

THE TEACHING AND LEARNING OF VALUES THROUGH TELEVISION

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Abstract – This study is based on the hypothesis that television contents themselves constitute a source of learning through television narratives. In specific terms, we defend the idea that it is possible to teach and learn values through said narratives. Some of the research dealing with the relationship between television and values is categorized from a three-fold standpoint: the contents themselves, the medium itself and the language. As a result of this review, we maintain that reiterated attacks on television, blaming it for the majority of problems suffered by young people today, are not supported by the studies carried out by psychologists over recent decades. We believe that viewers incorporate the information provided by television from different contexts and that the enculturation is not unidirectional. There is an interrelation between development contexts and messages. We are specifically interested in analyzing the implicit and explicit values underlying television contents. Thus, based on the model developed by Schwartz and Bilsky, we have compiled a questionnaire (Val-TV 0.1) with the aim of classifying values and interpreting the behaviours visualized in television texts, and relating them to adolescents' own values.

Zusammenfassung – WERTEVERMITTLUNG DURCHS FERNSEHEN – Diese Untersuchung basiert auf der Hypothese, dass die Inhalte von TV-Sendungen durch die Fernseherzählungen selbst eine Lernquelle darstellen. Insbesondere wird die Meinung vertreten, dass es möglich ist, durch solche Erzählungen Werte zu lehren und zu lernen. Die Herangehensweise dieser Untersuchung des Verhältnisses zwischen Fernsehen und Werten basiert auf den drei Kategorien Inhalt, Medium und Sprache. Im Ergebnis stellen die Autoren fest, dass der immer wieder aggressiv vorgebrachte Vorwurf, das Fernsehen sei an den meisten Problemen heutiger Jugendlicher Schuld, nicht gestützt werden kann, wenn man die in den letzten Jahrzehnten von Psychologen vorgenommenen Untersuchungen berücksichtigt. Sie glauben, dass die Zuschauer die vom Fernsehen bereitgestellten Informationen aus verschiedenen Kontexten heraus aufnehmen und dass der Inkulturationsprozess nicht nur eindimensional verläuft. Es gibt eine Beziehung zwischen Entwicklungskontext und Botschaft. Ein besonderer Schwerpunkt des Beitrags liegt in der Analyse der den Fernsehinhalten explizit und implizit zugrundeliegenden Werten. Die Autoren haben einen Fragebogen mit der Zielsetzung zusammengestellt, Werte zu klassifizieren und die in Fernsehertexten visualisierten Verhaltensweisen zu interpretieren, um sie dann mit den eigenen Werten der Jugendlichen in Beziehung zu setzen.

Résumé – L'ENSEIGNEMENT ET L'APPRENTISSAGE DES VALEURS TRANSMISES PAR LA TÉLÉVISION – Cette étude part de l'hypothèse que les contenus de la télévision constituent eux-mêmes une source d'apprentissage à travers des récits télévisés. Elle défend spécifiquement l'idée qu'il est possible d'enseigner et d'apprendre des valeurs à travers ces récits. Une partie de la recherche traitant du rapport entre la télévision et les valeurs est classée par catégorie sous trois angles: le

contenu, le milieu et la langue. En conséquence, les auteurs maintiennent que les attaques réitérées contre la télévision, qui la blâme pour la majorité de problèmes dont souffrent les jeunes aujourd'hui, ne sont pas corroborées par les études effectuées durant les dernières décennies par les psychologues. Ils croient que les spectateurs absorbent l'information fournie par la télévision à partir de différents contextes et que le processus d'enculturation n'est pas unidirectionnel. Il existe une interdépendance entre les contextes de développement et les messages. L'article se concentre spécifiquement sur l'analyse des valeurs implicites et explicites sous-tendant les contenus de la télévision. Les auteurs ont établi un questionnaire, dans le but de classer les valeurs et d'interpréter les comportements visualisés dans les textes télévisés, et de les relier aux propres valeurs des adolescents.

