



New Australian conference

Scared, sleepless & hostile: Children, violent/frightening media & public policy

**Tuesday March 1 2010, 9am - 5pm
NSW Teachers Federation Conference Centre
37 Reservoir Street, Surry Hills NSW 2010**

With international researchers Prof John P Murray, Associate Prof Doug Gentile, Prof Ed Donnerstein, and Australian academics Dr Wayne Warburton, Dr Sarah Blunden, Richard Eckersley, Prof Elizabeth Handsley. Chaired by Prof Alan Hayes.

**Watch our website for more information.
To be placed on the mailing list email
admin@youngmedia.org.au**

Know Before You Go

As usual, a number of films aimed at children are being released for the holidays, and ACCM reviewers are busy checking them out.

So far we have found two G-rated films suitable for under eights, both of which are showing infrequently at selected cinemas:

- *Fireman Sam: The Great Fire of Pontypandy* (which has some slightly scary moments)
- *Dorothy the Dinosaur Meets Santa Claus*

Parents should be warned that he recently released *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* is rated M and was found by our reviewer to be unsuitable for children under 13, with parental guidance recommended 13-15 due to supernatural themes, violence including torture, and disturbing scenes.

Our reviewer found the latest film in the *Narnia Chronicles: The Voyage of the Dawn-treader* unsuitable for children under 10 because of violence and scary scenes.

Reviews of the following releases will be available soon

- *Megamind* (PG)
- *Tron: Legacy* (PG)
- *Gulliver's Travels* (PG)
- *Tangled* (PG)

Reviews can be found at

http://www.youngmedia.org.au/mediachildren/07_04_choose_films.htm

Hungry Jack's again.....and again!

The recently formed *Junkbusters* organisation has announced its first successful complaint against the advertising of junk food to children.

Hungry Jack's has been found to have breached the Australian Quick Service Restaurant Industry Initiative for Responsible Advertising and Marketing to Children. The Advertising Standards Bureau has ruled that two *Hungry Jack's* advertisements- one for a Kids Club Meal Snoopy toy and another for an Iron Man toy have been found to breach the Initiative to which Hungry Jacks signed up in August 2009.

The ads were run in the children's magazines *K-Zone* and *Totally Girl* whose audience is 8-11 year olds. The Bureau stated that the advertisements are clearly directed primarily to children. The recent breaches follow on from previous ones in December 2009 and February 2010.

The Advertising Standards Bureau's case report can be read at <http://122.99.94.111/cases/0427-10.pdf>.

The *Junkbusters* website is <http://junkbusters.com.au/>

STOP PRESS

R18+ for games? Review first

The Standing Committee of Attorneys General in Canberra on December 10th called for a review of games guidelines, including taking into account the difference in nature of films and games, and the interactivity of games. to be considered at their next meeting

http://www.scag.gov.au/lawlink/SCAG/ll_scag.nsf/pages/scag_index

Meanwhile, the Australian Obesity Policy Coalition has revealed that major food outlets, including Hungry Jacks, are targeting children under the age of 12 through direct mail as part of online marketing campaigns to pre-teens that include special offers, free food vouchers and competitions.

This practice was highlighted in a submission to a Senate inquiry on privacy laws made by the Obesity Policy Coalition. The submission can be found on the senate website at

http://www.aph.gov.au/senate/committee/fapa_ctte/priv_exp_drafts/submissions.htm

CHOICES FOR CHILDREN : a survey of the views of parents of young children about what's on TV

The Australian Council on Children and the Media is conducting a national survey to gather information about the views of parents in regard to choosing quality television programs for children.

We are particularly interested in your view on programs available for children under the age of 8 years.

We would like to find out :

- what you think is good quality TV for children
- whether you think there are good quality programs currently available for children
- how you find good programs for your children to watch
- whether you think all age groups under 8 are equally well catered for in terms of program offerings
- how you would improve TV offerings for children
- how you manage TV viewing so that your children see programs appropriate for their stage of development

The survey is online at www.childrenandmedia.org.au

It will take between 15-20 mins to complete.

Use the "Choices for children" online survey button.



no. 270 November 2010

small screen

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GUEST EDITORIAL

The Supreme Court of the United States—A hearing on video game violence: Some reflections by John P. Murray, Ph.D.

