Elizabeth Handsley introduces this new book and discusses the impetus to publish it.

The book is the result of a multidisciplinary conversation held in early 2010 with the aid of a Harvard-Australia grant. My co-convenor, US “mediatrician” Michael Rich, and I gathered some 18 scholars from 10 disciplines and professions, and asked them to describe how their discipline approaches the question of the relationship between media use and children’s well-being. As part of the background, and to grease the wheels of the conversation, we also asked contributors to explain the general issues and questions with which their discipline or profession is preoccupied and the methods that it uses.

Both of us were interested in moving towards a more constructive engagement between people from different intellectual backgrounds.

One matter on which Michael and I shared a particular concern was the tensions that often appear to arise in interchanges between behavioural disciplines (such as psychology) and humanities-based disciplines (such as media studies and cultural studies). These manifest themselves most pointedly in the debate over media violence, as scholars who claim to have demonstrated an influence on thoughts, attitudes and behaviour are dismissed as ‘men in white coats’. I hoped that, if people from different backgrounds had an opportunity to explain why they do what they do, and in particular to confess to what they saw as the limitations of their discipline or profession, there could be a more soundly-based and constructive dialogue. We both saw the event as an opportunity to open up dialogue between people from different walks of life as to how we can all work together to improve the media environment for children.

I drew up a list of issues for the scholars to discuss in their papers:
- The principal questions or issues with which their profession/discipline concerns itself
- The principal methods employed by their profession/discipline to generate knowledge and make decisions; what debates are there within the profession/discipline as to methodology
- The major strengths and weaknesses of their profession/discipline
- What people outside their profession/discipline needed to understand about it and its methods. Were there any common misconceptions about the profession/discipline
- The contributions their profession/discipline had made to debates on media use and children’s well-being; the further contributions it could make in the future

Contributors met in Adelaide, with two contributors attending via videoconference. A decision was taken at the conference to publish the papers. Unfortunately three contributors chose to publish elsewhere. What you see in this volume is the remaining 15 papers.

The omissions are a matter of some regret to me, especially because of the way they deplete the media studies voice in the book. This limits the ability of the book to open up dialogue between disciplines in the way that Michael and I hoped it would.

In section 1, three authors discuss the issues from a broad theoretical perspective. Section 2 contains papers from disciplines other than psychology, including applied ethics, bioethics, paediatrics, librarianship, the law, and health science. Section 3 of the book gathers together those contributors from the discipline of psychology. This seems fitting, considering the greatly varied contributions that that discipline has made to understanding the influence that media use can have on children’s thoughts, attitudes, behaviour and general well-being.

However I am aware that, to those who take the ‘white coat’ view, giving a whole section of the book to this one discipline may appear as an indication of bias. Therefore it may be appropriate for me to declare my position of having a high degree of trust in quantitative disciplines such as psychology, because of the rigour of their methods.

I believe I speak for Michael and myself when I say that we are confident that readers will find the book both stimulating and reassuring in that it shows just how much respect and willingness to listen can be demonstrated by people from different intellectual backgrounds. Each contributor has written for an audience outside his or her discipline, and we trust that you will find the chapters readable and accessible. We hope they pave the way for more constructive collaborations between disciplines to achieve the best outcomes for children in a media-saturated world.


Screen Futures Summit & Youth Media Festival
1-3 July 2016, Melbourne
This three-day international summit will bring together media educators at all levels and media producers – both professional and amateur – from around the world to illuminate and discuss the future of the screen.

The summit program will bestructuredaround three related themes: Education, Innovation and Industry. It will offer lectures, screenings and presentations by leaders in the fields.

http://screenfutures.com/
The child consumer: What rights?
While the role of business in the area of human rights has received growing international attention over recent decades, thinking about the protection of child’s rights in this context has historically focused on children as workers – but what about children as consumers?

