NEW BOOK - COMING SOON

Getting Real: Challenging the Sexualisation of Girls
Melinda Tankard Reist ed

‘Sexualisation’, ‘pornification,’ ‘corporate paedophilia,’ ‘raunch culture.’ What does it all mean? And how does it affect girls?


So Sexy So Soon: The New Sexualized Childhood and What Parents Can Do to Protect Their Kids
Jean Kilbourne & Diane Levin

The book deals with children from infancy through adolescence and is very much about boys as well as girls.

http://www.sosexysosoon.com/

What's Happening to Our Girls?
Too much, Too soon, How our kids are overstimulated, oversold and oversexed
Maggie Hamilton

What girls are experiencing at present from birth to the teenage years.

http://www.maggiehamilton.org/booksandaudio/ourgirls.htm

Resources to help you deal with children and commercialisation

Australian Council on Children & the Media
http://www.youngmedia.org.au

Campaign for a Commercial Free Childhood
http://www.commercialfreechildhood.org/

Center on Media and Child Health
http://www.cmch.tv/

Early Sexualization: A guide for the parents of preteen girls.YWCA, Montreal
http://www.ydesfemmesmtl.org/sexualization_en.html

Kids Free 28 Kids
http://www.kf2bk.com

Don’t miss our Melbourne seminars on Children and Sexualised Media
3 & 4 August 2009
www.youngmedia.org.au

Consuming Innocence: Popular Culture & Our Children
Karen Brooks

Explores the complex relationship that kids - from toddlers to teens - have with popular culture. It examines the role that popular culture and parents play in creating children’s ideas of themselves, and the involvement of corporations.


Consuming Innocence:
Popular Culture & Our Children
Karen Brooks

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This Little Kiddy Went to Market :The Corporate Capture of Childhood
Sharon Beder
with Wendy Varney & Richard Gosden

How corporations are shaping children to be hyperconsumers, submissive employees, and passive, unquestioning citizens.


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Popular Culture & Our Children
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Explores the complex relationship that kids - from toddlers to teens - have with popular culture. It examines the role that popular culture and parents play in creating children’s ideas of themselves, and the involvement of corporations.


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How corporations are shaping children to be hyperconsumers, submissive employees, and passive, unquestioning citizens.

EDITORIAL

What boys want? What girls want?

This month’s issue is focussed on resources to help parents cope with the increasing commercialisation of childhood and with sexualisation in particular.

Today, the media and marketing environment are pushing children into a narrow range of roles, interests and play. For girls, it seems that they have to be sexy, hot and pretty. They are encouraged to play and dress as princesses and they’ll most likely need to be saved by a handsome prince or perhaps a Transformer!

As Diane Levin and Jean Kilbourne point out in So Sexy, So Soon “the onslaught of [entertainment] violence makes it harder for boys to develop into caring sexual beings capable of having fulfilling and connected relationships. As girls see boys’ involvement with violence, and boys see girls’ involvement with sexiness, they all learn damaging lessons about what to value in themselves, as well as about one another.” (p33)

Parents need more support than they are getting to counteract these pressures!

Transformers suits and princess gowns at your local Target store—only $49.95!

More resources

Watch It! What Parents Need to Know to Raise Media Smart Kids

Mary S Larson.

Concerned by “the relentless consumerism and materialism in kids; their sexual promiscuity; the rising incidence of eating disorders and other health issues” the author promotes teaching children media literacy.

http://maryslarson.com

DVDs

Sexy Inc: Our children under influence

This DVD condemns an unhealthy culture that bombards children with sexualized and sexist images and suggests way we can counteract this worrying phenomenon.

http://www3.nfb.ca/webextension/sexy-inc

Consuming Kids

Adproofing Your Kids: Raising Critical Thinkers in a Media-Saturated World

Tania Andrusiak & Daniel Donahoo

A new Australian book showing how children can be encouraged to understand and think critically about advertising for themselves. The book includes simple and practical ideas from parents, educators and psychologists who have effective ways to counter the manipulation of children by advertising and popular media.

http://www.finch.com.au

ACCM is a national, non-profit community organisation. Its mission is to promote the healthy development of Australian children.

