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The Role of Different TV Storytelling Approaches in Engaging U.S. Hispanic Parents and Caregivers Around Early Childhood Development

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Educational achievement gaps exist between racial and ethnic groups in the United States; early childhood readiness, fostered in part by parents and caregivers, is crucial. To respond to this challenge, the Univision television network produced content that aired across 3 storytelling genres (scripted drama, reality, news) to entertain and educate Hispanic parents and primary caregivers of children ages 0–5 years about early brain development interventions. This pretest/posttest experimental study assessed the impact of each genre and found significant direct effects on knowledge, attitudes, and behavioral intentions; the effects were mediated by perceived entertainment value and positive emotions.

Keywords: television, Hispanics, reality TV, scripted drama, entertainment–education, narrative persuasion, social change

The first five years of life are crucial for providing a child with a strong cognitive, linguistic, and social-emotional foundation (Vygotsky, 1979). Parents' participation is meaningful, as they support children through activities at home (Caskey, Stephens, Tucker, & Vohr, 2014; Dickinson & Tabors, 2001; Hallam, 2010). When it comes to talking, reading, and singing to young children, disparities exist between Hispanic parents and those of other racial and ethnic groups (Mamedova & Redford, 2015).

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To address this challenge, Too Small to Fail, a cross-platform media and public service initiative, and Univision, the country's leading media company serving Hispanic America ("25 Most," 2016), have partnered since 2014 to create Pequeños y Valiosos (Young and Valuable), a multiplatform public awareness campaign that brings Too Small to Fail's messages about early brain development into U.S. Hispanic homes. The initiative aims to reach Hispanic parents and primary caregivers of children age 0–5 years (Clinton Foundation, 2014) through a prosocial entertainment–education approach (Singhal & Rogers, 1999). In 2017, the partners incorporated Too Small to Fail messages into three disparate entertainment TV genres: *Pequeños Gigantes USA*, a reality talent show; *La Fuerza de Creer*, a scripted dramatic miniseries; and *iDespierta América!*, a morning news and entertainment program. In addition, Univision produced several public service announcements (PSAs) on campaign themes (Too Small to Fail, 2017a, 2017b).

This study endeavored to examine the impact of this unprecedented entertainment–education initiative, and to understand how an audience of U.S. Hispanic parents and primary caregivers of young children was engaged by early childhood development messages across three TV storytelling approaches. We recognize the diversity among U.S. Hispanics in terms of origin country, length of time in the U.S., immigration status, language proficiency, education, and income—all of which have implications for childhood learning and development. However, as an initial exploration of how entertainment–education can support childhood development activities among Hispanic caregivers, this study focuses on a broad, diverse U.S. Spanish-speaking population rather than on particular co-cultural groups.

We employed a pre-/posttest controlled experimental design; Hispanic parents and caregivers were assigned to view one episode from either the reality, scripted drama, or news programs (each followed by an identical PSA), or a narrative control program that did not contain intervention messaging. The research sought to understand whether U.S. Hispanic parents and caregivers learned new information, increased self-efficacy, shifted perceived importance, and increased their intentions to engage in language-rich activities with their children, and which TV genres were most effective. Anchored by narrative persuasion theory—entertainment value (Borum Chattoo & Feldman, 2017), emotion (Murphy, Frank, Moran, & Patnoe-Woodley, 2011), narrative transportation (Green & Brock, 2000), and connection with characters (Cohen, 2001)—the research also sought to illuminate the mechanisms of learning and persuasion for this audience.

This work contributes to scholarship and entertainment-based prosocial efforts aimed at U.S. Hispanics. Although growing evidence supports entertainment storytelling as an effective method to reach Hispanics in the United States with health-related information (Andrade et al., 2015; Murphy et al., 2015; Wang & Singhal, 2016), and *Sesame Street* offers an enduring model of how educational entertainment targeted to underserved children can help build school readiness (Wright, Huston, Scantlin & Kotler, 2001), there is a paucity of scholarship testing the role of entertainment storytelling that engages directly with caregivers to enhance early childhood development among U.S. Hispanic children.

Literature Review

Early Parenting Intervention and Young Children

Before they enter pre-K programs, children are learning and developing critical cognitive and social-emotional skills that will be necessary in school and life (Vygotsky, 1979). Parents can foster brain-building moments in several key ways, including (1) creating a language-rich parenting environment, by dedicating daily time to talk (Caskey et al., 2014), read (Dickinson & Tabors, 2001), and sing (Hallam, 2010) to babies and toddlers, along with speaking to them in both Spanish and English (Bialystok, 2011); (2) supporting early numeracy, by using number and math concepts every day (Geary, 1994), particularly in playful moments, like counting and comparing and measuring objects; and (3) nurturing social-emotional development, based on stable, caring and responsive interactions between young children and their parents and/or primary caregivers (Gertler et al., 2014).

When it comes to supporting early literacy and numeracy, disparities exist between young Hispanic children and those of other racial and ethnic groups (Child Trends, 2014). Hispanic parents reported reading to children; telling children a story; teaching letters, words, or numbers; and singing songs less frequently in the past week than any other ethnic group (Mamedova & Redford, 2015, p. 17). Hispanic children are enrolled in preschool at lower rates than their peers (Lindsey & Howard, 2013). These indicators do not comprise a nuanced cultural portrait of this diverse population group, however; Hispanic immigrant parents are deeply concerned about their children's learning (Poza, Brooks, & Valdés, 2014). When Hispanic immigrant parents are provided opportunities to learn about the positive impact they have on their children's education, they are more likely to engage in at-home literacy activities with their children (Chrispeels & Rivero, 2001).

