Identities and the Media
Rob Miller
1. WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN IDENTITIES AND REPRESENTATION?
2. SHOULD YOU TEACH IDENTITIES ACROSS ONE OR TWO MEDIA PLATFORMS?
3. WHAT CASE STUDIES/TEXTS HAVE YOUR GROUPS LOOKED AT?
4. HOW WOULD YOU LINK IN SELF REPRESENTATION?
5. WHAT ROLE DOES DIGITAL MEDIA PLAY?
6. MEDIA LANGUAGE - HEGEMONIC CULTURAL STEREOTYPES OR MORE PLURALISTIC REPRESENTATIONS, IDEOLOGY ETC.
7. IDENTITY IS NOT FIXED? DID THE STUDENTS GET THIS?
8. WHAT THEORISTS WOULD YOU REFER TO?
9. SIGNPOSTING THE FUTURE.
1 HR., 48 MARKS OUT OF 80, CHOICE OF TWO ESSAYS AND 2 TOPICS

AQA STATE THAT **ONE IDENTITY** SHOULD BE EXPLORED ACROSS ONE OR TWO PLATFORMS BUT CROSS REFERENCING OTHER MEDIA

EXAMPLES – ‘BRITISH NATIONAL IDENTITY’, ‘BLACK CULTURE IN HIP HOP’, ‘CLASS IDENTITY ON BRITISH TELEVISION’, YOUTH IDENTITY IN FILM AND TELEVISION’…..

CRUCIALLY AQA STATE: “THE BEST CASE STUDIES INCLUDE A RANGE OF DIFFERENT MEDIA PRODUCTS FROM A RANGE OF DIFFERENT MEDIA PLATFORMS”

BEST APPROACH – MAIN PLATFORMS (E.G. MUSIC/TV) BUT REFERENCING OTHERS, SPECIFICALLY DIGITAL MEDIA
IDENTITIES ACADEMIC FOCUS

- REPRESENTATION (IS ONE PART OF IDENTITY AS THE PAST TOPIC – A REPRESENTATION CAN REVEAL AN IDENTITY)

- AUDIENCE AND CONSTRUCTION OF IDENTITY INCLUDING SELF-REPRESENTATION A HEIGHTENED FOCUS

- THE IMPACT OF NEW/DIGITAL MEDIA (THE ALTERNATIVE SECTION B QUESTION AREA) INCL THE ROLE SOCIAL MEDIA

- COLLECTIVE/DOMINANT/PLURALISTIC/CHANGING/ALTERNATIVE/MARGINALISED IDENTITIES

- CLEAR LINKS TO IDEOLOGY
ACCESS TO SOCIAL MEDIA HAS EMPOWERED PEOPLE TO ASSERT THEIR TRUE IDENTITY. DOES EVIDENCE FROM YOUR CASE STUDY SUGGEST THAT THIS IS THE CASE?

“TO ARGUE THAT AUDIENCES HAVE THEIR IDENTITIES SHAPED BY THE MEDIA THEY CONSUME IS SIMPLY TO INSULT THEM. PEOPLE ARE MUCH SMARTER THAN THAT”. DOES YOUR CASE STUDY INDICATE THAT PEOPLE ARE ‘MUCH SMARTER THAN THAT?’

WHICH QUESTION DID/WOULD YOUR KIDS CHOOSE AND WHY?
“WE ARE DEFINED BY THE MEDIA WE USE”. HOW DOES YOUR CASE
STUDY SUGGEST THAT AUDIENCES USE THE MEDIA TO CONSTRUCT
THEIR OWN IDENTITY?

“SOCIAL MEDIA HAS ONLY SERVED TO REINFORCE EXISTING
VALUES AND IDEOLOGIES”. DOES YOUR CASE STUDY SUGGEST
SOCIAL MEDIA HAS PLAYED A POSITIVE OR A NEGATIVE ROLE IN
THE CONSTRUCTION OF IDENTITIES?

