries. Any initiatives in this field would need to address the issue of translation, and, in the case of conferences or international meetings, provide funding to ensure attendance from developing countries.

3. Copyright. Laws on intellectual property vary a great deal internationally, but in several countries copyright poses significant restrictions on the work of media educators. This issue might be addressed via international legal authorities.

4. Informal and formal media education. As noted in our introduction, there is a need to pull together information about 'informal' media education (which would require a different approach from that adopted in this survey), and to develop connections between this work and that being undertaken in schools.

These initiatives are currently being taken forward, and UNESCO looks forward to receiving responses and expressions of interest.

Notes

1. A much more detailed country-by-country analysis can be obtained from UNESCO. The full report was presented at a UNESCO Seminar on Youth Media Education held in Seville, Spain, on 15th-17th February, 2002, and is contained in a CD-Rom available from Lluis Artigas at UNESCO: ll.artigas@unesco.org
2. UNDA is nowadays part of SIGNIS, L'Association Catholique Mondiale pour la Communication. *(editors' note)*

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Managing without a Mandate

The Grassroots Momentum of Media Education in the USA

Joanne M. Lisosky

Despite counter indications, people in the United States *are* concerned about their children and about media literacy education. In spite of being one of only two countries that has failed to ratify the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, and even though substantive media discussions in the US tend to focus more on media ownership than media education, a wide array of governmental and non-governmental advocacy organizations have managed to broach the topic of media literacy education in the United States with modest success.

Myriad reasons have been offered for the delay in US participation in the world-wide media literacy education movement, and its subsequent lack of a federally mandated media education initiative. One reason implementation of a national media literacy program has been deemed problematic focuses on the decentralization of the US education system. In addition, Robert Kubey (1998) suggests that political, economic, historic and cultural obstacles exist to make it difficult to examine popular cultural products in the US. He reported that in the US, popular culture products tend to be treated more like natural phenomena and they might be more widely scrutinized if US consumers were exposed to media products from other countries. He also directed readers to consider a personal comment made by Peter Greenaway from Australia who concluded that:

> To understand a culture, you've got to go outside it. Americans never go outside their own culture. That's why media education barely exists there (personal communication quoted in Kubey, 1998, p. 62).

Other arguments advance the notion that because of limited curricular resources, the examination of popular culture would be fundamentally less legitimate and thus less edifying than attention to traditional subjects.

Often, the US knee-jerk response to growing concerns about the possible effects of media messages on its youth has resulted in what Masterman (1985) referred

to as the inoculationist or protectionist approach. This reaction was evident in the US Senate report prepared in 1998, which pointed to mediated violence as a primary cause of the escalation of youth violence (*Children, Violence, and the Media*, 1999). The recommendations provided in the report included punitive measures aimed at the entertainment industry and the use of advanced technological devises to help parents block unwanted images from entering the home. What the report failed to suggest, however, was implementation of a universal media literacy curriculum in the US.

Successful state-run media education initiatives

Fortunately, state-run education departments are not waiting for the federal government to act on media education. The agencies that govern primary and secondary education curricula in all 50 US states have incorporated some media literacy concepts into their state standards. These standards range from a single reference to media as a perspective worthy of examination in one state's social studies curriculum to a detailed state media literacy requirement in another state (Heins & Cho, 2002).

A look at a few of the successful state media education initiatives includes the *New Mexico Media Literacy Project*, which purports to be the largest and most successful independent, activist media literacy project in the US. Founded by veteran newscaster Hugh Downs and his daughter Diedre Downs in 1993, the New Mexico Media Literacy Project has been directed by Bob McCannon since 1994. The project is supported by the New Mexico Department of Education, the New Mexico Department of Health, the McCune Foundation, and other public and private donors. Interestingly, the New Mexico Media Literacy Project is one of the few media literacy organizations in the US that accepts no funding from the media industry. Its media literacy curricula have been used throughout New Mexico and several other states plan to replicate the New Mexico model of activist-oriented, bottom-up media literacy growth (http://www.nmmlp.org).

As a result of its collaboration with the New Mexico Media Literacy Project, the New Mexico State Board of Education's Guiding Principle 5, adopted in 2000, states that: "An effective language arts curriculum provides for literacy in all forms of media" (http://sde.state.nm.us, Language Arts Curriculum Framework, p. 2). This state standard goes on to say:

> Computers, the Internet, television, film, videos, and radio are widespread modes of communication in the modern world. All students need to learn how to be effective users of these various media for obtaining information and for communicating to others for a variety of purposes. Each of these media has its advantages and challenges, and students must learn to apply the critical techniques learned in the study of literature to the evaluation of film, video, television, and multimedia (ibid.).

Another state, North Carolina, boasts a substantive media literacy education component in its state curriculum. The North Carolina language/communication arts viewing standard maintains an important goal of education should be the ability to critique and use the dominant media of the day. The state requirement explains that:

> Learners will appreciate various visual forms and compositions, compare and contrast visual and print information, formulate and clarify personal response to visual messages, evaluate the form and content of various visual communications, identify and interpret main ideas and relevant details in visual representations, apply insights and strategies to become more aware and active viewers in their leisure time, relate what is seen to past experience, convey and interpret ideas through non-print media, recognize the persuasive power of visual representations (Kubey & Baker, 1999, p. 38).

According to a thorough study of US state media education initiatives by Robert Kubey and Frank Baker (1999), California and Texas have also developed complete and comprehensive curricula. California's history/social sciences research framework for grades 9 through 12 is described by the state as one where students:

> …evaluate, take and defend positions on the influence of media on American political life in terms of the meaning and importance of a free and responsible press; the role of electronic, broadcast, print media and the Internet as means of communication in American politics; and how public officials use the media to communicate with the citizenry and to shape public opinion (Kubey & Baker, 1999, p. 38.)

"Viewing and Representing: Media Literacy in Texas" was a curricular aid developed through a collaboration among the Texas Education Agency and several industry representatives in the state. The curriculum provides a classroom resource to build critical thinking and communication skills for life in a media and information society. The curriculum was designed to connect with many subject areas, including language arts, social studies, mathematics, and others (http://www.txcable.com/pressrelease5203.php).

The department of education in another US state, Maryland, developed a unique partnership with a national cable channel to implement a media literacy education curriculum in its state. "Assignment: Media Literacy" was developed by Renee Hobbs of Babson College and her staff in collaboration with the Discovery Channel. The curriculum was designed to closely align with many of the Maryland State Content Standards for language and visual arts. The program was introduced in the Fall of 2000 and a systematic evaluation of the curriculum describes its success:

> The curriculum does a good job of facilitating deeper learning for a great many of these standards. Moreover, the introduction to each of the six units for each level of schooling indicates which specific instructional objectives are developed in that

> unit. Many teachers commented very positively on the close linkage between the Assignment: Media Literacy curriculum and the state content standards (Kubey & Serafin, 2001, p. 3).

Media literacy education by non-governmental organizations

In some states, the core development of media literacy education comes not from within the state education system but from various non-profit organizations around the state. These organizations are often supported by state, federal and private grants but are not directly affiliated with local or state school systems.

In Washington State, the Department of Health, the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction and the Department of Social and Health Services recognized the value of media education when they published a joint document describing media literacy as an exciting new tool to promote public health and safety for Washington's communities and schools (1999). However, in Washington State, many of the state's media literacy initiatives have not been directly orchestrated by the state but overseen by a media literacy advocacy organization, the *Teen Futures Media Network* (http://www.teenhealthandthemedia.org). This group has been instrumental in the development of a number of unique media literacy education programs across the state.

The Teen Futures Media Network, which has been under the direction of Marilyn Cohen since 1989, functions within the auspices of the University of Washington's College of Education in Seattle, Washington. To augment its media literacy education program the Teen Futures Media Network has received funding from both state and federal grants as well as from the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences, a media industry organization.

Teen Futures collaboration with the Seattle Chapter of the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences (NATAS) began in the 1990s when the Seattle chapter of NATAS began searching for an academic ally to assist in promoting its *Creating Critical Viewers* curriculum materials. This project was created by the Academy to demonstrate that despite being part of the media industry, it could still commit to building public awareness of critical viewing habits among its youngest consumers. NATAS was responsible for supporting the development of the curriculum *Creating Critical Viewers*, which continues to be available free of charge to schools through the Academy's 17 chapters across the country. Designed for middle and high school students, *Creating Critical Viewers* was written by two Yale professors, Dorothy and Jerome Singer (1991). In 1997, spearheaded by Teen Futures and the Seattle Chapter of NATAS, the Seattle School District became the first major urban school district in the United States to introduce the *Creating Critical Viewers* media literacy curriculum materials into large city classrooms.

Another unique project developed by the Teen Futures Media Network and sponsored by the Washington State Department of Health uses media literacy as a strategy for addressing issues of tobacco prevention. This "tool kit" contains six

lessons designed to be delivered and presented by teens to teens. What makes this tool kit so unique is that youth representing schools and community organizations across four regions in Washington helped develop each of the six lessons in the tool kit. The lessons call on teens to use critical thinking skills and creative energies to analyze the ways in which the tobacco industry targets them, as well as to examine ways in which they can produce their own media messages to counter the power of tobacco advertising. Research conducted by Austin, Pinkelton and Cohen (in press), shows that this approach to tobacco prevention has been highly successful in reaching both those who have not yet experimented with tobacco as well as those who have used tobacco.

Another creative venture related to this project is the *o_2 magazine* (http://www.o2magazine.org). For this project, students manage all aspects of the magazine's operation as well as its web site. The teens are responsible for soliciting all content from other teens in an effort to alert young people about the hazards of cigarette smoking.

A media literacy curriculum on media violence

In 1998, Teen Futures Media Network with support of the Washington State Governor's Juvenile Justice Advisory Committee undertook an ambitious four-year project to develop a media literacy curriculum to be presented in the Seattle public schools. The curriculum was designed to address the issue of media and violence. The curricular design involved six lessons: 1) defining violence, 2) examining why people watch media violence, 3) deconstructing media, 4) deconstructing media violence, 5) examining conflict resolution, and 6) developing violence prevention recommendations for a middle or high school. As part of the curriculum's design, the Teen Futures Media Network held annual instructional sessions before the start of each year for the middle and high school teachers who would be using the curriculum.

In addition to presenting this curriculum to nearly four thousand students in the Seattle Public School System during a four-year period, an evaluation team annually assessed the effectiveness of the lessons among the student participants and the faculty instructors using both quantitative and qualitative research designs. The evaluation team gathered data from pre- and post-tests distributed to the students who participated in this media literacy instruction. These data annually revealed that after completing the unit, the students' definition of the term 'violence' had broadened in scope, and their ability to critique violent media messages in their environment had grown. Significant gains were also found in the students' knowledge of media strategies used to capture an audience's attention and in their knowledge of how to use media themselves to prevent violence around their home and school. Remarkably, a control group of students surveyed in year four exhibited no significant changes in these outcome measures.

To augment the survey data, nearly one hundred student participants and a dozen faculty instructors were interviewed to assess their opinions of the media and violence curriculum. Through these interviews it was revealed that the unit on violence and media significantly influenced students who participated. One student remarked in year four:

> You're not really aware of the violence that's going on [in the media]. When you're looking for it, you actually see how apparent and obvious it is.

The students told the interviewers that they appreciated this unit because it offered them the opportunity to speak their minds on an often-controversial and rarely discussed issue in school.

> I definitely learned that there are a lot of things you can look out for in the media, and there's just no straight opinion that overrules all the others. There are at least several that you have to at least know if you're going to make a decision (Lisosky, Cohen & Sager, 2003, p. 12).

One high school student concluded:

> People need to think about violence and social issues behind it and the deeper meaning behind it. It's not just something that spontaneously occurred. There's a reason that violence has become progressively more open out in the media. It's always been there – in society and human nature, but now it's becoming much more evident, so much more out there, and so much more glorified (Lisosky, Cohen & Sager, 2002, p. 27).

The Teen Futures Media Network is currently compiling the data from this project to demonstrate to Washington State and the nation the substantive value of media literacy education in US schools.

Other strong grassroots organizations

Like the Teen Media Futures Network, other non-governmental, grassroots organizations have maintained a strong presence in promoting media education across the US. These groups have fueled their initiatives through a variety of means: holding popular conferences, offering media literacy learning packets to schools and community groups, forming coalitions with state and local agencies such as public health and religious organizations, and gathering strong empirical evidence of the positive effects of media education. These US media literacy education organizations include, but are not limited to:

- *The Alliance for a Media Literate America* (AMLA) –The AMLA promotes media literacy education focused on critical inquiry, learning, and skill-building. In late June 2003, the organization hosted 450 educators, academics, media professionals and media arts instructors, public health and prevention professionals, religious and community leaders, students, youth workers and counselors from around the country at its National Media Education Conference in Baltimore, Maryland (http://www.amlainfo.org).
- *The Center for Media Literacy* (CML) –The CML is an educational organization that provides leadership, public education, professional development and educational resources across the United States. In 2002, CML introduced its CML MediaLit Kit, based on the thinking and writings of leading academics and practitioners in media literacy from over the past 50 years. In fact, CML is the largest distributor of media literacy teaching materials in North America. It is the leading importer of media literacy resources from Canada, Australia and Europe and specializes in hard-to-find resources from creative teachers and independent publishers (http://www.medialit.org/reading_room/rr2.php).
- *The National Telemedia Council* –The National Telemedia Council, the United States oldest and continuously operating media literacy organization, held its 50th Anniversary Celebration on November 7, 2003. For this celebration media literacy experts from around the world gathered in Seattle, Toronto, New York, London, and Madison, Wisconsin, to talk via interactive television about new directions in media literacy education around the world (http://www.nationaltelemediacouncil.org).

The future

Though no national mandate exists in the US, state education initiatives and non-governmental organizations' efforts have gained some momentum for media literacy education in the country. If this modern educational spirit continues to grow, the US may be able to join the rest of the world by finally embracing media literacy education – from the ground up.

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Media Literacy and Image Education

A European Approach

Matteo Zacchetti

> We must prepare young people for living in a world of powerful images, words and sounds. (UNESCO)
>
> A democratic civilisation will save itself only if it makes the language of image into a stimulus for critical reflection, not an invitation to hypnosis. (Umberto Eco).

Mankind has experienced three major "media revolutions". The first one with Gutenberg and the invention of printing, the second with the first electronic mass media – the radio and the media of the image, i.e., the cinema followed by television. Today we are experiencing a third media revolution. The era of the Internet and digital technologies has brought about significant changes: the mass of available information has increased dramatically; there are more and more possibilities to make contacts and exchange information both at personal and professional levels, as well as new opportunities to speak up, to spread one's opinions directly and without mediations.

It is a fascinating but also very unsettling time, because it suggests a world that could become dehumanised and open to manipulation and attacks on everybody's privacy. Nevertheless, the Internet is undeniably a potentially tremendous force for democratisation. We are no longer mere targets or buyers of pieces of information, but we now have the possibility to produce it ourselves. We can tell the whole world "here and now" our opinion on a specific event or even give our own interpretation of reality, turning ourselves into journalists using only a digital video camera and a link to the Internet. As a matter of fact, the Internet is the first communication medium to work in real time "many to many", and no longer on a "one to one" or "one to many" basis, such as all media have worked until now. According to the Spanish sociologist Manuel Castells, "Internet is a tool that better serves democracy than control over democracy".[1]

The combination of knowledge, information and technology has become the "magic formula" that must be managed if one does not wish to be excluded from

today's world. Unfortunately, very few people are in possession of this fundamental developmental skill, as hundreds of millions of people do not even have access to the media. In many parts of Africa, for example, television, radio and even newspapers are nonexistent, the consequence being that the distance between the "haves" and "have-nots", between rich and poor areas of the world, has been constantly increasing.

Beyond these issues of accessibility, serious questions must also be addressed regarding the use of such technologies, not only in terms of digital skills, but also with regard to the "relevant" appropriation of the media and their messages. The Internet is a useful tool inasmuch as one can use it not only as a trendy technological gadget or for play, but for living, improving, and rising up from poverty. We observe today the same kinds of problems that had to be faced at the beginning of alphabetical literacy. Using the Internet to download pictures or songs is something quite different from writing a collaborative scientific paper with somebody one has never met and who lives on another continent, participating in a political movement originated on the net (New Global) or debating social issues. Insofar as the Internet allows for all these degrees of operation, we may fear that, in ten years from now, those who are not able to use this medium in a creative, competitive, and relational way will not enjoy the full rights of citizenship.

The teaching of the Internet's many different uses, opportunities and potentials, and also of how to protect oneself and one's privacy, must therefore be put at the top of the political agenda. One of the results of the marriage between computer, digital technology and telecommunications has actually been a substantial change in the relationship between information, entertainment and education: the borderline between these three functions has lately been fading away, the consequence being that news, for example, has ceased to be submitted to the traditional criterion of checking for authenticity or mistakes. The new technologies have brought about a proliferation of the media. The main outcome of this process has been the discovery that news is a commodity, whose sale and distribution can generate large profits. The price of a piece of news depends on the demand. What counts is sales. A news item will be deemed of no value if it does not interest a large section of the public.[2]

For all these reasons, it is vital to empower citizens and teach them how to communicate in a competent way using all media and how to access, analyse and use images, texts and sounds. If Europe is not able to properly develop these media and does not pay attention to issues of digital and media literacy, its society will pay a high price in terms of human development and competitiveness.[3]

Media literacy and digital literacy

As mentioned above, two skills are of prime importance if one wishes to make efficient use of new technologies: digital literacy and media literacy. Whereas dig-

ital literacy deals with mastering new tools, media literacy emphasizes the sensible and responsible use of these tools, as they become increasingly available throughout society and in all walks of life. Digital literacy concentrates on the acquisition of capabilities and skills related to new technologies that play a decisive role in education, work, leisure, and particularly in active citizenship. Media literacy is a higher order concept, as it addresses various issues raised by the pervading influence of images and information, which these new technologies have infused with an unprecedented power of fascination and influence. In the context of digital literacy, new technologies are viewed as instruments for providing greater efficiency in accessing, using, distributing and processing information, the lack of which may induce a new form of social divide, the so-called "digital divide". In the context of media literacy, information is assessed and valued in terms of truthfulness and deception, confusion between facts and fiction, and/or accurate perspective and context as opposed to bias and prejudice.

Media literacy may, thus, be defined as the ability to communicate competently in all old and new media, as well as to access, analyse and evaluate the power of the images, sounds and messages with which we are now being confronted on a daily basis. While there is widespread criticism of mass-produced images and entertainment, the evolution and increasing sophistication of media technologies and the intensifying presence of the Internet as a distribution channel are also perceived as a powerful democratising factor in today's society. An increasing number of Europeans can now create and disseminate images, information and contents. As a result, media literacy is widely viewed as one of the major tools in the development of civil responsibilities. It is intended to ensure that more and more Europeans, especially young people, have the opportunity to deepen their understanding of the contentual differences between information and advertising, between fiction and reality, and between what may be beneficial and what may prove harmful. In preparing for tomorrow's Europe, it is essential that today's youth develop a well-considered and critical approach towards media, acquiring the basic skills necessary to take advantage of interactive facilities in the new media and to generate new and creative contents.

A European Commission approach

For these reasons, since the beginning and in the framework of its "*e*Learning" initiative, the European Commission has addressed the above issues with a specific programme on Image Education and Media Literacy, the aim of which is to give young people the necessary tools and knowledge to spot a stereotype, isolate a social cliché and distinguish between information and advertising, between fiction and reality, and between "virtual" and "real". Following the conclusions of the Lisbon Council held on 23 and 24 March 2000 and the subsequent *e*Europe Action Plan, the European Commission adopted the initiative "*e*Learning" in May

2000. It is designed to mobilize the education and training communities, along with the economic, social and cultural players concerned, in order to enable Europe to become a knowledge-based society. To achieve this aim, the first step is to provide the citizens of Europe with the skills to use – with confidence – the new tools for accessing knowledge, leading to the widespread development of "multimedia literacy". One of the aims of the *e*Learning initiative is to help people of all ages to develop skills of analysing, interpreting and evaluating image-based information. For example, one of the possible outcomes is an enhanced ability to discriminate between objective information and media or image manipulation.

Furthermore, as emphasized by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, there is a need to promote media education in order to foster a more critical and discerning attitude towards the media (i.e., all forms of photography, visual and audio-visual packaging of images, including the newest forms of technological transmission and data exchange, such as occurs on the Internet). European citizens should be encouraged to make their own judgements on the basis of available information, instead of relying too confidently on the media and image conditioning of such information. Media Literacy and Image Education concerns us all, including children, parents and teachers, and it should not be limited to the schools. Media Literacy and Image Education is envisaged as a life-long process, requiring a co-ordinated approach that may involve grass-roots, non-governmental organizations as well as media professionals.

In 2002, the Commission launched a study mapping existing practices in media education and related fields. The study has been carried out by relevant experts from different EU countries within the framework of the *e*Learning initiative. The persons invited to participate were mainly practitioners, researchers and educators in formal and non-formal educational milieus. In particular, the experts have been asked to investigate the following issues:

- reflections on the power of images in the society as a means to shape values, social codes and stereotypes including gender identity and civil responsibility;
- media pedagogy inside the educational systems;
- media pedagogy in environments outside the formal educational systems, such as cultural centres, cinema schools, life-long learning programmes, online discussion groups concerned with ethics in the media, advertising and the press;
- experimentation with a view to involve school and college students in a hands-on approach to image education;
- teaching approaches.

The main conclusions and recommendations for further action will constitute the basis of a comprehensive EC report on the subject, which will be presented in late 2003 - early 2004.

However, the results of the investigation show that:

- media literacy is one of the key prerequisites for active citizenship and is one of the contexts in which (intercultural) dialogue needs to be promoted.
- a variety of players support and promote media literacy as an integral aspect of many subjects in school and formal education institutions. This creates an invaluable diversity, which is indispensable for making this skill flourish. Nevertheless, the question arises as to how far national education supports media literacy and sees itself as responsible for it in the context of formal education.
- in-depth co-ordination of formal and non-formal education generates synergies.
- training for target groups needs to be extended and increased for the purposes of lifelong learning.
- it is crucial that media literacy projects be sustainable, even though the media culture is constantly in a state of flux. Activities to promote this skill should therefore be pursued both over a long period of time and with different partners.
- it is advisable to select partnerships judiciously and especially to actively involve media institutions in disseminating media literacy.
- different areas of research need to be co-ordinated with each other and with other work in the field.
- copyright issues must be clarified, as active production by students is a key stage in the teaching process and is always a potential source of infringement of copyright law.
- media literacy needs official recognition and support.

A first "Call for proposals" on Media Literacy and Image Education[4] was published by the European Commission in July 2002 and sixteen media literacy projects[5] (out of 45 proposals) have received European funding in 2003 under the *e*Learning Initiative. The objectives of these projects are to:

- analyse media representations and media values in a multimedia perspective;
- encourage the production and distribution of media-literacy-related content;
- stimulate the use of media in order to improve participation in social and community life;
- intensify networking around media-education-related issues;
- concentrate on the implementation of media literacy initiatives that bridge the gap between the media industry and the education world, using a "hands-on" approach.

The first results of these projects are expected by the end of 2003.

Finally, a corresponding sum was allocated to thirteen media literacy projects in late 2003[6] with special emphasis on the use of media and new technologies for cultural and artistic creation.

Notes

1. See "Le tante anime di Internet", M. Castells, *La Repubblica* 4/2/01.
2. See "Media as a mirror of the world", R. Kapuscinski, *Le Monde Diplomatique*, August 1999.
3. See "Multimedia Literacy. A pre-requisite for complete citizenship", E. Menduni, European Commission Workshop on Image Education and Media Literacy, 5/4/2001.
4. Call for proposals – Preparatory and Innovative Actions 2002/b – *e*Learning Action Plan.
5. For further information on the Media Literacy projects, supported with a total of 1.5 million Euro, please visit the following web site: http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/programmes/elearning/projects_en.html
6. Call for proposals DG EAC/62/03.

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Media Literacy Initiatives in Citizens' Rights to Communication – the Case of Japan

Midori F. Suzuki & Kyoko Takahashi[1]

Part I: Development and directions of media literacy initiatives in Japan

As we enter the 21st century, we find ourselves in a society saturated by a variety of media including terrestrial television broadcasting, satellite broadcasting, newspapers, magazines, the Internet, CD-ROMs, video games, and so on, all employing digital technology. The recognition that living independently in such a media-saturated society requires the development of media literacy for every human being, both children and adults, has gradually become commonplace in Japan over the past few years.

Looking back, the need for media literacy education was first suggested in the 1960s, and subsequently media literacy activities in terms of both research and practice have continued to be conducted by educators, media researchers, and a wide variety of citizens in various countries in the world. In the late 1980s, in particular, media literacy education was discussed frequently at UNESCO conferences. In 1982 the Grünwald Declaration,[2] in 1990 the Toulouse Conference,[3] and in 1999 the Vienna Conference[4] reported to UNESCO on the subject, contributing to an on-going program of theoretical and practical research sustained by successive conferences.

At the same time, the number of nations and regions engaging in media literacy activities has continued to increase. Within this global trend, efforts aimed at promoting media literacy in Japan began almost simultaneously by a small number of concerned citizens, educators and researchers. Yet, it was not until the mid-1990s that the general level of interest reached a significant level.

Subsequently, over the past few years, interest has increased dramatically not only in the education sector, but also on the part of the administration, the media, and the general public to the extent that "media literacy has assumed the status of a sociological phenomenon."[5]

In this part of the article, I (the first-mentioned author) hope to examine chronologically the progress of this development, and to analyze and give careful consideration to the various factors involved. And on the basis of this consideration, I would like to summarize some of the relevant issues that have to be faced in the 21st century. In order to do so, it is necessary to go back to the early 1980s, and to pay particular attention to the trends that arose in relation to the broadcasting policies of the latter half of the 1990s.

Grassroots citizens' initiatives

As in Canada and the US, and many other countries, the media literacy initiatives in Japan began with parents, teachers, researchers, and media professionals who were concerned with media issues pertaining to children, women, and many other minority citizens. Their efforts during the early 1980s were centered on the voluntary grassroots activities of the Forum for Citizens' Television & Media (FCT).

The FCT was established as a citizens' organ in 1977 and formally obtained in 1999 the status of a Non-Profit Organization (NPO) under the newly issued NPO Act of 1998. It is made up of a diverse range of members including researchers, journalists and other media-related professionals, teachers, and parents. I was involved in establishing the FCT, and ever since, I have been involved in its activities.

At the time of formation of the FCT, it was consistently emphasized that its purpose was to provide a place (forum) where citizens (all people), whether they were viewers, researchers, or media-related persons, could meet and discuss media issues (primarily related to TV at that time) and engage in continued research and activities as individuals living in a dynamic society.

In other words, by participating in the FCT, persons were liberated from having to reflect stereotypes of gender, age, ethnicity, occupation, and social status. Also they acquired the capacity to interpret the meanings of media transmissions within the framework of wider social contexts. Further, they learned how to gather evidence, analyze the accumulated data and actively participate in society on the basis of that data. These principles have subsequently been confirmed as the basic rationale of FCT activities, and continue as such to the present.

The activities of the FCT have been centered on research and practice in the field of media literacy, and as such extend over an extremely wide range. Activities may be classified as follows, but it is important to note that all the activities are interrelated:

1) Holding forums such as media literacy workshops and international conferences;

2) Conducting media analysis surveys and investigating how news reporting is carried out;

3) Issuing statements on media issues and other forms of public access activities involved in ensuring that every citizen has the right to engage in communication via the media;

4) Reporting on media literacy research, and periodically issuing publications;

5) Building a global network.

The increasingly global nature of the media ensures that those involved in media literacy initiatives become committed to activities within networks extending beyond national borders. Since the end of the 1980s, I have attended conferences such as those held in London and Stockholm, and I have gradually become a part of such a global network engaging in international exchanges. Most of my research and publications owe much to these global networking activities.

Within the context of this global network, at a conference held in Toulouse in 1990, I was able to meet members of the Association for Media Literacy (AML), a Canadian organization based in Toronto. My introduction to the *Media Literacy Resource Guide,*[6] a 1989 publication of the AML, was a high point in my association with media literacy. This publication was edited primarily by AML members at the request of the Ontario Ministry of Education, which decided to introduce media literacy into public education. The AML was established in 1978, a year after the establishment of the FCT in Japan, as a non-profit organization focusing on the education and training of media teachers, and the *Resource Guide* contains their experiences over the past ten years in this field.

Upon my return to Japan, I formed a *Resource Guide* study group as an activity of the FCT, and two years later the Japanese translation was completed and published. The Japanese version of the *Resource Guide* stimulated interest in a wide range of sectors in which the FCT had previously had no contact. Building on this background, I began the first course of lectures on Media Literacy Studies in Japan in 1994 as a part of university studies in sociology. My efforts have resulted in the establishment of this new field of research, a field that I defined at that time as follows. This definition is still valid today:

> Media Literacy can be defined in terms of the citizens' abilities to critically analyze and evaluate media, to have access to the media and to engage in active expression of their thoughts and views, producing social communications in a variety of forms. It also denotes various forms of educational activities to develop Media Literacy as defined above.[7]

In relation to broadcasting policy – within the debates over 'Children and Television'

In order to understand why the interest in Media Literacy grew in the latter half of the 1990s, it is essential to understand Japan's current social situation, and to look back at the trends in broadcasting policy up to the present in this light.

In the early 1990s, the issue of 'Children and TV', in particular the media environment and TV violence, became the focus of global interest, and resulted in vigorous public discussion in the US and Canada over the introduction of the V-chip.

The global nature of this public discussion meant that it became impossible to ignore the fact that the V-chip also had implications for Japan. However, it was not until the Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications (MPT) established the "Panel on Audiences and Broadcasting in the Multi-channel Era" in 1995 that the Japanese broadcasting industry realized that it was involved in this matter.

The members of the Panel included the presidents of NHK (Japan's public broadcasting service) and the National Association of Commercial Broadcasters (NAB) as well as representatives from telecommunication industries, and researchers from the law and media fields. Also, representing various media "audiences" were persons from the more traditional organizations, such as the Japan PTA and the Federation of Housewives, but no one involved with media literacy was invited.

The formation of this Panel was the first occasion on which the MPT had mentioned "audiences" in the title of its advisory committee. That evoked interest on the side of citizens and led newspapers to give wide coverage so that the Panel discussions, especially over the issue of the V-chip, became the focus of much attention from the citizens' side.

The Panel released an interim report in May 1996, in which it indicated the possibility of introducing the V-chip from the point of view of protecting children. However, in the final report submitted in December, it avoided the matter saying that it was too early to introduce the V-chip at that time. Instead of the V-chip, the Panel recommended the establishment of a third-party organ to handle complaints from audiences, and noted the necessity of media literacy. This was the first case of the concept of media literacy surfacing in public documents issued by the Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications.

It is true to say that, avoiding the issue of the introduction of the V-chip, the Panel proposed that a third-party organ be set up to handle complaints from viewers, and that media literacy be promoted. However, a detailed reading of the report makes it clear that the Panel's understanding of the concept of media literacy was minimal, as indicated by the brief statement:

> It is desirable that machinery be provided to promote Media Literacy or Information Literacy (ability to use information) among the audience.

As to a third-party organ, the All Media Research Center, the Japan Bar Association and many other citizens' organizations expressed fears about the establishment of a political organ to handle complaints.

At that time, the FCT formulated its own definition in which it criticized the Panel's final report for advocating a passive view of audiences as groups of people who needed to be protected. The FCT proposed the following:

1) Promotion of media literacy so as to secure the right of every citizen to communicate[8] over multiple channels;

2) Recognition of the need for a dialogue between citizens and the media;

3) Establishment of an independent regulatory body composed of persons from various sectors of society such as citizens representatives, NPOs and NGOs, researchers, journalists, educators, media professionals, and administrators, to which responsibility for regulation of broadcasting be transferred from the Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications.

In May 1997, there was a case in the city of Kobe in which a 14-year-old boy was arrested for the killing of an 11-year-old child whose severed head was left with a note in front of the gate of his junior high school. And this was followed by a series of crimes committed by young people. These incidents triggered discussion of the need for changes in the Juveniles Act, and the publication of photographs and names of juvenile suspects in the media became a matter of considerable social concern. In March 1998, within the context of fear of an increase in juvenile crimes, the Ministry of Education's Central Council for Education published an interim report entitled "To Cultivate Children's Sound Minds that will contribute to the Development of a New Era". The report included consideration of how to prepare a system to protect children from harmful information in the media, and again suggested the introduction of the V-chip.

During these continuing deliberations about the V-chip, the MPT organized in 1998 its own "Study Group for Research on Young People and Broadcasting". The report that emerged from these deliberations in December proposed that the issue of the V-chip should continue to be investigated, and recommended regulation of broadcast programs for young people, the promotion of research on young people and broadcasting, more careful consideration of broadcast timings, improvements in the system of providing program information, and improved promotion of Media Literacy.

As to the concept of media literacy at this time, the report stated:

> It is important to improve media literacy, namely the ability to understand the characteristics of the media such as TV broadcasting, and to understand the contents *properly*.[9]

Here, as we see, members of the Study Group continued to think of the relationship between the media and audiences in terms of senders and receivers; thus their fundamental thinking had not changed much.

However, this long-sustained broadcaster-oriented attitude finally changed in the report submitted in 1999 by the "Panel of Experts on Young People and Broad-

casting", which was initiated by the MPT, NHK, and NAB. They used the vehicle of the Panel to propose a number of practical measures, one of the most notable and important proposals being the need for improvement of media literacy.

Among the three parties, the MPT especially expressed a strong interest in media literacy, and in November of the same year established the "Study Group for Media Literacy and Young People in the Field of Broadcasting". It was composed of media researchers, educators, representatives of citizens' organizations, and representatives of the broadcasting industry. As I was a member of this study group, I was able to observe that – on the basis of presentations by individual members supported by considerable volumes of data and research publications – all the members engaged in vigorous discussions. These discussions resulted in a report published in June 2000, in which an understanding was reached that media literacy should be defined as:

> the ability to function in the media society, and an essential means of promoting a democratic society, which consists of people with a variety of values.

Further, the members of the study group defined the criteria in media literacy using the following factors:

1) the ability to subjectively read and comprehend media content
   a) the ability to understand the various characteristics of media conveying information
   b) the ability to analyze, evaluate and critically examine in a social context, and select information conveyed by the media;
2) the ability to access and use media; and
3) the ability to communicate through media, especially interactive communication ability.

During the period from September 1995 to June 2000, in which the committees established by the Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications have been in operation, the views of audiences and citizens have changed considerably. The concept of "protection" of children has been transformed into the concept of the "rights" of children, signifying a fundamental change in outlook. To change the media environment in which children live, requires promotion of media literacy to establish the rights of children as individuals based on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, rather than through the use of negative methods, such as the V-chip. Understanding of the concept and definition of media literacy has also shown significant progress both within the MPT and in the broadcast media. The role that researchers, citizens, and non-profit organizations played in bringing about these changes was very great.

In the fields of lifelong learning and school education

With regard to the media literacy initiatives in the administration sector, it is also necessary to point out that regional organizations involved with lifelong learning, especially in the new sections dealing with women's issues, have consistently included media literacy in lectures and workshops since the mid-1990s. In 1995 at the United Nations 4th International Women's Conference, "Women and Media" was emphasized among the twelve areas in its Action Programs to be carried out for the advancement of women. In Japan, too, the empowerment of women was made a goal for institutions; thus, media literacy became the focus of attention.

At present, a number of media literacy workshops focusing on Women and the Media are planned throughout the country, to be held primarily at women's centers. In the initial stages, workshops were mainly single lectures on such subjects as "Images of Women" and "Women in Media industries". However in recent years, series of ~10 workshops on the theme of gender and media literacy have become frequent.

This trend towards the systematic study of media literacy is a most favorable development. Moreover, not only women's issues but also various other media-related subjects – such as the media and human rights, children and the media, media and the aging society, which are dealt with at regional lifelong centers – are now also employing approaches to media literacy.

In the field of school education, teachers who have found that they have interests in media literacy have begun a number of course-based experiments in treating this subject in recent years. These experiments are currently underway in elementary, lower secondary, and upper secondary schools, in such subject areas as Social Studies, Music, Japanese language, Moral Education, and Industrial Arts/Homemaking, as well as in free time and the time allocated for school club activities.

Public forums are also held in conjunction with these teachers' experiments at schools, and study groups such as the "Course Preparation Network", consisting primarily of teachers, have been formed. The majority of these experiments, while focusing on media literacy in school courses, are the results of the efforts of individual teachers. As the "Period for Integrated Study" was included in the national curriculum standards from 2002, it is hoped that these pioneering teachers will be able to make use of it for teaching media literacy in a more theoretical and systematic manner.

In addition, in the midst of the current information and communications technology (ICT) revolution, an increasing number of teachers are becoming involved with Information Education. The desire among many of these teachers is to progress beyond the simple teaching of computer skills and the use of the Internet to incorporate the subject of media literacy into school courses.

The subject of Information has been proposed for consideration during the "Period for Integrated Study", together with International Affairs, Welfare, and the Environment. In this context, it is hoped that the "Period for Integrated Study" will become a time for education promoting critical reading and reflecting on the

mass media. To achieve this goal, it is important that we clarify the difference between conventional computer education and media literacy education, while facilitating the fusion of the two.

Issues and prospects – into the 21st century

We now feel that the necessity of media literacy has been well recognized in recent years, and Japan is no exception. While the necessity is understood, however, the important questions of "media literacy for whom?" and "why media literacy?" have yet to be answered clearly and there is still much confusion. The primary task for the new century is therefore for persons from various sectors to engage in a lively interdisciplinary discussion on this point, and strive to reach a common understanding.

A number of factors are responsible for this current lack of common understanding. Among the most important one is the lack of understanding that what is needed is a paradigm shift to transform passive audiences into active and critical media readers. In other words, for both students/learners and teachers/facilitators in media literacy learning, it is important to reach an understanding that the information from the media is not simply received and accepted, but is something to be actively analyzed and reflected on in a critical manner.

The same need for efforts to reach a common understanding applies to the second question of how and about what aspects of media studies should be undertaken. With what basic principles should we operate when learning and teaching media literacy? As Masterman has said,[10] all the media are in symbolic or sign systems. The media mediate. They do not reflect reality but construct it. This central unifying concept of representation is the absolute basic principle. Then, we analyze the media in terms of how and why they are constructed in the way that they are. In this process of analysis, critical thinking, full discussions and dialogue among students/participants and teachers/facilitators are indispensable.

In practice, learning media literacy is not a matter of determining what is right or what is wrong. Rather teachers/facilitators, while being very careful not to impose any particular system of values on students/learners, should help them sort out elements pertaining to the media text (codes and conventions, ideology and values). Also, help should be given in understanding various elements related to media production (media as industries and institutions), and further, elements of particular audiences such as gender, age, ethnicity, life-styles, etc.

Whether students/learners are children or adults, we should seek to enable them to raise their level of conscious awareness of the various elements as set out here, to analyze from many different angles the interrelated nature of these elements, and to evaluate them. In this respect, people with special needs, and those who are socially and economically disadvantaged, should be given special consideration. Looking from the perspective of their situation, our readings of the media will become more profound.

It is necessary to remember that each person will be able to contribute uniquely in his or her own way. As they discuss and participate in a dialogue, they will learn from each other and their readings of the media will be enhanced. This touches on the basic meaning of communication, which involves learning how to express oneself. In the course of our involvement in media literacy, we should take care not to lose our ability to respect every person's human dignity and should aim at fostering our critical autonomy.

When we reach a common understanding, we will then be able to aim at developing more practical and systematic programs that include, in a natural way, not only media analysis, but also media production activities, both in lifelong learning and school education. While engaging in media production activities, it will be possible to learn in a more practical manner about the types of languages used by the media and the forms of expression when using media. Caution is needed, however, when incorporating such activities into media literacy programs, with regard to the danger of falling into the trap of simply copying or reproducing existing media. It should be noted that acquiring the skills to produce media has no intrinsic relationship to acquiring the ability to read media in a critical manner.

In relation to media production activities, the question of how we should build our partnership with the media is also a crucial issue to pursue. As noted above, in the process of involvement with the committees related to the Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications, persons connected with broadcasting gradually deepened their interest in media literacy. They have even initiated their own media literacy activities. For example, in 1998 and 1999 NHK produced and broadcast a TV series on "media literacy education". Commercial stations have also followed suit and begun to produce such programs. It should be noted, however, that the use of these programs alone is insufficient for teaching and learning media literacy. Rather, we should use these programs as media texts, and read critically what they say, and what they do *not* say about media literacy.

We must welcome the fact that, on the whole, the media and media professionals have an increasing interest in media literacy. There is considerable scope for optimism about the issue of a partnership with the media regarding media literacy. Evidence of this can be found in Canada's CHUM TV. However, in Japan there are hardly any teachers trained in media literacy, and it is hard to find people in the media who understand it adequately yet. It is essential to have capable media literacy facilitators and media teachers to ensure equal participation in the program production.

Needless to say, the central figures in media literacy education are parents, teachers, educators, citizens, and NPOs/NGOs. At the moment, therefore, our priority should not be the impatient development of a partnership with the media, but rather the development of media literacy training programs to empower facilitators.

The development of such programs will enable researchers from a variety of fields to become partners in these activities through working together and analyzing their experiences. The General Research on Media Literacy in a Lifelong Learn-

ing Society program at the National Educational Policy Research Institute and other research projects currently underway are positive steps in the right direction.

The cooperation of media professionals is necessary in many areas, particularly in the development of training programs. On the other hand, it is important not to forget that media professionals, and the media themselves, have their own positions and such cooperation may provide them with an opportunity for reflection and self-criticism.

The UNESCO Vienna conference on Education for the Media and the Digital Age published the general principle on media literacy education as follows on behalf of the participants who gathered there from all parts of the world:

> Media Education is part of the basic entitlement of every citizen in every country in the world, to freedom of expression and the right to information, and is instrumental in building and sustaining democracy.

With this principle in mind we should endeavor to work together globally to pursue many unknown possibilities in the further development of media literacy.

Part II: Highlighting FCT's recent activities in the 21st century

Speaking at the 25th International Anniversary Symposium held by the FCT in 2002, John Pungente, SJ, Director of The Jesuit Communication Project in Toronto, Ontario, Canada, and President of the Canadian Association of Media Education Organizations, said as one of the nine key factors for media literacy to be successful:

> Media Literacy Education, like other innovative programs, must be a grassroots movement, and teachers need to take the major initiative in lobbying for it.

Over the past several years, the term "media literacy" has become trendy and it appears to have taken on a life of its own in Japan, despite the lack of a theoretical base. As mentioned in Part I of this article, media literacy workshops are held at colleges and women's centers throughout Japan, and NHK (Japan's public broadcasting service), as well as NAB (the National Association of Commercial Broadcasters), has a strong interest in media literacy, and has even initiated its own media literacy activities.

However, studying the media must involve not only critical analysis of texts, but also critical analysis of contexts of the media industry and media as social institutions, as well as the variety of audiences who are in contact with media. In addition, media texts should not be limited only to those we come into contact with daily, such as television programs and newspaper articles. Such a limitation would imply missing out on industry and institutions, which are the other two aspects of the media.

In his book *Teaching the Media*, Len Masterman writes:[11]

> What must be clear, however, is the fact that the objectives of media education are demystificatory and critical. The lines between public education and public relations must be rigidly drawn.

If the media is regarded as "public relations", the media itself will have very little to tell us about its industry and institutions. As Mr. Pungente noted, it is the citizens who take initiatives in media literacy, and the only way to deal with the media is through grassroots activities.

In this part of the article, I (the second author) would like to focus on major activities of the FCT, which has been playing a leading role in grassroots initiatives in the media literacy movement in Japan. In the same way that FCT President Midori Suzuki classified FCT activities into five areas in part I of the article, I, as a director of the FCT, will highlight some of the activities of the FCT during the years since 2001, covering the five areas.

International forums

Since its foundation, the FCT has based its activities on exchanges with a wide range of people in Japan and overseas. In 2001, the FCT opened a forum titled "Media for Children and Youth – A Dialogue between Japan and Italy" and improved cross-cultural exchange with the help of a NGO representative, an animator, and a pediatrician who is also a media researcher from Italy. In the following year, the FCT held its 25th Anniversary International Symposium, "Media Literacy and Empowerment of Citizens". Guest speakers at the symposium included John Pungente, as well as Yasuhiro Okudaira, Japan's leading scholar of constitutional law, and a former journalist and presently NGO activist, Hiroshi Iwadare. Mr. Pungente was also a speaker at the 15th Anniversary Forum, which turned out to be a catalyst for shifting the FCT's activities toward media literacy. In his speech entitled "Developing Successful Media Literacy – Key Factors", he expounded on eight key concepts using videos and spoke about the conditions necessary to foster media literacy activities. He also attributed the 1987 introduction of media literacy into Canada's public education system in Ontario to ten years of grassroots activities by teachers and citizens.

Every time a serious event takes place, such as the Gulf War, the Great Hanshin Earthquake, the series of problems caused by the AUM Shinrikyo cult, murder cases committed by junior high school students, or the 9/11 terrorist attacks, the FCT examines a large volume of television and newspaper coverage from the citizen's point of view, and publishes the results of the analysis in its periodical *fctGazette*. Whenever a concentrated number of news reports flood society, issues of freedom of expression and human rights arise. Under the title "Freedom of Expression in a Media Saturated Society", Professor Okudaira stated:

> What citizens need in order to have a whole, independent relationship with the media is to positively and critically examine the media and to equip themselves through literacy. This has the same significance as the freedom of expression guaranteed by the Constitution.

He provided audiences with the opportunity to examine who and what freedom of expression is for, from the standpoint of media literacy.

Mr. Iwadare, who has worked for a major newspaper company as a journalist for 37 years, presented his profound views on mass media as a citizen:

> One of the reasons why mass media cannot have a citizen's viewpoint is its desire to have an influence on the world and to rule the entire world with its power.

He concluded:

> It is better for citizens not to have any illusions about or expectations of mass media. Citizens are the ones who hold the key to making the media stand on the citizens' side, and the only way to accomplish this is to proactively lay down conditions and voice our opinions.

The influence of international and domestic exchanges and interactions on FCT activities through these international forums has been immeasurable.

