

The Media – Sociology AQA

Revision notes based on CGP revision guide

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1.1: Ownership and control of media.

1.2: New media.

1.3: Selecting and presenting the news.

1.4: Media representations.

1.5: Media and its audience.

1.6: Interpreting the media.

1.7: Globalisation and popular culture.

Remember

All evaluation is predicated on generic principles based on:

1. The different 'how and why' provided by different theories to different topics: for example, Marxist explanation versus functionalism, and structural explanations versus micro theories.
2. The comparison of each theoretical perspective for one topic – like the role of education – to culture and identity, for example. Thus, Marxist explanations of the role of education can be assessed with regard to the Marxist explanation of the role of the media, especially that both education and media are secondary agents of socialisation.

Any evaluation points below are key anchors for the above guidelines – application of generic principles of evaluation.

1.1: Ownership and control of media

Media = used to convey ideas and information to other people.

- Different forms of communication.
- Disagreement about what is considered 'media': types, new media, interaction with audience, the internet, social media.
- Secondary agent of socialisation – with increasing power, social media, and globalisation.

Functions

- Delivering news.
- To educate, inform.
- Entertainment.

Analysis of media and its effects

1 – Content analysis = how often a word/phrase is used in a piece of media, and a link between more than one word/phrase.

2 – Semiotics = studying the signs and codes of media, the meaning of the sign: subjective, bias.

3 – Experiments = how an actual audience responds to media: short-term and long-term effects, interviews, questionnaires.

Ownership

- The media is owned by a few powerful companies/individuals.
- Concentrated power = ability to influence the audience.
- Diversification = buying into other businesses.

Rupert Murdoch = **News Corp** owns TV stations, newspapers, books, magazines and websites.

- News Corp owns different media in several countries/continents.

Silvio Berlusconi = in Italy, national TV channels, an advertising agency and a magazine publisher. Part owns a banking company, a cinema firm, and used to own the football club AC Milan.

Research found that the American media is mostly owned by five corporations: Warner Bros (used to be Time Warner), Disney, News Corp, Bertelsmann and Viacom.

More recently, Comcast and CBS replaced Bertelsmann and joined the four remaining corporations. They are known as the **'Big Six'** and they own 90% of the media in the US: The Walt Disney Company, Warner Bros Discovery, Paramount, Sony Group Corporation, and Amazon.

Removing messages from the media

- Censorship = controlling the content of media: who decides, how and why?
- Removing harmful/offensive media messages: to whom and who decides?
- Moral, political or security reasons.
- Regulation.

Explanations

(1) Marxism

Media ownership controls media content and reflects the ruling class interests.

The infrastructure determines the superstructure.

Traditional Marxists = media owners' control what we see in the media, manipulating content, encouraging the working class to be subordinate, false consciousness.

Neo-Marxism = media reflect the ideas and values of the ruling class – that includes the media owners (the role of ideology).

Control over the media is indirect and reinforcing the ruling class idea = **cultural hegemony** = one set of ideas is dominating over other ideas.

The Frankfurt School (neo-Marxist) argued that advertising in the media creates 'false needs' entrenching the capitalist economy that is being perceived as 'right' and 'fair' = false consciousness, perpetuation.

(2) Pluralism

Media reflect the values and beliefs of society.

Society is composed of different interactive parts, each with its own opinions.

Postmodernism = the importance of consumption: media as cultural products that form one's identity; designer labels, diet coke is not just a drink, Nike is not just shoes.

Postmodernist pluralists = people can choose to consume any of these different opinions, media outlets produce content that they think people want to consume.

1 – The audience choose what media to consume:

Media respond to the needs/wishes of its audience, consumer power.

2 – Journalists can choose what to write about:

Postmodernist pluralists argue that this limits the power of owners and creates greater diversity.

Following professional codes.

New media = open to all: Twitter, TikTok, FB, etc.

3 – The state restricts the power of media owner:

Organisations and groups that regulate the media.

The BBC = public funding, impartiality, non-profit, Public Service Broadcasters includes the BBC and other channels as non-profitable, regulated.

1.2: New media

Features

Digitalisation, accessibility, convergence, streaming, user control, interactivity, direct engagement = audience increasing power. Active audience, free choice, and power.

Sociologists disagree about whether new media are revolutionary?

Cultures, economies and individual personalities are transformed by new media.

Other sociologists disagree: argue that new media is evolutionary rather than revolutionary, an expansion of previous older forms that still exist.

Media technology can offer extra options for viewing football (on mobile phones) but did not replace traditional options such as TV broadcasting.

Factors in use of media

Age, location, and consumer power.

Age = mostly young but older people increasingly use new media.

Digital underclass = people who can't access new media because of being poor, or living in remote location with limited internet access and poor internet coverage.

Getting passport, registering to vote – increasingly online.

