

Activity answers

Chapter 2: Mass media

Unit 1: Media institutions

Activity 1 (page 76)

Why is each picture an example of the mass media?

The mass media can be defined in terms of a range of different means of communication, involving the production of different types of content aimed at and received by a mass audience. In this respect, therefore, each of the pictures (the advertising billboard for *Lost*, computer games such as *Grand Theft Auto*, Lil Wayne's music CD, DVDs such as *The Devil Wears Prada* and the novels of John Le Carré) is an example of the mass media.

Activity 2 (page 78)

1 How does Item A illustrate both vertical and horizontal integration?

Vertical integration refers to 'the process by which one owner acquires all aspects of production and distribution of a single type of media product' – an idea illustrated by Time Warner in relation to its growth through mergers and acquisitions. Its Warner Brothers Entertainment division, for example, not only produces films and TV series, it also distributes these products on DVD to a worldwide audience.

Horizontal integration, on the other hand, refers to the process by which one company buys different media, thereby concentrating ownership *across* those media. This process is illustrated by Time Warner in terms of its various media interests and holdings. These include magazine publishing, television programming and delivery (via Time Warner Cable), film production and distribution, pay television services and the provision of web services.

2 How do Items A and B indicate media concentration?

According to Williams (2003), media concentration involves the idea that 'Fewer and fewer large companies increasingly own what we see, hear and read' – a situation illustrated by the items in two ways: **1** Time Warner (Item A) has grown, through a policy of mergers and acquisitions (Time merged with Warner Communications and acquired both Turner Broadcasting System and AOL), to become the world's largest media company. It owns and controls a wide range of media interests, from print, through film and television, to the online world. **2** The number of companies with media interests in the USA (Item B) has declined significantly over the past two decades – from 50 corporations in 1983 to just five in 2004.

Unit 2: Ownership and control of the media

Activity 3 (page 80)

What support do these items provide for the pluralist view that the media cater for a range of groups in society?

The general pluralist view is that no one group is dominant in any society and that, to some extent, a wide variety of groups compete for a say in how society is run. Individuals, in this respect, are presented with a range of political choices over who governs a society. For pluralists, therefore, the basic argument is that in a society characterised by a range of competing groups the media will both reflect and cater for this plurality.

This view is supported by the items in two main ways:

1 Within society generally the magazines shown cater for a wide variety of different views, interests and groups – from politics (*Newsweek*), through economics (*Investors Chronicle*), to leisure pursuits and interests (fashion, sport, music, gardening and so on). **2** Within any area of society (such as how people use their leisure time) the media cater for a similarly diverse range of interests. In terms of fashion, for example, magazines such as *Vogue* and *Cosmopolitan* are aimed at different social groups, while in terms of music a wide variety of genres (from hip-hop to rock and all points in between) are catered for by the media.

Activity 4 (pages 82–83)

How do Items A, B, C and D support the claim that proprietors sometimes influence the content of the news media?

The claim that proprietors sometimes influence the content of the news media – both directly and indirectly – is supported in various ways by the items. Evidence for direct influence (characteristic of the instrumental approach) can be found in Item D. Searby argues that while the function of most company boards is to take decisions, the main function of the News Corporation board was to 'rubber stamp' decisions made by the majority shareholder Rupert Murdoch. A further example of direct control – over and above the possible wishes of newspaper editors and staff (they were never consulted) – was Murdoch's personal decision to change the political support given by his company from the Conservative Party to the Labour Party (Item D).

Evidence for indirect intervention (the structural approach) is also provided by Item D. Searby notes that such was

the fear of Murdoch's 'autocratic intervention' that board members would try to 'second guess' what he would want in his absence. In other words, Murdoch did not have to directly intervene to impose his decisions on the News Corporation board – they implemented what they believed to be his ideas and wishes without having to be told. The cartoon in Item B provides further evidence for the indirect approach in that once Murdoch had made his views about war with Iraq generally known his newspapers throughout the world backed his stance by supporting the call for war. This is an example of allocative control, a situation whereby Murdoch had the power to set the goals of his organisation (such as support for the Iraq war or a political party) in the knowledge that his staff could be trusted (or coerced) into realising these goals.

A combination of these approaches can be found in Items A and C. In Item A Murdoch used his position as owner and chief executive to give an interview to one of his own newspapers backing President Bush's stance against Saddam Hussein and calling for war against Iraq. As Item C demonstrates, the editors of various News Corporation publications took note of their owner's political stance and duly produced headlines and articles that reflected and backed their owner's position.

Activity 5 (page 84)

Use Items A, B and C to show how the drive for profits may affect media content.

There are various ways in which the drive for profits may affect media content. In terms of programme content, for example, Item A suggests that the need to attract as large an audience as possible leads media companies to focus on 'human interest' stories rather than hard news – an 'infotainment' agenda whereby news reporting has become part of the entertainment industry. In other words, rather than running the risk of frightening people (war reporting) or depressing people ('unemployment reaches seven million') – and thereby making them switch channels or buy a different newspaper – media companies provide material designed to entertain rather than question or offend. Item B, on the other hand, illustrates how the drive for profitability (by creating larger, highly-centralised, national media companies) runs the risk of providing a generalised service to consumers that focuses on the larger national picture and neglects local interests. In other words, large media companies that focus on attracting a widespread, national, audience have to cater for that audience in terms of their common interests – and local news and programming, while important to small communities, is not something that fits with the economics (and profitability) of large media corporations. Item C demonstrates the way media owners use cross-promotion techniques (such as featuring products or services created by another part of the company) in an attempt to increase profits. However, this practice effectively limits media content because it restricts the products featured by media

outlets to those endorsed and promoted by the parent company.

Activity 6 (page 85)

How might a Marxist interpret Items A and B?

A Marxist interpretation of Item A might focus on Miliband's (1973) description of the media as the new 'opium of the people'. Popular soap operas like *EastEnders* – drawing audiences in their millions – function as a hallucinatory drug, creating illusions (of intimacy and community) and producing a general feeling of wellbeing that keeps the working class quiet and encourages them to accept a system which, in reality, exploits them. In this respect, such programmes serve three main purposes: **1** People's attention is diverted from the unfair nature of capitalist society. **2** They create the impression that nothing is radically wrong with the world in which we live. **3** They provide entertainment, enjoyment and a sense of wellbeing for millions.

