

The Impact of Political Transition (1976–1982) on Spanish Television for Children and Young People

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Abstract

This article analyzes the role of Spanish television in preparing children and young people for life in a society moving toward democracy after decades of authoritarian rule. The Spanish government, which had exceptional power over TVE, the country's sole television network, hoped to use this medium to instill democratic values and convey a sense of normality. However, findings show that TVE's new agenda was hampered by its programming requirements, responsibility as a monopoly to cater to the entire population, failure to understand the preferences and needs of young audiences, and emphasis on U.S. family-oriented series. Children's and young people's programming during the transition was a mix of innovative content and reactionary programs typical of the Franco era.

Keywords

broadcasting, children, history, propaganda, public television, television, youth culture

Periods of political crisis present good opportunities for exploring how the media acts as an agent of change in furthering the public policy objectives of a new political regime. The period of the Spanish transition from dictatorship to democracy (1975–1982) not only exemplifies the instrumental role of the media in the political sphere but also offers a comparative national model (Nohen and Filgueira 1994). Thanks to the support of almost all of the country's political factions, the European Community

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(Hamann 2003), and the Catholic church (F. Montero 2007), the Spanish transition to democracy unfolded smoothly (Preston 1986). Independent newspapers (Quintana Paz 2007) and newspapers closely aligned with the government (Montabes 1989) supported the process by covering national politics with moderation and without political demagoguery (M. Montero et al. 2008). Photojournalists, whose international work depicted a more critical perspective, represented the only exception to this rule (Nilsson 2004). Of all the media at that time, television had the largest impact on public opinion: almost 90 percent of the total population watched television on a daily, or nearly daily basis. Spain had an average daily television audience of 17.5 million viewers in 1979, a figure that rose to 20.9 million in 1982 (Anuario 1983–1984, 441). Although most Spanish households had their own TV sets by 1977, many rural viewers watched television via local *tele clubs* or relied on televisions in local community centers during the latter years of the transition.

Spanish television broadcast during this period followed the model of other European countries (van Cuilenburg and McQuail 2003). National networks at that time had the monopoly in their sector. They were controlled, to varying degrees, by political parties that assumed they understood what type of programming and content best suited the needs of average citizens. Only two television channels operated in Spain at the outset of the transition: TVE1, which provided national coverage on weekdays from 1:45 PM to 11:30 PM and offered a morning segment on the weekend, and TVE2, which broadcast to large urban areas on weekday afternoons from 7:30 PM to 11:30 PM and weekend afternoons from 4:00 PM to 11:30 PM. In addition to their monopoly status, two other factors made television a particularly powerful political instrument at the time. First, President Adolfo Suárez had been general director of TVE from 1969 to 1973; he had a keen understanding of the medium and its potential to sway public opinion. Second, the government exerted an extraordinary level of control over TVE's operations: twenty-five of the thirty-six members of its board of directors were directly appointed by the Suárez administration (Bustamante 2013). Rafael Ansón, TVE's general director during the decisive years 1976 and 1977, was in daily contact with and received direct instructions from the president's office. In 1981, a new public entity called Radio Televisión España (RTVE) approved a set of general operating principles, paving a concrete strategy for promoting democratic values (Martín Jiménez 2013, 307).

All of these factors and circumstances had a direct bearing on television programming for children and young people, an audience that was not yet eligible to vote in elections, but that would become the first generation of Spanish voters educated within a democratic system. The analysis of such programming on TVE from 1975 to 1982 is useful for two reasons. First, it serves as a useful indicator of the degree to which the political transition had an impact on Spanish television. Second, it allows us to explore the challenges political leaders face in advocating changes for televised content.

This study found that TVE's programming for young people during the political transition reframed normal life for a newly democratic citizenry. New types of content, formats, and modes were introduced to prepare young viewers as citizens. Furthermore, programs were crafted to make Spanish political innovations seem routine and on par

with the culture of other modern, democratic countries. Yet this change evolved slowly, rather than broke with or condemned the past and the Franco dictatorship. Nevertheless, TVE's experimental and off-the-cuff approach to programming resulted in the frequent transmission of contradictory messages. TVE's role as a mediator in the democratization process followed its general programming needs and its dominant position in the Spanish media market.

