

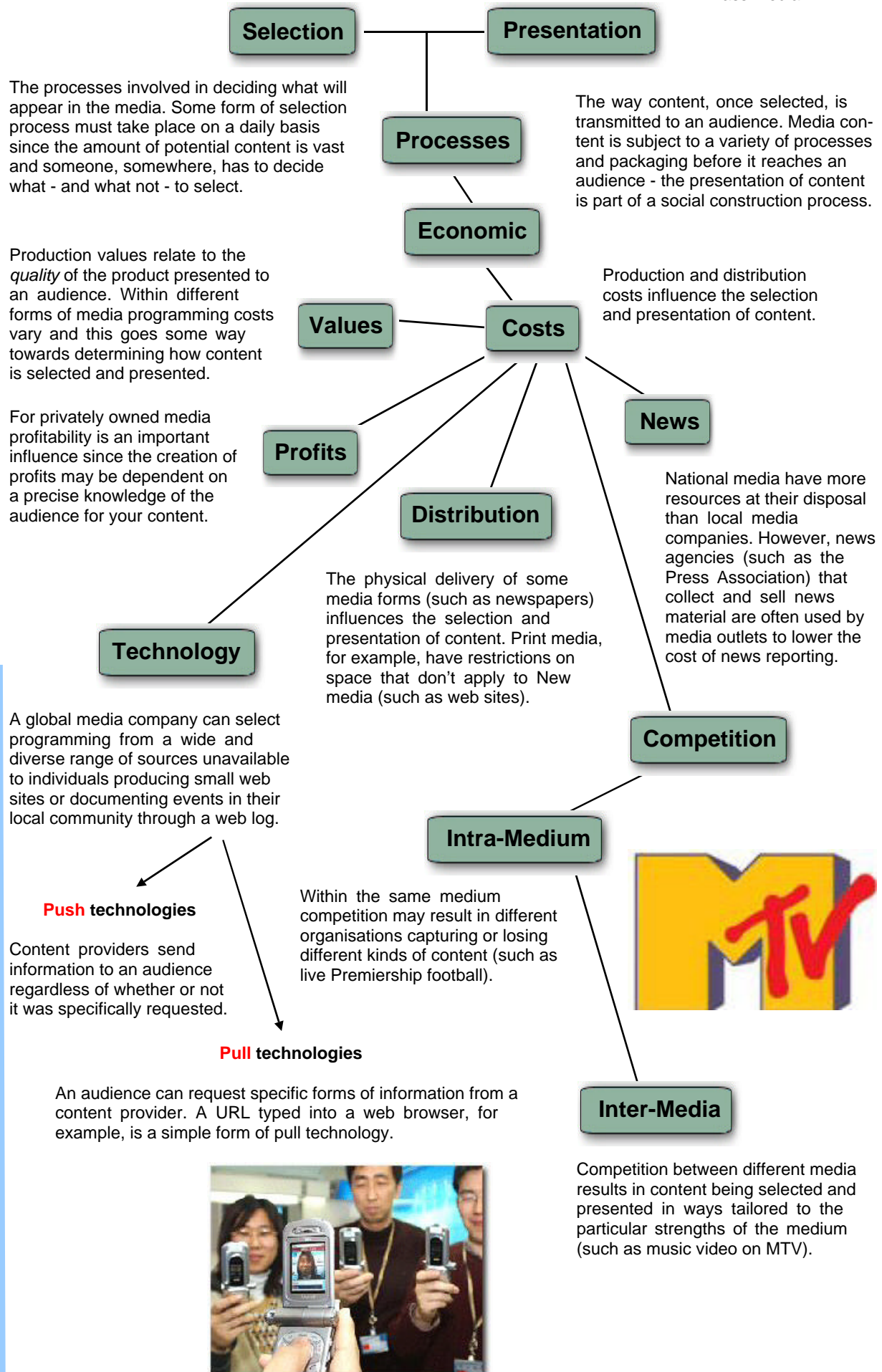
AS Sociology

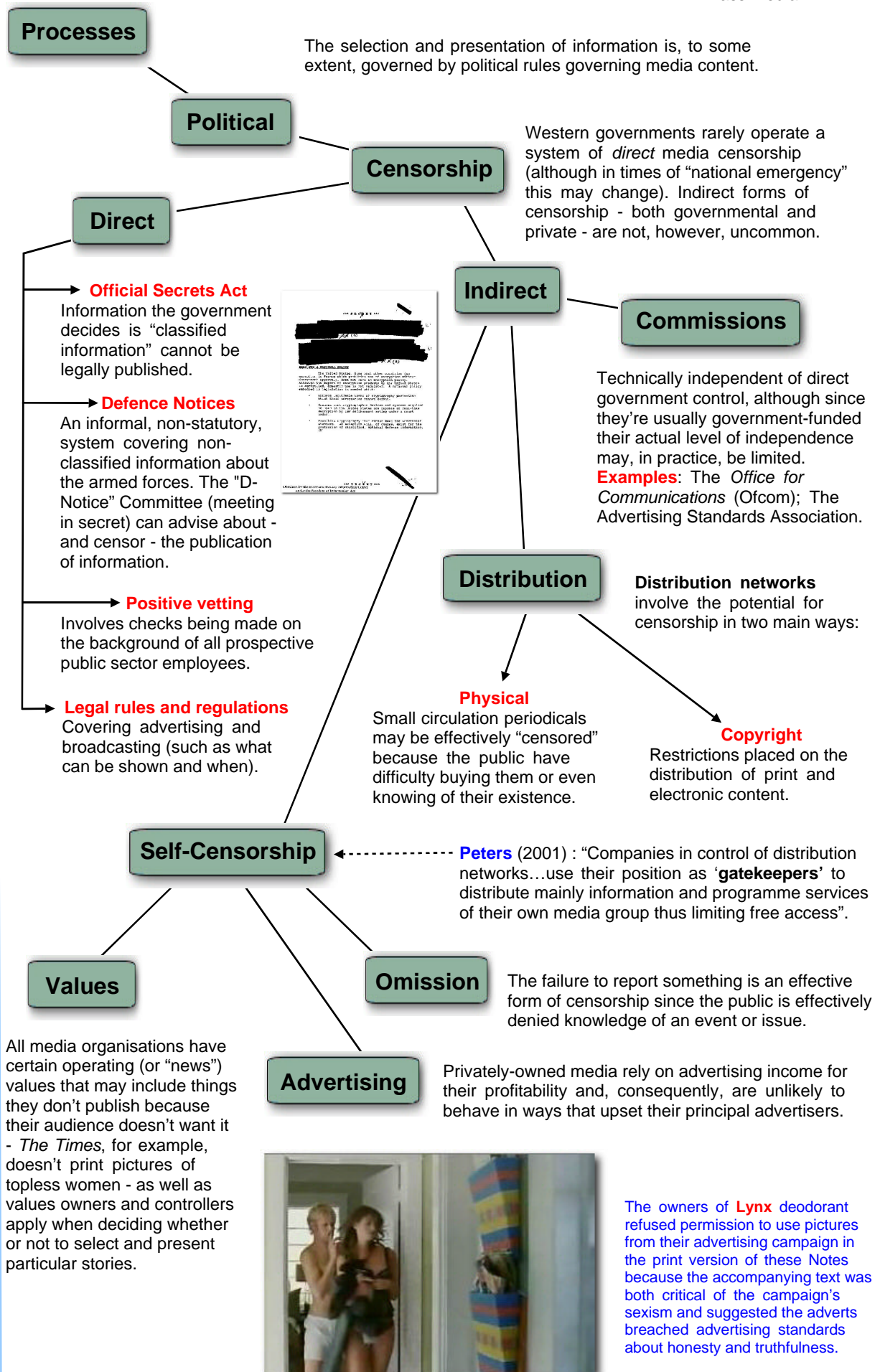
