Not the Six O’clock News: Children and violent or upsetting media content

This webinar was presented in April by Early Childhood Australia in partnership with ACCM. The speaker was the deputy director of the Children and Families Research Centre at Macquarie University, Dr Wayne Warburton.

Wayne spoke about the increased use of many types of screens by children aged from birth to eight. The increasing use of mobile devices by children makes it more likely that they will encounter frightening or upsetting material. He spoke particularly about the types of media that children find frightening at different ages and developmental stages.

Studies have shown that about 8 in 10 children have watched the news, with nearly half reporting they have seen something that upset them. Children troubled by the news may have trouble sleeping, or become anxious, or sad. The resulting phobias can be long-lasting.

Dr Warburton said parents should try to limit children’s exposure to media, and monitor what they watch. He recommended shows such as the ABC’s Behind the News which provides age-appropriate news coverage in context.

He advised parents of young children who were upset by something in the news that they should cuddle them, distract them, and reassure them it was unlikely to happen to them. Parents of older children can also discuss their fears, explain what is happening and put the real threat into perspective.

Wayne Warburton is one of the speakers at the July Violence in the Media conference in Sydney (see next column).

Disappearing childhood - what is the role of media and marketing?

This is a second webinar from Early Childhood Australia in partnership with ACCM. It can be accessed at 1pm AEST on Tuesday 10 May.

Dr Lesley-Anne Ey from the School of Education, University of South Australia, will provide an overview of how the media encroaches on childhood through promoting and normalising adult concepts and behaviours for young children.

She will also explore how media is contributing to children’s developing self-identity, attitudes and behaviours.


NSW Police Commissioner to open conference

Andrew P Scipione APM, Commissioner of the NSW Police Force will be giving the opening address at the Violence in the Media: The stories and the science conference in Sydney on 18 July 2016.

Disappearing childhood - what is the role of media and marketing?

56 per cent of children engage in excessive screen time

A survey by the ABC children’s current affairs program Behind The News has found that about three in five Australian children spend more time in front of a screen than the national guidelines recommend, with many respondents saying they would find it impossible to go without digital devices for one week.

More than 18,000 young Australians were surveyed via the program website to find out about their screen habits.

It found 56 per cent of the young people surveyed spent more than two hours a day using technology outside of school hours. One in 10 said they spent at least four out-of-school hours a day looking at a screen.


National Families Week is Australia’s annual celebration of the importance of families. It is timed to coincide with the UN International Day of Families (15 May).

The 14th National Families Week will be held between 15 and 21 May 2016. This year’s theme is Stronger Families, Stronger Communities. The aim of National Families Week 2016 is to celebrate the vital role that families play in community wellbeing.

One of ACCM’s contributions to this week is the running of two seminars, one for professionals and one for parents, on the subject: Technology and children: must-knobs from the experts.

The speakers are:

• Dr Kate Highfield - Nationally recognised expert on how technology can be used as a tool in learning and play
• Ben Riley - Cognitive Behaviour Therapist; Researcher on gambling-related digital media

More information and registration: childrenandmedia.org.au/events/accm-seminars

NOT THE SIX O’CLOCK NEWS

POLICE COMMISSIONER TO OPEN CONFERENCE

EDITORIAL: A SPORTING CHANCE FOR PARENTS?....
A SPORTING CHANCE FOR PARENTS?

We’ve been struggling to provide parents with a simple guide to the Dec 1 2015 Commercial Television Code of Practice, but we don’t think that’s possible.

We thought we might be able to give you a table with each hour of the day, that would tell you what level of programming you could expect and what you might have to look out for. It’s surely reasonable to expect that the time zones in which certain levels of classified programs can be shown might be a useful guide for choices for you and your children. But it’s much more complicated than that, so we’re tackling it bit by bit.

In the last issue of small screen, we told you about alcohol and betting ads, and whether you might be able to avoid them in family viewing time.

This month we providing a guide to the tricky issue of sports programs and live sporting events.

First some definitions:

A live sporting event includes live-to-air sporting broadcasts; broadcasts delayed in areas where the event is being held or for time zone reasons, and in some instances, replays due to temporary suspension of play.

A sports program is a program includes coverage of a sporting event, or sporting commentary or analysis, or presentations or awards associated with events.

Report: Is it gambling or a game?

