

QUUA-

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Issue 17  
September-December 2003

DERNS

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Consell  
de l'Audiovisual  
de Catalunya

CAC

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The representation of violence

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Legal deposit book: B-17.999/98

ISSN: 1138-9761

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# Presentation

The representation of violence in the media is a recurring theme in specialist literature and a source of constant concern, particularly with regard to the sectors most sensitive to the impact of media violence, i.e., children and adolescents. Research associated with the study of represented violence, particularly in the field of television, has a long history both in the United States and a number of countries within Europe. At *Quaderns del CAC* we have opted to focus, once more, on this problematic side of TV through different theoretical and applied approximations, with the aim of locating and assessing the general debate about the issue and to weigh up suitable protection measures for the most vulnerable parts of society.

This issue opens with an article by Victòria Camps ("Violence on Television: What Are We To Do?"), which sets out the case for needing to find an ethical response to overcome the shortfalls and fallacies of the dominant paradigms in the study of violence. Miquel Rodrigo ("The Narrativisation of Violence") looks at how violence is defined socially and justified narratively. The Violence and Television Research Group at Ramon Llull University (S. Aran, F. Barata, J. Busquet, P. Medina and S. Morón) sets out the main results of its research work into how children receive television violence in the summarised article titled "Childhood, Violence and Television: Television Use and Children's Perceptions of Violence on TV". The next two articles, by Antonio J. Baladrón from the San Antonio Catholic University of Murcia and Manuel Garrido Lora from Seville University, tackle different aspects of violence as represented in advertising ("The Foundations and Processes of Violence in Television Advertising" and "Conflict and Gender Violence in the Advertising Discourse", respectively). Finally, Francesc Barata examines the news treatment of violence associated with criminal acts ("The Media and Crime Information: The Tony King Case and Media Distortions").

The "Observatory" section includes a mixture of articles including "Theoretical Journals on Audiovisual Communication in Latin America" by Daniel E. Jones; "An Approximation to Catalan Cinema from the Study of its Creative Process", by Matilde Obradors; "The World Summit on the Information Society: The Contribution of Civil Society", by Martí Petit, and a summary of the White Paper on the Audiovisual Sector in the Basque Country.

**Josep Gifreu**  
*Director*

# Television Violence: What are we to do?

**Victòria Camps**

- *Violence is a phenomenon and an inherent part of human life, as is the need to justify and explain it. To our knowledge, there has never been a time or society that has not been violent, and we have a myriad of stories and myths that try to explain why, because of man, there is hatred and destruction in the world. The biblical story of Cain and Abel tells us within a religious context about the hatred between two brothers and by extrapolation about the hatred among the rest of humanity. The fire that Prometheus stole from the gods illustrates human societies' proven capacity and power for destruction. Violence, together with love, power and sex, has always been the resource most commonly used in literature, cinema and later in television, for telling a story. The exploitation of violence has been and is the most recurrent theme in the entertainment industry.*

Even though violence is an almost inseparable dimension of both real and fictitious human relationships, it has nonetheless been a cause of constant concern. There have always been wars and aggression, and some have been considered as the most normal and effective way to deal with conflict, but at the same time, we have had to differentiate and set criteria between just and unjust wars, legitimate and illegitimate aggression. Here we are faced with a clear example of human ambivalence that at first does not accept the status quo, but rather asks: what are we to do? Is what's happening good or bad? Right or wrong? Does it deserve our consent or not? Violence has been a subject of concern and theoretical discussion not just as an

undesirable phenomenon in itself but also for the effects and influence it can have on the behaviour of people who are surrounded by it or who are constantly exposed to it in film or on television. It seems the more fragile and vulnerable members of society, those with the least means for defending themselves from external aggression because of their age, require special protection to keep them away from violence and its influence. All these fears and concerns which, I repeat, are nothing new, are nonetheless further accentuated and verbalised more often because of television: the television of the masses, accessible by all and, whether we like it or not, part of our daily lives.

There is no doubt that television makes real-life violence much more explicit. We could even say that television content is much more violent than the real world, if for no other reason than because it has to highlight the parts of life that make the biggest impression on us in order to gain our attention. It is much easier to impress an audience with murder, misery and tragedy than with things that may not be more common or ordinary but are what we identify more closely with. However, it is not easy to criticise programme content. We live in a world that has made free speech sacrosanct, i.e., it has become a fundamental right that must be upheld and guaranteed, but free speech is often used as an alibi for surreptitiously defending other freedoms and interests that are not based on the individual but rather on the market. In order to directly or indirectly intervene in violent television content in a liberal society, you need evidence to support the belief that television violence is truly counter-productive and damaging, if to no one else but children.

## 1. The Effects Paradigm

The need to provide evidence to support regulatory deci-

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**Victòria Camps**

*Member of the Catalonia Broadcasting Council*

sions rests on a type of scientific fascination that has been a part of the social sciences since their beginnings. Let us not forget that both Durkheim and Max Weber promoted 'value-free' social science, a concept pursued with some doggedness by their successors. The combined fixation with empirical data and the need for evidence gave rise to what is known as the "effects paradigm", the perspective to be used when analysing television violence. The aim was to demonstrate with facts that televised violence is detrimental because it alters human social behaviour and incites people to imitate what they see on the screen. If the research carried out based on the abovementioned paradigm was to confirm the hypothesis that violence is indeed harmful, then regulatory intervention would be to all intents and purposes an indisputable result, i.e., we would have to act in order to prevent an obvious proliferation of violence, not just on television, but in real life, too.

The United States has led the way in constructing and disseminating the effects paradigm. Without giving an exhaustive analysis of the research carried out and the different lines of development involved, I will take the year 1969 as a significant date, as this is when the Surgeon General's Scientific Advisory Committee on TV and Social Behavior was created by Senator John O. Pastora, who asked the Health and Welfare Department to carry out research into the causal relationship between television violence and human antisocial behaviour, especially in children. Senator Pastora was inspired by another report, *Smoking and Health*, written several years earlier, which had established a likely link between smoking and cancer. So in the same way that smoking and cancer could be proven to be related, instinctively it was possible to link constant exposure to violent programmes with violent behaviour in real life. The Pastora Commission made a series of appearances, and five years after its creation revealed the outcomes of its research:

- a) Television is too violent.
- b) Adults (and children) spend many hours in front of the television and therefore exposed to violence.
- c) Exposure to television violence must have harmful effects and must contribute to antisocial behaviour, even though the effects of television violence are not the same in every child<sup>1</sup>.

As we can see, the three points that summarise the

conclusions of the report *Television and Growing Up: the Impact of Televised Violence*, are not exactly compelling, but rather ambiguous and very cautious. A headline in the *New York Times* of 11 January 1972 said that television violence had no impact on young people. The analysis method used in the report was created by George Gerbner, director of the Annenber School for Communication, University of Pennsylvania, whose team had been studying violence and its possible effects for a long time. Gerbner's definition was not characterised by its complexity and sustained that violence was the explicit expression of physical force (with or without weapons) against one's self or against others, leading an individual to harm or kill himself, or harm or kill others against his own will<sup>2</sup>. Gerbner's team used this basis to analyse the *frequency* and *nature* of violence, the *perpetrators* and the *context* it occurred in. This analysis led to a *violence profile* comprised of two indicators: the *violence index* and the *probability of risk*. The first represented the amount of televised violence based on three categories: frequency, proportion and role of the character. The *probability of risk* estimated the chance of viewers becoming involved in violent programmes, with all the positive and negative consequences that could follow.

It wasn't long before Gerbner's parameters were criticised, not only because of the abovementioned definition of violence and the means used to quantify it. Firstly, the studies had centred on fictional programmes but failed to differentiate between the various kinds (cartoons, comedy, terror, etc.) and did not take into account other programmes, such as news bulletins and documentaries. Furthermore, they only focused on physical rather than verbal aggression, or aggression in the form of irony or humour. Several years later, the National TV Cable Association financed an extensive scientific study, the *National Television Violence Study*, over three years (1994-1997), the sense of which was much more detailed than the report produced by Pastora. This later study was based on the idea that television violence did have risks, even though they were difficult to determine, and that ultimately the aim was to encourage more responsible programming and viewing. The foundations it began from, based on the extensive range of studies that had been produced up until then, showed that violence could have at least three harmful effects on viewers: aggressive learnt behaviour and

attitudes, desensitisation to the importance of violence, and fear of becoming a victim of real-life violence. The report said it was true that not all television violence produced these risks, i.e., programme context and type of audience either increased or decreased the possibilities. The various universities that took part in the study considered one of its virtues to be that it was able to collate the previous evidence and that it would remain the same over time. This evidence came to the unquestionable conclusion that violence was a basic food group in our television diet. Nonetheless, the proposals at the end of the study made recommendations to the television industry, politicians and parents. At the end of the day, the study said, there was the potential to change how we think about television and its effects, whilst helping the different social agents restructure and orientate their own concepts about the medium<sup>3</sup>.

The United States may be pioneers, but they are not the only ones who have done research on violence<sup>4</sup>. British television has been systematically producing reports since 1970. Ever since the murder of the child James Bulger in Liverpool in 1993, there have been more calls and pressure to determine and confirm the effects of media violence, especially on children. However, the conclusions were not that different from those already mentioned. A study commissioned by the Home Office in 1995 concluded that research could not prove that viewing violence led to crime, even though the title of the study, *Effects of Video Violence on Young Children*, was not exactly consistent with this conclusion<sup>5</sup>. Nevertheless, as studies proliferate, the definition of violence becomes broader and the subject itself gains greater complexity. It is not just acts of physical aggression that are taken into account, but other elements, such as: a) context; b) aggressive humour; c) intention or motivation; and d) the presence of regret or punishment.

A few decades after the first reports, and seeing that real and fictional violence were rising rather than falling, it became possible to study the behaviour of a group of people in relation to television consumption. The conclusions of this study are not very assuring. A poignant article appeared in the prestigious *Science magazine* in 2002 giving the outcome of a study carried out on 707 individuals over a period of 17 years, where they were interviewed at different times during that period. The outcome of the research, lead by Jeffrey Johnson, left little room for doubt: "There's a bi-

directional relationship between television violence and aggressive behaviour"<sup>6</sup>. In effect, people who had watched an average of three hours of television a day as children later became, between the ages of 14 and 16, 60% more likely to be involved in fights and other forms of aggressive behaviour, and at the same time, potentially violent individuals were more likely to watch television. Two professors at the University of Michigan, L.D Eron and L.R. Huesmann, had previously conducted a similar study (1960-1982) with a group of 856 eight-year-olds. These were the conclusions: children who watched the most television at home were more aggressive at school; at age 19 these same children, who had watched more television, were more likely to get into trouble with the law; at 30, they were more likely to be involved in crime and abuse their children and partners<sup>7</sup>. These results propelled people to become more involved and concerned about the social repercussions of violent programming, and led to increased demands for government intervention, especially in the light of a tragedy such as the James Bulger case, where it was easy to make the connection between what is seen on television and real life.

## 2. The Perception Paradigm

Even though we find ourselves increasingly before a range of studies with worrying conclusions, the effects paradigm doesn't quite convince social researchers. In particular, the European university groups have often cast doubts and criticism on the model. To justify their rejection of it, they proposed an alternative paradigm that focused not on effects but on public perception, particularly with regard to children and adolescents, of televised violence. This hypothesis, which says that perception of violence does not depend on the number of violent acts or the existence of an obvious relationship between viewing a violent programme and the viewer's emotive reaction, is questioned from different angles. One of the most recent examples of this research method was the study commissioned by the BBC, *How Children Interpret Screen Violence*<sup>8</sup>, which found that other factors come into play (the explicit justification of the violent act, family atmosphere, education and culture) in the evaluation the viewer makes, and therefore the impact violent scenes have.

The collection put together by Martin Barker and Julian Petley<sup>9</sup> is an excellent example of this line of research that considers the causal perspective to be too simplistic and hence erroneous. The book's collaborators began from the unquestionable position that human behaviour is complex and a causal relationship cannot be used to describe it. In fact, they do not really say anything new: Hume and Kant had already posed the same questions in the 18th century and given them a philosophical basis by reinforcing the idea that freedom and determinism are contradictory and antinomous. If we believe human beings are free, we actually mean their behaviour cannot be explained only by the effects of external forces. Approaching research using a method based on a causal connection presents a number of problems, the first being, as I already mentioned, understanding violence as a univocal phenomenon, when in fact the forms and expressions of violence are many and varied and are not subject to the type of analysis that seeks to reduce them to a single form. On the other hand, critics warn about the interests and political consequences of overly simplistic research, saying that what they are actually after are fast solutions and actions. In short, they say, the criticised model is potentially as absurd as resorting to witchcraft to explain natural disasters –an absurd hypothesis because you would first have to believe in witches. Although witchcraft was just a belief, at the time it had dire political consequences<sup>10</sup>.

A more empirical study than the previous one, also carried out in the United Kingdom, focused on the programmes of four terrestrial channels and four satellite channels over a four-week period and only excluded advertisements. It analysed the amount of violence, its nature, its justification, the type of aggressor and victim, and gender differences in programmes, including the news, and came to two conclusions: there was not a significant amount of violence in the programmes, but children's programmes were the most violent of all, especially cartoons. The report concluded that this study could not demonstrate anything regarding the effects of television violence or the public's attitude towards violence associated with the various programmes. Nonetheless, it said the different forms of violence and the existence of violence in various contexts and scenarios, and who is involved and how, could certainly be analysed, and that if we could determine what forms of violence particularly concern viewers or provoke strong reactions, it might be

useful to find out how frequently it occurs<sup>11</sup>.

In short, to not get weighed down with the details, the criticisms of the effects paradigm cover a wide range of objections:

a) It does not take into account other significant variables like social problems that often form the basis of aggressive behaviour. The effects ideologists are generally conservative and 'moralising', which is one way of avoiding more serious issues. Furthermore, there is no such thing as an impartial study. Effects research produces the sought-after impression that the public's concern for violence can be resolved with scientific studies. The culture in the United States promotes this idea, and accepts it without question, because it is more convenient that way. Objective, empirical, independent analysis actually masks deeper social problems.

b) Children are not listened to. In fact, in this theory it is assumed that children and adolescents are vulnerable, incompetent and in need of protection. The maxim "child protection" papers over a concept of childhood that has no foundations.

c) The succession of definitions of violence, even though not as simple as they were at the beginning, continues to be generalisations that are impossible to delimit. So, Browne's definition of the "violent action" film classification states that the purpose of the film is to excite and stimulate the public more than focus on the storyline. The classic example would be *Rambo*. Browne asks: Is *Rambo* just about violence or is it a violent story?

d) The studies carried out seem to come straight out of the laboratory, i.e., they are artificial. The subjects find themselves in situations created by the researcher, which no doubt determines and conditions their responses.

e) Effects studies focus on fictional programmes and not informational ones. They do not allow for interpretation and different meanings of the messages contained in films.

f) In short, research undertaken in the United States, the pioneer in the constitution of the effects paradigm, takes into account all real interests: industry, politics and academia. It is scientifically credible and provides short-term solutions so the government can use them to season their campaigns and policies. At the same time, and paradoxically, the conclusions are too weak to be used for weighty issues and major political reform and so, in effect, the industry comes out on top.



The perception paradigm, if I understand it correctly, generally dominates in Europe. The two studies commissioned by the Catalonia Broadcasting Council on television violence were conducted using this second model and supported the conclusions it led to<sup>12</sup>. I personally think this model contains doubts and warrants considerable criticism. It is true that the first model, i.e., the effects paradigm, is simplistic in nature and has all the faults that come from trying to derive recommendations and value judgements based on purely empirical data. It is positivistic and plays on its appearance of being more scientific than any other model. I will deal with this belief in more depth in the next section. The perception paradigm, which is more psychological and contains fewer scientific pretensions, has just as many criticisable defects. From my point of view, the most flagrant is playing down the need to protect children, given their intrinsic vulnerability and fragility. If we look at it from this perspective, i.e., which questions the need to protect children, we would have to conclude that the educational establishment is utterly useless or very much in the wrong. I believe concern about violence and its effects on children are simply another aspect of our concern about education. If we take the assumption that a child distinguishes itself from an adult only in the fact of seeing things differently, and has a different voice and look, I find it hard to understand how, from this point of view, one can justify the task of education.

### 3. The Weak Points in the Two Paradigms

All research is conditioned by the theories that feed it, but it is impossible to have research without theories. This unavoidable paradox has to make us aware of the implicit defects in the different methods used in each case, in order to avoid falling into the trap of conclusions that are too conclusive and that in the end cannot be justified. We should only give research its due weight and understand it as just another approach and perspective that helps guide regulatory decisions, which will never be absolutely based on the methodology or theory used. I will elaborate by focusing on what I believe are the two weakest points of each of the paradigms described, i.e., the effects of violent programmes and the emphasis given to how children and

adolescents perceive violence.

The least convincing point of the first paradigm is the belief that good empirical data is enough to draw conclusions for preparing guidelines and making value judgements. The rationale is the following: we use data and statistics to confirm that some of the children most exposed to television show violent behaviour, and from this fact we come to two conclusions: 1) that the main cause is television; 2) that excessive television violence needs to be regulated. These two conclusions rest on a shaky foundation. The first, because empirical data is never exhaustive, and therefore insufficient to affirm that one of the variables, in this case television consumption, is absolutely responsible for subsequent behaviour. We will always have variables we have not considered, because, as I have said, human behaviour is too complex to be reduced to a few determining factors. If we do not see it this way, it will consequently be hard to believe in freedom.

I would like to stress the implicit mistake of the second conclusion, where action is derived from observational data. I admit that all studies carried out, even the most faithful to the effects paradigms, are very cautious about coming to firm political or legislative conclusions. They do not dare to propose drastic measures, basically because they do not completely trust the absoluteness of empirical data. Nonetheless, we need to clarify something that makes us sceptical about the disproportionate emphasis placed on empirical research. Philosophers have condemned what is known as the "naturalist fallacy", namely, logical fallacy, which leads to recommendations based on observation. In other words, fallacy denounces the error many scientists fall into (especially in social sciences), which is to consider that legal, moral or other regulatory issues can only be resolved by the use of empirical and verifiable data. Hume was the first philosopher to denounce this fallacy, using a surprising example: precepts such as "thou shalt not kill" and "thou shalt not steal", are not "logical", i.e., necessary, conclusions, as there is proof that there are people in the world who kill and steal. Animals kill amongst themselves, and yet we don't say they shouldn't. Animals are not murderers, only man is. Why? Because humanity has accepted the precepts and value judgements that say "thou shalt not kill" and "thou shalt not steal", just as we have accepted other fundamental rights, such as the right to life and property rights. Murder



and other forms of violence against people are abhorrent behaviours in principle, in the sense we want to contribute to life and to human society. We understand that violence cannot be the governing law or the accepted way of resolving conflicts, and it is this conviction, or belief, if you like, that forms the basis of the condemnation of violence, and not the assurance that violence exists.

Let us use a more recent example and perhaps one that is easier to understand. A string of scientific studies and data, in this case somewhat more irrefutable than those connected to violence, have confirmed that smoking causes cancer, i.e., "smoking kills" (as proclaimed on cigarette packets). Now, from this there is no logical deduction that one should stop smoking. If it were logical, i.e., necessary, everybody without exception would make the same choice. But that is not how things work, as the decision to stop smoking depends on different situations and the evaluations and estimations each person makes about how stopping the habit will affect their lives. In other words, the issue is not only about facts, but also about social and personal values, about the usefulness of a thing or the governing principles that create the regulations to act in one way or another.

I do not think these considerations are redundant, as they especially contribute to playing down the value of empirical data. Moreover, if we were able to show that exposure to violence systematically produces antisocial and uncivilised behaviour, the conclusion that it is wrong, and the guidelines we derive from it, would be based on the evaluation we made of the facts, an evaluation which says it is better, or more convenient (for us, for society and for humanity) to set limits on violent programmes, than to give preference to, for example, free speech, or to television operators so they can do what is in their best financial interests. As W.D. Rowland so nicely put it, many communication researchers want to view the issues related to television as simply administrative problems that can be reduced to scientific terms, when in fact, as James Q. Wilson says, "they are moral problems", whose final solution is found in political and philosophical thought<sup>13</sup>.

Let's move onto the defects I said I also see in the perception paradigm, which focuses on children's and adolescents' perception of violence. If the conclusion is that we need to set limits on violent programmes, it is because we believe children and adolescents need protection.

Excessive television violence is not so much a concern for adult viewers, who are free to watch what they want. Children, on the other hand, have to be taught and sensitised so they too can choose freely and with some criteria to go by. Child protection is another ethical and legal precept we have come to accept as fundamental. Nonetheless, it is a precept that becomes a little ambiguous within the context of the perception paradigm. Theorists who claim to especially take into account children's perception of violence also say that intervention in children's lives is always somewhat paternalistic, and could in fact be counter-productive. The underlying hypothesis is that a child is not a "passive viewer" of television (just as an adult isn't either), but rather an "active interpreter"; and a child's interpretation will no doubt be influenced by the type of school they attend, their family and friends etc., and not just by the media itself. It is precisely because a child's world is elementary that if something is to be done, this line of reasoning goes, it should be to foster critical thinking in children rather than change programming.

Not all defenders of the perception paradigm are as anti-interventionist and liberal. For example, one of the most prestigious researchers in the field, David Buckingham, does not support the idea that children should be left in front of the television without any sort of intervention. He says the question is not whether we should intervene or not, but rather *how* and *where*. Both parents and children need help in discriminating. Educational strategies need promoting, and the classification and symbols of movies need to be more detailed and transparent. In short, his idea is to make education a priority when it comes to watching television.

My disagreement with this particular idea, as with the previous one, is not emphatic, but rather depends on how conclusively each of the underlying theories is expressed. In favour of the model, one has to point out that in order to educate, it is essential to understand the peculiarities of those who are to be educated. However, understanding that children are not adults and therefore treating them as minors does not necessarily equal radical paternalism. Having said this, neither is it a good idea to exaggerate an attitude of excessive complacency about what we could consider - always from our adult point of view, remember - "the world of children". This is a position that would easily support the current trend towards a "weak education", i.e.,

another example of the postmodern weakness of thought and the convictions of our globalised and liberal times. Intervention is essential in children's habits, as it is unavoidable if we want to maintain the etymology of *education*, which is to try and bring out the very best in people. In order to influence children's behaviour, it is not enough to teach them to read and write in the audiovisual language, or to transmit moral principles or teach them to see through critical eyes. It is important to provide a favourable learning environment, as children and adolescents would otherwise find themselves in a sea of confusion, with such contradictory messages that it would be hard to establish any consistent ideas about what to do and how to react. It would be futile to instil values that say people's relationships must be pacific and conflicts should be solved by communication if the messages on TV (one of the most important focal points of socialisation) or in videogames are totally alien and contradictory to the ideals transmitted. If we have reason to believe everyone should be educated, the school curriculum should prioritise certain fields of knowledge over others, and if we have reasons against allowing children to smoke, drink or drive cars, then why don't we have reasons enough to demand that programmes broadcast during children's and adolescents' prime times be in line with educational goals? I hope it is not because we are not really sure what these goals are.

The detractors of the effects paradigm add that children may perceive violence quite differently to the way adults perceive it, or even how adults think children perceive it. That is why it is important to analyse the way children see things, as we might arrive to the conclusion that violence is not as pernicious as adults tend to think. For now, and from what I know of studies conducted that were based on this hypothesis, there is not much difference between what children think and what adults think they think, i.e., they tend to condemn certain forms of violence and feel fear and anxiety about other types, just as their parents do. Therefore, children's perceptions do not seem to be very different from adults'. However, I don't think the main argument is this, but rather the unavoidable authority of those whose task it is to educate. Regardless of a child's perception, the educator has to teach the child to perceive violence as something bad and damaging to harmonious coexistence. Another question is how to establish the best

strategy to convince them, i.e., through prohibition or critical commentary. Something in-between is probably best, i.e., neither complete prohibition nor purely critical commentaries of a reality that, in the end and for children, is much more attractive and motivating than the classifications that disqualify them. The only thing strict prohibition generates is a desire for the prohibited object, but criticism of this persistent reality that does nothing for the attitudes we want to instil through education will never be very effective, either. If, as Hannah Arendt said so eloquently, education is always about teaching something, it is impossible to educate without guidelines, without teaching to discern right from wrong<sup>14</sup>.

#### **4. What Are We To Do: Intervene Or Let Things Be?**

In accordance with what I have said until now, the moral rejection of violence and our duty to educate are the two ethical principals upon which legislative decisions against what we believe to be excessive violence are based. Beyond scientific studies that prove violence is indeed detrimental, the driving principle is that "we reject violence". At the same time, and without questioning that children also have rights, we believe that "education is absolutely essential in order to instil basic democratic values and the rule of law", values we summaries today under *civil rights*.

Undoubtedly, the issue is not the discussion of these two principles, but determining when violence is excessive, unsuitable and "gratuitous", and how do we go about educating to create a reaction against it? It is problematic, especially as there are no clear-cut formulas. However, I would say it is a good thing there aren't any, unless we want to put paid to our freedom to make appropriate choices in each situation, even at the risk of being wrong. It is no use hiding behind escapist subterfuges like the ones that say there is no point in opposing violent programming, as real life is just as violent, or even in teaching children not to do certain things, when it is precisely those things adults perpetrate with a far less degree of scruples. What good will it do to prepare children for a world that's not real? some educators ask. As far as I know, there is only one answer, i.e., that is the whole purpose of education, to not only prepare a child for the world as it is, but also teach him to reject what isn't right with it.

The French Minister for Culture and Communication commissioned the philosopher Blandine Kriegel to prepare a report on television violence (*La Violence à la Télévision*), released in 2001. The document doesn't discuss the causal relationship between perceived violence and aggressive and antisocial behaviour in detail, but it does say that attempts to establish a causal relationship only produce limited or partial results, and in any case, we cannot go much beyond a statistical relationship, anyway. Nonetheless, the report says, "we would be wrong to ignore the social consequences"<sup>15</sup>, seeing as, if nothing else, too much TV violence cannot be good for building civic awareness, although it is obvious that violence has become more and more commonplace in both the media and society itself. It is also obvious that exposure to violence has psychological effects on children, i.e., it generates fear, anxiety and shame. However, the main philosophical argument is that violence results in a loss of "aesthetics", i.e., a loss of the principle or conviction that "there is no need to show it all". In line with this tradition, Kriegel ventures on a definition of "gratuitous" violence as violence with no purpose, "deregulated" and likened to "terrorism". A violence, in short, that shakes the foundations of society and could lead to "its naturalisation", i.e., a belief that violent actions are simply natural. This would mean a regression to the natural state that Hobbes wanted to demonstrate as irrational and unsuitable to the survival of man and society.

I have to admit I am not very happy about taking "gratuitous" violence to mean "deregulated" violence. For one thing, it assumes there is regulated violence, e.g., war, which is not gratuitous. Kriegel here would make one of the mistakes that supporters of 'perspectivism' on forms of violence condemn: that only fictional violence has been taken into account, and not, for example, violence that appears on the news, when the effects are studied in children. "Gratuitous" violence is a part of fiction and has been cultivated in films such as *Clockwork Orange* and *The Silence of the Lambs*. Understanding it in those terms implies that real-life violence is never gratuitous, and therefore is not as detrimental as gratuitous violence might be for society.

Let's go back to the arguments and principles that support a certain amount of television intervention in order to reduce violent content. These days any intervention or attempt to regulate the media gets bad press because it is seen as a

violation of free speech. Kriegel is aware of this, and rejects the 'free-speech' argument using the only irrefutable counterargument, i.e., market dependence. "Television violence neither reflects the free speech of the creator or public demand but rather is a product of a global marketing system. It acts as a cultural incubator and contributes in the long term to the devaluation of the world"<sup>16</sup>. Kriegel laments the weakness of French legislation compared to, say, its British counterpart: only 20% of French films have some sort of restriction placed on them, compared to 80% of British films. We need to classify everything, and we need to review the classification criteria. We need to do away with complexes and prejudices and boldly admit that to depend on market interests is not freedom at all. Making us believe that television is a means of free speech when obviously it is supported by advertising is nothing more than sophistry. So too is using free speech to legitimise the broadcasting of programmes that only contribute to the demise of man. Hence the *pseudo-debate* against intervention is effectively *hypocritical*. I say pseudo debate because it wants to avoid a debate, and hypocritical because it appeals to free speech while hiding a dependence on the market, which, if anything, restricts freedom of choice.

In the United States, the debate on the effects of television violence has translated into a confrontation between the entertainment industry and supporters of greater regulation, or self-regulation. The Action for Children (ACT) association prepared a declaration in 1968 that encapsulated all the social concerns regarding the issue. The point of the declaration was summarised in the slogan, "Children First, Profits Second". Child protection, it said, was a fundamental duty and the right of children a basic aspect of the "public interest" that President Herbert Hoover was the first to mention in connection with broadcasting, and which has since become the essential condition to use in connection with broadcasters, in accordance with the 1934 *Federal Communication Act*. Initially, *public interest* meant *public property*. In other words, there was a connection between interest and property with regard to the train, telephone and radio, but television was different, basically because television in the United States has generally been privately run. Television has always sought the public for the sake of its advertisers. As I said earlier, television programming rests on advertising support.

The defence of free speech therefore carries little weight. Nonetheless, this argument was used by Jack Valenti, president of the Motion Pictures Association, to reject even self-regulation devices like the *V-Chip*. Valenti says the chip has nothing to do with parental responsibility, and as we know, any reference to the first amendment is sacred. In 1947, the Hutchins Commission produced a report about the media in the United States that started with the question, "Is the Freedom of the Press in Danger?". The previous year, the FCC produced *The Blue Book*, which examined the balance between free speech and social responsibility, in which it was clear that the FCC didn't care much for public interest. However, the book failed to make a big impact. On the other hand, in 1970 when the debate on broadcast violence started to gain momentum, the very same FCC shamelessly declared that public interest hindered free speech and that the market was enough to determine public interest. Any concern for children was transferred to toy manufacturers and food producers. Anything that interfered with sales was seen as pure censorship<sup>17</sup>.

## 5. The Tunnel Vision of Violence

I have mentioned more than once in this article the implicit trap of considering limitations on violent content as a type of censorship, and therefore a wrongful violation of freedom. Not only are content creators seen as victims of illegitimate interference but viewers' freedom of choice is considered to be affected as they have less to choose from. Moreover, some people see screen violence as an artistic expression that reveals aspects of our world which, were it not for the media, we wouldn't see. Such is the case with the atrocities of war or the casualties of famines and poverty. From this point of view, violent videogames or comics could help people with their emotional imbalances, or could placate their sense of impotence. Fear, hunger for power and anger are emotions we need to learn to control and, because we don't want to experience them in our lives, we can access them through fiction or the experiences of others. That way, being faced with the pain or perversion of others can produce revulsion in us that further rejects purely destructive emotions. The possibly therapeutic effect of violent content is one of the favoured arguments used to

support the complacent "let it be" approach.

It would seem that the people who want to stifle the debate do not realise that accepting unfettered violent content is nothing more than shutting one's eyes to a form of expression, i.e., a condition often called "tunnel vision". As I said at the beginning, violence has always been the easiest way to entertain, and it continues to be so in increasingly blatant forms, with progressively crueller and more gruesome images. This is for one simple reason: violent content is easier to sell than any other type. Violence is a universal language that doesn't need translation or interpretation, which everyone in our globalised world understands and which easily transcends all cultural barriers. It doesn't take a great effort or much intelligence to decipher violent actions. The broadcast industry knows perfectly well that violence is the most efficient way to capture and manipulate an audience, especially a young one.