Media are a centerpiece of Latino family life in the U.S. (Moran, 2017).² U.S. Spanish-language media have long acted as important sources of entertainment and learning for individuals of Hispanic origin, including recent immigrants (Wilkinson, 2009). In particular, Univision has maintained high ratings among Hispanic audiences (Wilkinson, 2015). Spanish-speaking parents of young children often leverage media—particularly television—as a learning resource (Lee & Baron, 2015), and they tend to have a positive perception of television's influence on children (Moran, 2010). Notably, among Hispanic parents, media content often serves as a catalyst for nonmedia activities and conversations that support children's learning (Lee & Baron, 2015). Thus, media—and Spanish-language television, in particular—may offer a valuable opportunity to engage Hispanic caregivers in literacy and numeracy development with young children.

Mediated Storytelling for Change

According to Singhal and Rogers (1999), entertainment–education (EE) is “the process of purposely designing and implementing a media message to both entertain and educate” (p. xii). By incorporating educational or prosocial messaging into entertainment programming, EE is designed to affect knowledge, attitudes, behavior, and social norms. Although EE research in the U.S. has typically focused on scripted

² This source references “Latino/a,” not “Hispanic.”

storytelling (e.g., Murphy et al., 2011), recent research also has demonstrated its persuasive power in nonfiction storytelling (Borum Chattoo & Feldman, 2017).

EE is thought to be effective because it helps individuals to acquire knowledge through observational learning among other theoretical paradigms. Certain persuasive mechanisms are unique to entertainment storytelling (Moyer-Gusé & Nabi, 2010), as individuals are absorbed into a story through narrative transportation (Green & Brock, 2000) and identify with (Cohen, 2001)—or perceive similarity with or like (Murphy et al., 2011)—characters. Such narratives can lower resistance to persuasion by reducing counterarguing of the embedded message (Slater & Rouner, 2002) and by decreasing psychological reactance, selective avoidance, and other cognitive biases (Moyer-Gusé, 2008). Moyer-Gusé, Jain, and Chung (2012) suggest that epilogues, such as a PSA, following an EE story may further bolster involvement with the narrative.

Entertainment storytelling elicits emotions, which can help focus attention and motivate action, contributing to changes in knowledge, attitudes, and behavior (Murphy et al., 2011). Finally, a central, less studied element of EE is its ability to produce entertainment gratifications; indeed, Singhal and Rogers (1999) insisted that EE stories must be entertaining to drive social change. Entertainment media can be experienced as hedonically enjoyable, as well as elicit eudaimonic rewards that involve a heightened sense of meaning (Oliver & Bartsch, 2010). EE research shows that the experience of being entertained—whether in hedonic or eudaimonic terms—can facilitate shifts in knowledge and behavior (Schneider, Weinmann, Roth, Knop, & Vorderer, 2016).

As a newer approach, reality TV has been found to have important effects on audiences (Jain & Slater, 2013; Stevens Aubrey, Behm-Morawitz, & Kim, 2014). Compared with scripted dramas that have a planned narrative structure and professional actors, reality TV is a genre that showcases real people in nonscripted situations. National and local TV news also influences viewers' awareness of civic and social issues (Iyengar, Peters, & Kinder, 1982). Additionally, as a long-standing approach to encourage audiences to take action about a social issue after experiencing messages in an entertainment program, incorporating PSAs can be an effective strategy (Dillard & Peck, 2000; Keys, Morant, & Stroman, 2009). PSAs are short announcements that often appear between TV programs on topics such as health, safety, and education.

There is growing evidence that entertainment storytelling is an effective method for engaging U.S. Hispanics with health issues (Andrade et al., 2015; Murphy et al., 2015; Wang & Singhal, 2016), but few organizations have tested the role of EE in messages to mitigate childhood development disparities as they affect U.S. Hispanic children, and thus limited topical research and example programs exist. At the same time, little is known about the particular storytelling approaches that are best suited for delivering EE messages to Hispanic audiences, or the particular mechanisms via which EE may exert its influence on the topic of early childhood readiness. To our knowledge, no research to date has investigated EE and reality TV specifically for U.S. Hispanics. This is a particularly notable gap, given that Nielsen has reported reality TV as the second-most-watched television genre for U.S.-based Hispanic viewers (Nielsen, 2011).

Too Small to Fail: An Integrated Entertainment Media Campaign

Launched in 2013, Too Small to Fail is an integrated, entertainment media-based public service campaign that aims to promote early brain development (Too Small to Fail, n.d.). As a component of this effort, the Pequeños y Valiosos multiplatform public awareness campaign connects Hispanic TV viewing audiences with the Too Small to Fail messages about early brain development, targeted at parents and caregivers (Clinton Foundation, 2014). This work was facilitated under the leadership of Univision's cross-platform social-impact RISE UP initiative, which "harnesses the power of media and storytelling to drive positive social change on issues that matter to Hispanic Americans, African Americans, and the increasingly diverse and progressive millennial generation" (Univision PR Team, 2017, para. 7).

To anchor its 2017 campaign, Too Small to Fail worked with RISE UP and Univision's entertainment and news executives, producers, and writers to integrate positive research-based early childhood development messages into three kinds of entertainment TV programming: reality TV, scripted drama, and news. Messages originated from Too Small to Fail's national campaign and were based on empirical research on these topics. Specifically, Too Small to Fail provided synthesized research briefs to Univision from the overall campaign, which included theoretical foundations, such as attachment theory (Cassidy, 2008), and historical context, such as how Harvard professor Robert Putnam found parents of diverse backgrounds spent similar time reading to children in the 1960s and 1970s, but how gaps emerged by 2010. Other research briefs provided to Univision outlined the benefits of bilingualism, including summaries of recent research that shows children exposed to multiple languages have larger vocabularies and develop important thinking skills (Too Small to Fail, 2017c). Campaign messaging was integrated into three programs: *Pequeños Gigantes USA*, a children's reality talent show that incorporated interviews with children and their parents; *La Fuerza de Creer*, a scripted dramatic miniseries; and *iDespierta América!*, a feature-style morning news program that incorporated segments about early childhood development. Additionally, Univision distributed several PSAs produced by the campaign.

