

GCSE  
Sociology  
The Mass  
Media revision  
booklet



**EXAM CHECKLIST:** You are not ready for the exam until you have checked off each section of the specification below and you can answers all the questions that follow...

1. Can identify the mass media and outline the major characteristics of this means of communication.	
2. Know the different views of the nature of the relationship between the mass media and audience and how this may be affected by new technologies	
3. Know the significance of the mass media within the socialisation process and can describe, at a basic level, its part, along with other agents of socialisation, in the development of people's political and social identities and views	
4. Can identify the media as a source of power for the individuals and organisations which own and/or control it, and be able to describe and explain the exercise of this power through, for example, agenda setting, the creation and dissemination of positive/negative images of particular groups/ organisations, e.g. environmentalists, animal rights activists and lone parents	
5. understand the potential significance for the distribution of power of technological developments, such as the internet	
6. Can describe the ways in which the media may encourage stereotyping, and be able to describe the process of deviancy amplification	
7. Are aware of contemporary media related issues, such as whether media exposure encourages violence.	

## 1. Defining the Mass Media and its characteristics

### Key terms you need to know

- ❖ **Media:** A medium of communication, designed to enable a person or group to communicate information and ideas to an audience.
- ❖ **Mass media:** Media that can reach large number of people, e.g. global audience. Use modern technologies
- ❖ **Old media:** traditional forms of media such as newspapers and radio that reach a more limited audience, e.g. local or national and are communicated in a one way process.
- ❖ **New media:** media formats that use modern technologies, spreading content using screen based, digital (computer technology) such as the internet or mobile phones, electronic e books, iPods

### Changes in Technology over the last 30 years.

Development in technology	What the term means
Digitalisation	<i>using computers-</i> all data, text sound and pictures are converted into computer code which can be stored, distributed and picked up via screen based <b>devices-mobile phones, digital TVs and computers, DVDs.</b>
Interactivity	Consumers have an opportunity to <b>engage or interact</b> with the media. E.g. <i>they can press the red button on their digital remotes to explore their own interests, vote in reality shows etc.</i>



<p>Convergence</p> 	<p>While traditional media involves different devices for different media content-printed format for books, telephones to make calls and radios to listen to music. New media often involves using a <i>single device to do several things</i>.</p> <p>-More convenient (people can send and receive texts, emails and connect to the internet)</p>
<p>It is dispersed</p>	<p>New media is less <b>centralised</b> and <b>controlled</b> than old media. There is a huge scope for people to create and spread their own information outside the control of media companies and the agencies of social control.</p>  

### Exam questions

1. Identify **two** types of digital media. (2 marks)
2. Explain with examples, what sociologists mean by the term mass media (2 marks)
3. Describe and explain **two ways in which the technology of the mass media has developed over the last 30 years (4 marks)** (hint: think about the differences between the traditional and new media)

## 2. The effects of the Mass Media on audiences

There are a number of different approaches that sociologists have adopted to the question of whether media content does actually have an influence or effect on audiences, mainly centred around the issue of whether audiences are **passive** dopes mindlessly consuming media content, or **active** interpreters of that content, giving it their own meanings and interpretations. The different approaches are summarised below.

Audience model	Summary of explanation	Criticisms
<p><b>Hypodermic syringe model</b></p>	<p>Audiences are <b>PASSIVE</b>. This means.... Audiences don't question media messages, they accept them. The media is like a 'drug' - as audiences we are injected with images, ideas, instructions, words, behaviours and so on that we take on board and act on. We follow media messages as if they were direct instructions without considering if we agree with them, or not. For example, seeing violence on television, and then going out and attacking someone.</p>	<p>-Audiences don't all react in the same way-they may reject violence they view rather than copying it. -There is little research that supports this view of the effects of the media.</p>
<p><b>Uses and gratifications</b></p>	<p>Audiences are <b>ACTIVE</b>, thinking and critical human beings. This means the effects of the media will depend on what the audiences use the media for. People use the media for their own needs and desires. There are 4 possible uses:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Escape (e.g. relaxation)</li> <li>2. Personal relationships (e.g. providing things to talk about)</li> <li>3. Personal identity (e.g. buying a music magazine because you are into music)</li> <li>4. Getting information (e.g. watching the news)</li> </ol>	