Resumen – LA ENSEÑANZA Y EL APRENDIZAJE DE VALORES A TRAVÉS DE LA TELEVISIÓN – Este estudio está basado en la hipótesis de que los contenidos de la televisión, como tales, constituyen una fuente de aprendizaje a través de la narrativa televisiva. Específicamente, defiende la idea de que es posible enseñar y aprender valores a través de estas narrativas. Una parte del estudio sobre la relación existente entre televisión y valores se realiza desde tres enfoques diferentes: los contenidos, el medio y el lenguaje. Como resultado, los autores sostienen que los reiterados ataques a la televisión, a la que se achacan la mayor parte de los problemas de la juventud actual, no encuentran fundamento en los estudios realizados por los psicólogos durante las últimas décadas. Ellos creen que los televidentes toman la información suministrada por la televisión extrayéndola de sus diferentes contextos, y que el proceso de enculturación no es unidireccional. Existe una interrelación entre contextos de desarrollo y mensajes. El artículo enfoca particularmente el análisis de valores implícitos y explícitos subyacentes a los contenidos televisivos. Los autores elaboraron un cuestionario, con el objetivo de clasificar los valores y de interpretar las conductas visualizadas en textos televisivos para luego relacionarlas con los propios valores de los adolescentes.

Резюме – ОБУЧЕНИЕ И ПОЗНАНИЕ ЦЕННОСТЕЙ ЧЕРЕЗ ТЕЛЕВИДЕНИЕ

– Данное исследование основывается на гипотезе о том, что содержание самих телевизионных передач служит источником обучения посредством телевизионных сюжетов. В нем, в частности, утверждается, что представляется возможным обучать и познавать ценности через телевизионные передачи. Часть данного исследования, где рассматриваются взаимоотношения между телевидением и самими ценностями, делится на категории по трем аспектам: содержание, средства и язык. В результате, авторы данной статьи утверждают, что повторные нападки на телевидение, обвиняющие его в большинстве проблем, которые испытывает молодежь сегодня, не подтверждаются исследованиями, проведенными психологами за последние десятилетия. Они полагают, что телезрители получают информацию, предоставляемую телевидением, из различных контекстов, и что процесс формирования культуры не происходит исключительно в одном направлении. Существует взаимосвязь между контекстами развития и информацией. В данной статье особое внимание уделяется анализу имплицитных и эксплицитных ценностей, содержащихся в телевизионных передачах. Авторы данной статьи составили анкету с целью классифицировать эти ценности и интерпретировать модели поведения, представленные в телевизионных сюжетах, и соотнести их с собственными ценностями подростков.

Television and its educational power

Should we continue to think that television encourages habits of passiveness, impedes the development of creativity, takes time away from reading and other children's activities and is linked to low levels of achievement at school? These and many other similar questions have, over recent decades, raised many different, sometimes contradictory, responses from both a theoretical and empirical point of view. In accordance with Bronfenbrenner (1986), television is a true American institution and could be used as a means of dissemination that actively promotes educational programmes.

If the above assertions are true, then why do professionals in the field of education not try to turn television viewing into an opportunity for studying the values and counter-values that are explicitly or implicitly conveyed? If we want to deal with the values and counter-values transmitted in a systematic way, it is important to amplify the positive messages and try to "turn" the negative ones around.

In the United States, Calvert and Kotler (2003) have carried out a recent and exhaustive review of the influence of the agreements reached in the 1990 Act on Children's Television (in which four American channels were requested to include 3 h a week of educational and informative programmes) on children's learning. Through both qualitative and quantitative transversal and longitudinal studies, these authors show that nursery and preschool children gained significant learning in relation to social behaviours.

Television discourse: a parallel discourse to school

We base our work on the assumption that viewers are not just passive beings, but rather incorporate television contents from different contexts, especially their family and school environments. In each of these contexts (family, school, the media, etc.), viewers are in touch with specific aspects of their culture, as well as with other people, who help them, in different ways, to come closer to them. In Bronfenbrenner's words (1986), they become "cultural mediators".

