Media Portrayal of Young People – impact and influences

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and supported by Louca-Mai Brady, Anthony Ellis and Amanda Henshall from NCB.
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¹ The findings presented in this report and the conclusions reached were made by the young researchers and the NCB staff supporting them. In no way do they represent the views of the Young Researcher Network or the National Youth Agency.
Introduction

The Young Researcher Network

The Young Researcher Network (YRN) is made up of several different partner organisations, including the National Youth Agency (NYA). The network values, supports and encourages research led by young people. It aims to empower young people to raise their voice and influence matters that affect their lives.

The National Children’s Bureau

The National Children’s Bureau (NCB) is a charity based in London, which works to advance the well-being of all children and young people across every aspect of their lives. NCB is one of the several member organisations that make up the YRN.

Background to the research

In early 2008, the YRN invited its members to apply for funding to support a group of young researchers who would carry out a piece of research on a topic of their choosing. Emrys Green and Naushin Shariff, who are both members of Young NCB, were the first of the four young researchers to be involved. Emrys and Naushin were both interested in the media, and how the media portrays young people. This was an issue that was important to them and something that clearly was affecting theirs, and other young people’s lives. Together they worked with Louca-Mai Brady from NCB’s Research Department on the application, and were awarded the funding in May 2008. Amrita Ghosh and Catherine Clark, the other two young researchers, became involved in the project in June 2008, after responding to an email advertising the project.

The research project

Much research has already been done on how young people are portrayed in the media, but very little has involved the views of the young people themselves, or of the journalists writing on the matter. A recent article in the ‘Time’ magazine (‘Unhappy, Unloved and Out of Control’ 26/04/08) commented on the representation of young people in Britain, claiming them to be “boys and girls who casually pick fights, have sex and keep the emergency services fully occupied.” If this is the interpretation America has received from the British media, what are the views of young people? This is what we aimed to find out, as we think this is an important issue, and also a chance for us to influence how young people are presented in the media.
Aims of the Research

The broad aim of the research project was to explore how young people aged 13-18 are portrayed in the media, and find out what impact this has on them. Through gathering information from young people and journalists, we wanted to answer the following research questions:

- How are young people portrayed in national and London local papers and BBC/ITV news broadcasts?
- What do young people identify as positive, negative and neutral images? How do young people feel about these images?
- What do journalists' think about young people’s views?
Literature Review

We asked Amanda, one of the researchers at NCB, to look in their library at what research had been done already in this area, and this is what she found.

<table>
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<th>Key Points</th>
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<td>• Existing research has found most media stories about young people are negative</td>
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<td>• Stories involving young people are most commonly about crime; gangs; education; and social exclusion</td>
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<td>• Young offenders are likely to receive negative coverage</td>
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<td>• The media often reports stories in a sensational way</td>
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<td>• The media does not always represent reality</td>
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<td>• Most young people feel the media represents them as antisocial and a group to be feared</td>
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The majority of articles found were opinion pieces, or small-scale studies, although it should be noted that the NCB library does not have all the publications on media studies. Several articles related to the Positive Images Awards, set up by the magazine Young People Now (YPN) in 2004. These awards aimed to improve the portrayal of young people by encouraging the media to look for the positive side when covering stories, and young people to contact the media.

As part of the awards’ campaign, YPN commissioned research to monitor the newspapers’ coverage of young people. The researchers monitored the media during a specific week each year, collecting all stories related to young people and classifying them as positive, neutral/balanced, or negative.

In terms of the findings, in 2007 overall, 23% of mentions were positive, 29% neutral or balanced, and 48% negative, this was a slight improvement on previous years. During a week in August 2005, the results were 12% positive, 30% neutral and 57% negative. In 2004, the results were 14% positive, 15% neutral and 71% negative. When broken down by type of media, the results for 2007 showed that the most positive source was broadsheet papers, with 45% positive, whereas only 10% of broadcast news was positive, and 24% of tabloid news positive. The three most popular topics covered were knife crime, education and gangs. Then social exclusion and violent crime. This research claimed that news stories concerning young people should be more balanced.
Another study employing similar methods, was undertaken in Sweden, focusing on two national newspapers (Andersson and Lundstrom 2007). The total number of cuttings gathered was 1180; and the researchers found that teenagers featured more frequently than younger children, with more about teenage boys than girls, and much more about teenagers as the perpetrators rather than as the victims.