On 2 November 2010, the Supreme Court of the United States heard oral arguments in the case of Arnold Schwarzenegger, Governor of California v. the Entertainment Merchants Association. This case was at the Court on appeal from the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals in Sacramento California and concerned the right of the sovereign State of California to ban the sale or rental of violent video games to minors, under the age of 18 years. The video game industry claimed that the law was unconstitutional and violated their First Amendment rights to free speech...the Circuit Court agreed with the video game industry and the State of California appealed to the Supreme Court to reverse the lower court's ruling and affirm the State's right to protect its youngest citizens from harm.

I attended the Supreme Court hearing along with two colleagues—Professors Ed Donnerstein and Dale Kunkel—who have a long history in the area of research on this topic. After the hearing we gathered to discuss the likely outcome in this case. The Supreme Court is composed of nine Justices and they vary in political emphasis from liberal to conservative, but this case and the issue of violence cuts across lines of political ideology. The central issue in the case is whether the constitutionality of the law must be reviewed under the “Ginsburg Standard” (which refers to a landmark case in which the State of New

York banned the sale or distribution of pornography/sexually explicit material to minors, using a common sense approach concerning the harmful effects of such material on young minds) or whether the California



Law must be reviewed under “strict scrutiny (which would require a high standard of proof of harmful effects in order to avoid First Amendment prohibitions). All rather technical in a legal sense, but under strict scrutiny it would be very difficult to meet the rigorous proof of specific harm.

So, we are awaiting the decision of the 9 Supreme Court justices. That decision is not likely to be released until the end of the current term of the Court, which would typically not be until June, 2011. I will not name the six Justices who I think will vote in favor of California—because I don't want to give away my “secret powers” of observation!



The Supreme Court of the United States, interior of the courtroom with nine empty chairs for the Justices

How can I tactfully ask our family not to give my kids character toys?

We thought that parents might like to read the answer to this question given by Dr Michael Rich, Director of the Center on Media and Child Health at Children's Hospital Boston USA on the “Ask the Mediatrician” website where he and a panel of experts answer parents' questions about media and health.

Q: I don't want to seem ungrateful, and I know my children would probably like the Dora or Batman version of toys, but I just find that sort of commercialism unnecessary. How can I tell my family that we'd prefer they not get the character versions of toys when giving my kids gifts?

- Particular about Presents in Ypsilanti, MI

A: Dear Particular,

What a great question to consider this holiday season. Cross-merchandised products encourage kids to see whatever movie or TV show they represent—even if it's not appropriate for their age or stage of development. Plus, character toys often dictate how kids play with them: They encourage kids to act out the stories they know from the show or film rather than asking them to exercise their imaginations. This undermines the incredible value of open-ended free play.

So what to say to your family? First, know that

they'll likely appreciate any insight you can offer as to what to buy your child. (Holiday shopping can be stressful for even seasoned relatives, no matter how many gifts they've given in the past!) Provide them with suggestions as to what your unique child really wants: Opt for toys that encourage creative, imagination-fueled play and independent and collaborative learning. Books, board games, art sets, instruments—these are just a few great potential presents for kids of all ages.

Also, it's absolutely OK to tell your family directly that you'd prefer they not get the character versions of whatever toy they choose, even if they know your child is a fan of the show or movie. You can relay to them how important it is to you that your child make up her own stories instead of having her playtime scripted by pre-digested plotlines—or you can opt for whatever version of “Please choose non-character toys that expand our child's mind” that works for you.

However you make the message clear, remember to model these concepts yourself when choosing toys for cousins, nieces, and nephews: Think of your gift as an investment in that child's future brain, and make your investment wisely.

To read the Mediatrician's tips on good presents for children and answers to many other media problems, go to

<http://cmch.typepad.com/mediatrician/>

Clips 'n' Cuts

small screen no. 270 November 2010

BROADCASTING REGULATION NO SIMPLE ACT

The Australian, 8 November 2010

The system in which broadcasters and ISPs draft their own codes of practice needs work

IAN ROBERTSON

WHEN the Broadcasting Services Act, which regulates broadcasting and online services in Australia, was passed by the Australian parliament in 1992 it totalled less than 100 pages.

Today it is 10 times that length. The BSA was intended to be a significant departure from the previous regime of detailed and complex black letter law and an adversarial approach to regulation and enforcement.

The act aimed to substantially free up broadcasting regulation in Australia with a much lighter touch approach and an emphasis on co-regulation and appropriate flexibility to meet ever-changing circumstances.

