

□ Topic 6 - Representations of ethnicity, age and class

- Ethnic minorities are 7.9% of the population – the majority of this group are British born and British citizens.
- This group is most likely to use technology than the average member of the population
- Media representations of ethnic minorities are shaped by what media professionals think the white audience want to see. Representations therefore support and reinforce negative stereotypes
- This undermines the tolerant multicultural society we supposedly live in.

STEREOTYPICAL REPRESENTATIONS OF ETHNIC MINORITIES:

- **Akintu (2003)** - TV coverage of ethnic minorities over focuses on crime and AIDS in African and Black underachievement. The news tends to ignore Black interests, how they contribute hugely to UK society. In the news, they are usually seen as 'bad news'.

- **Van Dijk (1991) - content analysis - news representations of black people could be stereotyped:**

- 1. **Ethnic minorities as criminals** – Black crime is the most frequent issue found in media news coverage of ethnic minorities. Van Dijk found that Black people, particularly African-Caribbean, tend to be portrayed as criminals, especially in the tabloid press and more recently as members of organised gangs that push drugs and violently defend urban territories.
 - TV reflects an inaccurate and superficial view of black life focussing on stereotypical issues. E.g. as involved constantly with guns and gang crime
 - Agbetu (2006) - Black people in media have 3 characteristics (criminal, entertaining or talented at sports). Anything outside of these is not as interesting to the media. They are newsworthy as they nearly always constitute bad news.
- 2. **Ethnic minorities and moral panics** – **Watson (2008)** notes that moral panics often result from media stereotyping of Black people as potentially criminal. This effect was first brought to sociological attention by **Hall's** classic study of a 1970s moral panic that was constructed around the folk devil of the 'Black mugger'. It was exaggerated in the media and calls for the police to police black areas more than others. This turns white w/c people against black w/c - divide and rule to divert attention away from capitalism. Furthermore, moral panics have developed around rap music, e.g. in 2003, 'gangster rap' lyrics came under attack for contributing to an increase in gun crime by glamorising them.
- **Zylinska (2003)** - moral panic was initiated by the former home secretary who openly expressed that he was 'appalled' by the lyrics in rap music. e.g. in 2005, 50 Cent's 'Get rich or die tryin' movie was criticised by the advertising standards for having an impact on young people and encouraging gun crime. More recent games such as GTA V was banned in places like Australia for being very graphic and protestors said 'It's a game that encourages players to murder women for entertainment. The incentive is to commit sexual violence against women, then abuse or kill them to proceed or get 'health' points'.
- **David Cameron (2006)** - criticised radio 1 for playing music that encourages people to carry guns and knives
- **Ligali (an African British pressure group)** - protested at the MOBOS for awarding people who have committed crimes or encouraged gun use in music. They highlighted the **misogynist** (hated of women) nature of rap lyrics and videos, which is claimed devalue, disrespect and damage women by treating them as inanimate objects who are only there to serve men's sexual desires.
- 3. **Relationship between rap/hip hop and gun crimes:**
 - **A FORM OF CULTURAL IDENTITY** - Best and Kellner (1999) - Grime and Rap music articulates the experiences of black people living in inner city areas. It gives them an 'idea to exert their injustices and anger' it therefore helps shape identity. An example - Cadet - stereotype - song tells the story of his life and how he has become the typical black youth stereotype.
 - **AMBIGVALENT (two meanings) EFFECTS** - Best and Kellner (1999) - Contradictory messages in grime/rap music. Talks about racism and oppression (strength, intelligence, culture, pride) but also is racist, sexist and glorifying violence. B&K therefore argue that rap music makes it aware to listeners about the differences between Black and White culture, rich or poor.
 - **NEGATIVE ROLE MODELS** - Reach Report (2007) - violence in the black community was a result of the media failing to show black men and boys positively, they only show gangs and stuff so they don't know better. Teachers, no positive role models, parents, media said that they would not achieve their aspirations which turned them into SELF FULFILLING PROPHECIES, this impacted their self-esteem, image and expectations of themselves.
 - **ROLE OF EDUCATION AND FAMILY LIFE** - Reach Report (2007) - education and the Black family life are also to blame for the fact that young black men turn to negative role models. Sewell (2004) supports this claim as he identified 3 risk factors = media culture, street culture and the absence of family models. This supports the Reach report because music encourages the idea that status/respect can be achieved by adopting street culture which often takes its lead from deviant role models, role models impact how people behave, especially because people imitate role models that they can identify with (Bandura).
 - **REINFORCING CAPITALIST IDEOLOGY** - Cashmore (1996) it is the lifestyle promoted and promised by the media culture that reinforces capitalism. Racism in society suggests that material wealth in meritocratic societies and success is not accessible to young black people and they must achieve it in illegal ways (become shotters, gangs). Mitchell (2007) - the message that the media sends is that you are what you own, if you have no money, you are nothing. And it's that that encourages deviant or criminal behaviour.
- 4. **Race, Migration and Media** **Phillips & Beattie (1999)**:
 - Argued that moral panics often arise focused on asylum seekers and refugees
 - The resignation of the government trade minister in 1995 who was unhappy about the lack of European border control set off media hysteria about immigration. It happened again this year with the migrant crisis.
 - TV presented immigration news in an extremely negative way. They focused on the borders being dangerously under policed. E.g Calais border, throughout Europe, immigration crisis of refugees from Syria.
 - The coverage of this didn't say ANYTHING about the fact that immigration has made a huge contribution to the economy.
 - They also didn't mention that the refugees may genuinely be trying to escape war, poverty... e.g. Syria was -ISIS control. BUT it was broadly hinted that they only came to take advantage of the UK's benefits.
 - ICAR & Greenslade - studies of media coverage of asylum seekers has constructed an image of this group as problems and threats. The news has described them as a SWARM, FLOODING... There is a link between media coverage and community tensions.
 - **EHIC card provides UK citizens with free health services in Europe, so it's hypocritical.**
 - **David Cameron described migrants as a SWARM**