A sharp increase in the availability of games that simulate gambling poses a risk to young people by presenting gambling as attractive and relatively harmless, according to a report by the Australian Institute of Family Studies’ Australian Gambling Research Centre.

The report, *Is it gambling or a game? Simulated gambling games: Their use and regulation* identifies a proliferation of simulated gambling games that mimic the look and feel of gambling but without the ability to stake, win or lose actual money.

The Institute’s director, Anne Hollonds said that people who play simulated games, like poker, the pokies and blackjack were more likely to gamble commercially and to report gambling problems. “The boundaries between simulated and commercial gambling are becoming increasingly blurred,” Ms Hollonds said.

https://aifs.gov.au/agrc/publications/is-it-gambling-or-game

Telstra TV launches first children’s service

The interactive preschool network ZooMoo has become the first children’s service to launch on Telstra TV. ZooMoo, claims to be, “All animals all the time” – with a crew of animal puppet hosts, wildlife footage and stories that aim to enhance children’s knowledge about, and love of, animals.

The ZooMoo television viewing experience is tied in with a free ZooMoo App to provide a multi-platform experience that allows ZooMoo viewers to collect animals they encounter on the TV screen and bring them to life on mobile devices with games, music, puzzles and other activities.

Taking aim at gaming’s sexism

Andrew McMillen

Game Changers: From Minecraft to Misogyny, the Fight for the Future of Videogames
By Dan Golding and Leena van Deventer
Affirm, 250pp, $29.99

For a long time, the stereotype surrounding video game culture saw its players identified as uniformly male, probably socially inept and pale, and likely a little overweight. This is no longer true and has not been for some time, yet the sheer maleness of this industry and its initial consumer base meant that some unhealthy attitudes toward the opposite sex were allowed to fester unchecked for decades.

An undercurrent of misogyny among gamers broke from the shadows into sunlight in October 2014 when a story on the front page of The New York Times reported that a prominent feminist media critic, Anita Sarkeesian, had to cancel an appearance at a Utah university after being threatened with "the deadliest school shooting in American history" if she went ahead with her planned talk. Per Utah law, the university could not assure its guest speaker that campus police would stop people entering the hall with guns.

This unsavoury chapter was among the most high-profile events in a rolling campaign of organised online harassment against women who work in the video game industry or openly criticise aspects of it. Named "Gamergate" and often accompanied by a hashtag, for ease of context on social media, that front-page story offered a window into an ugly world that had been making outspok en women feel unsafe — online and off — for far too long. The Times story led to Sarkeesian appearing on The Colbert Report, where she spoke intelligently and rationally about the hate speech and threats she and her peers experienced on a daily, if not hourly, basis.

Gamergate was an important moment because it gave the many millions of people around the world who regularly play video games pause to reflect on the culture in which the hobby was enmeshed. It offered a binary choice: one could support the movement that had allowed entrenched sexism and misogyny to metastasise, or reject its ethos by proclaiming the hobby should evolve into an inclusive environment where players and developers could feel safe enough to contribute and reflect on this creative pursuit, regardless of their sex.

Game Changers is the debut book by authors Dan Golding and Leena van Deventer, and its focus is largely on examining the poisoned culture that allowed Gamergate to flourish, and how such unresolved attitudes from a noisy and occasionally criminal minority led to a global flashpoint. That latter adjective is used with purpose: as the authors explain, it is illegal in Australia to use a carriage service — including Twitter or Facebook — to threaten another person, so anyone who has stated their intentions to harm or kill someone else online has broken a law that holds a penalty of up to 10 years' imprisonment.

The inclusion of Minecraft — a popular world-building video game — in the book's extended title is purely a marketing decision, as there is much more discussion of misogyny than mining or crafting in these pages. This sly approach is admirable, though, because Game Changers is the sort of book that can be recommended to gamers of all stripes. If unsuspecting readers end up learning a thing or two about social inclusion and tolerance towards others, then the authors will no doubt share a smile. It is written with great passion, wit and insight, as much aimed at the "uninitiated, the curious and the confused as [much as] for the weary and the experienced". As a gamer and occasional journalist within the field, I knew the broad strokes of the Gamergate saga, but I learned many new things here.

Golding is a critic, academic and director of the Freesplay Independent Games Festival; van Deventer is a game developer, writer, teacher and director of a not-for-profit organisation supporting women in IT. Both are based in Melbourne and well-regarded within the gaming community. Here, they have combined their significant knowledge and experience to produce an accessible and worthy overview of what they accurately describe as the fight for the future of this important medium.