And for a while it did.

But the further development and international competitiveness of the Australian broadcasting industry, which has always provided world-class services and demonstrated great efficiency

and innovation, are being impeded by excessive regulation, much of which is no longer necessary in the interest of the public or the industry. This was one of the driving forces which caused the federal government to announce before, and during, the recent election campaign that there would be a complete review of Australia's media laws during the life of the next parliament.

Regular complex amendments to the BSA mean it is not only 10 times its original length but parts of it are similar to income tax law in the complexity of their provisions and section numbering.

Anyone contemplating the acquisition of a regional commercial radio station should take particular note of section 43B, which requires the regulator, the Australian Communications and Media Authority, to put in place local presence conditions likely to make it impossible to ever reduce the staff, contractors and facilities employed by the station.

It is difficult to think of any other Australian business activity which is subject to such onerous regulation.

Much of the complexity of the BSA stems from its continued underlying principles of strong restrictions on ownership and control and extensive anti-avoidance provisions to prevent them being circumvented.

Media companies have argued

for years that increased competition from new media technologies, especially online services, removes the need for media-specific ownership and control regulations altogether.

These claims have usually been viewed by government as being self-serving and an exaggeration of the impact of new technologies on the power and influence of the traditional media.

However, with internet televisions available in stores and the iPad and similar portable online devices set to become ubiquitous, it is now clearly the case that the competitive landscape of the Australian media has changed substantially and permanently.

A strong argument can be made for removing media-specific ownership and control provisions in the BSA and relying instead on the general competition principles in the Trade Practices Act, enforced by the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission, to protect the public interest.

Since 2007 foreign investment in Australian broadcasting businesses has been dealt with by the Foreign Investment Review Board under general foreign investment principles rather than by broadcasting regulation.

For the rest, the government needs to carefully consider what aspects of broadcasting and online services need to be regulated

to best serve the public interest for the decade ahead and beyond.

The answer is undoubtedly a great deal less than what is currently the subject of complex and usually quite onerous regulation.

The approach adopted in Britain with a green paper and a white paper leading to the Communications Act 2003 and the establishment at that time of the British communications regulator, the Office of Communications, suggests an appropriate path which could be followed leading to completely new communications laws for Australia.

At the same time, the actual practical effectiveness of the current co-regulatory system under which broadcasters and internet service providers draft their own codes of practice which are then enforced by ACMA should be rethought.

The difficulty for the regulator, formerly the ABA and now ACMA, is that it lacks effective mid-range powers to deal with code breaches. So in practice broadcasters are often faced with the choice between short-term ratings gain and the regulatory equivalent of a slap on the wrist and a good talking to from the regulator.

This has been particularly evident in respect of some commercial television current affairs programs. In addition, the codes regulate far more than is really

necessary in the public interest, and a number of areas could be better dealt with by broadcasters operating their own self-regulatory scheme.

The number of advertisements which free television stations are allowed to broadcast is an example of an issue that could be better regulated by the stations themselves. Another example is program classification where free and pay-TV programs are categorised under different systems.

One system, operated by the Classification Board, which classifies most content in Australia other than free television programs, should be sufficient.

However, some aspects of the existing regulatory regime work well. The rules concerning minimum levels of Australian content which are necessary to correct an obvious area of market failure are generally effective to ensure that Australian audiences are able to enjoy quality Australian programs, especially drama and children's programs.

These rules should be retained and, if possible, enhanced.

Ian Robertson heads the media, entertainment and communications practice of national law firm Holding Redlich and was, from 1997-2004, a part-time board member of the Australian Broadcasting Authority.

Children's junk food ads 'made for adults'

Julian Lee
MARKETING EDITOR

Sydney Morning Herald, 1 November 2010

ADVERTISERS are bypassing rules aimed at curbing junk food marketing to children by claiming their ads are targeting adults, an analysis claims.

The industry ad watchdog dismissed complaints about ads for Oreo, Smarties and LCMs rice bars after accepting manufacturers' claims that their ads were aimed at adults, despite the presence of children in the television commercials.

Ads for chips, sweets or fizzy drinks are covered by industry guidelines only if their content is "directed primarily at children".

Health campaigners such as the Obesity Policy Coalition say the rulings by the board of the Advertising Standards Bureau have made it uncertain what constitutes an ad for children.

