

# *Sociology* *Shortcuts* *A-Level Sociology*



## *Mass Media Issue*

*No.2:  
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Issue 2 of Sociology ShortCuts sees an expansion in both pages and content over the first (pilot) issue and also a change of focus: away from a single issue format and towards a multiple-issues-around-a-single-theme format.

Hence, The Mass Media Issue.

While the content is aimed at A-level Sociology teachers and students of no-particular and every exam board, we like to think it's both accessible to the majority of students while also being challenging at times in terms of both ideas and issues.

Whether or not that's actually the case is probably something for you and your students to decide.

What we've tried to do in this issue is combine a little bit of the old - looking at ways to define and research the mass media, for example - with a bit of the new: the focus on various aspects of new and social media (some of which you will have heard about, some of which you may not) has been a deliberate choice because, not to put too fine a point on things, it's not always something that's been particularly well-developed in A-level texts.

Either way, we hope you find something of interest here.





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# MASS MEDIA

A medium is a 'channel of communication' - a means through which we send and receive information. When we read a newspaper, watch television or view a web site, something is communicated to us in some way and, collectively these represent media (the plural of medium).

Mass media, in this respect, refers communication with large numbers of people, something traditionally seen as 'one-to-many' communication - 'one' person (such as the author of a book), communicates to many people (the audience) at the same time. This basic idea can, of course, be extended to include "a newspaper" or "a television programme" being "the one" that communicates - but the basic principle is the same.

This simple definition does, of course, hide a number of more-complex questions (how large does an audience have to be, for example, before it qualifies as 'mass'?) and we can note Dutton et al (1998) suggest that, traditionally, the mass media has been differentiated from other types of communication, such as interpersonal communication that occurs on a face-to-face, one-to-one basis) in terms of a range of essential characteristics we can explore further.

## Defining





# CHARACTERISTICS



Communication between those who send and receive messages (*information*) is impersonal, lacks immediacy and is one-way (from the producer/creator to the consumer/audience).

There is a physical and technological distance between sender and receiver, such that everyone receives the same message and the audience cannot directly interact with the sender to change or modify that message.

Mass communication is organised and requires a vehicle, such as a television receiver, that allows messages to be sent and received. It is inescapably bound-up with technology because a mass medium allows large-scale simultaneous communication with many people.

A popular UK television programme, such as Dr. Who or Sherlock can draw around 8 - 10 million viewers, while the global audience for something like the football World Cup runs into hundreds of millions. Mass communication is also a commodity - it comes at a price. You can watch films on TV, for example, if you can afford a television, a license fee (to watch BBC or ITV) or a subscription to a satellite, cable or streaming company such as Netflix.

Although these characteristics still hold true for the traditional mass media such as newspapers, magazines, books, television, radio and film, the picture has been complicated - and in some respects completely changed - by the development of newer, computer-based, technologies that don't fit easily into all but the last of the characteristics we've just noted: mass communication comes with a price tag.

## Mass Communication

Commodity  
Organised  
Simultaneous  
Technology



Computer networks open up the potential for ‘many- to-many’ communication; a mass audience can simultaneously communicate with each other to create a mass medium based on interpersonal communication. Social media, for example, arguably conform to two of the components of a ‘mass medium’

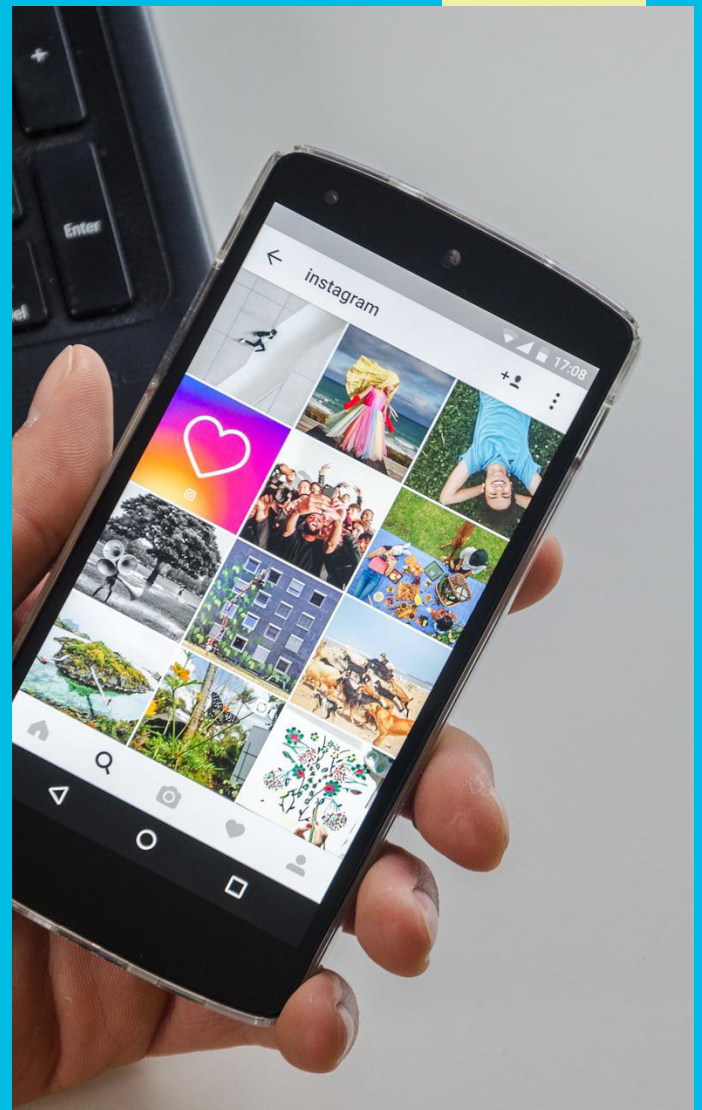
Peer-to-peer networks, using software to link individual computers in a network to exchange information, is another example of many-to-many communication. In the workplace, for example, any number of people can contribute to the same document at the same time - although perhaps one of the most common (and illegal) use for peer networks is to share copyrighted music and films. Computer networks also open-up forms of interactive communication that change how we define the media, in terms of the relationship between the production, distribution and consumption of information.



These ideas suggest that, at the very least, we need to redefine conventional concepts of **mass media** by distinguishing between two forms - the **old** and the **new**:

- **Old media**, such as television, books and magazines involve 'one-to-many' communication, based on a one-way process; information is produced and distributed by a media owner, such as the State or private corporation, and this is **passively** consumed by a mass audience; while an audience can accept or reject the information, they play no part in its production, nor can they change it. The roles of producer and consumer are, in this respect, very different and clearly differentiated.

- **New media** not only allows for simultaneous two-way communication, it also changes the producer - consumer relationship; someone who sets-up their own web site, writes a blog, maintains a presence on Facebook or regularly uses Twitter is both the producer and the consumer of media information. In this respect consumers are also active producers and their relationship is both similar and not clearly differentiated.



**Crosbie** (2002) argues new media has three characteristics that make them very different to other forms of mass media:

- Information can be **personalised**; individualised messages tailored to the particular needs of those receiving them can be simultaneously delivered to vast numbers of people.

- **Collective control** means each person in a network can share, shape and change the content of the information being exchanged.

- They can't exist without the appropriate (computer) **technology**.

The distinction between old and new forms of mass media has important implications for our understanding of the mass media in terms of ideas about ownership and control, the selection of media content and the possible effects of the mass media on audiences.

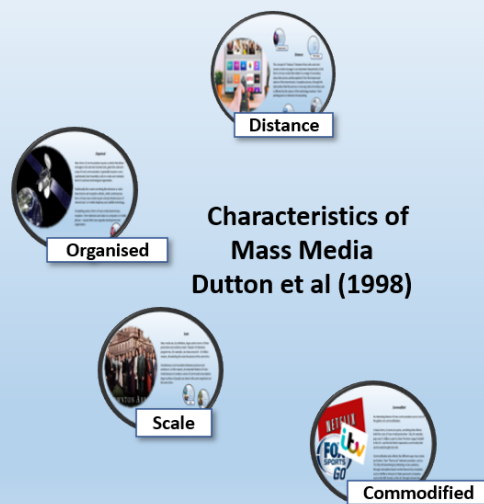


# Defining the Mass Media

A Prezi-style PowerPoint Presentation that combines text, video and graphics to introduce students to a wide range of concepts relating to how we define the Mass Media.