The old television adage "if it bleeds it leads" responds to people's craving for blood and guts, because at the end of the day they are simple stories that are easy to understand. Resorting to what is simple and easy is a requirement of the broadcast industry, which has taken up and run with the idea that "a picture is worth a thousand words". However, simplicity and superficiality reinforce stereotypes and clichés, and a lack of nuances undermines values such as tolerance, a culture of peace and the need to mediate in conflicts. We have become used to using euphemisms like "action movie" or "horror movie", which hide the real intention behind these productions, i.e., to excite base instincts and passions rather than tell a story. When it comes to educating children and teenagers, getting them used to simple messages is the worst way to instil in them a culture of hard work, deeper reflection in their studies and general knowledge.

The commercial monopoly of broadcasting content is so obvious, beyond what any past or future research could affirm, and the most indisputable proof is that we have delivered our "cultural environment to a marketing operation", as George Gerbner says. The overabundance of violence is not due to a particular type of viewer addiction, as some people would have us believe, but rather the low cost of these types of productions and their potential for slotting in advertisements during prime time, a concept

especially designed to offer these products. Thus violence ends up being the "psychic air" breathed in constantly by children and adolescents. The proportion of the broadcast space taken up by violence has turned our symbolic stage into one filled with murders and criminals, i.e., an environment of cruelty, crime, profanity, perversion and senselessness that may yet erode our sense of society by displacing or eliminating positive values. Huesmann supports this idea when he says children these days develop "cognitive scripts" that guide their behaviour by imitating their media heroes. They internalise scripts that use violence to resolve conflicts or to escape the pressures and demands of a competitive and aggressive society.

Violence has undoubtedly always been the easiest resource to entertain with, a resource that, as we have just seen, is being further exploited by global broadcasters that have found the key to a universal language in simplification. The point I have been trying to make here is that even though there has always been violence, it is not enough to close our eyes to it and let things run their apparently inevitable course. The title of this article features the question "What Are We To Do?" - a question that forms the basis of ethics. Understanding the world in order to change it has been the aim of not only science and technology, but of morality too, as from the outset it questions the rightness and justice of the things that happen.

If to give an answer to the ethical question we have to wait until we obtain irrefutable data, we would be putting off the answer until kingdom come. It would be absurd to conclude, on the one hand, that the phenomenon of violence doesn't exist because we can't systematically prove that it has a destructive effect on people's behaviour. What to do with television is a civic issue, not a scientific one. Given that protecting children is a required duty, it would be foolish to not let ourselves be guided by institutions which, on the other hand, seem irrefutable. It is one of these institutions that leads us to believe that totally unfettered violent content can only contribute to instilling a violent outlook in our society, and the fact that the media systematically uses violence to capture children's attention cannot be good for either socialisation or education<sup>18</sup>.

So from the start, we have an affirmative answer for the main premise: excessive violence is not good for people's socialisation and education. The second premise is that

there is no doubt that television is too violent. As Aristotle said, practical syllogism ends in action: we need to transform the mindset of some of the media, as the issue is too important to leave up to market interests.

## Notes

1. LIEBERT & SPRAFKIN (1988); ROWLAND (1983).
2. G. GERBNER, in COMSTOCK & RUBINSTEIN (1972), pp. 28-187.
3. *National Television Violence Study*  
[www.ccsp.ncsp.edu/execsum.pdf](http://www.ccsp.ncsp.edu/execsum.pdf).
4. GUNTER & HARRISON (1998).
5. BARKER & PETLEY (1997), pp. 47-52. See in the same book the article by Martin Barker criticising the report on the Bulger case by Elizabeth Newton, *Video Violence and the Protection of Children* (1994), pp. 27-46.
6. JOHNSON, et al., (2002), pp. 2,468-2,471.
7. HUESMANN L.R. (1986).
8. Research by the BBC, BBFC, BSC and ITC (September de 2003).
9. BARKER & PETLEY (1997).
10. Ibid., pp. 1-2.
11. GUNTER & HARRISON (1998), pp. 281.
12. Cf. Carles LÓPEZ I CAO (dir.), *La representació de la violència a la televisió (How violence is depicted on television) (2000)*, Jordi BUSQUET (coord.), *Infància, violència i televisió (Children, Violence and Television) (2002)*.
13. ROWLAND (1983), pp. 294-295.
14. ARENDT, Hanna (1996).
15. KRIEGEL (2001), pp. 18.
16. KRIEGEL (2001), pp. 20.
17. See this excellent book by the president of the FCC under the Kennedy administration, Newton N. Minow (1995).
18. This is one of the ideas the White Paper entitled *Education in the Audiovisual Environment*, recently published by the Catalonia Broadcasting Council, expands on thoroughly

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# The Narrativisation of Violence

Miquel Rodrigo

- *It is possible to distinguish two aspects in violent stories. Firstly, the definition of the act as violent and, secondly, the explanation of the violent act. This article shows how some acts are socially defined as violent and others are not, according to the social conventions of each historical period in a particular culture. It also shows different ways of justifying violence based on etiological and teleological strategies.*

Humans are narrative beings. One of the universal features of humanity is the narrativisation of reality. This is true from the broadest through to the most intimate of human experiences. Cultures construct the stories that will become shared mythical references and humans hold the micro-stories of their autobiographies. At the same time, the different social phenomena become discourses that take on a public dimension through the media. Violence is also narrativised in both interpersonal and media communication.

The aim of this article is to expand upon two aspects that strike me as essential in stories involving violence. In the narrativisation of violence we can see the possible appearance of two levels of production of meaning, i.e., comprehension and justification. Clearly, we are dealing with an analysis proposal that seeks narrative strategies for these stories. Very often the two aspects are mixed and one becomes confused with the other or, better said, one is masked as the other. It is therefore necessary to be

absolutely clear about the meaning that each contributes.

We can differentiate them in the following manner: *comprehension* involves providing violence with a meaning but not necessarily justifying it. It involves labelling particular phenomena as violent. *Justification* involves establishing legitimacy criteria that make it possible to evaluate different types of violence. As I have already said, it is common in many discourses for the two aspects to be inter-related. However, I think that by differentiating them we can arrive at a critical approximation of the discourses of violence.

Violent narratives are not simple; they are not provoked purely by casuistic processes but also by different ways from which the various cases can be approached. However, narratives constructed on violent conflict are very important because when it comes to resolving them it is not just the profound causes that led to the conflict that are influential but also their narrative representation. As Martínez de Murgía (1999, 149-150) says: "The difficulty in resolving conflict does not depend solely on the nature of the dispute in question, but the way in which the parties discuss it, the perception they have of what should be negotiated or not and the effect this could have on the other party (...), and on its public image". These elements with regard to the interpretation and representation of conflict are fundamental. Ross (1995, 244-245) says that for him, the more intense the conflict and the longer it lasts, the more likely it is that the interpretative component is important and that appreciating its role will be necessary to reach a viable agreement. People fight for real interests, he says, whether material or symbolic; but the way they fight, the intensity of their feelings and even how far adversaries will go to defend or achieve what they believe to be their legitimate property, is proof that the achievement of interests has an important psychocultural component that has yet to be well understood.

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The type of representation constructed is fundamental in the case of intercultural conflict (Rodrigo, 2003b). Ross (2001: 159) establishes his analysis of intercultural conflict, a type of conflict that appears frequently in the media, on the idea of psychocultural dramas. He says psychocultural dramas are apparently irresolvable conflicts between groups who fight over claims that affect central elements of each group with regard to their historical experience and identity and which lead to mistrust and fear of the adversary. Psychocultural dramas polarise events about cultural claims, threats and/or non-negotiable rights, which are important because they connect with narratives and the heart of the fundamental metaphors of the group's identity. These psychocultural dramas manifest themselves in various types of narratives. Ross (2001, 164) says that psychocultural interpretations are found in many forms, such as written material, historical documents, public discourses, government reports, laws, videos, theatre works, songs, systematic observations and opinion polls. All of these narratives contribute to the construction of social representations, but there is no doubt that news stories have a very significant social impact. This explains the importance of how violence is represented (Rodrigo, 1999).

Often, however, news stories about violence conceal (within the emotion that is typical to them) a construction of reality that has to be disseminated. That is why I propose analysing two aspects of these stories in order to consider what type of reality the media proposes. To begin with, let's look at the comprehension of violence.

## **From Aggression to Violence**

Violence is a social action that produces meanings. Different social discourses are constructed around violence and the significance of violence can change at different historical times. From this point of view, we could say that violence is a historical construction of meaning.

A key distinction when it comes to giving a meaning to violence is differentiating between aggression and violence. Aggression is considered to be an adaptive and, in short, positive response to environmental stimuli, while violence is seen as a social dysfunction.

We are thus looking at two different constructions.

Aggression corresponds to the worlds of neurobiology, behaviouristic psychology and evolutionary ethology and is presented as necessary, natural, innate and inevitable. Violence corresponds to the worlds of functional sociology, anthropology and social psychology and is considered to be contingent, acquired, cultural and reprehensible.

Sometimes, however, the two views are interlinked. It is important to determine whether we are dealing with manifestations of aggression or the sphere of violence. The borderline between aggression and violence is often not as clear as we believe. Moreover, the limits of this borderline can change over time. To that end, we have to ask where violence is located in our society, i.e., what violence is understood to be. Each society classifies particular types of behaviour as violent, while other forms of behaviour are considered to be just aggression.

Through its laws, each society establishes the violent behaviour it considers deserving of punishment. However, as we know, even in the best of cases the law lags behind social reality. Before a particular behaviour can be taken into account by legal regulations, it has been subjected to a discussion by the legislators and, before that, by society itself. It is in this public debate that the political and social parties with the most influence and power will create a particular climate of opinion, which in turns produces values that are presented as hegemonics and thus used to label particular phenomena as 'violent'.

If we accept these ideas, we could agree that things considered violent will be the product of a social convention subject to negotiation on the part of the political and social agents. The step from aggression to violence would be the result of this semiotic classification.

As I said in a previous work (Rodrigo, 1998), violence is a historical construction. That is why a social discussion about violence at any given time in history will produce zones of majority consensus, zones of dissent and zones of negotiation. This proposal of comprehending social debate can obviously be applied to other subjects besides violence, but this is the phenomenon we will focus on here.

Within the zones of consensus, the meaning of violence is shared by the majority, or at least is not systematically questioned. Furthermore, these zones are also where the centrality of some phenomena is established. Domestic violence today appears to belong to this zone, something

that would not have occurred a few years ago. It is precisely thanks to the role of the media that this phenomenon, which used to be considered part of people's private lives and was not labelled as violence, has acquired public visibility and a new social meaning.

Sensitivity and the perception of violence obviously continue to change and it is possible that dangerous driving, for example, could end up being considered a form of violence. But in order for that to happen, it will have to be made more visible and be classified, and move from the zone of dissent to the zone of negotiation and finally, possibly, the zone of consensus. Within the zones of dissent there are opposing views on labelling particular types of behaviour as violent. In these zones, the discussion has not entered the public debate, because the supposedly minority criterion has been unable to transform itself into a public interlocutor of the criterion considered to be the majority one. In short, in the zones of dissent we find all the phenomena that are not included within the definition of violence. For example, our society does not consider workplace accidents to be occupational violence, or football to be sports violence, even though we accept they can be aggressive.

Before going on to look at the zones of negotiation, I would like to point out that all these zones acquire a greater or lesser scope and more or less flexibility depending on how much social control is present at each historical time. Even the zones of consensus, where there may be a legal determination, are subject to a certain degree of negotiation. What the zones of negotiation establish is a public discussion on the classification that should be accorded to particular phenomena and the social, political and legislative actions to carry out based on this definition. Sometimes behaviour that is in the zones of dissent or negotiation can move into the zones of consensus. Here the correlation of forces that exist in a society will be decisive when it comes to imposing their point of view, interpretation of reality and values. These zones obviously have borders, i.e., areas in which you can move from one zone to another. The problem with the zones of negotiation is not that there is a 'no man's land' but rather an 'every man's land'. As Bauman (2002, 269) says: "The mortal threat against the very survival of social practice is not as threatening in the "no man's land" as it is in the "too-many-people land". Zones of negotiation

can thus become overcharged with significance. Moreover, as Appadurai (2003, 77) reminds us, "all moral and social taxonomies hate the categories that blur the dividing lines". In the zone of negotiation, the border between aggression and violence is blurred.

But sometimes, beyond the social debate over what constitutes violence, the social parties able to define it choose to mask it and present it as something else. As Lewis Carroll put it in his novel *Through the Looking Glass*, when Alice questions whether you can make words mean so many different things, Humpty Dumpty's response is blunt: "The question is which is to be master, that's all". But in a democratic system, it is not enough to just be master, it is also necessary to convince and acquire legitimacy. As Rousseau (1986, 13) said: "The strongest person is not strong enough to always be the master if he doesn't transform power into law and obedience into duty". Violence must become legitimate violence, not just legal violence. But somewhere along the way, violence loses its own label and becomes strength.

It is important to recognise that not all the violence in stories is equal. Some types of violence acquire a legitimacy denied to other types. Not just that, but identical behaviours can be valued differently according to the perpetrator of the violent act, as there are some social agents who have a monopoly on legitimate violence. This second movement of violent stories is very important because it changes the meaning of violence. Below we can see how this diverse evaluation of violence can come about.

### **From Violence to Strength**

As various authors have said, each society channels violent behaviour in accordance with its socially accepted values and rules of behaviour (Aran *et al.*, 2001: 37). As I said in a previous text (Rodrigo, 2003a), all cultures involve building an order and thus a meaning. We should bear in mind that providing a meaning involves organising a reality and putting the world in order. We know that the concept of culture is something that people have made many attempts to define. The concept of culture is a cultural construction. As Cuche (1996: 7) says: "It is significant that the word 'culture' does not have an equivalent in the majority of the oral

languages of the societies that ethnologists usually study. Even though it is not a universally shared proof of evidence, obviously it does not mean that these societies do not have culture, but rather that they do not look at the question or whether or not they have culture, much less define their own culture".

For my part, without pretending to understand everything involved, I subscribe to Geertz's (1989: 88) definition of culture as denoting a historically transmitted system of significances represented in symbols, a system of concepts inherited and expressed in symbolic forms through the ways that men communicate, perpetuate and develop their knowledge and attitudes towards life.

If we start from this idea of culture, i.e., as a source of meaning, it is important to understand violence as a communicative act. Culture provides violence with meaning and thus contributes instruments for communication. Even senseless violence has a meaning of things that do not have any sense.

But culture not only provides violence with meaning, it also (or, better said, it now) legitimises and delegitimises it. Legitimated violence thus becomes strength. To indicate this move from violence to strength we could show the existence of two narrative strategies that are not mutually exclusive, i.e., teleological and etiological strategies. In a teleological strategy, the focus is on the purpose of violence, e.g., when people use violence to try to liberate a country, or to become rich or to carry out revenge, etc. Narratives that justify violence with a teleological strategy usually emphasise the purpose behind carrying out a violent act. An etiological strategy focuses on the person who perpetrates violence and the surrounding circumstances. Narratives that refer to the etiology of violence are particularly concerned with explaining the reason for which something occurs.

Teleological violence would be based on the concepts of worthy and unworthy violence, while etiological violence would be based on justified and unjustified violence. Crossing one with the other would give us four ways to give a meaning to violence. Of course, each culture will establish the behaviour it considers worthy and unworthy, justified or unjustified, depending on its historically established zones of consensus, dissent and negotiation. All of these categories must be understood as proposals for reading discourses about violence. It is extremely unlikely that an

act of violence would be worthy per se; however, many social discourses aim to make their own violence seem worthy. Thus, a flare-up between countries can be considered a "just war" and violence thus becomes strength. I shall not go into this point in any more depth, but I think we could find many examples in our own history or in the bellicose climate of today's world.

One way of narrating violence would be to present it as worthy and justified. This would be a discourse that showed us a type of correct behaviour. Even though it was violent behaviour, it suggests that the perpetrator did what he said he would do. In fact, this would be a case of legitimate violence. One example would be self-defence, or the defence of third parties, with means in proportion to the aggression. For example, this type of narrative would establish the following line of reasoning: if Iraq is endangering the whole of humanity, defending it by attacking this bellicose power is the least we can do.

Another narrative is one in which violence is worthy but unjustified. This would be the case of erroneous behaviour. In other words, even though the purposes pursued through violence are worthy, the causes that lead to it cannot be justified. This could be the case of self-defence or the defence of third parties with disproportionate means. When we talk about "disproportionate violence" we mean to say, on the other hand, that there are some criteria that make violence worthy. This type of narrative would establish the following line of reasoning: if Iraq threatens us, we have to defend ourselves. But are we talking about a real threat? If it does not have weapons of mass destruction, how can it be a threat?

Another narrative would be one of justified but unworthy violence. We would find this, for example, in violence based on due obedience. Bauman (1998) clearly suggests that one of the mechanisms that the people who perpetrated the Holocaust used to justify it was delegated responsibility. A possible narrative is one that suggested it would be unworthy to attack a country like Iraq, if we do not know whether or not it has weapons of mass destruction, but that it is important to help our allies and that the US knows what it is doing.

The final narrative about violence that I would like to discuss would be unworthy and unjustified violence. This would be the case of incomprehensible violence, such as

"gratuitous violence". To look once more at the case of Iraq, it would involve establishing that if Iraq was not a threat to humanity nor had weapons of mass destruction, what sense would it make to initiate a war? (Although in this case it might not be appropriate to talk about gratuitous violence, given the country's oilfields).

If we accept that, at least in part, discourses about violence use the aforementioned bases, it is important to recall that each culture will establish the social regulations that provide the different forms of violence with meaning. Of course, these narratives of violence are not closed but can produce, particularly in the zones of negotiation, a discursive agonistics whereby different interpretations on violent phenomena are brought into confrontation, even to the point of discussing whether or not they are violent.

The discourses that prevail in each society will apply their own strategies for constructing different views about violence. Violence is justified from a teleological position in order to preserve a superior being, while alien violence is denied the interpretation of the perpetrators and is reinterpreted or removed to an etiological viewpoint in which the subject moves into the realm of individual pathology. This would be etiological, not teleological, violence.

Violence can thus be reduced in psychological terms. But, as Ross (1995: 19) says, we should not forget that the interpretative processes most commonly described in psychological terms are also profoundly cultural. The notion of a culture of conflict calls attention to how people in communities develop and share interpretations rooted in psychocultural dispositions. This approach forces us to consider common formative experiences and explicit practices and values shared by the people that grow up in a group and at the same time appreciate the importance of common identities, self-conception and external groups that serve as acceptable goals for externalisation and projection. As we can see, culture not only provides violence with meaning but also determines its goals and offers us acceptable justifications for legitimising or delegitimising it. As Delgado (1998: 59-64) reminds us, violent people are always other people. However, it is important to bear in mind that some cultures have more problems when it comes to managing conflict than others. In cultures where there is a high predisposition to define own and alien groups in diametrically different terms, in seeing the actions of others

as something threatening and provocative or in identifying oneself with few people from outside one's own group, it is not possible to modify internal psychic structures by managing conflict. However, one can propose analogies, metaphors and psychoculturally appropriate alternative images that could be more compatible with a constructive management of conflict (Ross, 1995: 271-272). That is why the social representations of the different types of violence are so important.

The representations of violence include the meaning given to violence, the legitimacy of the actors who carry out violent acts, and even the causalities attributed to it.

As Mannoni (2001: 61) suggests, social representations are dynamic, structuring and persistent. Social representations are cognitive and emotional processes that produce meaning and symbolic and dynamic realities. They also act as ways of thinking about how to organise reality. Finally, social representations ensure the permanence and congruence of what we believe. I would add that social representations are cultural products that form the basis of the comprehension, justification and attribution of violence. Mannoni (2001: 55) says that social representations are at the crossroads between subjective participation in sociality and the forms produced by the social body. Santamaría (2002: 11) reminds us that, "representations are (...) a particular way of *conceiving* reality in its cognitive sense, but also in terms of constructing and structuring. Representations form part of social relations, they are the product and generators of relations. It is important to emphasise that these representations are collective not just because they are shared by the members of a group but also because they are socially prepared, maintained and transformed within the heart of social relations and because they have a structuring scope of social relations themselves." In other words, social representations are socially constructed products and are constructors of social thought. However, it is important to remember what Mannoni (2001: 119-120) found, i.e., that "the problem that arises is not knowing the extent to which a representation is true or false, or the relationship this type of knowledge has with the truth. In effect, a representation, because it is a *representation*, is necessarily 'false', because it never says exactly what the object is, but at the same time it is 'true' because, for the subject, it is a type of valid knowledge upon which he can

act". Social representations, even if they usually have a certain historical and cultural continuity, can change according to the circumstances of a particular time and the perspective of the observers. A fundamental element in this change is the narratives behind the prevailing social representations or ones that offer alternatives. For Mannoni (2001:66), "the mentality of a particular group is in some way organised and led, i.e., conditioned by social discourses (...), in the same way that the narrative of a subject's life is open to interpretation according to his or her personal myth".

In a democratic and plural society there is a type of discursive agonistics in which the media plays a very important role. The media acts on the availability of social representations; by using some particular representations it promotes people's adherence to them.

"The media, and particularly television, is very important when it comes to constructing the social perception of reality" (Aran *et al.*, 2000: 32). The media shows representations of some forms of violence and conceals other ones. This is done by hiding particular types of violence, labelling them as 'aggression' or simply justifying them if they cannot be hidden. This is surely the immense power of the media, above and beyond more or less improbable causalities. As Cardús (1998: 26) says: "The relationship between television and violence is in fact crossed by a series of other cultural factors which necessarily put paid to any mono-causal analysis. Rather than considering television as the cause of violence, it might be necessary to speak of television as an almost perfect example of the violence intrinsic to our society".



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# Childhood, Violence and Television: Television Use and Children's Perception of Violence on Television<sup>1</sup>

**Sue Aran, Francesc Barata, Jordi Busquet, Pilar Medina and Sílvia Moron**

- *In this article we present the main results of a study commissioned by the Catalonia Broadcasting Council and prepared during 2001 by the Violence and Television Research Group at the Blanquerna School of Communication Studies (URL) on television usage and how children perceive violence on TV. (See [www.audiovisualcat.net/recerca/presentacio-violencia.html](http://www.audiovisualcat.net/recerca/presentacio-violencia.html).)*

The study started from the position that children are one of the age groups that watch the most TV. Audience surveys confirm that on average children spend more than three hours a day in front of the small screen and suggest that a significant part of the programmes they like the most are aimed at an adult audience and broadcast outside the children's viewing schedule. Some experts believe this should set the alarm bells ringing.

Television is one of the favourite targets of the apocalyptic discourses often present during times of insecurity that are wont to be filled with bad omens about the fate of humanity. *Common sense*, and often the intellectual field, is used to posit television as one of the scapegoats of our times. We are living in a time full of uncertainty. The anxiety and concern many people have with regard to today's society are projected onto television, which can end up being considered the source of all our problems.

Social sensitivity towards violence has also grown

significantly in recent decades. This sensitivity is expressed at many levels and is manifested in society's preoccupation with the excess of scenes of violence presented on TV<sup>2</sup>. It is also expressed in the growing unease about the repercussions that violent images in films and on TV have on children, as they are considered to be a particularly vulnerable *risk group*. For example, some health reports have indicated the negative effects television supposedly has on children, including disturbed sleep (insomnia, nightmares and bad dreams); language delay (poverty of vocabulary and poor verbal fluidity); difficulties at school (learning problems); anxiety to satisfy advertising stimuli and increased aggression or apathy (lack of interest in the stimuli of daily life) (Muñoz; Pedrero, 1996). In these types of studies it is taken for granted that the social effects of television are always negative.

Most of the studies that look at violence and television focus on violent content and presuppose a direct causal relationship between violence on TV and violence in society, even though they often fail to explain the mechanisms through which this influence is activated. From a methodological point of view, they use content analyses, which are a necessary but not sufficient condition for understanding the social influence and repercussion of violence on TV.

We believe that specialised research has focussed too much on studying the effects of the media when today it should focus on studying how it is received. For many years, the question focused on what television does to children. We consider this approach to be erroneous, as it fails to throw light on the issue and is misleading with regard to how to solve the problem. As we have said before, the question is not so much what television does to children but rather what use boys and girls make of it and what the programmes they watch mean to them.

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Most of the specialist research on violence and television has been done in the United States. In our work *La violència en la mirada* (2001) we suggested the need to promote research into television violence in the context of our own sociocultural environment. We said it should be a type of research that was not limited to studying either the television medium or "violent" programming content, but be sensitive to the prominence and responsibility of viewers in their use of television and perception of TV messages. That is why we believe it is necessary to take sensitivity and viewers' perceptions into account to redefine the notion of violence on TV and give it a meaning appropriate to current times, as it is a notion that has changed.

The concept of violence has also undergone changes over time. Norbert Elias (1987) said that the *process of civilisation* (which is neither lineal nor irreversible) allows human beings to take greater control and self-repression with regard to aggressive impulses in favour of a fairly scrupulous following of social rules and conventions. In virtue of this process, physical violence has been diminishing and has become intolerable in the eyes of Western citizens, but there are other, more subtle forms of violence that are almost invisible and which we accept or exercise either without realising it or with our tacit approval. In the theoretical research<sup>3</sup> that preceded this applied research work, we found the existence of different types of human violence and proposed a definition of violence that was more suitable to our cultural context. As a research group we were interested in defining types of violence, observing the level of formalisation that this violence presents in the television narrative and the intensity that young viewers attribute to it.

Finally, we wanted to locate our work within the context of communication research at the international level. Broadly speaking, and greatly simplifying the issue, we consider there are two main theoretical approaches, one of a positivist nature and the other of a hermeneutic/comprehensive nature, which guide modern scientific research in this area:

**1. Positivist Paradigm.** The first approach, defended by authors such as Bandura & Walters (1963), Berkowitz (1996) and Friedrich & Huston (1986), draws on behavioural psychology to sustain that television is a transmitter of violent behaviour that favours the modelled and conditioned

learning of aggressive trends. This school of thought holds that watching TV is an important risk factor that ends up becoming the basic ingredient of the *causal effect* theory between seeing violence on TV and aggressive behaviour.

**2. Hermeneutic/Comprehensive Paradigm.** The second point of view, defended by many authors from different spheres of the social sciences, takes a more interdisciplinary approach and aims to explain the content involved in programming in a comprehensive and integratory manner and taking into account the importance of factors of a psychic, social or cultural nature. From this point of view, which is the one we feel the most affinity with, the idea is that one of the important roles of television is its ability to promote stereotypes and social values that are not always in line with the ideals of a society based on dialogue and peace. By this way of thinking, the responsible authorities should take more care about ensuring quality programming and particularly the regulation of television content in order to increase the presence of positive models and altruistic values.

The research situation in our country is quite similar to the international one, although here very few research works exist (in fact, it is a new tradition that has yet to bear important fruit). The most common ones are studies into effects (mainly using methodologies of a quantitative type) that aim to determine the level of influence of television violence on children (see García Galera, 2001). A look at the different studies shows that the preconceived belief that television generates violence can distort the research work and condition the results beforehand.

Given this situation, we wanted to emphasise the qualitative side of research into the social use that children make of television. The application of qualitative studies was very useful because it allowed us to obtain figures that were more adjusted and precise about children's social and family relations.

The results of the work can contribute to a better understanding of the problem and could be used to give media owners and journalists more tools of comprehension and elements of judgement to be able to take a position that is strongly grounded on the presence of violence in different television stations (public and private), particularly during scheduling times addressed at children and adolescents.

## 1. The Study of Violence and Television

Specialised research has generally had a very poor conception about the human condition (Thompson, 1998). The public has been considered to be vulnerable and defenceless and this perception has been further accentuated with regard to children. Researchers have been preoccupied with finding proof or evidence that confirms that television is damaging and that violent images on TV have a perverse effect on children.

We would like to propose a type of research that is not circumscribed to studying the television medium or the "violent content" of programming but is sensitive to the prominence and responsibility of viewers in the use of television and their reception of television messages. We believe it is necessary to redirect specialist research and propose moving from "a content analysis to a reception analysis". To that end it is necessary, bearing viewers' sensitivity and perception in mind, to redefine the notion of violence on TV to give it a meaning that is suitable to current times. From these premises we can see children as valid interlocutors and protagonists in the construction of meanings.

### 1.1 Conceptual Approximations Towards *Childhood*

In many proposals, the concept of childhood implies offering children audiovisual matter that responds to a fairly simplistic and stereotyped notion of childhood. Children are seen as passive and ignorant beings and hence very easily influenced by the media. There is a distrustful and skittish view towards childhood that is not exclusive to the media but also responds to a longstanding perception in our society about children and human beings. This concept of childhood is the result of a long historical process that features an idea of children as being passive and pre-intelligent (i.e., practically unfinished beings).

Today an alternative concept in which children are considered co-builders of their own learning is proposed. As the Italian pedagogue Malaguzzi, well known internationally for his educational proposals in the region of Emilia Romana, says, "Our choice is a child who at birth already has a desire to feel part of the world, which makes him or her actively participate in a network of ability and learning,

be capable of organising relations and maps of personal, social/interpersonal, cognitive, affective and even symbolic orientation" (Malaguzzi, 1996).

We therefore consider children to be active beings, protagonists of their processes of personal autonomy when it comes to thinking and doing things, and full of personal abilities and communicational capacities. Beginning from this supposition, we believe it is important to consider children as interlocutors in the research we are dealing with, where we attempt to discover their perceptions towards violence and television.

### 1.2 Children's Stories and Violence

It is important to emphasise children's stories as a historical reference that predates television. In earlier times, these stories were the object of adult concern about the fear caused by the information that the world's children received (Pastoriza, 1962).

At the end of the 18th century, the French Revolution led to a series of changes in the social construction of the rights of adults and also the rights of children (Aries, 1987). This created an awareness of the need to care for and protect children, increased adult sensitivity towards them and, particularly within the privileged classes, promoted the assumption of Rousseauian ideas of the innocent child: "The child must be a child before he becomes a man, as he has his own ways of being, thinking and feeling" (Rousseau, 1969).

As Dahlberg, Moss & Pence (1999: 91) say, the idea of childhood that arises from Rousseau's concept of the child is understood as a period of innocence in a person's life. It is believed that boys and girls have enough ability to investigate Virtue, Truth and Beauty when they are located in a society that rots the innate goodness with which they are born. The authors say that this image of the child generates in adults a desire to protect children from the corrupt world that surrounds them, which is violent, oppressive, marketed and exploited, by building a type of environment in which the child is offered protection, continuity and security.

There are various currents within psychology and pedagogy that do not believe in the suitability of making the presence of violence explicit in literary works aimed at children. We should not forget that many children's stories and tales, such as Little Red Riding Hood, are extraor-

dinarily *violent* in every known version. It is logical for adults to be concerned about the *violent content* of these children's stories and for them to want to defend children from a series of *negative* elements and values present in our society. However, it is a question of measures. Certain restrictions can be established, but we should make sure that we do not become, as Brenda Bellorín<sup>4</sup> says, literary or cultural censors.

We live in a media society and culture. The presence of the broadcast media makes the illusionary existence of this children's world of fantasies, entertainment and innocence more difficult to separate from the adult world (Postman, 1990). This is one but not the only reason why childhood tends to be shortened in today's world and leads many parents and teachers to consider television as a danger and threat for children, as they find it hard to exercise effective control over this device that has invaded the domestic space. Television is a window, situated in the heart of the home, which puts us in contact with different realities (some of which are considered unsuitable for children).

As Salvador Cardús says, "If I really wanted to protect my child, I should ensure that he has more, not less, access to this new cultural and technological world" (Cardús, 1998: 27). We believe that the question is not about removing children from fear or from disturbing social situations, but rather limiting the consumption of these stories, teaching boys and girls a series of reading skills and developing their defences. Bellorín says it would be a mistake to deprive children of the ability to approach the adult world through reading. She extends her argument to include television consumption and access to the world of the Internet.