The coalition's senior legal adviser, Sarah MacKay, said the lack of definition in the rules had

CRUNCH TIME

The Oreos advertisement THEME

Two boys play a game with their Oreos by pulling it apart and seeing who gets the side with the icing.

WHAT THE BOARD SAID

The ad was more likely to be taken as being directed to adults who look back with amusement at school behaviour



from boys and girls ... Agreed the ad would be attractive to children but that it is not "directed primarily at children".

allowed a loophole for advertisers to emerge. The Oreo and Smarties ads were pulled after they were found to have been aired during children's programs, thereby breaching the industry rule that says only ads for healthy foods can be shown in children's programs.

"It seems an absurd outcome that an ad that only features children playing a childlike game [as

in the Oreo ad] that is shown in *Dora the Explorer* is not captured by the code," Ms MacKay said. "We are worried that it's going to set a precedent. If these aren't ads directed at children then I don't know what is."

A complaint about a Smarties website was also rejected by the bureau's board after it agreed with Nestle that the content of the website, which included a colour-

ing competition for three- to 10-year-olds, was not directed at children but rather to mothers as an aid for craft ideas for children.

There are four industry codes governing the advertising of junk food to children, but not all agree on a single definition of a child or a children's program.

Health campaigners have consistently argued the industry's narrow definition of where junk food ads cannot appear - namely in children's programs - is meaningless because more children are watching popular early evening shows. An Australian Communications and Media Authority review in 2006 found that the average television audience of under-12s leaps from 80,000 between 4pm and 5pm - when children's programs are aired - to 500,000 between 7pm and 8pm.

No one at the bureau or the Oreo manufacturer, Kraft, was able to comment. Nestle apologised for airing the Smarties ad in children's programs.

Youngsters stressed out amid body woes

STEPHEN LUNN
SOCIAL AFFAIRS WRITER

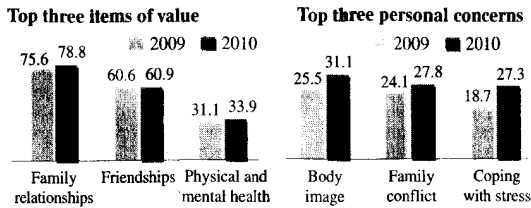
YOUNG Australians are grappling with stress and problems at school far more than in recent years, but body image is their biggest worry.

The nation's largest annual youth survey, to be published today, shows that whatever their demeanour towards parents and siblings, young people hold family relationships far more dearly than anything else.

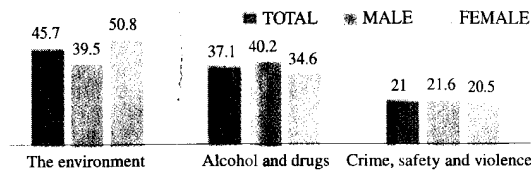
The Mission Australia survey of 50,000 young people, almost all between 11 and 19, rated the environment the most important issue facing the nation, followed by alcohol and drugs, with crime, safety and violence third.

The survey found stress levels had spiked this year. When asked to rank their personal concerns from a list of 15 issues, 27.3 per cent nominated "coping with stress", putting it in the top three, com-

WHAT YOUNG PEOPLE THINK (%)



Three most important issues facing the nation



*Data is aggregated and includes items ranked one, two or three by respondents
Source: 2010 National Survey of Young Australians

pared with 18.7 per cent last year.

Mission Australia spokeswoman Anne Hampshire said: "They are juggling a lot more than

past generations in terms of extra activities, but beyond that there's a heightened sense of expectation about their future from family,

friends, school and themselves. It's a bit of a hothouse and getting worse. When you see one in five 11- to 14-year-olds saying stress is a major problem, as the survey finds, that's a bit of a red flag for the community."

She said body image issues created stress for both genders.

"What came through in the responses was that young people are worried both about their personal body image and about how the media continues to promote a level of physical perfection that is neither healthy nor achievable," Ms Hampshire said.

Ku-ring-gai Creative Arts High student Chelsea Cronin said that, even at 15, the stress of school and study was "definitely high already". And she agreed body image was a top-order issue among her friends.

"I don't really have a problem with it because I exercise and eat properly, but I have friends who don't go to the beach because they're worried what people will

think of them," Chelsea said. Her schoolmate Joshua Edenhofner, also 15 and the youngest of four brothers, described the importance of family in a young person's life.