It seems that young offenders in particular are likely to be the subject of negative reporting. In 2002, a coalition of children’s charities (Barnardos, The Children’s Society, NCH, NSPCC, NCB) along with the National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders (NACRO), set up the Shape project to challenge the way young offenders are represented. Part of this project was an analysis of the newspapers over a three month period. In total 74 articles were published during this time. The tabloids had more articles (41) than broadsheets (33), The Sun had most with 13, The Independent had least with 5. Ghose (2004) pointed out the role newspapers, particularly local papers, can play in making life worse for young people who are in trouble with the law, by breaching their anonymity. Newspapers can apply to have the name of the young person revealed, and those applications are often successful.

An article by Hallsworth and Young (2005) looked at the representation of young people compared with the recorded levels of youth crime. This article is not based on an analysis of newspaper articles over time, but does claim that the term ‘gang culture’ was being used regularly. The authors criticise a story in The Times, in July 2005, that had the headline:

‘Fear drives one teenage boy in ten to carry a knife’.

This article tried to imply that there was a growing problem with knife and gun crime, without sufficient evidence.

Hallsworth and Young also focus on the media’s use of the term ‘gang’ to describe a group of young people together. Cases in the media of knife and gun crime referred to as gang related, are more likely to have been perpetrated by criminal groups, rather than peer groups of young people. Hallsworth and Young claim that society is frightened of young people who commit violent crimes, but these levels of fear are not supported by the recorded levels of crime. The British Crime Survey for 2003/04 showed that levels of violent crime had been falling slightly (Hallsworth and Young, 2005). Police statistics for violent crime during the same period contradicted this, showing a rise of 12% but there had been changes in how they record crimes. Hallsworth and Young also refer to the Youth Justice Board (YJB) Mori survey of 2004, which showed that there had not been an increase in offending by young people since 2001. This article also mentions the use of meaningless statistics in newspaper articles intended to scare people, such as the following from The Times newspaper, ‘Over half of young people claim to know how to obtain a knife’. This is no surprise, given that most people have access to kitchen knives.
There has been some research looking at how young people feel about the media, and about how they are represented. In 2006 the British Youth Council did a survey to find out young people’s views on how they are portrayed by the media and by politicians. The survey had over seven hundred responses from 12-25 year olds. Amongst the key findings were that 98% felt that the media always, often or sometimes represents them as antisocial. More than four out of five thought that the media represents them as a group to be feared. The respondents felt this may cause older people to be afraid of them, and may alienate young people causing more antisocial behaviour. The survey respondents wanted their achievements to be recognised, and to be given positive attention. They also thought that the media represented the majority of them on the behaviour of the minority.

According to Madge’s research (2006) the strength of the influence the media has on children and young people increases as they get older. In terms of respondents, there were 2000 primary and secondary age children and 500 adults. The focus of the project was to find out how children feel about their childhoods and the influence of the media. Adults felt the media had a strong influence on children. Children claimed that they were more influenced by their parents and families, adults claimed that children were more likely to believe the media and friends influenced them most. Adults also said they thought children were depicted ‘very badly’ in the media, over 75% thought children were depicted as ‘troublemakers’. In addition, 47% of adults said that children were portrayed in a negative way. Madge claims (2006:143)

“Sensationalised images of youth predominate in the media and elsewhere, and display bias in the behaviour they report as well as the status of the children they depict. The well-behaved, well-adjusted ‘ordinary’ child may not be newsworthy but this does not explain the undue attention paid to negative messages about youth”.

This does raise the question of why the media represent children and young people in negative ways. Goddard (2005) reports on an event run as part of Young People Now’s Positive Images campaign, where young people met with BBC television’s head of news, Roger Mosey, to discuss the way young people are represented. Mosey felt that BBC news was not “as good as it could be at talking to young people”, although he thought the BBC was better than some other media, particularly newspapers. Mosey also said that the news has to reflect reality and one problem is that “25 people doing something good is not a story, while one person doing something bad is”. However, as his comments show, the media doesn’t completely represent reality, as particular news stories are selected over others for coverage.

So it seems the public want negative stories. Hallsworth and Young (2005) claim that politicians use any mention of juvenile crime as an opportunity to demonstrate their toughness on crime. In addition, they argue that 24 hour news updates means that the public always want to hear the latest news, and also that the more sensational stories are repeated again and again, perhaps increasing their impact.
However, it is possible for young people to challenge the way they are represented. Roger Mosey encouraged children and young people to start at a local level, possibly with local radio stations, because stories often start there, move onto local television then to national broadcasts. Van Ark (2004) advises that youth groups need to be proactive to combat negative images of young people, and suggests ways of putting stories across. There are groups that can train children and young people in dealing with the media, for example The Media Trust and Children’s Express. Van Ark (2004) also mentions steps that can be taken if unfair publicity occurs: contact the editor of the newspaper or programme. The Press Complaints Commission has rules for coverage of children and young people. A negative story can be turned around; a story about gun crime is an opportunity for those who work with the young people who have been affected to talk about what is helping them. The Shape Project (2004) trained a group of ten young people from a variety of backgrounds to act as young media representatives, getting the campaign messages across to the press. They then had opportunities to speak to the media, and were briefed beforehand. As Van Ark (2004) says, young people who have contact with the media, whether to comment on stories, or to promote events and campaigns, need training, and there are also safety and confidentiality issues they need to be aware of.
Methods

In this section of the report we will explain what research methods were used to gather the data, which helped us to answer our research questions.

