

Encyclopedia of
**Children,
Adolescents,
and the Media**

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Edited by

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overall range of topics is broad; for example, on February 24, 2006, there were items on AIDS, violence against children, and camel riding in Pakistan, as well as the diary of a girl living in Iraq.

BBC's Afghan Education Project (AEP) has developed Radio Education for Afghan Children (REACH) to help address the educational needs of Afghan children ages 6 to 16 years who have missed most or all of their schooling. It is hoped that, by listening to the weekly radio programs at home, children will be exposed to Afghanistan's traditions, culture, and history, as well as receiving information about present-day concerns such as mine awareness and health education.

On the national level, some Internet-based initiatives try to promote the idea and availability of children's radio. For example, the *Radio4kids* website in the United Kingdom sets out "to thoroughly review and monitor the provision of radio offered to children in the UK." The core aims of this initiative include to promote the concept and idea of radio being produced by children for children, to campaign for the eventual setting up of a national radio station that showcases young people's work, and to provide guidance and training to teachers and others involved with children to help produce, edit, and submit material to potential broadcasters.

—Uwe Hasebrink

See also British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC); Media Effects; Radio, History of; Radio, Listeners' Age and Use of

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WEBSITES

- Information on Radio Initiatives for Afghan Children: <http://www.comminit.com/experiences/pds22004/experiences-511.html>
- Radio 4 Kids: <http://www.radio4kids.co.uk/index2.html>
- World Radio Forum: <http://www.worldradioforum.org/index.shtml>

RADIO, LISTENERS' AGE AND USE OF

Research on radio uses deals with what listeners seek from radio stations and what these listeners receive in return. Age is one important factor in how people use radio, with children using radio more frequently as they get older, especially for listening to music. The study of radio use (as contrasted with radio effects) assumes the ultimate power of the listener and falls under the umbrella of the conditional effects of the media. In particular, uses and gratifications theory looks at what people do with media, rather than what the media do to people.

Uses and gratifications theory was first developed in the early 1940s by such researchers as Herta Herzog and Paul Lazarsfeld (<http://www.britannica.com/bcom/eb/article/6/0,5716,48556+1+47446,00.html?query=lazarsfeld%20paul>) as they studied radio listeners. It was an early response to research on the direct effects of media, which assumed that all media had powerful and uniform effects.

A 1951 study showed that children had different uses for adventure stories based on their integration into groups of peers. Those in peer groups used the stories as a source of games, while those outside of peer groups used the stories for fantasies. The researcher concluded that different people can use the same communication message for very different purposes. Contemporary theorists such as Alan Rubin have isolated two categories of motives for media use: instrumental (learning, social) versus ritual (escape, habit, relaxation).

About the same time, another study looked at the listening habits of the young radio audience at a time when serialized dramas for children were still available on network radio. In the 1950s, however, very young audiences were beginning to discover television (e.g., *Howdy Doody*, *Captain Kangaroo*). While the youngsters may have left radio for TV, their adolescent brothers and sisters were drawn to radio, where they could hear rock and roll music and performers such as Elvis Presley.

Since the advent of television in the 1950s, radio has become of less interest to children, so research has focused more on television, especially on its potential for harming children. Television attracts all categories of young people and provides them with the widest range of satisfactions. Even proprietary media research (e.g., by media research companies such as Arbitron and Nielsen) regularly reports radio listening data only for children ages 12 and older, typically because advertisers assume younger children gravitate to television. Children age 2 years and older are counted as television viewers.

Music is the only other medium that ranks close to television, particularly for adolescents, because it can be both the focus of attention and a background medium, has both social and individual uses, and suits a diversity of moods. Radio competes with recorded music, and its use has declined as technology creates alternative delivery systems. In recent years, adolescents have shown much greater interest in recorded audio media and other digital personal media (e.g., iPods, other MP3 players) that allow music to be downloaded and stored rather than accessed via live broadcasts.

Academic research on radio is somewhat limited in recent years because of attention to television and the Internet, although concern about music lyrics produced notable work in the 1980s and early 1990s. Peter Christenson found age correlates with the amount of radio listening and whether or not listening is done alone or with others. His work confirms earlier research that found a key difference between television and radio with regard to youth: Young people tend to use music and radio to get away from parents, possibly because parents are more willing to permit the unsupervised use of these media than of television. Parents who ban computers and television from bedrooms do not often forbid radio listening. Christenson finds that benefits of radio listening (e.g., music, information, distraction, background noise) do not differ by age or gender. He also confirmed 1972 reports that about a third of sixth graders listen to radio 2 or more hours per day. By the third grade, 80% of children have a favorite station, up from 50% at the previous grade level. He concluded that preteens are “eavesdropping” on the teen world via radio and recorded music, causing occasional concern to parents. In the 1980s, research explored the public policy implications of music lyrics at a time of heightened interest before the labeling of CDs. One study found that African American children consumed 25% more

radio than white peers, twice the 12% difference between the groups’ television use.

Specialized research is still important to the radio industry. A recent Arbitron survey found that about 90% of 6-to-11-year-olds tuned into their favorite radio stations 8 to 9 hours each week. Many children develop surprising loyalty to stations and formats. The Arbitron study showed just how important the preteen market is to advertisers. A subsequent study made phone calls to parents and kids who had completed listening diaries from the first survey. The study revealed that children have very distinct listening and format preferences that can be targeted to deliver specific messages. In Los Angeles, for example, 67% of girls ages 6 to 11 years preferred a Top 40 station, whereas 71% of the boys in the same age range preferred a rhythmic contemporary hits radio (CHR) station.

Arbitron’s study found that in households with young children, listening to the radio is still a family activity after school. The most likely locale for tuning in to a child’s favorite station is the family car, where 85% most often listen to the radio. According to the study findings, children chose the radio station either all of the time (34%) or some of the time (38%). The study showed that kids like radio commercials and are receptive to radio ads that are fun and informative. They are also likely to respond to the products and services being advertised and frequently ask their parents to make purchases on their behalf.

—Douglas A. Ferguson

See also Bedrooms, Media Use in; Radio, History of

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RATING SYSTEMS, PARENTAL USE OF

Most electronic media industries employ a rating system to identify content that parents might find