A Marxist interpretation of the National Lottery (Item B), on the other hand, might focus on its ideological importance and significance. Miliband (1973), for example, argues that a ruling class in capitalist society always needs to find ways of persuading the rest of society to accept widespread inequalities – and something like the Lottery is an effective way to do this for two reasons: **1** Everyone who enters has an equal chance of winning – something that promotes the idea that inequality is based on things like luck or chance rather than the structural design of capitalist society. **2** If you do win, your life will change as you become very rich – something that promotes the idea of inequality as both desirable and acceptable.

Activity 7 (page 86)

How can Items A and B be seen as challenges to cultural hegemony in the USA?

Cultural hegemony involves the dominance of one set of ideas in any society. Neo-Marxists such as Gramsci and Hall (1995) believe that the ideology of the ruling class tends to be dominant, but they also believe that this dominance is never complete and there are always competing viewpoints which challenge ruling class hegemony. Sometimes these challenges can be sufficient to produce social change. The two items provide examples of the way that ruling class ideology can be questioned, especially during crises.

Item A, for example, offers an explicit challenge to ideological justifications made by the American government for the invasion of Iraq. It shows how the government's attempts to justify the invasion were undermined in Michael Moore's documentary *Fahrenheit 9/11*. This convincingly argued that the real reason for the invasion of Iraq was to secure control over the country's oil reserves, and the claims that Iraq posed a danger to world peace and possessed weapons of mass destruction were shown to be false.

Item B demonstrates a challenge to cultural hegemony in the sense that, following Hurricane Katrina and the devastation and death it caused, the American press started asking difficult questions about the government's response (or lack of response) to the crisis. Eventually, the media raised much deeper questions about the nature of a society in which the rich and powerful were given substantial tax cuts while the poor and powerless were left to suffer without food, clean water or shelter for days and weeks after the disaster.

Unit 3: Globalisation, the media and culture

Activity 8 (page 87)

How do Items A and B illustrate globalisation?

The items illustrate several dimensions of globalisation.

1 Political globalisation is illustrated in Item A – the 2001 attack on the World Trade Center. The buildings attacked were symbolic of America's global political reach and therefore the attack represented a protest against the American political (and economic) presence in Muslim countries.

2 Economic globalisation is illustrated in Item B in the sense that individual nation-states are increasingly part of a global economic system. In particular this has involved the growth of transnational corporations (TNCs), such as Coca-Cola, who are able to produce and sell their products in many different markets around the world.

3 Cultural globalisation is a further dimension illustrated in Item B in that it shows how the world is increasingly exposed to Western tastes (such as Coca-Cola), styles, fashions, music and films transmitted by international marketing and transnational media corporations.

4 Item A also illustrates the globalisation of risk. The 9/11 attacks showed that the USA was unable to keep the risk of international terrorism away from the territory of the United States itself.

5 In addition, Item A illustrates the increasingly global nature of population movements because the attackers were able to travel freely and live in America while they planned their attacks.

Activity 9 (page 88)

How can these items be used to support the idea of cultural imperialism?

Cultural imperialism involves the imposition of Western culture on developing countries, an idea supported by the items in two main ways: **1** Transnational media organisations transmit Western values and attributes across the developing world. This idea is supported by both the pirated DVDs being bought in China (including Western titles like Disney's *Sleeping Beauty*) and the availability of

translated Western (American Hollywood) films (such as *8 Mile* and *Lord of the Rings*) in countries such as Vietnam. The basic idea here, therefore, is that Western values are propagated in developing countries through both the legal and illegal availability of Western products. **2** An extension of this idea is Williams' (2003) argument that the cultures of the developing world (rather than simply the individuals who buy Western products) are shaped by exposure to the Western ideas, attributes and values contained in the media products featured in the items.

Activity 10 (page 90)

How can these items be used to question the idea of cultural imperialism?

The idea of cultural imperialism can be questioned through the items in two main ways: **1** Various forms of broadcasting have developed around the globe, aimed specifically at particular national or regional populations. Aljazeera (Item A) is an example of this type of broadcasting in that it provides an alternative to Western-produced global news channels. A further dimension here is that broadcasters like Aljazeera, with its 30 news-gathering offices around the world, are able to create home-produced programming that either replaces or displaces imported media products.

2 Minority ethnic media forms have developed in a couple of ways. Firstly, local programmes from developing countries are exported to Western societies, as illustrated in Item B by the poster for an Indian-produced film displayed in Brick Lane, east London. Secondly, minority ethnic groups produce their own media products that reflect the culture of their countries of origin. Examples in Item B include Red Records in Brixton, south London, specialising in African-Caribbean music, *The Voice*, an African-Caribbean newspaper, and Sunrise Radio, an Asian radio station.

Activity 11 (page 91)

Why does the Chinese government want to regulate the output of foreign media companies?

There are a range of reasons for the Chinese government wanting to regulate the output of foreign media companies, which relate to two main areas: **1** In terms of official government reasoning the item quotes Liu Chang Lee who suggests there is a need for Western companies to understand the particular (cultural) environment in Chinese society – how its norms, values, beliefs, sensibilities and attitudes, for example, may differ from those in Western societies. In addition, output is regulated on the basis that the government wants to ensure that foreign media organisations obey Chinese law and that they 'are not seeking to destabilise China, sow the seeds of social or political trouble, or weaken China's sense of cultural identity'. **2** A further, unofficial, aspect of regulation, however, is that of censorship. The Chinese government would not allow media companies (such as the BBC) to have

their programmes broadcast if the government believed such programmes were critical of China. In short, the Chinese government tries to prohibit any output which has the potential to undermine the power of government elites.

Unit 4: Selection and presentation of news

Activity 12 (pages 93–94)

1 Assess the 'newsworthiness' of the news stories in Items A and B using the list of news values.

In terms of the list of news values, Item A would not rank very highly in terms of 'newsworthiness'. Although the item has some **significance** (it relates to rising sea levels that might potentially affect a UK audience and there is a general human interest angle to people losing their homes) there is very little **drama** or **surprise** involved (the Tuvaluans might be forced to abandon their homes at some unspecified point in the future). There are no **personalities** involved and the story doesn't feature any type of **scandal** (sexual or criminal). The **numbers** involved are relatively small and, in terms of **proximity**, it is something happening far away on a Pacific island which few of the potential audience would have heard of.