Numerous scholars have examined the role television plays in the socialization of children from theoretical and historical perspectives (cf. Kraus 1973; Oswell 2002; Wiedemann and Tennert 2004). There are only two studies about children's programs during Franco's regime (Paz and Martínez 2013, 2014). On the other hand, Palacio (2005) focuses on the institutional aspects of the medium, while Baget (1993) describes the programs. No one has focused subsequently on the transition period. Palacio (2012) stands alone in addressing the difficulty of adapting programming for children during a period of sweeping political and social transformation.

Prior to the transition, children and young people's programming remained unchanged for twenty years under the Franco regime. Scheduling consisted of a week-day slot from 6:00 to 8:00 PM and various weekend shows. The tone of the programs, which were created as vehicles for doling out appropriate doses of political (patriotic) and religious indoctrination (Paz and Martínez 2014), was paternalistic and authoritarian. Children were seldom given important or dynamic roles. The only factor differentiating the types of young people's programming was the division of the overall audience into three age groups: preschool (three- to six-year-olds), schoolchildren (seven- to fourteen-year-olds), and adolescents (fifteen- to eighteen-year-olds). The programs' failure to reflect the interests of a diverse audience, and their occasional unsuitability for their targeted age groups, alienated many young viewers. Although TVE offered a few original and daring shows, such as *Cuentopos (Let's Find a Story 1974–1976)* and *La comparsa (The Carnival Troupe 1975–1977; Paz and Martínez 2013)*, these tended to be short-lived and rare during this period. It is telling that TVE's top two children's programs during the final years of the dictatorship were the Japanese animated series *Heidi (1975–1976)* and the sentimental, family values-packed American series *The Little House on the Prairie (1975–1983)*.

Method

This study is based on a detailed analysis of three key aspects of Spanish national television's programming for children and young people during the transition: their common topics, their mode of presentation as entertainment, news, or education, and their primary themes. The dearth of prior research on the time period necessitated, first, the identification of programs targeting children and young people between the ages of three and eighteen. Programming schedules were then reconstructed using information culled from the mass circulation newspapers *ABC* and *La Vanguardia*, the RTVE's magazine *Tele Radio*, and the network's annual reports. These sources also yielded useful information regarding program content and production, as well as presenters and featured personalities.

In all, this research focused on forty-three children and young people's programs introduced by TVE from January 1, 1976 until December 31, 1982. The period covered both Suárez's assumption of the presidency in mid-1976 and the swearing in of his successor, socialist Felipe González, on December 2, 1982. It thus encompassed the beginning of a process focused on social and political change to an event that completed the cycle of political transition (Fuentes 2006). Data from the sample included length of run, broadcast frequency and scheduling (weekday vs. weekend), and production origin (local vs. imported). The name of each program was recorded and categorized by type, using either the production department's classification system or the labels used to describe them in the media, such as sports, education, circus, contests, general interest, fiction, games, news, humor, magic, musical, variety, and religious. The names of directors, hosts, scriptwriters and producers, content keywords, and other relevant observations were also recorded. The thirty-seven programs with the longest runs and the greatest social repercussions were viewed to analyze their contents, their structure, their projected values, the role of their hosts as moderators or protagonists, and the presence or participation of children. The same data were collected for a total of 101 foreign programs that TVE broadcast so that a qualitative comparison could be made between local and imported contents.

The topics addressed in these programs were then identified to assess the extent to which they corresponded to those in adult programs, or if they had been developed specifically for younger viewers. This aspect of the research was vital to understanding whether TVE had a political agenda for children and young people, and, if so, their objectives and methods used toward them. The study analyzed how program content was discursively formatted as entertainment, education, and/or news to determine the impact that political and cultural factors may have had on programming. This helped clarify the extent to which content was successfully adapted to children's intellectual levels and interests.

Finally, to gauge the success of the network's strategy during this period, this study established a picture of TVE's young audiences. Although this was a daunting task, given the lack of audience ratings, both general interest and trade publications provided insights into viewers' tastes and preferences via letters to the editor and viewer approval polls of specific programs. Official government surveys of children's favorite television shows and leisure activities, as well as television critics' opinions in newspapers, were also taken into consideration.