It is towards the end of the book that the material becomes most heartfelt and affecting. The authors draw a straight line between words uttered by this year’s Australian of the Year, David Morrison, and the global community’s sluggish response to condemning the actions of the Gamergate minority.

"This period in video game history, for many people, will be remembered as the time when so many people walked right on past at the very moment when their input would have been most useful," they note.

If this all sounds a bit melodramatic, van Deventer underscores the point by reflecting on how Gamergate hit while she was teaching games writing at a university. One of her students was so appalled by the vitriolic surrounding women working in this industry that she asked her teacher, "Why make games when I can make something else for people that won't threaten my life?" Van Deventer laments the "bankruptcy" of her response, and how she still feels she had failed her student, who soon decided to change her degree.

Game Changers is an essential read for anyone who engages with video games. It is a strong indictment of a poisonous, misogynistic culture that has no place in the modern world. "The industry should take this as seriously as it takes piracy because abuse, harassment and bigotry shouldn't be considered less important than attacks against intellectual property or capital," the authors write near the end, perfectly summarising this unfortunate series of events.

Andrew McMillen is a Brisbane-based freelance journalist. His second book for UQP will be published in August.

The Weekend Australian 2-3 April, 2016
Prime time to carry M for modern rating

M-rated shows in peak family viewing hours are no big deal in 2016, writes Michael Lallo.

It's about free-for-all. An M-rated show, in mid-evening, on a major commercial network.

The airing of Married at First Sight at 7.30pm on Nine follows the broadcasting watchdog relaxing the rules last year: Since December, M-rated programs have been permitted at 7.30pm (previously 8.30pm); MA15+ at 8.30pm (previously 9pm); and PG all day.

So why haven't Seven, Nine and Ten filled their mid-evening slots with M content? Partly, because they pencilled those big-budget reality shows months in advance.

They are also wary of alienating "family audiences".

What is a "family audience", though? Mum, dad and their biological offspring? Except they're the minority of households in Australia. And why do we peg them all as old-fashioned and conservative? Surely most can handle something saltier than Alf Stewart's "Stone the flamin' crows!"

Maybe it's because - as always - people who accept a small change tend to shrug their shoulders and go, "Cool!" Whereas the upset few broadcast their displeasure from a megaphone. This lends an outsized quality to their protests (see also: opposition to marriage equality), such as those of the Australian Council on Children and the Media.

When the Australian Communication and Media Authority (ACMA) announced the new rules, the council slammed them as "very family unfriendly".

"There will be no time when families can sit down together to enjoy TV, without having to be on guard - apart from some programs principally directed to children," the group said.

I love this image of parents "on guard", crouched like ninjas in front of their wide-screen, ready to kick the off button if Manu drops an F-bomb on MKR. (Why do we still say "F-bomb"? It pains me that I can't even write the word in full.)

Or these parents could spend five seconds checking the program classification. The one with specific warnings about language, nudity, violence and other things that might upset them.

Married at First Sight is a reality program with some substance. To be clean, I'm not saying you should commit to partners you don't know, or expose your relationship to the scrutiny of a national audience. But it's not mindless trash, as many feared before its launch last year.

The worry now is that Nine will water it down to avoid offending its "family audience".

Nine is making just one change. It will bleep out the word "f-". Everything else will remain intact. Because it was not that risque to start with.

The way we watch television has changed radically over the past decade. This isn't a shock to anyone. But it does explain why ACMA altered the rules.

"It reflects the reality that television is operating in a new, digital era in which content can be viewed from a wide variety of sources, and on a wide variety of platforms," chairman Chris Chapman said in November.

Foxtel, Netflix, Stan, Presto: each has some restrictions. But essentially, they can show what they want, when they want.
The Australian 22 April 16

Barbie’s bad hair day hurts Mattel

Sales of Barbie dolls fell 3 per cent around the world in the first quarter and a strong US dollar eroded profits

**PAUL ZIGROB**

Mattel’s sales declined in the first quarter as Barbie’s revival stalled and the toy maker was unable to make up for the loss of a valuable Walt Disney licence to rival Hasbro.