“THE MEDIA DOES NOT CONSTRUCT IDENTITY, THEY MERELY
REFLECT IT”. DISCUSS.

TO WHAT EXTENT IS HUMAN IDENTITY INCREASINGLY ‘MEDIATED’?

“MEDIA REPRESENTATIONS ARE COMPLEX, NOT SIMPLE AND
STRAIGHTFORWARD”. TO WHAT EXTENT DO MEDIA
REPRESENTATIONS REVEAL IDENTITY?
AQA: “IDENTITY IS THE WAY WE SEE OURSELVES AND THE WAY DIFFERENT GROUPS SEE US. WE HAVE A CULTURAL AND A PERSONAL IDENTITY”.

IDENTITY IS NOT FIXED, BUT CONSTRUCTED AND EVOLVING OVER TIME – IT IS NOW LESS FIXED

RANGE OF PLATFORMS COULD BE MUSIC (E.G. VIDEOS), FILM, TV, VIDEO GAMES, SOCIAL MEDIA, NEWSPAPERS, MAGAZINES.....

ADVISE INDEPENDENT AND MAINSTREAM MEDIA ARE REFERENCED
MEDIA THEORISTS X 3-4 NEED TO BE REFERENCED IN THE EXAM ESSAY

CLASSIC CATCH ALL (DAVID GAUNTLETT): “IDENTITY IS COMPLICATED, EVERYONE’S GOT ONE”

TEACH A BRIEF CONTEXTUAL PAST SO STUDENTS CAN CONTEXTUALISE CONTEMPORARY REPRESENTATIONS

ACTIVELY ENCOURAGE INDEPENDENT CASE STUDY RESEARCH

LIKE OCR G325 SECTION B, A USEFUL END TO THE ESSAY IS TO SIGNPOST THE WAY FORWARD
KEY LANGUAGE

- COLLECTIVE IDENTITY – SOCIAL GROUPS/SIMILAR CHARACTERISTICS
- HOMOGENOUS – ALL THE SAME
- MEDIATION – REPRESENTATIONS ARE SELECTED AND CONSTRUCTED
- REPRESENTATION
- STEREOTYPING
- BINARY OPPOSITIONS
- DOMINANT PREFERRED READING/NEGOTIATED/OPPositionAL
- HEGEMONY – “IT’S ‘COMMON SENSE’ YOUTH BEHAVE IN THIS WAY”
- PLURALISM – ALTERNATIVE/ DIVERSE REPRESENTATIONS
- LINKS TO EFFECTS DEBATE, PASSIVE CONSUMPTION V ACTIVE
- MORAL PANICS
- IDEOLOGY
- REALISM V HYPER REALISM
- MARGINALISATION – TAIJFEL AND TURNER USEFUL
- DEVIANCY AMPLIFICATION – E.G. LONDON RIOTS AS ‘JUSTIFYING’
CASE STUDY – YOUTH AND IDENTITY

FILM ONLINE
ASK THE STUDENTS TO REFLECT ON THEIR OWN ‘YOUTH IDENTITY’

- Voting – would they have voted in the Gen election in May if they could? Have they an interest in, or awareness of political issues? What about reducing the voting age to 16…..

- What media do they prefer? (My perception next as white, middle class, middle aged) – Identity is wholly dependent on audience

- Are they consumers of traditional media? Are they all regular Twitter, FB, Instagram etc users?

- Have they got a part time job? Do they feel commercially valued or ‘do they feel like teenagers’/young adult?

- Do they feel like they belong to a youth identity or do they think that youth identity has become fragmented?

- Do they see any link between youth identity, social class/ethnicity?
STEREOTYPICAL MEDIA CONSUMPTION – YOUTH AUDIENCES

- **YOUTUBE** – Mainly for music videos e.g. Ed Sheeran, Sam Smith, Paloma Faith, Katy Perry, One Direction....

- **REALITY TV** – X Factor plus YouTube channel, Made in Chelsea, TOWIE, BB, I’m a Celebrity etc.