Publications

In her book entitled *Media Literacy: Present and Future*, Midori Suzuki praised *Scanning Television* created and directed by Mr. Pungente:

> The collection of videos is more innovative than any of the video packages of the past and offers multilateral viewpoints. It also promotes participation in a series of media literacy activities such as analysis, survey, discussion, and dialogue, and allows the audience to experience the joy and fun of learning.[12]

In Japan, no systematically developed educational materials for media literacy are available yet, and production of *Scanning Television Japanese Version*[13] was an ardent wish of the FCT for many years. Production of the Japanese version became reality in April, 2003, with the cooperation of Mr. Pungente. In Canada, the production of *Scanning Television* was accomplished through a partnership among citizens and NPOs/NGOs that actively promote media literacy, as well as media teachers and researchers, and media professionals who seek a deeper understanding of media literacy. The partnership of these three entities was also achieved in Japan, through the cooperation of an FCT member media professional, who operates a film production company. The Japanese version of *Scan-*

ning Television contains 18 video excerpts that are in line with the Japanese media environment, and that were selected and extracted from *Scanning Television, First Edition,* published in Canada in 1997 and *Scanning Television, Second Edition,* published in Canada in March 2003.

Study Guide Media Literacy: Gender Approach[14] was published by the FCT in April, 2003, highlighting gender issues based on the accumulated practice and research utilized in *Study Guide Media Literacy: Introduction*[15] (published in 2000). *Study Guide: Introduction* has been widely used in high schools and universities in Japan, as well as in lifelong education programs at places such as local community centers and women's centers. The focus on gender issues stems from the fact that today's society and culture have become so integrated with the media that they are no longer easily separated, and that the media is closely linked to the construction of the gender image as well. However, the media themselves lack awareness of these facts, and the concept of gender, based on the traditional patriarchy system, is deeply rooted in various sectors of society. Another reason is the rising demand for a gender approach to media literacy among the participants of media literacy workshops held throughout Japan where the FCT has been using *Study Guide: Introduction*.

A gender approach is also considered extremely effective in dealing with issues of minorities and the media. By combining the *Scanning Television Japanese version* and *Study Guide Media Literacy: Gender Approach*, the FCT has been offering a series of media literacy lectures and intensive courses as part of lifelong education programs at community and women's centers in various parts of Japan. At the annual training seminar in 2003, over 100 participants have completed the training so far, and many of them have led these nationwide workshops as facilitators.

Statements on media issues

Over the past quarter century, the FCT has analyzed media issues from the citizen's standpoint and has made social statements based on the findings. The FCT submitted proposals for public policies on broadcasting in 1996, 1998, and 2002. In the "FCT proposal for promoting media literacy: Toward Citizens' Right to Communicate" submitted in February 2002, the FCT pointed out problems with media advocacy, such as the fact that the media strongly opposes legislative bills that involve "measures against harmful environments for minors", "personal information protection" and "protection of human rights", while not making separate arguments to address each of these issues, but simply offering the dichotomist standpoint of "media censorship vs. freedom of expression". The FCT also suggested that:

> The important thing to do today is to recognize the significance of media literacy, which aims at the establishment of citizens' right to communicate, and allows citizens, the government, and the media each to take their responsibility in carrying out whatever is necessary for the promotion of media literacy.

The proposal also indicated that "citizens are the key players in media literacy and need to promote it proactively and voluntarily…" and "Citizen-driven activities require active participation in discussing freedom of expression, which is a basic human right". Increases in the number of active audiences, who are not passive but have a sense of awareness, should lead to the development of media literacy.

Global network

Since the conference held in Toulouse, France in 1990, the FCT has been an active member of the global network promoting media literacy. The FCT has been invited to, participated in, and reported on international conferences held in various regions around the globe, whose main themes are media literacy education. FCT members have attended the 3rd World Summit on Media for Children in Thessaloniki, Greece, in 2001, the 2nd World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children in Yokohama, Japan, in 2001, and the UNESCO Project Media Literacy Workshop in Bangkok, Thailand, in 2002, as well as the UN World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS), Asia-Pacific Regional Conference, Tokyo, Japan, in 2003. The Tokyo Declaration, drafted by the WSIS Asia-Pacific Regional Conference ranked economic and social development, cooperation with private corporations, improvement of infrastructure, skills learning, and copyright protection as priorities. Various issues brought up by NGOs and that the FCT considers important, such as children, young people, gender, and education, were also mentioned in the declaration, albeit vaguely. The FCT attended the 1st WSIS in Geneva in December, 2003. In order to advocate the importance of media literacy education and to have such a viewpoint included in public policies relating to the information society, the FCT hopes to increase its influence in sharing awareness as it continues preparing for the plenary meetings of the United Nations and the ITU (International Telecommunication Union), as well as various NGO activities.

Although the FCT engages in such wide-ranging activities as holding forums that include media literacy workshops, analysis and examination of media coverage, submission of proposals to the media, public access activities such as drafting charters to affirm citizens' rights, as well as publication of periodicals and analysis study reports, we believe that all of these activities are interrelated and, in a broad sense, help to promote media literacy

Notes

1. Midori Suzuki is Professor of Media Studies, Faculty of Social Sciences, Ritsumeikan University. She is also President of the Forum for Citizens' Television & Media (FCT). Part I of this paper was originally presented by Suzuki as a keynote speech at the International Seminar on Lifelong Learning in the Information Age, organized by the National Institute for Educational Re-

search of Japan (NIER), November 2000,Tokyo. Part II is written by Kyoko Takahashi. Takahashi is FCT Director and also visiting professor at Division of Visual Communication and Intermedia, Kawaguchi Art School, Waseda University.

2. UNESCO Declaration on Media Education, Grünwald, Federal Republic of Germany, 22 January 1982.
3. The Colloquy on "New Directions in Media Education", organized by BFI (The British Film Institute) & CLEMI (Centre de Liaison de l'Enseignement et des Moyens d'Information, France) supported by UNESCO & Council of Europe, Toulouse, 2-6 July 1990.
4. Recommendations addressed to UNESCO, adopted by the Vienna Conference "Educating for the Media and the Digital Age", 18-20 April 1999.
5. NHK Labour Union (ed.), *The Senders' Forest: Circulatory System Fostered by Media Literacy*, NHK Labour Union, 2000, p. 6. (In Japanese)
6. Ministry of Education, *Media Literacy: Resource Guide,* Queen's Printer for Ontario, 1989.
7. See more in detail: Midori Suzuki (ed.) *Learning Media Literacy,* Sekai Shiso Sha, 1997. (In Japanese)
8. According to the FCT, the right of every citizen to communicate is set forth in its "Charter on the Rights of TV Viewers" (1992), in which it is stated that the basic rights of each viewer should be guaranteed, one of which is ensuring the citizen's right to cultivate media literacy. The text on this may be found in the *fctGazette* No.47 and No. 61. After further consideration the FCT published a revised version titled "The Rights of Citizens Regarding Television". It consists of 6 articles, which state the right to express oneself freely, the right to freedom from discrimination, the right to rebut what is represented, the right to have access to information, the right to promote media literacy, and the rights and responsibilities of the citizens. (*fctGazette* No. 64)
9. The emphasis by underlining was added by the author.
10. Masterman, Len, "Media Education: Eighteen Principles", *Mediacy* Vol.17, No.3, the Association for Media Literacy, 1995. Its Japanese translation can be found on the web site of my seminar, Media Literacy Project in Japan: http://www.mlpj.org
11. Masterman, Len, *Teaching the Media*, Routledge, 1985, p. 9.
12. Midori Suzuki (ed.) *Media Literacy: Present and Future*, Sekai Shiso Sha, 2001. (In Japanese)
13. Midori Suzuki (ed.) *Scanning Television Japanese Version,* Image Science Ltd., 2003.
14. Midori Suzuki (ed.) *Study Guide Media Literacy: Gender Approach*, Liberta Publishing Co., 2003. (In Japanese)
15. Midori Suzuki (ed.) *Study Guide Media Literacy: Introduction*, Liberta Publishing Co., 2000. (In Japanese)

Table of contents

Entertainment-Education in HIV/AIDS Communication

Beyond Marketing, Towards Empowerment

Thomas Tufte

The use of entertainment-education (EE) within primarily non-formal education has been growing significantly over the past decade. EE combines entertainment with education in an integrated manner, most often seen in the use of radio and TV drama, but also in musical genres, theatre and even in talk shows. EE is, according to the Dutch media scholar Martine Bouman, defined as

> the process of purposively designing and implementing a mediating communication form with the potential of entertaining and educating people, in order to enhance and facilitate different stages of pro-social (behaviour) change (Bouman 1999: 25).

The use of EE is increasingly being used in addressing health-related issues ranging from blood pressure, smoking and vaccine promotion to family planning and HIV/AIDS prevention. The result is a growing volume of media products, especially radio and TV soap operas and similar serial productions produced with the specific goal in mind to educate their audiences. The aim of this article is to critically assess the potentials and limitations of this media practice in serving its educational purpose. Particular attention is given to how EE has been used in the combat against HIV/AIDS, drawing both on my own research in South Africa (http://www.media.ku.dk/HIVAIDSComm) as well as on a literature review on EE in general. The field of EE will be deconstructed and assessed from a generational perspective, outlining three main 'generations' of EE.

In relation to media literacy, the epistemological aim of the article is to contribute to developing a critical media literacy, where 'media literacy' is defined very broadly. Considering societies that are being severely affected by the HIV/AIDS pandemic as the main empirical focus area, the issue of media literacy is related less to teaching school children about content analysis or media production, but more focused on addressing the barriers for and the quality and impact of EE. The ideal communicative scenario this article wishes to pursue is to deal

with the challenge of providing an 'information and dialogue-rich enabling environment' (Skuse 2003: 6) where the media text – as an integration of specific formats and contents and languages – contributes to empowering the audiences in facing HIV/AIDS and fighting HIV/AIDS in everyday life. Thus, media literacy becomes about creating an enabling media environment with quality production which is of relevance to its audiences, voicing the concerns of the audience in appropriate and empowering manners, and which, to the degree possible, involves the actual audience in articulating the concerns in focus, in this case HIV/AIDS.

Three key research questions guide the analysis, questions that are concerned about the quality of the programme, the audience involvement, and the possible critical assessment by the audience:

1. Do EE-producers manage an appropriate balance between education and entertainment? The preoccupation is that EE-programming remains an audience success mainly because of the entertainment value, and possibly at the expense of the educational value.
2. How does this educational use of mass media relate to the formal educational system? Is a synergy effect possible, and how is it dealt with in practice?
3. The entertainment genre formats have a proven track record of articulating blockbusters – be it formats that stem from oral story-telling to the most popular telenovelas and soap operas. How is the genre explored in EE, and what nuances are handled or mishandled when dealing with the subtle issues of sexual practice, intimate life and HIV/AIDS?

Cutting across these questions is the aim to explore to which degree EE has managed to transcend the traditional dichotomies found within both development theory and communication theory, of diffusion of innovations *or* participatory strategy, modernisation strategies *or* a dependency strategy, top-down *or* bottom-up, etc. In a recent paper I have launched the concept of 'communication disconnect' as a means to explain why some of the many social marketing strategies and early EE-programs did not lead to the desired outcomes of behaviour change (Tufte 2003b). What may well seem to be happening is that EE has learnt from previous experience, and is finally moving towards a successful practice which may impact better than previous strategies upon the problems they are designed to combat.

The trajectory of Entertainment-Education

The use of mass media and particularly television series and radio dramas for educational purposes and to spread social messages is far from any new idea. One of the first modern examples is *The Archers*, a radio series produced by the

BBC radio drama in cooperation with the Ministry of Agriculture. It began broadcasting in England in 1951 and is still on air every Sunday. For the first 22 years, until 1972, it was an EE-product, communicating educational content to the farmers in England. In the mid-1950s, *The Archers* audience was two out of three adult Englishmen (Japhet 1999) and it continues to be very popular.

Thus, it has long been part of some educational strategies to use non-formal education through mass communication. However, it does remain an issue of controversy and debate how and to which degree media audiences are influenced by what they see and, consequently, a controversy to determine *how* educational such strategies end up being. This is reflected in the different approaches that exist within EE, strategies ranging from media-borne social marketing strategies to empowerment strategies such as Augusto Boal's liberating theatre (Boal 1979). It reflects a range of 'generations' within the development of Entertainment-Education, where we today find a co-existence of at least three different generations of EE. But fundamentally, it is also a reflection of epistemological differences in how to apply communication and involve audiences in relation to education, development and social change.

Social marketing is the first generation of EE. The use of social marketing developed in the 1970s and was quickly focused upon fictional genres, particularly linked to mass media, not least television and radio drama. One of the pioneers in the use of TV fiction for pro-social behavior change was Mexican Miguel Sabido. Between 1975 and 1985, Sabido produced a total of seven soap operas with built-in social messages. They were broadcast at Mexico's largest television network Televisa and had a large audience. In countries such as India, Kenya, Tanzania and South Africa the use of television and radio and the explicit use of fictional genres gradually developed, all becoming building stones in the continuous development of EE communication strategies successes (Sherry 1997, Singhal and Rogers 1999, 2002, Japhet 1999, Tufte 2000).

Within the UN-system, UNICEF in particular has worked strategically and in many places with EE, in an attempt to combine social messages, social mobilization and consciousness-raising. UNICEF has, for example, developed regional campaigns built up around comic-figures *Sara* in Africa and *Meena* in Asia. Undoubtedly, UNICEF is the strongest UN agency in the field of health communication. Within UNESCO, WHO, UNAIDS and not least FAO, other EE-initiatives have been developed and supported. However, it is the field of health communication that has carried EE-strategies the furthest. Here, the devastating impact of HIV/AIDS has in recent years articulated an urgent need for innovative thinking, where new EE-initiatives subsequently have been emerging (http://www.comminit.com).

Within health communication two strong independent institutions in the USA have played a central role. One is Population Communication International (PCI) in New York. The other is Population Communication Services (PCS) at the Center for Communication Programs (CCP), John Hopkins University (JHU), Baltimore. Both programs are tightly linked to issues of reproductive health and family planning, and have developed numerous campaigns using social marketing in tele-

vision and radio drama. While they both are pioneers and some of the leading practitioners of EE, the PCS/CCP program at Johns Hopkins University is significantly larger than that of PCI. In 2002, JHU/CCP signed a new 5-year contract with USAID, now entitled the Health Communication Partnership (HCP).

Liberating pedagogy and dialogical communication

Today, EE is growing as a field of practice in development and with an increasing number of scholars debating its theoretical stands. The EE world conferences in Los Angeles in 1989, in Ohio in 1997 and in Amsterdam in 2000, all supported by JHU/CCP, gathered key scholars and practitioners in debating the issue (e.g., Coleman and Meyer 1989). At the most recent conference, Soul City (presented later in this article) was featured as one of the central cases to learn from and served as a key input into discussions of the theoretical challenges in Entertainment-Education, campaign orchestration, media advocacy and strategic partnerships. PCI has in the past 7-8 years run organized 'Soap Summits' bringing EE-practitioners in dialogue with the Hollywood industry, key organizations and some media scholars. In November 2003, a major conference was organized focusing explicitly on HIV/AIDS and entertainment (see: http://www.population.org).

At the core of many recent debates has been the broadening of the scope of EE, reflecting the broadening of perspective in the overall field of communication for development. While social marketing strategies traditionally focus on individual behavior change, there has been a growing concern for the need to develop community-based strategies, as a means to involve the audiences or target groups more effectively. Thus, the traditions of participatory communication, known for decades from the field of grass roots communication or alternative communication, are finding their way into mass media-borne EE-strategies. This has led to a resurgence of the Brazilian adult educator Paulo Freire's dialogical pedagogy (Freire 1967, 1968) as a central perspective to 'second generation' EE-strategies. These EE-strategies range from the theatre for development strategies developed by Augusto Boal, a disciple of Freire (Boal 1979), to JHU/PCS's more recent strategic thinking that makes at least some initial mention of Freire and his principles of community involvement, dialogue and process-orientation (Figueroa et al. 2001).

Paulo Freire himself has no deep understanding of, or interest in, the mass media, as he made plain in an interview that I conducted with him in 1990 (Tufte 1990). His main orientation was to face-to-face communication and small-scale group interaction. However, Freire had a clear understanding of the need to deal with the power structures of society, and the need for the marginalized sectors of society to struggle in order to conquer a space for their critical reflection and dialogue. A previous interview with Freire identified a clear strategic aspect required for *social change communication:* the need to conquer space, challenge normative, moral and social borderlines, and to arrange a critical dialogue on perti-

nent issues as a pathway towards social change (Tufte et al. 1987). Freire's 'conscientizacao' (consciousness-raising) could be utilized to secure community involvement in EE-strategies. This pathway offers a means through which EE-interventions can be connected to the questions of power, inequality and human rights.

From Mexican telenovelas to South African TV series

Several issues characterized the growing use of telenovelas in strategic communication with the development of EE-strategies. Firstly, with the work of Miguel Sabido, there was *a particular development of the genre*, where mass education and behavior change via the media grew as a concern and ambition. Telenovelas that traditionally had been conceived of as entertainment, where increasingly ascribed an educational potential as a tool for both dissemination of information and, thus, for awareness raising and behavior change. While social marketing, as the first generation of EE, dealt with the marketing of social behaviors – most often health-related behaviors – to individuals watching the programs, more recent initiatives have used telenovelas and similar TV fiction formats *as tools for the purpose of articulating social change*. They have increasingly been integrated into multi-methodological strategies combining several media, linked through partnerships to civil society and grass roots activities as well as to formal instruction. The South African organization Soul City, which is an example of this tendency, will briefly be introduced in the following.

Soul City

The pioneers of the Soul City project are two medical doctors, Shereen Usdin and Garth Japhet. During the early 1990s, Garth Japhet, executive director of Soul City, worked in clinics among poor groups in the city as well as in the countryside:

> In the early 1990s I worked both in the rural areas of Zulu land and in the townships of Soweto and Alexandra in Johannesburg. Here I realized that I despite my training as a doctor had no real influence on the basic problems (Japhet 1999).

Japhet and his colleague Shereen Usdin realized the need for health training on completely basic issues such as child-care, contraception and AIDS. The overall objective, according to Japhet, was to develop an on-going vehicle that could promote social change, that is, being not issue-based but vehicle-based. Seen in retrospective, the media were from the outset considered the vehicle whereby information had and continued to be made accessible, real and appropriate to the audience. Through formative research the audiences played a crucial role in the overall message development process and were ultimately the agents of

change, deciding themselves how and if to use the information provided. As such, Soul City developed an inclusive vehicle where the core agents of change were the audiences, although the unit of change transcended the individual viewers, listeners and readers – being the broad society.

While writing a weekly column for one of the largest newspapers in South Africa, *The Sowetan*, Japhet quickly realized the need to use other media in order to reach the target groups: all the people that could not read or write. At this point, television and radio entered the picture. Despite resistance from scriptwriters and directors, Japhet, and with him Usdin, stood their ground and developed the idea behind *Soul City I*, the first 13 TV episodes with supplementing educational material. The creative people were not used to doctors interfering in their work. In South Africa no prior experiences existed to learn from, making it an insecure process for everyone involved.

The focus of the series, broadcast on TV in the middle of 1994, was mothers and children's health conditions. However, as Japhet says: "A lot of people, especially donors, thought we were crazy. They had never heard of anything like this before" (Japhet 1999). The series was a huge hit among the South African public. The concept behind was to supplement the television series with newspaper columns, followed by radio series and, later on, by educational material treating the same issues. All of it was to be based upon the story of the citizens of the fictional township Soul City.

This very first series, *Soul City I*, has since been exported to a large number of African countries, among others, Zambia, Mozambique, Namibia, Malawi, Zimbabwe, Nigeria and the Ivory Coast. Today, seven series later, Soul City is a leading NGO (non-governmental organization) with a well-tuned edutainment vehicle obtaining significant ratings and impacts in South Africa.[1] Soul City receives grants from the European Union, the British DFID (Department for International Development), The Open Society, UNICEF, the South African Government and a number of other bilateral and UN agencies. In addition to this, a number of privately owned companies also contribute financially to the Soul City project, among others, BP and Old Mutual. In 2000, Soul City launched a new initiative, *Soul Buddyz I*, aimed at 8-12 year-olds. It comprises of a TV series in 26 episodes followed by radio serials in three different languages, with life skills material for schools and a parenting book to assist caregivers. Two *Soul Buddyz* series have so far been produced (http://www.soulcity.za).

A cyclical communication strategy

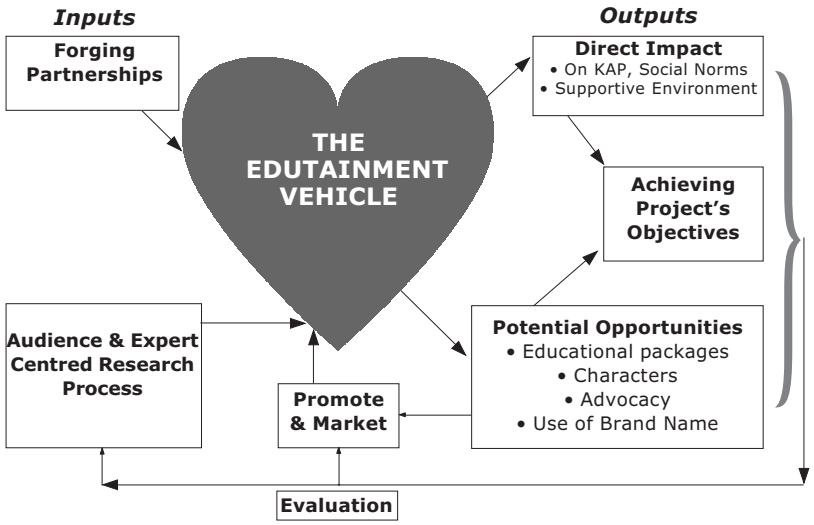
The guiding principle for Soul City is *edutainment*, the organization's denomination of entertainment-education. Garth Japhet has developed a model that explains the main principles of the 'Edutainment Vehicle' (Japhet 1999). Japhet's argues for *a cyclical communication strategy*, where a number of inputs are fed into the media vehicle, which then results in a number of outputs. The overall

process and the outputs in particular are evaluated, something that serves as a key input into the next phase of the on-going vehicle.

As seen in Figure 1, there are two key inputs: 1) *the audience and expert centered research process*, the formative research, and 2) *the partnerships* established with civil society, government, the private sector, international partners, and others. In a very participatory process, messages are developed and worked into the creative products, the media narratives – television, radio as well as print. Soul City emphasizes that the model is generic, and that any narrative form can be applied in the media vehicle. It could also be popular theatre, music or any other form of popular cultural narrative. Soul City has had the opportunity to work in prime time with the mass media and believe firmly in the efficiency of this. However, the medium may well be another if this opportunity is not possible.

The media vehicle results in two key types of output: 1) *the direct output*, being the changes in knowledge, attitudes, social norms and intermediate and direct practices, as well as the development of a supportive environment favoring these mentioned changes, and 2) *the development of potential opportunities*. The latter, made possible due to the media intervention, contain a number of interesting opportunities, some of which Soul City has come far in making use of, while others still are being developed further. These include educational packages, advocacy at both community and national levels, and the development and use of its brand name.

Figure 1. The Soul City edutainment model



Source: Goldstein et al. 2003, p. 195

Soul City has been active since 1994 and has constantly and closely evaluated the outcomes of the on-going communication interventions. It lies beyond this article to unfold the findings, except stating that the Soul City EE-vehicle has obtained changes and results, both as individual behaviour change and as influencing more profound social processes of change (see also Tufte 2001).

The heavy emphasis Soul City puts on monitoring and evaluating its communication strategy has contributed to making it an international showcase, which has inspired many other EE-focused communication strategies world-wide, for example in Latin America. It has inspired similar EE-based strategies in Suriname, has been negotiating and inspiring Peruvian and Colombian initiatives, and its successful use of fiction for change has generally gained a lot of visibility in the debates amongst theorists and practitioners involved in communication for development and social change.

Soul City represented a major methodological break-through in EE-praxis, when it initiated its activities in the early 1990s. It spearheaded the effort to bridge traditions of social marketing and health promotion with participatory strategies of involving the audiences in all stages of the communication strategies. As such, it has internationally been considered a key innovator of the 1990s' EE-initiatives, leading the way for what I have called the 'second generation' of EE-interventions.

The third generation of EE

In very recent years, a new wave is seen in the EE-initiatives, a wave which includes Soul City's later years and which also is emerging elsewhere. These are EE-initiatives that from the outset have moved beyond the 'either diffusion or participation' duality of previous initiatives, both conceptually, discursively and in practice – in addition to a change in the way issues are conveyed in the mass media. From a previous focus on correct and possibly culture-sensitive messages via the mass media, the focus is today more on problem identification, articulation of debate and advocating social change. There is a stronger recognition of the fact that lack of information is not at the core of the problem, but rather *the ability to* identify the problems and act upon them. Empowerment lies at the core of the challenge. The problem identification often leads to identifying solutions that lie beyond individual behavior change and rather have to do with structural problems, rights-based issues, gender inequalities, socio-economic conditions, etc. The need for social change lies at the core of the problem, and consequently, the EE-initiative will have to advocate for social change – not excluding but often in addition to individual behavior change – in order to find solutions. From a communications perspective, 'communication for social change' is emerging as the key concept (Rockefeller Foundation conference in 1997, Tufte 2003b).

The most successful case of using TV fiction for social change purposes in Latin America is a genuine 'home-grown' case from Nicaragua. It is the case of the NGO Puntos de Encuentro that has succeeded not only in producing the first Nicaraguan

telenovela, called *El Sexto Sentido* (36 episodes, transmitted in 2001), but also in putting a broad range of social issues on the agenda for large youth populations in Nicaragua. Thus, the most innovative pro-social use of telenovelas in Latin America is currently growing in a small country with no tradition of domestic production of telenovelas. *El Sexto Sentido* was a tremendous success, the most popular TV program for the youth audience at all (Rodrigues, forthcoming). The second round of *El Sexto Sentido* is on air in 2003/2004. Significant for this as an example of the third generation of EE is the strong community-based approach. Puntos de Encuentro had a decade-long trajectory in community-based participatory work with women, from where grew the need to develop a media vehicle that could provide voice and visibility in pursuit of their social change objectives.

Waves of hope

Paulo Freire once wrote: "You must swim in the cultural waters of the people." I paraphrased him in an article comparing Brazil's contemporary adult educator and philosopher Paulo Freire and Denmark's historical parallel, N.F.S Grundtvig (Tufte 1987). One of the problems in early forms of EE, and in many of the media-borne campaigns, has been the lack of connection to 'the cultural waters' – and the life experiences – of the people.

Paulo Freire's ideas – developed in the 1960s and 1970s – are regaining momentum and force, now in a larger scale in several organizations. Many of the ideas he launched, and analyses he conducted, about how to articulate processes of 'conscientizacao' have equal power today. And not least the fight against HIV/AIDS seems to carry the potential for policy makers, organizations, social movements, and ordinary people in their communities to come together and fight against this threat to human kind, a threat to moral.

Freire's ideas were lost, or at least "out of fashion" for some years, in the early and mid-1990s, when neo-liberalism, market economy and structural adjustment programs dominated much of the discourse of development. Unfortunate experiences with this dominating neo-liberal ideology of the 1990s (especially the large structural adjustment programmes in developing countries) – combined with the devastating sweep of HIV/AIDS across, in particular, the developing countries of Eastern and Southern Africa – is bringing paradigms of thought and practice together. This is now seen in joint efforts against HIV/AIDS, against poverty and against what Skuse calls 'the immoral of human action' (Tufte 2001, Skuse 2003). What Soul City in practice managed to develop into, in their continuous conceptual and methodological advancements, is today seen mushrooming many places in the world. Entertainment-Education has moved beyond social marketing in most of the cases.

Today, Freire's thoughts seem to be at the centre of many of the efforts to combat HIV/AIDS, be it in the work of theatre groups where Augusto Boal's Freire-based

methodology flourishes these years, or large-scale mass media-heavy campaigns as the CADRE (Centre for AIDS Development, Research and Evaluation)-run campaign Tsha-Tsha in South Africa. In the academic writing around EE, Freire's thoughts are coming forth again (Singhal 2003, Tufte 2004). As Andrew Skuse points at: instead of focusing on behaviour, community dialogue is crucial (Skuse 2003). What is characterising the third wave of EE-strategies is a stronger conceptual basis in such an integrated approach, taking almost for granted the need to move beyond either diffusion of innovation/social marketing *or* participation and community-based strategies. And it is combined with a strong action-orientation. Puntos de Encuentro with *El Sexto Sentido* and Soul City are examples of this.

With Freire's thinking increasingly incorporated into the conceptual basis of EE-strategic development, a conceptual tool has been brought in, which helps break the widespread silence around HIV/AIDS. Jesus Martin-Barbero mentions in his most recent book (2002) the concept 'culture of silence' that characterises large sections of the marginalized segments of (Latin American) societies in their response mechanism to dominating social classes. Martin-Barbero brings this concept forward, originally developed by Paulo Freire (Freire 1967: 111). It can very well be used in current discussions about HIV/AIDS and the far too widespread silence with which the epidemic is being accepted – by the victims as well as by the populations and opinion leaders of the developed countries, at least as long as it does not affect them.

The 'culture of silence' can be explained both in the history of some of the peoples (colonialism, the masses not having the strength and opportunity to go up against the root causes of the health problems they are faced with today) and within them, not having the indignation and energized rage with which to demand changes and better conditions of life – an internalized acceptance of 'status quo'. However, today there are growing strong voices which – with the electronic media of today – makes their voices heard, through efficient advocacy communication and articulating a strong, powerful and well-founded process of communication for social change. By using Freire in the problem identification, and in seeking to understand the mechanisms of the 'culture of silence', Freire's liberating pedagogy also becomes an appropriate tool in the development of solutions, given exactly this parallel of silence in equally marginalized and deprived populations.

The development of a new discipline?

The growing interest in EE, seen in practice in the cases mentioned above, is confirmed in the theoretical-methodological substantiation of EE as both a theoretical and practical approach to education, development and social change. It leads to the belief that new educational strategies are developing to enhance education, development and social change on the basis of competent and active involvement of the people it is about. The development of EE is seen in the following elements:

- Increased recognition of TV and radio drama as expressions of popular culture (Martin-Barbero 1993, Tufte 2000, etc.)
- Increased publishing on EE: Bouman (1999), a special issue of *Communication Theory* (2002), Singhal's et al. anthology on EE and social change (2004), etc.
- The institutionalization of the field: the global conferences (in 1989, 1997, 2000, and planned for 2004 in South Africa), as well as PCI holding an EE-focused 'Soap Summit' every year.
- A new generation of scholars interested in the field and characterized by bringing together their focuses in an action-oriented critical academic reflection (Graunbøl 2001, Giersing 2002, Ngenge 2002, Brink 2003, Skeie 2003).

The new ways of using EE, as an appreciation of new languages and formats in non-formal education around HIV/AIDS, is grounded in an important point: the need to move beyond information and towards communication, beyond *logos* alone to *mythos* as well, that is, beyond reason and towards emotion, not in an either-or dualism, but in integrated strategies where education is not only about conveying information – but also about involving people in a changing society.

Concerns about citizenship and human rights are at the core of this matter, and when it comes to the use of radio and TV drama in EE-strategies, it is also about exercising and recognizing the *cultural citizenship* of the audiences (Tufte 2000). EE, as an educational strategy in the language used, content focus and audience involvement, is treading new ground as a strategy of 'conscientizacao' that moves beyond marketing, towards empowerment, and more in synchronization with the mediated and globalized world of today.

Acknowledgement

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Note

1. Many of Soul City's TV series and print materials have been used, some in direct translations and some in adapted versions, in Africa and elsewhere. However, it lies beyond the scope of this article to explore the issues and challenges of how well-researched locally produced edutainment material is appropriated in neighbouring and other countries.

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A Pedagogical Deconstruction of TV Audiences in 21st Century Mediated Environments

A Latin-American Perspective

Guillermo Orozco Gómez
with the assistance of Daniel Medina Jackson

In the context of contemporary communication environments, characterized by an unprecedented audiovisual overrun, I discuss here a conceptual perspective on the mediated world through the social process of viewing television (TV). My intent is to advance the basis for a pedagogical project that could help individuals make sense of themselves in that world, understand better their new status as audiences and eventually intervene in the unintended TV and audiovisual media informal learning processes to which most people as audiences, and especially children, are subjected in Latin America.

The audience-subjects

First of all, *being* an audience in a mediated world today means, above all, a structural transformation in the way societies can be thought of. Segmentation based upon gender, age, religion, race, work and education is no longer enough to grasp the complexity of the mediated world and its segmented audiences. Now, in order to understand audiences, we must propel ourselves into a global mass media spiral that privileges transversal segmentation, which in turn emphasizes subjectiveness, emotions, rewards and pleasures. It is important to recognize that the known boundaries are being breached and expanded beyond recognition and that symbolic exchange has inaugurated a new slogan of interpretation: "Tell me what you watch and I will tell you what you like, what you feel, and who you are."

Second, being an audience modifies the way individuals relate to others, how they interpret everyday phenomena and how they interact with traditional information-bearing institutions, such as the church, family, government and school. Windows are being replaced by TVs and computer screens. For a still reduced

but growing global community, travel is being replaced by "web surfing" and public spaces by "chats" and other Internet sites (Maldonado, 1998). Face-to-face interaction is transformed into a vicarious experience in which a new array of exclamation signs stand for emotions, and participation is confined to an intramural zapping sport. In the meantime, the mediated world grows rapidly in size, as it becomes as much a product of knowledge, feeling and taste as a process for its consumption. TV, in this sense, projects itself above other media because of its inherent virtues of credibility, convenience and visual evidence – all of which attest undeniably to the natural "truths" viewers perceive and consequently to the knowledge, attitudes, opinions and beliefs they appropriate, produce and act upon.

A third element to be noted is how the space-time boundaries have been blurred and how being an audience in a mediated world has altered real *participation*. Not only do audiences find themselves at bay with *No Sense of Place* (Meyrowitz, 1985), but they are also anchored to an unpredictable, hazy and shaky reality. This can provoke an exponential dispersion-concentration process that "delocates" and "detemporalizes" everyday life experience through the binding connection to "non-places". To whom, where, when and how can disagreement be manifested? More than a question, this is a challenge to the creativity, resistance, perseverance and info-political confusion of audiences. Moreover, audiences are systematically subjected to the one-way mercantile superhighway that within its perfect operating form and its unrelenting stamina fails to take notice of or even glance at the nomadic spectators that travel on it.

In this communicative ecosystem the individual's knowledge is not only shaped and multiplied, but also the mediated representations that constitute it are made second nature by an unyielding audiovisual regime. Social participation in this context is greatly inhibited. Media recreates a simulated and hyped-up reality in which we can find all sorts of concoctions: rich people who also suffer and cry, children who enjoy "talk shows" and then put their parents on the spot by asking difficult questions on crude subjects, merciful people with no guilt whatsoever watching mass and sermons projected from the screen, Zapatista rebels with no television sets that claim human rights on the Internet, or the faint-hearted homemakers who cannot bear to watch dying children on the news, but change the channel so they can cry comfortably watching their favorite soap opera.

Audiences are in constant pursuit of pleasure: as they are swept away in drunken delight over temporary audiovisual gratification, they put themselves in ephemeral and dangerous emotional and intellectual positions. Media educators face a schizophrenic task, as they must deal with a complex puzzle of fragmented perceptions and emotions. Such mediated malaise can immobilize social action and convert potential critical attitudes into fruitless complaints.

International research on audience interaction is starting to find clarity amongst the complexity and novelty of these social phenomena: audiences are, above all, empirical queries that must be addressed with qualitative research in order to be comprehended and applied to educative processes (Seiter, 1999). Therefore, the

pedagogical challenge is to make sense of the multiplicity of elements and mediations that contribute to the understanding of audiences and their future emancipation.

Audiences and television: the complex and multiple bond

In a preliminary approach, audience complexity can be analytically divided into four distinct domains, which are simultaneous and not necessarily explicit. These domains can therefore be understood within the quadruple dimensionality of television: its language, media-ness, technical-ness and institutionality (Orozco, 2001a).

Television language and grammar

The first and more specific domain is language. Here we can observe an interaction between the codes used by audiences and those used by television itself. This domain is characterized by the iconic and auditory signs and meanings that make up TV grammar. A particular logic of montage and movement has been devised over time to summon and appeal to audiences and produce a very distinct form of visual enjoyment. It is precisely this evocative power, found in almost perfect form in music videos, that eclipses rational thought bound to oral and written language (Castells, 1999). This particular form of mediated interaction erodes, at least temporarily, the cognitive capacity of audiences and submerges them into an ocean of emotional responses. It is in this individual and collective "sensorium" that many illustrated men and women have been troubled and inconvenienced (Martin-Barbero and Rey, 1999) and where audiences fall into self-absorption by prolonged screen fixations. Also, it is in this domain that media literacy makes itself relevant and calls to our attention that, in spite of the universality of the televisual code and the self-taught nature of audience interaction, most individuals are "media illiterates".

Television as a medium

The second domain is related to the medium itself and not to the language it codifies. Audiences are not only lured by the audiovisual grammar, but also by such constitutive devices as formats, channels, genres, schedules, teasers, promos, scenes and sequences. All of these comprise habits and customs that audiences establish as strategies and rituals of televisual interaction. The amount of free time available to audiences in their everyday life is predominantly occupied by TV viewing and this raises serious questions we must address in order to diversify people's options. In this respect, education finds its greatest challenge in putting

forth a pedagogical project that can adequately and strategically navigate through a sea of audiovisual instincts, predispositions and gratifications. Hence, adequately educated, we would be able to avoid TV's monopolization of our enjoyment and its containment of our intimacy.

Television's technical nature

As a medium, TV also constitutes a technical form. On one hand, this particular form requires a specific level of expertise and literacy from audiences if they are to take advantage of it. This can be complex and alienating. On the other hand, it presents itself as a "land of opportunity" as the awesome technical possibilities open up new frontiers of perception and learning. For instance, the fact that audiences can modulate or mute sound, record images, flow through seven or eights channels at once, and in a near future be able to select camera angles, distort images and integrate several signals into one, gives television limitless possibilities and learning potential. The mere act of watching a soccer player score a goal from six or seven different angles multiplies perception and with it audiences' feverish expectation.

The permanent and geometrical explosion of perception that the technical form of TV allows is not only the most feared and misunderstood element of audience mediation, but also the most constitutive of them all. This is probably due to, as Martin-Barbero suggests (2002), the fact that Western culture has historically separated the instrumental nature of technology from the perceptual transformation it produces. Television and audiovisual media have made this evident by functioning as catalysts. The pedagogical challenge required for TV interaction in this instance is the development of strategies that reinforce hand-eye coordination and cognitive abilities, such as the rational, visual and auditory integration of fragments. That way, individuals will be able to make sense of the mediated world and project their intelligence forward with independence.

Television's institutionality

TV also constitutes itself as an institution because it has a history, a set of objectives and economic and ideological guidelines that are shared all over the world. As any cultural industry, television has a particular political and commercial specificity that was either in place since the outset or has come about through transformation. Generally, commercial TV has been an ally of political power and not of audiences. As time goes by, it becomes evident that it will petrify in that position (Bustamante, 2000). As a leading enterprise in world markets, audiovisual technology – in terms of its formats, genres and language – is determined by ratings. Commercial value falls even for educational programs such as *Sesame Street*, and for what is considered newsworthy. Information and education in this

context are considered merchandise to be exchanged by transnational oligopolies, which only simulate competition between national and local broadcasters. The end effect is a concentration of interests and limited possibilities of what can be considered "television worthy".

Broadcasters still have the power to impose their criteria on society. They establish agendas that recreate a deceitful plurality of options. Audiences, despite their hyperactivity and supposed freedom of choice, are permanently reconfiguring their identity based upon prefabricated TV menus, which offer them only the illusion of multiplicity (Renero, 2003). In spite of the great number of options, audiences do not take part as it would seem in a decision-making process (Hall, 1982).

This frantic merchandising of commercial TV acts produces a somatic effect on audiences. By targeting individual consumption with spectacular, dramatic and even perverse techniques, audiences are tricked into purchasing their own distinction and image of success. TV is out to *conquer* audiences, which in turn let themselves be seduced. In Mexico, for instance, there is no doubt that audiences have been seduced "*a la Televisa*".[1] Such hegemony has been historically determinant and still persists because it has been complemented by the complicity of audiences, which are vulnerable to being "unplugged" (Kaplun, 1996) from their source of reality and "infotainment". Nonetheless, audiences have the possibility of changing such susceptibility.

Audiences are not born – they are made. That is why media education is important – it can mold their alternative constitution.

This quadruple dimensionality of audience reception puts into perspective what sense can be "negotiated" with TV, at the same time as it synchronically and diachronically integrates and reduces mediated references and all they represent in the spiral of entertainment.

Mediations with capital and lower case letters

Seeing, listening, perceiving, feeling, talking, liking, thinking, comparing, evaluating, keeping, retrieving, imagining and "buying" TV are parallel and sometimes simultaneous activities. Regardless of their imperceptibility and second nature to audiences, these activities exercise significant mediations on their televisual interaction.

Micro-mediations

In a second approach to understanding audience interaction with television, it is important to observe "where" sense is being created in the communication processes that surround the media.

A first kind of mediation comes from the individual sphere, where sense depends upon vital personal experiences, such as ideas, prejudices, inhibitions,

attitudes, visions, and ambitions – all of which go beyond television. Each individual creates a "viewing contract" as a strategy to make sense of the world. This contract relates to and interacts with those of others, as interpretation communities are formed. That is why audience reception goes beyond the individual sphere to become a culturized social phenomenon. From *Cultural Studies* (Morley, 1992) and from education and psychology (Gardner, 1993), we know that the development of intelligence or "multiple intelligences" is not a strictly individual process. Even in those instances that seem to be unique and unrepeatable manifestations, we know there is a high degree of significance derived from the community (country, region, culture). Audiences are formed by individuals who strive for cultural survival within a particular sentimental, cognitive, creative, informative and axiological context.

On the other hand, the "contracted views" do not occur in a sociocultural void. Context mediates the possible meanings audiences can negotiate. TV viewing and its mediating context are not natural or casual events. Daily routine automates the construction of meaning, making it seem as if it were such a natural phenomenon that it becomes indistinguishable. Here we must understand the term "context" in its broader sense so we can conceptualize the different kinds that exist. There is a merely situational context (the physical act of viewing television) and there are symbolic, rational, emotional, axiological, institutional, social, political, economical and cultural contexts that come together into a complex and dynamic interpretation process.

First-order audience reception

Audiences interact face-to-screen with TV in a "direct reception" and primary process. Meaning can be constructed or appropriated with or without the presence of other viewers. Their presence or absence is as much another source of mediation as it is a rational and emotional context from which audiences are anchored. This primary reception process is determined by individual intuitions, strategies and rituals, as well as by particular socio-historic space-time mediations. It has been said that the daily life interaction of audiences with TV is an analysis category without boundaries. Despite this, conditions vary considerably. Results of an audience analysis in Latin America differ considerably from one in, for example, London (Silverstone, 1996). The indoor dimension of London audiences is completely different from the street dimension of Brazilian *favela* audiences, where their living room and TV interaction takes place literally on the sidewalk (Tufte, 1997). Here, audience reception is defined by a very controlled and closed interaction, on the one hand, and by an open and competed interaction amongst neighbors and passers-by, on the other.

The situational anchoring of audiences also responds to the more tangible and immediate context in which the reception process sinks in. Class, ethnicity, cultural belonging, geographical location, purchasing power and many other possible segmentations can very well differentiate audiences, but they are by no means

definite. Mediations play a role in audience interaction with TV in such a fashion that all segmentations are crossed so as to produce transclassed, transgendered, transgenerational, transgeographical and transethnic processes (Orozco, 1996a).

A classic example of this kind of transversal process is observed in Liebes' and Katz' (1990) study on the TV series *Dallas*. Here, audiences that differed considerably in terms of segmentation arrived at very similar interpretations of meaning. Another example is observed in the study *News of the World* (Jensen, 1998), where audiences from Mexico, India, Italy and Denmark had some similar positions with respect to international news coverage. Another example is provided in a study developed under the "cultivation hypothesis", which found that conservative tendencies were common amongst "heavy viewers" in different cultural contexts such as Argentina, Taiwan, Korea and the United States (Morgan and Shanahan, 1995).

Second-order audience reception

Beyond the physical act of being in front of the screen, there are subsequent, *secondary and tertiary*, processes in audience interaction with television. These are by no means less important to observe.

Audience interaction with television must be understood as a complex process that begins before and continues after the physical act of being in front of the set and as a conformation of diverse "miniature" processes. Understanding these different scenarios and mediated references of TV interaction will enhance the meaning that audiences build for themselves. In the end, what defines, sets boundaries and supports audience interaction with television is extremely varied and widespread. The kind of contact it creates can be direct or indirect, audiovisual or symbolic, cognitive or sensory, explicit or implied. It can also be ephemeral or lasting, weak or strong, it can be recovered or lost, but as long as there is some kind of contact, audience interaction takes place (Orozco, 1996b).

This understanding redefines the kind of empirical evidence that educators can obtain in the midst of their intervention. They must take into account "a priori" and "a posteriori" elements of audience interaction in pedagogical-political interventions. These can be implemented from different scenarios such as school, work, neighborhood, political assembly, organizations and social movements. Even though the primary interaction with television takes place in the home, it is also possible to deconstruct and reorient it from other scenarios. In fact, it is possible to intervene even in the commercial dimension of TV in order to amplify the perspective of potential social action of audiences. This is one of the greatest challenges of media education.

Macro-mediations

The *identity* or *identities* of individuals and audiences as a collective entity constitute one of the mediations "with capital letters" in the process of audience interac-

tion with TV. In this sense, Martin-Barbero (1994) says that contemporary identities, which are particularly reconstituted by audiovisual mediations, are becoming less essentialist and more amalgamating. That is why the "soap operish" weeping does not contradict the integrity and responsibility of a mother who is genuinely concerned about the future of her children, the unity of her family or even with the misfortune of thousands of children in the world who are starving to death.

Identities are not determining monoliths, nor are they superficial entities. For example, analyzing the "super themes" behind Mexican audiences in their interaction with international and national news coverage, it is evident that the memory of colonialism still has a profound effect. This can be observed in the feeling of impotence and fear of authoritarian power that is imbedded in the national identity and that determines the form of social participation. How people interact and find meaning in TV news demonstrates the position they take with respect to the world. That is why, for instance, Mexican audiences found common ground with the victims of the war in Yugoslavia, and also with countrymen who were going to be executed in the electric chair in the United States. This provoked great animosity and repudiation toward the powerful countries of the world, particularly our "neighbor to the north". This translates into a backward and reactionary patriotism that feeds a growing mistrust of foreign interests as well as the national regime. While other audiences might take action because of what they watch on television news, Mexican audiences demonstrate their passivity and submission to the dominant powers (Orozco, 2000a).

