

3 Histories of the media

By the end of this chapter you should:

- understand the development of the press and broadcasting in Britain;
- be familiar with the processes of integration, diversification and internationalisation as they relate to this development;
- understand the role of ‘media moguls’ past and present.

Introduction

The media industries mean big business! This is no simple statement, they are amongst the most profitable enterprises in the world and their close links with national and international politics have considerable implications for their role in democratic societies. A great deal of research has been undertaken into the development of the media industries, especially highlighting the three processes of integration, diversification and internationalisation. Much of this relates to concentration of ownership, which – as we shall see – has been a feature of media businesses over the past century. The focus of this chapter is the British media industry, but inevitably, with the increasingly global nature of media ownership and the introduction of new media technologies, it will be impossible to stay within the confines of the British Isles.

Media processes

There are two kinds of integration that are relevant for a study of the media:

- **Horizontal integration**, where a media company buys up other similar products, so a newspaper proprietor might take over another newspaper company or companies.
- **Vertical integration**, where a media company buys up other aspects of the same industry, so a newspaper proprietor might buy up paper mills and newspaper distribution outlets, hence gaining more power over the whole industry.

Diversification is the process by which media industries do not simply merge, but buy up other interests in diverse media and/or leisure industries.

An example of this process is illustrated by the Granada Group. Not only did it own the second largest television rental chain and the fourth largest publishing group, but it also operated one of the 'Big 5' network television companies and had interests in Bingo clubs, motorway service stations and music publishing (Murdock, 1990).

Internationalisation: there are three aspects to internationalisation – the exportation of media products to other countries; the ownership of foreign media organisations by home companies; and, conversely, the ownership of home media companies by foreign companies (Golding, 1974).

This chapter will examine all these processes in relation to the developments of mass media in Britain.

The British newspaper industry

In order to understand the history of the British press we have to make sense of the complex interweaving and increased concentration of ownership, together with the relationship between powerful proprietors and political processes. Concentration of ownership of the press and other media is by no means a new phenomenon, but what is new is the immensity of the modern media industries.

Even in the late nineteenth century there was evidence of multiple ownership of weekly newspapers; in 1884, for instance, a syndicate headed by an American steel magnate, Carnegie, controlled eight daily and ten weekly newspapers (Curran and Seaton, 1991). Between 1890 and 1920 there was rapid growth in newspaper ownership. In 1921 Lord Northcliffe owned *The Times*, the *Daily Mail*, the *Weekly Dispatch* and the *London Evening News*. His brother, Lord Rothermere, owned the *Daily Mirror*, the *Sunday Pictorial*, the *Daily Record*, the *Glasgow Evening News* and the *Sunday Mail*. Together they owned Amalgamated Press, and their brother, Sir Lester Harmsworth, had a chain of newspapers in the south-west of England. In total the circulation of their newspapers was over six million.

In the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s – the era of the 'press barons' – Rothermere, Northcliffe and Lord Beaverbrooke of the *Daily Express* were not simply the owners of newspapers, they also controlled the political content of their newspapers. On the death of Lord Northcliffe in 1922, four men held the controlling interests of the press, and by 1937 they owned nearly half of the national and local dailies as well as one third of the Sunday newspapers; their combined circulation was 13 million. They espoused strong conservative attitudes, and in 1931

Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin accused them of holding ‘power without responsibility’.

Exercise 3.1



What do you think the phrase ‘power without responsibility’ means? Try to illustrate your answer with examples.

ITEM A

National daily newspapers (selected titles), circulation (thousands)

Title (launch date)	1945	1965	1975	1988	1996
<i>Daily Telegraph</i> (1855)	822	1337	1331	1128	1044
<i>The Times</i> (1785)	195	254	319	436	685
<i>Guardian</i> (1821)	80	270	319	438	398
<i>Independent</i> (1986)	–	–	–	387	279
<i>Daily Express</i> (1900)	3239	3987	2822	1637	1245
<i>Daily Mail</i> (1896)	1752	2464	1726	1759	2058
<i>Daily Mirror</i> (1903)	2000	5019	3968	3157	2474
<i>Sun</i> (1970)	–	–	3446	4219	4049

(Sources: Seymore-Ure, 1991; *The Media Guide* 1997.)

ITEM A Exercise 3.2

With reference to Item A:

1. Identify the trend in the circulation of the *Daily Telegraph* from 1945 to 1996.
2. Describe the trends apparent between the circulations of the *Sun* and the *Daily Mirror*.

Gradually, individual proprietorship gave way to corporate ownership (ownership by companies rather than sole proprietors) and this was followed by ownership by conglomerates, although the controlling interest of some of the main newspaper, here were held by single individuals, such as Rupert Murdoch and the late Robert Maxwell. The processes of concentration and internationalisation attracted a great deal of attention in the 1980s as media of all kinds came under the control of the new international conglomerates (multinational organisations that have been produced as a result of mergers between different enterprises since the mid 1950s). Between 1957 and 1968, over one third of all companies quoted on the London Stock Exchange disappeared through mergers and acquisitions (Murdock, 1990).