The Presentation covers four major areas:

- *Types of Communication*
- *Defining the New Mass Media*
- *Characteristics of the*
- *Mass Media*



The Presentation consists of 17 slides and is designed for both individual and whole class use.

You can [download the Presentation](#) as a self-running PowerPoint Show.

# features

A significant aspect of these global features is the ability to create and share text, images, videos and the like across physical borders through cyberspace.

New media, in this respect, has much higher levels of interactivity between consumers (the Facebook model) and in terms of how users relate to different forms of media technology.

Playing interactive media such as a video game, for example, is a very different mediated experience to reading a book or watching television. Interactivity is also a feature of how information is presented and used through new media:







On one level, old media is a linear technology; information, such as a film, song, newspaper / magazine article or television programme has a start, middle and end and the consumer must follow this linear logic. New media, however, has the capacity to organise information differently, through a non-linear or nested logic; information placed inside other information.

Hypertext, for example, allows information to be organised and explored in non-linear ways rather than, Socha and Eber-Schmid (2012) argue “*simply following a straight order*”. The potential, not always realised, is for the user rather than the producer, to control how information is received and developed.

On another level, new media connects all kinds of information – text, images, sound and video – in all kinds of ways across a global network.

A key feature, therefore, is interconnectedness; not just of information but also people – an example of both being the development of Wikipedia, a free non-linear online encyclopaedia created by its users to which anyone can edit.

A further feature of new media is empowerment by encouraging user creativity. With old media creativity resides with the producer, such as a director or author, and flows in one direction only; from producers to consumers.

New media changes this flow of information; from digital publishing to social networks like Flickr or YouTube, the consumer is also the producer.

As Lievrouw and Livingstone (2005) put it, new media has “*demassified, time- shifting features*” that contrast sharply with the “one-to-many, one-way message flows of traditional mass media”.

# NEW MEDIA

The various features of new media raise a new set of issues for both producers and consumers. In terms of the former, for example, the development of global computer networks have presented problems for media industries whose products are relatively easy to copy and distribute, with no loss of quality because of digital reproduction.

The development of peer-to-peer networks, for example, has led to the rise of global forms of intellectual property theft (“piracy”), to which media conglomerates have responded in a couple of ways:

- legal prosecutions of individual offenders and attempts to shut-down illegal providers, such as Napster and Megaupload.
- the development of new economic models.

“Freemium” models, for example, provide a free service, such as software or a game, but users then pay a premium for “added extras”.

issues







A further issue involves the “unauthorised access to computers and networks” (“hacking”), something that includes:

- **governments:** cyberwarfare, for example, involves governments engaging in the politically-motivated hacking of rival government computer networks for reasons that range from espionage to sabotage.
- **organisations:** In 2010 the American government claimed the cybertheft of copyrights and patents by China remained at “unacceptable levels”.
- **individuals:** viruses and malware designed to damage computers, extort money or steal information.

Specific issues for consumers have a number of dimensions, particularly those surrounding personal privacy. Social media such as Facebook make money through advertising, which can now be individualised, personalised and targeted through the sale of users’ personal data to third-parties; users, therefore, exchange “free” services for some loss of privacy.

While corporations such as Facebook monitor how their network is used in terms of what someone likes or dislikes in order to deliver individualised adverts matched to these behaviours, Kosinski et al. (2013) have shown it is possible to

accurately infer a wide range of personal information, such as ethnicity, IQ, sexuality, substance use and political views, from an analysis of an individual’s “likes”.

In this respect Socha and Eber-Schmid (2012) argue new media is

*“characterized by an astonishing and uncharted level of personal experience / exposure. Online companies and sites can track the content of personal emails and site visits in order to target advertisements on users’. There are also websites whose sole purpose is to compile and share personal data about web surfers”.*

A further privacy issue is the rapid spread and persistence of online data; once data is released into the wild of the web, whether in the shape of sites, blogs, video, tweets or tagged photos, it is difficult, if not impossible, to erase or withdraw it.

While these ideas represent one form of surveillance, more explicit forms are facilitated by new media technology; the State, for example, may monitor its citizens to identify which web sites they visit, who they email or who they talk to using Voice over Internet Protocols (VoIP) such as Skype.

Digital transmissions are relatively easy to intercept and read, especially if they are unencrypted, and surveillance targets, from individuals to organisations, such as environmental activists, to political parties, are unlikely to know if they are being monitored.

If monitoring “from above” (surveillance) is an issue, monitoring “from below” (sousveillance) is a slightly different one arising from the rapid rise of smartphone and tablet technology to record and publish people’s everyday behaviour.

A greater willingness and ability to share information online also leaves people open to forms of surveillance that involve things like digital stalking and bullying.

Neelamalar and Chitra’s (2009) study of Indian college students and their use of social networks like Facebook does, however, suggest an “*awareness of the danger and risk involved in using these sites*”, something they interpret as “*a positive indicator Indian youth are not only techno-savvy and socially active through social networking sites but they also possess social consciousness*”.





# NEW MEDIA

## DIGITAL OPTIMISM



im possible

The development of new media has led to a debate about the impact of changing technologies on economic, political and cultural life, polarised around two opposing views: the first of which is digital optimism.

From this viewpoint the defining characteristic of new media is a form of digital liberation based, for Negroponte (1995), on processes that impact on society in three ways:

**1. Economically** we see the development of new models of production, distribution and exchange, particularly “free” or “gifting” models where the consumer pays nothing to use a medium. One significant new model is the development of open economic systems where software, for example, is developed collaboratively to take advantage of wide creative pools of talent - an idea Tapscott and Williams (2008) call “Wikinomics” to reflect the pioneering collaborative efforts of Wikipedia.

Producers, especially large corporations, have to be more responsive to consumer demands because the ability to act as a global crowd, passing information swiftly from individual to individual, means corporate behaviour is continually being monitored, evaluated and held to account. Surowiecki (2005) argues digital technology facilitates crowd-sourcing, a process based on “the wisdom of crowds”; if you ask enough people their opinion a basic “crowd truth” will emerge.

**2. Politically**, the global flow of information weakens the hold of the State over individuals and ideas. Repressive State actions are much harder to disguise or keep secret when populations have access to instant forms of mass communication, such as Twitter. The Internet also makes it harder for the State to censor or restrict the flow of information and this contributes to political socialisation by way of greater understanding of the meaning of issues and events.

**3. Culturally**, behaviour can be both participatory and personalised, processes that in cyberspace can complement each other.

The *global village* combines collectivity with individuality; cooperation flourishes while people simultaneously maintain what Negroponte calls the “Daily Me” - the personalisation of things like news and information focused around the specific interests of each individual.

Personalisation contributes to participation through the development of a diverse individuality that leads to the development of new ways of thinking and behaving. The ability to be anonymous on the web encourages both freedom of speech and whistle-blowing about the illegal activities of the rich and powerful.

# NEW MEDIA DIGITAL PESSIMISM

**Digital pessimism** argues the globalising processes on which new media depends are neither wholly beneficial nor unambiguous; while globalisation involves decentralising processes, for example, it also produces greater centralisation across economic, political and cultural behaviours.

In **economic** terms “free” business models are only free in the sense they have costs hidden from the consumer. These include:

- exploiting free labour:  
The news and opinion site The Huffington Post, for example, was built around the free labour provided by its blogging contributors; the site was, however, sold by its owners for \$300m in 2011.

- driving out quality: companies that can't rely on cheap or free labour must either cut their costs, thereby potentially undermining quality, or go out of business.

- **privacy:** new media that are dependent on free labour, such as social networking sites where consumers create content, make money by selling user data to advertisers.
- **copyright:** Some social media sites claim the copyright of user-generated content, such as photographs and videos, that is then sold to advertisers.





It is also “cheaper” for global corporations to simply take and republish content generated by individual users with little or no prospect of recompense.