"You really need them to help you through," Joshua said.

"I've learned quite a bit from my brothers, and they look after me. They will say 'I tried that and it didn't work', so they'll lead you to something better."

Mental health expert Patrick McGorry said young people were coming to understand that their main health threat was mental ill-health, because younger generations had never been in better physical shape.

"Sixty per cent of the health needs of young people relate to poor mental health, and overall the mental health of our young people is worsening," Professor McGorry said.

"Sadly we still haven't built a stream of the health system to respond to this emerging need."

The Australian, 17 November 2010

Harry Potter lets the magic slip away

David Stratton's film review concludes.

I hope that the second part is better than this film, which is wonderful to look at but takes itself far too seriously and is careless with essential details.

Nor is it very child-friendly. Parents who took small children to the media preview must surely have been a bit dismayed by the ferocious snake, to mention just one very dark moment in a very flawed addition to the popular series.

The Australian, 17 November 2010

AN announcement is believed to be imminent from PBL Media's ACP Magazines on the future of monthly tween title *Disney Girl*, one of two magazines it publishes under license from Disney. Rumours have been circulating that the magazine will either be closed or change publishers. ACP spokeswoman Deborah Thomas said: "At this stage there is nothing to report." *Disney Girl's* circulation slumped 13 per cent to average 23,514 copies a month in the year to June.

The Australian, 15 November 2010

Kids logging off to get more organised in sport

STEPHEN LUNN
SOCIAL AFFAIRS WRITER

FAR from the common view of today's kids being a bunch of obese, bug-eyed screen addicts, new data shows more are playing organised sport than at any time in the past decade.

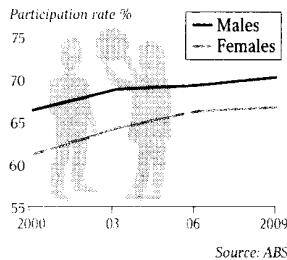
Australian Bureau of Statistics figures released yesterday reveal consistent growth in the proportion of children engaged in organised sport or dance, up from 64 per cent in 2000 to 69 per cent last year.

And the average number of hours children spent in front of the TV fell from 22 hours in 2000 to 17 hours last year.

"With the increasing prevalence of the internet and availability of a range of screen-based activities . . . for children, one might expect that the rate of children's participation in organised sport would have decreased over the period," the ABS report Children's Participation in Sport and Leisure Time Activities says. "(But) the participation rate . . . by children aged five to 14 years has

BOYS WIN

Sports participation by girls and boys (2000-09)



Source: ABS

actually increased from 64 per cent in 2000 to 69 per cent in 2009."

The jump has been greatest for 12 to 14-year-old boys, with 75 per cent currently participating in sport and/or dancing compared with 69 per cent in 2000.

Starting from a lower base, girls' interest in organised sport or dance grew faster over the decade (61 per cent to 67 per cent) than boys (67 per cent to 70 per cent).

Swimming remains the most popular organised sport, its participation rate growing from 14 per cent to 19 per cent across the dec-

ade as parents seek to ensure their children are safe around water.

Dance was second, with soccer coming in third, buoyed by greater interest from girls. "Contributing to the popularity of outdoor soccer was the increase in participation by girls aged five to eight years (2 per cent to 5 per cent) and 12 to 14 years (4 per cent to 8 per cent)," the report says.

Mark Walker, principal of Elsternwick Primary School in southeast Melbourne, said there had been a definite boom in organised sport among his students over the past five years.

"I think the general message of the potential dangers of childhood obesity has hit home in the community, and as children get older that potential danger shifts from obesity to drugs," Mr Walker said.

"This has parents keener to keep their kids in organised sport for longer, and that means more commitment from them in terms of travel and putting their hand up for coaching and managing."

The study found participation in bike riding fell across the decade from 64 to 60 per cent, no doubt driven by fears over traffic safety.

Weekend Australian, 13-14 November 2010

The 44 toys that rule the playroom

BEN DOBBIN
ROCHESTER, NEW YORK

DEAL me in! Playing cards are the latest iconic diversion - in some circles, a pack of trouble - to land in the National Toy Hall of Fame.

They were enshrined yesterday, along with The Game of Life, created in 1860 by American game pioneer Milton Bradley.