Attitudes to new media – Curran and Seaton

1 – Cultural pessimists = negative view

New media is controlled by multinational corporations such as Microsoft and News Corp, globalisation, controlled also by state (erosion of privacy, regulation).

Edward Snowden 2013 – whistleblower, revealed that American state security agencies were secretly hacking thousands of people's emails.

Consumers benefit from new media (online shopping, next-day delivery): it comes at a social cost.

Freedom of information – dissemination of offensive views, misogynistic, racist and radical messages, **'The Paradox of Democracy'**.

2 – Neophiliacs = positive view

Technological developments lead to increased consumer choice, a positive force.

Ability to share more information and quickly.

Satellite TV, access TV content from many countries and cultures = encouraging shared cultures and values, diversity, openness and tolerance. Dynamic process.

1.3: Selecting and presenting the news

Influences on selection and presentation of news

(1) Practical constraints

Time, space, money, resources, deadlines. And, time is money.

Time constraints = easily available stories, use of same contacts and sources repeatedly, convenience, quick easy access = limited number of viewpoints.

Technical constraints = access to cameras and crews.

Ignoring/minimising reports of some disasters or war zones.

Budget = reporters already on the ground, established contacts.

Competition = affecting the selection of news, stories to make the media popular and profitable; sensationalism and celebrity gossip.

(2) Journalists

The relative importance of specific values and practices that journalists lean to is often heavily dependent on the type of publication, media, corporation, 'big boss'.

Values

1 – Bureaucratic news value = news should be current, simple/brief, big news better than small news.

2 – Cultural news value = news should be unexpected, focus on important people, be relevant to the audience, and bad news is preferred to good news.

Practices

1 – Agenda-setting = journalists and editors select the news that become news. Direct effect on how the story is perceived by the audience. Potential biases.

2 – Gate-keeping = editors decide which stories are featured and how much space and frequency they received = filtering news stories. Potential biases.

(3) Potential bias

GUMG = the Glasgow University Media Group studied television news during the 1970s and 1980s, searching evidence for a bias.

The group has a neo-Marxist leaning.

Focus on workplace strikes, applying detailed content analysis.

Findings

- Selection of news = biased in favour of dominant class values = picket line violence was reported more than police violence.
- Voiceovers = biased in favour of dominant class values = leading terms such as 'trouble-makers' and 'pointless strikes' were used.
- More access to the media was given to managers compared with the strike leaders = interviews with managers more frequent and longer than with strike leaders.
- Filming and editing were biased in favour of the police = cameras were often placed behind police lines, showing the police viewpoint.

(4) Society

Media sociologists agree that news is socially constructed but they disagree about whose values are behind the social construction of news: those of the dominant class or of the majority of society.

From a pluralist perspective, practical constraints are more significant in influencing the content of the news in comparison with a potential for ideological bias. The values of journalists are common values in society. This of course can be debatable.

From a Marxist perspective, the ideological influences are more important, and practical constraints can't be separated from ideology. Journalistic values are part of the dominant ruling-class ideology.

(5) New media

Editors tend to select interesting juicy stories to capture the attention of the audience.

Clickbait = the headlines are designed to encourage people to follow links to pages that have advertising.

Audiences can 'have their say' on news stories via online comments etc. This interactivity can influence the selection of stories that are likely to stir up responses.

Numerous news websites, thus the audience can compare and contrast how they present a story. Some stories are the same on various different websites including the use of the same sources.

Citizen journalism = the public actively participate in reporting the news and eliciting engagement, and often the audience tells the first part of a story, spreading it across social media before any official confirmation.

Impact of platforms like Twitter and Hashtag that draws together content on a specific topic/story/content.

The flipside is loss of reliability, credibility, spreading rumours and misinterpreting events as they unfold.

(6) Media professionals

Media professionals make assumptions about their audience = **public appeal**.

News content is influenced by the way news professionals construct stories = what news' values they adhere to, depending on public appeal.

Journalists make assumptions about what their audience wants to read, watch and hear. Framing stories so they are appealing: tone, images and focus.

Journalists judge whether a story is in the **public interest**. Politicians and powerful businessmen/figures often influence what is perceived to be 'public interest' which becomes often what is good for the government or certain individuals.

(7) Advertisers

Some argue that media outlets always **seek increase in profits**. They rely on the government and big corporations for stories which can threaten their profits potential.

For example, some advertisers didn't want to appear next to images of the **Iraq War** (2003-2011) and these images were suppressed in favour of less serious content, to protect profits.

(8) The government

Some argue that **media often minimise or omit criticism of the UK government** and related actions and policies. For example, they argued that the media blamed the negative impact of the Iraq War on those in power in Iraq.

Regulation

Consequently, some argue that news content should be regulated by the government.

PCC = Press Complaints Commission = monitoring standards and dealing with audience complaints. Thus, the content of the press is self-regulated. This makes it difficult to be impartial and involves obvious ethical considerations.