Research Questions

The purpose of this research was to understand how an audience of U.S. Hispanic parents and primary caregivers of young children was engaged by messages about early brain development across three distinct TV storytelling approaches that aired on Univision in 2017: reality TV (*Pequeños Gigantes USA*), scripted drama (*La Fuerza de Creer*), and news (*iDespierta América!*). This research was conducted by the authors as an independent evaluation of disparate media messages within the Too Small to Fail campaign.

RQ1: How do three storytelling approaches—reality/nonfiction TV, scripted drama, and news—compare with each other, and to a narrative control program, in terms of influencing knowledge, self-efficacy, perceived importance, and intended behaviors related to early childhood development for a Hispanic parenting/caregiving audience?

RQ2: Across the three storytelling approaches, how are U.S. Hispanic parents and caregivers' shifts in knowledge, self-efficacy, perceived importance, and intended behaviors mediated by

involvement with perceived entertainment value, emotional experiences, narrative transportation, and character involvement?

Method

We employed a pre-/posttest online experimental design with a national sample of Hispanic parents or primary caregivers of children ages 0–5 years. The study was conducted between October 26 and November 24, 2017. After completing a pretest survey that gauged baseline knowledge, self-efficacy, importance, and behaviors regarding childhood development, participants were randomly assigned to one of the three primary storytelling conditions that included early childhood development messages (reality TV *Pequeños Gigantes*, $n = 217$; scripted drama *La Fuerza de Creer*, $n = 211$; news program *iDespierta América!*, $n = 206$) or to a narrative control condition (*La Que La Vida Me Robó*, $n = 148$), which did not include any information related to children or parents. The three storytelling conditions each included an identical 30-second PSA at the end, which featured on-air Univision talent talking about the importance of engaging young children in activities that stimulate early brain development. The four groups watched their assigned stimulus online. Immediately after viewing, respondents completed a follow-up survey that asked a series of questions to gauge their responses to the video they watched, and to uncover shifts in knowledge, self-efficacy, importance, and intended behaviors. Two attention checks were included among the survey questions; respondents who did not pass the checks were screened out. Both the stimulus materials (i.e., the four assigned storytelling conditions) and survey were given in Spanish; the original content aired on Univision in Spanish.

Sample

The sample was recruited online from three industry-leading market research sample vendors, including SSI, Prodege, and Offerwise. A total of 782 respondents completed the study. All participants were U.S.-based, Spanish-speaking Hispanic adults (18+ years) who are parents or caregivers of children five years and under. The sample was 66% female with a mean age of 34.34 years ($SD = 8.97$ years; range: 18–81 years), a median education of a bachelor's degree, and a median household income of \$60,000–\$69,999. The relatively high socioeconomic background of the sample is a likely artifact of the online sample recruitment, which may have made it more difficult to reach Hispanic caregivers from lower socioeconomic groups. Of the respondents, 79% were parents of young children (as opposed to another relative or caregiver) and had an average of 1.5 children ($SD = .80$) under the age of five years. The sample represented a mix of Hispanic/Latino origins: 34% of respondents were born in the United States (including Puerto Rico), 28% were born in Mexico, and the remainder had origins across 16 other countries. Among those not born in the U.S., 60% had been in the country for 11 years or more. Approximately 65% of respondents indicated that they could speak and read English "very well"; thus, the sample was primarily bilingual. For context, 62% of U.S. Hispanics are bilingual (Krogstad & Gonzalez-Barrera, 2015). More than 64% watched Univision at least once a week, and approximately 30% of participants were regular viewers of *iDespierta América!*, 22% were regular viewers of *Pequeños Gigantes*, and 9.5% regularly watched *La Fuerza de Creer*. Acknowledging these sample characteristics, it is important to note that the sample represents only a portion of Univision's target audience. Yet, given Univision's mass audience appeal and

dominance with a broad swath of U.S. Hispanics as the top Spanish-language network (Univision, 2018), this sample was useful for the study's purposes.

Stimuli

Reality TV: Pequeños Gigantes USA

Pequeños Gigantes USA is a Spanish-language reality talent show that premiered in the United States in February 2017. The show features six teams of children from the U.S., including Puerto Rico, who compete in three categories—talent, singing, and dancing—judged by three celebrities. The episode with Too Small to Fail messages originally aired on March 28, 2017. The episode (42:00 minutes in duration) has three segments. First, the host, Giselle Blonder, introduces Angel, a child who immigrated to the United States from Honduras, who talks about his mother's role in helping him achieve his dreams. In the second segment, Giselle talks about raising her own children before introducing two more contestants—Alondra, who loves to read and whose mother talks about the importance of reading and talking to her children, and Edrai, who speaks about the importance of his grandmother and extended family in his upbringing. In the final segment, the host introduces Joel and his father, who speaks about the value of spending quality time with his son.