In sum, this study drew upon a wide range of relevant sources to indicate the political, cultural, and social messages TVE sought to convey to children and young people through a variety of programming formats. From these, three major trends of the transition period are detailed below.

Results: More Family Programming and Less Youth Programming

TVE's decision to feature *Heidi* and *Little House on the Prairie* during the final years of the Franco dictatorship marked what would become a major trend in Spanish television throughout the transition: the "family audience" who watched "family oriented"

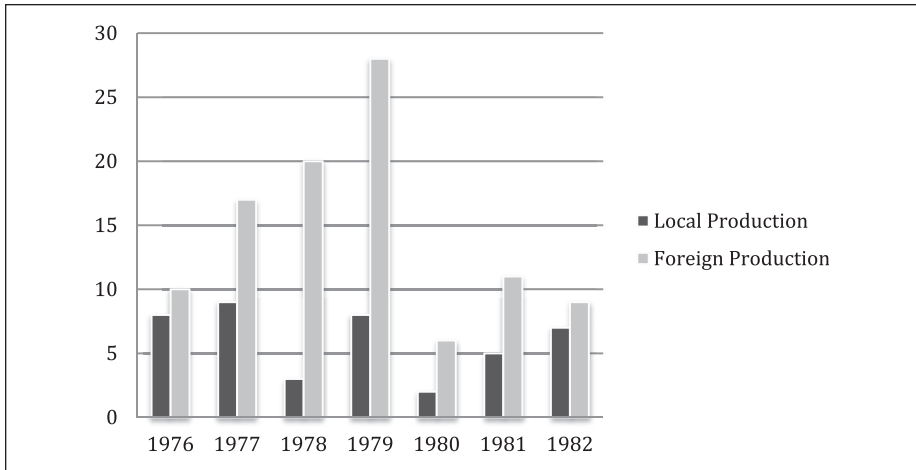


Figure 1. Premieres of local and foreign productions per year (TVEI, 1976–1982).
 Source. Based on data compiled by the authors.

programs. To accommodate this focus, TVE reduced the daily time segment earmarked for children and young people’s programming from one-and-a-half hours to one hour in October 1978, albeit with slight seasonal variations. The channel devoted the time it had cut from weekday and weekend schedules to cultural documentaries, current events, or U.S. series designed to appeal to the entire family. Although the network featured movies, circus shows, and children’s musicals during the Christmas holidays, it frequently suspended children’s programming during other times of the year to cover sporting events that captured a broader audience (Coke 1978, 5). Viewers complained that some children’s programs were aired during school hours (“Cartas al director” 1978, 6; 1980, 4). These examples indicate the challenges TVE faced in adjusting schedules to meet growing demands of a diverse viewership.

A breakdown of TVE’s programming into in-house productions and imported series (Figure 1) reveals that imported series represented an ever-growing slice of the schedule for young audiences (Baget 1979, 32). This continued despite new programming guidelines in 1981, which recommended both increases in TVE’s in-house production of children’s programs and more selectivity in foreign imports. The failure to follow these guidelines, however, must be understood in the context of TVE’s limited operating budget (Corral 1976, 118), its numerous changes in leadership (five different general directors within a span of six years), and its internal power struggles involving political parties eager to gain control (Pérez Ornia 1988).

The majority of children and young people’s programs targeted audiences aged seven to fourteen. Programs ranged from competitions based on skills (*El Monstruo de Sanchezstein* [Sanchezstein’s Monster] 1977–1978) to culture and variety shows with a more educational slant (*Destino: Plutón* [Destination: Pluto] 1980, and *Dabadabadá*, 1982–1984). These highlighted films, classic literature, theater, curious museum objects,

and popular songs from around the world and from entertaining angles. TVE also created sports and science programs for this age group.

