

the importance of income, housing and resources in the development of children. These factors are also drivers of attainment and maintenance of family cohesion, with the tensions and anxieties associated with a lack of resources often contributing to family dissolution.

This book provides an excellent example of how research-based data can be presented in a way that ensures both a sense of continuity and of change. Furthermore, using the qualitative information in this way makes it both meaningful and, by extrapolation, practical for professionals employed in the welfare sector – and it avoids the ‘dryness’ that sometimes dogs research reports that are reliant on statistical evidence alone. For instance, understanding the ongoing concerns of people raising children in a crowded inner-city environment, where they are exposed to drug users, pollution, noise and lack of safe open spaces for play, tells us something about the environment needed for social housing development. This is pertinent to contemporary debates about housing, choice of housing options and locational issues.

The study is also an excellent example of a longitudinal project that has maintained, as an inherent value, the need to understand development over significant life stages rather than addressing only single points in time. For this reason it will stand as an example of what can be gained from the commitment over time to research studies and will, hopefully, be evidence for the value of funding further studies of this nature.

For those new to the welfare sector, and those in the political and advocacy spheres, this book is a powerful account of

what happens to families, their concerns about raising their children and the difficulties of maintaining wellbeing in the face of language difficulties, marital disharmony, ill health and other adverse circumstances. I suspect that our politicians are inclined to view the lives of Australians through their lenses of advantage, and seldom have significant exposure to disadvantage in any real sense. This book could provide the ground from which to reappraise the reasoning underpinning what remains of the ‘welfare state’; and perhaps encourage our politicians to be less dismissive of the outcomes that policies can have on those with least power and influence.

I particularly liked hearing the voices of the participants in the study and felt that their values, attitudes, ideas and aspirations were well integrated into the book overall. It is a credit to all who contributed, and especially to the parents and young adults who agreed to have their lives presented in this volume. We owe significant thanks to the families, the author Janet Taylor, the Federation Press and the Brotherhood of St Lawrence for this publication, and it will no doubt stand as a resource and teaching tool for social work, public health and sociological coursework.

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Children’s wellbeing in the media age: Multidisciplinary perspectives from the Harvard-Australia Symposium

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Handsley, MacDougall and Rich enlist 15 scholars from Australia, New Zealand and the United States, representing nine different disciplines and professions, to explore each field’s approach to research about children and the media. Represented were Psychology, Library Science, Paediatrics, Law, Public Health, Bioethics, Nutrition and Dietetics, Social Work, Philosophy and Media Production. This book advocates for multidisciplinary research in the field of children and media with the aim to encourage constructive engagement between scholars from diverse intellectual backgrounds. It is designed to present a backcloth to each discipline’s domain and provide insights into the

research methods currently used, strengths and weaknesses, and contributions of each field to advancing knowledge about children and media. It depicts substantial awareness of an array of disciplinary frameworks, research paradigms and methods. I have one caveat, however, in that arguably one of the most important disciplines, that of Education, has been omitted or overlooked. One chapter author holds a degree in education and works in the field of media production, and the chapter focuses on producing evidence-based documentary films. This leaves a crucial gap for potential readers concerned with children’s wellbeing in relation to media.

The Book is Presented in Three Parts

Part one consists of three chapters, beginning from chapter two, and presents theoretical frameworks. Dr David Bickham, a Research Scientist at the Centre on Media and Child Health at Boston Children's Hospital, and instructor in Paediatrics at Harvard Medical School applies Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory to provide a thorough overview of the many variables in children's environment and individual characteristics which interplay to shape and direct their development. Professor Colin MacDougall, a Professor of Public Health at Flinders University in Australia presents a strong case for children's rights to be included in research about them, and the value of children's contributions to research and policy through a child-citizen lens. This is followed nicely by Dr Alison Wotherspoon who is Head of Department of Screen and Media, also at Flinders University who describes working collaboratively with children and communities using participatory action research. Part one thus provides an effective foundation for placing children's voices and best interests at the centre of media research.

Part two comprises seven chapters and highlights the multiple and diverse disciplines that are actively researching in the area of children and media. Dr Emma Rush who lectures in Philosophy and Ethics at Charles Sturt University in Australia presents a chapter dealing with philosophy, ethics and applied ethics. She provides insight into the methods used within these disciplines, referencing deductive, inductive and dialectical approaches and the misconceptions revolving around ethical relativism, ethical subjectivism, predetermined political stance and ethical expertise. The information on ethical theories may assist reflective researchers to understand why they hold the moral positions they do. John McMillan, a Professor at the University of Otago in New Zealand, and Director of Bioethics explains the nature of bioethics in this context and outlines its common principles, namely, 'respect for persons, beneficence, non-maleficence and justice' (McMillan, 2015, p. 78) which underpin codes of research ethics worldwide including in Australia (see for example National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research, (National Health and Medical Research Council, 2015)). Dr Michael Rich works at the Boston Children's Hospital alongside co-editor David Bickham. Rich is the founder and Director of the Centre on Media and Child Health. Rich provides an overview of Paediatrics and identifies family and child trust and rapport as key to the discipline's historical influence on children's development and family child rearing practices. He notes, with some concern that media influence on children's development has not been given the same priority as other health risks in Paediatrics. Dr Ali Mubarak, from the discipline of Social Work at Flinders University, writes of the discipline's concern with public welfare, social justice and empowerment using an ecosystems approach. Mubarak proposes that social work's contribution to children and media includes being