As we have seen, horizontal integration was well established before 1945 with the press barons, but what was distinctive in the 1980s was the ‘scope, scale, management, balance and volatility’ of the new media conglomerates (Seymore-Ure, 1991). The expansion of new media such as cable and satellite television, video recording and per-

sonal computers, brought about by new technological developments, played a large part in creating the new era of media ownership.

In the 1940s a media organisation was typically print-based, whereas in the 1980s the process of diversification meant that media conglomerates dealt with television, publishing, music, cinema, travel, international news agencies and satellite broadcasting. A new pattern had emerged whereby non-media conglomerates acquired media interests, as well as media conglomerates acquiring non-media-based interests.

This can be illustrated with a specific example: the Reed International Group. Until the 1960s this was essentially a paper-making company, in which the Mirror Group (IPC) held 44 per cent of the shares. The company then diversified into wallpaper production, and by 1971 Reed was so large that it took over the Mirror Group. In the 1970s and 1980s it changed again. In 1984 it sold the *Daily Mirror* to Maxwell, and by the 1990s it was an international paper, packaging and publishing conglomerate. It was about the fifth largest publishing house in the world, and was especially strong in magazine publishing.

From press baron to media mogul

Tunstall and Palmer (1991, p. 105) define a ‘media mogul’ as ‘a person who owns and operates major media companies, who takes entrepreneurial risks, and who conducts these media businesses in a personal or eccentric way’. They also see other defining characteristics of media moguls as significant, notably that they mainly confine their business activities to the media – although they may have non-media interests, these will be secondary. It is not surprising that media moguls also tend to become involved with politics. In the USA, William Randolph Hearst (an anti-Democrat whose life was dramatised in the film ‘Citizen Kane’) was accused of delaying the entry of the USA into the Second World War.

Exercise 3.3



It might be interesting for you to see how Hearst’s life has been dramatised. Borrow a copy of ‘Citizen Kane’ from your video library and decide whether the portrayal of this media mogul is sympathetic or not.

Until the general election of 1997, Rupert Murdoch’s newspapers were seen as strongly biased towards the political right, and the newspapers owned by Robert Hersant and Axel Springer in France and Germany respectively have also shown very right-wing support in recent elections. Generally, media moguls tend towards support of individual political leaders rather than whole parties. This can be seen

in the support the *Sun* gave Margaret Thatcher, whilst picking out other Tory politicians as subjects for their various 'sleaze' campaigns. As we shall see in Chapter 10, Murdoch withdrew his loyalty from John Major's Conservative government to give unqualified support to Tony Blair and New Labour.

The two great moguls of the British newspaper industry, Rupert Murdoch and the late Robert Maxwell, do not really conform to any of the general patterns of ownership. Neither was British by birth, both of them were buyers and sellers of media properties and both were partisan. Murdoch, who inherited an Australian daily newspaper from his father, went to Oxford University and became a journalist on the *Daily Express*. He bought the *News of the World* in 1968 and the *Sun* in 1969. He moved into London Weekend Television, bought *The Times* and *The Sunday Times* and then *Today*. He entered the American market and eventually took US citizenship. After establishing himself as a successful newspaper proprietor in New York, he took a controlling interest in Metromedia (the leading US group of independent television stations) and bought up Twentieth Century Fox for \$575 million. He then turned his attention to satellite broadcasting and launched SkY. In 1989 he took over Harper Collins publishing, which included Fontana and Granada Books. As Seymore-Ure (1991) demonstrates, Murdoch's career has been highly individualistic. He still retains some non-media interests, for example part of the TNT trucking company.

Exercise 3.4



1. Murdoch's involvement in media organisations exemplifies different processes of media development. Which of the following are relevant to his organisations and why – integration, diversification, internationalisation?
 2. Give two reasons why Murdoch would be interested in owning a transportation company.
-

Although Eddie Shah was the first proprietor to use new computer technology to produce his newspaper, *Today*, Murdoch saw the opportunity to break the unions' power by moving his entire production to a new plant in Wapping and bringing in non-union labour to work it. This was the first step in the modernisation of the industry. Staff levels were reduced dramatically and new newspapers were introduced: the *Independent*, the *Post*, *Sunday Sport*, the *Sunday Correspondent* and the *Independent on Sunday*.

Exercise 3.5



Using suitable CD-ROMs, look up references to the Wapping dispute of 1986. What does the reporting tell you about the impact of new technology on the print industry as a whole and the print unions in particular?

Purchasing power is crucial to Murdoch's corporation because it allows it to make losses in one product area that can be sustained by profits made in others. For example in 1994 News International lost £45 million in its UK newspaper business, but its profits rose to over £186 million at BSkyB, of which it has a 40 per cent share. 'World-wide, News Corporation saw a general fall in profits from print-based media, but a big rise in film and television profits' (Branston and Stafford, 1996, p. 277).

Murdoch has fought a newspaper 'price war' since 1994, when he dropped the price of *The Times* to 10p. This has had a serious effect on *The Independent*.

In August 1995 *The Times* was given away free. 'The national newspaper price war . . . was estimated to have cost 150m in lost revenues. "We won," said a News International spokesman. "Nobody has won," countered a stockbroker at Smith New Court'. In November the cover price of *The Times* went from 5p to 30p and the *Telegraph* increased to 40p (Peak and Fisher, 1996).

