Australian Studies in Journalism 7: 1998: 84-136

Rating youth: a statistical review of young Australians' news media use

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There has been much recent academic and popular interest in the media consumption habits of young adults, especially within the context of the Generation X phenomenon. Much of this discussion has argued the current generation of young people are consuming less news media than ever before. Using a range of primary and secondary statistical sources, this paper reviews youth news media consumption in Australia with particular reference to the past two decades. The paper finds some evidence to support claims of a youth exodus from conventional forms of journalism. However, the situation is not as clear-cut as some would suggest.

Regardless of how we define the youth audience for journalism, it appears there has been an ongoing concern over its size. However, compounding the problem is the fact that young people appear to be reading, watching and listening to *increasingly less* news and current affairs than ever before. While such a situation may be "somewhat surprising" considering it comes at a time when the public has more access to information than ever before (Evard 1996), the accelerating decline in young people's news media use is a recurring theme in contemporary discussions of journalism in Australia and elsewhere (See for example Katz 1994a;

Sternberg 1995; Sternberg 1997a; Turner 1996a, 1996b). Indeed, the issue was the focus of a special conference, "Young People and the Media", held by The Australian Centre for Independent Journalism in 1995, and formed the basis of an episode of the popular television current affairs pastiche-cum-parody, *Frontline* (1997).

Cobb-Walgren (1990, p.340) and Taverner Research (1995, p.1, Appendix 2, p.2) point to the historical concern over youth newspaper audiences and the medium's lack of popularity with young people. Comparatively little research, however, has been conducted into the young audience for television news and current affairs. Another factor also makes the task of cross-examining youth news media use extremely difficult. Questions regarding young people's use of journalism are relatively easy to determine when examined in the context of newspapers and television news and current affairs which are regarded as "general" media and genres. However, news and current affairs on radio and in magazines are quite different matters. These target niche audiences and, in the case of radio, are not discretely measured. However, in America, Katz (1994a, p.31) has argued that "[t]he young are abandoning conventional journalism in stunning and accelerating numbers" and are "fighting for and building their own powerful media".

This paper is a review of primary and secondary statistical sources regarding young people's news media use in Australia. For the purposes of this article, primary sources may be defined as "official" audience data on both print and broadcast media, gathered by the organisations that service Australian media outlets; namely, Roy Morgan Research, A.G.B. McNair and A.C. Nielsen. Unfortunately, due to cost restrictions and the detailed nature of the data presented, all primary data is restricted to the Brisbane youth audience only. However, with only a few exceptions (mentioned below), the media habits of Brisbane's youth demographics are largely similar to those of youth audiences in other capital cities.

A broader picture of youth media use is provided by the secondary data. Secondary sources refer to discussions of youth media consumption levels contained in market research reports, policy documents, academic research and media reports. I have attempted to give these a national focus, as well as drawing on overseas research where applicable.

Reviewing youth media use in this way is important due to the "paucity" of relevant information in the area (Johnstone 1990/1, p.173). Several authors from within cultural studies (Mungham & Pearson 1976; Hall & Jefferson 1975; Hebdige 1979; Grossberg 1992; Lewis 1992; Hall & Whannel 1994) show how the electronic media, in particular, expanded to cash in on the post-World War II youth culture boom. However, while much attention is devoted to children's media habits (See for example Melbourne's 1995 World Summit on Television and Children and the Australia Broadcasting Authority's *Kids Talk TV: "Super Wickid"* or *"Dum"* report (Sheldon et al 1996)), Bissnette (1990, p.55) criticises Australian media researchers' "established reticence" towards examining the media consumption of teenagers. The situation only appears to be worse with people aged between 18 and 24, who straddle the categories of teen and young adult[1] and are virtually absent from the literature.

Also, very few existing studies have attempted to examine young people's media use over an extended period in order to understand changes and continuities in consumption patterns. This is a particular problem considering one of the primary motivations for studying youth media use is for its predictive capacity of future adult consumption (McLeod & Brown 1976). The study of youth media use (and youth culture in general) "is both piecemeal and historically contingent" (Tait 1993, p.41). Much of the research available on the topic of young people and their media use only seems to multiply and extend the confusion and mythologies surrounding the topic.

Recently, much of this mythology has revolved around the Generation X phenomenon. Through his 1991 novel *Generation X: Tales for an Accelerated Culture*, Canadian author Douglas Coupland without doubt "created a monster" (France 1994, p.11). Indeed, in the years following the novel's publication, it seemed as if the already bizarre and contradictory world of youth culture had been transformed forever because of the term. Generation X has been used to describe groups ranging in age from about 13 to 40 and has developed into what Coupland himself (1995, p.72) describes as "demographic pornography". The world seems to have gone "berserk" (McCaughan 1995a) over Generation X and its numerous spin-off labels such as slackers, twentysomethings and Baby Busters. It has spawned more discussion about youth culture than "freckles on a red-head" (Ritchie 1995, p.9). Much of this discussion about Generation X has referred to its media use, tapping into concerns about young people's seeming abandonment of traditional journalistic forms (See for example Rushkoff 1994a; Tulich 1994; *The Media Report* 1995; Sessions Stepp 1996).

It is Generation X's almost natural status as a descriptor of young people today and its applicability to their media use which is the second main concern of this paper. Elsewhere (Sternberg 1997b) I have argued that while Generation X does have *some* applicability to late twentieth century youth culture, the term has been so abused by the media that it is now almost worthless. However, what can the labelling of young people as belonging to Generation X tell us about their news media use?

Newspapers

Beavis: Words suck.

Butt-head: Yeah. If I wanted to read, I'd go to school.

("Beavis and Butt-head: A *Rolling Stone* interview", Charles M.Young 1994, p.167).

For many, the youth audience has become "the Holy Grail of newspaper demographics — much pursued but so elusive" (Gibbons 1995, p.5). In particular, interest from publishers has been directed towards increasing the frequency of habitual newspaper reading (Taverner Research 1995, Appendix 2, p.7). Katz (1994b, p.50) observes that "for millions of Americans, especially young ones, newspapers have never played a significant role". The decline in U.S. youth newspaper reading has been well documented by Cobb-Walgren (1990), Taverner Research (1995) and Katz (1994a). Similar problems have also been observed in nations and regions as diverse as Japan (de Jong 1992, p.57), Hong Kong (Turnbull 1993), the Pacific Islands (Evans 1992) and Finland (Finnish Newspaper Association 1995).

Although Australian research by Sachs et al (1991, p.19) found that morning newspapers were read "once a week to every day" by 69 per cent and evening papers by 45 per cent of the 12-17 year-olds they surveyed, some local market research has gone as far as not to include under-24s in surveys of newspaper buying or reading (Shoebridge 1990, p.91). This is not without some justification: 25 per cent of 14 to 17-year-olds in New South Wales read no newspapers at all Monday through Saturday (Taverner Research 1995, Appendix 2, p.2). However, some research suggests that when the young read newspapers, they prefer the Sunday press and tabloids (ANOP 1985; John Fairfax and Sons Pty Ltd 1993; Cf. Karmatz 1985).

Cobb-Walgren (1990, p.340) points out that researchers had previously explained adolescent non-readership of newspapers in terms of a "maturation effect" (Henke 1985, p.432; ANOP 1985; Sachs et al 1991, p.19; Taverner Research 1995, p.1), whereby "young non-readers will acquire the newspaper habit as they grow older and mature" (Cobb-Walgren 1990, p.340). However, more recently, it has been suggested that "readers lost in youth may be lost forever" (Cobb-Walgren 1990, p.340). Indeed, "[e]ditors are be-

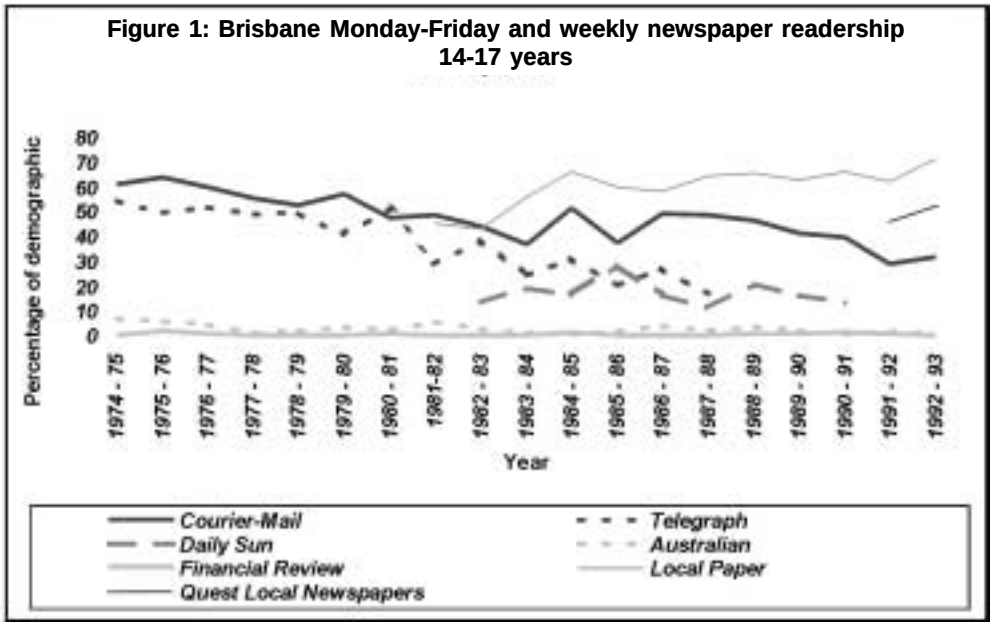
coming *increasingly* concerned about the low levels of newspaper reading among younger members of the public" (Wanta & Gao 1994, p.926, emphasis added). As Margaret King, education officer for Fairfax Newspapers in Sydney points out: ". . . I believe they [editorial staff] think there has been a lost generation of readers . . ." (1995).

Monday - Friday readership

On the surface, this notion of a "lost generation of readers" does seem to be supported when we examine Figures 1 and 2, which depict Brisbane's Monday-Friday and weekly newspaper readership in the 14-17 and 18-24 year-old age-groups between 1974-5 and 1992-3.

The decline in 14 -17 year-old readership for both the afternoon tabloid the *Telegraph*, from 54.7 per cent to 17.1 per cent of the age-group and the consistently low readership figures for the morning tabloid, the *Daily Sun*, which had a mean readership in the demographic of only 17.2 per cent, are in keeping with the more general declines in readership that eventually saw both newspapers fold. Interestingly, however, both papers' lack of popularity challenges the notion that tabloids are more popular with young people. For 14-17 year-old readers of the *Courier-Mail*, readership dropped by about half in the 19-year period, from 60.9 per cent to 31.6 per cent. In terms of frequency of readership, this data suggests that in 1992-3 68.4 per cent of 14-17 year-olds in Brisbane did not read their city's daily broadsheet newspaper, which is the only daily paper published in the city[2]. Readership of Australia's national dailies, the *Australian* and the *Financial Review* are both extremely low, never reaching above 6.7 per cent and 1.7 per cent of the demographic for each paper respectively. More importantly, since about 1989, there has been a downward trend in readership for both papers. Readerhip of weekly local newspapers is surprisingly high, with a mean readership for general and Quest publications of 59.9 per cent and 48.8 per cent respectively. Apart from 1981-2 and 1982-3,

Figure 1: Brisbane Monday-Friday and weekly newspaper readership 14-17 years



Source: Roy Morgan Research

Note: Quest Newspapers is owned by News Ltd. Roy Morgan did not distinguish between Quest and other newspapers in its surveys until 1991-92.