Item B, on the other hand, is a highly newsworthy story which fits many of the news values on the list. The story is focused around a royal **personality** (Prince Harry) and is given a certain level of **drama** by the claim that his behaviour (which might be considered **scandalous** in the context of the royal family) potentially puts his life in danger. This, in turn, gives the story a **surprise** element in two ways: firstly that of trying to understand why someone in Harry's position would behave in this way, and secondly in terms of the decision of his bodyguard to request a transfer away from royal protection. Although the scale of the event, in terms of **numbers** involved, is small, the fact that one of the people involved is a royal prince gives it **significance** in both political terms (if any harm came to Harry this would be politically very significant) and human terms – the story suggests that Harry's chosen lifestyle is not one that would normally be associated with a prince. Finally, in terms of **proximity** it is an event that occurs very close to the intended audience.

2 What point is being made by the cartoon in Item C?

The cartoon is making the point that to enable newsworthy events to be understood by audiences, the news media place them within some kind of familiar framework – in this instance one that contrasts the 'reasonableness' of official government thinking with the 'unreasonableness' of the thinking of a small, unrepresentative, minority. A further point – that news media are able to find ways to get around their obligation to be impartial and unbiased – could also be taken from the cartoon.

In this instance the general framework is one of political debate which, in the interests of a legal obligation to provide 'balance and impartiality', involves two sides: a government spokesman and someone opposed to the government's argument. However, media bias is illustrated by the way the two sides are labelled in the introduction. The government side is labelled impartially – the presenter simply describes the function of the individual. The opposition spokeswoman, however, is introduced partially using a variety of labels designed to tell an audience how they should respond: this individual is 'wild-eyed' (a label used to suggest insanity and a lack of self-control), 'militant' (a 'troublemaker' who, unlike the government spokesman, can't be trusted to be impartial, even-handed and willing to listen to rational argument) and from the 'lunatic fringe' (something that reinforces the idea of madness and suggests that the spokeswoman's views are held by a very small minority).

What does it suggest about the influence of the powerful?

The cartoon suggests that the powerful (in this case the government and the news media) have a great deal of influence in terms of the way they can: **1** Set the framework under which something will be discussed and understood (the cartoon is framed as a debate between a 'reasonable' official source and an opposition characterised by its unrepresentative unreasonableness). **2** Act as primary definers of a situation. The interpretive context set by the media here (and by extension the government through their participation in the debate) is that official sources should be listened to, trusted and believed, because they are contrasted with opposing views that have been effectively ridiculed. While the opposition view is heard, their voice is drowned out by the description used to introduce their spokeswoman.

3 What does Item D suggest about the claim that TV news is objective?

Item D suggests that TV news is not objective in terms of the way it describes the opposing sides in the Palestinian intifada. It suggests, on the contrary, that broadcasters 'take sides' (sometimes openly and directly but perhaps more often indirectly) – an assessment supported by the way language is used to describe each side. While Palestinian deaths were described in moderate, neutral tones, Israeli deaths were described using more emotive, loaded language (such as 'lynching' and 'savage cold-blooded killing').

Activity 13 (page 95)

1 What framework is the British news media using?

The framework used by the British media was one of support for the British government, army and war effort against Iraq. In this situation, where Iraq was seen as an enemy and a threat, the language used to describe the (same) behaviour of each side clearly demonstrates both the framework and lack of objectivity displayed throughout the British news

media. Their task, as they interpreted it, was to provide propaganda support for the British war effort.

2 The Iraqi news media was tightly controlled by Saddam Hussein's regime.

a) What framework might they use?

It is likely that the news media in Saddam Hussein's regime would have used a similar framework to that adopted by the British news media – one of support for the Iraqi war effort that involved describing the opposition forces in uncomplimentary and disparaging terms. In both instances the news media acted as primary definers of the news framework. However, the main difference between the British and Iraqi news media is that while the former adopted their supporting framework willingly and without the need for explicit government coercion (which left room for some anti-war voices to be heard in the media), the latter had no choice but to support Saddam Hussein's regime and war effort.

b) Suggest two phrases they might use to describe the Allies.

There are numerous phrases that could be chosen here. For example: 'imperialist dogs', 'foreign invaders', 'cowardly infidels', 'fanatical crusaders', 'mindless killers', 'Western bullies', 'Bush's bastards', and so on. Any phrases which stereotype the Allies and are critical of their actions could be used to answer this question.

Activity 14 (page 96)

With reference to the items, explain how media concern over paedophilia can be described as a moral panic.

Cohen (1987) suggests that a moral panic exists when 'a condition, episode, person or group of persons emerges to become defined as a threat to societal values and interests'. He further suggests that those perceived as 'a threat to social order' are often portrayed as 'folk devils' – a characterisation that arguably fits neatly with both items. In Item A, for example, a social group ('paedophiles') is linked to both a particular condition (the way 'sick' individuals use the internet to 'trap' children into sex) and episode (the murder of four children) to create a folk devil against whom action must be taken by the authorities. This theme is continued in Item B in terms of a 'public reaction' to such folk devils that is characteristic of a moral panic. Such a reaction stemmed initially from a media campaign ('How do you know if there's a paedophile in your midst?') to 'name and shame every paedophile in Britain' and rapidly spread to various other forms of reaction – the search for 'paedophiles', reporting child abusers living in a particular locality and, in some instances, the presence of violent mobs and vigilante actions against 'suspected sex offenders'.

Goode and Ben-Yehuda (1994) further clarify the concept of a moral panic when they argue that it has five distinguishing features, each of which is in evidence in the items:

1 Increased public concern over the behaviour of a certain group is evidenced in both items in terms of the media and public reactions. **2** Increased hostility towards the group can be seen in Item A (and also in the emotive language used to describe sex offenders), and in Item B, where such hostility was expressed in terms of physical as well as verbal aggression. **3** A certain level of public agreement that there is a real threat and that it is caused by the group is shown by both items linking paedophilia/child abuse directly to child murder. **4** Public concern is out of proportion to the real harm caused by the group. While paedophilia and murder are clearly important concerns in our society there is little evidence that these practices (either alone or in combination) are particularly widespread. Although the items link paedophilia/child abuse directly to child murder, the connection is by no means automatic (most child abusers do not murder children). **5** Moral panics appear and disappear very quickly. Although this is perhaps the most debatable feature of a paedophilia moral panic (it rumbles on in the media from time to time), in this particular instance, where there were extreme public reactions (mob violence), such behaviour was both localised and short-lived.