proactive in addressing public policy, creating awareness and educating policy makers, communities and children in media use. Barbara Biggins is honorary CEO of the Australian Council on Children and the Media and the editor of *small screen*. Biggins champions the strengths of librarians including their professional skills to identify reliable sources for information and make these available to meet the needs of knowledge seekers. She argues that librarians can play a role in protecting children through unpacking the meaning and significance of freedom of expression and identifying and circulating high quality media resources for children. Elizabeth Handsley, a Professor of Law at Flinders University and president of the Australian Council on Children and the Media, argues that law is fundamentally concerned with providing structures to meet the needs and interests of members of communities to provide a harmonious and just society. She reflects that law has been largely absent in debates about media and children's wellbeing; however, she points to the following key contributions in regulation and governance more broadly: Broadcasting regulation; Online content regulation; Classification of films, publications and computer games; and Advertising regulations. Dr Kaye Mehta, is a Senior Lecturer at Flinders University, who 'founded the national Coalition on Food Advertising to Children' (p. ix). She provides an innovative chapter on public health nutrition drawing attention to diversity in philosophical and theoretical, and individualist and structuralist approaches. Mehta argues that public health nutrition is significant in contributing scientific evidence and informing political debate about the links between advertising and childhood obesity. Part two thus draws disciplines together to advocate for children's wellbeing via the unique contributions of each.

Part three presents perspectives from different strands of Psychology. Dr Glenn Cupit was a Senior Lecturer in Child Development at the University of South Australia, retiring two years ago. Cupit states that psychology is concerned with identifying the phenomena, describing what occurs, classifying the relationships, explaining the influences and predicting resolutions. He highlights the effectiveness of this research in informing the content for age-appropriate television productions for children. Dr Wayne Warburton, a Senior Lecturer in developmental psychology and Deputy Director of the Children and Families Research Centre at Macquarie University in Australia outlines nine key principles for psychology. He observes that psychology commonly collects quantitative data through rational, empirical and evidence based approaches and highlights psychology's latest methods of using Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) and Magnetoencephalography (MEG). He identifies that psychology research has informed our understanding about media influence on aggressive and also pro-social behaviours. Dr Julie Robinson, a Senior Lecturer in the School of Psychology at Flinders University provides a brief overview of marketing strategies, techniques and mediums which are used in advertising, whilst also

providing a balanced perspective on children's involvement in absorbing and interpreting media. She makes the point that those who research marketing to children are commonly concerned with both positive and negative media influences which has resulted in more informed marketing and media regulation, and media literacy interventions. Marika Tiggemann, a Professor in the School of Psychology at Flinders University, highlights that body image is a relatively new field in psychology. She notes that psychology research has contributed greatly to understanding media influences on children in relation to body image, self-objectification and sexualisation. However, she warns that there is a dearth of research in relation to younger children. Dr Sarah Blunden is Head of Paediatrics Sleep Research, at the Appleton Institute of Behavioural Science at Central Queensland University, Australia and is the founder and director of the Australian Centre for Education in Sleep. Sleep is not often considered in relation to children and media, however, in this emerging new field she highlights screen media as a significant contribution to poor sleeping habits and presents research demonstrating its impact on children's and adolescents' sleep quality, and sleep quantity. Media content, particularly frightening content, may affect children's sleep and exposure to the type of light emitted by media device screens affects melatonin levels, which in turn affect sleep. Part three cleverly brings together an array of innovative threads highlighting the need for varied complementary research approaches in establishing the evidence base.

A common theme throughout the text was that research is not keeping up with rapid pace of media and communication technologies and that there are still many gaps in our knowledge. Dr Michael Rich skilfully concludes the book by recommending that interdisciplinary research can improve the media environment for children without subjective agendas which can be seen in debates between child advocates and media producers.

We should seek neutral territory, built on unbiased scientific evidence of how we are influenced by the media we use. There we can transform the current polarised and contentious debate into proactive consensus-building (Rich, 2015, p. 247).

This book delivers a far greater array of material than is captured in the title. Fifteen experts from a diverse range of disciplines and professions present rigorous arguments for engaging in multidisciplinary research to minimise disciplinary divides, accomplish more rigorous research, and provide deeper, more comprehensive understandings about matters surrounding children and the media. Readers will come away with new understandings about the strength of multidisciplinary approaches to research with children and the media. I recommend this book to academics and researchers interested in investigating issues relating to children and the media.

It certainly enlightened me.

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