We can therefore assert that television favours a new discourse and communication style, mainly based on the properties of image. Certainly, images are also present in the texts used by schools, and in this sense are nothing new. However, with television, associative, primary and non-reflexive thinking is given priority over logical or rational thinking, which is why we believe that it generates a different discourse. In fact, the intellectual effort involved in reading a book or even a comic is considerably greater than that required by television viewing.

Although, as we have already explained, children do not incorporate television texts mechanically, we should not forget that the socializing potential of the vast majority of the messages conveyed is based on seducing mechanisms, given that they seek to exploit emotional, rather than rational

channels. In itself, as a medium, television is neither good nor bad and the influence of its discourse will depend on how it is used. Knowing the limits and advantages of television may constitute a first step towards studying television narratives from a critical standpoint in class. (Rosenkoetter, Huston, and Wright 1990; Petty, Priester and Briñol 2002).

In our opinion, the fact that children watch television either on their own or with somebody else, may, when used properly, constitute a good resource for the learning of values. To this end, teachers' active involvement is required in order to explain the reasons, intentions and context of television narratives (Watkins, Huston-Stein and Wright 1980).

In a research project carried out in the United States focusing on African, Latin American and Caucasian immigrants, involving a sample of 527 parents with children aged between 2 and 17, Gentile and Walsh (2002) demonstrate that family habits concerning the mass media are directly related to school performance. Despite the fact that there are strong links between poor academic achievement and a greater number of hours devoted to television per week, these links vary widely depending on whether or not parents watch some specific programmes together with their children, intervening in their understanding and interpretation.

Television as a source of learning: content, medium and language

When we refer to television as a source of learning, we take into account three different dimensions: (a) its contents; (b) the medium itself and (c) the language used. Different research studies in this field have focused on some of these dimensions.

Firstly, and in relation to *television contents*, many research projects have clearly demonstrated the influence of television as a learning model on infant and adolescent perceptions and behaviours. However, many of these works focus on the field of violent action viewing and were carried out in North American contexts (Bryant and Zillmann 2002; Ward 2003). In their respective conclusions, these works emphasize the increase in or tendency towards violent behaviour in individuals that habitually watch scenes of violence on television. More specifically and also in a North American context, Kremer and Cooke (2001) have analysed the relationship between children's moral reasoning and their perception of television violence. In a sample of 184 children (Caucasians, Afro-Americans, Asians and Latin Americans) with a mean age of 7.60, the aforementioned authors found a significant relationship between children's moral reasoning and their perception of violence. In any case, the viewers' age and the contexts in which the action takes place have been shown to be highly relevant to the study of the influence of violent actions on children's and teenagers' behaviours and attitudes.

In an analysis of content, Raffa (1983), as part of a research project carried out in Florida (United States), studied a number of television narratives and their influence on moral development in children aged between

6 and 12. This author asserts that television narratives are also replete with positive social behaviours, such as concern for others and prudence.

Television contents can also develop other abilities. In a study carried out in Australia with a sample of 96 individuals aged between 6 and 12, Low and Durkin (1998) show that as individuals grow older, television narratives (American detective series) foster their ability to establish causal relationships at different levels between different scenes. Similarly, in France, Pasquier (1996) also confirms that television series for teenagers have become a major social phenomenon in that country since the 1990s. The most influential contents were those of both American and national (French) series. More specifically, all these productions have influenced the construction of identity in childhood and adolescence. A research project involving 703 French teenagers of both sexes, aged between 10 and 18, confirms, among other things, that television plays a highly relevant role in the construction of young people's identity.