Scripted Drama: La Fuerza de Creer

This original scripted dramatic miniseries, which premiered on Univision in 2017, centers on pediatricians working at a health clinic, as they deal with declining revenues and various interpersonal conflicts. In the program, parents bring their children to the health center, where they receive medical care and advice on a range of early childhood development topics, including ways to boost early brain and language development, the benefits of bilingualism, the importance of fathers and other caregivers, and healthy social-emotional development. The stimulus episode originally aired on September 3, 2017. The episode (43:00 minutes in duration) introduces Dr. Laura, a strong-willed pediatrician who has just started working at the clinic, where she finds her clinical approach, which is focused on early brain and social-emotional development, in conflict with the approach of another doctor at the clinic, David, who is focused on the financial bottom line.

Feature-Style News: ¡Despierta América!

¡Despierta América! is a U.S.-based Spanish-language morning television entertainment and news show that debuted in April 1997 and targets a U.S. Hispanic population. It is broadcast from the network's studios in Miami, Florida, weekdays from 7:00 to 11:00 a.m., and includes a mix of interviews, entertainment, and news. The episode with integrated Too Small to Fail messages (22 minutes in duration) originally aired on June 16, 2017. The five-minute educational segment features Univision News anchor Enrique Acevedo, who is about to become a father for the first time. The hosts talk about Univision's "Pequeños y Valiosos" campaign and the importance of reading, talking, and singing to children. The host presents Enrique with a basket of books to read to his child and announces that the book publisher, Scholastic, and *¡Despierta América!* will donate books to a local preschool. Enrique reinforces the importance

of reading and encourages viewers to join Univision's Pequeños y Valiosos text campaign for parent tips, activities, and resources to support early childhood development.

Narrative Control Program (Telenovela): Lo Que La Vida Me Robó

Lo Que La Vida Me Robó is a Mexican telenovela that tells the story of Montserrat, whom her mother has chosen as the solution to the family's economic problems, forcing her to marry a wealthy young man. Montserrat secretly maintains a relationship with José Luis, a Marine. The study episode (43 minutes in duration) originally aired on October 9, 2017.

Public Service Announcement

In this 30-second PSA, *iDespierta América!* host Satcha Pretto and her young son are together in a neighborhood grocery store. Satcha shows her son a red bell pepper and gives him the name for it in English and Spanish. She goes on to say that research indicates speaking two languages at home provides a great benefit to children: "Speaking to children in English and Spanish from the moment they are born helps them develop their young minds and for them to have success in school and outside of school. To find out about all the advantages and receive free advice on activities to do with children, text the word VALIOSOS to 26262." This PSA premiered on Univision on April 3, 2017, and continued throughout the year.

Measurement of Dependent Variables

Knowledge

Knowledge was measured in the pre- and posttests with a series of five true or false statements designed around the core campaign topics of reading, talking, and interacting with children, topics that were covered across the stimuli (Clinton Foundation, 2014). Respondents read each statement and indicated whether they thought the statement was "true," "false," or "don't know." The knowledge items included three true items: "The more parents talk to and interact with their children starting at birth, the better those children do when they get to school," "Hearing more than one language at home boosts children's learning and brain development," and "Research finds that, as a group, Latinos are less likely than White parents to read daily to children," and two false items, "Children learn new words from television just as effectively as when an adult is talking directly to them," and "It is not important to talk to babies, since they don't understand speech." Correct responses were coded as 1, incorrect and "don't know" responses were coded as 0; correct responses were summed to compute a knowledge index ($M_{pre} = 3.32$, $SD_{pre} = .90$; $M_{post} = 3.34$, $SD_{post} = .94$).

Self-efficacy

On the pre- and posttests, respondents indicated their agreement, on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*), with six items that gauged their perceived ability or confidence to engage with their children in the activities promoted by the campaign. Sample items included "I'm able to set aside at least 15 minutes every day to talk with my child or children" and "I am confident that I can

speak with my child or children every day in Spanish and English.” The items were averaged to compute a scale (Cronbach’s $\alpha_{pre} = .91$, $M_{pre} = 6.22$, $SD_{pre} = .97$; Cronbach’s $\alpha_{post} = .91$, $M_{post} = 6.27$, $SD_{post} = .91$).

Importance

On the pre- and posttests, respondents rated five child development activities promoted by the campaign (talking, reading, singing, engaging with simple math activities, and speaking with children in English and in Spanish) in terms of how important each is for raising successful children on a scale from 1 (*not at all important*) to 7 (*extremely important*). The items were averaged together to compute a scale (Cronbach’s $\alpha_{pre} = .86$, $M_{pre} = 6.28$, $SD_{pre} = .84$; Cronbach’s $\alpha_{post} = .89$, $M_{post} = 6.33$, $SD_{post} = .85$).

Intended Behaviors

At pretest, respondents were asked whether or not they had performed each of five different campaign-promoted behaviors within the previous week: (1) talking with children for at least 15 minutes every day, (2) reading with children for at least 15 minutes every day, (3) singing with children for at least 15 minutes every day, (4) engaging in simple math activities like counting objects and pointing out shapes and patterns every day, and (5) speaking to children in English and Spanish every day. Responses were summed to compute a baseline index of behavior, ranging from 0 to 5 ($M_{pre} = 3.66$, $SD_{pre} = 1.31$). The posttest measured future intentions to engage in the same five behaviors. Respondents were asked how likely they would be during the next week to spend at least 15 minutes per day doing each activity on a scale from 1 (*not at all likely*) to 7 (*very likely*). The items were averaged to compute a scale (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .90$, $M_{post} = 6.33$, $SD_{post} = .85$).