It is interesting to note that the *Guardian* was less affected by this battle because *Guardian* readers were unlikely to leave it for a newspaper that supported the Conservatives.

ITEMS B AND C

Exercise 3.6

Read Items B and C on the News Corporation and Maxwell's empire.



1. In each of the boxes below, provide three examples of the processes of integration, diversification and internationalisation. The first has been done for you:

Corporation	Vertical integration	Horizontal integration	Diversification	Internationalisation
News Corporation	1. West Web printers 2. 3.	1. <i>The Times</i> the <i>Sun</i> 2. 3.	1. Delphi Internet Services 2. 3.	1. Fox TV 2. 3.
Maxwell Corporation	1. 2. 3.	1. 2. 3.	1. 2. 3.	1. 2. 3.



2. How would a sociologist who holds a Marxist perspective on the media, use Items B and C to illustrate their theory of media ownership?



3. How would a pluralist respond to their argument using the same sources? (You might need to refer to Chapter 4 to help you with these answers.)

News Corporation: the worldwide net

Television

United States

Fox Broadcasting Company
 Fox Television Stations
 WNYW – New York, NY
 KTTV-Los Angeles, CA
 WFLD-Chicago, IL
 WTXF-Philadelphia, PA
 WFXT-Boston, MA
 WTTG-Washington, DC
 KRIV-Houston, TX
 KDVR-Denver, CO
 KSTU-Salt Lake City, UT
 WHBQ-TV-Memphis, TN
 WBRC-tv-Birmingham, AL
 Acquisition pending
 WGHP-TV-Greensboro, NC
 Sale Pending
 WATL-Atlanta, GA
 Fox News
 Australia
 Seven Network (10)

Cable and satellite television

United States
 fX Networks
 fX
 fXM: Movies from Fox
 Latin America
 News Corporation/Globo
 Joint Venture (3)
 Canal Fox
 United Kingdom
 British Sky Broadcasting (7)
 Germany
 VOX (4)
 Australia
 FOXTEL (3)

Asia

Star TV
 ZEE TV (4)

Filmed entertainment

United States
 Fox Filmed Entertainment
 Twentieth Century Fox
 Fox 2000
 Fox Searchlight
 Fox Family Films
 Fox Animation Studios
 Twentieth Century
 Fox Television
 Twentieth Television
 Australia
 Fox Studios Australia

Newspapers

United States
New York Post
 United Kingdom
The Times
The Sunday Times
Sun
News of the World
Today
 Australia & Pacific Basin
 National:
The Australian
New South Wales:
The Daily Telegraph
Mirror
The Sunday Telegraph
Sportsman
 Cumberland Newspaper Group
 (21 various titles – Sydney suburbs and regional)
 Victoria:
Herald Sun
Sunday Herald Sun
The Times Weekly

The Sporting Globe

Leader Newspaper Group
 (31 various titles-Melbourne suburbs and regional)
 Queensland:
The Courier-Mail (6)
The Sunday Mail (6)
 Gold Coast Bulletin Group (6)
Gold Coast Bulletin
Gold Coast Sun
Hinterland Sun
 The Cairns Post Group (6)
The Cairns Post
Tablelands Advertiser
Pyramid News
Douglas Times
Northern Beachcomber
Travel Cairns
Rural Post
 North Queensland
 Newspaper Group
Townsville Bulletin
 (8 various titles – regional)
 Quest Community Newspapers
 (17 various titles – Brisbane Suburbs and regional).
 Northern Territory:
Northern Territory News
Sunday Territorian
Centralian Advocate
The Suburban
 Tasmania:
The Mercury
The Sunday Tasmanian
Tasmanian Country
Treasure Islander
Derwent Valley Gazette
South Australia:
The Advertiser
Sunday Mail
 Messenger Press Group

(11 various titles –
Adelaide suburbs)
Western Australia:
Sunday Times
New Zealand
Independent Newspapers
(3)
Fiji
The Fiji Times
Nai Lalakai (Fijian
language)
Shanti Dut (Hindi
language)
Papua new Guinea
Post Courier (2)

Magazines and inserts

United States
TV Guide
The Weekly Standard
News America FSI
Canada
News Canada FSI
Coupon Clipper
Pian and Save
United Kingdom & Europe
*The Times Educational
Supplement*
*The Times Higher
Education Supplement*
*The Times Literary
Supplement*
*The Times Scottish
Educational
Supplement*
TV Hits (U.K.) (5)
Hit (Germany) (5)
Inside Soap (U.K.) (5)
Sugar (U.K.) (5)
Australia & Pacific Basin
Brisbane News
Pacific Islands Monthly
Australasian Post (5)
*Australian Home
Beautiful* (5)

Best Bets (50)
Disney Adventures (5)
Girifriend (5)
Hit Songwords (5)
HM (5)
New idea (5)
Super Models (5)
That's Life (9)
TV Hits (5)
Your Garden (5)
TV Week (9)