Secondly, if we refer to *television as a medium*, some of the data found may also lead us to reflect on its educational power. Anderson, Huston, Schmitt, Linebarger and Wright (2001) carried out a longitudinal study in California (United States) involving 570 individuals. The project started when the individuals were 5 years old and then analysed them again 10 years later. The purpose of this work was to determine the relationship between the amount of time spent watching educational programmes during childhood and adolescent behaviour. The results show that individuals who had spent longer watching television during childhood scored higher in the different curricular subjects analysed as well as in specific attitudes.

In specific terms, American educational programmes from the late sixties, such as *Sesame Street* and *Mister Roger's Neighborhood*, are good examples of the educational power of television. However, we should not forget that these programmes are American and that the studies focusing on them were also carried out with American children.

Thirdly, in addition to the contents and the medium, *the kind of language* is also interpreted as a stimulator for development in diverse functional aspects.

These data suggest that the *television medium* fosters a kind of understanding based on visual images and develops certain types of attitudes and skills, very different from verbal communication, that should nevertheless not be disregarded. Among such attitudes and skills we could highlight motivational power, stimulation of the imagination, learning experiences and vocabulary enrichment, etc. Its greatest disadvantages, on the other hand, are the fleeting nature of the messages conveyed, the lack of immediate feedback, its inability to explore complex scenes, the interpretation of meanings and a certain degree of passiveness in viewers.

In view of these results, the negative effects of this *medium* need to be counteracted through the *contents*, which are presented as a source of learning. Since the creation of the *Centre for Cultural Studies* at the University of

Birmingham (1964), with the aim of making headway in the field of theoretical reflection and empirical research focusing on the influence of mass media messages on specific communities, great importance has been placed on the decoding of television discourses within the field of education. In our opinion, there are sufficient arguments to support the idea expressed by other authors that schools as an institution are wrong to consider television as a competitor (Hardaway 1979; Palmer and Dorr 1980; Raffa 1985).

In short, we believe that, beyond the medium itself, *television contents* constitute a source of learning. This conception implies that we urgently need an educational intervention designed to re-contextualize the values transmitted by television.

The teaching and learning of values through television narratives

From an educational perspective and since the 1980s, narrative in accordance with the Brunerian postulates has become increasingly popular. Bruner (1997) points out that stories may help us interpret life as a “text” subject to diverse interpretations.

Polkinghorne (1988) asserts that *narrative* is the most elementary way of making sense of the human experience, since it favours the construction and reconstruction of different stories. We understand narrative as a tool that aids representation and communication. Within the Neo-Aristotelian tradition, some authors have proposed narratives and traditional stories as strategies for moral education (Winston 1997). In specific terms, if we analyse the characteristics of programmes and their content from an educational perspective, we see that some audiovisual stories aid the construction of children’s thinking, while others interfere with this process. Narrativistic audiovisual texts (i.e. texts based on sustained, long-term narratives, such as *Heidi*, *Maya the Bee* and *David the Gnome*) generate a vertical thought structure that is necessary for school activities. In other words, thoughts are organized in firm hierarchies, thereby enabling inference and deduction. Narrative tales provide values and specific identity identification elements. Rather than narrativistic, however, some texts are de-narrativistic in nature. Such texts are characterized by the fact that they generate a fragmented world, attract attention mainly on the sensorial plane, foster superficial thinking and lack any understanding of the narrative plot. In this sense, *Dragon Ball* does not follow the linear structure of classic tales and uses visual and sound clinchers as a formal resource for creating tension, regardless of the content. In this type of text the plot is not clear and in general, such texts are understood to a much lesser extent than narrative ones. Causal, motivational, spatial and temporal relationships tend not to be understood either.

De-narrativistic audiovisual texts, such as *Dragon Ball*, for example, generate poor, horizontal and juxtaposed thought structures that interfere

with the ways of thinking required for school education (Bermejo 2005). In de-narrativistic texts, greater emphasis is placed on perceptive aspects and thoughts are fed on all things fast and immediate. Research has also demonstrated that audiovisual narratives about real life (news programmes and documentaries, etc.) may have a greater impact than fictional stories. News items are also stories and share with fiction the same characteristics as narrative stories. The difference between the impact of fictional stories and news stories on children's thinking is more a question of degree than of nature.