THIS LINKS WITH ↓

- 1. **Ethnic minorities as a threat** – ethnic minorities are often portrayed as a threat to the majority White culture. It is suggested by some media that immigrants and asylum seekers are only interested in living in Britain because they wish to take fraudulent advantage of Britain's 'generous' welfare state. **Poole (2000)**, rep 9/11, argued that Islam has always been demonised and distorted by the Western media. It has traditionally been portrayed as a threat to Western interests.
- Representations of Islam have been predominantly negative and Muslims have been stereotyped as backward, extremist, fundamentalist and misogynist. Modern examples would be how Muslim people are being portrayed in the news as terrorists and a threat to British peoples wellbeing... Muslim men killed the ex-UDF soldier Lee Rigby. They had to mention that they were Muslim whilst covering it on the media to create fear, Paris and Belgium attacks by so called 'Islamic State'. Moral panics have been created surrounding:
 1. Immigrants - taking all our jobs etc...
 2. Refugees and asylum seekers - taking advantage of the UK Welfare State
 3. Muslims - before and after 9/11 experiences, Paris bombings, Muslims experience islamophobia coverage.
- **Patel (99)** - suggests Islam is purposely misrepresented because it commands an allegiance that goes beyond boundaries of wealth
- **Richardson (2001)** - broadsheet press suggest that
 - British Muslim communities are almost wholly absent from the news
 - When they do appear, it is usually in a predominantly negative context.
 - British Muslims are very rarely called upon as providers of informative commentary on news events
 - Everyday issues and concerns for the Muslim communities is not being addressed
- **Whitaker (2002)** - the existence of four very persistent stereotypes in news stories and features - Intolerant, misogynistic
 - Violent/cruel, strange/different
- **Nahli (03)** - western news agenda is dominated by hostile careless coverage of Islam that distorts reality and destroys trust amongst Muslim media and journalism.
- **HOWEVER: Positive and balanced stories about Islam and Muslims do exist**
 - Websites such as BBC and Channel 4 have explored Islam in a balanced fashion
 - **Guardian, Observer have sympathetically focused on Muslim Britain**
- Many media sociologists argue that certain negative images and stereotypes about Islam and Muslims propagated by the British mass media over the past 30 years are now deeply embedded in journalistic practices.

- 1. **Ethnic minorities as dependent** – news stories about less developed countries tend to focus on a 'coup-war-famine-starvation syndrome'. Often such stories imply that the causes of the problems experienced by developing countries are self-inflicted – that they are the result of stupidity, tribal conflict, too many babies, laziness, corruption and unstable political regimes. External causes such as colonialism, tied aid, transnational exploitation and the unfair terms of world trade are rarely discussed by the British media. An example of when this is shown on the media is the coverage of Comic Relief and Sports Relief. They nearly always show children with flies on their faces, malnourished and unable to help themselves.
- **Pambazuka (2005)**:
 - An African organisation working to increase understanding of African issues making a number of criticisms of British news coverage of Africa.
 - The media constructs myths about Africa. E.g African current situation is due to the fault of African people, means that people of the west need not feel a sense of responsibility about African issues
 - Media reporting is about Africa is too dominated by western campaigns and now are suffering from Africa fatigue.