Book Publishing

United States,
United Kingdom & Europe,
Australia & Pacific Basin
HarperCollins

Commercial printing

Australia & Pacific
Streetfile (5)
Progress Printers &
Distributors (5)
Keppell Printing (5)
Pac-Rim Direct (5)
Wilke Color (5)
Wilke Directories (5)
Griffin Press (5)
Griffin Paperbacks (5)
Prestige Litho (5)
Mercury Walch (5)
Argus & Australasian (5)
Westernport Printing (5)
West Web Printers (5)
Southweb (5)
Northweb (5)
Pacweb (5)
Swanweb (5)
Asher & Co. (Hong Kong)
(50)
Baskands (Christchurch)
(NZ) (5)

Baskands (Auckland)
(NZ) (50)
Circular Distributors (NZ)
(8)

Other operations

United States
Etak
News Electronic Data
News Corporation MCI
World Wide Joint
Venture (3)
Delphi Internet Services
Kesmai Corporation
United Kingdom
Broadsystem Ltd.
Convoys Group
News DataCom Ltd.
News MultiMedia Ltd.
Sky Radio (1)
Australia & Pacific Basin
Ansett Australia (3)
Australian Newsprint
Mills (6)
Broadsystem (Aust)
Computer Power (B)
Festival Records
FS Faulkner & Sons
Lamray Industries (6)
(Sunshine Plantation)
Mushroom Records (3)
PDN Xinren Information
Technology
Super League

Key:

News Corporation holds

(1)	71%	(6)	41.7%
(2)	63%	(7)	40%
(3)	50%	(8)	26%
(4)	49.9%	(9)	22%
(5)	45%	(10)	15%

(Source: *Guardian*, 16 July 1996.)

ITEM C

Maxwell's empire

**68% of Maxwell
Communication Corporation**

which owned:

- Que (Macmillan Computer Publishing)
- Berlitz
- Panini
- Nimbus Records
- Maxwell Consumer Publishing
- International Learning Systems
- Official Airline Guides
- Collier
- Molecular Design
- Macmillan/McGraw Hill School Publishing
- Macmillan Inc

Private interests

- Through Headington Investments and Robert Maxwell Group
- Maxwell Aviation
 - Lady Ghislaine (yacht)
 - AGB international
 - Property
 - Maxwell House, Holborn Circus
 - The Independent (6%)
 - 50% of Thomas Cook America
 - Reading FC (stake)
 - Oxford Utd FC
 - The European
 - Berllner Zeltung (50%)

- Modlin (Israeli newspaper)
- Robert Maxwell Business School – now the Sofia International Management Centre
- New York Daily News

**54% stake in Mirror Group
Newspapers**

which owned

- 26% *Quebecor*
- 26% *Donahue*
- *Daily Mirror*
- *Sunday Mirror*
- *Daily Record*
- *Sunday People*
- *Sporting Life*

(Source: *Guardian*, 20 January 1996.)

The other 'media mogul', Robert Maxwell, came quite late into newspaper ownership. He made an unsuccessful bid for the *News of the World* in 1968, but it was for his ownership of the *Mirror* that he is most remembered. As well as the Mirror Group he had investments in Central TV and Border, a cable station and part of the satellite music station MTV. He controlled the Macmillan Incorporated publishing house in the United States and had part-interest in a French TV channel. His death in 1991 left his sons with a conspiracy trial to face, from which charges they were acquitted.

Today in Britain, seven companies account for all national newspaper sales (Item D).

ITEM D**National newspaper owners (approximate circulation percentages)**

- News International (35%)
- Mirror Group (26%)
- United News and Media (13%)
- Daily Mail and General Trust (12%)
- The Telegraph (7%)
- Guardian Media Group (3%)
- Pearson (1%)

One of the reasons cited for the high level of concentration of ownership has been the considerable cost of launching a newspaper, although computerised typesetting has reduced the costs. Despite the arguments of pluralists who maintain that it is always possible to challenge the market share of the megacorporations, it is abundantly clear that finance has been the downfall of many a would-be proprietor. For example in 1986, when Eddy Shah set up the only daily tabloid espousing support for the Liberal/Democratic Alliance Party – *Today* – it cost him 18 million pounds in start-up funds and he hoped for a circulation of 800 000. Within four months he sold the newspaper to Lonrho for 20 million pounds, and Lonrho sold it to News International in June 1987 for approximately double that figure. Eventually it too accepted defeat and *Today* ceased operations in November 1995.

In 1988 a new left-wing Sunday newspaper was introduced, the *News on Sunday*, but it was shortlived, as were the *Sunday Correspondent*, the *London Daily News* and the *Post*, which were also set up in the 1980s. The *Post*, also owned by Shah, was abandoned in December 1988 after 33 issues. It achieved a circulation of 100 000 and lost around six million pounds. *The European*, which was set up by Maxwell in 1990, was taken over by the Barclay brothers and is still running at a circulation of around 225 000 (*Guardian*, 28 December 1995).

Golding (1974), Seymour-Ure (1991) and Curran and Seaton (1991) are excellent sources of further information on the historical development of the media industry in Britain.

Broadcasting in Britain – BBC radio

We have come a long way since 1922, when the Crawford Committee recommended a new broadcasting service funded by licence fees paid by owners of radio receivers. John Reith, later Lord Reith, was appointed managing director of the new British Broadcasting Company in 1923 and director general of the new British Broadcasting Corporation, set up in 1927 under royal charter. Today the governors of the BBC still have to maintain its public service responsibility and review it on a regular basis.

