

OPPORTUNITIES AND BENEFITS: A GUIDED READING LIST

This section addresses the theories and concepts for analysing children’s engagement with digital technologies and the internet, pointing to a wide range of benefits and opportunities, including socialising, creativity, civic engagement, entertainment and learning. A common theme is the posing of a theoretical challenge to the common-sense distinction between online and offline engagement. Recognising the multiple interdependencies between online and offline activities, researchers are instead seeking a comprehensive approach that distinguishes between different types of engagement, depending on the context, and on the outcomes for children, many but not all of which are conceived of as beneficial.

Some authors propose a hierarchical classification of online activities (or modes of engagement), arguing that some but not all children are able or supported to ‘climb the ladder’ and engage in more complex digital activities. Another direction of theorising explores the connections between online engagement and longer-term benefits for children, such as scaffolding child development and learning, and impacting positively on children’s life outcomes.

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Useful starting points

📖 Dahlgren, P. and Hill, A. (2020). [Parameters of media engagement](#). *Media Theory*, 4(1), 1–32.

Dahlgren and Hill discuss how media engagement has become synonymous with social media analytics and ratings performance but should instead be theorised as subjective experience linking the personal, socio-cultural and political. They use a model with five parameters of media engagement – in relation to media contexts, motivations, modalities, intensities and consequences.

📖 Georgiou, M. & Leurs, K. (2022). [Smartphones as personal digital archives? Recentring migrant authority as curating and storytelling subjects](#). *Journalism*, 23(3), 668-689.

The authors conceptualize smartphones as devices through which migrants can curate and catalogue their lives within the context of conflict, uprooting, migration and resettlement. Analysis centres on the way these personal digital archives reflect the mediation of migration in three dimensions: symbolic, affective and material.

📖 Ito, M., Arum, R., Conley, D., Gutiérrez, K., Kirshner, B., Livingstone, S., Michalchik, V., Penuel, W., Pepler, K., Pinkard, N., Rhodes, J., Salen Tekinbaş, K., Schor, J., Sefton-Green, J. & Watkins, S.C. (2020). [The Connected Learning Research Network: Reflections on a Decade of Engaged Scholarship](#). Connected Learning Alliance.

This book reports on a sustained programme of exploration of the potential of children and young people’s digital engagement. With the focus on designing to optimise youthful digital media engagement in terms of creativity, collaboration, learning and civic engagement, it reviews the lessons learned and the future direction for internet engagement in the interests of children and youth.

Further reading

Brites, M.J., Ponte, C. & Menezes, I. (2017). [Youth talking about news and civic daily life](#). *Journal of Youth Studies*, 20, 3, 398–412.

This article considers how young people talking about news and politics in their family and peer contexts influences their civic life. Based on talking and news-mediated contexts and habits, the authors identified three different profiles: limitations to empowerment; civic capital and self-empowerment; and socioeconomic conditions and empowerment.

📖 Colvert, A. (2021). [The Kaleidoscope of Play in a Digital World: A Literature Review](#). Digital Futures Commission, 5Rights Foundation.

The report outlines the possibilities and challenges of children's free play in the digital environment, exploring the similarities and differences with free play in general, and tackling the specifics of digital affordances as they shape play possibilities.

Emejulu, A. & McGregor, C. (2019). [Towards a radical digital citizenship in digital education](#). *Critical Studies in Education*, 60(1): 131-147.

In their effort to explore radical digital citizenship and its implications for education, the authors find a need for transparency between critical social relations and technology, as well as the development of emancipatory technological practices for social justice.

📖 Fingerhut, J. (2021). [Enacting media. An embodied account of enculturation between neuromedia and new cognitive media theory](#). *Frontiers in Psychology*, 12, 635993.

This article offers a short primer on media theory, but the work is primarily situated within a cognition perspective, which asks questions related to mental state in media engagement.

Gee, J.P. (2008). [Learning Theory, Videogames, and Popular Culture](#). In K. Drotner & S. Livingstone (eds) *International Handbook of Children, Media and Culture* (pp. 196–212). SAGE Publications.

Critiquing psychological and individualistic theories of learning, including in relation to digital environments, Gee sets out his influential socio-cultural analysis of learning, taking online games as a provocative case. He contests accounts of gaming as problematic, and insists on understanding gaming in cultural terms – as social, aesthetic and pedagogic, as with other forms of media.

