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Radio, Children, and Young People

Radio and Children

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Introduction
Children and young people are now living in an era where their daily routines are saturated with different media platforms, competing for their attention. Once such platform is radio. Whilst other forms of media, such as social media and television, are associated with negative portrayals of young people in some contemporary popular and academic debate, radio has often been met with positive appraisals. For instance, radio has been heralded for its ability to empower young people and to position young people within dominant societal discourses, from which they were previously excluded. Writings on radio are a multidisciplinary effort, drawing on fields including communication and media studies; human geography; sociology; journalism; cultural studies; and musicology. There are many different ‘types’ of radio stations on which scholarship exists, including but not limited to commercial; community; college; university; and net-only. Most research into radio (particularly community radio) has used case studies from developing nations. Specific policy and political regulatory structures exist within different countries, and so research is not easily transferable. This article will introduce the reader to dominant themes and areas of interest from international and interdisciplinary scholarship regarding children and young people’s relationships with radio – both as listeners and as volunteers/staff - as explored in academic debate. This bibliography begins by detailing texts that provide useful overviews of the topic of children, young people and radio. It then lists and discusses useful textbooks and journals. The paper then moves on to discuss textbooks and journal articles thematically, beginning with empowerment and voice, then belonging, community and social inclusion, and a final thematic section on learning, knowledge and skills. Texts discussing online radio and the history of radio as it intersects with young people are also discussed. The paper concludes by detailing useful resources for making radio, either by, or for, children and young people.

General Overviews
The topic of radio with children and young people has attracted interdisciplinary attention, but texts often focus on one specific aspect of radio in relation to children and young people (for
instance voice, production, audience, participation), and it is rare to find a complete overview on the topic. One useful overview on radio and young people is Bloustien and Peter’s 2011 exploration of youth, music and creative cultures with a focus on radio in the UK, US and Europe. McClung, Pompper and Kinnally 2007 also provide a useful general discussion of the function that radio plays in the lives of today’s youth with an emphasis on positive relationships between radio use and other media. There are some more specific overviews, including a journal article by Wilkinson 2015 which collates case studies on community radio and situates these within the wider literature on youth media, the arts and the creative industries. Each of these readings provides a sound starting point to gain contextual knowledge of children, young people and radio, though predominantly focussed on the teenage years.


A cross-cultural exploration into the everyday lives and music practices of young people from Australia, the UK, the US and Europe from their own broad social, cultural and ethnic perspectives.


An informative examination of the function that radio plays in the lives of young people. The study provides a contemporary benchmark for understanding the role of radio for teenagers.


A review of existing case studies discussing community radio as a platform for youth voice, and as facilitating social inclusion for young people through youth media participation. These debates are situated within the wider literature of youth media, the arts and creative industries.

**Textbooks**

There are limited textbooks available on the topic of children, young people and radio, and those that do exist are diverse in style (from monographs to edited collections) and content.
Soep and Chávez 2010 adopt an ethnographic approach, and weave young people’s personal stories into an empirically rich text. This text would be most suited to third-year undergraduate and postgraduate students. Walker 2014 provides insight into youth radio and arts in the multilingual classroom. Squier 2003 and Fairchild 2012 offer more general overviews of radio and radio culture, with no explicit focus on children and young people and their texts would be best suited to early career scholars.


This text combines critical analysis, interdisciplinary theory and ethnographic writing about community radio to provide a novel theorisation of democratic aesthetics, with important implications for the study of both old and new media.


This book provides a fascinating behind-the-scenes insight into Youth Radio, in Oakland, California. It brings together personal stories from young people to help understand the relationship between radio, learning and youth culture.


A collection of essays considering the development of radio from the perspectives of literary and cultural studies, science studies and feminist theory, radio history, and the new field of radio studies.