The introduction of preschool programs coincided with the implementation of the 1970 General Education Law, which called for new teaching methods, the inclusion of audiovisual material in school curricula, and the use of media to make children feel more included in the world. One of the network's longest-running children's programs was *Ábrete Sésamo* (*Open Sesame* 1975–1978), a dubbed version of the U.S. series *Sesame Street* produced by the Children's Television Workshop (CTW). As was the case in many other countries, the series was successful in Spain only when a version was created using a nationally specific language (Palmer et al. 1976). TVE developed educational entertainment programs (*La cometa blanca* [*White Kite*] 1981–1983) to spark preschoolers' interests in learning and discovering the world around them.

Conversely, less time was devoted to programming for fifteen- to eighteen-year-olds until youth employment reached alarming levels in 1983. This is understandable given the fact that many young people entered the workforce at the age of fourteen and were considered young adults during the transition. Shows in this category featured news and music (*Gente Joven* [*Young People*] 1975–1987) in line with TVE's long-standing tradition promoting the careers of young artists. The network created at least one program to express the thoughts, actions, and aspirations of young viewers (*Pista Libre* [*Free Track*] 1981–1985). The decrease in children and young people's programming overall may have been a consequence of the network's difficulty in connecting with these age groups. Perhaps producers simply lacked interest. It is also possible that TVE executives thought that by exploiting their opportunity to socialize children and teenagers, critics would accuse the network of manipulating the most impressionable segment of the population; that would complicate the ongoing political process.

Nevertheless, children were watching more television. According to surveys conducted at the time (Ministerio de Cultura 1979), viewing had become a favorite pastime. Given the overall reduction in children's programming, one must conclude that children were watching all sorts of programs, including the increasing number of programs not specifically for their age group. This trend, which first surfaced in the Franco era, intensified during the transition.¹

Adult Topics Were Adapted for Children

From 1976 to 1982, children and young people's programming on TVE aligned with its general programming in terms of broadcasting about the building of a democratic state and the attitudes citizens demonstrate in a democratic society. TVE made a special effort to get children and adults interested in the political and cultural environment. News programs for young people were strengthened. Politicians and their proposals were given more airtime.

Programming guidelines stressed that the public's faith in the legitimacy of democratic institutions should be reinforced (Principios básicos de programación de RTVE 1981, 57). The network, hence, introduced programs designed to raise young people's

awareness of current events that directly affected them, even indirectly, such as a bakers' strike. Interviews and dialogue with political figures were featured to bring these individuals closer to youth. Minister of Justice Francisco Fernández Ordoñez and the country's newly inaugurated President Felipe González appeared on the youth-targeted news program *Nosotros* (Us 1982-1985). Children's news programs focusing on current events and political issues and figures were produced by TVE's adult news services, rather than its children's programs production unit.

The messages to young people stressed the importance of access to information as well as team spirit and collaboration in the new Spanish society ("Cambios en la programación" 1979, 29). Adult themes—such as the benefits of coexistence, the importance of dialogue and tolerance, and the need to have an open mind in all spheres of life—were embedded in programming geared toward minors; this was especially evident in programs that encouraged debate. Children's programs in addition stressed the importance of getting along with adults and peers. Although parent-child relationships were never framed as relationships between equals, programs nevertheless showed that respect of one's elders was not an imposition but rather an acknowledgment of older people's wisdom and experience (*Los niños no sois tan niños [You Children Are Not Really that Young]* 1976). Portrayals of relationships between children were based on traditional values of friendship (*Verano azul [Blue Summer]* 1981-1982). Shows provided a framework that allowed children to deduce what constituted correct behavior, such as the traffic safety program *A pie, en bici, en moto (On Foot, by Bicycle, by Motorbike)* 1979-1983). Newspapers praised TVE's attempt to promote dialogue and peaceful coexistence (Crespo 1981, 125).

Cultural topics also had an important place in programming, including the family-oriented shows broadcast during children's time slots. TVE tried to appeal to different age groups. The network broadcast contemporary music for teenagers and traditional Spanish music for adults; it also unsuccessfully attempted to introduce classical music to both audiences. Programs adapted classical dramas and theater (*Todos los cuentos [All the Stories]* 1978), including experimental pieces (*Los episodios [The Episodes]* 1979) that children found difficult to understand but received for their cultural value in spite of the fact that many TVE viewers were not prepared for programs of this kind ("Una madre indignada [An Indignant Mother]" 1977, 5). Classical figures from Spanish literature were transformed into cartoon characters. TVE aired many family movies on the weekends and youth-oriented films on weekdays based on English-language literary classics, such as *Treasure Island*, *Tom Sawyer*, and *David Copperfield*. Most films were U.S. imports.