- **SOAP OPERAS** – EastEnders, Hollyoaks?

- **GOSSIP MAGAZINES** – Heat, Reveal, Now, Take a Break but also upmarket lifestyle magazines e.g. Grazia

- **ACTION BASED/FPS VIDEO GAMES** – GTA V, Halo....

- **THE TWO RUSSELLS** – Russell Brand’s blog rants and Russell Howard’s interactive Good News
EXAMPLE FILM TEXTS – HISTORICAL FIRST

- REBEL WITHOUT A CAUSE (1955)
- CLOCKWORK ORANGE (1971)
- QUADROPHENIA (1979)
- TRAINSPOTTING (1996)
- EDEN LAKE (2008)
- FISH TANK (2009)
- ATTACK THE BLOCK (2011)
- THE INBETWEENERS (2011)
- SELFISH GIANT (2013)
- THE FALLING (2014 – BFI BANNER)
JAMES DEAN

WARNER BROS. CHALLENGING DRAMA
OF TODAY'S TEENAGE VIOLENCE!

REBEL WITHOUT A CAUSE

Cinemascope • Warner Color

Also starring
NATALIE WOOD with SAL MINEO

Screen Play by STEWART STERN • Produced by DAVID WEISBART
Directed by NICHOLAS RAY • Music by Leonard Rosenman

JIM BACKUS • ANN DORAN • COREY ALLEN • WILLIAM HOPPER
REBEL WITHOUT A CAUSE - 1955

- As much about social class as the construct of the teenage – middle class youth but also moral decay

- Post war new teenage brand – crisis in identity, e.g. the role of men/masculinity. Mounting delinquency (rock n roll, fashion, sub culture – moral panics)

- Clear ‘us and them’ binary oppositions between generations

- Representation of juvenile criminals – Dean as a drunk and Natalie Wood breaking curfew

- Critical of parents, offering reasons for delinquency? Bickering parents, lack of love, parents often ‘away’

- Reinforcing hegemony or a more pluralistic text?
Plan and structure your response carefully. Choose two media. Use main case studies in your response but reference plenty of others. Ensure there is a past, present and future element to your response (case studies should reflect this). Link with media theory – MINIMUM 4/5 references to theorists. Develop an argument where relevant, offer an informed 'opinion' based on own experience (OCR like this). Plan an essay – revise from it then tweak it in the exam. Stare at the question until you know exactly what your response is going to be – have a final point in mind e.g. “youth are still subject to a constructed, stereotypical identity but within a changing media landscape (digitisation)”. A CLOCKWORK ORANGE - 1971
CLOCKWORK ORANGE (1971)

- Explores moral panics of deviant youth
- Escapist, science fiction text but grounded in realism
- Anti establishment – Alex ‘wins’
- His violence is ultimately rewarded in terms of narrative outcomes
- The idea of the urban gang and youth sub culture as a collective group is explored
- There are no connotations of age and wisdom – older characters are ridiculed. Pluralistic representations
- Dystopian future but aspirational youth culture.
Plan and structure your response carefully. Choose two media. Use main case studies in your response but reference plenty of others. Ensure there is a past, present and future element to your response (case studies should reflect this). Link with media theory – MINIMUM 4/5 references to theorists. Develop an argument where relevant, offer an informed 'opinion' based on own experience (OCR like this). Plan an essay – revise from it then tweak it in the exam. Stare at the question until you know exactly what your response is going to be – have a final point in mind e.g. "youth are still subject to a constructed, stereotypical identity but within a changing media landscape (digitisation)". QUADROPHENIA 1979
Uses 1964 Moral Panic as historical basis (Mods fighting Rockers on Brighton seafront)

Stanley Cohen described the event as a ‘moral panic’ (violent, out of control youth)

Film explores these stereotypes but glamourises the subculture (preferred reading) as it is produced and distributed by The Who Films

Youth mediated to audiences as rebellious, violent and deviant with no value

Jimmy, however is used as an example of ‘notions of difference’ – he reflects and obsesses on his own ‘mod identity’ which leads to his marginalisation from the collective group (see Tajfel and Turner – intergroup discrimination).