Reith's conception of radio broadcasting was a service dedicated to promoting and maintaining the highest possible standards in public taste by providing the best in information, education and entertainment. He wanted to use broadcasting as a kind of social cement to unify the people of Britain. As you read through this chapter you might think about whether broadcasting is now or ever has been capable of being this 'social cement'.

The Second World War emphasised how important light entertain-

ment radio programmes could be to the public morale, and the BBC Home Service was joined in 1946 by the Light Programme (now Radio 2). Very soon the BBC realised that its listening audience was quite diverse, and in 1947 the Third Programme (now Radio 3) was introduced to offer audiences ‘broadcasting as art’, that is, high-culture serious features, classic music and theatre. Broadcasting at that time could be seen as a parallel institution to the newly introduced tripartite system in education: grammar schools catered for 5 per cent of pupils/the Third Programme had 6 per cent of radio listeners; technical schools catered for 15 per cent of pupils/the Home Programme had 20 per cent of listeners; modern secondary schools had 80 per cent of pupils and the Light Programme attracted 74 per cent of the listening public. Broadcasting and education together were reinforcing the traditional divisions of culture and class (Seymore-Ure, 1991).

BBC radio broadcasting, promoting as it did the middle-class values of home life and the family, was never really popular with working-class audiences, who tuned into commercial stations as soon as they were launched. When the BBC had a monopoly of listeners, its mode of address was designed to reflect its public service orientation, and it was authoritative and set high standards. The BBC pattern of speech came to be known as ‘BBC English’ or ‘received pronunciation’. It was some time before this was overtaken by regional accents and the more informal language used today.

Exercise 3.7

This exercise will help you to see that different radio stations have very distinct profiles. Take a copy of the BBC radio schedules for any week (you will find these in any radio and television magazine).

Compare the schedules of BBC Radio 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 for any given day.

- ia** 1. What can you discover about the characteristics of each station?
 - ia** 2. Is each station broadcasting to a different audience?
 - iae** 3. Take one station and build up a picture of its audience. Now listen to this station at different times of the day; was your earlier audience profile correct?
 - a** 4. You could extend this exercise into a coursework enquiry by combining your content analysis with audience surveys. Produce three possible hypotheses that you could investigate in this way.
-

Independent radio

The potential youth market for radio was hardly considered by the early programmers. Although the Light Programme had some ‘youth’ programmes, young people were largely ignored, but competition for this new audience was growing from the independent stations, which

were broadcasting exactly the kind of music that the new ‘teenagers’ wanted to listen to. Eventually the independents forced the hand of the BBC. For example ‘Radio Caroline’, a pirate station broadcast from a ship somewhere in the North Sea, successfully withstood the attempts of the BBC to prevent it from going on air, but in August 1967 the Labour government passed the Marine Broadcasting Offences Bill to prevent British nationals from working on pirate stations. In September the same year the BBC launched its new pop music station, Radio 1. At the same time the Light Programme became Radio 2, the Home Service became Radio 4 and the Third Programme became Radio 3. The BBC started to develop a network of local radio stations, but in 1971 competition arrived in the form of privately owned radio stations funded by advertising (independent local radio, ILR). In the mid 1980s there were around 45 commercial radio stations, now there are nearly two hundred. In August 1995 commercial radio was attracting more than half of all radio listeners. Item E shows the radio audiences for BBC and commercial radio stations in 1993 and 1996.

ITEM E

Radio audiences, 1993 and 1996 (millions)

Station	1993	Listeners 1996
All BBC		29.43*
Radio 1	14.2	11.24
Radio 2	9.0	8.41
Radio 3	2.8	2.28
Radio 4	8.5	8.69
Radio 5 Live	4.0	5.21
All commercial	26.4	28.9**
Atlantic 252	3.8	3.18
Classic FM	4.7	4.94
Virgin 1215	3.0	3.36

* 50.4 per cent.

** 47.6 per cent.

(Source: *Media Guide*, 1997.)

Since the 1990 Broadcasting Act, independent radio companies have operated under licence to the Radio Authority, which monitors and oversees their programming. Like commercial television and the press, radio ownership is concentrated in just a few hands. Classic FM is owned by a Major consortium that owns Time Warner, GWR, Associated Newspapers, Home Counties Newspapers. GWR also runs local radio stations in Reading, Swindon, Bristol, Bournemouth, Plymouth and Tavistock (O’Sullivan *et al.*, 1994, p. 72).

ITEM F**Radio services: share of listening by age, sex and class, 1986**

	BBC R1	BBC R2	BBC R3	BBC R4	BBC local	ALL BBC	ILR
Age							
4–15	54	4	0	2	3	63	33
16–34	56	5	1	5	3	70	27
35–54	20	24	2	14	10	70	26
55+	4	33	2	19	19	77	18
Sex							
Males	33	18	2	10	8	71	25
Females	20	19	1	13	11	73	24
Social class							
AB	20	19	5	31	6	81	16
C1	28	20	2	15	9	74	22
C2	36	17	1	6	10	70	26
DE	27	19	1	7	13	67	28

*(Source: Seymour-Ure, 1991.)***ITEM F Exercise 3.8**

Study Item F.