Social media bloggers aren't regulated yet must obey the law, and increasingly on platforms such as FB and X messages/profiles can be managed, regulated, censored and/or blocked.

Leveson Inquiry (*into the culture, practices and ethics of the British press, following the News International phone hacking scandal) recommended that the PCC should be replaced by a body with legal backing to make self-regulation more effective, but it didn't recommend government regulation.

As for government regulation – it is a highly contentious issue.

Freedom of press.

Holding people accountable.

Sources of information, protection.

1.4: Media representations

- Link with culture and identity.

Media representations can be stereotyped, biased, and can affect any related identity:

(1) Gender

Most editors and senior management at newspapers and TV are men.

Women don't appear in media as often as men.

Studies found overwhelming (90%) of voiceovers were male and 66% of all people in adverts were male.

Male and female stereotypes

- Women are often presented as a specific ideal for other women to aspire to – the rise in eating disorders.
- Women tend to be portrayed in a limited range of roles.
- Women are often represented as victims (domestic and sexual).
- Women's magazines = advice to women is mostly domestic and romantic.
- Some adverts portray men as domestically incompetent.
- Action films = men as violent, with a positive spin of thrill to violence as masculine.

Stereotypes of gender are influenced by binary opposition

- **Binary opposition** = viewing the world in pairs of opposites: and attaching culturally positive or negative substance to either half of the binary opposition. Men are culturally marked more positively.
- Media often use binary opposition in stereotypical representations of gender = women as housewives and men as breadwinners.
- Binary opposition includes the ideal of **'the other'**. The dominant half of the binary pair (men) is perceived as the 'normal standard' regular group, and 'the other' = women, less positive portrayal.

Gender representations are changing

- All the above 'traditional' stereotypes are currently challenged.
- Different female characters in TV and films that do not conform to traditional gender roles. These characters are perceived to be **'transgressive'** = they go beyond the traditional stereotypical roles.

- Changes in the portrayal of masculinity = men's magazines increasingly similar to women's magazines; metrosexual men who display traditional feminine traits; yet men's magazines still sexualise and objectify women.
- Diverse representations of gender create a wider range of gendered images to represent in the media.
- Postmodernists argue that people, especially in contemporary society can reject media messages about gender and choose freely how they perceive oneself.
- **Most significant** = the diversity of types of media and audience makes it possible for individuals to consume media and specific representations that 'match' their own identity and values.

(2) Sexuality

Inaccurate stereotypes of LGBT groups or **ignoring** these groups altogether.

'Symbolic annihilation' = negative or even non-existent identity.

Homosexuality represented negatively, lesbianism often ignored, especially regarding young audience.

There is increasing acceptance and positive tolerant representation.

Obviously, one cannot compare related previous/traditional representations to the current world and media. Some would argue that the representations nowadays are biased in different ways.

(3) Disabled people

Under-represented in the media: a far lower representation of disabled people in the media especially in speaking roles, compared with their proportion in the general population (about 20%).

Roles for disabled people can be quite limited and are often based on pity or comedy. However, there are some positive and real-life representations as well, such as **Stephen Hawking** with motor neurone disease.

Poor representations of disabled people in powerful positions, and those who are in powerful positions are often specialise in disabled issues.

Sociologists examined the link between media representations and stereotypes of disability: disabled people are often presented as reliant on charity, as being dependent – and shows like **Children in Need** may reinforce these stereotypes inadvertently.

Audience response to media representations depends on having direct experience with disability. People with an experience with real-life disability tend to be critical of stereotypes and more likely to reject stereotypical representations.

Social media outlets enabled significant changes, as with other representations and related identities.

(4) Class

Media editors, executives and management are almost **all middle-class** professionals.

Middle-class people in TV appear more often than working-class people both in dramas and news programmes.

Drama roles for **working-class** characters are often limited to **soap operas**, and upper-class characters are often limited to historical costume dramas which tend to portray a romantic picture.

News often represented working-class people as **a source of trouble** = anti-social behaviour, crime, riots, violent protest and strikes = all negative and against social order and stability.

Media render positive attention to things that only the wealthy can afford = for example, newspapers devote much space to reporting on stocks and shares. Additionally, media can blame the working class for poverty, unemployment and slumps in the economy. Let alone the underclass.

Research found that when middle-class students were shown programmes such as *The Royle Family*, which intentionally present exaggerated and stereotypical working-class characters, they thought it is an accurate portrayal of working-class life.

Stuart Hall = argues that the media has always portrayed the middle classes in a positive light and the working class in a negative way. This reinforced related class identity and class divisions.

(5) Ethnicity

Cumberbatch et al (2014) found that people from ethnic minorities are most likely to appear in entertainment shows and are rather fairly represented in factual shows as key contributors or interviewees. In more major roles, representations are rather limited and ethnic minorities are less likely to be presenters or have lead roles in dramas.

