

Student Number: 1502739

EAEC 6011C

A portfolio on Children and the
Media

Part 1: The development of watching television over the past fifty years.

To begin, Chaudron (2015) and Brito and Dias (2017) both state that children today are growing up in households full of media and have access to it on a daily basis, in comparison with previous generations of children, today's children are media literate (Buckingham, 2009). Chassiakos et al. (2016) believes that children are accessing media at around four months old. One of these forms of media is television.

Children begin to watch television at an early age, on average before they reach their first birthday (Pecora et al., 2009). However, Wartella et al. (2010) states babies having been watching television since it first entered homes in late 1940 (Bavelier et al., 2010). By 1961, fourteen percent of children aged two were watching television (Wartella et al., 2010). Historically children would have been in the family living room watching television, today children are able to access many television sets in different rooms of their homes (Wartella et al., 2010).

As stated by Ruddick (2017) fifty years ago, families would gather around their one television set in the family living room and watch a show, today families no longer do this, through a survey Ruddick (2017) found that only thirty percent of families still watch television programmes together. In households today, every family member can watch a different programme on different devices at their leisure, this is due to the fact that households now own many media devices (Haines et al., 2013; Ruddick, 2017). Both Haines et al. (2013) and Vaala and Harnick (2014) say that children now have access to televisions in their own bedrooms and often watch television alone and unsupervised, this is because technology has become more affordable, parents are able to purchase these items for their young children (Livingstone, 2009; Takeuchi, 2011). Worryingly, watching television has become a main leisure activity in young children's lives (Livingstone, 2009).

There has been a rapid change in the way children can access television in the last decade, children are now able to access television on many devices, for example on an iPad, this has resulted in children able to watch catch up television shows whenever they like twenty- four hours a day (Ofcom, 2015). Livingstone (2009) agrees this is considerably different to how previous generations could access television programmes, in the past programmes were very limited, often families would plan their

day, so they could all be seated to watch a programme together at a certain time of day (Wartella et al., 2010).

Fenstermacher et al. (2010) claim that media has consistently grown over the past ten years with babies now being targeted with baby tv; a channel dedicated to babies, they claim that through viewing this programme it will improve babies intelligence, parents are buying into this phenomenon and allowing their babies to view this as they feel their babies are gaining vital skills that will prepare them for school readiness (Fenstermacher et al., 2010). However, Baby Einstein Company (2009) claim that their videos were originally introduced to promote parent and child interaction time together. Bavelier et al. (2010) states that it is now thought technology shapes the way in which children learn and develop, likewise Wartella et al. (2010) say that increased television viewing in the early years when the brain is developing, could lead to cognitive difficulties. This supports Corsaro (2017) belief that Piaget believed children learn from the day they are born, they use information that they gather from their environment and use it to construct their own perception of the world.

Part 2: Children watching YouTube and the influence that YouTube celebrities (YouTubers) have on young children.

According to (Ofcom, 2016) children are now using media devices such as a tablet to view television programmes, on average a child aged between three and four years old now spends eight hours a week online on their tablets (Ofcom, 2016).

Dredge (2015) states that YouTube has now replaced television viewing amongst young children. Ofcom (2016) agrees, they found that thirty seven percent of preschool children are now watching videos on YouTube. Dredge (2015) believes this may be due to the fact that YouTube holds viewing history, this enables YouTube to offer children easy access to watch videos on repeat and will offer suggestions for different videos with the same content to watch next (Elias and Sulkin, 2017). Holloway et al. (2013) say that due to the fact children are now regular viewers of YouTube, there are now YouTube channels specifically aimed at children. Elias and Sulkin (2017) claim that in the UK, YouTube is rated as the top app amongst children under the age of eight, with this in mind, Elias and Sulkin (2017) state that YouTube channel Sesame Street had reached one billion views in 2017.

