

Youth TV Programs in Europe and the U. S. Research Case Study: Spanish Television

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Resumen:

Si los acuerdos de autorregulación entre los productores y las compañías de difusión de contenidos no funcionan ¿qué alternativas tenemos? La evolución de las diferentes regulaciones existentes en la actualidad demuestra que la industria de la televisión – tanto en la UE como en EEUU – lejos de aproximarse a un cumplimiento real de los objetivos institucionalmente marcados tiende a alejarse lo máximo posible. ¿Cómo lo hace? La denominada *autorregulación preventiva* ha sido, tradicionalmente, la vía elegida.

Palabras clave:

Televisión, infancia, regulación

Abstract:

If self-control agreements between content producers and broadcasting companies do not work, what alternatives do we have? The evolution of regulations shows that the television industry –both in EU and US - tries to get away from the institutional regulatory observance. The so called preventive self-regulation has been, traditionally, the chosen path.

Keywords:

Television, children, regulation

Introduction

“The logic that television influences behavior is simple and clear: A multi-billion dollar advertising industry is built on this premise” (Trend, 2007)

Europe is far away from the initiative taken by the Medical Society of the State of New York that urges all New York families to participate in the States first TV-Turnoff week 23-27 June 2007¹. The idea is to reduce² the 1,023 annually hours of television spent by children in front of the screen. To these hours, we must add the time of video games as well as the time of surfing the internet. The number of hours has increased by three percent for children ages 12 to 17 years³. Perhaps the most striking impact on children occurs in the realm of physical health and behavior. The more time a child spends watching TV, the more likely he or she is to be obese. Television viewing often detracts from physical activity time; watching TV while eating interferes with hunger and satiety cues; and finally, commercial programming often directly markets unhealthy foods and attitudes toward food to young children (Sparrow, 2007). A study by the University of Missouri-Columbia of 8,000 children from kindergarten to third grade showed that those kids who watched the most TV were at the greatest risk for excess weight gain⁴.

The Center for Screen Time Awareness points out some worrisome statistics, including:

- Even though pediatric experts recommend that children under two watch no TV, children this young watch an average of over 2 hours each day.
- Children 2-7 spend 19% of their TV viewing time alone and unsupervised.
- During a typical day, 70% of day care centers use the TV.
- In a single year, American children view 40,000 TV commercials.

¹ According to hundreds of responses to our TV-Turnoff Week's follow-up surveys, 90 percent of responding participants reduced their TV-viewing as a result of participating. TV-Turnoff Week was supported by over 70 national organizations including the American Medical Association, American Academy of Pediatrics, National Education Association, and President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports.

² “Why turn off the TV? Television cuts into family time, harms our children's ability to read and succeed in school, and contributes to unhealthy lifestyles and obesity. Here are just a few of the facts: On average, children in the US will spend more time in front of the television (1,023 hours) than in school this year (900 hours). Forty percent of Americans frequently or always watch television during dinner. As US Surgeon General Dr. David Satcher said at the Kick Off of TV-Turnoff Week 2001, we are raising the most overweight generation of youngsters in American history...This week is about saving lives” (<http://www.tvturnoff.org/week.htm>)

³ *The New York Amsterdam News*, 19 April 2007, p.31. Research has shown that preschoolers' risk of being overweight increased by 6% for every hour of television watched per day. This increased an additional 31% for children who have a set in their bedroom.

⁴ “Did you know?”, *Scholastic Parent & Child*, April 2007, vol. 14 (6).

- The proportion of overweight children has doubled in the U.S. since 1980 due, in part, to sedentary leisure time activities such as watching TV⁵. Children’s exposure to food advertising on television on average has been reported in a recent study done in 2007 by the Henry J. Kaiser Foundation “Food for Thought, Television Food Advertising to Children in the United States”.