Children’s consumption and marketing to children are now big business. Children have their own money to spend, and they have some influence over family spending; for example in June 2013, AdWeek reported that ‘fully one-third of parents report their kids are “extremely influential” on household purchases big and small’. And with new methods such as ‘advergaming’, it is becoming harder for carers to moderate the impact of marketing to children. It is timely to put a child-rights lens over these developments, and the Convention on the Rights of the Child contains many relevant articles. [www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.asp].

In presenting the conference - Rights of the Child Consumer - in Sydney on November 20 (at the Telstra Customer Insight Centre), the Australian Human Rights Commission and the Australian Council on Children and the Media will provide a forum for the exploration of issues relating to children as consumers. They aim to start a national conversation and reflection on questions such as:

- Do existing consumer laws and codes of practice adequately protect children?
- How can we help to ensure children are informed and empowered as consumers?
- What are some examples of business good practice in addressing the needs of the child consumer?
- What are the benefits to business of becoming champions of children’s rights?
- What barriers need to be overcome to get more businesses on board?
- What additional protections might be needed in areas such as mobile phone contracts, entertainment and media, food advertising and dangerous products?

The conference will combine presentations from high-profile speakers from business, academia and the law, along with children themselves, with ample opportunities for interactive discussion on the way forward. National Children’s Commissioner Megan Mitchell, Professor of Law, Elizabeth Handsley and Australian Competition and Consumer Commissioner Sarah Court will present key papers.

ACCM’s Website is designed and supported by www.gocreate.com.au
ACCM acknowledges support from the Romeo Family

ACCM acknowledges support from the South Australian Government

ACCM parent seminar
Marketing to children: Resisting the pressure
7.30pm, 19 August 2015
Highgate School
4 Hampstead Ave
Highgate, SA

Speakers
Professor Elizabeth Handsley
Dr Julie Robinson

Chaired by Pam Simmons, SA Guardian for Children & Young People

childrenandmedia.org.au/events/accm-seminars

More information and conference updates:
childrenandmedia.org.au/events/accm-conference
Guidelines restricting device use are not being met, to children’s detriment

PIA AKERMAN

You see them in cafes and restaurants, in trains, planes and automobiles — the touchscreen generation with their little heads down and eyes transfixed.

But parents who have surrendered to the use of iPads and other touch-screen devices to keep their young children entertained could be laying the seeds for musculoskeletal disorders later in life, with early results from a new nationwide study showing many families are eschewing guidelines on the level of appropriate screen time.

More than 40 per cent of parents surveyed in the Curtin University study admitted they used electronic devices to keep their children “calm and happy”, relying on the devices to occupy their offspring for substantial periods.

The findings have spurred renewed warnings from ergonomists about the risks related to poor posture while using the devices.

Post-doctoral research fellow Pieter Coenen will present the preliminary results at the International Ergonomics Association congress in Melbourne next month.

He said the research hoped to uncover an appropriate level of device use for children younger than five. “The behaviours they develop early in life can cause musculoskeletal issues later on in life,” he said.

Federal health guidelines advise a maximum one hour of screen time (including television) for children between two and five, with no electronic device use for children younger than two. Yet the survey of 159 children aged five and younger, including 30 younger than two, found one-quarter watched TV for more than an hour a day during the week, rising to nearly half on weekends.

Sixty per cent spent up to an hour using tablets or mobile phones during the week, with nearly 10 per cent spending more than an hour a day on their tablets during the weekend.

Melbourne ergonomist and occupational therapist Stephanie Cassidy is acutely aware of the problems that can flow from poor posture while using electronic devices.

“...two. Yet the survey of 159 children aged five and younger, including 30 younger than two, found one-quarter watched TV for more than an hour a day during the week, rising to nearly half on weekends.

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Melbourne ergonomist and occupational therapist Stephanie Cassidy is acutely aware of the problems that can flow from poor posture while using electronic devices.

She has tried to limit her daughter Elizabeth’s use of her iPad, iPod and laptop while encouraging good posture and regular activity, mindful of research showing the dangers of prolonged sitting.

“I’m on her case a bit, but if she is tired or unwell she will often stay on it for hours on end, in which case I say: Neutral postures, support your neck, don’t sit like that, you’re going to hurt yourself,” Ms Cassidy said.