TVE's efforts to disseminate culture that would uplift but be accessible to youth were part of a national strategy. Ministry of Education officials became alarmed when survey data revealed Spanish children's lack of interest in reading, which was the most common cultural indicator of the time. Only 20 percent of youngsters surveyed read books, comic books, stories, or textbooks, and none devoted more than two hours a day to this activity. A mere 5 percent listened to music, and under 0.5 percent went to movie houses, theaters, or museums (Ministerio de Cultura 1979). In response, TVE directed programs at young people that promoted reading and fostered an interest in

early education. In addition to teaching basic social norms, the programs promoted fantasy, imagination, and creativity. They approached science from a broad, practical perspective and sparked children's curiosity by covering topics such as the human body, astronomy, botany, and meteorology.

Sports were presented in all time slots, but budgets limited young people's programming in this category, leading to some improvisation. The children's segment included coverage of school competitions. Although young people were encouraged to participate in sports, another sign of modern thinking that possibly hoped to raise the level of Spanish athletics (*Torneo [Tournament] 1975–1979*), sports broadcasting for youth paled in comparison to the more glamorous and professional coverage of athletic events aired during adult time slots. No doubt young people watched the latter.

TVE's focus on reading, sports, and science as themes of Spanish modernity were presented alongside other themes. Programs highlighted traditional trades and artisan skills (*Oficios para el recuerdo [Trades to Remember] 1973–1989*) and celebrated folk music (e.g., *Ismael y la banda del Mirlitón [Ismael and the Mirlitón's Band] 1976*) as a sign of Spanish identity. Some programs showed hobbies that were to stimulate young people's curiosity and persistence—such as stamp collecting, yoga, or car repair—but that also were likely beyond the economic means of most families watching television during the transition period. In effect, children and young people's programming did not cover topics specifically identified as age-appropriate and, generally speaking, did little more than “translate” adult issues related to the construction of a democratic society for younger audiences. The only topics geared toward the intellectual level and interests of children were those directly related to education and learning.

Entertainment as the Primary Format for Organizing Democratic Discourse

The research shows that during the transition period, 65 percent of the children and young people's programs produced by TVE aimed to entertain rather than teach or inform them (Figure 2).

In contrast to pretransition television shows that were set in faraway or imaginary times, new fictional series situated children in the real world. *Verano azul (Blue Summer)*, for example, narrated the adventures of seven teenagers on a summer holiday in a southern Spanish town. A family series broadcast after lunch on Sundays, this show addressed issues that real people struggled with at that time, such as generational conflict, teenage sex, environmental problems, violence, and death. Free of dogmatic or educational pretensions, it explored human situations with humor and tenderness.

Even serious topics used entertainment style formats. Interviews with well-known public figures, political issues, and current events were presented as infotainment, such as in *Sabadabadá* (1981–1982). The network shifted from embedding short, newsmagazine segments into variety shows to targeting younger audiences with programs entirely devoted to news. This marked a noticeable break from prior programming (*La Semana [The Week] 1976–1978*; *Informativo Juvenil [News Bulletin for*