The pair joined an all-star line-up of 44 classics, from the bicycle, kite and teddy bear to the stick, the cardboard box and Mr Potato Head.

Longevity is a key criteria for getting into the Hall of Fame, which was created 12 years ago and now belongs to The Strong, a children's museum in Rochester.

Each toy must be widely recognised, foster learning, creativity or discovery through play and endure in popularity over generations.

"Play is so key to human development and to maintaining a healthy perspective on all of life, for kids and adults," said Chris Bensch, the museum's curator of collections.

"It's something that allows us to toy with possibilities - it helps us grow into who we are and who we can be."

The modern version of Bradley's moralistic board game was redesigned in 1960 by Reuben Klamer and uses a spinning wheel, paper money and car-shaped playing pieces.

Endorsed by famed broadcaster Art Linkletter, it quickly became one of the nation's most popular board games. It is now owned by Hasbro Inc.

Card-playing has been universally enjoyed across centuries by people of all cultures, skills and ages.

Historians are fuzzy about its origins, pointing to evidence of ceramic-tile decks in ancient Egypt and leaf cards in ninth-century China.

Mr Bensch said that with the possible exception of dice, he could hardly imagine a game tool that matches playing cards in terms of popularity across the ages as well as variation of forms and degrees of difficulty.

"It's so easy to learn some of the most basic games, but the more complicated ones like bridge have such depth of interaction and probabilities," he said.

Ten nominees fell short of entry this year, including chess, Cabbage Patch Kids and the Rubik's Cube.

- AP

The Advertiser, 6 November 2010

SOCIAL NETWORKING KIDS ARE OUT OF THE SAFETY ZONE

The Mark Zuckerberg film reminds us of Facebook's less than noble origins

The Australian, 3 November 2010

JANET ALBRECHTSEN



SOCIAL networking has become the bon mot of our times, a phrase that oozes affability, cleverness and connectedness in an online age. Kind of like old-fashioned social inclusion, social justice, social capital, social responsibility, and social so on, social networking has an air of something good.

Think again. Or even better, look again. Social networking is just another clever marketing tag. Parts of it are benign. And other parts are repugnant. If more parents spent more time looking a little closer at what their children are doing online, they will discover that social networking often hides a darker, not so friendly, reality.

Some will start screaming about reactionary technological Neanderthals who just don't get what one pundit called the "early middle internet age". Sure, every generation of parents has its own concerns about new influences on a younger generation. Sure, often the fears are ill-founded. Rock music didn't corrupt kids in the 1950s. Feminism and the counterculture didn't wreck homes in the 60s. That said it's worth checking whether every social, cultural and technological advance is serving our children well.

The Social Network is a good place to start. Released last week in Australia, this outstanding film is a fast-paced, chatty, depressing, funny glimpse at how and why Facebook was founded.

The opening conversation sets the scene for the Facebook story. When Harvard sophomore Mark Zuckerberg is dumped by his girlfriend, she tells him: "You are going to go through life thinking girls don't like you because you're a nerd. I want you to know from the bottom of my heart, it's not true. It will be because you're an asshole." Returning to his dorm, Zuckerberg posts this online: "Erica Albright is a bitch."

That night he creates Facebook, hacking into the university's protected databases, extracting private photographs of female students, lining them up in twos and asking students to rank the hot-

test. After Harvard shuts the site as an egregious breach of privacy, Zuckerberg, with the help of one of his few friends, Eduardo Saverin, sets up thefacebook.com, where students can sign up, post personal information, list their relationship status and connect online.

The movie paints Zuckerberg as insecure and awkward around girls, quietly desperate to do "something substantial" to get noticed by one of Harvard's clubs. Envious of the good-looking Winklevoss twins, both champion rowers and members of an elite Harvard club, who first approach him, together with Divya Narendra, about creating a site called Harvard Connection, Zuckerberg strings them along, creating computer codes for his Facebook site aimed at campus students. He would later settle litigation with them. He is disloyal to good friends such as Saverin, who is shafted from the Facebook business and ultimately paid out in an undisclosed settlement.

The screen version of Zuckerberg, with all the hallmarks of Asperger's syndrome, becomes the personification of an online world where normal social interactions between people are replaced by new levels of narcissism, online bravado, the insincere pursuit of "friends", the new practice of "unfriending" and the search for online fame and gratification.