Activity 15 (pages 97–98)

1 Read Items A, B, C and D. What justification is there for the views of the judge and Sir Ivan Lawrence?

In terms of the actual incident (the murder of a 2-year-old child by two 11-year-old boys) there is no evidence in the items to justify either the judge's conclusion that 'exposure to violent films may in part be an explanation' or Sir Ivan Lawrence's claim that exposure to televised or film violence 'was a major reason for the rise in juvenile crime'. This follows for two main reasons: **1** Although there were certain similarities between scenes in the video and the killing of the child there is no evidence that either of the killers had watched the film (*Child's Play 3*) on which the claims were based. **2** The Merseyside police detectives who interviewed the boys for several weeks before the trial found no evidence – despite going through 'something like 200 titles rented by the family' – of any scenes that could be directly related to the murder.

Why do you think they reacted in this way?

The murder featured in Items B and C was a particularly shocking event for two main reasons. Firstly, the victim was a very young child (2 years old) while the perpetrators were themselves very young children (both 11 years old). Secondly, this type of incident (children killing children) is extremely rare in our society. The combination of these two factors made it very difficult for those involved in the event (police, courts, politicians and so on) to make sense of what had happened and, more importantly, why it had happened. In this respect, the judge – as a primary definer in the incident – made a connection between two things that may

or may not be related, namely, exposure to violent films and a propensity to commit violent acts. This connection was further cemented by the idea that young children represent a vulnerable audience – one that is easily led and influenced. In so doing an explanatory framework was set up that allowed both the judge and the politician (Ivan Lawrence) to look for an explanation that would allow an understanding of what was, on the face of things, highly unusual and inexplicable behaviour. This was duly found in something – exposure to violent images – that appeared to make the behaviour explicable. The young children had, through exposure to violence (either directly in the case of *Child's Play 3* or indirectly through continued exposure to violence contained in films rented by the family), either copied the behaviour they had witnessed or come to see it as part of the 'normal' way people behaved.

2 Do you think the reactions in Items B, D, E, F and H can be described as a moral panic? With some reference to Item G, give reasons for your answer.

In terms of the criteria suggested by Goode and Ben-Yehuda (1994) the items can be described as a moral panic, albeit one not directed towards a particular social group but rather towards what are seen to be a particular set of harmful ideas, actions and practices: **1** Increased public concern (as measured in terms of media (Item H) and political reactions (Item D)) is in evidence before, during and immediately after the trial of the two boys. **2** Increased hostility is demonstrated by Items E and F – withdrawing a particular video from sale and the rather more hostile reaction of demanding that copies be burnt. **3** A certain level of public agreement about a real threat caused in some way by 'violent videos' is in evidence in terms of the media reaction (Item H). The general media consensus, as expressed in the items, is that there is a clear link between exposure to film violence and real violence (although this is sometimes qualified by arguing that the link only relates to those who are uniquely vulnerable to such influence. As Item H puts it: 'it seems quite possible that exposure to images of brutality could turn an already disturbed child towards violence'). **4** Moral panics appear and disappear very quickly. In terms of the behaviour of the media and politicians the sense of general outrage was relatively short-lived. **5** The idea that public concern is out of proportion to the real harm caused is, sociologically, a debatable idea given the problems involved in validly measuring variables like 'concern', 'proportion' and 'harm'. However, we can note that the public reaction could arguably be said to be disproportionate given that the relationship between 'violent films' and 'violent behaviour' was simply one suggested by a judge (and questioned by the detectives (Item C) who worked on the case).

Newburn (Item G) provides an important context to the interpretive framework used by the media (Items F and H) when he notes that 'moral panics about violent images' are a recurrent theme in our society – one based on the idea that

a violent and disordered present is repeatedly contrasted with 'a mythical golden age of tranquil behaviour' located some time in the recent past. As he suggests, such moral panics repeatedly occur in the context of new media developments, the most recent being in the 1980s with the development of home video players and the moral panic over so-called 'video nasties' such as *'Drillerkiller'*, which also led to a new law'.

Unit 5: Media representations

Activity 16 (pages 99–100)

1 Explain the results of the experiment in Item A, using the idea of stereotypes.

Stereotypes involve widely-held beliefs about the characteristics of different social groups such that all members of a particular group are seen to have certain attitudes, values and behaviours. They are generalisations about a group of people or their behaviour. In this respect, the results of the experiment can be explained in terms of the stereotypical views about Black and White people held by the participants. Where the participants had certain (negative) views about Blacks (that they were more likely to be violent, aggressive, law-breakers) and certain (positive) views about Whites (that they were unlikely to break the law in the way outlined in the experiment), such stereotypical beliefs were translated into an interpretation of what people 'saw' (or believed they saw). In other words, the strength of the stereotypical beliefs of some participants led them to see something that did not actually happen (the Black man threaten the White man). The experiment demonstrates the power and importance of interpretive frameworks (in this instance, the stereotyped beliefs the participants held about how Black and White people behave) in shaping 'what we see'.

2 Look at Item B.

a) Describe the changes in American stereotypes of Japanese.

American stereotypes of the Japanese change from being positive in 1932 (intelligent, industrious and progressive) to negative in 1950 (treacherous, sly and extremely nationalistic) to broadly positive in 1967 (industrious, ambitious and efficient).

b) Suggest reasons for these changes.

We can suggest three main reasons for the changes: **1** The Japanese attack on the American fleet at Pearl Harbor in 1941 which led to America declaring war on Japan. **2** The war itself and the fact that the Japanese were enemies of America. **3** The behaviour of some Japanese soldiers – in particular, the torture and execution of American prisoners of war.

Activity 17 (page 101)

1 What stereotypes are illustrated in these representations of women?

There are four main stereotypes illustrated in the item:

1 Housewife and mother (the woman pictured in the kitchen, her children playing around her, when her husband arrives home from work). **2** The woman as domestic servant is also illustrated by this representation, and by the middle picture which suggests women are responsible for domestic chores (such as the household laundry). **3** Domestic consumer: where women are seen as being responsible for the home (the cooking and cleaning represented in the first two pictures), they are also stereotyped as domestic consumers of products – such as the washing powder featured in the middle picture. **4** The right-hand picture shows a further form of stereotyping: the idea of women as sex objects. In this instance the woman can apparently be dressed and undressed at will.