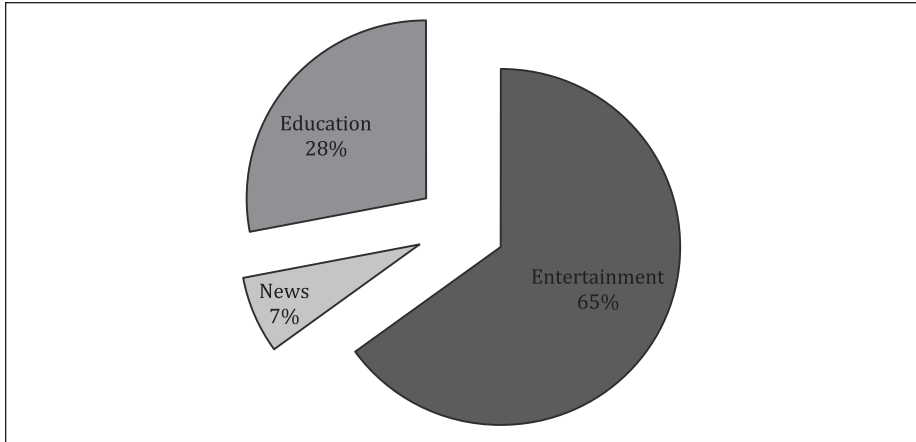


Figure 2. Percentile distribution of children's and young people's programs by type (TVEI, 1976–1982).

Source. Based on data compiled by the authors.

Young People] 1981–1982; *Nosotros [Us]* 1982–1985). The fact that these shows were given their own time slots despite low viewer satisfaction ratings reflects network executives' keen interest in increasing entertaining programming. Science and nature were also explored using entertainment formats, an indication that programmers and producers believed that successful, educational shows needed to be fun. *El Taller de los Inventos (The Workshop of Inventions 1975–1976)*, for example, used a workshop format to explain how knowledge could be applied in everyday life. Animated films and reports covered a range of popular science topics (for example, *3, 2, 1, contacto [3,2,1, Contact]* 1982–1983). Nature documentaries shown in this period stood out for both their production quality and their entertainment value (Cabeza and Mateos 2013).

TVE thought of children's entertainment as a way to foster creativity and a sense of fantasy. The network accomplished this through dramatic productions that featured unconventional characters and storylines (*Jueves locos [Crazy Thursdays]* 1977–1978) and avoided conveying paternalistic attitudes (*Los episodios [The Episodes]* 1979). In general, these shows depicted positive stories that did not resort to tricks to prompt an emotional response, unlike so many foreign children's series and especially Japanese programs, such as *Heidi* or *Marco*. Even puppet shows, a staple of children's programming since the early days of television, sought to stimulate the imagination of the youngest viewers (*Juan sin miedo [Fearless John]* 1977), to praise the value of friendship (*Teo y Calabaza [Teo and Pumpkin]* 1977), and to acknowledge the wisdom of elders (*La abuela cleta [Grandmother Cleta]* 1978). The only two animated shows created during the transition were based on two Spanish literary classics: *Don Quijote (Don Quixote 1979–1980)* and *Ruy, el pequeño Cid (Ruy, The Little Cid 1980–1981)*.

The network made an effort to offer educational programs for children, but the vast majority of its scheduled children and young people's programming used entertainment

as a hook. For example, plays were accompanied by information about actors' roles and behind-the-scenes aspects of theatrical production (*Viaje al escenario* [*Journey to the Stage*] 1977). The same strategy was applied to sports: school competitions were rounded out by cameo appearances by famous athletes who explained their playing styles and personal histories (*Lecciones con* [*Lessons with . . .*] 1976).

Although programming was entertaining, it also addressed current events and the need for dialogue as a democratic value. These programs thus indicated TVE executives' belief that television was an ideal medium for providing children behavioral models and information about the world around them (Watkins 1985). Political discussions were filmed before live audiences of young people to foster an appreciation for dialogue as a viable alternative to confrontation—a message that transition leaders were anxious to convey, and one of the principles stressed in the 1981 guidelines for broadcasting. *Pista Libre* (*Free Track* 1981–1985) featured films followed by debates on related themes. Discussion topics that related to foreign films shown on TVE included resistance against the Nazis (*Little Captain*, 1974), the 1960s youth scene (*Some People*, 1962), and the importance of thought and imagination (*Fahrenheit 451*, 1966). Some shows stressed how important it was for young people to express their opinions, voice their complaints, and share their experiences of the world they lived in (Corral 1976, 118). Other programs dealt with children facing special challenges, such as physical handicaps or social marginalization, and explored ways in which their circumstances might be improved (*Un mundo para ellos* [*A World for Them*] 1979–1983). The basic goal of all these programs was to foster harmony between different segments of society, in every sphere of life. Despite the limited airtime specifically allocated to them, educational components were incorporated into every type of program, with the exception of those featuring political figures or meant to spur children's imaginations.²