## 2. Methodological Orientations

Most of the specialist research has questioned the impact that violent images or scenes in fictional spaces have on the public to which they are exposed. They consider that children are a particularly sensitive and vulnerable public. This type of research responds to a social and political concern and unrest: what impact does television (i.e., violent images on television) have on children? Our research wanted to turn the issue around and change the meaning of the questions.

1. What use do children make of television?
2. How do they read images of violence?

The study of violence on TV is a complex and difficult issue that requires a more sophisticated methodological strategy than the one on which most studies into content have been based. To that end, the research methodology we employed combined quantitative and qualitative tools that enabled a description and analysis of the social uses of television in the family sphere and made it possible to look in more detail at knowledge about how children perceive violence on TV (Hartley, 2000).

The initial proposal was to describe the habits, television uses and forms of consumption of TV programmes and assess considerations about violence by boys and girls from different economic and social spheres in the city of Barcelona. Secondly, and as the main goal, we wanted to establish a qualitative approximation towards the perception that children and preadolescents have of the different types of violence present in television fiction.

We chose five public primary schools located in different parts of Barcelona and selected students aged 7 to 12. In the quantitative approximation we used a questionnaire to interview 443 children. The fieldwork was carried out from 12-19 March 2001.

The exploratory nature of the study and particularly the characteristics of the interviewees (children and preadolescents) made it advisable to prepare a very short questionnaire with closed questions drawn up in a very clear and comprehensible manner. *Closed questions* limit individual freedom and make it impossible to look too profoundly into details, but have the advantage that they allow a simple answer and facilitate subsequent use of the data.

Bearing in mind that the nature of this work made it advisable to take an eminently qualitative approach, in a second phase we established focus groups made up of eight groups with a total participation of 48 students. The fieldwork was carried out intensively from 19-23 March. Two groups were used at each school and each group comprised six children (three boys and three girls).

The aim of the focus groups was to establish a relaxed and comfortable discussion for the participants to put forward their ideas and comments. The open nature of the discussion allowed the research group to leave the pre-



established script and explore unexpected deviations not possible in more rigid situations. Moreover, the analysis of the data provided by the focus groups was very complex. The comments had to be analysed within the context of the group and we had to be extremely careful not to extrapolate the results gathered in the focus groups when analysing the situation of the population in general.

The focus groups were shown four scenes from different series aimed at a young audience: *Doraemon*, *Cow and Chicken*, *Rin Tin Tin* and *Wolf and Sheep*<sup>5</sup>. Various types of violence could be identified within the sequences shown.

For the analysis part of the focus group, a number of analysis categories were established that focussed on the observation of three aspects we have already mentioned: the type of violence, the formalisation of the violence and its level of intensity and seriousness. The three categories influenced each other and allowed us to establish a number of criteria for choosing four sequences of TV programmes so that the children could watch them and later discuss them in the focus group.

Finally, it is important to add that beginning from the interaction with the boys and girls in the discussion group, other basic categories arose which were also taken into account in the study:

- Distinction between reality and fiction
- Aesthetic and formal parameters
- Manifestations of pleasure and displeasure
- Ethical considerations

### 3. Results

#### 3.1 Quantitative Study Data

Once the fieldwork had been done and the data from the questionnaires obtained, we could make a summary of the main results obtained:

1. The general data showed that 82% of the boys and girls interviewed lived with their parents, i.e., they were part of a nuclear family. It is important to interpret the use of television within the domestic context bearing in mind the family structure and type of relationships among the members of the family.

2. All the homes of the children and preadolescents interviewed had a television set. 72% of the children had

more than one set at home. Television therefore had a notable presence in the domestic geography and occupied an important place in the family living room.

3. There was a positive correlation between the number of TV sets and the number of hours that children spent in front of the small screen. In other words, the more sets in the home the more time they spent *contemplating* TV.

4. Television played an important part in children's time. 83% of the boys and girls interviewed had the subjective perception that they watch *quite a lot* or *a lot* of television. Only 17% believed they watched little TV.

5. The times when they watched the most television was before and immediately after school. For example, the scheduling times that recorded the highest television consumption levels were the *late afternoon* (6-8 p.m.) and the *evening*, i.e., at dinnertime and after dinner.

6. The children felt they had a relatively important control over remote controls, which allowed them to flick between programmes. 47.4% of the total said they *had some say* in the decision of the programmes to watch while 30.1% said they were the *only ones* who chose the programmes.

7. The boys and girls interviewed admitted they did other things at the same time as they watched TV. Watching TV was nearly always (81.6% of the people interviewed) accompanied by other activities, such as *eating*, *playing* or *doing homework*, in this order.

8. Two out of every three children interviewed said they did not feel "monitored" while they watched TV. On the other hand, 45% of the children (particularly the younger ones) said they liked to have company while they watched television.

9. The most popular children's programme amongst the children interviewed was *Pokemon*, which was watched by 19.4% of the sample. 20.3% of the children liked this programme. It was particularly popular with boys and girls aged 7-10, and especially with 8-9 year-olds. It was not very popular among children aged 11-12. Most of the children's programmes were watched by barely 5% of the boys and girls. The three programmes not exclusively designed for children that were the most popular were *The Simpsons* (watched by 23.2% of respondents), *Veterinaris* (17.8%) and *Pasa Palabra* (12.4%).

10. Censorship exercised by adults with respect to programming was not very important and was very

heterogeneous, as it differed according to the range of the television offer and the plurality of the preferences as expressed by the children.

### **3.2 Results of the Qualitative Study**

Finally, we would like to present the results of the qualitative part of the study, which was the central focus of the research work.

#### **Television Culture**

The children who participated in the focus groups generally had a good idea of television culture. This is not the place for making value judgements on whether that is good or bad. We only wish to point out that they had an exhaustive knowledge of television programming, which presented a very broad and diverse offer and which was very different to the television culture of their parents. The children were very knowledgeable about genre conventions and had a noticeable authority over the codes for interpreting television programmes.

#### **Distinction Between Reality and Fiction**

The interviewees, aged 7-12, were patently able to clearly distinguish between what is real and what is fiction. There is often the suspicion that children use television elements as an escape mechanism from daily life. However, in this study we found that the children were quite easily able to make the leap from one sphere of significance to another. In general, the imitation that children use in games was not of concern. The only concern was about the possibility of imitation of particular scatological or non-recreational behaviour that appeared on screen. They can sometimes be led by their imagination or fantasy, but that does not mean they are unaware that daily reality is the main reality. One curious fact was that the children of all ages projected the concern about imitating particular behaviours shown on television onto younger children, but did not feel affected themselves.

#### **Age Differences**

Children aged 7 or 8 develop prelogical thought in their construction of reality and easily connect with particular stories or characters in the fictional world. At this age they often interpret situations of physical violence as if they were a type of game.

By the time they are 11 or 12, the boys and girls could express themselves very well through verbal discourse. They had logical thought patterns and were able to take a more distant and critical view with regard to particular forms of violence. Following a discussion of the data obtained there were a number of observations that struck us as particularly relevant:

#### **Recognition of Violence and Perception of Intensity**

The children considered that physical violence was the main type of violence. This does not mean they were unaware of particular types of verbal or symbolic violence. There was also a notable ability to establish a gradation of violence beyond the most direct and graphical types such as physical violence. The 11 and 12 year-olds in particular were able to understand a verbal attack as a form of humiliation and ridicule. Normally, the violence present in news programmes and documentaries was seen as a more intensive (and hence more serious) reality than the violence that appeared in fictional programmes.

#### **Ethical Considerations**

Amongst the group of 11 and 12 year olds, there was in general a reflective and personal consideration that was particularly critical about stereotyped or simplified content in audiovisual programming. The older children thus expressed a demand for more developed and accurate storyline content, even though they were able to enjoy the recreational aspect of cartoons. Ethical considerations were not part of the spontaneous discourse of the younger children. However, they did verbally indicate a familiarity with the scenes chosen and commented on whether or not they liked them. They made comments while they watched them about aspects closely related to the knowledge they had about the viewed material (i.e., whether they had seen it before, explanations of other episodes, etc.).

## **4. Conclusions**

Together with the rest of the media, television has an undeniable social and cultural importance. However, we believe that in general (and in specialised research) there is a tendency to give it too much importance, both positive

(when television is considered to be an educational instrument) and negative (when it is blamed as a bad influence). The supposed omnipresence and omnipotence of TV can lead us to forget and underappreciate the importance of other social and cultural authorities (e.g., the school or family) which continue to have a considerable weight on and great social responsibility in children's education.

Where does the fear and fascination about television come from? What is behind the concern about violence in today's world? Why is there such enormous concern about children? It is not easy to answer these questions and this may not be the place to try. We only want to show the existence of a situation of fear and anxiety that affects broad sectors of the population with regard to the issue of children, violence and TV.

In his work entitled *Homo videns* (1998), Giovanni Sartori highlights the danger that he says television involves in a world dominated by the culture of the image. We do not think it is right to make television (as an object or artefact) a subject or protagonist. It is people who are, or who should be, the real protagonists of social life.

We are aware of the importance and responsibility of communication professionals. However, we do not want to fall into a media-centric conception that tends to systematically locate the media in general and television in particular in the middle or heart of social life and give it a negative role. Many television analysts are unable to locate television in a determined social context. This leads to a tendency to ignore television or to place it in the middle of the discourse.

We have to change the traditional view about the social effects of television and uphold one that is more focussed on its social uses and the prominence of viewers, including children, in the interpretation of messages. This change involves a new approach with regard to the methodological strategies used in the research field. In this framework, we would stress that it is important to take into account the personal disposition of viewers and the social and family context in which they watch TV. It is necessary to maintain distance with regard to television as an object of study and to prevent projecting our fears and anxieties about this controversial issue. It is important to uphold, as Bourdieu says, an incessant attitude of epistemological vigilance.

## Notes

1. This article is a new, reviewed and extended version of the following article, originally published in English: ARAN, S.; BARATA, F.; BUSQUET, J.; MEDINA, P. MORÓN, S.: (2003), "Childhood, Violence and Television: Television Use and Childhood Perception of Violence on Television". *Violence and Media: Resources and Discourses*. Barcelona: Trípodos [Extra, 2003], pp.109-121.
2. A CAC study published in 1998 found that the period between 5 and 7 p.m. had highest the concentration of violence: "The Representation of Violence on Television: A Quantitative Approximation to Fictional Programming Broadcast in Catalonia During One Week (2-8 June 1998)". Barcelona: CAC, 1998
3. ARAN, S; BARATA, F; BUSQUET, J; MEDINA, P: *La violència en la mirada. L'anàlisi de la violència a la televisió*. Barcelona: Study Papers, 2001.
4. "Our latent morality leads us to move heaven and earth to perpetuate what we understand as childhood. I believe we should pause a moment to think whether, with our overprotective attitude, we are really looking out for [children] or whether, on the contrary, we are leading them into defencelessness with regard to the adult world. [...] This punitive, prudish and censorial list that political correctness proposes limits access to books under the premise that reading good things makes us good and reading bad or incorrect things makes us bad or incorrect individuals. As much as I would like to believe in the power of books, as much as I idealise literature, I can't help finding these premises somewhat superfluous and lacking in any good grounding". BELLORÍN, B. "If Little Red Riding Hood Had Read Politically Incorrect Stories, Would She Be In the Wolf's Tummy Today?" (Y ¿si Caperucita Roja hubiese leído cuentos políticamente incorrectos, el lobo la tendría hoy en la panza?).
5. With regard to the selection of images, they were all taken from an initial sample provided by the technical teams at the CAC, which monitored children's programmes broadcast in Catalonia from 10-18 March 2000. The channels that formed part of the sample were Canal 33, La 2, Tele-5, Antena 3 TV and Canal Plus.

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# The Foundations and Processes of Violence in Television Advertising

Antonio J. Baladrón

- *Violence as a creative resource is usually a reason for scientific concern in research into violence and television advertising. However, it is also important to study the violent dimension inherent to advertising, independently of whether or not it shows violent content. The importance of this second area led me to tackle the systematisation of its main foundations, which are, broadly speaking, the intrinsic dynamics of the advertising goal, technology's contribution towards it and violence based on the image as the raw material of the TV advertising discourse. I will also describe the processes by which this violence is developed in television advertising.*

Violence is a phenomenon that concerns society and hence is widely analysed by social scientists who dissect its physical, psychological, sociological and other forms. A phenomenon that is as close as it is vague, as palpable as it is difficult to perceive overall is studied from diverse points of view, ranging from research into the individual status of violence through to detailed studies of its social dimensions and the way it constitutes human life in a community; studies that seek an explanation by referring to behavioural analyses or ones based on neuropsychological knowledge or theories of conduct, or anthropological and philosophical approaches. These are each attempts at providing a holistic understanding and have always been frustrated.

In recent decades, the media (particularly television) has been the focus of studies on social violence that take its possible influence into consideration. Moreover, as Salva-

dor Cardús i Ros says, "there are social debates which, precisely because they are so recurring and have been so extensively analysed without clear resolutions having been achieved, are suspected of hiding a number of traps that are very hard to avoid" (CARDÚS I ROS, 1998: 23). In this sense, the paths opened around this issue have often been founded on establishing correlations that are too rotund and which avoid the multi-dimensionality of the violence phenomenon. Research into violent content in different media messages (basically films and cartoons) has proliferated in all countries, very often following quantitative guidelines. However, the results have never been conclusive and, as we can see from an analysis of the scientific literature, have even been radically different.

## 1. Levels of Relationship Between Violence and TV Advertising

Advertising has not been the object of this growing academic concern, although it has a very close relationship with violence as understood in its broadcast sense. To present this argument, I would like to emphasise the levels at which the interconnection between the two phenomena occurs.

The first level could be considered as violence as a creative resource, i.e., as the content of the TV advertising message. This is the focus of attention and concern upon which the sensitivity of receivers and even academics nearly always rests - its final fracture is more limited than the second level of interconnection. The second level could be considered the violence inherent to advertising communications, i.e., not the violence *in* advertising but the violence *of* advertising. This type of violence is always at work - slowly, but insistently and perennially - and is gradually shaping individuals' life plans, i.e., changing them into consumers, upsetting their knowledge about the Other and

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the environment, and thus also their own identity, or 'I'.

It is important to bear in mind that this double dimension is justified from a concept of violence formed by two essential elements: the use of force and the provocation of evil. We can only talk about violence if these two components are present and are tackled from a broad perspective not restricted to the strictly physical arena. This leads us to question any positivist definition of it that includes only particular behaviours or attitudes with a number of specific characteristics. For example, the most bloody or perceptible is a simple and scientifically palpable procedure, but it involves a great simplification of the phenomenon itself. Looking in detail at the complexity of violence is a more complicated task, but it makes it easier to understand its multiple facets and implications.

Violence as a creative resource of advertising is behind different controversies that have arisen in recent years about the limits of the creative task and the social responsibility of advertising and which have sometimes forgotten, as Manuel Fernández Areal says, that, "a confirmation of abuses of different types in advertising activity (...) should not lead us to a regressive and irrational condemnation of mass communication in its most recent manifestations, which are essential for an acceptable life in society" (FERNÁNDEZ AREAL, 1996: 67). To date, legal and self-regulatory mechanisms have been an important mission for guaranteeing the divisions of a respectful use with the dignity of the receiver as a person. In this area, it is important to mention the work undertaken by the Association for the Self Regulation of Sales Communication and the Catalonia Broadcasting Council. However, it is true that violent content generally appears much less frequently in TV advertising than in other media products. Careful of the need to use the resource responsibly, this leads me to focus on analysing the second level of the relationship between violence and TV advertising, showing its main foundations and thus its risks.

## **2. The Foundations of Violence in Television Advertising**

TV advertising has a violent side, i.e., it is a form of violence. That is because it features the two elements necessary for talking about violence. On the one hand, force is a

constitutive part of advertising, obviously considering it not just as physical force but derived from an up/down imbalance, i.e., a position of power in the hands of commercial structures and over the individual receiver. On the other hand, in the case of violence in advertising, evil is understood as a reduction of the freedom or ability to act; in this way, the coercion that is inherent to it constitutes a modality of symbolic violence. Even when an advertisement provides information that promotes freedom because the receiver can choose among the products on offer, it ultimately reduces the freedom to decide on the basic dilemma, i.e., whether or not to consume, and thus promotes the attitude that consumption is something necessary for living in a society.

Three main pillars or foundations support this violence in TV advertising. Firstly, the dynamics intrinsic to the advertisement's communication goal, crossed with the desire to condition the freedom of the receiver/consumer. Secondly, technology's determining contribution to this goal, which is essential for understanding the phenomenon of modern advertising. Thirdly, violence based on the image as the raw material of the TV advertising discourse.

### **2.1. Violence and the Advertising Goal**

Violence that involves the dynamics intrinsic to the TV advertisement's communication goal is based on its aspiration to be an all-encompassing product, i.e., an ad aims to make the concept of reality presented the only one possible, which explains the above-mentioned reduction of freedom that it leads to. As Luis Sánchez Corral says, "the advertising discourse is formed in such a way that it presents a proposal of free choice, when in reality what is at play is a situation of dilemma. Having accepted the statement contract, there is no possibility of not choosing such-and-such a brand as the best and only one. The person who enters the discourse's 'supermarket' cannot escape the consumption space of signs without having chosen from among what is promoted (...). But, precisely because the feeling one gets is of having made a choice when in reality the option doesn't exist, the advertisement has to meet the requisite of the formation of the discourse itself, i.e., that the simulacrum of free choice hides the reality of the dilemma" (SÁNCHEZ CORRAL, 1997: 209). This violence inherent to the advertising goal is achieved using a number of simultaneous and different processes.

### 2.1.1. The Construction of Reality

The first process is the social construction of reality, in which advertising participates by redounding on a same version of the world, given that it features a number of values repeated over and over again while others are excluded because they fail to generate more consumption of the products or services on offer. Thinking about advertising, writes Juan Benavides, "means thinking about the reality that people suffer or enjoy, because what it means is each time a person communicates they seem to speak less than what is possible, as they express themselves through (or from) advertisements, images and fictions that are continually being exchanged" (BENAVIDES, 1995: 96). This is a function of reality construction that some researchers, such as Armand Mattelart, say conceals a serious risk of homogenisation. He says that the noisy space of desire and the dream with which the aim is to seduce the market-world network in the search for the calculable and predictable individual is certainly not that of the Utopia hidden from the subjects of the city-world. The international nature of the management of feelings is presumably not the cosmopolitanism of cultural otherness (MATTELART, 1989: 232).

In this sense, as we have already seen, TV advertising awards itself an all-encompassing role: the version of reality is the one transmitted through these channels, while at the same time it makes it hard to obtain any other version of the facts. It is in this restriction that we can see where a basic part of advertising violence is concealed. As Carlos Lomas says, "perhaps the advertisement's art of seduction and conviction, by putting us in the paradise of objects, is not, when all is said and done, to (categorically) confirm the absurd (and unreal) aspects of thinking about the world in a different way" (LOMAS, 1997: 50).

This construction of reality involves a parallel contribution that shapes people's attitudes, habits and beliefs, i.e., it is not a simple conditioning factor of perception, but rather through it the process is completed and generates changes in these other dimensions and thus in the development of individual and social life.

### 2.1.2. The Construction of Desire

In the case of TV advertising, the construction of reality goes further, to hinge to a large extent on the status of what is desirable. Unlike with other media communications, in

advertising the influence on what is desirable is not just a collateral or secondary effect but the main goal of the communication process, i.e., the feature that makes advertising what it is. Advertising can pursue the shaping of reality as perceived by an individual and thus condition habits and attitudes, particularly the ones that in one way or another end up leading to the purchase of the advertised object, but it is its purpose of exercising control in the area of desire that makes it so unique. Advertisements aim to guide people's desires and condition what they want in order to present the advertised object and its acquisition as a form of satisfaction and even fulfilment. In short, to the construction of reality we have to add the construction of what the receiver wants that reality to be.

That is why advertising has become a fundamental basis of the market economy. With the game of supply and demand, the stage is set for the capitalist society to triumph in its attempt to create desire and offer obliging mechanisms, both of which are always at the service of the incessant economic machinery, using advertising and its inherent violence as a means to guarantee the survival of the system. To generate new needs, there are new means to respond to them, although they are not put within the reach of all receivers, thus generating numerous processes of frustration.

Furthermore, we should remember that desire is not projected only on the objects themselves, but also the representations of the goals as shown by the ad. As Jesús González Requena says, "the desirable is never the empirical object but rather its image. The best proof of this is found in the inevitable disappointment that always accompanies the possession of the desired object. This disappointment shows the lack of adjustment between an image (the object of desire) and the empirical object that can really be possessed. The structural insatiability of human desire depends on this lack of adjustment and is capital to understanding the statute of the image and its essential link to the subject of desire" (GONZÁLEZ REQUENA and ORTIZ DE ZÁRATE, 1999: 16).

### 2.1.3. Omnipresence

The processes of constructing reality and desire are reinforced by their omnipresence, which provides increased efficacy to the TV advertising message, involves greater

forcible persuasion of the individual (who is increasingly conditioned by his or her vision of the facts and what is desirable) and reduces his or her ability to act. In this sense, omnipresence is a basic factor in the examination of TV advertising violence, because it makes it possible for its effects to survive and occupy all life phases and better guide the activity of subjects with regard to them and the advertising messages inserted in them.

This omnipresence begins in the message itself, where the advertising object/desire becomes a full and self-sufficient element: the advertising message's strategy is to change the advertised desire into full desire and the advertised object into the total satisfaction of desire. Once the advertised object has been made the omni-object, it is necessary to make it omnipresent in the life of the consumer/individual and so the different media become the informational support for the omnipresent omni-object. At the same time, by occupying the public and media space, the advertisement also becomes omnipresent in people's private spaces or directly impacts their privacy.

## **2.2. Violence and Technology**

The violence of television advertising grows exponentially as communication technologies are perfected: that is why technology is the second basic pillar on which it is based. Speaking about advertising violence requires looking more deeply into technological developments for different reasons.

### **2.2.1. The Technological Basis of Advertising**

Firstly, advertising was the result of a period in which technical progress was determined by the appearance of commercial activity and thus the communication involved. Some historians locate the origins of the advertising phenomenon in distant times, with the first use of informational billboards, or even seals and emblems, as examples of elements that sought identification and differentiation. Although that may well be true, it is also certain that modern advertising as we understand it today does not date back to the times of classic antiquity, nor did it appear with the birth of the printing press and its great capacity for dissemination, but rather can be located in the economic and social expansion that arose from mechanisation and the technological exploitation of the Industrial Revolution.

Therefore, if at that time industrial progress was linked to the commercial peak that established the bases of modern advertising, these days technological development, particularly with regard to communication technologies, continues to play a major role in economic and social environments and thus in the field of advertising.

### **2.2.2. The Amplification Ability of Technologies**

Secondly, in the case of advertising, this new technology explosion allows the existence of new spheres for disseminating the message, but more important is the enormous amplification power of communication technologies. This multiplication ability is another reason for relating advertising violence with technological development. "Contemporary advertising, fuelled by the surprising broadcast technologies available today, is materialising the construction of an imaginary visual representation at a rate unprecedented in the history of human representation" (GONZÁLEZ REQUENA and ORTIZ DE ZÁRATE, 1999: 86). This amplification ability makes a decisive contribution to the processes of advertising violence, not because it generates them but because it allows their influence to take greater hold.

Amplification also occurs because the new media formats and the technologies on which they are based allow a greater and faster dissemination of the advertising message, which leads to a rise in its ability to impact and the omnipresence I mentioned before. Furthermore, it occurs because of the rise in new media formats that have other expressive possibilities that are more easily able to attract people's attention and complete the processes of violence inherent to advertising.

### **2.2.3. The Risks of Television Technology**

Thirdly, it is important to mention that technologies are not neutral, but rather their features influence their possible effects, and by generating new risk spaces that can later be used by human beings. On this point, Fernando Broncano recognises that, "the pragmatic possibilities opened up by the existence of a technique are objective possibilities, in the sense that they go further than the current representations that the subject makes of them. By developing a technique, in some way we create a set of possible or future worlds able to be realised that would not have been attainable were it not for the technique, so that

we constitute a set of action opportunities, some desirable and others not, some legitimate and others not" (BRONCANO, 2000: 234).

In the case of television advertising, the role of technology is particularly important because it permits the above-mentioned amplification and without which its effects would greatly be reduced or even nullified. But there are other features inherent to the technology that television ads use for transmission that constitute the violence of advertising. It is therefore important to bear in mind the risks of the so-called tertiary mediums, and more particularly those of the television sphere.

With respect to the first of these features, television, as a tertiary medium, contributes to the redeployment of the primary medium, i.e., body-to-body, face-to-face contact, promoting a loss of sensitivity in favour of knowledge of the world in a mediated form. This is the violence inherent to broadcast technology, which, under the form of images and by removing the individual from primary experiences, leads to invisibility: if the ability to see is restricted, television advertising generates its highest level of violence.

On the other hand, there are a number of added risks in television technology that pertain to audiovisual texts and therefore also to the television advertising discourse. They are characterised by leading to a strong conditioning of perception that can set off processes of communication and advertising violence. For example, an ad is based on the goal of proposing meanings at a great speed through an immediate communication and often by forcibly persuading the perceptive processes, although without encroaching on subliminal advertising and other legally and ethically outlawed limits. On the other hand, an ad is constructed holistically, making up small micro-fictions that require no alien element to provide significance, which means they determine the perceived reality and condition purchasing attitudes through veils that do not allow viewers to see the reality in all its dimensions. It is also important to add other features of the broadcasting language in general, and thus that of television advertising, as well.

Finally, TV is a visual technology, i.e., it is also important to specifically consider this dimension when considering its forms of violence. Some of the risks mentioned up until now are based, or at least their importance is based, on considering the television message as the product of a

vision technology. However, and given the importance of this aspect, it is necessary to study its peculiarities in detail. That is why when we talk about the television text, we have to refer to the image, which is the raw material of vision technology: the image provokes invisibility, limits the receiver's field of vision and conditions, even if it is not designed to do so entirely, his or her orientation and sense of the view.

### 2.3. Violence and Image

The underlying violence of the image is generated in this invisibility. Given the widely held belief that the broadcast media leads to increased visibility on the world - Gérard Imbert even talks about *hypervisibility* (IMBERT, 2000) - the effect it provokes is the opposite, giving rise to what Santos Zunzunegui calls "that contemporary species of the seeing blind man" (ZUNZUNEGUI, 1998: 24). Although *seeing/viewing* has been fundamental at all times throughout history as the ability to make sense of the world, it is true that today this importance has grown drastically, because of the preponderance of the sense of distance that the new technological developments provide. That is why Román Gubern talks of "interfacial techno-culture" (GUBERN, 1987), characterised by replacing the face-to-face aspect with communication via machines. The technology on which TV advertising is based and via which it is disseminated supports this trend and with it, by reducing primary communication in favour of a mediated one, the risks of limiting visibility, and hence, violence, increases.

#### 2.3.1. The Nature of the Image

This invisibility/violence establishes the bases of the features inherent to the nature of the image. Together with materiality, as its support is a physical medium, I mean its substitutive nature, because the image represents reality (i.e., it maintains a relation of similarity). However, the process is not closed with the representation but rather the very representation leads to substitution. As Zunzunegui says, "the key factor of the representation is not in the relationship of similarity that can be established between the object and its representation, but in that they both meet the same *function*, i.e., the *function of substitution*, or the logical and historical precursor to the portrait (similarity), where creation proceeds from communication. Beginning from this



point, *representation as substitution* requires two conditions: *that the form authorises the significance* with which it is invested and *that the context determines the significance* in the appropriate manner" (ZUNZUNEGUI, 1998: 58).

Another essential feature of the image is its reproducibility capacity, which is enabled by evolution in the processes of image production that facilitate the generation of copies in an ever-increasing number and a shorter time. This ability for reproduction strengthens the substitutive function. When the image replaces reality and the replacement is multiplied in virtue of reproducibility, the visibility of reality is further decreased. In reducing the visibility of the world, we also reduce our imaginary, both as individuals and as a society.

### 2.3.2. Fictionalisation and Mimicry of Appearance

We can see two basic processes that arise from the nature of the image, i.e., fictionalisation and the mimicry of appearance, by which the advertising image contributes towards invisibility. Violence begins when there is a loss of perception of the limits between reality and fiction, i.e., between what is being represented and the representation. "By fictionalising the real and materialising new fictions, by tending to confuse drama with docudrama and real accidents with reality shows, television moves yet again from the thesis to the antithesis, 'from the window open to the world' to the 'wall of images', from music to noise and vice versa. It is this unpredictable oscillation that is perhaps its ultimate truth," says Régis Debray (DEBRAY, 2000: 297-298). This fictionalisation of reality is the anchor of the very origin of the violence of the advertising image. Reality is supplanted by signs of reality, which is completed with the institutionalisation of what is apparent as a valid value.

Moreover, advertising images not only mimic reality but also end up mimicking each other, making up a game of views or reflected images - in short, continually mimicked appearances. This is a manifestation of what Jean Baudrillard called "the deadly power of images, assassins of that which is real" (BAUDRILLARD, 1993: 17).

### 2.3.3. Loss of Body and Present

These processes mean that invisibility turns into violence towards the receiver by promoting the loss of body (space) and present (time). Looking at the first, it is important to say that by restricting the ability to see, the processes also

curtail knowledge about the 'I', because generating invisibility towards the world, towards the Other, i.e., that which is different, means that the advertising image provokes the loss of oneself, as in falsifying otherness it ends up falsifying identity, because the second is only possible from the first. It is only when we perceive difference that we have an identity. In this vein, Marc Augé says, "when a ritual blocking, a symbolic deficit, a weakening of the mediations (of the cosmologies or the 'intermediary bodies' that Durkheim talked about) is produced, i.e., when there is an interruption or reduction of the identity/otherness dialectic, signs of violence appear. Second observation: the new communication and image technologies mean that the relationship with the Other is becoming increasingly abstract: we are becoming accustomed to seeing everything, but what is not certain is whether we will continue to watch. The fact that the media has replaced mediations contains in itself a possibility of violence" (AUGÉ, 1998: 29).

The loss of oneself first translates into the loss of the body, as the visible manifestation of the 'I'. We should remember that vision, together with the organs of balance and perception that each person has of him or herself, is one of the elements through which the sense of the body is achieved. If the advertising image reduces this vision it will lead to changes in the latter. The consumer will even end up accepting the loss of his body and aspire to the physical models presented in the advertising messages broadcast on TV, which shows that by falsifying reality the individual ends up rejecting his or her own body and desiring that of another. The most extreme cases, which Mònica Figueras has studied, are anorexia and bulimia, in which the loss of body translates into violence against the body. She reaches the following conclusion: "It is interesting to note that as physical violence is decreasing in our society, other, more subtle forms are created, which generate compliance with the system and even self-violence. This is the case of illnesses like anorexia and bulimia, in which we can see a clear self-violence with respect to one's own body" (FIGUERAS, 2003: 338).

However, the advertising image not only leads to the loss of the 'here', i.e., the body, but also the 'now', i.e., the present. Behind this lies *presentification* as one of the basic features of the TV advertising discourse. Motivated by the need to surprise and offer a new message, advertising

avoids the past. At the same time, it rarely refers to the future or long-term strategy and, when it does, it changes it into the present, i.e., something close and possible for consumption expectations.

This presentification ultimately generates the loss of the present, as once any reference point to the past or future has been erased, the result is a now that is continually renewed; and as identity is not possible without otherness, neither can there be the present without the past or future. Consequently, by mutating space and time, body and present, the advertising image promotes its symbolic violence.

#### **2.3.4. Overdose of the Image and Social Iconophagia**

The violence of television advertising is shored up by two aggravating circumstances. Firstly, the overdose of images in contemporary society, which allows the intensification of these processes. Moreover, the consumption of images is increasingly occurring from different types of perception. The younger generations more quickly assimilate the image's enormous ability: adapted to the new medium, they perceive images from other points of view, which allow them to make sense of and even respond to the rapid succession of them. Technological advances that promote speed, and which are also in over-abundance, lead to new forms of perception.