Elias and Sulkin (2017) suggest that children in their early years are vulnerable users of YouTube and could accidentally come across content unsuitable for their age. Dredge (2015) agrees, they say YouTube Kids contains adverts that are not deemed suitable for young viewers. The launch of YouTube Kids in 2015 was to ensure parents that it was safe for younger viewers and had parental controls. They believe this move was necessary to avoid children viewing inappropriate videos or advertisements (Dredge, 2015; YouTube Kids, No date). Elias and Sulkin (2017) states that YouTube Kids has been criticised frequently over the years for failing to regulate its use of commercial content. A recent survey on children's safety while using YouTube found that for children watching certain videos, they were just a few clicks away from viewing adult content and videos containing swearing and nudity, worryingly one third of parents admitted their children had accessed unsuitable content in a recent survey (Elias and Sulkin, 2017).

Marsh (2015) says that young children are attracted to watching videos on YouTube in which YouTubers are opening wrapped products. The particular term for this is unboxing. One example of these unboxing videos is one in which a person opens Kinder Surprise eggs. Due to the nature of these videos, it is believed that very young children aged between two and four are the main audience, a reason for this is because this type of video is exposing transformation, and this satisfies the developmental needs characteristic of children in this age group (Elias and Sulkin, 2017). These unboxing videos are good at persuading children to buy the Kinder Surprise eggs as they want to have the latest toys that come out of the egg (Marsh, 2015). Both Ramos-Serrano and Herrero-Diz (2016) explain how forty eight percent of children have come across toys while watching unboxing videos and have asked their parents to purchase them. Companies are becoming aware of how YouTubers and unboxing videos are influencing children's choice of toys and are taking advantage, they are using YouTubers to promote their products (Ramos-Serrano and Herrero-Diz, 2016). Yahoo (2015) agree as they say that YouTube's highest paid YouTuber is a lady that unboxes toys. She is a Disney collector and gets paid to open their toys on her channel. Her face is never shown in her videos, only hands can be seen as she opens the toys and her voice can be heard as she describes the toys she is opening (Yahoo, 2015). Dredge (2016) expresses concern and believes that

YouTube Kids have gone too far with advertising, children are sitting watching these videos and are being influenced to buy the products demonstrated. Ramos-Serrano and Herrero-Diz (2016) agree, they say that children are now influenced to purchase toys they see YouTubers unboxing and not the traditional toy catalogue or television advertisement.

Elias and Sulkin (2017) say many videos children watch on YouTube have been created and uploaded without having been regulated by a professional body, this leaves children vulnerable, particularly if they are left to watch such videos unsupervised. Reports have found that many videos using the names of well-liked children's television shows are becoming popular, these videos are not regulated and often contain adult content but can show up on suggested play lists on YouTube (Livingstone et al., 2014). An example of this is a Peppa pig video, the creator has used actual footage from the popular cartoon but has added swearing and inappropriate content to it. If children typed Peppa Pig into the search bar, this video would show up as an option to view, YouTube Kids (No date) claim that these videos cannot be viewed on their channel, however a report found that some of these videos had managed to find their way onto the popular children's channel (BBC News, 2017). As suggested by Ellis-Peterson (2014), recently the birth of YouTube celebrities, known as YouTubers, has come about (Jerslev, 2016). Marsh (2015) describes StampyLongNose, an adult that records himself playing the game Minecraft while commenting on what he is doing, and PewDiePie who also does the same, both are YouTubers that children enjoy watching. Their videos have reached millions of views, both have become famous and in the eyes of children are celebrities (Pauls, 2017). Merz (2014) explains how StampyLongNose has their own personal channel on YouTube and uploads one new video every day. Children are spending on average two hours a day watching these videos (Merz, 2014).

YouTube celebrities are influential over children. Children are becoming obsessed with watching the videos and now own merchandise bearing the celebrities names and the games that they play, children have adopted a certain style of the way YouTubers speak and like to play the same games (BBC News, 2015; Marsh, 2015). Research conducted by Westenberg (2016) found that YouTubers are more influential on children today than traditional celebrities were with previous generations. Today's

children are able to view YouTubers participating in normal daily tasks and are seen as role models in the eyes of children, traditional celebrities would not have been seen doing anything, they only ever released staged photographs of themselves (Westernberg, 2016).