Sales of Mattel’s Barbie doll fell 3 per cent globally in the first quarter, with the stronger dollar eroding sales volume gains. Barbie’s latest decline came on top of a 14 per cent sales drop in the same quarter a year ago. The results dashed hopes raised in the previous quarter that, after failing for eight periods, Barbie sales had bottomed out.

The doll did better in Mattel’s home North American market, where sales rose 11 per cent. After struggling, the company is trying to create a comeback for Barbie with the introduction during the quarter of three new body sizes — petite, tall and curvy — as part of a move to broaden consumer interest in the iconic doll.

Mattel president and chief operating officer Richard Dickson said he expected Barbie’s international sales, which were down 14 per cent in the latest quarter, to start improving as some of the changes make their way overseas.

Mattel shares, which slipped 2.6 per cent to $US33.04 ($A42.34) in 4pm trading, fell an additional 6 per cent in after-hours trading. The share price had risen 22 per cent this year before the earnings report, which was released after markets closed.

The quarter was the first where Mattel felt the impact from the loss of sales of Disney’s princesses and characters from the hit animated film Frozen. Mattel lost that coveted Disney licence to Hasbro, which reported a big gain in sales from those products in the latest quarter.

Overall sales fell 6 per cent to $US869.4 million in the quarter. Absent foreign-exchange rates, the decrease in net sales would have been 2 per cent. Demand was a little better at retail stores, where Mattel said sales were 2 per cent higher. Chief executive Christopher Sinclair said the company remains on track to meet its guidance for the year.

For Mattel, the loss of the Disney licence means figuring out how to close a sales gap of nearly $US450m this year, including about $US100m in the first quarter. Mattel is relying on several smaller properties, such as girls’ action figures based on DC Comics characters and Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles building-block sets. It also needs legacy brands such as Barbie and Fisher-Price, which recently signed on designer Jonathan Adler as a creative director, to continue to improve.

Mattel is also trying to stop slumps in two other girl brands: Monster High and American Girl.

The plan is part of a broader turnaround being orchestrated by Mr Sinclair and his new management team. Together, they are trying to shake off a bureaucratic culture that they say stifled creativity and crippled sales in the years before they took on their current roles in early 2015.

Overall, Mattel’s quarterly loss deepened to $US78m compared with $US58.2m a year earlier. Excluding restructuring costs and other items, the operating loss was US$33c a share, compared with US$8c a share a year earlier.

Gross margin narrowed to 44.7 per cent from 48.6 per cent a year earlier.
Turning off TV sex and violence

NEW code of practice was instituted for free-to-air television in Australia last year but, is it a good result for Australian families? A Code of Practice is an industry standard and sets out what the specific industry will do to regulate its behaviour in keeping with "community standards."

So here's the what the new common standard is, according to the Free-to-Air TV in Australia. ALL O time zones have been replaced by "E".

THE M time zone has been extended and now starts at 7.30pm (instead of 8.30pm).

THE M5- time zone has been moved forward to 9.30pm (instead of 9pm).

ALCOHOL ads can be shown in free-to-air programs whenever shown. They can be shown in "sports programs" on weekends and on weekdays from 7.30pm.

BETTING ads can be shown in any PG classified program (including sport), and in any program shown after 7pm.

PROGRAM promotions and trailers for higher classified programs and movies than you've chosen can also be shown.

What this really means essentially, the free-to-air TV stations (co-regulated by the Australian Communications and Media Authority ACM) are arguing that you can see all of this content (and worse) any time of the day on the internet or pay TV. They want a level playing field.

So it means if you leave your child in front of the TV while you organise dinner, they could be watching a G-rated program that has trailers or promotions that are unexpectedly violent or sexual or contain drug use or other content to promote programs deemed suitable only for mature audiences.

Sure, some children will have been worse. Other children won't even notice it. But plenty of three, four or five-year-old will notice.

And plenty of six, seven or eight-year-old may become inquisitive. Some will be scared. Some confused. Scared will act out what they've seen.

Evidence shows that many will be affected - particularly if the exposure is repeated.

Does it actually matter? We are becoming increasingly desensitised. Research shows this is a fact.

The content we deem appropriate today would never have been allowed on free-to-air television during these time slots decades ago.

Studios into the impact of television viewing on children's behaviour have told a relatively consistent story for decades: watching violent or sexual content (or even simple relational aggression) is not just correlational, but actually affects the way our children behave.

Who is responsible? We've all heard the saying a thousand times. It takes a village to raise a child.