2 How can they be seen as examples of patriarchal ideology?

These representations can be seen as examples of patriarchal ideology because they suggest that the various roles depicted (housewife, domestic consumer and sex object) are part of the natural and normal 'female role'. In this respect, therefore, they represent a set of beliefs (an ideology) that distort reality (these roles are culturally defined for and by women rather than being defined by 'women's nature') and support male dominance (men benefit from the 'free services' women provide around the home, while taking or being given the role of sex object places women in an inferior position to men).

Activity 18 (page 102)

1 How do the items illustrate changes in media representations of women?

In the past, as Tunstall (1983) notes, media representations of women emphasised their 'domestic, sexual, consumer and marital activities to the exclusion of all else. Women are depicted as busy housewives, as contented mothers, as eager consumers and as sex objects.' In this respect the items illustrate a range of changes in the way women are represented. **1** There is less emphasis on female domestic roles (none of the items feature women in this context). **2** While female sexuality is represented (by magazines like *Bed Head*), it is a very different form of sexuality – one that focuses less on women as objects of male desire and more on the idea of women finding fulfilment through the control and expression of their own sexuality. **3** While women are still represented as consumers there is less emphasis on domestic consumption (as part of the traditional wife/mother role). In its place we have female consumption as the basis of having fun (Fuji) or for self-adornment (*Bed Head*). **4** Each of the items, in slightly different ways, moves away from the idea of 'women and marriage' (with the notions of

dependency on men this has entailed in the past) towards the idea of greater female independence. The most obvious expression of this is the character of Lara Croft, as played by Angelina Jolie – a tough, resourceful and independent 'action hero'.

2 To what extent do you think the items accurately represent media representation of women today?

The items are generally accurate in terms of representations of women today in some parts of the media. They illustrate, for example, the idea that media representations are less likely to both rely on traditional stereotypes and portray women in a narrow range of subordinate roles. In this respect the items reflect representation changes across a range of media: **1** In terms of films, Gauntlett (2002) argues today's women and men tend to have similar skills and abilities, something represented by Angelina Jolie playing the central 'action hero' in *Tomb Raider* (a type of role traditionally occupied almost exclusively by men in the past). Jolie reflects the idea of women as not only physically attractive but also 'amazingly multi-skilled'. **2** In relation to magazines, the items demonstrate that there is now a much greater emphasis on two areas: firstly, young women seeking to control their own lives rather than being dependent on men ('my secret power', for example) and, secondly, women expressing their own sexuality (*Bed Head*) rather than finding 'fulfilment' through romance. **3** Finally, in terms of advertising, women are represented as both consumers in their own right (*Bed Head*) and as consumers of a range of non-domestic products (Fuji) – something that, in turn, arguably represents the idea of women as earners and consumers in ways that are independent of men.

However, the items may not be typical of representations of women in the whole of the media because some parts of the media still portray women in ways that reinforce traditional gender stereotypes. For example, Gauntlett (2002) found that women had relatively few speaking parts on American television, and the research by Newbold et al. (2002) found that television coverage of sportswomen tended to 'sexualise, trivialise and devalue women's sporting accomplishments'. Therefore, it may be impossible to generalise about whether the items accurately represent media representations of women today.

Activity 19 (pages 104–105)

How does each of the items demonstrate that media representations of ethnicity are changing?

The Benetton ads (Item A) demonstrate how media representations of ethnicity in advertising are changing in three particular ways: **1** Colonial images and crudely nationalistic emblems are much less acceptable to modern audiences than to those in the past and, consequently, these do not feature in the items. **2** Non-Whites are no longer under-represented in advertising. **3** Ethnic differences are increasingly likely to be acknowledged and celebrated

rather than ignored. The Benetton ads, in this respect, not only transmit a message of human unity in the face of ethnic and cultural differences, they also explicitly challenge racist assumptions and attitudes (a Black woman breast-feeding a White baby, for example).

This theme of challenging such attitudes and assumptions is carried over into Items B and C. Toscani's picture of the 'Black Queen' (Item C), for example, challenges our traditional ways of looking at and thinking about ethnicity through the development of new forms of representation (some of which have been carried through to advertising practices – the Benetton series of adverts being an important case in point). In the case of the 'Black Queen' this representation of ethnicity examines taken-for-granted assumptions about national (in this case British) identities, while the Obama/McCain colour switch (Item B) does something similar for American society in terms of the 2008 presidential election. The 'colour switch' suggests that being 'Black' or 'White' is no longer an important issue in American politics – what matters is the policies each candidate proposes.

Item D represents further important changes in the media representation of ethnicity. *Goodness Gracious Me*, for example, was one of the first programmes on British TV to feature an Asian cast. It also presented Asian British characters in the same situations and doing much the same sort of thing as White British characters – the idea of going out for a meal as featured in the item, for example. Finally, where Asian (and Black) characters have, in the past, been the target – both conscious and unconscious – of racist media representations, *Goodness Gracious Me* poked fun at these practices (as the idea of 'going for an English' demonstrates). It reverses racist media representations common in earlier years and shows them to be ridiculous.

Finally, the title of the programme is itself an example of changing media representations of ethnicity. The comedy film from which it was taken featured a white actor (Peter Sellers) 'blacked-up' as an Asian doctor.

Activity 20 (page 108)

What impression of youth is provided by Items A and B?

The most common framework used by news media to understand and explain the behaviour of youth is one that represents them as 'trouble' or, as Muncie (1999) puts it, 'depraved youth' who have no respect for authority. In this respect, the general impression of youth we get from the items is that they are 'out of control' – that the 'hooligans' depicted in Item A and the 'yobs' depicted in Item B are both symbolic and representative of all youth behaviour.

The items further demonstrate Pearson's (1983) argument that the 'youth as trouble' interpretive framework has a reasonably long media history – from the depiction of hooligans at the turn of the 20th century in Item A to a similar depiction at the turn of the 21st century in Item

B. Further impressions we gain from the items are the suggestion (Item A) that young people are easily influenced (ironically by some sections of the media, such as the comic book being read by the youth in the item); that their 'troubled youth' is a progressive process – from the initial learning stage at age 12 to becoming a 'full-fledged hooligan' by the age of 17 – and that 'the problem of youth' is one that has developed and expanded over the years – from the 'individual hooligan' represented in Item A to the 'teenage gangs' represented in Item B.