Jimmy’s ‘emotions’ and mental illness are ignored and misunderstood reflecting the time period
TRAINSPOTTING - 1996

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m_s9Ko_vTwU

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S3HBBPOUYOc
but within a changing media landscape (digitisation)
THE INBETWEENERS (2011)

- Coming of age drama set in Crete – post school holiday
- Rites of passage
- Pluralistic representations – a range of diverse representations
- Challenging notions of collective identity
- Cultural stereotyping and issues of marginalisation
- Social commentary on ‘fitting in’ in society
Plan and structure your response carefully. Choose two media. Use main case studies in your response but reference plenty of others. Ensure there is a past, present and future element to your response (case studies should reflect this). Link with media theory – MINIMUM 4/5 references to theorists. Develop an argument where relevant, offer an informed ‘opinion’ based on own experience (OCR like this). Plan an essay – revise from it then tweak it in the exam. Stare at the question until you know exactly what your response is going to be – have a final point in mind e.g. “youth are still subject to a constructed, stereotypical identity but within a changing media landscape (digitisation).”

EDEN LAKE – 2008
EDEN LAKE (2008)

- Explores youth and delinquency – hysteria
- Psychological horror but exploring a lack of morals and ethical code – the ‘good’ are killed
- Again, as with A Clockwork Orange Brett ‘wins’
- Do the children outwit the adults?
- Possible social comment?
- Are Jenny and Steve ‘punished’ for their sexuality?
ATTACK THE BLOCK

INNER CITY VS OUTER SPACE

FROM THE PRODUCERS OF SHAUN OF THE DEAD

FACEBOOK.COM/ATTACKTHEBLOCK
ATTACK THE BLOCK AND IDENTITY

- MEDIATED REPRESENTATIONS THROUGH COMEDY (DILUTION)
- AUDIENCE IDENTIFICATION – URBAN SOUTH LONDON, PLUS COMING OF AGE THEMES
- NOTIONS OF THE TEENAGE STREET GANG DEFINES MEDIA AND COLLECTIVE IDENTITY – COMPARE WITH SHIFTY, ILL MANORS, KIDULTHOOD/ADULTHOOD.....HOW IS YOUTH REPRESENTED?
- BASEMENT JAXX SOUNDTRACK – AUDIENCE IDENTIFICATION
- WHO DO THE ALIENS REPRESENT?
- YOUTH AS ANTI HEROES – HOODIES V ALIENS
- THEMES – RESPONSIBILITY, CONSEQUENCES, RESPECT AND MORALITY
- URBAN CULTURE – THERE ARE SCARIER THINGS OUT THERE THAN ALIENS: SURVIVAL, DRUGS, GANG CULTURE, MUGGINGS
Reflects recent trending of social realism towards youth audiences (Shifty, Shank, Ill Manors, Fish Tank, This is England)

Key argument – does it represent youth as a ‘deviant threat’ (dominant reading) or does it mediate a oppositional, more compassionate reading (see Skins argument)

Academic discussion – passive consumption of gamourised violence by youth audiences

Youth culture seen as reckless, anti social, criminal and violent

The film arguably has moral closure and throughout identifies ‘consequences’

Collective gang identity and loyalty explored as key narrative themes but again explores this collective identity through individualism (Trevor)

COMPARE WITH KIDULTHOOD/ADULTHOOD (2006/08)
THE SELFISH GIANT

WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY CLIO BARNARD

BRITAIN HAS FOUND A NEW DIRECTOR TO BE PROUD OF.
KATE MUIR, THE TIMES

A HEART-WRENCHING MOVIE... CEMENTS BARNARD'S REPUTATION AS ONE OF BRITAIN'S BEST FILMMAKERS.
PETER BRADSHAW, THE GUARDIAN