Table I. Children’s exposure to food advertising on TV, on average

AGE	Number of Food Ads Seen per Day	Number of Food Ads Seen per Year	Hr: Min of Food Ads Seen per Year
2-7	12	4,427	23:31
8-12	21	7,609	50:48
13-17	17	6,098	40:50

Source: Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation (March, 2007)

However, this is not the only problem; violence and sex on television are showed too often. Regulations from different institutions, in Europe as well as in the US, have not had an effect on preventing this problem. To be more precise, they have not been able to solve the problem. We all know that researchers have had to face the fact that a majority of children are growing up viewing violence in their homes. The Center for Media and Public Affairs reported that the average American child witnesses over 200,000 acts of violence on television including 16,000 murders before the age of 18. According to the National Television Violence Study, 60 percent of children programs contain violence. Three quarters of violent children programs demonstrate unpunished violence. Fifty-eight percent of the violence occurring does not show the victim experiencing pain. In this context, is it any wonder that youths (cartoon style) hit each other on the head with bricks and stab each other with knives without really understanding the gravity of what they had done? (Mcintosh, 2006)

If self-control agreements between content producers and broadcasting companies do not work, what alternatives do we have? The evolution of regulations shows that the television industry –as well in UE as in US -- tries to get away from the institutional regulatory observance. A few examples (Trend, 2007) can give us and idea of this.

⁵ “Reminder: TV Turnoff Week Is Coming!”, *Child Health Alert*, March 2007, vol. 25.

In 1908, the mayor of New York City ordered moving-picture exhibition licenses to be revoked, and as a result, a group of theater companies founded the National Board of Review (NBR). Later on, came the film industry. In 1922, film production companies formed their own regulatory organization, the Motion Pictures Producers and Distributors of America (MPPDA). They approved their own code for movies that is in effect from 1930 until 1958. Over the years, and with the dissolution of the Hollywood studio system in 1960, more freedom was given to independent filmmakers to increase the images of violence and sex as well as harsh language and sexual dialogue. The extent of freedom taken by producers created some fear within the Motion Pictures Association of America. So, in 1968, this group implemented a voluntary movie-rating system that continues to operate today.

In 1980, the MTV phenomenon led to a new agreement for the industry. This time, the record industry voluntarily developed its Parental Advisory labels before regulations were imposed. The last Parents Television Council report shows that teenagers who watch MTV view 9 erotic images per hour. Obscenity and crude use of language are also heard. The television industry initiated a program to do the same; self agreement was better than an imposed code. As a result, the Television Violence Act was approved in 1990. However, because of the ambiguity of some terms and the claim of different parental organizations, in 1997, a letter code was added to indicate content with “coarse language, sex, violence and sexual dialogue”. Researchers were now able to distinguish among different matters and concerns.

Different research and alternative perspectives can be defended concerning television and its effects, videogames, and the Internet. The media industry has reports finding both positive and negative influence depending on the position you want to take. In 1999, the American Academy of Pediatrics and the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry issued a Joint Statement on the Impact of Entertainment Violence on Children. APA did not state that violent media cause aggression; they identified a correlation. Some positive effects (Johnson, 2006: 24) from playing video games include the development of different skills, visual intelligence, manual dexterity and greater hand-eye coordination.

Our last reference is about video games and how its effect is under study using different models which we compare. We make this reference because concerns related to the use of video games have been very similar to those raised about the effects of exposure to violence in other media, such as television (Arriaga, Esteves, Carnerio and Monteiro, 2006: 358). In Europe, the model used in different countries⁶ known as

⁶ Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom

PEGI⁷ was established in 2003. Researchers developed a model to test the levels of aggressive behavior from long and short periods of playing violent electronic games; it is called GAM (Arriaga, Esteves, Carnerio and Monteiro, 2006: 359). In the US, we have to talk about the Entertainment Software Rating Board (ESRB)⁸ which is a similar institution, about federal court decisions in California, Illinois, Michigan and the federal district courts of Oklahoma, Louisiana, and Minnesota (Calvert and Richards, 2007)

The self-regulatory systems and the FCC activity will be also described from a comparative point of view. Recently – June 2007- the FCC punished UNIVISION with the largest fine in years: \$24 million. During the last three years, FCC has been considering some soap operas as educational programs.

1. Europe and the self regulations agreement: Spain, a special case.

In order to take a look inside the European situation, we need to consider the regulatory situation in relationship to the subject with which we are dealing. An October 24, 1997 resolution of the European Parliament “*Green Book of audiovisual service in the information society*” created the basis for the protection of childhood and youth throughout Europe.