Another aspect that has been demonstrated by research is that the positive effects of narrative tales are much stronger and more persistent when adults intervene actively in their viewing (Gerbner, Groos, Morgan, Signorielli and Shanahan 2002).

Media narratives and the construction of values

From a historical point of view, stories, society and morality are all inseparable parts of a single whole. Historical stories convey an image of the society together with its moral features. In this field, the ethics of the "narrators" themselves is of vital importance, and they should be aware of their professional limits when conveying the information and strive to be as honest as possible. Although some authors affirm that, during the post-modern era, much suspicion has arisen regarding television narrators' moral authority, the industry continues to increase its audience ratings day by day and exerts a greater influence than written information (Etemma 1994; Fiske 1987; Glasser and Etemma 1993; Hodge and Tripp 1986).

In Baym's opinion (2000), in the field of the social media in general, and journalism in particular, there is a tendency to present biased information, thereby turning journalists into moral authorities. The author calls media professionals *the new storytellers*. By using "we" in their discourses, they strive to represent and provide information on behalf of the community, a strategy in fact designed to establish their moral authority. Likewise, several research studies have demonstrated how the mass media offers meta-narratives and interprets various social events in basically moral terms. This was found by Cheung and Chan (1996) in a research project carried out with adolescents in Hong Kong, as well as by Tan, Nelson, Dong and Tan (1997) in another study focusing on native North American adolescents. Despite the fact that these data correspond to analyses focusing on the ideological and moral influence of the media on the adult population in the United States, most of them are relevant also to our reflection, given the importance bestowed on these "new story-tellers". Being conscious of the power and moral authority held by the media makes us responsible for teaching the new generations how to decode the messages conveyed.

When we refer to stories, we must remember that they maintain a complex balance between two different and complementary functions: the

communication of closed and univocal meanings, on the one hand, and the conveyance of open and dialogical meanings on the other, which in turn enables the negotiation and generalization of new meanings. The idea that television narratives generate new meanings can only be understood if we are aware of the fact that they are not closed contents in themselves, but rather a means of obtaining some sort of response from the viewer (Bajtín 1984).

To summarize, as we have just pointed out, media stories and their new storytellers wield enormous moral power, even among the adult population. In relation to childhood and adolescence, enough evidence has been found of the influence of television narratives on the construction of values to justify the need to reflect on the necessity of establishing different guidelines for analysis, in order to promote the reconstruction of contents and facilitate the acquisition of new meanings. The following section presents a reference framework for the analysis of values, which in turn has enabled us to compile a questionnaire designed to explore the perception of values in television contents (Val-TV 0.1).

A proposal: Schwartz's and Bilsky's model applied to television

In order to fully understand the process of learning through television, we need to take into account both the *form* and the *content*. Television uses different formats from those found in textbooks, educational materials or other sources of learning. Television contents represent a complex symbolic system which requires decoding in order for children, and even many adults, to understand it. In this sense, it is important to teach children how to decode specific symbolic codes in order to gain a better understanding of their content. The formats themselves can also help develop certain types of cognitive skills. Thus, for example, showing an object from different angles facilitates perspective taking.

The reference framework for analysis

In order to analyse the implicit and explicit values underlying television contents, we propose the model developed by Schwartz and Bilsky (1987, 1990). These authors conceptualize values as cognitive representations whose origins lie in basic biological needs, social interactions and the demands of the different social institutions. However, they also interpret values as an individual construction of a trans-situational goal (final/instrumental values), in which the aims express interests (individual/collective/both) linked to a motivational domain (pleasure, security, achievement, self-direction, conformity, prosocial, social power and maturity), and these interests are assessed within a range of importance/non importance as principles for an individual's behaviour.