The overdose of images is linked to the second of the aggravating circumstances: society's increasing iconophagia, or consumption of images. The consumption of images is today the main way presented to individuals to obtain information on their environment and social integration. However, as consumption rises, so too does the volume of images to which we have access, normally immersed in processes of mimicry themselves, which means that the knowledge and visibility the imaginary consumption dominates only leads to invisibility or lack of knowledge about reality and fundamental questions. This iconophagia is manifested not just when individuals devour images but when the images themselves, which mimic each other, end up being images of other images, signs of other signs, iconophagic images that shape the abyss of the loss of reality where media messages in general and television advertising in particular drive individual consumers.



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# Gender Conflict and Violence in the Advertising Discourse

Manuel Garrido Lora

- *Harsh statistics on gender violence have increased people's concern about this form of aggression. From the sociological perspective, gender violence is interpreted as a type of social interaction in which men and women are unequally situated due to biological, socio-economic and cultural factors. The mass media, particularly television, is considered to be an environmental factor in, on the one hand, the configuration of gender stereotypes and, on the other hand, the conviction that conflict is becoming a sufficient reason to deploy human violence. Advertising, one of the three big television discourses, also imitates the narrative models of other audiovisual content. On one hand, there is the prevalence of the model of the dominant, competitive and even aggressive masculine subject and on the other there is a new model of the aggressive young woman who attacks anybody who might try to limit her.*

## Stressing the Term 'Gender Violence'

Society's concern about violence dates to the beginning of human civilisation. There have always been people who, shaken by the astonishing facility with which intra-species violence is produced, have asked why. At the same time, the development in recent decades of science, on the one hand, and democratic societies, on the other, have promoted, free of religious links or ties of any other kind, the search for responses to these type of acts that are so

incomprehensibly human. This concern has multiplied lately because of the cases in which violence takes place in the home and where women are the victims. Although this form of masculine domination is not new, a good part of today's society views with horror acts that were previously hidden or even tolerated. In fact, violence against women is so well rooted in our culture that the Spanish dictionary *Diccionario de la lengua española* (21st edition) defines violence (in the fourth given meaning) as "the action of violating a women" (The Royal Academy of the Spanish Language, 1997). In this way, from the many possible acts of a violent nature, it highlights one (rape) perpetrated against a single sex (women).

In any case, limiting the semantic field of what we understand violence to be is quite complicated, as scientific reflections on the concept arrived much later than the daily use of the expression. It has almost been used as a 'lazy expression' to cover many human acts, from the way a football player kicks the ball through to the actions of a serial killer, making it an all-embracing term that is bursting at the seams (Storr, 1987: 10). Gender violence is not alien to this disquisition, as it groups together a large number of actions that vary in intensity and in the consequences on the psychological or physical life of the victim and configures a specific type of violence in which motive, attitude, conduct, emotion and personality traits are amalgamated.

The extensive literature on the study of violence highlights its importance as a social fact. Entities and institutions of all types have been interested in researching violence and have generated a great many possible perspectives for studying it, which could be summarised into three definitions: broad, restricted and legitimist (ARÓSTEGUI, 1994: 22). The first understands violence to be a structural social fact, i.e., any form of domination in which social injustice and inequality prevails. This definition considers

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violence to include the fact that men and women are paid differently for doing the same work. The second considers that violence involves the use of physical force in an intentional manner and that observable damage is generated in the victim. This concept is more specific and has greater social acceptance. However, in identifying violence exclusively with physical force, it excludes a great many acts that sometimes generate invisible untoward consequences, particularly in the case of gender violence. In fact, it is normal for physical violence between couples to be related to a complex grid of domination and psychological humiliation that is even more damaging to victims than the aggression that involves physical force. Finally, the legitimist perspective understands that an act is violent when it runs contrary to what is legally established or culturally accepted, i.e., if it is an illegitimate act. This involves a third approach in which violence is not an objective fact in itself but rather depends on its interpretation by the parties involved.

In short, delimiting the concept of violence is a task researchers have struggled with, without their efforts having led to a unitary definition among the scientific community overall. On the contrary, the dissenters are palpable. Disagreement sometimes arises not just when researchers have different ideas about what the expression 'violence' can include, but also on a number of concepts specific to it, including power, intimidation, force, coercion, manipulation, conflict, immorality, aggression, rage, hostility, etc. In some cases, an absolute identification of violence has been found with one or some of these terms. In other cases, reflections have focused precisely on the differences that stop the terms from being compared. However, I would like to emphasise two notions that are closely related to the development of gender violence in our culture: the idea of power and the notion of conflict.

Powerful people try to maintain their dominant position over others through the use of force, not just in the case of political totalitarianism but also in the more particular case of domestic violence, very often the result of a cosmivision in which husbands have power over their wives and both partners over their progeny. This is where a subject's self-perception with respect to his place in the world and the power he holds over the things that surround him enters the picture. In the majority of cases, human aggression is activated to control the impression others may have of you.

When a subject feels that his dominant position is threatened (e.g., when women begin separation or divorce proceedings), he is nearly always stirred to counter attack, to demonstrate his strength and ability to fight the people hurting him. The origin of many acts of gender violence thus lie in men's efforts to hold onto their power and influence over the behaviour of others. They thus end up hurting or killing the people closest to them, i.e., their partners, children or parents, and even hurting themselves through suicide, an act that has become a sad epilogue to many episodes of gender violence.

On the other hand, it is common to understand violence - and also gender violence - as a social interaction in which the actors involved are at conflict. Although conflict is a necessary condition for violence between a couple, it is not a sufficient condition for explaining it. It is common for conflict between couples and gender violence to take place simultaneously, but they can also happen separately. At the same time, it is common for violence to be activated as a good tactic for resolving conflict, in which the aggressor recovers control of the situation by violating the integrity of the victim, who is thus controlled. Conflict between humans is thus present in the origin of any violent situation. Violence does not tend to take place outside of conflict, although this does not mean that all conflicts between couples will be resolved through the use of violence.

Two types of aggression are distinguished in gender violence. The first is instrumental violence and the second is emotional violence (BERKOWITZ, 1996: 40). In the first case, violence becomes an instrument for demonstrating domination over another person. Precipitation is not common in instrumental violence, as the attacks are executed coolly and with a clear will. The aggressor attacks when he has the best chance of success and conscientiously assumes the risks in order to minimise them. In the second case, the principle objective is to hurt the victim. Emotional violence arises from a feeling of personal dissatisfaction and the aggressor seeks pleasure by hurting others. Unlike the former case, the attacks are undertaken without or with very little premeditation and without a conscious analysis of their results for either the aggressor or the victim. The violence is produced in a type of short-circuit in the normal process of evaluating a situation on the part of the aggressor, who doesn't stop to think what the consequences of his actions

might be. This is a type of gender violence in the heat of the moment, where conflict leads directly to aggression. In these cases, the conflict is usually much more intense and longer lasting. The aggressive exchange (words, gestures, etc.) leads to violence at a moment of lack of control and explodes. Moreover, the roles of aggressor and victim can sometimes alternate within the same act, as both are acting in response to a very strong internal emotion.

### **What is the Role of the Media and Advertising?**

The study of the causes of human violence has led to three major explanations (EIBL-EIBESFELDT, 1987: 89-90), of which the *Model of the Psychology of Learners* (particularly Bandura) appears to be the most respected. This model broadly considers that any violent act stems from prior learning. From the time they are little, children see that violence is a way to achieve social success. Success in the use of violent behaviour reinforces violence itself and makes it a habit with good results in social life: "Biology makes us aggressive, but it is culture that makes us pacific or violent" (SANMARTÍN, 2000: 19). From this perspective, the social models and stereotypes shown on TV, in the movies, music or advertising, could lead to the learning of attitudes and behaviours in which conflict resolution necessarily leads to violence. Obviously, the media is just one part, albeit an important part, of this environment in which humans move and which is the cause of most human predisposition towards aggression that results from a lack of family attention, impoverished economic and cultural environments, peer pressure, sexual and/or psychological abuse, etc. All together it makes up a network of causes that allow aggression to surface early on in many people's lives.

The media has reproduced a number of values associated with masculine aggression (competition, virility, honour, power, struggle, etc.), which has allowed the glorification of the male sex in detriment of the female one. Western culture has given importance to men, from whom it demands an ongoing reissuing of his virility that can sometimes lead to gender violence. This indomitable masculine behaviour is sometimes accompanied by exhibition in front of others. As occurs with other higher animals, a man commonly competes with others to demonstrate his virility, strength

and power, sometimes simply to show off and other times as part of a real competition that can end in the death of his adversaries.

However, it is also true that the presence of women is slowly gaining ground in all types of criminal acts, including violence-related ones. In their attempt to make inroads in areas that were previously and discriminately the competence of men, women are probably taking on some of the values that make people predisposed towards violence, i.e., power, domination, competitiveness, etc. In some way, women's activities, tastes and values have become *masculinised*. This would explain why aggression is taking increasing hold in the behaviour of some women.

As I have already said, the mass media, and particularly television, is considered to be a determining factor in the propagation of gender stereotypes that can threaten the development of a truly equal society. It goes without saying that there are other voices that defend the social utility of this new form of human communication. These opposing ideological positions generate fierce debates which increase the urgency of obtaining responses that refer to the effects that the media can provoke in the psyche and behaviour of receivers. Science today generally recognises the media's importance in propagating ideas and processes for carrying out violent actions but not as direct inducers of these actions. The media does not determine violent acts itself but it provides people with lots of knowledge about how to hurt another person.

None of the content on television and in the other mass media is exempt from this responsibility. Miquel Rodrigo Alsina (1998: 23) considers that violence is present in the three genres of the audiovisual discourse, i.e., advertising, news and entertainment. Although the areas traditionally criticised for their violent nature are films and TV series, he also emphasises the presence of violence in ads and news reports. To demonstrate this, he presents one figure: 10% of the toy advertisements analysed by the Catalonia Broadcasting Council featured an element of violence. The presence of violent content, which used to be almost exclusively apportioned to films and fictional series, has thus also moved into the commercial and news discourses. I would thus like to look at the following scientific suppositions (BERKOWITZ, 1998: 46):

- Violence on TV appears to contribute to the appearance

and development of antisocial effects on the public.

- There are three principle types of effects provoked by television violence: the learning of aggressive attitudes and conducts, insensitivity towards violence and the fear of being a victim of violence.

- The way that violence is represented is essential to determining its ability to generate effects on viewers, as not all displays of violence on TV have the same risk of hurting the public.

As such, not all the violence represented on TV, including advertising, has the ability to affect the human mind, but the most dangerous situation would be one in which (DONNERSTEIN 1998: 54-55):

- The aggressor is attractive and acts for *morally appropriate* reasons.

- The aggressor is immersed in continuous violent actions that appear to be realistic.

- The aggressor is rewarded for his actions.

- The aggressor uses conventional weapons.

- The aggressor executes his actions without visible consequences.

- The action is endowed with a certain sense of humour.

## **Aggressive Men and Women in Television Advertising**

Advertising has been overlooked in recent decades in studies that have measured the presence of violent content on TV. To begin with, most researchers tend to exclude news bulletins, sports broadcasts and advertising spaces from their analyses. However, if, with many precautions, one can understand the exclusion of the first two because they are based on images that have not been previously conceived through a worked-upon script, it does not make sense to exclude advertising content as it not only has a proven effectiveness but is the result of extremely careful planning.

As I said before, one of the (few) pioneering studies into violence and advertising was the one the Catalonia Broadcasting Council commissioned a few years ago, aimed at objectively measuring the presence of violent content in television toy advertisements (RODRIGO ALSINA, 1998: 27).

The study found that 10% of toy adverts included scenes of an aggressive nature. This figure is important if we bear in mind that it involves a sector of advertisements that are closely regulated by law and monitored by consumer and user associations.

In any case, it is very hard to find researchers who have reflected on violence in advertising. Pioneers in the field within Spain include Perales and García Nebreda (1998: 50), who noted a number of years ago the trend towards violent TV content in traditionally non-violent discourses, such as advertising. These researchers felt that advertising had been infected with the violence present in other television content. They concluded that advertising not only distracted audiences but could also present aggression as a socially inevitable model of behaviour and representative of social success.

Imbert's similar conclusions from over a decade ago are even more enlightening (*Los escenarios de la violencia*, 1992). He related the growth in violent actions in advertising with the redistribution of gender roles in society. He said that in violent ads, aggression was vindicated as a positive social value and allowed women to access the social recognition that society had denied them for years. Advertising is thus assuming the reigning ideological disorder in the context in which aggression - a traditionally masculine value - is transferred to the sphere of today's woman: "The [myth] of the female rebel has been developed lately, (...) not so much a rebel in the economic sense but rather in what we could call the imaginary sense, i.e., the right to fantasise, to enjoy aesthetic values and even the right to a certain type of gratuitousness (enjoying a status and at the same time the refusal of this status)" (1992: 40). In short, aggression, which in traditional advertising was the *natural* terrain of man, has become a positive value for the new image of women in advertising. Since Imbert first drew these impressions, there have been many examples of ads in which women use aggression as a very useful resource to obtain all sorts of social and economic objectives. In general, the dialectic between the genders is found in the narrative basis of this type of message.

In current TV advertisements, women still appear in the classical stereotypes of the mother-woman, the Aphrodite-woman, the submissive woman or the angel-women, to use the classifications posited by León (2001: 83-108), but along



with these classical stereotypes, it also presents new women who are more independent, self-made, dynamic and tough. The new woman, who does not claim her femininity or sensuality as a principal feature but rather the values I mentioned before, manages her sentimental relations with a strong feeling of domination and is not disposed to let any opportunity slip by to remind her partner that she has the same rights and obligations as him. In this way, given the slightest insinuation of sexual harassment or male-chauvinistic behaviour, the new woman attacks (something without piety) her partner who, in most cases, has no choice but to defend himself, as counter-attack is very rarely given as an option. In some way, today's advertisements employ a policy of positive discrimination in which women are now permitted particular aggressive actions against men which would not be tolerated the other way around.

In one research work I did specifically into the types of representation of violence in advertising (GARRIDO 2003), I was able to confirm the above-mentioned trends noted by other researchers. The study involved analysing more than 1,200 ads broadcast by Canal Sur in recent years, in which I discovered that the presence of explicit violence only affected 4.79% of the total advertisements screened. Although this figure is not inconsiderable, it was much lower than the amount of violence in other TV content, such as films, made-for-TV movies, series and cartoons.

As you can see, more than half the TV ads with violent content pursued an exclusively male public. This figure rose to nearly 90% when the target was both men and women, while women were the exclusive targets of 12% of these types of ads. These figures lead us to conclude that the audience sought by ads with violent content was markedly male, but that aggression was also an argument of growing persuasion for a female public, who in today's advertising world are attributed some of the characteristics that decades ago were reserved almost exclusively for men.

In general, most violent ads continue to be targeted at men. In these ads, the male protagonist with which the viewer can associate effectively employs violence in situations of competition with other men. In fact, competitiveness and aggression were associated in many of the ads analysed, to the point that it was normal for male violence to be associated with the world of sport, thus putting paid to the idea of a clean, non-violent game. For

**Table 1. Gender of the Target Public of Ad Campaigns**

<i>Gender</i>	<i>Number of Ads</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Exclusively male	31	55,36
Exclusively female	7	12,50
Male and female	18	32,14
<b>Total</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>100,00</b>

Source: author's own work

example, in a Nike ad for its Cross Training line, the young male protagonist (Leo) moves through a series of videogames in which a great many violent actions associated with sports such as football, basketball, tennis or car-racing are developed. In this advertisement, there was a very significant gender conflict. At one point in the ad, Leo rushes from one scene to another by breaking (literally) through the stage, whereupon he lands on a young woman holding a couple of guns. Without meaning to, Leo falls on her chest, at which point she starts firing indiscriminately and, upon realising she can't get him off, punches him with such force that he flies into another scene in this vertiginous ad. Gender conflict is represented in a simple and stereotyped manner, resolved by the violence of positive discrimination I mentioned before, in which women defend themselves in a manner out of all proportion to the slightest male insinuation, even if the male subject, as was the case with Leo, was unable to control his actions.

To some extent, a great many ads continue to show idyllic worlds in which conflicts do not exist. However, when they show conflict between couples or simply gender conflict, the behaviour is usually violent and suggests yet again that violence is the most effective way of resolving conflict, including gender conflict. A new added feature is that women are reflected and attracted by a type of advertising that promotes female aggression, which in many ads aimed at women becomes a sign of independence and women's superiority over men. An advertisement for La Cocinera shows a girl throwing a jug at her partner's head when she discovers he has been cheating on her. Another ad, for Tampax Compak, features the female protagonist (the

incarnation of the new, independent young woman) attacking a group of men when all they want to do is offer her some items of clothing. At the end, the girl is emotionally compensated for her violent behaviour when a couple of the boys gaze at her in rapture. The ad ends with a significant closing phrase addressed at the product's young consumers, which says, "The game will go on, what are you going to do?"

Of the characters (whether aggressors or victims) featured in the advertisements with violent content that I analysed, 75.05% were men and 18.32% were women. In the remaining 7.63% of cases it was impossible to tell the sex, either because the characters were inanimate beings or animals without a gender determination. If we study these figures by profile of aggression, we find that men were mainly aggressors, but also victims (48 of 63). All up, contrary to the official statistics, women were more often represented as aggressors rather than victims of the actions. The reasons for this can surely be found in the two factors mentioned before: firstly, there is a heightened sensitivity towards violence against women, which means that a type of message in which a woman is the victim would be more reproachable and could thus damage the advertiser's image, and secondly, many of today's advertisements feature a new type of woman who embodies traditionally masculine values, including aggression.

That is why it is common to find female protagonists who are not intimidated by men. In an ad for Nestlé Crunch Cereal, two flatmates bitterly attack the physical integrity of the man in the flat in front of them, who had insinuated something through the window. The ad awards these women "the use of combat against a man, which is commercially profitable and which is one of the peculiarities of modern-day life" (LEÓN, 2001: 96). This type of apparently justified female aggression is repeated in other ads. The ad for the popular children's film *Toy Story 2* shows the cowgirl protagonist savagely attack the male star, Woody, no doubt because of some sexist comment the ad does not show. Finally, another advertisement, this time for Levi Twisted jeans, features a girl violently pushing a boy who, unable to control the movement of his jeans, can't do anything to prevent his zip getting caught up with that of the girl, something which she considers to be a clear case of sexual harassment. These apparently justified forms of

**Table 2. Gender of the Characters in Violent Advertisements**

<i>Gender</i>	<i>Number of Characters</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Male	97	74.05
Female	24	18.32
Not especificed	10	7.63
<b>Total</b>	<b>131</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Source: author's own work

aggression are in keeping, as I said earlier, with the most pernicious form of representation in the generation of the psychological effects of learning, fear and insensitivity among different publics.

Female aggression is sometimes presented as a characteristic that is not only valued by women, but also by men. I have already mentioned the male stars of the Tampax Compak ad who were attracted by their particular guerrilla, but there are other, similar cases. An ad for the Peugeot 206 shows a couple who agree to a blind date after meeting on the Internet. They say they will recognise each other because they will be holding a red rose, but the boy drops his rose when he discovers that the girl is not as attractive as he had imagined. In the following shots, this apparently boring and mediocre girl is transformed into a *superwoman* who easily and aggressively passes a great many tests with the help, of course, of the car being advertised. The boy who had dropped his rose hurriedly picks it up again, attracted by such a tough woman.

Sometimes female aggression is projected onto other women, such as in the ad for Camy's Extreme ice-cream, in which a woman stops her friend from eating the ice-cream through an extremely vivid scene of violence - particularly psychological violence - in the purest style of a gore film. Other times, although very rarely for the reasons already mentioned, a woman is the victim of the narrative at play. This is the case of the ad for Axe deodorant, in which the irresistible attraction for the man who uses the product results in a woman dying. The action is located in a violent boxing match. A boy comes in and sits next to a girl who is



better looking than him. She begins to be attracted to him (the irresistible *Axe factor*) and closes her eyes in a moment of ecstasy. Just then, one of the boxers is thrown into the air and lands on the girl, who is crushed. Before helping the victim, the male protagonist notices that the smell of his deodorant is beginning to affect the woman on his other side.

### By Way of Conclusion

Advertisements mainly show male aggressors and victims. However, women are more often represented as the aggressors than the victims of a violent action. This overrepresentation of woman as aggressor could have a number of different explanations: firstly, social sensitivity towards messages in which women are victims of aggression and secondly, advertising support for a type of tough young woman who refuses to be cowed by the opposite sex.

On the other hand, independently of whether men or women are aggressors or victims in ads, the model used in the representation of advertising violence makes it possible to conclude that violence is a successful way to resolve human conflicts, including gender conflicts. In general we could say that comparing the conclusions of this work with other data uncovered by the researchers behind *Recomanacions de València*, published by the Queen Sofia Centre for the Study of Violence (1997), suggests there are particular elements that can seriously damage viewers, especially young viewers: the presence of narrativity, a character who intentionally carries out violent actions, the consummation of aggression without any other alternative, the legitimisation of aggressive acts and characters and the physical attractiveness of aggressors, the youth of aggressors and victims, the association of social recognition with aggression, the lack of punishment, the presence of material or emotional rewards and, finally, the use of humour as a way of sweetening the most serious actions.

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# The Media and Crime Information

## The Tony King Case and Media Distortions

**Francesc Barata**

- *On 18 September 2003, Tony Alexander King, a robust, 38-year-old British citizen was arrested for murder on the Costa del Sol, six years after fleeing Great Britain and with it the stigma of being a 'danger to women'. The King case shed some light on two crimes that had deeply affected public opinion and which had led to the imprisonment of an innocent woman. The deaths of teenagers Rocio Wanninkhof and Sonia Carabantes touched many hearts, and the false conviction of Dolores Vazquez became a wake-up call to reason. This is the most recent major criminal case in Spain, and it highlighted the significant role the media had in moulding the public's opinion of the crimes and the workings of the criminal justice system.*

The aim of this article is to reflect on the impact of crime information on a society where a feeling of insecurity has subtly taken hold of the collective unconscious, ushering in what is known as a 'culture of fear'. On the basis of the news broadcast on TV3's news bulletin<sup>1</sup> over the period of a fortnight, I want to put forth a series of reflections on the journalistic approach to the coverage of crime news.

The arrest of Tony Alexander King provided evidence that will soon have to be ruled on by the courts, but from a news point of view, it opened up a very interesting debate on the role of the media in the Wanninkhof case, named after the

19-year-old teenager murdered in the town of Mijas in 1999, and the subsequent initial conviction of Dolores Vazquez. Apart from the errors later found in the initial police investigations, we have to ask ourselves about the effect the media coverage had on society as a whole and on the jury that wrongly convicted Dolores Vazquez. Was the media's approach to the case somewhat 'alarmist'? Was her presumption of innocence honoured? These were questions posed by the editor and newsreader of TV3, Carles Francino, during the news bulletin of 24 September when the magistrates were already hinting at the imminent withdrawal of the charges against Dolores. He was referring to certain journalistic practices associated with the coverage of the murder of Rocio Wanninkhof.

### **The Presumption of Innocence**

The disappearance of the Mijas teenager led to an increase in the coverage of event-based news in some media, particularly television, where crime is often the major story. When Rocio's body was found, Dolores Vazquez was arrested. It is interesting to note that two days before her arrest, her photo had appeared in a newspaper<sup>2</sup> as the face of a suspect. When the Civil Guard went to her house to arrest her, there were already dozens of cameras in front of her home, ready to deliver an account.

From the time Dolores Vazquez was arrested she became the focus of the media. Her private life was divulged, her cold personality was interpreted as calculating and unscrupulous, and her relationship with the victim's mother became the 'unconfessable' motive of her crime. "Dolores has been exposed in every aspect of her life: economical, sexual and professional," her lawyer told the TV3 evening news bulletin on 22 September.

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Source: *La Vanguardia*.

A good part of the media failed to respect her presumption of innocence. Beyond this, it is interesting to analyse the different elements that came into play in this breach of the right to be presumed innocent that all accused persons have until found otherwise by a judge.

The first event that opened the door to a breach of the presumption of innocence was when the police released the names of the people taken into custody. Dolores' name was leaked even before her arrest, when she was simply a suspect. Once her identity became known, many journalists went on an information hunt to uncover details of her life.

The case of Dolores Vazquez demonstrates two events which, when combined, tend to lead to an initial transgression of the presumption of innocence, i.e., the rivalry generated among reporters to obtain and publish all possible information surrounding an investigation, and the police practice of providing the names of people in custody. In Catalonia, as in the rest of Spain, police and other state security forces only give the names of people in custody once they have a police record, i.e., after they have been arrested and charged, even though the judge may later have declared them innocent. This is the policy of police spokespersons with regard to the media.

But what happens when the media and society take a special interest in a case? Then, it seems, the police reveal the identity even of people who have no police records, as was the case with Dolores Vazquez. She was a prime suspect in Rocio's murder and as such her identity and a lot

of other personal details were divulged. The journalists took care of the rest.

There are times when police withhold the identity of a person arrested, but unofficially it ends up reaching the media because of the persistence of a reporter or because it is in the police's interests.

Knowing a suspect's identity goes way beyond simply informing the parties involved in the process following an arrest, and mass dissemination in the media damages the presumption of innocence. In other words, when a suspect is identified in the headlines and their face appears on the news, their presumption of innocence is weakened. Significant media coverage confers elements of certainty on a suspicion. A similar thing happens with journalistic rumours, where an unconfirmed piece of information becomes major news with often very real consequences.

Another journalistic practice detrimental to a suspect's presumption of innocence is the way different 'voices' are handled in a story; i.e., the use a journalist makes of sources of information and declarations made by the people involved. In the Wanninkhof case, much of the media dedicated significant space to the murdered teenager's mother, which she used to air her suspicions. After the disappearance of her daughter, Alicia Hornos appeared on various television programmes stating her accusations against Dolores Vazquez. The anguished mother's line of reasoning was instrumental in pointing the finger at Dolores, with whom she'd had a relationship. Luis Gomez, a

journalist with El Pais, says that after Dolores' arrest, the victim's family "went from one television programme to another, dragging up old stories that confirmed her cold, unfriendly, demanding and violent character"<sup>3</sup>.

Even after Tony King admitted to the teenager's murder, her mother refused to believe the evidence contained in the declarations and the results of the DNA tests. Although the case against Dolores was falling apart, the media continued to give the mother's account; she still believed there was a connection between Dolores and the death of her daughter, according to a TV3 news report of 21 September.

The journalistic practice of giving so much visibility to the accusations made by the families of victims is indeed worrying. It is as though the media wants to foster suspicion and exploit the understandable incomprehension of those directly affected by the crime, of those whose minds are clouded by the tragedy. There seems to be some sort of lure of irrational voices charged with emotion and expressing pain.

Journalists exploiting aggrieved voices: this is also a concern because it introduces subjectivity into public opinion with emotive speeches that clash with the reason upon which modern criminal law is based; speeches charged with emotion that are often understood as calls for tougher penalties for perpetrators, or at least raise old misgivings about the legal system. Such was the case with TV3 on 2 September when Encarna Guzman, mother of Sonia Carabantes, appeared on the news demanding the murderer serve his entire sentence. One can understand how a mother who has just lost her daughter may be unfamiliar with the law, but not the journalists covering the story: the Criminal Code establishes that sentences are to be fully served. Therefore, broadcasting these statements promotes mistrust of the penitentiary system. These practices encourage old and well-rooted suspicions in society, like the belief that criminals go in one door and out the other.

So, on the basis of everything said until now, I believe that breach of the presumption of innocence is due to a particular journalistic culture and certain police practices which are not very sensitive towards a person's right to privacy, even when under investigation. We must never forget that the only moment of truth is during oral proceedings, and until then a defendant is always just alleged to be guilty.

A weakening in the presumption of innocence is a step

backwards for modern criminal law. This idea was put forth by the prestigious Italian lawyer Luigi Ferrajoli, when he said that in today's society, the media has introduced a new type of 'pathology' that disrupts legal proceedings, i.e., anticipated punishment, sometimes worse than the penalty itself. In the work *Law and Reason*, he also said that with the media has come the old infamous role of pre-modern criminal law, whereby penalties were executed in public but proceedings held in secret, and that these days pillory has been replaced by the exposure of defendants on the front pages of newspapers and on TV, not as a result of their conviction but rather their having been charged, when they should still be presumed innocent. In short, the media has disrupted the enlightened manner in which proceedings should be publicised.

Breach of the presumption of innocence is the first step in what is known as parallel proceedings, something that took on special significance here at the start of the 1990s with the Alcasser case. What happened is a phenomenon that some writers call 'the return of events'. The bloody details and criminal facts were given new and greater coverage, and had a lot to do with the appearance of private television stations. Gruesome details became instrumental in the battle for audience share and continue to be used today by some of the media.

As the prestigious French theorist Pierre Bourdieu pointed out in the mid-1990s in his book *On Television*, drama and crime have always sold, and the reign of the Audiometer has put them back in the headlines and as the opening stories in news bulletins, including the types of stories that were previously excluded and relegated due to the sense of responsibility imposed by the model of the written press. Events are now stories that entertain, he says, and an event is a type of elementary and rudimentary news production which is important because it captures people's attention without a concern for the consequences and because it takes up air time that could be used to ask for other things. It is true that personal dramas entertain and captivate audiences, but the consequences are not always as harmless as Bourdieu suggests. I believe that, apart from being a form of entertainment, this type of news introduces into society powerful icons about the world, the justice system, the police and the application of the law. We need to remember that only a small part of society has any direct

contact with crime. That is why information of this nature provides a powerful source of knowledge regarding crime and the people involved in its resolution - knowledge mediated by the producers of the stories, i.e., the media.

## Media Visibility

The role of the media in how society perceives certain crimes and the criminal justice system has become increasingly important in recent years. This process has run parallel to the expansion of the criminal justice system, as Jose Juan Toharia points out in *Opinion Pública y Justicia* (Public Opinion and Justice). In other words, the expanding law has been accompanied by increased interest in crime on the part of the media. Crime has gained an important position in the media agenda, and even though there are not any compelling studies on the subject, it appears that this type of news has a powerful impact on people's conversations and public opinion.

I defend the idea that the media should reveal aspects of criminal events that are key to understanding a good part of society's responses to them. Since the appearance of the modern press some 120 years ago, much of what society knows or imagines about crime is largely due to the media. The media transformed society's experience of crime, leading to a fundamental change in which we went from the old public-punishment rituals to the new media rituals. The real violence that made up the barbarous 'theatre' punishment system that took place in the streets and squares disappeared and was replaced by emerging violent narratives. When personal violence started to subside, violence began to be given more visibility throughout society. There is no denying the radical change it has produced in the way modern society experiences crime in general. We have gone from direct and observable public punishment to the recorded accounts offered by the media. The media has become a mediator; not a neutral mediator or a mere bearer of news, but rather a mediator who also produces the messages. Society's experience of crime is recorded by the media and is therefore above all a media experience.

This visibility becomes more apparent in the face of what we call 'media crime waves', i.e., when all sections of the

media give a certain crime abundant and 'alarmist' coverage, resulting in news overload. We could say these waves are artificial because the emphasis given in the news is disproportionate to the true incidence of the problem. These 'media crime waves' give problems about crime a social dimension that is not accurate, but the most worrying aspect is that they end up shaping the real perception of crime. It is not that the media invents the crimes, but it gives them a certain shape and content that determine society's perception of them.

The media does not stop at introducing certain images into people's minds, but goes further, to establish something more serious in society. Even though 'media crime waves' are essentially psychological experiences, they end up becoming real because the consequences they produce in society are real.