ASTONISHINGLY STRONG PERFORMANCES... CINEMA THAT TELLS AN UNSURE NATION WHO WE ARE.
ROBBIE COLLIN, DAILY TELEGRAPH
Hegemonic cultural stereotyping – Hebdige’s ‘youth as trouble’

Negative representation of parents – children take on adult, parental roles

Deviancy amplification – kids’ lives spiral out of control

Victim culture – child abuse/bullying narratives (adults as the bigger criminals)

Cultural stereotyping and issues of marginalisation (northern working class identity)
“POWERFUL AND POIGNANT, THE BEST BRITISH FILM OF THE YEAR”

“JARVIS AND FASSBENDER ARE OUTSTANDING”

“FUNNY, MOVING AND PROFOUND”

A FILM BY ANDREA ARNOLD

FISH TANK

LIVE, LOVE AND GIVE AS GOOD AS YOU GET.
Pluralistic representations of youth and gender

Deconstructs notions of the youth ‘chav’ stereotype (has all chav signifiers)

Presents audiences (using Hall) with dominant and oppositional reading (dependent on reception)

Shown in only 40 independent cinemas – for some middle class audiences is was reassuring in how it perpetuated the ‘council estate, unemployed, youth chav stereotype – using Levi Strauss, binary oppositions of ‘us and them’

These binary oppositions for some audiences maintain social divisions but arguably Andrea Arnold mediates youth culture as pluralistic and empowered (she escapes her ‘Fish Tank’)

On one level her childhood ‘innocence’ has been destroyed by her upbringing and social spiral but on another level she challenges societal norms and makes her own future
THE FALLING

- Set in late 1960s – independent girls’ school

- Coming of age film – linked with sexuality (first scene is Abbie having sex in a car)

- Lydia idolises and admires Abbie (who becomes pregnant) but no spoilers......

- Epidemic of fainting fits takes over school. Girls end up in psychiatric care

- Pluralistic rites of passage narrative, themes include hysteria, collective identity, sexuality, isolation, morality.....
AS WITH ANY IDENTITY – THERE’S LOTS OF STUFF OUT THERE

ONLINE YOUTH IDENTITY = TOO MANY OPTIONS

SOLUTION - FOCUS ON KEY TEXTS E.G. SNAPCHAT, FACEBOOK, YOUTUBE VLOGGERS LIKE ZOELLA ETC.

EMPHASIS ON INTERACTIVITY AND SELF REPRESENTATION

ODDLY, THE 1956 TEXT BY SOCIOLOGIST ERVING GOFFMAN “THE PRESENTATION OF SELF IN EVERYDAY LIFE” CAN BE MAPPED ONTO SOCIAL MEDIA AND IDENTITY (CHAPTERS ON ‘PERFORMANCE’ AND ‘COMMUNICATION OUT OF CHARACTER’
http://www.independent.co.uk/voices/comment/sure-teenage-girls-need-role-models--but-not-of-the-zoella-kind-9809136.html

http://www.independent.co.uk/voices/comment/zoella-is-a-great-role-model--she-changed-my-life-9811326.html

- ZOE SUGG, 24: FASHION/BEAUTY VLOGGER, AUTHOR, ‘INTERNET PERSONALITY’ AND NOW TV PERSONALITY (LOOSE WOMEN....)
- DEBUT NOVEL ‘GIRL ONLINE’ BROKE PUBLISHING RECORDS NON 14’
- STARTED BLOG 2009 THEN FASHION/BEAUTY/LIFESTYLE YOUTUBE VLOG
- DIGITAL AMBASSADOR FOR MIND AND FOR NATIONAL CITIZEN’S SERVICE
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o70ch7zTj9U (ZOELLA MEETS 1D)
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0in_9j25uCI (SKINCARE – BRANDED REPRESENTATIONS)
SNAPCHAT

- Photos, videos, add text etc to controlled recipients

- Interesting aspect, 1 – 10 second time limit (youth stereotyping an issue here?) after which videos etc are deleted from server/device