The previous examples suggest that "audience ethnography" has had a significant role in examining and identifying the identities of particular communities through the analysis of mediated interaction. Understanding and using the results of these studies is an essential part of designing strategies for pedagogical intervention.

Another of the major mediations that can be found in audience interaction with TV is that of *perception* as a multiple cognitive process. The construction of meaning passes through a sensorial as well as symbolic, aesthetic, notional, emotional, rational and vicarious process. This process is at the same time mediated from different scenarios and requires a broad perspective in order to implement adequate strategies. A narrow vision will only be an obstacle to engaging audiences and allowing their reconstitution. The fact is that many Latin-American mothers, from northern Mexico to southern Argentina, especially in the lower socio-economic classes, find soap operas educational and recommend them to their children so they can "learn about life". This does not seem to be a corruption of values, but a confirmation that television plays an important role in shaping their perception of the world (Lopez, 2000). Many of these women when asked what they most enjoy about their favorite soap operas respond: "the furniture and set decoration". A closer look reveals that this corresponds to the profound yearning these women have to belong to a higher socio-economic class. This is not a mere corruption of values either, but a reminder that TV is an important member of the family. TV might not have a clear educational intent, but people

certainly do learn from it. Even talk shows and ad campaigns come into this picture. Most elementary school teachers in Latin America complain about the "negative" effects of television on their students and the threat it represents in the education process. They recognize the "license to teach" that TV has taken away from them and are desperate to find ways to get it back.

Audiences construct meanings that go beyond the original intention of producers and broadcasters. For example, news programs are perceived mainly as entertainment or as a means of "being informed", regardless of what other purposes might have been intended. Umberto Eco may not have been exaggerating when he said that audiences "hurt" TV and not the other way around.

Institutional mediation, which is in itself a conglomerate of mediations, includes the four dimensions of televisual mediations, as well as all the other institutional mediations with regard to which social subjects construct meaning. This "macro" mediation not only disseminates meaning in all forms of social, cultural, economic and political exchange, but also constitutes the most direct, systematic, incisive and complex process of audience interaction with TV.

Audiences, as subjects, are compelled to watch TV as a fundamental effort toward socio-cultural survival. Institutional mediations simultaneously reinforce and tense a considerably hyperactive context. Any pedagogical strategy will have to consider as explicitly as possible all elements present in a given audience segment in order to develop an adequate intervention.

Mediating institutions

Audiences' immediate or mediate exchange with their environment occurs simultaneously in several institutions: work, neighborhood, school, religion, and partisanship, among others. The audience segment in question will determine in which institutions participation takes place and, in turn, how institutional mediations are constituted. The most important factor for an educator is knowing how to calibrate his or her intervention so as to benefit particular TV audiences.

In spite of the innumerable variations that institutional mediations put into play in the postmodern age, it is possible to distinguish the main characteristics that are relevant when educating audience-subjects. For example, *politics*, as a super institution, is changing drastically and TV instigates an important part of the transformation. Political parties, due in part to technology, are losing their ability to represent and summon up people's involvement. Politics is moving daily toward televisual determination and vice versa. Moreover, television is solidifying as a merchandizing institution, as it takes an important role not only in selling goods and services, but also in selling political personalities to audiences that are consumers and voters, as well. The difference in merchandizing strategies is hardly noticeable from other kinds of products (Ford, 1999).

Some institutions maintain relative stability in this mediated context. In Latin America, the public school system and the Catholic Church have stubbornly re-

mained unchanged. Despite this, they are showing signs of aperture for future transformation. Within the *family* institution, the capitalist structure has produced a significant transformation. Gender roles, particularly the fact that women have entered the labor market and left homes without the traditional structure that characterized them, have caused a major imbalance in the rituals and beliefs that make up family life. Conflict has been introduced into the family via the TV room. Traditional socialization scenarios have been transgressed by issues that would otherwise not have appeared. TV often shows what families want to avoid talking about and what they purposely try to hide.

Regardless of its morality or common sense, family mediation is an important factor in any approach to television. In Latin America, the family institution is one of the last strongholds of "traditional values" and acts as a defense mechanism for deeply rooted conservative ideologies. Nonetheless, families censor TV and use it as a punishment, at the same time as they use it as a baby-sitter and reward. The contradictions abound.

It was no coincidence that transnational television corporations such as Fox Kids and Nickelodeon debated at The Second World Summit on Television for Children (that took place in London in 1998) whether they should direct programming exclusively at children or at the family as a whole. It was not a coincidence either that representatives of those same corporations made considerable effort two years later in Toronto at Summit 2000 to show their "new face" by promising their compromise with education and "healthy entertainment". Not only did they promise to become permanent educational institutions, but they also promised to produce didactic materials to accompany the process. This is something media educators have been eagerly awaiting. Now, it seems, these corporations are not only selling entertainment and information, but also education!

The TV as an institution is going through the most changes. On the one hand, it is revolutionizing itself in terms of its technical, expressive and linguistic components. On the other hand, it is putting itself forward in a dramatic fashion in terms of marketing, politics and globalization. In doing so, it avoids potential legal, ethical and aesthetic constraints. The growing media deregulation, the constant debate over freedom of enterprise, the openness toward new technologies and the highly competitive world market have made of television a bastion of novelty, success and gross earnings. It is precisely in this context that media education takes place and must subsist and prosper as a fundamental priority. Pedagogical alternatives must be implemented quickly in order to transform interaction with television and reorient its course toward the better. This not only guarantees an integral formative process in individuals, but also a potential transformation of TV itself.

The pedagogical recomposition of mediated interactions with television

A TV viewing pedagogy from, with and for audiences must redefine the ways in which researchers and media educators assess particular interpretative communities as the targets of their intervention. Only after a precise description of their composition is it possible to produce change. In the context of the contemporary "mediated opulence" of which Roman Gubern (2000) speaks, audiences are falling into one of only two major segments: the "info-poor" and the "info-rich". This illustrates the economic as well as cultural divide that is beginning to spread. The main objective of an educational project for TV is to breach that divide by orienting efforts toward the info-poor majority. This majority in turn is integrated by numerous minorities that are consistently excluded by regular TV. The homeless, the indigenous communities, dissident groups, senior citizens, children and many young adults are systematically excluded from the priorities of broadcasters. Inclusion is based exclusively on the purchasing power of potential consumers. Media educators are compelled not only to transform audiences themselves, but also the way they are conceived of by the media industry. The goal is to oblige broadcasters to see audiences not only in terms of their commercial appeal, but also in terms of their intellectual abilities as interlocutors and citizens of a mediated world.

The design of pedagogical strategies must take into account a different segmentation of audiences. This would mean a complete separation from the "consumer demands" and "purchasing powers" that constitute the ratings system and throw aside all cultural and cognitive contexts. The goal is not to substitute the commercial model for a "culturalist" one, but to motivate audiences to view TV in other ways. Media educators must facilitate a process whereby audiences can understand by themselves how TV is constituted and how it expresses itself. In that way they can relate TV to their own lives and be motivated to talk and think television from a broad and inclusive perspective.

It is of the utmost relevance that individuals recognize that amongst the many things that define them, being TV viewers and/or members of an audience is of great significance in their daily lives.

The educational intention behind a TV viewing pedagogy would not be to dismiss or even try to transform any particular genre. The main purpose is not to work on TV programming in order to produce a new line of educational or cultural shows. Rather, the goal is to give a new dimension to audiences' perception of TV as a whole, in order to take advantage of its inherent form and content.

Two key elements for approaching commercial TV with a pedagogical strategy could be to analyze how ethics and respect for audiences appear on the screen. For example, it is important to show how TV constitutes a saturation of images and information, how advertising schemes are conducted, how violence and sexually explicit materials are unnecessarily presented, and how lies, exaggerations and misinformation are put together. A pedagogical key to unraveling TV

would be to contrast its evident spectacular nature with *relevant* cultural elements, such as political, educational and social problems (just as Paulo Freire does), and to analyze in turn the televised references, as well as the uses, aspirations, hopes and needs that audiences have in relation to these references. Throughout this effort, it is necessary for educators to know exactly *where* audiences are positioned in their interaction with television and use that knowledge to systematically and permanently offer feedback to audiences. Therefore, a critical attitude can be motivated and impositions can be avoided.

After 50 years of commercial TV presence in most countries, it is impossible to deny that audiences have been (de)formed in one way or another. This historical determination poses a difficult but possible challenge for audiences to *relearn* the world around them and incorporate new forms of interaction with the media. Educators must set the stage.

Taking into account secondary and tertiary processes of audience interaction with TV, the pedagogical strategy I propose must transcend mediated environments in order to permit audiences not only to interact amongst themselves, but also to facilitate their encounter with broadcasters at levels beyond rating statistics. Eventually their voices can be heard on a broader public stage and empower their socio-political and cultural organization. In this manner, audiences can exercise their participation, for example, from a collective manifestation against a particular program to the creation of a more structured association that analyzes, criticizes and takes action toward television in general.

The new utopia of real democracy, justice, equality and participation for all cannot be conceived of and much less attained if there is not also a "media utopia" and particularly a "*television utopia*" to go along with it. The mission for a pedagogy of TV interaction is to ferment the field for future change to take place.

Note

1. Televisa is the television network monopoly that has dominated audiovisual production in Mexico for over fifty years and is the largest Latin-American exporter of media products above Brazil's Red Globo. The only other network, Television Azteca, which started to operate independently in 1993, does not yet represent a real competitive factor or even a different programming option for Mexican audiences.

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Children's On-line Life – and What Parents Believe

A Survey in Five Countries

Karin Larsson

Today, the Internet is an important part of children's and young people's everyday life in several countries. Virtually everyone has used a computer. About one third even have a PC of their own, and just as many go on-line at least once daily. 80 per cent have an Internet connection at home and they start using it at an early age; every fifth 8-year-old has already begun exploring the Internet.

The above is true at least for children aged 9 to 16 years in Denmark, Iceland, Ireland, Norway and Sweden, as shown in an extensive survey of children's on-line behaviour presented by SAFT, an Internet Safety Awareness project supported by the European Union Commission's Safer Internet Action Plan.[1] In each of the participating countries, penetration of the Internet is very high. The same survey also concludes that there are substantial differences between what children actually do on-line and what parents think they know about their kids' Internet use.

The SAFT project

SAFT (Safety Awareness, Facts and Tools) works to teach children and their parents safer use of the Internet by stressing the potential as well as risks connected to children's Internet use. In order to gain the necessary knowledge and understanding of children's on-line behaviour and what the concerns of their parents might be, the project decided early on to conduct two major surveys, focusing on each of these two target groups. Both surveys were conducted by MMI (Markeds og Mediainstituttet as, Market and Media Institute, Inc.) – a Norwegian polling institute and one of the partners in the SAFT project. The objective of the parental survey was to map parents' surveillance and knowledge of their children's Internet use. Parents of children aged 6-16 years and living in a household with Internet connection were interviewed by telephone in December 2002. In Janu-

ary-February 2003, this survey was followed by the child survey conducted at a representative sample of schools, where students aged 9-16 years themselves filled in self-report questionnaires in a classroom situation, in the absence of their teacher.

Ireland did not participate in the parental survey, but all partner countries implemented the children's survey. As a consequence, all comparisons between the parents' and children's answers in this article are based only on the results from the four participating Nordic countries. In total, 3,200 parents and 4,700 children were interviewed. The results have been weighted according to gender, age and regions based on the population distribution as collected from official statistics in each country. Table 1 gives an overview of facts about the surveys.

Table 1. Samples, response rates and data collection in the five countries

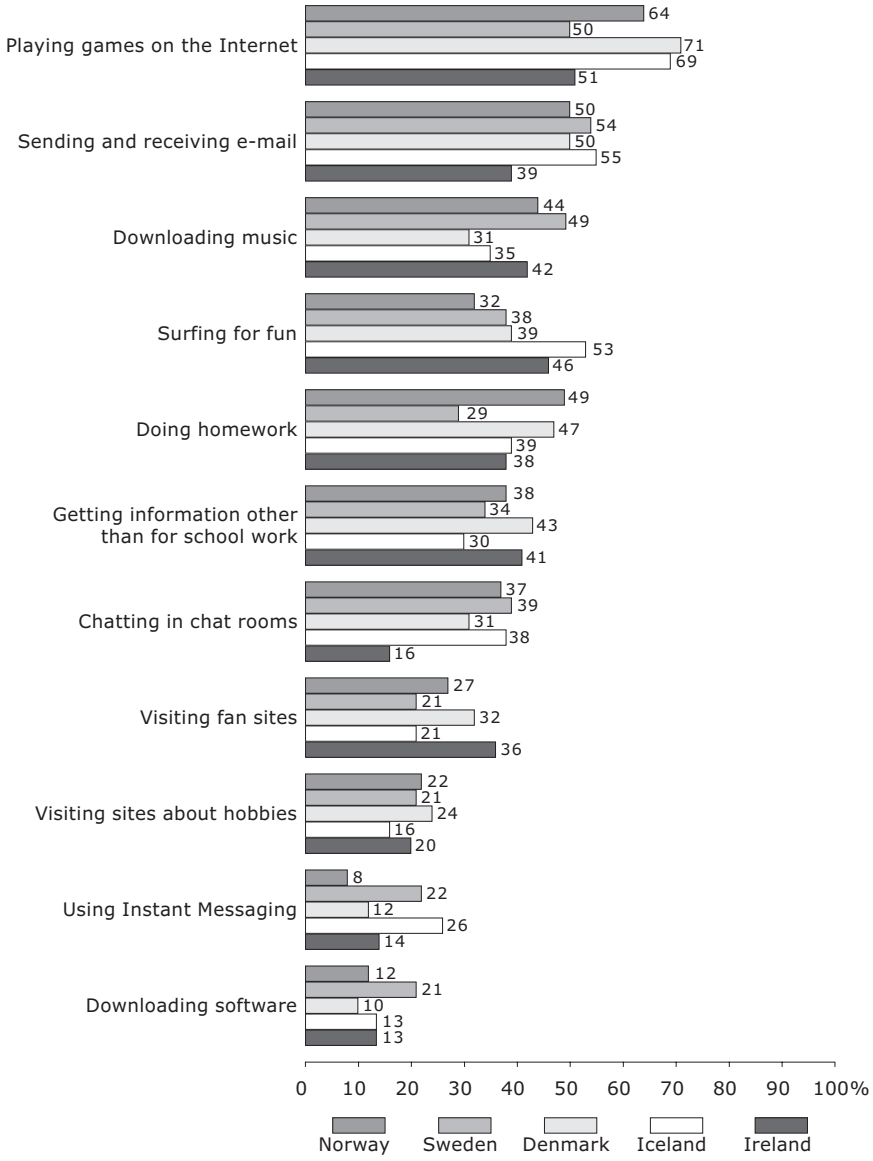
	Total	Norway	Sweden	Denmark	Iceland	Ireland
Parental survey						
Response rate	49%	40%	45%	51%	59%	
Average interview time	16 min.	14 min.	18 min.	17 min.	16 min.	
Number of interviews	3 213	800	807	808	798	
Incidence target group	23%	23%	17%	22%	31%	
Population target group	2 744 000	763 000	1 148 000	774 000	59 000	
Pilot study		Week 48				
Data collection		Week 49-51	Week 49-52	Week 49-52	Week 49-52	
Cati-bus for weights		Week 50	Week 50	Week 50	Week 51	
Child survey						
Number of schools	122	24	27	27	26	18
Number of interviews	4 754	1 004	1 011	1 035	972	732
Population target group	2 522 000	472 000	963 000	518 000	39 000	530 000
Piloting		Week 2				
Letter to headmaster		Week 50	Week 49	Week 50	Week 49	Week 6
Telephone recruitment		Week 3-4	Week 2-3	Week 2-3	Week 2-3	Week 6
Data collection		Week 4-7	Week 4-7	Week 4-7	Week 6-7	Week 7-10

What kids do on-line – and what parents think

The most popular Internet activities among children who use the Internet (92-99% in the countries surveyed) are playing games (58%), using e-mail (49%) and downloading music (43%). Children spend on average a little more than 2 hours per week playing games on the Internet, and 30 per cent play at least once a week. One out of two children has at least one e-mail account and they use it mainly to e-mail their friends. Most children have set up these accounts themselves and 15 per cent claim to have e-mail accounts their parents do not know about.

There are some national variations – of which a few are presented in Figure 1: Danish and Icelandic children are the most dedicated gamers. Norwegian and

Figure 1. What kind of things do you do on the Internet? (Per cent of children who use the Internet, by country. Responses where the average exceeds 15%)



Danish kids more often use Internet for homework than children in the other countries. In Sweden e-mailing is the number-one on-line activity. Swedish, Icelandic and Norwegian kids are more likely to go chatting than are kids in the

other countries. Irish children use the Internet least regularly; 12 per cent use the Internet every day compared to 46 per cent of the Swedish kids who are the most frequent Internet users.

Looking into the gender-specific use gives us a somewhat different list of favourite things to do on-line. Playing games is still the most popular activity among boys, followed by music downloading, surfing for fun and downloading software. Girls prefer e-mailing, searching for information – for schoolwork or for other purposes, and visiting fan sites.

The comparison of findings from the parental and child surveys reveals obvious discrepancies regarding a number of areas – see, for example, Figure 2. Parents tend to underestimate the extent of children's on-line activities. Even though they have a fairly good knowledge about the most popular Internet activities, such as playing games and browsing in general, many parents are not aware of the social and interactive aspects of Internet use, such as e-mailing, chatting, instant messaging and downloading music and software. (The differences here must be interpreted with some caution, as response items were presented in the child questionnaire, while parents in this case received an open-ended question.)

Offensive on-line content

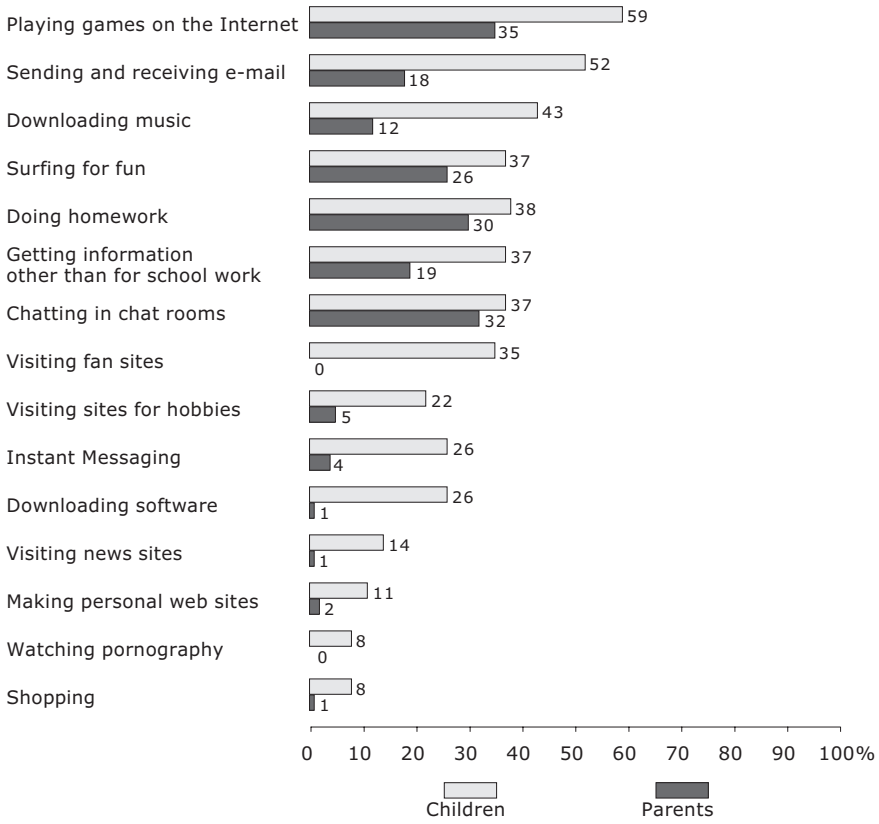
According to the findings in the parental survey, pornography and sexual material are the biggest concerns among parents in regard to their children's use of Internet. Twenty-four per cent of the parents believe that their child has come across such material on-line – the child survey shows that 44 per cent of the children who use the Internet have, accidentally or on purpose, visited pornographic web sites or sites with sexual content. Unsurprisingly, these sites are most visited by teenage boys.

In addition, three out of ten children, most often girls, have received unwanted sexual comments on the Internet, but they usually do not tell their parents about it. Usually children do not seem to think too much about being on such a web site, but girls as well as younger children are more often upset about these incidents and state that they wish they had never seen the material. These tendencies are similar when it comes to violent and hateful Internet content.

On-line relations and face-to face meetings

E-mail, chat and instant messages are important means for young people both to get to know new friends and to maintain existing relationships. The anonymous character of these tools also provides an opportunity for children to pretend to be someone else. Generally, teenagers pretend more than younger children. There

Figure 2. Children: What kind of things do you do on the Internet? (Aided) Parents: As far as you know, what does your child use the Internet for? (Unaided).
(Per cent of children who use the Internet, on average for all countries)



are also gender differences. Girls tend to use another name, age and make up another physical appearance, while boys brag about doing things they cannot do in real life.

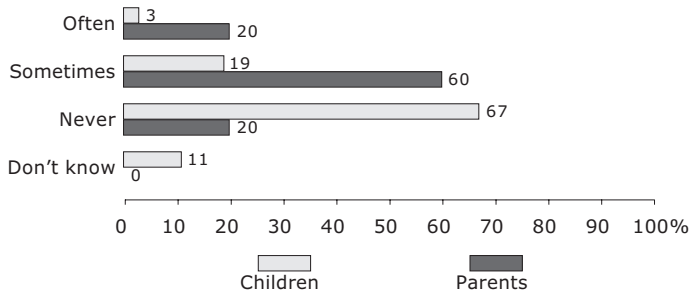
Chatting, both in open chat rooms on the Internet and by using instant messaging software, is a popular activity, especially within the four Nordic countries. A little more than 60 per cent of all children who go on-line have used chat and the proportion increases to 80 per cent among teenagers, while only 45 per cent of parents mention that their child has ever used chat. Thus, chatting is more common than most parents think. Swedish children are particularly interested in chatting; 87 per cent of them state that they have spent time in a chat room, compared to only 42 per cent of the Irish kids.

Approximately 40 per cent of the chatting children have met someone on-line who asked to meet them in person. About 20 per cent, representing 300,000 children, have actually met someone in real life (IRL) whom they first got to know on-line, while only 4 per cent of the parents think that this applies to their children. Half of those children state that the meeting turned out good and that they had a really good time. Half report having brought a friend to the meeting, but approximately every tenth child went alone to the meeting. An average of 16 per cent of all kids who have met an on-line friend IRL have experienced that a person who introduced him- or herself as a child on the Internet, turned out to be an adult.

Mediation by parents and school

As expected, parents of young children (9-12 years) tend to supervise them more than do parents of teenagers (13-16 years). However, children and parents have totally different views on how much time they spend together on-line. While eight out of ten parents claim that they often or sometimes sit with their child while he or she is on the Internet, seven out of ten children say parents never sit with them when they go on-line (see Figure 3). Even so, nine out of ten parents consider themselves to have a good or very good knowledge of their children's on-line life.

Figure 3. Children: When I am on the Internet at home, my parents sit with me while I surf…
Parents: Do you sit with your child while he/she is on the Internet?
(Per cent of children who use the Internet, on average for all countries)



Many families have rules regarding Internet use; the most common rule is not to give out any personal information on the Internet. Irish children are generally more aware of rules and guidelines for Internet use. There seems to have been a greater focus on safer Internet education in Irish schools, while children in the four Nordic countries tend to explore the Internet more on their own. In general,

most children state that school and parents are their preferred sources of information and support regarding safer Internet use.

Rules, involvement and dialogue are needed

Although the findings are interesting in themselves, the main purpose of the survey has been to provide current facts and knowledge as a basis for the different awareness raising efforts carried out by the SAFT project. So far, the findings have served as valuable input to the development of tools, such as a Safe Use Guide for parents and an Internet Safety Education Programme to be launched in early 2004. The Guide encourages parents to explore the Internet together with their child and to start a dialogue about aspects of everyday life on-line, such as submitting personal information, the need for source criticism, how to behave towards other people, and what content and activities are acceptable as well as unacceptable. Issues like these will also be addressed in the upcoming Internet Safety Education Programme, targeting children aged 8-10, their teachers and parents. The programme will empower teachers and parents in helping children to become more competent, responsible and confident Internet users.

Note

1. SAFT – Safety Awareness, Facts and Tools – aims to provide knowledge and tools for Safer Internet use among children aged 9-16. The participating countries are Norway, Denmark, Iceland, Ireland and Sweden and the project consists of a consortium of seven partners representing government bodies, educational expert institutions, parental organizations and the ICT (information and communication technology) industry. The project's web site is: http://www.saftonline.org

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Understanding Our Youths and Protecting Them

Singapore's Efforts in Promoting Internet Safety

Angeline Khoo, Tyng-Tyng Cheong & Albert Liau

Singapore is a country that prides itself on its connectivity. It has one of the world's highest computer take-up, Internet usage and Internet household penetration rate. Singaporeans are taking the technological growth by storm. The Internet, especially, is fast becoming an essential tool in every Singaporean's life. The medium is used for entertainment, communication and business purposes. Schools, too, are increasingly using the Internet as an educational tool. Students as young as 10 years old are beginning to use the medium for research.

Similar to the world, Singapore has seen cases of the Internet being misused and there are concerns on how the young can be protected against such incidences, but at the same time harness the medium to its fullest potential.

This article documents findings of two studies that have been conducted in Singapore in 2001 and 2003 to analyse parents' and children's perceptions, uses and understanding of the Internet. It also highlights the efforts of the Parents Advisory Group for the Internet (PAGi) in implementing Internet public education initiatives in Singapore.

The Internet scene in Singapore

With a population of just over four million people, Singapore has a home PC penetration rate of 68.4 per cent and a home Internet penetration rate of 59.4 per cent (Infocomm, 2002). These statistics show that the Internet is a prevalent medium in the country. The widespread use of the Internet has also created increasing concerns about the potential dangers the Internet poses, especially for the young.

While many Singaporean parents perceive the Internet as an essential educational tool, there are rising concerns about problems and potential dangers on the Internet such as pornographic web sites, cyber predators and Internet addiction.

The fears of parents are not unfounded. A survey by Lycos Asia showed, not surprisingly, that "sex" topped the list of search words in Singapore (Chan, 2000). Another survey found that 41 per cent of Internet users between the ages of 15 to 24 visit adult sites (Liang, 2001). In fact, an academic study of the surfing habits of adolescents indicated that one in two were tricked into accessing pornographic sites (Oo, 2001). While data on the number of chat rooms and off-line meetings after on-line encounters are not available, there have been several reports of victims of paedophiles who first met their assailants in chat rooms (Lee, 2000; Lim, 2000; Kaur, 2001).

To facilitate the growth of the industry but at the same time ensure that Singapore's core societal values are safeguarded, Singapore adopts a light-touch approach when it comes to regulating the Internet. Since 1996, the Media Development Authority of Singapore (MDA) (http://www.mda.gov.sg) has established an Internet regulatory framework to meet these needs. The authority adopts a three-pronged approach involving a tripartite collaboration between government, industry and the public – (a) instituting a light-touch regulatory framework; (b) encouraging industry self-regulation; and (c) promoting on-line safety awareness through public education.

In line with the approach, the Parents Advisory Group for the Internet (PAGi) (http://www.pagi.org.sg) – a volunteer group – was formed in 1999 to empower the public, especially parents, on the positive use of the Internet and the importance of on-line safety. To date, PAGi has garnered the support of some 300 volunteers and has reached out to almost 60,000 parents with its various Internet public education initiatives.

Parents play a very significant role in safeguarding their children from Internet dangers. However, to what extent are parents aware of these dangers, and how concerned are they? Do these levels of awareness and concerns differ from that of the children, and if so, how wide is this gap? Do parents think the various Internet safety strategies are effective? These concerns, coupled with the need to understand parents' and children's behaviour and provide parents with more effective public education programmes prompted PAGi to embark on its first study – Uses and Perceptions of the Internet: Children's and Parents' Perspectives – in 2001.

Singaporean study in 2001

The study focused on Singapore parents' and youths' perceptions of Internet dangers (Lim, Khoo & Williams, 2003). The aims of the survey were to study the level of awareness Singaporean parents and children have of Internet problems and potential dangers, as well as their concerns for these problems and potential dangers. The study also examined children's and parents' perceptions of measures or strategies to safeguard children from these problems and dangers. These strategies or measures are classified into two categories:

a) Control strategies involving measures such as removal of the computer, forbidding its use, complaining to the school, issuing warning to the children, and punishment; and

b) Educational strategies involving learning more about Internet, understanding children's use of the Internet, and talks and discussions with children.

The sample consisted of children and parents of students from nine schools. A total of 621 parents and 552 children participated in the study.

The survey found that parents were more aware of Internet dangers as compared to children. Parents who speak English had a higher level of awareness compared to non-English speaking parents. Tertiary educated parents and younger parents (40 years old and below) were also more aware of these dangers than parents who were older and parents who had received up to 10 years of education. Children 16 years and older had a higher level of awareness of Internet dangers as compared to children below 16 years of age. The children surveyed learnt about Internet dangers through friends and media for all Internet problems and potential dangers, such as surfing for pornography and meetings after chat room encounters, except for violent games where they had gained awareness through their own experiences.

Not surprisingly, parents were also more concerned about Internet dangers than children. Paradoxically, parents who were more aware also reported they trusted their children to behave more responsibly than the students themselves. In terms of percentages, 81 per cent of parents indicated that they believed that children could behave responsibly on the Internet. However, only 46 per cent of students responded that they could behave likewise. The study also found that students between 13 and 15 years old were least concerned about Internet dangers when measured against those whose ages range from 10 to 12 and 16 to 18 years.

In general, both parents and children favoured educational strategies more than control strategies. The educational strategies preferred were "having mutual discussions on the dangers of the Internet" and "learning more about the Internet" while control measures such as "stop children from using the computer" and "complain to Internet Service Provider" were less favoured. Generally, younger parents with children below 12 years of age preferred the use of control measures. Older parents tended to advocate educational measures to children of all ages.

Implications for PAGi

The findings of this first study had three implications for PAGi. Firstly, PAGi had to double its efforts in reaching non-English speaking parents who were less aware of the importance of Internet safety. Secondly, as the results indicated that teenagers, especially those between 13 and 15 are more resistant to parental advice,

PAGi could play an important role in encouraging parents of pre-teen children to take advantage of pre-teen years to inculcate healthy surfing. Thirdly, a deeper understanding of the 13 to 15 year-olds is required in order for public education efforts reaching teenagers to be more effective.

In response to the findings, PAGi embarked on a series of initiatives to aggressively reach out to the non English-speaking parents. Some of these initiatives include:

a) *Participation in community events* – To reach non-English speaking parents, PAGi began participating in community events to create greater awareness of the importance of Internet safety especially among heartlanders. At these events, PAGi's volunteers were mobilised to speak to participants about Internet safety and, at the same time, multi-lingual collaterals were distributed to reinforce the Internet safety messages.

b) *"Making the Internet Journey Safe" multi-lingual training* – In addition to just creating awareness, there was a need to train parents on how to guide their children on the positive use of the Internet. PAGi co-developed training materials with Childnet International, United Kingdom (UK), to empower parents in this area. These materials were translated into three other languages (Chinese, Malay and Tamil) in order to cater to the non-English speaking parents. Training sessions were conducted through various organisations, namely schools and companies.

c) *Multi-lingual education brochures* – Brochures with content on PAGi, information on Internet safety and tips were created in Chinese, Malay and Tamil to reach out to non-English speaking parents at the community events PAGi participated in.

d) *"Caught in the Web" VCD* – Another strategy which PAGi employed was to produce a multi-lingual educational video in VCD format, a medium that is easily accessible for non-English speaking parents. Titled *Caught in the Web*, the production marked the birth of SPEEDi, PAGi's mascot and everybody's cyber buddy. SPEEDi starred as a guide for the family that encountered various Internet pitfalls.

e) *PAGi Families Week '03* – The culmination of PAGi's efforts to create awareness and educate the heartlander parents was PAGi Families Week '03 (PFW '03). Held from 12 to 19 March 2003, PFW '03 comprised of a series of events aimed to highlight the positive and safe use of the Internet. Some of these included: story-telling sessions at libraries; road shows at the heartland shopping malls; Cyber Families Race, a virtual and on-line treasure hunt for families; and Cool Kidz Search '03, a pageant in search for Singapore's most Internet-savvy teenagers. PAGi also invited international speakers from Canada and UK to share their knowledge and expertise on Internet safety.

Cross-cultural study in 2003

The SAFT (Safety Awareness, Facts and Tools) project, funded by the European Union (EU), initiated a cross-cultural study in 2003.[1] The study involved the Nordic countries Norway, Denmark, Sweden and Iceland, as well as Ireland and Singapore. Singapore was the only Asian country involved in the primarily European effort due to the similarities which the sample countries shared in terms of population size, stage of IT development and concerns for on-line content. The study aimed to:

a) Investigate teenagers' risk behaviour on the Internet and examine the gap between the latter and what is reported; and

b) Analyse the cross-cultural comparisons between Singapore, the Nordic countries and Ireland.

PAGi spearheaded the study in Singapore. It involved some 10 schools, with about 1,000 youths and 1,500 parents participating. Participants for the Singapore sample consisted of youths 13 to 17 years old and parents, whereas the Nordic countries' and Ireland's samples comprised children 9 to 16 years old and parents. 94 per cent of Singaporean youths surveyed in this study use the Internet, and the percentages in the following are valid for this group.

The questionnaires for youths and parents were similar to those used in the SAFT study. There were two methods of administering the survey in Singapore: (a) teenagers were required to answer via an on-line questionnaire; and (b) parents responded via a paper-and-pencil version. The parents' questionnaire was translated into Malay, Chinese and Tamil to facilitate the participation of non-English speaking parents.

The focus of the study included:

- The extent youths would reveal personal information and the degree to which they have been asked for their personal information on-line;
- Youths receiving sexual comments and pornography; and
- Youths' chat room behaviour and their face-to-face meetings they have had with someone they have first encountered in chat rooms.

A few findings

Results showed that with regard to giving out personal information, older youths from Singapore, as well as from the Nordic countries and Ireland, tend to reveal more information than younger ones. There are also gender differences – in the Nordic countries and Ireland, boys tend to give out more demographic information such as age and gender, whereas girls would reveal more information about their hobbies and personal interests. However, in Singapore, it was the boys who tended to give out more information on hobbies and personal interests. In both

regions, about a third of the sample reported that they have encountered someone on the Internet who asked them for personal information.

More youths in the Nordic countries and Ireland reported having surfed pornography on purpose, and more Singaporean youths reported having accessed pornographic sites by accident. A higher percentage of Singaporean youths were upset compared to Nordic and Irish youths. At the same time, more Singaporean youths also found pornographic sites to be "funny" or "cool".

79 per cent of youths in both regions reported having been in chat rooms, and 20 per cent of these have met someone whom they first encountered on the Internet. While only 16 per cent of Nordic and Irish youths admitted to having met more than six people in person, 27 per cent in Singapore, especially 14 year-old boys, admitted to this. When asked if youths have experienced meeting people who first introduced themselves as children on-line but turned out to be adults at the meetings, the average percentage for Nordic countries is 16 per cent, but 35 per cent for Ireland. This incident is relatively low in Singapore – 9 per cent. Youths in both regions prefer to bring their friends rather than adults to such chat-initiated meetings. If these meetings should result in a bad experience, 36 per cent of Singaporean youths claimed that they would tell their parents about it, compared to 25 per cent of Nordic and Irish youths.

A comparison of the digital divide between parents and children in both regions found more similarities than differences. In general, parents tend to underestimate the extent of all their children's Internet activities, such as playing games, using e-mail, downloading music and software, surfing and chatting. On the other hand, parents in both regions tend to overestimate their children's skepticism regarding the reliability of information obtained from the Internet.

The gap between what children and parents report regarding the use of Internet safety rules at home seemed to be wider in the Nordic countries and Ireland. More children than parents claimed that such rules were used. In contrast, this gap was not as wide among Singaporean parents and children. There is more consistency in the perceptions of parents and children regarding rules of not revealing personal information, not meeting someone met on the Internet, and telling parents if they have encountered something that made them uncomfortable. Further collaborative studies may help determine if the differences found are due to cultural differences inherent in parenting styles and family values.

Factors influencing Singapore youth's engagement in risky Internet behaviour, particularly face-to-face meetings with someone they first encountered on-line, were also investigated. Older teenagers were more likely to engage in such face-to-face meetings compared to younger teenagers. There were no gender difference as boys and girls were equally likely to engage in such behaviours. Youths who enjoyed better communication with parents were less likely to engage in risky Internet behaviours. Specific rules at home that warn youths not to meet people whom they have first encountered on-line, and not talking to strangers in chat rooms, were important factors. Findings also indicated that youths who tend to chat frequently, who were asked for their personal information, who received

sexual material and who gave out their phone numbers and photographs, were more likely to have face-to-face meetings.

The importance of Internet safety

The findings of the two studies conducted by PAGi show that there have been no significant changes over time in teenagers' Internet behaviour and parents' understanding of their children's on-line activities. Both studies showed that the teenagers that are still at most risk would be those aged 13 to 15, and parents still do not have an understanding of their children's on-line activities. These findings concur with several studies, such as those of Turow and Nir (2000), Turow (2001), Media-Awareness (2000) and Pew (2001). The results in both regions also show that parental involvement plays a significant role in their children's safety on the Internet.

In light of the recent findings of the cross-cultural study, it is evident that more efforts are needed to highlight the importance of Internet safety among teenagers and youths in Singapore, the Nordic countries and Ireland. Parents, in particular, need to realise the importance of their role in ensuring their children's safe use of the Internet. Parents should also be encouraged to acquire surfing skills to equip themselves, while reaping in the full benefits of the Internet for themselves and their children.

It is evident, too, that Internet public education initiatives cannot be shouldered by one agency alone but rather requires that of a multi-prong approach involving inter-agency and international collaboration. PAGi will take the findings to youth- and family-related agencies to explore collaborations to strengthen PAGi's efforts in providing guidance on parenting, family counselling and peer-mentorship programmes.

Note

1. For the SAFT project, see the article by Karin Larsson in this book. *(editors' note)*

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Table of contents

Parents, Children and Media

Some Data from Spain, Brazil, Norway, South Africa and India

Ferran Casas, Mònica González & Cristina Figuer

Children and new technologies are key topics for our common social future in the international arena. We need increased understanding of how children and adolescents themselves think about new technologies, use them, and relate them to their own personal future through present expectations, wishes and aspirations.

Audio-visual technologies, multimedia, and other technologies are influencing our everyday life, our lifestyles, our ways of entertaining and also our ways of relating to and communicating with other people. These technologies may also stimulate some of our capacities and be used to promote values that are important for international understanding and co-operation.

New technologies, particularly information and communication technologies, (NICTs) offer us new tools to improve our ways of living. Some authors have re-analysed and underlined how such tools may allow us to *establish relationships in new ways*. In fact, new ways of relating to and communicating with others are already happening, and not only *in* cyberspace. They may also happen *because of* the audio-visual media or be *mediated by* it or *concerned with* it. We may chat or relate to others in new ways according to our experience with audio-visual media (Suess et al., 1998).

Some recent research has explored how adults and children – particularly parents and their children – communicate with each other when referring to television and NICTs. Although audio-visual media activities are often highly motivating for children, research results show that communication on these topics is too often lacking. There are different reasons for this (including fear, misinformation, and feelings of incompetence among adults) (Casas, 1998; 2000). It also happens that such communication is unsatisfactory for children and adolescents (Casas and Figuer, 1999).

Preliminary research results in Spain indicate that children's satisfaction with communication with their parents about the different audio-visual media they use

with high motivation often influences other aspects of their satisfaction with the family and with their own life (Casas et al., 2000; 2002).

In this article we present some descriptive findings from a survey of children and their parents, and a comparative analysis of the paired answers (parents-children) in five countries: Spain, Brazil, Norway, South Africa and India.

Sample and method

Until now, data collection has involved questionnaires to 8,995 boys and girls aged 12 to 16 and 4,381 of their parents in five countries, as detailed in Table 1:

Table 1. Number of children and parents in the survey

	All children	Boys	Girls	Age mean*	Parents
Spain	5058	2518 (49.8%)	2540 (50.2%)	13.96	2443 (48.28%)
India	1125	700 (62.2%)	425 (37.8%)	13.65	763 (67.82%)
South Africa	1002	435 (43.4%)	567 (56.6%)	14.49	565 (56.39%)
Norway	917	466 (50.8%)	451 (49.2%)	—	347 (37.84%)
Brazil	893	423 (47.4%)	470 (52.6%)	13.61	263 (29.45%)
Total sample	8995	4542 (50.5%)	4453 (49.5%)	13.94	4381 (48.69%)

* Age data from Norway are not available.

The Spanish sample was selected from different towns and villages in the north east of the country, the Autonomous region of Catalonia. The Brazilian sample was drawn from the region of Rio de Janeiro, the Norwegian sample from the whole country, the South African sample from the Cape Town area, and the Indian sample from the city of Mumbai.

Our sampling procedure is not sociological – we do not aim for representative samples of each country or region. We look for psychosocial samples – large samples with similar psychosocial characteristics in which the variables we intend to explore are sufficiently represented – because our aim is to test relationships between variables.

In each country we selected a town or a region, and obtained a list of all schools with children in the selected age range. We chose those schools whose student population could be considered most representative of the characteristics of the majority of the families in the town. In practice that means we excluded some schools

from the list: elite schools with rich people and schools from communities with the lowest socio-economic status. Therefore we assume that we mainly compare across countries samples in which a majority of children are from middle class families according to the standards of each country or culture (low, medium and high middle class). We realize that the more extreme situations in each country may be very different across countries and therefore non-comparable. We can only guess as to the different situations in countries such as Norway and India, for example.

From the final list of schools, we randomly selected a number of schools, in order to obtain a certain number of questionnaires from each age group in each school, calculating that we would have a sufficiently large overall sample (at least between 600 and 1,200 children in each country). The Spanish sample is much larger, however, because it includes several sub-samples. Some schools declined participation in our research project, which is why we tried to randomly substitute them. But in low-populated areas we sometimes had to include the only school/schools willing to co-operate.

In each school we presented our goals to the director and the parents' association, and proceeded in accordance with regular ethical guidelines in the respective countries for administration of questionnaires to children.

When participation had been agreed to, we randomly selected a number of classes, in order to obtain a sample of all age groups from that particular school. We also asked for co-operation from the responsible teacher. After that, children were kindly asked for co-operation and were informed that data would be treated confidentially and that they were free to decline participation at any time. The questionnaires were group-administered in the regular classroom. One of the children's usual teachers and one or two researchers were present during the administration and clarified any of the questions raised by the children. The session was usually about one hour long for the youngest children and about 35-40 minutes for the oldest ones.

At the end of the session, we gave each child a letter and a questionnaire for their parents in a sealed envelope, to be delivered by hand. The children were asked to return it to the teacher within about a week, in a sealed envelope. Parents were asked to co-operate by answering the questionnaire, either one of them or both together. We kept track of that important variable, which offered interesting results (Casas et al., 2001; Casas and Figuer, 1999). Each parent questionnaire has a code, so that it can be paired with each child's.

In their questionnaire, parents were requested to answer only with respect to the child who had answered our school questionnaire. The name of the child was marked on the form.

The questionnaire

The original questionnaires were in Castilian Spanish and Catalan languages and had already been tested in previous studies. For the international study, the Spanish

version was translated into English and participants from all research teams across the five countries discussed the preliminary version at an international meeting, where many specific cultural and social factors were taken into account. As a result, some items on the original questionnaires were modified and a few new items added. Then, the English version was translated into the other languages. In the cases of Brazilian-Portuguese and Norwegian, the translations were also based on the Spanish version. All translations were pilot tested in each country, and an e-mail discussion developed among the research teams until agreement was reached on a new English standard version. All translated questionnaires were then re-adapted to that version.

The questionnaire for children includes closed and open-ended questions aimed at systematically exploring the different activities, perceptions and evaluations with regard to audio-visual media (television, computer and video console), and some of their facilities as well (educational CD-ROMs, Internet and games). We also explored the extent to which the activities with these media are present in the children's conversations with parents, siblings, peers, teachers and other people. Furthermore, we collected information about children's perspectives of their future in relation to media use. In addition, we studied some general values, satisfaction with different life domains and with life as a whole, self-esteem, mastery and perceived social support.

The questionnaire for parents includes only closed-ended items, which are similar to those in the child questionnaire. We asked parents about their present interest in NICTs, the information they have about the above-mentioned audio-visual media, their perceptions of how interested and informed their child is, how satisfied they think the child is with conversations about media with different people, and about their own values.

In this article, we present some results of closed-ended items that were measured using 1 to 5-point Likert scales. Other results have been presented in Casas et al. (2003).

Findings

Table by table: Interest in, information on and satisfaction with talking about audio-visual media

In all countries, children report higher *present interest* in the audio-visual devices studied than their parents do, with the exception of CD-ROMs, which seem to be much more interesting for parents than for children, except in India where children are more interested than their parents (see Table 2, page 139-140).

Analysing these results by the child's gender, we observe one exception in almost each country. Boys' parents express higher interest in mobile phones than do their sons in Brazil. Girls' parents express higher interest in computers than do their daughters in Norway and in mobile phones in India. And girls' parents show lower interest in educative CD-ROMs than do their daughters in South Africa.

When we asked parents about their child's present interest in each media, the general rule is that parents tend to overestimate children's interest, when compared with the child's self-reported interest. However, there are both some general exceptions and some gender-related ones – see Table 2.

In general, parents tend to overestimate children's *future interest* in the different applications and instruments explored. Spain is an exception and other exceptions concern gender (see Table 3, page 141).