**Politically**, mass communication tools can be used by repressive regimes to restrict individual freedoms and enhance various forms of State surveillance. Mobile technologies can, for example, be used to track both the online and offline behaviour of users through things like GPS technology. The “wisdom of crowds” equation has a darker side in terms of the development of a “hive mind”, where individual dissent is not tolerated. In addition the “stupidity of crowds” is emphasised in terms of their being more-prone to moral panics (see below) based on “mob rule”.

# NEW MEDIA

## DIGITAL INCARCERATION

While new media ownership is sometimes likened to what Socha and Eber-Schmid call “the growing pains of the American Wild West”, where a diversity of companies compete for market share, the reality is probably closer to its old media counterpart; various forms of vertical, horizontal and diagonal concentrating processes have increasingly come into play, leading to the notion of **digital incarceration**.

This involves the idea producers are able to create digital “prisons” that are entered freely by consumers; once there, however, they are locked in. Someone who puts their life online through social networks such as Facebook or Flickr finds it very difficult to leave. A further similarity between the behaviour of old and new media corporations involves two related processes:

- locking-out competitors from markets.
- locking-in consumers to products.

A small-scale example of these tendencies is Amazon’s development of an eBook reader (the Kindle) that gave them control over who could publish eBooks for this product and how consumers could use the product (to buy eBooks from Amazon).

On a larger scale Apple has, over the past 30 years, consistently attempted to lock-out market competitors and lock-in consumers; this corporate strategy failed spectacularly in the 1980s because Apple was not sufficiently powerful to challenge IBM’s strategy of allowing anyone to manufacture a “Personal Computer” (Apple would only allow third-party manufacturing under licensing they controlled). More-recently this strategy has proved spectacularly successful with the development of the iPhone and iPad that allows Apple to control both of these processes.







The idea of digital incarceration is not only an important concept in itself, because of the way it points to interesting tendencies and developments within new media (many of which are, equally significantly, an extension on a global scale of old media economic and cultural tendencies); it also has applications across other parts of the Media Specification.

It can, for example, be applied to evaluate Pluralist arguments about consumer choice and media diversity, particularly in relation to moving the debate away from the significance of “individual choice”. In late-modern (or postmodern if you prefer) societies, for example, the point is not whether individuals have “consumption choices” in terms of media technology but rather the consequences of exercising such choices.

To use an analogy: whether a mousetrap is humane or inhumane in terms of how the mouse is treated, ultimately it’s still a mousetrap. For those, such as neo-Marxists, who are critical of pluralist approaches, it doesn’t particularly matter if consumers of both media hardware and software have a wide range of choices if the consequences of exercising such choices are ultimately much the same...

# NEW MEDIA

## *digital optimism, digital pessimism*

Whatever your views on whether we should be broadly optimistic about the development of digital technologies, such as the Internet and mobile computing, or view them with varying levels of pessimism, it would be helpful, teaching-wise, if someone put together a useful summary of these two opposed schools of thought.

Luckily for us that's just what **Adam Thierer** did, albeit in 2010 so you might want to consider if there's anything more-recent that needs adding to the list). To help you out I've appended a few ideas of my own that you might want to consider.

Alternatively, you might want to add your own ideas, or encourage students to research possible updates. The choices here are limitless (presupposing your idea of "limitless" extends to "probably one or two").

The table below is taken from a [much longer article](#) that's worth a read if you have the time and inclination. It develops some of the ideas listed below and puts them into an historical context, starting with the Web 1.0 Granddaddy-of-all-debates between **Nicholas Negroponte** and **Neil Postman** in the early 1990's.

It's fairly student-friendly and there's a useful section that frames the debate in a general cultural context while summarising some of the main arguments.

In this context Thierer orders what he calls the "lines of disagreement" between Optimists and Pessimists in terms of Cultural and Economic Beliefs, which I think is quite a handy way of categorising the two positions, so I've left it in.

Where I think it's helpful and / or necessary I've added short clarifications / explanations / examples to the original text (in brackets).





## Digital Optimists

## Digital Pessimists

### *Cultural Beliefs*

Internet is participatory  
Net facilitates personalization  
(the “Daily Me” that digital tech allows)

Internet is polarizing  
Net facilitates fragmentation  
(fear of the “Daily Me”)

A global village

Balkanization (people retreat into their own groups and raise barriers to entry by outsiders) and fears of “mob rule”

Heterogeneity: encourages diversity of thought and expression

Homogeneity: leads to close-mindedness (“Them” and “Us”) and aggressive responses to those “Not like Us”

Allows self-actualization:  
 (“the best version of yourself”)

Diminishes personhood  
(individual less important than collective)

Net is liberating and empowering

Net is frequently misused and abused

Net can help educate

Fear the dumbing-down of the masses

Anonymous communication is a net good; encourages debate and whistleblowing

Fear of anonymity: it debases culture and leads to lack of accountability

Welcome information abundance; believe it will create new opportunities for learning

Concern about information overload; the impact on learning and reading

### *Economic Beliefs*

Benefits of “Free”; importance of “gift economy” (people provide free services in exchange for publicity, experience, etc.)

Costs of “Free”; threat to quality and business models. (“Free” paid-for by a loss of privacy: selling personal data)

Embrace “amateur” creativity  
 (“Gifted amateur” with untapped creativity)

Superiority of “professionalism”  
 (Expert knowledge and expertise).

Superiority of “open production systems”  
 (idea anyone can make products that interoperate with original product: the PC was an open system product)

Superiority of “proprietary” production models  
 (the creator is the rightful owner)

“Wiki” model = wisdom of crowds and benefits of crowdsourcing

“Wiki” model = stupidity of crowds; collective intelligence is oxymoron; exploitation of free labour

In the 10 - 15 years since Thierer's original categorisations were developed there's been a lot more to get optimistic or pessimistic about, depending on your particular ideological position.

### Digital Optimists

### Digital Pessimists

#### *Cultural Beliefs*

Mobile phones: all the world's knowledge in your hand, digital observation and surveillance of the powerful

Mobile phones are most sophisticated State and Corporate surveillance devices ever invented: paid for by those who use them.

Access to information widened making it more difficult for State and Corporate media to control how people think.

State surveillance increases and extends to all areas of personal and social life (the "1984" nightmare)

Homeworking: gives people the freedom and flexibility to work when they like, as they like and how they like.

Homeworking involves surveillance, isolation and a dual burden for women: work and childcare.

Sousveillance: observing "from below"  
Digital tech allows for greater observation and control of harmful ideas and behaviours perpetuated by rich and powerful

Surveillance: observing "from above"  
Increased opportunities for observation and control of people's behaviour – through physical means, such as CCTV, or digital means such as web / phone-tracking

#### *Economic Beliefs*

Cryptocurrencies (such as bitcoin) free people from the financial controls and tyrannies laid down by governments and financial institutions.

Crypto mining uses vast amounts of electricity and damages environment.  
Cryptocurrencies lure gullible into investing in things that have no intrinsic value.

Flexibility Digital tech that allows zero-hours contracts, self-employed contracting etc. gives workers freedom and flexibility over when and how they work.

Exploitation Digital tech is used to control and exploit workers in areas like the "gig economy": no work = no pay

A couple of things to keep in mind when evaluating these ideas:

Firstly, Thierer is something of a digital optimist and this is reflected, to some extent, in his observations and arguments.

Secondly, this type of classification lends itself to the development of an "either / or" perspective on digital technology, where students are encouraged to see complex and nuanced arguments in relatively simple, fixed, terms. In this particular area, however, there's plenty of room to be *optimistic* about some forms of digital technology while also being deeply *pessimistic* about others...



# NEW MEDIA

## Augmented Reality

While there's nothing particularly wrong with examining and evaluating new media in terms of digital optimism / pessimism, Jurgenson's (2012) novel reinterpretation / reinvention of the term "augmented reality" adds a slightly more-nuanced reading of something like social media to the debate.

*Augmented reality*, if you're not familiar with it, refers to the idea of overlaying the real world with digital layers that enhance or *augment* what we're seeing. You could, for example, be in a museum looking at a picture and, by pointing your phone at it you reveal a variety of details about the artist, the picture and so forth on the screen.