New technology, more specialist satellite and digital TV and radio channels – often related to specific ethnic minorities and are controlled by people of those ethnic

minorities, such as BBC Asian and Bangla TV. There aren't many ethnic minorities people in positions of power in mainstream media.

Tabloid newspapers sometimes stereotype some ethnic minority groups as posing a threat or causing trouble.

Van Dijk (1991) = **content analysis** of headlines of five British national newspapers; and found there is often an association in the headlines between ethnic minorities and violent and negative language.

Multiculturalism = media portrayal of ethnic minorities can be part of media representation of multiculturalism – like coverage of the *Notting Hill Carnival*.

Some representations of multiculturalism can present overly 'perfect' picture whereas others may present some authentic problems such as the film *Bend It Like Beckham*.

Media stereotypes of ethnic minorities can reinforce views of non-white as 'the other'.

Multiculturalism can gloss over problems, unequal power balance, opportunities, access and achievement for different ethnic groups.

Material and cultural deprivation, marginalisation, social exclusion and isolation.

Audience can react differently to ethnic stereotypes

Hartmann and Husband (1974) found that in an area with a low ethnic mix, children tend to believe negative media content and thought of race relations in terms of conflict. In areas with a high ethnic mix, children tend to reject media stereotypes in favour of their own personal experience.

Such findings emphasise the importance of direct experience and awareness (similar to other issues such as disability, class, etc) and can have a great impact on related social policies.

(6) Age

Images of young and old are stereotyped in the media.

Sexist double standard: the way older people are represented = older women less likely to get a leading role or a TV presenting jobs, compared with older men. Older men are more likely to be romantically paired with much younger women.

Sociologists found that both young and old were under-represented in prime-time TV characters in America, and it was biased towards middle-aged people.

Children often represented as innocent and teenagers as posing a social problem because they are more prone to substance abuse, crime and unplanned pregnancies.

Young people are often represented as a threat to society, and they have less opportunities and access to influence such stereotypes.

Changes in media representations of young girls is linked with consumer culture

During the 1970s, young girls were represented in magazines as 'passive' and focusing on impressing boys. **'Girl power'** language changed the mindset and encouraged free choice and achievements.

Girls presented as active consumers that are free to express themselves the way they perceive themselves.

Obviously, the impact of social media and various platforms, work from home, small businesses etc, have major influences on such representations.

1.5: Media and its audience

The media construct and send messages to the public – yet, the impact of these messages heavily depend on what the audience 'do' with these messages.

(1) The Hypodermic Syringe Model

During the 1920s, radio and newspapers began becoming important agents of socialisation.

Media inject its message into the mind of the audience; the audience is passively absorbing the message.

One way influence, from media to audience.

- Media is powerful, the audience is passive and powerless to resist.
- All individuals are affected in the same way – directly injected.
- In 1938 Orson Welles recorded a radio production of Well's story ***The War of the Worlds***, in which Martians (hypothetical or fictional inhabitants of Mars) invade Earth. The broadcast included fictional news bulletins reporting the Martian invasion. Some radio listeners believed the fake message was true and panicked. This was used as evidence to demonstrate the dangerous and direct power of the media.

- The model was criticised for being oversimplistic and extreme in its argument about individuals' passivity.
- Not all audience react in the same way to the same piece of media = thus it is important to identify the factors that can mediate this relationship.
- The growth of new media means that audience can also directly influence the media. For example, during the refugees' crisis in 2015, photographs of the body of 3-year-old **Aylan Kurdi**, a Syrian refugee who drowned in the coast of Turkey, were shared on social media. Many people criticised European governments as a result. Afterwards, mainstream media messages were inclined to be more sympathetic to 'match' public opinion.

(2) Two-step Flow Model

Was developed during the 1950s.

Media messages are interpreted and passed on by key individuals.

- The media affect people but not everyone is affected directly.
- **First step** = the media message is reaching an audience member.
- **Second step** = the understanding of the message by people is shaped by social interactions with other audience members. Workers in the office chat about a soap opera, and these discussions affect perception of storylines and characters.
- Key individuals in each community whose reaction directly influenced others; 'opinion leaders' express their opinions and others follow their lead.
- The two steps are the principle of the interaction, but it can be conducted in a sequence of steps and be affected by the emerging interaction.
- Consider new media influences and the term '**influencer**'.
- Consider social conformity and different levels of conformity and influence.

(3) Cultural Effects Theory

Social and cultural context affect how the audience respond to the media.

- Social and cultural context shape the way audience interact with the media.
- **Interpretation** = the audience interpret the media in the context of the culture they belong to; thus, the effects of the media are not the same for everyone and the links are complex and multifaceted.
- This is true particularly when taking into account subcultures, thus, the individual is a member of the mainstream culture and the subculture at the same time.

