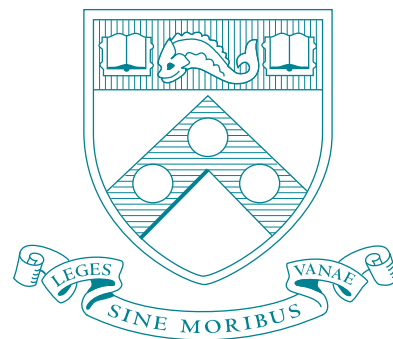


# LATINO AMERICAN PRESCHOOLERS AND THE MEDIA

A Study by Dina L.G. Borzekowski (Ed.D., Harvard University, 1994) and Alvin F. Poussaint (M.D., Cornell University Medical College, 1960) of the Media Center for Children, Judge Baker Children's Center, Boston, Massachusetts. Funding for this research was provided by the Annenberg Public Policy Center of the University of Pennsylvania

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## FOREWORD

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# LATINO AMERICAN PRESCHOOLERS AND THE MEDIA: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## PURPOSE

The objective of this research was to gather information on media used by and reaching a specific group of preschoolers. We conducted interviews with mothers to find out how much and in what ways Latino American preschoolers use television, VCRs, video game players and computers. We also performed a content analysis of television popular with 2- to 5-year-olds to determine the frequency with which Latino characters appear.

## METHODS

**Survey.** We interviewed 128 mothers of Latino American preschoolers in Northern California. The sample included English and Spanish speaking mothers of children aged 2- to 5-years-old.

**Content Analysis.** We coded ethnicity for characters seen in television program and nonprogram content in and around the 30 highest ranked programs for preschool children.

## RESULTS OF THE SURVEY

**Technology in the Home.** Every household had at least one television set and 52% had cable or a satellite dish. VCRs and videogame players were in 86% and 40% of the households, respectively. A quarter of the preschoolers lived in households with at least one computer.

**Viewing Amounts and Behaviors.** According to mothers' estimates, these Latino American preschoolers watched, on average, 15.2 hours of television per week. Most mothers reported that the preschool child co-viewed with a parent or with a brother, sister, or friend. These children varied in whether they ate or drank, did games or puzzles, played with a peer, or read a book or magazine while watching television

**Television Advertising's Effect on Preschoolers.** These preschoolers were influenced by television advertising. Sixty-three percent had made requests for toys seen on television in the past week or two. Fifty-five percent of the preschoolers had made a food or drink request, and 67% of the children had asked to go to a specific store or restaurant, based upon what they had seen on television.

**Mothers' Opinions about Television.** On television's benefits, the majority of mothers felt that "watching TV improves the language skills of preschool children." Fewer than half thought TV teaches about either majority or minority culture. On television's negative effects, more than half agreed that television is too violent or teaches bad habits. Around 40% agreed that TV makes children more aggressive or watching can hurt school performance. Overwhelmingly, mothers strongly believed that "Preschool children should watch what their parents pick out for them."

**Networks, Genres and Programs Encouraged or Discouraged by Mothers.** Mothers encouraged their preschoolers to watch shows in Spanish; however, few mothers approved of the Spanish station Univision. Most mothers strongly encouraged their preschoolers to watch Sesame Street, specifically, and PBS, in general. Disney was also favored while Nickelodeon was less frequently encouraged. Considering adult programming, only 18% of the mothers said they encouraged their preschool child to watch game shows, while even fewer encouraged the watching of music video, situation comedies (sitcoms), or soap operas.

## RESULTS OF THE CONTENT ANALYSIS

We examined the program and non-program content during and around the 30 top rated shows watched by preschool children. Of the 185 characters featured in programming, 6 were identified as Latino. Of the 584 non-program content items, 64% present at least one white character while only 6% feature at least one Latino character.

## DISCUSSION

This research advances our understanding of media use and Latino American preschoolers in several ways. First, it provides a picture of how much and in what ways media exists in the homes of these preschoolers. Second, this study considers if media use differed across groups within the Latino American community. While we expected variables related to one's economic level or acculturation status to affect media use, this was not the case. The third finding of this study was that most of the surveyed Latino American mothers were highly invested in parenting and, as a result, cared greatly and monitored their preschoolers' use of TV, VCRs, videogame players, and computers. The study's fourth and last finding was that Latinos rarely appear in the program and non-program content most often seen by preschool children.

# LATINO AMERICAN PRESCHOOLERS AND THE MEDIA

## PURPOSE

The purpose of the study was to gather information on media used by and reaching Latino American preschoolers. Through interviews with mothers, we examined how much and in what ways Latino American preschoolers watch television, use computers, or play with video game players. Besides identifying children's patterns of use, we explored parent's opinions and policies specifically regarding their preschoolers' television viewing behaviors. As well, we performed a content analysis of television popular with children ages 2 to 5. This was done to determine how often Latinos appear in both television program and non-program content.

## INTRODUCTION

Until recently, Latinos have generally been either ignored or categorized as "white" in media studies. It is important, however, to consider ethnic and cultural groups, because understanding patterns of use increases our ability to develop strategies for creating media that can be more effectively tailored to population subgroups.

In the United States, Latinos are the fastest growing minority group and, by the year 2000, they will outnumber African Americans as our largest ethnic-racial minority group (1). Already in June 1996, the number of Hispanic children (12 million) outnumbered the number of African American children (11.4 million) in the U.S. (2). Considering immigration patterns, high fertility rates of most immigrant groups, and improvements in the accuracy of census enumeration techniques, demographers predict that in California alone, the Latino population will increase from 4.5 million in 1980 to 13.6 million in the year 2030 (3).

During the preschool years, rapid cognitive, psychological, and social developmental growth can be threatened by various factors, especially poverty. Among Latino American 2- to 5-year-olds, 42% live below the poverty level, 29% live in single parent households, and 30% do not have health insurance (4). Furthermore, Latino American preschoolers are more at risk to environmental toxins and pesticides than are their non-Latino white peers (5). As they become school children and adolescents, Latinos become susceptible to long-term health problems such as obesity and heart disease as well as the harmful consequences of high risk behaviors (i.e., early sexual behavior and exposure to sexually transmitted diseases, substance abuse, violence, etc.) (4, 6-9).

We believe that media can play a positive role in the lives of Latino American children. It is known that preschool children watch many hours of television and learn from all types of genres and content (10). Among immigrant children, television facilitates acculturation by creating a shared reality and encouraging understanding of different cultures and experiences (11). Furthermore, television can depict and model, in appropriate ways, positive health messages and behaviors for specific audiences (12-13). Lastly, educational programs watched during the pre-school years can benefit underserved populations in providing tools necessary for educational success (14).

It is also important to know what Latino American children see on television. While data is scarce, the incidence and portrayal of minority groups on television are minimal (15). When they do appear in programs or commercials,

Latinos have minor, non-speaking roles. This is important to note since minorities often spend more time watching television than whites and indicate that they rely on it more as an information source (16-17).

In this report, we advance the understanding of media use by Latino American preschoolers by considering a sample of preschoolers in Northern California. Through interviews with mothers, we gathered and now offer current data about the existence and use of technology in the homes of Latino preschoolers. We present information on preschoolers' television viewing patterns and behaviors and mothers' opinions and policies regarding media use. In addition, we performed a content analysis of programs popular with children aged 2 to 5. This analysis allows us to describe the frequency that Latino characters appear on televised program and non-program content.

# METHODS

## SURVEY

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**Sample** We interviewed 128 mothers of Latino American preschoolers in Northern California in what is known familiarly as Silicon Valley. The sample included both English and Spanish speaking mothers of children aged 2- to 5-years-old.

Initially, we tried recruiting mothers of preschoolers through bulletin board and newsletter announcements at community and day care centers, Head Start programs, schools, and churches. This effort proved ineffective in gathering a representative sample, so we redirected our efforts. With authorization from center directors and supervisors, we had our trained research staff actively recruit at four community center sites. These sites were all in the Silicon Valley area of northern California and were at locations where preschoolers of parents of low- and middle-income families attended day care or classes. Researchers approached mothers, who had been notified about the study through letters sent home through the mail. Interviews, which lasted around 15 to 20 minutes, were either conducted at that time or scheduled for a more convenient time. This more aggressive approach proved successful; very few of the approached mothers refused participation and we conducted all our interviews within a 3 month period (February to April 1998). It should be noted that the research staff was bilingual and extremely familiar with the local Latino American community.

This sample was desirable since research indicates that poor youngsters from minority groups are frequent users of media and they are more likely to be at risk for various health problems (4, 7, 16). Furthermore, very little research has been conducted with this population and this sample was representative of Latino Americans in this geographic region.

**Description of Variables:** From the mothers, we obtained data about the preschoolers including gender, age, ethnicity, number of children and parents/guardians in the household, and whether the family qualified or received AFDC. Mothers indicated the highest education level obtained by either or both parents and we relied on this data since it serves as a good proxy for socio-economic status (18). To ascertain acculturation status, we asked mothers where they were born and/or how many years they had lived in the United States and the primary language spoken by both the mothers and the child. Mothers described how much and in what ways their children used television, VCRs, video game players and computers. Besides indicating their preschooler's favorite program, mothers told us of their child's viewing behaviors, such as parent and peer co-viewing and eating meals or snacks, or playing games while watching. Mothers also offered their opinions about television and told of what program types they encouraged or discouraged their children to watch.

## CONTENT ANALYSIS

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**Sample** In gathering representative content that preschoolers are likely to see, we relied on Nielsen Media Research statistics. We obtained the names of the highest ranked programs for preschool children and videotaped the top 30 on three separate occasions during a six week period (Fall 1997). Since young children are likely to see non-program content in and around the programs they watch, videotaping included the programs as well as the non-program content during and immediately after the program's broadcast. Five researchers, all who had studied communica-



tion, participated in training exercises prior to coding. In these trainings, program and non-program examples (not part of the content analysis sample) were reviewed and as group, researchers discussed variable qualifications until a consensus was reached. Then, researchers independently coded the videotapes. A random subsample, constituting 15% of the videotapes, was double-coded and percent agreement was calculated for a range of variables.

***Description of Content Analysis Variables:*** We recorded information about both the program and non-program content, including demographic data for featured characters. This included the gender, approximate age, and ethnicity for program characters and ethnicity of featured characters in non-program content.

## ANALYSES AND RESULTS

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For both the survey and the content analysis, we present the general findings and note existing patterns. In describing the survey, we give an overview of media use by this sample of Latino American preschoolers. We tell of the amount and diversity of media technology in the homes as well as the viewing behaviors of these preschoolers. Lastly, we present the ways in which mothers of Latino American preschoolers think of and encourage and discourage the use television. Regarding the content analysis, we offer the percentage of featured Latinos in relation to the total number of presented characters in various types of program and non-program content.

We tested for statistical significant differences between and among variables using the Student T, Chi-Square, Anova, and Pearson correlation tests. Significance was determined at a  $p < 0.05$  level for all tests.

# RESULTS

## SAMPLE

Through parent interviews, we collected information on 128 Latino American preschoolers (See Table 1). There were slightly more girls than boys and the average age was 3.98 years (St. Dev.=0.73).