While the real Zuckerberg has said the movie is just a bit of fun, it's clear enough that the social networking site was founded on less than fine motives. The brilliant boy who couldn't get into an exclusive Harvard club created his own not-so-exclusive club and became president. The awkward boy who couldn't break into Harvard's social scene went out and created his own online social world.

Later in the movie, when Zuckerberg approaches his former girlfriend, Erica sums up both the boy genius behind Facebook and the wider zeitgeist of social networking when she says, "It's as if every thought that tumbles through your head was so clever it would be a crime for it not to be shared."

Zuckerberg, the head of Facebook Inc who once called his customers "dumbf...ks" for handing over their private information, is now listed as richer than Rupert Murdoch and Apple's Steve Jobs. Of the more than 500 million people on Facebook, millions are chil-

dren discovering the parent-free zone of social networking.

Facebook can certainly be a harmless zone where you swap photos, arrange parties and share gossip. But it is also the first stop for cyber-bullying for the simple reason that everyone is on it. And this is the fast-paced, relentless, anonymously vicious, very public version of bullying, a world away from the old schoolyard variety.

And, of course, social networking is bigger than Facebook. Take a look at formspring.me, a site that "lets you and your friends ask questions and give answers about anything and everything". Thanks to Zuckerberg, you can sign up as a Facebook member.

In fact, this is a site for those who want to bully and be bullied. It chills the blood with its frenzied incoherence. Posting anonymously, kids aim inane, nasty attacks at other kids with machinegun speed and complete disregard for the damage caused. Schools advise their students to stay away. But hey, this is the internet. Cautions, especially from pre-internet age adults, are thrown to the wind by young, curious minds eager to explore the new, largely uncontrollable world of social networking. Block one site one minute and another pops up the next minute.

Or check out tumblr.com, an online blog site where teenagers, often girls, pour out their hearts to a steady stream of strangers who egg them on with comments and praise. Instead of drawing on those around them for love and affection, or putting their private thoughts into a diary tucked under their bed, teenagers are seeking out salvation from strangers where insincerity has become the driver of social networking.

In cyberspace, no-responsibility friendships mean you click on and off at your own pleasure. Add the sites together for a toxic cocktail where teens search out abuse from formspring and then seek affirmation and acceptance from Tumblr.

Most teenagers have been immersed in social networking since it started. Having known nothing else, they are learning about relationships, trying to form their young identities, some harming their sense of self in this new online world.

If adults want to use these sites, that is their own business. But when young children are doing so, it's up to the adults around them to try to teach them that social networking is not always so social. By all means celebrate the brilliance of people such as Zuckerberg. But at the same time, parenting just got a whole lot harder.

janeta@bigpond.net.au

Video games are no longer toys for boys

VIDEO gamers believe technology gives them more control over their lives, consider themselves risk-takers and lament there aren't enough hours in the day.

There are differences between gamers, too.

A fifth of Nintendo DS players are so engrossed in the activity, they admit they "don't like to know too much about what's going on in the world these days", a study carried out by Roy Morgan Research revealed.

The same proportion of Sony PlayStation 3 fans feel it's important to have a full social life, countering the stereotype of gamers as socially isolated.

The comprehensive survey compared the attitudes of game players with the rest of the population above the



TECHNOLOGY WRITER
GREG THOM

age of 14. It found women were moving into what has traditionally been a male-dominated pastime.

More females than males have embraced Nintendo's family-friendly DS handheld and wireless Wii games consoles.

Roy Morgan Research technology spokesman Andrew Braun said that trend would grow in coming weeks. The introduction of interactive gadgets such as Sony's PlayStation Move motion controller and Microsoft's Kinect hands-

free games system would get more players off the couch.

"We are going to see more of a shift (away from hardcore male players) towards that household demographic profile," he said. The research also revealed:

VIDEO gamers are 54 per cent more likely to live with their parents.

PLAYERS are 60 per cent more likely to live in a home shared by five people or more.

GAMERS are much less likely to be a farmer than the rest of the community.

FANATICS are almost 40 per cent more likely than the general population to have a partner and children.

Mr Braun said the research helped break down gaming stereotypes, such as players doing little else.

The Advertiser, 20 November 2010

Watch out for waistline police

The Australian, 1 November 2010

SIMON CANNING
COMMENT



JUST how far should the guardians of Australia's waistline be allowed to go when it comes to cracking down on advertising and its role in the obesity epidemic?