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Internode

Publication and printing of small screen is supported by Nickelodeon
Clips ‘n’ Cuts
small screen no. 254 June 2009

On the internet, no one knows you work in advertising

T he first time I noticed, it was on a news blog site, at the bottom of a story inviting reader comment. The story was about preventing swine flu in your house.

One of the responses read thus: “I live in Victoria so naturally I was worried about swine flu,” said 45-year-old J.A., a mother of three from Balwyn.

“But my friend swears she can keep all types of flu at bay by eating just a teaspoon of Capilano honey each morning. It has to be Capilano, she reckons there’s some secret ingredient. Even if it turns out to be baloney, it’s worth giving it a try, for the kids’ sake.”

Trawling around the blogosphere a little longer, Wry Side came across a popular health magazine website, with this piece of reader advice from 16-year-old Jazzmeene of Dee Why, NSW, on a story about problem skin.

“My friend Kortyne, she’s 15, and like, she told me to do a gob of Capilano honey, like, once a day, on pimples can, like, sooo good. Trick all being told the internet is where younger generations go to for their information at the expense of those media dinosaurus TV, radio and newspapers. But how good is the information?

The traditional media has pretty strict rules about advertising material and cash-for-comment has raised its head on numerous occasions in recent years. But advertising on the internet seems a far more organic beast. Sure, radio talkback can be manipulated by oh-so-clever spin units in political parties looking to boost support for a particular policy or attack the other side’s, but those effort to do it are typically driven by ideologically real rather than an hourly pay rate. Injecting websites with viral product endorsements under the guise of feedback on the web is not only a pretty effective way of pushing a product, creating vibrant, interesting discussions. And the fact advertising agencies are prepared to pay to have people pretend to watch, mention products is yet further evidence of the web’s commerciality.

That’s all fine and good, but at least, at that level, anonymity has been commercialised on the net. So, at the end of the day, how much of what you can you really trust?

New health lobbyists gain in strength

Federal: Preventative Health Taskforce

- Minister for Health & Ageing set up the Taskforce to develop a National Preventative Health Strategy to tackle chronic disease caused by obesity, tobacco, and excessive consumption of alcohol
- Obesity paper suggests limiting inappropriate advertising such as ‘nutrient poor foods’ on free-to-air television between 6am and 9pm.
- Alcohol program considers regulating alcohol advertising, including ban ads and sponsors of cultural and sporting events.
- Final report due June 2009

Federal: Australian Communications and Media Authority’s Children’s Television Standards review

- Draft review of the CTS, which regulates children’s content and advertising during children’s viewing times on free-to-air TV, recommended a crackdown on ‘peer power’ and the use of celebrities to promote junk food
- Failed two TV sets of junk food, citing a lack of evidence it contributed to child obesity
- Final report due mid-2009

Ministerial Council on Drug Strategy (reports to the Coalition of Australian Governments)

- Ministers agreed in April COAG should start a mandatory co-regulatory scheme which includes pre-screening all alcohol ads
- SA: Review of Television Advertising
- Health Department discussion paper examines options for controlling advertising such as a complete ban on junk food ads during children’s viewing times.

- Submissions were due October 2008. No final report yet.
- QLD: Review of Junk Food Advertising on Children’s TV
- Health Department is considering banning or restricting junk food ads during peak viewing times for children.
- Submissions were due October 2008. No final report yet.

Federal: House of Representatives Federal Standing Committee on Health and Ageing Inquiry into obesity

- Report into the obesity epidemic, 100,000 last week, recommended the marketing of unhealthy products to children be restricted and/or decreased
- Gave the industry a chance to say this is the first through self-regulation

The Australian, 8 June 2009

Custodians of Dora explore her full marketing grunt

If you ever needed proof that children’s television exists to sell spin-off merchandise, here it is.