Later on April 30, 2004 the European Recommendation Parliament and Council states that they want to enforce cooperation among industry, states and stakeholders. This idea of collaboration is required to correct minors’ use of audiovisual service, avoid industrial discrimination and establish rating icons on audiovisual content previously defined by self-regulatory institutions.

⁷ The Pan-European Game Information (PEGI) age rating system was established in 2003 to help European parents make informed decisions on buying interactive games. Designed to ensure that minors are not exposed to games that are unsuitable for their particular age group, the system is supported by the major console manufacturers, including PlayStation, Xbox and Nintendo, as well as by publishers and developers of interactive games throughout Europe. The age rating system was developed by the Interactive Software Federation of Europe (ISFE) and has the enthusiastic support of the European Commission, which considers the new system to be a model of European harmonization in the field of protection of children. Started in the early spring of 2003, PEGI replaced existing national age rating systems with a single system that is identical throughout most of Europe. The game rating appears on the front and back cover of interactive games, and retailers provide information on the new system. The age rating system comprises two separate but complementary elements. The first is an age rating, similar to some existing rating systems. The PEGI age bands are 3+, 7+, 12+, 16+, 18+. The second element of the new system is a number of game descriptors. These are icons, displayed on the back of the game box, that describe the type of content to be found in the game. Depending on the type of game, there may be up to six such descriptors. The intensity of the content is appropriate to the age rating of the game. The combination of age rating and game descriptors allows parents and those purchasing games for children to ensure that the game they purchase is appropriate to the age of the intended player (<http://www.pegi.info/en/index/id/179/>)

⁸ The ESRB is a non-profit, self-regulatory body that independently assigns ratings, enforces advertising guidelines, and helps ensure responsible online privacy practices for the interactive entertainment software industry. (<http://www.esrb.org/index-js.jsp>).

Regarding to this last aspect, the example is found in the States. The idea developed in 2000, because of travel to Europe the same problems that today we are able to see on the American screen, will appear in Europe. An industrial and regulatory agreement established that all televisions created after this year must contain a V-chip to let the parents block programs. The problem is that only 15% of parents know how to program the system. In addition, the system needs to recognize the program content and the icons: “V” for violence, “L” for harsh language, “S” for sexual material, “D” for sexual dialogue. If they are not shown, how is the V-chip going to work?

A few aspects relating to publicity have been set forth by the European Recommendation Parliament and Council as well:

- Do not encourage minors to buy something under age; and
- Do not place minors in dangerous situations

Three broad actions are supported in Europe:

- The creation of a legal database in Europe about content and minors
- Even if this legal reference exists, all countries must have their own freedom to classify the television production based on their own beliefs.
- Different media, such as television, Internet, videogames and films now require different regulatory codes. There should be a common code for all of them.

1.1. The situation of Spain and the self regulations agreement

In Spain, at the end of 2004, an agreement was reached with all Spanish television stations to establish a voluntary guide to control content; they chose to act based on the European Recommendation. As a result an agreement that we will call “the Code” was signed on December 9, 2004 and began to be implemented in March 2005. Later on and because of the digital era, new broadcasters and new television stations will be added to the agreement. Under the rule of this gentlemen's agreement, the University Rey Juan Carlos was commissioned to develop a parallel study. The idea was to be able to compare the results of their reports and our studies.

The basic provisions of the agreement are:

- General period of children protection over television contents starts at 6:00 a.m. until 10:00 p.m. Days of the week are from Monday to Friday.

- Within the different hours of viewers, there are different regulations of audiovisual contents according to age: less than 7, 13, and 18 years old.
- Improve parents' role: educational, technological assistance. The idea is to give parents more control over the situation
- Audiovisual contents must count rating icons

To understand the meaning of this agreement, the first thing we need to do is to define the concepts the code tries to protect. First, we need to focus on the protection of fundamental rights of children, especially those aspects that should be removed from programs to avoid dangerous behaviors:

- Should avoid any content that may create a possible imitation of conduct by children
- Should not show any kind of emotional conflicts between parents and children when they are not solved "correctly"
- Should avoid any image or reference of violence and /or sex.

In addition, professional experts on children programs should be involved on a regular basis in the media company. Television presenters should provide advice about parental control over the release of programs that could damage the sensibility of children.

