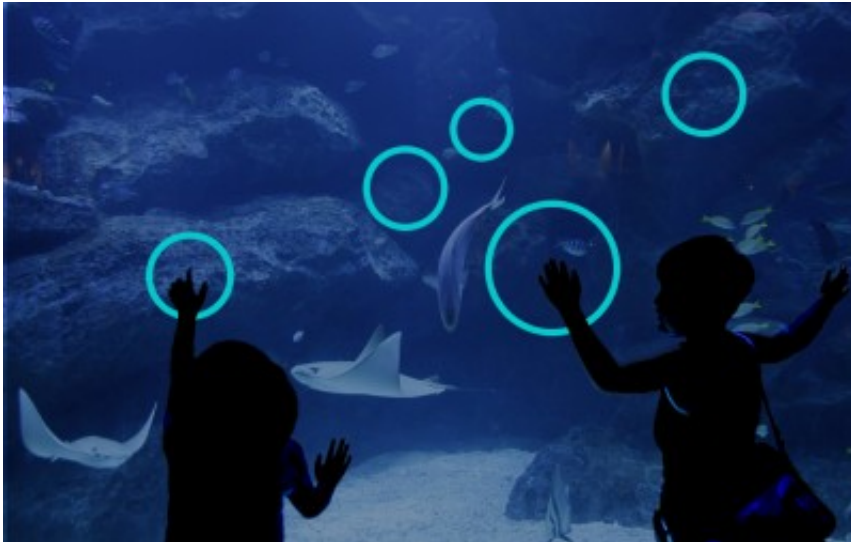


New platform to encourage social interaction

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A Monash University Masters student has developed a new platform to encourage social interaction among children. The prototype is an interactive environment that assists children to conquer fear during social communication.

Chulin Yang, with supervisor Dr Stephen Jia Wang, from Monash Art Design & Architecture (MADA), developed the idea to help break the boundaries of social interaction and enhance experiences among [children](#) by facilitating their social behaviour.

Yang, a Masters student in Interaction Design at MADA, said social

anxiety and disorders were major social issues for young children, and the interactive display aimed to develop connections between children aged three to eight.

This platform has been designed to support various interesting applications. One of the case studies called 'Seesaw' sees children touch the large display to create bubbles – the longer they touch the screen the bigger the bubble. Children work in teams to create bubbles on each side of the Seesaw, aiming to get more on one side. Eventually the bubbles fade, leaving the game to continue for the next group of children.

The team see the large display being used in public spaces as a media to facilitate interactive social behaviours where there are usually long waiting times for children – such as airports, railway stations, and hospitals.

"We are also looking at having the game either be played physically next to each other and globally – so a child in an airport in Australia could be playing with a child in a railway station in the United Kingdom," Yang said.

"We have also developed some other games and activities, such as a sand-pit type interactive display which sees children using sand to create images on a screen."

Dr Wang, Senior lecturer at MADA, also the founder and director of the masters program said other products made use of newly developed technology for child development, but they usually missed the point of providing support for the development of social interactions among children.

The team said next steps for the work were to look at other activities and games, and to examine the display's education and long-term influence

on child behaviour.

Provided by Monash University

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