Pay-TV channel Nick Jr. — which exploits a loophole in the legislation to advertise junk food and toys to preschoolers — announced last week it would screen a one-hour special Dora Saves the Snow Princess on Saturday, July 11.

Why so special? Well, the episode is being broadcast in conjunction with a new range of Dora merchandise on sale at a chain store.

‘The special episode of Dora Saves the Snow Princess will also be featured in Big W stores in Australia, with a dedicated range of merchandise hitting stores in July, which will include special Dora Saves the Snow Princess apparel, footwear, accessories, manchester and toys,” Nick Jr said. Dora, a seven-year-old Latino
tomboy who goes on adventures with a monkey called Boots, has always been a popular brand to merchandise.

Three years ago Mediu spoke to Haven Licensing director Yonne King, who brought the Dora merchandise to Australia, and she said the character was the first pay-TV figure to sell vast amounts of toys and accessories.

‘Dora is no Barbie,” King said in 2006.

‘She looks a lot more like the kid who is sitting next to you at preschool.

‘She taps into exactly where kids’ minds are; she goes on adventures. Some of the preschool properties try to be too sexy.’

‘I think parents are embracing Dora because she is not sexy. The product is lovely, basic educational material.

‘Even the apparel is nice, wholesome gear.’

The Australian, 2 June 2009

Sadly, three years later Dora is no longer a tomboy who likes adventures. Now, she is a princess with a long dress and a crown.

Later this year the final stage in the Dora transformation will be unveiled in the US by Mattel and Nickelodeon/ Viacom Consumer Products.

Dora is going to be a sexy “tween” with long hair who looks more like a Bratz doll than the original little girl who appeared as Dora 10 years ago. Gone are the sensible shoes, replaced with pointy ballet shoes.

“As tweenage Dora, our heroine has moved to the big city, attends middle school and has a whole new fashionable look,” Mattel said.

“As tweenage Dora, our heroine has moved to the big city, attends middle school and has a whole new fashionable look,” Mattel said.

“So what’s more, she now has a rich online world in which girls can explore, play games, customise and, most importantly, solve mysteries with Dora and her new friends.”

The Australian, 2 June 2009
Strange but true

Computer games can be deadly in the virtual world, and also in real life, say doctors who warn of the risk of carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning from generators powering the consoles. CO poisoning is a particular risk to electrical generators is common during power cuts, say researchers in Pediatrics. Their report on an epidemic of CO poisoning in Texas after power cuts caused by Hurricane Ike found kids were particularly at risk. Among 37 people exposed to CO from generators in 13 incidents, 54 per cent were under the age of 18. And among the nine incidents in which the reason for the generator use was determined, five were due to generators powering video games or television. In one, a boy had the electric heater inside there's a hurricane. Generators are commonly used to power kids' entertainment devices, the authors say.

Kids who watch The Simpsons, after research in the Medical Journal of Australia shows it often shows people smoking, prompts fears it may encourage children to light up. In a feat of television stamina, researchers watched all 400 episodes in the first 18 seasons of the highly popular children's cartoon that aired from 1989 to 2007. They featured 795 instances of smoking, defined as any mention of smoking, or it being visible in any one. One-third of smoking instances reflected it in a negative way; most (63 per cent) were neutral and 2 per cent portrayed the habit in a positive light. Watching The Simpsons characters smoking may prompt children to consider smoking, the authors say.

The Australian, 13-14 June 2009

AFA seminars

SEMINARS explaining the advertising self-regulatory system will be hosted around the country by the Advertising Federation of Australia. The seminars, held in conjunction with the Australian Association of National Advertisers, will be in Brisbane, Melbourne, Perth, Adelaide and Sydney in August. AFA executive director Mark Champion has urged agencies and their clients to participate.

The Australian, 13 June 2009

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The Australian, 13 June 2009
Most boys spend too long in front of screen

The Australian, 17 June 2009

Stephen Lunn
Tom Kelly

MORE than seven in 10 boys aged nine to 14 spend more than the recommended maximum of two hours a day watching TV or playing computer games.