Most of the preschoolers' parents were immigrants to the United States from various regions of Mexico, including Jalisco, Michoacan, and Zacatecas. The primary language spoken at home by the majority of these parents and children was Spanish. Mother's education level, which we know to be a good indicator of socio-economic level (18), was low. Slightly more than half had less than a high school education and only 5.5% had a college or an advanced degree. Only 16.4% of the interviewed mothers indicated that they qualified for or received financial Federal assistance (Aid to Families with Dependent Children or Food Stamps).<sup>1</sup>

**Table 1. Information about the sample.**

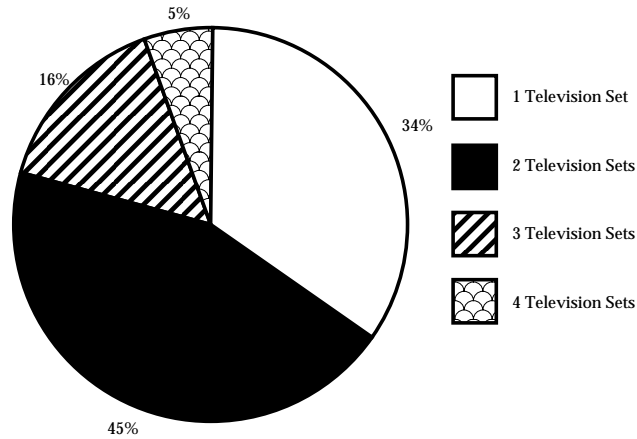
		NUMBER	%
GENDER	Boys	55	42.9
	Girls	73	57.0
AGE	2 years old	8	6.3
	3 years old	11	8.6
	4 years old	84	65.6
	5 years old	25	19.5
MOTHER BORN IN THE U.S.	YES	21	16.4
	NO	107	83.6
Average No. of Years in the U.S. = 9.8 (St. Dev. = 5.8)			
MOTHER'S PRIMARY LANGUAGE	Spanish	112	87.5
	English	16	12.5
CHILD'S PRIMARY LANGUAGE	Spanish	100	78.1
	English	28	21.9
NUMBER OF PEOPLE IN THE HOUSEHOLD	3	13	10.2
	4	41	32.0
	5	36	28.1
	6	19	14.8
	7	19	14.8
MOTHER'S EDUCATION LEVEL	< High School	69	53.9
	High School	32	25.0
	Some college	20	15.6
	College or more	7	5.5
QUALIFY FOR/RECEIVE AFDC	No	107	83.6
	Yes	21	16.4

<sup>1</sup> We believe that many of the families in the 84% not qualifying for or receiving AFDC might be in the economic bracket that can get assistance. The Latino American mothers of this survey may not have felt comfortable or did not apply for AFDC for fear of deportation.

TELEVISION SETS

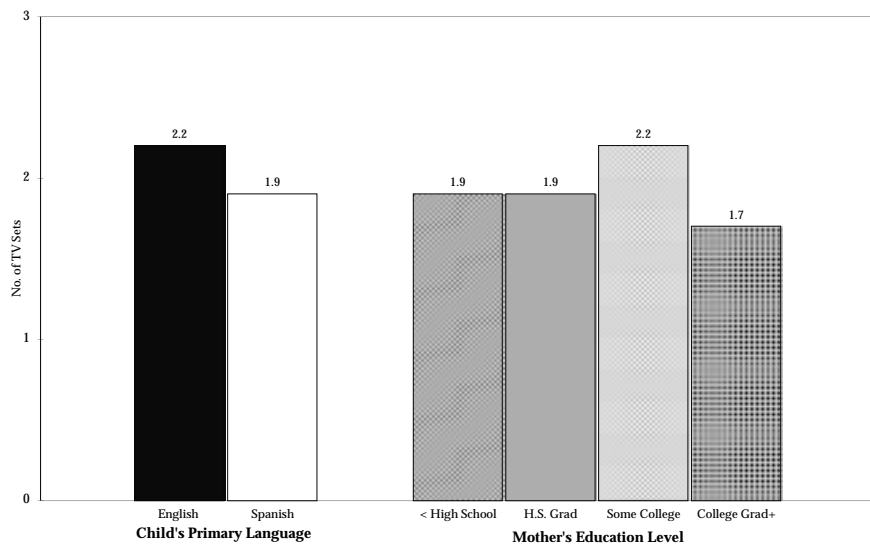
Every household had at least one working, plugged-in television set (average = 1.92 TV sets, St. Dev. = 0.85). In fact, two-thirds of the households had more than one TV set (See Figure 1).

Figure 1. Number of TV sets per household.

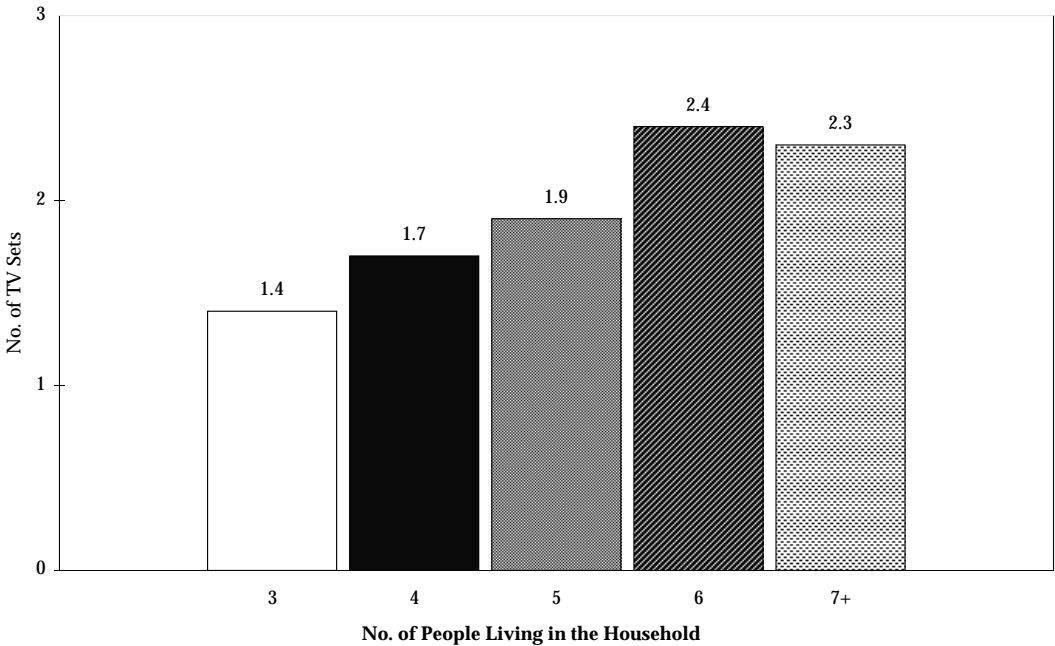


Neither the mothers' primary language nor where she was born was related to the number of TV sets in the household. Furthermore, the number of TV sets was not significantly related to the mother's education level; households where mothers had less than a high school education had only slightly fewer TV sets (average = 1.9) than households where mothers had a high school education or more (average = 2.0) (See Figure 2). We did find that the number of TV sets was related to the number of people living in the household (See Figure 3). Households with 4 or fewer individuals had, on average, 1.6 TV sets; in contrast, those households with 5 or more people had, on average, 2.1 TV sets.

Figure 2. Average number of TV sets per household, by child's primary language and mother's education level.



**Figure 3. Average number of TV sets by number of people living in the household.**



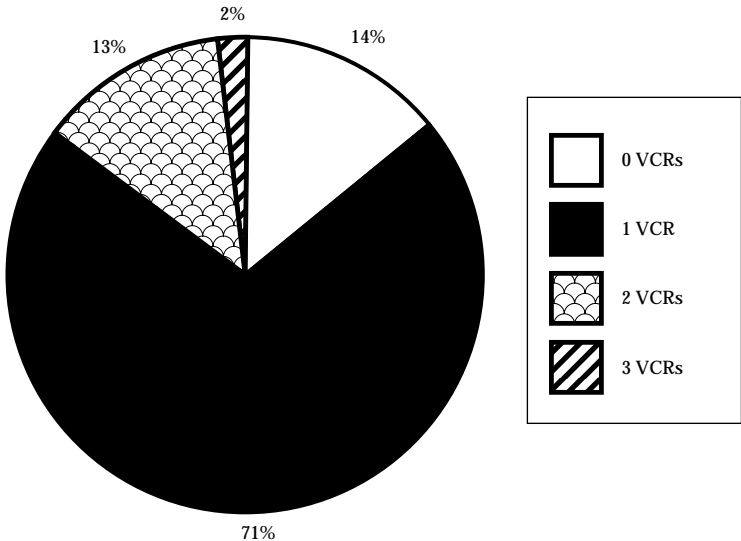
**CABLE SERVICE OR SATELLITE DISHES**

Fifty-two percent of these households had either cable service or a satellite dish. Of those with cable or satellite, 21% paid for extra channels. The most frequently reported premium channel was Disney, followed by HBO and Showtime. In this region of California, extended cable service costs approximately \$30 a month, while basic cable service costs around \$11 a month.

**VCRs**

VCRs were in 86% of the surveyed households. The majority of families had only 1 VCR, but 13% had 2 and 2% had 3 VCRs (See Figure 4).

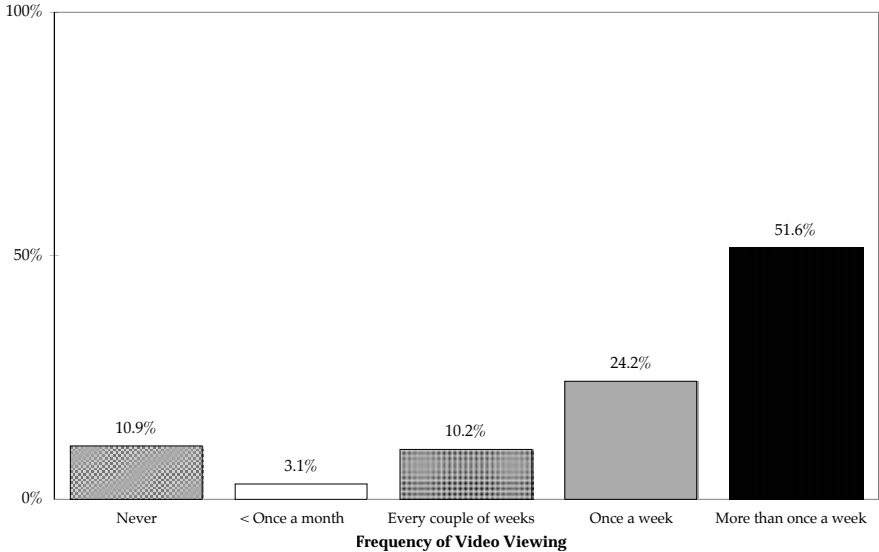
**Figure 4. Number of VCRs per household.**



**VIDEO WATCHING**

Mothers reported that their preschool children frequently watched videos. Seventy-six percent said that their preschooler watched videos either one or more times a week. Another 11% of the mothers said that their preschoolers never watched videos (See Figure 5).

**Figure 5. Frequency of video viewing.**



The following is a table of the preschoolers’ favorite videos, separated by gender (See Table 2). The videos *Barney*, *The Lion King*, and *Toy Story* appear on both the girls’ and boys’ lists.

**Table 2. Favorite videos of Latino American girls and boys.**

<b>Girls</b>	<b>Boys</b>
(1) Barney	(1) Barney
(2) Cinderella	(2) The Lion King
(3) Winnie the Pooh	(3) Batman
(4) The Lion King	(4) Toy Story
(5) Toy Story	(5) Hercules
(6) Sesame Street	(6) The Land Before Time
(7) 101 Dalmatians	(7) Power Rangers
(8) The Little Mermaid	(8) Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles
(9) Beauty and the Beast	(9) Aladdin
(10) Pocahontas	(10) George of the Jungle

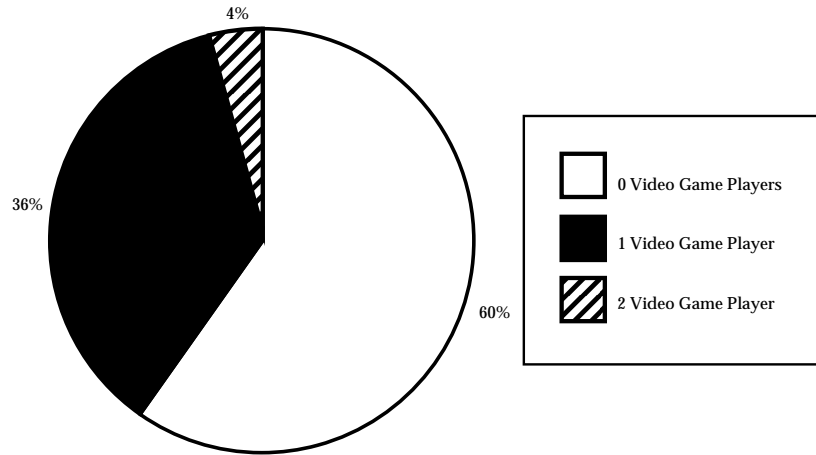
**MOVIE WATCHING**

Only a very small subsample of the preschoolers (6%) had seen a movie at a movie theater during the week prior to the interview. Of the eight children constituting this group, four saw *The Borrowers*, three *Titanic*, one *For Richer or Poorer*, and one *Anastasia*. Please note that one child saw 2 movies. *Titanic* and *For Richer or Poorer* both had a PG-13 rating, *The Borrowers* a PG rating, and *Anastasia* a G rating.

