children opportunities to expand gender perceptions and behavior,

We follow the words of the children as they interact and share their views. This opportunity provides a wealth of information about how the children interpret their experiences and act upon them and how they interact with their peers. Martin encourages readers to look at children's play as a vehicle where dialogue and behavior have critical roles. We are able to see how ethnicity, class, and cultural differences relate to gender development and how children use play objects and technologies in gendered play. The detailed reporting and the accompanying narrative focus the reader's attention on how children position themselves in frameworks that contribute to their gender development. She encourages us to view skeptically the notion that interests and behaviors are purely organic.

Educators and administrators of children's programs as well as parents can benefit from the range and quality of the author's research and reporting. She enriches the book by including children's drawings, pointing to further reading, suggesting ways to promote gender equity, summarizing key points from the research, and providing a glossary. She supports each point with examples from her field notes. The book reflects scholarship at its height, where Martin's findings and the findings of others intertwine to create a picture of all she has learned about gender development and how she believes equity and social justice can be promoted through play.

—Kathleen E. Fite, *Texas State University-San Marcos, San Marcos, TX*

Handbook of Children and the Media

Dorothy G. Singer and Jerome L. Singer, eds. Los Angeles, CA: Sage Publications, 2012. Tables, charts, indexes. 803 pp. $150.00 cloth. ISBN: 978141298249

"Sir, is this your bag?" The TSA agent looked serious. "Yes," I responded, surprised. As a frequent traveler, I have become adapt at moving smoothly through airport screening lines. Why was my laptop-free bag being searched? She reached in my bag and pulled out the second edition of Singer and Singer's *Handbook of Children and the Media*. To my amazement, she dropped the heavy 803-page hardcover onto a stainless steel examination table and began carefully swiping the inside pages for explosive residue. She told me the thick hardcover was blocking the x-ray machine's view of my bag's contents.

This raises some questions. If a hardcover book is an outlier for our national airport security system, are the ideas it contains—frozen in ink and on paper—equally as troublesome? Or does this heavy book achieve its intellectually heavy goal "to review, through the contributions of research experts, the past and potential future impact of the electronic media on growing children" (p. 3). The answer is yes to both questions.

The book meets its goal in part due to the skill, experience, and deep scholarly connections of the editors—Jerome and Dorothy Singer, the Yale-based husband-and-wife team who have been conducting and reviewing research on children's television since 1961, when former Federal Communications Commission chair-

man Newton Minnow called the medium a vast wasteland. The historical frame, which stretches back to media as cave drawings, is provided in the introduction as well as in each of three sections, containing, in all, thirty-five articles from sixty-four researchers. Short biographies, with research interests and university affiliations, appear for each, which makes it possible to spot that all but three writers come from the United States.

Part 1is the largest and the most useful part of the book, with twenty-three articles loosely organized under the heading "The Popular Media as Educators and Socializers of Growing Children." Its buffet of themes have appeared throughout television-inspired discourse for the last sixty years, many massaged here, sans specifics, to account for new digital media. Many of the articles follow a similar pattern: they state that older children are spending vast amounts of time—seven hours and thirty-eight minutes per day, to cite Vicky Ridout's 2010 Kaiser Family Foundation survey—with various forms of media, and then they look at what this means from different angles. The well-worn media worries are present and accounted for, including video game violence (Anderson, Gentile, and Dill), reducing (or enhancing) creativity (Valkenburg and Calvert), food marketing (Battle Horgen, Harris, and Brownell), gender stereotyping (Signorielli), advertising (Kunkel and Castonguay), and drugs (Strasburger). The reader might conclude that children's media still seems to have plenty of wasteland in it.

Part 2, "Forging the Media Environment for the Future: The Media Industry and Its Technology," contains five articles that describe how children's television has been disrupted by cable and digital programming. Part 3, "Policy Issues and Advocacy," includes eight chapters that provide a historical overview of children and media policy (Kunkel and Wilcox) along with a historical description of television-rating systems by Greenberg and Rampoldi-Hnilo. Did you know that there are now twenty children's media advocacy groups? Each are described by Trotta in chapter 35.

The final eighty-two pages contain the index in a six-point type that is as irritating as any TV guide you can find. The resulting alphabetized list of topics and authors form a linear word cloud and another view of the Singers' take on the children's media elephant. By counting the references, you can see how this is a body of discourse thick with sex (92 references) and violence (108 references). External validity is weakened because MySpace (20 references) is covered more than Facebook (17 references), and broadcast television (160 references) trumps YouTube (14 references). This disproportionate coverage indicates that many scholars still look at electronic media through their rear-view mirror. In other words, the ivory tower has yet to catch up with the cloud, Nintendo, iTunes, iPads, Facebook, YouTube, and Google.

So should you buy this book? If, as Marshall McLuhan had it, the medium is the message, then this volume is evidence that sixty years of broadcast television–driven discourse does not turn on a dime. But despite the old-media themes, the Singers' pedigree of scholarly analysis is the first step to "dispel media myths, dubious generalizations . . . and hasty judg-

ments" (p. 4) that so frequently appear in the mainstream news related to children and media these days. In addition, the thousands of references provide a useful listing of topics and people who have formally studied children's media, in a form that you can scribble and take notes on—with a pencil. For this reason, the second edition of Singer and Singer's *Handbook of Children and the Media* will stay within reach of my writing desk. I will probably think twice, however, before I take it onto an airplane.

—Warren Buckleitner, *Children's Technology Review, Flemington, NJ*

Playborhood: Turn Your Neighborhood into a Place for Play

Mike Lanza
Menlo Park, CA: Free Play Press, 2012.
Figures, images, notes, index. 238 pages.
$9.95 paper. ISBN: 9780984929818

My parents moved a lot. Between my fourth and fourteenth birthdays (mostly in the 1950s), I lived in eight different neighborhoods, in six different cities or villages. Yet, finding friends to play with, and exciting things to play at, never seemed a problem. All I had to do was go outside, and there they were. Kids were everywhere and could go everywhere. Every community had its own kids' play culture. In one village, we spent huge amounts of time at pick-up baseball, kite building, and, in winter, skating down ice slides that we made on the steep hill behind the school. In another village, we played mostly on the

lake. We swam, fished, rowed, skated, and skied on it, all the time exploring it and the life within and around it. Adults almost never joined us in these activities or even knew what we were doing.

But the world is different now. For various reasons, most parents today do not allow their young children to play and explore freely outdoors, away from adults. Those kids who are allowed to do so, often have nobody to play with. So they go back inside to the more certain company of television and computers. This is a serious problem. As opportunities for free outdoor play have declined, children's physical health, mental health, psychological resilience, and sense of personal control over their lives have also declined. What can be done to reverse all this? Mike Lanza's *Playborhood* provides the best set of answers I have found yet to this vexing question.

When Mike and his wife started a family, a few years ago, they were determined to provide their kids—which now number three young boys—the opportunity to play freely outdoors with other kids. To do so, they turned their Menlo Park, California, neighborhood into a *playborhood*—a place for outdoor play. Step one was to create all sorts of interesting play opportunities in their own front yard. The *front* yard, not the back, because the front is the part of the yard that neighbors can see and feel most comfortable entering. They put a fountain there and a play river for kids to splash in and run toy boats down, a smooth concrete driveway for all kinds of hard-surfaced play, a basketball hoop, a large whiteboard and markers for drawing, a sandbox, a picnic table, and benches that serve also as weatherproof toy boxes. Big playthings that—for practical reasons