**Revision
Mapping**

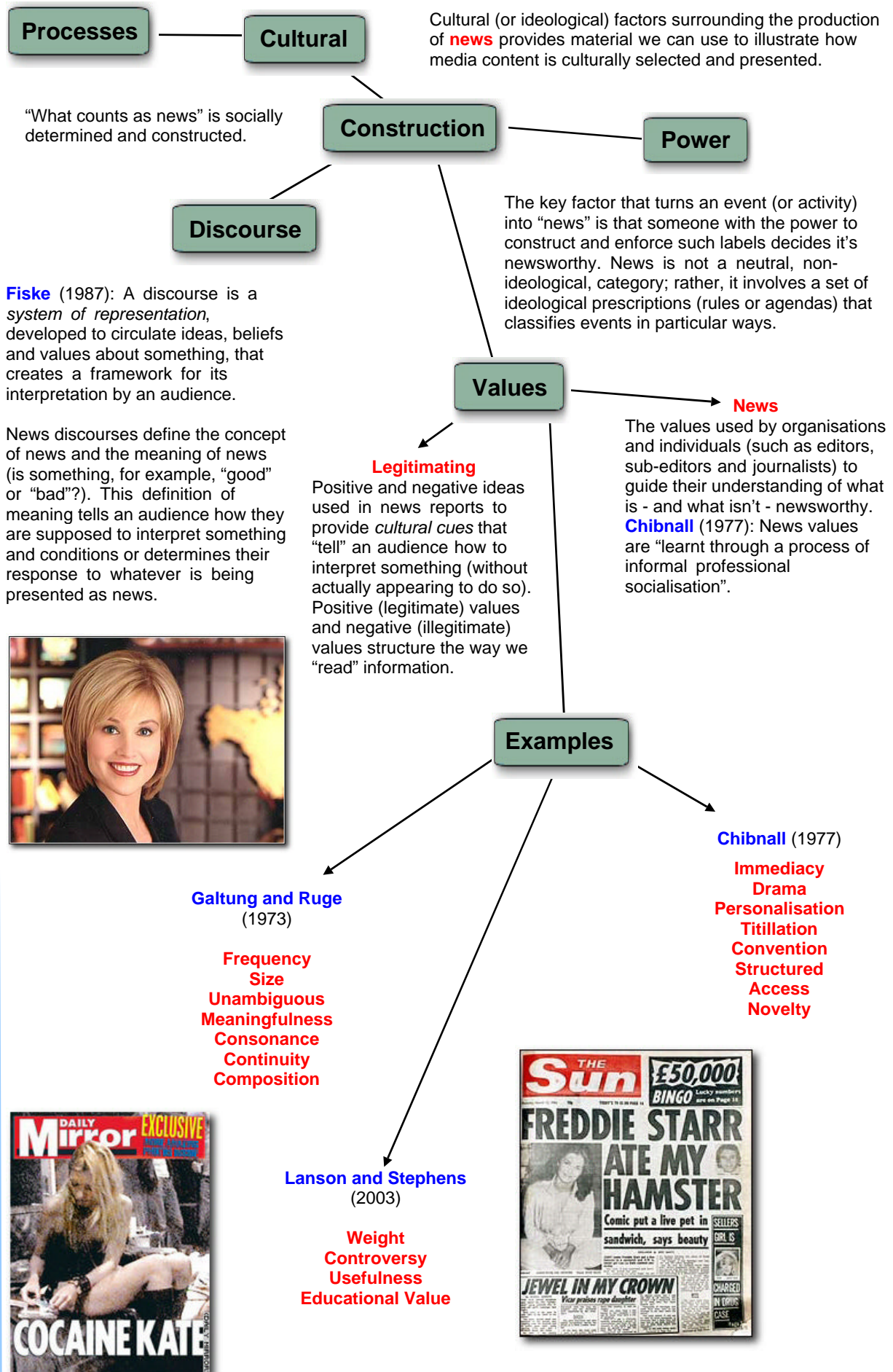
Mass Media



“Different explanations of the processes of selection and presentation of media content”.