As regards *available information* that children have about different audio-visual media, the general rule is that parents report having less information than their children (see Table 4). However, in Spain and Brazil parents report having more information about educative CD-ROMs, in South Africa about television and in India about television and mobile phones. Norway seems to be an exception. In Norway only boys' parents report having less information than their child about the Internet, video and computer, and girls' parents report the same about mobile phones. In all other cases, Norwegian parents say they have more information available than do their children. (For a few further exceptions, see Table 4, page 142-143)

When we asked parents about their child's available information about each medium, the pattern is that parents tend to overestimate the child's information, compared with the child's self-reported information. The Internet is an exception in Norway and India, where parents seem to underestimate their child's available information. In India, parents also seem to underestimate their child's information about computers and educative CD-ROMs. In Brazil, parents tend to underestimate their child's information about computer games and mobiles. And in South Africa they seem to underestimate their child's information about computers and video games. Additionally, a few gender-related differences are observed (see details in Table 4).

In a different set of items, we asked children about their *satisfaction with talking with their father* about various interesting audio-visual media activities. We also asked each parent separately about the satisfaction he or she attributed to his/her own child when talking together about such activities. The overall tendency in all countries is that parents systematically overestimate their own child's satisfaction when talking with the father about any audio-visual media activity (see Table 5, page 144). There are only a few gender-related differences.

Almost exactly the same pattern is found for *satisfaction with talking with the mother*. In all countries and with only a few exceptions (generally and according to gender), parents systematically overestimate their child's satisfaction with talking with the mother about audio-visual media activities (see Table 6, page 145).

Moreover and with only a few exceptions, parents tend to overestimate their child's *satisfaction with talking with their siblings* about media related activities (Table 7, page 146).

General tendencies

Our results point at similar tendencies in all countries, although in each country some exceptions to such tendencies can be observed – including gender-related exceptions. General tendencies found in the five countries studied can be summarized as follows:

- Parents tend to report less *present interest* than their child in any audio-visual media activity, except in using educative CD-ROMs.
- Parents tend to attribute to their child less present interest in watching television (except in Spain), using computer, playing video and computer games, and using educative CD-ROMs, than their child her-/himself reports.
- Parents tend to attribute to their child more present interest in using the Internet and using a mobile (except in Norway and Brazil), than their child expresses.
- Parents tend to estimate that their child will have more *future interest* in audio-visual media activities (except mobiles and games in Spain, Brazil and Norway, and television in Spain, which tend to be underestimated), than their child anticipates.
- Parents tend to report having less *information* about audio-visual media activities than their child has, except about television and educative CD-ROMs, about which parents in four of the five countries report having more information.
- Parents tend to attribute to their child more availability of information about television (except in Spain) and games, than the child reports.
- Parents tend to attribute to their own child more *satisfaction with talking about any audio-visual activity* with the father, with the mother or with siblings, than the child her-/himself reports. Most of the exceptions to this general tendency are gender-related, and have to do with television watching, game playing and use of mobiles in some countries.
- Some parents' perceptions, evaluations and attributions related to the audio-visual media activities of their own child reflect consistent gender biases, which should be analysed in the context of gender stereotypes in their socio-cultural environment. For example, parents tend to underestimate boys' and to overestimate girls':
  - interest in computers in India;
  - available information about Internet in Spain and Brazil;
  - available information about computer games in India;
  - satisfaction with talking with the father about television in Brazil, South Africa and India;
  - satisfaction with talking with the father about the mobile in Spain, Brazil and South Africa;

- satisfaction with talking with the mother about television in Brazil;
- satisfaction with talking with the mother about the mobile in Spain and India;
- satisfaction with talking with siblings about the mobile in Brazil and India.

The evidence that parents tend to show less interest than children in most audio-visual media activities may be modulated, at least partially, by the tendency of children to show more extreme scores than adults on the evaluative scales. Most children tend to like most audio-visual media activities. In consequence, their answers tend to be enthusiastic when evaluating their own interest. However, many children seem to feel that educative CD-ROMs are boring. Their answers tend to show a low evaluation of their own interest and, thus, the mean answer of the whole child sample is much lower for this medium than for any other media-related activity. Parents' answers tend to be more moderated in general, both when indicating a positive interest and a negative evaluation.

However, when parents are asked about the interest they think their child has, they tend to exaggerate the child's interest in some audio-visual media (television, games, computer and educative CD-ROMs). In the case of educative CD-ROMs, it is clear that the parents' answers correspond to their own desires, and not to the child's real interest. When parents are asked about their child's interest in using the Internet or a mobile, they tend to underestimate such interest in comparison to the child's answer. A possible explanation may be that both media are "new" and parents are not yet "updated" about children's interest in them. An alternative, non-excluding explanation for the Internet could be related to a defensive attitude of parents: Some parents see the Internet as something "dangerous", and therefore their own child "can't be" much interested in it (such an attitude was previously identified in relation to video games, see Casas, 2000). In the case of the mobile, the shared thoughts may be related to the idea that it is very expensive to use it often, and therefore the parents "can't" imagine their child using it that frequently.

Probably the most outstanding tendency identified in our results is that parents, in all countries, tend to overestimate their own child's satisfaction when talking with family members about their audio-visual media activities. Considering it the other way around, children tend to report less satisfaction than their own parents attribute to them. Such results are consistent with previous research based on findings from only one country (Casas et al., 2000), and agree with the cumulative evidence that children's enthusiasm appears particularly when talking with peers about such activities, and not with adults.

Conclusions

Some conclusions may follow from our results, facilitating a broader discussion – but, we feel they are sufficiently important to be taken into account in our debates

on how to investigate the present situation, and how to develop plans of action to support families facing the dilemma of whether to protect against or promote media use:

- Any information about interactions with audio-visual media, or about personal relationships mediated by such media, is sensitive to the source of information we use. The social and psychosocial "reality" we evaluate is not shaped in the same way when we obtain the information from adults as when we obtain it from children. There is no evidence that adults are more "right" – it is rather clear that adults also have their own biases when perceiving, evaluating or making attributions about their own interactions with their own child.
- Children are immersed in different media environments (Plowman and Stephen, 2002), media cultures (Casas, 1998; Lievrouw and Livingstone, 2002; Munné and Codina, 1992; Sefton-Green, 1998), media-mediated interpersonal relationships and media-related activities in comparison to the situation of adults. It seems obvious that NTICs play a very important role in the lives of most children. Their enthusiasm using audio-visual media is frequently very different from that of adults. In consequence we can even say that children and parents live in different "media worlds". We cannot analyse such media worlds only from adults' perspectives. Researchers, as adults, can only be competent in understanding children's worlds if we are able to give a predominant place to children's perspectives and points of view.
- All research results we have knowledge of to date show that, in all samples, a majority of children are dissatisfied when talking with their parents about audio-visual media activities they have developed with great enthusiasm. When dissatisfaction is persistent, they may stop explaining their experiences with such media *at any age*. A break in the communication between parents and children may so appear many years before adolescence, at least in relation to media use.
- In many families, a sort of *generational gap* appears with respect to audio-visual media use. Parents do not seem to be able to understand their own child's interaction with media from the child's perspective. In consequence, sometimes huge discrepancies can be observed between the child's evaluations (i.e., of her/his interest in, information available on, and satisfaction with talking about the media) and the parents' attributions to her or him. In such cases, some parents tend to deny the child competences in relation to such media, devaluating its worth and reinforcing the generational gap.
- In many families, adults do not seem to have the most important and reliable influence on children with regard to audio-visual media activities, because as children see it, adults may have low credibility as "experts" or even as "well-informed" on such activities. However, the socialization role

of parents is central and is particularly important when talking about media literacy and media regulation. Parents cannot be considered or viewed as the only ones responsible for children's media use and activities. Parents need extra-family information and support to better interact with their children in relation to audio-visual media use. That does not mean that parents should "learn" quickly and deeply about media use to become experts – but that they need to know how to maintain permanent communication channels with their child. Parents need to talk more openly and *bi-directionally* with their children – accepting that sometimes this may mean that the child *teaches* the adult about media, and frankly informs the adult about why it is so exciting. Only when the child perceives that the adult understands her or his point of view, can he/she accept the adult as an *authority* (with *referential power* and) with the influence to protect against or promote media use.

- Such phenomena are modulated by each country's culture and social environment. However, underlying general tendencies seem to exist in the five studied countries, perhaps related to overall global cultural processes (the "relational planet" in terms of Bressand & Distler, 1995) involved in the use of NICTs worldwide.

Of course, our data have different limitations, and our conclusions can only be taken as initial elements of a discussion that should continue, after collecting more detailed data in the near future, from more samples, from more cultural contexts, and with better control of more variables.

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Table 2. Children's present interest in audiovisual media (means)

Spain		TV	Computer	Internet	CD-ROMs	Console games	Computer games	Mobile phones
Children's interest	Boys	3.67	3.67	3.67	2.71	3.61	3.69	3.45
	Girls	3.65	3.49	3.53	2.76	2.57	2.68	3.80
	Total	3.66	3.58	3.60	2.74	3.09	3.18	3.62
Parents' interest	Boys	2.89↓	3.44↓	2.90↓	3.29↑	1.76↓	1.87↓	2.64↓
	Girls	2.87↓	3.43↓	2.86↓	3.25↑	1.58↓	1.78↓	2.75↓
	Total	2.88↓	3.43↓	2.88↓	3.27↑	1.66↓	1.82↓	2.70↓
Parents' attribution of children's interest	Boys	3.48↓	3.93↑	3.54↓	3.13↑	3.61→	3.71↑	3.26↓
	Girls	3.45↓	3.80↑	3.42↓	3.19↑	2.42↓	2.66↓	3.64↓
	Total	3.46↓	3.86↑	3.47↓	3.16↑	2.97↓	3.14↓	3.47↓

Brazil		TV	Computer	Internet	CD-ROMs	Console games	Computer games	Mobile phones
Children's interest	Boys	3.80	3.99	3.82	2.68	3.69	3.65	3.08
	Girls	3.73	3.77	3.56	2.71	2.80	2.93	3.63
	Total	3.76	3.87	3.69	2.69	3.24	3.28	3.37
Parents' interest	Boys	3.49↓	3.38↓	3.12↓	2.95↑	1.85↓	2.15↓	3.30↑
	Girls	3.21↓	3.34↓	3.04↓	2.75↑	1.66↓	2.08↓	3.07↓
	Total	3.32↓	3.36↓	3.07↓	2.83↑	1.74↓	2.11↓	3.16↓
Parents' attribution of children's interest	Boys	4.10↑	4.10↑	3.67↓	3.29↑	4.08↑	3.81↑	3.21↑
	Girls	3.86↑	3.96↑	3.76↑	3.17↑	2.86↑	2.97↑	3.67↑
	Total	3.95↑	4.02↑	3.73↑	3.22↑	3.37↑	3.33↑	3.48↑

Norway		TV	Computer	Internet	CD-ROMs	Console games	Computer games	Mobile phones
Children's interest	Boys	3.40	3.84	3.59	1.63	3.00	3.74	3.34
	Girls	3.50	2.90	3.36	1.57	1.82	2.08	4.13
	Total	3.45	3.38	3.48	1.60	2.42	2.93	3.73
Parents' interest	Boys	3.00↓	3.22↓	3.25↓	2.64↑	1.40↓	1.68↓	2.64↓
	Girls	2.97↓	3.19↑	3.16↓	2.44↑	1.24↓	1.40↓	2.41↓
	Total	2.98↓	3.20↓	3.20↓	2.53↑	1.32↓	1.53↓	2.52↓
Parents' attribution of children's interest	Boys	3.64↑	4.19↑	4.13↑	2.47↑	3.07↑	4.20↑	3.81↑
	Girls	3.69↑	3.45↑	3.68↑	2.27↑	2.09↑	2.67↑	4.32↑
	Total	3.66↑	3.81↑	3.90↑	2.37↑	2.56↑	3.41↑	4.08↑

South Africa		TV	Computer	Internet	CD-ROMs	Console games	Computer games	Mobile phones
Children's interest	Boys	3.52	3.99	3.78	2.45	3.30	3.65	3.42
	Girls	3.61	3.57	3.62	2.71	2.48	2.70	3.99
	Total	3.57	3.75	3.69	2.60	2.84	3.11	3.75
Parents' interest	Boys	2.87↓	3.49↓	3.11↓	2.65↑	1.92↓	2.40↓	2.83↓
	Girls	2.97↓	3.48↓	3.10↓	2.59↓	1.93↓	2.47↓	3.09↓
	Total	2.93↓	3.48↓	3.11↓	2.61↑	1.93↓	2.44↓	2.99↓
Parents' attribution of children's interest	Boys	3.85↑	4.04↑	3.60↓	3.31↑	3.28↓	3.48↑	3.30↓
	Girls	3.95↑	3.63↑	3.34↓	3.38↑	2.75↑	3.00↑	3.55↓
	Total	3.91↑	3.79↑	3.44↓	3.35↑	2.95↑	3.19↑	3.45↓

Table 2. Cont.

India		TV	Computer	Internet	CD-ROMs	Console games	Computer games	Mobile phones
Children's interest	**Boys**	3.38	3.96	3.46	2.73	2.82	3.60	2.71
	Girls	3.49	3.70	3.55	2.90	2.18	2.73	2.62
	Total	3.42	3.86	3.49	2.80	2.58	3.27	2.68
Parents' interest	**Boys**	2.91↓	3.27↓	2.75↓	2.54↓	1.85↓	2.12↓	2.68↓
	Girls	3.03↓	3.19↓	2.95↓	2.58↓	1.60↓	1.93↓	2.64↑
	Total	2.97↓	3.23↓	2.84↓	2.56↓	1.73↓	2.03↓	2.66↓
Parents' attribution of children's interest	**Boys**	3.57↑	3.93↓	3.24↓	2.64↑	2.93↑	3.43↓	2.47↓
	Girls	3.57↑	3.77↑	3.32↓	2.71↑	2.30↑	2.83↓	2.41↓
	Total	3.57↑	3.85↓	3.28↓	2.67↑	2.64↑	3.15↓	2.44↓

Table 3. Children's future interest in audio-visual media (means)

Spain		TV	Computer	Internet	CD-ROMs	Console games	Computer games	Mobile phones
Children's future interest	Boys	2.93	3.52	3.65	2.73	2.80	2.95	3.72
	Girls	2.78	3.62	3.75	3.12	2.11	2.29	3.68
	Total	2.85	3.57	3.70	2.94	2.44	2.61	3.70
Parents' attribution of children's future interest	Boys	2.85↓	3.95↑	4.04↑	3.55↑	2.51↓	2.81↓	3.71↓
	Girls	2.70↓	3.97↑	4.06↑	3.74↑	1.95↓	2.25↓	3.45↓
	Total	2.76↓	3.96↑	4.05↑	3.66↑	2.19↓	2.48↓	3.56↓

Brazil		TV	Computer	Internet	CD-ROMs	Console games	Computer games	Mobile phones
Children's future interest	Boys	3.36	4.04	4.00	3.14	3.12	3.34	3.67
	Girls	3.32	4.10	4.06	3.37	2.42	2.83	3.85
	Total	3.34	4.07	4.03	3.26	2.77	3.07	3.76
Parents' attribution of children's future interest	Boys	3.42↑	4.38↑	4.18↑	3.68↑	2.88↓	3.56↑	3.85↓
	Girls	3.21↓	4.15↑	4.12↑	3.63↑	2.30↓	2.79↓	4.05↓
	Total	3.29↓	4.24↑	4.15↑	3.65↑	2.54↓	3.11↑	3.97↓

Norway		TV	Computer	Internet	CD-ROMs	Console games	Computer games	Mobile phones
Children's future interest	Boys	2.82	3.23	3.48	2.74	2.41	2.70	3.42
	Girls	2.53	3.12	3.38	2.97	1.84	1.89	3.24
	Total	2.68	3.18	3.43	2.86	2.14	2.30	3.33
Parents' attribution of children's future interest	Boys	3.75↑	3.63↑	3.88↑	3.57↑	2.34↓	2.55↓	3.44↑
	Girls	3.78↑	3.62↑	3.92↑	3.64↑	2.27↑	2.29↑	3.20↓
	Total	3.77↑	3.62↑	3.90↑	3.61↑	2.30↑	2.41↑	3.31↓

South Africa		TV	Computer	Internet	CD-ROMs	Console games	Computer games	Mobile phones
Children's future interest	Boys	2.84	3.85	3.98	2.99	2.83	3.00	3.90
	Girls	2.87	3.71	3.96	3.21	2.18	2.39	4.05
	Total	2.85	3.77	3.97	3.11	2.46	2.66	3.99
Parents' attribution of children's future interest	Boys	3.24↑	4.42↑	4.39↑	3.99↑	2.88↑	3.33↑	4.13↑
	Girls	3.19↑	4.17↑	4.27↑	3.82↑	2.53↑	3.07↑	4.27↑
	Total	3.21↑	4.27↑	4.32↑	3.89↑	2.67↑	3.17↑	4.21↑

India		TV	Computer	Internet	CD-ROMs	Console games	Computer games	Mobile phones
Children's future interest	Boys	2.82	3.79	3.60	2.93	2.44	2.96	3.40
	Girls	2.84	3.61	3.70	3.04	2.00	2.43	3.51
	Total	2.83	3.72	3.64	2.97	2.28	2.76	3.44
Parents' attribution of children's future interest	Boys	3.08↑	4.18↑	4.06↑	3.35↑	2.51↑	2.89↓	3.69↑
	Girls	3.06↑	4.15↑	4.10↑	3.45↑	2.28↑	2.69↑	3.68↑
	Total	3.07↑	4.17↑	4.08↑	3.40↑	2.40↑	2.80↑	3.69↑

Table 4. Children's available information (means)

Spain		TV	Computer	Internet	CD-ROMs	Console games	Computer games	Mobile phones
Children's information	Boys	3.74	3.62	3.50	3.03	3.55	3.57	3.50
	Girls	3.62	3.36	3.17	2.97	2.63	2.72	3.78
	Total	3.68	3.49	3.33	3.00	3.09	3.15	3.64
Parents' information	Boys	3.58↓	3.38↓	2.95↓	3.23↑	2.68↓	2.71↓	3.31↓
	Girls	3.52↓	3.31↓	2.82↓	3.18↑	2.30↓	2.43↓	3.34↓
	Total	3.55↓	3.34↓	2.88↓	3.20↑	2.48↓	2.56↓	3.33↓
Parents' attribution of children's information	Boys	3.57↓	3.77↑	3.37↓	3.45↑	3.71↑	3.73↑	3.53↑
	Girls	3.62→	3.71↑	3.21↑	3.37↑	2.89↑	2.99↑	3.76↓
	Total	3.60↓	3.74↑	3.28↓	3.40↑	3.27↑	3.33↑	3.65↑

Brazil		TV	Computer	Internet	CD-ROMs	Console games	Computer games	Mobile phones
Children's information	Boys	3.68	3.90	3.84	2.89	3.68	3.72	3.21
	Girls	3.60	3.61	3.41	2.81	2.72	2.90	3.66
	Total	3.63	3.75	3.62	2.85	3.20	3.29	3.45
Parents' information	Boys	3.77↑	3.29↓	3.01↓	2.93↑	2.46↓	2.52↓	3.45↑
	Girls	3.57↓	3.20↓	3.12↓	2.88↑	2.17↓	2.42↓	3.37↓
	Total	3.65↑	3.24↓	3.08↓	2.90↑	2.29↓	2.46↓	3.40↓
Parents' attribution of children's information	Boys	3.82↑	3.73↓	3.42↓	3.25↑	3.65↓	3.48↓	3.12↓
	Girls	3.72↑	3.61→	3.52↑	3.19↑	2.94↑	2.89↓	3.63↓
	Total	3.76↑	3.66↓	3.48↓	3.21↑	3.24↑	3.14↓	3.42↓

Norway		TV	Computer	Internet	CD-ROMs	Console games	Computer games	Mobile phones
Children's information	Boys	3.36	3.76	3.66	1.87	3.05	3.64	3.36
	Girls	3.13	2.82	3.20	1.82	1.93	2.14	3.99
	Total	3.24	3.30	3.43	1.85	2.50	2.90	3.67
Parents' information	Boys	4.12↑	3.75↑	3.63↓	1.93↑	2.33↓	2.69↓	3.64↑
	Girls	4.00↑	3.78↑	3.62↑	1.61↑	1.95↑	2.74↑	3.69↓
	Total	4.06↑	3.77↑	3.62↑	1.76↑	2.13↓	2.72↓	3.66↓
Parents' attribution of children's information	Boys	4.19↑	4.13↑	2.47↓	3.07↑	4.20↑	3.81↑	4.12↑
	Girls	3.45↑	3.68↑	2.27↓	2.09↑	2.67↑	4.32↑	4.00↑
	Total	3.81↑	3.90↑	2.37↓	2.56↑	3.41↑	4.08↑	4.06↑

South Africa		TV	Computer	Internet	CD-ROMs	Console games	Computer games	Mobile phones
Children's information	Boys	3.29	3.90	3.41	2.79	3.88	3.93	3.16
	Girls	3.32	3.51	3.37	2.84	2.36	2.56	3.49
	Total	3.31	3.42	3.39	2.82	3.58	3.72	3.35
Parents' information	Boys	3.82↑	3.15↓	3.14↓	2.88↑	2.72↓	2.88↓	3.41↑
	Girls	3.80↑	3.20↓	3.28↓	2.81↓	2.72↑	2.95↑	3.39↓
	Total	3.81↑	3.18↓	3.23↓	2.84↑	2.72↓	2.93↓	3.40↑
Parents' attribution of children's information	Boys	3.77↑	3.45↓	3.59↑	3.37↑	3.80↓	4.11↑	3.77↑
	Girls	3.86↑	3.32↓	3.46↑	3.41↑	3.27↓	3.47↑	3.93↑
	Total	3.82↑	3.37↓	3.51↑	3.40↑	3.48↓	3.73↑	3.87↑

Table 4. Cont.

India		TV	Computer	Internet	CD-ROMs	Console games	Computer games	Mobile phones
Children's information	**Boys**	3.37	3.70	3.27	2.97	2.77	3.17	2.64
	Girls	3.39	3.70	3.52	3.12	2.27	2.67	2.74
	Total	3.38	3.70	3.36	3.03	2.58	2.98	2.68
Parents' information	**Boys**	3.44↑	3.30↓	2.89↓	2.64↓	2.19↓	2.33↓	2.68↑
	Girls	3.48↑	3.34↓	3.13↓	2.89↓	2.12↓	2.40↓	2.81↑
	Total	3.46↑	3.32↓	3.00↓	2.75↓	2.16↓	2.36↓	2.74↑
Parents' attribution of children's information	**Boys**	3.42↑	3.54↓	3.08↓	2.85↓	2.82↑	3.11↓	2.60↓
	Girls	3.46↑	3.51↓	3.23↓	2.92↓	2.48↑	2.85↑	2.58↓
	Total	3.44↑	3.53↓	3.15↓	2.88↓	2.66↑	2.99↑	2.59↓

Table 5. Children's satisfaction with talking with the father (means)

Spain		TV	Computer	Internet	CD-ROMs	Console games	Computer games	Mobile phones
Child satisfaction with talking with father	**Boys**	3.26	3.04	3.04	2.58	2.81	2.80	3.05
	Girls	3.16	3.04	3.03	2.68	2.38	2.50	3.02
	Total	3.21	3.04	3.04	2.63	2.61	2.66	3.03
Parents' attribution of child satisfaction with talking with father	**Boys**	3.31↑	3.52↑	3.53↑	3.21↑	2.89↑	2.95↑	3.02↓
	Girls	3.13↓	3.58↑	3.51↑	3.35↑	2.54↑	2.66↑	3.19↑
	Total	3.21→	3.55↑	3.52↑	3.29↑	2.73↑	2.81↑	3.12↑

Brazil		TV	Computer	Internet	CD-ROMs	Console games	Computer games	Mobile phones
Child satisfaction with talking with father	**Boys**	3.38	2.99	2.82	2.37	2.87	2.99	2.92
	Girls	3.11	3.02	2.85	2.59	2.69	2.89	3.10
	Total	3.24	3.00	2.83	2.48	2.78	2.94	3.01
Parents' attribution of child satisfaction with talking with father	**Boys**	3.07↓	3.38↑	3.13↑	2.84↑	2.92↑	3.21↑	2.90↓
	Girls	3.23↑	3.42↑	3.23↑	3.26↑	2.61↓	2.75↓	3.25↑
	Total	3.16↓	3.41↑	3.19↑	3.11↑	2.75↓	2.91↓	3.10↑

Norway		TV	Computer	Internet	CD-ROMs	Console games	Computer games	Mobile phones
Child satisfaction with talking with father	**Boys**	2.90	2.83	2.77	2.19	2.12	2.51	2.51
	Girls	2.80	2.78	2.80	2.27	2.01	2.13	2.79
	Total	2.85	2.80	2.78	2.23	2.07	2.34	2.66
Parents' attribution of child satisfaction with talking with father	**Boys**	3.33↑	3.48↑	3.48↑	3.20↑	2.66↑	2.85↑	3.09↑
	Girls	2.97↑	3.02↑	3.08↑	2.98↑	2.39↑	2.38↑	2.77↓
	Total	3.14↑	3.24↑	3.26↑	3.08↑	2.55↑	2.63↑	2.92↑

South Africa		TV	Computer	Internet	CD-ROMs	Console games	Computer games	Mobile phones
Child satisfaction with talking with father	**Boys**	3.34	3.21	2.85	2.55	2.74	2.91	3.11
	Girls	3.33	3.24	3.09	2.85	2.55	2.79	3.54
	Total	3.34	3.22	2.98	2.72	2.63	2.84	3.36
Parents' attribution of child satisfaction with talking with father	**Boys**	3.56↓	3.76↑	3.51↑	3.37↑	3.13↑	3.23↑	3.50↓
	Girls	3.40↑	3.74↑	3.64↑	3.49↑	2.93↓	3.13↓	3.63↑
	Total	3.46↓	3.74↑	3.59↑	3.44↑	3.02↓	3.17↓	3.58↑

India		TV	Computer	Internet	CD-ROMs	Console games	Computer games	Mobile phones
Child satisfaction with talking with father	**Boys**	3.46	3.43	3.03	3.06	2.80	3.15	3.17
	Girls	3.14	3.31	3.02	3.12	2.42	2.83	3.09
	Total	3.34	3.38	3.03	3.08	2.67	3.03	3.14
Parents' attribution of child satisfaction with talking with father	**Boys**	3.28↓	3.63↑	3.28↑	3.21↑	2.61↓	2.84↓	3.21↑
	Girls	3.28↑	3.51↑	3.35↑	3.38↑	2.53↑	2.84↑	2.98↓
	Total	3.28↓	3.58↑	3.32↑	3.30↑	2.58↓	2.84↓	3.10↓

Table 6. Children's satisfaction with talking with the mother (means)

Spain		TV	Computer	Internet	CD-ROMs	Console games	Computer games	Mobile phones
Child satisfaction with talking with mother	**Boys**	3.23	2.73	2.70	2.53	2.54	2.50	2.98
	Girls	3.49	2.85	2.89	2.66	2.22	2.32	3.10
	Total	3.36	2.79	2.79	2.59	2.40	2.41	3.04
Parents' attribution of child satisfaction with talking with mother	**Boys**	3.39↑	3.32↑	3.30↑	3.19↑	2.77↑	2.77↑	2.97↓
	Girls	3.47↓	3.29↑	3.25↑	3.20↑	2.36↑	2.47↑	3.23↑
	Total	3.43↑	3.30↑	3.27↑	3.20↑	2.57↑	2.62↑	3.13↑

Brazil		TV	Computer	Internet	CD-ROMs	Console games	Computer games	Mobile phones
Child satisfaction with talking with mother	**Boys**	3.73	3.21	3.05	2.66	2.88	2.91	3.19
	Girls	4.01	3.42	3.13	2.72	2.71	2.95	3.61
	Total	3.88	3.32	3.09	2.69	2.80	2.93	3.42
Parents' attribution of child satisfaction with talking with mother	**Boys**	3.64↓	3.69↑	3.32↑	2.87↑	3.09↑	3.13↑	3.37↑
	Girls	4.04↑	3.59↑	3.52↑	3.75↑	2.78↑	3.03↑	3.84↑
	Total	3.89↑	3.63↑	3.44↑	3.42↑	2.93↑	3.07↑	3.65↑

Norway		TV	Computer	Internet	CD-ROMs	Console games	Computer games	Mobile phones
Child satisfaction with talking with mother	**Boys**	2.80	2.30	2.37	2.14	1.91	2.02	2.35
	Girls	3.02	2.42	2.60	2.32	1.89	2.06	2.74
	Total	2.91	2.36	2.49	2.23	1.90	2.04	2.55
Parents' attribution of child satisfaction with talking with mother	**Boys**	3.49↑	2.99↑	3.03↑	3.06↑	2.46↑	2.36↑	2.78↑
	Girls	3.25↑	2.74↑	2.80↑	2.88↑	2.17↑	2.18↑	2.76↑
	Total	3.37↑	2.87↑	2.91↑	2.97↑	2.34↑	2.27↑	2.77↑

South Africa		TV	Computer	Internet	CD-ROMs	Console games	Computer games	Mobile phones
Child satisfaction with talking with mother	**Boys**	3.49	3.13	2.99	2.73	2.67	2.79	3.21
	Girls	3.79	3.27	3.07	2.99	2.62	2.69	3.68
	Total	3.66	3.21	3.03	2.88	2.64	2.73	3.49
Parents' attribution of child satisfaction with talking with mother	**Boys**	3.73↑	3.66↑	3.42↑	3.61↑	3.15↑	3.07↑	3.62↑
	Girls	3.92↑	3.60↑	3.55↑	3.53↑	2.88↑	2.94↑	3.67↓
	Total	3.84↑	3.63↑	3.49↑	3.56↑	3.00↑	3.00↑	3.65↑

India		TV	Computer	Internet	CD-ROMs	Console games	Computer games	Mobile pnones
Child satisfaction with talking with mother	**Boys**	3.60	3.26	3.02	3.08	2.87	3.07	2.89
	Girls	3.77	3.26	3.02	3.07	2.56	2.80	2.84
	Total	3.66	3.26	3.02	3.07	2.76	2.96	2.87
Parents' attribution of child satisfaction with talking with mother	**Boys**	3.47↓	3.33↑	3.14↑	3.22↑	2.62↓	2.87↓	2.86↓
	Girls	3.71↓	3.27↑	3.14↑	3.28↑	2.54↓	2.70↓	2.89↑
	Total	3.58↓	3.30↑	3.14↑	3.25↑	2.59↓	2.79↓	2.87→

Table 7. Children's satisfaction with talking with siblings (means)

Spain		TV	Computer	Internet	CD-ROMs	Console games	Computer games	Mobile phones
Child satisfaction with talking with siblings	Boys	3.59	3.31	3.23	2.50	3.62	3.54	3.28
	Girls	3.78	3.39	3.45	2.61	3.34	3.36	3.55
	Total	3.69	3.35	3.34	2.55	3.49	3.45	3.42
Parents' attribution of child satisfaction with talking with siblings	Boys	3.64↑	3.68↑	3.64↑	3.17↑	3.78↑	3.76↑	3.31↑
	Girls	3.68↓	3.70↑	3.66↑	3.26↑	3.39↑	3.42↑	3.49↓
	Total	3.66↓	3.69↑	3.65↑	3.22↑	3.59↑	3.59↑	3.41↓

Brazil		TV	Computer	Internet	CD-ROMs	Console games	Computer games	Mobile phones
Child satisfaction with talking with siblings	Boys	3.70	3.58	3.57	2.76	3.79	3.69	2.99
	Girls	3.83	3.80	3.58	2.80	3.60	3.56	3.37
	Total	3.77	3.69	3.58	2.78	3.70	3.62	3.19
Parents' attribution of child satisfaction with talking with siblings	Boys	3.93↑	4.31↑	3.97↑	3.26↑	4.16↑	4.20↑	2.89↓
	Girls	3.92↑	4.11↑	3.98↑	3.49↑	3.52↓	3.55↓	3.66↑
	Total	3.93↑	4.19↑	3.98↑	3.40↑	3.83↑	3.84↑	3.32↑

Norway		TV	Computer	Internet	CD-ROMs	Console games	Computer games	Mobile phones
Child satisfaction with talking with siblings	Boys	3.22	3.31	2.97	1.93	2.93	3.15	2.73
	Girls	3.43	3.21	3.16	2.01	2.87	3.06	3.12
	Total	3.33	3.21	3.07	1.97	2.90	3.11	2.92
Parents' attribution of child satisfaction with talking with siblings	Boys	3.49↑	3.70↑	3.56↑	2.82↑	3.70↑	3.88↑	3.35↑
	Girls	3.39↓	3.28↑	3.15↓	2.70↑	3.49↑	3.41↑	3.23↑
	Total	3.43↑	3.48↑	3.34↑	2.76↑	3.61↑	3.64↑	3.28↑

South Africa		TV	Computer	Internet	CD-ROMs	Console games	Computer games	Mobile phones
Child satisfaction with talking with siblings	Boys	3.73	3.63	3.30	2.54	3.61	3.66	3.28
	Girls	4.12	3.71	3.56	2.75	3.39	3.48	3.68
	Total	3.95	3.67	3.44	2.66	3.49	3.56	3.52
Parents' attribution of child satisfaction with talking with siblings	Boys	4.07↑	4.02↑	3.69↑	3.06↑	3.98↑	4.01↑	3.67↑
	Girls	4.12→	3.75↑	3.21↓	3.21↑	3.70↑	3.69↑	3.87↑
	Total	4.10↑	3.85↑	3.16↓	3.16↑	3.81↑	3.81↑	3.80↑

India		TV	Computer	Internet	CD-ROMs	Console games	Computer games	Mobile phones
Child satisfaction with talking with siblings	Boys	3.63	3.71	3.41	3.07	3.44	3.79	3.09
	Girls	3.93	3.88	3.67	3.21	3.33	3.55	2.98
	Total	3.75	3.78	3.52	3.13	3.40	3.62	3.04
Parents' attribution of child satisfaction with talking with siblings	Boys	3.79↑	3.83↑	3.47↑	3.32↑	3.50↑	3.68↓	2.96↓
	Girls	4.03↑	3.87↓	3.77↑	3.51↑	3.37↑	3.48↓	2.99↑
	Total	3.90↑	3.85↑	3.62↑	3.42↑	3.45↑	3.59↓	2.97↓

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Attitudes toward Media Violence and Protective Measures in Sweden[1]

Ulla Carlsson

For years, fears have been voiced that the media, and particularly television, may exert an undesirable influence on viewers, especially children. Of particular concern are depictions of violence in the media. These fears have escalated in pace with the mushrooming of media output and as depictions of violence have evolved with respect to both content and form – on the Internet, in pay-TV channels and computer games. Parents, teachers and policy-makers all express concern regarding the possible influences of such content. Many perceive a link between acts of violence in society at large and the violence depicted on television, in video films, computer games and on the Internet.

Various proposals have been put forward to limit the distribution of depictions of violence; these include both legislation and voluntary measures designed to protect the health and well-being of minors. Dialogues between authorities, media companies and the public are being held in order to reach consensus regarding appropriate principles, both nationally and within the UN and the European Union.

Article 17 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child provides an international framework. Governments that have ratified the Convention are bound "to ensure that the child has access to information and material from a diversity of national and international sources, especially those aimed at the promotion of his or her social, spiritual and moral well-being and physical and mental health". Toward this end, the governments should "encourage the development of appropriate guidelines for the protection of the child from information and material injurious to his or her well-being".

The need to protect minors from potentially injurious content has been on the agenda of the European Union (EU) in recent years in response to the rapid pace of development in the IT and media sectors. Discussions have largely focused on measures to classify and label media content and technologies that make it possible to filter out certain kinds of content. In the main, the measures discussed fall into the category of self-regulation on the part of media operators or meas-

ures founded in regulatory legislation whose implementation is left to the industry. Many EU Commissioners are convinced that self-regulation can provide adequate protection of minors and human dignity without encroaching on fundamental democratic principles such as freedom of expression.

Thus, over the past decade we see a shift in emphasis from ideas about legislative regulation and prohibition, toward an emphasis on parents' and other adults' responsibilities for the well-being of children and young people. The importance of media education in the schools is widely held forth – a sign that 'protection' is now understood to be more than a question of keeping children away from certain television programs, but extends to strengthening young viewers in their role as consumers of media fare. Judgments as to what might be harmful to young viewers, youth and, in some instances, adult viewers vary, however, between countries. As a consequence, proposals of concrete measures often arouse strong feeling; indeed, the issue itself is controversial.

Despite all the work on the subject within the EU and despite the Swedish Government's commitment to children's welfare, we know rather little about the attitudes of the Swedish people toward various proposals that aim to protect children and youth from harmful depictions of violence in the media. Nor do we know very much about public perceptions of violence in the media and ideas about its possible influences. In order to fill this gap the SOM Survey 2000[2] included a battery of questions to measure Swedish opinion about media violence and how it relates to the incidence of violence in society at large. Respondents were also asked about their views regarding various policy measures designed to protect young people from so-called media violence.

Violence in the media

The question of media violence and its possible influences on viewers and users has occupied media researchers for decades. Numerous studies have been carried out, and multiple interpretations of the findings reported. Much of the research has focused on possible influences on children and youth. Incidents in which very young perpetrators have committed violent crimes give rise to heated discussions of the increasing amount of violence in audiovisual media. Many see a causal relationship between media violence and acts of violence in society at large.

Perceptions of the incidence of violence in the media

About three respondents in four in the SOM Survey 2000 feel that violence occurs 'often' or 'very often' in video films, cinema films and in interactive games; the proportions are lower, 50 to 60 per cent, with respect to newscasts and feature films on television. Lower shares, about 35 per cent, are noted for Internet and cartoons on

Table 1. Assessments of the frequency of acts of violence on television and in other media (per cent)

	Very often	Often	Occasional	Total %
Video film	79	18	3	100
Games, computer and video	72	21	7	100
Cinema film	70	26	4	100
Feature film on TV	59	34	7	100
Newscasts, TV	47	34	19	100
Internet	37	40	23	100
Cartoons, TV	36	34	30	100
TV drama	29	47	24	100
TV "soaps"	27	44	29	100

Note: The responses were given using a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 indicates "Very low frequency" and 10 "Very frequent". In the table, the column headed "Occasional" registers responses on the lower end of the scale, values 0-3; "Often" represents values 4-5; and "Very often", values 7-10. The number of respondents (n) for each category varies between 1389 and 1699.

television, and just under 30 per cent for television drama and 'soaps' (Table 1). It is interesting to note a large measure of consensus regarding the violent character of video films, interactive games, cinema film and feature film on television. Few respondents have responded, "not very often". Closer analysis reveals that this judgment is shared, irrespective of sex, age and education, but that women, individuals with little formal education and older respondents (there is some overlap between the latter two categories) feel that depictions of violence occur 'often' or 'very often' in all media and genres, to a somewhat greater extent than do men, highly educated and young respondents. The only notable exception concerns cartoons on television, where youthful and highly educated respondents feel that depictions of violence are more frequent than elder and less educated respondents do.

Perceived influences of media violence

In public discussions of media violence, the notion that viewers – particularly children and youth – may learn and imitate the deviant and antisocial behavior shown on television is widely shared. It is claimed, often supported by references to research findings, that media violence heightens young people's aggression. The belief is common qualified with the specification of "children and young people at risk". Respondents in the survey were asked if they personally had observed such an influence of violent media content. More than 80 per cent said they had, with 60 per cent saying they observed a 'marked increase' (Table 2). This finding may come as a surprise in view of what research results have indicated.

If we exclude the youngest respondents (15-29 years), fewer of whom report observing any 'marked' increase in children's aggression, observations of 'marked

What does research have to say about the frequency of violence in the media?

- A study of depictions of violence on six Swedish-language television channels in 1997 found that violence occupied seven per cent of total air time, or 43 hours, in the week studied. There were marked differences between channels, with far less violence on public service channels SVT1 and SVT2 than on commercially financed, satellite distributed TV3, Kanal5 and TV1000 (the latter one subscribed). Violence occurs chiefly in three kinds of programs: fiction (70%, measured in air time), news and non-fiction (10%), and children's programmes (20%). TV fiction contains considerably more GROSS VIOLENCE (severe injury and death) than the other categories. Forty per cent of the depictions of violence on Swedish television involve GROSS VIOLENCE. Seventy-five per cent of all violent content originates in the USA. In some satellite channels the incidence of violence is greater. In contrast to newscasts, fictional programmes seldom show the consequences of acts of violence. Depictions of violence in newscasts are considerably more frequent today than they were 20 years ago (e.g., a doubling in SVT1's evening news). Close-ups of acts of violence and of victims are more frequent. (Cronström 1999)
- A study of cinema films in Sweden in the 1990s noted no increase in the incidence of violence, but depictions were found to have changed in character, with a greater reliance on technology and 'special effects'. In short, the violence portrayed was increasingly depersonalized. Over 35 per cent of the most popular cinema films may be characterized as violent ('action', thrillers and adventure). Action titles make up a greater share of the video stock (44%) than of cinema offerings (24%). The study found that action has increased its share of the most popular films at the expense of thrillers. About 70 per cent of the films screened in Swedish cinemas and 84 per cent of the video films in distribution were produced in the USA. Many animated films, particularly those originating in the USA, contain violence. In the 1990s, an increasing number of animations mimicked the action genre. (Söderbergh-Widding 1999)
- Some 340 computer games were published in Denmark in 1998, 30 per cent of which were 'action' games. Slightly more than half of the games (53%) contained elements of violence. Five per cent of the games published were judged to contain "a considerable amount of violence", i.e., they contained detailed or lurid and/or frequently recurring acts of violence in the form of hand-to-hand combat and shootings (at human targets). Acts of violence occurred often in 17 per cent of the games, occasionally in 34 per cent, and seldom in 3 per cent. Human beings and 'machines'/inanimate objects are the most common victims of violence (77%). (Schierbeck & Carstens 1999)

increases' in children's aggression are common among adults of all ages. Women and respondents with little formal education report experiencing this behavior as a consequence of media content more than other groups. Analysis of the responses according to political preference also shows widespread agreement: adherents to all the parties from left to right hover around 7 on the 11-point scale, 0 (no influence) to 10 (marked increase in aggression).

The perceived relationship between media violence and violence in society

The responses to the questions about the incidence of violence in the media and the influences of media violence indicate that a good share of the Swedish pub-

Table 2. Ratings of first-hand observations of displays of aggression in children as a consequence of depictions of violence on television and in films (per cent)

	Marked increase	Some increase	Little or no increase	Total %	N responses
Sex:					
Women	69	24	7	100	857
Men	57	25	18	100	819
Education:					
Low	70	21	9	100	769
Medium	55	30	15	100	409
High	60	25	15	100	465
Age:					
15-29 years	41	35	24	100	363
30-49 years	62	25	13	100	546
50-64 years	75	19	6	100	430
65-85 years	75	19	6	100	337
All	61	24	15	100	1676

Note: The responses were given using a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 indicates "No increase in aggression whatsoever" and 10, "Marked increase in aggression". In the table, values 0-3 are shown in the column headed "Little or no increase"; values 4-6 under the heading "Some increase"; and values 7-10 under "Marked increase".

What does research have to say about the influences of media violence?

- Depictions of violence can lead to imitation among young children, but in most cases it is only a question of short-term impulses. Elder children can learn how to commit acts of violence, knowledge that they may put to use later in a critical situation. The media are not, however, responsible for the critical situation.
- We absorb various impressions from the media. These are then mixed together with ideas, feelings, norms, values and experiences from other sources. In most cases, these latter influences are stronger than those we derive from the media. It is the sum total or 'mix' of all our cognitive and emotional experiences that either increases or decreases our propensity toward different behaviors. It is in this indirect and reinforcing manner that mass media contribute to displays of aggression by certain individuals in certain circumstances.
- Another kind of influence is the fear that both fictional and non-fictional depictions of violence arouse in many young viewers. In some individuals the fear arising from media-generated perceptions of threats in one's surroundings may fuel destructive aggression in critical situations.
- There is also some evidence that media violence produces distorted perceptions of violence and its consequences. Studies of school-aged children have found that children who watch action-adventure films believe that the human body can withstand more violence than is actually the case. Children cannot foresee or understand the severity of the injury blows to the body (hitting and kicking) can inflict. (von Feilitzen 1998)

lic are convinced that media violence can have negative influences on children and young people. In an article entitled "Violence, Society and Media" that accompanied the report of the SOM Survey 1995, Lennart Weibull analyzed public opinion concerning the causes of violence in Swedish society, and particularly the importance of the media in this regard (Weibull 1996).

Alongside media-related factors – video films, television, cinema films, comic magazines, 'pop idols' – SOM 1995 inquired about factors like alcohol and drugs, unemployment and the schools, including parental influence and peer pressure. The aim was to find out the role people ascribed to the respective factors and how the factors might be interrelated. The 1995 survey contained a battery of ten questions. These same questions were asked again in 2000, with the addition of an eleventh factor: computer and video games.

The two factors seen to have the strongest influence are drugs and parents – 74 and 67 per cent, respectively, consider these factors 'very important' with respect to the incidence of violence in Swedish society. Around 50 per cent assign some degree of importance ('important' or 'very important') to peer pressure/ 'friends'. Thereafter come television, unemployment, cinema film and the schools (assigned importance by 32-40 per cent). The findings coincide very closely with the findings of SOM 1995. The balance measures, too, show no change in the order of the factors over the five-year interval. Public attitudes in this area seem quite stable (Table 3).

Table 3. Factors believed to contribute to increasing violence in society 2000 (per cent and balance of opinion)

Factor	Very important	Important	Neither/ nor	Not very important	Little or no importance	Total %	Balance 2000	Balance 1995
Alcohol, drugs	74	22	3	1	0	100	+95	+95
Peer pressure, "friends"	55	40	4	0	1	100	+94	+94
Parental influence	67	24	5	3	1	100	+87	+84
Video films	45	34	14	5	2	100	+72	+78
Unemployment	34	44	15	6	1	100	+71	+72
Television	40	36	16	6	2	100	+68	+71
School	32	43	15	7	3	100	+65	+59
Cinema films	33	35	21	8	3	100	+57	+58
"Pop idols" (film, music)	17	32	33	14	4	100	+31	+38
Games, computer and video	20	31	27	14	8	100	+29	–
Comic magazines	11	21	35	20	13	100	- 1	+ 3

Note: The balance of opinion measure indicates the share of respondents who have rated the respective factor as "very important" or "important" minus the shares who have rated it as "not very important" of "of little or no importance". The values can range between +100 (all consider the factor very important) and -100 (all accord it little or no importance). The number of respondents (n) for each factor varies between 1706 and 1744.