	This approach makes it difficult to generalise about the effects of the media, as they are likely to vary depending on what people use the media for.	
<b>Decoding theory</b>	This approach suggests that the content of a particular television programme such as a news bulletin has several possible meanings. It may, therefore be decoded or interpreted in a number of ways. How we decode a particular programme is shaped by our cultural and social backgrounds, our age, gender and ethnicity. How we actually respond to the programme's messages depends on our own reading of it.	
<b>Hyper reality</b>	We are, as audiences of the mass media, losing sense of the difference between the real world and the media created world. The more information, images and ideas we are exposed to, the less able we are to separate reality (the real world) from the media created world. Also, as technology advances, our 'real' world and our virtual worlds being to blend into one, instead of being separate.	

### Exam questions

1. Explain what sociologists mean by hyper reality. (4 marks)
2. Explain what sociologists mean by the hypodermic syringe model. (4 marks)
3. Discuss how far sociologists would agree that an audience's behaviour is directly affected by what it sees and hears in the mass media. (12 mark)

### 3. Mass Media and Socialisation

#### Key words

**Socialisation:** (the process through which we learn the culture (norms and values) of the society or group we are born into.

**Identity:** how we see and define ourselves and how other people or groups see and define us.

**Democracy:** government by the people

The mass media plays a significant role in the secondary socialization process, especially since many people spend many hours of their week watching television, browsing the Internet, listening to the radio etc.

#### Mass media and identity:

In developing their identities, people make choices about their lifestyles or their way of living. They could choose a life style focused on dance music and clubbing. Sociologists argue that the mass media are important in spreading ideas about modern lifestyles. For example, young people might first learn about dance-music and clubbing via dance-music magazines. In this way the media play a role in the development of peoples identities.

#### Mass media and political socialisation:

**Political influence:** For many people the media is their primary source of information about anything connected to current affairs and politics. All media has a political bias, whether we are aware of it or not, so we are being *politically socialized (acquiring our political beliefs)* by the papers we read or the programmes we watch.

**Who we vote for:** Newspapers, more than other forms of media, are politically biased and usually reflect the political views of one particular political party. For example, the Daily Telegraph traditionally supports the Conservative party and the Daily Mirror the Labor party. It can be argued, therefore, that newspapers **play an important role in influencing who we vote for as a person who regularly reads one particular newspaper is likely to be exposed to a slant on current affairs that could encourage them to vote for one political party rather than another.**

**If we vote at all:** One view is that the press has too much influence over how people vote. Another view is that the **negative coverage** of politics and **criticism of politicians** in the press influence the election turnout by discouraging voters from voting at all.

**Mass media and democracy:** If the press have the power to influence the outcome of general elections, and are slanted towards one particular party, then this could be seen as a major problem in a democracy. This is because elections are supposed to be fair and to give citizens the opportunity to express their preferences. If the press are **setting the agenda**, or **influencing turn out**, then this bias may work against some political parties.

#### **Exam questions**

1. Explain what sociologists mean by political socialisation when studying the effect of the mass media on political opinion. (4 marks)

## 4. The mass media as a source of power

Sociologists are interested in examining how material is presented and selected. Is it presented in a fair and neutral way or in a biased and one sided way? Agenda setting and norm referencing are two processes that the media employ in selecting & presenting news content.

**Agenda setting:** the media have the power to set the agenda. In other words, the media focus on some issues and topics and ignore others. Potentially this could give the media a lot of influence over people's political views and their voting behaviour.

The media also has the power in relation to **norm referencing**. In other words they are able to outline the acceptable boundaries of behaviour. The views and behaviour of some groups and organisations are presented positively and those of others are presented negatively. In this way positive images of some groups such as nurses and fire-fighters and negative images of others such as asylum seekers and teenage parents are created. It is through this norm referencing that the media have the power to shape public opinion.

Groups such as environmentalists and animal rights activists are often presented negatively in the media. The consequences may be that we do not take their views seriously, we condemn their behaviour or we demand that action should be taken against them. This can lead to marginalising people who support such causes.