Various studies have highlighted the fact that most crime news covered by the media is made up of bloody events, when these are only a small part of the crime index. As far as the media is concerned, a crime is always a bloody, violent and dramatic event.

One of the notable aspects of these 'media crime waves' is that they tend to 'package' different types of events that take place in other social settings and group them under a negative and inaccurate image. The 'packaging' effect makes certain criminal events more visible. One example is what is known as 'school violence'. Let me use an example, i.e., the attack in a school in L'Hospitalet de Llobregat (Barcelona) in November 2002, which was linked with the murder of school students in Germany, France and the United States, when it was obvious the surrounding circumstances were radically different. With this event, as with others, the media globalised these negative experiences and presented occurrences that happened in faraway places as things that could happen at any time in our own society.

To my understanding, all these elements make news reports on crime activity highly responsible for public insecurity. Studies carried out in other countries have established a link between public fear and increased news about criminal activity. We need to ask ourselves if the escalated presence of bloody and dramatic events in the news actually broadens society's perception of insecurity. We should remember that in Barcelona, insecurity is one of



the top three issues that concern the population, despite an actual fall in the crime index.

As promoters of critical criminology pointed out over thirty years ago, media reports help incite alarm and moral panic in society. Crime reports that become part of this media wave appear as part of the social debate in the form of conflict and use emotive language that appeals more to sentiment than reason.

The death of the teenager Rocio Wanninkhof and the subsequent arrest, indictment and conviction of Dolores Vazquez were covered in alarmist terms by a lot of the media, particularly certain television programmes. These programmes offered a dramatic view of the events, exaggerated the reality and highlighted punitive options as the solution to the problem.

These events bring with them a dose of reality to a society in the midst of a 'trust crisis' that makes it turn to an older form of truth, i.e., feelings. In the desert of metastories, *mini speeches* have sprung up that offer society a feeling to go by. Snippets of truth with large doses of emotion, like stories about crime. In other words, we are faced with a real trust crisis that affects the symbolic order: the big stories are not as believable anymore, and people take a greater interest in the small, common and personal. Criminal events, considered a request for reality, lead to a search for authenticity in the face of the charade that Baudrillard talked about. A study conducted in Spain by Eco Consulting in June 1998 revealed that stories pertaining to events and sports had the most credibility amongst the public, while the least credible were political stories (*El País*, 14 July 1998). 78.6% of the population thought event stories were reliable, as opposed to 30.8% who felt the same about stories on national politics.

This attraction to criminal events comes at a time when society feels insecure. In most European countries, public safety is one of the top issues of concern amongst the population. It is generalised fear, a fear of the unforeseeable, that feeds the booming security business. In countries like Canada and the United States, fear management has become a very profitable business: according to Nils Christie in *Crime Control As Industry*, twice as much is spent on private security as on public security.

There is an incredible paradox in everything I have said until now: the same society that feels deeply vulnerable also has a fascination for violent stories and crime.

## The Influence of Political Actors and the Criminal Justice System

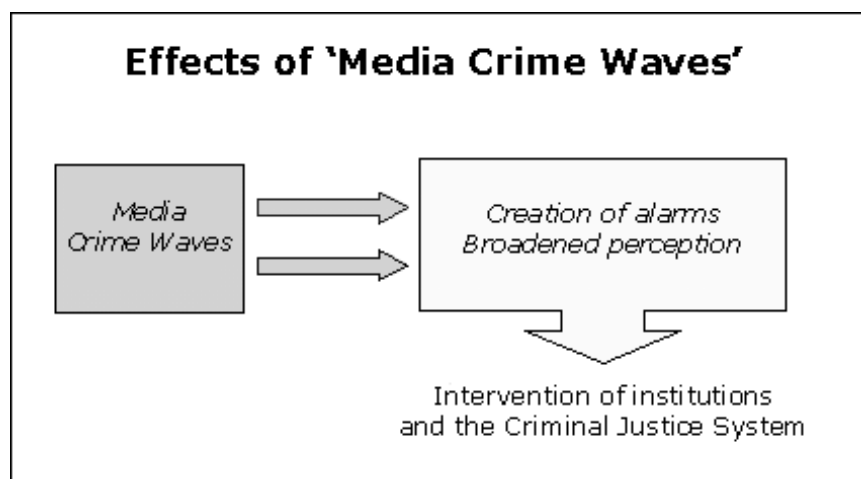
Apart from the influence crime stories have on the population, I would like to point out another disturbing issue, i.e., the influence they have on the politicians involved and the criminal justice system. The Tony King case showed how the media agenda ends up having a powerful effect on the political debate. This is also applicable to other areas of life, but when it comes to criminal affairs it takes on a special dimension due to the alarmist messages that accompany these stories. It is more than a simple influence; the social climate created by these stories is taken advantage of to introduce changes to criminal legislation.

The arrest of Tony Alexander King on 18 September 2003, and the DNA results that linked the Sonia Carabantes case with the Rocio Wanninkhof one, brought to light the judicial error that initially saw Dolores Vazquez convicted and sentenced to 15 years' imprisonment. It is worth remembering that the case was thrown out by the Malaga Courts for procedural errors and the supposed perpetrator had already been in prison for 18 months. This spurred a political debate regarding the reform of the Jury Act, seeing as it was the appointed jury that had committed the error. Declarations made by the Interior Minister, Mariano Rajoy, generated some concern amongst the legal bodies.

One part of the debate focused on the above-mentioned error, although studies have shown there is approximately the same error index with decisions made by ordinary citizens as by judges.

The controversy surrounding the use of juries reminds me of other debates that have begun in recent years in the wake of examples of news overload. It is worrying to see how alarmist information can mobilise the political and legal classes. We could say they are both too dependent on the media, and fearing an unpopular public reaction, they give what could be called an 'anticipated response'. In Spain, as in other European countries, the political and legal world have reacted to successive 'media crime waves' by upping restrictions. In 1992, in the wake of the murder of the Alcañices teenagers, certain penalties were shored up under the Criminal Code, which at the time was being amended. The paedophilia cases in Europe at the end of the 1990s resulted in a toughening of the penalties pertaining to sexual





Source: author's own work

offences. The same thing happened after intensive news coverage of battered women - an issue that had registered barely any media visibility until just a few years ago.

I will not go into an analysis of whether these legal changes were appropriate or not; the point I want to make is that these changes have come about during a period of abundant and often sensationalist media coverage of certain criminal events.

In short, the visibility the media gives to certain criminal events seriously questions the criminal justice system.

I believe the alarmist effect created by the media would be much less potent if institutions did not react in response to 'media crime waves'. Official bodies often grant these types of stories a sociological truth that society itself has yet to do. In the year 2000, the death of a young boy after being savaged by a dog and the ensuing alarmist coverage given to the event led to the toughening of legislation concerning the control of certain breeds, even though there was no study to show there had been an increase in these types of attacks.

This hypersensitivity to crime news began with major cases and threatens to contaminate each procedure in criminal law. It is no coincidence that, since the establishment of Spanish democracy, judges have never before made the most of social alarm as now.

Luigi Ferrajoli criticises the interference of the media in the criminal justice system. He warns of the dangers and points

out that judges should only weigh evidence and not take public opinion or the media into account, as they always seek to apportion blame.

Apart from the pressure that news overload exerts on the various parties working in criminal affairs, I would like to mention the use it can be put to in the political arena. It is worth noting that in the last electoral campaign the issue of public safety was high on the list of concerns.

Some writers talk about the negative influence of news overload when it comes to the political behaviour of a society. A study carried out in France by TNS Media Intelligence revealed that during the 2002 legislative campaign, crime news rose by 126% and that this extensive coverage of public insecurity resulted in extra votes to the extreme right.

To conclude, we could say that the Tony King case and the media coverage surrounding the teenagers Rocio Wanninkhof and Sonia Carabantes revealed some of the most worrying practices in the media treatment of criminal events. News overload increases social alarm, and publicising the identity and personal lives of people in custody only devalues the right to the presumption of innocence. A media circus always has a negative influence on the people involved in the criminal justice system, equal to a public humiliation which increases social stereotyping and contributes to what the German sociologist Ulrich Beck calls a 'scapegoat society', where it is not the threats

themselves that generally unsettle society, but those who expose them.

The media is a powerful machine that produces, speculates on and influences the beliefs surrounding crime. Its alarmist approach generates a 'punishment syndrome' in society, i.e., the feeling that anyone could be a victim. Crime is presented as the paradigm of the fears that surround us and the media creates the idea of present-day life as a world plagued by insecurity.

## Notes

1. The sample studied was composed of a total of 30 news programmes broadcast by TV3 between 19 August and 15 November 2003.
2. See *El País* 28 September 2003.
3. See *El País*, 28 September 2003.



# Theoretical Journals on Audiovisual Communication in Latin America

Daniel E. Jones

■ *This article presents a comparison of the role developed by Latin American theoretical journals that specialise in audiovisual communication and new digital technologies. I will firstly review the most significant features of the leading publications in developed countries (mainly Anglo-Saxon countries) and then go on to look more closely at the journals in the Latin American and Spain area, i.e., those published in Spanish and Portuguese, and a number of other minority languages on the Iberian Peninsula, such as Catalan, Galician and Basque.*

Some of these journals, such as the US titles *Public Opinion Quarterly*, *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, *Journal of Communication* and the *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media*, have been influencing international environments, industry, the news profession and political decision-making for more than half a century. Europe also has examples of illustrious journals published in different countries and languages, from different ideological or theoretical approximations and with varying degrees of social and cultural impact. However, the situation has been slightly different in the Latin American arena because of various factors that I will analyse in this article.

## Introduction

Scientific journals in the fields of communication, cultural industries and new audiovisual technologies are growing in number, importance and specialisations, particularly in the Anglo-Saxon countries. However, the role of these publications on the Iberian Peninsula and in Latin America is less relevant, although the areas have a long tradition of high-quality journals.

From research into mass communications (in the US) and advertising (Germany), via semiotics (France and Italy), cultural studies (the UK) and national communication policies (Latin America), many researchers at academic and business institutions across the world have published hundreds of thousands of articles in journals that specialise in these issues to greater or lesser success and with very different goals.

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## 1. Concentration of Anglo-Saxon Publishing

The leading role of the Anglo-Saxon world within the international scientific and technological fields in all knowledge areas is repeated in studies into audiovisual-communication phenomena. Furthermore, the US-UK hegemony, complemented by other countries such as Canada and Australia, is accompanied by a clear linguistic prepotency. In effect, any important scientific or academic journal that wants to be considered within the international circuit must be published in English, a phenomenon also perceptible in the Scandinavian countries, Japan and even the Third World<sup>1</sup>.

Similarly, and very closely linked with the above point, these countries reign supreme in content, models, theories and the selection of authors or subject matters in all types of scientific publications. In the specific case of audiovisual communication, to the US-UK primacy in the system of mass communication (broadcasters, media and content and now also the Internet) we should therefore add an historical pre-eminence in publications devoted to analysing and reflecting on these types of phenomena.

The two main types of journals that regularly address the different facets of audiovisual communication (academic or scientific and industry or technical) are practically monopolised by the most important Anglo-Saxon countries, as well as nearly all the international organisations (of a professional, business, documental, teaching or research nature), which also use English.

In effect, the leading British, US, Canadian and Australian universities, professional associations and public institutions, as well as the international organisations headquartered in these countries or in others, have a number of important journals (in English) devoted to analysing communication phenomena and those of different broadcast industries from all sorts of scientific perspectives, i.e., historical, sociological, economic, psychological, political, linguistic, anthropological, semiotic and technological.

This situation mainly came about because of the US, where there are many professional and academic associations with a longstanding tradition and a great many members (inside and outside the country). The situation is quite different in Europe (except the UK) and Latin America, where it is usually universities (or their associated institutions and research centres) that publish most of the specialist theoretical journals. However, the number of commercial companies that publish and distribute these types of works, particularly ones published in English, is growing steadily. Publishing companies that specialise in social sciences and humanities usually publish journals that address audiovisual-communication phenomena from an academic standpoint.

In general, Anglo-Saxon journals specialising in analysing the audiovisual sphere feature one-off and empirical research results, while publications from Latin countries (particularly France) prefer studies of a more general and global nature, with theoretical and methodological contributions. The Anglo-Saxon journals are usually aimed at the hands-on exploitation of results, whether for commercial, social or political purposes, while the Latin ones, on the other hand, often contain critiques or alternative proposals and are sometimes not linked purely to current affairs. (DZIKI, 1980; DYER & GARNET, 1991; GALDÓN, 2003; JONES, 2003).

## **2. Journals in Latin America and Spain**

The publishing of journals that specialise in communication, culture and new broadcast technologies has grown considerably across Latin America and Spain in the past 20 years, although more in some countries than others. The most notable are, without a doubt, Spain, Mexico and Brazil, because of the rise in specialist faculties and the growing number of experts devoted to teaching and research in this field. In this article, I will not only present a general overview of the Latin American area as a whole, but also emphasise the specific features of the main linguistic areas. (MOTTA, 1989; IPAL, 1990; HULLEBROECK, 1994; JONES, 1996; JONES, 1999-2003).

### **2.1. Portuguese: Brazil and Portugal**

#### **2.1.1. Brazil: Tradition and Importance**

Brazil, a country/continent full of contrasts, in which the most modern technologies exist cheek-by-jowl with misery and under-development, has seen the rise of one of the most important media systems in the world, led by powerful groups such as Globo and Abril. Different institutions devoted to teaching, research and documentation and focusing specifically on audiovisual-communication phenomena have sprung up over the past four decades. There are currently close to 70 university teaching centres with over 20,000 students and an association that gathers 1,000 researchers in this field (INTERCOM) and which in 1986 started up the PORTCOM CENTRE, dedicated to documenting communication issues in Brazil, Portugal and the former Portuguese colonies in Africa.

There is a clear interest on the part of the Brazilian researchers who work in this area to integrate their works across Latin America and throughout the world. To that end, the above-mentioned institutions play a leading role in the heart of other, continent-wide organisations, such as FELAFACS and ALAIC, and international associations like AIERI-IAMCR and the ICA. For example, Brazilian research into audiovisual communication (particularly TV soap operas) has become a reference point for important academic sectors across the continent and beyond.

With regard to journals that specialise in this field of study, Brazil has different titles with a certain academic tradition

and other, more recent ones. At the end of the day, they reflect the development of research into communication over the past four decades and can be characterised by a number of basic elements.

Early research works in the 1960s were aimed at assessing the effects of the media, as well as journalism studies (teaching, profession and history) and rural and popular communication, generally from a functionalist and developmental perspective. Within a decade, this type of research work had grown markedly and more studies were being done into the press (sociological and content analysis) and radio and TV (effects, programming, educational use), the majority of which were influenced by the critical theory of the Frankfurt School, semiotics and structuralism. The complexity of the communication phenomena first began to be accepted in the 1980s and many simplistic and naive types of research were rejected in favour of more critical and committed works (particularly reception studies) and ones more closely related to technical and professional activities.

The Brazilian cities with the longest tradition in audiovisual-communication studies include São Paulo and its nearby environs, the site of important universities and research institutions that publish the main theoretical journals, such as the University of São Paulo, the Methodist University of São Paulo and the INTERCOM Association. In recent years they have produced publications including *Revista Brasileira de Ciências da Comunicação* (São Paulo: INTERCOM); *Anuário de Inovações e Artes* (São Paulo: USP); *Comunicação & Sociedade* (São Bernardo do Campo: UESP); *Comunicação & Política na América Latina* (Rio de Janeiro: Centro Brasileiro de Estudos Latino-Americanos), and *Revista FAMECOS* (Porto Alegre: PUCRS) (STUMPF & CAPPARELLI, 2001).

### 2.1.2. The Sudden Acceleration of Portugal

Theoretical studies into communication, culture and new broadcast technologies were not greatly developed in Portugal until recent years, mainly because of Salazar's dictatorship (1929-1974) and the debility of its media system, and there were few universities that taught these specialities. Without a doubt, the most significant was the New University of Lisbon. Moreover, Portuguese research was particularly influenced by other countries with a

longstanding academic tradition, mainly the US and France and, to a lesser extent, Spain and Brazil. However, although few and far between, the level of its academic books and journals was very good, easily on par with that of its neighbours. Portugal's leading researchers conducted important academic activity within the country, even though they were not well known abroad.

In recent times, important work has been done by the Centro de Estudos de la Comunicação e Linguagens, the New University of Lisbon (which publishes the excellent *Revista de Comunicação e Linguagens*); the Observatório da Comunicação (the publisher of *Observatório: Revista do Obercom* and the magnificent *Anuário Comunicação*); the Associação Portuguesa para o Desenvolvimento das Comunicações, from the New University of Lisbon (the sponsor of the journal *Tendências: Broadcast, Telecomunicações, Multimédia*); the Instituto Superior de Ciências do Trabalho e da Empresa (which publishes *Trajectos: Revista de Comunicação, Cultura e Educação*), and the Centro de Estudos de Ciências da Comunicação, at the Independent University (the publisher of the industry journal *Midia XXI*).

## 2.2. Spanish. Latin America and Spain

### 2.2.1. Imbalances in Latin America

The overall number of regular publications of all types devoted to analysing audiovisual communication from the different formal, theoretical and methodological perspectives published in the different Latin American countries over recent years gives an indication of the region's great interest in studying this contemporary social phenomenon.

Because of the strong influence exercised by developmentalist currents, promoted by the US (since the 1950s), UNESCO (since the 1960s) and local universities, European foundations and religious confessions of different origins and diverse orientations (from the 1970s), almost all the Latin American countries today have centres that specialise in training communicators, researching audiovisual communication and publishing specialist journals. There is no doubt that Latin America (including Brazil) has managed to position itself at the vanguard of the developing countries with regard to the study of communication phenomena.

However, the exponential growth of university teaching centres (up from two 50 years ago to more than 200 today)

has not always gone hand in hand with an equivalent qualitative development of education and research. Many of these university faculties or schools are very poorly equipped in terms of both technical resources (libraries, newspaper archives, radio and TV equipment, computer connections) and human resources, with professors ill-equipped for teaching as a result of the mass increase of students and an evident lack of planning.

A number of excellent Latin American researchers have made among the most interesting and original contributions in recent years to this field of studies at the international level, particularly of a sociological, semiotic, economic, political and anthropological nature, with many focused on the North-South conflict. Each of these leading researchers has made a particular contribution from different perspectives and interests towards consolidating interdisciplinary studies of these phenomena, particularly through the regular publication of diverse books, reports, speeches and journals.

The great number of publications specialising in audiovisual communication in recent years in the principal Latin American countries includes organisations of very different types, content and levels of specialisation. We can thus say that diverse journals have carved out a particular name for themselves, regardless of their scope and international recognition, because of the quality of the articles and authors chosen, the treatment and profundity of the issues tackled or because of the continuity and care of the publication.

The best theoretical publications in the Latin American countries today are Mexico's *Estudios de las Culturas Contemporáneas* (Colima: Colima University), *Comunicación y Sociedad* (Guadalajara: Guadalajara University), *Revista Mexicana de Comunicación* (Mexico City: Manuel Buendía Foundation) and *Etcétera* (Mexico City: Análisis, Publicaciones y Ediciones); Colombia's *Signo y Pensamiento* (Bogotá: Pontificia Universidad Javeriana) and *Escribanía* (Manizales: Manizales University); Venezuela's *Comunicación* (Caracas: Gumilla Centre) and *Anuario ININCO* (Caracas: Central University of Venezuela); Peru's *Diálogos de la Comunicación* (Lima: FELAFACS) and *Contratexto* (Lima: Lima University), and Chile's *Cuadernos de Información* (Santiago: Catholic University of Chile). There are some others that are too recent to know how they will evolve and yet others that have declined in academic quality in recent months, such as Ecuador's *Chasqui* (Quito: CIESPAL).

## 2.2.2. The Spectacular Change in Spain

The censorship and State control exercised by the Francoist regime (1939-1975) meant that with some exceptions (particularly in the press and advertising), research in Spain during that time was characterised by a lack of scientific and academic rigour and reduced to the simple organisation of conferences, congresses and discourses of an ideological nature. However, this doctrine evolved, thanks to the socio-political adaptation of the regime from the authoritarianism of the early years into greater liberalism later on, although it was still marked by the nationalist Catholicism that characterised the whole period.

It wasn't until the 1960s that the first academic studies (by local and foreign authors) were published, thanks particularly to the publishing work of Navarre University. Moreover, despite the clear progress taking place in Europe and the US, the shortfall in heavy-hitting works and specialities at home was matched in academic institutions (teaching, documentary and research institutions) and professional and theoretical journals.

However, the past 30 years has been spectacular, although there have been significant imbalances. Because of the number of institutions, people, resources, research and publishing companies, Madrid (and to a lesser extent, Catalonia) was traditionally the main centre in Spain with regard to audiovisual-communication studies. Examples include the work carried out in recent years by some key institutions, such as the Complutense University of Madrid, FUNDESCO (now the Telefónica Foundation) and IORTV (which depends on Radio Televisión Española), as well as all types of private institutions that specialise in communication marketing (audience surveys and advertising investments), which have produced commercial information of strategic value.

These historical conditions meant that until recently there were no academic journals on audiovisual communication published in Spain on par with those being published in its neighbouring countries. There are now many publications of a commercial nature that specialise in film, radio, television, video and advertising, and different theoretical journals have appeared in recent years, although most are published in Madrid.

The most significant academic journals published in Spanish today are *Ámbitos* (Seville: Seville University); *CIC*



and *Cuadernos de Documentación Multimedia* (Madrid: Complutense University of Madrid); *Comunicación y Sociedad* (Pamplona: Navarre University); *Comunicar* (Huelva: Comunicar Group); *Revista LATINA de Comunicación Social* (Santa Cruz de Tenerife: La Laguna University); *Telos* (Madrid: Telefónica Foundation); *Voces y Culturas* (Barcelona: Ediciones Voces y Culturas) and *Zer: Revista de Estudios de Comunicación* (Bilbao: University of the Basque Country).

### 2.3. Catalan

It was not until the 1980s that various specialist academic journals appeared in Catalan. They were consolidated during the 1990s with the help of promotion from university institutions and other public and private agents. The journals could easily be framed within international models, although they generally do not have an important repercussion beyond Catalonia, mainly because of the language used and because they tend to deal with issues of interest to Catalonia and the defence and promotion of the Catalan language and culture.

The longest-established and most high-quality journal is without a doubt *Anàlisi: Quaderns de Comunicació i Cultura*, first published in 1980 by the faculty now called the Department of Journalism and Communication Sciences at the Autonomous University of Barcelona, which has, in the 29 issues published to date, enjoyed good collaborations both from Catalans and authors from abroad, particularly the Latin countries.

The Journalists' College of Catalonia published 26 issues between 1984 and 1995, as a second phase of the journal *Annals del Periodisme Català*, which mainly involved reflections on journalistic activity within the country, both from the professional perspective and legal, historical, economic and sociological points of view, with references to the broadcast media.

The Catalan Communication Society (an affiliate of the Institute of Catalan Studies) launched the journal *Periodística* in 1989, which has published issues devoted to studies on the theory and history of journalism, but with few references to the broadcast media. The same organisation started another academic journal, titled *Treballs de Comunicació*, in 1991, which promoted the Institute's activities as well as theoretical works produced by its members.

However, not all the projects have had the same success: *Gazeta* (1994), devoted to the history of the press, and *Cinematògraf* (1992 and 1995), which specialised in film history, only published one and two issues respectively.

Other private institutions have also promoted their theoretical journals. The public Elisava School has been publishing *Temes de Disseny*, a journal devoted mainly to questions of graphic design, corporate image, semiotics, communication theory and mass culture, since 1986.

The Blanquerna School of Communication Studies at Ramon Llull University has been publishing *Trípodos: Llenguatge, Pensament, Comunicació* since 1996, which gathers articles by the university's professors and collaborations from other sources. The Catalonia Broadcasting Council has been publishing *Quaderns del CAC* since 1998, an important source of legal and sociological aspects of broadcasting in Catalonia and the rest of Europe.

Within industry, the clear highlight is the journal *Capçalera*, published by the Journalists' College of Catalonia, which has examined all types of issues relating to the professional world and the Catalan media since 1989. Finally, a new title was released in 2000, in this case private and commercial: *Mass Media 21* (now called *Comunicació 21*). This was a publishing novelty in Catalonia as it concerned the monitoring and analysis of the business and professional world of communications in the country.

### 2.4. Basque and Galician

There are very few theoretical publications in Basque or Galician because of the historical and social evolution of these languages. In the specific case of journals that specialise in the academic field of audiovisual communication, there are only a few titles, most recently published by public institutions devoted more to defending the languages and culture than specifically interested in the development of the media system.

In the case of the Basque language, the University of the Basque Country has been publishing *Zer: Revista de Estudios de Comunicación* since 1996. Although nearly all the articles are in Spanish, it also includes some texts in Basque, as well as other European languages, such as French and English. Another specialist publication is *Mediatika: Cuadernos de Medios de Comunicación*, published in Basque and Spanish by Eusko Ikaskuntza (the

Society for Basque Studies), which also publishes other titles relating to music and film.

With regard to Galicia, the only academic journal in this field that appears in the Galician language is *Estudios de Comunicación*, which the Council for Galician Culture has been publishing since 2001 and which particularly includes collaborations from university experts and professionals in the region and mainly deals with local issues.

### **3. Features of the Latin American Journals**

The big Latin American cultural area is the result of the colonisations and racial intermixing begun in the 15th century by the Spanish and Portuguese, and although from the point of view of political, economic, cultural and communication integration it could be qualified as entelechy, it could also be understood in the current global era as constituting a differentiated (and at the same time fairly heterogeneous) cultural and communication space. In any case, these shared identity traits do not clearly translate into the field of theoretical journals on audiovisual communication.

#### **3.1. The Main Contribution of the Academic Journals**

Although they have been around in Latin America for nearly half a century, it is not easy to say what the most important contribution of academic journals in the region is, although some trends can be observed in the trajectory of the main titles. These include an interest in popular culture and alternative media used as tools for social development and an observable interest in questions of a political nature, i.e., the role of the media in the democratic development of Latin America. However, this has been not been so to the same extent on the Iberian Peninsula.

The 1970s and 1980s featured concern for national communication policies and the new world order of information and communication, particularly following the impact of the MacBride Report and regular discussions within the heart of UNESCO. In recent years, however, theoretical research has focused on more pragmatic aspects, such as the rise of institutional communications and the implementation of new digital technologies. In any

case, culturalist and anthropological theories influence the whole of Latin America. On the Iberian Peninsula, on the other hand, we find more studies of an empirical nature on the real structure of the media and cultural industries and their dependence on local power groups, as well as their links to big trans-national groups.

#### **3.2. Latin American Journals Compared to their Anglo-Saxon Counterparts**

At first glance, we can see quantitative and qualitative differences of both form and content between the Latin American journals and their Anglo-Saxon counterparts. Firstly, in the Anglo-Saxon world, and thus by extension all the developed countries, there are a great many titles, many with a commercial circulation (particularly the British and US ones) from the main universities across the world. This gives them a very big projection, particularly in the developed world. They have an excellent formal quality and are released with strict regularity, generally on a quarterly basis. By contrast, the Latin American journals (less in the case of Spain) are usually characterised by poverty of material, sloppy design, irregularity in release dates and a noticeable disappearance rate, most dropping quickly from view. Few manage to survive for a period of years or have a foreign projection.

In Anglo-Saxon countries, there are an ever-increasing number of new titles that specialise not just in communication in general but in particular theoretical perspectives, e.g., history, economics, technology, linguistics and psychology, or aspects such as sex, age, health, etc. They even focus on specific media, e.g., radio, television, advertising, film or new digital technologies. The rise in specialisation has come about because of the increased complexity of the phenomena and progress in research.

In contrast, in Latin America (less on the Iberian Peninsula) journals are still in a preliminary, more descriptive, repetitive and trial phase, with texts of a more general nature that do not feature original contributions (where the author only shows, with the bibliography and sources used, that it is updated) but instead are different versions of matters that have already been discussed.

In general, at least in the developed countries, academic journals (particularly those that specialise in physical and natural sciences) are the first level of dissemination

(together with specialist congresses) that an expert can use to promote the preliminary results of his or her work (both individual and group work, at universities or in research centres) before a book is released; a book being a slower process that can include more details and relevant updates. However, what happens in Latin America is that nobody who has anything important to say uses these types of journals as a platform, and they don't have any academic or social projection or real influence.

### 3.3. Redundant and Unoriginal Content

With few exceptions, audiovisual-communication journals are very repetitive because little is researched due to lack of resources (particularly in Latin America), lack of time and because there is little social interest in the theoretical area of communications. This disheartens many researchers, who often end up abandoning academic circles and creating private consultancies at the service of corporations, political parties or other institutions, such as NGOs, where they tend not to carry out theoretical research of an empirical basis but rather applied research on particular and situational questions.

Furthermore, universities generally do not undertake research because the conditions to do so are unavailable or because professors are poorly paid and often have to take on another job. In short, the texts that usually appear in many Latin American journals are one-off articles that don't form part of a long-term ambitious process or line of reflection and research, but are rather commissions or proposals that serve to boost an author's academic curriculum so they can rise through the bureaucratic ranks and obtain better work conditions.

With regard to the criteria they are forced to abandon, the most notable is originality in the approach to an issue, rigour in the selection of sources and bibliography, the theoretical framework and empirical data handled, clarity of organisation and the social interest of the object of the study (as it is not enclosed within a purely academic environment but contributes to common wellbeing).

### 3.4. Circulation Today

Anglo-Saxon journals have a high level of circulation among hundreds of universities in the wealthy countries, not just the English-speaking ones but also in those of the

world's main languages. The same does not occur with Latin American journals, which generally don't leave their own country because there is not the material ability to do so nor enough interest in their content to attract potential readers, at least within their own cultural area. For example, very few journals from Latin America reach Spain (particularly some that circulate in a form of exchange with other Spanish ones) because they are not very attractive from the formal and content points of view, are too irregular and are only concerned with local or one-off issues, without original contributions that could be of use to the research community.

There is no justification for the fact that academic journals in Spanish don't circulate across the whole Latin American cultural area (including Brazil and Portugal) because Spanish is generally used in nearly all academic fields. The situation is different in Europe, where political and linguistic fragmentation results from each State having its own language. Some even have more than one language (e.g., Spain).

This has a marked impact on the publishers and readers of academic journals, including ones concerned with audiovisual communication. Publications generally only circulate within their linguistic environment and don't usually cross borders unless they are published in English. That is why important German, French or Italian journals, for example, are not well known outside their national territories. In the case of post-Franco Spain, for example, regional languages in which journals (or at least a number of articles) are published, such as Catalan, Galician and Basque, have gradually been recovered, which paradoxically makes it more difficult for them to circulate across Spain and Latin America.

However, not only is the level of readership low, but journals often have no type of academic, political or social repercussion. In other words, articles are not commented on or quoted in other academic texts (books, reports, theses, other scientific articles) and even students in the faculties that publish them don't take them into account as reference works, nor are they used for professional recycling or updating within industry.

This does not mean journals are not published or new titles don't appear regularly, because there is a strong pressure by university institutions for their teachers to publish theoretical reflections, but as they cannot do so in the

leading specialist journals they have to create their own platforms of expression, which usually have a very short life or, in the best of cases, are irregular and weak.

### 3.5. The Rise of Digital Journals

The implementation of the most advanced technologies has been much slower in Latin America than in the highly developed world, something that can be clearly appreciated by the number of computer users and even more by the number of people who use the Internet. This has very important repercussions at all levels in the use of these technologies, the languages used, the expansion of websites (particularly portals) and, especially, the implementation of e-commerce, where the differences between the First and Third World are much more obvious. Moreover, this inequality translates into the hegemony of a number of languages (particularly English and to a lesser extent German and Japanese) and the marginalisation of others, such as Spanish, French, Italian, Portuguese and Russian, a phenomenon that is even more pronounced in the case of minority languages in all the regions of the world, except for the Scandinavian ones (with a large number of speakers).