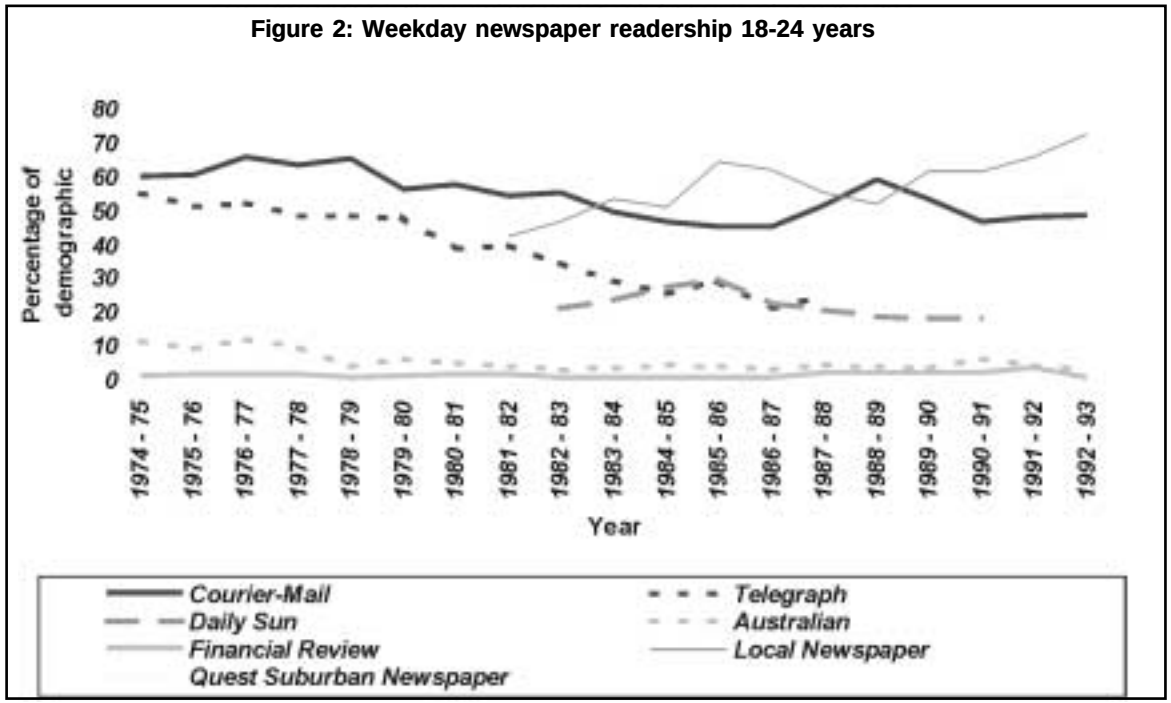
when they were first counted in the surveys, 14-17 year-old readership of local papers was larger than the same demographic's readership of the *Courier-Mail* by never any less than 9.2 per cent. Such findings regarding the popularity of local newspapers are in keeping with market research conducted in Sydney (Filomena Bafsky Research 1993).

The 18-24 year-old readership for the *Telegraph* declined rapidly from 55 per cent of the age-bracket to 24.4 per cent in 1987-88 when the paper closed. *Daily Sun* readership was also never high, peaking at 29.8 per cent in 1985-6, before bottoming-out at 18.2 per cent in 1990-1. The 18-24 year-old demographic's readership of the *Courier-Mail* dropped from 59.7 per cent to 48.2 per cent. Readership of the *Australian*, although low overall, declined from 11.3 per cent in 1974-75 to 3.1 per cent in 1992- 93. *Financial Review* readership was comparatively more consistent, although once again very low, with an 18-24 year-old readership of no higher than 3.3 per cent for the 19-year period. Such findings are consistent with those obtained by Finger (1994), who in a survey of 18-24 year-olds in Brisbane found that only 16.6 per cent of respondents cited newspapers as their "source of most news", 7 per cent listed them as the "best source of news for young people" and only 18.8 per cent spent between one and two hours reading a paper each day. Seventy-five per cent of young people surveyed said they spent less than one hour per day reading newspapers. Figure 2 also shows that readership of local newspapers is once again strong, regularly higher than that for the *Courier-Mail*.

Saturday readership

One of the major flaws in the Taverner Research study of 18-24 year-old newspaper reading habits is that it makes no distinction between weekday and weekend reading. Given the increased leisure-time experienced by young people on weekends, we could logically expect newspaper readership to increase as a result (cf. PANPA Bulletin 1996, p.67). For example, in New South Wales, 43

Figure 2: Weekday newspaper readership 18-24 years



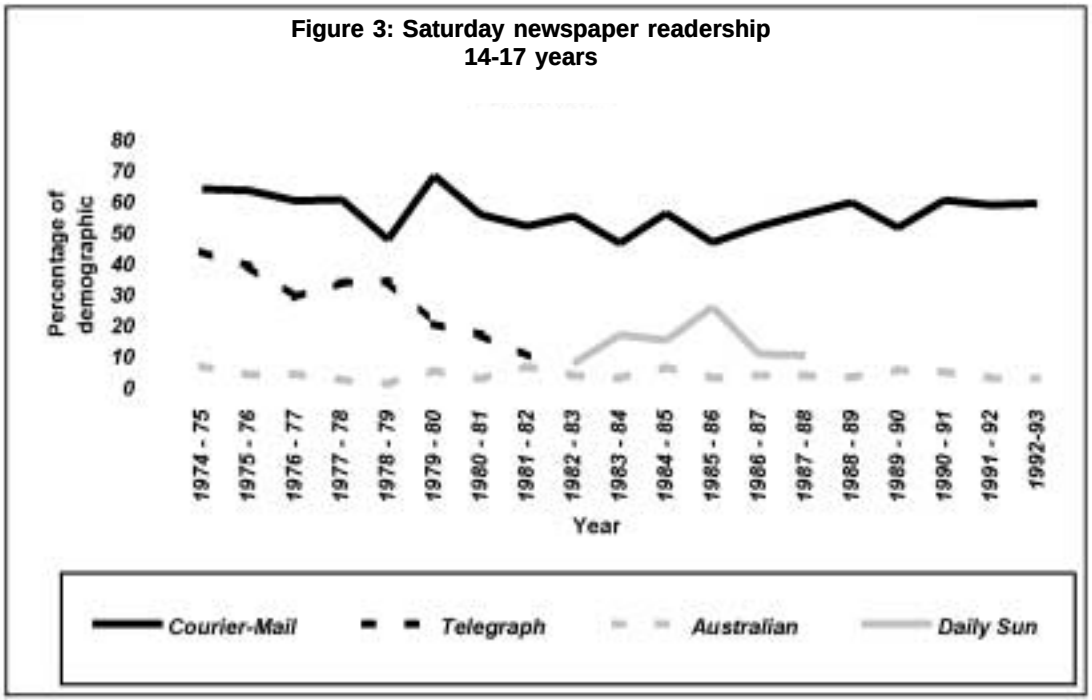
Source: Roy Morgan Research

per cent of 14-17 year olds and 37 per cent of 18-24 year-olds only read a newspaper on the weekend (Taverner Research 1995, Appendix 2, p.2). This trend of increased weekend readership is carried over into figures for the 14-17 and 18-24 year-old markets for Saturday newspapers in Brisbane, as depicted in Figures 3 and 4.

The first thing that becomes apparent about Saturday readership of the *Courier-Mail* in the 14-17 year-old market, is that unlike Monday-Friday readership, it has remained relatively stable across the 19-year period. Readership for 14-17 year-olds has dropped only slightly from 64.4 per cent of the demographic in 1973-74 to 59.7 per cent in 1992-93. Mean Saturday readership for 14-17 year-olds is 56.9 per cent, as opposed to 47.3 per cent for Monday-Friday readership. Readership of the *Weekend Australian* is higher also, with a mean of 4.4 per cent, compared to mean of 2.8 per cent for the weekday editions. The decline in readership for the Saturday morning edition of the *Telegraph* was even more rapid than for the weekday edition, however, and its publication was ceased in 1981-82. Readership for the Saturday morning edition of the *Daily Sun* was also lower overall.

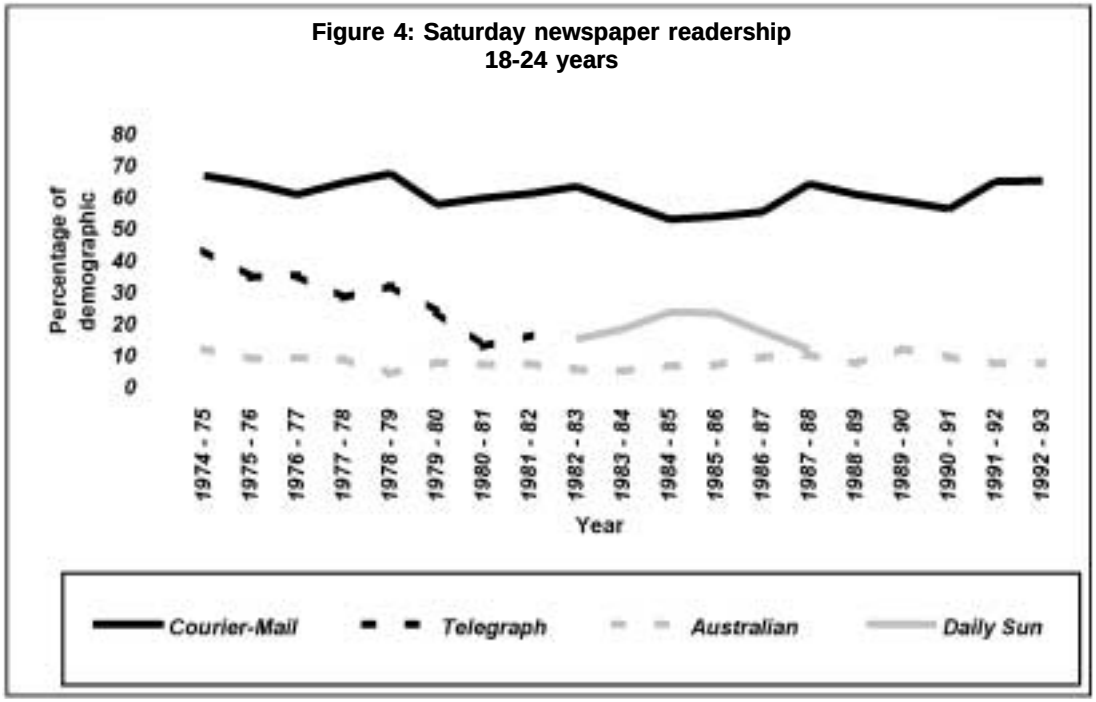
The 18-24 year-old demographic's readership of the Saturday editions of the *Telegraph* and *Daily Sun* are highly comparable, both in terms of overall trend and percentage. However, the *Weekend Australian*'s 18-24 year-old readership, with a mean of 8.2 per cent, is almost double the readership of the same paper in the 14-17 year-old age-group. Saturday *Courier-Mail* readership for 18-24 year-olds declined only 1.5 per cent between 1973-74 and 1992-93. Mean Saturday readership for 18-24 year-olds is 61.2 per cent, compared to a mean Monday-Friday readership of 54.1 per cent. In terms of overall readership frequency, the 1992-93 figures show that approximately two-thirds of Brisbane's 14-24 year-old population in each demographic read the newspaper on an average Saturday.