## VIDEO GAME PLAYERS

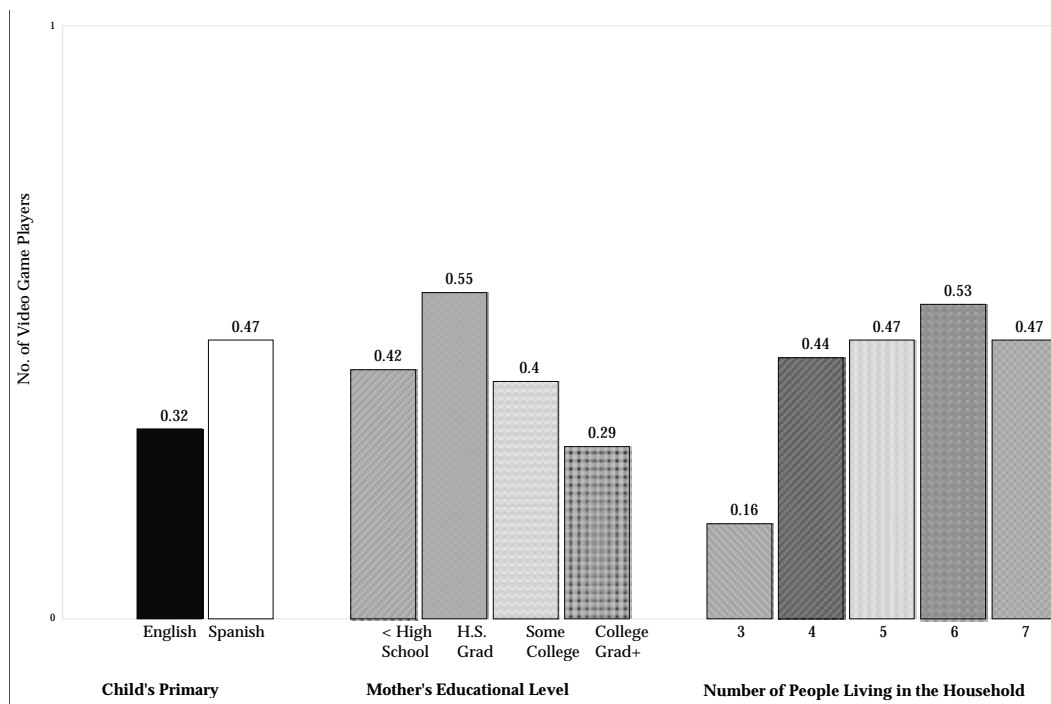
Video game players were in 40% of households, 36% had 1 player and 4% had two players (See Figure 6).

**Figure 6. Number of video game players per household.**



Households where English was the primary language were no more likely to have a video game player than households where Spanish was the primary language. As well, mothers' education level was not associated with having a video game player nor was the number of people living in the household (See Figure 7).

**Figure 7. Average number of video game players by child's primary language, mother's education level, and number of people living in the household.**

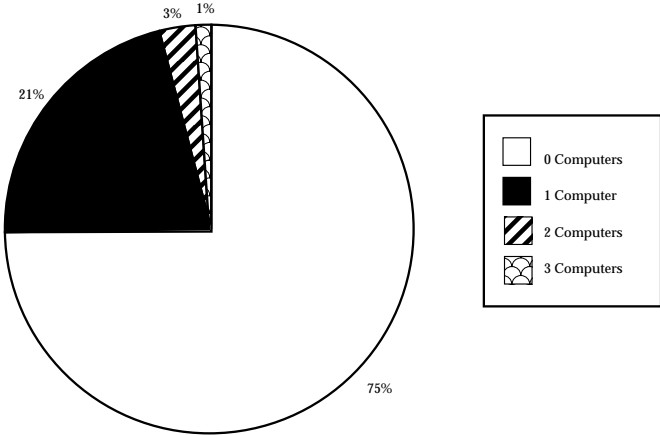


Preschool boys were no more likely than preschool girls to live in a household with a video game player. While not significant, there was a trend for preschool boys to use the household video game player more than preschool girls. Seventy-nine percent of the boys, living in households with at least one video game player, actually used the video game player in contrast to 54% of the girls.

**COMPUTERS**

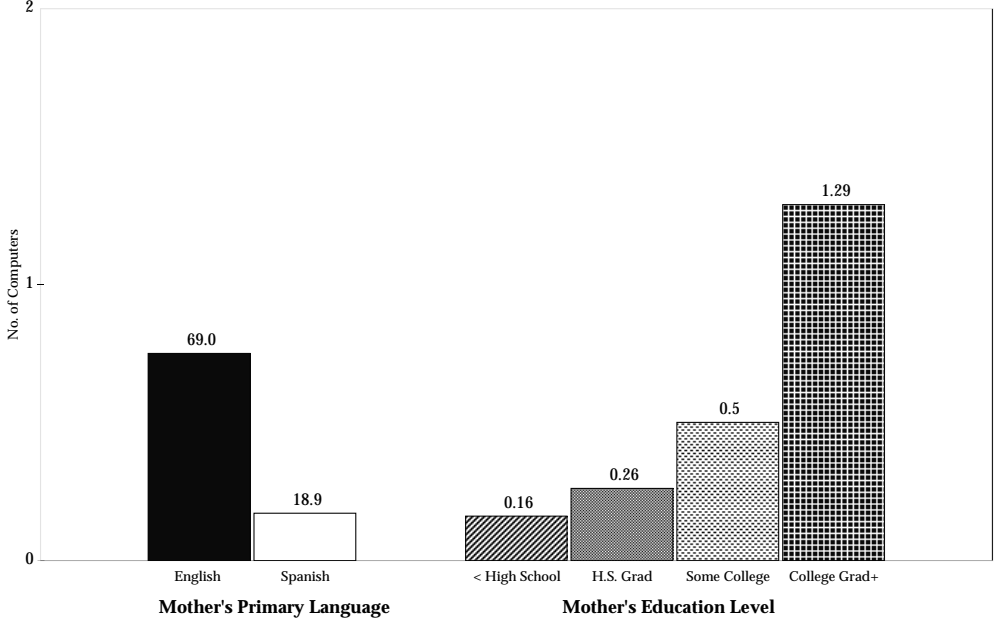
Given from where the sample was drawn (Silicon Valley of Northern California), we expected computer penetration to be high. In fact, 21% of the Latino American preschoolers lived in households with one computer, 3% with 2 computers, and 1% with 3 computers (See Figure 8).

**Figure 8. Number of computers per household.**



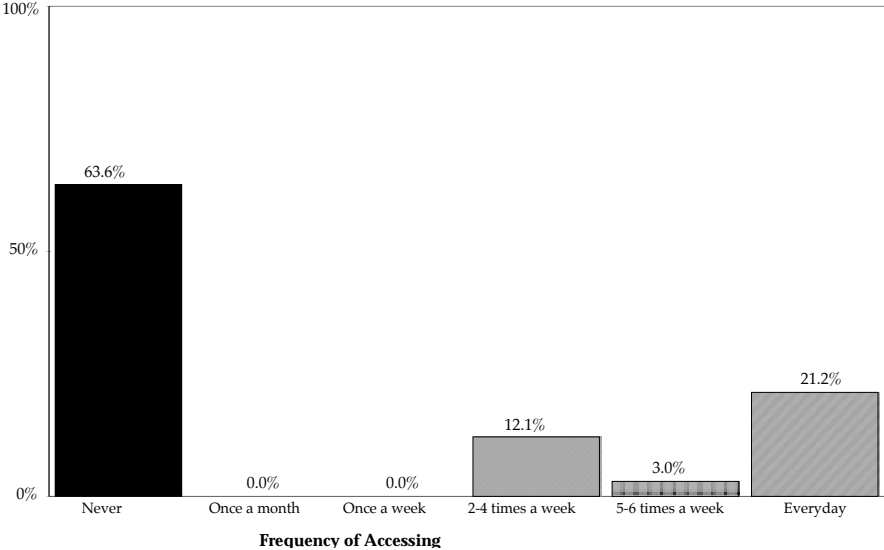
The average number of computers per household differed significantly by the primary language spoken at home and the mother's education level (See Fig. 9). Only 18.9% of the homes where the mother's primary language was Spanish had computers in contrast to 69% of the homes where the parent's main language was English. Of the 21 households that qualified for or received AFDC, 6 had a computer.

**Figure 9. Average number of computers by mother's primary language and mother's education level.**



For the 32 households with at least 1 computer, 36.4% had access to the internet. Of these households with access, all indicated that they logged on 2 or more times a week and 58% said they logged on everyday (See Figure 10).

**Figure 10. Frequency that households with computers access the Internet.**



In the households with computers, 79% said that their preschool child used the computer. Preschool boys and girls used computer with similar rates and in similar ways. According to mothers, some of the ways preschoolers used the computer were:

- (1) Played with the keyboard and/or mouse.
- (2) Used educational programs (i.e., *Reader Rabbit*, *Sesame Street* programs, *Jump Start* programs, *Math Blasters*).
- (3) Used color/paint programs (i.e., *Kid Pix*).
- (4) Played age appropriate games (i.e., *Richard Scarry Preschool Program*, *Airport Game*, *Sammy's Science House*).
- (5) Watched an older sibling or parent using the computer.

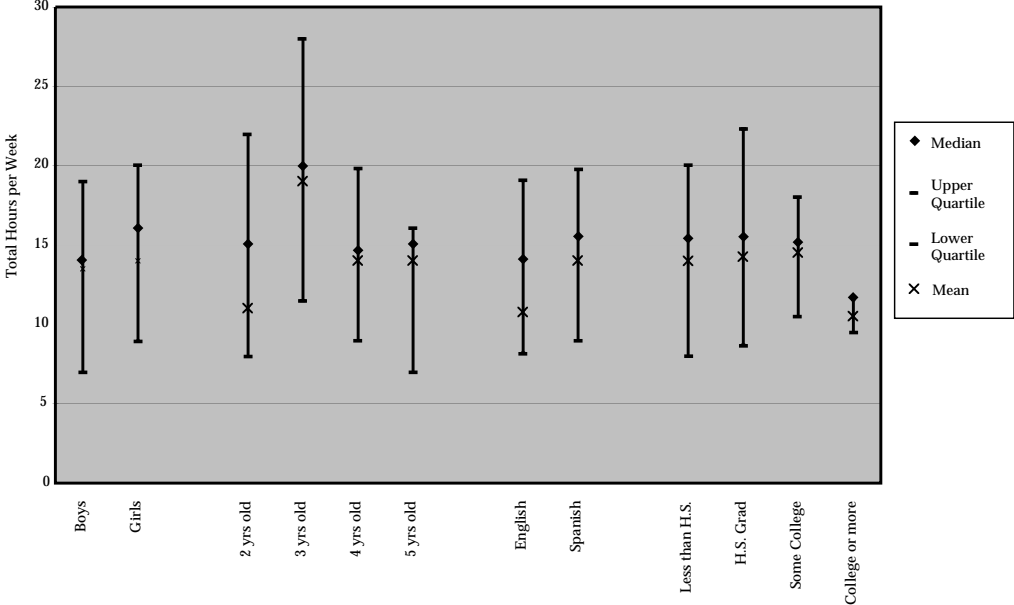
**VIEWING AMOUNTS**

According to mothers' estimates, these Latino American preschoolers watch, on average, 15.2 hours of television per week. If we examine viewing rates according to certain demographics and background characteristics, we see no significant differences (See Figure 11). Beginning with gender, we observe that boys watch, on average, slightly less than girls. This difference, however, was not significant. Our three-year-olds watched the most television per week (20.0 hrs/wk), but this average was not very different from the average hours of the 2-year-olds (15.1 hrs/wk), four-year-olds (14.7 hrs/wk), or five year olds (15.1 hrs/wk). Children living in households qualifying for or receiving AFDC watched only a little less than those who did not qualify or receive financial assistance. Children living in English speaking households watched almost an equivalent amount of television compared to children living in households where Spanish were the primary language. Where a mother was born also showed no significant



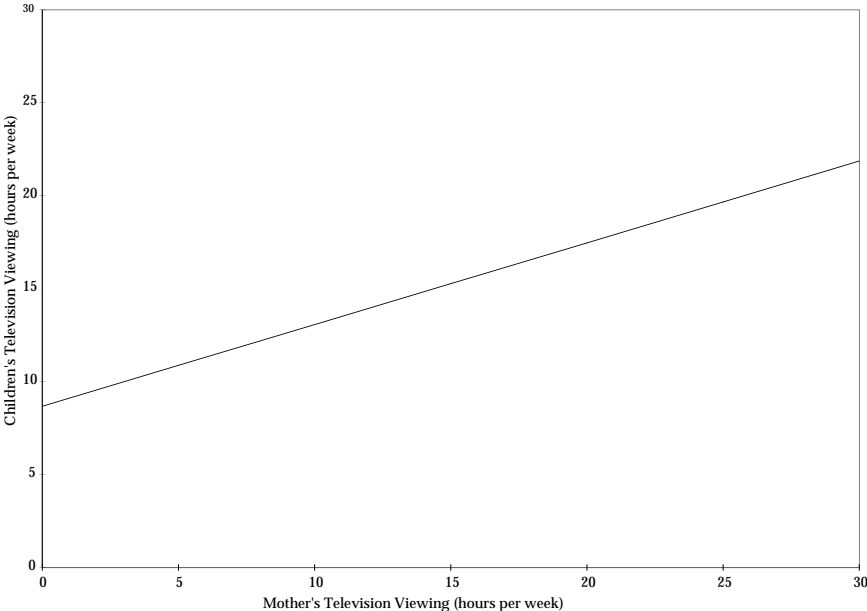
relationship to preschoolers' TV viewing amounts; those whose mothers were born in the U.S. watched an average of 14.5 hours per week and those whose mothers were born abroad watched 15.4 hours per week.