- Further examination of the response to ***The War of the Worlds*** broadcast: it is unlikely that the same response would be observed today because of different cultural contexts. At the time, as well, there was a greater insecurity within American society because of the financial crisis and the move towards war in Europe.
- **Stuart Hall**, neo-Marxist, argued that the media have dominant ideological messages that are 'encoded' into its messages, and people of different backgrounds can 'decode' these messages differently.

(4) Moral panic

Stan Cohen (1973) described how media reporting of unexpected 'trouble' could create a moral panic.

He used the example of two subcultures, the ***Mods and Rockers*** in the 1960s.

The Rockers were motorcyclists wearing black clothes and tended to be from the working class, and *the Mods* tended to be from lower middle classes.

The media reported that there would be fights, as indeed happened in various seaside towns. Many people turned out to fight, or to watch, and got involved in fights.

- A small group behaves in a deviant way.
- Media report the story.
- Media report similar stories again.
- Original group is labelled as a threat to social order.
- More people join in with deviant behaviour.
- Moral panic = the public demand that actions will take place against the threat.
- Thus, amplification of the situation and as a result, self-fulfilling prophecy.

(5) Effects of media message build up over time

Media effects can build up over time and create or reinforce cultural norms.

- For example, images of women in the media create stereotypical images and place expectations on girls and women. In January 2015 ***The Sun*** newspaper ended its ***Page Three Girls***, following up on a public campaign because it reinforced the message that it is acceptable to objectify women.
- Sociologists argue it is not only the content of media but also the technology plays an important role. The influence of the internet, new media and social media.

- **Marshall McLuhan** (1964) = **'the medium is the message'** = media technology has greater effects on society than media content; it is the type of media we consume that matters. Different forms of media require different levels of engagement, effort and interpretations. 'Hot' media like films, require little engagement, compared with 'cool' media like comics that need to be interpreted.

(6) Effects of violent media on audiences

Violent media --- impact on audience.

- What kind of violent media, what kind of impact on the audience, and the importance of mediating factors.
- Impact especially on audience behaviour = engaging in violent media is likely to lead to violent behaviour.
- Especially on young audience.
- However, it is not a direct relationship, the importance of other sociodemographic and psychological factors.
- **Bandura** (1963) **Bobo Doll**, social learning theory.
- **The Hypodermic Syringe model** was used to link fictional media violence to shooting incidences: in 2012 a gunman killed 12 people at a screening of the **Batman** film *The Dark Knight Rises* in Aurora, Colorado. He was dressed as the villain from the film **The Joker** who committed various violent acts throughout the film.
- **GUMG** The Glasgow University Media Group – examined media effects since 1974, focusing on effects of news and current affairs reporting, by analysing content according to its messages and values.
- They also conducted surveys and interviews of audiences.
- Concluded that media have a strong influence on different audiences' attitudes and beliefs.
- **The miners' strike of 1984-85:** 54% of the audience sample who had seen media coverage of the strike = inclined to believe that the picket lines were mostly violent. Police and people who were on the picket lines said that there wasn't much violence in reality, not as much as suggested by the media. Thus, the audience based their beliefs on what and how the strike and picket lines were reported in the media.

Criticism of the argument about the negative effects of violent media

Some criticised the idea that violent media normalise violence and desensitise people to violence, thereby likely to result in violent behaviours in other settings and situations.

Cumberbatch (2004) – a review of thousands of research studies; and suggested that there is no clear evidence that violent media is linked with violent behaviour of children or adults.

- **And if or when there is a link** – the question is what the mediating factors are or is the link spurious, and/or the issue of causality. Yet this is a genuine concern in all sociological and psychological research because of the relevance of multitude factors.

Some suggested the opposite argument = that violent media in fact have a positive effect on behaviours and attitudes.

Young (1981) – violent media may result in **'sensitisation'** to violent crimes especially because of increased awareness about the negative hurtful consequences of violent acts and the impact on the victims.

Other suggested violent media provide people with the opportunity to 'ventilate' their aggressive urges in a positive neutral and non-realistic settings – such as video games. A safe release, **'catharsis'**.

- Freud, defence mechanisms, see also crime and deviance.

Criticism about research of media effects in general

Gauntlett (2008) criticised the methods used in investigating media effects, although he excluded GUMS research in that respect.

For example – he criticised experimental methods such as laboratory studies used by Bandura, because of its lack of ecological validity which is crucial in the study of media effects because it involves many potential factors that were not and could not have been included nor controlled in lab studies. However, high on reliability.

He also argued that the focus on the effects of media on children is based on the perception of children as passive and easily amenable. Other research suggest that children can recognise from an early age that it is not acceptable to imitate fictional violence.

- Compare and assess to family influences as a primary agent of socialisation.