Figure 3: Saturday newspaper readership
14-17 years



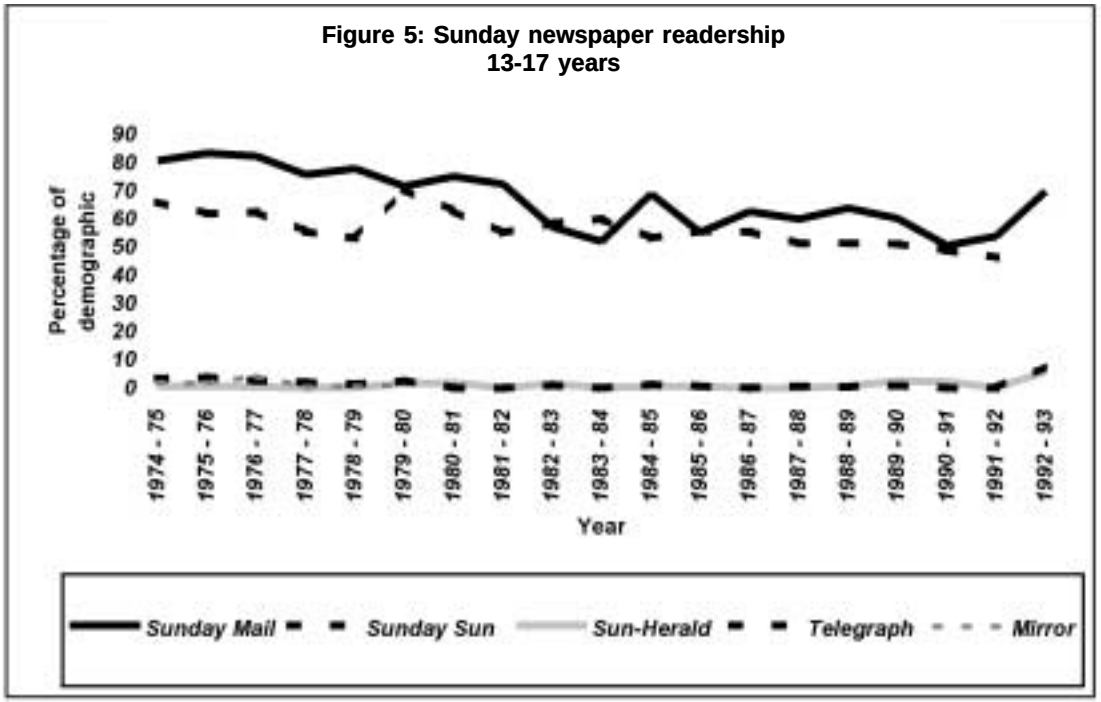
Source: Roy Morgan Research

Figure 4: Saturday newspaper readership
18-24 years



Source: Roy Morgan Research

Figure 5: Sunday newspaper readership
13-17 years



Source: Roy Morgan Research

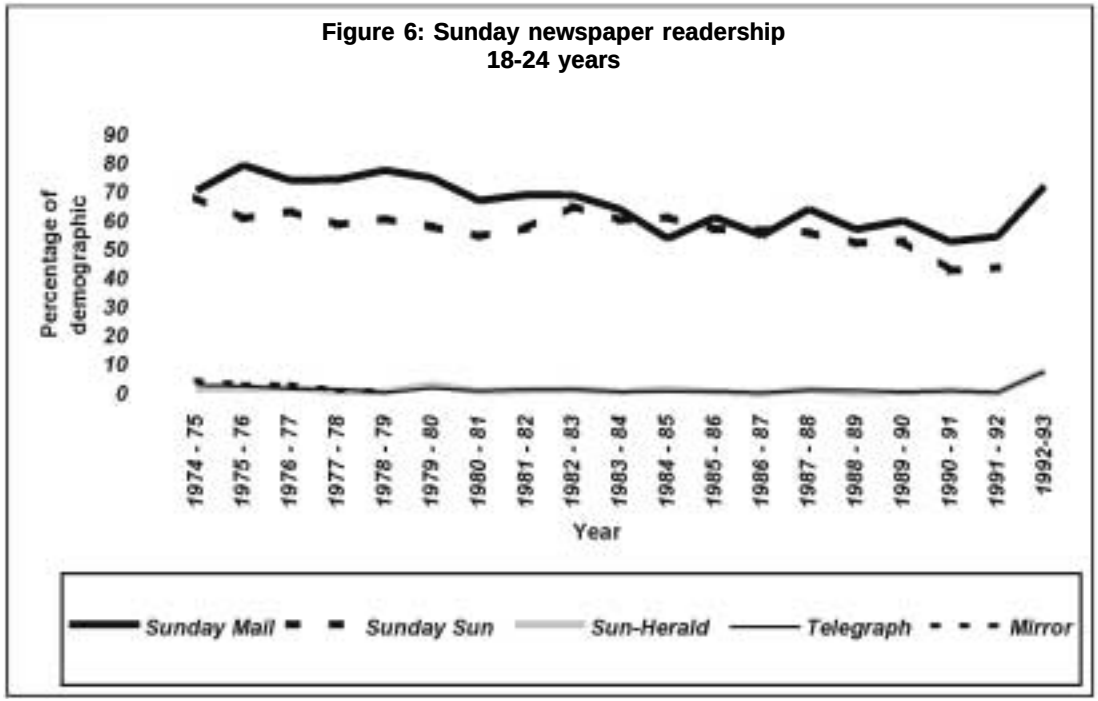
Sunday readership

However as Figures 5 and 6 show, it is the *Sunday-Mail* which may be considered the real "winner" in the youth readership stakes, particularly in recent years.

Sunday-Mail readership for 14-17 year-olds declined 10.9 per cent between 1973-74 and 1992-93 and had a mean of 67.1 per cent. Perhaps the most important aspect of 14-17 year-olds' readership of the *Sunday-Mail* are the two substantial increases between 1983-84 and 1984-85 and 1990-91 and 1992-93. In 1992-93 readership for the *Sunday-Mail* was the highest it had been for 10 years, although neither that figure of 69.9 per cent nor the 1980-81 figure of 75.2 per cent beat the 19-year-high of 83.5 per cent in 1975-76. Significantly, 1992-93 was the same year the newspaper changed from broadsheet to tabloid format and as such, supports claims that Sunday tabloid newspapers tend to be more popular among young readers. This notion is also supported by the 14-17 year-old readership for the tabloid *Sunday Sun*, which despite being lower overall than the *Sunday Mail* and being on the decline when it stopped production, still managed to draw equal with or beat the former broadsheet paper's readership in four years. The rapid increase in the readership of the *Sun-Herald* and *Telegraph* from New South Wales is due to the fact that these papers began publishing Queensland editions following the *Sunday Sun*'s closure. However, these papers never posed a significant threat to the popularity of the *Sunday Mail* and later closed their local editions.

Sunday-Mail readership for 18-24 year-olds differs from that of their younger counterparts. Readership for this age group actually increased — although only slightly — between 1973-4 and 1992-93; from 70.8 per cent to 72.4 per cent. However, as with 14-17 year-old *Sunday-Mail* readership, perhaps the most important trend to notice is the most recent one: the increase in readership between 1990-91 and 1992-93. Also, as with the younger demographic, there is an equivalent — although less dramatic —

Figure 6: Sunday newspaper readership
18-24 years



Source: Roy Morgan Research

mid-1980s increase between 1984-85 and 1987-88. For 18-24 year-olds, though, the most recent readership figures were the highest for 13 years, although they still did not beat the 1975-76 high of 79.7 per cent. *Sunday Sun* readership is lower overall when compared to the *Sunday-Mail*. However, between 1982-83 and 1989-90, the readerships of the two papers were highly comparable, although the *Sunday Sun* readership was only higher than *Sunday Mail* readership on two occasions.

A resurgence in reading?

The above weekend readership trends for the Brisbane newspaper market support recent claims that, after years of falling readership, newspapers are making something of a comeback amongst young people. A 1996 survey conducted by the Newspaper Association of America and the American Society of Newspaper Editors found evidence to challenge downward readership trends from the late 1980s and early 1990s, with nearly 66 per cent of 16-29 year-olds reading both a weekday and a Sunday newspaper and 49 per cent reading a weekday newspaper at least four times a week (PANPA Bulletin 1996, p.67).

However, overall, the Brisbane weekday findings do contrast fairly significantly with Taverner Research's 1995 survey of 18-24 year-olds in Australia and New Zealand which pointed to "extremely encouraging readership figures" (Taverner Research 1995, Appendix 4, p.2). The report identified "a dedicated and significant core of young adult newspaper readers and a large majority who regularly or deliberately make use of newspapers to fulfil their own needs" (Taverner Research 1995, p.1). Overall, the telephone poll of 1296 18-24 year-olds in Australia and New Zealand found 78 per cent of the sample claimed to have read or looked through a newspaper yesterday and 96 per cent had done so in the past week (Taverner Research 1995, pp.21, 22). The report also found that

contrary to popular industry beliefs, young people exhibited "many positive attitudes towards newspapers" (Taverner Research 1995, p.5) and that "newspapers still have a strong presence as far as young people are concerned, even if there is no room for complacency" (Harvey 1994, p.61).

These arguments in favour of a resurgence in youth newspaper reading are consistent with 1995 Audit Bureau of Circulation figures for the total population which also point to the newspaper industry pulling out of its lengthy circulation decline (Beverely 1995; Strickland 1995). However, it is worth noting that the 1995 overall circulation trends for the *Courier-Mail* declined on weekdays and Saturday, and increased only for the *Sunday Mail* on Sundays (Beverley 1995, p.15), thus mirroring the readership trends displayed by the youth audiences above.

Television news and current affairs

> Overseas, they found all these ancient paintings in this cave and said it was the greatest find this century and they talked about it for about 15 seconds. And directly after it, they showed for about a minute or two . . . Agro becoming an honorary sergeant in the police force (19 year-old male TAFE student describing a television news bulletin, in Sternberg 1997a).

> That *Today Tonight* show? The most pathetic piece of bullshit ever made! (17 year-old female high school student, in Sternberg 1997a).

Turner (1996a, p.78) notes that it has become "increasingly common" since the late 1980s for conventional commercial television news and current affairs programs (e.g. *A Current Affair*, *Today Tonight* and *60 Minutes* among others) to be attacked for their failure to attract a large youth audience. In a public broadcasting context, former head of ABC Television, Penny Chapman has also acknowledged problems with this group (1995).

This is a particularly confusing situation considering that survey results show television is rated as the best and most commonly used source of news for young people (Finger, 1994). However, it may be partially explained by evidence which suggests general television consumption is at its lowest point ever in the during the teenage and young adult years (McLeod & Brown 1976; Watson 1979, p.105; Wakshlag 1982; Johnsson-Smaragdi 1983; Sachs et al 1991, p.17; Bisnette 1990, p.57; Dorr & Kunel 1990; Ward 1992, p.214; Ricketson 1993, p.21; Arnett 1995; Arnett et al 1995; Larson 1995; Finnish Newspaper Association 1995; Emmison 1997) and that youth television consumption is currently declining (Shoebridge 1990, p.91; Cuppit et al 1996).

Since about 1980, surveys have consistently indicated news and current affairs programs are not popular with young people (Shoebridge 1990, p.91; Ricketson 1993, p.21; Jones 1993, pp.23-4; Williams 1995; Emmison 1997). Similar trends concerning the accelerating decline in young people's news and current affairs consumption have been noted in overseas research. For example, news was listed as the least popular program type among 15-20 year-olds living in Saudi Arabia despite the fact it is screened at the time this age-group is most likely to be watching television (Boyd & Najai 1984, p.295). In America, a recent survey conducted by Yankelovich market research found that only 20 per cent of Americans aged 21-24 watched ABC's *World News Tonight*, although 35 per cent watched *The Simpsons* (Katz 1994a, p.31).