Alternatively, if you're into less high-cultural pursuits think Pokemon Go - a game that uses a phone's GPS function to overlay virtual creatures on real-world locations.

Conventionally, therefore, the term involves seeing the real and the virtual worlds in terms of a digital dualism – conceptualising the "online" and "offline" realms as separate social spaces (SSS's) linked by various forms of technology: from physical objects like mobile phones to metaphysical objects such as the web / cyberspace.

This, Jurgenson argues, is both mistaken and misleading.

Rather than seeing the two as separate spheres connected by technology, Jurgenson argues they have become enmeshed and are now impossible to separate: we are living and experiencing a single "augmented reality" that merges:

- **the physical:** living in a tangible "geographic space with flesh-and-blood bodies" and
- **the digital:** a virtual world of "networked information".



# digital dualism

For Jurgenson our online and offline lives have become indivisible and it's no longer clear where one starts and the other ends. While we are able to distinguish, at some level, our different online and offline existences, the two are inextricably linked. In relation to social media for example,

*“Our offline lives drive whom we are Facebook-friends with and what we post about. Our offline histories, social-locatedness in various structures, demographics, epistemological standpoints [the proof we will accept about our fundamental beliefs], etc. all influence how we behave online.*

*And what happens on Facebook influences how we experience life when we are not logged in...For example, social media users are being trained to experience the world always as a potential photo, tweet, check-in or status update. The logic of social media sites and smart phone technologies fundamentally influence how we experience reality even when offline”.*

Although Jurgenson was writing before photo / video sharing sites like Instagram (2010) and Tiktok (2016) came to the fore of social media, their existence and popularity simply reinforces the idea of a convergence between our offline and online selves – albeit one that augments the other.

*“It is because social media augments our offline lives (rather than replaces them) that research shows Facebook users have more offline contacts, are more civically engaged, and so on. The online and offline are not separate spheres and are thus not zero-sum”.*

In other words, unlike digital optimist and pessimist positions where for one to triumph the other must fail (a zero-sum game), Jurgenson's augmented reality argues for the reverse: a variable-sum game where the online and offline worlds have their advantages and disadvantages for different individuals and groups.





# cyborgs

Jurgenson, it should be noted, actually goes a bit further than this to cast “*the Facebook user as the paradigmatic example*” of the Harawaysian “cyborg””: Donna Haraway’s [Cyborg Manifesto](#), published in the early days (1985) of internet development, argued that the anonymity of cyberspace allows us to create and recreate different “cybernetic personalities” that are both closely related to - and sometimes widely divergent from – our offline personality.

Developments in surveillance over the past 25 years have, to say the least, made this both a fanciful and questionable claim.

Similarly, it’s probably an indication of how quickly things change and “events in the virtual realm” are overtaken by events in the real world that Jurgenson’s arguments about the nature of augmented reality in relation to various forms of social protest - from the so-called Arab Spring to Occupy Wall Street - now seem hopelessly outdated and over-optimistic.

Whether this invalidates his basic argument, however, is something for you to debate and decide.

And if you want to merge and extend this debate you could think about how the concept of [hyperreality](#) might be critically applied to Jurgenson’s basic argument.



# NEW MEDIA

## *digital natives, digital immigrants*

Like any scientific endeavour, one of the virtues of sociology is its scepticism – and one area that's always ripe for a sceptical approach is new media and the various claims made on its behalf.

One such claim is Prensky's (2001) concept of the "digital native", something that has become widely used in both press and public to refer to a generational difference between those (natives) who have grown-up in the digital age and those (immigrants) who came to the digital realm later in life.

- **Natives** refers to those born in the 1980's who have effectively lived their whole lives surrounded by and immersed in digital technologies.

- **Immigrants** refers to those born *before* the widespread development of digital technologies. They are latecomers to the digital party, even though many will have different levels of experience, confidence and facility with digital technology. Immigrants are generally portrayed as outsiders in this new digital realm. While they may, for example, "understand the language" of digital tech and speak it relatively fluently, they are not, for Prensky, "native speakers" of this language – with all this implies...







This distinction is not too outrageous to contemplate, particularly if writers like Prensky had restricted themselves to observing how this generational difference might be like the difference between learning a new language and being a native speaker.

It may seem plausible the digital natives who have grown-up with various forms of digital technology are likely to be much more fluent in its use than their elder(ly) peers.

Equally, the distinction might involve a range of ways of doing (such as finding your news on social media rather than in newspapers or on television) and being (living your life on Instagram or TikTok, perhaps, or maybe in the soon-to-be unleashed multi- dimensional Facebook metaverse that looks and sounds like an unironic Matrix reimagining...) that are qualitatively different in some way.

As Prensky, argues, digital immigrants:

- don't go to the Internet first for information.
- print things out rather than working onscreen.
- read manuals rather than working things out online.

The significance of these qualitative differences for writers such as Prensky (presupposing they actually exist) is a desire to extend them, such that they become the basis for a wide-ranging and fundamental critique of contemporary forms of educational teaching and learning.

Which, when you stop to think about for a moment, is some stretch of the imagination.



Undeterred, Prensky argues:

*“It is now clear that as a result of this ubiquitous environment and the sheer volume of their interaction with it, today’s students think and process information fundamentally differently from their predecessors. These differences go far further and deeper than most educators suspect or realize. ‘Different kinds of experiences lead to different brain structures,’ says Dr Bruce D. Perry of Baylor College of Medicine... ‘it is very likely that our students’ brains have physically changed - and are different from ours - as a result of how they grew up. But whether or not this is literally true, we can say with certainty that their thinking patterns have changed’”.*

Despite the equivocation about whether digital natives “have a different brain structure” to their immigrant peers -although if it’s not “literally true” then it’s literally false - the claim they have a different way of thinking lays the ground for a critique of contemporary education systems based on the idea they were designed by and for the digital immigrants of the distant past.



The upshot of this is a mismatch between those who control the education system (*digital immigrants*) and those who consume it (*digital natives*) that has resulted in a type of education no-longer fit-for-purpose. Educational systems need to be reinvented to bring them into line with how digital natives think and learn. This, according to Prensky, means:

*“**Digital Natives** are used to receiving information really fast. They like to parallel process and multi-task. They prefer their graphics before their text rather than the opposite. They prefer random access (like hypertext). They function best when networked. They thrive on instant gratification and frequent rewards. They prefer games to “serious” work.*

***Digital Immigrants** have very little appreciation for these new skills the Natives have acquired and perfected through years of interaction and practice. These skills are almost totally foreign to the Immigrants, who learned - and so choose to teach - slowly, step-by-step, one thing at a time, individually, and above all, seriously”.*





While, as I've suggested, the digital natives concept might have some (limited) currency, it's questionable that it can be extended in the way Prensky claims, for a couple of reasons identified by Helsper and Eynon (2009):

1. The validity of the generational dimension to digital nativism is open to question.

As they argue:

*“Those in support of this digital native / immigrant distinction tend to assign broad characteristics (e.g. a specific learning style, amount and type of technology use and / or set of learning preferences) to an entire generation and suggest all young people are expert with technology. Yet, while the proportion of young people who use the Internet and other new technologies is higher than the older population there are significant differences in how and why young people use these new technologies and how effectively they use them”.*

2. The extent to which differences between digital natives and digital immigrants can be explained by age differences rather than differences in class, socialisation, experience and the like is also questionable.



Moreover, Helsper and Eynon's research makes a number of observations and draws a range of conclusions about the concept that we can summarise as follows:

1. "Generation alone does not adequately define if someone is a digital native or not". There are a range of factors involved here, from class and gender to different levels of learning and experience.

2. The use of digital technology and media is to some extent age-stratified in the sense younger people:

- have a greater range of ICTs in their household
- use the Internet for fact checking and formal learning activities
- tend to use the Internet as a first port of call
- are more likely to come from media-rich homes
- have higher levels of Internet self-efficacy
- are more likely to engage in online learning activities.
- multi-task more
- are more confident about their skills
- use the Internet more

Despite these differences, however, age alone is neither a sufficient nor necessary explanation.