Perceptions as to the causes of violence in society are fairly uniform among demographic subgroups (Table 4). Essentially irrespective of their sex, age and education, respondents consider alcohol and drugs 'important' or 'very important'. Alcohol tops the list in a comparable survey from other data, as well (von Feilitzen & Carlsson 2000). Next-most important is peer pressure, closely followed by parental influence. Here, too, perceptions are quite homogeneous. Although perceptions differ regarding the importance of the schools, the patterns of response among different demographic groups are consonant.

We note more pronounced differences in the case of unemployment and media-related factors. Women, older people and respondents with little formal education accord unemployment greater importance than men, younger people and the highly educated do.

Age turns out to be a powerful differentiating factor when it comes to perceptions of the role of media-related factors. Young respondents are consistently less prone to attribute increased violence in society to media violence – especially video films, and cinema film, television, computer games and, above all, 'pop idols'. These younger respondents accord violence in the media significantly less importance as a contributing factor to violence in society, whereas a majority of their elders consider it 'important' or 'very important'. These findings largely coincide with those obtained in 1995.

Table 4. Factors believed to contribute to increasing violence in society 2000 by respondent's sex, education and age (balance of opinion)

	Sex		Education			Age				
Factor	Women	Men	Low	Medium	High	15-29	30-49	50-64	65-85	Total
Alcohol, drugs	+98	+92	+96	+92	+95	+91	+95	+97	+97	+95
Peer pressure, "friends"	+96	+93	+94	+94	+96	+95	+96	+94	+95	+94
Parental influence	+87	+85	+86	+86	+87	+83	+88	+86	+87	+87
Video films	+81	+62	+78	+68	+65	+45	+72	+86	+83	+72
Unemployment	+77	+63	+76	+60	+70	+46	+72	+76	+84	+71
Television	+78	+57	+77	+64	+56	+43	+67	+78	+84	+68
School	+66	+64	+70	+60	+61	+59	+69	+60	+74	+65
Cinema films	+67	+47	+66	+53	+47	+32	+57	+67	+74	+57
"Pop idols" (film, music)	+40	+20	+42	+20	+20	-3	+32	+44	+49	+31
Games, computer and video	+45	+11	+36	+23	+21	+ 8	+27	+38	+43	+29
Comic magazines	+9	-11	+12	-10	-16	-34	- 14	+15	+38	-1
Number of responses	866-904	839-869	770-809	414-421	482-492	371-383	552-568	441-454	333-370	1706-1774

Note: The balance of opinion measure indicates the share of respondents who have rated the respective factor as "very important" or "important" minus the shares who have rated it as "not very important" or "of little or no importance". The values can range between +100 (all consider the factor very important) and -100 (all accord it little or no importance).

The differences in assessments of media-related factors are more marked when we compare men and women, as well. This is true of all media, and particularly interactive games; women attribute greater importance to media content than men do.

Looking at education, we find some distinctions – the less one's formal education, the more importance one tends to ascribe to the media as an important factor.

Analysis of the responses by respondents' political preferences reveals greater differences in the case of media-related factors than otherwise; as to the importance of other factors – unemployment excepted – assessments are fairly uniform. Those who adhere to the Left or the Social-Democratic parties hover close to the mean across the board. Respondents who favor the Christian Democrats accord most factors – again, unemployment excepted – greater importance than respondents with other political leanings. This is particularly true in the case of media-related factors. The pattern is inverted among Conservative respondents: they are close to the mean in all cases, but are a bit below it in the case of media-related factors – especially interactive games, 'pop idols' and video films. 'Greens' and Center Party sympathizers emphasize computer games much more than adherents of other parties do. No Left-Right dimension is apparent in the data.

Upon closer examination we find support for the existence of a *media factor* in public perceptions of the causes of violence in society. Factor analysis[3] of all the factors studied produced three principal clusters of explanatory factors: a *social factor* (alcohol and drugs, unemployment), an *institutional factor* (parents, peer pressure, the schools), and a *media factor* (video film, television, cinema film, computer games, 'pop idols', comic books). The factors in each pattern of response are closely interrelated; that is to say, those who consider video games important also mention television and cinema film as causes. The same patterns were found in 1995.

As indicated above, no differentiation according to the sex, age or education of the respondents was noted for either the social or the institutional factor, but differences were noted for the media factor. Women, older respondents and individuals with less formal education emphasize the importance of media content more than other groups do. The pattern reflects the media habits of the respective groups: children and youth – especially boys – are the heaviest consumers/users of video and satellite television, games and on-line diversions (*Nordicoms Mediebarometer 2000*).

The findings presented so far indicate that a majority of the people feel that depictions of violence occur 'often', and a majority believe that violent media content can heighten children's and young people's aggression. It is therefore hardly surprising that the media factor takes its place on a par with social and institutional factors as a perceived cause of violence in society. Now, let us consider what the Swedish people think of various measures that have been proposed to counteract what many believe to be a contributing factor to the rising level of violence in Swedish society.

What measures to reduce the influences of media violence do people endorse?

The measures proposed

Several EU documents recognize the need to protect minors as a matter of prime concern. Underlying this thinking is the presumption that children are more impressionable, less critical and therefore more vulnerable than adults inasmuch as they have little experience of life and thus poorly developed frames of reference to guide their judgment. Consequently, it lies in the *public interest* to protect children – among other things, from harmful media content – until they have become more experienced and more mature. Certain kinds of depictions of violence are considered 'harmful'.

All the EU instruments are consistent with regard to the assignment of responsibility for European children's well-being. First and foremost, responsibility rests with the adults – parents and others – in children's surroundings. But these adults need help in the form of both political decisions and initiatives on the part of the media and IT branches, e.g., codes of ethics and rules that require the industry to assume its share of responsibility vis à vis children and youth. Proposed measures include the drafting of criteria whereby content may be classified and the institution of consumer relations offices to field and follow up complaints.

The legal framework for the protection of minors in the European Union from harmful media content

- The Directive, Television Without Frontiers (adopted in 1989 and amended in 1997), calls upon broadcasters to take measures to ensure that their program output is not detrimental to the physical, mental and moral development of minors. The Directive also points to the responsibility of parents and other adults to guide and control children's exposure to television fare. (The EU Commission is expected to submit draft amendments to the Directive during 2002-2004.)
- A Recommendation on the Protection of Minors and Human Dignity (adopted in May 1998) includes all electronic media and calls upon broadcasters and operators of on-line services to develop new methods to enhance parents' control (e.g., introduce a Code of Ethics, filtering software) – in effect, self-regulation. An evaluation of the implementation of the Recommendation by the Member States was reported in early 2001.
- A Communication, Principles and Guidelines for the Community's Audiovisual Policy in the Digital Age, recognizes that digital technology may render traditional protective measures obsolete. The Commission therefore foresees an increasingly important role for technology that filters and blocks electronic messages, but also notes that such a development in no way relieves broadcasters and other operators of their responsibilities in this regard. The Communication stresses the importance of media education in the schools. In the judgment of the Commission, self-regulatory measures within an overall framework of rules and guidelines may be more flexible and more effective than legislation.
- The Multiannual Community Action Plan on Promoting Safer Use of the Internet (1999) seeks to combat "illegal" and "harmful" content on global networks by encouraging a battery of measures on the part of the industry (hotlines, systems of classification, filtering, consumer information, 'awareness projects').

Self-regulation is clearly the preferred approach today. Most of the EU documents call for a heightened sense of responsibility among the media and IT operators. Self-regulation is believed to reduce the need for legislation, which, it is feared, would not be able to keep pace with new technology. In many respects, however, self-regulation is not yet practicable – considerable debate and policy-making lies ahead. In Sweden, all cinema film has to have been vetted and approved by a public censor, the National Board of Film Censorship, set up in 1911. Most countries have some form of prior vetting of films and age restrictions on admission to films. Whereas age limits for minors are generally accepted, public regulation of what adults may or may not see is far more controversial.

The principal legal instrument governing film censorship in Sweden (SFS 1990:886) prescribes that films and videograms intended for public screening (cinemas, but also meetings that are open to the public) shall have been approved by the Film Censorship Board. Two criteria are applied: in the case of films for adults the Board determines whether the film in question may be said to have a *brutalizing* effect; in the case of juvenile audiences (up to age 15), the issue is the risk of *psychological injury*.

Vetting of videograms (for sale or rental) for private use is not obligatory. During the 1980s, when public discussion of 'video violence' was at a peak, many demanded that the censorship requirement be extended to videograms. As things stand today, distributors of video film can submit titles to the Censorship Board for approval on a voluntary basis. Distributors whose titles have been approved by the Board cannot be charged with *distributing* unlawful depictions of violence under the Penal Code.

According to the Swedish Penal Code (ch. 16, para. 10b) it is against the law to "show intrusively or extensively acts of extreme violence towards humans or animals" in moving pictures (of any kind) if the intent is to show or disseminate such a depiction. Distribution of unlawful depictions of violence is a violation of the Freedom of Expression Act (constitutional law in Sweden). *Shocking Truth*, a documentary that includes sequences from some pornographic films that have been broadcast via satellite, aroused widespread and heated discussion in Sweden as to the need for new legislation to meet the proliferation of new television channels. The documentary itself had been approved by the Film Censorship Board. In the ensuing debate the Minister for Cultural Affairs criticized how the criterion 'brutalizing effect' is implemented and appointed a commission to review pertinent laws and guidelines.

Swedish law requires that television programs that contain explicit or prolonged depictions of violence or pornography must be preceded or accompanied by warnings in the sound or picture. Such programs may not be transmitted at times of day when children are likely to see them unless special circumstances warrant it. In Sweden, the limit is 9 p.m. Both these measures are included in the EU Directive Television Without Frontiers. The Broadcasting Commission is charged to review programming after transmission and monitor its compliance with the rules set out in the Law on radio and TV.

In 2000, a survey commissioned by the Broadcasting Commission found that over 80 per cent of the respondents agreed with the statement that the Government and Parliament should make policy rules for radio and television companies, e.g., rules concerning depictions of violence and rules to protect individuals' right to privacy. More than 70 per cent agreed that regulation should be entrusted to an independent body rather than to broadcasters themselves. Self-policing is not considered a feasible alternative. In sum, the Broadcasting Commission's study found widespread support for the role and work of the Commission.

Several other protective measures exist, some of which are of a technical nature. Filters were discussed in connection with the documentary *Shocking Truth*. These technical systems are not yet very user-friendly, and they presume digital transmission. Blocking access to television content by means of coded access, for example, is perhaps the most radical measure under consideration at present.

The so-called "V-chip" (Viewer Control Chip), a blocking device now mandatory in the USA, is a software module that can be built into television receivers and programmed to block certain signals. The chip has not taken root this side of the Atlantic, nor is it particularly popular in the USA. A number of troublesome 'bugs' have annoyed users, and there are indications that the law requiring the technology may be revoked in the near future. Both the above-mentioned filtering systems require classification and labelling of all programs.

The EU Commission has evaluated five different on-line filtering systems for household use. The results were disappointing: 55 per cent of users were dissatisfied with their system's performance, the most common complaint being that it was not reliable, i.e., it did not always keep potentially harmful content out of children's reach. The results of the EU Commission's evaluation, together with reports from the USA, have sent engineers back to their drawing boards.

In Europe the favored approach is consumer information. Recommended age limits are one way to keep inappropriate material – video cassettes and computer games, etc. – out of younger children's reach. The approach presupposes both classification of content (rating) and agreement as to the criteria of classification. It boils down to a system for providing consumer information, whereby the consumer (parent) makes the choices. In several countries the crucial question of who is to be responsible for classifying and labelling media content remains unresolved.

Many groups are calling for an international system of classification that encompasses both the Internet and television. The problem of reaching consensus on criteria in the whole of Europe is daunting, however.

Another approach that has received increasing attention is media education or media literacy. Here the aim is to enhance children's competence as consumers/users of the media. Today there is widespread agreement among European policy-makers that the schools bear a responsibility to introduce juvenile media culture into curricula. Not doing so means that the individual child is left to interpret and understand the signs and grammar of the media on their own. Media

education can provide both theoretical frameworks and practical experience. Many educationalists recognize the value of hands-on production as an effective means to develop children's critical faculties vis à vis the stereotypes of violence and the aesthetics of newscasting.

Public acceptance of proposed measures

Swedish attitudes toward the different approaches to shielding children from 'harmful' content on television, in the cinema and on the Internet were measured in the SOM Survey 2000. Sweden has shown a strong commitment to this issue, not least during the half year, January to June 2001, when Sweden chaired the EU and hosted a meeting of experts to discuss the issue. Responses confirm an avid interest in several protective measures (Table 5).

Table 5. Ratings of measures designed to shield children and youth from exposure to depictions of violence on television and video and via the Internet (per cent)

Measure	Very good or good	Neither bad nor good	Bad or very bad	Total %
Suitable age recommendation	85	11	4	100
Information about content	82	15	3	100
Information campaigns directed to parents	78	18	4	100
Ethical rules by and for the media	77	19	4	100
Warning about content prior to transmission	78	17	5	100
Legislation on obligatory film censorship	66	21	13	100
Obligatory media education in the schools	64	29	7	100
Technical filters to block certain content	48	24	28	100

Note: The responses were given using a scale consisting of the following alternatives: "Very bad proposal", "Bad proposal", "Neither bad nor good", "Good proposal" and "Very good proposal". The number of respondents (n) for each proposal varies between 1615 and 1663.

The vast majority of respondents prefer measures that tend toward self-regulation and that help parents form judgments of media content – measures like recommended age limits, rating and labelling, information campaigns targeting parents, and warnings prior to and during television transmissions. All these measures are informative rather than restrictive (like, for example, obligatory vetting). A high degree of covariance is noted between age limits, labelling and on-air warning. That is to say, essentially the same people advocate all three. More than three respondents in four also endorse the adoption of codes of conduct by the media and IT-industries.

Nearly two-thirds of the respondents (64%) find the idea of obligatory media education in school curricula a 'good' or 'very good' idea. It may seem odd that the proportion is not higher, but this approach has been rather little discussed, among either policy-makers, educationalists or media practitioners. Sweden is not in the forefront in this regard (von Feilitzen & Carlsson 1999). Respondents may also have reacted to the word "obligatory" in the question; it may be that another phrasing – such as "media education for all" – might have been better received.

About the same share (66%) endorse obligatory vetting of media content. Such a proposal was also included in SOM 1995, and we find identical patterns of response to this idea in the two surveys. It may come as a surprise that so many people, despite all the talk about self-regulation and the industry's responsibilities, still advocate a legislative approach. Or, may it be that the more informative approaches have been on the political agenda, but have not been discussed in mass media? On the other hand, whenever juveniles commit violent crimes – which, sadly, occurs in Sweden, too – calls for harsher restrictions are heard. Recent years have seen a series of crimes committed by children; these highly publicized incidents have surely left their mark on public sentiment.

Filtering, i.e., blocking reception of content, is the least endorsed measure. Still, nearly half the respondents find it a 'good' or 'very good' idea. But it is also the one measure to which a significant share of the population object; 28 per cent find it a 'bad idea'. This result has to do with the fact that it has been little discussed in Sweden – despite the interest it has attracted elsewhere in the European Union. Those who endorse filtering also favor obligatory vetting of content. This covariance suggests that filtering is seen to be a measure over which the consumer has no control, more akin to censorship than to consumer information.

Closer analysis reveals that those who advocate restrictive measures are the same people who report having observed 'marked' aggression among children as a consequence of media violence.

There are marked differences between men's and women's attitudes toward the different measures. Women generally advocate taking meaures more than men – they are particularly more favorable to obligatory censorship and filtering. That is to say, women are more inclined to endorse prohibitive measures, whereas men tend toward informative measures. Education groups differ, too, albeit the contrast is less pronounced than that between the sexes. Respondents with little formal education tend to endorse restrictive measures more than highly educated individuals do. Approval of all proposed methods increases with age. The most distinct difference between age groups is noted with respect to filters, information to parents and codes of ethics; agreement is greatest concerning on-air warnings, labelling and recommended age limits – in other words, informative measures (Table 6).

Table 6. Ratings of measures designed to shield children and youth from exposure to depictions of violence on television and video and via the Internet (balance of opinion)

	Sex		Education			Age				
Factor	Women	Men	Low	Medium	High	15-29	30-49	50-64	65-85	Total
Suitable age recommendation	+85	+77	+82	+81	+80	+73	+84	+ 81	+86	+81
Information about content	+84	+73	+82	+75	+75	+69	+81	+77	+88	+79
Information campaigns directed to parents	+82	+68	+78	+70	+74	+55	+75	+81	+89	+75
Ethical rules by and for the media	+79	+68	+72	+66	+81	+55	+76	+80	+85	+73
Warning about content prior to transmission	+80	+64	+77	+73	+66	+67	+73	+72	+79	+73
Obligatory media education in the schools	+63	+51	+60	+53	+57	+40	+57	+62	+71	+57
Legislation on obligatory film censorship	+68	+38	+64	+45	+44	+32	+58	+53	+70	+53
Technical filters to block certain content	+32	+8	+30	+8	+13	-10	+20	+22	+54	+20
Number of respondents	822-854	790-818	712-751	405-414	464-472	365-371	537-549	412-428	296-324	1615-1663

Note: The balance of opinion measure indicates the share of respondents who have rated the respective measure as "good" or "very good" minus the shares who have rated it as "bad" or "very bad". The values can range between +100 (all consider the measure very good) and -100 (all consider it very bad).

Variations by political preference are generally rather slight. Adherents to the Left Party and the Social-Democrats rank the proposals in the same order as others do and are close to the mean in all cases. That is to say, they prefer informative measures to legislation. Conservative respondents also rank the measures in the same order, but are in most cases below the mean – particularly in the case of film censorship. Christian Democratic sympathizers distinguish themselves by consistently lying above the mean, especially with regard to filtering devices, codes of ethics, information to parents and prior censorship of films. 'Greens' and Center Party sympathizers are more favorable toward obligatory film censorship than, for example, adherents of the Liberal, the Left and Social-Democratic parties. Media education in school curricula appears to find the strongest support among Liberals and 'Greens'. No distinct Left-Right dimension is discernable (Table 7).

Thus, a majority of the Swedish people endorse informative measures that help parents and other adults to shield children from media violence, but the question is how best to get the information across to the public. In the above-mentioned survey conducted by the Broadcasting Commission, more than every sec-

ond respondent knew that there was a starting time, after which channels can show violent programmes, but rather few knew that it was 9 p.m. Field research in Austria and other countries indicates that few people are aware of the informative measures that have been introduced to protect young viewers/users (Geretschlager 2000).

Table 7. Ratings of measures designed to shield children and youth from exposure to depictions of violence on television and video and via the Internet by party preference (balance of opinion)

Measure	Left	Soc-Dem.	Greens	Center	Liberal	Christ-Dem.	Cons.	Total
Suitable age recommendation	+82	+85	+71	+68	+93	+88	+77	+81
Information about content	+77	+83	+77	+82	+78	+81	+75	+79
Information campaigns directed to parents	+73	+79	+72	+77	+80	+84	+71	+75
Ethical rules by and for the media	+73	+76	+78	+77	+79	+85	+69	+73
Warning about content prior to transmission	+75	+77	+67	+53	+77	+75	+66	+73
Obligatory media education in the schools	+55	+60	+73	+56	+71	+62	+49	+57
Legislation on obligatory film censorship	+56	+58	+62	+63	+54	+63	+41	+53
Technical filters to block certain content	+12	+24	+31	+26	+28	+37	+12	+20
Number of respondents	220-225	465-487	80-82	56-57	68-71	175-184	361-371	1615-1663

Note: The balance of opinion measure indicates the share of respondents who have rated the respective measure as "good" or "very good" minus the shares who have rated it as "bad" or "very bad". The values can range between +100 (all consider the measure very good) and -100 (all consider it very bad).

Conclusions

Media violence is frequently blamed for the rising level of violence in Swedish society, particularly in the aftermath of violent crimes committed by young people. People are also clearly concerned about the influence media violence may have. As many as 60 per cent of the Swedish people report first-hand observations of markedly increased aggression in children as a consequence of the children's exposure to media violence. (More than 80 per cent feel that media violence leads to increased aggression.) But when we inquire about possible causes of violence in society, media do not top the public's list of 'suspects'. Instead, there is near unanimity, irrespective of sex, age and education, that alcohol and drugs, peer pressure and parental influences lead to acts of aggression. Yet analysis of the respondents' ideas about the causes of violence identifies a distinct media factor alongside social and institutional factors.

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and several EU directives all define children and young people as a vulnerable group who need to be protected from certain media content, e.g., harmful depictions of violence. When the Swedish people are asked their views regarding different kinds of protective measures, they tend to prefer informative rather than restrictive measures or prohibitions. Most people, irrespective of sex, age, education and political leanings, endorse recommended age limits, descriptions of program content, and on-air warnings about violent content. These are measures that fall within the scope of industry self-regulation. The only notable demographic distinctions are found between women and men and between age groups. Women and older respondents generally favor taking measures to protect young viewers/users more than men and young respondents do, and they are also more accepting of prohibitive measures, a law requiring prior censorship of films, and filtering of content. It comes as no surprise that these same groups feel that media violence contributes to violence in society at large.

'Moral panic' in response to new media and genres is a well-known phenomenon (Dalquist 1998). Sweden experienced such a panic in the early 1980s, when video recording equipment became a commonplace fixture in Swedish homes, and again, twenty years later, when satellite television, the Internet and computer games spread. At junctures like these there are calls for prohibitions and stiffer restrictions to protect our young.

The findings presented here show that the Swedish people are anxious to protect 'vulnerable' groups – in this case children and youth – from the harmful influence of media content. Secondly, they reveal a good measure of consensus around protective measures of an informative nature. In other words, parents and other adults are prepared to assume a responsibility to protect minors from 'harmful depictions of violence'. But, equally important, the media industry must assume its share of responsibility and take steps to make self-regulation truly effective.

Notes

1. The article was published in Swedish in Sören Holmberg and Lennart Weibull (eds): *Land, Du Välsignade? SOM-undersökningen 2000*. Göteborg University 2001. ISBN 91-97366-0, ISSN 0284-4788 (SOM-rapport 26).
2. The SOM Institute at Göteborg University, founded in 1986, conducts interdisciplinary research and organizes seminars on the topics of Society, Opinion and Media (hence the name SOM). The Institute is jointly managed by the Department of Journalism and Mass Communication, the Department of Political Science and the School of Public Administration at Göteborg University. The Institute is headed by Professor Sören Holmberg, Department of Political Science, Professor Lennart Weibull, Department of Journalism and Mass Communication, and Director Lennart Nilsson, Center for Public Sector Research.

   From 1986 till 1997, the core of the SOM Institute has been an annual nationwide survey, *National SOM,* carried out every autumn in the form of a mail questionnaire to 2,800 randomly selected persons between the ages of 15 and 80. Since 1998 the survey has more than doubled, and now comprising 6,000 individuals with an increased age limit to 85. The central

questions addressed in *National SOM* are attitudes toward mass media, politics and public services. A report summarizing the main results of each year's survey is published annually.

3. Factor analysis – Rotation by Varimax Method. Number of Factors by the Kaiser Criterion. Percent of Variance Explained: Media factor = 39%, Social factor = 15%, Institutional factor =10%.

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Self-Regulation, Co-Regulation & Public Regulation

Carmen Palzer & Alexander Scheuer

Although intensified discussions about different forms of media regulation, particularly self-regulation and co-regulation, are increasingly taking place both on national and international levels, the terms 'self-monitoring' or 'self-control', 'self-regulation' and 'co-regulation', describing different regulatory systems, do not seem to be used appropriately – even by experts. Nevertheless, the precondition of a fruitful discussion about new regulatory approaches aimed at guaranteeing the protection of minors should be a common understanding of which model of regulation the respective terms – self-regulation, co-regulation, (public) regulation – paraphrase. This is not only a need for academic discourse; the definition of and differentiation between the different regulatory approaches are even more important in practice, when stakeholders are planning and discussing implementation of a new regulatory scheme. In this case, it seems to be indispensable to work on the basis of a consensus about the key-elements of the model under discussion, e.g., the degree of involvement of state authorities or the voluntariness of participation on the part of concerned parties. Another problematic situation, in which generally-accepted definitions might be useful, is when the state introduces a new regulatory system using a misleading description, e.g., the implementation of state regulation denoted as self-regulation. The existence of an acknowledged definition for a self- (or co-)regulatory scheme would allow concerned parties to remind the state of the misleading denotation of its action.

Thus, this article starts by defining the different regulatory systems, including their key elements, followed by some brief thoughts about their respective advantages and disadvantages. Due to the nature of this contribution, being part of a yearbook, it is not possible to deal with the issue exhaustively. However, the positive and negative aspects chosen may give an idea of the appropriate use of the different regulatory systems. Some examples of the different models will serve to illustrate the differences between the regulatory systems, particularly the self-

regulatory and co-regulatory models, and a final remark will address the prospects of media regulation.

A closely related issue, "Co-Regulation of the Media in Europe", was discussed at a workshop held in September 2002 in Florence. This meeting had been organised jointly by the European Audiovisual Observatory (EAO), Strasbourg, the Institute of European Media Law (EMR), Saarbrucken, and the Institute for Information Law (IViR), Amsterdam. Some of the findings presented below are gathered from the preparations for and the discussions during this workshop.[1]

Public regulation

The term *public regulation* describes the traditional regulatory system: the public authority being the all-embracing regulator, setting the relevant legislative or regulatory rules, monitoring compliance with them and equally enforcing them by imposing sanctions. Regulation in this context entails legislation and other forms of binding action by public authorities to implement public policy. Traditionally, both the formulation and implementation of (public) policy goals have been vested with the legislator. In a first step, politics realises/acknowledges a pressing need to counteract tendencies that may otherwise be, for instance, susceptible to the achievement of a certain general interest. The motivation to legislate may also stem from the political will to stimulate action on the part of citizens or undertakings in a way that is felt desirable (by providing for tax benefits, for example). Legislation would then be adopted to set the necessary rules and, where appropriate, provide for the structure, tasks and means of implementation of competent authorities. Private persons or organisations may be involved in this system by supporting the competent authority with, e.g., expert knowledge or by monitoring compliance with the given rules (self-monitoring). Nevertheless, the responsibility for implementing rules for the purpose of achieving public policy aims remains with the state.

Advantages and disadvantages of regulation

Some of the advantages and disadvantages of traditional regulation shall be described below. As one of the basic attributes of democratic sovereignty, regulation is established by democratically appointed authorities – at least in democratic countries. For this reason, public regulation is normally not challenged in terms of its authority to express the general interest. The democratic legitimisation of the rules is one of the advantages of public regulation.

Another advantage may be seen in the ability of the public authority to impose sanctions severe enough to guarantee the strict observation of a given set of rules. Such sanctions comprise particularly those provided for by criminal law,

which can be implemented by state authorities, e.g., police and public prosecutors. Thus, when stringent sanctions are deemed necessary to ensure conformity with a set of rules, public regulation seems to be the appropriate form of regulation.

In many cases, public regulation is indispensable to ensuring public policy remits, for example, when non-discrimination must be guaranteed through the strictly uniform application of identical measures in a certain area, e.g., in the case of competition regulation.

Nevertheless, regulation, though one of the main ways of implementing public policy, is not necessarily the only or best way of solving a given problem. The setting of rules by democratically appointed bodies may take a long time, especially if requirements such as consultation processes or impact studies must be met. In fields where technology is fast-paced or where for other reasons (e.g., social developments) the factual basis for a future regulatory reaction changes rapidly, the time necessary for public regulation may compromise its effects; in the worst case it cannot achieve its objectives at all.

Furthermore, the setting of rules by public authorities may be very expensive, if it requires the mobilisation of special skills and resources. Thus, the costs of drafting and implementing rules may be disproportionate to the expected benefit.

Example of regulation

In the area of protection of youth from harmful media content, for example, rules have been laid down that prohibit the portrayal of "gratuitous violence" on television. Such presentation has been considered, by, i.a., the Television Without Frontiers Directive, to be absolutely intolerable and member states must foresee effective measures in order to implement this provision into national law and to monitor and enforce compliance.

Self-regulation

The system of *self-regulation* is situated at the other end of the "regulatory scale". Under this system, social groups (producers, providers, etc.) draw up their own regulations in order to achieve their objectives and take full responsibility for monitoring compliance with them. Such regulations may take the form of technical or qualitative standards, potentially combined with codes of conduct defining good and bad practice. Codes of conduct may also contain rules on out-of-court mediation and on the structures of the relevant complaints bodies. These rules may be laid down by a self-regulatory organisation created by the parties concerned (ideally involving other interested parties, such as consumers). This body may also monitor compliance with the rules and impose any sanctions, if provided. Equally, it is possible that the body generating the rules is different

from that applying them. Thus, rule-making may be the task of the association, having adopted the self-regulatory system and created the self-regulatory body, whereas the latter is responsible for applying the rules. Such a model might even be considered the preferable one, because the rule-making – "legislative" – power is separated from the rule-applying – "executive" – power.

Since the state is not involved in this form of regulation, public authority sanctions cannot be imposed, but only those provided by civil law, particularly the articles of association(s). According to this, the most severe sanctions are financial penalties or exclusion from the relevant association that has adopted the self-regulatory system. Thus, the self-regulatory approach is not primarily based on enforcement by punitive or exemplary sanctions. Based on agreement, the conviction that the parties concerned have common objectives should ensure the effectiveness of this system. The key element of the above-defined self-regulatory system is the voluntary nature of the participation of those who are subject to regulation.

The so-defined self-regulatory model should be distinguished from a *self-monitoring* or *self-control system*. The latter are limited to monitoring compliance with a given set of regulations, laid down by another party, e.g., a public authority. Self-monitoring approaches may be a way of involving private organisations or social groups in the implementation of state regulation or legislation (see above). They may also be considered as part of a self-regulatory system. In contrast to self-monitoring approaches, self-regulatory systems are not limited to the self-determined control of rules; they also have the power to create the rules to achieve their own objectives themselves. This differentiation is not easy to implement in practice, because in ordinary language, the term 'self-control' is often used to describe self-regulatory systems.[2] Nevertheless, in discussing different regulatory approaches, this distinction is important, because the two systems are conceptually different regulatory schemes, with self-regulation being a private/social regulatory model and self-monitoring – in its proper meaning – being part of a state-dominated model.

The fact that self-monitoring systems may also be a part of a self-regulatory or a co-regulatory scheme and that societal/private "regulatory" bodies, involved in a co-regulatory scheme, are often denoted as self-regulatory bodies, does not facilitate the differentiation.[3] As a matter of fact, one must admit that the transitions between the different regulatory models are blurred; there will always be "grey areas" of regulatory approaches that cannot be clearly dedicated to one or another of the described systems.

Advantages and disadvantages of self-regulation

Self-regulation as a self-contained regulatory system often receives support. This is due to the fact that the industry is perceived as most experienced and best placed to evaluate the risks of their products and services. Professionals may react

to new challenges in an easier and faster manner than do the makers of public regulation.

Another positive aspect is the voluntariness of the system. The members, voluntarily submitting to the system, are willing to comply with the rules. Normally (when the system is running well) they obey without coercion; they are convinced that conformity of their behaviour with these rules is the best way to solve the given problems.

Additionally, some parts of the media sector – especially the Internet – are considered unsuitable for state regulation approaches. In this context, voluntary self-regulation, implemented ideally by all, if not by most of the stakeholders, may provide for a solution.

On the other hand, the voluntariness of the system may be seen as its weakest point: Stakeholders cannot really be forced to comply with the rules. If, for example, the management of an undertaking changes and the new leaders do not subscribe to the idea of self-regulation, the heaviest sanction that can be imposed is exclusion from the system – the effect being that the failing undertaking is no longer subject to the rules.

Also, self-regulation suffers from a lack of democratic legitimation. It originates from economic players or groups with their own specific interests – interests that may contribute to or even be partly congruent with the general interest; nevertheless these special interests do not necessarily coincide totally with the general interest. Thus, there will always be a tendency to allege that self-regulatory organisations pursue their own policies rather than general policy goals.

Example of self-regulation

The Pan European Games Information (PEGI) system is a new age-rating system for interactive games, applicable throughout Europe. It is designed to prevent the exposure of children to game content that is considered unsuitable for their age group, especially to games developed for mature players. It was developed under the aegis of ISFE (Interactive Software Federation of Europe), a trade body to which games console manufacturers, developers and suppliers of interactive games belong, together with national trade bodies and European institutions, with collaboration from academics, national classification bodies, state authorities, consumer organisations and other interested groups. The PEGI system is administrated by NICAM (Netherlands Institute for the Classification of Audiovisual Media), a non-governmental organisation that actually administrates the classification of all audiovisual content in the Netherlands (see below).

PEGI comprises two elements: an age-rating system and an indication of game content. Whereas the age-rating indicator will feature on each cover of a game, the addition of content descriptors is at the discretion of the publisher. The age bands are 3+, 7+, 12+, 16+ and 18+, except for Portugal and Finland, where minor variations apply: in Finland, a product rated 12+ or 16+ must be labelled 11+ or

15+, respectively, and in Portugal, games rated 7+ must be labelled 6+. An additional procedure applies for games to be published in the United Kingdom.[4] The game description system consists of six icons,[5] referring to discrimination, drugs, fear, bad language, sex and violence. The combination of age rating and content description will allow consumers to ensure that the game they purchase is appropriate to the age of the intended player.

The formal implementation of this self-regulatory system combines self-assessment by publishers with scrutiny by an independent body. In a first step, the product must be assessed by the publisher by means of an on-line product assessment form. Then, as a second step, this provisional rating must be approved by NICAM. If the age rating is 16+ or 18+, NICAM checks the evaluation before giving the approval; the other ratings will at first be accepted, all games rated 12+ being checked afterwards, while 7+ and 3+ classifications are only investigated on a random basis. When satisfied that the product has been classified correctly, NICAM confirms the rating with the publisher, who is then authorised to reproduce the appropriate age rating (and content descriptor, if that is their practice) on the packaging in accordance with the system rules and ISFE Codes of Conduct. In contrast to age rating, content descriptors are not mandated by NICAM.

Complaints from publishers or consumers are firstly referred to the administrator. If NICAM cannot resolve the problem, it will be handled by a Complaints Board, consisting of a broad mix of independent international representatives, such as rating experts, youth protection specialists and groups representing various sectors of society. Though decisions of the Complaints Board are not legally binding, the users of the system will be bound by virtue of a Code of Conduct. The decision of the Complaints Board is final.

PEGI is an example of a purely industry-based model. No state organisation is involved within the PEGI system, nor has PEGI classification (until now) any importance for the legal handling of the game in the different states. No state regulatory framework makes reference to the PEGI classification. On the contrary, PEGI is considerate of the legal provisions – see the modifications for the application of PEGI in Portugal and Finland, or the restrictions for the use of PEGI in the UK. In this respect, PEGI takes into account and builds upon extant legal provisions. It seems remarkable that the PEGI creators found only a few binding rules concerning the classification of computer or video games; this may be seen as one of the major reasons why the implementation of this system was possible. Where binding regulations were in place, the PEGI system was usually able to align itself accordingly.[6]

Co-regulation

The term *co-regulation* in its widest sense denotes co-operative forms of regulation that are designed to achieve public authority objectives – the co-operation

being performed by public authority and civil society.[7] A co-regulatory scheme combines elements of self-regulation (and self-monitoring) as well as of traditional public authority regulation to form a new and self-contained regulatory system. In this perspective, there are conceivably many different forms of co-regulatory models, depending on the combination of public authority and private sector elements.

One of these possibilities for creation of a co-regulatory system is that the state would integrate an extant self-regulatory system into a public authority framework. Another approach would be initiation of a co-regulatory system by the state. In this case, the public authority would lay down a legal basis for the co-regulation system, so that it could begin to function. Many other forms of regulatory models could be brought within the above broad definition of co-regulation. The elements chosen as the foundations of a co-regulation framework also depend in particular on the task to be performed. One common feature will exist in each case: the pursued aim will be a public one.

A key element of a co-regulatory regime is the self-contained development of binding rules by the co-regulatory organisation and its liability for these rules, the latter being one of the main differences between co-regulatory systems and self-monitoring systems. In respect of the distinction between self- and co-regulatory schemes, an important criterion is the voluntariness of participation. In a co-regulatory-system, non-compliance with the given rules is directly or at least indirectly (e.g., in the form of possible revocation of a licence) sanctioned by the state (public authority). Thus, the market players concerned are not actually free in their decision to participate in the system. In fact, in a functioning self-regulatory system, there is also some pressure to participate; although this pressure is not exercised by the state but by the public, the customer – in short, by societal institutions. The greater the public authority's involvement in a co-regulatory model, the less participation in the inclusive co-regulatory organisation[8] can be considered to be voluntary. This leads to the distinction between co-regulation and state regulation: in this context, the main criteria can be seen in the degree of autonomy of the co-regulatory organisation from state influence, e.g., the extent to which it can make its own decisions, or whether representatives of the public authority can exert influence over the rule- or the decision-making of the co-regulatory body.

However, one has to take into account that a clear-cut distinction between such models is difficult. There is a smooth transition from one system to another (see above).

Advantages and disadvantages of co-regulation

Due to new technological developments, especially their speed and the growing convergence,[9] public regulation is deemed to be no longer able to solve some of the problems at issue. Public regulation is, due to the complicated mechanism of

findings, rather bovine.[10] At present, the manner of bringing an audiovisual product to the consumer is decisive for the implementation of standards for the protection of minors. This "artificial" distinction already causes some problems.[11] If convergence becomes reality in the mid-term perspective, providing for different regulatory regimes according to merely technical considerations (what represents the status quo) will become increasingly difficult – if not deficient and therefore unacceptable. Against this background, the prospects and advantages of co-regulation become visible. The more stakeholders take the initiative for responsible handling of relevant concerns, such as the protection of minors, the more efficient and prompt the regulatory framework can react to new technologies.[12]

On the other hand, in the context of co-regulation, the state or competent authority will play a significant role, setting the legal framework and monitoring the functioning of the system by assuming responsibility for initially checking self-regulatory bodies, having a say on the monitoring of results and, if necessary, requesting that adaptations be implemented. Thus, the achievement of public policy goals is not relinquished to societal control entirely; the responsibility remains with the state, which is often even under an obligation to guarantee this achievement. With regard to youth protection in the media, where such fundamental public goods are at stake, the state cannot exercise complete restraint in view of its responsibility for safeguarding the public interests involved. Furthermore, democratically-founded legislation will have to establish, in most cases, criteria according to which co-regulatory systems should work, addressing such issues as complaint procedures, sanctioning powers in view of members, organisation and representativeness, conditions for accreditation, etc. Bearing in mind that state authorities may intervene in the case of an alleged malfunctioning of a co-regulatory institution, this will necessitate, at least to some extent, the doubling of institutional structures, on the side of the organisation in charge and, in addition, on behalf of a competent state authority. Therefore, one may doubt that in the short-term co-regulation will also show prospects for more efficiency, in particular in terms of costs.

Examples of co-regulation

In the following, we will present two forms of co-regulation of the media with different linkages between both public regulation and "self-regulatory" bodies.

The Dutch system for classification of audiovisual content

As mentioned previously, the Netherlands Institute for the Classification of Audiovisual Media (NICAM),[13] established in 1999, is competent for classification of audiovisual products with a view to content of television, cinema, video, DVD (and electronic games). NICAM replaced the former censorship committees that were entrusted with the classification of films and videos. The governing board

consists of representatives of public service and commercial broadcasting organisations, film distributors and cinema operators, distributors of video cassettes, DVDs, computer games, video stores and retailers. On television, only those companies are entitled to broadcast programmes that may impair the physical, mental or moral development of persons under the age of 16, which are members of an accredited organisation for classification of audiovisual content.[14] In order to receive accreditation from the Dutch Minister of Education, Culture and Science, NICAM had to establish criteria for programmes in which, e.g., pornography is involved or violent behaviour is shown or justified, and the broadcasting time for such content.[15]

Kjkwijzer, the NICAM classification system, consists, similar to the already described PEGI system, of two elements: an age classification and content descriptors. Contrary to the PEGI system, both are compulsory. The content descriptors, presented as icons, refer (as for computer games) to violence, sex, fear, drug and/or alcohol abuse, discrimination and coarse language. The age bands are Al, 6, 12, and 16. Kijkwijzer is based on the computer-aided self-classification of products by the supplier. A company's employee (the 'coder') fills out a questionnaire provided by NICAM and transmits it to the Institute. There, the product is evaluated by means of a computer program, which works out its rating. This rating is (until now[16]) not monitored, neither by NICAM nor by the state. Coders are trained by NICAM in order to ensure that the information submitted on the questionnaires is as accurate as possible. If in doubt, they can obtain assistance from an inspection board by NICAM. For each of the content categories, an age classification for the product will be set. The final rating depends on the highest age restriction in any of these categories. The product's overall rating comprises this age classification and up to two pictograms: those with the highest value.[17]

Although the NICAM system itself contains no further obligations, the Dutch government has used legislation and regulation to create a number of constraints, based on the NICAM classification. Television programmes, i.e., that are classified as age 12 must not be screened before 8 p.m., and programmes classified as age 16 not before 10 p.m. Cinemas must refuse admission to persons under 16, if a film is classified as age 16; video retailers must not hire or sell such a film to persons under 16, and so on. Furthermore, an independent research agency has been brought in by the government to monitor the functioning of the system.[18]

The differences from the PEGI system are obvious: At first, the "self-regulatory" organisation had to apply for accreditation by the competent minister. Furthermore, legislation and regulation concerning the distribution of audiovisual media relying extensively on the classification existed and remain in existence. There is a strong pressure to participate in the system by the above-mentioned rule that prohibits the broadcasting of any television program that could seriously impair the physical, mental or moral development of persons under the age of sixteen. Companies that are not participating in the system will suffer substantial disadvantages concerning their (advertising) revenue. In addition, the system is evaluated by public authority.

Thus, the NICAM system, as a result of its linkages and its interdependency with public regulation, is a form of a co-regulatory system, a model presenting the strong position of the embedded "self-regulatory" system.

The German system for youth protection in the media field

Another co-regulatory system for the protection of minors in the media environment was established in Germany in 2003. This system is characterised by a higher degree of state influence, with a view both to the implementing bodies and to monitoring of the system. Due to the complexity of the whole system, this shall be demonstrated regarding only the on-line media.[19] The supervisory authority in Germany, mainly responsible for all kinds of on-line media, is the Kommission für Jugendmedienschutz, or KJM (Commission for the Protection of Minors in the Media).[20] It acts as part of the competent regulatory authority of the respective state and comprises twelve experts nominated by the media regulatory authorities and the supreme juvenile welfare authorities of the federal government and the states. The newly formed KJM is to ensure compliance with norms defining the protection of minors. It recognises and issues licences to institutions of voluntary "self-regulation", and approves technical measures, such as content filtering and rating systems. If broadcasters are linked with a certified "self-regulatory" body, the media authority will not directly act against them, provided that two conditions are fulfilled:

(i) Wherever possible, programme items had been presented for assessment to the "self-regulatory" body up-front their being broadcast; and

(ii) The broadcaster complied with the classification, which itself had not been based on unreasonable appreciation.

Up to the present, only the Freiwillige Selbstkontrolle Fernsehen (FSF) has been certified; the on-line self-control organisation Freiwillige Selbstkontrolle Multimedie-Diensteanbieter has not yet[21] applied for accreditation.

However, a considerable degree of legal framework conditions are being maintained, which either the legislator or the KJM put in place. Not only must the "self-regulatory" body be certified by the competent authority, but its decisions may also be abrogated by the KJM. The German co-regulatory system is characterised by intense state involvement, that tends more than NICAM towards a public regulatory system that avails itself of private assistance. Nevertheless, it has to be classified as a co-regulatory model, the co-regulatory body being entrusted to create its own rules and having a certain (quite broad) scope for judgement evaluation (decision-making) that is non-controllable by the KJM and, thus, reflects the responsibility that the organisation must exercise.

Prospects

On the European level, as far as both the Council of Europe and the European Union are concerned, the issue of co-regulation and self-regulation is becoming increasingly topical. Whereas these (new) regulatory approaches are not only considered for application in the media sector, but also in, e.g., the financial services and energy markets, and while this article has concentrated on the issue of protection of minors in the media, one should bear in mind that the discussion has been broadened significantly. In recent debates, different aspects of media regulation have been examined as to their suitability to being handed over to co-regulation or self-regulation. With regard to the content of advertising, on the one hand, such has been the case for different media already (TV, print) and, on the other, with a view to systems that have been implemented in several member states as well as on the European level. Moreover, such concerns as the freedom of journalists or the avoidance of intolerant speech in the media have been areas in which, at least partly, self-regulatory organisations have been established and in which the state regulation increasingly relies on this form of achieving public interest remits.

When one looks at the European Community, very recently – in the course of reviewing extant legal instruments – the co-regulatory approach has been recognised as an essential and, possibly, sufficient way of implementing extant provisions. Both the review of the Television Without Frontiers Directive and of the Recommendation on the Protection of Minors and Human Dignity on the Internet may lead to further support for such a form of regulation.[22] In addition, it is worth mentioning that, especially in respect of the Internet, proposals have been made to establish a network of co-regulatory organisations in Europe in order to facilitate the exchange of best practice experiences and, second, for the handling of common interests that could provide for better (and faster) answers to today's needs. In this respect, one may argue that it seems to be more likely that such a network could reach solutions to problems that, due to the different cultural and legal traditions of the European countries, could not be dealt with as efficiently by public authorities.

Notes

1. The results of the workshop, including all papers presented there, two in-depth articles on the topic (*IRIS plus* No. 2002-6 and *IRIS plus* No. 2002-10) and background material, were published in 2003 by the European Audiovisual Observatory as an *IRIS Special* on the theme "Co-Regulation of the Media in Europe". For further information or ordering the publications see: http://www.obs.coe.int/oea_publ/iris_special/2003.html
2. In Germany, the FSM (Freiwillige Selbstkontrolle Multimedia-Diensteanbieter – Voluntary Self-control Multi-media Service Provider) uses the notion of 'self-control' to describe itself, although until now the FSM has been working as a self-regulatory organisation and, thus, acting independently of state interference. The FSF (Freiwillige Selbstkontrolle Fernsehen – Voluntary Self-control Television Broadcasting) was formerly a self-regulatory organisation. Now, with accreditation as a 'self-regulatory' body within the legal framework for youth protection in the media,

it is involved in a co-regulatory framework (see infra "Examples of co-regulation – the German System..." furher on in the article).