**Figure 11. Average time per week of television viewing by gender, age, child's primary language and mother's education level.**



Preschoolers' viewing hours were related with mother's viewing hours (See Figure 12). Children who watched fewer hours per week had mothers who also watched less, children who watched more had mothers who watched more.

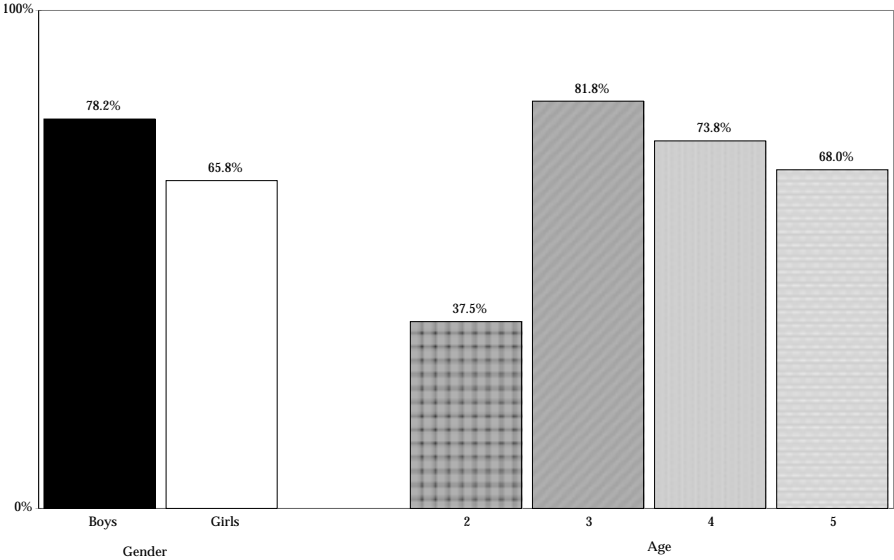
**Figure 12. Mothers' television viewing amounts per week in relation to children's television viewing amounts.**



By categorizing both preschoolers and mothers into groups of light, moderate, and heavy viewers, this association between child and parent viewing amounts becomes more apparent. In this classification scheme, light viewers watched fewer than 7 hours per week, moderate viewers watched between 7 and 17.5 (the equivalent of 2.5 hrs per day) hours per week, and heavy viewers watched more than 17.5 hours per week. Of the children who were light viewers, one-third had mothers who we also considered light viewers. More than half (59%) of the preschool children who were heavy viewers had mothers who were also heavy viewers.

More than two-thirds of the interviewed mothers reported that they have tell their preschool son or daughter to “turn off the TV set” (See Figure 13). Seventy-eight percent of boys’ mothers in comparison to 66% of girls’ mothers indicated that they gave this instruction, but this difference was not statistically significant. Child’s age was related to whether mothers told their preschooler to “turn off the set.” Few mothers of the two-year-olds had to tell their preschooler to turn off the TV set in comparison to the majority of mothers of three-, four-, and five-year-olds who had to instruct this. Mothers whose primary language was Spanish were no more or less likely than mothers who primarily spoke English to tell their preschooler to turn off the TV. This was also the case with mothers born in the U.S. compared to mothers born outside of the U.S.

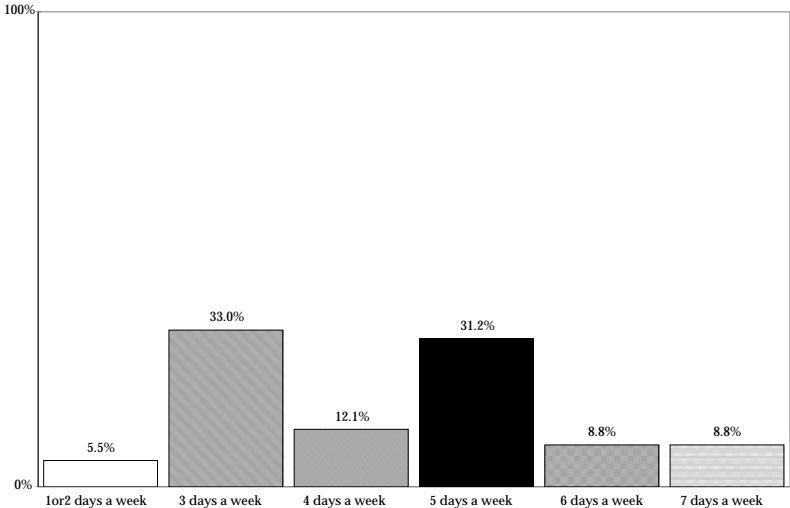
**Figure 13. Percentage of mothers who told their preschool child to turn off the TV set, by child’s gender and age.**



Preschoolers who were told to turn off the TV set watched, on average, 16.2 hours per week. This was significantly greater than the 12.9 hours of television watched by preschoolers whose mothers never had to tell them to turn off the TV set.

Of those mothers who reported having to tell their preschoolers to turn off the TV set, most said they had to make this instruction a few times a week or more (See Figure 14). Close to half indicated that they told their preschooler to turn off the TV set about everyday or more.

**Figure 14. Frequency that mothers told their preschool children to turn off the TV set.**



We asked mothers if their preschool child had any favorite television show; 87% said yes and provided the names of these programs. Table 3 presents lists of the preschoolers’ favorite television shows, separated by gender (See Table 3). We find the shows *Barney*, *Sesame Street* (and *Plaza Sesamo*, the Spanish version of *Sesame Street*), *Arthur*, and *Bananas in Pajamas* are on both the girls’ and boys’ lists.

**Table 3. Favorite television shows of Latino American girls and boys.**

<b>Girls</b>	<b>Boys</b>
(1) Barney	(1) Barney
(2) Sesame Street	(2) Sesame Street
(3) Arthur	(3) The Simpsons
(4) Rugrats	(4) Arthur
(5) Blue’s Clues	(5) Arthur
(6) Bananas in Pajamas	(6) Plaza Sesamo
(7) Sailor Moon	(7) Bananas in Pajamas
(8) Plaza Sesamo	(8) Tom and Jerry
(9) Esmeralda (Spanish Soap Opera)	(9) Superman
(10) Winnie the Pooh	(10) The Magic School Bus

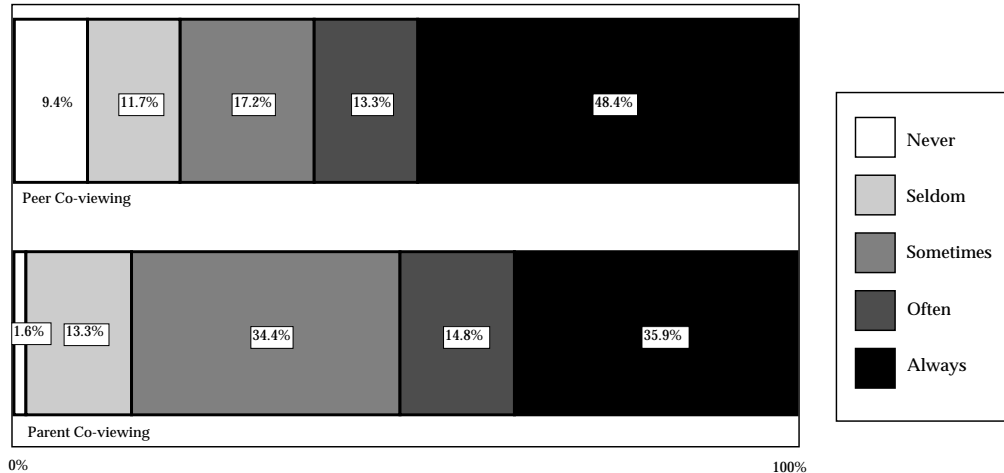
**ACTIVITIES & BEHAVIORS WHILE WATCHING TELEVISION**

**CO-VIEWING WITH A PARENT AND CO-VIEWING WITH A PEER**

When asked how often their preschool child co-viewed with a parent, around half of the mothers reported that their son or daughter “often” or “always” watched television with a parent in the room (See Figure 15). Gender of the preschooler was not related to rates of parental co-viewing nor was the age of the preschooler. In contrast to what we expected, we observed no relation of parental co-viewing to mother’s education, primary language spoken by either parent or child, and whether the mother was born in the United States.

Mothers indicated that their preschool child frequently co-viewed with a brother, sister, or friend (See Figure 15). Only 21% of the preschoolers “never” or “seldom” co-viewed with a peer; of these preschoolers, two-thirds had neither an older or younger sibling. Of the 62% that “often” or “always” co-viewed with a peer, over ninety percent had a sibling. We found, though, that peer co-viewing related to whether the preschooler had older versus younger siblings. Preschoolers with older siblings were more likely than those without older siblings to engage in peer co-viewing. In contrast, preschoolers with younger siblings did not have different co-viewing rates compared to those without younger siblings.

**Figure 15. Frequency of parent and peer co-viewing.**

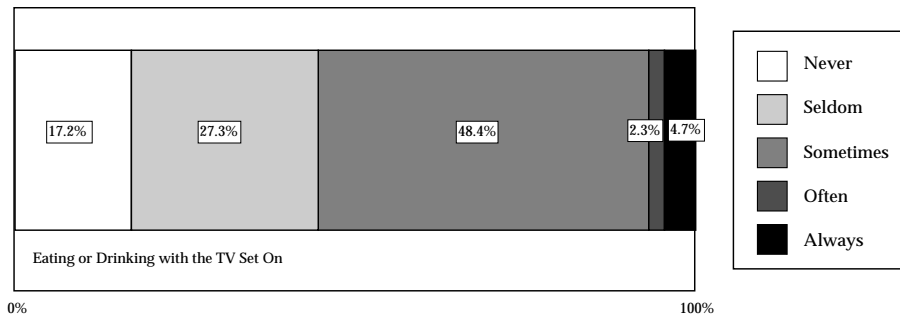


While we observed no relationship with parental co-viewing, mothers’ education level was related to the preschool child’s peer co-viewing rates. In households where mothers had less education, preschoolers were more likely to co-view with siblings or friends. Similar trends regarding co-viewing appear in relation to the primary language spoken by either parent or child and peer co-viewing. In both Spanish and English speaking households, around 60% of the preschoolers co-viewed with a peer. We did find, though, that preschoolers whose mothers were born in the U.S. co-viewed with a peer less frequently than preschoolers whose mothers were not born in the U.S. This trend, however, was not significant.