Measurement of Mediating Variables

Perceived Entertainment Value

Our measure of perceived entertainment value combined three items used by Oliver and Bartsch (2010) to measure enjoyment of entertainment (“It was fun to watch this program”; “I had a good time watching this program”; “The program was entertaining”) and three items used to measure appreciation of entertainment (“I found this program to be very meaningful”; “I was moved by this program”; “The program was thought-provoking”). Responses were measured on a 7-point scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). All six items loaded on a single factor (eigenvalue = 4.070, variance explained = 78.41%) and were averaged to compute a scale (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .94$, $M = 5.80$, $SD = 1.30$).³

³ Although past research typically treats enjoyment and appreciation as separate constructs, in EE, which explicitly combines elements of hedonic and eudaimonic entertainment experiences (Oliver & Bartsch, 2010), it is not surprising that the enjoyment and appreciation items load on a single factor.

Emotion

Respondents were asked to rate how much they felt each of nine emotions (anger, sadness, disgust, fear, hope, worry, optimism, sympathy, and compassion) as a result of the video they watched on a scale from 1 (*did not feel at all*) to 7 (*felt this deeply*). The items loaded on two distinct factors, one capturing negative emotions (eigenvalue = 4.08, variance explained = 45.37%) and the other capturing positive emotions (eigenvalue = 2.25, variance explained = 25.03%). Responses for anger, sadness, disgust, fear, and worry were averaged to compute a scale of negative emotions (Cronbach's $\alpha = .90$, $M = 2.93$, $SD = 1.82$). Responses for hope, optimism, and sympathy were averaged to compute a scale of positive emotions (Cronbach's $\alpha = .85$, $M = 5.57$, $SD = 1.49$).⁴

Narrative Transportation

Narrative transportation was measured using five of the six items from Appel, Gnambs, Richter, and Green's (2014) Transportation Scale–Short Form ("I could picture myself in the events described in the program"; "I was mentally involved in the program while watching it"; "I wanted to learn how the program ended"; "The program affected me emotionally"; "I found myself thinking of ways the program could have turned out differently").⁵ Responses were measured on a 7-point scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*) and averaged to compute a scale (Cronbach's $\alpha = .87$, $M = 5.34$, $SD = 1.39$).

Character Involvement

Character involvement was measured using four items drawn from Murphy et al. (2011). Respondents indicated how much they liked, how similar they are to, how much they feel like they know, and how much they would like to be like the host/main character of the program they watched on a scale from 1 (*not at all*) to 7 (*a great deal*). The name of the main character was piped into the survey, reflecting the specific stimulus to which participants were randomly assigned. Responses were averaged to compute a scale (Cronbach's $\alpha = .90$, $M = 5.15$, $SD = 1.61$).

Results

Treatment Effects on Program Outcomes

To examine the effects of the treatment on the outcome variables, we used an ANCOVA, where the pretest level of each dependent variable was included as a covariate. There was a significant effect of the treatment for all four outcome variables: knowledge, $F(3, 777) = 6.42$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .02$; self-efficacy, $F(3, 777) = 4.17$, $p < .01$, $\eta^2 = .01$; importance, $F(3, 777) = 4.91$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .01$; and behavioral intentions, $F(3, 777) = 5.85$, $p < .01$, $\eta^2 = .02$.

⁴ Compassion loaded relatively weakly to the positive emotions factor and reduced the scale's reliability; thus, it was dropped from the final scale.

⁵ The sixth item, "I found my mind wandering while watching the program," loaded on a separate factor from the other five items and demonstrably reduced reliability; thus, it was dropped from the final scale.

Given the overall treatment effects, we conducted pairwise comparisons using the Sidak adjustment to determine specific significant differences among conditions for each dependent variable. Table 1 reports the posttest means for each dependent variable, adjusted for the pretest level of the dependent variable, across each of the treatment conditions.

Table 1. Posttest Adjusted Means and Standard Errors for the Outcome Variables Across Experimental Conditions.

Condition	Knowledge mean (SE)	Self-efficacy mean (SE)	Importance mean (SE)	Behavioral intentions mean (SE)
Control	3.13 (.07) _a	6.09 (.06) _a	6.19 (.05) _a	6.09 (.06) _a
News	3.34 (.06) _{a,b}	6.31 (.05) _b	6.31 (.04) _{a,b}	6.38 (.05) _b
Reality	3.33 (.06) _{a,b}	6.28 (.05) _{a,b}	6.40 (.04) _b	6.36 (.05) _b
Drama	3.52 (.06) _b	6.35 (.05) _b	6.40 (.04) _b	6.42 (.05) _b

Note. $N = 782$. Means are adjusted for the pretest level of the dependent variable. Within a column, estimates with different letter subscripts are significantly different from one another, $p < .05$, using the Sidak correction.

Pairwise comparisons indicated knowledge was significantly higher in the drama condition relative to the control; no other differences between conditions were statistically significant for knowledge. Self-efficacy was significantly higher in both the drama and morning news conditions relative to the control. Importance was significantly higher in the drama and reality conditions relative to the control. Finally, behavioral intentions were significantly higher in all three treatment conditions relative to the control, with no differences among the three treatment conditions.

In sum, the experimental manipulation had a significant impact on all four outcomes, with the strongest effects for the drama, which outperformed the control across all measures.

Treatment Effects on Mediating Variables

The analysis next turned to the mediating variables: entertainment value, emotions, narrative transportation, and character involvement. Here, we used an ANOVA to test the effects of the treatment on each mediator. The treatment had a significant overall effect on entertainment value, $F(3, 778) = 26.37$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .09$; positive emotions, $F(3, 778) = 31.24$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .11$; negative emotions, $F(3, 778) = 50.58$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .16$; transportation, $F(3, 778) = 22.66$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .08$; and character involvement, $F(3, 778) = 44.70$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .15$.