“If she is using them in bed or on the couch, I'm often saying ‘Use cushions to support yourself!’

“Everything points towards a maximum of 30 minutes (usage), then we should be moving again ... if kids start reporting symptoms of neck and back pain, these symptoms are often a sign that your body is not coping with what you’re putting it through.”

Children should spend an extra hour outdoors every day, and time on electronic devices should be restricted, if Australia is to avoid a dramatic leap in the number of people who are shortsighted.

Professor Brian Holden, an internationally acclaimed vision researcher, said the proportion of 17-year-olds with myopia had jumped from 20 per cent to 31 per cent over the past 15 years.

About 30 per cent of the children who were shortsighted were found to have no correction in place for the problem and this was impacting on their ability to learn in school.

If the problem was not addressed, by 2050 more than 50 per cent of the population was expected to be shortsighted.

Professor Holden said growing shortsightedness was linked to people going from largely rural environments to urban settings where they mostly concentrated on “near” things such as books, computers and mobile phones.

“It has now been quite well established that time outdoors reduces the risk of myopia and may even reduce the progress of myopia in myopic children and non-myopic children,” he said.

“Children need to spend at least 60 minutes extra outside per day compared with what they do on average these days.

“We also need to screen every four-year-old ... before they get out of kindergarten and we need to have every child going into primary school examined by an optometrist or an ophthalmologist and given a certificate on the state of their vision.”

Professor Holden, the chief executive of the Brien Holden Vision Institute, said a further examination was needed when children started secondary school.

He said about 60 per cent of myopia cases started between the ages of six and 15, and a second wave of myopia tended to happen between 18 and 22, when people started studying at university.

The problem was particularly bad in Asia, where half the population was shortsighted. In Taiwan, 96.5 per cent of males aged 19 are myopic. Taiwan has introduced laws under which parents can be fined if a child younger than two uses an iPad or a child younger than 12 uses one excessively.

“It is a massive problem in Asia, a developing problem in Australia, and in the US they’ve gone from 25 per cent myopia to 42 per cent myopia in the last 30 years, and that process is accelerating,” Professor Holdensaid.

The Weekend Australian 25-26/7/2015

The Australian 13/7/2015
Word out on apps to learn

MARIE HOGG

An online learning platform has launched a $50,000 literacy competition for Australian schoolchildren, promising to be “much more” than a traditional spelling bee.

Harnessing the magnetic pull of tablets and mobile devices have over children, Literacy Planet has wrapped an educational competition around a colourful gaming app to entice schoolchildren to get involved in their free time.

Launched in June, Literacy Planet LogoMania 2015 is an online competition open to primary school children from Year 1 to Year 6. The competition promises to improve literacy skills, including spelling, word recognition, vocabulary and word knowledge one minute at a time.

According to the 2012 Australian Early Development Census, one in four Australian children lacked the most basic literacy skills when they started school, including simple letter recognition.

The nationwide education initiative aims to encourage tens of thousands of schoolchildren to compete and play a collective 10 million minutes of literacy development over the next few weeks.

Each game played contributes three minutes to the national goal. In that time players have to build as many words as possible using letter tiles.

Literacy Planet CEO Adam McArthur said he was confident the competition would improve literacy outcomes.

“Our goal is to provide a learning experience that’s fun, engaging and effective,” he said. “We have set a great challenge for primary school children to improve their literacy skills and work together to build millions of words and play 10 million minutes of literacy online.”

This is the first year the competition has set the goal to achieve 10 million minutes of literacy development. Literacy Planet ambassador Georgie Gardner said she was looking forward to primary school children rising to the challenge.

“I am passionate about child literacy development and this provides a great incentive, as well as a really fun and easy way for children to practice their literacy skills,” she said.

Children can already access practice games ahead of the competition start on July 27.

About 500 primary schools around the country have already registered. Teachers and parents can register schoolchildren now at literacyplanet.com/logoMania/

The Advertiser 11/7/2015

Filmmakers with future

CHILDREN across the state are being encouraged to pull out their iPads or dust off their video cameras and get creative in the lead up to this year’s Adelaide Kids Film Festival.