### Exam questions

1. Describe **one** way in which the mass media can present a negative image of groups such as animal rights protesters **and** explain why this might cause problems in a democratic society. (5 marks)
2. Describe **one** process through which editors and journalists can influence what appears in the news **and** explain why this might lead to bias when covering an event. (5 marks)
3. Describe **one** way in which newspaper owners can influence how the news is presented **and** explain why this might lead to problems in a democracy. (5 marks)

### Media ownership and control

#### Key words

**Conglomerate:** A huge cooperation made from the merging of different firms

#### Pluralist views

- Pluralism is a view that suggests power in society is **spread** among a wide variety of groups and individuals, with no single one having a monopoly (control) on power and influence.
- Pluralists point out that the internet, cable, satellite and digital television, and the global reach of modern mass media technology offer such a huge range and choice of media products and access to knowledge from across the world that no single group or class can impose its view on others.
- The media now cover all kinds of interests and all points of view. New media technology also means ordinary people now have the opportunity to create their own media products and distribute them all around the world. What appears in the media therefore, **reflects a wide range of views**, and is **driven by the wishes of consumers**.

The fight for audiences in competition with other companies means the mass media have to cater for audiences tastes-*audiences will simply not watch TV programmes, view WebPages or buy newspapers which do not reflect their views. If media companies do not satisfy their audiences, they'll go out of business.* **Therefore it is the consumers who influence content through their market power.**

**THERE IS NO LINK BETWEEN OWNERSHIP OF THE PRESS AND CONTENT**

- **Summary box: Pluralists argue that freedom of the press exists because:**
  - We, as members of the public, have market power. This means we can switch newspapers if we are unhappy with the content
  - Owners cannot dictate content, as they have to give us what we want to buy
  - There is freedom to set up new newspapers if the ones in existence don't meet our needs.
  - We can put forward our views on an issue and have them published in a newspaper
  - On a day-to-day basis, the owners do not worry about the content it is often the job of newspapers editors and journalists

### The conflict (Marxist) approach to press ownership

- Marxist writers disagree with the pluralists. They suggest the content of the media reflects the wishes of media owners, and the views of the most powerful and influential are given more weight than those of less powerful groups.
- The owners of newspapers are part of a wealthy minority group. They are in a strong position to put forward their own views. For example, if a business has its own newspaper, it is more likely to put forward news stories which reflect their political views.
- Supporters of this approach use the following media developments as evidence:
  - There is an increased concentration of press ownership into the hands of a few individuals
  - There are lots of multimedia **conglomerates**. For example, Trinity Mirror had 155 newspapers, and more than 200 websites.
  - These conglomerates operate on a global scale. As a result of this, now most of what we see/hear comes from a small amount of multinational media empires.

### Exam questions

1. Discuss how far sociologists would agree that the audience decides what is seen and heard in the mass media. *(12 marks)*
2. Discuss how far sociologists would agree that the political views presented by the mass media are those of the rich and powerful in society. *(12 marks)*

## 5. The internet and the distribution of power

### Key words:

**Pressure groups:** a group of people who try and persuade the government to adopt a particular policy or to influence public opinion on an issue.

Some sociologists argue that developments in digital technology will result in the reduction of power and influence of media owners. This is because digital technology (internet) allows everyone (not just media owners or journalists) to produce media content rather than just consume it. For example, internet blogs and websites enable individuals and **pressure groups** to publish their views and join in public debates.

Pressure groups can use the internet to set up websites which publish their aims or causes. This enables such groups to spread the word about their cause (e.g. human rights) and gives them more power to communicate globally. Pressure groups can also use the internet to organise protests and to collect online petitions. By using the internet pressure groups could **gain more members, exert influence on politicians and inform public opinion.**

By changing the way we receive information some have argued that the internet has given **power to ordinary people**. *E.g. allowing people to create their own media can give others access to information governments may not want people to have. Example for your exam: WikiLeaks is an international, online organisation which publishes secret information, news leaks, and confidential media from anonymous sources.*

1. Describe **one** way in which groups such as environmentalists might use digital media to promote their cause **and** explain how successful this might be. (5 marks)
2. Describe **one** way in which digital media have given more power to ordinary people **and** explain why this may cause problems for governments. (5 marks)
3. Describe **one** way in which digital media such as the internet have changed how we get information **and** explain why this may make it difficult for governments to control access to information. (5 marks)