Through his research Westernberg (2016) was amazed on the influence YouTubers had on children, children are copying everything they do and like to dress like their favourite YouTubers and copy their behaviours. The most worrying fact to bear in mind is that children, envy the life of YouTubers and want to be YouTubers when they are older (Wright, 2018). A reason for this could be that children are seeing YouTubers as normal people, famous for having no particular talent other than playing video games for a living. A recent survey conducted in the UK with children aged between seven and eleven revealed that as a career option, in fourth place, the children wanted to be a YouTuber (Wright, 2018).

Children believe that the chances of them becoming YouTubers are high, they believe that if you want to be a YouTuber you can. Westernberg (2016) states children believe they could be YouTubers, playing video games, as this is what they do in their spare time. However, they do not realise the amount of hard work that is required for them to become successful. They say that children are thinking of the more famous YouTubers that make a lot of money and think that they could also be making money and living the lavish lifestyle that YouTubers are boasting about (Westernberg, 2016). Many parents are not aware that their children are viewing these videos and are unaware YouTubers exist. Faggerston (2017) states that for young children watching these videos it is worrying as for example, when children are watching PewDiePie, they are subjected to swearing. In many of his videos he is often seen portraying his feelings through laughing, talking, screaming and swearing while playing video games. Through watching YouTube videos, children are exposed to many branded product names through adverts on YouTube channels and by YouTubers advertising through wearing the merchandise or playing certain branded games. Young Children do not realise that YouTubers are asked by companies to sell their brands through their videos and often do not choose to dress like that or play that certain game. Children are vulnerable and in a desperate attempt to be like their favourite YouTuber, they are copying them. YouTubers need to realise this and understand the influence that they

are having on children (Ramos-Serrano and Herrero-Diz, 2016). Children have the right to access media, they also have the right to be safe from harm. Companies have a duty to ensure that the rights of the child place the child at the centre of any decisions they make (Unicef, No date). In 2017, Disney Maker Studios withdrew their connections with PewDiePie due to the nature of his videos and the fact that children were his main audience (Faggerston, 2017).

In contrast to this, Pauls (2017) believes that children benefit from watching YouTubers, in line with Vygotsky's and Bruner's theories of social learning, children are engaging with a more knowledgeable other, where scaffolding takes place (Berk, 2012; Play England, 2012). When children are engaging with a more knowledgeable other, they reach the point of self-actualisation, this is where learning takes place. Pauls (2017) believes that children do not actively have to be involved in an activity as they can still reach this point from just observing a more knowledgeable other.

Elias and Sulkin (2017) state that for many years children's television viewing has been investigated, but little to no research has been done on children in the early years and their viewing of YouTube videos. There are very different developmental stages of children between the ages of birth to eight and research needs to be conducted into the positives and negatives of every year group on viewing YouTube videos, also the influences that YouTubers are having on these age groups (Holloway et al., 2013).

Part 3: The role of the parents to safeguard their children on media use.

Chiong and Shuler (2010) believe that parents and practitioners are the main facilitators of media use in the early years. In line with Vygotsky's theory on child development Schofield- Clark (2011) suggests parents and practitioners play a vital role in scaffolding children's development of media skills, this is particularly effective when children are in the zone of proximal development (Nikken and Schols, 2015).

Kucirnova and Sakr (2015) suggest that parents play a significant role in media use within the home, they say that children have their first experiences of media use with their parents, it is becoming unavoidable for parents to prevent early years children from coming into contact with media, it is vast becoming second nature for children (Kabali et al., 2015; Moiuuae, 2012). Children learn to use these media devices through

closely watching their family members, children view their parents as their role models and try to mimic them (Kucirkova, 2011; Pereira et al., 2016).

Parents and practitioners have a role to play in keeping children safe from harm during media use. Bocking and Bocking (2009) highlight the importance of parents and practitioners becoming mediators, they should have time and content restrictions in place to protect children. However, Kabali et al. (2015) states that parents have mixed feelings about what they should be doing to keep their children safe.

