

## **MA Defence**

### **As Seen on Screen: A Virtual Ethnographic Study of Children's Screen Time by Nicole Stewart**

This is a news update from School of Communication, Simon Fraser University  
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Our dear colleague, Nicole Stewart, will defend her MA Thesis on Wednesday, October 26, 2016 at Harbor Center Room 1505 (10:00 am – 12:00 pm). Here is the abstract of her thesis "As Seen on Screen: A Virtual Ethnographic Study of Children's Screen Time".

#### **Abstract**

Children's screen time is a cultural construct, a worldwide issue, and a highly controversial subject that separates people in ideological groups over the perceived impact that media and technology have on children. Screen time is a phenomenon, a discourse, an object, and a thing. It is a slippery, flexible, and complex issue that is constantly evolving, which only intensifies the debate over whether children's screen time is positive or negative. Using virtual ethnography, I examined a number of field sites including academic journals, Twitter, LexisNexis, Reddit and The Bump to uncover the sentiments that scholars, media and parents form about children's screen time. These sentiments often mirror the media harm debate, which positions children as vulnerable or competent. The media report on academic research, which is then discussed by parents. Groups form around the affective dimension of the debate (emotional ideologies), which only perpetuates the idea that children's screen time is positive or negative (rather than both). This either-or proposition is unhelpful for the creation of management strategies that assist children in using screen-based devices in a healthy, balanced and productive way that doesn't create a division in class structures.

**Keywords:** children's media; screen time; cultural studies; media harm; virtual ethnography