Gauntlett prefers the use of **'imaginative methods'**, **ethnographic studies**, like investigating children in natural ways and in their **natural setting** = he asked schoolchildren in Leeds to make their own videos about the environment and then observed the results.

- Connect with theory and methods in context – types of methods in sociology and/or regarding particular questions.
- A problem with operationalisation of the concept 'violence': audience might react differently to different types of fictional violent media.
- Especially relevant regarding the hypodermic syringe model = it doesn't take into account how different people in the audience react: individual, situational, sociological and dispositional factors such as age, maturity etc.
- **Morrison** (1999) emphasised the role of **'context'**. Some studies ignored the fact that violent media are presented in different contexts that can affect their influence in different ways. For example, viewing violence that is meant to be funny/comic may be different to viewing news reports on violence in warzones.
- However, others would argue that this difference in context doesn't matter, and in fact, presenting violence in comical ways may have more negative effects on violent behaviour because of the context being 'funny' thus trivialising, desensitising and normalising violence, if only in subtle perhaps unconscious ways.

1.6: Interpreting the media

Another orientation to understand media effects on audience emphasises how the audience/individuals actively engage with, and interpret the media to 'match' their own needs.

Thus, the question becomes not (or not only) what media 'do' to people, but what people 'do' with media.

- Think about the link with psychological processes and factors.
- And, social action theories, interactionism/interpretivism, and postmodernism.
- The importance of psychological factors – needs, motivations, fears, etc.

(1) Uses and Gratification Theory

Blumer and Katz (1974): people use the media to meet their own needs.

The audience actively choose what to watch, when to watch etc – digital channels, remote controls, variety and types of media.

Free will and free choice, lack of determinism. Potential for various effects depending on the choice, timing, needs, etc. Interactive processes.

McQuail (1972) – examined soap operas’ audience and looked at how audiences used Coronation Street to fulfil their need for social companionship – they become highly involved and or identified with the lives of the fictional characters and their storyline.

This orientation is functionalist because it argues that the media exist to serve the needs of the public/consumers of media. Thus, an organisation, agent of socialisation that has a ‘job’ to do with respect to individuals/society.

Needs can change over time and can also depend on the type and nature of media, especially new forms of new media such as social media.

(2) Selective Filter Model

- **To engage with a piece of media** = to find it interesting and to be ‘into’ it.
- **Media text** = a piece of media, such as a TV programme, a newspaper article or an advert. A product of the media industry.

This theory argues that the audience choose which media to experience, to consume/to engage with. Thus, not purely passive individuals.

The audience choice is based on picking up the message that fits in with their view of the world; and ignores all the rest = **selective filtering**. The filtering process is the ‘activity’ conducted by the individual.

Fiske (1988) says that individuals become very experienced readers of the media and can understand a ‘media text’ in several different ways and at different levels, and in relation to other ‘media texts’ on the same subjects. A degree of sophisticated processing, not a direct influence on individuals.

Klapper (1960) argues that to get the message across, the media has to penetrate three different filters:

1 – Selective exposure = people consume the media they want to consume and are able to get.

2 – Selective perception = people ignore messages they don’t want to hear.

3 – Selective retention = people tend to remember only what they agree with.

- See cognitive biases and errors. Business psychology.
- See the difference between sensation and perception and subjective elements.

Klapper argued that these selective processes make it easier for media to reinforce and cement existing thoughts of people, compared with changing their minds. It is very important in political campaigns courting public support.

This model emphasises the role of the individual in shaping and controlling their own experiences by choice. However, the distinction between levels of consciousness is very important here, especially if we address issues such as prejudice and stereotypes.

These are all psychological processes, especially cognitive mental processes, that in for themselves can be highly influenced and regulated by both cognitive and emotional factors = regulation of needs, emotions and thoughts: cognitive dissonance for example, these can all be based on the use of defence mechanisms that are employed in regulating anxiety. Cognitive errors.

On the other hand, especially given the power of media in contemporary global society with new forms of social media, this model can be criticised for overestimating the role of the individual and free choice. Often what seems to be a free choice is a result of subtle manipulation that operates at some unconscious powerful levels.

(3) Structured Interpretation Model

Like the other two theories, the structured interpretation model argues that individuals actively pick what media they engage with, but this choice is conducted within a social context. Thus, the social context is often characterised by a dominant interpretation of media messages, and it creates 'preferred reading' of the media messages. Preferred reading means preferred interpretations. Thus, the individual is not completely free and instead, constrained by the social context and is influenced by it.

Different social groups have different dominant interpretations of the same text.

Morely (1980) studied how television audience responded to one news programme, **Nationwide**. He showed the same programme to different social groups and found that their response to the programme varied significantly. But, within each group, most individuals responded in similar ways. For example, trade unionists saw it as biased toward management, and management trainees saw it as pro-union.