- i** 1. What are the social characteristics of the average listener to Radio 1, Radio 3 and ILR?
- a** 2. How might sociologists account for the different profiles you have described in question 1?
- ie** 3. 'Radio stations broadcast to selected audiences with very specific interests and tastes, rather than to a mass audience.' To what extent does the information in Item F support this statement?

Breakfast radio

According to Steve Barnard (1989), in the 1950s radio adopted 'sequential programming', that is, news, music, features and so on were presented in time blocks – the kind of magazine format that will be familiar to today's daytime television viewers. Sequential programming accepts that listening is casual because it dovetails with our daily lives. This can be seen in early morning radio programming. On breakfast radio the presentations are pacy, active and lively. The presenters are said to be highly professional because radio audiences are relatively loyal, so it is necessary to catch them early and keep them. Morning programmes are feature-packed and fast-paced; it is as if they are keeping pace with our supposedly busy lives. Barnard argues that they act as a bridge between the private, family sphere and the more impersonal, public domain of work.

Exercise 3.9

Listen to BBC Radio 4 and BBC Radio 1 between 7.30 a.m. and 9 a.m. on any two weekday mornings.

- i** 1. Make a list of each of the items dealt with by each station.
 - a** 2. How do these differ? (Does one station have more/fewer news items? Where is there more political news? What about music coverage?)
 - a i** 3. How do the presenters address their audiences? (You might think about accents, vocabulary, familiarity, formality and so on)
 - a e** 4. On the basis of this information, produce profiles of the average listener to each station. Now look back at Item F. How accurate are your profiles?
-

Exercise 3.10

'Radio frames the working day; it reinforces the work ethic' (Barnard, 1989).

- ku** 1. Explain what is meant by 'the work ethic'. Which sociologist is associated with the concept of the 'work ethic'?
 - ia** 2. What do you think that Barnard means by the above statement? Rewrite it in your own words.
 - ia** 3. Using the radio schedules for one day, show how radio stations may shape our day.
-

Television

BBC television was introduced to the nation in 1936 – or more accurately, to a small, select, affluent audience in London and the Home Counties – but this was short-lived as television broadcasting was suspended during the Second World War.

It is interesting that commentators at the time foresaw that television was going to have a considerable influence on the social life of the audience: 'Viewing television is a very different activity from listening to sound broadcasts . . . the television set demands your attention; you cannot enjoy television from the next room. You must sit facing the set, with the lights down or shaded, and if you are a normal viewer you will find yourself very reluctant to be disturbed during a programme that you enjoy' (Gorham, head of BBC, 1946). How many families now watch television with the lights down and undisturbed? When television transmission restarted in 1946 it was received by 15 000 households, and by 1956 it could be received throughout Britain. In 1946 9.7 million licences were issued, including 9.6 million radio licences; by 1959 these figures had grown to 14.7 million and 5.4 million respectively. Today there are 19.3 million television licences and radio licences are no longer necessary.

The Independent Television Authority was created by parliament in 1954 as a commercially funded corporate body to inform, educate and entertain. This service presented an immediate threat to the comfortable monopoly of the BBC and forced it to compete for audiences in the new cultural market place. In entering this new competitive market the BBC became more like the commercial channel, but because it was funded by the licence fee it lacked the huge revenues that advertising brought to ITV. The licence fee was increased every third year, and since 1988 has been increased annually.

There were three committees that made significant changes to broadcasting up to the end of the 1980s:

1. In 1960 the Pilkington Committee examined the output of commercial television. The committee was extremely critical of the output and as a consequence the proposed third channel was offered to the BBC – this became BBC2 .
2. In 1977 the Annan Committee was critical of both the BBC and ITV for having become complacent, and of being a ‘cosy duopoly’. Annan accused both broadcasting authorities of failing to cater for the wide range of audience tastes. It was recommended that the fourth channel should be managed by an independent open broadcasting authority – a commissioner of programmes, not a producer. This became the new Channel 4, which started broadcasting in 1982.
3. In 1986 the Peacock Committee was set up to review the BBC licence fee with a view to its possible abolition. The committee was in favour of deregulation, with the greatest possible freedom of choice for consumers. The Peacock Report has had a significant impact on broadcasting in the 1990s, influencing as it did the white paper ‘Broadcasting in the 1990s’. The report made reference to the ‘robust consumer’, the audience member who was able to identify and act in her or his own interests. So consumer sovereignty and competition were to be the benchmarks of the future.

Exercise 3.11



Look up the following terms in your sociology textbook or a dictionary of sociology and write a definition of each. It would be quite useful to get a friend to test you on your how well you have learned them:

- (1) Consumer sovereignty, (2) competitive tendering, (3) deregulation, (4) duopoly.
-

The Peacock Committee recommended that all restrictions on cable and satellite pay-per-channel and pay-per-programme be lifted. They suggested that competitive tendering for franchises should apply both to ITV and to Direct Broadcasting by Satellite (DBS). The most signifi-

cant recommendations were for the maintenance of the BBC licence fee and that advertisements should not be allowed on BBC television. The Broadcasting Bill of 1990 set out the government's proposals for a new framework for the deregulation of independent television and radio. The Independent Television Commission (ITC) replaced the Independent Broadcasting Authority and Cable Authority so that it had authority over independent terrestrial television as well as cable and satellite. It was to have a 'lighter touch' than the IBA, which meant that it would be less interventionist in programme content. Other new institutions came into being:

- The Radio Authority, responsible for independent local and national radio and community radio.
- Channel 4 Wales (S4C) the Welsh language channel.
- The Broadcasting Complaints Commission and the Broadcasting Standards Council.