The event, held in October, allows children aged six to 16 to present their own short films, submitted individually or as a group.

Festival director Chloe Gardner says it provides a great opportunity for children to think outside the box and, if short-listed, see their movie on the big screen.

“Films bring people together and it’s great for children to see the work of others and be recognised by the audience for their efforts,” Ms Gardner says.

Filmmakers choose from three categories – live action, animation and documentary – and must address the theme “connections”.

“This can be interpreted any way the filmmaker likes...it could be a connection to a place in the world, best friends holding hands, or even a technological connection,” Ms Gardner says.

Prizes include cameras, video and digital equipment, movie passes and vouchers.

For details: aclf.com.au

The Advertiser 11/7/2015
Stepson becoming hooked on screen zombies

The evidence around children and screen usage is concerning for any parent interested in the health of their children. Some research indicates a percentage of children your son’s age are spending between four and seven hours each day on screens. That is beyond excessive. But with so many screens at their disposal and hanging around in our households, we need to consider the content of our children’s media diet, to filter out the garbage as much as possible.

The content knot/tangle

A big concern for many parents is what their children are viewing online. As time increases in front of screens, so too does the risk they will come across unsavoury, malicious or R-rated content. It is up to you to decide whether a six- year-old in your care should be watching Call Of Duty. Given the MA5+ rating on COD, this should be easy to determine. If you’re unsure about the appropriateness of content, take a look at www.commonsensemedia.org.

Experimental studies demonstrate what we view affects our thinking, emotions and behaviour. News stories describing how young children have viewed pornography and then embarked on a sexual assault using a sibling or neighbour as their “partner”, or when kids watch a movie with sword fighting and then race outside to gather sticks and start mimicking what they’ve seen, are anecdotal and empirical evidence which tell an important story: children are affected by what they view.

So what can you do as a stepparent?

Step-parents are at an almost insurmountable disadvantage. Asking a child who is not “yours” to behave in a particular way is often met with a seething, “you’re not my parent, you can’t tell me what to do” response. The most important piece of advice I can offer to anyone in a step-parenting (or co-parenting) environment is to be on the same page as one another. This is often easier said than done (particularly for co-parenting). Here are my tips:

1. As adults, discuss the issue before engaging with the child. This means you and your husband, but also the co-parents. It is critical to take the time to fully understand why something the child is doing is causing challenges to the other parent. (If this is tough, perhaps start with, “I want to talk with you about one of those awkward parenting things. Is now a good time?” Be patient with one another.)

2. Explain to one another why you feel the way you do, and suggest possible solutions. Ask their opinion first. Listen carefully. Ask if you can share your ideas. Get permission. It works better that way.

3. Make a decision together and then go to the child/children. Depending on your relationships with one another and with the child, you might go together. If children are older or larger and it may be best your biological parent speaks with them alone.

4. Speak to the child about the issue. Explain what you have decided and take the time to discuss why.

5. See things from your child’s perspective to be sure you haven’t overlooked anything, and do not be insensitive or harsh.

6. If there are issues, problem-solve together. Ask your child, “What do you think?” and then chat about potential solutions.

7. Stay united, supportive, and understanding of your child and one another.

In an ideal world, everyone (including your husband’s previous family with whom you co-parent) will work together to raise your children to have healthy relationships with one another and with screens.

The reality is that it rarely works as easily in real life as it does in the advice columns. If this is the case, follow the steps above as best you can and proactively look for creative ways you can encourage your stepson to find appropriate outlets and stimulation away from screens.

Dr Justine Coulson is the founder of happyfamilies.com.au

The Advertiser 11/7/2015
Sales sink as Barbie battles bureaucracy

CASSANDRA JARAMILLO PAUL ZIOBRO

Mattel's sales of the doll fell 19 per cent in the second quarter, as the toy maker swung to a quarterly loss and posted a 7 per cent drop in overall net sales. The stronger US dollar drove a large chunk of the decline, but Barbie's sales would still have fallen 11 per cent when stripping out currency swings.