## EATING OR DRINKING WHILE WATCHING TELEVISION

Preschool children varied in whether they ate or drank while watching television. Close to half (44.5%) of the mothers said that their preschool child “never” or “seldom” ate or drank while watching, another 48% reported that their preschooler “sometimes” ate or drank (See Figure 16). The gender nor the age of the child appeared related to the frequency of eating or drinking with the TV set on. In addition, we observed no relation of eating or drinking with the TV set on with mother’s education, primary language spoken by either parent or child, and whether the mother was born in the U.S.

**Figure 16. Frequency of eating or drinking with the TV set on.**

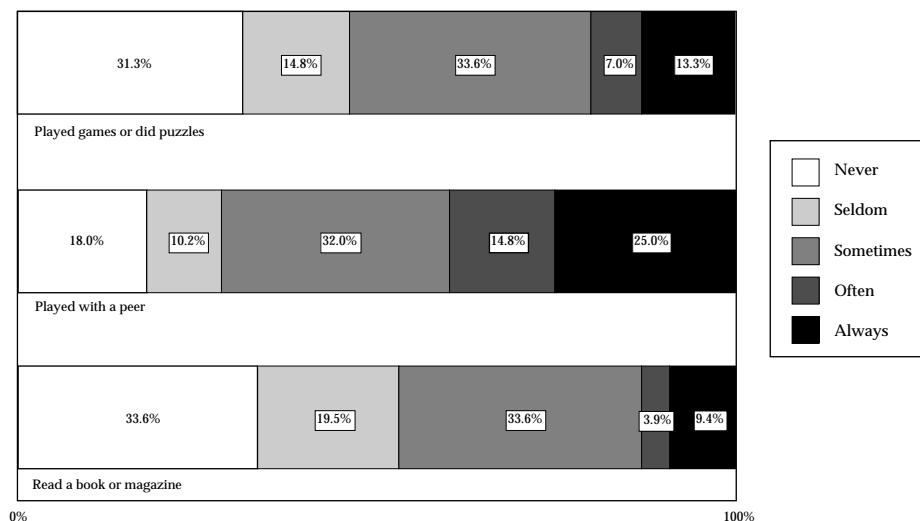


Twenty-eight percent of these children watched TV while eating breakfast, 23% and 38% watched during lunch and dinner, respectively. For those who watched during breakfast, 56% watched while eating either two or three days per week. This was similar for lunch, where this combination of eating while watching usually happened two or three days a week. For preschoolers who watched TV during dinner, 12.5% did this one day a week, 33% three days a week, and 31% seven days a week. Preschoolers who ate breakfast in front of the television set were significantly more likely to eat lunch or dinner in front of the television set. These youngsters were also more likely to watch more hours of television per week. Among our light viewers, 14% watched while eating breakfast, 10% during lunch, and 29% during dinner in comparison to 45% of heavy viewers who watched during breakfast, 35% during lunch, and 55% during dinner.

## DOING ACTIVITIES WHILE WATCHING TELEVISION

Preschool children varied in whether they did games or puzzles, played with a peer, or read a book or magazine while the TV set was on (See Figure 17). We observed that a few variables were significantly related to the combining of activities while watching television. For example, higher percentages of preschool girls compared to preschool boys played a game or did a puzzle “often” or “always” while watching. As well, having an older sibling, but not a younger sibling, was related to whether a preschool child played with a peer while watching TV.

**Figure 17. Frequency of other activities done while the TV set is on.**



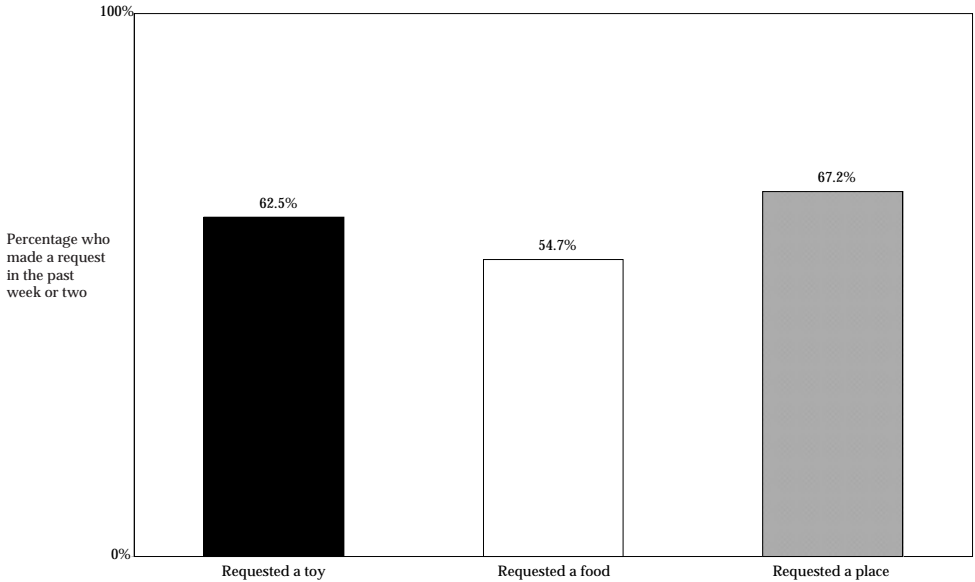
Children whose mothers spoke English were more likely to play a game or do a puzzle than children whose mothers spoke Spanish. They also played with a friend or sibling while watching TV more often than children of Spanish speaking mothers. Reading while watching, however, was not associated with the gender, age, or primary language spoken by either the mother or the preschool child. Whether a parent was born in or outside the U.S. was not related to any of these activities that were done while the TV set was on.

We found positive relationships among each of these activities done while watching television. Those who played games or did puzzles with the TV set on were also among those who either played with a peer or read while watching. Likewise, playing with a peer was associated with reading while the TV set on. Interestingly, none of these activities were related to overall media use. That is, preschoolers who watched a great deal of television were no more or no less likely to engage in another activity while watching.

### TELEVISION ADVERTISING’S EFFECT ON PRESCHOOLERS

The effect of television advertising becomes apparent in mothers’ responses to three questions about preschool children’s requests (See Figure 18). First, we asked “in the past week or two, has your child asked you to purchase any toys that he/she has seen on TV?” Sixty-three percent of the mothers responded that their preschoolers had, in fact, made requests for advertised toys. Interestingly, the making of such requests (yes or no) was not associated with the child’s gender, age, primary language, or media use or the mother’s education level, primary language or country of birth.

**Figure 18. Preschoolers’ requests for toys, food, and places advertised on television.**



Mothers who said their preschooler had asked for a toy, supplied the brand names of the requested toy. The following table provides a list of the top five requested toy items, separated by gender (See Table 4).

**Table 4. Requested toy items by Latino American girls and boys.**

<b>Girls</b>	<b>Boys</b>
(1) Barbie(s), Barbie Accessories	(1) Cars, Remote and Model
(2) Dolls other than Barbie	(2) Power Ranger items
(3) Cosmetics	(3) Superhero toys/figures
(4) Winnie the Pooh items	(4) Nintendo Games
(5) Fast food kids' meals toys	(5) Action figures

The second of these questions was “in the past week or two, has your child asked you to purchase any foods or drinks that he/she has seen on TV?” Here, 55% of the mothers said their preschooler had made a food or drink request. Asking for a food or drink was not related to the child’s gender. We observed greater percentages of older compared to younger children requesting an advertised food or drink, but this trend was not significant.

The primary language spoken by the child or parent was related to food and drink requests. Only 19% of preschoolers whose mothers spoke English compared to 60% of preschoolers whose mothers spoke Spanish asked for an advertised food or drink. Much the same, preschoolers whose mothers were born in the U.S. were significantly less likely to make a food or drink request than preschoolers whose mothers were born outside of the U.S. We also observed that the mother’s education level was related to requesting a food or drink; those who made such requests had mothers with less education. The preschoolers’ television viewing amounts were also related to such requests. On average, children who did not make requests watched 13.4 hours per week while those making requests watched, on average, 16.8 hours per week.

Mothers who indicated that their preschooler had recently requested a food or drink, reported the brand names of these items. Table 5 provides a list of the top five requested food and drink items, separated by gender. In contrast to what was observed with requested toys, a few items appear on both the girls and boys’ lists, including Squeeze Its and Kellogg’s Cornflakes.

**Table 5. Requested foods or drinks by Latino American girls and boys.**

<b>Girls</b>	<b>Boys</b>
(1) Squeeze Its (fruit drink)	(1) Kellogg’s Cornflakes
(2) McDonalds’ Food	(2) Other Cereals
(3) Kellogg’s Cornflakes	(3) Cheerios (Regular and Honey Nut)
(4) Pizza	(4) Squeeze Its (fruit drink)
(5) Sunny Delite	(5) Macaroni and Cheese

The third of these questions was “in the past week or two, has your child asked you to go to any stores or restaurants that he/she has seen on TV?” Over two-thirds (67%) of the interviewed mothers said that their preschoolers requested that they go to a specific store or restaurant. More similar to the toy than the food or drink requests, we found few variables related to the making of store or restaurant requests. Child’s gender, age, and primary language and the mother’s education level, primary language or country of birth were not related to requesting that family members go to a store or restaurant. Only the child’s media use was related to such requests. Preschoolers not making store or restaurant requests watched an average of 12 hours of television per week while preschoolers making this request watched an average of 16.8 hours per week.

Mothers of those who had made requests supplied the store or restaurant names, as presented in Table 6. Again, girls and boys made similar requests, with McDonalds by far being the most popular response.

**Table 6. Requested stores or restaurants by Latino American girls and boys.**

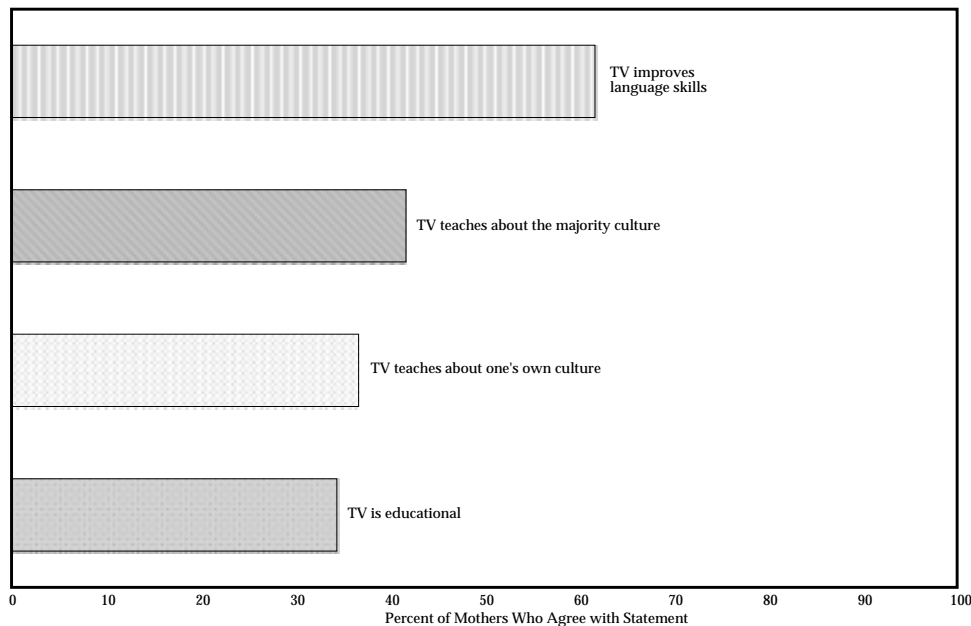
<b>Girls</b>	<b>Boys</b>
(1) McDonalds	(1) McDonalds
(2) Burger King	(2) Burger King
(3) Toys R Us	(3) Toys R Us
(4) K-Mart	(4) Chuck E. Cheese
(5) Walmart	(5) Jack in the Box

## MOTHERS' OPINIONS ABOUT TELEVISION

We asked mothers whether they agreed or disagreed with various statements about television. Do note that these are the mothers' perceptions; mothers interpreted each of the statements with their own discretion. Several statements suggested the potential benefits or the negative effects of television. Other statements were neutral or concerned the ways mothers or preschool children use television. Figures 19, 20, and 21 present the percentages of mothers who agreed with each of the statements.