- 1. **Ethnic minorities as abnormal** – the cultural practices of ethnic minorities are often called into question and labelled as deviant or abnormal. Many Asian people believe that the media treatment of arranged marriages was often inaccurate and did not reflect the way that the system had changed over time. **Ameli et al (2007)** noted that media discussion around the issue of the wearing of the hijab and the veil is also problematic, often suggesting that it is somehow an inferior form of dress compared with Western female dress codes and that it is unnecessary and problematic. It is often portrayed as a patriarchal and oppressive form of control that exemplifies the misogyny of Islam and symbolises the alleged subordinate position of women in Islam.
- **Ethnic Focus (2004)** - ethnic minorities in 2 camps - miserably and in loveless marriage VS billionaires who came to Britain with nothing but they made a fortune.

- 1. **Ethnic minorities as unimportant** – Van Dijk notes that some sections of the media imply that the lives of White people are somehow more important than the lives of non-White people. News items about disasters in developing countries are often restricted to a few lines or words unless there are also White or British victims. **McLurg's Law** - 1 dead Briton was worth 5 dead French, 20 Egyptian, 500 Indian, 2000 Chinese. Moreover, Sir Ian Blair, the former Metropolitan police commissioner, claimed that institutionalised racism was present in the British media in the way they reported death from violent crime. He noted that Black and Asian victims of violent death did not get the same attention as White victims. HOWEVER some sections of the media have been very positive in their exposure of problems such as racism. E.g. Black teenage Stephen Lawrence - received very rare high profile coverage. Even in the right winged Daily Mail presented a front page story about him to attempt to name and shame the alleged racist murderers.

- 2. **Ethnic minorities as invisible** – in 2005, a BBC News Online survey noted that Black and Asian people were represented as newscasters and television journalists, but the range of roles that ethnic minority actors play in television drama is very limited and often reflects low status, e.g. Africans may play cleaners or Asians may play shopkeepers. There is only 1 BBC breakfast presenter with an Indian heritage (Naga Munchetty). Ethnic minority audiences were also very hostile towards **tokenism** – the idea that programmes contain characters from ethnic minority groups purely because they 'should'. Ethnic minority audiences complain that Black and Asian people are rarely shown as ordinary citizens who just happen to be Black or Asian.

□ CRITIQUE:

- Gangs existed before rap music became popular
- Socio economic factors are more important -
- Rap and hip hop is much more than violence and covers everything from politics to race awareness.
- Other genres of music have violent lyrics in them e.g. Johnny cash - killed to watch him die???
- Media is used as a scapegoat and a way of ignoring structural inequalities.
- Ethnocentric
- FININSH

Representations of social class:

How does the media represent social class

- Lack of focus on the tensions or class conflict which exist within society and have been highlighted by keep sociologist perspectives such as **Marxism**
- Media through its representations of social class ensure that the cultural hegemony (dominant ideals) of the dominant capitalist class which maintains inequality and exploitation.

Poverty and Underclass

- **Newman** argues that when the news media turn their attention to the most destitute, the portrayals are often negative or stereotypical. Often, the poor are portrayed in statistical rather than in human terms by news bulletins that focus on the numbers unemployed or on benefits, rather than the individual suffering and personal indignities of poverty.
- Portrayed in the form of statistics in news bulletin such as figures of unemployment
- Recent media interest in the labelling of the poor such as 'chavs' which according to **Shildrick and MacDonalds (2007)** suggest that the poor are undeserving of sympathy.
- **Hayward and Yar (2006)** - the term chav is used as an amusing term of abuse for young poor people
- **Lawler (2005)** - chavs is used as a term of disgust and contempt. Lawler argues that the media use the discriminatory and offensive language to vilify what they depict as a peasant underclass symbolised by stereotypical forms of appearance. Newspapers suggest that those from the underclass are responsibility of their own poverty.
- **There are so many other factors which determine whether you are in the w/c or underclass. They have less material items...**
- **Swale (2006)** usage of the term NEET - not in employment education or training in newspapers. She argues that this type of coverage negatively stigmatises the underclass as the 'out' group, which encourages readers to label those on benefits.
- **McKendrick et al** - Poverty is rarely explored in the media. **Jeremy Kyle** paints a picture of poverty which is seen as entertainment
- **Cohen (2009)** - Argues that the UK mass media was so concerned about trumpeting the good fortune of British capitalism that it paid less attention to its casualties. He argues that some sections of the media revelled in the suffering of the poor. He notes that shows such as Little Britain show white poor people as White trash. He notes that the media often fails to see the connection between deprivation and wealth.