3. See footnote 2.
4. The evaluation questionnaire contains some content-related questions, which rely on the legal situation in the United Kingdom. If one of these questions has to be answered with "Yes", the game (i) must be submitted to the British Board of Film Classification for (external) legal classification, (ii) the ISFE voluntary rating system cannot be applied, and (iii) the product must be labelled "Not for distribution in the UK". Additionally, the evaluation questionnaire contains the warning that an incorrect answer to these questions could result in criminal prosecution of the supplier and/or the retailer.
5. A figure featuring these icons is available in the article by Piermarco Aroldi in this book. (*editors' note*).
6. Interestingly, PEGI is not applicable in Germany. The German interactive software industry association (Verband der Unterhaltungssoftware, UVD), which was involved in the development of the PEGI system, found that with a view to the German legal situation, the application of a voluntary rating system would not be possible.
7. This definition of co-regulation is deliberately broad so as to include the various forms of co-regulation, which, in view of individual states' various legal provisions and traditions, are or could be used to pursue political objectives.
8. Due to the lack of voluntariness, the inclusive regulatory system is not really a self-regulatory system. Hence, it should not be designated as such; one could perhaps use the term co-regulatory organisation instead.
9. Convergence means the merging together of various media sectors on account of technological developments. Convergence may be seen from two different angles: technical convergence and convergence of services; for further explanations see Carmen Palzer & Caroline Hilger: "Media Supervision at the Threshold of the 21st Century: structure and powers of regulatory authorities in the era of convergence", *IRIS plus* No. 8-2001, p. 4 ff., available at: http://www.obs.coe.int/oea_publ/iris/iris_plus/iplus8_2001.pdf.en
10. See above.
11. One member state, e.g., applying a rather broad definition of broadcasting, may request that, for the transmission of an audiovisual service over an Internet platform, the same youth protection provisions would have to be observed by the respective (content) provider as is the case in traditional (linear) broadcasting. Another member state may uphold different approaches to both means of transmission, i.e., it may rely on a (mandatory) age classification system in order to determine the appropriate scheduling of a programme on TV and, on the other hand, accept that the relevant issues of protection of minors may be dealt with by self-regulatory bodies when it comes to the Internet. Due to the latter's nature, the different approaches may lead to the availability of content throughout Europe, which one (or several) member states consider harmful for minors.
12. Another prospect of co-regulation may be seen in an increased potential for transparency. It is inherent in such a system that it necessitate a constant dialogue between, on the one hand, the co-regulatory organisation and its members (undertakings and other stakeholders) and, on the other, the competent authority, which represents the state involvement as regards the efficiency of the organisation's activity. Evaluation becomes more open to public debate. Therefore, better chances for transparent regulation in view of public policy goals (and even their verification or re-definition) may be attributed to such a regulatory approach, see Alexander Scheuer: "Losing Weight: Is De- or Co-regulation Needed?", contribution to a panel discussion at "The Challenge of Transparency in the Audiovisual Sector", which was a conference on the occasion of the 10th anniversary of the European Audiovisual Observatory, Strasbourg, 17 January 2003, http://www.obs.coe.int/about/oea/scheuer_conf.pdf.de
13. Nederlands Instituut voor de Classificatie van Audiovisuele Media (http://www.kijkwijzer.nl)
14. Article 52d, section 2, Media Act (in the Netherlands)

15. Article 53, section 1, lit a) No. 2, 4, lit b), Media Act (in the Netherlands)
16. In the course of evaluation of the NICAM system, proposals have been made to introduce some sort of additional checks, for example, by way of monitoring individual results that the self-rating process has shown on a random basis.
17. See the difference from PEGI, where several icons may be set, although the setting of icons is not required.
18. Accordingly, the NICAM system has recently been evaluated both from an independent expert perspective and by the Dutch Commission for the Media (CvdM). Despite some critics, their findings acknowledge the proper functioning of the system. Interestingly, the CvdM suggests implementation of a (random sample based) monitoring system by the NICAM organisation itself. The Commission announced it would, after 30 March 2003, take immediate and effective action against broadcasters who are not yet members of NICAM (Article 52d, section 2, Media Act).
19. The German legal framework consists in principle of two different regulatory regimes for on-line and off-line media. However, there are numerous links in place that result in the interdependence of the relevant approaches, both in terms of procedural rules and with a view to, e.g., age classifications obtained.
20. The KJM assumes responsibility for the on-line world, as well. In fact, the new regulation had been inspired by arguments saying that what is forbidden on the TV screen should, in principle, not be accessible via the Internet either.
21. For some time after the enactment of the relevant state treaty on the protection of youth, it remained unclear whether FSM would participate in the (co-regulatory) system by applying for accreditation or whether it preferred to stay independent of state influence, acting as a self-regulatory organisation in addition to the state regulation in place. In January 2004, however, it was made public that FSM had decided to apply for accreditation after necessary reforms of its internal rules had been enacted.
22. However, the fact should not be neglected that there are some challenges ahead. It remains to be seen whether self-regulation or co-regulation is equipped appropriately (both in terms of financial and administrative resources) to achieve the expected results. Second, in some areas it seems to still be unclear what the respective roles of state regulation and such new forms of societal/sector regulation are – there may be room for readjustment once evaluation has shown, e.g., that it is no longer necessary to uphold state regulation, see Alexander Scheuer: "The Portrayal of Violence in the Media: the respective roles of public regulation, media self-regulation and co-regulation", contribution to the Council of Europe Expert Seminar "Violence in Everyday Life", held in Strasbourg, 11 June 2003, http://www.emr-sb.de/EMR/Portrayalofviolence_media.pdf

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Television and Protection of Minors in Some European Countries

A Comparative Study

Piermarco Aroldi

In the year 2002, the OssCom of the Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore of Milan (Italy)[1] was commissioned by the "TV e Minori"[2] Committee to carry out a study of the systems for the protection of minors in the field of television broadcasting in six different European countries. The following pages contain a summary of the study's principal results, the complete version of which has been published in Italian[3].

Premise

In the last 25 years, the terms of one of the more classical issues of the debate on media, that concerning the relation between television and minors, have undergone a significant transformation throughout Europe; the changes do not concern solely the approach and the theoretical perspectives expressed by the different disciplines but above all the profound modifications that have been introduced in the different national television systems and in the codes of rules regulating the field.

Carrying out a chronological examination of the main changes in the last decades, we observe that during the eighties television broadcasting was progressively liberalized (known as *deregulation*) leading to the establishment of commercial television, which sometimes occurred – as in Italy – in the total absence of adequate laws. The success of commercial television and the parallel, increasing social impact of television broadcasting have, in Europe, brought to the forefront some of the issues already contained in international media and pedagogical studies specifically on the *effects* and the *forms* of interaction between the television screen and young viewers, with particular reference to the broadcasting of scenes of violence and sex.

On the other hand, the nineties were characterized by a return to legislative initiatives aiming to redefine the rules of the system both at a European Commu-

nity and at a national level; attention was also paid to younger and more vulnerable sectors of the public with the introduction of specific laws, as well as the wide formulation of rules on an ethical and self-regulation basis. Different social entities participated in this "game of the rules": politicians, legislators, operators in the field, communication experts, public-interest groups, unions of consumers, teachers and parents. Seemingly opposing theories also came into play such as that according to which social responsibility should be a prerogative at the basis of a broadcaster's self-rule and the logic, which identifies the family as the institution whose task it is to determine what its members should and should not watch.

The result is a totally new, diversified and very dynamic scenario in constant transformation. As is known, all European countries share as their point of reference the code of norms set out by the European Union at the end of the eighties. However the actual framework in which they are applied varies. The differences lie in the cultural traditions of the various networks, the level of technology, advertising resources and forms of consumerism. Legislation and self-regulation have also found different forms of application, as different are social sensitivity in each country, educational priorities and the issues of protection underlying the norms. The very definition of the category of subjects that should be protected differs from one country to the next, in terms of age and of the extension to be attributed to a typically juridical category as "minors".

On the other hand, the process of integration in audiovisual markets in terms of operators, products and audience, together with the development of new technologies and the growing awareness for the need of an efficient and coherent European governance in the field, call for a comparison between the different experiences and the different forms of protection of minors which they have found.

From what has been said so far it is clear that this comparison is possible on two different levels. The first is on a procedural level: describing the systems of protection considering them as a coherent organic set of rules finalized at the efficient protection of minors. The criteria of evaluation are: applicability at a practical level, the clear assignment of duties and responsibilities to the subjects involved, the consensual acceptance of the instruments of regulation and control to be used, agreement on the laws involved and the sanction applied for breaches. The second level of comparison is content: on the one hand the norms and on the other the criteria for the evaluation of programming content, with specific reference to the different genres, scheduling times and the viewing limits to be applied on the basis of the audience's age.

Here we will concentrate principally on the first level of comparison in the attempt to explain how the different national legislations have created actual systems of protection and the tools they offer. The comparison of contents will be more concise and will refer mainly to the major themes contained in the legislation we will examine.

Aims and limits of the study

The aim of this study was to carry out an international recognition of the systems for the protection of minors in generalist television in order to try and identify the more significant trends and models within different national realities.

As the study could not be extended to all the members of the European Union we chose Italy and six other countries. We based our choice of the countries on criteria of non-uniformity: we chose two countries that were similar to Italy, from a geographical and cultural point of view (France and Spain, two neo-Latin countries where the social context and the development of television share many similarities). Then we chose to examine two more different countries from a cultural point of view (Germany and Sweden); lastly we opted for a country with a strong broadcasting tradition, a reference model for most European public networks, particularly interesting for its long experience in the field of research, and the special attention paid to the relationship between children and television (Great Britain) – as well as for a more innovative system (Netherlands).

For each of the six countries the study has highlighted the set of codes, from the European Union regulations in which each national legislation fits, to the constitutional laws, the laws on the protection of minors regulating radio and television networks, up to the guidelines, the codes of conduct and self-regulation carried out by single entities (producers, broadcasters, advertisers, etc.) with the aim of enacting the reciprocal integration of these norms in an actual "system of protection" resulting efficient and coherent at least from a formal point of view.

It should firstly be said that this choice has, amongst other things, entailed the need to concentrate on the "negative" aspect of the topic (limits, prohibitions, broadcasting conditions) rather than on the "propositional" aspect (promotional campaigns, experimenting, research, investment in productions for younger and teenage viewers), which is obviously the second sphere of action of a television system's approach towards its underage public and which deserves a separate study complementary to this one. It should also be added that the term "minor" used here indicates the different age categories that, in the different cases and national contexts, are recognized as a television audience sector needy of protection.

Research methodology

The study was carried out following a not strictly juridical approach and privileged the tradition of research on media and on television in particular. This meant developing an integrated methodology, which through bibliographical assessment ascertained the studies already carried out in the different countries on the subject of the protection of minors, and simultaneously identified and brought together the various documentations structuring the protection process.

In both cases it was thought fitting to identify, for each country, an "inside" referee, a foreign expert who could provide the study group with a local "competence", to check the material, point out any documents overlooked during the initial phase, provide more up-to-date or inaccessible documents, while also being able to suggest interpretations, critical issues and trends in the medium term. Finally, we asked each foreign expert for a contribution reflecting the "state of the art" of the public debate in his/her country on the topic.[4]

In order to assemble as wide a range of points of view as possible we chose to refer to experts of varying competence and working in different areas, from research in universities and other institutions to internal broadcasting network control and control carried out by competent authorities.[5]

The study then described each TV system on the basis of its history and its structure, concentrating obviously on unencrypted ground based technology. The hierarchical and chronological analysis of the codes of legislation and self-regulation were then inserted into this context; for each national system we pointed out the competent bodies and the different phases of the regulation process. Then we analysed the content of the fundamental rules and the current debate. To conclude the study we held an international meeting attended by the foreign experts who collaborated on the study.[6]

The European framework

We must firstly comment on the European Union regulatory context; to this end it is necessary to remember that France, Germany, Great Britain, Italy, Netherlands, Spain and Sweden have all integrated into their legislative system, each in their particular and specific form, the European Directive "Television Without Frontiers", 89/552/EEC (TWF) and its subsequent modifications (97/36/EC).

The Directive separates the subject of the protection of minors in relation to two distinct programming sectors: advertising and real television programmes, whatever category they may fall into.

As concerns advertising we must refer to Articles 15 and 16 which on the subject of minors state:

> Television advertising for alcoholic beverages shall comply with the following criteria:
> (a) it may not be aimed specifically at minors or, in particular, depict minors consuming these beverages (Article 15);
>
> Television advertising shall not cause moral or physical detriment to minors, and shall therefore comply with the following criteria for their protection:
> (a) it shall not directly exhort minors to buy a product or a service by exploiting their inexperience or credulity;

(b) it shall not directly encourage minors to persuade their parents or others to purchase the goods or services being advertised;
(c) it shall not exploit the special trust minors place in parents, teachers or other persons;
(d) it shall not unreasonably show minors in dangerous situations (Article 16).

As you will notice these indications are precise and detailed both in specifying categories of goods (other than alcohol there are limits on medicines and a total band on tobacco based products), and the contents of the advertisements and television sales which will be judged acceptable or inappropriate. The Directive also defines the limits concerning the insertion of advertising in programmes for younger viewers.

The second common point of reference for the protection of minors on the subject of programming is Article 1 of Directive 97/36/EC which at paragraph 27 reformulates Article 22 of the 1989 Directive. It is worth considering the entire article thus modified:

1. Member States shall take appropriate measures to ensure that television broadcasts by broadcasters under their jurisdiction do not include any programmes which might seriously impair the physical, mental or moral development of minors, in particular programmes that involve pornography or gratuitous violence.
2. The measures provided for in paragraph 1 shall also extend to other programmes which are likely to impair the physical, mental or moral development of minors, except where it is ensured, by selecting the time of the broadcast or by any technical measure, that minors in the area of transmission will not normally hear or see such broadcasts.
3. Furthermore, when such programmes are broadcast in unencrypted form Member States shall ensure that they are preceded by an acoustic warning or are identified by the presence of a visual symbol throughout their duration.

In addition to this is Article 22 b, which states:

> Member States shall ensure that broadcasts do not contain any incitement to hatred on grounds of race, sex, religion or nationality.

A glance at Article 22 allows us to identify certain important aspects of this topic. The first is that there seem to be, from the Community legislator's point of view, two types of programmes which are the subject of the Directive: those which "might seriously impair the physical, mental or moral development of minors" and those "which are likely to impair the physical, mental or moral development of minors"; the difference lies in the adverb "seriously" and if from a definition point of view there seems to be a lack of a precise reference allowing us to distinguish the former from the latter, the consequences at a programme scheduling

level are important. “Programmes which might seriously impair” are completely banned from television whilst the others can be broadcast under specific conditions preventing minors from viewing them.

The second is that from the point of view of programme content the rule is necessarily generic; if, on the one hand, it explicitly provides the unconditional exclusion of “pornography”, “gratuitous violence” and “any incitement to hatred” based on discrimination, on the other it provides no definition for the identification of such contents. It is true that the reference in paragraph 1 to “programmes containing pornography or gratuitous violence” would automatically seem to exclude certain programmes, for example pornographic films, easily recognized on the basis of extratextual and productional criteria. The issue however is still open, even though it mainly concerns encrypted broadcasting.[7]

There seems to be an even more generic approach in the definition of programmes “which might seriously impair the physical, mental or moral development of minors” and which can be broadcast unencrypted as long as they respect certain conditions. Rather than taking into consideration the programming contents we should therefore focus on the procedural conditions regulating their identification and broadcast.

In actual fact the European norm only takes a stand on broadcasting conditions, leaving to the Community Members the evaluation of the programmes; such conditions are not just “the selection of the time of the broadcast” or other “technical measures” but also the fact that these programmes must be “preceded by an acoustic warning or identified by the presence of a visual symbol throughout their duration”.

If the reference to the “technical measures” is decidedly vague and seems to refer to technical measures controlled by parents which are not at all common, the other two conditions seem to act synergetically: the choice of a scheduling time making it unlikely for minors to be viewing such programmes at that hour together with an acoustic warning (at the beginning) or a visual symbol (throughout the duration of the programme) making it possible to identify them.

Incidentally it is worth noting that the Directive in no way defines the programmes referred to in paragraph 2; fiction, light entertainment and news therefore are also subject to the above conditions.

A systematic approach: regulation or self-regulation?

Since all the countries examined here combine – and somehow reconcile – the need to safeguard minors with recognition of the right to freedom of expression, the first common features that seem to emerge from the study are a tendency to reject all *a priori* forms of censorship that go beyond the limits already suggested by the European Directive, as well as the active involvement of broadcasters in the process of regulation.

In organising its system of protection within the framework of the guidelines of the European Directive and national legislation, none of the countries analysed adopts only "top-down" regulation (civil or penal codes, systematic laws, special regulations, clauses in the TV licence or authorisation) or only self-regulation by broadcasters (production guidelines, codes of ethics, internal commissions, etc.). The different systems, in different forms and degrees, provide for complementary action:

- by a competent Authority (generally an Authority or Commission for broadcasting) which spells out the principles and (sometimes) the instruments of control to be applied in the wake of national legislation and the EU rules embodied in it;
- by the broadcaster (in its various professional forms and at various levels of its hierarchy) which accepts the principles and applies the instruments, so regulating itself in the daily practice of production/acquisition/programming;
- by an Authority that monitors programmes and issues sanctions against breaches.

Seen from this point of view, it seems more correct to speak of co-regulation, a term that also expresses the consensual and cooperative nature of the systems of protection, which are binding on broadcasters not only because they impose limitations on them but because they entrust them with the instruments to guarantee real self-regulation, for which they are responsible to the public and the competent Authorities. This co-regulation can, however, be analysed better by considering separately the three phases: of *regulation*, of *self-regulation* and of *control*. Also in this case, in keeping with the spirit of the European Directive and the approach adopted in this study, we shall devote particular attention to the *forms* that each of them assume to designate a system of effective protection, rather than the *contents* of the programmes subjected to sanctions.

Forms of regulation

The forms by which the national jurisdictions fix the principles for protecting minors, define the criteria of classification and indicate the instruments of control vary to some extent in each of the six countries. The approaches most frequently adopted seem to be the following:

- Definition of the qualitative or quantitative standards by the competent Authority (e.g., *Conseil Supérieur de l'Audiovisuel* or *CSA* which defines the *Cahiers de charge* in France) or codes of conduct (e.g., the *Independent Television Commission* and the related *ITC Code* in Britain), which often constitute an integral part of the broadcasting licence or authorisation;

- Accrediting of broadcasters by the competent Authority, which authorises broadcasting of programmes under paragraph 2 of Article 22 of the TWF Directive only by those broadcasters that subscribe to an Institute of self-regulation and certification (e.g., the *NICAM – Netherlands Institute for the Classification of Audiovisual Media* in Netherlands);
- Underwriting of bilateral agreements between the competent Authority and broadcasters for the explicit adoption of a measure of self-regulation (e.g., the French example of the adoption of a *rating system*, which the Spanish system draws on by analogy).

Forms of self-regulation

In-house self-regulation takes very different forms, some of which are explained by the specific history of the broadcasting network or public television system, in the different countries. This is the case, for example, with the BBC, which historically has developed a privileged relationship of an almost institutional form with the public; and by virtue of this it tends to preserve a broad sphere of independent judgement, but in forms that permit the "incorporation" of rules through procedures or bodies appropriate to broadcasting:

- Definition of internal guidelines (e.g., the BBC's for Britain, the ARD's for Germany): these are actual manuals for the use of producers, authors and directors of programming, extremely detailed in describing the topic, contents, languages, and delicate areas of particular concern, though they do not necessarily devote a chapter specifically to the protection of minors; this question is often dealt with as the specific version of that system of expectations that the public nurtures towards the TV channel and which, for this reason, the broadcaster considers to be its responsibility;
- Designation of a subject with whom responsibility rests within the broadcaster and who constitutes the referee for all the professionals involved; the subject designated may be an individual, responsible for protecting minors, to whom the authors and programme directors must apply (this is the case, for example, of the figure of the *Jugendschutzbeauftragte* introduced into the German system) or of a group entrusted with responsibility for programmes in those systems that provide for some coded rating system (e.g., the *Comité de visionnage* instituted within each French broadcaster, with its composition left to the free choice of the broadcasting company);
- Standardisation and unification of the criteria of evaluation of programmes through recourse to a sort of "third" certifying body. This system has the advantage of being outside the individual broadcasters and so guarantee-

ing a real margin of control, while at the same time it is the creation of an association of broadcasters and producers, which does not withdraw self-regulation from the subjects directly responsible (e.g., *NICAM* in Netherlands*, Freiwillige Selbstkontrolle Fernsehens* or *FSF* in Germany);

- Adoption, explicit or implicit, of conventional viewing times established by the broadcaster (e.g., the so-called *watershed*, traditionally adopted in Britain and imported into Germany and Sweden). This distinguishes between a broad band of family viewing for the whole public, including minors who may be alone in front of the TV, and a more restricted time, progressively introduced after peak viewing hours,[8] prevalently devoted to a mature, adult audience and whose contents may be more sensitive.

Forms of control

The process of co-regulation concludes, as we have said, with various forms of monitoring, at times complementary, that aim to verify the activity of self-regulation conducted by the broadcasters. The principal forms it takes are as follows:

- Self-monitoring (supervised by the competent Authority): in this case the subject created by the producers or broadcasters controls the effective and correct application of the rules for self-regulation of the system, but there is external supervision by institutions that can also intervene in cases where the sanctions possessed by the self-regulatory body are unable to act (this is the case, for example, in Netherlands, where the *NICAM* has the power to impose sanctions for behaviour that is "not seriously harmful" and is monitored in turn by the *Commissariaat voor de Media*, an Authority that also intervenes to deal with actions that are judged to be "seriously harmful");
- Control *a posteriori* by the competent Authority: the same institution that has laid down the regulations verifies compliance and imposes sanctions (e.g., the *CSA* in France);
- Control *a posteriori* by another designated Authority: control is entrusted by the competent Authority to another institution set up for this purpose (e.g., the case of Sweden, where there are actually two institutions of this type: the *Justitiekanslern*, the office of the Chancellor of Justice, and the *Rådet mot skadliga våldsskildringar*, a government commission that deals with representations of violence in the media);
- Control *a posteriori* on the basis of reports and complaints by the public. In this case the initiative is taken following complaints made by individuals or associations and it can be carried out either by the competent Authority or other institutions (e.g., the case of the Swedish broadcasting commission

Granskningnämnden för radio och TV, where a complaint about the violation of the code may lead to dismissal of the complaint, criticism or censure of the broadcaster).

An overall view[9] of the process of co-regulation in the various countries analysed is presented in Table 1. This scheme enables us, at the same time, to observe a number of peculiar features concerning Spain and Italy.

In Spain, the absence of a competent Authority and of guidelines for concretely applying the rating code seems to leave the instrument of self-regulation devoid of any real powers of intervention.

In Italy, it is worth recalling that the ministerial instrument of the *Codice di autoregolamentazione* became effective only at the start of 2003, though it was based on a previous (unsuccessful) system that dated back to 1997. It is interesting to note that the other forms of self-regulation implemented spontaneously by the commercial TV channels are essentially self-referential, since they are not recognised by the *Autorità per le garanzie nelle comunicazioni* which, in turn, is based only on the articles of the law. In both Spain and Italy, in short, co-regulation seems to be a system still needing to be defined.

Two principal models... that tend to converge

On the basis of the documentation about the national systems and the European framework in which it is set we can recognise, historically, two principal models, each of which is confirmed by reference to one or other of the paragraphs of the TWF Directive:

- The first is the *watershed* model, namely the division of viewing hours into family programmes and adult programmes (TWF, Article 22, 2: "...it is ensured, by selecting the time of the broadcast... that minors in the area of transmission will not normally hear or see such broadcasts") applied in Britain, Germany and (in fact, though not explicitly laid down by the system) in Sweden.
- The second is the *rating* system, namely a code that informs viewers of the age limits recommended for viewing a given programme (TWF Article 22, 3: "…shall ensure that they are preceded by an acoustic warning or are identified by the presence of a visual symbol throughout their duration.") which, in different ways, is applied in France, Spain, and Netherlands.

It is worth examining more closely how the two models are structured by describing some national examples.

The *watershed* model is peculiar to those systems that have a broad social legitimisation, based on trust in a long public service tradition and a sort of "institutionalisation" of broadcasting. It relies on the audience's almost institutional-

ised trust in the broadcaster and the corresponding recognition by the broadcaster of family viewers' expectations. The introduction, as the evening advances, of contents intended for an adult public is well represented by the organisation of viewing times (e.g., in the *ITC Programme Code*) as follows:

> 6 p.m. - 9 p.m.: family programmes
>
> 9 p.m. - 10.30 p.m.: transitional phase in which more delicate programmes can be aired
>
> 10.30 p.m. - 5.30 a.m.: programmes for an adult public.

The criteria for applying the *watershed* can be laid down in detail in internal guidelines by the broadcasters (as in the case of the *BBC* and the German *ARD*) or by institutionalised codes of practice incorporated in the practice of production and programming (as in the case of the *ITC Code*), or else based on prior evaluation (for example in the case of films screened in cinemas, which are submitted to a commission that assesses the need to introduce age limits for viewers).

In the first case we need only cite the example of the *BBC* in Britain, which suggests applying the following principles when deciding the viewing times for a given programme:

- good taste and decency
- ways of representing sex
- ways of representing violence
- risk of imitative and anti-social behaviour
- offensive and crude language

In the second case it is worth noting the German example, which refers the choice of viewing times to the limitations established beforehand by the committee of voluntary self-regulation of the cinema companies, the *Freiwillige Selbstkontrolle der Filmwirkshaft* or *FSK* (not suitable for viewers under 16: after 10 p.m.; not suitable for viewers under 18: after 11 p.m.). Britain also has a similar system (not suitable for viewers under 12: after 8 p.m.; not suitable for viewers under 15: after 9 p.m.; not suitable for viewers under 18: after 10 p.m.).

The *rating* model is based on a contractual type of agreement ascribing greater responsibility to the viewers while, at the same time, giving them more efficient information tools to evaluate the nature of the programme. Obviously this type of information is generally aimed not so much at minors as at their parents who are put in a position to determine an adequate use of television as fits their beliefs and needs. Of course this requires the presence of the parents and their will to carry out this "mediation" operation. If on the one hand this protection system gives greater importance to the family's educational role, on the other it s a prag-

matic solution in the case of complex television systems and which might be less subject to "institutionalisation".

In these cases, the efficiency of the system is based on the adoption of conventional classification systems based on the target and the type of content and any connection between programme classification and the hour of broadcast.

Programme classification can be entrusted, as in the case of France (see Table 2), to the individual *Comité de visionnage* operating within each broadcaster and selected using discretional criteria, e.g., *M6*: family mothers; *France 2*: programme directors and management members, etc.); particularly interesting is the case of Netherlands which has adopted a computerized system based on the on-line completion of a detailed questionnaire by a codifier: the codification programme used by *NICAM's Kijkwijzer* system automatically assigns each classified audiovisual product a symbol defining age limit and the specific content (violence, sex, fear, drug and alcohol abuse, discrimination, vulgar language) justifying the limit (see Table 3).

As we have seen, on the basis of the European TWF Directive there should be a synergetical application of both conditions: the choice of broadcast time and the necessity to identify programmes unsuitable for minors using a signal (a visual symbol or a sound); in fact paragraph 2 and 3 of Article 22 are explicitly tied by the conjunction "furthermore". By virtue of this concurrence the two traditional models, the *watershed* and the *rating* system, are probably destined to converge on forms of protection whereby according to its classification a programme fits into a specific broadcasting time slot. Again, let's take the French system as an example. The more up to date version of the rating system in use indicates the broadcasting time to be applied for categories 3 (unsuitable for viewers under 12, after 10 p.m.) to 5 (unsuitable for viewers under 18, after 12 p.m.).

Conclusion

On the basis of this international survey we can draw a few conclusions. The first consideration concerns the growing tendency towards co-regulation (and thus a more effective and efficient self-regulation) as a preferential way of guaranteeing the protection of minors. Supported also by the European Union, this model however increasingly supplements delegational responsibility to the family and parental control with the adequate support of tools for the classification and identification of programmes. The broadcaster's social responsibility and the family's educational responsibility seem to be destined to be merged and to cooperate, leaving no space for forms of reciprocal substitution as demonstrated by the progressive integration of the watershed model (traditionally the expression of the broadcaster's social awareness) and of the rating model (explicitly implying parental involvement and responsibility).

Secondly, the analysis of different European contexts with a long public service tradition, such as Germany and Great Britain (and Sweden to a certain extent), seems to suggest that public broadcasters, while having to respect service contracts, are legitimated to carry out autonomously their in-house guidelines on protection and therefore have an increasing margin of independence compared to commercial broadcasters, who receive their guidelines from the competent television system Authority or relative Commissions whose duty it is to control their application. In the case of the public services examined, it is worth remembering that the guidelines are extremely detailed and precise making any form of self-referential control very efficient.

Furthermore from a strictly procedural point of view it should be pointed out that in most cases, the co-regulation process is an integral part of the negotiation between the public institutions whose duty it is to control the television system and licensed or authorized broadcasters; in other terms, licences and concessions are the responsibility of the Authority determining the regulation principles, sometimes indicating or approving the self-regulation tools (e.g., the French rating system or the *NICAM* in Netherlands) and carrying out a complex supervision of the control phase. This factor and the application of significant sanctions in the case of violation (culminating in the loss of the licence or concession) make co-regulation particularly efficient.

As concerns the content of the rules protecting minors and programming contents subject to particular conditions and restrictions, it is possible to pick out in these pages only certain tendencies common to all six countries studied. Certainly, particular attention is paid to advertising, which in Sweden is not allowed in the case of children under the age of 12 and which in Spain is the subject of a surprisingly strict and precise law. It is strongly regulated also in the other countries, often through a specific Authority or Commission.

As concerns the actual programmes themselves, apart from a common (but sometimes ambiguous) attention towards pornography, it is above all violence which is subject to the more rigorous forms of regulation and control, as in the specific case of Sweden.

However, the more interesting indications are contained in those measures which, on the one hand, focus particularly on the real condition of children, preadolescents, adolescents and youngsters and which, taking into account the different ages, articulate the juridical definition of minor in a much more complex and elaborated manner; and on the other try to define the parameters needed to measure, according to the context, a wider range of "prejudicial" contents: from frightening scenes to forms of discrimination, from swearing to the use of harmful substances, from dangerous or antisocial behaviour to forms of substance abuse. The British or German guidelines, as well as the programme classification systems adopted in France and in Netherlands, are particularly significant from both these points of view.

However, beyond this initial general interpretation the study confirmed how each country has, in accordance to its own cultural sensitivity, focused attention

on the contents of television communication and the educational problems connected. Moreover, the aforementioned convergence between the watershed and the rating models also indicates the urgent need to focalise on classification systems, not only of television programmes but of all audiovisuals destined, in the current technological context, to circulate through different means and international distribution channels.[10] This reflection will, obviously, have to take into account cultural differences and the different traditions of the Member countries and reintroduces the complex problem of a common recognition of potentially "dangerous" contents.

In a multicultural and pluralist European content, the matter appears particularly delicate and worthy of attention.

Notes

1. OssCom is a media and communication research centre directed by Fausto Colombo; the study was directed by Piermarco Aroldi and carried out by Marco Deriu, Paola Ortelli and Chiara Valmachino. Special thanks go to Angelica Dadomo for her contribution as coordinator.
2. The "TV e Minori" Committee is the body whose responsibility it is to implement the Code of self-regulation underwritten by broadcasters belonging to the FRT-Federazione Radio-Televisioni; other than the broadcasters the Committee includes twenty-one major parent, teacher and consumer associations in Italy working for the protection of minors.
3. Aroldi, P. (ed.), *Il gioco delle regole. Tv e tutela dei minori in sei paesi europei*, Milano, Vita e Pensiero, 2003.
4. Unfortunately, with the exception of Spain where notwithstanding joint efforts and the involvement of members of different European research networks we were unable to contact an inside referee.
5. In some cases the functions overlap; refer to Table 4 for competence and qualifications of the experts who collaborated.
6. The meeting was held on 13th November 2002.
7. The topic is currently the subject of a heated debate in France.
8. The term has a different meaning and corresponds to different times in each country.
9. For necessity's sake it is a general and simplified synthesis focusing only on co-regulation forms of broadcasting (excluding advertising); due to the institutional system differences in the various countries the Authorities indicated in the table should only be considered homologues on the basis of their function in the co-regulation process.
10. On 6th January 2003, "The Commission's fourth report to the Council and to the European Parliament on the application of the 89/552/EEC Directive Television Without Frontiers" also came to the same conclusion and indicated this theme as one of the priorities in the revision procedure of the Directive.

Table 1. Synopsis of the co-regulation process

Member State	Implementation of the Directive 97/36/EC in the Member States*	Regulatory Authority / Broadcasting Commission	Subjects and tools of self-regulation	Control Authority
France	Loi n° 2000-719 du 1 août 2000 modifiant la loi n° 86-1067 du 30 septembre 1986 relative à la liberté de communication	Conseil Supérieur de l'Audiovisuel (CSA); *Cahiers de charge*	Comité de visionnage *Rating system binding on scheduling time*	CSA (monitoring and complaints)
Germany	Vierter Rundfunkänderungs-staatsvertrag vom 22. März 2000	Fernsehrat (National Public Television) Arbeitsgemeinschaft der Landesmedienanstalten (ALM), Gemeinsame Stelle Jugendschutz und Programm (GSPJ) (Public regional TV and commercial national TV)	Jugendschutzbeauftragte Guidelines *Watershed (+ acoustic warning)* Freiwillige Selbstkontrolle der Filmwirkshaft (FSK) Freiwillige Selbstkontrolle Fernsehens (FSF)	ALM/GSPJ (monitoring and complaints)
Italy		Autorità per le garanzie nelle comunicazioni (AgCom) Ministero delle Comunicazioni	"Codice di autoregolamentazione ministeriale TV e minori" *Watershed (+ acoustic and visual warning)* Codice di autoregolamentazione "TV e minori" (*protected time band*) *Rating system* (voluntary) Deontological and professional codes	AgCom (monitoring and complaints) Comitato di applicazione del codice di autoregolamentazione TV e minori (complaints) Comitato "TV e minori" (complaints)
Netherlands		Commissariaat voor de Media	Netherlands Institute for the Classification of Audiovisual Media (NICAM – Kijkwijzer) *Rating system*	Commissariaat voor de Media (monitoring and complaints) NICAM
Sweden	Lag om ändring i radio- och TV-lagen (1996:844), Svensk författ-ningssamling (SFS) 1998:1713	Radio- och TV-verket (RTVV) Granskningnämnden för radio och TV (GRN)	Guidelines (*Watershed*)	GRN (complaints) Justitiekanslern Rådet mot skadliga vålds-skildringar
Spain	Ley 22/1999 de 7 de junio (BOE n° 136 de 08.06.99), de Modificación de la Ley 25/1994, de 12 de julio (Real Decreto 410/2002 de 3 de mayo 2002)		*Rating system*	
United Kingdom	The Television Broadcasting Regu-lations 1998, Statutory Instru-ments number 3196 of 1998 The Broadcasting Act 1990 The Broadcasting Act 1996	Independent Television Commission (ITC) Broadcasting Standards Commission (BSC)	ITC Code BSC Code BBC Guideines *Watershed and Family viewing*	ITC BSC Broadcasting Complaints Commission (BCC)

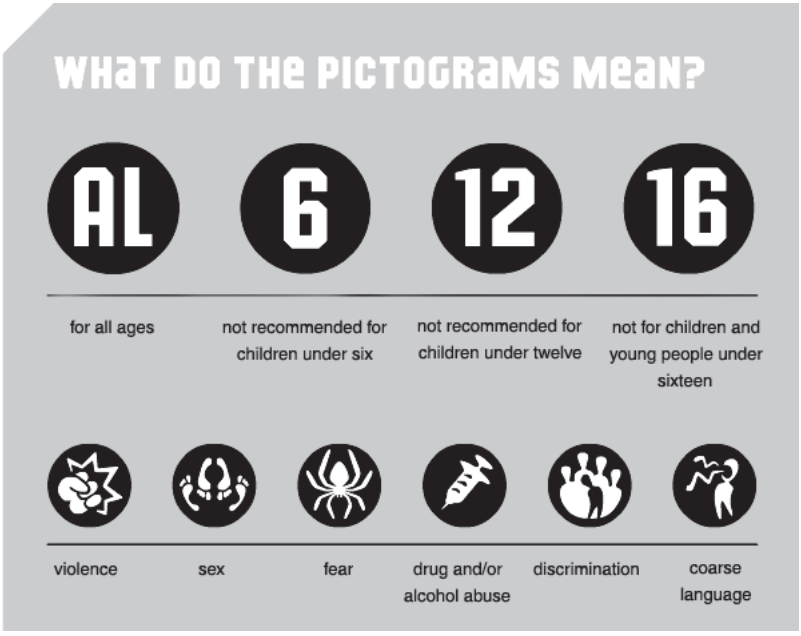
* *Source:* www.europa.eu.int/comm/avpolicy; "in the 2001 the Court of Justice in two cases decided that Member States had not implemented the Directive […] The Court held that Luxembourg and Italy had failed to fulfil their obligations […] In both Member States the provisions of the Directive have been duly implemented in the meantime […] In 2002 there was still a case against the Netherlands pending before the ECJ, but the Commission was able to withdraw its application, because also the Netherlands have now implemented the Directive in substance" (Commission of the European Communities, *4th Report on the application of Directive 89/552/EEC*, p. 7).

Table 2. The rating system used in France

Graphic symbol	Categories and definition
(none)	*Category 1:* the whole public
-10	*Category 2:* unsuitable for viewers under 10 years of age These programmes contain scenes which could be damaging to children under the age of ten.
-12	*Category 3:* unsuitable for viewers under the age of 12 These programmes could be damaging to children under the age of 12, especially when there are repeated scenes of physical and psychological violence. (10 p.m.)
-16	*Category 4:* unsuitable for viewers under the age of 16 The erotic or violent nature of these programmes could hinder the psychological, moral or physical growth of viewers under the age of 16. (10.30 p.m.)
-18	*Category 5:* unsuitable for viewers under the age of 18 These programmes are destined for an adult audience as they contain indecent scenes, which could hinder the psychological, moral or physical growth of viewers under the age of 18. (12 p.m.)

Source: www.csa.fr

Table 3. The rating system used in Netherlands



Source: www.kijkwijzer.nl

Table 4. The international experts who took part in the study

Country of origin	Name	Qualification
France	Monique Dagnaud	Centre d'Etude des Mouvements Sociaux CNRS/ EHESS
Germany	Stephanie Meyer	Jugendschutzbeauftragte Saarlaendischer Rundfunk
United Kingdom	David Buckingham	Centre for the Study of Children, Youth and Media, Institute of Education
Netherlands	Katinka Moonen Margo De Waal	NICAM – Netherlands Institute for the Classification of Audiovisual Media
Sweden	Ulla Carlsson	Nordicom – Nordic Information Centre for Media and Communication Research, Göteborg University
	Ann Katrin Agebäck	Council on Media Violence

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The Myth that the Rating Systems and V-chip Will Help Solve the Problem*

W. James Potter

Ever since televisions became a staple in American living rooms, the public has been pressuring Congress and the FCC (Federal Communications Commission) in the US to do something about the violence pouring into their homes every day. Congress has been holding hearings on this complaint for over 50 years but doing very little to effect a remedy – or even a change. There have been a few instances of Congress pressuring the industry to alter some of its practices, but these have been largely unsuccessful. Then in 1996, the V-chip (for "violence chip") was swept into law on the coattails of the Telecommunications Act. Many hail this as a major breakthrough in the problem of media violence. I am not one of them. In fact, I think this is a major failure, as I will show in the following analysis of this myth.

Building toward the V-chip

Throughout the past decade, both Congress and the public grew more fixated on a ratings system as a solution to the problem of media violence, while alternative proposals were falling by the wayside. For example, in the early 1990s, Congress was considering as many as 10 bills dealing with violence on television. These bills were generally one of three types: family viewing hour, ratings system, and blocking devices.

Family viewing hours

One set of proposals put forth since congressional debates began in the 1950s is the idea of a "safe harbor", a time when programming would be appropriate for the entire family. This type of legislation is designed to prohibit the airing of violent content during hours when children are reasonably likely to make up a substan-

tial portion of the audience ("Violence on Television", 1993). The NAB (National Association of Broadcasters) Broadcast Code contained such a restriction until its abandonment in 1988 ("Voices Against Violence", 1994), so throughout the 1990s many people were working to get the programmers to create safe harbors or violence-free periods of the day when children are most likely to be viewing.

On the surface the safe harbor, or "family viewing hours", appears to be a good idea. But this is an unworkable proposal, because there is no time when children are not viewing television in large numbers. For example, 9 p.m. is usually regarded as a safe harbor border, that is, it is assumed that children drop out of the prime-time audience at 9 p.m. Thus it is safe to program exclusively for adults at 9 p.m. Apparently the supporters of this proposal do not have children, or if they do, their children are in the minority as far as bedtime. When we look at the data from the A.C. Nielsen Company, we see that among children 2 to 11 years of age, there is a drop at 9 p.m., but that drop does not mean that children disappear from the viewing audience. The drop is from 12 million to 10.8 million children. Does a 12 percent shrinkage in the size of the children's audience qualify as a signal to start the safe harbor period? I think not. Young children are viewing in large numbers during all day-parts. At 11 p.m., when prime time is over, there are still 3.2 million children viewing television; this figure is even higher than the 3.0 million adolescents (13 to 17) viewing at this same time. How small does the children's audience need to get before we can consider the harbor safe for violence? Any number but zero would be an arbitrary – and indefensible – answer to this question. It is disingenuous to embark on a quest to protect children from risk and then to be satisfied with a proposal that ignores the risk to more than 10 million children.

Ratings and report cards

There were two notable bills designed to provide viewers with information about violent content on television. One measure, the Children's Television Violence Protection Act of 1993, would have required the broadcast of advisory messages before violent programs (with the exception of shows aired from 11 p.m. to 6 a.m.). The second bill, the Television Violence Report Card Act of 1995, would have required programs to be rated for violent content so that broadcasters and advertisers may be included in public reports on televised violence ("Violence on Television", 1993). Neither of these bills was passed, because attention shifted toward a more technological "solution" – blocking devices.

Blocking devices

Several bills sponsored by Rep. Edward Markey and Sen. Kent Conrad (among others) called for mandatory installation on all sets of a so-called V-chip, which

would use the vertical blanking interval portion of a TV signal to transmit program information to viewers' homes. With this technology, viewers could block out violent or other offensive programming. One of these bills was incorporated into the Telecommunications Competition and Deregulation Act, which was passed in 1996. Part of that law required that all television sets with screen sizes of 13 inches or larger must have the V-chip technology if they were to be sold in the United States beginning January 1, 2000. The passage of the law was hailed as a major victory in the war against media violence.

V-chip software problems

The V-chip is only a piece of hardware. In order to work at all, it needs to be programmed with information about the programs to be aired. In order to work well, it needs to be programmed with information that is accurate, detailed, and keyed to the risks of harm to the viewers.

There are some significant challenges to developing good software for the V-chip. In rising to those challenges, we have gotten off to a very poor start, particularly in five areas. First, the industry was allowed to develop its own system. Second, the system that the industry designed provides as little information to viewers as possible. Third, the industry was permitted to assign ratings to its own programs and to do so with no oversight. Fourth, the ratings are misapplied, so that two very different shows can get the same rating. And fifth, most people do not understand the ratings, nor do they use them. This set of problems is characterized by George Gerbner with the following analogy: "It's like the major polluters saying 'we shall continue our profitable discharge into the common cultural environment, but don't worry we'll also sell you gas masks to protect your children and have a free choice!' " (Martin, 1998, p. 7).

Programmers develop ratings system

The first barrier in the way of a meaningful solution was erected when Congress allowed the television programmers to develop their own ratings system. In order to circumvent the industry objections to the V-chip, Congress left it up to the television networks to establish their own rating system and to put it in place by January 1997. From a political point of view, this was a success. Although many people in the industry complained and dragged their feet, almost everyone got on board by 1997 (one exception was NBC).

From a problem-solution point of view, this concession to the industry was not a success. The process the television industry used to develop its own ratings system was highly controlled by industry insiders, thus ensuring that the resulting system would be crafted primarily for the industry's benefit. Programmers

began this process by putting together an advisory board headed by Jack Valenti, president of the MPAA (The Motion Picture Association of America) and one of the designers of the motion picture rating system.

The advisory board at first appeared to be concerned about getting input from many concerned parties. Although the board went through the motions of talking to people outside the industry, there is no evidence that they were influenced by any of the opinions that the industry did not already hold. For example, Valenti said he talked to some members of the clergy

> to tell them that when we have something that seems to be reasonable by way of a ratings system, we'll run it by them. But we will not be running it by them for veto purposes. We're going to keep this within the television industry. (quoted in Biddle, 1996, p. 59)

In any event, this process was a public relations success: The industry portrayed itself as acting very responsibly even in the face of being manipulated by an oppressive federal government.

The ratings system that was developed for television was based on – and looks very similar to – the MPAA ratings system. The developers knew that the MPAA ratings system was palatable to the film industry and that producers knew how to manipulate the ratings for marketing advantages.

The MPAA system was established in 1968 to ward off government intervention. It started with four categories (G, PG, R, and X – general audiences; parental guidance suggested; restricted – under 17 requires accompanying adult; restricted); in 1984, PG-13 (parents strongly cautioned) was added. In 1990, the X designation was changed to NC-17 (no one 17 and under admitted).[1] The MPAA ratings are assigned by a ratings board consisting of parents in the Los Angeles area. The members of this board, whose names are kept secret, are appointed by the film industry. Valenti explains: "I don't have any child behavioral experts on that panel. I just want ordinary people." Although standards are arbitrary and often unclear, illicit drug use automatically warrants a PG-13, as does a single sexually derived obscenity, and if the obscene word is used in a sexual context, it warrants an R (Morris & Silver, 1999).

The television ratings advisory board began with the MPAA system and made some minor adaptations by moving to six age-based categories: two for children (TV-Y and TV-Y7) and four for general audiences (TV-G, TV-PG, TV-14, and TV-MA) (see Table 1). The television industry grudgingly agreed to this rating system, and it was first instituted in January 1997 (Mifflin, 1998).