As Helsper and Eynon conclude:

*“Generation was not the only significant variable in explaining these activities: gender, education, experience and breadth of use also play a part. Indeed in all cases immersion in a digital environment (i.e. the breadth of activities that people carry out online) tends to be the most important variable in predicting if someone is a digital native in the way they interact with the technology”.*

In this respect:

1. While digital natives and immigrants exist in the sense there are notable differences in the extent to which different individuals and social groups are comfortable using digital technology and media they are not *“two distinct, dichotomous generations”*.

2. “While there were differences in how generations engaged with the internet there were similarities across generations as well, mainly based on how much experience people had with using technologies”.

3. Internet use in particular reflects “a continuum of engagement” rather than “a dichotomous divide between users and non-users”. People, in other words, of various ages use the Internet for a wide variety of purposes.

4. Their research “supports other research that has demonstrated that there are significant differences within cohorts of young people in terms of their preferences, skills and use of new technologies”. Young people are not, in this respect, an “homogeneous generation of digital children”.



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# MEDIA METHODS

## content analysis

**Quantitative** forms of this research method are a statistical exercise, based on an analysis grid, that involves *categorising* and *quantifying* aspects of behaviour to *systematically* reveal underlying media patterns and themes.

Meehan's (1983) study of US daytime television, for example, revealed the limited number of stereotypical roles played by female characters at this time and suggests this form is particularly useful for identifying and classifying recurrent themes in a media text, such that quite complex forms of social interaction can be explored.

In a slightly different way Hogenraad (2003) used computer-based content analysis to search historical media accounts of war to identify key recurring themes that signify the lead up to conflict. The objective here was to identify the *ideological markers*, transmitted to the audience that signified support for aggression.

Similarly, Miller and Riechert (1994) developed the idea of *concept mapping*, using computer technology to identify and describe '*themes or categories of content in large bodies of text*'.

For Page (2005) this involved using computer technology to analyse different texts (such as newspaper articles going back many decades) to search for key words or phrases indicating the use of similar ideas or concepts - an idea similar to tag clouds where the most popular search options appear as larger text on a web site.

Page was interested in the social construction of global warming and he used "content analysis of prominent media streams from the mid-80s" to investigate whether or not the media advanced a dominant interpretation of this concept, as either a man-made or natural phenomenon.



In this way content analysis can be used **longitudinally** to track how ideas develop or are consolidated and can reveal media **patterns and trends** over a given time period that may be hidden to individual audience members. This idea applies not just to *national* media: differences in understanding, interpretation and emphasis across *international* boundaries can also be revealed by content analysis.

We can illustrate these ideas by outlining examples of research on media-generated "gender scripts" designed to tell an audience how to be male and female.



- **Sharpe's** (1976) study of teenage girls found female identities were shaped around "love, marriage, husbands, children, jobs and careers, more or less in that order".
- **McRobbie** (1977) argued female identities - as depicted in the pages of Jackie", the best-selling teenage magazine of the time - were shaped by a "narrow and restricted view of life", marked by "Romance, problems, fashion, beauty and pop", coupled with an "idealised and romanticised" view of boys. Jackie girls inhabit a world of "romantic individualism" where the objective is to find and keep "her man".
- **Ferguson's** (1983) longitudinal analysis of women's magazines described a "cult of femininity" revolving around traditional female values of caring for others, marriage, and concern with appearance. The general message was women should define themselves in terms of male needs.
- **Cumberbatch** (1990) found TV adverts used male and female identities in different ways - older men and younger women were more likely to be used than other age groups. The former featured heavily when an advertiser wanted to convey authority, especially when an advert featured technical expertise, while young women were used to convey sexiness.
- **Best** (1992) demonstrated how pre-school texts designed to develop reading skills are populated by sexist assumptions and stereotypes about males and females.
- **Kraeplin** (2007) examined how popular magazines aimed at teenage girls linked personal appearance with consumerism and consumption ("Women are constantly being made aware of their imperfections, then offered products that will help them attain the socially constructed ideal").
- **Ward** (2016) examined how the content of celebrity messages on Instagram affected the largely female fanbase response to different messages.



These examples, although relatively recent, largely predate the development of new media and this adds a new layer of diversity to the range of information now available; one that questions the kind of "cosy consensus" about gender represented through these studies, since the idea of a media consensus is more difficult to sustain where both access to and consumption of media has changed.

Cumberbatch's study, for example, was based on two commercial TV stations; there are now many hundreds of channels.

Robson (2002) also points to a couple of methodological strengths of content analysis.

Firstly, it's an unobtrusive method; data can be taken from texts without the need to interact with research subjects. Consequently, there are few ethical problems with this type of research.

In addition, the researcher doesn't rely on a respondent's memory or personal knowledge: this removes a layer of potential bias from the research process.

Secondly, reliability is improved through the ability to replicate the research - something made easier by the constancy of the source material.

In terms of weaknesses, while content analysis uncovers themes within texts, it doesn't tell us much about how audiences understand - or decode - media messages.

Just because a theme is present, it doesn't mean an audience recognises it or necessarily accepts it.

Methodologically we have to assume identified patterns aren't simply *artefact effects* - a product of how data is classified. How a researcher categorises the content they observe, for example, may suggest a pattern of behaviour that is neither present nor has any affect on people's behaviour in the real world. In addition, where the analysis involves making judgements about the categorisation of behaviour - the researcher decides the categories used - this may lower *reliability*: different researchers may use different categories or different criteria for placing behaviour into similar categories.



Conceptual (or thematic) analysis, for example, extends quantitative analysis by focusing on the concepts or themes that underlie media content such as news reports and magazine articles.

Philo and Berry (2004), for example, identify recurring themes in news reports of the Israeli - Palestinian conflict, such as language differences when referring to similar forms of behaviour; Palestinians were frequently classed as 'terrorists' while Israeli settlers were called 'extremists' or 'vigilantes'.

Relational (or textual) analysis examines how texts encourage readers to see something in a particular way.

Hall (1980) refers to this as a preferred reading - how a text is constructed, through the use of language, pictures and illustrations, for example, subtly "tells" the audience how to interpret the information presented. Professional sport in British popular newspapers, for example, is frequently presented in a way that suggests it is almost exclusively a male activity.

In terms of limitations, the depth and complexity of qualitative analyses makes them labour-intensive and time consuming, while the subjectivity of the analysis introduces reliability problems - different researchers may interpret the meaning of the data differently, depending on their initial theoretical perspective.

They are also prone to confirmation bias or *cherry picking*; it's relatively easy for a researcher to interpret data in ways that confirm their initial hypothesis, while ignoring data that doesn't fit neatly into the hypothesis.





# MEDIA METHODS

## semiology

Semiology is the study of cultural meanings embedded in media forms and, as Stokes (2003) suggests, is frequently combined with content analysis to produce a more-rounded picture of media texts through its ability to explore and interpret the 'hidden messages' embedded within texts. In this respect, semiology is based on two fundamental ideas: signs and codes.

Danesi and Perron (1999) define signs as: "*something that stands for something, to someone in some capacity*" while Saussure (1974) argues signs consist of two ideas:

1. The **signifier** - the particular form taken by a sign.
2. The **signified** - what the sign represents. The word "natural", for example, is a signifier for something "not artificial"; however, it can also represent a range of different ideas, depending on the context. In advertising, for example, "natural" is frequently used to signify ideas like "good" and "healthy" (even though there are numerous things in nature that are neither good nor healthy).

This general idea can be further expressed in terms of two levels of meaning:

1. The **denotative** or what something is - a literal representation.
2. The **connotative** - what something means.

Signs always have a meaning - although the meaning can differ from group to group or culture to culture. In our culture a man giving a woman 12 red roses might intend to symbolise his love or affection; doing the same in Russia symbolises death - even numbers of flowers are only given to people at funerals.



**Chandler** (2009) notes "*the meaning of a sign depends on the code within which it is situated*"; codes "*provide a framework within which signs make sense*".