Table 1. Structure of Schwartz and Bilsky's system of values

Domains	Values
Enjoyment: satisfaction of physical needs	Pleasure, comfortable life, happiness, feeling happy.
Achievement: develop and use abilities in order to obtain the resources required for prosperity from the physical and social environment.	Being capable, being ambitious, social recognition.
Self-direction: effective control of events over and above external rewards.	Being imaginative, being independent, being intellectual, being logical.
Conformity: inhibition of impulses and actions that may hurt others in favour of fluid social interaction.	Being obedient, being polite, being clean, being self-controlled.
Prosocial: positive, active involvement designed to promote others' welfare.	Being useful, forgiving, loving, equality.
Maturity: self-development, awareness of one's own values and their redefinition in order to achieve goals.	Wisdom, range of perspectives, mature love, peaceful world, being brave.
Security: physical survival and avoidance of threats to one's integrity.	Internal harmony, family security, national security and a peaceful world.
Social power: search for a higher social status.	This value is not included in Rokeach's list.

Source: Goñi (1966).

The structure of the system of values proposed by Schwartz and Bilsky is illustrated in the following Table 1.

Schwartz and Bilsky's model can be considered an integration of Rokeach's model and the most culturalist approaches which have focused on categorizing values into motivational and/or content-related domains, with the aim of exploring the structure underlying value systems. According to these authors, certain universal aspects of human psychology and interaction systems can be found in all cultures and, in turn, constitute the universal cornerstones of human value systems.

In our opinion, this model has the enormous advantage of offering a sound classification system, not only from a theoretical-conceptual standpoint, but from a statistical-experimental one also, that greatly facilitates the quantitative analysis of the values conveyed in television narratives.

The structure of values proposed by these authors offers us an outline for interpreting the behaviour viewed in television narratives in terms of values. It is not, however, a theory in the strict sense of the term, but rather a categorical outline that facilitates an experimental statistical study. In accordance with

that described above, Schwartz and Bilsky's model offers us an instrument which can be used in collaboration with teachers in order to work on the values they wish to develop in their students, as well as on the discrepancies observed between these and the values conveyed by television narratives. Explicit reflection on and assessment of these discrepancies may foster the construction of those values considered desirable from an educational point of view. Firm commitment by teachers is essential to the development and implementation of this task. In other words, it is not enough to use dialogue only in audiovisual texts, it is also necessary for both teachers and adults in general to include it in other development contexts, in order to guarantee a certain degree of coherence within the educational process.

This model also enables us to specify values, i.e. those perceived in television contents on the one hand, and the individual values held by the subjects analysed on the other. This specification of values is extremely important in their teaching and learning, given that it provides a translation of the implicit messages and enables us to share them with others and to develop a critical attitude.

On the basis of this framework of reference and the context of wider research, we have compiled the Val-TV 0.1 questionnaire (see Appendix 1), based on the categories established by Schwartz and Bilsky. The questionnaire aims to analyse the values conveyed by those programmes which are most popular among teenagers (chosen by the subjects themselves) and to relate them to the values regarded by each individual as relevant to his or her life.

Nevertheless, our primary proposal refers to the need for teachers to interpret television contents in terms of values. In this sense, the instrument presented here may help teachers gain a clearer understanding of the values held by their students, as well as the values perceived in the programmes they watch. Teachers' involvement in the viewing of the different programmes is vital, since without such involvement, it would be like the school offering students textbooks unaccompanied by either instruction or a teacher. Learning how to watch television may, with time, become a habit just like any other, as well as a good resource from an educational point of view. The classroom media library becomes a place where children view certain pre-selected videos or television narratives which are later analysed using scripts structured by the teacher, with special emphasis being placed on three specific types of strategies: (1) highlighting the decoding of the messages conveyed; (2) understanding the information; and (3) discussing and relating the values perceived with those fostered by the school. The teacher's role consists of reconstructing new meanings and acting as a mediator between the students and their contexts.