On the potential benefits of television, the majority of mothers felt that “watching TV improves the language skills of preschool children.” We observed only a few significant differences between groups regarding this statement. For example, 69% of Spanish speaking mothers agreed that TV improves language skills in contrast to only 12.5% of English speaking mothers. As well, 66% of those born outside of the U.S., compared to 38% of those born in the U.S, agreed with the idea that television viewing could improve preschool children's language skills.

**Figure 19. TV's potential benefits.**



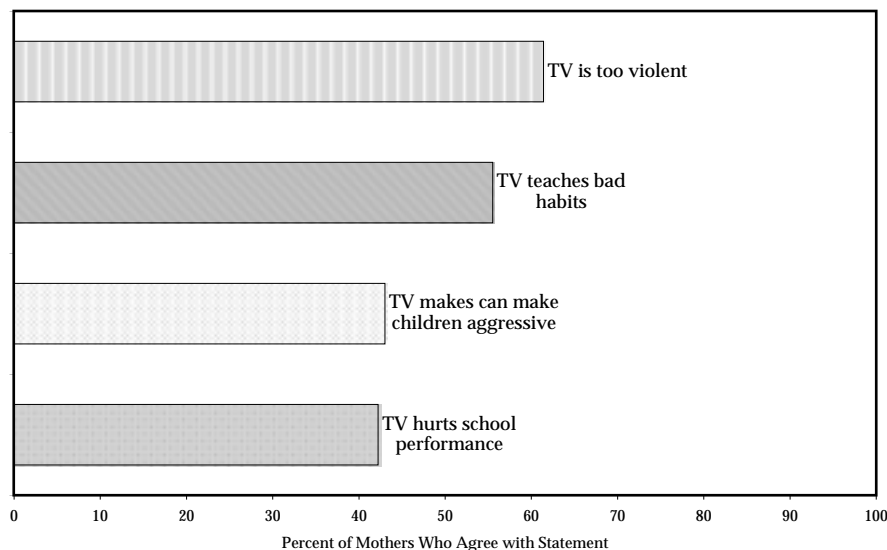


Around 42% of these mothers agreed that “TV teaches about the majority culture” and 37% agreed that “TV teaches about one’s own culture.” Recall that the mother interpreted these statements with her own discretion. The language spoken by either the parent or the child was related to agreement with these statements. Those who spoke Spanish, compared to those who spoke English, were more likely to agree with both statements. Mothers born outside of the U.S. were more likely than mothers born in the U.S. to believe that TV teaches about one’s own culture. Where one was born did not relate to whether one agreed with the statement about TV’s teaching about the majority culture. Lastly, mothers with lower educational levels, compared to those with higher educational levels, were more likely to agree that TV teaches about one’s own culture. Mothers with dissimilar educational levels did not have different opinions on whether TV teaches about the majority culture.

A little more than a third (34%) of the mothers agreed that “TV is educational.” Only mother’s education level related to one’s opinion; mothers with more education were less likely to agree that TV is educational.

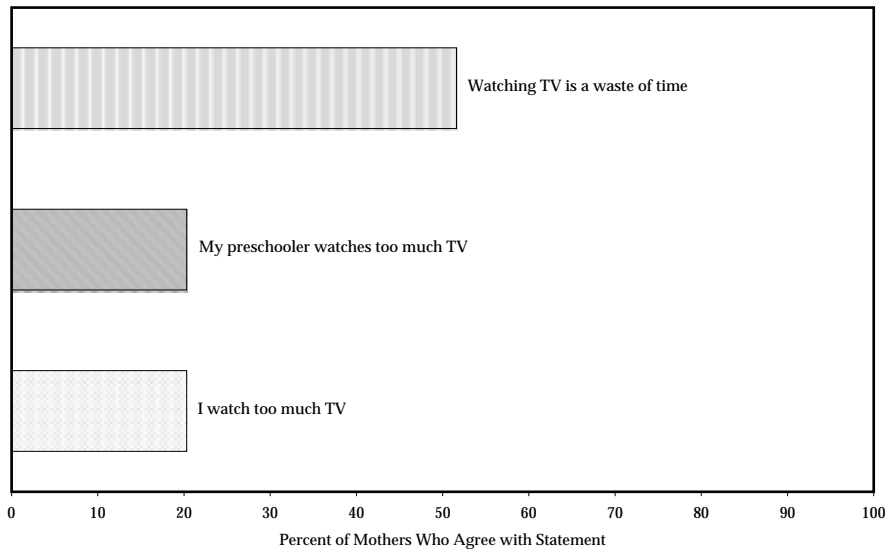
When we asked mothers to indicate whether they agreed or disagreed with statements referring to the potentially negative effects of television, we observed similar opinions across various subsamples (See Figure 20). In fact, no significant differences were observed among mothers of boys versus girls, mothers of younger versus older preschoolers, mothers who spoke English versus Spanish, mothers born in versus outside of the U.S. or mothers with less versus more education. Across the entire sample, we found that 61% agreed that “TV is too violent,” 55% thought that “TV teaches bad habits,” 43% felt that “TV makes can make children aggressive,” and 42% agreed that “TV hurts school performance.”

**Figure 20. TV’s potentially negative effects.**



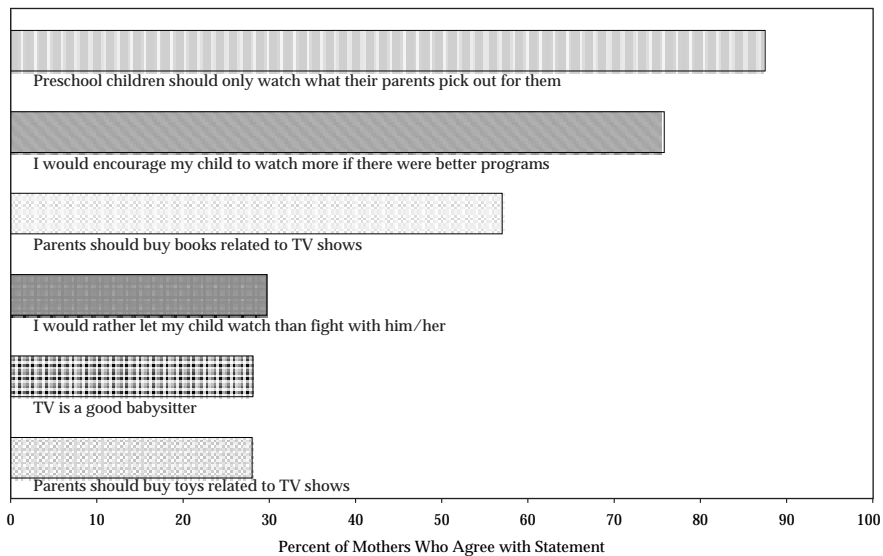
Fifty-one percent of the mothers agreed that “Watching TV is a waste of time,” but only 20% felt that they or their preschool child watched too much TV (See Figure 21). The only significant difference observed among the subsamples with reference to these three statements was that those born in the U.S. compared to those born outside the U.S. were more likely to agree that their preschooler watched too much TV.

**Figure 21. General statements about television use.**



Our final set of statements concerned the ways that parents use television with their preschoolers (See Figure 22). Overwhelmingly, mothers strongly agreed with the statement that “Preschool children should watch what their parents pick out for them.” Mothers who differed in primary language, where they were born, and educational background consistently felt that parents should be very involved in choosing what their young children watch on television.

**Figure 22. Ways that parents and preschoolers use television.**



More discrepancy was observed with the statements “I would encourage my child to watch more if there were better programs” and “I would rather let my child watch than to fight with him or her.” With the former statement, around 80% of mothers who spoke Spanish or were born outside of the U.S., in significant contrast to around 40% of mothers who spoke English or were born in the U.S, said they would encourage more viewing if better programs existed. Those with less education, compared to those with more, were more likely to agree with the statement about

encouraging more viewing of better programs. On the latter statement, significantly more of the mothers born outside of the U.S. (34%), in contrast to those born in the U.S. (9%), agreed that they would let their preschool child watch rather than fight. Mother's primary language and educational level did not relate to whether the parent would be more permissive regarding their child's TV viewing in order to avoid a fight.

Only 25% of the mothers agreed with the statement "TV is a good baby-sitter." Among mothers who spoke Spanish, 32% agreed, in contrast to 0% of mothers who spoke English, that "TV is a good baby-sitter." Mother with less education, compared to those with more education, were more likely to agree with this statement.

We asked mothers if parents should buy books and/or toys related to the TV shows that their preschool children watch. While 57% of all mothers agreed that buying books related to TV shows was a good idea, significantly more mothers of girls compared to mothers of boys agreed with this statement. This was the only opinion statement for which we found a significant difference based on the child's gender. Mothers whose primary language was Spanish were more likely than mothers who spoke English to agree that "parents should buy books related to TV shows." Education level of the mother was related to agreement with the statement about book buying. Interestingly, mothers with more education were less likely than mothers with less education to agree that parents should make this type of purchase. Fewer mothers agreed that parents should buy toys related to TV shows compared to the number of mothers who thought it was okay to buy books related to TV shows. Mothers' primary language and education level were associated with statement agreement on the buying of TV related toys. Spanish speaking and lesser educated mothers were more likely to agree that "parents should buy toys related to TV shows."

## NETWORKS, GENRES, AND PROGRAMS ENCOURAGED OR DISCOURAGED BY MOTHERS

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Given that children are exposed to numerous networks, genres, and programs, we thought it would be valuable to know what mothers encouraged, were neutral towards, or discouraged their preschool children to watch. Specifically, we considered three groups of things broadcast on television: Spanish language, children's, and adult programming (See Figures 23, 24, and 25).

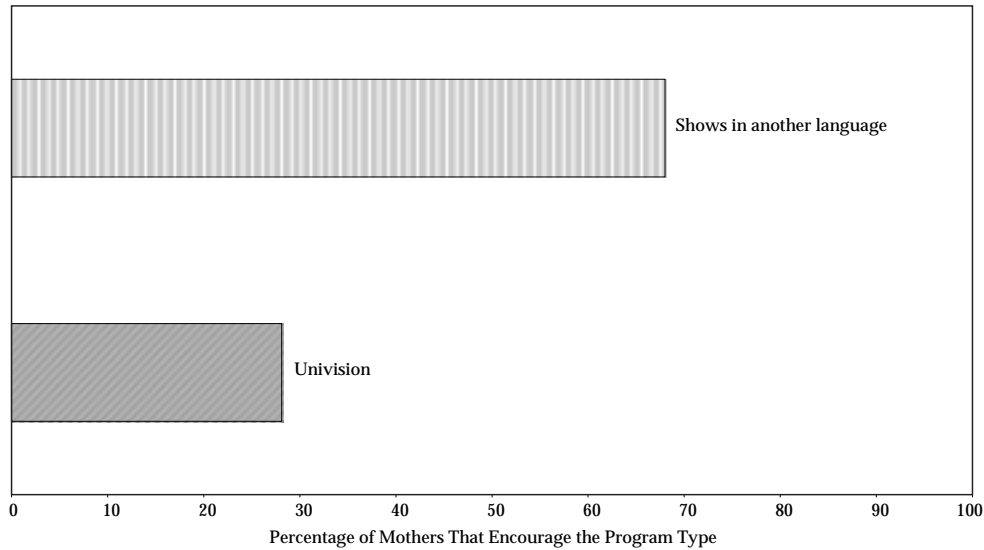
### SPANISH LANGUAGE PROGRAMMING

Sixty-eight percent of the mothers said they encouraged their preschool child to watch shows in another language, although only 28% encouraged their son or daughter to watch the Spanish station Univision (See Figure 23).<sup>2</sup> The only variable related to encouraging watching shows in another language was mother's primary language. Mothers whose primary language was Spanish, compared to those who spoke English, were more likely to encourage their preschoolers to watch such shows. We observed no significant differences in whether mothers encouraged or discouraged Univision; mothers from most subsamples equally indicated that they discouraged preschoolers in watching this network.

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<sup>2</sup> Many mothers indicated mixed feelings about Univision. They did not approve of the general programming on Univision, but did approve of and encourage their preschoolers to watch *Plaza Sesamo*, the Spanish version of *Sesame Street* broadcast Saturday mornings on Univision.