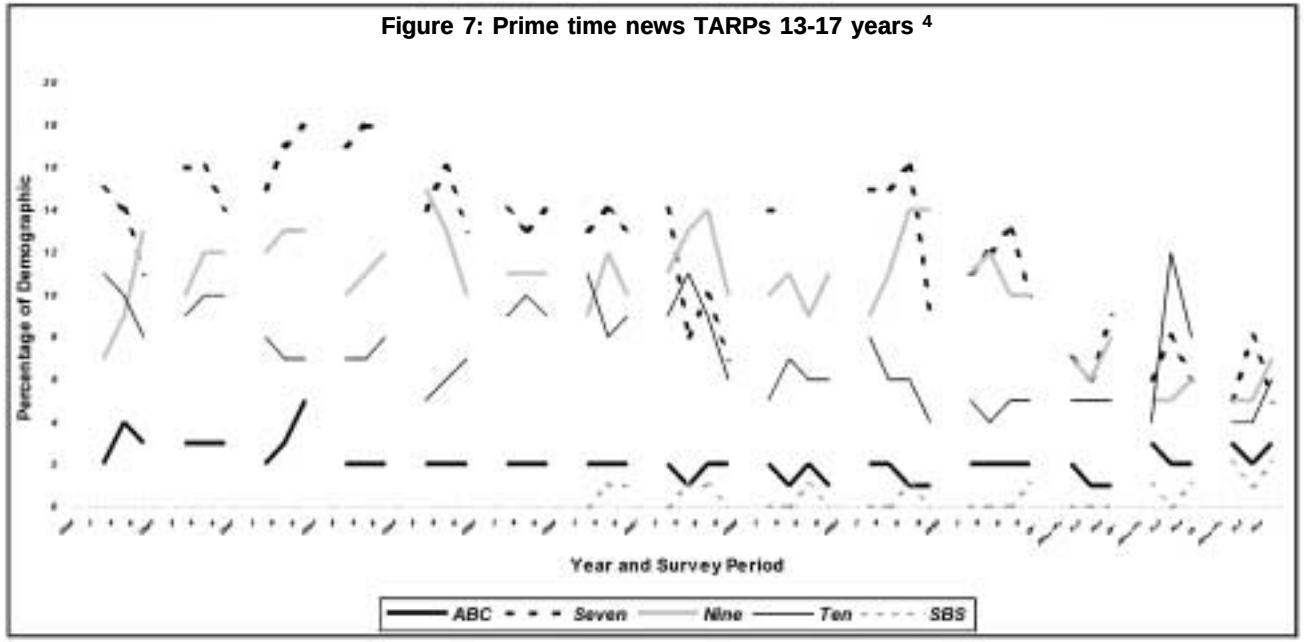
As was the case with newspapers, while the low levels of young people's news and current affairs consumption have historically been of concern to the television industry, it has usually been assumed that each successive wave of the youth audience would eventually mature into the genre. In support of the maturation effect, the ANOP (1985) survey found in the 15-17 year-old age-group, 22 per cent of females and 20 per cent of males nominated news and current affairs as being among their favourite pro-

grams, compared with 32 per cent of females and 31 per cent of males in the 18-20 year-old age-group, and 46 per cent of females and 45 per cent of males in the 21-24 year-old age-group (ANOP 1985, p.153). Also, American research has found that later college years are associated with heavier television news consumption (Henke 1985, p.431). However, recent Australian data suggests young people may be picking-up the news and current affairs habit increasingly later in life. An A.C. Nielsen list of 1995's top 100 programs for the under-40 demographic included only one news and current affairs program — the Sunday night edition of *National Nine News* — which was ranked at number 74 (de Groot 1996, p.16). Once again, this would seem to be in keeping with the American experience. For example, a 1990 study by the Times Mirror Centre for the People and the Press found that the main audience for TV news was "increasingly drawn from the ranks of older people . . ." (Katz 1994a, p.32).

Such findings contrast with other research. In 1985, the ANOP survey found news and current affairs was the third most popular television genre among 15-24 year-olds. In fact, the ANOP survey found *60 Minutes* ranked sixth in the list of the most popular shows nominated by the 15-24 year-olds. A 1988 Australian Broadcasting Tribunal survey found one in every five teenagers aged between 15 and 17 identified news and current affairs as the program they most enjoyed watching (Australian Broadcasting Tribunal 1988). Using an older demographic, a list of Nielsen's top 10 television programs for the 18-29 year-old age-group in 1994 again ranked *60 Minutes* at number six (McCaughan 1994, p.6).

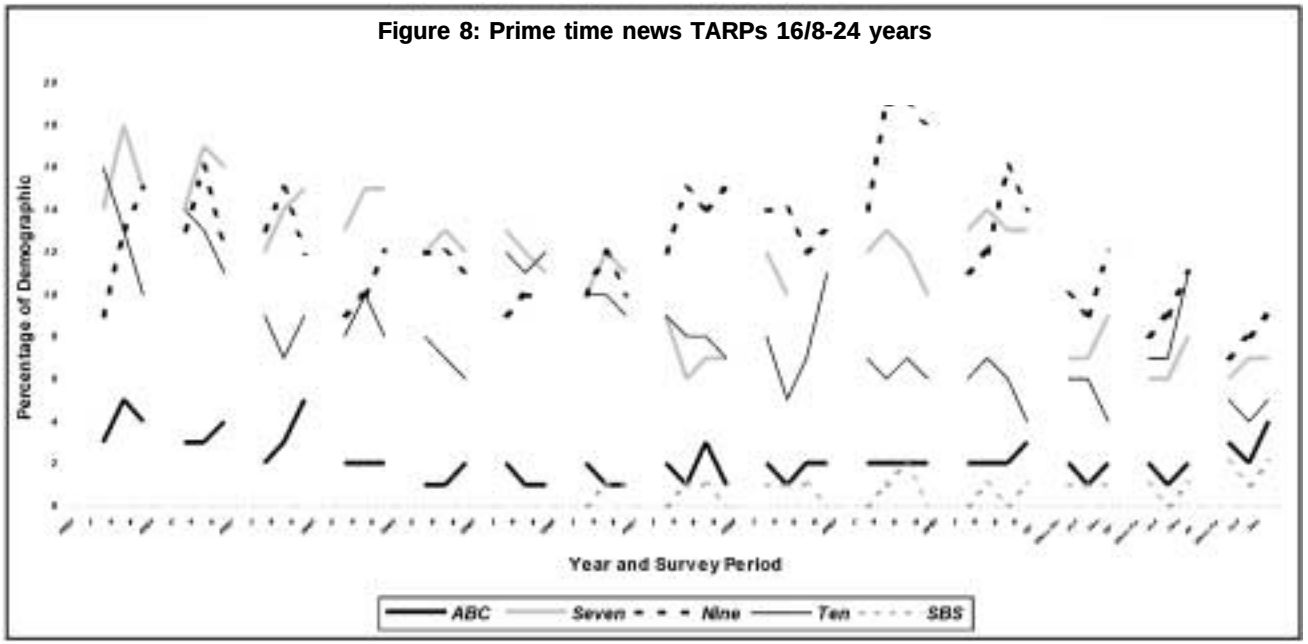
Despite these trends, it is the case for a decline in news and current affairs consumption by young people which is supported by A.G.B. McNair's and A.C. Nielsen's Target Audience Rating Point (TARP)[3] data. Figures 7 and 8 show each network's nightly prime time news TARPs for the 13-17 and 16/8-24 year-old demographic between 1980 and 1990 and 1993 and 1995[4].

Figure 7: Prime time news TARPs 13-17 years [4]



Source: AGB McNair/AC Nielsen

Figure 8: Prime time news TARPs 16/8-24 years



Source: AGB McNair/AC Nielsen

Commercial prime time news appears to have never attracted any more than 19 per cent of either the 13 to 17 or 16/8 to 24 year-old audience for a particular program for any of the survey periods between 1980 and 1990 and 1993 and 1995 analysed here. The TARPs for commercial prime time news also appear to have declined overall between 1980 and 1990. The only exception to this would appear to be the 13 to 17 year-old audience for *National Nine News*. Between 1993 and 1995, the audiences tended to decline overall. Although it is impossible to determine exactly how much the audiences declined due to the potential discrepancies in the data collection methods used by AGB McNair and A.C. Nielsen, no program registered a TARP in either demographic higher than 12 between 1993 and 1995 and all three commercial networks registered their lowest TARPs ever during this period. Prime time news in the public broadcasting sector appears to have never attracted any more than 5 per cent of either the 13-17 or 16/8-24 year-old audience for any of the survey periods between 1980 and 1990 and 1993 and 1995 analysed here. In particular, the 13-17 and 16/8-24 year-old audiences for the SBS World News frequently registered TARPs of 0. However, unlike the trends for commercial prime time news, the TARPs for both the ABC and SBS tended to remain relatively stable during this period (although it was hard for them to get any lower). Between 1993 and 1995, there tends to be little difference in the TARPs for Monday to Friday and Saturday and Sunday viewing in the 13-17 and 18-24 year-old age-groups. The only exceptions are the TARPs for the Sunday night edition of *National Nine News* and some weekend editions of *Ten News*.

Although there are fluctuations across time and survey period analysed, *National Nine News* tended to have the largest 13-24 year-old audience overall, followed by *Seven Nightly News*, *Ten News*, the *ABC News* and *SBS World News*.

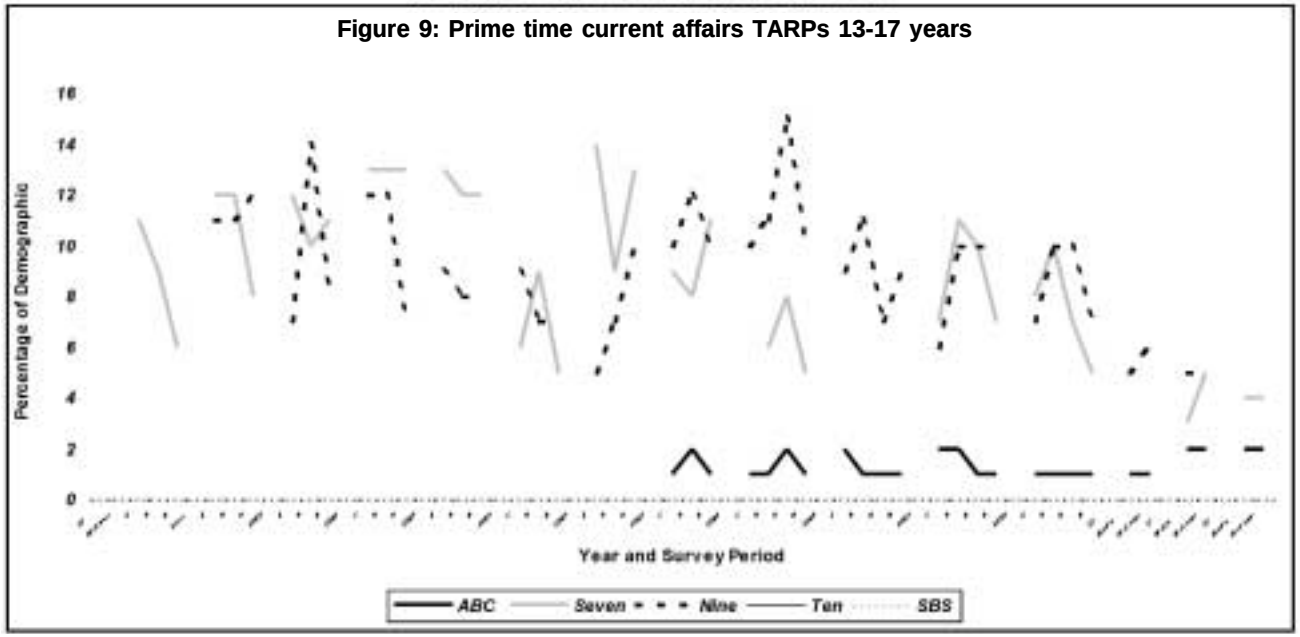
In the A.G.B. McNair survey data, the 13-17 year-old demographic frequently out-rated the 16/8-24 year-old audience for

commercial nightly prime time news, throwing the maturation effect into some doubt. This is particularly the case for the period between about 1983-1988. In the A.C. Nielsen survey data, however, the 18-24 year-old demographic appears to out-rate the 13-17 year-old audience overall. Although the differences in the data for the younger and older demographics for the *ABC News* and *SBS World News* are too small to determine which is larger overall, the 13-17 year-old ABC News audience does manage to be slightly larger than the 16/8-24 year-old audience occasionally.