Although Valenti headed the development of the TV ratings system, he said he did not want the television system to resemble too closely the MPAA system of G, PG, PG-13, R, and NC-17. His reasoning was not that the content in television is different from content in movies and therefore two different systems are warranted. Instead, Valenti said: "I don't want to diminish their effectiveness as ratings for motion pictures, nor would I want to diminish their effectiveness on television"

by making them interchangeable (Biddle, 1996, p. 59). This is very curious reasoning. Apparently Valenti believes that a certain kind of violent portrayal may be appropriate for a 7-year-old in the movies but not at home, or vice versa.

Immediately, this system was criticized for being an age-based system, not a program content-based system (Cantor, 1998). The age-based system relies on the assumption that all children of the same age are the same as far as their ability to handle different television content. All parents can recognize this as a faulty assumption. To this criticism the industry responds that the age ratings are meant to be suggestive, that is, they are merely guidelines that parents must use in their individual families. This is a fair response to the criticism. But this then leads to the question: If the age-based ratings are only suggestive, where do parents get the rest of the information they need to make good decisions? Clearly parents need more information about the content in the shows.

In response to the criticism, the industry group amended the rating system nine months after their initial adoption to add some information about the content of their rated programs. The revisions were essentially five letter ratings (FV, V, S, L, and D) to indicate whether the programs contained violence, sexual situations, or bad language (see Table 1). Although this system appears to provide information about the content of programs, that information is almost meaningless. The ratings are categorical and provide no sense of the extent of negative elements. For example, a rating of V means there is some violence in the program, but that could be 1 act or 60 acts – there is no way to tell from the rating of V. More important, the content ratings are missing a sense of context. A program marked with a V could be very harmful to viewers (i.e., containing violence that is glamorized, sanitized, and trivialized), or it could teach valuable lessons (i.e., violence

Table 1. Television industry-developed program rating system

Age-based ratings
TV-Y: Program is designed to be appropriate for all children.
TV-Y7: Program is designed for children age 7 and above.
TV-G: Most parents would find this program suitable for all ages.
TV-PG: Program contains materials that parents may find unsuitable for younger children.
TV-14: This program contains some material that parents would find unsuitable for children under 14 years of age.
TV-MA: This program is specifically designed to be viewed by adults and therefore may be unsuitable for children under 17.
Content-based ratings
FV: Fantasy violence in children's programs
V: Violence
S: Sex
L: Coarse language
D: Sexual dialogue and innuendo

is portrayed with a highly remorseful perpetrator and victims in great physical as well as emotional harm). Risk of harmful effects to viewers lies in the context of the portrayals – that is, where viewers construct their meaning – but the people who developed the television ratings system have been unwilling to provide meaningful information to people who want to make good choices about whether to watch a violent program.

System is designed to provide as little information as possible

The second of the problems with the V-chip system is that the system developed by the networks is designed to provide viewers with very little information through ambiguous labeling. The low information content of the symbols allows the programmers to present the ratings in a harmless (to the show) manner. Furthermore, if programmers are clever, they can manipulate certain symbols to achieve a "forbidden fruit" kind of attraction. Prohibiting children and adolescents from doing something often makes them regard that something as highly attractive. Research clearly shows that the more restrictive movie ratings entice many children to seek out media content that is labeled as being inappropriate for their age group (Cantor & Harrison, 1996). For example, when a movie is rated R, many children find the movie more attractive than if that same movie were rated G.

Are programmers using this information about forbidden fruit attractiveness to their advantage? It is a little early to determine whether this is the case with television, but there are critics who argue that this is the case with film. These critics argue that the film ratings are used more as a marketing tool than as a sincere attempt to convey good information to the public. For example, Andrews (1995) contends that systems such as the MPAA ratings for film are often used to generate marketing publicity for films with questionable content. Also, the well-known film critic Roger Ebert says that the ratings do not help parents shield children from objectionable material but instead allow more sex and violence than many 17-year-olds should see.

It is important to note that researchers have found that labeling the *content* does not create a similar forbidden fruit attraction (Cantor & Harrison, 1996). Although labeling a movie with an R or NC-17 makes the movie more attractive to adolescents, the labeling of that same movie with V for violence does not increase attractiveness. So age ratings can be manipulated to attract more viewers, but content information can only scare viewers away. This is a reason why the programmers have accepted the age-based ratings and resisted using the content information ratings.

Also, the age-based system requires the raters, who are not experts in child development, to make important judgments about the appropriateness of certain shows for different age levels of viewers. However, not all people develop their understanding of stories and their experience with life at exactly the same age. Not all 12-year-olds are the same. Also, not all households are the same. Some

have a higher tolerance for violence but no tolerance for sex or bad language. When the ratings system does not provide a description of the content, it is impossible for parents to make an informed decision.

MPAA president Jack Valenti admits that the ratings system is flawed but chooses not to change it, because, he says: "we can't draw the lines that precise" (Morris & Silver, 1999). But Valenti, as well as critics, are missing the point. The system is flawed *not* because the MPAA is unable to draw more precise lines between age groups but because the MPAA is not providing more information about content. Consumers do not want the MPAA system to draw more age-based lines or to defend their lines as being nonarbitrary. The public wants more information so that individuals can draw their own lines. My child might not be ready for a PG-13 movie when she is 13 or even 14, but your child might be ready at age 11. How can we tell? We need to use the information we have about our children and put that together with information about television programs in order to make informed decisions. In surveys, parents continually say they prefer ratings that give information about content over those that provide age recommendations (Cantor, 1998; Cantor, Stutman, & Duran, 1996). Most parents prefer content labels, that is, they want warnings about whether violence, sex, bad language, and so forth are in particular shows. However, the industry has resisted such labeling. Valenti deflects such criticism by saying that parents need to take more responsibility for what their children see (Morris & Silver, 1999), but the irony here is that parents who are trying to be responsible in making better viewing decisions for their children need more information from programmers. However, the industry's response to such a request is to lay the blame on parents for not being more responsible.

The most serious shortcoming of media businesses' providing little information is that consumers are provided with no sense of risk. Even when networks agree to label their violent programs with a V, people have no way of knowing if that means one act or wall-to-wall violence. Also, no distinction is made between a show that portrays violence in a morality play and those shows that portray it as a glamorous and successful way of solving problems. The context of the portrayal is much more important than the frequency when trying to understand how harmful the exposure to particular violent occurrences might be.[2]

Let's consider the different options available to people who are entrusted with labeling programs (see Table 2). For purposes of keeping the illustration simple, I have organized this into five types. Notice that as we go from Type l (no labeling) to Type 5 (risk ratings) the benefits to viewers greatly increase, but the cost of the system also goes up. Also, as we move up the types, the program providers lose control over the ratings. This is why it has been such a struggle to go from Type 1 to Type 2 and also why there is little hope at this time that there will be any further progress to higher types.

Table 2. Different types of media content labeling systems

Type 1: No labeling

Advantage: This requires no effort from program providers.

Disadvantages:

- Consumers have no way to know the violent content of a program ahead of viewing unless they can find a critic who has previewed the program and written a detailed account of it.
- If there are a lot of critical reviews of shows published in local newspapers and magazines, then there is a concern about uniformity in judgments across different critics reviewing different shows.

Type 2: Age-based labeling

Advantages:

- Program providers get credit for labeling while providing as little information as possible.
- Program providers can use "forbidden fruit" labels to attract larger audiences.
- These are relatively easy for viewers to understand, because they are already used to the system from the MPAA.

Disadvantages:

- Labelers must make two very sophisticated judgments: (a) content judgments about the level of maturity needed for someone to understand, appreciate, and not be adversely affected; and (b) viewer judgments about how people of different age groupings would process the information and be affected by it.
- Not all people in a certain age group are the same in terms of maturity or risk of negative effect. Many 13-year-olds are able to handle PG-14 shows, whereas many 14-year-olds are not.

Type 3: Categorical content labeling

Advantage: More information is provided to viewers and their parents.

Disadvantage: The system is categorical, that is, if a show has violence it gets a V, and some V shows can be wall-to-wall violence, whereas others present only one act.

Type 4: Content synopsis

Advantage: This provides lots of information so viewers can make more informed decisions.

Disadvantage: This system is very labor intensive.

Type 5: Risk ratings

Advantage: This type of system puts the focus on the meaning of violence portrayed and how that meaning can change the probability of harming viewers.

Disadvantage: We do not have enough research findings at the present time to make good risk ratings.

Programmers assign ratings to their own programs

Only the programmers themselves are permitted to give their own shows the ratings. To most readers, this shortcoming is intuitively obvious. It is putting the

fox in charge of guarding the henhouse. In a public opinion poll taken at the end of the first year of the new program ratings systems, parents were found to be very skeptical of the networks' providing useful information they can use to guide the viewing of their children (Jones, 1998).

Industry insiders defended the application of their system by saying that all the networks had their own broadcast standards and practices departments and that they had worked well in the past (Biddle, 1996). "We've had a very productive standards and practices department", said Martin Franks, senior vice president at CBS. He continued: "This is a point we've been trying to make for five years. … We have producers bitching and moaning about what cuts they have to make. We're looking at each script anyway." Franks argues that the very fact that censors approve a given episode suggests its suitability for general audiences. He also points out that the networks have been placing warnings of violence in front of certain programs for years. For example, CBS occasionally aired warnings about violence before episodes of *Walker, Texas Ranger,* and ABC airs a sober warning that is "this is an adult drama" before each episode of *NYPD Blue.*

What Franks fails to address is that if the broadcast standards and practices departments have been doing their jobs well in the eyes of the public, why is there so much criticism? Of course, it is possible that the standards and practices departments *have* been screening out unacceptable portrayals of violence. Because we never see what is screened out, we must take it on faith that the networks are in fact toning down violent content. So let's give them credit for the situation's not being worse, but we must also give them the blame for the situation's being as bad as it is.

Not all television networks have standards and practices departments. UPN, which has been a major television network since 1995, does not have a department or even a single person whose primary job is to monitor content and identify material that may be unsuitable to present. Instead, this function is shared by Adam Ware, the chief operating officer, and David England, the chief financial officer (Stanley, 2001). This may be one reason why studies have shown that UPN is usually ranked first in terms of rates of objectionable material. For example, a study by the Parents Television Council found 18.1 acts of objectionable material per hour on UPN; this was much higher than the rates on any of the other broadcast networks (Garvey, 2001).

The locus of the problem with allowing the networks to rate their own programs is not with whether they have a broadcast standards department but instead with their motives. Because programmers have a very different motive than do consumers, it is important that an independent body assign ratings so that one group's motives do not supercede the motives of the other. The motive of the programmers is to use the ratings to increase the audience size. From the programmers' perspective, when ratings can be used to increase audience size (such as attracting new viewers through a forbidden fruit effect), they are useful, but if the program labeling highlights risk to viewers, this might have the effect of scaring potential viewers away, and this is bad for programmers.

Parents who try to make responsible decisions about their children' s viewing are not asking for advertising or for "forbidden fruit" temptation to lure their children; instead, these parents want enough information about the upcoming programming so they can assess the degree to which their own children might be at risk from viewing the program. If consumers already had this information or if they could get reliable information from other sources, there would be no reason to ask for it. But such information does not exist for television shows; the situation is different with theatrical films: People can read a variety of reviews from their most trusted critics to help them make the decision about whether to see the movie. The only reviews available about television shows appear after the shows have already been broadcast, and then the review is more about the series than about a particular episode.

The media industries have a very different perspective on the V-chip. Programmers do not want to provide information about their shows *unless they can control that information in order to attract large audiences to their programs.* The television networks are highly competitive businesses whose primary purpose is to maximize profits and thus increase the value of their businesses. Their motivation is to protect themselves, not the viewers. If their motivation were to protect viewers, they would be making very different decisions about what gets screened out. In fact, if they were primarily concerned with the welfare of their audiences, they would be much more likely to keep highly graphic content – even though it has a high probability of offending many viewers – because they would be concerned that sanitizing the violence would increase the risk of desensitizing viewers.[3]

Ratings are misapplied

When we analyze the content of certain films or television shows and then look at their ratings, several other problems clearly emerge that indicate that the ratings are not being applied in a uniform or meaningful manner. There are examples of very different shows being given the same rating as well as very similar shows being assigned different ratings. For example, Roger Ebert points out that a film with occasional profanity such as *Limbo* received an R rating – the same rating as *8mm,* a film about the hyperviolent world of snuff films. Ebert complains that the R rating covers too much territory and has therefore lost its meaning.

Joe Zanger, managing editor of a web site (pg14.com) and newsletter aimed at giving parents information on choosing movies, says the problem with the ratings system is that the line between R and PG-13 has become "hopelessly blurred". Zanger cites *The First Wives' Club* as an example. "The theme of that movie was divorce and revenge. That's pretty grown-up stuff. But that film pulled a PG rating. Not even PG-13!" (Oldenburg & Snider, 1999, p. 1D).

Some films are clearly violent but are still marketed as family entertainment. For example, within two weeks of the release of the movie *Karate Kid,* a violent film that was rated as family fare, pediatricians had seen numerous children who

were injured by their playmates while imitating the action portrayed in that film (Robb, 1991).

Just because a film has a G rating does not mean it is suitable for all ages. Movie ratings typically don't rate for fear. Something might be rated G and produce a lot of fear for kids. Accordingly, KidScore has warnings on such popular fare as *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, because it presents some fantasy violence, illegal and harmful acts, and scenes that have the ability to cause fear. KidScore warns that this video should be viewed with caution by young children. Likewise, KidScore warns parents about *Toy Story,* again because of the nature of the violence as having the ability to scare young children (Churnin, 1998).

In a study published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association,* Fumie Yokota and Kimberly Thompson (2000) reported the results of an analysis of all G-rated feature films released in theaters between 1937 and 1999. They found at least one act of violence in all films, and these acts of violence consumed anywhere from 6 seconds to 24 minutes, with the duration getting longer in more recent films. Furthermore, the majority of the violence (55%) depicted good characters using violence as a successful means of dueling with the bad characters. Also, they found that in G-rated animated films in 1940, there was an average of 6 minutes of violence per movie, and by 2000 there were 11 minutes per movie (Morris, 2000).

The use of the television ratings system earned a mixed grade in an analysis of the television networks' revised ratings system one year after it was implemented. The good news was that the age-based ratings were generally applied fairly (Kunkel et al., 1998). As for the age-based ratings, among all TV-G-rated shows, 20 percent contained violence, but usually the level of intensity was low, and there were an average of only two acts of violence per show. As for the TV-PG shows, violence was found in 55 percent of them. In the TV-14 programs, 70 percent contained violence.

The bad news was that the content information was largely missing. For example, only 21 percent of the shows with violence were marked with a V, and only 19 percent of children's shows with fantasy violence got an FV rating (Kunkel et al., 1998). Remember that it is the content ratings that are more valuable to TV viewers and risky for the networks.

Most people do not understand or use the V-chip

Do people, especially parents, use the new system? The answer is no. The ratings system began in January 1997. In May 1998, the Kaiser Family Foundation commissioned a survey to assess the reaction of parents to the age-based and content-based programming warnings. This was after the system had been operational for 16 months. The survey found that a little more than half (54%) of the parents surveyed reported they at least sometimes used the industry-imposed TV content ratings to help them decide what their children should watch. A little

less than half (46%) said they pay scant or no attention to the warnings printed in the *TV Guide* listings and briefly superimposed on the upper lefthand comer of the TV screen. A companion survey of children ages 10 to 17 reported that just over one third of them (36%) said they decided not to watch a program based on its rating, for reasons ranging from avoiding the wrath of parents to avoiding the shame of watching a program aimed at younger children. Later study by the Kaiser Foundation found that only 28 percent of parents said they use the television ratings regularly, and only 17 percent of parents with a V-chip in their television said they program it (Johnson, 2001). Also, parents in the poll said the ratings often are confusing, and their 15-second duration at the beginning of a program is not long enough (Jones, 1998). Also, according to a 1998 poll by the Annenberg Public Policy Center, only a small percentage of parents understood and used the onscreen ratings that accompany TV shows (Barnhart, 1999).

A large part of the problem is that parents do not understand what the ratings are or what they mean. For example, in a Kaiser-funded study, Dale Kunkel and his colleagues (1998) found that 61 percent of parents who used the ratings believed that shows that are rated TV-Y are not supposed to contain any violence, but an analysis of those shows revealed that 55 percent did in fact contain violence.

Another problem is that parents find that programming the V-chip is not simple, so many parents are put off by the task. Even experts sometimes have trouble. At a Senate committee hearing, one manufacturing executive was unable to successfully demonstrate the technology (Mundy, 1995).

Parents need to be taught how to program the hardware of the V-chip and how to understand what the ratings mean. Where were parents supposed to go to get the needed information? They were supposed to get the information from broadcasters themselves. When the V-chip legislation was enacted, the commercial television networks agreed to educate users by presenting public service announcements (PSAs) in their programming to explain the rating codes. But by the summer of 2000, a survey found that 39 percent of parents still had never even heard of the V-chip. It appears that this problem of lack of knowledge in the public can be traced to broadcasters' not following through on their mandate to educate the public. From January 2000 to August, the big four commercial television networks had run a combined total of only 59 PSAs on the V-chip, and 54 of these (92%) were run by CBS. That means that CBS ran its PSA about twice each week; Fox and NBC aired their PSAs once every 15 weeks; and ABC aired its PSA only once in the 30-week period (FCC, 2000). This poor performance from the commercial networks prompted FCC Commissioner Gloria Tristani to question the degree of commitment the networks have to educating their viewers about their system. During that 30-week period, each of the networks scheduled more than 30,000 30-second slots (called avails) for ads, program promos, and PSAs. In this more than 1,000 hours of avails, less than 30 minutes of time total across the four networks was set aside for V-chip education. This prompted Tristani to send a letter to the major broadcast networks asking them to do more in educating the public about the V-chip and the ratings systems.

Many people in the industry are satisfied with the ratings system, and they shift the burden of responsibility back on to parents. For example, Maryann Grasso, vice president and executive director of the National Association of Theater Owners, says that the way to improve the current system of movie ratings "is for parents to take a strong position with their kids and say, 'I don't want you to see this movie' " (Oldenburg & Snider, 1999, p. ID). Also, director Barry Sonnenfeld (*Men in Black* and *Wild, Wild West*) thinks that the existing rating system is sufficient. "It lets parents and children know what kind of movie they are seeing. No more is necessary", he says (Oldenburg & Snider, 1999, p. 1D).

Valenti argues that it is purely the fault of parents if the MPAA system is not working well. "We can't have policemen with bayoneted guns in front of every household [to get them to follow the ratings]", Valenti says. Of course Valenti can't control the parents of America. But it also appears that Valenti has no control over the people who work in his own industry. A recent FTC report revealed that children are frequently able to buy tickets to R-rated movies without parental accompaniment. The FTC (Federal Trade Commission) survey found that half the movie theaters admitted children ages 13 to 16 to R-rated films, even when they were not accompanied by an adult. Also, 85 percent of the time children 13 to 16 who were unaccompanied by an adult were able to buy both explicit recordings and electronic games that were rated M (mature) (FTC, 2000, p. 1).

Valenti also said: "We can only put the ratings out there – that is the most we can do in a democratic society." Again Valenti misses the point. There are good labeling systems that have lots of information about potentially harmful content in movies, and there are poor systems that are based on intuitive judgments made by people on a secret board that believe all 12-year-olds are the same and that all 13-year-olds are much more mature than all 12-year-olds. Some systems are simply more useful than others. It is disingenuous to provide parents with a weak system and then blame those parents for not using the system more, especially when the industry has done so little to follow through on its promise to educate the public about the V-chip and the ratings.

Conclusions

It is a myth that the V-chip and its program ratings system will help solve the problem of media violence. Television programmers have kept control of the development and use of the system, so it is not surprising that the system is crafted to serve their needs – not the needs of the viewers. Recall that the ratings are not assigned to shows by experts who understand the nature of risks to viewers. To the contrary, Valenti brags that ratings for films are assigned by a board that specifically excludes social scientists. Furthermore, ratings of television shows on at least one network are assigned by people primarily concerned by the company's finances, not the well-being of the viewers the company is affecting.

Furthermore, programmers have done little to educate the viewing public about how to use the V-chip. As a result, many people are still unaware of this device and how to use it. Also, many people who consider using the system find the age-based categories not very helpful and the content letters confusing. If the ratings system were to evolve into one that provided much more information about the amount and nature of violent content in shows, it would be much more useful. But given the current motives of the television industry, there is little chance that such a system will evolve.

Notes

1. Explanation of the symbols is added by the editors. (*editors' note*)
2. See Myth 9 (i.e., the preceding chapter in the book from which this chapter is reprinted.)
3. See Myth 9 (i.e., the preceding chapter in the book from which this chapter is reprinted.)

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Regulation of TV Contents in Argentina

Santiago Barilá

In Argentina all types of broadcasting activities (i.e., free to air/open television, pay television, radio, etc.) are regulated by the Federal Government (as opposed to provincial or municipal governments).

Regulations governing broadcasting are law No. 22,285 (the *Broadcasting Act*), decree No. 286/81, and resolution No. 830/2002 of the Federal Broadcasting Committee (Comité Federal de Radiodifusión or COMFER).

The mentioned regulations establish goals and prohibitions for broadcasting networks with regard to contents, and also define the scope and attributions of COMFER, which has the exclusive power to enforce regulations governing contents, subject to judicial review.

It is interesting to see what role COMFER sets out for itself as concerns protection of children:

> During the Minor Protection Time (8 a.m. to 10 p.m.) there is a transfer of responsibility from parents to Government, which, using regulations on broadcasting, assumes the role of protecting children to avoid their accessing contents that may be harmful or interfere with their normal growth.[1]

Section 5 of the Broadcasting Act establishes that broadcasting services must facilitate the cultural enrichment of the population, promote its moral growth and respect for freedom, social solidarity, personal dignity, human rights, respect for republican institutions, strengthening of democracy, and the preservation of Christian morals.

Further goals of broadcasting services are those related to contributing to the general well-being, strengthening national unity and the faith and hope in the future of Argentina, the education of the population, freedom of speech, promoting citizen participation and feelings of international friendship and cooperation (section 14 of the Broadcasting Act).

Obligations

Networks have the following limitations/obligations:[2]

- Personal intimacy must not be disturbed;
- Contents must not harm the health or psychic well-being of viewers;
- Programs rated 18+ may not be shown, at any time;
- Within the Minor Protection Time, programs must be rated as pertinent to all audiences;
- Programming for children and youngsters must be appropriate to the requirements of their education;
- Information must be true, objective and pertinent. Contents and communication of news must aim at avoiding public turmoil or collective alarm, must not affect national security, praise illicit activities or promote any kind of violence;
- News regarding sordid, repulsive or gruesome doings or events must be treated delicately;
- Advertising must abide by the general criteria set for broadcasting contents, especially as concerns the integrity of the family and Christian morality;
- Advertising of products or services for children must be prudent, and must not generate inconvenient reactions or expectations or take advantage of their credulity.

Violations

Resolution No. 830/2002 of COMFER defines the diffusion of certain contents as a breach of the content-related issues:

I. Minor infractions (within Minor Protection Time):
   a) coarse expressions or insults, either reiterated or exceeding the normal use of language, and contents exalting or promoting violence;
   b) erotic contents, as the main plot;
   c) contents suitable for adults when the message may affect the moral stability of minors;
   d) explicit violence, when it is shown out of context or intended to impact minors;
   e) showing of films rated 13+.

II. Material infractions (at any time unless otherwise indicated):
   a) messages that discriminate or constitute a manifest offense to the republican institutions or the National Anthem, the National Flag or other

national symbols, or the values of democracy or the feelings or principles held by the religious groups recognized by the Federal Government;
b) messages exalting or inducing the consumption of drugs or other harmful substances;
c) advertisement of medical products that are not authorized by the competent authority or that are to be sold only on prescription;
d) pornographic contents;
e) obscene contents;
f) extreme violence, when violence is portrayed in all its details or repeatedly;
g) edited material suitable for adult discussion, when gruesome, sordid or sick aspects are emphasized;
h) diffusion of facts or showing of contents exposing the identity of minors involved in criminal actions;
i) diffusion of live shows in which children under 12 actively participate out of the Minor Protection Time;
j) showing of films rated 16+ within the Minor Protection Time;
k) showing of films rated 18+ or 'Restricted'.

Other infractions, not classified as material or minor, are the advertising of adult programs within the Minor Protection Time when inappropriate contents are shown; the diffusion of gambling and dividends of horse races; and revealing the identity of minors who are involved in or the victims of criminal activities, or those abandoned or in danger.

The Guide and the Guidelines

On October 2000, COMFER, TV networks and producers agreed to and adopted the Guide for TV Contents (the Guide).

The Guide is a mere orientation document, meant to identify concerns related to different types of contents.

Here are the main concerns, grouped according to different time slots:

A) Between 8 a.m. and 8 p.m.:[3]
- Language: adequate use of terms and comprehensibility should be sought; coarse language should be kept within the limits of typical social use and an adequate context;
- Sex: it should be portrayed either in the context of a plot or from a scientific, educational or informative point of view; in fictional programming, sex is suggested and the observer has to "complete" the erotic idea; exhibitionism and nudity should be avoided;

- Violence: physical, verbal, gestural, emotional, sexual and special-effects violence are of concern. In fictional programs, violence must be portrayed within a context that permits it to be understood and elaborated by the general public and minors, which implies the avoidance of repeated violence, as a goal in itself, or violence associated with sex or with the treatment of minors. Portrayal of suicide, even attempted, is banned.
- Alcohol and drugs: contents linking alcohol consumption with a better lifestyle or psychic performance, or social or sexual success, as well as showing minors in a context in which alcohol is drunk or drugs are consumed, are banned. Any stimulation of the consumption of alcohol or drugs should be avoided. Drug purchase/consumption behaviors should not be shown in detail. Real or fictional people, addiction or consumption of drugs must not be shown as models. All information on or mention of toxic substances is to be made within a context that includes warnings as to their harmful effects.
- Adult problems (either in fiction or talk shows): human, familiar and social realities must be comprehensible by all audiences. In fictional programs, what happens to the characters must be appropriate to their age. Real people must not be exposed by degrading their dignity, or shown in a way that may cause a negative emotional impact on children.
- Advertising: all the precedent criteria must be taken into account, with special consideration to the fact that contents are always deprived of an adequate context due to the duration of ads.
- Cartoons: the preceding criteria will be used until a "special evaluation system" is created for cartoons.

B) Between 8 p.m. and 10 p.m., when minors are supposed to watch TV with their parents, there is more room for adult language, sex and violence, as long as such situations may be understood, and do not seek to be the main goal. Alcohol and drug-related contents must follow the criteria set for 8 a.m. to 8 p.m., unless consumption behavior has an "adequate dramatic resolution". Sex, violence and drug combinations are banned.

C) Between 10 p.m. and 12 p.m.: nudity may be shown (excluding genitals); however pornography and material degrading the human condition are banned.

In 2002, another document – the Basic Guidelines for Broadcasting Contents (the Guidelines) – was adopted by agreement between COMFER and radio and television industry chambers. The Guidelines imply a commitment on the part of media to address concrete concerns about each kind of content. Some examples of how the Guidelines refer to undesirable contents are:

The following contents shall be avoided:

- (Only within the Minor Protection Time:) Those including the presentation of adult problems referring to interpersonal conflicts (such as incest, pros-

titution, suicide, sexual abuse, etc.) when they are treated in a way that may affect the emotional welfare of minors.

- (Only within the Minor Protection Time:) Those presenting explicit violence out of a context that may allow minors to understand and contextualize it.
- (Both within and outside of the Minor Protection Time:) Those promoting the consumption of psychoactive substances or exalting their effects as positive or pleasant and/or describing in detail the elements of addictive behavior.

In sum, it is easy to see how the proliferation of provisions concerning the same matter brings discordance between the regulations, the Guide and the Guidelines and allows COMFER to chose the provision COMFER thinks is most convenient to justify a punishment. This contradicts the principle according to which punishable behaviors must have a unique description.[4]

On a separate matter, there are very few "positive", written regulatory provisions – i.e., those that encourage improvement in contents for children – either in regulations, the Guide or the Guidelines, and practice reveals that the only permanent approach of the Government is a punitive one.

How regulations are applied

Each time a program is identified as apparently contrary to regulations, the evaluation department of COMFER makes a report in which the relevant contents are depicted and an opinion on the respective program is given. Reports provide grounds for a notification to networks, allowing them to defend themselves. After defenses are filed, COMFER resolves the case by either imposing a punishment or allowing the defense. In general, the opinions provided in reports are upheld by COMFER and punishments are imposed with no further analysis of programs. Therefore reports from the evaluation department of COMFER usually end up expressing substantially the whole view of COMFER on each program.

We have drawn a sample of 45 reports regarding program contents, from August 2002 to June 2003.

The core of the reports is an explanation for how the pertinent program violates regulations. Usually, such explanations are very poor, and do not link sufficiently the aim of regulations and concepts involved therein to the specific case.[5]

COMFER tends to repeat vague formulae about certain specific contents.

Besides, there is no invocation of any kind of scientific conclusion on the effect of any particular kind of program that would provide the grounds for any accusation made by COMFER.

For all the foregoing, although the Guide and the Guidelines have improved the quality of the reports, they are more or less a reflection of the evaluator's personal preferences.

Some examples of contents frequently considered to be inappropriate for children are:

- news regarding violent or criminal acts (such as policemen forcing entrance into a house and arresting drug dealers, or the lynching of a rapist), when contents are vivid or shocking, lacking a context that may allow children to understand their meaning and causing an emotional impact on children.
- lyrics of songs in shows that portray alcohol consumption as improving mood or causing joy and fun, or easing anxiety or pain, or as a means of evasion, or portraying alcohol or drug consumption as a way of gaining membership in a group, or opinions on drug consumption as a source of pleasure, creativity and happiness, especially when those opinions are not counterweighed with information about the negative consequences of use of such substances.
- talk shows in which interpersonal conflicts and other situations such as infidelity, swinger practices, etc., are discussed by the guests, and in which they insult each other or reveal intimate practices.

Effect of regulations on programming

There seems to be a generalized public opinion that regulations and their application do not help to encourage positive programming or to deter harmful contents.

According to a recent, unpublished investigation made by Tatiana Merlo Flores de Ezcurra:[6]

- "...the most repeated word in children's conversation about TV programs […] is 'violence'; 20 percent of the children say it [...]".
- 85 percent of 400 interviewed parents and 97 percent of 60 interviewed TV producers say that during the Minor Protection Time there is inadequate programming for children.
- 81 percent of parents consider that there are inadequate ads for minors.
- Most parents consider that, though there is an agency to enforce children's rights, it does not fulfill its task.

Hence, COMFER's intense and mostly discretionary application of sanctions has not improved what is shown on the screen, based on general perceptions.

Conclusion

There is no general perception in Argentina that media regulations and application thereof keep harmful contents off the screen or encourage positive contents. Such regulations and application deserve material objections from a legal point of view.

Access to and discussion of the growing knowledge on media and children among parents, teachers, researchers, networks, producers, advertising agencies, other individuals, entities of the industry and the different agencies of the Federal Government with media concerns (COMFER, National Minor and Family Council, etc.) are imperative in order to improve regulations and their enforcement.

Knowledge-sharing and positive and cooperative attitudes on the part of the media and the Government will finally help to set new guidelines and regulations, and to complete the legal landscape by encouraging positive contents.[7]

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Notes

1. Excerpt from an evaluation report of COMFER.
2. Such limitations stem from sections 16, 17, 18 and 23 of the Broadcasting Act and section 4 of decree No. 286/81.
3. Only for purposes of the Guide, the Minor Protection Time is divided in two, taking into account that the last two hours deserve specific directions, because parents are supposed to be in the company of their children between 8 and 10 p.m.
4. A behavior can only be punished if the norm that specifies punishment for it also contains a unique, clear and concrete definition of such behavior. Overlapping of regulations and other documents results in vagueness.
5. Any application of punitive norms must sufficiently indicate how the concrete behavior fits into the respective category, described by the law as illegal and punishable. The mere statement that a program violates a section of the Broadcasting Act or resolution No. 830/2002 is not sufficient. COMFER must explain why and how a particular program contradicts regulations. This principle also implies that there must be concrete grounds for considering that the social value in question, and with regard to which the respective conduct is to be punished, has been "harmed" in that particular case. The more abstract the protected value, the harder it will be for the judge or authority to justify or explain the way in which it has been "harmed" in the particular case. For instance, the risk of affecting children's psychic stability may be proven more objectively than an "attack on the republican institutions". Moreover, when the protected social value is strictly moral (the familial institution, Christian morals, etc.) there are no measures or objective criteria for delivering a judgment. I firmly believe that the exercise of any punitive power on such grounds is invalid not only based on an interpretation of the consti-

tutional liberal principles, but because it is unreasonable. The moral issue also confronts us in the context of the eternal debate on the limits of Government and laws with regard to the enforcement of moral and religious views.

6. Tatiana Merlo Flores de Ezcurra interviewed 2,000 children for this study, besides parents and TV producers.
7. A positive experience took place when COMFER organized meetings with producers at each channel separately, and openly discussed each program. But such dialogue was only an experience that was never implemented as a normal practice. This and the sporadic agreement between Government and networks on "guides" or "guidelines" are not sufficient.

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The State of Broadcast Regulations on Children in Ghana

Audrey Gadzekpo

Since the 1990s, many African countries, including Ghana, have made the transition from military to constitutionally elected governments. One of the dividends of Ghana's constitutional democracy has been a lifting of media restrictions in line with the 1992 Constitution and a de-regulation of the airwaves after more than six decades of state monopoly. Media pluralism has broadened the information and entertainment options of citizens, however, broadcast policy has not kept pace with the rapid transformation of Ghana's airwaves. Increasingly there are concerns about the deleterious effects of programming on especially children. Radio and television stations have been criticized for displaying poor judgment and taste in the images they show, for broadcasting inappropriate films during hours children watch television, and for violating ethical codes such as identifying rape victims or underage children involved in crime. Radio DJs have also been criticized for playing music with "vulgar" lyrics over the national airwaves.

Television and radio advertisements have come under similar scrutiny. Child rights activists are especially disturbed by the amount of alcohol advertising during prime time hours and increasing exposure of children to beer and alcoholic cocktail commercials.[1] More recently children's access to Internet pornography has been added to this growing list of concerns. This article provides an overview of the state of broadcast regulations and programming with regard to children in Ghana, and discusses the lack of response by state authorities and broadcasters to public concerns over harmful broadcast content and poor children's programming.

Proliferation of electronic media

Ghana's National Communication Authority (NCA), which oversees the allocation of broadcast frequencies, has approved 21 television stations and more than

127 radio stations since the airwaves were officially liberalized in 1996.[2] Five of the licensed television stations and about 70 percent of the radio stations are currently operating across the country. The NCA has also given permission to 112 Internet providers to operate, with the result that there has been a rapid growth in the number of cyber-cafés in big cities across the country.

In the Accra-Tema metropolis, an area with a population of roughly 2 million inhabitants, almost half (47%) of whom are children, 16 FM stations are on air. In addition, four of the five local television stations broadcasting are located in that area. Satellite television is also available in about 9,000 homes in Ghana, mostly in the capital city of Accra, where the majority of the country's elite and affluent live. Multichoice, Africa (MCA), a multi-channel television platform with channels in Africa, Britain and the USA, and over 8,000 subscribers in Ghana, is one of three licensed pay television companies in Ghana and the leading provider of satellite broadcast services in the country.

Broadcast regulations concerning children

Children below the age of 18 years make up more than 45 percent of the Ghanaian population (2002 Population Census). And while there has been a tremendous increase in the penetration of television and radio over the years, and consequently, an expanded audience of child listeners and viewers, hardly any attempts have been made to address children's programming needs and to protect children from harmful broadcasts.

The regulatory framework on children's broadcasting in Ghana is weak, and issues relating to children's broadcasting appear to have fallen through the cracks. National discussions on broadcast policy that have been taking place since 1993 as a result of a more liberalized media environment have tended to focus on ownership, frequency allocation, deregulation of the Ghana Broadcasting Corporation (GBC), copyright issues, public service programmes, professional training, economic viability for privatization and partnerships between the private and public sectors (Heath, 1999, Gadzekpo, 2002). Generally, some of these discussions have tried to address ethical guidelines for programming, standards for advertisers, and the educative and cultural imperatives of broadcast media, but they have given only cursory treatment to children's programming needs and protection.

Report of the Preparatory Committee on Independent Broadcasting

In most of the forums and committees that have addressed the issue of broadcast policy in the country, the tendency has been to advocate for a democratic form of broadcasting regulation that recognizes broadcasting as a public activity sub-

ject to some form of public accountability and responsibility, but at the same time having protection from the state (Heath, 1999). According to Heath (1999: 514), in national conversations on broadcast policy in Ghana "it was thought that the public needed to be protected from fraud, indecency, bad taste, excessive violence, inefficiency and low standards". Thus, the Report of the Preparatory Committee on Independent Broadcasting, which was set up in January 1995 to draft regulations and guidelines for private broadcasting in Ghana, addressed content by enjoining programmers to avoid "indecency, incitement to ethnic, religious, or sectional hatred and disaffection"; "language that might incite crime, glorify war or lead to disorder"; and "material likely to adversely affect the sensitivities and sensibilities of children" (Report of the Preparatory Committee, 1995: 10-11). The Committee did not, however, attempt to prescribe, for example, a minimum of children's programming or the kind of content that ought to be developed and targeted at children.

The National Communication Authority Act

Some of the recommendations from the Report of the Preparatory Committee on Independent Broadcasting were incorporated into the National Communication Authority (NCA) bill that was subsequently enacted in 1996 (NCA Act 524 1996). Significantly, however, while the NCA bill paid attention to technical and constitutional guarantees of free expression, scant attention was given to content regulations, except a proviso that allows the NCA to modify or cancel frequencies if a "view or opinion is a breech of the conditions of his license" (NCA Act Article 27: 5). The upshot of this is an absence of regulations in the NCA bill.

Officials at the NCA, the state regulatory body that has the sole power to grant and withdraw frequencies, say they rely on the National Media Commission (NMC) to monitor content and expect the Media Commission to enforce broadcast standards. Consequently the NCA has not formulated any programming guidelines and regulations in respect of children, even though it insists that it can and will close down stations that overstep the bounds of free speech.[3]

The National Media Commission's Broadcasting Standards

The NMC is an independent constitutional body with oversight responsibilities regarding the media. Significantly, its prescribed functions include:

> To take all appropriate measures to ensure the establishment and maintenance of the highest journalistic standards in the mass media, including the investigation, mediation and settlement of complaints, made against or by the press or other mass media" (Article 167:b of the Constitution of Ghana).

The NMC speaks to this provision by adjudicating complaints about media content from aggrieved parties, and by playing an advocacy role in ensuring that the media improve their performance. The absence of explicit content regulations led the NMC to commission a special committee in 1999 to develop standards for broadcasting practice in Ghana. In the preface to the final document, Tim Acquah-Hayford, then chairman of the NMC, notes that the guidelines on broadcasting standards were to enable people to "maximize returns from the proliferation of the electronic media" and rationalizes that:

> With pluralism, there has been the need for basic standards as a way of ensuring that the liberalization of the airwaves impact qualitatively and positively on the society. Equally, because frequencies are national resources, they must be applied for the good of our people" (NMC Broadcasting Standards, 1999: v).

The NMC's Broadcasting Standards, comprising 21 articles, mainly addresses children in Article 11. It requires, for example, that "programmes meant for adults of 18 years and above be broadcast only after 10 p.m." (NMC Broadcasting Standards, 1999: 4) and provides for "the protection of the identity, privacy and reputation of children" (NMC Broadcasting Standards, 1999: 8-9). Although the broadcast standards titled a section "Children's Programming", it is silent on the amount or the content of children's programmes. Article 11 only generally attempts to protect children from harmful broadcast content. It includes, for example, provisions that ask the media to avoid materials likely to affect adversely the sensitivities and sensibilities of children, not to broadcast programmes with adult content, or language, when children are likely to be watching, and not to glamorize crime and violence. The NMC standards also forbid programmes that contravene social values, show disrespect for law and order or depart from a honourable life-style (NMC Broadcasting Standards, 1999: 8-9). It contains peculiar provisions that ask media to be cautious about foreign folklore and values to prevent undue influence on children, and to promote Ghanaian culture, folklore and values while handling popular superstitions with discretion (NMC Broadcasting Standards, 1999: 8-9). It also stipulates that the media protect children from ethnic and other complexes resulting from careless or deliberate comparisons or information.

The NMC's Broadcasting Standards are a guideline that the NMC says it hopes "readers and practitioners will find […] useful" (NMC Broadcasting Standards, 1999: vi). There is no force of law that compels broadcasters to adhere to the prescribed standards and thus they serve only as a self-regulatory mechanism. Many of the provisions, including the appropriate time to broadcast content meant for adult viewing, have been ignored. It is not uncommon to hear programme hosts dispensing explicit advice on sex on afternoon shows and to see films that have been rated 18 being broadcast at prime time or in the mornings without being edited for content.

A survey conducted for this study on four out of the five television stations currently on air and ten of the 16 leading FM radio stations in Accra indicates

that few have adopted the NMC guidelines or, for that matter, any regulatory guidelines concerning children. Indeed only three out of the 14 TV and radio stations sampled said they had guidelines on children's programming. These guidelines were, however, inaccessible as they were neither codified nor written down in any policy manuals.

The African Charter on Children's Broadcasting

Significantly, only one out of the television and radio stations surveyed had heard of the African Charter on Children's Broadcasting, which was ratified by Commonwealth broadcasters in 2000. Yet the African Charter was produced and adopted by delegates during the first All Africa Summit on Children's Broadcasting held in Accra from October 8 to 12 1997. Following the Accra Summit the Charter was ratified at the general assembly of URTNA (Union of National Radio and Television Organizations of Africa) on June 21-22, 2000 in Algiers. At the Algiers meeting African broadcasters were asked to make further amendments to the document before the final outcome of the Charter was adopted by the Commonwealth Broadcasting Association (CBA) on October 13, 2000 in Cape Town, South Africa.[4]

The African Charter calls for children's participation in their own productions and access to programmes and discourages commercial exploitation of children and programming that includes "gratuitous scenes and sounds of violence or sex". It stipulates that children's programmes be aired in regular time slots at times when children are available to listen and view, and that sufficient resources be made available for high quality programming. Significantly, the African Charter asks that a diverse range of groupings formulate and develop codes and standards for children's broadcasting (African Charter on Children's Broadcasting, Article 8).

With the exception of the manager of the college campus FM station – Univers – none of the head programmers and producers at the other television and radio stations we spoke to had heard about the African Charter on Children's Broadcasting. Needless to say no attempts have been made by the broadcast industry to develop codes and standards regarding children's programmes or broadcasts to children as recommended in the Charter. Women in Broadcasting (WIB), an association of private and public sector women broadcasters who have attempted to address this issue, has been unsuccessful in getting programming departments to adopt the Charter. Members of WIB said they were not in a position to change policy and that they could only make recommendations to management of broadcast stations.

The issue of Internet regulations

The availability of information and communication technologies (ICTs) in Ghana and in particular the growth in Internet services has resulted in the need to tackle issues regarding children's access to harmful Internet sites as well. As in the case

of broadcasting, the issue of Internet regulations is not being addressed in Ghana, even though the Internet has been blamed for being a conduit through which paedophiles from Western countries prey on children. Recently, unease over unrestricted Internet access to children was magnified when the Minister for Information, Nana Akomea, issued a release in which he noted the government's concern over easy access to pornography in Internet cafés by children and teenagers, and in which he asked Internet cafés to declare their premises as "zero tolerant for pornography access".[5] Such expressions of public anxiety over Internet content have, however, not translated into any public actions or regulations concerning the Internet. No efforts have been made to promote a children's code on the Internet and to introduce blocking or filtering devices to protect children's access to web sites.

Just as with broadcast regulations, everyone thinks it is someone else's business to protect children against harmful content and influences. The NCA authorities, for example, acknowledge that Internet pornography is a problem for children, but do not think that they are in a position to formulate policy to address it. "We expect the Internet providers to be watchdogs themselves", said Mr. Joshua Peprah, Director for Regulation and Licensing. Officials like Peprah insist that the NCA does not generate policy, only gives advice within a larger policy framework. "What is missing", says Peprah, "is larger national broadcast policy that will address some of these issues."

Children's programming

The absence of a national broadcast policy in general and in particular, a policy regarding children and media use, has meant that there is little participation of youth and children in the media, and very little children's programming on both television and radio. Notable is a paucity of children's TV programmes during times of the day when children watch the most television and at weekends when children are likely to be at home.

Television

The state-owned GBC is about the only station that has developed programming for children. GTV, the television wing of GBC, has had a history of school broadcasting as well as producing local children's programmes, children's quiz shows and instructional variety shows, dating back to 1965 when television was introduced into the country. Hosted mainly by adults, the children's programming at GTV often reflects a hierarchical relationship of teacher-child, or a story-telling format that underscores the rationale behind children's programming as didactic, rather than amusement or engagement. Ansah (1985) points out that in Ghana

children's programming has mainly been educational in content and targeted at a widely scattered and influential body of teachers and adolescent schoolboys and -girls. Often the tendency of such programming is to patronize children rather than reflect the complexities of their lives.

GTV broadcasts weekly three locally produced children's programmes. Another children's programme is telecast much more irregularly. While in the past GTV's children's programmes have been produced in-house, they are now independently produced. GTV does not buy the programmes but rather sells airtime to producers of the shows whose responsibility it is to find sponsors to underwrite the cost of production. This new programming arrangement has reduced the amount of children's programmes on the public television station. In the absence of any clear-cut policy on children, GBC producers have tended to adopt a lackadaisical attitude towards children's programming. The Corporation neither actively develops nor promotes children's programmes, nor does it provide the funds to sustain them.

Privately owned stations are even less inclined to develop programming for children. TV3, a joint Malaysian/Ghanaian TV station, broadcasts only one locally produced children's programme – *Kyekyekule* – which happens to be one of the three shows now syndicated on GTV as well. In addition to this, TV3 re-broadcasts re-runs of the British Broadcasting Corporation's (BBC) popular children's show *The Teletubbies*. The two other privately owned TV stations in Accra – TV Africa and Metro TV – do not as yet broadcast any local programming targeted at children. Similar to TV3, Metro TV shows imported children's cartoons.

In a sense it is the digital satellite television provider Multichoice that provides the longest hours of children's programming and offers the broadest children's programming options. For 12 hours each day, Multichoice beams its children's broadcasting channels K-TV and Nickelodeon to its subscribers, in addition to a 24-hour Cartoon Network. At a monthly subscription rate of US$60.50 (plus the initial cost of a dish at $359) only a few households (8,000) can afford to subscribe.[6] In terms of access, therefore, only a negligible number of children in Ghana benefit from the programming choices offered by Multichoice.