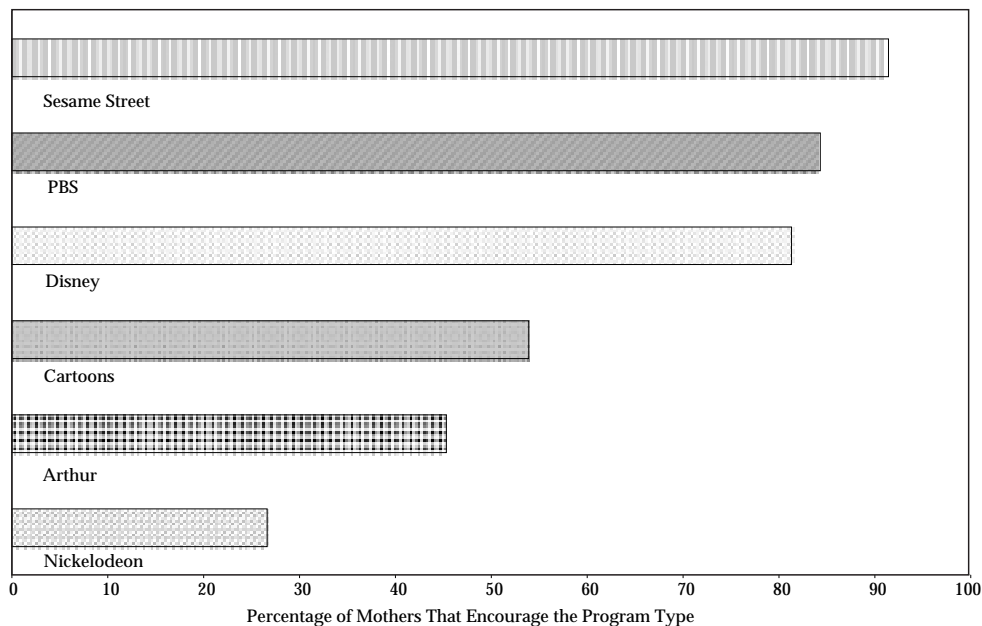
**Figure 23. Spanish language television.**



## CHILDREN'S PROGRAMS

We had mothers consider a variety of networks and shows that target preschool audiences (See Figure 24). In this sample, we found that most mothers strongly encourage their preschool children to watch *Sesame Street*, specifically, and PBS, in general. Only 1% and 5% strongly discouraged their son or daughter to watch *Sesame Street* and PBS, respectively.<sup>3</sup> Fewer mothers encouraged their children to watch *Arthur*; but we believe that this is because mothers were less familiar with this show. Of the interviewed mothers, 43% were neutral about *Arthur* and only 12% discouraged their children to watch.

**Figure 24. Children's television.**



<sup>3</sup> Mothers encouraged their preschoolers to watch both the English and the Spanish versions of *Sesame Street*.

Eighty-one percent of the mothers said they encouraged their preschooler to watch Disney. We should note that because of ambiguities in the question, it is unknown whether mothers were thinking of either the Disney station or particular Disney videos. A much smaller percentage, 27%, of the mothers indicated that they encouraged their son or daughter to watch Nickelodeon.

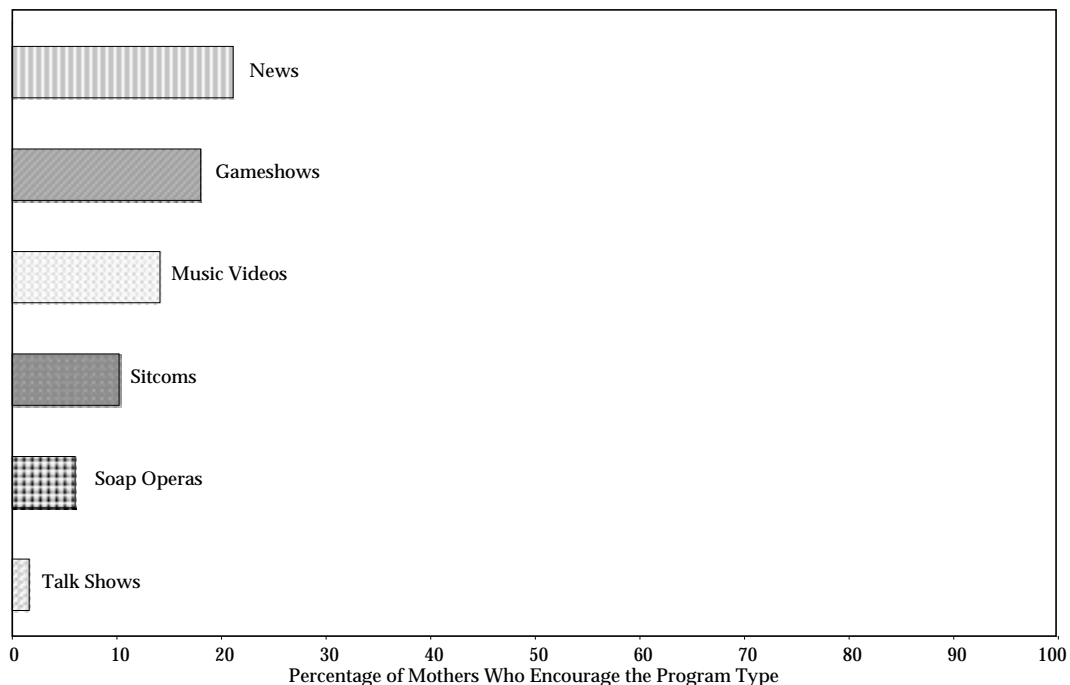
We observed that mothers' primary language, where they were born, and education level was associated with whether mothers encouraged Nickelodeon. Those who were English speakers, born in the U.S., or had more education were less likely to encourage the watching of Nickelodeon than their Spanish speaking, foreign born, or lesser educated counterparts.

A little more than half of the mothers (54%) said that they encouraged their preschooler to watch cartoons. We found several differences among various subgroups with reference to watching cartoons. Twenty-eight percent were neutral and another 18% said they discouraged watching of cartoons. Mothers of boys were more likely than mothers of girls to discourage cartoon watching. Mothers who spoke English, compared to those who spoke Spanish, were also more likely to discourage cartoon watching. Lastly, mothers with more education were more discouraging of cartoon watching than mothers with less education.

## ADULT PROGRAMMING

Twenty-one percent of the mothers said they encouraged their preschool child to watch either the national or local news, while 18%, 14%, 10%, 6% and 2% encouraged game shows, music videos, situation comedies (sitcoms), soap operas, or talk shows, respectively (See Figure 25). Of these genres, sitcoms drew the most diverse opinions about viewing. For example, 0% of English speaking mothers encouraged, 19% were neutral and 81% discouraged sitcom watching. Among Spanish speaking mothers, 12% encouraged, 33% were neutral, and 55% discouraged their preschooler from watching sitcoms. Where the mother was born had similar trends. Those born outside of the U.S. were less likely to discourage sitcom viewing. Finally, mothers with less education than their counterparts were more likely to encourage their son or daughter to watch sitcoms.

**Figure 25. Adult television.**



# RESULTS OF THE CONTENT ANALYSIS

National Nielsen ratings obtained during early Fall 1997 indicate that shows such as *Blues Clues*, *Barney*, *Rugrats*, *Ultimate Goosebumps*, and *Sesame Street*, as well as shows such as *Friends*, *ER*, and *Sabrina the Teenage Witch*, are popular with young children. Rather than consider time periods when children supposedly watch television, we decided to examine the program and non-program content during and around the 30 top rated shows. Three different episodes of each show were watched and coded, resulting in over 45 hours of material.<sup>4</sup> We used this sampling scheme to get a representation of what preschool children are supposedly watching as opposed to assuming what stations and programs they are seeing during a given time period. Furthermore, in contrast to previous content analyses, this sample includes program and non-program material appearing on PBS.

## PROGRAM CONTENT

The top thirty shows were found on commercial, cable, and public broadcast (See Table 7). There were almost equal numbers of shows in three time periods; nine shows were on Saturday or Sunday mornings, ten were broadcast on a weekday or weekend evening, and eleven could be found during the weekday hours. Most shows were 30 minutes long (90%), but a few were an hour long (7%) or 45-minutes long (3%). Sixteen (53%) shows were classified as cartoons, nine (30%) as situation comedies, four (13%) as educational, and one (3%) as a drama. Sixty-six percent of the shows popular with preschoolers had a Y rating, 10% had a G rating, another 10% had a TV 14 rating, 6.7% had a Y 7 rating, and the remaining 6.7% had a PG rating.

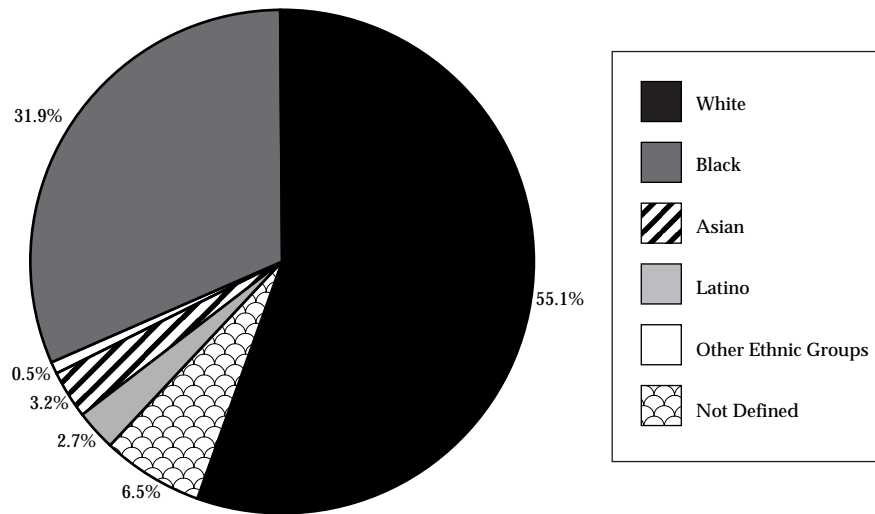
**Table 7. Percentage of Top 30 Shows Watched by Preschool Children by Network**

Network	% of Top 30 Shows
ABC	20.0
NBC	13.3
FOX	13.3
NICK	30.0
PBS	23.0

An examination of the top 30 shows watched by preschool children offers, on average, 185 featured characters to consider. Figure 26 is a pie-chart offering the percentage of characters in each ethnic group. Most of the featured characters were White (i.e., Phoebe on *Friends*, Yosemite Sam on *Bugs Bunny and Tweety*), with the next largest group consisting of characters who did not have an identifiable ethnicity (i.e., Slimy on *Sesame Street*, Blue on *Blue's Clues*).

<sup>4</sup> Around fifteen percent of the videotapes were double coded in order to ascertain percent agreement. Considering program content, we calculated an overall percent agreement of 84.3% (st. dev.=18.6) for twelve different variables across nine show pairs. For some variables, like character gender and ethnicity, percent agreement was at 100%, but for other variables, such as character age group and body shape, percent agreement was at 77.8% and 50%, respectively. Our overall percent agreement for the non-program content was 85.3% (st. dev. = 9.9). Here, we considered five variables including primary food item advertised, primary non-food item advertised, physical activity depicted, number of Caucasian characters, and number of Latino characters across 140 pairs of non-program content items.

**Figure 26. Characters by Ethnic Group on Top 30 Programs Watched by Preschoolers**

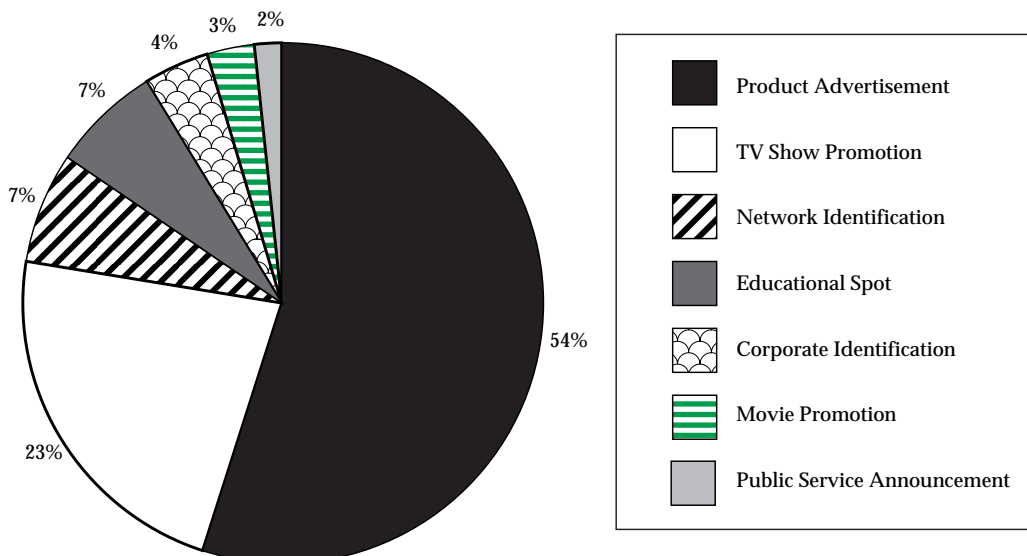


Only 6 of the featured characters were Latino. These characters were Carlos on *The Magic School Bus*, Luis and Maria on *Sesame Street*, Tina on *Barney*, Carol on *ER*, and Luis on *Suddenly Susan*. These characters appeared on either PBS or NBC shows; no Latinos appeared in popular programming airing on ABC, FOX, or Nickelodeon. Half were female, four were adults, and two were children.