Postmodernism

Audience 'get' many meanings to any social or cultural aspect of life. Therefore, many interpretations and understandings.

Structuring reality! The distinction between reality/facts/perception and subjective appraisals.

There isn't one aspect of life with one single objective truth or reality that everyone experiences in the same way. The audience pick and choose between a range of images, messages, ideas and meanings.

Argues that the media take the place of reality.

Again, structuring reality! Not just with regard to the role of media, postmodernism is about 'narratives' that are personal, subjective, dynamic and in flux.

The boundaries between reality and media are increasingly blurred, partly because of the constant bombardment of messages and stories and also the nature of new media, especially social interactive media.

The explosion of various reality TV shows.

When something is on the news, it seems like it proves that it is real and true. Images on the news can be taken out of context and news reporting can be affected by various factors.

This idea is closely attached with the postmodernist concept of a simulacrum = something that looks as if it is real, but it isn't, an image or a representation of someone or something, like a miniature model of a skyscraper. It also denotes that it is an unsatisfactory imitation or a substitute of the 'real thing'.

Baudrillard (1981) suggested that everything had been replaced by simulacra – he called this replacement of reality hyper reality. Images of hyper reality seem more real than real, and they replace real reality. Link with virtual reality and electronic games. Link with the subtopic influence of media on violence.

In *The Gulf War Did Not Take Place*, Baudrillard argued that the war existed more as images on TV screens than as actual fighting, as if it seems like a video game on our TV screens.

Critics argue that postmodernism is too theoretical and deliberately too obscure. Baudrillard was criticised for diminishing genuine and real suffering and inequality with his ideas.

Postmodernism in general is criticised for being too theoretical and impossible to be investigated empirically by any robust methods because there is no evidence that can prove it as either right or wrong (like psychodynamic approach and Marxism). However, in the first place, postmodernism aimed to 'diminish' the power of objective reality (sensation, registration of objective 'facts') and 'optimise' the power of subjective perceptions, namely, the narrative.

If the core idea is that no idea has a specific meaning and individuals create their own reality, thus, there is no definition of what is real and what is unreal, then surely reality

is being replaced by something that cannot be scientifically investigated. Narratives exist instead. Link with mental disorders and defence mechanisms = distortion of objective reality.

- BBC and impartiality debate.

1.7: Globalisation and popular culture

- ✚ From Culture and Identity – see pp. 42-43 = types of culture, and pp. 62-63 = production, consumption and globalisation.
- ✚ Integrate some key points from notes into these sections.

Media culture is popular culture

Some argue that media is 'dumbed down'.

High and low culture.

High culture = good for society = binary elitist opposition – see above on binary opposite representations.

Others prefer to examine **mass culture** which is passed on by the media.

Popular culture is another way of looking at the culture of the 'masses', and some scholars prefer that concept because it has a more positive connotation compared with the term **'low culture'**. Or at least it allows to examine various nuances and meanings.

The idea of popular culture is based on the idea of active audiences capable of shaping their culture.

In contrast, mass culture is based on the idea that the audience is passive and controlled by the media. Thus, mindlessly absorbing media.

The 'dumbing down' debate about the media

Oversimplifying content and news to avoid challenging the audience; news is increasingly characterised by sensationalism and gossip.

- ✚ See the debate about understanding complex issues such as Brexit, and the idea of participant democracy versus elitist democracy, the problem of referendum regarding complex divisive issues which are exactly the ones that are passed on back to the public via a referendum.

In terms of culture – **popular classical artists** such as Katherine Jenkins and Il Divo – can be seen to popularise high culture and making it more mainstream and accessible. But many argue that it led to dumbing down of high culture. These, of course, are elitist ideas.

Pluralists argue that audiences get the media they want, so dumbing down is not the fault of the media. Practically this argument can be examined in the light of the direction of the question: it is the media that is dumbing down its audience, it is the audience that is ‘dumbed’ and the media provides content to match the audience preferences.

This connects with models of how we consume media = passively or actively; it is by and large **a two-way-exchange**.

Media is a global industry that create a global culture

McLuhan (1962) – the idea of the ‘global village’ – and that was developed already in 1962! He suggested that new technologies bring people together and the world becomes like **‘one big village’** where our ‘neighbours’ can live on the other side of the world!

Add to this idea the new developments of **new media**, social media, and interactive media.

In recent years there is an increasing concentration of media ownership – a few media corporations that dominate the global market = media globalisation.

Devereux (2003) most of the large media corporations are based in the West and therefore Western societies dominate the global media market. Dissemination of values and norms.

However, there is a significant increase of major corporations that are non-Western, a development that is encouraged by satellite and cable TV. Nowadays also various types of media penetrate the Western audience – such as **Turkish series**, **Latin soap operas**, **Bollywood movies**, etc. Consequently, it is not a one-way influence, there is a constant exchange between Western and non-Western cultures.