Key Points

We used the following for our research:

- Collected news stories on young people for a two week period
- Ran a consultation event with other young people
- Ran two focus groups with young people
- Interviewed seven journalists over the phone
- Ran an online survey of young people

Research Design

The main aim of our research was to find out what people’s feelings and opinions were about the way young people are portrayed in the media. To gather this kind of information, we felt it would be most useful to give the young people and journalists participating in the research an opportunity to talk to us at length, and in depth about how they felt. We developed a five-stage method to gather our data, using mainly qualitative research methods and some quantitative methods as well. The qualitative methods gave the participants an opportunity to talk to us, which helped us to look in more depth at their views, and find out what they thought and felt about this topic; while the quantitative information gave us statistics, which made it easier to compare what people said.

We wanted to find out what else had been done on young people’s views of their portrayal in the media, what information there was about the methods we want to use and where the gaps in the information were. From the literature review section of this report (pages 6 - 9) we found no mention of any existing research project which
had used qualitative research methods with young people or journalists to find out what they felt about the way young people are portrayed in the media. Therefore, we knew that our research project would make an important contribution and help us to better understand this topic area.

We will now describe the research methods that were used during the project and how we used them to collect our data.

The Research Process

Media stories analysis and consultation:

At the beginning of the research, stories were collected about young people aged 13-18 that appeared in the Sun, Daily Mail and Guardian national newspapers. Stories were also gathered from the London Evening Standard; the East Anglian Daily Times (regional newspapers); and from the BBC/ITV news. We collected these over a two week period, from the 30th June to the 14th July 2008. Once all the stories had been collected, a consultation event was arranged and attended by the four young researchers and four other Young NCB members. At this event, we selected some of these stories and looked at what each one said about young people. The stories were classified into positive, negative and neutral categories based on how young people were presented in them. The Young NCB members that attended this event supported the research team with planning aspects of the project, and with three additional members, helped us with our dissemination strategy.

Focus groups:

One of the aims of our project was to understand what young people feel about the way they are portrayed in the newspapers and on TV. To do this we used one of our qualitative methods - focus groups. A focus group is a method that is used by researchers to find out what people’s opinions and views are. During a focus group the researcher(s) will ask questions to stimulate discussion within the group, while taking note of what people are saying about particular issues. Two focus groups were conducted: one in Suffolk, and the other in London. In total, 14 young people
took part, who were all aged between 13 – 18 years. During the focus groups we used some of the stories that we had collected from the media as prompts, to encourage the young people taking part to talk about their views and feelings. We also asked them to draw a picture of a young person from the point of view of the media, and from the point of view of another young person.

Interviews:

Interviews were carried out with journalists to find out what their views were on the way young people are portrayed, and how the media could respond to this. In total, seven were interviewed over the telephone. Four of these journalists wrote articles about children and young people in magazines; one wrote articles for both national newspapers and magazines; and two of them worked for a TV channel. The NCB’s Media Department contacted the journalists on our behalf and asked them if they would mind being interviewed for our project.

Online survey:

After the interviews with journalists and focus groups with young people had been completed, we designed and then ran an online survey to get the views of young people from across the country. Once the survey questions had been developed, a member of the NCB’s Research Department input the survey into an online survey tool – Survey Monkey. The survey was advertised to young people through Young NCB’s website, the Young Researcher Network, and several other networks that the NCB is part of. The survey remained ‘live’ for two weeks, and received 62 responses in total.

Ethics

To ensure that we gathered information for our project ethically we read and used both the NYA’s and NCB’s ethical guidelines to inform the design of our project. Before we began collecting our data, one member of the research team also attended a training session on ethics that was delivered by the NYA.

So that the young people who took part in the focus groups were able to give their informed consent, each of them were given an information sheet in advance. These sheets explained who the research team were; what the project was about; what the participants would be doing during the focus group; and what we would do with the information that they gave to us. The sheets also explained that their identity would not be revealed to anyone outside the research team and whatever was discussed during the focus group would be confidential (an example copy of this sheet is available in Appendix 1). To ensure that the young people taking part were properly protected, we followed NCB’s Child Protection Policy. We explained that we would have to tell someone if they said something that made us believe they or another
child were in danger. An adult member of NCB’s Research Department was also present at the two focus groups to support us with this. The young people who wanted to take part were all given consent forms, which were signed by their parent or guardian if they were under 16.