Some references of the code about prohibitions for content producers are easy to understand from the children's protection care perspective. None of the following material should be played on television during the period above mentioned: alcohol, tobacco and drugs, humiliating references or situations, references to children as victims, perpetrators or witnesses of illegal actions, or prostitution.

The Code describes not only some requirements, also seeks to avoid specific situations, such as considering children as viewers of news. In this situation, the producers must: eliminate images of violence, humiliations, and sex that are not necessary to the comprehension of the show, avoid real images because of harshness and, when necessary for the comprehension of news, provide a reference as a warning sign.

Known as "the gentlemen's agreement", the Code creates a special period of vigilance. We will refer to it as the "increased protection", that is, the hours and days of the week when damage one by the effects of television could be considered worse than other times (Monday to Friday 8:00 a.m. to 9:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m., as well as Saturday and Sunday from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.). This protection will be applied also during special holidays and will take into account local festivities. The idea is that during those hours

and days, because children tend to watch television, the broadcasters will take "special care" of the content that will be shown on the screen.

We have been describing the different rating system. The Code, used on general television content also comes with a rating system; obviously, the idea is that parents can choose what kind of content their children watch on television through a classification of content. To promote this objective the different television stations must implement it. In addition and for the development of the agreement, the producers' contents will apply not only to the programs, but also to the promotion of different programs. They will avoid the promotion of content of a different classification during increased protection period and will provide a permanent signed reference for programs not recommended for all public viewers during this period. They also will avoid promotion of what could be considered adult material because of their images and/or sounds. They must offer public information of the classification system in newspapers and websites so that parents will be able to know and to choose freely.

As a direct consequence of the implementation of the Code, people have been able to complain, to analyze if there is or is not any content that could break the rules designed by the Code. Its control and application has been monitored. To understand the problem that is under the self-regulatory system, we first studied how it was built. There is a Committee of Self Regulation that is composed of television operators who signed the Code, content producers and journalists. Its function is to make reports to the Monitoring Committee responding to different questions; doubts sent in by producers or television operators about the interpretation of the content and the Code, doubts with the origin of parent associations, viewers of television... The Committee must develop a process for dealing with requests. Requests must be resolved by concluding one of the following options: there is no problem with the release of the content; problems are found but can be solved in the ways indicated; release cannot be permitted during the special protection period; release cannot be allowed during the period of normal protection; or it is necessary to provide regular information about how to observe the Code.

There is also a Representative Committee with has regular meetings every three months or when four members request one and there is at least five days' notice. Here the composition includes a member of the Self Regulation Code as well as a member of the Social Life who has a relationship with the Code. Their functions are to monitor the implementation of the Code, to analyze aspects in relationship to this Code, produce an annual report of the Code's implementation process and collaborate with the Commission to improve practice. This Committee has to deal with appeals of action taken or not taken by the Committee, actions of persistent non-compliance of the Code by broadcasters, sanctions for persistent violations, and develop referrals by the Combination Committee to the Committee of Self Regulation.

As an example of a forbidden situation, consider the Code's description for children younger than 13 years old. The Code is divided, like the American one, into four different areas:

1. Social behavior, which includes:

- Attitude or behavior which unintentionally shows sexist and/or racist attitudes and/or intolerance.
- Any kind of behavior which will encourage too much competition which could produce negative actions towards the community.
- The show of institutional corruption or corruption of minors
- The presentation of images that denigrate religions, philosophy, cultural or ideologies of any kind.
- The presentation of images of the consumption of drugs, tobacco, thinness as well as the use of drugs.

2. Violence, which includes:

- Actions or behavioral conduct that could be reproduced by children, the use of violence as a way to solve problems, too realistic representation of violence or violent acts, even of minimal content when they are performed by "positive" actors.
- The violence has to be analyzed by the kind of program and the context, and may be justified by the end of the tale.

3. Controversial subjects, which includes:

- A positive presentation of actions that are illegal, violent or dangerous, a show and a not positive ending about revenge, hate, sexual identity, incest.
- Conflicts in relation to race, religion, politics or social aspects.
- Images which generate fear or terror as well as the presentation of the death of parents, or children when the situation is not resolved without anguish.

4. Sex is also included; explicit sex and strong insinuation are forbidden and only accepted when romantic, humorous or parody aspects make these acts less harmful.