Despite TVE's best efforts, producers failed to achieve their social agenda—a fact confirmed by children's opinions about the programs they produced in-house. A 1979 Tele Radio survey revealed that children ages seven to twelve liked cartoons, and especially those produced in the United States, more than other program types. Young survey respondents defended cartoons, saying, "They cheer us up," "They're funny," "The characters are cool," "They make us happy," and "They're important to us" ("Encuesta" 1979, 42–45). Other foreign productions ranked second in the survey. Girls liked sentimental shows that were full of adventure and unlikely plot twists, such as *The Famous Five* (1979), *Charlie's Angels* (1978–1981), *Eight Is Enough* (1979–1982), and *The Ropers* (1979–1981). Boys preferred action-packed adventure series, such as *The Famous Five* and *Tarzan* (1979) and a dubbed version of the French program *Il était une fois . . . l'Homme* (1979–1984). Youth were least enthusiastic about TVE's own programs. They made comments, such as,

- *El mundo de la música* (*The Music's World* 1975–1980): "It's boring," "It's confusing," and "It doesn't teach music";
- *Torneo* (*Tournament*): "It's boring," "Too long," and "It's stupid";
- *Los episodios* (*The Episodes*): "They don't mean anything," and "They're really childish and stupid."

According to the surveys, the least appealing youth shows were theatrical productions, variety, and news shows. The decision to increase weekend family-oriented programming may have been partially responsible for young people's growing preference for westerns, adventure films, and police series. The fact that Spanish audience preferences mirrored those of audiences in countries not undergoing processes of political transition (Webster and Coscarelli 1979) supports the notion that television viewers, including the youngest ones, choose what to watch independent of programmers' efforts to direct their preferences.

Conclusion: A Limited Political Socialization for Democracy

At the outset of the Spanish transition to democracy, television was more important to children than it was to adults. In the words of one young viewer: "If television didn't exist, life would be very boring" ("Encuesta" 1979, 42–45). As a medium that had always already been present, television conditioned the pace of their lives, their schedules, and their free time. It informed them and filtered their notions of the real world to a degree. TVE executives during the Spanish transition were keenly aware of these facts. During his time as the network's general director, Suárez established a system for monitoring children and young people's reactions to TVE programming. He reviewed these biweekly reports on a segment based on audience and focus groups moderated by Catholic priest Jesús Vázquez and Ana García Bernal (Ansón 2013).

Yet TVE made the mistake of treating children and young viewers as a homogeneous audience. Television programmers had primarily schoolchildren aged seven to fourteen in mind; they did not consider the needs and interests of other adolescents. Although they took the needs of viewers with disabilities, such as deafness, into account, they rarely addressed cultural or racial diversity because neither issue was considered relevant in Spain at the time (Gorn et al. 1976; Houser 1978; Persson and Musher-Eizenman 2003). The network also failed to address the gender, social, cultural, and economic diversity of its young viewers in its programming. Its unwavering perception of the young as schoolchildren implied that all other aspects of their personalities and identities, as well as the challenges and rewards of addressing diversity, would be ignored.

As was the case in other countries, Spanish programming was tailored to serve the nation's overall political, social, and cultural objectives (Bryant and Monge 2008). Although strong staff support for the shift toward democracy helped TVE further its social agenda, support alone did not always translate into successful programs, especially those directed at young audiences. First, children and young people tended to prefer imported family sitcoms over civically focused in-house productions. Second, TVE executives and staffers failed to develop the kinds of programs that really interested young viewers in terms of content, but they did succeed in giving young people's programming a new look and feel. In sum, they created a children's lineup brimming with good intentions that ultimately failed to connect with its target audience.

Opportunities to fine-tune messages to Spanish children were often lost in the general rush to promote civic tolerance, dialogue, and democratic values. Producers and programmers mistakenly believed that they could simply reframe mature political issues and democratic values for younger audiences. Although news programmers worked to provide truthful and transparent reporting—a practice woefully absent during the Franco era—they did not realize that children and adolescents were too young to be personally interested in this issue. Another case in point involved TVE's decision to reduce the time slot allotted to young people's programming to offer a greater variety of shows for adults. Family friendly programming mostly meant airing films and made-for-TV movies produced in and for the United States. Children and young people's programs followed suit, leading to the uptick of foreign entertainment programming. In other words, very few programs on Spain's TVE responded to the geographically specific demands of the new political order.