Given the overall treatment effects, pairwise comparisons using the Sidak adjustment were conducted for each mediating variable to assess specific significant differences among conditions. Means for each mediating variable across the four experimental conditions are reported in Table 2. As shown in Table 2, entertainment value and positive emotions were significantly higher in all three treatment conditions relative to the control; both entertainment value and positive emotions also were higher in the drama and reality TV conditions relative to the morning news condition. Negative emotions were significantly higher in the drama and control conditions compared with the reality and morning news conditions. Transportation was highest in the drama condition, followed by reality TV, morning news, and

the control, with significant differences among all groups except the news and control conditions. Finally, character involvement was highest in the drama condition, followed by reality TV, the control, and then morning news. As with transportation, differences were significant among all groups except the news and control conditions.

Table 2. Means and Standard Errors for Mediating Variables Across Conditions.

Condition	Entertainment value mean (SE)	Positive emotions mean (SE)	Negative emotions mean (SE)	Transportation mean (SE)	Involvement mean (SE)
Control	5.10 (.10) _a	4.81 (.12) _a	3.76 (.14) _a	4.81 (.11) _a	4.62 (.12) _a
News	5.65 (.09) _b	5.24 (.10) _b	2.17 (.12) _b	5.04 (.09) _a	4.47 (.10) _a
Reality	6.03 (.08) _c	5.95 (.10) _c	2.36 (.11) _b	5.49 (.09) _b	5.31 (.10) _b
Drama	6.19 (.08) _c	6.04 (.10) _c	3.72 (.11) _a	5.86 (.09) _c	6.01 (.10) _c

Note. $N = 782$. Within a column, estimates with different letter subscripts are significantly different from one another, $p < .05$, using the Sidak correction.

In sum, across the various mediating variables, the drama was consistently the most engaging. The drama elicited higher transportation and character involvement than the other treatments; the drama also evoked stronger negative emotions than either the reality or morning news programs. For perceived entertainment value and positive emotions, however, the drama was rated equivalently to the reality TV condition.

Mediation Analysis

Finally, we used the SPSS PROCESS macro (Version 2.16, Model 4; Hayes, 2013) to test the indirect effects of the storytelling conditions on each of the outcome variables via the parallel mediators of perceived entertainment value, positive and negative emotions, narrative transportation, and character involvement. PROCESS employs a regression-based path analytic framework to test the indirect effects of the treatment conditions on the outcomes via each mediator. PROCESS provides OLS regression coefficients as well as bootstrapped confidence intervals for the indirect effects. The bootstrap analysis was conducted with 10,000 iterations and bias-corrected estimates. We included the baseline measure of the outcome variable as a covariate in the analyses. Also, because the mediator and outcome variables were measured cross sectionally, we controlled for age, gender, education, and number of children (more than one versus one) to reduce the likelihood of selection bias. The control condition served as the reference category in all analyses.

The regression results predicting the mediators were consistent with the ANOVA results reported above and are thus not discussed further. Regression results predicting the outcome variables from the mediators (see Table 3) showed positive emotions were positively and significantly related to knowledge, efficacy, behavioral intentions, and, at levels that approached significance, importance. Entertainment value also had a positive, significant relationship with importance and behavioral intentions. Negative emotions were negatively related to self-efficacy and behavioral intentions. Narrative transportation and character involvement did not influence the outcome variables, with the exception of a negative relationship between character involvement and knowledge that approached significance.

Table 3. OLS Regression Analyses Predicting Outcome Variables.

	Knowledge	Self-efficacy	Importance	Behavioral intentions
	<i>B</i> (<i>SE</i>)	<i>B</i> (<i>SE</i>)	<i>B</i> (<i>SE</i>)	<i>B</i> (<i>SE</i>)
<i>Predictors</i>				
Pretest level	0.47(.03)***	0.52 (.03)***	0.64 (.03)***	0.18 (.02)***
Treatment ^A				
Drama	0.33 (.09)***	0.12 (.08)	0.09 (.07)	0.07 (.08)
Reality	0.11 (.10)	0.03 (.08)	0.07 (.07)	-0.03 (.09)
Morning news	0.13 (.10)	0.13 (.08)	0.03 (.07)	0.10 (.09)
<i>Mediators</i>				
Entertainment value	0.02 (.04)	0.02 (.03)	0.12 (.03)***	0.15 (.04)***
Positive emotion	0.09 (.03)**	0.06 (.03)*	0.04 (.02) ⁺	0.07 (.03)*
Negative emotion	-0.02 (.02)	-0.03 (.02)*	-0.02 (.01)	-0.05 (.02)**
Transportation	-0.003 (.04)	0.02 (.03)	-0.04 (.03)	0.004 (.04)
Character involvement	-0.05 (.03) ⁺	0.01 (.02)	-0.01 (.02)	-0.002 (.03)
<i>Demographic controls</i>				
Age	-0.007 (.003)*	-0.0006 (.003)	0.001 (.002)	0.003 (.003)
Gender (female)	0.004 (.06)	0.09 (.06)	0.08 (.05) ⁺	0.22 (.06)***
Education	-0.02 (.02)	-0.007 (.02)	-0.006 (.01)	-0.03 (.02)
More than one child	-0.01 (.06)	-0.08 (.05)	-0.01 (.05)	-0.14 (.06)*
Constant	1.71 (.24)	2.43 (.25)***	1.47 (.22)***	4.32 (.24)***
<i>R</i> ²	.24	.41	.54	.25

Note. Unstandardized regression coefficients are reported. *N* = 782.

^AThe control condition was the reference category.