1.1.1. The Code's implementation

If we want to make a reference to the kind of study that we have done, consider the 1990's National Television Violence Study –NTVS- that in collaboration with different university studies of 23 channels found 6,5 incidents per channel per hour and 18,000 violent acts for each week of programs analyzed. We studied only five broadcasters and for less time but our results are much worse than those of the 1990's.

Our first research task was completed in March 2007. We are now working on the second part, which is a parallel study, started from the time the Code was adopted, so there can be no argument by broadcasters in relationship to the requirements. During the first year of the Code's implementation, the Committee approved a total of 124 violations. Of these, broadcasters gave their positive evaluation to only 10%; as a result, only 12 requests from parents or associations of viewers were accepted.

This is the aspect where we at the Rey Juan Carlos University have been working for the past 15 months. We found that the results -124 violations- were accurate. In a parallel research project conducted by 15 students from our university, we followed the greater protection time period - Monday to Friday 8:00 a.m. to 9:00 a.m. and 5:00 to 8:00 p.m. We did not include Saturdays or holidays. The idea was to take a look at the system. The research was funded by a grant from the Secretary of State, Department of Communication, Ministry of the President of the Spanish Government.

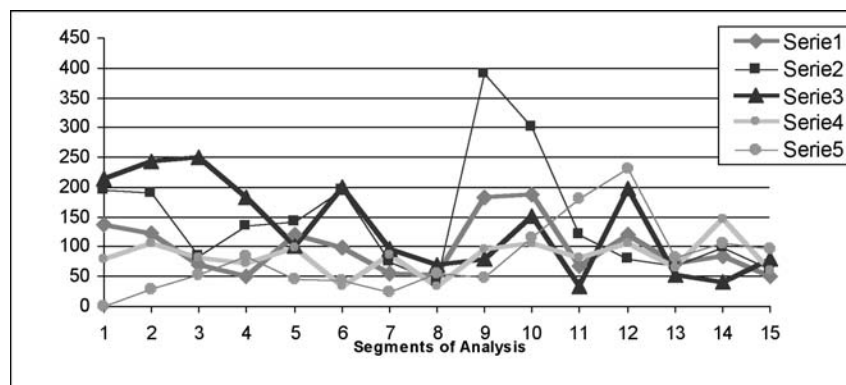
The results of our investigations reveal a few problems:

- People do not know how to make a formal complaint. As a result, only 124 situations were submitted as infractions of the Code.
- There is no institution or association which daily monitors, with some credibility, television programs.
- The Ministry of Industry – the appropriate organization to penalize broadcasters- levied during the last year only 19 sanctions against a total of 50 proceedings against broadcasters. They were charged with too many advertisements or too many changes in the predefined programs. No interest was shown in the contents; so the broadcasters were totally unrestricted on this matter.
- By applying the Code, our research found that the real numbers indicate more than 8,200 infractions in the same period of time.
- One of the problems of the application of the Code is that we were not able to structure the infractions by the different levels: low, medium or high. There is no structure in the Code; so we reported all of them.

- We created a DVD with a few sequences that go from low to high levels so that there will be no doubt about the subjects discussed. The total hours were divided into different types of information. Even in the kitchen programs we found infractions – people drinking alcohol during the program as a normal activity-
 - News: 588
 - Cartoons:1300
 - Morning serials: 878
 - Soap operas: 1900
 - Magazines: 2000
 - Social actuality:340
 - Quiz shows: 300
 - Kitchen: 15
 - Movie trailers and Auto Television Promotions:142

To solicit comments from broadcasters and consumer organizations, we organized a seminar at the university and invited all people concerned with the subject. Only the public television stations participated and then only during the seminar’s political inauguration. The rest of the CEO’s of the National Broadcasters did not even answer our invitation.

Figure 1. Total infractions by Spanish TV Channels (2007)*



*Serie 1 TV1; Serie 2 Antena 3; Serie 3 Cuatro; serie 4 Tele5; serie 5 La Sexta.

We made a simple quantitative study in order to show that voluntary compliance with the signed agreement does not work for the community. There is no administration or institutional organization which cares about what our children see on television.