Working class

- **Newman (2006)** argued that when news organisations focus on the **working class**, it is generally to **label** them as a problem, e.g. as welfare cheats, drug addicts or criminals. Working class groups, e.g. **youth sub-cultures** such as mods or skinheads, are often the subject of moral panics, whilst reporting of issues such as poverty, unemployment or single-parent families often suggests that personal inadequacy is the main cause of these social problems, rather than government policies or poor business practices. He also argued that there are very few situation comedies, tv or drama which focuses on the everyday lives of w/c who constitutes a significant section of society. He argues that when in the media, working class are often depicted in the very non positive light dumb buffoons (e.g. Homer Simpson) and immature machos.
- Studies of industrial reporting by the Glasgow University Media Group suggest that the media portray 'unreasonable' workers as making trouble for 'reasonable' employers.
- Presented in the stereotypical context of traditional working class communities such as EastEnders...
- Community values of the w/c is often praised but do not reflect reality
- W/c communities have declined with the collapse of traditional industries such as coal mining, factory work... Everyone used to work at the same factory... there was a community feel
- W/c often presented in the context of trouble, undesirable welfare takers, unable to cope with their delinquent children. Often have low level skilled jobs if working.
- **Curran and Seaton (2003)** - note that newspapers aimed at working class audiences assume that they are uninterested in serious analysis of either the political or social organisation of British society. Political debate is often reduced simplistically to conflict between personalities. The content of newspapers such as The Sun and the Daily Star assumes that such audiences want to read about celebrity gossip and lifestyles, trivial human interest stories and sport.
- **not down to the class, down to the age. Daily telegraph aimed at 40 year olds**
- **Marxists** argue that the content of newspapers such as the Sun and the Daily Star is an attempt to distract the working class audiences from the inequalities of capitalism. Assumes that they are passive audiences.

The Middle class

- Presented as educated and successful as well as able to cope with problems. Comfortable with life. e.g. modern family
- Over represented in the media on TV in dramas, soap operas and situation comedies due to their lifestyle. Nice but not out of reach, no deviancy.
- Representation fits in with the hegemonic ideology (dominant ideas) of the dominant class in society
- Representation justifies the existing class structure and inequalities by suggesting people need to become more competent and successful in order to cope with life.
- Substantial percentage of newspapers and magazines are aimed at the middle class such as the Daily Mail + Telegraph which focuses on their consumption and taste. Content of newspapers expresses the concerns of the middle class with regards to the declining moral standards along with their pride for their British identity and heritage

Four broad sociological observations can be made with regard to mass media representations of the middle classes:

1. The middle class are over-represented on TV dramas and situation comedies.
2. Part of the British newspaper market is specifically aimed at the middle classes and their consumption, tastes and interests, e.g. the Daily Mail.
3. The content of newspapers such as the Daily Mail suggests that journalists believe that the middle classes of middle England are generally anxious about the decline of moral standards in society and that they are proud of their British identity and heritage. It is assumed that their readership feels threatened by alien influences such as the Euro, asylum seekers and terrorism. Consequently, newspapers, such as the Daily Mail, often crusade on behalf of the middle classes and initiate **moral panics** on issues such as video nasties, paedophilia and asylum seekers.
4. Most of the creative personnel in the media are themselves middle class. In news and current affairs, the middle classes dominate positions of authority – the 'expert' is invariably middle class.
 - **not thinking about individual differences, harder for some to do this... getting a degree won't get you a job every time with everyone**

Nairn (1988) - Representations of the Monarchy

- The Royal Family concept - niceness, decency ordinariness
- Royal family can be deemed to be 'like us' but 'not like us'. The queen seen as ordinary working mother doing extraordinary things
- Obsession with the royal family develops through the British society following WWII
- Media coverage hasn't reported anything bad about the queen except when **Diana died**, she took a while to address it. The media portrayed her as being uncaring. However, this was changed on the Queen's Golden Jubilee, William and K

Representations of the upper class and wealth

- Neo-Marxist believed that the mass media representations of social class tend to be celebrated with hierarchy and wealth
- The UK mass media never portrays the upper class in a critical light
- Upper class usually portrayed in an eccentric or nostalgic way. E.g. Lady C/The Queen
- When the media cover them, it is mainly done through the coverage of the monarchy
 - Seen as well-bred and cultured
 - Represented through their accents, estates and leisure activities (hunting or shooting)
 - Usually represented in dramas like **Downton Abbey**, **Made in Chelsea**

Reiner and Young (2007)