## NON-PROGRAM CONTENT

A total of 584 non-program content items can be found in and immediately after the set of top 30 shows, representing a total of 3 hours, 28 minutes. We categorized the non-program content into seven different purposes. The greatest proportion of time and number of items were product advertisements, next were TV show promotions or cut aways (i.e., “after these messages we’ll return to the *Bugs Bunny and Tweety Show*”) and corporate recognition spots (i.e., McDonalds or Nike advertisement that features the corporate logo but no specific products) (See Figure 27).

**Figure 27. Types of Non-Program Content Seen During Top 30 Programs Watched by Preschoolers**



White characters dominate in all types of non-program content. Sixty-four percent of these items featured at least one white character while 6% featured at least one Latino character. Table 8 presents each type of non-program content and the percentage of items featuring one or more white, Black, or Latino characters.

**Table 8. Percentage of One or More White, Black, or Latino Characters in Non-Program Content.**

<b>Non-Program Content Item</b>	<b>(N)</b>	<b>White (% of 1+ characters)</b>	<b>Black (% of 1+ characters)</b>	<b>Latino (% of 1+ characters)</b>
(1) Product Advertisements	254	86	32	6
(2) TV Show Promotion or Cut Away	286	57	20	5
(3) Corporate Recognition Spot	55	20	5	2
(4) Network Identification	54	30	20	10
(5) Movie Promotion	15	93	20	7
(6) Education Spot	12	50	33	16
(7) Public Service Announcement	8	50	50	13

Quite often, Latino characters did not appear in non-program content unless there was at least two or more white characters. For example, 10% of all non-program content with 2 or more white characters had at least one Latino in contrast to 6% of non-program content with just 1 white character, and 0.3 % of non-program content with no white characters. In product advertisements, the percentage of items featuring a Latino characters was 8% when there were 2 or more white characters, 4% when there was just 1 white character, and 0% when there were no white characters.



## DISCUSSION

This research advances our understanding of media use and Latino American preschoolers in several ways. First, it provides a picture of how much and in what ways media exists in the homes of Latino American preschoolers. We found that Latino Americans of the San Francisco Bay area, while poorer and less educated than their Caucasian neighbors (19), live in households with substantial amounts of technology. From this small but representative sample, we see that television sets are ubiquitous, VCRs are in 86% of households, and video game players are in two-fifths of the households. Computers, which appear in a quarter of these homes, are being used by children as young as two-years-old. We also found that these Latino American preschool children frequently watch television programs and videos. The 15.2 average hours per week of television viewed by this sample falls within the range observed by other researchers (17, 20, 21).

Second, this study allowed us to consider if media use differed among several groups within the Latino American community. While we expected particular variables to affect media use, this was not the case. For example, other studies show that parents' education is negatively related to total amount of television viewed (22). Among this sample, however, mothers' education was not related to the average amount of viewing per week nor was it related to the number of TV sets in the house, parental and peer co-viewing, and television advertising's effect on requests for toys, food, or restaurants. Another example of where we found no significant differences concerns variables related to one's acculturation status. Among this sample, preschool children who lived in homes where Spanish was spoken or had mothers that were born outside the U.S. had similar media use patterns and viewing habits to children who lived in English speaking households or had mothers who were born in the U.S. This is surprising since others have suggested that ethnic groups vary in their motivations for television viewing, with Hispanics using media as a source for learning about the majority culture and gaining language skills (15). One would expect less acculturated Latino American preschoolers to use media differently than their more acculturated counterparts, but for the most part, we did not observe this.

The third finding of this study was that, in this sample, most Latino American mothers were highly invested in parenting and, as a result, their preschoolers' use of TV, VCRs, video game players, and computers. Throughout the interviews, our researchers heard numerous qualitative comments reflecting high levels of involvement by mothers from all the subgroups represented. For example, on eating meals while watching television, the vast majority of interviewed mothers felt strongly that meals and TV should be kept separate. A few offered the explanation that their children did not concentrate on their meal if the TV was on. Most mothers simply felt that meals were one type of family time, TV viewing was another. Furthermore, among the majority of Latina mothers, parental co-viewing was done "often" or "always" and most thought parents should be highly involved in choosing what their preschool child watched.

This study's fourth and last finding was that Latinos rarely appear in program and non-program content most often seen by preschool children. We found, as have others, an abysmally low percentage of Latinos characters on television (11, 16). Interestingly, in the program content, one of the six characters coded as Latino is not even a Latina, but rather of mixed Austrian, Romanian, Hungarian, and Russian extraction (Carol on ER) (23). The misperception of a character's ethnicity can overinflate or underrepresent the diversity thought to be on television (11, 16). In our research, as in others, the Latinos in non-program content served as background characters, appearing only among a multi-ethnic group of characters (11). From our survey, we see that Latino American preschoolers watch, on

average, more than two hours of television a day and many of the shows that they watch are among the top 30 rated shows for children aged 2 to 5. We believe that Latino American preschoolers ought to and deserve to see greater representation of their own culture – at least with respect to their proportion in the population.

## LIMITATIONS

This research had several limitations. For the survey, the sample size is somewhat small and derives from a very specific geographic region. Mothers provided information and this may vary from what fathers may have offered or what could have been found if researchers observed the preschool children in their naturalistic environments. Lastly, to create a succinct one-time-only interview, some important questions were not asked. Future studies examining the media use patterns of Latino American preschoolers may try to gather a more diverse national sample, triangulate data collection methods, and ask additional questions at more than one time point. The content analysis was also limited in the amount of television viewed and the number of variables coded. In future content analyses, it would be worthwhile to do more extensive coding in and around a larger number of programs at several time periods of the year.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Although our study relies on a small geographically distinct sample, the information offered and opinions expressed by Latino American mothers about their preschoolers' media use represent extremely important concerns. Latino American preschoolers access all types of media and, given decreases in prices and satisfaction derived from use, we anticipate future use rates to increase. Given what we know and what we expect, we offer the following recommendations about programming specifically for Latino American preschoolers and more generally for all preschoolers.

- **Continue creating educational and age appropriate media for Latino American preschoolers.**

While many mothers thought watching television improved language skills, most did not express a concern that their preschooler needed to watch television to acquire such language skills. Most mothers felt their children would learn English and Spanish from existing environmental and social exposure to both languages. Certainly, watching, on average, 15.2 hours a week of television programming serves as one of the major contributing influences on learning the English language.

Other than encouraging *Plaza Sesamo* (the Spanish version of *Sesame Street*), most mothers did not encourage their preschoolers to watch Spanish programs. In fact, many disapproved of programming (other than *Plaza Sesamo*) offered on Univision. This may very well have to do with the quality and lack of age appropriateness of such programs.

Based on these findings, we recommend that the extensive number of television programs designed for preschoolers continue to be broadcast (i.e., *Sesame Street*, *Barney*, *Puzzle Place*, *Blues Clues*, *Little Bear*, etc.). Perhaps such programs could include some or more Spanish language, Latino characters, and cultural segments, but given the simplistic nature of most preschool programming, it does not seem necessary to create programs exclusively in Spanish.

- **Provide Latino American mothers with educational outreach to best use available media.**

Several of those creating media for children already distribute outreach materials to schools and community centers. We would encourage such stations and production companies to provide directly to mothers information on how best to use available media. Since most Latino American mothers primarily speak Spanish, such outreach material must be in Spanish as well as English. Latino American mothers not only know their children enjoy media but also realize that some content and programs are better than others for them. We believe that advice on appropriate uses of television, video, video games, and computer software would be welcomed and practiced by most mothers.

- **Lessen the commercial nature of children's programs.**

While the Children's Television Act of 1990 limits the amount of commercial time in children's programming, we still found amazingly high percentages of two- to five-year-olds making requests for toys, foods, restaurants, and stores advertised on television. Until they can understand the persuasive tactics expressed by and seller's motives underlying commercials, preschool children should have extremely limited exposure to commercials. It seems unfair and inappropriate to market to those who think of advertisements as providing trusted, friendly advice.

In addition, outreach material created by early childhood educators should be distributed to Latino American mothers. Given the high request rates made by children across various backgrounds, all mothers should have the necessary tools to begin offering their preschool children media literacy skills.

- **Produce educational videos for preschoolers.**

Almost ninety percent of these Latino American households had one or more VCRs. We also found that around 75% of our sample already watch videotapes once a week or more. Based on these access and high use rates, we believe that preschoolers would greatly benefit if production companies, that mothers already find favorable (i.e., PBS, Disney), created and distributed age appropriate videotapes for two- to five-year-olds.

Since marketing videotapes can be more targeted than broadcasting national television programs, production companies should offer videotapes in Spanish in order to provide families more viewing options. A subsample of these Latino American children did watch and enjoy videotapes in Spanish. We believe that understandable and engaging videotapes, in both English and Spanish, might encourage and facilitate continued use among children and high rates of parental co-viewing.

- **Create educational and entertaining video game cartridges for preschoolers.**

Two-fifths of these households owned at least one video game player. Given that preschool children access this medium, it would be worthwhile to produce video game cartridges that benefit the child. Too many video games contain stereotypical, violent and/or sexist images. Companies should be encouraged to create and distribute appropriate games for this age group. Latino American families ought to have easy access to affordable games that improve skills, present culturally appropriate characters, and are enjoyable for the preschool child.

- **Produce computer software and hardware for preschoolers.**

Computer technology is now accessible to most Americans through the schools, day care centers, libraries, and homes of preschool children. In this study, a quarter of these Latino American families, including some who qualified for AFDC and/or had parents with little education, had computers. Based on conversations, many mothers indicated great acceptance of new media and technology with the expressed purpose of benefiting their children. Furthermore, mothers said their two- to five-year-olds definitively enjoyed using this medium. We suggest that appropriate software and hardware be created so that these children can continue gaining the benefits of computer (and Internet) use. In addition, we strongly recommend that, based on this sample where mothers had little formal education and primarily spoke Spanish, instructions for computer use should be easy to understand and printed in Spanish.

- **Increase the number of Latino Americans characters on popular media.**

We know from years of research that media offers role models and information that greatly influence children. In order to convey pro-social and positive behaviors among even the youngest of users, television along with the newer technologies must provide appropriate and relevant characters. Beyond increasing the portrayal frequencies of Latino Americans to greater resemble population rates, we would like to stress that portrayed characters should represent and provide positive, familiar, role models. As well, scenarios depicting the diversity of Latino American neighborhoods, festivals, foods, heroes, music, literature, and art should appear on children's programming. Such modifications of media would not only authenticate the Latino American children's sense of self, but also it could educate non-Latino Americans about the richness of this culture.

- **Conduct additional research.**

Additional studies, using a variety of approaches (i.e., natural observations, extended interviews, longitudinal surveys, etc.), must be done to gain a greater understanding of media use by Latino American preschool children.

Predominantly, this sample consisted of Mexican American youth; to know the patterns and behaviors of preschoolers, researchers should examine media use among Latino Americans from the Caribbean and Central and South America. As well, similar research ought to occur with other minority, immigrant groups living in a variety of geographic locations. Specifically, we know very little about media use among Asian American children. We feel that not until studies are done with additional and diverse samples will we have the necessary information to create appropriate media for existing and growing ethnic and cultural groups in the United States.

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