**Codes** refer to **conventions** that "need to be learned" and language itself is an example of the relationship between signs and codes. The meaning of a word (sign) depends on the grammatical context (code) within which it is located. Codes have three significant features:

1. They are an **integral** part of communication - language cannot function without them.

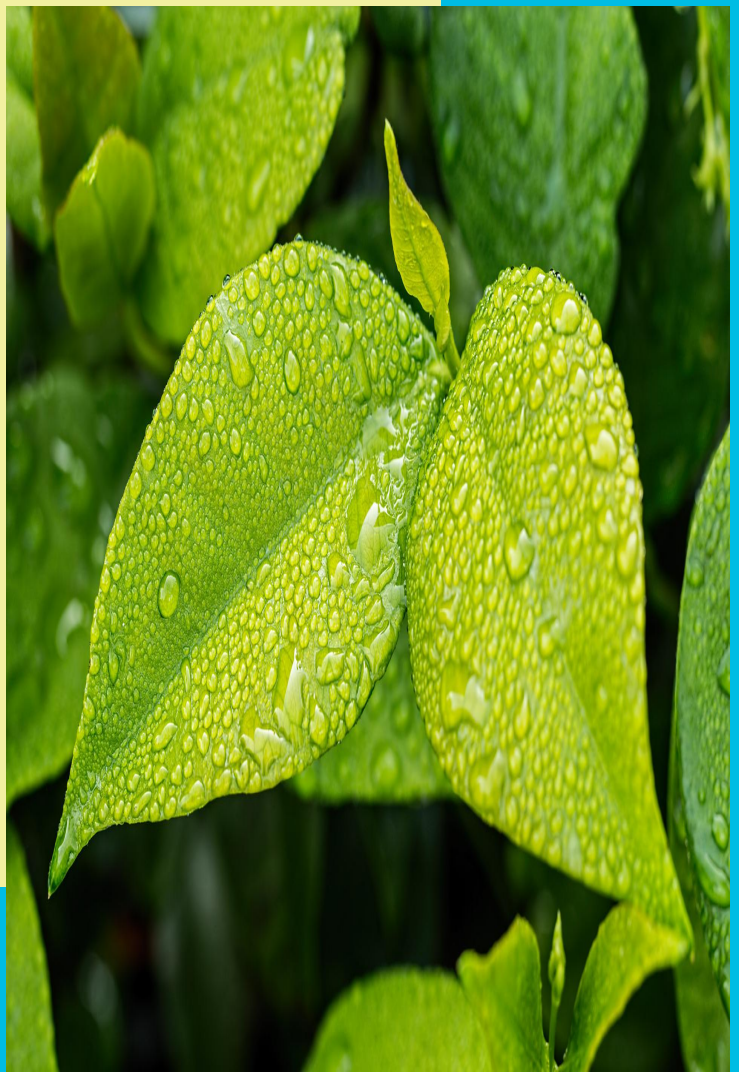
2. They must be **shared**: everyone must understand the cultural codes being used. Where two people don't speak the same language, for example, they often use **visual codes** (*non-verbal communication*) such as hand gestures, as a way of finding some common grounds for communication.

3. Codes can create "hidden meanings" within a text - advertisers, for example, use words like "natural" as cultural code to suggest "health" (using a variety of visual cues to embed this association) without actually having to support the claim their "natural product" is indeed healthy.

These features of coding means semiology can be used to analyse media texts in two ways:

*Firstly*, to understand how conventions are used by media organisations to convey a variety of messages - from selling *things*, such as consumer goods, to *ideas* - such as lifestyles or ideologies.

Advertising, for example, uses simple codes to encourage people to both consume and, of course, consume the "right things" (an advertiser's product rather than that of a rival).

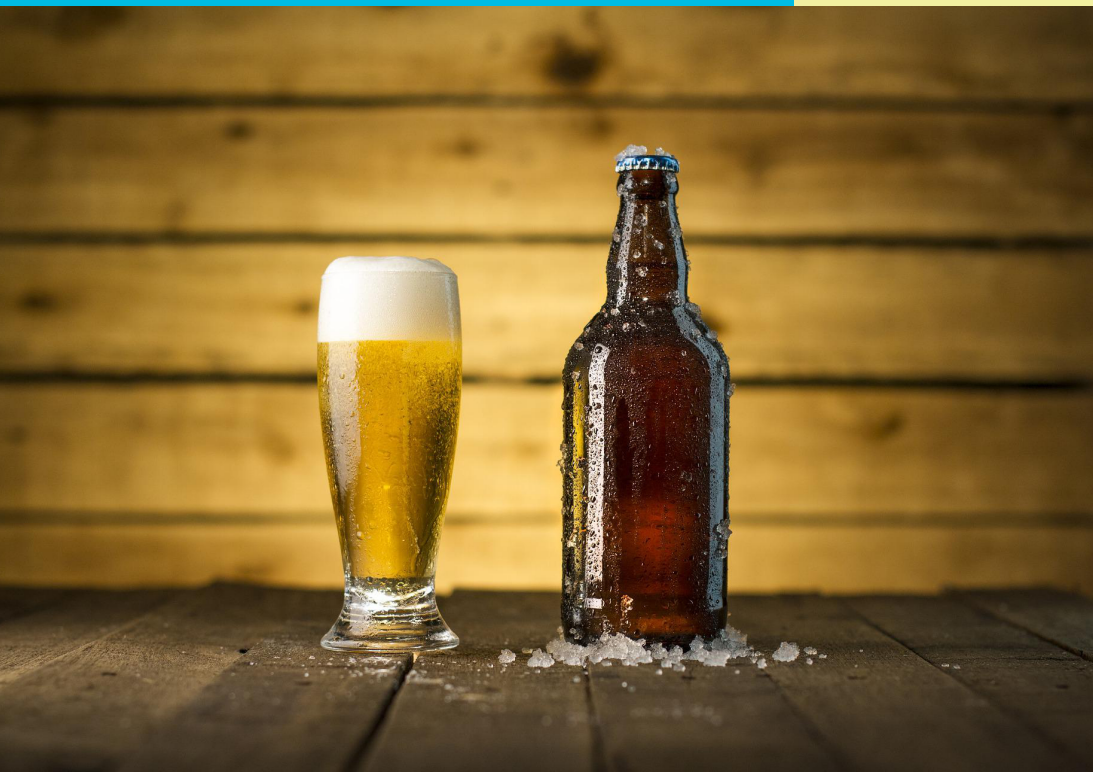


Jhally's (1987) study of 1000 U.S. television commercials, for example, looked at how product advertising is framed in relation to different target audiences, such as males and females - something that involved two processes:

- inventing qualities for products that define the essence of their existence (*carefree, adventurous...*).
- disconnecting products from their overt, practical, use and reconnecting them to a range of abstract qualities.

This allows *consumers* to invest products with the qualities they personally desire. Where one floor cleaning product is much like any other, the advertiser seeks to imbue their product with desirable, but abstract, properties (*ease of use, efficiency, time saving...*).





*Semiologically*, therefore, it's possible to identify codes used by advertising that cover a range of possibilities:

- *exclusions* - repetitive messages that exclude or drown-out rival interpretations - "because you're worth it".

- *associations* between something culturally desirable, such as status or

sophistication, and the product: "designer clothing" for example.

- *disassociations*; trying to ensure a product is disconnected from associations that may damage its image.

*Secondly*, semiological analysis allows us to understand *why* various conventions are used by the media - something that, for Marxist approaches, involves ideas about power and manipulation.

Althusser (1972), for example, suggests semiological analysis reveals the *ideological assumptions and manipulations* underpinning media texts and, by so doing, demonstrates how: "*knowledge is constructed in such a way as to legitimate unequal social power relations*".

For Althusser media texts are part of the ideological state apparatus in capitalist societies; they promote ideas favourable to the interests of a ruling class in increasingly sophisticated ways using a variety of devices - one of which, as we've suggested, is through preferred readings. Newspaper headlines and subheadings, for example, tell the reader what to expect before they've read the article, while captions tell an audience what a picture means.

Jhally combined *content analysis* - identifying the characteristics of different types of advert - with *semiology* to uncover how products are sold to different audiences using different cultural appeals:

- 75% of adverts aimed at men were focused around transport, alcohol and personal care.
- 60% of adverts aimed at women focused on personal care, food and drugs.