- Media tends to portray the UK as a meritocratic society in which intelligence, talent and hard work are rewarded
 - Neo-Marxists (new Marxists) argue that the concept of meritocracy is in fact a myth as wealth rather than ability opens up the doors and access to Oxbridge and top jobs.
 - **This is supported by Cohen and Young (1981) theory which believed that the British culture is a monetary culture characterised by a chaos of reward**
 - Top businessmen are rewarded for failure (e.g. bankers - they were still getting huge bonuses when in the recession)
 - Celebrities are over rewarded by their talent (e.g. Kim Kardashian, Footballers paid way too much)
- Newman (2006)
- Argues that the tabloid media dedicate a great deal of their content to examining the lives of another section of the wealthy elite.
 - This dedication invites the audiences to admire the achievements of these celebrities
 - The media over focuses on consumer items such as luxury cars, costly holiday spots and fashion accessories

Representations of age

CHILDHOOD

Seven stereotypes of children:

1. As victims of horrendous crimes - E.g. Madeline McCann - white children who are victims of crime get more media attention than adults or children from ethnic minority backgrounds. The media ethnocentrically portrays foreign children in quite a different way from British children.
 2. As cute
 3. As little devils - especially in dramas and comedy e.g. Bart Simpson
 4. As brilliant - child prodigies or heroes for saving the life of an adult
 5. As brave little angels - suffering from long term diseases
 6. As accessories - celebrities such as Beckham and Jolie-Pitt may focus on how their children humanize them
 7. As modern - media focuses on how children these days know so much more at their age than previous generations of children
- Heintz - Knowles (2002) - study of children on TV found that children are often portrayed as motivated primarily by peer relationships, sports, romance and less often by religion and community. They are rarely shown as coping with societal issues such as religion and abuse. However most representations of children are positive and show them engaged in prosocial actions such as telling the truth and helping others.
 - Children are also represented in TV commercials in ways that socialize them to become active consumers. They are encouraged by TV advertising and film merchandising to have an appetite for toys and games. Some sociologists have argued that it has created a new family pressure of 'pester power' - power of children to train or manipulated their parents to spend money on consumer goods that will increase the children's status in the eyes of their peers.
 - Chandler (2006) - pester power is creating great anxiety among poorer parents, who will often go into debt to provide for their children's needs.

YOUTH:

- Seen as a problem group because the media portrays them as vandals, social problem, anti-authority and are consequently constructed as 'folk devils' as part of a moral panic.
- The majority of moral panics since the 50s have been manufactured around the behaviour of young people. e.g. young people being a member of specific deviant subcultures (hoodies). This has attracted the disapproval of those in authority
- A02 SUPPORT :
 - Wayne et al. (2008) conducted a content analysis of 2130 news items across all the main television channels during May 2006. They found that young people were mainly represented as a violent threat to society. They found that it was very rare for news items to feature a young person's perspective or opinion. They note that the media only delivers a one-dimensional picture of youth, one that encourages fear and condemnation rather than understanding. Moreover, they argue that it distracts from the real problems that young people face in the modern world such as homelessness, not being able to get onto the housing ladder, unemployment or mental health and that these might be caused by society's, or the government's, failure to take the problems of youth seriously.

Elderly:

- Research focusing on media representations of the elderly suggests that age is not the only factor that impacts on the way the media portrays people aged 65 and over. Newman (2006) notes that upper class and middle class elderly people are often portrayed in television and film dramas as occupying high-status roles as world leaders, judges, politicians, experts and business executives. Moreover, news programmes seem to work on the assumption that an older male with grey in his hair and lines on his face somehow exudes the necessary authority to impart the news.
- However, female newscasters, such as Anna Ford, have long complained that these older men are often paired with attractive young females, while older women newscasters are often exiled to radio. Leading female film and television stars are also often relegated to character parts once their looks and bodies are perceived to be on the wane, which seems to be after the age of 40.

Stereotypes of the elderly:

1. As grumpy: Elderly women are shrews/busybodies. Elderly men are conservative, stubborn and resistant to social change
 2. As mentally challenged: Elderly are forgetful, feeble minded or severely confused. This stereotype suggests that growing old involves the decline of mental functions
 3. As infantile/dependent: helpless and dependent on other younger members of the family or society.
 4. As a burden: portrayed as an economic burden in terms of health care and pensions. Also as a physical and social burden on younger members of their families (who have to worry about or care for them).
 5. As enjoying a second childhood: as reliving their adolescence and engaging in activities that they have always longed to do before they die. E.g. bucket list
- However, recent research suggests that media producers may be gradually reinventing how they deal with the elderly, especially as they realize that this group may have disposable incomes, i.e. extra money to spend on consumer goods.