We believe that provided they are used intentionally, media resources can be an effective way of teaching values and providing students with greater critical awareness. Television can be used by teachers in four areas present in all aspects of the school curriculum: (1) as a didactic instrument or strategy

in any field of learning (language, social studies, mathematics, plastic expression, etc.); (2) as a mediating variable that fosters an interdisciplinary approach, using programmes about themes such as: the development of the mind, life on other planets, non-Western customs, communication in the animal kingdom, etc.; (3) as a strategy for conveying structured information originating from outside the classroom; and finally, (4) as a means of conveying information compiled by the students themselves, using a critical, participatory approach.

In any case, we believe it is absolutely necessary for schools to dedicate time and space to explaining the values conveyed by television. Television contents need to be analysed critically within the school environment. The school can do this using the understanding method, based on the spontaneous verbalizations generated by the tale. Depending on the age of the subjects, a number of different strategies can be used: brainstorming, semi-structured pencil and paper questionnaires, drawings for expressing what the children have understood during the story, etc. Similarly, one of the most important aspects to bear in mind is that teachers should become good mediators between the values conveyed by television narratives and those reconstructed by students. As Bruner (1997) explains, tales express the shared beliefs of a society and are presented as models for the younger generations. However, these same tales may be used by schools and teachers to reconstruct and rebuild those values which we believe are worth reinforcing through education. In short, we are convinced that schools have a very important role to play in this regard and are in a position to work on values through the medium of television contents.

Conclusions

From a socio-cultural point of view, seeing viewers as subjects who incorporate television information from different contexts, including family, school, neighbourhood, friends and, in short, culture in the widest sense of the term, we believe that television narratives may offer many opportunities for the discussion of dilemmas and different situations that go well beyond the traditional curriculum. Texts with a classical narrative structure create vertical structures that foster the construction of thinking, identity and social interactions, while de-narrativistic texts foster a horizontal structure that generates poor thinking. The production and programming of contents should obviously strive to provide entertainment, but they should, above all, aim to generate narrative thinking that will contribute to the formation of more reflective thinking structures.

Similarly, it is best to use not only cognitive, but also empathic strategies that will enable students to compare what they “see and hear” with the values which, from an educational point of view, we consider it important to

work with. For example, we could begin with the characters with whom students identify most closely and discuss the reason for this; and then proceed to imagine what they would do in a similar situation, or what they believe would be the correct way to act. Above all, students should “become aware” of the models transmitted and be able to compare them with the values which are really worth using as a guideline for our behaviour.

We believe that in order for television to be truly educational, two conditions must be fulfilled: firstly, teachers must remain with their students or be available to answer any questions (this implies being physically present); and secondly, viewers should be able to “read” television, i.e. be able to tell fiction from reality and differentiate between an imaginary story and a real one. Parents should not just make an effort to watch television with their children, they should also show confidence in their own capacity to influence them. Similarly, teachers need to be convinced that it is possible to work on values through the medium of television contents, rather than viewing television as their enemy. To this end, schools should dedicate both time and space within their curricula to working on the values conveyed by television.

In the European context (Belgium and Switzerland), Buijzen and Valkenburg (2003) have carried out a review of research studies focusing on the effects of television advertising on consumer habits, parent–child conflicts and unhappiness. Despite finding high correlations between television advertising and the first two variables (although not unhappiness), they conclude that these effects may be mitigated by parental mediation that aims to establish ongoing parent–child dialogues regarding advertising messages.