Such in US, it appears that there are too many people involved to make a single conclusion: consumers, producers, advocates, experts, politicians, reporters... they do not agree. At least we have one result: the Code is not working; the self regulation model does not work and we do not have any FCC or APA Association able to control what is going on.

One part of our research, because it is a part of the Code, concerns media violence. We identified different publications and projects dealing with violence and especially with video games. However, before we go deeper into the subject and review the legislation and litigation situations in the US, we must remember that everyone has an opinion about this subject and that different researchers have their own goals. Two big problems when studying media violence must be taken into account: we are dealing with complex human behaviors and it is very difficult to prove a correlation between watching violent media and behavioral change, especially in laboratory situations.

2. Previous Research

Without trying to give a complete list of all the research done on the media/video game and violence, we may understand how confusing the situation has to be for parents trying to make a decision about what their children should do in relation to the media (Trend, 2007; Arriaga, Esteves, Carneiro and Monteiro, 2006).

- Lovaas (1960) studied several cohorts of children exposed to violent and non-violent cartoons. The conclusion was that children who saw violent material exhibited a slightly more violent attitude immediately afterwards. In another group, however, both became more aggressive. So, the conclusion is not definitive.
- In "*Long term effects of media*" (1960-1982), called the 22 year study, Eron and Rowell looked at the difference between children who grew up with violent media and those who were not exposed to such material. Aggression increased among boys, but not among girls. This research has been influential in our days, reference 2000, for the implantation of the V-chip on new televisions. The problem is that later on we have known (by work done by Richard Rhodes) that during the first study the authors were pressured into making a negative conclusion.
- Bruno Bettelheim (1970), in *Uses of Enchantment: the meaning and importance of Fairy Tales*, con-

cludes children have a natural attraction to violence. Today, this idea is used to embrace the view that delinquent and violent tendencies are part of human nature and that children must learn to manage their innate behaviors. However, recent research (Maria Tatar, 1998) shows that most children do not imagine themselves committing violence, although roughly half empathize with victims of violence.

- “*Television and Aggression: and Experimental Field Study*” is probably the most famous field studies, carried out by Feshbach and Singer (1971) with 625 boys in seven residential boarding academies and reform schools in California and New York. During the six week study half of the boys were permitted to watch violent programs and the other half non-violent shows. Non-violent program viewers became angry because they were not allowed to watch their favorites programs. On the same topic, we found “*Catharsis or aggression among institutionalized boys*” (Liebel, Sobol and Davidson, 1991). Based on this theory, some authors claimed that playing electronic games with violent content, instead of instigating aggressive behavior, may have a positive effect on the players as it allows and encourages the discharge of latent aggressiveness in a socially acceptable way. However, later on, other researchers have discredited both studies (Arriaga, Esteves, Carneiro & Monteiro, 2006: 359)
- In Mueller and Donnerstein’s field study films (1981) different types of audiovisual production were shown to children: aggressive, humorous or neutral films. Then they were offered the chance to act aggressively. Neutral viewers were less aggressive than the other two groups.
- Silver and Williamson (1987) exposed children between 4-7 years to an electronic game with violent content or to a violent cartoon, and then monitored their physical aggression in a free play naturalistic setting: both increased their aggressive responses
- In an interesting counter- research, Freedman (1990) reviewed over 87 cases of laboratory studies. His hypothesis was that the artificiality of the laboratory environment makes people behave differently than they would normally. He concluded that, based on the cases, 37% of them proved the hypothesis, 41% disproved the hypothesis, and 22% were inconclusive
- Ballard and Wiest (1996) studied the effects of electronic games on cardiovascular responses. High levels of game violence can lead to an increase in heart rates of systolic blood pressure, as well as to higher feelings of hostility.
- The 1998 National Television Violence Study (NTVS) determined that 60% of broadcast programming contained some form of violence. As a result, there is a risk of learning aggressive attitudes and behaviors from television; there is a risk of desensitization to violence and at the same time and

increased fear of becoming victimized by violence. The NTVS may have reached its conclusions based on different studies (Arriaga, Esteves, Carneiro and Monteiro, 2006: 358):