An interesting text providing insight into processes of meaning-making, identity work, knowledge and skill acquisition, and the key role that community mentors play in mediating young people’s thinking, emotion, and creative productions at a youth radio station.
Journals
The topic of children, young people and radio does not belong to one set discipline and is of interest to scholars in a range of fields including geography, sociology and media studies. This reflects in the diversity of journals publishing work on this topic. Many scholars working with research on children, young people and radio publish in **Journal of Radio & Audio Media**. There is a specific journal on children and media: **Journal of Children and Media** which invites papers from scholars and professionals. There is a dedicated journal to youth media: **Youth Media Reporter** which serves practitioners, educators and scholars. Other more general journals which feature papers on children, young people and radio include: **Westminster Papers in Communication and Cultures**, **Media, Culture and Society** and **The Radio Journal – International Studies in Broadcast and Audio Media**.

Journal of Children and Media [https://www.tandfonline.com/toc/rcnm20/current]
An interdisciplinary and multi-method journal that provides a space for discussion by international scholars and professionals, and across theoretical and empirical boundaries, who are engaged in the study of media in the lives of children and young people in local, national and global contexts.

Journal of Radio & Audio Media [https://www.tandfonline.com/toc/hjrs20/current]
A semi-annual publication that promotes dialogues between interdisciplinary and methodologically diverse scholars. The journal is not devoted solely to discussions of children but contains articles on research involving children and young people.

Media, Culture and Society [https://journals.sagepub.com/home/mcs]
The journal provides a major international and interdisciplinary forum for the presentation of research and discussion concerning the media, within different political, economic, cultural and historical contexts. Its focus is on substantive topics and on critique and innovation in theory and method.

A publication promoting diverse research into radio and sound media. The journal addresses both historical and contemporary issues from national and international perspectives.

Westminster Papers in Communication and Cultures [https://www.westminsterpapers.org/]
An arena for international scholars to engage in critical debate about the relationship between communication, culture and society in the 21st century.

Youth Media Reporter [http://www.youthmediareporter.org/]
A professional multi-media journal that serves practitioners, educators and scholars in the youth media field. The journal engages a variety of stakeholders to identify issues, pedagogies, opportunities and challenges concerning children, young people and media.

**Empowerment and Voice**

There is a body of literature concerned with radio as giving voice to disenfranchised or disadvantaged children and young people; for instance, those who are economically, linguistically, or politically marginalised. Wagg’s 2004 text argues that, in producing a radio show, young people gain agency in the production of their own audio, thereby affording them a voice they are often deprived of in school and family settings. Dauncey and Hare 1999 adopt a political stance as they explore the regulatory issues related to free market and free speech on French youth talk radio. Some writing on youth voice and radio adopts a literacy perspective, for instance Green 2013, Soep 2006 and Walker and Romero 2008. Other work focuses on radio as a source of empowerment for young people (Scifo 2015). In a more recent chapter, Wilkinson 2016 explores how community radio provides a platform for young people to experiment with voice and to create cultural (re)presentations of themselves.


An analysis of French youth talk radio through a number of scandals involving the radio stations Skyrock and Fun Radio, whose programmes elicited sanctions from the French regulatory body the *Conseil supérieur de l’audiovisuel.*
Green, Keisha. L. 2013. “‘The Way We Hear Ourselves is Different from the Way Others Hear Us’: Exploring the Literate Identities of a Black Radio Youth Collective.” Equity & Excellence in Education. 46: 315-326. doi: 10.1080/10665684.2013.808506

An interesting insight into literacy events in an out-of-school program called Youth Voices that serves to create opportunities for development of a strong sense of historical and cultural identity. The paper provides examples of African American adolescent language and literacy learning at the intersection of youth media production and civic engagement.


An exploration of how a university-based radio station plays an important role in creating more diverse and vibrant media content available locally. The paper also provides an overview of the conceptual contours of community media and community radio.


This paper focuses on the presentation of multivocality in youth media discourse and considers the implications of this for multiliteracy theory and practice.