Before we interviewed the journalists who participated in our project, an adult member of NCB’s Research Team contacted them in advance to arrange a convenient interview time and to explain a little about the project. At the start of each interview journalists were told more about the project; informed that their identity would not be revealed to anyone outside the research team, and that their responses would be confidential.

Both the young people and the journalists were given the option to leave the focus group or interview at any point if they wished to.

To ensure the data we collected was safe all the consent forms and other information were stored in locked cabinets. Electronic documents with names were saved in password protected files.
Analysis and Findings

To analyse the information that we had gathered, we worked together as a group and were supported by NCB’s Research Department and the NYA. At the start of the analysis process, we developed codes and used these to extract themes from our data. These codes were taken from our main research questions, which helped us to stay focused on our original research aims. The key themes that we identified are outlined below, with our main findings described under each theme.

### Key Points

- The media produces more negative stories than positive
- The media focuses on minority groups
- Bad news sells
- Journalists are under pressure to cover negative stories
- Negative media coverage can have a negative affect on young people’s lives

### Media content

Many messages were found in our research. The most obvious message we found was that there was an imbalance in the amount of positive stories about young people and negative stories. Most of the stories published about young people portray them in a negative rather than a positive light. The young people who took part in the survey felt that there were more stories on them that are giving a negative image than positive, as can be seen in Fig 1 below:
Fig 1: Out of all the stories on young people that the media covers, what percentage of these are negative?

Respondents to the survey were also asked to select what they felt were the three most common news stories involving young people. The majority who responded to the survey felt that knife crime was the most common story, with 76% selecting this. Followed by gun crime (22.4%) and violent crime (15.5%). Stories covering teenage pregnancy; school and education; and drugs were also felt to be common stories.

Another message from the research was the difference in the stories that are published within local and national papers. We found that national newspapers publish more stories that give a negative portrayal of young people. But on the other hand we found that local/regional papers we collected, tended to publish more stories that gave a positive image of young people. Although as stated above, the media as a whole tends to report more negative stories. This is reflected in the views of some of the young people that responded to the survey, particularly around how they feel they are represented by local and national media:
Fig 2: Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements:

- Young people are portrayed positively on TV news
- Young people are portrayed positively by local and regional newspapers
- Young people are portrayed positively by the national newspapers

The reasons for this difference in local and national media reporting were not explored in depth during this research; however, it is possible that local/regional media are more likely to cover stories that will present the geographical area they cover in a more positive light. Whereas the national media are not constrained by geographical loyalties. The commercial media need to attract audiences to consume their stories. This is perhaps why many newspapers/editors choose to publish negative stories that will interest readers/viewers – we explore this in more detail under our next theme.

We also found that media stories are not representative of the youth population as a whole, as they tend to focus on minority groups that are extreme examples of young people. For example, if the content of the story is negative it’s usually very bad, focusing on young people who are criminals or badly behaved. Positive stories are often linked with the self achievements of extraordinary individuals with rare talents, rather than average young people. Evidently not all young people are like these two extremes.

**Barriers experienced by journalists**

The journalists that participated in the research generally did not believe all of the bad press that young people so often receive. They recognised that young people are diverse: some of them behave badly; but the majority do not. Although they were
also aware of the sensationalism that often characterises news stories, and felt that negative reporting by the media is likely to make young people feel negative about themselves, alienated and angry. All the journalists interviewed strongly agreed that not all young people are bad; one journalist commented that young people were a:

“Fantastic bunch of people”

However, our research found a common perception amongst the profession that negative stories sell. Several journalists that we interviewed mentioned the importance of targeting their readership and viewers. This is always the main focus, especially for editors, even if the values of the story aren’t shared by the journalists who have covered it. The media needs to sell itself to the public, and it feels that negative, sensational news is what the public wants to hear about. As some of the journalists who were interviewed explained:

“If it’s bad news it’s news worthy”

“Bad news sells”

This arguably catalyzes the situation, as the public become more aware of particular issues and want more stories that cover those issues. The media will then publish more, further increasing awareness, and creating a ‘thirst’ amongst the public for negative press. Arguably then, young people are being commercialised, as they can be portrayed in particular ways that will attract readers or viewers who will consume the news. One journalist described young people as being like “play toys”, as they are an easy target for negative reporting and can be used by the media to sell its products.

Therefore, journalists must often conform to the requirements placed upon them by the institution they work for. Some of those that we interviewed explained that journalists often do not wish to disrupt the status quo and will conform to what their publication or TV channel sees as being the ‘norm’.