## 6. Media Representations

### Key words

- **Media representation** - this refers to the way a social group is portrayed in the mass media (i.e. the image they are given) For example, you could write. *"The media representation of old people is often that they are frail and unable to cope with the modern world"*
- **Stereotype** - this refers to an exaggerated story or representation of a social group. For example, you could write *"The stereotypical image of teenagers from working class backgrounds is that they are chavs who hang around estates causing trouble"*
- **Media representations** of particular social groups can be positive or negative.
  - For example, disabled people being shown as brave, courageous and tough (e.g. during the TV coverage of the Paralympics) could be seen as positive.
  - Whereas the stereotype of the young, black male who is tough and violent and involved in gangs and street crime that is often seen in TV and film dramas creates a negative image.

Sociologists study the media representations or portrayals of different social groups such as women or black people.

### Women in the media:

Research indicates that, in 1950s, 60s, 70s, media representations of women were **stereotypical** rather than **realistic**. The media images of women did not reflect the range of roles that they actually play in society.

#### **Gender representations in the past**

- 1) **Women seen as inferior to men**- It is the old fashioned view that women were not as intelligent, brave and resourceful as men, and should concern themselves with children and housework.
- 2) **Women seen as housewives**- Adverts for household goods, such as cleaning materials and food, were aimed at women. This can be seen as a reflection of the old-fashioned view that a woman's place was in the home
- 3) **Women seen as sex objects**- Women have traditionally been used in advertising to sell products through selling sex.

**However**, since the 1970s, there have been some changes in Media's representations of women. In your exam you must be able to create a **for and against** argument for the question are media representations **still stereotypical**.

<b>Media representations of women are still stereotypical</b>	<b>Media representations of women are no longer stereotypical</b>
Women are invisible in much press and television coverage of sport. When women's sport is reported, it is often trivialised 'sexualise and devalue women's sporting accomplishments'.	The situation has improved in recent years, with a number of films and dramas and games showing women taking the lead

<p>Female magazines are dominated by advertising that is concerned with appearance, make-up and hair, developing an 'ideal' body through exercise and so remaining 'attractive' to men.</p>	<p>Children's books that present women and men in non-stereotypical roles are becoming more widely available</p>
<p>Women tend to be shown in a limited number of stereotypical roles in films and television, for example, as dumb sexy blondes, as contented housewives, or as ruthless career women.</p>	<p>The changing nature of the female characters in the Bond films over the years also illustrates how women are more likely now to be portrayed as strong, resourceful and intelligent main characters with varied ambitions and interests. Bond's latest boss, a woman, refers to him as a 'sexist, misogynist dinosaur' in <i>Goldeneye</i>.</p>
<p><i>That's why mum's go to Iceland</i>" (advertising slogan used by the supermarket's TV campaign in 2009)</p>	<p>Sainsbury's 'seaside' advert. Depicting the 'new man' who looks after the children and prepares the meals whilst the mother works.</p>

- **Feminist sociologists argue that women are 'symbolically annihilated'** in the media- shown that their views are limited in comparison to men. This may result in women learning that their roles are less important than those of men. These images and messages build up over time and contribute to the process of gender socialisation-learning our gender roles.

## Men in the Media

Traditionally male family-roles were represented as secondary compared with the primary representation of men as workers, high-powered businessman and leaders. Things have changed and men are now portrayed differently in the media. Some writers have also seen evidence of the emergence of a new type of masculinity.

**The 'New Man'**- *This man is more sensitive, more concerned with his appearance and more in touch with his feminine side, while still having certain masculine characteristics.*

Men's bodies are now sexualized in this period by the media - they have become subjected to a "**female gaze**".

### **Harmful consequences of media stereotyping**

- There is evidence of men having more concerns about their appearance and sexual attractiveness, their body size and shape, their diet, health and dress sense
- 8% of cosmetic surgery is now carried out on men.
- An *Observer* and Nivea for Men survey in 2004 found that 21% had been in the past or were currently on a diet.
- Increase in eating disorders among men

## Ethnic stereotyping:

The view of the world we get from the media is often highly stereotyped. Media images of ethnicity have been criticised for portraying minority ethnic groups in negative ways and often as victims of **moral panics**.