Similar trends may be seen in Figures 9 and 10, which show each network's nightly prime time current affairs TARPs for the 13-17 and 16/8-24 year-old demographic between 1980 and 1990 and 1993 and 1995.[5]

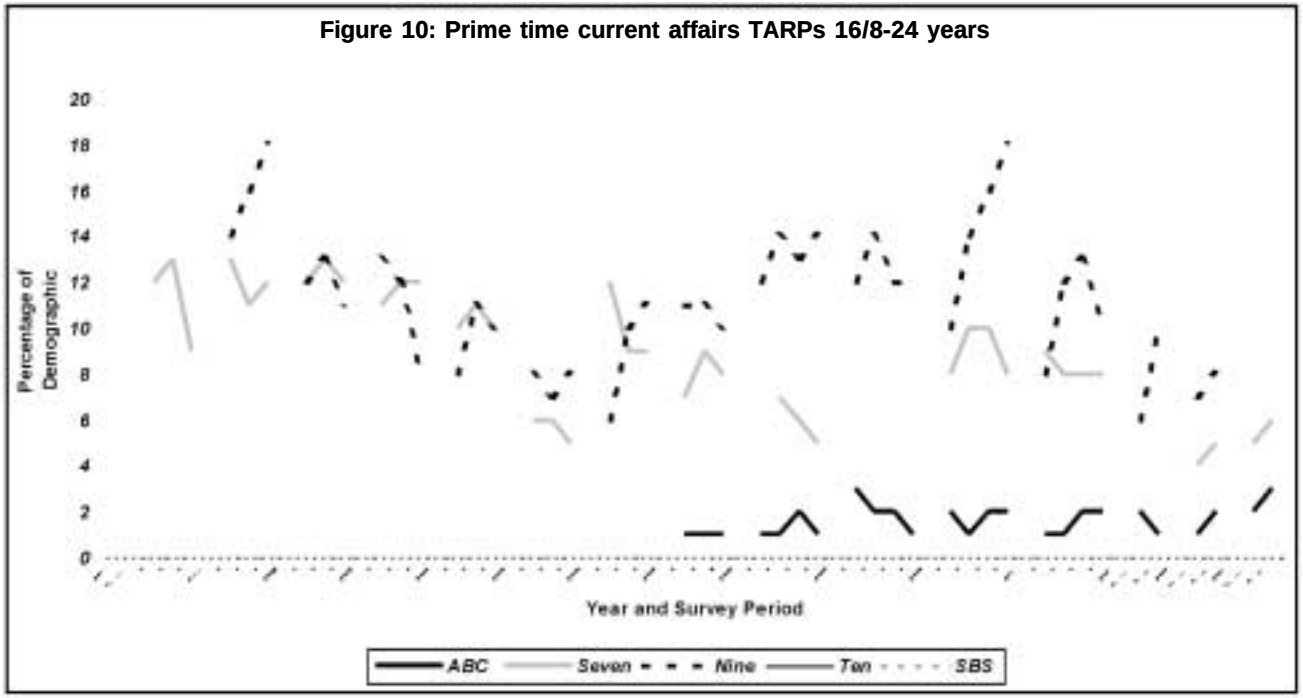
Commercial prime time current affairs appears to have never attracted any more than 18 per cent of either the 13-17 or 16/8-24 year-old audience for a particular program for any of the survey periods analysed here. The Ten Network screened no weeknight prime time current affairs program between 1980 and 1990. However, the TARPs for weeknight prime time current affairs on Channels Seven and Nine appear to have declined overall between 1980 and 1990. Between 1993 and 1995, the audience for current affairs on Channel Seven tended to decline overall and the audience for The Ten Network declined overall between 1993 and 1994. However, the audience for Channel Nine appeared to increase and remained stable overall. Although it is impossible to determine exactly how much the audiences have declined due to the potential discrepancies in the data collection methods used by A.G.B. McNair and A.C. Nielsen, no program registered a TARP in either demographic higher than 10 between 1993 and 1995 and all three commercial networks registered their lowest TARPs ever during this period. Although data for the ABC was not provided for analysis until 1986 and for SBS until 1993 to 1995, prime time current affairs in the public broadcasting sector appears to have never

Figure 9: Prime time current affairs TARPs 13-17 years



Source: AGB McNair/AC Nielsen

Figure 10: Prime time current affairs TARPs 16/8-24 years



Source: AGB McNair/AC Nielsen

attracted any more than 3 per cent of the either the 13-17 or 16/8-24 year-old audience for any of the survey periods analysed here. In particular, the 13-17 and 16/8-24 year-old audiences for current affairs on SBS frequently registered TARPs of 0. However, unlike the trends for prime time news, the TARPs for both the ABC and SBS tended to remain relatively stable during this period.

Although there are fluctuations across time and survey period analysed, between 1980 and 1990, current affairs on The Nine Network tended to have the largest 13-24 year-old audience overall, followed by The Seven Network and the ABC (from 1986 onwards). Between 1993 and 1995, Channel Nine once again had the largest audience, followed by Channels Seven and Ten, the ABC and SBS.

As was the case with the news, the 13-17 year-old demographic frequently out-rated the 16-24 year-old audience for commercial weeknight prime time current affairs in the A.G.B. McNair survey data. Once again, this is particularly the case for the period between about 1983 to 1988. In the A.C. Nielsen survey data, however, the 18-24 year-old demographic appears to out-rate the 13-17 year-old audience overall. Although the differences in the data for the younger and older demographics for ABC and SBS current affairs are too similar to determine which is larger overall, the 13-17 year-old audience for *The 7.30 Report* does manage to be slightly larger than the 16/8-24 year-old audience occasionally.

In all the survey periods where both commercial news and current affairs audience data was available, the 13-24 year-old news TARPs tended to be larger overall compared to the current affairs TARPs. In other words, commercial prime time news and current affairs tended to lose, rather than pick-up 13-24 year-old viewers over the programming block. Although this tune-out factor can be seen taking place in the ABC news and current affairs audience, the TARPs for *The 7.30 Report* and SBS's *Dateline* are generally too small and too similar for it to be seen with any consistency.

The myth of the displacement hypothesis

For the past 35 to 40 years, television has often been blamed for the increasing downturn in newspaper readership (Sachs et al 1991, p.19). For example, a 1992 U.S. study found that the average 11 year-old only reads 11 pages of text per day, but watches up to six hours of television (McCaughan 1993a, p.8). Conversely, Morgan data shows more 14-17 year-old *Sydney Morning Herald* readers are light or non-viewers of commercial television than heavy viewers (John Fairfax and Sons Pty Ltd 1993). Surprisingly, however, little research has been conducted on this form of media displacement (Stamm and Fortini-Campbell 1993, p.4). Also, given the fact that both general television consumption, along with the consumption of news genres, has declined amongst youth audiences, there would seem to be little logic to the argument. In relative terms, newspaper readership is readily comparable to broadcast media (Taverner Research 1995, p.21).

Radio

> Who listens to the radio? That's what I'd like to know. (The Sports, *Who Listens to the Radio?* 1978)
>
> Never bothered with FM radio, grab a compilation tape and we'll go. (You Am I, *Pizza Guy*, 1994)

Although there appears to be little displacement of youth newspaper reading by television, it seems that television viewing declines over time for young people while radio listening increases (Johnsson-Smaragdi 1983, p.52; Sachs et al 1991; Arnett et al 1995, p.520). Indeed, there is empirical evidence to suggest the place of radio in the lives of young Australians is increasing at the expense of television (ANOP 1985; Shoebridge 1990; McCaughan 1995b, p.1). As Turner (1993, p.142) points out, since the beginning of rock 'n' roll, commercial music programming has been dominated

by the "teen radio" format, which he defines as "Top 40 hits played in 24-hour rotation for an audience demographic of 10-25". Ninety-seven per cent of the 12 to 17 year-olds surveyed by Sachs et al (1991, p.17) owned a radio. The ANOP survey found 91 per cent of 15-24 year-olds listened to the radio, and 86 per cent nominated a music program as their favourite. Young people are most enthusiastic about FM, with music stations on that frequency being the most often listed "favourite" radio stations in each capital city, except Hobart (ANOP 1985; Shoebridge 1990, p.91; Ricketson 1993, p.21; Cuppitt et al 1996, p.23).

However, against this backdrop of historically strong youth radio listenership, Turner (1993, p.143) argues there is currently an "urgent provocation for rethinking the institutional industrial centrality of teen radio" in Australia. Following the introduction of commercial FM radio in 1980, and especially since the large shifts in media ownership in 1986-8, teen radio has "virtually disappeared" from Australian radio (Turner 1993, p.145). As early as 1984, Windshuttle (1984, pp.240-1) was arguing that Australian radio was no longer meeting the needs or interests of teenagers and the industry and mainstream press, for many years, have "attacked the trend to 'radio bland', . . . [and] have accused radio of shooting itself in the foot by disenfranchising a key section of their constituency." (Turner 1993, pp.145-6; See for example Safe 1994; Ruehl 1995)

In the switch to FM during the 1980s and into the 1990s, most stations have skewed their format towards an older audience of 25-39 year-olds (Safe 1994, p.15). Michael Gower from the advertising agency DDB Needham laments: "The problem radio may face is that as a medium it may lose all relevance to this generation of younger people who will grow up without developing the habit," (Strickland 1994, p.26). The recent Mansfield Report into the future of the ABC noted that young people were not well served by radio, with only 7 per cent of radio stations explicitly targeting the under

24-age group in 1993-1994 (Mansfield 1997). Despite the phenomenal popularity of Hitz-FM, which began in 1993 and operated on short-term licences in Melbourne, the only youth radio station to emerge nationally since 1990 has been the ABC's Triple J[6, 7], which is now broadcast to every capital city and more than 37 regional locations (Cuppitt et al 1996, p.25).

