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*British children online?: Children, citizenship and news in the UK's four nation/regions*

This paper presents findings from a BBC/AHRC funded Knowledge Exchange Programme (KEP) project, carried out with 8-15 year olds in four nation/regions of the UK. The study's context was the academic and policy debate around children and young people as potential citizens, and the role of the media, including interactive technology, in promoting (or inhibiting) citizenship. (See Bennett, 2008; Buckingham, 2000; Carter 2007; Hine, 2004; Livingstone et al, 2007; Messenger Davies, 2004). The year-long study focused on children's perceptions of the BBC's news programme, Newsround and its website. Using questionnaires, group based activities, and video diaries with 220 children in Bournemouth, England; Coleraine, Northern Ireland; Glasgow, Scotland and Cardiff, Wales, the study examined Newsround's role from a variety of perspectives, including interviews with the programme's producers. In their responses, children demonstrated knowledge about the forms and practices of reporting, and attendant news values, and – especially from a regional perspective - they debated the programme's status as a resource (or otherwise) for identity formation. Issues around interactivity proved to be particularly salient, inviting questions about the extent to which the familiar conventions of children's news reporting need to be reconsidered in order to better engage young people in a digital age. A key finding was the continuing centrality of television for these children as their 'favourite' source of news, with online resources being seen – particularly by younger children - as more for games than for information. Secondary school children expressed more familiarity with online sources and were unhappy with Newsround's focus on under-12s. The study raises questions about the role (now almost unique in the British broadcasting system) of the BBC in producing public service content for children; about where this content can best be placed, and for whom; and about the symbiotic relationship between 'traditional' media (of which television can now be seen as an example) and so-called 'new' media, in fostering citizenship.

Bennett, W.L. 2008. Changing Citizenship in the Digital Age. Civic Life Online: Learning How Digital Media Can Engage Youth. In Bennett, W.L. (ed). The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation Series on Digital Media and Learning. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press. pp. 1–24.