Media content analysis

Complete the form below when you watch a form of media that has fictional or factual portrayals of a specific group. note down the type of media, the title of the programme, film or documentary, the name of the character or person involved and how they are portrayed by the specific media source. You may wish to categorise these based upon your knowledge of media stereotypes.

Media source (TV, film, streaming)	Title of media content	Character	Description of how portrayed

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Common media stereotypes

CLASS
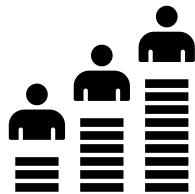
- **Working Class:** Frequently depicted as uneducated, lazy, or dependent on welfare. Shildrick and MacDonald (2013) highlight the phenomenon of the "chav" stereotype in British media, which stigmatises the working class as irresponsible and criminal. Soap operas often portray working-class life as rife with dysfunction.
- **Middle Class:** Presented as aspirational, respectable, and the social norm. Media aimed at family audiences, such as sitcoms, often portray the middle class as relatable and stable, reflecting the concept of cultural hegemony (Gramsci).
- **Upper Class:** Stereotyped as elitist, aloof, and powerful. Documentaries or dramas may depict upper-class individuals as out of touch with ordinary society, reinforcing their distance from "normal" life. Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital explains how media portrayals highlight their cultural superiority.

GENDER

- **Men:** Often portrayed as strong, dominant, and unemotional, reflecting Connell's concept of hegemonic masculinity. Media frequently showcases men as action heroes, leaders, or protectors, marginalising alternative masculinities.
- **Women:** Stereotyped as nurturing, emotional, and preoccupied with appearance. Wolf's (1990) beauty myth describes how women are objectified and judged by their looks. Media often reinforces traditional roles as mothers or carers, though feminist movements have challenged this narrative.
- **Non-Binary/Gender Non-Conforming:** Rarely represented in mainstream media, often depicted as confused or rebellious, reinforcing Butler's (1990) argument about the rigidness of the gender binary.

SEXUALITY
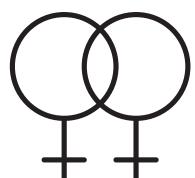
- **Heterosexuality:** Remains the default assumption in most media representations, often marginalising other sexualities.
- **LGBTQ+ People:** Gay men are frequently shown as flamboyant or comedic, while lesbians are often hypersexualised. Bisexual individuals may be dismissed as confused, and transgender people are underrepresented or sensationalised, reflecting a lack of nuanced portrayals. Gauntlett (2008) notes gradual progress in more positive and complex representations.

AGE

- **Children:** Seen as innocent and in need of protection. Aries (1962) argued that the modern concept of childhood is constructed around notions of dependency, a narrative reflected in media.
- **Teenagers:** Stereotyped as rebellious, moody, and anti-social, reflecting Cohen's (1972) concept of moral panics surrounding youth culture.
- **Elderly People:** Often depicted as frail, forgetful, or out of touch, although sometimes shown as wise or comedic. Media narratives rarely acknowledge the diversity within older populations.

ETHNICITY
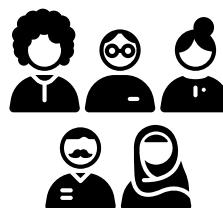
- **White People:** Typically portrayed as the societal norm, with access to a wide range of roles and characterisations. Van Dijk's (1991) work on media and racism highlights how whiteness is often associated with modernity and progress.
- **Black People:** Often stereotyped as criminals, athletes, or entertainers. Hall (1992) notes the "criminalisation" of Black individuals in British media, which perpetuates racial inequalities. Positive portrayals are increasing but still limited.
- **Asian People:** Stereotypes vary; East Asians are often shown as academically gifted but socially awkward (the "model minority"), while South Asians may be depicted as overly traditional or linked to terrorism (Saeed, 2007).
- **Mixed-Race People:** Often exoticised or shown as grappling with identity issues, reflecting postcolonial concerns about cultural hybridity.
- **Indigenous Groups:** While less relevant in the UK context, representations often focus on historical tropes, erasing contemporary realities.

DISABILITY

- **Physical Disabilities:** Stereotyped as either objects of pity or as inspirational figures who "overcome" their condition, reflecting the "supercrip" narrative. Barnes (1992) critiques this for reducing disabled individuals to one-dimensional characters.
- **Mental Health:** Often sensationalised, with individuals depicted as dangerous or tragic. Goffman's (1963) concept of stigma explains how such portrayals reinforce societal fears and misunderstandings of mental health issues.

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