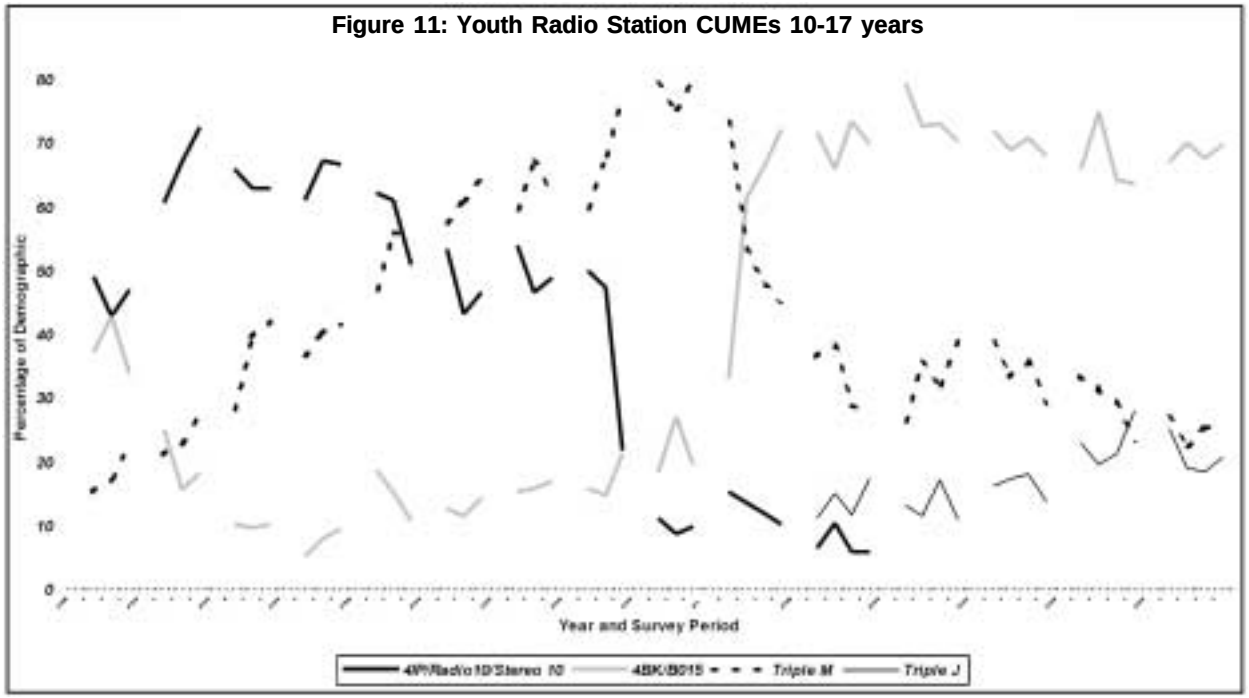
Gower (Strickland 1994, p.26) goes on to claim that because of teen radio's demise, young people now actually listen to less radio than most of the community. Such arguments are supported by the recent ABA examination of the A.G.B. McNair audience data which found that between 1990 and 1995, radio listening by 10-17 year-olds declined 20 per cent, or an average of 3 hours and 7 minutes per week (Cuppit et al 1996). However, teenage satisfaction with radio remains well above average, although slightly lower in regional areas (Cuppitt et al 1996, pp.60, 63). Similarly, former Triple J station manager Stuart Matchett (1995) believes that although the industry currently has problems, younger listeners are not becoming increasingly disenchanted with radio as a medium:

> . . . even though the actual content . . . they might not be satisfied with, they will still use it. I'm always staggered by the number of under-17-year-olds who listen to hits and memories formats[8] . . . which kind of doesn't sort of make sense . . . but I think young people are incredibly inquisitive and want to know what's going on in the world and that radio's a good way for them to find out. And these days there's lots of radio stations and so they do a fair bit of channel surfing and check out what's going on.

These trends are apparent when Figures 11 and 12, which look at Brisbane youth radio stations' cumulative reach for 10-17 and 18 to 24 year-olds expressed as a percentage of market potential[9, 10, 11] are examined.

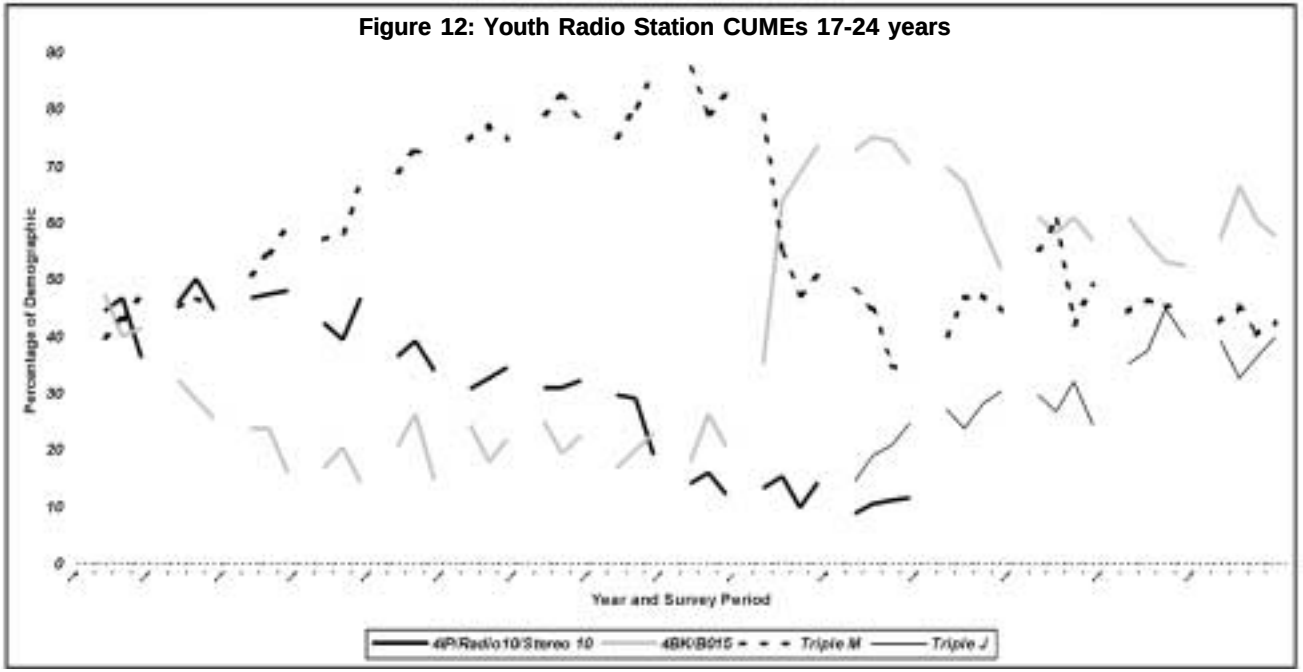
The first and most apparent trend from these figures is the steady decline of the AM teen station 4IP (later Radio 10 and Stereo 10), which switched to an adult-oriented, easy-listening format in 1989 and now broadcasts horse-racing as 4TAB. However, as

Figure 11: Youth Radio Station CUMEs 10-17 years



Source: AGB McNair

Figure 12: Youth Radio Station CUMEs 17-24 years



Source: AGB McNair

Turner (1993, p.142) argues: "[t]een radio was not a passing fad; it continued to be a powerful programming format well into the 1980s". To this extent, Radio 10's audience rose between 1981 and 1982. However, the "forlorn challenge" (Turner 1993, p.144) of AM stereo could not prevent an even greater decline in the new Stereo 10's young teenage audience which plummeted between 1982 and 1988 when the station eventually changed format.

At least part of AM's decline can be attributed to the rise of FM radio, which has been "phenomenally successful in Australia" (Turner 1993, p.144). This situation is reflected not only by the decline in 4IP's audience, but also by the rapid rise of Brisbane's first FM youth station, FM104/Triple M. However, it was the stations that switched from AM to FM that made the biggest gains in terms of audience (Turner 1993, p.144). This is reflected in the success of B105, which changed its format and switched to FM in 1990. Turner (1993, p.145) notes the emerging drift towards homogeneity in commercial FM radio programming and its impact upon Triple M. When Brisbane AM station 4BK switched to FM and became B105, it did little more than copy the format of and poach the best on-air staff from Triple M. Triple M moved its format slightly downmarket, to cater for 18-35 year-old males. In the process it lost about half its audience (Turner 1993, p.145).

Despite Triple M's eventual 1994 merger with Village Roadshow's Austereo network, which owned B105, the network's ratings continued to slide (despite increases in both the 10-17 and 18-24 year-old demographics between 1992 and 1993), with the introduction of Triple J in 1991. Triple J has always performed more strongly in the 18-24 year-old age-bracket than for 10-17 year-olds, lending some weight to Matchett's (1995) claim that while the station targets 15-30 year-olds, its primary audience is 25-30 year-olds (See endnote 7). Nevertheless, Triple J's success with its skew towards a younger audience and networked, nationally-broadcast format which included a strong component of dance, rap and pop

music clearly influenced the Triple M network. In 1994, it poached Triple J's general manager Barry Chapman and several popular DJs including Ian Rogerson and Andy Glitre. It also began playing techno, rap and pop music and broadcast most of its content out of Melbourne[12]. What is interesting about Triple M's attempts to capture a younger audience is that although they were considered a failure by the industry and may also be considered that way according to the data presented in Figures 11 and 12 — with Triple J actually outrating Triple M on occasion — they did not have that great an effect upon the 18-24 year-old age group in Brisbane.

While the 10-17 year-old audience for B105 increased between when it arrived on air in 1990 and 1995, its 18-24 year-old audience has remained relatively static. In fact, after peaking in 1991, 1995 was only the second time the station had a reach of over 60 per cent in the age-group. So, while B105 is Brisbane's market leader in FM radio for both age-groups, consistently "out-reaching" Triple M every year since it came on air, the station contradicts suggestions that FM is somehow increasingly geared against a younger teenage audience by actually having a stronger audience in that demographic when compared to 18-24 year-olds.

The problem of measuring news on radio

Radio listenership surveys tend to consider radio formats as "programming entities", with little regard for elements such as newscasts (Wright and Hosman 1986, p.802) and as such, "ratings firms . . . produce a vast amount of demographic information about radio audiences and track the popularity of radio stations, [but] rarely isolate news segments for analysis" (Finger 1994, p.10). Such a shortcoming in research throws the popularity of radio news with young people into some doubt. ANOP (1985) found only 16 per cent of 15-24 year-olds surveyed mentioned a news or information program as their favourite and only 9 per cent nominated a talk

show as their favourite, although 21-24 year-olds indicated a greater preference.

However, news may be an important and "underestimated" component of youth radio programming (Finger 1994, p.82). Indeed, in Finger's (1994) survey radio was nominated after television as being "the source of most news" and the "best source of news" for young people by 36.6 per cent and 38.3 per cent of 18-24 year-olds respectively. Seventy-two per cent of those surveyed by Finger (1994, p.68) also claimed they would miss not having any news on the radio. This concurs with the nationwide ABA study of 14-19 year-olds, who gave news a well-above average importance rating in their assessment of radio content (Cuppitt et al 1996, p.49). Although only 9 per cent gave news as their primary reason for liking radio (Cuppitt et al 1996, p.53), the majority of those surveyed were satisfied with the quality of news on radio (Cuppitt et al 1996, p.62).