📖 Greene, K., Yanovitzky, I., Carpenter, A., Banerjee, S.C., Magsamen-Conrad, K., Hecht, M.L. & Elek, E. (2015). [A theory-grounded measure of adolescents' response to media literacy interventions](#). *Journal of Media Literacy Education*, 7(2), 35–49.

This study offers a conceptual framework for the effects of media literacy interventions on behaviour. The authors posit that it is not participation but engagement that can explain and predict individual variations in media literacy programmes.

Hasebrink, U. (2012). [Young European's Online Environments: A Typology of User Practices](#). In S. Livingstone, L. Haddon & A. Görzig (eds.) *Children, Risk and Safety Online: Research and Policy Challenges in Comparative Perspective* (pp. 127–139). Policy Press.

Hasebrink analyses how and with which outcome children use online opportunities, using the 'ladder of opportunities' approach. This is based on the notion that children can be divided into groups depending on the

range of opportunities used by a particular child, moving from information-related sources to communication to advanced uses, ending with online content creation, practised by only a few. European countries are also compared in this context.

📖 Hasebrink, U. & Domeyer, H. (2012). [Media repertoires as patterns of behaviour and as meaningful practices: A multimethod approach to media use in converging media environments](#). *Participations: Journal of Audience Research & Reception Studies*, 9(2), S757–S783.

This article proposes a conceptual approach to media-related practices that considers the overall range of media practices, including different kinds of engagement, as a comprehensive pattern. This can help to avoid a biased picture as provided by studies that focus on specific communicative practices and neglect their embeddedness in larger patterns (or repertoires).

Ito, M., Baumer, S., Bittanti, M., Boyd, D., Cody, R., Herr-Stephenson, B., Horst, H., Lange, P., Mahendran, D., Martinez, K. Z., Pascoe, C. J., Tripp, L., Robinson, L., Sims, C., & Perkel, D. (2010). [Hanging Out, Messing Around, and Geeking Out - Kids Living and Learning with New Media](#). The MIT Press.

This research investigates the dynamics of youth social and recreation use of digital media across varied settings, from home to after-school programs and online spaces.

📖 Ito, M., Gutiérrez, K., Livingstone, S., Penuel, B., Rhodes, J., Salen, K., Schor, J., Sefton-Green, J., & Watkins, S. C. (2013). [Connected Learning: An Agenda for Research and Design](#). D. M. a. L. R. Hub.

The concept of connect learning implies that a young person is able to pursue a personal interest with the support of a care network, and in turn is able to link this learning to educational, economic or political opportunity. This paper investigates how new media can foster the growth and maintenance of connected learning in an equitable and broad way.

📖 Kahne, J., Hodgins, J., & Eidman-Aadahl, E. (2016). [Redesigning civic education for the digital age: Participatory politics and the pursuit of democratic engagement](#). *Theory & Research in Social Education*, 44(1), 1-35.

Notable in the conception of participatory politics is the expansion beyond specific categories of engagement activities to a focus on cultivating and applying media literacy competencies and skills, such as critical thinking and content creation for civic purposes. Participatory politics allows investigation of these competencies and skills for utilizing digital media in opinion-formation and social action which are essential to the dynamics of civic engagement. This perspective of citizenship also acknowledges children and adolescents as citizens with present rights and responsibilities and recognizes the ways in which they engage in public life through digital activities.

📖 Paus-Hasebrink, I. (2019). [The role of media within young people's socialization: A theoretical approach](#). *Communications: The European Journal of Communication Research*, 44(4), 407–426.

This article is relevant in order to research media socialisation in the context of social inequality. It combines the subjective and structural components of practice. The approach is based on three analytical concepts – options for action, outlines for action and competences for action – and advances an interlinkage of subjective perception, action-driving orientations and everyday life practices against the backdrop of (changing) socio-structural conditions.

📖 Paus-Hasebrink, I., Kulterer, J. & Sinner, P. (2019). [*Social Inequality, Childhood and the Media: A Longitudinal Study of the Mediatization of Socialisation*](#). Transforming Communications – Studies in Cross-Media Research. Palgrave Macmillan.

This book is an in-depth analysis of the nature of digital and social inequality, based on a longitudinal study (2005 to 2017) on the question of the role of media within the socialisation of socially disadvantaged children and their families.