But almost 80 per cent still manage the recommended daily amount of physical exercise, at least an hour of vigorous activity — evidence that most boys find a balance in their lives, although possibly to the detriment of reading and social interaction with friends and family.

The new national figures, published for the first time today by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare in A Picture of Australia’s Children 2009, reveal that 63.6 per cent of girls aged nine to 14 clock up more than two hours of non-school physical activity a day, compared with 73.4 per cent for boys.

But fewer girls meet the minimum recommended level of physical activity: 68.9 per cent of boys and 56.7 per cent of girls.

The report’s author, Deanna Eldridge from the AIHW’s Children, Youth and Families unit said: “The results show that it is not a straightforward relationship. You can’t say children who spend too much time in front of a screen are necessarily physically inactive.”

The AIHW report notes the prevalence of overweight (17 per cent) and obesity (6 per cent) children in Australia. While it highlighted high levels of overall literacy and numeracy in Australian children, those living in remote areas did comparatively worse.

“The year five students met or exceeded national standards for reading (96 per cent) and numeracy (93 per cent),” it says. “A higher proportion of girls in year five achieved the minimum standard for reading: 93 per cent compared with 89 per cent of boys.”

The snapshot of Australian children provides a generally positive story, with a continuing fall in child death rates, fewer children having asthma and a high proportion of children reaching the minimum standards for numeracy and literacy.

But the future remains grim for indigenous children, who are two to three times as likely as other Australian children to die, be born underweight and have poor dental health.

The amount of screen time for children is a live issue for Melbourne’s McCoppin family. While the television is rarely on, Therese McCoppin admits the time 13-year-old Liam spends on the computer can be a thorny issue.

“He’ll ask me if he can turn on the TV, which is quite unusual, but it’s one of the ways he keeps himself brough,” Ms McCoppin said yesterday.

She admits computer habits can be trickier to control, and says her son’s behaviour changes after extended periods in front of a screen.

“Whenever Liam spends a long time in front of the computer, he’s argumentative and lethargic afterwards, and we notice it — it’s very clear to us,” she said.

But her friends are on the screen for all the time. We go to friends’ houses and their sons are in front of their screens from when we get there to when we go home. I just don’t think it’s good for their brain.”

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“Most Year five students met or exceeded national standards for reading (91 per cent) and numeracy (93 per cent),” it says. “A higher proportion of girls in year five achieved the minimum standard for reading: 93 per cent compared with 89 per cent of boys.”
Eat-your-greens fight a lost cause

EATING HABITS
Children aged between 4 and 13 years meeting daily dietary guidelines

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<th>Fruit</th>
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Stephene Lunn
Ehsan Sahezadeh

CHILDREN really do hate their vegs and parents are apparently hopeless at doing anything about it.

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare’s snapshot of Australian children released today shows the level of disdain children have for their greens.

The report, A Picture of Australian Children 2009, citing a 2007 nutrition survey says: “Only a very small proportion of children met the recommendations for daily servings of vegetables (excluding potatoes) – 3 per cent of 4- to 8-year-olds and 2 per cent of 9- to 13-year-olds.”

“Even with the inclusion of potatoes, the vegetable servings remained low (22 per cent and 14 per cent respectively).”

National Health and Medical Research Council guidelines recommend one serve of yellow and two serves of vegetables a day for children aged four to seven, one serve of fruit and three serves of vegetables for those eight to 11, and three serves of fruit and four serves of vegetables for ages 12 to 18. A serve is about half a cup.

“The report’s author, Deonnis Eldridge from the AIHW’s Children and Youth Families and units, said vegetable consumption was a key concern related to children’s health and wellbeing.

“This is a crucial figure to highlight, because it is occurring at a time when young bodies are growing and developing,” she said.

Accredited practicing dietician Kate Di Prima said that however hard parents might find it to get children to eat vegetables, they must persist.

“The parents find it very difficult to encourage children to eat green vegetables and fruit,” Ms Di Prima said. “They are happy to eat dairy foods and soft pastas and rice, but when it comes to chewing something with more than a bland taste, parents battle.”