Activity 21 (page 109)

1 Look at Item A. What evidence is there of double standards in the treatment of *Scarlet* and *Zoo*?

The evidence in Item A suggests the operation of a double standard in two main ways – sexual orientation and attitudes to sexuality. 1 In terms of sexual orientation, for example, the double standard operates in that whereas Tesco is willing to sell a 'raunchy' heterosexual magazine like *Zoo*, it is unwilling to treat lesbian magazines in the same way.

2 In terms of attitudes to sexuality, a similar double standard applies – while magazines that are aimed at a male market, such as *Nuts* and *Zoo*, are considered acceptable, similar kinds of magazines, such as *Scarlet*, aimed at a female market, are considered unacceptable.

2 Look at Item B. Why are some companies unwilling to be associated with the drama *Queer as Folk*?

One obvious reason for the unwillingness of the companies to be associated with the drama is homophobia – a prejudice against gays and lesbians. In the case of the Pittsburgh Steelers – an American football club with a predominantly male, working class audience – this may arguably be the case. The explanation for their unwillingness to be associated with the drama is to be found in anti-gay prejudice.

In the case of fashion companies this kind of explanation – while always a possibility – may not tell the whole story. One reason for fashion companies not wanting to allow their brands to appear in the series is a desire not to have these brands exclusively associated with homosexuality, in the sense that by advertising on such a programme the brands would be sending out a clear statement – that their products are aimed at a homosexual audience. Such companies want to ensure that their products are aimed at all sexualities.

Unit 6: Media effects

Activity 22 (page 111)

To what extent does the behaviour of the radio audience support the hypodermic syringe theory?

Hypodermic syringe theory claims the mass media have a direct and immediate effect on people's behaviour, and this, on the face of things, seems to be the case with the

behaviour of the radio audience. People believed they were listening to a real news broadcast (rather than a radio play) and the item reports ‘widespread panic at the news that millions had been killed by Martian death rays’, and that ‘Thousands fled towns and cities and took to the hills.’

However, we need to keep in mind two things: **1** This was not a typical situation. The radio play was deliberately constructed to sound like a news broadcast and, in this respect, people may have been reacting to what they sincerely believed was ‘the news’ of an invasion (however unbelievable this may seem from our 21st-century viewpoint). This, therefore, was not necessarily a good example of a ‘media effect’ based around the hypodermic syringe model since it could be argued that it was the news itself, rather than the method of delivery, that caused the panic. **2** Even if we acknowledge ‘an effect’ on the audience, a further problem arises because not everyone reacted in the same way – although ‘thousands’ may have fled towns and cities, the audience for this play was much larger and the vast majority did not react in this way. We don’t, of course, know how many of these people heard the announcement that it was a play – but it does, at the least, suggest the hypodermic syringe theory is only valid for a ‘vulnerable’ (or highly susceptible/suggestible) minority.

Activity 23 (page 112)

How would you interpret this image of Madonna?

Any interpretation of this image will involve a range of factors based around people’s personal experience and membership of social groups (their age, gender, class, ethnicity and so on). In other words, what you ‘see’ in this image will be determined by a range of cultural factors. Some of these are personal to you (if, for example, you like Madonna’s music you will probably ‘see’ something quite different in the image compared with if you don’t like her music), and others are part of a wider set of cultural meanings. For example, gender differences within an audience may lead to different interpretations. Young men might see the image in terms of the ‘male gaze’, something that might involve the idea of seeing Madonna as flaunting her sexuality for the benefit of men and, by extension, teaching young women to see themselves as they think men would like to see them. Young women, on the other hand, might interpret the image in terms of seeing Madonna as a strong, liberated woman who challenges the mainstream model of femininity.

Activity 24 (page 113)

1a) Which picture is typical of the strike?

The picture showing police and pickets ‘milling around’, not doing much and not engaging in any kind of violent confrontation, is generally typical of the strike itself. The picture showing violent confrontation between the police

and the strikers, on the other hand, is typical of the way the strike was reported in the media.

b) Why do you think TV news focused on violent confrontations?

The focus on violent confrontations reflected the ‘news values’ of TV news, whereby some forms of behaviour are considered more newsworthy than others. For example, TV news values things like **drama** (the excitement and action of a violent confrontation between strikers and the police); **surprise** (the unpredictable and fast-moving pace of violent confrontations for example – and the fact that such confrontations are not particularly common in our society also adds a novelty or surprise value when they do occur); **numbers** involved (thousands of striking miners facing hundreds of police on the street); and **proximity** (the fact such confrontations were taking place in towns and cities in Britain). Given this, it is not surprising that the images TV news finds attractive are those relating to violent confrontations rather than the more humdrum daily interactions between strikers and police that contain little or no action, confrontation or violence.

2 Why did people interpret the news in different ways?

There are two main reasons we can identify for the different ways the news (Item B) was interpreted: **1** Personal experience. The research found, for example, that ‘none of those who had direct knowledge of the strike – the miners and police – believed that picketing was mostly violent’. This suggests people rely, initially at least, on their personal knowledge in order to interpret and make sense of an event. Thus, for those with direct experience of the strike, media interpretations of what happened were largely rejected because they did not fit their personal experiences. **2** Social background. The research showed that those with no personal knowledge or experience of the events surrounding the strike ‘interpreted the media’s version in terms of their experiences and previously held attitudes and beliefs’. This doesn’t, however, mean they simply accepted the predominant media coverage (which portrayed the picketing as mostly violent). Rather, it suggests that where people rely on the media for information this information is likely to be filtered through their personal beliefs.

Around half (54 per cent) of those interviewed believed the picketing was mostly violent (something that reflected media coverage) – but this means that nearly half of those interviewed (46 per cent) did not necessarily accept that the media coverage was a valid representation of the strike. What this research suggests, therefore, is that those who generally supported the strikers (even though they had no personal involvement or experience of the strike) would reject media interpretations and representations of events. The reverse, of course, is also true: those who were inclined to support the police against the strikers may have been more inclined to accept ‘official’ (media) interpretations of the nature of the strike. What the research shows, therefore, is that the media audience is an active one. It selects and

interprets media output, and people construct their own meanings based on individual experience and group membership.