****p* < .001. ***p* < .01. **p* < .05. ⁺*p* < .10.

Finally, looking to the indirect effects (see Tables 4 and 5), all three treatments had a positive, indirect effect (relative to the control condition) via positive emotions on knowledge and behavioral intentions. The effects of the drama and reality conditions on importance also worked indirectly via positive emotions. Additionally, all three treatments had a positive, indirect effect on importance and behavioral intentions via entertainment value. The reality and news conditions also had positive indirect effects on self-efficacy and behavioral intentions that worked through negative emotions. Because these programs elicited fewer negative emotions than the control, and negative emotions, in turn, were negatively related to self-efficacy and behavior, this translated into an advantage for the news and reality conditions relative to the control condition.

Table 4. Indirect Effects of Experimental Conditions on Knowledge and Self-Efficacy Via Mediators.

Mediator	Knowledge		Self-efficacy	
	Indirect Effect (Boot SE)	Boot 95% CI	Indirect Effect (Boot SE)	Boot 95% CI
<i>Drama</i>				
Entertainment value	.01 (.04)	-.065, .107	.02 (.04)	-.066, .106
Positive emotion	.12 (.04)	.037, .212	.07 (.04)	-.009, .153
Negative emotion	.0007 (.006)	-.007, .012	.0003 (.007)	-.013, .015
Transportation	-.003 (.04)	-.085, .079	.02 (.04)	-.053, .119
Char. involvement	-.08 (.05)	-.167, .016	.01 (.04)	-.062, .110
<i>Reality</i>				
Entertainment value	.02 (.04)	-.051, .092	.018 (.04)	-.056, .088
Positive emotion	.10 (.04)	.031, .189	.06 (.04)	-.009, .131
Negative emotion	.03 (.03)	-.029, .091	.05 (.02)	.013, .093
Transportation	-.002 (.03)	-.057, .051	.01 (.03)	-.033, .077
Char. involvement	-.03 (.02)	-.090, .004	.009 (.02)	-.026, .057
<i>News</i>				
Entertainment value	.009 (.02)	-.028, .063	.01 (.02)	-.029, .058
Positive emotion	.04 (.02)	.006, .100	.02 (.02)	-.0006, .070
Negative emotion	.03 (.03)	-.032, .102	.05 (.02)	.013, .104
Transportation	-.0007 (.01)	-.028, .018	.004 (.01)	-.008, .044
Char. involvement	.009 (.01)	-.007, .049	-.003 (.009)	-.034, .007

Note. Bootstrapped standard errors and confidence intervals were computed using 10,000 bootstrap samples. Boldface text is used to denote significant effects, $p < .05$. Effects are relative to the control condition.

Table 5. Indirect Effects of Experimental Conditions on Importance and Behavioral Intentions Via Mediators.

Mediator	Importance		Behavioral intentions	
	Indirect effect (Boot SE)	Boot 95% CI	Indirect effect (Boot SE)	Boot 95% CI
<i>Drama</i>				
Entertainment value	.13 (.04)	.063, .219	.16 (.05)	.081, .272
Positive emotion	.05 (.03)	.0005, .112	.09 (.04)	.018, .173
Negative emotion	.0001 (.004)	-.008, .009	.0005 (.01)	-.019, .021
Transportation	-.04 (.03)	-.098, .018	.004 (.04)	-.071, .080
Char. involvement	-.01 (.03)	-.067, .038	-.002 (.04)	-.074, .077
<i>Reality</i>				
Entertainment value	.11 (.03)	.052, .182	.14 (.04)	.070, .229
Positive emotion	.05 (.02)	.0007, .099	.08 (.04)	.016, .156
Negative emotion	.02 (.02)	-.007, .061	.07 (.02)	.028, .127
Transportation	-.02 (.02)	-.066, .011	.002 (.02)	-.045, .052
Char. involvement	-.007 (.01)	-.033, .017	-.001 (.02)	-.036, .038
<i>News</i>				
Entertainment value	.06 (.02)	.019, .121	.08 (.03)	.030, .157
Positive emotion	.01 (.01)	-.003, .048	.03 (.02)	.003, .081
Negative emotion	.03 (.02)	-.009, .069	.08 (.03)	.032, .145
Transportation	-.006 (.009)	-.035, .003	.0008 (.01)	-.016, .029
Char. involvement	.002 (.006)	-.005, .022	.0003 (.007)	-.013, .018

Note. Bootstrapped standard errors and confidence intervals were computed using 10,000 bootstrap samples. Boldface text is used to denote significant effects, $p < .05$. Effects are relative to the control condition.

Discussion

This study evaluated the role of entertainment storytelling and news programming on a trusted Spanish-language network, Univision, in helping U.S. Hispanic parents and caregivers create a strong cognitive and psychological foundation for young children. Overall, the results show entertainment storytelling approaches can be an effective way to encourage knowledge, self-efficacy, importance, and intended behaviors related to early childhood readiness and development among Hispanic parents and caregivers. All three program approaches—the reality talent show, the scripted dramatic miniseries, and the morning news program—performed better than the narrative control program (a telenovela without childhood development content) when it came to motivating caregivers' intentions to engage in development activities and supportive behaviors with their children. Outside of intended behavior, we also found various effects of the three programs on knowledge, self-efficacy, and importance. The drama had the most consistent influence, showing a significant increase in all four outcomes when compared with the narrative control. This finding was not particularly surprising, as a rich body of evidence documents the effectiveness of drama in EE (Singhal & Rogers, 1999), and scripted drama remains the most common genre in EE today (Sood, Riley, & Alarcon, 2017). Much less is known, however, about other genres such as reality television,

a more recent and popular genre among U.S. Hispanic audiences. Given consistent disparities among racial and ethnic groups in the United States across measures of income and financial well-being (Harris & Curtis, 2018), these results suggest storytelling-based interventions can be a powerful form of influence among Hispanics. Additionally, given U.S. Hispanic parents' active engagement with media to benefit their children's learning development (Lee & Baron, 2015), this study validates media intervention work in entertainment storytelling on the most watched Spanish language network.