This paper uses primary data collected through semi-structured ethnographic interviews to argue that young people are empowered through their participation in the alternative media production process. The author applies critical media literacy to illustrate how production can enfranchise the creator.


This paper presents findings related to contested literacies from an innovative school-based youth radio project for Mexican immigrant students.

An exploration of how community radio functions as a platform for youth voice, therefore enabling young people to create cultural (re)presentations of themselves.

Belonging, Community and Social Inclusion

Literature has explored how participation in community radio can enable children and young people to locate themselves in the social and cultural fabric of their geographic locale and neighbouring areas. Baker 2007 writes that the production of a weekly community radio show, Guerrilla Radio, by a group of young Australians allowed the marginalised radio crew to build productive networks. Seen in this way, for young people, radio is a means to negotiate marginalisation. Bloustien 2007 finds that young people can discover new forms networking, collaboration and trust through using convergent media forms. Other research highlights the important social role of radio (Algan 2005; Glevarec and Choquet 2003; Green 2007; Mchakulu 2007; Odine 2014; Ojwang 2015). Wilkinson 2017 looks within a community radio station to discuss the hyperdiversity of the volunteer body, who are brought together through their common interest in radio production. In a landmark text, Chávez and Soep 2005 offer insight into the relationship between adult staff and youth volunteers at a youth radio station.


An investigation of the role of Turkish commercial local radio in the construction of a youth community in the city of Sanliurfa. The study highlights the important social role of radio.


An examination of the music practices of a group of young people regarding their development and broadcast of a weekly youth community radio show in suburban Adelaide, Australia. The paper addresses key questions concerning ways that informal, community-based music-related practices are a means to agency and social inclusion.

An exploration of the collaboration among young people and adult participants at Youth Radio, a broadcast-training program in the San Francisco Bay Area. This work contributes to the growing literature highlighting the role of youth media as a tool for expanding democratic participation.


This paper addresses questions of what are young people’s links with radio? And what role does radio play in the lives of adolescents? By focusing on the situation in France, where popular radio programmes mix ‘free radio’ in the evening with music, this article examines the structure of youth listening reception.


This chapter highlights the promises and perils of civic identity and engagement among marginalised black young people in out-of-school contexts through the case of a youth leadership development program, Youth Voices.


This article reports on a qualitative research study that used community radio and radio listening clubs to examine the involvement of youth in community debate in Malawi.


A candid discussion of how South Africa’s young people have found their voices and communicate through the medium of radio, and how radio has become a companion that the young people trust. Programmes listened to by children include programmes delivered and presented by children, from their perspective.

This paper uses the case study of youth-initiated radio station Koch FM, and demonstrates how young people who are socio-economically disadvantaged use the radio station to maintain social networks in the form of support groups, theatre and income-generating clubs.


This paper finds that engaging hyperdiverse young people in meaningful interactions around a shared interest in community radio stimulates the development of relationships across categorical differences.

**Learning, Knowledge and Skills**

A growing body of work has concentrated on the skills that children and young people gain through youth media participation. Writing on Youthworx, Hopkins 2011 tells how the media organisation offers young people, who have withdrawn from formal education, skill-building through multi-media training. Podkalicka 2011 highlights ways in which Youthworx is important as an access point for young people to gain creative digital media-based experiences and the related development of skills. Kyneswood 2015 also discusses volunteering at a youth radio station as a learning process, and Marchi 2009 discusses how youth radio programmes can be used to engage youth in larger issues of democracy and non-commercial expression. Soep and Chávez 2010 is essential reading and provides advice for engaging young people in real-world initiatives through radio. For readers interested in the effectiveness of youth radio training programmes, Huesca 2014 provides a comprehensive scholarly analysis. Bass and Halverson 2012 examined how radio can be used for transformative pedagogical practice in the classroom. Cooper 2016 also discusses the use of critical pedagogy to stimulate learning. Ibrahim and Mishra 2016 discuss college radio as a mechanism for participatory learning. Kang and Quine 2007 offer insight into the questions a teenage listenership asks a talk programme, providing insight into knowledge gained about sex. Providing a critique to the celebrated learning environment that radio can provide for young people, Wallace 2008 discusses how regulatory practices at a college radio station limit individualistic, developmental goals of the students.
In this article, the authors unpack a first-year college seminar where students explored digital representations (using radio) of pedagogies of possibility for traditionally marginalised student populations.