The newly formed ITC was to oversee the franchise bidding for the fifteen independent television companies and Breakfast Television. The private companies had to submit sealed bids to the ITC, which would award the franchise to the highest bidder after a 'quality' threshold was guaranteed. Only in 'exceptional' but unclear circumstances would the bid not go to the highest bidder. Item G shows the new franchises.

ITEM G

The new Channel 3 franchises

Licence area	Applicant (ranked by bid size)	Cash bid	Outcome
Borders and Isle of Man	Border TV	52 000	(a)*
Central Scotland	Scottish TV	2 000	(a)*
Channel Isles	C13 Group	102 000	(f)
	Channel TV	1 000	(b)*
E, W and S Midlands	Central Independent TV	2 000	(a)*
East of England	Anglia TV	17 804 000	(a)*
	Three East TV	14 078 000	(f)
	CPV-TV (East of England)	10 125 000	(g)
London Weekly	CPV-TV (Greater London TV)	45 319 000	(f)
	Carlton TV	43 170 000	(e)*
	Thames TV	32 794 000	(c)(g)
London Weekend	Consortium for IB	35 406 000	(f)
	LWT Holdings	7 585 000	(b)*
North of Scotland	North of Scotland TV	2 709 000	(f)
	C3 Caledonia	1 125 000	(f)
	Grampian TV	720 000	(b)*
N-E England	Tyne-Tees TV	15 057 000	(a)*
	North-East TV	5 010 000	(g)
N-W England	North-West TV	35 303 000	(f)
	Granada TV	9 000 000	(b)*
N Ireland	TVNi	3 100 000	(j)
	Lagan TV	2 712 000	(f)
	Ulster TV	1 027 000	(b)*

Licence area	Applicant (ranked by bid size)	Cash bid	Outcome
S and S-E England	TVS TV	59 758 000	(d)
	Meridian Broadcasting	36 523 000	(e)*
	CPVTV (S of England)	22 105 000	(f)
	Carlton TV	18 080 000	(g)
S-W England	TSW Broadcasting	16 117 000	(d)
	West Country TV	7 815 000	(e)*
	Telewest	7 266 000	(f)
Wales and West of England	HTV Group	20 530 000	(a)*
	Merlin TV	19 367 000	(f)
	Ch 3 Wales & the West	18 289 000	(f)
	C3W	17 760 000	(g)
Yorkshire	Yorkshire TV	37 700 000	(a)*
	Viking TV	30 116 000	(f)
	White Rose TV	17 403 000	(g)
National Break fast Time	Sunrise TV	34 610 000	(e)*
	Daybreak TV	33 261 000	(h)
	TV-am	14 125 000	(c)(h)

Key

* Awarded new franchise.

(a) Licence awarded to incumbent with highest or sole bid.

(b) Licence awarded to incumbent even though not the highest bidder; the others were unacceptable.

(c) Licence lost by incumbent – awarded to higher bidder.

(d) Licence lost by incumbent – awarded to lower-bidding competitor as the incumbent did not satisfy the ITC that it could maintain the proposed service.

(e) Licence awarded to new applicant in place of incumbent.

(f) Applicant did not satisfy the programme quality threshold for Channel 3 regional licences laid down in the Broadcasting Act 1990.

(g) Applicant satisfied the programme quality threshold for Channel 3 regional licences laid down in the Broadcasting Act 1990, but did not submit the highest qualifying bid.

(h) Applicant satisfied the programme quality threshold for Channel 3 national breakfast-time licences laid down in the Broadcasting Act 1990, but did not submit the highest bid.





(i) Applicant satisfied the quality threshold requirements and submitted the highest bid, but did not satisfy the ITC that it would be able to maintain the proposed service throughout the licence period.

(Source: *New Channel 3 franchises, Cultural Trends 1993: 17.*
© Policy Studies Institute.)

Although the aim of government was to ‘open up’ broadcasting, it is not clear that this has happened. As O’Sullivan *et al.* (1994, p. 71) argue, there were some disconcerting results:

Carlton has taken over Central Television (Central owns 20% of Meridian) and has a 20% interest in GMTV, the breakfast contractor. Carlton also owns 18% of, and heads, the consortium that runs ITN. Carlton’s head, Michael Green, is also on the board of Reuters which . . . provides GMTV with its news service. Carlton shares its news facilities with LWT which also has a 20% share in GMTV. Meridian is owned by a consortium that includes MAI Broadcasting, Central Television and Select TV and is set to take over Anglia TV.

Study Item G.