Despite these inequalities, there is a very dynamic Internet environment made up of Latin American digital newspapers, i.e., ones that carved out a place online during the 1990s, which are enjoying significant year-on-year growth. However, the publications that are still not consolidated in the Latin American area are theoretical journals in the field of audiovisual communication on digital support. It is true that in the past two or three years many of these journals have had a double version (on and offline) and that access is still free, which means they can be disseminated beyond the specialised libraries that store them. But there has been hardly any success stories to date among digital journals without a printed version or titles that were traditionally printed and which are now digital only.

At the same time, there are few cases of new Latin American journals published on digital support only (e.g., online and CD-ROM, such as the case of the Madrid-based Cuadernos de Documentación Multimedia), or that can only be consulted online, such as Catalonia's *Formats: Revista de Comunicació Broadcast*, the Spanish journals *Caleidoscopio*, *GITTCUS* and *Revista LATINA de Comunicación Social*, Brazil's *Pensamento Comunicacional*

*Latino-Americano*, *Eptic on Line*, *Com Ciência* and *e.Pós*, or Mexico's *Razón y Palabra* and *Sala de Prensa*, to mention some of the most important.

Only time will tell whether these publications will be consolidated or not (e.g., *Revista LATINA de Comunicación Social* had published 56 issues by August 2003, while *Formats* has not been published since 1999). Neither is it clear whether the digital format will be the most suitable format for theoretical and academic texts, which are generally long and sometimes dense. In effect, paper support is still more important (as texts downloaded from the Net have to be printed). Furthermore, the rigour in the selection of authors and texts in some digital journals has not been the same as is usually applied to printed journals. It will therefore be a question of time until readers get used to finding good-quality articles in journals that are only presented in a digital format .

## 4. Conclusions

The production of journals that specialise in audiovisual communication has enjoyed sustained growth in the Latin American area in recent decades, both with regard to number of titles and variety of publishers and cities of origin. However, it is the developed countries (particularly the Anglo-Saxon ones) that have managed to consolidate the most ambitious academic and professional projects.

Analyses of the traditional broadcast media continue to award most space to Anglo-Saxon journals, although it is the electronic broadcast industry (e.g., new types of television transmission and consumption: cable and digital satellite) and computer technologies (multimedia integration, CD-ROMs, information highways) that are generating an increasing interest in the international panorama of this speciality area.

The most commonly used theoretical analysis perspectives are sociology and politics and, to a lesser extent, economics, semiotics, anthropology, pedagogy, psychology and history. Electronically broadcast goods and services appear to be more interesting in terms of their technological and socio-political implications than other considerations. Moreover, analyses on content, professional practices and ideological and commercial effects on audiences continue to

be of great interest to the experts who publish in these types of specialist journals.

However, the same is not true for the Latin American countries, which continue to publish traditional studies of a fundamentally ideological and cultural nature. Furthermore, there are publications of very diverse types, content and levels of specialisation. Some journals stand out above the rest, either because of their scope and international recognition, or for the quality of the articles and authors chosen, the treatment and depth of the issues tackled or for the continuity and care taken with the publication.

On the other hand, many of the issues dealt with in the different journals are often repeated, without signifying clear progress in research. This could be attributed to a lack of previous documentation on the part of the essay writers and a large dispersion of sources and efforts. Repetition often fails to give rise to new approaches and themes, which means that the range of issues dealt with - and the way of dealing with them - shrinks and does not allow an in-depth analysis of the real communication processes with all the different types of links they contain and the consequences that can be drawn.

However, the journals published in Latin America in recent decades have favoured the dissemination of intellectual output devoted to analysing audiovisual-communication phenomena, not only by locally based researchers but ones from abroad. They have also made it possible to introduce and generalise different theoretical currents and new methodologies, as well as debates crucial to the future of the area, although they have inevitably suffered from the shortfalls of any other genre in relation to the societies from which they spring and on which they act. Most of the titles have an irregular existence, an austere presentation and an uncertain future. In short, we could say that, despite the differences between them, they have contributed, even if modestly, to a better understanding between the different countries and an increased comprehension of their social, political, economic and cultural problems.

## Notes

1. This is what recently occurred with the French journal *Communications & Strategies*, published by the IDATE in Montpellier. From 1991 to 1999 it was bilingual (French and English), but since the year 2000 it has only been published in English.
2. The most significant case is SAGE Publications, headquartered in London and with offices in other English-speaking countries, e.g., the US and India. This important transnational publishing company develops a hegemonic role in its specialty areas, annually publishing different books by the most important researchers at the international level, as well as 17 scientific journals. Through agreements with numerous professors at the most important Anglo-Saxon universities, it publishes quarterly journals that have a big circulation and a great influence on all academic environments across the world. It is a good example of globalisation.
3. 1997 saw the launch of the first issue of *Formats: Revista de Comunicació Broadcast*, promoted by the Broadcast Communication Studies area at the UPF. The journal was released on digital support over the Internet and a second issue was published in 1999, offering academic articles on this specific field. The Associació Film Historia published the journal *Film Historia* between 1991 and 2000, which included academic articles on film history and theory, both of domestic and foreign films. The journal was published in Spanish and English.
4. Today, what works very well on the Internet is not just on websites and portals (e.g., the Communication Portal started up by InCom at the Autonomous University of Barcelona), but also news bulletins with regularly updated content. This is the case of the excellent *Jornal Brasileiro de Ciências da Comunicação* (São Bernardo do Campo: Methodist University of São Paulo), which had published 225 issues by August 2003, with a wide range of information on academic communication activities.

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# An Approximation to Catalan Cinema from the Study of its Creative Process

**Matilde Obradors**

- *The film approximation put forward in this paper is tackled from the perspective of the Psychology of Creativity, starting from the grounds that studying the creative practice in a field makes it possible to devise new ways for understanding it. In particular, in the film sector in Catalonia (which appears to be immersed in a structural crisis) the basic hypothesis of the research work was the idea that film practice is limited just as much or more by the creators' restricted approaches and concepts as it is by purely economic and industrial issues within the sector.*

## Introduction

This document sets out some of the results of a doctoral thesis that involved an in-depth analysis of the creative practice in Catalan cinema, which was innovative in the sense that no research had previously been carried out into Catalan films from that point of view.

The analysis made it possible to outline attitudes in relation to the creative process, which, because they were repeated in the different interviews, defines common procedures and can therefore help describe the imaginary of the film universe developed in Catalonia. It also worked on the idea that the concept the people who work in a field have of the creative process involved can reveal symptoms that make it possible to diagnose the sector.

The contributions of the research work were:

- a) A description of the concept that filmmakers currently working in Catalonia have of their work (i.e., from the

creative process of their work) and an analysis of the parameters on which this concept is based.

- b) The way new knowledge supports the theoretical and methodological perspective of the Psychology of Creativity (the processes involved in ideas generation).

The research was designed on the basis of the psychological tradition of studying cases that determine a series of representative constants that make it possible to unify concepts about creativity and the processes involved in ideas generation. Bearing in mind that one of the tasks of Psychology of Creativity is to know the creative process and circumstances that stimulate or hinder the production of original ideas, I developed this study with the final purpose of generating a new way of understanding Catalan cinema.

The work involved detecting mental blocks and conceptual limitations, i.e., the limits that individuals impose upon themselves and which, although not explicit, can in one way or another restrict the practice of an activity. Although there are many research works on economic and industrial questions relating to film practice in Catalonia, they do not reveal the limits of approach, ideologies or concepts.

The situation of Catalan cinema forces us to ask a number of questions that have already been formulated too often. It is true that when something doesn't work despite repeated efforts we soon lose interest in it, ignore it and make it a "taboo topic". If there are no voices that interpret a type of cinema that appears to be inexistent, it is extremely important to listen to the voice of some of its artists. In-depth interviews are useful in any study, but in this case they were particularly valuable.

Thus, any investigation into issues relating to Catalan cinema involves knowing what the filmmakers who work in the area think and how they conceptualise their work in this context.

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## Methodology

The following steps were taken to achieve the abovementioned goals:

a) Field research of a qualitative nature, articulated in the form of in-depth interviews with filmmakers within the territorial and geographic sphere of the city of Barcelona, understanding that film production in Catalonia is focused mainly on the capital city. Films are the result of group work, but I chose directors because they participate in the whole of the creative process.

b) I established a theoretical body based on the Psychology of Creativity. I added a number of aesthetic, philosophical and anthropological considerations to this body with the purpose of defining concepts such as *imaginary* or *fantasy* and to decode myths related to this artistic practice. I also examined the bibliography of the filmmakers considered to be key in the history of filmmaking to explain the genesis of their works.

I used the theoretical body described above to develop the interview protocol.

Within the phases of the creative process of films (ideas generation, the script, the shoot and the editing), I chose to place particular emphasis on the initial phase of ideas generation.

With regard to the sample, I used the list of film directors who belong to the Barcelona College of Film Directors. From a total of 100 affiliated directors, I chose a sample of 25, giving a representativeness of 25%. In fact, it would represent more than 25%, given that there are very vague limits with regard to professional dedication. The sample was designed with the intention that the filmmakers interviewed would represent the different trends present in Barcelona. The criteria were as follows:

- By film genre: psychological thrillers, psychological terror films, fantasy films, comedies, documentaries and dramas.
- By script origin: their own scripts, scripts by other people and literary adaptations.
- By the age and experience of the directors: directors with many years' experience, directors with recognised years' experience, young directors whose careers were just taking off. I also interviewed directors who formed part of the Barcelona School.

The interviews should be treated not as a loyal reflection of reality but basically as an indication of the following:

a) How directors conceptualise their creative processes, the stereotypes they include and their values and goals.

b) According to this conceptualisation, I also assessed the type of films that for some reason or another they felt they ought to see; their possibilities and limits; how they justify their film practice; how they relate to the industry, viewers, critics, etc.; how they see their place in and contribution to film history and the role they award it.

This article is structured from some of the results of the research work. I do not set out in detail all the conclusions strictly related with the Psychology of Creativity, as they are simply contributions to this discipline and not data that can be used as symptoms able to generate a diagnosis of the situation of Catalan cinema.

Before making a summary of the research work, I would like to set out the theoretical interpretations and historical trajectory of Catalan cinema.

## Theoretical Interpretations

An analysis of authors such as Balló, Espelt, Lorente (1990), Oltrà & Costa (1990), Gubern (1995) and Riambau (1992) suggest that Catalan cinema is the product of a historical trajectory that occurred because there was no homegrown or quality cultural identity and thus the industry was marginalised.

In general terms, the causes that led Catalan cinema to a situation of marginalisation are, according to the abovementioned authors, the following:

- Catalan cinema did not form part of official culture and only later joined the Yellow Manifest (1928) which, during the time of the Generalitat of the Republic, had led to the opening of the Orpheus (1932); but the thing that appeared able to be the starting point for the Catalan industry was buried with the failed attempt to establish the Statute of Autonomy and when the country was subjected to an interminable dictatorship.
- Marginalisation was consolidated during the Francoist regime with the imposition of a strong ideological censorship that preserved particular religious and ideological dogma

and which furthermore represented a pessimistic and repressed view of life that left few possibilities for innovation.

- The intellectuals on the left who had not gone into exile rejected filmmaking as an artistic expression and the ones who did make movies disassociated themselves from political beliefs and moved into experimentalism as the only possible way forward in a situation of extremely strong censorship. The Barcelona School<sup>1</sup> went through a similar situation.

- The system of economic protection from the State safeguarded censorship. An industry which had been fairly badly run down because of the severity of the official censorship subsequently collapsed when aid was withdrawn.

- Screenwriters applied a form of self-censorship in order to work within the censored environment.

- Producers and businessmen made films as a business option without taking cultural aspects greatly into account. Oltra & Costa said that for a period of 60 years (1930-1990), every time new paths or issues were opened up, the moneymen would end up making low-quality products.

## Immediate Background. Genres and Directors

In Madrid in the 1960s and 1970s, producers such as Elías Querejeta were making films that managed to break with Francoist norms, gained a lot of acclaim in international festivals and introduced to the public people such as Carlos Saura, Víctor Erice, Jaime Chávarri, Montxo Armendáriz, Manuel Gutiérrez Aragón and Ricardo Franco, who belonged to an official film school and had the support of television. Meanwhile, in Catalonia, film as an artistic manifestation ran up against a certain level of resistance because, on the one hand, there was a lack of knowledge about the medium and, on the other, the country was going through a political and economic situation that did little to favour creation. These could be the reasons why Catalan filmmakers were more prone to make products that met particular genres rather than a type of film that expressed a personal universe. The lack of an industry prevented systematic productions with professional screenwriters. Directors therefore wrote their own scripts, inadvertently leading to auteur cinema. Comedy was the most representative genre

of Catalan production overall in the period up to 1975. The fact that producers considered comedy a slighter genre led to a long list of comedies being made with minimum resources and without the participation of professional screenwriters (BALLÓ, ESPELT & LORENTE, 1990).

With regard to thrillers, there were a number of directors, such as Pomés, Luna, Herralde, Cadena and Abril, who followed the formal structure of the genre in all its elements. To some extent, it would also be possible to include names such as Agustí Villaronga and Jaume Balagueró.

Another genre that enjoyed a renaissance in the wake of the Francoist regime was the documentary. These were not documentaries in the traditional sense but rather involved the use of reality inserted into film fiction. This trend was shown in the films made within what was known as the Barcelona School, based on the influence of Neo-Realism and Nouvelle Vague. The genre was eventually called "creation documentaries" and currently has a considerable representation in Barcelona. Joaquim Jordà and José Luis Guerín are the best-known examples, being filmmakers who use documentary features within fictional works, as does the director Marc Recha.

Catalan cinema in the decades of the 1980s and 1990s was based on things ranging from the historical reclamation proposed by Antoni Ribas' *La ciutat cremada*, through to comedies, which could, to a greater or lesser extent, be considered to be in poor taste. One proposal that managed to attract an audience with a more commercial product without renouncing quality and which showed the talent of its director was *Boom, Boom* (1989), by Rosa Vergés.

The same period saw the rise of a type of film that was a continuation of the Barcelona School (EdB), with Pere Portabella's *Puente de Varsovia*. New filmmakers upheld a certain avant-garde trend, including Gerardo Gormezano (*El viento de la isla*, 1988), José Luis Guerín (*Los motivos de Berta*, 1983 and *Innisfree*, 1990), Manuel Hueriga, (*Gaudí*, 1987), Agustí Villaronga, (*Tras el cristal*, 1985 and *El niño de la luna*, 1989), Jesús Garay (*Pasión lejana*, 1987 and *La bañera*, 1990) and Marc Recha (*El cielo sube*, 1992).

According to Riambau (1992), "the best Catalan cinema has always been one that follows avant-garde concerns and which continues the parameters characteristic to film noir". With regard to the influence the Barcelona School has on contemporary Catalan cinema, it has more to do with issues

and style, the most radical sign being the trend to act within marginalisation.

## Results of the Research Work

### The Creative Process

It is firstly important to mention that the situation of Catalan cinema makes it necessary to investigate obvious matters. Given that questioning Catalan cinema is to question the seriousness, honesty and professionalism of Catalan directors, the research work carried out was aimed at obtaining information from Catalan filmmakers on how they perceive their creative process, which could allow them to clarify what is obvious.

The conclusions to the work suggest that, in effect, the filmmakers interviewed were able to explain the creative process they follow and have a solid process with regard to ideas generation composed of phases that they explained in detail. For example, they talked about how they feel during each phase, as well as the methods and procedures they use. Their statements seem to be completely in line with the theoretical positioning of a number of psychologists who work in creativity, such as Boden (1994), Getzels (1976), Gruber (1984), Gardner (1999), Csikszentmihalyi (1998) and Sternberg (1988), who understand the creative process as something that includes observation, complex mental operations, the approach towards problems through to advanced work phases, documentation and the involvement of emotions which rise, fall and are repeated. Ideas are the products of their imaginary or system of preferences. They are things that struggle to arise; there is a need to bring out the issues inside them and to uncover basic structures.

We can find an absolute dedication and continual organisation and re-organisation of the information they work with, which is what guides their choices throughout the process. It is also important to mention that they carry out operations that belong to creativity and self-administer external stimuli (books, films, exhibitions, etc.) in order to trigger doubt, conflict and the approach to problems; as well as chance, in a fundamentally ludic attitude and with the idea of making contact with ambiguity to explore stages of chaos that are very productive.

However, I would like to specify one particular aspect. If we

take Gardner's (1998: 50) contributions to the Psychology of Creativity into account, the element that characterises creative people is that they think deeply about the most advanced knowledge in a field and are able to link it with the experiences, problems, issues and feelings that characterised their childhoods, i.e., their experiences as a child amazed by everything around them. Furthermore, if we look at the bibliography of the directors who explain the genesis of their work, one of the most important conclusions is that they see the use of childhood and adolescent feelings, memories and experiences in a diaphanous and clear manner. In other words, they are fully aware that their childhood is present in their work, are conscious of the social and political situation they have been fated to live in, and take a long hard look at their personal problems and their origins.

In the case of the directors interviewed, I detected contradictions with regard to the assumption of a personal universe. Without mentioning names, a number of people said they had recurring issues that did not stem from their own experiences of childhood but subsequently, during the interview, I found a very clear relationship between them. In other cases they said they did not remember much about their childhood.

We could say that some of the filmmakers interviewed had a mental block when it came to assuming their role as creators, i.e., they had not assumed the use of personal imaginary and childhood experiences in their works.

### Creating Effects on Viewers

One of the goals of a film is to create effects on viewers. In relation to this goal, which is closely linked to the process of ideas generation, two different positions arose with regard to the directors interviewed.

a) Some directors completely refused to understand the viewer because they associated this with commercial cinema, which they hate. However, that does not mean they don't wish to create effects on viewers, such as arouse sensations or make people feel or think, etc.

b) There was another group who kept the viewer in mind at all times during the film, without this having the negative connotations that the word *entertain* had for the first group.

In the case of directors who made genre films (particularly psychological terror or intrigue), creating effects on the

viewer was a basic goal. In some way they established themselves as specialists in transmitting emotions (positive emotions to a certain extent, but particularly negative and preoccupying ones) and this was their main motivation in making a film.

Genre cinema that wants to transmit a particular effect on the viewer and carry it to a number of peaks so that particular emotions are felt requires a special type of editing. Ander S. Labarthe "internalises this idea of editing as the science of effects, particularly in Hitchcock's films" (Villain, 1994: 138). It is interesting to note that one of the directors interviewed who was most robust in his condemnation of entertaining viewers hates Hitchcock's work.

### **Documentary Films**

Documentary films represent a type of freedom for some of the directors interviewed because they involve a work dynamic that does not depend as heavily on the system of film apparatuses, e.g., the script, big equipment, large budgets, actors, etc. Because they are films that offer the director's personal take on a particular topic, it seems that documentaries, even when they have their own strategies, do not follow certain canons like those imposed by fiction films. "Fiction documentaries" that are on the borderline between documentaries and fiction are freed from the credibility imposed by fiction and the textual strategies of realism. They do not have to establish an agreement with reality or meet the precepts of fiction<sup>2</sup>.

From the mythical point of view (Eliade, 2000), the director of documentary films (located in the borderline area between documentaries and fiction) is the creator of a new time, who also passes through a historical time that he reconstructs as he wants. He makes visible the things that are hidden behind visibility; he crosses and decodes secrets and establishes himself in discovering hidden truths (discoverer and interpreter). The artist's desire to recreate the dawning moment in which one sees things for the first time is, in the case of documentary films, revealed through practice (location + camera) rather than a structured and, in some way, rigid guide (the script). From the perspective of the imaginary and using the terms that Durand (1993:139) applied to the voyeur, documentary films, which are on the borderline between fiction and reality "are a precious and delicious violation of the gaze" which demonstrate a

predilection for "cracks, skylights, windows and even crystal and glass", but which also participate from the supreme sense of the function of fantasy.

The directors interviewed who make classical narrative films using a structured script said that the most pressurised filmmaking process is script development. According to the psychologists Barron, Feldman, Gardner, Gruber & Davis and Simonton & Torrance (Sternberg, 1988: 431), without taking into account the particular content, type of product or domain in which creativity is developed, the process involved in creation requires pressure. Taking the above point into account, the directors of documentary films do not experience a time of maximum pressure (such as directors who prepare a structured fictional script do) but rather experience a more regular type of pressure throughout the whole filmmaking process.

### **The Film Field and Sphere**

Csikszentmihalyi (1998: 46) said that creativity could only be assessed by taking the field, sphere and person into account, as well as the interaction between them. The field is the concrete material, which has its rules and symbolic processes. The sphere corresponds to the individuals who assess and control the field and dictate the new products to be included. In the case of film, we could say that the sphere is made up of historians, theorists, critics, festivals and viewers (box-office success). The individual person uses the symbols of a particular field and contributes a new idea. But regardless of the novelty of the idea, it will only be considered new and useful if it is chosen by the sphere in order to be included in the field.

In Catalonia, films are made that go unrecognised by the sphere, which means that the people don't know the films that are made, despite a number of successes. Ventura Pons and Bigas Luna would be the most significant examples in this regard. That does not mean that other filmmakers are not recognised, but that people's general perception, i.e., the social representation (speaking in terms of social psychology), is that films are not made in Catalonia. This is even more incomprehensible when we consider that the films of the directors interviewed have won prizes abroad.

However, the most worrying problem is not just that the sphere fails to recognise the products but that, in short,



there is no well-defined field. Proof of this is that it is considered to be a triumph when a film is actually released, even if it is only in the theatres for three weeks. Film lacks the necessary industrialisation process that has occurred with other cultural manifestations.

With regard to the field, again it is surprising how silent the directors are. It seems as if they are not sure it is legitimate for them to claim their rights. They do not identify with either the field or the sphere. Another surprising thing about this sector is that directors and producers appear to not inhabit either the same community or the same landscape.

### **The Position of Directors**

Perhaps the most relevant conclusion from the research work with regard to Catalan cinema are the two different positions that the filmmakers interviewed adopt when it comes to doing their work:

a) Some of the filmmakers were interested in breaking with classic film or narratives and continue to be influenced by Jean-Luc Godard, Alain Resnais and Andréi Tarkovski with in their clear attempts to damage so-called commercial films, without having any clear goals about where to direct innovation, possibly because they are unable to find the aid to develop their projects.

b) Some filmmakers interested in making good films that correspond to classic narrative establish the category of "well-made films". Some of the filmmakers interviewed appeared to be more interested in making well-made films, i.e., in meeting a number of canons, than in innovation in terms of reinventing procedures. This attitude was conditioned by the environment in which films are developed. The film imaginary in Catalonia to some extent imposes a demonstration of the message implicit in the slogan "we are capable of making good films". It is important to bear in mind that both positions build two schools of thought<sup>3</sup>: that of transgression (want, desire) and that of adaptation (duty, obligation)<sup>4</sup>.

Both the filmmakers interested in film deconstruction and the ones interested in making "well-made films" leave the return to origin open to interpretation. In mythological terms, they reconstruct the myth of eternal return (Eliade, 2000), the cosmogonic myth, which considers the first manifestation of something as denotative and valid. On the one

hand, the myth of eternal return makes man aware of the world around him and ensures his permanence in it; and, on the other hand, offers the possibility of improvement, regeneration or treatment. However, it is obvious that this persistent return to the origins (classic film, transgressional film) can impede innovation. Given that film already has a long history, the big problem is not the lack of models but the attempt to make products that have already been made; on the one hand, in order to show that you know how to make a film and on the other hand, because you are living in a state of perplexity with regard to the model.

### **Conclusions**

The research work in the Catalan film context about the conceptualisation that filmmakers have of their creative process revealed a series of issues that led me to draw the following conclusions:

The directors interviewed follow a clearly explained creative process with differentiated phases; they organise and re-organise the material they work with, employ resources of time, energy, documentation, etc. typical to creative people and carry out their own operations of creativity, which makes it possible to realise creative products.

- In confronting the processes of ideas generation and, in particular, creating effects on viewers, I found that there was very often a battle between the profound and the superficial, between art and show, thought and entertainment, etc. These dualities can make innovation more difficult.

- They were excessively aware of what it takes to make a movie, i.e., that viewers should not be bored, that some directors have an open field while others are not allowed to make the film they want, etc. They suggested a discourse of despondency (related to the syndrome of the masterpiece, while they usually work with amateurish gestures, eternal apprentices.)

- Considering the existence of interaction between creative producers and the environment in which films are generated, it is important to say that in the case of Catalan cinema, there was a greater influence of the environment on the process than the creator on the environment. As such, the creative process followed by the directors interviewed



was clearly influenced by a relatively undefined environment that does not transmit security or legitimise their work, something that makes it impossible for the resulting products to break with inertia, become clearly innovative and transform both the field and the sphere. The lack of entity conferred on Catalan filmmakers as a group leads to a lack of assuming their role of creators.

- Historically, Catalan cinema has not shaped its own identity, i.e., it has not been the carrier of a collective spirit. The spirited necessity of the people (which Jung referred to in 1994) is not met by Catalan filmography. To date, the Catalan public has not identified with the films made in this country. Although this might make readers think Catalans are not good storytellers, it is clear that the creative ability focuses on the theatre. (It is also curious that in the case of the theatre there is not obviously this battle between the profound and the superficial, between art and show, between thought and entertainment, but rather a broad theatrical offer is involved that covers all the phases of the aforementioned dualities).

- The historic trajectory of Catalan cinema suggests that the film collective has been discouraged and is now going through a slow recovery. The sector is immersed in a vicious circle that impedes putting into practice strategies that require a certain timeframe in which to obtain results. It seems that each person acts off his or her own bat and there is a type of short-circuit between the different artists involved in the film process.

- So-called creation documentaries establish a new link between images and reality, i.e., they are another way of making films. The creative process involved with the documentary is less pressured and has fewer stimuli. It could liven up the Catalan film sector because it represents another way of creating that seems more viable to producers. Documentaries such as *Mones com la Becky* and *En construcció* are opening up new paths. As Balló (2001) said: "We have to take into account this new way of making films as the movie theatre is a creative strategy, not just a form of funding (...). Documentaries give us the chance to prove you can make popular and profitable films without them having to be commercial"<sup>5</sup>.

As a general conclusion we could say that it is important to move beyond the two positions that Catalan filmmakers

adopt (deconstructionist films, classical narrative films), and in particular that it is necessary to move beyond having products that are generated with the purpose (even if unconsciously) of proving we are able to follow a model properly. Once the industry has got over having to show that it knows what to do, films in Catalonia could develop their own identity.

The people who return to "well-made" films (i.e., Hollywood films, even though there are references such as Welles, Carl Theodor Dreyer or Ingmar Bergman), are the "golden-haired boys", while the ones who return to the model of deconstructionist films (Jean-Luc Godard, Alain Resnais, Andréi Tarkovski, etc.) are the "bad boys" (they are, we could say, two schools of thought with rigid canons) but, regardless of the case, both carry the weight of film regeneration in this country. We are currently witnessing the beginning of a renewal of Catalan cinema, promoted in many cases by the directors themselves, i.e., it is not part of a specific overall restructuring of the sector.

All of the above leads me to think about something that goes beyond the research work presented and also beyond the present document to raise the following question, i.e., whether there is somebody interested in maintaining the battle between the two types of films, when really the only goal should be to build a film industry in Catalonia that covers all types. Ideological positions are being maintained that stop the industry from becoming stronger and lead some directors to choose to work outside Catalonia<sup>6</sup>.

Perhaps there is no alternative but to recognise that Catalan cinema lacks tradition and is too militant. However, it would also be worth asking whether promoting the idea that it involves a somewhat invalid collective is a good justification for not fostering the building of an industry.

## Notes

1. The Barcelona School was not a film school, but a group of people with cinematographic concerns who went by this name. Joaquim Jordà used a phrase that has since been regularly employed to describe it: "Seeing as we couldn't do Victor Hugo, we thought we'd do Mallarmé", i.e., in the Francoist context in which he was speaking, filmmakers were not allowed to make "realist" films that approached transgression or modernity (García Ferrer, Rom, 2001: 73).
2. I would like to make a clarification: the filmmakers interviewed who work in documentary films, creation documentaries or films considered to be on the borderline between documentaries and fiction do not make these films because they are unable to make fictional ones but because they choose to.
3. Limits are also imposed and precepts established in films that struggle against the classic narrative style of Hollywood and its canons. See Masson's article, "Un cinéma inamerican?" In: *Positif*, 1999, no. 458, pp. 69-71.
4. In Catalonia there is no middle ground between transgression and adaptation, as can be seen, for example, in the works of Julio Medem or Alex de la Iglesia, to give two examples from Spain.
5. BALLÓ, J. "Le llamamos documental...". In: *areavisual.com*, November 2001, no. 21, p. 1.
6. On the one hand, a genre film that achieves a certain amount of box-office success is considered a commercial product (with negative connotations). On the other hand, the "documentary gaze" is insulted and classified as "intellectual glamour" and its quality questioned.

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# The World Summit on the Information Society: The Contribution of Civil Society

**Martí Petit**

- *The first phase of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) took place in December 2003 in Geneva. The purpose of the summit, which will end in Tunisia in 2005, is to promote a non-exclusionary information society that can promote the incorporation of less-developed countries into this new environment. It has been shown that civil society has a leading role in achieving this because it is the most dynamic collective and, along with local governments, is the most closely grounded in daily reality. Finally, the information society will only become a reality if it includes a dynamic and diverse social fabric. To that end, the Catalonia Broadcasting Council has co-organised an international conference within the framework of the Universal Forum of Cultures to discuss the matter further<sup>1</sup>. The purpose of the meeting is to develop the open participation of civil society and local governments and to determine, expand and quantify the Plan of Action approved in Geneva<sup>2</sup>. The collectives most closely involved in promoting the information society will thus have a major say in the process of the WSIS.*

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**Martí Petit**

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## **Connecting to the Information Society: The Infrastructure Barrier**

Behind the declarations proclaiming the need for a fair information society, there has always been the barrier of connectivity and lack of infrastructures in countries under development, particularly in Africa and South East Asia. Moreover, this problem links to social and family structures that delegate too much responsibility to particular groups, such as women. Access is thus only part of the problem. The mass incorporation of these countries into the global information society also requires training and local-content production and must generate interest within local communities.

In order to make these projects a reality, we need a combination of factors that are not always easy to achieve: a (minimum) group of people with the ability and knowledge to use information and communication technologies (ITCs), the support or simple goodwill of local institutions, which sometimes see education and the spread of knowledge as a major threat, and international financial aid. From Uganda and Nepal through to the Solomon Islands, there are local initiatives to get historically unconnected areas online so they do not miss out on the opportunities of the new digital era.

In this framework, the case of Uganda is particularly important. Although it is a very young democracy (the first presidential elections were held in 1996), Uganda has a relatively stable economic and political situation and a reasonably high level of literacy (64%). The country is thus favourably positioned to develop pilot tests of ITCs applied to marginalised areas. One example is the case of Uganda Connect (Uconnect)<sup>3</sup>.

Uconnect was originally an online literacy project. After a preliminary training phase, the project goals were expanded

and the organisers began to provide Internet connection services. A group of volunteers began to modernise the country with the help of international donors. In the words of Kelly Mitchell, the head of Ukhozi Prod., which made a documentary on the Uconnect project, "the people in this fertile land desperately needed Internet communication ability to be able to rescue the emerging sectors of the country from the pessimism into which they had fallen".

It is obvious that establishing an ITC access programme in Uganda entails serious objective difficulties, such as telecommunications infrastructure, PC terminals and the middle-level education of the population. However, Uconnect found its first "objective" obstacle in the scepticism of the government. The programme's initial move to win the government's support was to set up a local network in the central offices of the Ministry of Education and Sports and a training cycle for ministers and technical staff on how to use the Internet to raise productivity. After that, Uconnect could begin training the population.