This paper describes how critical pedagogy, an approach to teaching and learning that encourages students to reflect on their socio-political contexts, may stimulate critical consciousness and dialogue at a youth radio show.


Through the case study of Youth Worx, this article examines some of the broader thinking behind the relationship between youth, media, identity and citizenship, and considers the difficulties of implementing an evaluation between these disparate fields. It also reports on the findings of the media ethnography component of the initiative, tracking the first cohort of young people through the programme.


An examination of the experiences of participants at four well-established yet structurally diverse youth radio training programmes to provide scholarly analysis on youth radio training programmes. The paper uses theoretical contributions from alternative and community media and development communication.

An exploration of the prospects of online college radio at Sur College of Applied Science and the possible scope of its contributions to student learning, engagement and community service.

Kang, Melissa, and Susan Quine. 2007. “Young People’s Concerns about Sex: Unsolicited Questions to a Teenage Radio Talkback Programme over Three Years.” *Sex Education*. 7: 407-420. doi: 10.1080/14681810701636010

This paper describes a novel qualitative study that identified the concerns of young people about sex through a talk-back segment from 2002 to 2004 on an Australian national radio popular music programme targeting 15–24 year olds.


This study follows 14 young volunteers as they broadcast on community radio. It explores how learning occurs and how volunteering may structure this, and whether such learning has distinct characteristics from types of learning theorised in broader literature.


An analysis of a youth organisation's struggle to start a low-watt community radio station. Funding, organisational, logistical, and regulatory issues are discussed, along with the potential for such programs to engage youth in larger issues of democracy and non-commercial expression.


The book offers strategies for engaging and collaborating with diverse groups of young people on real-world initiatives through radio.

Using data from long-term ethnographic research, this article critiques the normative Habermasian public sphere by demonstrating how regulatory practices at a college radio station limit individualistic, developmental goals of the students.

Online Radio

Traditionally, the reach of radio stations (particularly community stations), was limited to the broadcast range. However, there is increasing recognition that use of Internet technologies for online simulcasting is expanding this reach, making content available at the time of broadcast, and afterwards through downloads and podcasts. Scholarship has explored how this move online has impacted on a youth audience. Many of these studies are case studies (Abratt and Cullinan, 2017; Baker, 2010; Baker, 2012a; 2012b), providing in depth exploration of one particular community radio station and its use of online broadcasting. In this area, Baker is the leading author, although Algan 2013 and Hartley et al. 2003 offer important contributions to debates with regards to creating new audiences and outcomes.


A case study of how the station manager of 5FM, a commercial, national radio station, grew the station’s online community to combat declining listenership and revenue figures.


A critical discussion of how underprivileged youth in Southeast Turkey adapt to new forms of media convergence to continue to make local radio relevant to their lives.


This article reports on an ethnographic study conducted in 2005 reviewing one of North America's first net-only college radio stations, City University of New York's Brooklyn College Radio.

This article is part of a larger study that examines the characteristics of a transnational youth net-radio audience and their associated values, attitudes, behaviour and cultural practices.


Based on an empirical case study of transnational (United States and Australia) youth net-radio users, this article re-evaluates the role of style, resistance, and social class in subcultural theory by relating them to the dynamics of a transnational youth net-radio hierarchy.


Primarily based on a transnational study of college students’ net-radio consumption practices, this book argues that net-radio is an important and ongoing social-cultural and global phenomenon. The book contributes to cultural studies research on the Internet.