The styles of parental mediation employed usually correspond to the parents’ own parenting style. When the values are well rooted in the family, they tend to prevail over those conveyed by television, particularly if there is intentional mediation by parents. The use of videos is one of the best ways of controlling the contents viewed by our children. Adults can select those videos that most stimulate the development of the values they wish to foster: self-esteem, friendship, sharing, asking for forgiveness, respect for differences, conflict resolution strategies, commitment, honesty, etc. According to the data presented previously in this review, it is perfectly possible for parents to combine the viewing (either alone or with a parent) of some recorded and some live programmes with other leisure activities also. Nowadays, there are many programmes or videos which promote highly desirable values that even very young child can grasp easily, i.e. contents related to respect for nature, care of the elderly, care of animals, shared participation of men and women in household chores, the resolution of interpersonal conflicts, the importance of certain conventions (saying please and thank you, etc.) that imply respect for people and the importance of forming an integrated part of our neighbourhood or community, etc. It is unrealistic to try and make

television disappear. What we should do is learn how to use it and how to negotiate contents in accordance with children's age, interests and innate curiosity.

If we see audiovisual texts as materials that can be interpreted, then audiovisual culture presents us with the opportunity of engaging in a process that is enriching for the viewer, rather than taking protectionist or defensive stances towards television's negative influences. The entire educational community is committed to this task and the mass media should not be blamed for the cultural impoverishment of new upcoming generations.

Likewise, teachers should not only be familiar with Schwartz and Bilsky's model and the specific classroom work strategies (as regards both instrumental and technical aspects), but above all, they should acquire the skills and attitudes necessary for stimulating and developing values. Intentional and systematic education in this field could give rise to a new kind of viewer, through an attempt to modify the attitudes of the youngest generations towards this medium. It is important to remember that there are two institutions which are, in our society, privileged domains for discourse, namely the mass media and educational institutions. From a sociocultural perspective, it is necessary to decode and reconstruct the discourses transmitted, using the values worth teaching as a reference. Only in this way can we conclude that television, in its three-fold dimension (as a medium, content and language), may constitute a staunch ally in the teaching and learning of values. Television can be seen as an unplanned curriculum which wields great educational influence. We would be failing in our responsibility to the younger generations if we did not take advantage of the opportunities offered (Berry 1980).

In short, television *per se* has no direct influence (either good or bad) over children, but rather the relationship is a complex one and it is important to be aware of the variables involved in each case in order to be able to analyse it effectively. Research has demonstrated the involvement of variables linked to the subject (intelligence, age, etc.), the programme (age appropriateness, structure, etc.), the context in which viewing takes place and the mediation of adults during the whole process. The questionnaire presented here may help specify the values perceived through television contents and prompt a dialogue that may lead to the reconstruction of those values we wish to transmit. The solution is not to stop watching television altogether, but rather to take advantage of the medium as simply another of the many resources available within both the family and school environments.

Appendix 1. Values and television questionnaire (Val-TV 0.1)

1. Indicate, from very important to not at all important, the extent to which you believe that the corresponding value is important to your life.					2. Order the values from 1 to 10 from the most to the least important.					Read each of the values and descriptions below.											
Very important	Quite important	Important	Not important	Not at all important	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>												
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Very much	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Not very much	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Not at all
Read each of the values and descriptions below.																					
— Self-direction Choosing your own goals (objectives in life) with independence and freedom; being guided in your life by curiosity and creativity.																					
— Stimulation Having the courage (daring) to live a varied and exciting life.																					
— Hedonism Leading a pleasurable life.																					
— Achievement Setting yourself demanding (ambitious) goals in life and having the intelligence to obtain them (to triumph).																					
— Power Being a socially recognised person, having authority, wealth and social influence.																					
— Security Feeling like an accepted member of society, and feeling that there is order in society and security in both your country and your family.																					
— Conformity Respecting parents and older people, cordial relations between people, people respecting rules and knowing how to behave.																					
— Tradition Respecting traditions, people being prudent rather than conceited (arrogant).																					
— Benevolence Friendship and the ability to forgive, sincerity and keeping your word, responsibility.																					
— Universalism Wisdom and internal harmony, opening up to others, respect for the environment, sense of equality and justice.																					

2. Indicate, from very much to not at all, the extent to which you believe the TELEVISION PROGRAM SELECTED BY YOU fosters the values expressed in each statement.

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