Peppler, K. & Wohlwend, K. (2017). [*Theorizing the nexus of STEAM practice*](#). In J. Katz-Buonincontro and C. Conway (Eds.) *Arts Education Policy Review Special Issue: Gathering STEAM*, 1-12.

This article synthesizes previous research across STEAM-based tools, materials and activities, and applies the findings from more than 50 papers and books to outline an approach for arts education classrooms.

📖 Ravenscroft, A., Dellow, J., Brites, M.J., Jorge, A. & Catalão, D. (2020). [*RadioActive101-Learning through radio, learning for life: An international approach to the inclusion and non-formal learning of socially excluded young people*](#). *International Journal of Inclusive Educational Review*, 24(9), 997–1018.

This article describes an original international approach to the inclusion and non-formal learning of socially excluded young people through participatory internet radio. First, it critically discusses the social and digital exclusion of young people. It then describes participatory action research methods that are influenced by the work of Dewey and Freire. The article emphasises that to support the non-formal learning of socially excluded young people, we must foreground our attention on fostering psychosocial dimensions alongside developing contemporary competences.

📖 Reicher, S.D., Spears, R. & Postmes, T. (1995). [*Social identity model of deindividuation effects \(SIDE model\)*](#). *European Review of Social Psychology*, 6(1), 161–198.

The social identity model of deindividuation effects (SIDE model) explains how group behaviour is affected by anonymity and identifiability. There are many social situations in which people interact in relatively anonymous ways. In social interactions on the internet, for example, people often use pseudonyms or avatars (pictures) to identify themselves, and even email addresses do not typically provide much information about senders. An important question, therefore, is how anonymity affects people's behaviour.

📖 Robinson, P.A., Allen Handy, A. & Burrell-Craft, K. (2021). [*Critical media literacy and Black female identity construction: A conceptual framework for empowerment, equity, and social justice in education*](#). *Journal of Media Literacy Education*, 13(1), 79–91.

While this article does not specifically include children, it offers an overview of critical consciousness and develops a conceptual framework for the gendered and racialised construction of identity, which can be used for teaching critical media literacy.

📖 Sarwatay, D., Raman, U. & Ramasubramanian, S. (2021). [*Media literacy, social connectedness, and digital citizenship in India: Mapping stakeholders on how parents and young people navigate a social world*](#). *Frontiers in Human Dynamics*, 3.

The literature reviewed in this article aids in understanding key themes and concepts influencing media literacy, digital citizenship and social connectedness, with a specific view to diversifying media literacy scholarship beyond the context of the Global North.

Subrahmanyam, K. & Smahel, D. (2010). [Digital Youth: The Role of Media in Development](#). Springer Science & Business Media.

This book is a useful reference as it focuses on the integration between offline and online experiences, challenging the outdated opinion according to which when children engage with the internet, they develop a different persona. Overall, the book looks at youth online through a developmental lens, offering frameworks useful to orient the theoretical and empirical analysis of children's internet engagement.

 Wartella, E., Beaudoin-Ryan, L., Blackwell, C.K., Cingel, D.P., Hurwitz, L.B. & Lauricella, A.R. (2016). [What kind of adults will our children become? The impact of growing up in a media-saturated world](#). *Journal of Children and Media*, 10(1), 13–20.

This article offers a framing for media (and the internet in particular) as a 'more knowledgeable other', following Vygotsky, in order to frame children's internet engagement as an opportunity for informal learning. Technologies are conceptualised as dominant activities of childhood that can scaffold learning and inference values, for instance in relation to priorities and expectations around relationships with others, and definitions of success.

 Woodfall, A. & Zezulcova, M. (2016). [What 'children' experience and 'adults' may overlook: Phenomenological approaches to media practice, education and research](#). *Journal of Children and Media*, 10(1), 98–106.

Drawing on foundational work by Husserl, Bakhtin and Dewey, this article outlines several concepts that are useful in rethinking the direction of research in this area – primarily from a media-centric to an experience-centric approach.

You can find more guided reading lists covering the following areas:

[children and young people](#), [digital environment](#), [access](#), [skills and literacies](#), [risk and harm](#), [health and wellbeing](#), [social support](#), and [policy and regulation](#).



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