- Reduction of physiological and emotional response may occur after repeated exposure to violent scenes (Cline et al. 1973 and Thomas et al. 1977).
- Sympathetic decrease towards the victims of violence (Linz et al. 1984, 1988)
- Increase in tolerance towards aggression (Drabman and Thomas, 1974; Molitor and Hirsch 1994)
- Acceptance of violence as a way of solving interpersonal conflicts (Zillmann and Weaver, 1997)
- Two meta-analyses (Anderson and Bushman, 2001; Sherry, 2001) in relationship with video games reveal that playing violent electronic games has an effect on aggressive behavior. The problem is that Sherry suggested that the relationship between playing violent games and interpersonal aggression is lower than the research's finding of the effects of violence on movie and television viewers (Arriaga, Esteves, Carneiro and Monteiro, 2006: 359).
- Last study published on the *Archives of Pediatric Medicine* in 2007 stated that teenagers who spent more than 3 hours per day in front of a television have twice the possibility of ending their studies after high school.
- In the British magazine *Biologist*, Sigman (2007) concluded that many hours watching television is responsible for at least 15 different kinds of illnesses, including diabetes, obesity, and autism. The study also showed that too many hours in front of television by adults may be responsible for the increasing risk of Alzheimers, short-sightedness, and different kinds of cancer and dream alterations.

Today, the FCC may start to take control over the content. Three years ago, the government hired some experts to analyze the effects of violence and sex from television. A few days ago, *The Washington Post* published an article stating that Congress may give power to the FCC to control the content of all broadcasts.

3. Two models to approach a subject: European Research on video games GAM and US Legislation and Litigation

Just weeks before the scheduled European launch of *Manhunt 2*, Britain, Ireland and Italy banned the savage computer game, maintaining that it encourages "violence and murder." The game became the first to be banned by the British Board of Film Classification (BBFC) in 10 years, following a similar decision by the

Irish Film Censor's Office (IFCO). On the other hand, the recent litigation resolutions of California, Illinois and Michigan followed by the federal district court decisions of Oklahoma, Louisiana and Minnesota show (Calvert and Richards, 2007: 54) that video game industry has a 9-0 record in federal courts when it comes to challenging legislation alleged to infringe upon the First Amendment freedom of expression rights of game creators, distributors and players.

We can try to understand the point of view of these judges by following their resolutions; Judge Rosenbaum from Minnesota argued that “it is impossible to determine from the data presented whether violent games cause violence, or whether violent individuals are attracted to violent video games”. Judge Brady from Louisiana said that morbid interest has no clear meaning. Another interesting resolution was dictated by Judge F. Kennelly, who ordered the State of Illinois to pay the video game industry a significant amount of money, in attorney fees, for its unconstitutional effort to enact a law banning the sale of violent video games. In addition to these examples and the ideas that underlie them is the fact that more than \$1.35 million have been awarded to the arcade and video game industries out of taxpayer revenues.

Introduced in 1972, video games are played on several types of platforms, and those will increase over time. As well, the rate increased from the fall of 2002 to today by 55% of children who play video games by themselves according to the Keiser Foundation (2002: 2). Developments for mobile phone games, virtual life, like Second Life and more realistic games, present a new future for our children.

4. Conclusion

Apart from the country where we established our research, is it reasonable that 10% of children from 6 months to 2 years have a remote control adapted for their use? Is it reasonable that one of every four children less than two years old have a television at their rooms? Is it normal that at the age of three months children are regular viewers?

It is not question of control of producers' content. It is not a problem of profit for broadcasters. It is not a problem of self regulation among different industries. Maybe it is a question of educating of our next generation. The steps towards their normal life start by concerned parents. Parents must help children examine stereotypes and the illusions that television presents; help children learn to question the claims of advertisements; help children to choose correctly their own video games...

During our research, working with the two children of one of our collaborators (a boy of five and a girl of three), we played different cartoons of Sing Chang, a Japanese production. The older one was asked if her

sister should be allowed to see the same cartoons that he just saw a few minutes ago and the answer was clear: no, it is too violent for her and it could be bad for her. Even without knowing anything about the broadcasters business, the self regulatory system, the university researchers, the foundations or parental associations, the rate developed by the industry to classified the contents... even without that knowledge, he was able to protect his sister and he was only five. Why cannot we, who are older and maybe with more knowledge than him, do the same?

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