When asked about changes in the portrayal of young people over time, some journalists believed the situation had worsened. Although we have established that this is very much a personal perception. The murder of James Bulger was mentioned as an example of negative news coverage from over 10 years ago – suggesting that negative reporting of young people is not new. It was suggested by one journalist who participated that levels of violence may not be increasing; but due to excessive, sensational media coverage this can influence the public’s awareness and perceptions of this. Moreover, a TV journalist pointed out that there is also an increase in young people becoming the victims of crime too.

The journalists who took part in the research agreed that it is more likely that positive stories will appear in the local/regional rather than national media, something that we have discussed above. One journalist explained the reasons for this being due to an:
“easier access to market due to a lower threshold of news need”

It was suggested that TV news channels are more likely to go for stories that involve powerful, visually impressive images, such as people who are angry and upset, rather than images of young people that have made a positive contribution.

We did find that some journalists were quite pessimistic about the situation, and felt it would be difficult to change the negative portrayal of young people and the public’s demand for bad stories. Despite this pessimism they did discuss ways in which it might be possible to challenge this. On several occasions during our research participants commented on how young people can be empowered to change things through the use of online multimedia such as video sharing and social networking sites. One journalist we interviewed felt that instead of always interviewing adults about youth issues, the media should also be:

“making more use of articulate young people”

Young people’s perceptions of ‘self’

From the research that was conducted, a number of points were made by young people on the perception they had of themselves and how this could be influenced by media reporting.

Overall, it is clear that the media often present young people in a negative way, which the young people we spoke to said was often associated with “hoodies”, “gangs”, “knives” and other generally negative images. Some of the young people who participated in the research felt that this can lead to stereotyping, and as a result, older people will feel that all young people are part of gangs or are badly behaved. Some of the young people we spoke to during the focus groups felt that these negative stereotypes were impacting on their daily lives: making them more conscious of how they dressed, how they presented themselves, and where they could go with their friends. For example, some young people wore hoodies because they’re comfortable and fashionable. However, the negativity that the media often attaches to this item of clothing, left some of the young people who participated feeling anxious about how other people may view them while wearing one. As this young person’s comments during the survey demonstrate:

“Adults do not trust you if you wear fleeces with hoods on, or ‘hoodies’ – they presume you are in with a knife carrying gang and are on drugs”.

Others reported feeling like older people were often intimidated by them:

“It makes me feel ashamed to fall into this stereotype… some people may even cross the road if they see a group of us coming in their direction”.
Our research found evidence that negative press can impact on young people’s self-welfare, as a number reported feeling scared and intimidated by other young people after reading or seeing negative coverage. Evidence from the online survey found that some young people had experienced harassment at the hands of the police, for what they described as no apparent reason. They felt that negative media coverage had led the police to suspect them of wrong-doing.

During the two focus groups that were held in London and Suffolk we asked the young people taking part to draw what they thought a typical young person looked like from their perspective, and also what they believe the media thinks a typical young person is like (Some examples of these drawings are in Figs 3 & 4 below).

![Image](image_url)

Fig 3: The media’s view of young people drawn by young people participating in the Suffolk focus group.

We found clear similarities between the two groups, with evident consensus around how the media portrays young people. In these illustrations young people were depicted in gangs, wearing hoods and carrying knives, guns, alcohol and drugs. They were described as living a “gangster life” and “Rebelling against society”, as “Troubled, Violent and Threatening”, “Chav, ASBO Yobs” who are “Rude”, and concerned with “fashion and appearances”.
The illustrations from their own perspectives differed in some ways. The Suffolk group described young people as being “individuals”, “keen to learn”, “misunderstood” and capable of doing positive things. Whereas the London group emphasised some of the negative images that had characterised the illustration from the media’s perspective. The London group also made references in their drawing to young people’s interests, such as music and spending time with friends.

Clearly the focus groups showed the impact that the media is capable of having on young people, who felt that the media currently portrays them overwhelmingly in a negative light. When given the opportunity to express their own views of young people, it is evident from the London group that some of the negative images and stereotypes portrayed in the media had arguably begun to shape some of their own perceptions of young people.

Other participants were angry about the media’s obsession with young people who misbehaved. They felt that behaving badly was often the only way to get any attention, something the minority of young people involved in criminal activity seem to get.
The young people who took part in the research recognised the important role the media has in informing people of what is going on, and that the public should be informed when bad things happen. However, they were critical of sensational reporting and felt that there should be some more positive news stories about young people to create a balance, as findings from our young people’s survey in Fig 5 support:

**Fig 5:** Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statement – The media should cover more positive stories about young people.

