

Thematic guide: media studies (using qualitative data)

The media is not only reflective of culture it also has the power to shape culture

Introduction

From the introduction of printed mass media in the 1850s, to the introduction of the television in the 1950s, to rapidly expanding new technologies and the rise of the internet over the last two decades, the mass media continues to dominate, influence and epitomise modern life at a national and global level.

The media and its effects have driven critical debate, evoked ethical arguments and created new challenges for society, which have all been of great interest to sociologists.

The media is not only reflective of culture it also has the power to shape culture. The way in which mediated culture reflects and affects an audience is dependent on complex social factors including social class, values and beliefs.

Studies on media in the UK Data Service's qualitative collections have focused on a diverse range of topics such as television viewing, the internet, security, parental regulations of media use, consumption, lifestyles and news.

Examples from our collections include Jackson, Stevenson and Brooks's study 'Consumption, Lifestyle and Identity: Reading the New Men's Lifestyle Magazines, 1985-1997', which looked at how masculine identity was shaped through the media, in particular through magazines.

Livingstone and Bober's study 'United Kingdom Children Go Online, 2003-2005', explored the implications of internet usage amongst young people and how the internet has had a dramatic impact upon social relationships, education and family life.

Searching for related materials

The [UK Data Service catalogue](#) can be searched for data on media studies using subject terms such as:

- media culture
- television
- consumption
- leisure
- journalism
- press
- news
- internet
- communication
- mass media

Every data collection is accompanied by comprehensive documentation. These are open access and available to the public from the website and it is not necessary to be a registered user to access and download them.

The content of the documentation varies by collection, but usually includes information such as the initial proposal, interview schedule, description of methodology, end of award report, and so on.

In some cases, more details are provided such as the coding schemes of the original researchers or examples of the consent forms used.

Other resources on media studies

[Family and media](#)

Summary of selected qualitative studies on media

Study name

[SN 5631 Media Consumption and the Future of Public Connection, 2004-2005](#)

Couldry, N., Markham, T. and Livingstone, S.

This project focused on whether and how people's practices of media consumption give them the resources to connect to wider public spaces. The research explored the ways in which people's practices as media consumers were connected (or not) to their practices as citizens.

Coverage

Sample: media consumers resident in the United Kingdom

Data: 42 diarists and interviewees; 1,017 respondents to quantitative survey

Topics

- consumption
- political awareness
- television/radio
- newspapers
- internet/email

Study name

[SN 6126 Shifting Securities: Television News Cultures Before and After the Iraq War, 2003-2005](#)

Gillespie, M.

This qualitative data collection examined changing relationships between government, media and multicultural publics in the UK. The project examined how changing practices of news production in an increasingly competitive transnational news environment affect the quality of political journalism and judgements about the legitimacy, credibility, ethics and salience of 'security' policy.

Coverage

Sample: news viewers, news makers, and security policy-makers in India, Ireland, United Kingdom and United States

Data: 75 semi-structured interview transcripts; 100 focus group transcripts

Topics

- mass media
- security
- news
- multiculturalism
- citizenship
- legitimacy

Study name

[SN 4543 Consumption, Lifestyle and Identity: Reading the New Men's Lifestyle Magazines, 1985-1997](#)

Jackson, P. Stevenson, N. and Brooks, K.

This study aimed to explore the new generation of men's lifestyle magazines, which emerged since the mid-1980s. The researchers sought to examine specific forms of masculinity as they varied by place, class, ethnicity and generation, and also to assess the extent to which variations in the magazines' content and the way they are read by different groups of men can be explained according to competing sociological theories of masculinity and the media. A teaching dataset is also available: SN 6964.

Coverage

Sample: readers and editors of men's magazines

Data: 25 interviews (20 focus group, 5 individual)

Topics

- men's lifestyle magazines
- gender
- mass media
- consumption
- identity

Study name

[SN 5593 Photographs Leave Home: a Study of the Impacts of Personal Photography Online, 2004-2005](#)

Cohen, K.

This research explored how the new presence of millions of personal photographs online is changing how people understand images and themselves through images, and conversely, how those photographs are changing the way space on the internet is understood and used.

Coverage

Sample: individuals in the United Kingdom who put their personal photographs on the internet between 2004 and 2005

Data: 40 interviews

Topics

- photography
- photoblogs
- the internet community

Study name

[SN 6525 Impact of the Depiction of Work in Television Drama on Young People's Career Aspirations and Choices, 2007-2008](#)

Mendick, H. and Williams, K.

This study explored the ways that young people make sense of the representations of work and workers in television drama, how they use these to construct identities as future workers and how class, gender and ethnicity intersect with these processes.

Coverage

Sample: 14 to 16 year-olds in England in their final two years of schooling

Data: 31 individual interviews; 18 focus groups

Topics

- television
- career aspirations
- identity
- gender
- class

Study name

[SN 5475 United Kingdom Children Go Online, 2003-2005](#)

Livingstone, S. and Bober, M.

Many United Kingdom households, especially those with children, now have access to the internet although, importantly, some do not. This project looked at the growing significance of the internet in peoples' lives and looked at how this raises many questions for social scientists, policy makers and the public - about access and inequalities, the nature and quality of use, the implications for education, family life and social relationships and the balance between online risks and opportunities.

Coverage

Sample: 9 to 19 year-olds and their parents in the United Kingdom

Data: qualitative: 27 focus groups; 13 semi-structured family visit interviews; 11 online panel chat logs quantitative: 1,511 respondents

Topics

- inequalities and the digital divide
- education
- identity
- parental regulation of media use