Jhally found the most common codes involved testimonial appeals; associating the product with someone the audience:

- *admires*, using popular personalities to endorse a products
- *wants to be*, using "idealised" individuals: fantasy figures the consumer could be if they bought the product
- *is* - using "ordinary people" with the same characteristics as the target consumer.

The Glasgow Media Group (1976) show how semiology can be used to identify the assumptions that lie behind the presentation of television news. Their analysis of how industrial disputes were portrayed illustrated subtle (and not so subtle) forms of bias:

- Employers, for example, were generally filmed in a relatively calm environment (an office, behind a desk) and the reporter would ask respectful questions the employer was allowed to answer without interruption.
- Employees, often simply identified as "striking workers", were most often pictured outside and the questioning was more aggressive with the emphasis on the employee justifying their actions.

Rose (2007) argues semiology has a range of advantages:

- it requires very few resources.
- is relatively cheap to carry out.
- reliability issues, while always relevant, are less so when the researcher isn't necessarily trying to generalise their findings from the group they are studying to wider society.

Although it is an *interpretive method*, analysis can be grounded in empirical research (as with, for example, the Glasgow Media Group) and can be combined with quantitative forms of content analysis to produce *triangulated research*.

Semiology provides useful tools for analysing the meaning of media texts, to demonstrate how and why the media construct "social realities" in fundamentally ideological and manipulative ways (from selling products to selling ideas).







Marxism, in particular, has used semiology to reveal how various cultural conventions, such as social and economic inequality, are presented as "natural", inevitable and unchangeable. Where semiological analysis is underpinned by empirical research it provides insights into the way powerful groups, from corporations to political parties, use the media to influence public perceptions and opinions.

Semiological analysis does, however, tend to be on much weaker ground in relation to how audiences understand and interpret media messages and codes.

We can't, for example, simply *assume* that because a researcher is able to uncover "hidden meanings" in a text this is necessarily the case for a casual audience. Rose also points-out that a researcher requires a thorough grounding in their subject matter if they are to identify and understand the codes and conventions involved; a semiological analysis of Hollywood films, for example, would be difficult for a researcher who had little or no knowledge of cinema.

A more-fundamental criticism, particularly as it applies to Marxist analysis, is the belief that media messages are layered; "core ideas" are embedded in layers of seemingly inconsequential ideas. The "real message" of advertising, for example, is not about buying one product rather than another; it's about *consumption*.

This assumes there are "real" messages that can be found by peeling back the layers under which they're disguised and the researcher gives themselves a privileged position - someone who "knows the real meaning" of media messages.

When Hebdidge (1979), for example, writes about 'the meaning of style' in youth subcultures, he argues some punks wore Nazi swastikas in an 'ironic way'. Young (2001), however, argues, that whatever the truth of this assertion it is simply an interpretation unsupported by evidence.

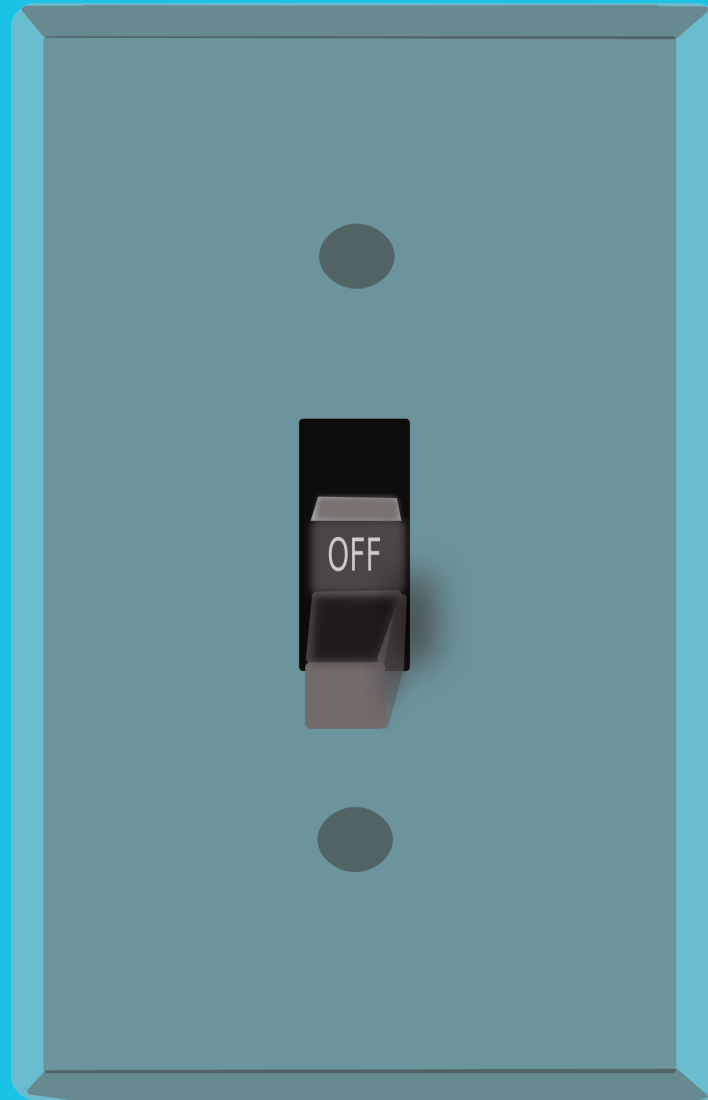
# MEDIA METHODS

Giddens (2006) defines experiments as "attempts, within artificial conditions, to test the influence of one or more variables upon others". Experimentation, in other words, involves identifying variables and testing their relationship under controlled conditions.

Variables are things that may change - or *vary* - under different conditions; we may, for example, want to see what happens to one variable when we change the condition of another. A simple example involves two variables - a light switch and a light bulb. The bulb is a dependent variable - we want to measure any changes in this variable, depending on how we change another (independent) variable; in this instance the light switch. The relationship between the dependent and independent variable takes one of two forms:

- **Correlation** involves the idea that when one thing happens something else immediately follows; there is a clear correlation between flicking a light switch and the state of the light bulb. Correlations are, however, only suggestive of a relationship; they can occur by chance, accident or some other intervening factor.
- **Causation** is a stronger statement of a relationship that refers to the fact that when one action occurs, another *always* follows. In this way causal relationships allow researchers to make highly reliable predictions about future behaviour based on observations

In the real world causation and correlation are not always easy to distinguish - things often happen "around the same time" by chance. One way to separate correlation from causality, therefore, is to *test and retest* a possible relationship; the more times it is *replicated* with the same result, the greater the chances it is a causal relationship.





# ***laboratory experiments***

are a feature of closed systems where research conditions can be exactly monitored and controlled - something that ensures no extraneous variables affect the tested relationship between dependent and independent variables.

Although laboratory experiments are not particularly common in the social sciences, the relationship between media violence and violent behaviour in young people has been researched in this way.

A classic example is Bandura et al's (1961) 'Bo-Bo doll' experiment where one of three groups of children witnessed an adult behaving violently; the play of each group was then observed to see if the children *shown* violent behaviour then *played* violently (which they did).

Similarly, Asch's (1955) perception experiments tested the extent to which individuals will conform to group opinions, even when these opinions conflict with the evidence of the individual's own eyes. Asch found the majority of respondents (37 out of 50 subjects) preferred "obviously erroneous" (they deliberately lied) group opinions.

Both experiments have implications for how we see the influence of the media - the first in relation to "copycat violence" and the second in terms of how people's opinions may be formed through "expert guidance".

# ***natural experiments***

are a feature of open systems, such as the social world, where the environment cannot be closely monitored or easily controlled. Field experiments conducted outside of a closed, controlled, environment are more common in the social sciences, where respondents are studied in a natural environment. Zimbardo (1973), for example, set-up a role-playing simulation (The Stanford Prison Experiment, 1971) where volunteers were assigned the roles of prisoners and guards. The experiment was eventually halted because some of the "guards" took to their role with just a little too much (violent) enthusiasm.

Although not as tightly-controlled as the laboratory type of experiment, field experiments can give important insights into people's behaviour; in this instance Zimbardo's experiment has wide-ranging implications for our understanding of media influence; if people identify closely with the behaviour and relationships being portrayed this potentially influences their real-world behaviour.



