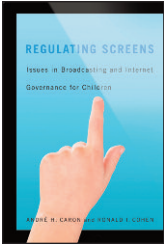# *Reviews*

Regulating Screens: Issues in Broadcasting and Internet Governance for Children. *By André H. Caron & Ronald I. Cohen.* Kingston, ON: McGill-Queen's University Press 2013, 184 pp. ISBN 9780773542099.

Children's media in Canada has received very little attention in the field of communication studies. While, there are pockets of scholarship—Michelle Byers' work on *Degrassi* (2005) and André Caron's previous scholarship on the current state of children's and youth television in Canada (2010, 2012) come to mind—there is still a gaping hole in the field. In this void, any work on children's media in Canada is much needed. Caron and Ronald Cohen's work, *Regulating Screens: Issues in Broadcasting and Internet Governance for Children*, helps to begin to fill this hole. And even more helpful to the field, Caron and Cohen have chosen to focus their attention on governance of children's media, an area of the field in which there is virtually no scholarship.

Right from the outset the book shows great promise; both scholars come from impressive backgrounds that relate to the field. André Caron is one of few scholars who have spent their careers studying children's media in Canada. He is the director of the bilingual Centre for Youth and Media Studies (GRJM/CYMS), which was founded in 1988. Ronald Cohen, former national chair of the Canadian Broadcast Standards Council (CBSC), has a vast amount of experience in the area of media regulation. Together these authors skilfully set out to do what the book jacket promises: provide an "up-to-date inventory of existing laws, codes and standards in Canada."

Regulating Screens focuses primarily on television and the Internet, with detours into film and video and video games. The book explains the confusing terrain of regulation and self-regulation of screen media as it pertains to children. As a hint to how confusing this subject is, the book dedicates almost two and a half pages to listing the acronyms for organizations, such as the Canadian Marketing Association (CMA) and the Recreational Software Advisory Council (RSAC), which are peppered throughout

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the book. This list alone is a valuable key to any scholar who is attempting to navigate this terrain.

The book is based on the premise that children need protection from the media, the book's self-described goal is to provide answers to the question: "How are today's children protected in our new multi-screen environment" (p. 5)? While this is a laudable goal, there is little reflection on what children need protection from, if they even need protection, or how protection reveals broader moral panics. Instead the starting point is built on this already established assumption that children need protection. A more nuanced debate would have established a more critical tone.

Instead of debating children's need for protection, what *Regulating Screens* does reveal is why "how are children protected?" is such a complex question to answer. Firstly, as the book illustrates, there is no clearly co-ordinated regulatory body; instead children are protected through a mishmash of regulatory and self-regulatory frameworks implemented by government and industry that vary across media and have differing levels of power. Secondly, often the regulation that applies to children is embedded in sections and subsections of broader regulatory policies. For example, regulation of advertising to children on broadcast TV is mostly upheld by a set of guidelines by the self-regulatory Advertising Standards Canada (ASC) and also the Broadcast Code for Advertising to Children, which was established by another self-regulatory body in the industry, the Canadian Association of Broadcasters (CAB). There are also subsections in the Competition Act that apply to children's advertising and in Quebec, there is the Consumer Protection Act. The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) has its own set of guidelines and the private broadcasters have various requirements individual to each of their licenses as dictated by the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC).

Because of the confusion and complexity of regulation, *Regulating Screens* is a welcome addition to the field; it is the only work available that teases out all the policies and rules of the various bureaucratic institutions and pieces them together in one document. I am sure such a narrative will be of interest to both scholars and students who are trying to make sense of the regulatory environment, along with those who are practitioners in the industry.

The regulatory landscape of Canada's media is constantly evolving. One of the dangers of publishing in this field is that things can become out of date as soon as they are published. Already a few points have changed since the publication of this book, notably in the section on the self-regulation of advertising, the Concerned Children's Advertisers (CCA), for example, has become the Companies Committed to Kids (CCK).

The weakness of the book is that unfortunately it is often purely descriptive of the various regulatory frameworks. There is a missed opportunity of critique. The authors do not do much more than quote from and describe the key policies. With each regulatory framework, they do provide a bit of the backstory, but they fail to contextualize policy changes within the broader cultural, political, and economical shifts. For example, the offloading of regulatory power from the CRTC, a governmental body, and onto self-regulation by industry lobby groups such as the CAB and the ASC is treated

as a matter of fact. The authors miss an opportunity to understand this shift as part of a broader move of neoliberalism in which private interests take the place of public institutions. Furthermore there is little critique of the implications this move has on the democratic imperatives of the media or even a critique on why policies changed in certain ways. The book also ignores the foundation of children's studies, as it fails to even consider how historical shifts in the regulation of children's media reflect broader societal changes in the ideological construction of the child.

Instead of offering much in the way of a reflective critique, *Regulating Screens* relies mainly on descriptions and direct quotes from regulatory policies and guidelines. *Regulating Screens* is more of a guidebook to the terrain of children's media policies than a scholarly text with an overarching thesis. That being said, it still has an important place in the field as it provides a map of the confusing landscape of media regulation in Canada.

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