
Harwood V, Jones S, Bonney A, McMahon S.


Abstract

There is a dearth of scholarly analysis and critique of the Australian newsprint media's role in the medicalization of child behavior. To begin to redress this lack this paper analyses newsprint media's use of metaphors that re/describe and construct realities of ADHD with a medicalizing effect. The interdisciplinary team used the FactivaTM database to locate and review 453 articles published in Australian national and metropolitan newspapers during the decade 1999-2009. Data analysis involved generating statistical descriptions of the dataset according to attributes such as date, state, newspaper titles and author names. This was followed by inductive analysis of article content. Content analysis revealed the pervasive and striking use of metaphor in newsprint media reporting of ADHD content, especially when describing health professionals, educators, parents, and children. This collection of metaphors was striking, and while the metaphors deployed were varied, this diversity seemed underscored by a common functionality that increased the risk that child behavior was explained using medicalized knowledge. We contend that these metaphors collectively and coherently functioned to simplify and delimit meanings of children's health and behavior to favor depictions that medicalize problems of children and childhood.