![Pie chart showing responses to the survey question.](image-url)
Conclusion and Recommendations

Our research indicates that the media has the ability to influence people’s perceptions and their views of particular issues, and as our evidence has demonstrated, it can affect the lives of young people. What concerns us about the findings of this research, is the clearly negative impact that sensational, negative reporting is having on young people. Many who participated felt angry and resentful that the widely publicised negative behaviours of minority groups within the youth population are dominating the headlines, and affecting wider society’s perception of all young people. What is also concerning is the amount of negative coverage that young people receive, particularly in the national media, and the use of this bad coverage by the media for commercial gain. Clearly this situation places pressures upon journalists to cover instances where young people behave badly, rather than when they make a positive contribution.

At the beginning of this research we wanted to use the findings to raise awareness, and try to make a difference to the way young people are currently being portrayed. Our recommendations from doing this research have been included below, and we hope that our audiences will take note of them. We would like policy makers and media professionals to seriously consider the damaging effects that constant negative and sensational reporting are having on young people.

Our recommendations

The data in Fig 5 above, demonstrates the overwhelming desire of the young people we surveyed to be represented in a more positive light. This is one of the clear recommendations from the research evidence we gathered:

- there should be a balance of negative and positive stories.

Our other recommendations include:

- young people should be given a voice to put across their views on this issue;
- negative, sensational reporting can have a negative affect on young people’s lives;
- negative stories have the potential to be used for education.
References


Youthnet British Youth Council (2006) *The voice behind the hood: young people's views on anti-social behaviour, the media and older people.* London: Youthnet, and British Youth Council.
Young Researcher Profiles

Naushin Shariff

Naushin is 18 years of age and is currently in the final year of her A levels studying Psychology, Law and Philosophy. She plans to study Law at University. Naushin is interested in young people’s issues and this is shown through her involvement with NCB, THT, CAMHS and the Bexley Youth Council. In her spare time, she enjoys playing sports such as football, basketball and badminton. She also partakes in Kickboxing and enjoys practising creative card making.

Emrys Green

Emrys is 18 years of age and is currently studying for an honours degree on a flagship university course for a year in the city of Nottingham. As a young entrepreneur Emrys has also been working within youth advocacy for about 6 years covering issues from health, lifestyle, facilities, age rights, human rights, and many others. Working as a participation consultant he has enjoyed this research as it has given him a deeper understanding of the issues that are affecting society and those that influence the views of people.

Amrita Ghosh

Amrita is 15 years of age and is currently studying for her GCSE’s. Amrita is a member of Young NCB and is regularly involved in the work of NCB. She is a member of the Children and Youth Board and also a member of the Young People’s Public Health Reference Group, which meets regularly to discuss issues related to public health research.

Catherine Clark

Catherine is 17 years of age and is currently studying for her A Level qualifications. Afterwards, she is planning to study Law at University. This was Catherine’s first project with NCB. Although she has recently got involved with a project exploring how adverts affect young people. Having gone to political conferences as part of her A Level in Politics, where many different issues inevitably arise, Catherine finds these projects interesting and likes being involved in trying to raise people’s awareness of important issues. Catherine is a prefect for this subject and also a representative for her form in school, which enables her to get the views of other young people and input these into the projects she is involved with.
Appendix 1: Information leaflet for young people taking part in focus groups

Confidentiality and Anonymity
Your name will not be passed on to anyone or used in anything written about the project. The focus group discussion will be confidential, so only the people in the group will know what you’ve said. However, if you tell us something that makes us believe you or another child might be in danger, we may need to discuss what you have told us with someone else. Only the researchers and the person who is typing it up will hear the recording of the group.

Who are NCB?
NCB is a charity that works to improve the lives of children and young people.

What is the Young Researcher Network (YRN)?
The YRN is a network that is part of the National Youth Agency (NYA). The network is made up of 16 partner organizations including the NCB, that supports and encourages young people’s active participation in research.

Have your say...

Are you conscious about how young people are being portrayed in the media?

Young people in the Media

Have your say...

We want to talk to young people aged 13-18 who have an interest in this issue.
Appendix 1: Information leaflet for young people taking part in focus groups (continued)

What is the project about?

We are looking at how young people are portrayed in the media and would like to hear what YOU have to say about this. The research is being led by Young NCB members with help from NCB and YRN. During the focus group an adult member of NCB’s Research Department will be present.

What happens to the information?

The information will be used to write a report, which will be sent out through NCB’s networks. We will create a poster advertising the findings, post them on the YNCB website, and present them at a conference.

What would I have to do?

