

Brazilian Children: World Champions in TV Watching

Contributed by Juliana Andrade
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A 10-country study, "What do Children Do Every Day?," indicates that around 57% of Brazilian children and adolescents aged 2-17 spend at least three hours a day in front of the television.

According to the study, published this year by the market research outfit, Ipsos, in none of the other nine countries covered by the survey - Canada, the United States, China, France, Germany, Italy, Mexico, England, and Spain - is the percentage of children and adolescents who spend at least three hours a day watching TV as high as it is in Brazil.

The closest is Mexico, in which 38% of the juvenile population devotes three hours or more a day to this pursuit. In the United States, 29% of the youngsters in this age bracket spends at least three hours a day in the company of the television.

In each of the ten countries, 500 parents or guardians of these children and adolescents were interviewed, except in the United States, where the sample included 100 people.

The study also shows that 31% of the juvenile population in Brazil watches television for 1-2 hours daily and only 5% does not spend any time in front of the TV.

The influence of television programs on children and adolescents worries specialists, and initiatives have arisen to prepare the public for conscientious consumption of the products generated by the media.

Stimulating critical reflection regarding the media and helping improve productions aimed at young audiences are the mission of the Brazilian Children's and Adolescents' Media Center, the MídiaTiva, founded in April, 2002.

MídiaTiva is a non-profit civil association made up of professionals who work in the fields of Communication and Education.

"We work with professionals, parents, and teachers. These are the people who will, through their daily contact with children, get them to discuss what they are seeing, how they are seeing it, and why they are watching it," explains MídiaTiva president, Beth Carmona.

The United Nations Education, Science, and Culture Organization, UNESCO, recently launched the collection, "The Child and the Media - Image, Education, Participation," in Brazil.

The document contains 37 articles by international specialists on education for the media and describes experiences with children from all over the world, from England to Ghana, in Africa.

The international organization is working in partnership with the National Newspaper Association (ANJ) to promote the reading of newspapers and magazines in Brazilian schools.

"Our intention is for children to make reading a habit," explains the UNESCO representative to Brazil, Jorge Werthein.

"The UNESCO publication demonstrates the importance of the media in the education of children, bearing in mind both positive and negative aspects," Werthein affirmed.

He expressed concern over Brazilian television programming. In his view, children and youngsters need less exposure to

violence.

"There is no way to instill a culture of peace, when certain segments of the media encourage violence in routine situations. Without proposing censorship, we shall establish a dialogue with the producers and the owners of the means of communication to improve this picture," he emphasizes.

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