That doesn't mean parents don't have a responsibility to watch what their children do.

Parents need to protect, put safeguards in place and trust their children.

But parents still need that village. The village needs to uphold a standard of behaviour that supports parents in their efforts to be responsible. In the case of the current standards, another safety fence has been removed from a high place.

The village has abrogated its responsibility. The village is clearly saying it's entirely up to the parents to raise their children because the villagers want to pursue their own pleasures with little thought for the consequences of their fellow villagers.

According to federal Liberal politician Rowan Ramsey, the village is essentially saying it doesn't matter what our children see anymore.

If you would like more information see the Australian Council on Children and the Media.

They have loads of great information on the topic including ways you can act to form a change.

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

The Advertiser 19 March 2016
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Dickinson, M; Thomas, A 2016 Is it gambling or a game? Simulated gambling games: Their use and regulation Australian Gambling Research Centre Discussion Paper No. 5


CONFERENCES

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July 13-15, 2016 Flinders University Adelaide, South Australia


22nd World Meeting of the International Society for Research on Aggression (ISRA)

19-23 July 2016 University of NSW, Sydney

iec.mq.edu.au/research/cfrc/isra_2016
Young victims of revenge porn

BBC News reports that children as young as 11 are among more than 1,000 alleged victims of revenge porn who reported offences in the first year of a new law coming into effect in the UK. Revenge porn refers to the act of a partner or ex-partner purposefully distributing images or videos of a sexual nature without the other person’s consent. The law introduced in April 2015 covers images shared on and offline with the subject’s permission and with the intent to cause harm. Physical distribution of images is also covered.

The BBC analysed Freedom of Information requests from 31 police forces in England and Wales between April and December.

Their analysis shows that:

- There were 1,160 reported incidents of revenge pornography from April to December 2015
- Three victims were 11 years old with some 30% of offences involving young people under 19
- Facebook was used by perpetrators in 68% of cases where social media was mentioned in reports.


Brussels Conference

This year’s Media & Learning Conference organised by the Media & Learning Association and the Flemish Ministry of Education and Training with the support of the European Commission was held on 9-11 March in Brussels. 290 people from 30 countries took part in the conference which had two main aims:

- to highlight the impact of media in enriching learning
- to reflect on promoting a critical understanding of media.

Central to the agenda was a discussion about the role of social media in youth radicalisation and how media literacy can provide a way to tackle extremism and alienation in youth (a discussion which has been given added poignance by the tragic events that happened in Brussels only 10 days later).

Panellists agreed that social media is not a cause but an accelerator of radicalisation. The causes were seen as adolescent feelings of apathy, stigmatization and a perception of adult hypocrisy.

Mechanisms to promote self-autonomous and self-esteem were considered important in combatting radicalisation and there was some agreement that effective programs and approaches are starting to be developed.

Video recordings of many of the presentations are available on the conference website along with the slides and materials shown by speakers.

http://media-and-learning.eu/

Breaking down gender stereotypes in children’s media

In April the US White House was host to a day-long conference, Helping children explore, learn, and dream without limits: breaking down gender stereotypes in media and toys.

The conference brought together an interdisciplinary mix of leading researchers, content creators, and advocates working in the area of children’s media. The researchers gave an in-depth look at current research on how notions of boyhood, masculinity, and femininity are affecting children today and the impact of gender disparities in children’s media and toys.

Parent, blogger, and policy advocates of youth-serving organizations including Common Sense Media and Amy Poehler’s Smart Girls presented recommendations for developing more inclusive children’s media and toys that disrupt gender stereotypes.

The event also involved featured industry leaders from Mattel, Disney, Lego, and DC Entertainment/Warner Bros.


Australian PM announces new adviser

Malcolm Turnbull has announced that the role of Special Adviser on Cyber Security within the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet will be filled by the current e-safety commissioner Alastair MacGibbon.

MacGibbon was appointed as e-safety commissioner in March 2015, and was empowered to investigate and seek to have content removed if it is deemed to be bullying to a specific Australian child.

Australia will also get a new Minister on Cybersecurity, as well as the newly created role of Cyber Ambassador to liaise between agencies and business, and communicate the strategy internationally.

AU$6.7 million has been set aside for the Cyber Ambassador to conduct overseas advocacy.

http://www.zdnet.com/article/t turnbull-calls-for-more-openness-surrounding-data-breaches/