Folk Devils

The periodic identification and selection of individuals or groups as being deserving of special attention, usually because they're believed to represent a challenge or threat to the existing moral order.

Examples: Asylum seekers, Terrorists, Paedophiles.

Moral Panics

The idea folk devils are sufficiently threatening to require some sort action to be taken to counteract or neutralise their influence.

Scapegoating

Moral panics involve individuals or groups being targeted for special treatment by the media. Politicians, the police and so forth. The objects of such panics (usually those who are relatively powerless) are stigmatised and scapegoated (blamed) for social problems.

Social Control

Moral panics represent one way of "cracking down" on behaviour seen as undesirable by the media. This often occurs during periods of social crisis or change and, arguably, represents attempts to limit the impact and pace of such change.

Hall et al (1978), from a Marxist perspective, linked a moral panic over "mugging" in the 1970's to an economic "crisis in capitalism", arguing the media used such folk devils to distract people's attention from the real problems in society at that time (high levels of unemployment and social unrest, for example).

A contemporary example - the US-led "War on Terror" - has seen the introduction, in the UK, of a wide range of government policies that impact directly on individual freedoms (such as the possible introduction of Identity Cards).

Moral Entrepreneurs

Individuals or groups who take it upon themselves to "protect public morality" who use news media to promote their individual or group agendas.

Values

Alternative explanations of moral panics focus on how they reflect news values.

Risk



Audience



The **amplification of risk** is related to **Wilkins** (1963) concept of Deviancy Amplification (where one result media selection and presentation in relation to crime and deviance was an increase ("amplification") in the behaviour they were concerned to control). By publicising certain types of behaviour the media not only served to attract people to the behaviour but also led to deviance becoming criminalised.

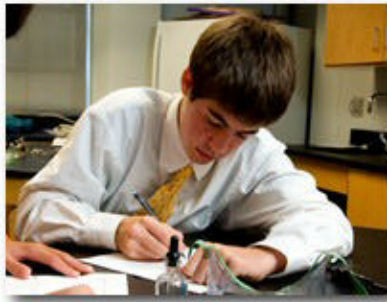
A dramatic, sensational, story can be used to increase audience figures or ratings. This is particularly apparent during "quiet periods" in terms of news when the lack of anything significant to report often results in "folk devil" stories appearing in the media.

Frewer et al (2002) showed how perceptions of risk relating to genetically modified food increased after extensive media reporting in the UK in 1999. **Pidgeon et al** (2003), highlight the way various issues have been increasingly used by media organisations to amplify the actual risks from a range of things (such as AIDS).

Synoptic Link Crime and Deviance

The concept of deviancy amplification can be applied to "the social construction of, and societal reactions to, crime and deviance, including the role of the mass media".



**2 marks**

Explain what is meant by a stereotype.

4 marks

Identify two features of a moral panic.

4 marks

Explain what is meant by a 'folk devil'.

Exam Questions**4 marks**

Give two examples of issues that have become moral panics.

8 Marks

Identify and briefly explain two factors that may affect "whether an event will be reported in the media".

6 Marks

Give three examples of "news values".

8 Marks

Identify and briefly explain two reasons why moral panics occur.

Item

A major interest of researchers is whether the mass media are biased in their selection and presentation of the news. For example, some sociologists argue that the media reproduce the views of the ruling class and portray subordinate groups in stereotypes. Studies by the Glasgow University Media Group have shown that the language and 'visuals' used in TV news broadcasts are biased against particular groups; that stories are selectively reported (for instance, the effects of strikes are given more coverage than their causes) and that there is a hierarchy of access to the media, in which more powerful groups find it easier to get their views heard. Sociologists have also examined how news values – that is, the criteria that journalists and editors use in deciding whether an event is 'newsworthy' – produce systematic biases in the news.

20 marks

Using material from the Item and elsewhere, assess the view that the selection and presentation of the news by the mass media are biased.

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