Radio

Children's radio programming is even more wanting, especially when one considers the number of radio stations operating in the country (more than 70) and the pervasive nature of the medium. Radio penetration in Ghana is almost 100 per cent and radio is the most widely used mass medium in the country. Yet only two of the 10 FM stations surveyed – Radio Univers and Meridian FM, a women's community radio station in Tema, near Accra – carry children's programming. Two other stations – Gold-FM and Peace-FM – used to carry children's programming but dropped them in favour of other more "popular programmes". Another radio station – Top – that also carried children's programming, is no longer on air.

Significantly, the state-owned Uniqii-FM does not carry children's programming although its nationwide affiliates GBC Radio One and Two, which are available only on short-wave, broadcast the most children's programmes each week on their channels. Seven of these programmes are in local Ghanaian languages. The only English language programme is *Curious Minds*, carried on Radio Two each week with support from UNICEF. It forms part of UNICEF's initiative to encourage children's participation in the media and to fulfil Article 13 and 17 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Article 13 promotes a child's right to freedom of information and Article 17 a child's right to diverse information and materials, especially those of social and cultural benefit.

Curious Minds was conceived as a participatory programme where children, not adult producers, decide on the topics, and invite experts and guests. However, while children do decide on their own topics, it is adult producers who end up inviting the experts and booking studio space. There are 40 children aged 9-18 who are involved in the production of *Curious Minds*, a programme that explores children's rights issues, woven within real social problems.

The international non-governmental organization Action Aid (Ghana) also plans to sponsor a new pseudo-religious programme to be broadcast on GTV. Similar to *Curious Minds*, the programme will deal also with social problems plaguing children. Properly structured, this could afford children another opportunity to participate in radio programming on a regular basis.

Without sponsorship from UNICEF and perhaps aid organizations such as Action Aid, it is doubtful that GBC would produce and sustain participatory children's programmes such as *Curious Minds*. Sarah Akrofi-Quarcoo, the President of Women in Broadcasting, observes that not everyone is happy to see 40 children running around the studios, competing for limited studio space. Despite UNICEF funding, a scarcity of resources makes producing *Curious Minds* difficult. Moreover, many adult broadcasters are reluctant to share control of decision-making and information with children.[7]

UNICEF also supports WIB in holding each year a workshop for children in broadcast skills as part of the International Children's Day of Broadcasting (ICDB), celebrated on the second Sunday in December. First held in September 1997, the Children in Broadcasting workshops in Ghana aim at building a corps of children's advocates on issues relating to children, by teaching them interviewing and broadcast skills (Akrofi-Quarcoo, 1999). Every year, some 40 participants, aged 9-18, are allowed into the studios of GBC and given a chance during the workshops to discuss programme ideas, subjects and formats, to control and edit programmes and to produce final projects for radio and television (ibid).

Conclusion

In a review of the Children's Broadcast workshop a few years ago, Akrofi-Quarcoo (1999) was optimistic that Ghanaian broadcasting was on the verge of significant

change in children's radio and television production. According to Akrofi-Quarcoo (1999: 339):

> From stereotyped formats fashioned along the lines of adults dishing out advice and morale lessons to kids in heavy doses of traditional tales, through children's dramas, poetry recitals and nursery rhymes, children are now being made to play more serious roles as presenters, anchors, panellists, interviewers and interviewees.

Her views may have been predicated on the growth in the number of broadcast stations in Ghana and the progressive changes in children's programming that have occurred in other countries. This outlook is, however, overly optimistic as there has been little if any increase in children's programming since the airwaves were liberalized some seven years ago, and few opportunities for children to play the kinds of roles described in Akrofi-Quarcoo's quote. Despite international efforts at encouraging children's programming at conferences, workshops, and the ratification of charters such as the African Charter on Children's Broadcasting, children's programming needs are neither on the national agenda nor on the radar of most radio and television stations in Ghana. And whereas countries such as Jamaica have formulated a Children's Code for Programming (*News from ICCVOS* 1 2003), Ghana has not even begun national discussions on the issue. Instead there is a tendency to drop regular children's programmes from the schedule when stations, for whatever reason, need additional airtime.

In short, rather than opening up opportunities for innovative programming for children, the transformation of broadcast from a state monopoly to one dominated by several privately owned stations has had no impact on the quality or quantity of children's programmes. Programme producers seem to believe that sponsors are not very interested in children's programmes. Thus, in an increasingly competitive and de-regulated broadcast environment, it is Western action dramas and Nigerian and local movies, with their depictions of gratuitous violence, that fill the airwaves even at times when children watch television the most.

The laissez-faire attitude to children's broadcast policy by the state has not encouraged new stations to adopt child-friendly programming policies. The country's liberal Constitution and the desire of both the past regime and the ruling government of the New Patriotic Party (NPP) to project an image of an economically liberal and democratic country to donors and potential investors, has encouraged authorities to promote self-regulation, rather than external regulation (Heath, 1999).

Aside from the NMC Broadcast Standards, and a provision in the Ghana Journalists Association (GJA) Code of Ethics stipulating that "journalists should protect the rights of minors and in criminal and other cases secure the consent of parents or guardians before interviewing or photographing them" (Article 15), no other self-regulatory measures have been formulated. Thus, no agreements exist between the state and broadcasters that seek to negotiate content, and both the state and the broadcast industry continue to turn a deaf ear to public calls that the airwaves in Ghana ought to be more child-friendly.

Notes

1. Interview with Beatrice Duncan, Head of Programs, Child Protection at UNICEF, September 30, 2003.
2. Private broadcast was already underway prior to 1996 as the Frequency Registration Board had assigned a few frequencies to experimental private operators.
3. Interview with Joshua Peprah, Director for Regulation and Licensing, NCA, Wednesday, October 1, 2003.
4. See von Feilitzen, C. and Bucht, C. *Outlooks on Children and Media*, *Compiled for the 3rd World Summit on Media for Children*, held in Thessaloniki, Greece, 23-26 March 2003.
5. *Ghanaian Times*, September 23, 2003: 1.
6. Ghana's minimum wage is about $1.25 a day.
7. Interviews with Sarah Akrofi-Quarcoo, September 19 & 20, 2003.

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A Practical Response to Classification of Convergent Media in the Australian Context

The Combined Guidelines for Films and Computer Games

Des Clark

The major event of 2003 for the Office of Film and Literature Classification (OFLC) in Australia was the release of the Guidelines for the Classification of Films and Computer Games, a unique response to the challenge of media convergence. In March 2003, the new combined guidelines came into effect.[1]

Overview

Australia has a national classification scheme, which enables people to make informed choices about the films and computer games they see or play. The scheme is wide-ranging and delivers high profile classifications and symbols for a vast number of media products in the Australian market.

In 2002, the Classification Board classified 439 cinema films, 2,727 videos and DVDs, and 661 computer games.

In Australia, the Board works within a 2 and a half billion dollar industry:

- Cinema box office in the last financial year was AU$844 million
- DVD and video revenue was $893 million
- Computer games revenue was $807 million.

In addition, this does not include publications, or adult video and DVD product.

Australia has eight states and territories. The Australian national classification scheme involves the cooperation and coordination of the Australian government, and the governments of all the states and territories. The scheme is a cooperative one in which all jurisdictions are equal partners.

Decisions to change the scheme are made through a national committee of Ministers who are responsible for classification in their jurisdiction. They make

all the key decisions about the workings of the scheme. The ministers mainly consist of the Attorneys-General of the Australian government and each state and territory, and are called Censorship Ministers.

In Australia, legislation requires that all films and computer games (with some limited exceptions), and some publications, must be classified before they can be sold, hired or publicly exhibited. The *Classification (Publications, Films and Computer Games) Act 1995* establishes the Classification Board and the Classification Review Board.

The Board's role is to classify publications, films and computer games. The Review Board reviews decisions of the Board.

The OFLC administratively supports the Board and the Review Board. The states and territories are responsible for enforcing Board and Review Board decisions.

There are no special qualifications for Board members. The Act provides that, in appointing Board members, regard is to be had to the desirability of ensuring that members broadly represent the Australian community.

Recently a round of Board recruitment was completed. Advertisements were placed in the national press and short-listed applicants went through a variety of tests and screening procedures. There were over 1,000 applications for eight positions. The new Board members commenced in May 2003.

How does the Classification Board make a decision?

The Classification Act provides that publications, films and computer games are to be classified in accordance with the Classification Act, the National Classification Code and the classification guidelines.

Section 11 of the Classification Act sets out the matters that the Board must take into account when making decisions:

(a) the standards of morality, decency and propriety generally accepted by reasonable adults

(b) the literary, artistic or educational merit (if any) of the publication, film or computer game

(c) the general character of the publication, film or computer game including whether it is of a medical, legal or scientific character, and

(d) the persons or class of persons to or among who it is published or is intended or likely to be published.

The National Classification Code sets out the broad criteria for each of the classification categories and the principles that the Board must use:

(a) adults should be able to read, hear and see what they want

(b) minors should be protected from material likely to harm or disturb them

(c) everyone should be protected from exposure to unsolicited material that they find offensive

(d) the need to take account of community concerns about:
  (i) depictions that condone or incite violence, particularly sexual violence, and
  (ii) the portrayal of a person in a demeaning manner.

The classification guidelines assist the Board to interpret the National Classification Code. They provide more detail about what material falls into which classification category. The Code and the guidelines can be amended with the agreement of the Australian government, and the states and territories.

There are separate guidelines for publications, and for films and computer games. The new combined guidelines for films and computer games apply to all cinema films, as well as to videos, DVDs and computer games.

Media convergence

Previously, the Board used two sets of guidelines for audio-visual media – one set for films and one for computer games. The two sets of guidelines were quite different in their structure and content, and came into being at a time when films and computer games were quite different.

However, with media convergence a film can now contain a computer game and a game can contain a film. For example, the computer game for *Lord of the Rings, the Two Towers* contains film footage that turns into a computer game. As we watch the main characters fighting the orcs, the 'film' turns into a game and we, as viewers, can control the characters in their battle. This typifies the convergence of a film and computer game into one interactive medium.

Examples such as this raised issues for the Board, who had problems trying to classify a film that contained a computer game, or a game that contained a film. Potentially, the Board had to decide which guidelines to use – film or games.

The review of the guidelines

Australia's Censorship Ministers therefore requested the guidelines be reviewed to address these problems, and to ensure that the guidelines continued to reflect community standards. Such reviews happen periodically and are an effective means of keeping in touch with the community. They are an opportunity to hear if the community overall sees the need to tighten or relax standards.

The guidelines review process

The guidelines review process is agreed to by all Ministers and must be followed. It is worth outlining some aspects of the process that resulted in the new guidelines.

The process includes extensive public consultation and community feedback. The guidelines review was advertised widely in the press, including the mainstream media. The OFLC called for public submissions on a discussion paper raising a number of key issues, and including a proposal for combining the film and computer games guidelines. We sent out the discussion paper to more than 1,000 stakeholders. The general public was also invited to comment. Overall, about 2,000 copies of the paper were disseminated.

The OFLC received more than 370 submissions about the discussion paper from individuals, organisations and industry. This was the largest number of submissions received for a guidelines review in Australia, and reflected the strong community interest in the classification system. There were submissions from grandparents and church groups, and an on-line petition with more than 600 individual responses.

An independent consultant, Dr Jeffrey E. Brand, Associate Professor of Communication and Media Director, Centre for New Media Research and Education, Bond University, was engaged to analyse the public submissions. He noted that many of the public submissions said that the draft new guidelines were complex and unclear. A recurring theme in the submissions was that both the previous film and computer games guidelines, and the proposed draft guidelines circulated with the discussion paper, lacked simplicity and clarity.

Although Ministers did not believe that community standards had changed so appreciably as to warrant a change in the standards applied in the guidelines, Ministers did feel strongly that the form of the guidelines should be re-cast to make them simpler, clearer and more transparent. Ministers therefore asked that the draft guidelines be rewritten without altering existing classification standards.

The OFLC took this direction on board and worked hard to make the guidelines easier to understand. Before being approved by Ministers, the guidelines were analysed by a plain English language expert, Professor Butt of the Faculty of Law at the University of Sydney. He confirmed that the new guidelines were much clearer. Although the clarity was the product of a thorough revision of the material in the previous guidelines, Professor Butt noted that there was no change in the meaning. This achieved Ministers' direction that there should be no change to the classification standards.

Structure of guidelines

The new guidelines combined the film and computer games guidelines into a single document.[2] The new guidelines addressed issues of clarity and readability with their predecessors but did not change classification standards.

The guidelines have a new structure, which makes explicit the Board's processes when classifying material. The introductory section on pages 1-3 gives the background to the guidelines and explains how they are used. The second section, 'Using the guidelines', points out the essential principles of the guidelines. The third section is the classification categories. G, PG and M are the advisory categories, and MA, R, X and RC are legally restricted categories.[3]

Using the guidelines – three principles

On pages 4-6, three essential principles underlie how to use the guidelines – context, impact and the six elements. Some people skip over these pages, missing the main framework of the guidelines.

Context

Context is important in the new guidelines. It is crucial in determining whether a classifiable element is justified by the story-line or theme.

Hierarchy of impact

The new guidelines use a hierarchy of impact – from very mild for G films to very high for films that are refused classification.

Assessing impact

The Board must consider a range of factors when assessing impact. For example, in a punch-up scene the amount of detail – whether it is a close-up or a distant shot – or the lighting may change the impact. The Board must also consider questions such as, does a reference to using drugs have a lower impact than seeing actual drug use?

Impact and context

Impact and context are interrelated. The Board looks at the characteristics of detail, interactivity, frequency, realism, prolonged effect or duration, and dominant effect. All these combine for the overall impact and context. Then the Board classifies the film or game into a category.

Elements

The Board must consider each of the six classifiable elements – sex, violence, drug use, language, themes and nudity. Assessment of elements includes references, descriptions and depictions.

The old guidelines named the six classifiable elements. However, while all elements had to be considered, they were not listed in each of the categories. This lead to confusion by some people. The public will now have a better idea about how the Board makes its decisions.

Conclusion

Generally, the community and industry have been very pleased with the changes to the guidelines.

I believe that Australia is now a leader in having one set of guidelines for films and computer games, which the Classification Board can use with any electronic visual media.

The new combined guidelines break new ground in classification. They are a world first in incorporating guidelines for films and computer games. As far as I am aware, Australia is the only country in the world that has this unique classification system for both films and games.

With the new combined guidelines, Australians now have a single, easy to use and easy to understand set of symbols to help them decide what films and computer games they and their children will watch and play.

The broad thrust of classification policy, and legislation, in Australia is that adults should be free to choose what they read, hear and see. The Government is also of the view that parents should be the arbiters of what their children watch.

In Australia, the Classification Board is the leading provider of classification information to parents and the general community. This assists them to make appropriate viewing choices and ensures they are forewarned about the strongest elements in films, DVDs, videos or computer games.

Notes

1. This paper was presented at the Australian Office of Film and Literature Classification's International Ratings Conference, "Classification in a Convergent World", on 23 September 2003. Other papers presented at the conference are available at: http://www.oflc.gov.au (go to 'International Ratings Conference').
2. This document is available at: http://www.oflc.gov.au (go to 'About Us').
3. For an explanation of the categories, see the document at the web address in note 2.

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A Brief Look at the Regulation of the Broadcast Media in Australia

Suzanne Shipard

The broadcasting industry in Australia is governed by legislation that regulates the planning, licensing, control and program content of television and radio services across the country. The relevant rules are contained in the *Broadcasting Services Act 1992* (the Act), which was enacted by the Federal Government on 5 October 1992. Under the Act, the Australian Broadcasting Authority (ABA) was established as the regulator of broadcasting services in Australia.

A number of explicit policy objectives are set out in the Act, including the desirability of program diversity, limits on the concentration of ownership and foreign control of the mass media, and the need for the media to report news fairly and respect community standards. Other objectives of the Act are to help develop and reflect a sense of Australian identity and cultural diversity and to ensure that providers of broadcasting services place a high priority on the protection of children from exposure to material which may be harmful to them. One way in which the ABA pursues these objectives is by developing and administering mandatory program standards that require commercial television stations to broadcast minimum levels of Australian programs and pre-classified children's programs.

The Act marked a move toward a more co-regulatory system of broadcasting regulation in Australia. One of the ABA's primary functions is to assist broadcasting service providers develop codes of practice that are in accordance with community standards and to monitor compliance with those codes. The ABA also plays an important role in commissioning research into community attitudes on programming matters.

Types of broadcasting services in Australia

There are six categories of broadcasting services available in Australia: national broadcasting services, commercial broadcasting services, community broadcast-

ing services, subscription broadcasting services, subscription narrowcasting services and open narrowcasting services.

National broadcasting services are funded by the Federal Government and provided by the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) and the Special Broadcasting Service (SBS). The ABC was established in 1932 and provides nation-wide television and radio broadcasting services. The Special Broadcasting Service, which began broadcasting in 1980, provides multilingual and multicultural radio and television services that reflect Australia's multicultural society.

Commercial broadcasting services are privately owned and provide programs free of charge (usually funded by advertising revenue) that are intended to appeal to the general public. There are currently 48 commercial television services and 264 commercial radio services in Australia, each of which is allowed to broadcast in a specified geographic licence area. In most places, the general public can receive three commercial television services in addition to the ABC and SBS. In the capital cities and some larger regional markets the public can also receive a community television service.

Community broadcasting services are operated by community-based organisations on a not-for-profit basis. The programs are made available free of charge. The licences for these services are allocated to community groups by the ABA on a merit basis and cannot be transferred. Community radio services are widely available with 409 licences currently allocated across the nation.

Subscription broadcasting services (pay TV) provide programs that are intended to appeal to the general public but that are only made available upon payment of subscription fees. In Australia there are three major providers of pay TV. They use a mixture of satellite, cable and microwave distribution to deliver programming to their customers.

Narrowcasting services are broadcasting services whose reception is limited by being targeted to a special interest group, intended for a limited location, of limited duration or because the programs are of limited appeal. They are often niche services, such as foreign language stations, specialist information services and race call services. Subscription narrowcasting services are made available upon payment of a fee while open narrowcasting services are available free to the public.

Regulatory policy

The stated philosophy of the Act is that different levels of regulatory control should be applied across the range of broadcasting services available according to the degree of influence that different types of broadcasting services are able to exert in shaping community views in Australia. In particular, a high level of regulation applies to commercial television services as those services are considered to exert a strong influence in shaping views in Australia. By contrast, narrowcasting serv-

ices are considered to play a minor role in shaping Australians' views and are therefore subject to much lower levels of regulation.

Australian content requirements

Commercial television licensees must comply with the Broadcasting Services (Australian Content) Standard 1999 (Australian Content Standard). The Australian Content Standard aims to promote the role of broadcasting services in developing and reflecting a sense of Australian identity, character and cultural diversity by supporting the community's continued access to television programs produced under Australian creative control. Under the standard, Australian programs must comprise at least 55 per cent of all programming broadcast each year on commercial television stations between 6 a.m. and midnight. Australian official co-productions and New Zealand programs can be counted towards the quota. In addition, there are separate quotas for first release Australian drama programs and first release Australian children's drama programs. In relation to the latter, ninety-six hours of first release Australian children's drama programs must be broadcast over each three-year period.

A separate standard (Television Program Standard 23 – Australian Content in Advertising) requires that commercial licensees ensure that at least 80 per cent of total advertising time between 6 a.m. and midnight is occupied by Australian produced advertisements.

Some other categories of broadcasting are also subject to Australian content requirements. Pay TV licensees are required to spend ten per cent of their total program expenditure for drama channels on new Australian and New Zealand drama programs while commercial radio licensees and community radio licensees are required under their codes of practice to broadcast a specified percentage of Australian music, depending on the predominant format of the radio service.

Children's Television Standards

The quality of children's programming on commercial television has been a major issue since the commencement of television in Australia. Children's Television Standards (CTS) have been in place since 1984 based on the policy that children are entitled to be provided with quality, age specific and comprehensive programs geared to their special cognitive abilities and experiences. At the time when the CTS were introduced it was considered to be part of the public responsibility of commercial television licensees to provide such programs. It was accepted that children, like adults, were entitled to a viewing choice and to the diversity of ideas and information that are central to broadcasting policy.

Since 1984, the CTS have been subject to regular revision. The current Children's Television Standards cover programs for preschoolers (P programs) as well as for older children up to 14 years of age (C programs). Commercial television licensees are required to broadcast a minimum of 390 hours of children's programs per year including at least 130 hours of P programs and 260 hours of C programs. To meet the quota requirements, all P programs must be Australian programs and at 50 per cent of the time allotted to C programs must be occupied by first release Australian programs. New Zealand programs and Australian official co-productions are treated as Australian programs under the CTS.

To count towards the quota, a children's program must be pre-classified by the ABA and broadcast within specified time bands. To meet the criteria for C and P programs, a program must be made specifically for children or groups of children, be entertaining, well-produced, enhance a child's understanding and experience, and be appropriate for Australian children. In addition, the ABA can give a program a provisional classification, which remains valid for five years and permits a pilot episode to be included in the broadcast quota.

The CTS also contains rules regarding the showing of advertisements and the offering of prizes during the broadcast of children's programs.

Other program rules

All categories of broadcasting service are subject to a number of standard licence conditions that are set out in the Act. These include a prohibition on broadcasting tobacco advertisements, a requirement for prior approval of advertisements relating to medicines and special provisions relating to the broadcasting of political matter.

In addition, there are specific licence conditions in the Act for each category of broadcasting service. The number and scope of the conditions varies according to the degree of influence that the category is considered to have on the community. For example, under the Act, commercial television stations are not permitted to broadcast films that have been classified R (restricted) under the National Classification Code as R (unless the film has been suitably modified). However, providers of a subscription television narrowcasting service are permitted to broadcast R classified programs if the channel has in place parental control systems, such as access to the channel only by the use of a PIN (personal identification number). Potential sanctions for breach of a licence condition include cancellation or suspension of the licence.

Many matters relating to community standards and the protection of children are regulated under industry codes of practice. These include classification of programs before they go to air, fairness in news and current affairs programs, invasions of privacy, scheduling and broadcasting of advertisements, betting and gambling, advertising of alcoholic substances, suicide and program promotions.

Codes of practice are registered by the ABA, which then monitors compliance. While there are potentially less serious consequences for a breach of a code than a breach of a licence condition, the ABA has residual powers to impose a licence condition and to make an industry standard. The ABA has exercised these powers in the past where there have been repeated breaches of a code of practice.

Under the Commercial Television code of practice, commercial television licensees classify their own programs using a modified version of the classification guidelines used by the Office of Film and Literature Classification (OFLC). The classifications in the Code – G (General), PG (Parental Guidance Recommended), M (Mature), MA (Mature Audience) and AV (Adult Violence) – take into account community concerns about suitable levels of language, violence, sex and nudity on television. The code splits the broadcast day into a number of different classification time zones and programs may only be broadcast during a suitable time zone.

The national broadcasters (ABC and SBS) have adopted a similar system regarding classifications and time zones in their codes of practice. The codes for pay TV services use similar classification guidelines but do not divide the broadcast day into classification zones.

The codes of practice for television stations also contain requirements regarding the display of the classification symbol for programs and the provision of oral and visual consumer advice on the reason for a program's classification.

Conclusion

Australia has adopted a co-regulatory system for the regulation of television and radio program content under which the responsibility for protecting the public is shared between the ABA as the government regulator and the six different sectors of the Australian broadcasting industry. This approach has resulted in a comprehensive set of regulations that are targeted to particular broadcasting sectors, depending on the sector's perceived degree of influence on community views. An important aspect of codes of practice is the broadcasting industry's obligation to classify programs to take into account community concerns about violence, coarse language, sex and nudity. Complementing the codes of practices are mandatory standards developed by the ABA to promote Australian identity and character and to ensure that children have access to appropriate high-quality television programs.

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Internet Content Regulation in Australia

A Co-regulatory Approach

Mike Barnard

Since January 2000, the Australian Broadcasting Authority (ABA) has administered a co-regulatory scheme for Internet content. Set out under Schedule 5 to the *Broadcasting Services Act 1992* (the Act), the scheme seeks to protect children from exposure to unsuitable Internet content and to restrict access to certain Internet content that is likely to cause offence to a reasonable adult. The scheme seeks to achieve these objectives by a number of means – through community education activities targeted primarily at children, through establishing links between Government and industry, and by providing a means for the public to have complaints about offensive or illegal (known as 'prohibited') Internet content addressed.

As the body charged with administering the scheme, the ABA's responsibilities include:

- investigating complaints about Internet content;
- encouraging development of codes of practice for the Internet industry, registering, and monitoring compliance with such codes;
- providing advice and information to the community about Internet safety issues, especially those relating to children's use of the Internet;
- undertaking supporting activities including research and international liaison.

While the administration of Schedule 5 is the responsibility of the ABA, the principle of co-regulation embodied in the scheme reflects Parliament's intention that Government, industry and the community all play a role in managing Internet safety issues in Australia, particularly Internet safety for children.

Complaint handling

A central feature of the on-line content scheme is the complaints mechanism that allows members of the Australian public to submit complaints to the ABA about Internet content that is, or may be, prohibited by law. Under Schedule 5 to the Act, the ABA must investigate legitimate complaints about potentially prohibited Internet content. 'Internet content' is stored information that is accessed over an Internet carriage service, including material on the World Wide Web, postings on newsgroups and bulletin boards, and other files that can be downloaded from an archive or library. For the purposes of the scheme, Internet content does not include ordinary e-mail (including spam) or information that is accessed in real time without being previously stored, such as chat services and voice over the Internet.

In assessing whether or not Internet content is, or may be, prohibited, the content is classified according to the National Classification Code (the Code) and the Office of Film and Literature Classification (OFLC) Guidelines for the Classification of Films and Computer Games (the Guidelines). The Code and Guidelines are available on the OFLC website at: http://www.oflc.gov.au

In summary, the following categories of Internet content are prohibited:

- *Content which is (or would be) classified RC* (refused classification) *or X* (restricted) *by the Classification Board*
  Such content includes:
  - material containing detailed instruction in crime, violence or drug use;
  - child pornography;
  - bestiality;
  - excessively violent or sexually violent material;
  - real depictions of actual sexual activity.

- *Content hosted in Australia which is classified R* (restricted) *and not subject to a restricted access system which complies with criteria determined by the ABA*
  Content classified R is not considered suitable for minors and includes:
  - material containing excessive and/or strong violence or sexual violence;
  - material containing implied or simulated sexual activity;
  - material which deals with issues or contains depictions which require an adult perspective.

If the content is hosted in Australia and is prohibited, or is likely to be prohibited, the ABA will direct the Internet content host to remove the content from their service. If the content is not hosted in Australia and is prohibited, or is likely to be prohibited, the ABA will notify the content to the suppliers of approved filters in accordance with the Internet Industry Association's code of practice. If the content is also sufficiently serious (for example, illegal material such as child pornography), the ABA may refer the material to the appropriate law enforcement agency, or, where appropriate, to a member of the Internet Hotline Providers in Europe Association (INHOPE) (see further below).

Codes of practice

Complementing its role in administering the complaints mechanism, the ABA is also responsible under the scheme for registering, and monitoring compliance with, Internet industry codes of practice. The three current codes, which govern the activities of Internet service providers (ISPs) and Internet content hosts (ICHs), were developed by the Internet Industry Association (IIA) in consultation with the community and subsequently registered with the ABA in May 2002. Among others, the codes contain provision for ISPs and ICHs to:

- assist parents and responsible adults to supervise and control children's access to Internet content;
- ensure that on-line accounts are not provided to children without the consent of a parent or responsible adult;
- inform producers of Internet content of their legal responsibilities in relation to that content;
- inform and assist customers to make complaints about Internet content;
- assist customers with complaints about unsolicited electronic mail;
- assist in the development and implementation of Internet content filtering technologies (including labelling technologies);
- give customers information about the availability, use and appropriate application of Internet content filtering software;
- ensure that customers have the option of subscribing to a filtered Internet carriage service; and
- ensure that, in the event that an industry member becomes aware that an Internet content host is hosting prohibited content in Australia, the host is told about the prohibited content.

There are a graduated range of enforcement mechanisms and sanctions available to the ABA to allow flexibility in dealing with breaches of codes of practice depending on the seriousness of the circumstances. If an ISP or ICH fails to comply with a direction by the ABA to comply with an industry code, the ISP or ICH may be guilty of an offence. A copy of the Internet content codes of practice can be found at the IIA website at: http://www.iia.net.au/codes.html

Community education

A key component of the ABA's role under the on-line content scheme is to provide information to the community, and particularly to young people, on how to stay safe on the Internet.

The ABA Cybersmart Kids web site (http://www.cybersmartkids.com.au) provides Internet safety advice for children and their parents and teachers. Features of the site include Internet safety tips, an interactive quiz, a poster gallery, lesson plan for teachers, and links to other fun or educational sites. The site was launched in 2001. It is regularly updated with new links, and will soon have some new interactive features. The site has been positively received, and the ABA has received a large number of requests to link to the site from Australian and overseas agencies.

The ABA has also developed a brochures series to complement the Cybersmart Kids web site. The brochures, each with a particular Internet safety message, have a similar look and feel to the web site, and again target young people and their parents or teachers. The brochures have been widely distributed through school networks, and are also made available to community groups, police, and libraries. They are also available for downloading from the ABA's website at: http://www.aba.gov.au/internet

The ABA's work in the international arena enables it to keep across the best new programs promoting Internet safety, and consider these for an Australian audience. It has recently worked with the agency Childnet International, United Kingdom, to bring the interactive activity 'Net Detectives' to Australian schools. The activity involves teams of school children, who take on the role of 'net detectives' in resolving an unfolding scenario with an Internet safety message. The on-line medium enables teams from different schools, cities, or even countries to work together during the course of the activity. The activity encourages young people to think for themselves about the risks associated with Internet use (particularly in chat rooms), and how they can stay safe on-line.

International liaison

Because of the global nature of the Internet, international co-operation is a key requirement for effective regulation. The Act charges the ABA with the responsibility to liaise with regulatory and other relevant bodies overseas about co-operative arrangements for the regulation of the Internet industry, including (but not limited to) collaborative arrangements to develop multilateral codes of practice and Internet labelling technologies. In the course of implementing Australia's co-regulatory scheme for Internet content, the ABA has participated in a wide range of international regulatory forums and networks.

The ABA has had particular regard to the operation of the Safer Internet Action Plan (SIAP) of the European Union (EU), which has objectives and elements similar to the Australian co-regulatory scheme. The plan is comprised of strategies in the areas of hotlines, filtering, and education and awareness. In relation to the hotlines component of the SIAP, the ABA is an associate member of INHOPE, which is established and partly funded under the plan. INHOPE provides a forum through

which Internet hotlines are able to exchange information and experience on matters such as complaint investigation processes, occupational health and safety for hotline staff, and standardised reporting of hotline statistics. The network is also an effective mechanism for dealing with specific complaints and enhancing and complementing existing arrangements with law enforcement agencies.

In February 2002, INHOPE established a number of working groups, to develop operational guidelines and resources for hotlines. The working groups focus on content-related issues, hotline awareness and visibility, hotline 'best practice' and codes of conduct, and statistical reporting. The working group on content issues is chaired by the ABA. Further information about SIAP can be found at: http://www.saferinternet.org. Information about INHOPE can be found at: http://www.inhope.org

Further information about the co-regulatory scheme for Internet content is available at the ABA website at: http://www.aba.gov.au/internet/index.htm

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Raising Media Professionals' Awareness of Children's Rights*

Aidan White

If children's rights figure prominently in mainstream media it is usually in the context of child abuse, exploitation and sensationalist news making. Children are generally seen and heard at a distance, reflecting a weakness that resonates through any discussion on media and the rights of children, that young people are seldom allowed to speak for themselves.

Raising awareness about the rights of children and the promotion of children's rights is a challenge to media. Media must not just report fairly, honestly and accurately on the experience of childhood, but they must also provide space for the diverse, colourful and creative opinions of children themselves. Whether it is news and current affairs, or the complex world of creative and performing arts, all media professionals, and the organisations for which they work, have a responsibility to recognise children's rights and reflect them in their work.

But how do we raise awareness? To answer requires examination of the way media work, of how existing principles of accountability apply, and how media must be freed from reins of political and economic control which limit professionalism and undermine ethical standards.

It will not be easy. In a world of rapid technological change and globalisation of information, commercial competition has led to a perceptible fall in standards within traditional media. At the same time, many governments and state authorities manipulate information through regulation or forms of censorship, often to satisfy narrow political objectives rather than to meet the needs of people or to protect the rights of children. Whether driven by commercial objectives or subject to political controls, journalists and media professionals are under increasing pressure.

Raising awareness

Media play an important role in raising public awareness of children's rights, but can be ambiguous partners. While journalists can uncover cases of abuse and raise awareness of children's rights, media also infiltrate the public with tolerant attitudes towards child pornography and prostitution or provide the means (for example through advertisements) by which children are exposed to abusers. On the one hand, news media tell the stories of abused and abuser, through news reports, photographs, documentaries, and drama. But on the other, they can themselves become the exploiter, by creating sexually provocative images of children in news or advertising, or, at worst, as the vehicle for child pornography, or a source of information for paedophile networks.

The way the media portray children has a profound impact on society's attitude to children and childhood, which also affects the way adults behave. Moreover, the images of sex and violence that children see influence their own expectation of their role in life. There is increasing alarm in a number of countries that the way children are portrayed may increase the risks they face. There is concern about how far children's behaviour is influenced by what they see on television, particularly with regard to violence. Another crucial question is whether media encourage children to become, or seem to become, prematurely sexually active, especially through coverage of pop music and fashion.

Journalists need to be aware of the consequences of their reporting. The co-operation of media organisations and journalists and their orientation towards safeguarding the rights and the dignity of children and young adults is extremely important for all who strive for wider recognition of children's rights. Sensational coverage may distort and exploit a serious problem, doing more harm than good. Some editors claim that sensationalism permits serious social issues to capture the attention of readers and viewers. However, such coverage rarely analyses the social and economic causes of abuse of children: the dislocation of communities and families, homelessness, corrupt employers, pimps, the drug culture or why parents in poverty sell a child to support the rest of the family. The positive story of children, their lives and their rights is not being told in full. To examine how this can be changed requires examination of the professional conditions in which media work, a review of the principles or guidelines journalists and programme makers should follow, and the obstacles that stand in the way of good journalism.

Standards, regulations and self-regulation

Reporting well on child rights requires access to a great deal of information about children, much of it held by the state authorities. Media cannot report effectively if information about education, health, employment, development and social

conditions is not generally available. Too many governments and state institutions are secretive and hoard information.

Respect for independent journalism is an essential condition for a media culture of openness about children and their rights. Journalists need to be confident that they can uphold ethical standards – rather than 'following orders' – and that they can protect confidential sources of information. Many cases of the exploitation of children will never be revealed unless the people who provide the media with information can be confident that anonymity will be preserved.

The right to freedom of expression is always important to media professionals, but has to be balanced against other important rights – most notably the rights of the child to freedom from fear and exploitation.

Journalists are wary of regulators. They have much evidence that outside intervention inevitably leads to forms of censorship. However, it is legitimate to question whether media self-regulation is a sufficient answer to public concern over standards of journalism, particularly in an age when the growth of global media enterprises and the Internet appear to put media beyond the range of national public accountability. How effective are the voluntary codes and guidelines that set out the professional obligations of journalists? As in all forms of self-regulation, effectiveness depends upon the professional confidence of journalists, their knowledge of the issues, and the conditions in which they work.

A study carried out for the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) by the UK based Presswise[1] revealed that few journalists' organisations had specific codes of good practice covering the rights of children. In May 1998 the IFJ drew up the draft of the first international guidelines for journalists covering children's rights, at a conference attended by journalists from 70 countries. Regional discussion on these guidelines took place in Latin America, Africa and Asia and they were formally adopted at the Annual Congress of the International Federation of Journalists in Seoul in 2001. The guidelines were presented at the 2nd World Congress against Commercial Exploitation of Children held at Yokohama, Japan, in December 2001. The aim of the guidelines[2] is to raise the standards of journalism in reporting on issues involving children, and to encourage media to promote children's rights and give them a voice. The code promotes:

- respect for the privacy of children and protection of their identity unless it is demonstrably in the public interest;
- the need to give children access to media to express their own opinions;
- the obligation to verify information before publication;
- the need to consider the consequences of publication and to minimize harm to children.

The code will also help media to avoid:

- sexual, violent or victim-focused programming and images that are potentially damaging to children;

- stereotypes and sensational presentation of journalistic material.

Codes do not guarantee ethical reporting, but identify the professional dilemmas that journalists and media face when reporting about children. They challenge journalists and media to be aware of their responsibilities.

Commercial pressures on journalists and media

Fierce commercial competition is one factor leading media to exploit children. The exposure of emotions and sensationalism attract audiences and sell news. Cash-conscious media organisations apply greater pressure on news teams for productivity. Journalists, therefore, sometimes take an ill-considered, easy route to newsgathering, perpetuating myths and stereotypes.

An uncomfortable balance of interests prevails where ethical standards are too often sacrificed in defence of commercial imperatives. Self-regulation may not be convincing when media organisations appear to ignore the process or to use professional codes to support their narrow interests. Very often even regulatory bodies lack the power to enforce sanctions that bite.

Media professionals need to challenge the constraints that bind them to markets. Journalists, writers, and producers must work towards a system of popular culture that addresses the needs of children without devaluing them. The competitive nature of the industry means that media will often cut corners to beat a rival network or publication. However, journalists must remain aware of the need for fair, open and straightforward methods in obtaining information. Journalism should always be ethical, above all when considering the needs of children.

Advertising and the impact of new technologies

Strongly commercial motives, primarily the need to win audiences and advertisers, influence the content of mass media communication, and these commercial motives are at their strongest when it comes to advertising. Advertising is also subject to a combination of legislation and self-regulation in the way it appeals to children. It is also one of the most controversial areas of media activity. Henry Danthan, Executive Manager of the World Federation of Advertisers, which represents national associations and multinational advertising companies, believes that an 'anti-advertising climate' is being fostered in some parts of Europe because of a misguided moral panic about its influence on children. The advertising industry is, without doubt, sensitive about allegations over its use of children.

There are problems with the concept of self-regulation in advertising. Mechanisms are only equipped to deal with grave breaches of regulations, while the

main problems arise from the accumulative effect of banal stereotypes that are used everyday without sanction. Secondly, advertising codes, like those covering journalism, often rely on notions such as 'good taste', 'bad taste' and 'decency'. But how are these terms to be interpreted and implemented particularly in an industry where image is a powerful motor for selling? Moreover, in an era of global communication, material prepared in one country may be broadcast in a region with different cultural values and expectations.

The development of new forms of communication such as the Internet has raised international concern, particularly because of the widescale availability of pornography on the Internet, and because people who target children for abuse use this technology to ensnare children or to share information. The major problem in controlling material on the Internet is that nobody controls it. Nevertheless, recent international strikes against paedophile networks by police have shown that on-line services do not have to be safe havens for people who exploit children.

Free-speech campaigners both in the United States and Europe have defeated government attempts to control content on the Internet, but the need for safeguards remains. Technical resources for parents and children to put up protective barriers to on-line exploitation are only part of the answer, and this question will need to be addressed as more children gain access to the Internet.

In fact, most of the world's children are excluded from the Internet because of a poverty of technical and financial resources – it was recently reported that only 0.1 per cent of Africans have access. Ensuring access to the Internet while protecting children from exploitation is a major challenge.

Strategies to extend children's rights will have to be linked to this rapidly-changing media environment, one that offers much less scope for centralized control and regulation than before. Solutions will have to be found in mechanisms that empower adults and young people themselves to exercise control over the on-line world.

Children should be seen and heard

The issue of identity is at the heart of journalistic endeavour. It is in the nature of journalism, from the first lesson in journalism school onwards, to provide facts, including personal details about whoever is involved in a story. The decision to suppress information has to be carefully considered, but a journalist should always respect, above all, the rights of the child.

The booklet *Putting Children in the Right* [3] explores how journalists can both give a voice in the media to children, listening to their views and aspirations and protect the identity of children who should not be exposed to the glare of publicity.

International conventions and recommendations emphasise the right of children to have a say in decisions affecting them, and call for a change in the way

children are regarded. The Council of Europe has recommended documentary programmes on young people's lives in different countries, with the aim of giving children aged from 7 to 18 – including poor and migrant children – an opportunity to air their opinions.[4]

As part of their learning children also need to be educated to be knowledgeable and critical about how the media work. There are a few projects worldwide that seek to give children opportunities to create their own media. These include the children's news agency ANDI in Brazil and Children's Express in the US and the United Kingdom. These may appear to threaten traditional notions of professional journalism. However, in an age when electronic services allow everyone access to unfiltered information, the challenge to mainstream media is not to create obstacles to participation, but to promote access that will bring children into the picture without diminishing professionalism and standards.

New means of giving children access to the media as sources should be investigated. Media outlets might consider the appointment of 'children's correspondents', with a brief covering all aspects of children's lives, and specific training to enable journalists to express the child's point of view. Another measure to assist journalists in covering children's issues accurately would be for NGOs (non-governmental organisations) in each country to compile a directory of reliable experts on different topics, which could be available on every news desk.

International bodies have called for more information to be given to children – both through the media and at school – so they can protect themselves about the dangers and risks of sexual exploitation. But children, from primary school upwards, also need media literacy training, to help them understand and decode the messages they receive from programmes and advertising, to become critical and well-informed media consumers.

Conclusion

The publication *Putting Children in the Right* includes a number of practical recommendations intended to make media and journalists more responsive and to encourage debate within media about the portrayal of children and their rights. Media professionals need to play a leading role in this debate or they will find that others grow impatient and seek to control them through regulations. Such regulations will not be effective in protecting children, but they will make it more difficult for good journalists to do their jobs.

Although there are no easy answers to complex issues or to ethical dilemmas, there are standards and benchmarks by which media can judge how they portray children in society. The need for journalistic training in reporting on the rights of children has never been greater, both at the entry point to journalism and in mid-career courses. Bad habits in the newsroom and the tyranny of deadlines, always a handicap to good reporting, can be overcome if journalists and pro-

gramme-makers at all levels are exposed to good practice and information about the importance of children's rights.

It is possible for journalists to depict children in a way that maintains their dignity, and avoid exploitation and victimisation. There are many examples of good journalism that act as a counterweight to media indifference and lack of awareness and that challenge myths. There is a need for media to identify good practice, to applaud high standards and to encourage improved coverage.

Notes

1. See: http://www.presswise.org.uk (*editors' note*)
2. The guidelines appear on pp. 61-63 in the IFJ publication *Putting Children in the Right. Guidelines for Journalists and Media Professionals*, from which this introduction is reproduced – see: http://www.ifj.org (The guidelines can also be found on, e.g., the Clearinghouse's web site: http://www.nordicom.gu.se/unesco.html – go to "Declarations and Resolutions on Children & Media".) (*editors' note*)
3. See footnote 2. (*editors' note*)
4. Björnberg, Ulla: *Children and their Families, Childhood Policies*. Council of Europe 1994.

*Source

This article is the "Introduction", pp. 3-10 in the booklet *Putting Children in the Right. Guidelines for Journalists and Media Professionals* published in 2002 by the International Federation of Journalists with the support of the European Commission, and is reprinted by permission of the International Federation of Journalists. The booklet is available in full at: http://www.ifj.org

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Published yearbooks

One of the most important tasks of *The International Clearinghouse on Children, Youth and Media* is publication of its yearbook. Five yearbooks have previously been released.

Cecilia von Feilitzen & Ulla Carlsson (eds.): *Children, Young People and Media Globalisation. Yearbook 2002.*

The Yearbook 2002 contains research examples illustrating the role of media globalisation in children's and young people's lives in different parts of the world. The transnational media and media contents - imported television programmes, satellite TV, the Internet, video and computer games, popular music, 'global' advertising and merchandised products - are to a grat extent used used by children and are, as well, increasingly targeting children. What does this mean for media production? For children's cultural identity and participation in society? For digital and economic divides among children both within and between richer and poorer countries? A separate section of the book presents recent statistics on children in the world and media in the world.

Compiled and written by Cecilia von Feilitzen & Catharina Bucht: *Outlooks on Children and Media. Child Rights, Media Trends, Media Research, Media Literacy, Child Participation, Declarations. Yearbook 2001.*

The aim of Yearbook 2001, *Outlooks on Children and Media*, is to give a broad outline of children and media in the world, focusing on media literacy in the manifold sense of the word. The concept of 'media literacy' has been given a great many definitions worldwide, something that is touched upon in the book. What we have in view here is knowledge of children and media, and efforts made to realise children's rights in this respect, not least their right to influence and participate in the media. The yearbook contains a review of recent and current international trends in media literacy including research on children and media – that is, summarising examples of/references to research and practices, important conferences and declarations related to the area, and a selection of relevant organisations and web sites.

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Cecilia von Feilitzen & Ulla Carlsson (eds): *Children in the New Media Landscape. Games, Pornography, Perceptions. Yearbook 2000.*

The 2000 yearbook contains three topics focused on the new media landscape: *violence in video and computer games*, *pornography on TV and the Internet*, and *audiences' perceptions of violence and sex in the media*. The reason why these subjects have been highlighted here is related to the increased and changed media output facilitated by new technology – and to the consequences of this new situation, primarily as concerns children and young people. The research on video and computer games, and on children's relationships to pornography on the Internet and in other media, is new and poses, therefore, also many questions.

Cecilia von Feilitzen & Ulla Carlsson (eds): *Children and Media. Image, Education, Participation. Yearbook 1999.*

The 1999 yearbook mediates *knowledge on initiatives and activities that promote children's competence as media users*. Presented in this edition is a number of articles by scholars, educators, media practitioners and representatives of voluntary organisations from around the world who work with media education and children's participation in the media. Among other additional features in this volume are sections on how children are represented in the media, as well as international and regional declarations and resolutions concerning children and the media.

Ulla Carlsson & Cecilia von Feilitzen (eds): *Children and Media Violence*. *Yearbook 1998.*

In this first yearbook, great importance is placed on research into *the influences of media violence on children and youth*. With the aim of increasing awareness and knowledge about children, youth and media violence, the Clearinghouse is dedicated to promoting a comprehensive picture of the findings based on decades of international research in the area. The book also contains, among other things, articles on children's media situation, statistics on children and media around the world, an overview of regulations controlling the media, etc.