On the positive side, the network's overall programming during the transition associated democracy with the peaceful coexistence of people from different circumstances and segments of society. It promoted the idea that citizens were in charge of actualizing democracy through their attitudes and actions. The contents of many programs gave the shift toward democracy a semblance of normalcy and ensured that the process of political transformation was peaceful. The management of TVE understood that the backbone of a democratic state was an educated citizenry. Programs for young people did foster curiosity in the world around them and the joy of learning. They emphasized the importance of tolerance, listening to others, backing assertions with hard data, and developing one's own criteria and opinions. TVE promoted literacy. Children's programs encouraged viewers to develop an interest in theater, films, and music, including classical music. Children and young people's programs became more dynamic and up-to-date. The network's overall production values improved as staffers gained experience and developed specializations within a maturing medium. TVE offered programming produced in Spain that eschewed clichés, revived heroes from classical literature, and attempted to spark viewers' imaginations and creativity with provocative and innovative narratives, even if overall audience responses to these programs were tepid. Professional and technological advances at TVE during this period meant that young audiences were exposed to and became accustomed to more sophisticated television programming.

The evolution of TVE's children and young people's programs during the transition did not represent a revolution. By the late 1960s and the early 1970s, children already had been given a more proactive role in television. They were writing and performing plays, presenting their own inventions, participating in debates, carrying out experiments on the set, and posing questions. Approved several years before the end of the Franco dictatorship, the General Law of Education of 1970 paved the way for the implementation of active teaching methods. As a result of this new approach toward education, TVE's programs for younger viewers gradually became better suited to the real needs of these age groups. Educational programs adopted more practical foci. Programs produced subsequently put less emphasis on authority, and more on reflection. Whereas the dictatorship had emphasized obligation and obedience, the new

democratic order promoted critical thinking by encouraging children to determine for themselves what was right and wrong.

The network faced the challenge of serving ideologically diverse audiences. There were contradictions between TVE's supposedly forward-looking programming agenda and what one actually saw on television. The network's programs for children and young people were a mixed bag of Spanish and imported shows, generally from the United States. Some of these were innovative in terms of form and content, and some were moralizing and occasionally reactionary enough to be compared with content broadcast during the Franco dictatorship. The sexual liberation that took place during the transition was clearly reflected in movies, but conspicuously absent in TVE's in-house programming. Children's television programs timidly broached the topic. Although divorce was frequently mentioned in programs targeting adult audiences, divorce remained taboo in family fare until it became legal in 1981. Divorce never appeared in the plots of *Verano Azul* (*Blue Summer*) prior to that date. The large blocks of time dedicated to import predominantly U.S.-produced programming promoted conservative values. Many of these shows, such as *Eight Is Enough*, *Apple's Way* (1980–1981), and *The Little House on the Prairie*, portrayed perfect, nuclear families whose many problems always had pat solutions.

TVE was progressive in its efforts to help young people adapt to the country's shift toward democracy but conservative in the way it clung to traditional notions of Christian family values and filial obedience. Unlike newspapers, each of which had its own ideologically based constituency, television was expected not only to be all things to all people but also to bring about consensus among disparate social and political factions. As a result, it remained moderate throughout the entire transition process, making only changes strictly necessary to the mission of preparing young people for democracy. It must also be recognized that the prevalent notions of childhood and adolescence in Spain were tinged by deep-rooted authoritarian traditions, as was the case in Hungary years later (Lustyik 2006, 115). In both cases, it proved to be much easier to promote political change than to shift mentalities, especially those rooted in a not-always-acknowledged legacy of hierarchical regimes, a profound respect for authority, unquestionable obedience, and the submission of children.

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Notes

1. This finding is confirmed by adult Spaniards today who remember their favorite programs as series produced in the United States and game shows, rather than children's programs.
2. Some have argued, in addition, that all television entertainment has a certain degree of educational value (see Palmero et al. 2015).

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