We would like you to come to a focus group discussion with 6-8 other young people and take part in various activities, through which we would like to find out what your views are on how teenagers are portrayed in the media.

What is good about taking part?

You can have your say and hear what other young people think. You will be given a £10 High Street voucher, refreshments will be available and we will cover your travel costs.

If you want to take part and if you are under 16, one of your parents or carers will need to sign a consent form.

If you would like to take part please contact the Research Department at the NCB.

Tel:

Email:
## Appendix 2: Focus group plan for young researchers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Resources Needed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10:00 - 10:30</td>
<td>Participants arrive - collect forms / registration. Refreshments.</td>
<td>Pens &amp; checklist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:30 – 10:35</td>
<td>Introductions to the Project, the group today and ground rules etc</td>
<td>Flipchart paper + pens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:35 – 10:45</td>
<td>Warm Up activity (move around room as animals etc, clap for groups of '..' to share; The super power you would most like to have, where you'd like to visit for holiday, name one publication you read, how often you watch TV news. Followed by round robin of names on item throw. Do the dis/agree activity for the phrase 'Young People are portrayed in a positive light in the media on TV news and in newspapers'.</td>
<td>Bean bags or soft balls, 4 Smiley face cards (one very happy, one looking mildly amused, one looking neither way, and one that is sad)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:45 – 11:00</td>
<td>People break out to look at media images around the space. They write brief comments on paper / post its.</td>
<td>The media image articles/copies and post it notes + pens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:00 - 11:15</td>
<td>Discussion around how typical the images are for young people to see in the media. Look for why they may have been important to report and general classifications on what makes an image positive / negative in general.</td>
<td>The media images &amp; post its from before + Dictaphone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:15 – 11:30</td>
<td>Split to 2 groups. One draws a Young person as young people see it, the other draws a young person as they see the media portraying them.</td>
<td>Flipchart + pencils + coloured pencils</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:30 – 11:40</td>
<td>Break – inc. looking at other group’s picture</td>
<td>Refreshments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:40 – 11:50</td>
<td>Each group creates a thought shower explaining why they have drawn the picture that way and identifying the issues with the portrayal.</td>
<td>Flipchart + pens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:50 – 12:00</td>
<td>Thought shower on this flipchart (on the bottom half) as to how the media / young people can affect change. What could be done to address the issues identified.</td>
<td>Same flipchart and pens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:00 – 12:20</td>
<td>Discussion on sharing our issues and the ways to address them. The discussion includes identifying what we have learnt from today and identify our top 3 ways to influence the media to show more positive stories.</td>
<td>4 Smiley face cards (one very happy, one looking mildly amused, one looking neither way, and one that is sad)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:20 – 12:30</td>
<td>Do the dis/agree activity again for the phrase ‘Young People are portrayed in a positive light in the media on TV news and in newspapers’. Evaluate whether the session has been useful and provide a summary of what’s happened.</td>
<td>Voucher and expense forms, petty cash.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:30 – 12:40</td>
<td>Collect vouchers and sort out travel expenses</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 3: Schedule for journalist interviews

**Schedule for interviewing journalists.**

Before starting interview:

1) Interviewer introduces themselves and explains the research project. Explain what the information gathered from the interview will be used for – to write a report, findings will be posted on a website, developed into a poster, and presented at the NYA conference in November 08.
2) Everything you say during this interview is confidential and you will be anonymous in the report.
3) Request permission to record.
4) Ask if they have any questions.

**A:** First I would like to ask you some questions about yourself...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>MAIN QUESTION</strong></th>
<th><strong>PROMPTS/SUB-QUESTIONS</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How long have you been a journalist?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why did you decide to become a journalist?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What stories do you usually cover?</td>
<td>How often do they write? Ask for examples</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**B:** I would now like to ask you about your views on how young people are portrayed in the media...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>MAIN QUESTION</strong></th>
<th><strong>PROMPTS/SUB-QUESTIONS</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What is your honest current view of teenagers/young people in general?</td>
<td>Why do you think this?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What do you think is the general public’s view of teenagers/young people?</td>
<td>Why is this? Is there stereotyping? To what extent is this view influenced by the Media?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What do you think are the most common kinds of news stories</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Question                                                                 | Why?
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------
| about young people?                                                     | Why?                                             |
| How are stories selected?                                               | What influences the stories that are chosen to cover? |
| Have you ever had feedback on your stories?                            | Who?                                             |
|                                                                         | Have you ever had feedback from children and young people? |
|                                                                         | How have they reacted to your stories?           |
|                                                                         | Good/bad?                                        |
| Do you feel there is a difference in how young people are portrayed in regional newspapers compared to national newspapers? | Why do you think this is the case?               |
| Do you feel there is a difference between newspaper and TV coverage of young people? | Do you think they reflect the truth?             |
| Do you think that young people are portrayed differently now compared to 5 or 10 years ago? | Why do you think that is?                        |
| How do you think young people feel about how they are presented in the media? | What do you think influences this?               |
| Do you think more positive stories should be produced?                 | Why?                                             |
|                                                                         | What could these stories include?                 |
|                                                                         | What would be of interest to readers?            |
| How would you suggest changing the way young people are presented in the media? |                                                   |

Is there anything else you would like to say about the way in which the media portrays young people?