Last week's decision by the Productivity Commission and the Advertising Standards Board came into a strange alignment, with advertising at once exonerated and admonished for its part in creating a nation of fatties.

The Productivity Commission's evaluation of the situation was well considered and presented, falling on the side of scepticism, saying advertising's role in what is undoubtedly a serious social issue was unproven and most likely minimal in the greater scheme of things.

But over at the ASB, two major multinationals got a going-over

for daring to market confectionery and cookies in the presence of children. Even worse, in both ads, children were used as part of the marketing hook.

The pendulum has been swinging towards the sugar-focused temperance society members for years, but has it now swung too far?

The focus of the gatekeeper's ire was two ads, one for Oreo Cookies, part of Kraft, and one for Smarties, a Nestle line. The consumer complaints each had their variations but essentially claimed the ads were aimed at marketing unhealthy food to children. This claim was based on the shows in which the ads were broadcast, and the fact that children featured in the ads.

Both manufacturers abide by the industry's voluntary code on marketing to children.

In the case of Smarties, the ad had been programmed into a movie that was then changed by the network to one with a younger demographic profile.

Nestle apologised and said it would not happen again.

In the case of Kraft and its Oreo brand, it said the ad — featuring schoolboys playing a game with the cookies — was

aimed at adults and only appeared in shows with an older audience profile, not those aimed at children.

Initially the ASB agreed and the complaint was dismissed, but the complainants, undeterred, came back with a longer list of shows in which the ad appeared, all, they said, aimed directly at impressionable kids.

Dora The Explorer, *The Bee Movie* and *Home and Away* were highlighted as shows aimed directly at children. This time the board was convinced, the fact that the ads featured kids and was shown in kids' shows was enough, and the ad was duly banned.

How far must the nanny state go? The outrage directed at an ad featuring kids enjoying a treat seems to far outweigh the scale of the breach, and the punishment borders on the absurd.

At this rate ads for chocolate biscuits and confectionery treats will soon be governed like ads for alcohol.

But it won't stop there. Marketers will soon be forced to place cookies and sweets in plain packaging and then will come the day when shopkeepers reach under the counter for a deadly pack of chocolate chip cookies.

Outlets fight back in fast-food war

SHARON BERNSTEIN
LOS ANGELES

FACED with fresh assaults on fast food from politicians and anti-obesity activists, the US restaurant industry is to fight back, emphasising the role such businesses have played in providing jobs and entrepreneurial opportunities.

From next year, major chain restaurants in California will have to include calorie counts of items on menus.

San Francisco officials last week passed the so-called Happy Meal ban, which forbids toys to be included with meals that do not meet nutritional

standards. Now the battle switches to southern California, where the city of Los Angeles wants to bring back — and tighten — restrictions on establishing new fast-food restaurants in some minority neighbourhoods where obesity is a significant health problem.

The measure unanimously passed the Los Angeles Planning Commission last month and is expected to be taken up by a City Council committee.

Behind the scenes, however, lobbyists have been working City Hall, pointing out McDonald's, Burger King and other franchises have brought jobs, management training and

entrepreneurial opportunities to many disadvantaged people in those same communities.

"These fast-food franchises are often a ladder if not an elevator up the socioeconomic ladder for folks," said Daniel Conway, of the California Restaurant Association.

"These companies are trying to bring jobs and tax revenue to this area. We were sitting here at a board meeting trying to figure out how we wound up on the front lines of the culture wars. We're trying to feed people, and here we are in the cross-hairs every single day."

Supporters of the LA proposal to restrict the new res-

taurants, however, say the area it would affect is drowning in fast food to the detriment of a population that already is overburdened with obesity, diabetes and other nutrition-related conditions. The *Los Angeles Times* newspaper reported in 2008 that fast-food restaurants, which often offer less-expensive fare than sit-down establishments, represented 45 per cent of the eating establishments in south LA — far more than in other parts of town.

Historically, however, fast food has provided business opportunities to black entrepreneurs when few were available with national companies.

The Advertiser, 13 November 2010

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EVENTS

Entries open for

2011 SA Screen Awards

Entry deadlines:

Short films: 5pm Fri 11 Feb 2011

Feature film: 5pm Wed 9 Mar 2011

Entry forms and guidelines:

www.mrc.org.au