Barbie's performance — sales of the doll have dropped by double digits for seven straight quarters — underscores the deep challenges facing new Mattel chief executive Christopher Sinclair as he looks to right the world's largest toy maker by sales. Barbie is Mattel's largest brand and a big driver of profits, but its long slump has cost it shelf space at retailers that Mattel will have to work hard to earn back.

Mr Sinclair, a longtime board member who was named CEO in April, is trying to pull Mattel out of a multi-year slump, where the company's creative side was weighed down by a culture of too many meetings and a stifling bureaucracy that designers say impeded their ability to come up with new toys.

While development suffered, Mattel also bungled basic retail execution around the holidays, promoting different products on television than it featured in stores, hurting its standing with retailers.

The company posted a loss of $US10.4 million ($15.4m) in the most recent quarter, compared with a profit of $US28.3m a year earlier.

Mr Sinclair hopes to quickly stabilise Mattel's operations. He's pushing for faster development of toys, encouraging partnerships with technology companies and cutting costs. He acknowledged that fixing the cultural problems remains a top priority. "Our emphasis continues to be on rebuilding our culture to embrace brand building, creativity and innovation," he said on the earnings call.

He's working closely with chief operating officer Richard Dickson, who was brought in last year to help jettison a floundering creative division and has since been given the broader role of making sure Mattel does a better job of designing and selling toys.

Mr Dickson, widely viewed as a likely successor for Mr Sinclair's job, helped turn around Barbie's fortunes during his earlier time at Mattel before leaving for a senior job at apparel company Jones Group in 2010. Since returning, he's rearranged the creative team and changed leaders at the top brands.

Two of his top priorities are fixing Barbie and Fisher-Price. Both brands have endured long slumps, with Barbie suffering recently from disjointed marketing campaigns and rising competition from Anna and Elsa dolls from Disney's Frozen movie. The Barbie brand is making a big bet on a superhero version that hit shelves earlier this year and which has helped retail sales improve slightly from a year earlier even as gross sales to retailers fell sharply.

Fisher-Price, meanwhile, is trying to recover from a period where it raised prices too fast, costing it shelf space that allowed smaller companies like VTech to gain share. Fisher-Price's sales showed some promise in the period, rising 2 per cent overall.

Mattel's wheel's business, which includes diecast Hot Wheels cars, posted 15 per cent sales increase.

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If you want peak performance, change your usage

Prioritise your texts and emails

Put the phone on silent for dedicated periods each day (and slowly increase this "off time")

Turn off notifications; colour code emails

Never read emails or texts first thing in the morning as they overstimulate the mind and cause the day to start with fight-or-flight chemicals such as cortisol and adrenaline

Don't look at any screens one hour before sleep at night because they prevent sleep hormones

Don't write angry emails because you wait for the response and get upset — handle difficult situations by voice, it's better that way

Don't bring devices into meetings

Source: Larry Rosen, California State University

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The Weekend Australian 18-19/7/2015

The Australian 31/7/2015
ADVERTISING


Kraak, V. I; Story, M (2015) An accountability evaluation for the industry’s responsible use of brand mascots and licensed media characters to market a healthy diet to American children Obesity Reviews Volume: 16 Issue: 6 Pages: 433-453


COMPUTER & INTERNET

MEDIA EFFECTS - HEALTH


Hale, Lauren; Guan, Stanford (2015) Screen time and sleep among school-aged children and adolescents: A systematic literature review Sleep Medicine Reviews Volume: 21 Pages: 50-58

Maras, D; Flament, MF; et al (2015) Screen time is associated with depression and anxiety in Canadian youth. Preventive Medicine, Vol. 73, Pp133-138

Ross, Craig S; et al. (2015) The relationship between population-level exposure to alcohol advertising on television and brand-specific consumption among underage youth in the us Alcohol and Alcoholism Volume: 50 Issue: 3 Pages: 358-364