The prime concern about low levels of vegetable consumption was the lack of fibre in children’s diets and the health consequences that flowed on, such as constipation, she said.

Ms Di Prima said she advised parents to start small and build up.

“Put a bit of carrot and a bit of broccoli on the plate,” she said. “Get the children to wash some carrots and put it in with the pasta. This will put some balance in their diet. It’s better than nothing.”

Don’t cave in if a child is not co-operating, she said. Let them go to bed without eating anything rather than take the easy option and fill them up with some milk and yoghurt.

Parramatta mother Alexis Henderson said she improvised to make sure her five-year-old son, Brooklyn, ate enough vegetables.

“You can mash them up, hide them, you can cook a cake with pumpkin in it, or make corn muffins,” Ms Henderson said.

She said Brooklyn did pretty well at home, but getting him to eat vegetables at school lunch was tricky.

“It’s hard when most other kids are bringing chips and Nunella sandwiches and all sorts of unhealthy things,” she said.

Plan 3D unveiled for B1 and B2

By Miriam Steffens

TELEVISION’s Bananas in Pyjamas will be coming down the stairs a little differently – as 3D cartoon characters.

The popular children’s show, started in the early 1990s and featuring Ken Badley and Nicholas Opolski as the talking and dancing bananas B1 and B2, is earmarked to be partly outsourced from the ABC to the commercial production firm Southern Star Entertainment.

Under the new production deal being hatched out, the Bananas will be transformed from life-sized banana-in- pyjamas-clad actors to computer-generated animation figures.

While stressing that all “creative and conceptual work” for the preschool show would continue to be done in Australia, the ABC did little to play down suggestions its production would move to Singapore.

“It’s not a final contract yet,” said a spokesperson.

The planning for the cartoon series comes as the national broadcaster is gearing up to start a new digital children’s channel, ABC3, later this year. Its executive director of children’s television, Tim Brooke-Hunt, said the move to animation was “designed specifically to appeal to today’s generation of young children.”

The ABC said it would retain the rights to the original Bananas in Pyjamas and continue to screen the old programs. But it argued that the costs for the new multimillion-dollar animated production would be too expensive to shoulder alone, prompting it to seek partners.

Endemic Southern Star managing director Rory Calaghan said the new series would take about two years to produce.

‘Bliss’ foods devised to create snack junkies

The Australian, 17 June 2009

Jonathan Leake

JUNK foods such as Snickers bars and tomato sauce really are irresistible. Manufacturers have discovered optimum levels of fat, sugar and salt that make them highly addictive, according to the US Food and Drug Administration, which claims that 40 per cent of the nation’s calorie intake comes from junk food.

David Kessler, a former head of the US Food and Drug Administration, has warned that snacks, cereals and ready meals devised by food scientists can act on the reward centres of the brain in the same way as tobacco or alcohol.

He argues that manufacturers are seeking to trigger a “bliss point” when people eat certain products, leaving them hungry for more.

“It is time to stop blaming individuals for being overweight or obese,” Professor Kessler said.

“The real problem is we have created a world where food is always available and where that food is designed to make you want to eat more of it. For millions of people modern food is simply impossible to resist.”

In a new book, The End of Overeating, he suggests that food manufacturers encourage addiction using precise combinations of fat, sugar, salt and texture to make foods “hyper-palatable”.

Professor Kessler cites White Tomato sauce and Starbucks white chocolate mocha frappucino as examples of the thousands of modern foods that have been engineered to stimulate feelings of pleasure.

A study carried out by Professor Kessler with researchers at Yale University using functional magnetic reso- nance imaging techniques, showed that about 50 per cent of people and 30 per cent of those who are overweight were prone to so-called excessive activation.

“The right combination of tastes triggers a greater number of neurons, getting them to fire more,” said Professor Kessler.

The message to eat becomes stronger, motivating the eater to seek out food that is more.”

In other research, scientists have used rats to study how different combinations of fat, sugar and salt trigger the release of neurotransmit- tlers in the brain’s pleasure centres.