Ethnic minorities in the media are stereotyped...	Ethnic minorities in the media are realistic.	Conclusion- Is the representation of ethnic minorities STILL highly stereotyped?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1920s-1950s- Black people either absent or underrepresented.</li> <li>• When black people were represented it was often in narrow roles: <i>criminals, singers, dancers or sports people</i></li> <li>• 1970s- report on race issues negatively. <i>E.g. In Britain, reports often associated black people with crime, conflict and riots.</i></li> </ul>	<p><b>Research suggests that in the 1990s there were changes in the representation of race and ethnicity</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More black actors playing ordinary characters rather than unrealistic stereotypes</li> <li>• Comedy programmes like Everybody Hates Chris and Little Miss Jocelyn show Black and Asian people in a range of different roles</li> <li>• In 2009 EastEnders ran an episode with an all-black cast.</li> <li>• There are big international pop stars who are black e.g. Beyonce, Nicky Minaj, Will.i.am - they are rich and powerful in the media</li> </ul> <p><b>More recently sociologists have found evidence that the media still portray ethnic minorities in distorted ways- Stories about British Asians tend to be focused on forced marriages, terrorism runaway girls and young black males are often represented as gang members.</b></p>	<p><b>Yes: Stereotyping is still common in the mass media but the stereotypes have changed (e.g. Muslim terrorists, black gang members) and are still as damaging as the 'black Sambo's and 'Big Mamas' of the past</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>OR</b></p> <p><b>No: Stereotyping is rare - we see Black and Asian in a wide range of roles and characters in the mass media and this reflect real life</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>The conclusion is up to you!!!!</b></p>

### Exam questions

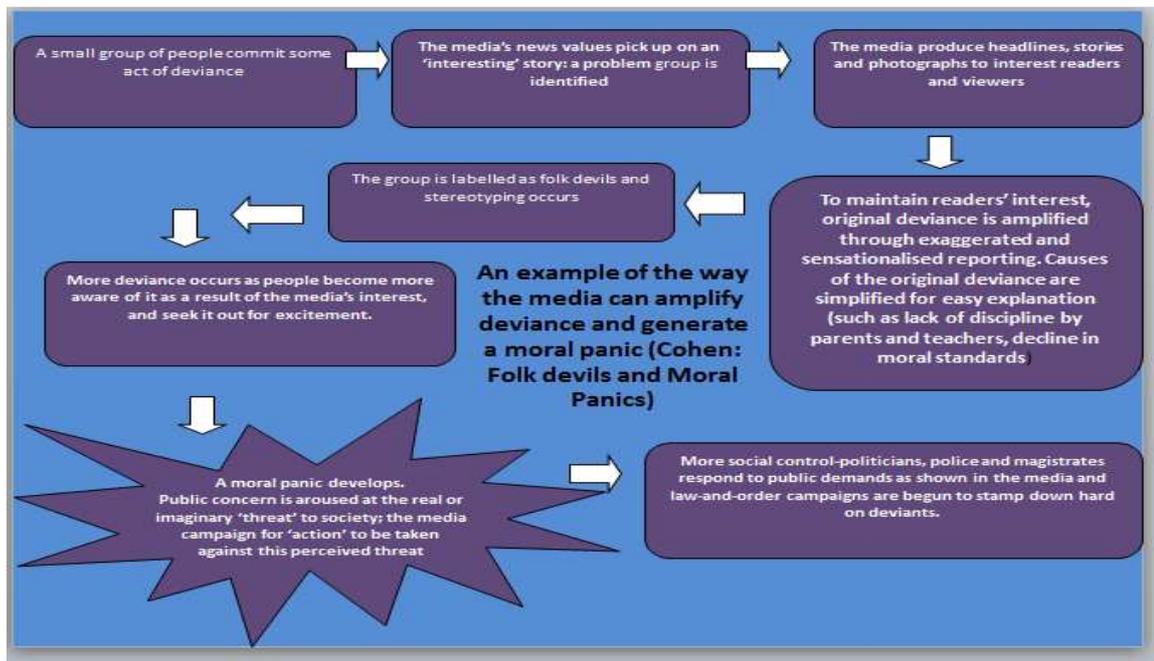
1. Suggest two negative media stereotypes of ethnic minority groups (4 marks)
2. Suggest two positive stereotypes of ethnic minority groups (4 marks)
3. Explain what sociologists means by the term stereotypes (4 marks)
4. Discuss how far sociologists would agree that the mass media present a stereotyped image of Black and Asian people (12 marks)

## Deviancy amplification

### Key words

- **Moral panic:** A wave of public concern about some exaggerated or imaginary threat to society, stirred up by exaggerated and sensationalised reporting in the mass media.
- **Folk devils:** a group seen as a threat to societies values. Recent folk devils: *asylum seekers, single parents, young people (hoodies)*
- **Deviancy amplification:** The way the media may actually create or make worse the very problems they condemn.