These arguments concerning the importance of news on youth radio are supported when we consider the rise of Triple J. Triple J produces an average of 5hrs 4mins of news per week with its composite bulletins relayed from Sydney (Turner 1996b). This is about 20 per cent more news than B105 (4hrs 4mins) and almost 30 per cent more than Triple M (3hrs 30mins), both of which share the same newsroom and produce a local composite bulletin (Turner 1996b). Neither B105 nor Triple M produce any current affairs, compared to the 15 hours[13] produced by Triple J (Turner 1996b). Put simply, although it is the least popular youth station with 10-24 in Brisbane, Triple J is the youth station with the most news and has experienced the best growth in youth demographics over recent years. As the listenership of Triple J news cannot be judged apart from the overall audience of the station, assessing the popularity of its news is difficult. However, the effectiveness of the news service should follow from the success or otherwise of the station as a whole (Matchett 1995; Crowther 1997, p.9). To this end, Triple J's

audience has more than doubled since 1991 and the station is now estimated to have an audience reach of around 2.1 million nationally (Mansfield 1997, p.24).

Magazines

> Edina : ... darling names, names, names.
> Patsy: *Harpers*, , English *Vogue*, American *Vogue*, French *Vogue*, Bloody Aby-bloody-ssinian bloody *Vogue*, darling! (*Absolutely Fabulous* excerpt from The Pet Shop Boys' *Absolutely Fabulous*, Tennant & Lowe, 1994)

Market research argues that while young people "virtually ignored" newspapers (Strickland, 1994: p.26) and news magazines (ANOP 1985; Katz 1994a), they were reading more youth magazines than ever before.[14] Indeed, during adolescence the primary shift in reading habits is away from books and towards magazines (Bisnette 1990, p.57) and magazine reading increases in importance with age.[15] It may be argued that this is especially the case in Australia, which has the highest per capita consumption of magazines in the world (Bonner 1997, p.112). However, there is also evidence to suggest that magazine readership is declining among young people in this country. Once again, this is against the backdrop of a drop in consumption for the total audience (Cf. Bonner, 1997, p.112). For example, Audit Bureau of Circulation results show *Rolling Stone*'s circulation dropped by 7.07 per cent to 35,946 for the year to September 1993 (Hughes 1994, p.23), although it managed to rise again in 1995 (McIntyre 1995, p.6). Overall declines in circulation were also posted in 1995 by youth-oriented titles such as *Mode, Vogue, Dolly, Cosmopolitan, Elle, TV Week* and *Cleo* (McIntyre 1995, p.6).

Such declines are also demonstrated by an examination of the readership for Brisbane's 10 most popular magazines in the 14-17 and 18-24 year-old demographic (Figures 13 and 14).

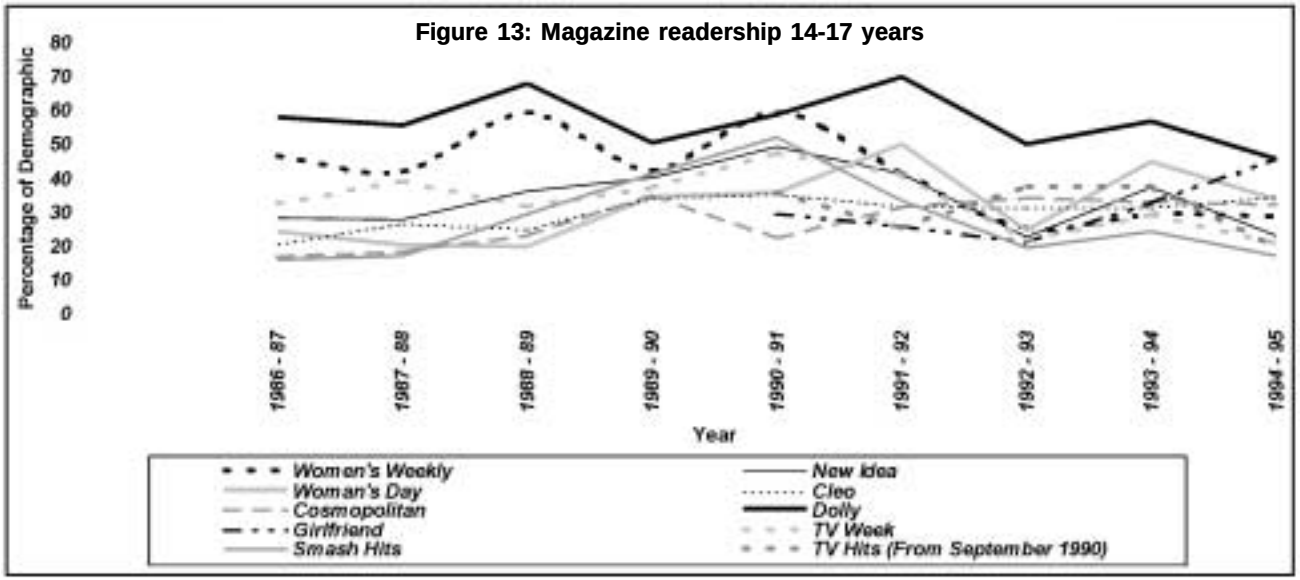
For 14-17 year-olds, youth magazine readership is dominated by women's or fashion magazines such as *Women's Weekly, New Idea,*

Dolly and television or light entertainment magazines such as *TV Week*[16]. Such findings are consistent with the 1985 research conducted by ANOP. However, only *Woman's Day, Cosmopolitan* and the relative newcomer *Girlfriend* showed increases in readership between 1985-6 and 1994-5, with *Woman's Day* fluctuating wildly in readership from 1990-91 onwards and *Cosmo* holding steady from about the same period. *Dolly* remains the teenage girl's most loved title, despite dropping in readership from 1991-92 onwards[17] after strong increases between 1989-90 and 1991-92. However, the 1994-95 figures only place its readership as being 0.1 per cent higher than *Girlfriend*, which showed an overall national increase in circulation for the year of 14.5 per cent (McIntyre 1995, p.6).

Overall, while the titles read are fairly similar, magazine readership in the 18-24 year-old demographic is lower overall than for the 13-17 year-olds. Except for *Cosmopolitan, Woman's Day* and *TV Week*, readership among the top 10 titles in the demographic has also declined between 1986-87 and 1994-95. Worth noting is the comparatively strong readership for the first two years of the "quasi-news" (Katz 1994a, p.32) magazine *Who Weekly*.

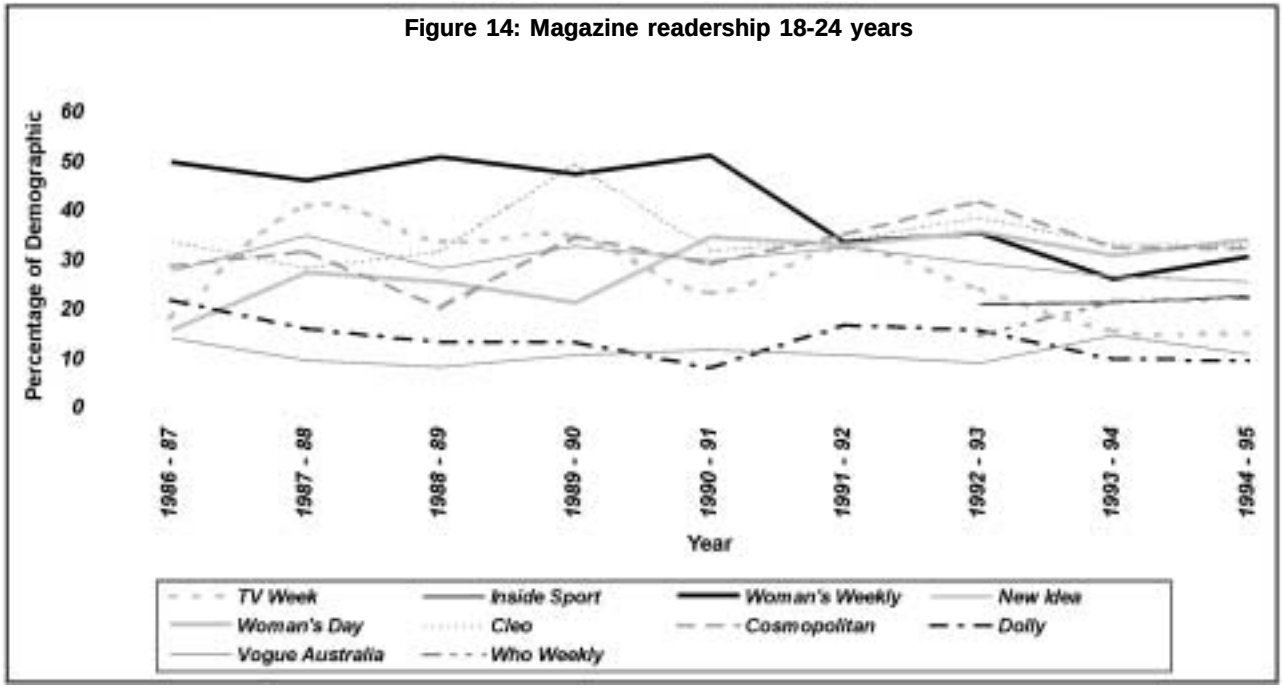
Indeed, it is this growth of new titles rather than readership per se which provides evidence to suggest that magazine reading is becoming increasingly important in the lives of young Australians. Although readership and circulation appears to be declining, in recent years there has been "an explosion" in the number of magazines pitched at young people (Shoebridge 1990, p.91). For example, in 1980, magazines aimed at teenagers and people in their early 20s had a combined circulation of 30.2 million. In 1989, the total was 47.5 million, a 57.3 per cent increase (Shoebridge 1990, p.91). In 1980, if females aged under 24 bought each issue of the main magazines aimed at them, it would have cost them $12 a month. In 1989, the monthly cost would have been $40 (Shoebridge 1990, p.92). In 1980, nine key magazines were aimed at under-24s or included the age-group in their marketing. They were: *Dolly, Cosmopolitan, Cleo,*

Figure 13: Magazine readership 14-17 years



Source: Roy Morgan Research

Figure 14: Magazine readership 18-24 years



Source: Roy Morgan Research

1. *Sports Illustrated* readership is calculated for the male audience. All other data is calculated for the female audience.

Australasian Post, People, Rolling Stone, Penthouse, Playboy and *Ram* (Shoebridge 1990, p.92). *Ram* disappeared in the late 1980s, but the other eight publications are still on the market (although *Post* and *People* have altered their target demographic). Over the past 17 years, they have been joined by other youth-oriented titles including P*icture, Pix, Smash Hits, Girlfriend, Looks, WkD, Juice, Disney Adventures* (which is aimed at the under 12 market)[18], *Inside Sport, She, TV Soap, Marie Claire, Australian Women's Forum* and *Hot Metal* among others. These are only the titles that have managed to survive long-term. In a market characterised by high saturation and cashing in on trends casualties are inevitable[19] (Shoebridge 1990, p.92).

Conclusion

> Humans are the only animals to have "generations", and personally I think that technology creates generations. (Douglas Coupland, author of *Generation X*, 1994)

It is clear that the media play a significant role in the lives of young people. However, traditional media such as newspapers, television, radio and magazines should now be seen, not in isolation, but as one of a number of information and communication technologies, including pay television and the Internet[20], occupying domestic time and space (Morley 1992, p.201). The role media forms play in relation to each other becomes more integrative (Morley 1992, p.201) during youth and will continue to change with the introduction of new media. With reference to the current generation of young people Katz (1994a, p.31) notes: "No group of young people has ever had more choices to make regarding — or more control over — its own information, amusement and politics. Rock spawned one culture; TV, another; movies, hip-hop, computers, video games, still more". For example, an Australian home with a 16-17 year-old has a higher than average number of electronic goods (TV, VCR, PC, CD, camcorder) (McCaughan 1993, p.4;

Cuppitt et al 1996, p.37). One potential result of this increasing multi-media environment is that young people simply may not need to rely on a single medium such as television for information. As Casimir (1995) notes: ". . . you get the news by osmosis now. You don't need to listen to the radio, you don't need to watch television, you don't need to read a newspaper. You're just going to get the daily news by walking the street these days because there's so much stimulation".