Activity 25 (page 115)

Use these pictures to support the view that hip-hop/rap is interpreted differently by different performers and audiences.

Bennett's (2001) study of White rappers in Newcastle upon Tyne gives an insight into the way hip-hop/rap is interpreted differently by different performers and audiences in a number of ways: **1** This musical genre has its origins in Black urban ghettos in America (as personified in Item B by the Black American rapper 50 Cent) but has since spread to become a global musical phenomenon which is interpreted by different performers in different ways. White artists, such as Skinnyman (Item D), have used rap to express their own particular (ethnic) concerns and attitudes, much as Black rappers like Dizzy Rascal have used it to articulate the concerns of Blacks in the UK. **2** UK rappers like Dizzy Rascal have not only turned rap towards an examination of British identities and ethnic and gender differences (mirroring the way rappers like 50 Cent and Jay-Z have articulated Black American attitudes and concerns), they have also interpreted it differently in terms of language – in Item A, for example, Jay-Z said of Dizzy Rascal, 'I like his beats but I can't understand a word he says'. Thus, although hip-hop/rap is a genre frequently used by artists to express ideas about their lives and problems, an important interpretive difference is that these are put into local contexts – for example, the experiences of Black youth (Item A) and White youth (Item D) in Britain as opposed to the experiences of Black youth in America (Item B).

Just as performers have interpreted hip-hop/rap differently, so too have their audiences. Not only is the music interpreted in terms of their own particular meanings and experiences (Items B and C), different audiences take different things from their experience of the music. For some individuals and audiences the meaning of hip-hop/rap is in the lyrics which address their personal and social experiences and concerns; for others (such as the Chinese hip-hop fans in Item C perhaps) the meaning is expressed through dancing and the desire to have fun – whether or not the lyrics are in a language they understand, the musical beats are certainly understandable.

Unit 7: The new media

Activity 26 (page 118)

1 Outline the trends indicated in Items A and B.

We can identify the following trends since 2001 in Item A: **1** A decline (from a peak of 82 per cent to 70 per cent) in the numbers using television as the source for their national and international news. **2** A similar decline (from 45 per

cent to 35 per cent) in those using newspapers as their main source. **3** A sharp increase (from 13 per cent to 40 per cent) in those using the internet as their main news source. **4** Over this period the internet has overtaken newspapers as the main news source for a large number of Americans.

The trends in Item B show: **1** A decline in television as the main news source for young people. **2** A massive increase in the number who now cite the internet as their main news source. **3** Other sources (radio, magazines and so on) have maintained their average percentage share. **4** The long-term trend is for an increasing number of young people to use the internet as their main news source. Television and the internet are currently the main sources of news for young Americans, whereas only two years ago television was nearly twice as popular as the internet as a news source for this age group.

2 Assess the importance of blogs.

Blogs are important for a number of reasons: **1** The numbers of people involved in writing blogs – upwards of 184 million people around the globe – suggest extensive popular involvement in the news gathering and dissemination process. This has two implications: firstly, more people are taking an active interest (by writing blogs) in the issues and concerns traditionally handled by large-scale media corporations. Secondly, this explosion of popular involvement has increased the number of news sources available to individual consumers. **2** Developing this idea, blogs function in ways that complement the news process by both commenting on news stories and allowing their readers to interactively discuss issues in the news (in a way that traditional print media cannot). On occasions blogs may also break a news story (Item D) that, for whatever reason, has not been picked up by traditional news media. **3** They attract an audience – especially among young people – that may have been lost to traditional news media. **4** In some situations – such as the case of Salam Pax (the 'Baghdad Blogger') in Item C – blogging individuals may have access to information denied to traditional media companies and outlets. In 2003, for example, Salam Pax used his blog to document his personal experiences of life in Iraq following the American invasion. **5** This example also suggests a further importance of blogs, namely the independence of their authors. In some situations (such as the Iraq war) the ability of conventional news media to report what is happening can be restricted (through government- and self-censorship, an inability to reach and report on certain areas and so on). In such instances a blogger such as Salam Pax represents an important source of information.

While we can make a case for the importance of blogs, the reverse is also true – it is possible to identify a number of criticisms of bloggers: **1** Very few blogs attract more than a handful of readers. **2** Their importance as a source of 'news' is wildly overstated – the majority of blogs either simply repackage news taken from conventional news gatherers or offer some kind of commentary on that news. **3** News media

are regulated in various ways (from the type and level of qualifications required of journalists to legal rules governing their behaviour) whereas individual bloggers are not. This raises questions about the trustworthiness (Item D) of blogs as a source of information. **4** In this respect, since 'anyone' can start a blog and write whatever they want, it is difficult for consumers to check the reliability of these news sources.

Activity 27 (pages 120–121)

1 What support do Items A, B, C and D provide for the view that the internet has an important part to play in the democratic process?

Democracy is a political system in which citizens have a say in the way they are governed – something that has traditionally been guaranteed by things like the right to vote for elected representatives, a free and independent media, the right to protest (in print as well as in person) and so on. As the items suggest, the internet has an important part to play in this general process for a range of reasons: **1** In societies (such as Iran) that restrict and censor the news or restrict individual freedom of speech, blogs and websites provide the freedom of expression that allows people to criticise the government (an important element of democracy) and 'indulge their tastes for things banned by the government – from Harry Potter to Marilyn Manson'. In this respect, as Livingstone (2004) argues, the internet provides a means for citizens to direct communication, send and receive messages, discuss and debate – things that all contribute to the democratic process. **2** The internet allows political leaders such as Nicolas Sarkozy (Item B) to speak directly to huge numbers of people – targeting specific demographic groups through the use of different media. For others involved in the political process, the internet can provide a fast, cheap and very effective medium for getting a political message across to vast numbers of people. This is especially true when the use of conventional media (such as newspapers or television advertising) would be far too costly. **3** In some situations, such as the US presidential elections, the internet represents a form of digital citizenship that allows the electorate to actively participate in the democratic process in a number of ways: social networking sites enable political parties to identify and contact supporters; websites enable individuals to make political contributions, and can be used to coordinate supporters' time and effort in support of a party or its candidate, or simply to provide the electorate with the information they need to make informed electoral choices. **4** Mossberger et al. (2008) have argued that survey evidence shows internet use increases the likelihood of voting and participating in the political process. **5** Where people are denied access to conventional media because the government is opposed to their message (Item C), the internet represents a way for political parties and groups to reach out to supporters. The Zapatista movement, for example, used the internet

to bypass traditional media (who were opposed to their message and aims) in order to appeal to both a local and wider (international) audience. As Livingstone (2004) suggests, the internet gives voice to those who might otherwise go unheard; it allows like-minded people to join together and take action which may lead to social change; it allows the powers that be to be challenged.