Takeuchi, Hikaru; et al. (2015) The impact of television viewing on brain structures: cross-sectional and longitudinal analyses Cerebral Cortex Volume: 25 Issue: 5 Pages: 1188-1197


MEDIA EFFECTS - SOCIAL


VIDEO & COMPUTER GAMES


VIOLENCE


CONFERENCES
Rights of the Child Consumer
Presented by the Australian Human Rights Commission in partnership with ACCM
20 November 2015
Telstra Centre
400 George St. Sydney
Principal speakers
Megan Mitchell
National Children’s Commissioner
Professor Elizabeth Handsley
Professor of Law Flinders University and President, ACCM
Sarah Court
Commissioner, ACCC

Overall, 25.2% of students.

The Journal of Media Literacy Education Research Journal (MERJ) and work to a special editions of the Media

Presenters will be invited to submit their

The Summit is convened annually by the

Thomas turns 70
Popular multimedia children’s character Thomas the Tank Engine turns 70 years old this year, and Mattel is marking the occasion with a new documentary film, Seventy Years of Friendship.

The documentary which can be seen on YouTube includes interviews with fans in many different countries. There is also an interview with Christopher Awdry, the son of Rev. Wilbert Awdry, the Anglican vicar and creator of Thomas the Tank Engine. Christopher shares personal memories associated with the stories, and reads from the books, including his father’s favorite, Thomas Comes to Breakfast. The first book in the Thomas series, Thomas the Tank Engine, was published in 1946.

http://kidscreen.com/2015/07/15/youtube-doc-celebrates-thomas-the-tank-engine/#ixzz3Hb97jBEuA

Media Education Summit
The 8th Media Education Summit will bring together a global network of media educators, scholars and researchers to share research, pedagogy and innovation on all aspects of media education and media in education.

The Summit is convened annually by the Centre for Excellence in Media Practice CEMP and is hosted this year by Emerson College, Boston, USA.

Presenters will be invited to submit their work to a special editions of the Media Education Research Journal (MERJ) and the Journal of Media Literacy Education (JMLE).

http://www.cemp.ac.uk/summit/2015/

Social networking and mental health
Canadian research has shown that frequent use of social networking sites (SNS) is associated with poor psychological functioning among children and adolescents.

Data for the study were based on 753 students (55% female) in grades 7–12 derived from the 2013 Ontario Student Drug Use and Health Survey. Overall, 25.2% of students reported using SNSs for more than 2 hours every day, 54.3% reported using SNSs for 2 hours or less every day, and 20.5% reported infrequent or no use of SNSs.

Students who reported an unmet need for mental health support were more likely to report using SNSs for more than 2 hours every day than those with no identified unmet need for mental health support. Daily SNS use of more than 2 hours was also independently associated with poor self-rating of mental health and experiences of high levels of psychological distress and suicidal thoughts.

Researchers point out that more research is needed to understand the relationship between the use of SNSs and mental health among children and adolescents, the direction of the association and the factors that might change this relationship.


http://online.liebertpub.com/doi/full/10.1089/cyber.2015.0055

New Zealanders support junk-food ad controls
Research shows that New Zealanders want greater government controls on junk-food promotions to children, with 72 per cent calling for stronger restrictions.

A June survey of 1620 adults found 40.5 per cent were strongly in favour of greater restrictions to reduce the advertising of unhealthy food and drink to children, and 31.5 per cent were somewhat in favour.

Forty-three per cent of those surveyed wanted a ban imposed on website games and competitions that carry branding of unhealthy foods and drinks.

The survey was commissioned by researchers at Auckland University investigating ways of dealing with New Zealand’s obesity epidemic. Eleven per cent of NZ children are obese.

http://m.nzherald.co.nz/lifestyle/news/article.cfm?c_id=6&objectid=11483657

UK ministers back iRights campaign
UK government ministers have backed a campaign calling for under-18s to have the right to delete embarrassing and damaging material they have posted on social media that could later harm their job or education prospects. A report published by iRights on Tuesday said: “Personal experimentation is an essential part of childhood development, yet the internet never forgets and never corrects”