- Currently 750 million photos/videos per day

- Presented as an “alternative to stresses caused by the longevity of personal information on other media”

- “Intended to counteract the trend of users being compelled to manage an idealised online identity”

- Flags up issues of immediacy and fragmentation
REPRESENTATION OF YOUNG PEOPLE ONLINE

- [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=71pXYlwyPaU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=71pXYlwyPaU) (InRealLife Trailer - DOCUMENTARY). DIGITAL DIST. – DOGWOOF/BFI

- BEEBAN KIDRON – INTERESTING BODY OF WORK INCL. ‘HOOKERS, HUSTLERS, PIMPS AND THE JOHNS’ AND ‘BRIDGET JONES: EDGE OF REASON’. MOTHER TO A 21 YEAR OLD AND AN 18 YEAR OLD (PARENTAL UNDERSTANDING OF YOUTH CULTURE)


- ACKNOWLEDGES THE POWER OF THE INTERNET – WHAT CONCLUSIONS DOES THE DOCUMENTARY MAKE? DOES IT SUGGEST YOUNG PEOPLE ARE MORE EMPOWERED OR DOES IT FOCUS ON A MORE HEGEMONIC VICTIM CULTURE? (see recent seemingly increased cases of online grooming).
Interactive convergence via YouTube, Social Networking is exploited by youth consumers

The Prosumer means many young people are commercially exploiting opportunities (own YouTube channels, Blogs, 2.0 opportunities)

Proliferation of digital media has led to less mediation

Facebook makes a perfect case study to discuss notions of the construction of one’s own identity in ‘interpretative communities’

But - Internet identity has consequences – cyber bullying, grooming etc.

Michael Wesch describes YouTube as a cultural phenomenon (peer to peer sharing, implosion of traditional youth identity)

Henry Jenkins disputes a dominant reading that internet communication reduces social skills by stating instead that users actively participate in multiple communication
Key issue – is there immediacy without understanding e.g. infotainment culture

Internet identity has led to the fragmentation of traditional collective group identity (supporting David Buckingham’s argument)

Internet identity is a ideal opportunity for students to bring in their own examples/experience of the representation of online youth culture

Internet identity has led to further moral panics of ‘youth as threat’ – piracy, illegal downloading, hacking...

‘We Media’ issues e.g. campaigns and immediacy; news footage circulated online in minutes via social networking e.g. Boston Marathon as citizen journalism, FB as ‘empowering youth’

FYI and 60 Seconds as stereotyping
IDENTITY – THEORISTS 1

- **David Gauntlett** – youth prosumer, Web 2.0., Identity is complicated, everyone’s got one

- **Henry Jenkins** – digital media as empowering youth culture

- **Martin Barker** – challenges stereotypical moral panics

- **Tajfel and Turner** – intergroup discrimination/marginalisation

- **Dick Hebdige** – sub culture maintains divisions in society

- **Levi-Strauss** – binary oppositions maintain the dominance of the ruling class (link with **Richard Dyer** and the purpose of stereotypes)
YOUTH AND IDENTITY – THEORISTS 2

- **David Buckingham** – identity is the way we relate to, or fit in with those around us.

- **Anthony Giddens** – developing own biographical narratives via social networking – self representation denying Identity and Stereotyping in traditional media

- **Martin Hoyles** – ‘The Politics of Childhood’ – children as marginalised from making a ‘serious contribution’ to society (ideology of protection)

- **BLUMER & KATZ** – U & G

- **Michael Wesch** – on YouTube as cultural phenomenon
THE FUTURE

- Digital technology is fundamentally changing the concept of identity
- Audiences still very much exist, however in reference to identifying and expecting repeated hegemonic stereotyping (Daily Mail, TV News etc. as most commonly perpetuating and mediating stereotypical representations).
- Moves towards self construction (identity less reflected in mainstream media)
- Online communities formed from shared identity which would both not have been possible without digital technology and 2.0 – moves towards pluralism
- Fragmentation of traditional identity apparent but within a hegemonic framework....