2 Amnesty International and *The Observer* launched a campaign against internet repression in 2006. Do you support this campaign? Refer to Item E in your answer.

Whether or not you support this campaign, there are arguments to consider in favour of – and against – internet repression.

Arguments **against** internet repression, for example, are based around the idea that the internet allows people 'to participate in a free flow of information and ideas with others across the world' (Amnesty International, 2006) and that this is something to be encouraged for a number of reasons: **1** People have the right to free expression of their ideas, however unpalatable these may be to governments. **2** Decisions about what people should – and should not – be allowed to read, see or discuss are not the sole preserve of governments. **3** Where governments act illegally or practise censorship for reasons that are more to do with suppressing criticism and discussion than national security (Item E) the internet represents a way for public criticism and debate to be heard. **4** Governments should not be allowed to use the internet for surveillance of its citizens or the suppression of information, such as in the case of Shi Tao in Item E. Yahoo, the internet service provider involved, supplied the information about Shi Tao's email account which allowed the Chinese government to identify and convict him of the 'crime' of using the internet 'to email a US pro-democracy site about warnings from the Beijing authorities to news outlets against covering demonstrations to mark the anniversary of the 1989 Tiananmen Square democracy protests where hundreds of protesters were killed'. **5** A general argument against internet repression is one that follows Habermas' (1992) ideas about the role and purpose of 'the public sphere' – a space where people can freely debate issues that are of importance to them as citizens. The internet, in this respect, provides individuals with the opportunity to access a wider range of information and interpretations than is provided by conventional private or state-run media. It also allows individuals to interactively participate in online discussions and debates across the globe, thereby encouraging the free flow of information and ideas that enhance the democratic process

Arguments **in favour** of internet repression can be summarised in terms of the following: **1** The internet can be used for illegal activities (from child pornography to copyright infringement) – activities that are not tolerated in the off-line world. Why, if this is the case, should they be tolerated in the online world? **2** Where political groups

may be engaging in activities that threaten or endanger the citizens of a state they should not be allowed to use the internet for these purposes. **3** The internet should not be used to reveal state secrets to 'enemy powers'.

Unit 8: Postmodernism

Activity 28 (pages 124–125)

How do these items illustrate the postmodernist view of the media and society?

The items illustrate the postmodernist view of the media and society in terms of three broad ideas:

1 Media realities: Postmodernists argue that we live in a media-saturated society where we are bombarded with images that increasingly dominate the way we see ourselves and the world around us. These images don't simply reflect or distort 'reality' (since this presupposes there is a single 'reality', 'out there somewhere', that can be reflected or distorted); rather, they become realities in themselves. Item B illustrates this idea in the sense that Truman experiences 'one reality' – he lives his life 'as if it were real' (which, as far as he is concerned or knows, is the case). However, another 'reality' is at work here, one in which Truman is simply the (unwitting) 'star' of a TV show. This is the reality experienced by the audience, the makers of the show, the other actors and so on.

This illustrates a further postmodernist idea, namely that the media don't just provide multiple views of reality – these views are also open to a multitude of different interpretations. Truman's reality, for example, is qualitatively different from the 'reality' of the actors in the show. Where Truman lives his life *within* the show, the actors straddle two realities – their 'working reality' within the show and their life outside the show (in the 'real world' – or at least the reality outside the TV show). Thus, Truman's interpretation of 'reality' is very different from the interpretations of the people (actors) who populate the show. While the TV show is real to him, it is not real to the other actors. The audience, on the other hand, represent a third interpretation of 'reality' – they live in the 'real world' while simultaneously enjoying their knowledge of the reality created by the TV show.

In this respect, the relationship between the TV show, Truman and the audience is one of simulation. Truman lives in a simulated reality while the audience are aware of the simulation but, at various times, 'believe it to be real' as they watch. A further dimension of simulation, for postmodernists, is that the audience, just like Truman, live in a simulated world of multiple realities of which they too may be unaware. Where the media provide us with much of our knowledge about the world ('reality'), such knowledge is not drawn from our direct experience. Rather, it is 'reproduced knowledge' – knowledge we think or believe to be true but which we can never be sure is 'actually true'. This idea relates to a second point made by postmodernists.

2 Multiple truths: In a situation where, like *The Truman Show* in Item B, there are multiple realities, postmodernists argue there must also be multiple truths. That is, there can never be an 'absolute truth' about anything – a truth where there is a single dominant meaning to something. Rather, a multitude of meanings have replaced the idea of a single meaning, just as a single truth has been replaced by many truths. The media, for example, broadcast different perspectives and different views – from across the world and from the past and the present – and we have no objective way, according to postmodernists, of distinguishing between them. To take another example, just as Truman is unaware of living his life in a scripted TV show, the audience cannot take it for granted that they are not living their lives in just such a way – if Truman was unaware of his situation why should the audience not be similarly unaware?

3 Postmodern identities: In a situation of multiple realities and truths the concept of identity (who we believe ourselves to be) becomes similarly fluid and confused. In postmodern society people have greater freedom and opportunities to construct their own identities and more options from which to choose – an idea illustrated (and satirised) in Item A. Here, identities are so fluid that it is possible to 'win a year's worth of free identity', whereby the lucky winners get to live out their 'dream identity'. In this respect the item reflects two important postmodernist ideas. Firstly, the media offer a wide range of identities and lifestyles from which we can pick and choose. Thus, with all the choices on offer, it is fairly easy for people to either change their identities or have several identities which they put on and take off depending on their social situation. Secondly, people become much less committed (than in the modernist past) to these identities. Where images and styles are constantly changing – the media regularly present new styles linked to new lifestyles – postmodern identities are less stable and more fragile. They offer choice, but they don't always provide a firm and lasting foundation (as illustrated in 'one year's worth of free identity' on offer in Item A).