We also examined the mediating pathways through which program exposure influenced knowledge, self-efficacy, importance, and intended behavior. For this audience, we found high entertainment value, and positive emotions were especially critical for driving knowledge, attitude, and behavioral intentions. This points to the important role of both scripted drama and reality programming. Although the scripted drama had the most consistent effects—perhaps in some measure due to the length of the messaging—both reality and scripted drama were equally likely to create both highly entertaining experiences and a positive emotional response. Thus, to the extent that entertainment value and positive emotions are related to positive shifts in knowledge, self-efficacy, importance, and behavior, scripted drama and reality programming both appear to be effective ways to engage Hispanic audiences with the issue of early childhood development. This is notable given that reality TV programming in an EE context had not previously been explored.

Among the other mediators studied, negative emotions—which were lowest in response to the reality and news programs—detracted from self-efficacy and intended behaviors. And although the reality program and especially the drama generated high levels of narrative transportation and character involvement, these variables did not have significant effects on knowledge, attitude, or behavioral intentions. Thus, in the context of child development, it seems positive emotional responses and enjoyable entertainment experiences, rather than deep engagement in the storyline or with the characters, were most important for informing, empowering, and motivating caregivers.

In terms of study limitations, it is hard to say whether or not the length of the message integrations made a crucial difference for viewers. We also do not know whether the interventions would affect longer term attitudes and behaviors, although the EE literature supports the idea that short-term interventions are associated with short-term effects and longer term changes in behavior typically require a higher degree of exposure (Sood et al., 2017). Thus, ongoing exposure to the types of storytelling approaches tested here may be needed to influence attitudes and behavior over the long term. It is also difficult to parse the extent to which the effects were driven by the PSA versus the programming, given that all storytelling conditions included the PSA.⁶ But still, viewers responded both to the programming itself, as well as the PSA, in ways that reveal the promise of this method of intervention with young parents on this topic. Additionally, this research examined programs that were produced and distributed in the entertainment marketplace, which has both benefits and constraints. On the one hand, with this approach, we are able to understand the effects of

⁶ Given the PSA's focus on the importance of speaking to children in English and Spanish, we reanalyzed our data after excluding items from our efficacy, importance, and intended behavior scales that referred to speaking to children in two languages. The results of our analyses were unchanged, suggesting that the observed effects were not primarily driven by the PSA's emphasis on speaking two languages.

programs that were shaped to be consumed as part of a media diet by U.S. Hispanic viewers. On the other hand, the creative context of each program was not precisely equivalent. Additionally, our sample was not representative of all U.S. Hispanics and, in particular, was relatively well educated.⁷ And yet, *Too Small to Fail* aims to reach an audience of all Hispanic parents, not specific strata, and thus there is value in understanding Hispanic parents from various socioeconomic groups (*Too Small to Fail*, n.d.). Still, it is important not to treat Hispanics as a monolithic group, and future research will benefit from closer examination of how the effectiveness of media-based interventions vary across various co-culture groups. We also recognize that the observed effects were relatively small; however, we note that at baseline, the sample was, on average, already very engaged in childhood development practices (perhaps owing to participants' educational background), which may have made finding effects more difficult.⁸ Thus, the fact that we found significant effects is particularly notable, and these effects might be even stronger with a more socioeconomically diverse sample. Finally, because participants completed the pretest, watched the stimulus, and completed the posttest in a single sitting, we cannot entirely rule out the possibility of a testing effect.

The major contribution of this study is the learning opportunity from an unprecedented, multigenre media campaign on the most watched Spanish-language network in the United States. A contemporary prosocial entertainment campaign focused on U.S. Hispanic parents and caregivers is a rarity both in the entertainment marketplace and in peer-reviewed research. For future campaign efforts that leverage the powerful role of entertainment programming to provide reinforcing, role-modeling messages to Hispanic parents and caregivers of young children, our analysis points to the promise of storytelling approaches and suggests that feelings of hope and optimism are crucial, as opposed to punitive messages. As civil society—humanitarian organizations, foundations—sets agendas and aims to ensure an equitable playing field for future generations, it is imperative to consider the role of entertainment. This crucial realm of culture often is relegated to lower priority than fact sheets and tutorials, to the peril of social progress, we would argue. Practitioners engaged in prosocial communication are wise to take entertainment stories seriously within a suite of interventions.

⁷ To examine whether the education level of the sample may have affected the results, we tested for any main effects or interactions involving education, comparing those with a college degree to those without. Respondents' education level had no main or interactive effects on the four dependent variables. With respect to the mediators, those with a college degree exhibited higher levels of character involvement, transportation, entertainment value, and positive emotions than did those without a college degree. The treatment interacted with education level in predicting negative emotions, such that those without a college degree experienced higher negative emotions in response to the drama than those with a college degree did. The treatment also interacted with education in predicting character involvement; those with a college degree were more involved with the news and control programs than those without a college degree. Despite these differences, the general pattern of findings held regardless of education level.

⁸ It also is possible that some participants were previously exposed to campaign messaging in the course of their typical media consumption, thereby limiting the study's effects. As noted in the sample description, a minority of participations indicated that they were regular viewers of the three tested programs.

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