Global advertising also contributed to the growth of global capitalism.

Postmodernists argue that media promote the consumption of logos and brands which fuels the global economy and culture.

Some sociologists argue that governments in Europe and the US have deregulated the media, thereby allowing capitalist media corporations to set up global media networks. These global corporations can influence and shape culture on a global scale.

- ✚ **Remember:** Coca Cola is not just a drink, and McDonald's is not just burgers! These are conglomerates that reflect and shape culture and values including in non-Western cultures and countries.

The internet also changed the nature of the relationship between the media and the state because there are no national boundaries on the internet.

- ✚ Integrate the decline of the nation-state and the issue of national identity compared with all other types of identities.

The impact of the internet on global culture

Globalisation of media exposes us to cultural and social commentaries and news from different countries, and it is also instantaneous. Thus, it facilitates developing a sense of a shared global culture.

- Penetration of Western ideas into other cultures and societies, and vice versa, the exposure into non-Western cultures and ideas – such as Bollywood, Turkish and Latin American's soap operas, etc.
- However, some sociologists argue that despite the two-way exchange of cultural ideas, Western culture is becoming the dominant culture all over the world.

Cultural hegemony.

- **Matos** (2012) argues that before the development of the new media in the 1990s, most the world's media focused on national news. In contrast, the internet and social media allow constant stream of content (including by individuals that aren't part of the mainstream media) related to global issues that affect all of us.
- The internet has made global communication cheap, easy and immediate. People also can create their own media content and gain massive number of followers.

Digital creators, Influencers.

- However, some sociologists argue that while new media contributed into the sense of global village, it will eventually lead to divisions within this global village.
- Some people are part of the digital underclass = no access to internet, slow limited signal in some remote areas, and lack of IT skills. Less significant nowadays, as most people, including older generation have some measure of use of various devices.
- Countries with better connectivity will have a stronger cultural influence.

Globalisation and the media led to cultural imperialism

There is a debate whether globalisation of culture is harmful to national cultures. Some argue that Western culture is taking over the globe = **cultural imperialism/hegemony.**

Others argue that there is a blending of national and global cultures into various hybrid cultures = **cultural hybridisation**.

- This debate is similar to the older debates about diverse societies and how they cope with ethnic and cultural diversity within a single political community – such as the USA and other European countries including the UK.
- The idea of the **'melting pot' versus the 'salad bowl'**.
- **Macbride** (1980) suggested there is **cultural imperialism** – Western media products flow into less developed parts of the world and change local cultures. This creates a ready market for Western consumer goods.
- However, it also works the other way around.
- **Online shopping** and international shipping.
- **Global advertising** from companies such as Disney, SONY and Coca Cola – the internet has allowed national boundaries to be eroded.
- Diet coke is not just a drink, and Nike is not just running shoes – these are avenues of disseminating values and beliefs.
- **Klein** (2000) argues that the dominance of multinational corporations leads to increasing **cultural homogenisation** = everyone's culture is becoming the same.
- Some also argue that technological advancement has made national culture less important = the spread of the internet and satellite TV means that all cultures are under the same umbrella leading to cultural homogenisation.
- Some go as far as to argue that globalisation is specifically synonymous with **Americanisation** = American culture being copied and replicated all over the world.
- **There are four main global news agencies** that media outlets across the world use as a source for news and they were accused of spreading Western culture prejudices through their reporting: AP Associated Press, UPI United Press International, Reuters, and AFP French Press Agency.
- However, nowadays, many sources of news could be simply generated by individuals who film/report and spread it via social media – the question is always what the facts are and what is the interpretation of the facts, and does content presented as facts is genuine facts. (objective versus subjective issue in research methods).

Cultural Hybridisation

- Some sociologists argued about the emergence of **cultural hybridisation** = local, national and global cultures are all mixing to create a series of hybrid cultures around the globe.
- **'Melting Pot' idea versus 'Salad Bowl'** – traditional debate about diversity of ethnicity. American society.
- Some local cultures resisted cultural imperialism – in line with the growing media industry in Asia and South America, which actually export media products back into the Western world – Bollywood films, Brazilian soap operas, etc.
- This is often referred to as culture that is moving in **'multidirectional flows'** – it flows in different directions, and it is dynamic. Consequently, it creates cultural diversity rather than cultural homogenisation.
- **Curran** (2000) criticised that theory of cultural hybridisation and argued that some studies that emphasise cultural hybridity ignore the role of economic factors. He argued that media corporations use their power to control the culture the audience is exposed to. This creates certain cultural preferences among the audiences that companies can then capitalise on to make profits.
- For example, **Matos** (2012) argued that the idea of **'exotic'** cultural differences is used by big media companies to make money. They can advertise and sell 'exotic' products to consumers across the world who have been exposed to various **multicultural** influences through the internet and satellite TV.