This paper proposes that interactive technologies can combine with training and enterprise development, and young people’s desires for content creation, to establish a network of users across differing geographical and social ecologies, creating new cultural forms and economic outcomes.

**History**

There is much written about the history of radio, some of which touches on youth culture and the teen market. Hilmes and Liviglio 2002 is a must-read text to gain an overview of the cultural history of radio, with specific attention to Keith’s 2002 chapter in this edited collection. Wilkinson 2017 also provides a useful brief history of radio. Significant literature is devoted to pirate radio, for instance Miley and Read 2017 and Walker 2004. Other literature focuses on
children’s radio programming (Boemer 1989). Another important area of focus is the competition between community and commercial broadcasters for a youth audience (Waits 2008; Wilson 2015). Another noteworthy text is Di Spurio’s 2017 examination of the relationship between radio, music, and youth during the 1950s and 1960s.


An interesting and nostalgic overview of children’s radio programming through describing 47 programs broadcast nationally in America from 1929 to 1956.


An examination of the various discourses, engaged in by social observers and experts alike, on the relationship between radio, music, and youth during the 1950s and 1960s.


The essays collected in this text demonstrate that radio sets patterns that have affected all forms of media that have followed it, and also looks at how it has survived the coming of media that was predicted to make it obsolete.


The chapter documents the lifespan of underground radio in American stemming from 1966 and the influence on the teenage market.


A qualitative historical examination of legislation designed to prevent Radio Caroline, a pirate radio station, from broadcasting into Britain in the 1960s. Radio Caroline played the
type of rock music the British Government sought to suppress as representing the undesirable side of youth culture.


Along with the mainstreaming of alternative practices in the 1990s came an increasing vigilance among underground communities, who sought to keep their subcultures untainted by corporate interests, yet as this article highlights, it was difficult to remain isolated from commercial culture.


This text focuses on the history of American radio, from the amateurs who invented broadcasting to the community radio movement of the 1960s and 1970s, the pirate broadcasters of the 1990s, and the micro radio movement.


This chapter offers a brief history of radio for its infancy in the 1920s to radio in the digital age, with consideration of the mediums’ expanded spatial reach.


This article examines a case in which competition for young listeners between the Nova FM commercial service and Perth youth community broadcaster Groover FM was pursued through the regulatory system.

**Handbooks and Resources for Making Radio**

Alongside greater theoretical scholarship around community radio, there are a growing number of resources tailored to producing radio, by or for children and young people. These resources include handbooks and toolkits that are predominantly online, open access and free to download. The best one in a print edition is by Park 2017, which provides an accessible insight into Ham Radio for teenagers, written by teenagers. The Children’s Radio Foundation provides
comprehensive online resources for how to start a youth radio project, and how to make a radio show. Other organisations providing useful free ‘how to’ guides and resources include Youth Radio, UNESCO and Radio Diaries.

*DIY Toolkit: How to Make a Podcast[https://youthradio.org/teach-youth-radio/diy-toolkit-how-to-make-a-podcast/]*

A toolkit by Youth Radio; it covers all aspects of making a podcast from coming up with an idea; getting to know the equipment; conducting great interviews; writing a script; and voicing a script.


A resource that promotes young people’s right to be heard. The toolkit includes a skills review; advice for preparation of shows; advice on producing shows; being live on air; and promoting shows.


A comprehensive resource from Children’s Radio Foundation providing advice of all aspects of youth radio, including ethics and consent; child participation; listening and hearing; storytelling; interviewing; and monitoring and evaluation.


UNESCO’s radio toolkit – *Linking Generations through Radio* – is an open access document, inspired by children and youth. The toolkit is from Africa and is designed for radio producers working with children and young people.
A ‘how to’ guide for those interested in Ham Radio, written by young people, for young people, although the book has wider appeal to novice radio enthusiasts.

A digital handbook for teenage reporters, including basic principles; technical tips; advice on interviewing and must-have equipment.