-  1. List those franchise 'winners' that had not previously been franchise holders.
 -  2. List the winning incumbents (an incumbent is a company that held the previous franchise).
 -  3. What were the largest and smallest bids? Who made them?
 -  4. Do you think that ownership has become more or less concentrated as a result of the Broadcasting Act? Explain your answer.
-

Television and the future

Satellite television

In 1986 British Satellite Broadcasting (BSB) was awarded the franchise for satellite broadcasting. It was responsible for its own programming and its audience consisted of class ABC1 (professionals to skilled non-manual workers). At the same time as BSB was launched, Murdoch's News International bought up an existing satellite company based in Luxembourg. This became SkY, and unlike BSB it was aimed at mainly manual audiences.

Neither was initially successful, and in 1991 they merged to become BSkyB, owned by News International, Pearsons and the Granada Group. The new merger seemed to challenge the legal safeguards against cross-media ownership and monopolies. BSkyB has been an aggressive competitor, especially in gaining a monopoly over sports broadcasting. It bought the rights to premier league football matches in 1992, and has created a great deal of controversy by charging subscribers an additional fee for specific sports events (for example subscribers were asked to pay an additional fee to receive the Bruno-Tyson heavyweight championship fight in 1995). It seems likely that pay-per-view will become commonplace.

The satellite channels seem to appeal mainly to men and young people. Over half (51%) of the adults living in satellite-receiving homes are less than 35 years of age. Satellite-receiving households are larger than average in size. They have an average of 3.3 people compared with a norm for Britain as a whole of around 2 people. . . . In satellite-receiving homes, BBC2's share of the viewing is 38% below that in homes without satellite capability, Channel 4's viewing drops by 41% (Denscombe, 1993, pp. 41-2).

BSkyB has ten channels with over four million subscribers. It owns:

1. Sky One – an entertainment channel. (There were rumours that it planned to bid for Coronation Street from ITV in order to increase the number of women in its audience. However this did not happen.)
2. Sky Movies.
3. The Movie Channel.
4. Sky Movies Gold (numbers 2–4 show 400 films each month).
5. Sky Sports.
6. Sky Sports 2.
7. Sky Sports Gold (numbers 5–7 show 10000 hours of sport each year).
8. Sky News.
9. Sky Travel.
10. Sky Soap.

BSkyB has recently announced the launch of seven more channels, including European Business News, a history channel, Disney and Playboy channels (*Media Guide 1997*, p. 168). It is estimated that BSkyB will have launched up to 500 new channels by 1998. In April 1996 the number of subscribers had reached 5.35 million.

Exercise 3.13

Take a copy of any publication showing TV schedules for the week and look at the listings for Sky Television.

- i** 1. Which programmes are unavailable on terrestrial channels?
 - i** 2. Are any types of programme missing from these schedules?
 - ia** 3. Can you gauge anything about the audiences for Sky that makes them in any way specific as an audience?
 - e** 4. Pluralists may argue that Sky Television gives the audience greater choice. How far would you agree with this?
-

It is important to note that despite Murdoch's News International having a 40 per cent holding in BSkyB, it still only reaches one fifth of the British population. However Whannel and Williams (1993) argue that worse is yet to come. They equate the buy-up by BSkyB of major sporting events, especially football's Premier League matches, with an insidious attack on the basic principles of democracy and citizenship. Their thesis is that satellite television has challenged democratic society's fundamental principle of universal access, because only the media-rich consumer will have access.

Digital television

Television is undergoing an enormous technological change. At present programmes are transmitted by a series of radio waves via an

analogue signal. However new technology will allow programmes to be transmitted by a digital signal, which will double the number of scan-lines on screen (at present 625) and the picture quality will be superior to that we have at present. Digital television and radio involves converting sound and images into computer language, which is then transmitted in a compressed form. The signals will have to be decoded by a black box on the television set, and the estimated cost of a decoder is between £300 and £500. A consultative paper from the Heritage Department offered safeguards to the existing terrestrial channels, 'but if they want to expand beyond their existing channels they will have to bid competitively for extra capacity – a process which could cost the BBC, for example, £100 million to £150 million a year' (*Guardian*, 11 August 1995) .

The 1996 Broadcasting Act allowed for 36 digital terrestrial channels on six 'multiplexes' – bunches of channels – that will be capable of delivering three or more channels. Multiplex owners will have to bid to the ITC, they will be licensed by the Department of Trade and regulated by the Office of Telecommunications and the ITC. It appears that digital TV will force the BBC and ITV to compete against cable and satellite operators. The BBC has predicted cuts of £1.8 billion from conventional BBC budgets. The justification is their prediction that by 2005, up to 10 per cent of households will have digital TV services (Peak and Fisher, 1996).

With more channels there will be more TV, from more points of view. We can then come to see TV as no more sinister than books. My guess is that in 20 years' time people will look back on the impartiality requirements on broadcasting as quaint history, like censorship of the theatre and newspapers in the 18th century. The present rules will wither away.

This statement came from Kelvin Mackenzie, ex-editor of the *Sun* newspaper and now managing director of Live TV (quoted in Peak and Fisher, 1996). It appears at present that Rupert Murdoch has the monopoly in producing black-box signal decoders.

In chapter 11 we will look in more detail at the changes in broadcasting and the likely social impact of these changes.