With its mysterious connotations, Generation X would therefore seem to be a useful phrase in that it gives a name to an age-based cohort which appears to be shifting its patterns of media consumption in complex and not always easily understood ways. Certainly, the media consumption trends are not always downwards. This is as true of the news media, as it is of other forms and genres.

As a result of these changes in the consumption and availability of technologies, young people today have been described as increasingly media literate (Sachs et al 1991, p.16). Indeed, media literacy is one of Generation X's key defining features (See for example McCaughan 1994; Rushkoff 1994b; Wark 1993; Ritchie 1995). However, discussions which claim to account for an entire generation's media use should be treated with a high degree of scepticism. As Carey (1993, p.7) notes:

> . . . if you look at social change from a distance, from on high, it seems neat and orderly, lines of clear projection and destination . . . However, when you descend into it, into the sheer dirtiness and disorder of the social, chaos reigns and it is difficult to get fixed angles and perspectives.

Literacy is culturally influenced and, to a greater or lesser extent, depends upon access to media, the ability to use it and above all, the desire to use it. Gender, race and socio-economic position would all appear to play some role in influencing these factors. As such, we should avoid abandoning these notions in favour of a generalised move towards labelling young people with titles such as *Generation*

X, in which the traditional relations of capitalism are transcended by age-based relations of consumption (Murdock & McCron 1975, p.17). The apparent lack of academic interest in such issues as they apply to youth media use over recent years seems to mirror much of the popular Gen-X hype.

Another key area in the Generation X phenomenon has been the emergence of the "new generation gap" largely fought out between Xers and their older demographic cousins, the Baby Boomers. If some of the popular discussion about this is to be believed, it seemed as though for the first few years of the nineties we were on the verge of a generational war (McGuiness 1994); not simply a widening of the generation gap, but a "polarisation of the generations" (Mitterauer 1992, p.240). On the surface, much of the evidence presented in this paper would certainly seem to support Carey's (1993, p.9) argument that one of the most striking differences between the young and old today is "the development of new age segregated patterns of living and, more importantly . . . generational styles of popular culture that bear new and discontinuous outlooks and sensibilities" (See also Werner 1989, p.38). This, Carey (1993, p.9) argues, is the result of a postindustrial shift in the axes of diversity which prioritises time over space and, as a result move social forces "from differences between societies to differences between generations within societies"[22].

On one hand, older demographics would still appear to consume more media than young people overall (Cobb-Walgren 1990; Ricketson 1993). On the other hand, adult consumption may have declined to the extent that adult and youth media consumption is quantitatively more similar than we might have been led to believe. Lack of space has prevented the investigation required to uncover such findings and such an activity is further limited by the expense of obtaining primary audience data for other demographics. However, a partial cross-demographic examination of the primary data (Sternberg 1997a) suggests that how concerned one becomes about

young people's media use depends on how one defines youth and what other demographics one compares their consumption to. The notion of the generation gap is "multi-dimensional; it can appear to be wider or narrower according to the particular subject of discussion" (Werner 1989, p.33). As such, a more detailed examination of different demographics' news media use might find that much of the concern about young people's declining interest in journalism is exaggerated when compared to older demographics and takes the form of a media moral panic (Drotner 1992), which is itself part of a larger "lifestyle panic" concerning Generation X (Sternberg 1997b).

Finally, more work needs to be undertaken to explain why young people's media consumption habits appear to be changing (Livingstone et al 1994, p.374). Elsewhere (Sternberg 1997a), I have indicated through qualitative, critical empirical audience research that there are many possible explanations for the decline, including competing media, changes in lifestyle, the differing news needs of the young and representational issues. Also, most of the young people involved in this project reject the label Generation X and are highly critical of the media's — and particularly television's — attempts to produce news for them. If Generation X means anything at all, it means that this generation's media use is almost still literally an unknown. Rather than trying to solve the mystery of young people's media use through endless surveys and catchphrases such as Generation X, media industries should "Let X=X" (Coupland 1995, p.72) and re-commit themselves to understanding the factors which impact upon young people's media consumption patterns and practices and become articulated in their increasingly fragmented and contradictory "socially perceptible subjectivities" (McRobbie 1994, p.180).

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The author wishes to sincerely thank the employees of the following market research companies for advice and assistance above and beyond the call of duty in providing the primary data used in this paper:

Roy Morgan Research:
Mr Colin Causte;
Mr Suvinder Sawhney;
Ms Joanna Causte.

A.C. Nielsen:
Mr John Grono.

A.G.B. McNair:
Mr Ken Chesterfield.

The author also wishes to thank: Dr Chris Lawe Davies for teaching him that numbers are only texts and should not be feared; Professor John Henningham for attempting (in vain) to transform him into an empiricist; Ms Danna Dale for incredible skill and patience in creating the ridiculously complex figures that appear in this paper.

Endnotes

1 Similar criticisms have been made of American research (See for example McLeod & Brown 1976), although a much stronger tradition of academic research into youth media use exists in that country than in Australia.

2 In this way, the Brisbane newspaper market differs from the Sydney and Melbourne markets, both of which are still served by morning tabloids.

3 TARPs measure the percentage "of the target audience that are tuned to a particular station at a particular time" (Nielsen) and differ from the more commonly known ratings points which are concerned with the percentage "of households that are tuned to a particular station at a particular time" (Nielsen). TARPs are produced by calculating the percentage of people in a demographic who are watching a particular show compared to the total population in that demographic. In the context of this study, TARPs provide the most accurate measure of how many young people may or may not be watching news and current affairs because they are based on the number of young people in the demographic under investigation, not on the number of households in the sample which may or may not include 13 to 25 year-olds. TARPs are also a more useful measure of the youth audience than "share" which is concerned only with the number of households or people in a demographic that have a television switched on (Nielsen), thus preventing us from obtaining an indication of the number of young people who do not watch any news and current affairs at all. This is clearly an important figure when examining claims about traditionally low levels of youth television news and current affairs consumption and an apparent "youth exodus" from news and current affairs. People who chose not to watch television at the time these programs are screening are just as — if not more important — than young people who have the television on, but are watching something else.

In 1990, the contract for measuring television ratings passed from A.G.B. McNair, which collected data via a diary method, to A.C. Nielsen which utilise peoplemeters. Because of the potential discrepancies in the data collection methods (peoplemeters are considered to be more accurate), the audience data for the years 1991 and 1992 were not supplied in order to avoid potentially skewing trends due to differences in collection methods, rather than actual viewing. Such a technique was also adopted by Cuppitt et al (1996). Due to cost restrictions, the A.G.B. McNair data (from 1980-1990) only shows

TARPs for every second survey period during each year. Also, the McNair data measures the viewing for 16-24 year-olds, as opposed to 18-24 year-olds, which is the demographic used by the Nielsen data.

It is also important to note that in keeping with both A.G.B. McNair and A.C. Nielsen, all figures are rounded to the nearest whole percentage. As we will see, this has the tendency to overly simplify some of the figures presented. Unfortunately, this rounding-off process also makes it virtually impossible to check the accuracy of either companies' data.

4 Notes to Figures 7 and 8: All commercial and SBS news programs screened from 6-6.30pm unless otherwise indicated. All ABC news programs screened from 7-7.30pm unless otherwise indicated. Between 1980-1988, all A.G.B. McNair survey data measured Monday-Sunday viewing. In 1989, A.G.B McNair surveys measured Monday-Friday viewing only. McNair conducted 8 surveys each year from 1987 onwards. *Seven Nightly News* was screened in a one hour bulletin from 6-7pm during 1987. *Seven Nightly News* was screened from 6.30-7pm between survey periods 2 and 4 in 1988. No data was available for *Seven Nightly News* survey 6 1988. *Ten News* was screened in a one hour bulletin from 6-7pm between 1986 and 1990. *Ten News* was screened in a one hour bulletin from 5-6pm from 1993 onwards. Weekend editions of *Ten News* changed to half hour bulletins screened at 5pm in 1994. SBS began transmission on June 30 1986.

5 All commercial and SBS current affairs programs screened from 6.30-7pm unless otherwise indicated. All ABC news programs screened from 7.30-8pm unless otherwise indicated. All "national" current affairs programs screened between 1993 and 1995 were during the off-peak summer viewing season. Not all A.C. Nielsen data was broken down according to this division. In these cases, the figure is indicated in the "ratings" column. McNair conducted 8 surveys each year from 1987 onwards. ABC current affairs data available for 1986 onwards.

6 For a useful history of Triple J and its early years as a national network, see Dawson (1992).

7 Former Triple J station manager Stuart Mattchet admits that although the station's target audience does range from 15 -30, it has a specific emphasis on 20-30 year-olds (Mattchet 1995).

8 Such a situation is particularly pertinent in Brisbane where in 1993, the station with the biggest market share for the breakfast timeslot was 4KQ, an AM station with a "Greatest memories, latest hits format" (Gardiner 1993, p.31). At the time of writing, both FM youth

stations B105 and Triple M were telling listeners in their station promos not to switch to the "daggy oldies" format.

9 In 1990 A.G.B. McNair began conducting four radio surveys per year. Data analysis commences in 1981 with the launch of FM104/Triple M. 4IP became known as Radio 10 from survey 2 1982. Radio 10 became Lite & Easy 1008 from survey 2 1988. Lite &Easy 1008 changed its name back to 4IP in survey 1 1990. 4BK switched to FM and changed its name to B105 in survey 1 1990. FM104 changed its name to Triple M in survey 1990. Triple J commenced broadcasting in survey 1 1991. In 1991 A.G.B. McNair began conducting 9 radio surveys per year.

10 This figure is the equivalent of the TARP for television and the readership percentage for print media.

11 et al (1996, Appendix A) provide a useful list of the audience shares of each mainland state capital city station by age group for 1994.

12 As it has increased in popularity with audiences and in stature within the ABC to become the Corporation's key vehicle for capturing young audiences, Triple J has also entered the poaching wars. Its current station manager is B105's former station manager Ed Breslin.

13 Although it cannot be stated with any certainty, this figure is likely to include talk-back, which accounts for 15 per cent of Triple J's content (Cuppitt et al 1996, p.25).

14 A traditionalist would argue that many of the magazines listed in these figures such as *Dolly* and *TV Week* do not contain "hard news", as it is taught in journalism schools. Certainly, research evidence (Finger 1994) suggests that young people also do not look to magazines as sources of hard news. However, to the extent that these products contain information that young people clearly like reading about, their inclusion is valid here.

15 American teenagers read fewer magazines than their adult counterparts (Cobb-Walgren 1990, p.340).

16 Apart from the readership figures for *Sports Illustrated*, which are based on the male audience, all figures quoted from Figures 13 & 14 have been calculated on the female audience. These figures reflect the largest niche audiences for each publication. All secondary data quoted in this section is based on the total audience, unless otherwise stated.

17 This result is consistent with national Audit Bureau of Circulation figures for 1993 (Hughes 1994, p.22).

18 And posted a 168 per cent increase in circulation in 1995 (McIntyre 1995, p.6).

19 See for example, *Countdown* and *The Edge*.

20 Although both pay TV and the Internet are increasingly popular media forms with young people in Australia, their potential as suppliers of news and current affairs are, at this stage, difficult to measure.

21 Rushkoff (1994b), Liu (1994) and Sternberg (1995a; 1997b) all refer to Generation X as a "postmodern generation".