The team began with a "teach-the-teachers" programme, with only 25 computers across the country and a single Internet connection. The programme involved training future Ugandan teachers to spread ability and knowledge. The programme was so successful that Uconnect received a commission to manage the Multipurpose Community Centres (MCTs) of the international consortium that had begun the initiative. The consortium included the United Nations Education, Science and Culture Organisation (UNESCO), the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and the International Development Research Centre (IDRC).

El 1999, this consortium of local and international organisations created the first MCT in Nakaseke, a small city of 30,000 inhabitants, 50 kilometres from the capital, Kampala. The centre offered all the regular services of a conventional cyber cafe (i.e., Internet connection, printers, scanners, television, video and photocopier) as well as training courses for the local population, led by Uconnect. Moreover, the fact that the centre was located in the Nakaseke public library meant the project was based on a concrete reality, thus multiplying its training effects.

Although the use of ITCs is not a panacea for resolving the daily problems of Ugandan society, it is clear that the benefits of such policies have long-term effects. In this framework, it is still too early to make an assessment of the

effects that the MCT has had on the local population, although a survey carried out by the organisers showed that the potential public for the centre stood at 44.2% of the people in the region, of which 60% came from nearby rural areas. Other centres have opened since Nakaseke, e.g., in Nabweru and Bunyoro, two towns on the fringes of Uganda.

Having consolidated the training phase thanks to the MCTs, Uconnect went on to raise the possibility of connecting the Ugandan people to ITCs. It drew on the experience of the World Food Program (WFP) to use systems to overcome the infrastructure barrier and get rural areas online. In 1994, the WFP had begun to use high-frequency radio modems to send emails from remote rural areas to coordinate the logistics operations of their campaigns around the world. Uconnect opted for similar technology to overcome the country's serious infrastructure shortfalls. It also established an agreement by which the WFP would collaborate by connecting schools, hospitals and centres that publish agricultural information.

The first email pilot test using high-frequency radio (HF, to give it its technical name) took place in 1997 in Arua, a rural town some 500 kilometres north of Kampala. The test was a success and showed that this type of transmission can be used as a viable connection technology in areas lacking the most basic infrastructures. The design of this test pre-configured a viable telecommunications model in Uganda that was the catalyst for broadband access technologies. Uconnect is now working on connection projects that use a Global System for Mobile Communications (GSM) or microwave-signal transmission network. As well as the direct benefits of the project, Uconnect is helping the Government become aware of the importance of universal access to the information society for all the people of Uganda.

I would also like to mention that a factor in the success of the HF radio transmission network was synergy with other projects and institutions. One example was the transmission centre created in 1999 on the border with the Democratic Republic of Congo. The centre used a solar energy-powered laptop to offer email services through an HF radio connection in Kihiki Hospital, which in turn offered the centre a permanent flow of electricity. This collaboration between the centre and the hospital facilitated the centre's expansion, which, by the end of 2003, had more than a dozen



computers. In exchange, the use of the Internet by hospital staff facilitated the installation of a GMS antenna in the area.

## Health and Environment

E-medicine is another basic ITC application for social development. The growing circulation of medical information on the Net has facilitated the diagnosis of illnesses and treatments. As with the education sector, access to a public health system continues to represent an abyss between the more advanced countries and many parts of the world, particularly Africa and South East Asia. The people in these areas on the fringes of the global society have a lack of medical assistance, so e-medicine and digital health services can be an important breakthrough. Indeed, tools such as the Internet, CD-ROMs, digital cameras and electronic databases provide training and information to medical staff in many marginalised areas.

A very significant part of the active population in countries under development have alarming rates of AIDS, malaria and other fatal diseases. These countries are being denied an important part of their production force, as it is affected by health problems. By providing basic medical information to many areas of the world, ITCs can facilitate instruments to alleviate epidemics, which are a cause of suffering amongst many people and a threat to social and economic development.

Aware of the negative effects associated with an unequal distribution of medical information around the world, the UN Secretary-General, Koffi Annan, called on the World Health Organisation (WHO) to alleviate the digital divide in health issues. In response, the WHO launched the Health InterNetwork, a seven-year project with a budget of \$150-200 million, the development of which arose from consultations with public and private groups, international organisations and NGOs. The Health InterNetwork<sup>4</sup> has three main work areas:

- Content creation: The WHO will work with academic groups, the private sector and local partners in the creation of an Internet portal that can provide access to high quality and contextualised information for marginalised groups within each country. The portal also aims to offer information in local or regional languages wherever possible.

- Connectivity: The Health InterNetwork wants to establish 10,000 Internet access points around the world over the next seven years, with the support of other agencies, such as the UN Development Programme (UNDP). The WHO will also work with other NGOs and local partners to create, manage and maintain the centres and the information content.

- Training: The programme pursues territorial sustainability, as it is essential to ensure that the people at whom the information is aimed can also be the middle managers of all the resources created.

One noteworthy task in this area is carried out by HealthNet<sup>5</sup>, an NGO that provides health content and Internet services in Nepal. The situation of health assistance in this country is particularly poor. 1999 figures from the UNDP put infant death rates at 75 per thousand births compared to, for example, 17 in Sri Lanka. The proportion of doctors in relation to the population also presents vastly differing figures: in Nepal, in 1993 the same source put the number of doctors at five per 100,000 inhabitants, while the figure in Pakistan was 52.

The first task of this NGO, based at Tribhuvan University in the capital Kathmandu, involved overcoming the isolation of medical professionals by creating a network of organisations connected through a technology that had to be suitably simple and cheap. One of the specifications of HealthNet is that, as well as being a window on international medical literature, it has to offer resources for illnesses with a particular incidence among the local population. For example, the leading public health problem in Nepal is water pollution and its effects on people, so HealthNet provides figures, studies and preventive information in relation to this matter.

With regard to cultural diversity, HealthNet has an added peculiarity. The NGO is committed to studying and conserving the traditional medicine of Nepal, something which favours the maintenance of local cultural values both from the point of view of knowledge and also, indirectly, with regard to the concepts of health and wellbeing.

Internet and other ITCs are also being used as information platforms and to spread knowledge about the environment. One example is Ranet<sup>6</sup>, a project that combines radio and Internet to disseminate information on the weather and

climatology the length and breadth of Africa. In this way, Ranet helps marginalised communities interpret forecasts and meteorological and environmental information. Given that the weather plays a basic role in human communities across nearly all of Africa, with questions relating to agriculture, health and migration due to natural disasters, Ranet is a fundamental work tool for these areas.

However, Ranet, which is supported by institutions such as the African Centre for Meteorological Applications for Development, also offers other services, e.g., it provides fringe communities with email access, thanks to the satellite network managed by Volunteers in Technical Assistance (VITA).

## E-education

Given the limited resources available to countries under development, ITCs offer a unique opportunity as an educational support. In many countries with serious economic difficulties, development initiatives focus on community users of ITCs that aim to innovate the regional education system.

One example is the experiment being carried out by the Adaptive Technology Centre for the Blind (ATCB)<sup>7</sup>. This Ethiopia-based NGO provides assistance to blind people and people with reduced vision to integrate them into the information society. Its work is fundamentally training-oriented and involves transcribing academic material and basic professional information into Braille. The computerisation of the transcription processes means the procedure is much faster than the traditional ones, which had until now been done in an almost craftsman-like fashion.

Two UN agencies contribute the know-how necessary for the ATCB, while UNESCO develops training and the curricular material, and the International Telecommunications Union is responsible for providing the software and equipment. The International Eye Foundation, an organisation headquartered in the US, says there are 45 million blind people in the world, the majority living in Africa. In particular, the last census taken in Ethiopia indicated the country had more than 500,000 blind people. However, the local government's ability to promote initiatives is very poor. There are too many problems facing both the federal and

regional authorities to be able to devote resources to integrating these people into society. It is therefore fundamental for these initiatives to be able to depend on work by NGOs and funding from international organisations to carry out their labour.

## Popular Initiatives

However, one of the main contributions of the information society is without a doubt the opportunities it brings for citizen participation and a more exacting relationship between citizens and government. This is the area where, if the possibilities of ITCs are duly taken advantage of, work can be done to decentralise power and make a more democratic society.

In the remote Solomon Islands, in the middle of the Pacific Ocean, the People First Network (PFnet)<sup>8</sup>, an NGO that depends on the Rural Development Volunteers Association, offers Internet connection through short-wave radio transmission. This technology means the inhabitants of all of the islands in the archipelago, spread over an area of thousands and thousands of square kilometres, can have email access using just a computer and solar energy.

PFnet is, in fact, the only viable connection system with the outside world for the inhabitants of the Solomon Islands. For the more remote populations, the only technically viable solution are radio waves or satellite phones. But while the latter system is too expensive to assume, short-wave radio connections offer solutions at a reasonable cost. Thanks to financial aid from the UNDP, PFNet has not only brought email to the local people but also generated synergies in the fields of education, health, business and the fishing sector.

A particularly interesting example with regard to the mass and democratising use of ITCs is found in the Philippines. The ITU says Filipinos are the world's biggest users of Short Messaging Services (SMS), accounting for 10% of international traffic, as they send 50 million messages per day (figures from December 2000)<sup>9</sup>. The 'txting' habit (i.e., sending messages by mobile phone) now forms part of the country's quotidian culture and has created a new expression, taglish, i.e., a hybrid of English and the local language, Tagalog, which uses Latin characters.

One of the reasons for this explosion in SMS use is price.

The service was originally free. Even after introducing a tax to promote "responsible txtng", which also provided significant income to telecommunications operators, SMS messages were still eight times cheaper than a one-minute conventional phone call. Furthermore, from the very beginning text messaging by mobile phone offered value-added services (stock-market information, teaching aid for students, astrological predictions and biblical messages, etc.). The phenomenon also has interesting implications as a precursor to mobile-phone Internet access.

Another implication of the mass use of SMS in the Philippines has a markedly social character. In early 2001, the service played a fundamental role in the revolt known as "People Power 2", in which Filipinos coordinated demonstrations via SMS. This produced a relentless social movement that led to the ousting of the then president Estada. This example shows yet again that the use of ITCs can have positive consequences for citizen participation and the development of democracy.

### **Call for Public Participation in the WSIS Process**

It was within this often unarticulated and even sometimes hodgepodge of concepts, that the Catalonia Broadcasting Council co-organised an international conference entitled "Internet, Cultural Diversity and the Media" within the framework of the Universal Forum of Cultures, 2004. The conference was especially addressed at civil society, the most dynamic sector (particularly in countries under development) in the task of introducing and extending the information society. Very often, a lack of resources and difficulties of all types lead NGOs and similar organisations to invent imaginative and unconventional solutions that are subsequently adopted by official institutions. In this sense, they are therefore test banks for digital policies.

The first phase of the World Summit on the Information Society that took place in Geneva last December showed that civil society, in a strategic alliance with local authorities and multilateral organisations (e.g., UN agencies) is the party most closely involved and most able to achieve an open and universal information society.

That is why the exchange of information, knowledge and experiences - factors that are very often not well connected

- is extremely important. To that end, the organisation of the above-mentioned international conference was a call to all the experts and organisations interested in making a contribution to get involved. In this framework, the conference was not interested only in theoretical analyses but also the description of particular cases where strategies appropriate to each local reality could be developed. We are convinced that digital policies cannot be carried out through governmental decrees but must be reached via the dynamism of a society that can act as a driving force in the information society.

### **Notes**

1. [www.wsis-cac-bcn2004.org](http://www.wsis-cac-bcn2004.org)
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3. [www.uconnect.org](http://www.uconnect.org)
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6. [www.ranetproject.net](http://www.ranetproject.net)
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# How to Promote the Basque Audiovisual Industry: Summary of the White Paper on the Sector in the Basque Country

- *The Basque Country generates one percent of the income from the audiovisual industry in Spain. In an attempt to promote and develop the Basque audiovisual industry, the Basque Government prepared the White Paper on the Audiovisual Sector in the Basque Country in 2003. The paper presented a series of proposals, initiatives and strategies to follow in order to shore up and promote a very fragmented sector that depends heavily on EITB, the Basque public television and radio network. One of the priorities of the White Paper was to define a comprehensive policy in which all the public and private parties involved in the sector could work together.*

## Introduction

The White Paper was presented to the Basque Government on 10 June 2003. The process of preparing the document had begun in September 2002 and ended in late May 2003. The Culture and Industry Department, the heads of the Basque public broadcasting network Euskal Irratia Telebista (EiTB) and a team of consultants from BearingPoint (formerly Andersen Consulting) participated in the preparation of the document.

The White Paper was presented as a **general plan**, i.e., a first step towards developing the Basque audiovisual industry, in which inter-institutional projects and commitments were sought and a series of business, financial and industrial measures, as well as a change in the orientation of the sector, were involved. EiTB was at the forefront of this process, acting as the driving force for the audiovisual industry.

The White Paper was structured in six chapters: the first defined the peculiarities of the audiovisual industry as an economic and culture driving force; the second included an overview of the industry at the international, European and Spanish levels; the third, fourth, fifth and sixth chapters presented a diagnosis of the situation of the audiovisual industry in the Basque Country and proposed a development strategy with various lines of action and a comprehensive system of measures to support the sector. The goal of these measures was to promote "an audiovisual industry with international visibility that would allow the development of the industrial fabric and contribute in a profitable and long-lasting manner to the economic and social development of the country".

One of the main challenges facing the White Paper was to involve in the process all the parties involved in the sector. This included the Government, companies, associations and independent professionals. However, the study, which focused on Basque companies, did not mention other companies in Spain that also participate in the economic fabric of the region.

With regard to the general concerns that have arisen from the Basque audiovisual crisis, the proposals were aimed at reorganising the sector, improving the business model, shoring up resources, promoting the market and fostering the audiovisual culture.

## The Situation of the Basque Audiovisual Industry

The audiovisual industry in general is undergoing an evolution conditioned by various issues, such as the vertical disintegration of the production process (which has favoured the appearance of many specialist companies) and the disappearance of public monopolies. At the same time,

content digitalisation has favoured horizontal integration between formats (from mono-format to multi-format) and the impact of digital technologies and the Internet has reduced entry barriers with regard to developing new, cheaper technologies. In relation to the latter point, we should also bear in mind the effects of the geographic coexistence between local and global communication.

The first chapter also referred to future trends in the sector, which pointed to an increase in the supply of audiovisual products; a change in business models (with more options of choice, cheaper distribution, new pay-per-view platforms, etc.); the promotion of innovation and the creation of differentiated market-friendly products; improvements in the rate of technological convergence; increased competition and cost pressures and changing relationships with audiences.

Focusing on the case of the Basque Country, the White Paper defined Basque culture as a minority culture, with a small market that required active policies and great economic and industrial efforts. In this framework, the broadcast industry is closely linked to the culture sphere and this peculiarity implies that any development strategy not only has to take economic factors into account but must also guarantee the quality of less commercial creative works.

As one of the essential requirements for the optimal development of the audiovisual industry, the document emphasised the normalisation of the Basque language and recognised the essential role of the media in this area. The Basque language is currently not present to any significant extent in the media: only 3% of the newspapers sold are in Basque and the language is only broadcast by 10% of public radio stations and 3% of private commercial ones. With regard to television, the presence of the Basque tongue does not exceed 6%. One of the goals of the White Paper was to achieve the progressive use of the language within the media with a view to obtaining a situation of true bilingualism.

Another shortfall in the sector which has to be resolved is the need for an own communication system with strong local and provincial media in which processes of excessive concentration are limited, digital radio and television is developed efficiently and a good synergy is established between EITB and production companies, programme packagers, innovative enterprises and Euskaltel.

## **An Overview of the Basque Audiovisual Industry**

In order to make a more accurate analysis of the state of the audiovisual industry, the White Paper devoted the second chapter to analysing the situation at the international, European and Spanish levels and went on to focus on an overview of the Basque sector in the third chapter.

### **The Basque Audiovisual Industry in Figures**

According to figures in the study, Biscay, Àlaba and Guipúscoa generate one percent of the total income of the audiovisual industry in Spain, compared to 74% in Madrid and 16% in Barcelona. This negative balance is partly due to the dispersion of the sector, composed of around 400 companies and 3,000 professionals, i.e., 0.36% of the total number of people employed in the Basque Country. Of these companies, only four have more than 50 people on staff (EiTB is the biggest company with 600 employees), while close to 250 companies have only one or two workers or even operate without paid staff. We can thus say that the system is limited and conditioned to EiTB and that there is a shortfall of local companies and not enough self-employed workers to rebalance the weight of the private and public radio and television system with capital in Madrid.

With regard to the activities the companies develop, more than half work in the field of film and video (254) and radio and television (78), while the rest are news agencies or are dedicated to reproducing recording supports (62).

### **Radio**

The Basque Country has the highest percentage of radio listeners amongst the autonomous communities of Spain, with 60% tuning in, some six percent more than the Spanish average. However, the radio audience in the Basque language does not exceed 150,000 people (200,000 if we include bilingual broadcasts), while public and private Spanish stations attract 75% of Basque listeners. The structure of radio companies in the Basque Country comprises seven groups of broadcasters: EiTB, RNE, SER, Vocento, COPE and Onda Cero Groups; other broadcasters linked to the Church, and Radio Nervión-Gorbea. Of the 84 existing broadcasters, five pertain to EiTB, with 400,000 listeners each day. The Basque Country has promoted free broadcasters but does not have a significant network of



local radio stations (compared to Catalonia, for example, with more than 200).

### Television

The television situation in the Basque Country is made up of the regional television network ETB, with its four stations (Etb1, Etb2, Etb Sat and Canal Vasco); the digital platform Euskaltel and a network of local television stations. They all compete with the State television networks and platforms.

The high purchasing power and production policy associated with the sector have made EITB the main client of the broadcast industry in the Basque Country, which purchased products from Basque production companies to the value of more than 19 million euros in 2002. In the same year, over one million euros was earmarked to purchasing rights from local production companies and funding feature-length films, made-for-TV movies and short films produced by them. The amount spent on similar purchases from companies outside the Basque Country came in at over 300 million euros.

Figures from the Local Television Census and the AIMC from October 2002 reported 27 local broadcasters based in the Basque Country, from a total of 387 across Spain. The absence of regulations for local television stations and the lack of a frequency distribution map have put a brake on the development of local television in the region.

### Internet

Another factor to take into account is the Internet. Existing infrastructures provide 95% of the Basque population with Internet access and the forecast for the medium term is that cable services will reach 73%. This situation is a favourable starting point for defining actions in this area, either within the Basque Country Plan For The Information Society or through EITB to develop the production of interactive broadband content. However, the key factor is content generation, and there is currently a limited presence of the Basque language online. The General Users Study (EGU) for the year 2000 found 36,321 websites in the Basque language, compared to 200 million in English, 7.5 million in Spanish and 443,301 in Catalan. Other studies, such as Eustat, show that the Internet is mainly used as a source of information, as in the second half of 2002 the pages most commonly visited by Basques aged 15 and over were

elcorreodigital.com; marca.es; diariovasco.com; euskadi.net and elmundo.es

The White Paper supported innovation and new technologies and emphasised the opportunities the Internet provided to promote the production of programmes aimed at local television stations, as well as the development of new broadband formats and content. In this framework, one month before the White Paper was presented, on 6 May 2003, the Basque Government approved the creation of a public company called EITBnet, charged with promoting the production of multimedia channels and content on digital TV, teletext, the Internet, mobile phones and other multimedia supports.

### Conclusions to the Overview of the Basque Sector

During the preparation of the White Paper, the authors became aware of a lack of information about the sector. One of the first measures that the paper mentioned, therefore, was the need for a quantitative and objective analysis of the Basque audiovisual industry as a starting point for assessing the level of success of the measures and strategies already applied and to adapt future measures to the reality of the sector.

Despite the lack of data, it is possible to conclude that the audiovisual industry in the Basque Country is very fragmented, with little self-funding ability, a high turnover in jobs, limited experience in business management and a heavy dependency on EITB. The practical inexistence of private companies on regional and international markets furthermore ensures that the volume of the Basque audiovisual market does not correspond with the region's weight within the Spanish economy. The sector is also defined by a lack of products and little expansion abroad, making it important to promote a system of marketing, promotion and distribution addressed to domestic, neighbouring and international markets.

### Factors for Developing the Sector

The authors of the White Paper established five basic elements when it came to reflecting on the evolution of the Basque audiovisual industry.

Firstly, **access to new markets** would have to be esta-

blished in both the geographic and linguistic areas, making it possible to diversify sources of income, reduce the dependency on EITB and break out of the endogenous dynamics in which Basque companies work. To carry out this expansion to other markets, it is necessary to have more investment capacity, and in this area the public sector could facilitate the extension of the private sphere's ability to be able to find new forms of collaboration and integration.

The second factor to bear in mind is the **optimisation of investments**, which would make it possible to use potential synergies in staff and infrastructures. In this sense, the digitalisation of content production requires a renewal of technology, know-how and human resources. The solution would be to support shared production infrastructures to generate products and content aimed at non-domestic markets.

Defining a **coordinated strategy for public organisations** within the sector would improve the effectiveness and efficiency of public policies to integrate the activities of the different, capable public agents and the regulation of the audiovisual industry.

The fourth point would be to promote a **global and segmented vision** of the sector to ensure pluralism, the construction of an identity of a modern society, and the formation of an own and inter-communicated network. To do this, it is extremely important to establish a comprehensive policy to support synergy between film, television and radio; to concentrate efforts and agree on the cultural, industrial and financial policies of the public radio and television stations and to extend the policy of promoting films to the rest of the audiovisual sphere. It is also necessary to make the most of the opportunities that the digital cultural provides and to follow changes in the value chain (B2B, P2P, e-films, etc.).

The final factor to consider in the development of the audiovisual industry is **training and recycling**. Within the area of professional training, an essential requirement is more courses in camera operation and sound engineering, with a capacity for recycling workers' in line with technological breakthroughs. With regard to university education, it is necessary to cover the areas of audiovisual management; image research, analysis and narratives; artistic experimentation, etc. It is necessary to recycle the people currently in work and to support specialist schools and scholarship programmes abroad; and to promote the

production of works (short films, first works, etc.), business networking and the exchange of resources.

## Strategies to Develop

The White Paper focused mainly on the industrial side of the audiovisual industry and so the first stage of its Plan of Action prioritised the phases of creation and production, particularly in television, which plays a fundamental role as a vehicle that can promote other areas.

Moreover, the sector must make the most of the growing interest in minority cultures, which means promoting quality films without overlooking general content. Films bring prestige to an audiovisual industry and are decisive in the formation of creators. To that end, the authors of the White Paper established that film works had to receive the necessary support to be able to have four to seven movies shot per year (with at least one being in the Basque language). Public support is vital until such time as the market is big enough to stand on its own.

In this regard, an additional proposal would be to identify all the audiovisual content generated in the Basque Country with a specific and recognised brand.

## The Basque Government's Overall Cultural Policy with Regard to the Audiovisual Industry

One of the first measures the White Paper proposed was the collaboration and business integration that could generate a greater size amongst private companies, which in turn could facilitate internationalisation. Moreover, it suggested the creation of common-use infrastructure or the use of EITB equipment when not being used. Basque companies should also have a role in co-productions with other companies, which could facilitate the distribution and marketing of their products.

Among the areas that this comprehensive cultural policy should define would be measures to link the audiovisual industry to the Basque Culture Plan, particularly in the area of cultural industries and digital culture, as well as the defence of pluralism in the public service through a regulation that would reinforce the quality and adequacy of

the communication system, as shall be exercised in the future by the **Basque Audiovisual Communication Council**.

The White Paper mentioned other initiatives and parameters, such as the need to create an observatory to track the sector and detect trends; to make the most of possibilities determined by the EU's audiovisual policy on cultural diversity; to develop the Basque cultural and communication space; to integrate fiscal, financial, industrial and subsidy organisations and measures; to promote funding measures so that companies can have enough initial capital to later be able to capture investment and aid; to support training and recycling at all levels; to promote creation and quality to obtain products suitable for domestic and foreign distribution, and to maintain a line of support for new filmmakers and other audiovisual creators.

## Internal Analysis

The fourth chapter of the White Paper looked at the internal weaknesses and strengths of the Basque audiovisual industry.

The **weaknesses** were found to include the following: that the sector is very fragmented as it is made up of small enterprises with little self-funding capacity and a high dependency on EITB. Moreover, there is not enough audiovisual infrastructure or equipment to be a reference point for production, nor is there enough use of existing initiatives to promote the industry. The low level of internationalisation, the high turnover of jobs and the general lack of knowledge about technologies in all phases of production are currently impeding the growth of the sector.

One result of this unfavourable situation has affected all the stages of production: with regard to creation, little new talent has emerged, there is limited experience in global content and there is a lack of know-how when it comes to creating multi-format products. Audiovisual distribution is in a weak position because of the practical inexistence of Basque distribution companies, while the broadcasting of EITB content has a limited scope, meaning that advertising income is also very scarce.

On the other hand, the **strengths** of the audiovisual sector in the Basque country are mainly based on the strength and

flexibility of the local industrial fabric beyond the audiovisual market and its experience in promoting other sectors. The White Paper also underlined the following as advantages for the sector: the existence of a public investment plan in infrastructure and equipment; the support for broadband as a way of stimulating demand for new-format interactive content; an efficient education system and acceptable university model linked to culture; and, finally, the programme contractually agreed upon between the Government and EITB, which redefined the role of public television to increase its involvement in the sector.

With regard to creation, the Basque Country has its own cultural identity and values, with leading personalities in the areas of culture, film and art. Cultural events are also organised with an international presence. With regard to production, people trained in the Basque Country are recognised for their ability and experience in producing pilot projects and high-quality general programmes known for their agility and competitive prices, as well as the adaptation of multilingual solutions.

## External Analysis

Before establishing the lines of action set out in the White Paper and studying the internal weaknesses and strengths of the sector, it is important to look at the risks and opportunities relating to external markets.

Basque audiovisual companies have to compete with a growing content supply of a global formula, such as *Gran Hermano* and *Operación Triunfo*; they have to tackle the centralisation of the audiovisual industry in Madrid and bear in mind audience habits and preferences in audiovisual consumption which are changing at an increasingly fast pace. Moreover, digitalisation opens the way to new, low-cost producers that compete against the producers already established in the sector. Distribution is affected by the predominance of big international distributors who impose very strong entry barriers.

If the previous paragraph specified the external risks, I would now like to consider the opportunities that have arisen from the explosion of the information society: an increase in demand for broadband content and personalised audiovisual supply (an increasing number of niche channels

and falling audiences among general channels); the development of digital terrestrial television (DTT) and the presence of Euskaltel, which has generated frequency multiplexing and the surge in the number of channels able to distribute Basque audiovisual content, and the EITB Group's participation in FORTA, an important distribution source for Basque content. Finally, audiovisual production in the Basque Country could satisfy the demand for made-to-measure content from regional and local channels, as well as requests for the same content in different languages to respect the linguistic preferences of each market.

## Lines of Action

The authors of the White Paper devoted the fifth chapter to specifying the lines of action that could define the coordination policy between public administrations, companies and people working in the sector. The first result of the start-up of these areas would be a new sector map, with the redefinition of existing organisations and the creation of new ones.

In general terms, the main lines described below involve organising the sector, improving the business model, promoting resources, strengthening the market and promoting the audiovisual culture.

### Organising the Sector

Endow the sector with new organisations.

Consolidate the audiovisual industry in the Basque Country.

Bring public initiatives into line.

Extend knowledge about the Basque audiovisual industry.

Track the action plan.

Guarantee communication between industry and the Government.

### Improving the Business Model

Facilitate the search for information.

Support creation.

Shore-up legal advice.

Promote shared know-how.

Promote projects of R,D&I (Research, Development and Innovation).

### Promoting Resources

Improve human resources.

Improve working conditions.

Have production infrastructure shared by sector organisations.

### Strengthening the Market

Create a distinctive brand for the Basque audiovisual industry.

Develop international promotion.

Promote co-productions.

Improve knowledge about creative trends.

Guarantee a minimum local distribution.

Facilitate external distribution.

### Promoting the Audiovisual Culture

Link the audiovisual industry to overall cultural development.

Promote the industry in the Basque language.

Guarantee film production in line with the cultural needs and potential of the Basque Country.

Support production in other formats and content for cultural reasons.

## Sector Map and Organisations within the Audiovisual Market

For the short term, the White Paper proposed the creation of an Inter-Institutional Committee on the Basque Audiovisual Industry and an Audiovisual Cluster to hammer out a common strategy and coordinate public and private efforts to promote the industry. For the medium term, it proposed the creation of two companies within the heart of the Cluster, which could develop production ability and the sector's capacity for attracting interest, i.e., an Audiovisual Production Society and an Audiovisual Infrastructures and Services Management Society.

### IKEBATZ-CIVAL

The inter-institutional committee was established four months after the White Paper was presented. On 23 September 2003 the Basque Government approved the decree to establish a committee called IKEBATZ-CIVAL,

which had the mission of fostering convergence between public and private initiatives and providing the latter with particular tools and projects.

The Committee has the following functions:

- To report on and assess the promotional activities established in the White Paper.
- To propose support programmes, concrete actions and other intervention measures to coordinate the activity of the Basque audiovisual industry.
- To monitor the White Paper's Plan of Action and public aid to the industry.
- To propose measures to promote inter-departmental cooperation.
- To prepare an annual report.
- To promote the development of the Cluster.

The Committee is comprised of representatives from the government departments related to the audiovisual industry (Culture; Industry; Trade and Tourism; Tax and Public Administrations; Education and Universities; Work, Justice and Social Security), the provincial governments and EITB. The sector members are also represented, in the capacity as advisors on the Advisory Council and in the different IKEBATZ-CIVAL workgroups.

### **The Audiovisual Cluster**

Of an essentially private structure, the aim of the Cluster would be to encourage the cooperation and competition needed to promote the sector. As with other clusters promoted by the Basque Government, funding could be private or mixed. The main purpose of the organisation would be to guarantee an effective communication channel between the government and private companies when it came to promoting joint ventures, mergers and the creation of an Euskadi Film Commission that could promote film production in the region. It would also support sector activity by providing legal advice, finding funding sources, conceptualising new projects, arranging further-training programmes, foreign-distribution methods, etc. In relation to distribution and promotion abroad, the Cluster would promote the creation of an Export Consortium to consolidate an identity brand for the Basque audiovisual industry across the world. Finally, it would be charged with coordinating

studies in the Observatory to discover the latest creative and technological trends within the sector.

### **The Audiovisual Production Society**

This organisation would be responsible for consolidating the creation and distribution of audiovisual products aimed at global markets. It could be established from the merger of different Basque production companies, thus making a bigger group that could access foreign markets. The presence of the government within the share portfolio would be either partial or minority and only in the event that there was not enough support from the private sector.

### **The Audiovisual Infrastructures and Services Management Society**

The purpose of this mixed-ownership organisation would be to promote competition and the shared management of services and investments in infrastructure and equipment, as well as to promote discussion forums, innovation and knowledge exchanges. Management of the use of infrastructures could initially be handled through renting arrangements, so that the elements that single organisations would find hard to write off alone could share common resources. If a high level of occupation could be achieved, it would even be possible to offer the services to third parties interested in producing in the Basque country.

### **Companies, Associations and People Working in the Sector**

The participation of these groups is extremely important in defining the strategy for the sector.

### **The Basque Government**

Various departments of the Basque Government have powers in relation to the audiovisual industry and the White Paper set out the activities they could carry out.

#### *The Culture Department*

This department is responsible for the Government's cultural and audiovisual policy and would firstly have to support solvent projects and then look at experimental or riskier initiatives. It could also create and maintain an Audiovisual Companies Register, promote innovation, help the Cluster form the brand image of the Basque audiovisual

industry and assess sector needs and trends through IKEBATZ-CIVAL.