According to Pereira et al. (2016) parents need to consider their role in mediating media with their children, parents can enable children to develop the skills needed to use these devices safely and can also teach children to stay safe to prevent negative outcomes.

Sonck et al. (2013) believes that parents and practitioners should be using media together. Both Pauls (2017) and Kim and Anderson (2008) share this view, they believe that when parents and practitioners are able to watch a television show together, this can scaffold children's learning (Chiong and Shuler, 2010). Takeuchi (2011) say that children in their early years need an adult with them to guide them on safe and age appropriate use of media devices.

However, research has shown that this is not always possible, at home parents try to keep their young children close when they are using media devices alone, this allows parents to eavesdrop on what the child is watching. Kids in the House (2014) recommends that parents monitor children's online activity by checking the browser history on all devices (Sonck et al., 2013). Nikken and Jansz (2014) suggest that this is becoming increasingly difficult as more and more children are now having media devices in their bedrooms, parents are having difficulty regulating their use. RSA (2017) highlight the importance of parents setting down rules in order to restrict the use of media in the bedrooms.

Livingstone and Helsper (2008) suggest that parents can use parental controls on all media devices to restrict children's viewing. However, Nikken and Schols (2015) say that for parents who do not have the skills or experience in using media devices, they would find this difficult to put in place. Ofcom (2018) recommend parents set up pin codes on their devices to restrict children viewing certain content. They also say that

media devices usually have settings that can control what the children can access (Ofcom, 2018).

Research conducted by Ofcom (2015) concluded that in comparison to 2005, more parents in 2015 had set up parental controls on all media devices in the house. They also found that in 2015, parents were more likely to believe that their children were able to switch off the parental controls, for some parents, they were naive as to what they thought their children could access on their devices and were not aware that such controls existed (Ofcom, 2015).

Chaudron (2015) found that parents of early years children were more likely to set up passwords on media devices in order to avoid their children incidentally purchasing goods, they thought that very young children did not need rules regarding their media use.

Research conducted by Bocking and Bocking (2009) found that the extent to which parents would regulate their children's media use, depended upon many factors such as age and education status of parents, income level, gender and family size. Similar to this, Ito et al. (2010) say that higher educated families on a higher income were more likely to monitor children's media use than those parents on a lower income. In contrast to this, Nikken and Jansz (2014) say that parents regardless of status, concerned about their children's media use will apply restrictions on their use, supervise their children and talk to their children about the imposing risks that come with media use. Buckingham (2009) agrees, they say that although it is thought that parents with a higher level of education monitor their children's use, there is no evidence to suggest they do this. However, Goh et al. (2015) states that parents only consider setting restrictions on media devices after observing negative outcomes.

Australian Government (2014) and the American Academy of Pediatrics (2011) state that as children are becoming younger users of media, parents need to consider their development stages and adapt media mediation to suit the age and developmental stages of the child (Takeuchi, 2011). Research conducted by Chaudron (2015) found that parents of young children were more likely to have time limits on media. However, Livingstone et al. (2014) believes that for children under the age of seven, time restriction would be unsuitable as children of this age do not understand time and so this would be impossible to impose successfully.

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Ofcom (2018) recommends that parents talk to their children about how to use these devices safely and how to stay safe on the internet. Even when parents have set up other forms of media mediation, parents should still talk to their children about these safety issues. It is also advised that for very young children, parents need to find out exactly what their children are doing and explore the websites and apps on devices to fully be aware (NSPCC, 2018). According to Smahelova et al. (2017) parents alter their time restrictions, during the weekends children are allowed more time on media devices in comparison to a school night.

NSPCC Netaware (2018) advises that parents familiarise themselves with YouTube Kids and ensure they use the tools to restrict the content their children can access.

Plowman et al (2008) suggests there has been little research conducted on the role of the family in media use for children under the age of eight, most research surrounding the subject is based upon early years children usage rather than keeping them safe (Buckingham, 2009).

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