Explanation: Stan Cohen argues that the media are involved in the creation of moral panics. Moral panics involve exaggerating the extent and significance of a social problem. In a moral panic, a particular group is classed as a folk devil. The group is portrayed in stereotypical terms by the mass media and as a consequence the media makes worse the problems they condemn (portray as bad).



#### Example of deviance amplification: Cohen - mods and rockers

The news story led to:

- Public fear
- More young people involved
- More police suspicious/arresting young people

The media 'amplified' the level of violence and caused more crime

#### Exam questions

1. Explain what sociologists mean by deviancy amplification. (4 marks)
2. Describe **one** way in which the mass media may amplify deviance **and** explain how this may affect some minority social groups. (5 marks)

## 8. Key debate: Does violent media exposure encourage violence?

The media can be seen as having potentially harmful effects on audiences, this has generated **public debates** in recent years an area of concern is whether media exposure encourages **real-life or copycat violence**, particularly among children.

The media can cause violence	The media doesn't cause violence
<p>The hypodermic syringe approach, believes that there is a <b>DIRECT link between the violent behaviour shown on TV, computer games etc and anti-social and criminal behaviour in real life</b>. It sees the media as having the power to influence audiences to commit <b>copycat crimes</b>.</p>	<p><b>Uses and gratifications approach</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People have choice and are not just moulded by media (NOT PASSIVE)</li> <li>• People have different uses/needs from media - personal identity/escapism / information</li> <li>• Media violence - people can tell difference between violence in news and that in fiction, ie) games/films</li> </ul>
<p>An example of copycat violence in the media- <i>after watching the film Childs Play 3, A gang in Manchester tortured a 16-year-old girl, set her afire and left her dying, while one of the attackers repeated a line from the movie: "I'm Chucky- wanna play?"</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sociologists like Gauntlett, argue studies which interview young people involved in violence, fail to show a strong connection between screen violence and real-life violence.</li> <li>• Gauntlett argues that children are more sophisticated than we think in their understanding of what is real and what isn't. Some sociologists have also argued that the fear of new media forms is just another example of <i>moral panic</i>.</li> </ul>
<p>Psychologist (Bandura) carried out an <b>experiment on the relationship between media images and behaviour</b>. <i>Bandura concluded that violent media content could lead to imitation or copy cat violence (Note: research supports the HSM).</i></p>	<p>Sociologists criticise Bandura and the use of experiments for researching the effects of media violence on audiences as they involve putting participants in artificial situations. This questions the validity of such research as how do we know that the children's behaviour was not affected by knowing they were observed.</p>
	<p><b>Peak and Fisher (1996)</b> argue that television is not to blame for violence and crime. Television has been used as a scapegoat for deep-rooted social problems. They suggest that the causes of violence and crime are more likely to be found in poverty, unemployment, poor socialisation and personality traits.</p>

### **Key research: Bandura**

*He made a film of a young woman beating up a Bobo doll. Bandura showed his film to groups of small children and another film which was non violent to another group of children. They then were let out to play! In the play room there was a Bobo doll and various toys; including toy hammers. Bandura watched as the kids who watched the violent film beat the daylight out of the Bobo doll while the others did not really pay it attention. In other words, they imitated the young lady in the film. The children changed their behaviour in response to what they had seen on the TV*

## Exam questions

1. Describe **one** way in which the portrayal of violence in the mass media is claimed to lead to an increased level of violence in society **and** explain why sociologists might find problems researching such a claim. *(5 marks)*
2. Discuss how far sociologists would agree that violence in the mass media leads to violence in real life. *(12 marks)*

HAPPY REVISING YEAR 11 ☺