#### *The Industry Department*

This department's objective within the audiovisual industry would be mainly to develop policies to keep the companies already established in the region and attract and promote new ones. The department could define horizontal aid programmes and contribute its managerial experience and know-how in developing technology and industrial parks.

#### *The Education Department*

This department would have to establish a dialogue between companies, EITB, training centres, technology centres and universities to prepare a correct diagnosis of the training situation and could assess the possibility of promoting a project to create a European training programme.

#### *The Work Department*

The main task of this department with regard to the audiovisual industry would be to promote jobs and sector training and reach an agreement that would guarantee suitable and decent contract conditions within a framework of competition.

#### *The Tax Department*

This department would have to carry out the fiscal coordination that could guarantee sector viability, create new funding instruments and lend its support to R,D&I activities.

### **EITB**

The public radio and television organisation signed a contract with the Basque Government for the 2002-05 period, which redefined its role as a company that could promote the Basque audiovisual industry. EITB agreed to more efficiently plan its relationship with the sector and reorientate the contracting of its activities to endow the market with a business volume that it currently lacks, through the co-production of audiovisual works. It would also be important to guarantee a local minimum distribution to reduce the commercial risk of productions, such as, for example, the agreements with FORTA.

The Basque communication group has to be involved in the anticipated acquisition of broadcast rights, the promotion

of distribution (including international distribution) and the strengthening and fostering of the production of documentaries and pilot programmes.

## **A Comprehensive System of Measures for Supporting the Sector**

The first five chapters of the White Paper presented a specific and joint reflection on the government authorities and their role in developing the audiovisual sector. It set out strategic lines of action, priorities and organisations to promote the sector, particularly from an industrial perspective. The authors emphasised the importance of integrating these measures under a single policy to ensure that companies could make the most efficient use of the aid available. This was partly due to shortfalls in production, financial aid and commercial management. To promote the sector it would be necessary to use Spanish and European promotion instruments, as well as sector initiatives.

## **The Seven Spheres of the Public Audiovisual Policy**

### **The Cultural Policy**

It is important for the Culture Department to include all the audiovisual production phases and subsectors and all types of products and genres. It must support cooperation and aid for companies, the renewal of creative talent, the promotion of linguistic normalisation and the qualitative overhaul of the aid system for the creation and production of films and other audiovisual works. The autonomous community currently contributes 6.7% of the funds in the Film Protection Fund that provides aid to the Film and Audiovisual Arts Institute (Ministry for Culture). Basque audiovisual companies are currently not profiting from this contribution, which could rise by some 2.4 million euros.

Some of the most interesting aspects of the cultural policy are the preparation of an act by the Audiovisual Communication Council, the start up of a Communication Observatory and the establishment of an Audiovisual Companies Register, which would include companies, people and other organisations that carry out production



and distribution activities in the region, as well as laboratories, dubbing studios and other technical firms, theatre owners and other operators.

### **The Industrial Policy**

It would fall to the Industry, Trade and Tourism Department to provide the sector with proposals that could shore up Basque audiovisual companies through, for example, the creation of the Audiovisual Production Society and an Audiovisual Infrastructures and Services Management Society. It could also promote microenterprises with business and innovation centres that could provide advice, make premises available and facilitate access to aid programmes and market surveys, etc. With regard to other aid, the policies would have to be aimed at supporting the incorporation into the sector of new technologies and export aid.

### **The Funding Policy**

To draw up a new sector map, the White Paper suggested reorganising current aid systems and establishing a complementary source of special public funding for audiovisual production, such as a Special Capital Risk Fund or a Society for the Promotion of Audiovisual Companies. Basque companies can currently access different aid mechanisms such as Luzaro (which grants share-based financial credits to facilitate investment and the process of intermediation in small and medium-sized enterprises), Gauzatu (which promotes the creation and development of innovative technology-based SMEs and companies that work in the information and communication society), AFI aid (which accounts for 70% of the material investment required for SMEs) and Elkargi and Onarri (pool companies).

In this framework, the funding instruments would have to take into account the specific nature of audiovisual products, i.e., the fact they are expensive, require public treatment and take a long time to write off, etc.

As a result of the White Paper's Plan of Action, in September 2003 the Basque Government presented a funding line for the industry that anticipated providing 15 million euros for the year 2004. 60% of the sum would be distributed in the form of loans repayable at 0% interest over four years to make feature-length films, short films, made-for-TV movies, television series, etc. The remaining 40% was earmarked to a line of discounts available to producers.

For its part, EITB dedicated nearly half its operating budget to the production of television works with Basque companies to strengthen the size of the audiovisual industry in the region.

### **The Fiscal Policy**

The current regional legislation provides general tax advantages and others aimed particularly at the audiovisual sector. The White Paper suggested the possibility of including new lines of audiovisual production within the Basque Country Plan For The Information Society.

### **The Public Television Policy**

As mentioned previously, the contract for 2002-05 signed by the Government and EITB included measures to support the audiovisual industry (finding new formats and projects, supporting quality production, participating in co-productions, the normalisation of the Basque language, etc.), as well as steps to support independent film and made-for-TV movies (collaborating in productions, promoting the participation of Basque organisations in audiovisual production, supporting film shoots in the region, etc.).

EITB's medium-term commitments to the sector include preparing a catalogue of multi-year requirements with investment obligations; signing agreements and collaboration frameworks with industry; participating in projects earmarked for abroad; configuring and developing competitive Basque companies; allowing the use of its infrastructure and equipment, and promoting the industrialisation of the sector with a greater volume of control.

### **The Job Policy**

The Work, Justice and Social Security Department should be in charge of finding agreements to improve the competition conditions of companies and establish further training and work policies adapted to the industry.

### **The Training Policy**

As the final sphere of the public policy, the White Paper looked at training. Measures here should be addressed both at occupational and further education, as well as regulated training in professional training centres and universities. In this area, the White Paper emphasised the importance of scholarships and research within the audiovisual industry.



# Broadcasting regulations

## CATALONIA

### Government Awards 48 Provincial and Supra-Provincial Digital Radio Licences

On 12 November 2003 the government of the Generalitat awarded terrestrial digital licences for public service broadcasting in the provincial and supra-provincial areas (DOGC No. 4018, of 26/11/03). The coverage areas in relation to the licences were the supra-provincial areas of the Provinces of Barcelona (made up of Barcelonès, Baix Llobregat, Maresme, Vallès Oriental, Vallès Occidental, Alt Penedès and Garraf); the Provinces of Tarragona (including Tarragonès, Baix Penedès, Alt Camp, la Conca de Barberà, Priorat and Baix Camp) and Montsià-Baix Ebre. Licences also went to the provinces of Gironès, Segrià, Bages and Osona.

The following companies were awarded the licences:

- Cadena Pirenanca de Ràdio i Televisió, SL (licence for the Provinces of Barcelona).
- Comit Audiovisual, SL (licences for the Provinces of Barcelona; the Provinces of Tarragona; Montsià-Baix Ebre; Gironès; Bages and Osona).
- Compañía de Emisiones de Publicidad, SA (CEPSA) (Osona).
- Comunicacions Pla, SA (Segrià).
- Diari Segre, SLU (Segrià).
- Enciclopèdia Catalana, SA (Provinces of Barcelona).
- Grupo Editorial 100 por 100, SL (Provinces of Barcelona; Provinces of Tarragona; Montsià-Baix Ebre; Gironès; Segrià; Bages and Osona).
- Mediaproducción SL (Provinces of Barcelona; Provinces of Tarragona; Montsià-Baix Ebre; Gironès; Segrià; Bages and Osona).
- Ona Catalana, SA (Provinces of Barcelona; Provinces of

Tarragona; Montsià-Baix Ebre; Gironès; Segrià; Bages and Osona).

- Onda Ramblas, SA (Provinces of Tarragona; Montsià-Baix Ebre; Bages and Osona).
- Productora d'Emissions de Ràdio, SL (Provinces of Barcelona)
- Ràdio Marina, SA (Gironès).
- Radiocat XXI, SL (Provinces of Barcelona).
- RM Ràdio, SA (Provinces of Barcelona and Montsià-Baix Ebre).
- Sociedad Española de Radiodifusión, SA (SER) (Provinces of Barcelona; Provinces of Tarragona; Gironès and Segrià).
- Taelus, SL (Bages).
- Uniprex, SA (Provinces of Barcelona).

#### Other News:

- The Catalonia Broadcasting Council published the first call for awarding aid to research projects in audiovisual communication (Agreement 165/2003 of 12 November, DOGC No. 4036 of 23/12/2003). In particular, the aim is to promote research in the following areas: a) protection policies for children and young people with regard to audiovisual material; b) cultural diversity in the audiovisual sphere; c) new forms of advertising, d) digitalisation - technical aspects, legal framework, market situation and business strategies; and e) deregulation of the telecommunications sector.

- The DOGC of 23 December 2003 published the edicts under which two projects of the General Directive of the Catalonia Broadcasting Council shall be submitted for public consultation. In particular, the spheres subject to regulation are the presence of the Catalan and Aranese languages and cultures in the broadcast media and the protection of children and adolescents, signalling guidance and the right to information of television-service users (DOGC No. 4036, page 25,526).

## SPAIN

### Act Accompanying the 2004 Budgets: Amendments to the Legal System Concerning Television

The Act accompanying the Budgets (Act 62/2003 of 30 December on fiscal, administrative and social organisation measures published in Official State Gazette No. 313 of 31/12/03) has again been used to modify the regulatory framework for television in Spain. The Act includes a number of modifications that arose from the amendments the Popular Party presented to the Senate during the procedural steps of the Act concerning local television (about the transition to digital TV and network transmissions) and shareholder incompatibility, in which current limits are relaxed. It is important to bear in mind that the current regulations in both cases refer to the modification introduced through the Act accompanying the 2003 Budgets.

In particular, the Act anticipates the following modification to the legal system concerning television:

- With regard to shareholder incompatibility, the Act bans a single shareholder from having "a significant level", i.e., 5% or more, of shares in a company with a public service television licence in any of the three spheres of TV coverage, i.e., State, regional or local, at the same time in a single geographical coverage demarcation or sphere. A private operator with more than 5% of shares in a state television company can hold shares in other regional or local operators so long as the coverage does not exceed 25% of the population. The same condition is established in the case of regional operators in relation to local operators. The act allows a single shareholder to have shares in different television operators of the same sphere of coverage so long as they do not exceed 5% of the capital.

The Act then goes on to establish the guarantee mechanism for operators who breach the established share limits: communication to the relevant authorities accompanied by an action plan to modify the breach (additional provision 30.12 amending Act 10/1988 of 3 May on Private Television, amending article 19 and transitory provision 3 and adding article 21b).

- With regard to local television, the 'analogical blackout' is delayed, with which for two years beginning 1 January 2004 broadcasters are allowed to transmit on analogical technology "so long as the availability and planning of the spectrum as established under the National Television Plans so allow" (additional provision 30.11 amending Act 41/1995 of 22 December on Local Television by Terrestrial Waves, amending transitory provision 2).

- With regard to inhouse programming transmission, the Act establishes the obligation of television stations in all spheres of territorial coverage, i.e., State, regional or local, to broadcast television programmes of their own production for a minimum of 4 hours per day and 32 hours per week. These transmissions should take place between 1 p.m. and 4 p.m. and 8 p.m. and 11 p.m. and content should relate to the sphere of transmission "subject to other content which could be authorised by the regulatory procedure to transmit during the above-mentioned times" (additional provision 30, section 1).

- With regard to station broadcast limits, the act forecasts a maximum of 5 hours per day and 25 hours per week (additional provision 30, section 2).

## New General Telecommunications Act

On 5 November, the new GTA entered into force (Act 32/2003 of 3 November, General Telecommunications Act published in Official State Gazette No. 264 of 4/1/03), replacing Act 11/1998 of 24 April. The principle purpose of the new Act is to incorporate into the Spanish legal system the provisions of the new regulatory framework on electronic communications adopted by the European Community in March 2002 with the objective of consolidating a telecommunications market of open competition (see the commentary on the GTA project in *Quaderns del CAC* 15).

In accordance with article 1 of the Act, the objects of the regulation are telecommunications that include the use of the Internet and the provision of e-communication services and associated resources. In other words, the new Act establishes the legal system for signal carriers rather than the content that is broadcast. The new provisions change the audiovisual landscape despite excluding "audiovisual programming content" from the application sphere. Although the provisions do not affect content or content marketing they do regulate transmission (i.e., infrastructure conditions) and reception (i.e., conditional access), interactive television services, electronic programming guides (EPGs), application programme interfaces (APIs) that allow interactivity and must-carry regulations.

In this framework, an important feature with regard to the sphere of broadcast communication services is, amongst other things, the fact that it involves an additional 7th provision on "obligations with regard to access conditions, access to particular broadcasting services and television, wide-format television and transmission obligations" as well as additional provision no. 10 on "cable services". In the former case, the object of the regulation conditions the determination of the audiovisual sector in that in the new digital environment the matters subject to regulatory development on the part of the State government refer to aspects directly related to viewers' access to content and thus to the pluralism of the media. In the second case (with the additional provision being introduced through an amendment by the Popular Party in the Senate) it establishes the deregulation of the provision of cable radio and television services, specifying that, "they are provided under a system of free competition, in the conditions

established by the government through regulation". This regulation will determine "the relative obligations on the distribution of programmes belonging to independent programmers and compliance with the applicable legislation on issues of radio and television service content".

### Other News:

- Act 59/2003 of 19 December, on electronic signatures (Official State Gazette No. 304 of 20/12/03, page 45329).

- On 17 December 2003 the Ministry of Science and Technology authorised Telefónica to market its ADSL television services (the Imagenio Project).

- The Supreme Court of Justice in La Rioja rejected an appeal from Localia against the decision to award DTT licences to Popular TV and the former Correo Group, now called Vocento. (26/11/03).

- Agreement of 14 November 2003 from the Council of Ministers on the purchase of Retevisión Audiovisual by Abertis, in which it authorised the purchase subject to particular conditions. The authorisation was agreed upon according to the matters established in a report from the Restrictive Practices Court ([www.tdcompetencia.org/frames.asp?menu=5](http://www.tdcompetencia.org/frames.asp?menu=5)) and the Telecommunications Market Commission recommending the operation be subject to the condition that Abertis renounced accumulating rights to Retevisión and Tradia infrastructure within the area of Catalonia. Among the conditions for the authorisation of the purchase, Abertis Telecom will have to give up the right to rent the infrastructures that belong to the Generalitat of Catalonia and the ability to determine who shall access use of the two television networks that currently exist, the ownership or right to rent of which were retained by Retevisión and Tradia. Secondly, Abertis Telecom will have to maintain the legal and operative separation of the companies relative to their respective networks. Moreover, behaviour conditions were imposed with the purpose of providing access or use to third parties that operate on the two networks.

- Bill creating the Andalusia Broadcasting Council (17 December 2003).

- ECD Order/224/2003 of 22 July setting out the application standards of Royal Decree 526/2002 of 14 June regulating the measures to foster and promote films and the realisation of film co-productions (Official State Gazette No. 188 of 7/8/03, page 30,472).

### The Future of the Audiovisual Regulatory Policy

European Commission Communication of 15 December 2003 on "the future of the European regulatory audiovisual policy" [Document COM (2003) 784 final].

[europa.eu.int/eur-lex/es/com/cnc/2003/com2003\\_0784es01.pdf](http://europa.eu.int/eur-lex/es/com/cnc/2003/com2003_0784es01.pdf)

With the adoption of this document, the European Commission approved the new programme to update the European Union audiovisual policy in the short and long terms. The document was the result of a public consultation on the revision of the Television Without Frontiers Directive and followed an intense discussion by Member states that identified the spheres considered necessary for adopting new regulatory measures at the European level. In particular, the Communication proposes a two-phase update: i.e., adopting initiatives on TV advertising and the protection of minors during the first quarter of 2004 and continuing to reflect on other aspects covered by the Directive, in relation to which a study in collaboration with experts will be proposed to see if the Directive can be updated in 2005.

The timetable for the actions established by the European Commission is as follows:

- Interpretive communication on advertising (first quarter of 2004)
- Proposal for an update of the Council Recommendation on the protection of minors and human dignity (first quarter of 2004)
- Proposal for a Council Recommendation on cinematographic heritage (first quarter of 2004)
- Proposal for an update of the Commission's Cinema Communication (first quarter of 2004)
- Report on the application of articles 4 and 5 of the Television Without Frontiers Directive (first quarter of 2004)
- Meeting of focus groups on the regulation of audiovisual content, level of detail in the regulation of advertising and the right to information (2004)
- Possible Commission decision on AV regulators group (second half of 2004)
- Presentation of the study on the impact of measures concerning the promotion of the distribution and production

of TV programmes (Community and national), provided for under article 25 a) of the Television Without Frontiers Directive (late 2004)

- Presentation of the comparative study on the impact of control measures on the television advertising markets of the Member States of the European Union and other countries (late 2004)
- Fifth Commission report on the application of the Television Without Frontiers Directive (2005)
- Third European audiovisual conference (2005)
- Presentation of the study on co-regulatory measures in the media sector (2005)

### Other News

• The European Commission's second assessment report on the application of the Council Recommendation of 24 September 1998 concerning the protection of minors and human dignity.

[europa.eu.int/eur-lex/es/com/rpt/2003/com2003\\_0776es01.pdf](http://europa.eu.int/eur-lex/es/com/rpt/2003/com2003_0776es01.pdf)

• Sentence from the Court of Justice of 23 October 2003 in prejudicial matter C-245/01, *RTL Television GmbH Versus Niedersächsische Landesmedienanstalt für privaten Rundfunk*, in which the European court interpreted the regulations of the Television Without Frontiers Directive (in particular section 3, article 11) with regard to ad breaks during series.

[www.curia.eu.int](http://www.curia.eu.int)

• Council Decision (2003/840/EC) of 17 November 2003 concerning the celebration, in the name of the European Community, of the Council of Europe's Agreement No. 180 on information and legal cooperation in the area of information society services (DO No. L-321, 6/12/2003, page 41).

• The European Commission reached a provisional agreement with the FA Premier League and BskyB on the rights to broadcast football matches (IP/03/1748 of 16/12/03).

• The European Commission considered the public funding of France 2 and France 3 in proportion to their assigned public service missions (IP (03/1686 of 10/12/03).



europa.eu.int/rapid/start/cgi/guesten.ksh?p\_action.getfile=gf&d  
oc=IP/03/1686|0|RAPID&lg=FR&type=PDF

- Council Resolution of 24 November 2003 on registering films in the European Union (DO No. C-295 of 5/12/03, page 5).

- European Commission Report on the application of Community law in the area of electronic communications (Document COM (2003) 715 final, of 19/11/2003).

- Sentence from the Court of Justice in prejudicial matter C101/01, Bodil Lindqvist, in which for the first time the sphere of application of the Directive concerning the protection of personal data and their free circulation on the Internet was defined.

www.curia.eu.int

- MEDIA Plus. Development, Distribution and Promotion (2001-2005). Execution of a programme to stimulate the development, distribution and promotion of European audiovisual works. Call for proposals 75/2003. Support for the promotion and access to the market in the sphere of audiovisual festivals. (DO No. C-266 of 5/11/2003, page 18.)

- Committee of the Regions Sentence on the Fourth European Commission Report to the Council, the European Parliament, the Economic and Social Committee and the Regions Committee concerning the application of the "Television Without Frontiers" Directive 89/552/EEC. (DO No. C-256, of 24/10/2003, page 79.)

- The Court of First Instance upheld the European Commission's decision to open a file against the Spanish authorities on the merger between Canal Satélite Digital and Vía Digital. The Court thus ruled against the appeal lodged by the Spanish cable operators (sentence of 30 September 2003 in accumulated matters T-346/02 and T-347/02).

www.curia.eu.int

- European Commission Communication on the role of the e-Government in the future of Europe, of 23/9/03.

europa.eu.int/information\_society/eeurope/2005/doc/all\_about/  
egov\_communication\_fr.pdf

- European Commission Communication on an international instrument for cultural diversity (Document COM (2003) 520, 27/8/2003).

### France

- On 21 October 2003, the Conseil Supérieur de l'Audiovisuel (CSA) awarded licences to DTT multiplex operators. The new licence holders are: Nouvelles télévisions numériques which manages the multiplex R2, iMCM, Canal J, Match TV, Direct 8, TMC and Cuisine.TV/Comédie; Compagnie du numérique hertzien with regard to the multiplex R3, Canal+, I-Télé, Sport+, CinéCinéma Premier and Planète

Société opératrice du multiplex R4 (Multi 4) for the multiplex R4, M6, M6 Music, TF6, Paris Première, NT1 and AB1; and SMR6 for the multiplex R6, TF1, LCI, Eurosport France, TPS Star and NRJ TV.

- Decree No. 2003-960 of 7 October 2003 amending Decree No. 92-280 of 27 March 1992 adopted in application of articles 27 and 33 of Act 86-1067 of 30 September 1986 concerning the freedom of communication and establishing the general principles and obligations of television operators with regard to advertising, sponsorship and telesales. (JO No. 233 of 8 October 2003). The modification opens the way to the press and distribution sectors being able to advertise on television; it limits the possibility of advertising related to the publishing world to cable and satellite and continues to completely exclude this type of advertising in the film sector. The exclusion approved in 1992 is justified on the grounds of cultural diversity and pluralism in the media. However, the regulation led the European Commission to open a procedure for breach of Community Law in France. It also remains to be seen whether this modification closes the procedure still open.

### United Kingdom

- OFCOM (the Office of Communications), the new authority for the communications sector in the UK which assumed full powers on 29 December 2003 and which takes over the jurisdiction of the former sector authorities, has

opened the following public consultations:

*Consultation on Ofcom guidance for the public interest test for media mergers*

[www.ofcom.org.uk/consultations/current/pi\\_test/?a=87101](http://www.ofcom.org.uk/consultations/current/pi_test/?a=87101)

*The Ofcom Review of Public Service Broadcasting (PSB) Television*

[www.ofcom.org.uk/consultations/current/psb\\_review/index.htm](http://www.ofcom.org.uk/consultations/current/psb_review/index.htm)

*The Ofcom Strategic Review of Telecommunications*

[www.ofcom.org.uk/codes\\_guidelines/ofcom\\_codes\\_guidance/strategic\\_review\\_telecoms/](http://www.ofcom.org.uk/codes_guidelines/ofcom_codes_guidance/strategic_review_telecoms/)

*Consultation on the draft code on providing television access services*

[www.ofcom.org.uk/consultations/current/prov\\_tv\\_access/?a=87101](http://www.ofcom.org.uk/consultations/current/prov_tv_access/?a=87101)

*Outline procedure for statutory sanctions in content cases*

[www.ofcom.org.uk/consultations/current/sanctions\\_content/?a=87101](http://www.ofcom.org.uk/consultations/current/sanctions_content/?a=87101)

*Ofcom's proposed guidance on regional production and regional programming*

[www.ofcom.org.uk/consultations/current/regional\\_production/?a=87101](http://www.ofcom.org.uk/consultations/current/regional_production/?a=87101)

*Criteria for transferring functions to co-regulatory bodies*

[www.ofcom.org.uk/consultations/current/co-reg/?a=87101](http://www.ofcom.org.uk/consultations/current/co-reg/?a=87101)

*The Future Regulation of Broadcast Advertising*

[www.ofcom.org.uk/consultations/current/broadcast\\_advertising/?a=87101](http://www.ofcom.org.uk/consultations/current/broadcast_advertising/?a=87101)

- The British Government gave the go-ahead to the merger of the Granada and Carlton television stations and authorised the creation of the new ITV PLC, worth some four billion pounds (six billion euros). In practice, this involves the creation of the third British TV group able to compete with the BBC and BskyB. In this framework, the Department of Trade and Industry, in its decision of 7 October 2003, considered the suggestions from anti-trust organisations acceptable and only found it necessary to require behavioural rather than structural changes. The only significant conditions are those imposed in the area of the advertising market, with the obligation to make "contracts with renewable rights".

# Webs Review

## Violence, Children and the Media

The Internet features a good many documents and websites that deal with violence in the media and its effects on children. The content and attitudes the issue generates are varied. Below is a selection of the sites we found the most interesting.

### ***The UNESCO International Clearinghouse on Children, Youth and Media***

***[www.nordicom.gu.se/unesco/](http://www.nordicom.gu.se/unesco/)***

This organisation, under the auspices of UNESCO, promotes research into the media and minors and in particular violence in the media. Published in English, it includes an extensive database, with bibliographies on communication and violence. Its updated diary includes all types of events relating to children and the media. The organisation's inhouse publications up to 2003 can be found in PDF format in the section entitled 'Newsletter'.

### ***Infoamérica***

***[www.infoamerica.org/teoria/violenciatv.htm](http://www.infoamerica.org/teoria/violenciatv.htm)***

Infoamérica is a portal addressed to the Latin American community and created in 2002 at the initiative of the academic Bernardo Díaz Nosty, from Malaga University, with support from the Ministry for Science and Technology. It is a wealth of resources on communication issues and includes a wide range of links about violence and television. The portal includes articles in Spanish, Portuguese and French. NB: some links do not work properly.

### ***Consell de l'Audiovisual de Catalunya***

***[www.audiovisualcat.net](http://www.audiovisualcat.net)***

The Council commissioned the Blanquerna School of Communication Studies at Ramon Llull University to prepare a study into children's and adolescents' uses and perception of violent television content. The report was coordinated by the professor Jordi Busquet and formed part of the research work the Council promoted into television violence and its possible influence on society, particularly children, with a view to generating a social debate on the topic.

[www.audiovisualcat.net/recerca/presentacio-violencia.html](http://www.audiovisualcat.net/recerca/presentacio-violencia.html)

### ***American Psychological Association (APA)***

***[www.apa.org](http://www.apa.org)***

The APA is a reference point as an association that has looks into the effects of media violence on viewers. Its attitude reaffirms a direct relationship between violent behaviour and exposure to aggressive content on TV. Articles can be downloaded from the website, including "Longitudinal Relations Between Children's Exposure to TV Violence and Their Aggressive and Violent Behavior In Young Adulthood: 1977-1992" and "Exposure to Violent Media: The Effects of Songs With Violent Lyrics on Aggressive Thoughts and Feelings".

[www.apa.org/pubinfo/violence.html](http://www.apa.org/pubinfo/violence.html)

[www.apa.org/journals/psp/press\\_releases/may\\_2003/psp845960.pdf](http://www.apa.org/journals/psp/press_releases/may_2003/psp845960.pdf)

[www.apa.org/journals/dev/press\\_releases/march\\_2003/dev392201.pdf](http://www.apa.org/journals/dev/press_releases/march_2003/dev392201.pdf)

### ***Estudi de la UNESCO sobre la violència als mitjans***

***[www.hinifoto.de/gaming/unesco.html](http://www.hinifoto.de/gaming/unesco.html)***

On 19 February 1998, Professor Dr. Jo Groebel from Utrecht University (Holland) and currently the director-general of the European Institute for the Media presented a report in Paris on the global state of violence in the media. UNESCO prepared the document in conjunction with Utrecht University and the World Organisation of the Scout Movement.

### ***Center for Media Literacy (CML)***

***[www.medialit.org](http://www.medialit.org)***

The CML website enables you to do a theme-based search. In terms of violence in the media, it offers both a selection of articles (over 20) that analyse the phenomenon, as well as the possibility of purchasing books online.

[www.medialit.org/focus/viol\\_home.html](http://www.medialit.org/focus/viol_home.html)

### **Media Literacy Review**

**[interact.uoregon.edu/MediaLit/mlr/home/index.html](http://interact.uoregon.edu/MediaLit/mlr/home/index.html)**

Media Literacy Review is a biannual e-journal that provides resources to educators and other people interested in the study of the media, children and youths. The publication is the result of an initiative of the Media Literacy Online Project (MLOP) and, among the issue-based directories, has one devoted to violence, sex and the media.

[interact.uoregon.edu/MediaLit/mlr/readings/contents/violence.html](http://interact.uoregon.edu/MediaLit/mlr/readings/contents/violence.html)

### **Australian Broadcasting Authority**

**[www.aba.gov.au/tv/research/projects/violence\\_on\\_tv.htm](http://www.aba.gov.au/tv/research/projects/violence_on_tv.htm)**

In 2002, the Australian regulatory authority carried out a research project to establish the relationship between television violence and people's attitudes. The study also determined different categories of violence and types of television access (pay-per-view, Internet, etc.). The document can be consulted in PDF format at:

[www.aba.gov.au/tv/research/projects/pdftrf/ViolenceOnTV.pdf](http://www.aba.gov.au/tv/research/projects/pdftrf/ViolenceOnTV.pdf)

### **Media Awareness Network**

**[www.education-medias.ca](http://www.education-medias.ca)**

The main goal of this Canadian-based resources network that helps educate people about the media and Internet is to contribute useful tools for parents, tutors and teachers about media awareness. One section is dedicated to media violence and includes different articles with economic data, information on education and public policies, etc. In French and English.

[www.education-medias.ca/francais/enjeux/violence/index.cfm](http://www.education-medias.ca/francais/enjeux/violence/index.cfm)

[www.media-awareness.ca/english/resources/tip\\_sheets/media\\_violence\\_tip.cfm](http://www.media-awareness.ca/english/resources/tip_sheets/media_violence_tip.cfm)

### **Grup d'Estudis de Pau i Desenvolupament (GEPYD)**

**[www.ua.es/es/cultura/gepyd](http://www.ua.es/es/cultura/gepyd)**

The GEPYD research group from Alicante University looks into areas relating to peace, conflict and violence from different perspectives, including the media and the cultural point of view. The documents it publishes include an interesting article by professor Clemente Penalva titled "El tratamiento de la violencia en los medios de la comunicación" (The Treatment of Violence in the Media):

[www.ua.es/es/cultura/gepyd/docs/tratviol.pdf](http://www.ua.es/es/cultura/gepyd/docs/tratviol.pdf)

### **Media Education Foundation (MEF)**

**[www.mediaed.org/studyguides](http://www.mediaed.org/studyguides)**

The Foundation offers a video and DVD service about communication and education. In relation to violence, you can consult the website, found in the Study Guides section, which includes a collection of articles on violence in the television discourse by George Gerbner, a communications professor and president-emeritus of the Cultural Environmental Movement.

### **Center for Communication and Social Policy (CCSP)**

**[www.ccsp.ucsb.edu/beigfram.htm](http://www.ccsp.ucsb.edu/beigfram.htm)**

The Centre does research work and promotes discussions on communication policies. It regularly publishes a study on violence on national television in the US. Among its goals, it aims to develop conflict-resolution measures, dialogue and the prevention of violence. The website includes a PDF format summary of the study.

[www.ccsp.ucsb.edu/execsum.pdf](http://www.ccsp.ucsb.edu/execsum.pdf)

### **MCS**

**[www.aber.ac.uk/media/Sections/tv07.html](http://www.aber.ac.uk/media/Sections/tv07.html)**

MCS is a specialised resource portal within the sphere of the academic study of communication and the media. The directory on violence contains theoretical and academic articles on the influence of violence.

### **Center for Media and Public Affairs (CMPA)**

The CMPA, headquartered in Washington, prepares studies on the entertainment and news media. The centre's website is published in English and has a section with various studies looking at the effects of violence.

[www.cmpa.com/tvent/violence.htm](http://www.cmpa.com/tvent/violence.htm)

### **Queen Sofia Centre for the Study of Violence**

**[www.gva.es/violencia/](http://www.gva.es/violencia/)**

One of the principle aims of the centre is to promote research into the factors that promote violence in different contexts, such as the media or schools. Each year it organises an international congress on a particular area relating to violence. For further information, see the bibliography, the news section and links.

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