The Age, 18 June 2009
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The key aim of the ARACY Conference is to showcase preventive innovations that are improving the wellbeing of children and young people. Conference sessions will be relevant to those working in public and non-government sectors, across sectors, disciplines and professions.

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WORLD NEWS

So flirtatious so young!

According to the Herald Sun, a new video game teaches young girls how to flirt. Called Secret Flirts, the game for Nintendo DS claims to show girls how to “make everyone fall for you”. A promotional video providing a walk-through of Secret Flirts starts with a groovy young girl giving a sly wink and a Cupid’s arrow piercing a pink heart.

The first “lessons” of the game teach girls to do their make-up and choose clothes and accessories. The next lesson is to “improve your attraction” by going to a hairdresser, a beauty centre and a gym. Then players are ready to listen to advice from the “Love Coach”.

While not rated here yet, in Europe the game has been marked as suitable for players aged 3+.

The game website is http://www.secretflirts-thegame.com/en/

Australian children getting smarter about online risks says ACMA research

Children and young people have a high level of awareness of cybersafety risks and the key messages for staying safe online, according to an Australian Communications and Media Authority report.

The report, Click and Connect – Young Australians’ Use of Online Social Media, found that 75 per cent of children surveyed claim they know not to give out their address or phone number online and remember key safety messages such as ‘people aren’t always who they say they are online’.

‘Australian children are telling us the internet is part of their everyday lives, and as they approach high school, it’s increasingly important to their social lives. Up to 97 per cent of 16 to 17 year olds claim to use at least one social networking service,’ said Chris Chapman, Chairman of the ACMA.

Report findings will inform development of new ACMA cybersafety materials, including a new cybersafety website due for release soon.

The full reports of both the qualitative and the quantitative research can be found at http://www.acma.gov.au/WEB/STAND-ARD/pc=PC_311798

TV ads trigger mindless eating

A study in July’s Health Psychology suggests that television ads trigger mindless eating, especially in children. Yale University researchers experimented on children aged seven to 11; those who watched a half-hour cartoon that included food commercials ate 45 per cent more snack items than those who watched the same cartoon with non-food commercials.

This could equate to a child putting on 10 extra pounds per year unless TV viewing is counteracted with increased levels of exercise and decreased intake of other foods, researchers said. “This research shows a direct and powerful link between television food advertising and calories consumed by adults and children,” said Jennifer Harris, the lead author of the study and the director of marketing initiatives at the Rudd Center for Food Policy and Obesity at Yale.

http://yaleruddcenter.org/front_burner_news.aspx?id=205

Giffoni Film Festival

Giffoni, the Italian children’s film festival that involves 2,800 children from 40 countries as jurors, is rebranding itself as Giffoni Experience. The festival is expanding its core event to two weeks July 12-25 and consolidating its global offshoots in 54 countries, becoming active 250 days a year. Existing international spinoffs include Giffoni Hollywood and Giffoni Australia.

http://www.giffonifff.it/

KIDS’ TV

A selection of children’s programs screened on TV during the period

ABC
Freaky; Wolverine; Skunk Fu; Mr. Men; Adredalin Brothers; Sitting Ducks; Play School; Our Animals; Being Me; Classic Tales; M.I. High; Sadie; BTN Daily; Take on Technology; Rupert Bear.

SEVEN
Larry the Lawnmower; Go Go Stop; Staines Down Drains; Zeke’s Pad; Master Raindrop; Handy Manny.

NINE
Dora; Kids’ WB; Ben; Saddle Club; Streetsmartz; The Shak; Timeblazers; Hi-5.

TEN
H2O: Just Add Water; Totally Wild; I Got a Rocket; Scope; Puzzle Play; Toasted TV.

NICKELODEON
Iron Man; Penguins of Madagascar; iCarly; Naked Brothers Band; True Jackson VP; Kids Choice Awards; Nick Podcasts; TEENick; Back at the Barnyard; Family Matters.

DISNEY CHANNEL
Emperor’s New School; Even Stevens; The Replacements; Cory in the House