-Thank you for your time-
Appendix 4: Online survey of young people

Media Portrayal of Young People – impact and influences

Survey

Welcome to the young people in the media survey.

The purpose of this short survey is to find out what young people aged 13-18 think about the way they are portrayed by the media. The survey is part of a research project that is funded by the National Youth Agency (NYA) and is being led by a group of young researchers. The young researchers have received training on how to do research and are being supported by the National Children’s Bureau’s (NCB) Research Department. NCB is a charity that works to promote the interests of all children and young people across every aspect of their lives.

The findings from this research will be written up in a report, put on a poster, posted on the Young NCB website, and presented at a conference. The survey is anonymous so you do not need to tell us your name, and your responses are completely confidential. The survey should take no more than 5 minutes to complete, and once you are finished please click the ‘Done’ button and your responses will be returned.

Thank you.
1) What is your gender?
Male   Female

2) How old are you? _________________________

3) What is your ethnicity? *(please tick one)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>White</th>
<th>Black/Black British</th>
<th>Mixed</th>
<th>Asian/Asian British</th>
<th>Chinese/ Other Ethnic Group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White British</td>
<td>Caribbean</td>
<td>White &amp; Black Caribbean</td>
<td>Indian</td>
<td>Chinese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White Irish</td>
<td>African</td>
<td>White &amp; Black African</td>
<td>Pakistani</td>
<td>Any other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other White</td>
<td>Other Black</td>
<td>White &amp; Asian</td>
<td>Bangladeshi</td>
<td>Traveller/Gypsy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other Mixed</td>
<td>Other Asian</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If you answered ‘Other’ please say __________________________

4) Which region do you live in?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>North West</th>
<th>North East</th>
<th>Yorkshire &amp; Humber</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>East Midlands</td>
<td>West Midlands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>East</td>
<td>South East</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>London</td>
<td>South West</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5) Do you read national newspapers like the Sun, Daily Mail or Guardian?

Yes   No

6) If ‘Yes’, which of these national newspapers do you read?

The Sun   The Daily Mail   The Guardian

The Mirror   The Times
7) How often do you read national newspapers?

Never  A few times a month  One to two times a week
Three to four times a week  Everyday

8) Do you read local or regional newspapers?

Yes  No

9) If ‘Yes' please say which local or regional newspapers you read?

10) How often do you read local or regional newspapers?

Never  A few times a month  One to two times a week
Three to four times a week  Everyday

11) Do you watch TV news?

Yes  No

12) If ‘Yes', which TV news broadcast(s) do you watch?

BBC News  ITV News  Channel 4 News
Channel 5 News  Sky News

13) How often do you watch TV News?

Never  A few times a month  One to two times a week
Three to four times a week  Everyday

14) The media regularly cover stories involving young people. Out of all the stories on young people that the media covers, what percentage of these are negative?

Up to a quarter (0 – 25%)  Up to half (26 – 50%)
Up to three quarters (51 – 75%)  Almost all of them (76% – 100%)
15) When stories about young people are in the newspapers or on TV news, what are the stories most commonly about? *Please pick what you think are the three most common stories*

**Drop down menu containing the following options:**

Knife crime; Teenage Pregnancy; Gun crime; School & Education; Alcohol; Poverty; Sex; Positive work in the community; Personal achievement or success; Violent crime; Non-violent crimes (e.g. burglary); Drugs

16) Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements:

- Young people are portrayed positively by the national newspapers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Not sure</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

- Young people are portrayed positively by local and regional newspapers:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Not sure</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

- Young people are portrayed positively on TV news:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Not sure</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

- The media should cover more positive stories about young people:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Not sure</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

- I think that the way the media portrays young people in England is fair:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Not sure</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

- The media produces more negative stories about young people now than it did five years ago:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Not sure</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

17) Would you like to be able to provide feedback to the journalists who write stories about young people?
Yes          No          Not sure

If you answered ‘Yes’, what would you like to say to them?


18) Please describe how the portrayal of young people in the media makes you feel?


19) How do you think young people should be portrayed in the media?


20) Is there anything else you would like to say?


Thank you for taking part in this survey.