# breaching experiments

Garfinkel's (1967) breaching experiments, on the other hand, were designed to show how people 'construct reality'. The experiments deliberately 'breached social expectations' by upsetting people's expectations and, by so doing, demonstrated the normative conventions on which reality is based.

In one experiment Garfinkel sent researchers into restaurants where they were instructed to deliberately mistake customers for waiters while their reactions were secretly observed.

Similarly, Mann et al.'s (2003) *sousveillance* experiments involved going into shops that had security cameras (*surveillance* of customers) and 'reversing this gaze' by recording the reactions of shop assistants as they were filmed.

The principle on which these experiments are based - that "reality" consists of a range of carefully constructed social conventions - has important implications for the role of the mass media in creating such conventions.



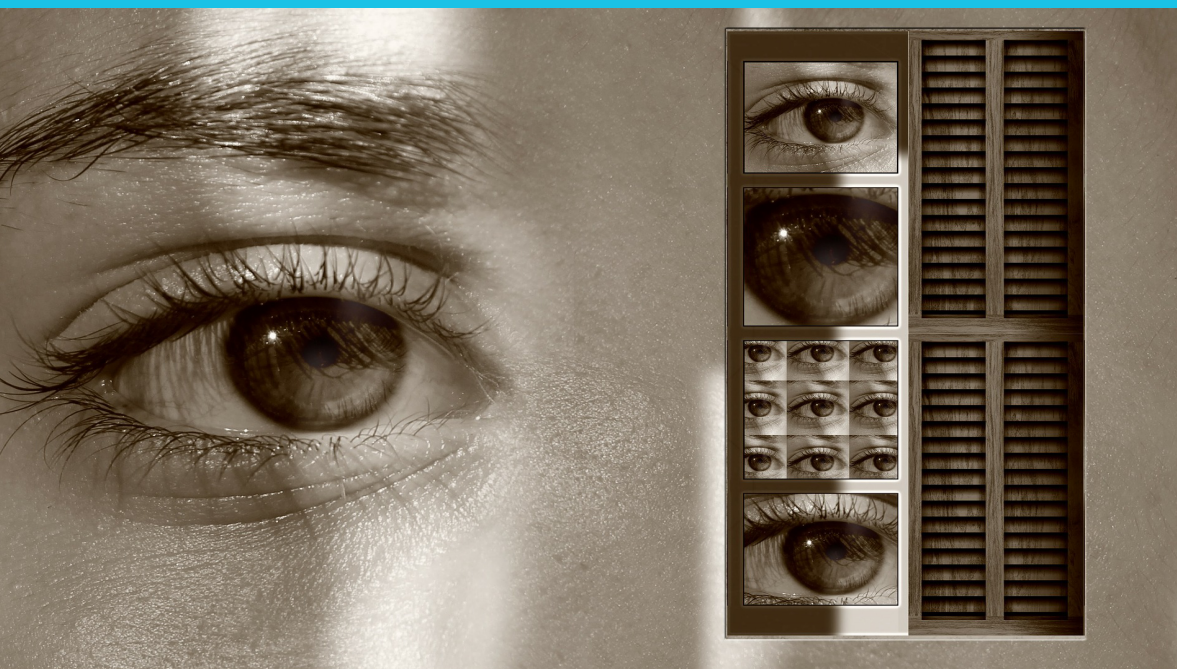


Laboratory experiments allow tighter control over research conditions and this gives higher levels of control over the variables being changed and tested.

This makes replication easier than in a field experiment, where uncontrolled extraneous variables can more-easily intrude. Social science experiments, therefore, generally identify correlations that require further testing, rather than a strict sense of causality.

Laboratory experiments can be highly reliable; the experimental conditions can be controlled and standardised to allow replication.

They can also create powerful, highly valid, statements about cause-and-effect relationships that can be extrapolated to understand people's behaviour "in the real world". Similarly, field experiments may also be used to manipulate situations 'in the real world' to understand the normative assumptions underlying everyday behaviour.



On the other hand, experimental control is a major methodological problem because of the difficulties involved in controlling for all possible influences on people's behaviour.

A simple awareness of being studied may introduce an uncontrolled independent variable into an experiment; the Hawthorne Effect, named after the studies by Mayo (1933) at the Hawthorne factory in Chicago, refers to changes in people's behaviour that directly result from their knowledge of being observed. As Draper (2004) argues "*the important effect here was the feeling of being studied*".

A related problem is the artificial environment. A controlled experiment is an *unusual* situation - and respondents may behave differently inside a laboratory to how they behave outside its controlled environment.

Finally, we need to note there may be a range of ethical questions surrounding the right to experiment on people who may be unwitting (and unwilling) participants in any experimental research.

# Methods, Mobiles and Media



Research Methods can be a little abstract and dry (teacher-speak for dull), particularly when opportunities to experience and apply what's being taught are limited by things like time and a lack of easy access to suitable research subjects. This is where Steven Thomas' "[Patterns of Mobile Phone Use](#)" article might help.

The research example it suggests takes advantage of a ubiquitous resource – student ownership of mobile phones – to promote a relatively simple and straightforward way of applying and evaluating a range of methods, from questionnaires to participant observation.

## Media: Context / Background

It does this by suggesting students (loosely) replicate Maenpaa's (2001) examination of the impact of mobile phones on social interaction through a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods designed to monitor mobile phone use in a small case study scenario.

The article suggests a set of general areas to study – from the simple quantitative, like the length of time people spend on their phones each day, to more qualitative questions relating to how people behave when using their mobiles.

Although the article is mainly designed to help students get to grips with research methods, if you're teaching media there is an additional aspect to the research you might find interesting: evaluating the social impact of new media.



The concept of “New Media” appears somewhere on all Sociology a-level Specifications, frequently in conjunction with an instruction to examine its role / impact / significance in contemporary societies, both local and global:

- **AQA:** New media and their significance for an understanding of the role of the media in contemporary Society
- **OCR:** The impact of digital forms of communication in a global context.
- **WJEC:** New media and globalisation
- **CIE:** The impact of the ‘new media’ on society.



In Thomas’ article the student research is based around a contrast between **Negreonte’s slightly gung-ho and highly-individualistic “digital optimism”** and Maenpaa’s more-nuanced approach to communication and interaction.

One interesting aspect of Negreonte’s work is the claim that in a digital society of “email, fax and answering machines” (the fact he only said this in 1995 shows how rapidly the technology has changed) the world will become *asynchronous*. In order to participate or communicate people do not need to be interacting at the same time.



*“We’ll all live very asynchronous lives, in far less lockstep obedience to each other. Any store that is not open 24 hours will be non-competitive. The idea that we collectively rush off to watch a television program at 9:00 p.m. will be nothing less than goofy. The true luxury in life is to not set an alarm clock and to stay in pyjamas as long as you like. From this follows a complete renaissance of rural living. In the distant future, the need for cities will disappear” (Wired, 1998)*

One way in which new media has become increasingly ubiquitous is through the exponential growth of mobile / cell phone ownership and you would think that if any technological development has created or expanded asynchronous interaction it would be this one: technology that even a few years ago could be used to symbolise wealth and social status is now pretty-much everywhere.



While Negreponte's arguments have a ring of truth about them - a certain face validity as it were - others have not been so sure.

Maenpaa's (2001) examination of the impact of mobile phones on interaction is a case (study) in point, with his key findings summarised by Thomas.

If you just want to use the activity as a way of teaching research methods, researching mobile use could be used to devise and apply methods such as:

- Questionnaires / Structured interviews
- Unstructured interviews
- Observation – non-participant
- Participant – overt and covert

Equally you could use a combination of quantitative / qualitative methods if you wanted to illustrate concepts of triangulation.

If you don't have the time, opportunity or inclination to do this as a practical exercise, try doing a *thought experiment* where students have to imagine what it would be like to do the research.

This particular route can be instructive if students already have a good grounding in different methods, their strengths, weaknesses, uses and limitations and you want to explore a range of more-theoretical issues (different research methodologies, different aspects of triangulation and so forth).







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