

# Media Representations of Childhood

Children are often shown as innocent, cute, or in need of protection - but sometimes as spoilt, bratty, or dangerous. They rarely appear as complex individuals.



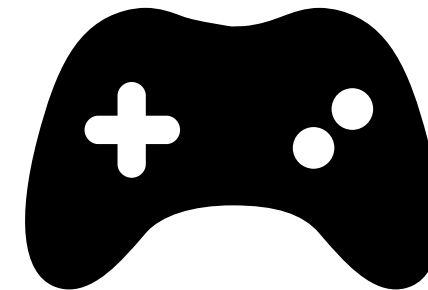
**Heintz-Knowles (2002)** – Found that children in TV shows were mostly shown as motivated by fun, friendship, or family, and rarely by issues like politics or work. This presents childhood as carefree and simple.



**Gauntlett (2008)** – Argued that children's media today (like Harry Potter or Disney) gives more positive, empowering messages, showing children as independent and capable.



**Wayne et al. (2007)** – Found that news coverage of young people (including older children) was dominated by crime and violence, creating moral panics.



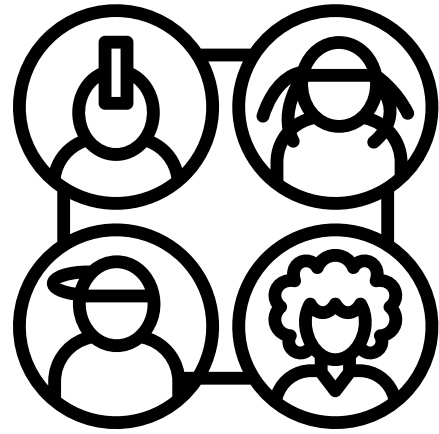
**Buckingham (2000)** – Found that the media often portrays childhood as a time of innocence under threat from adult culture (e.g., violent games, internet), which reflects adult anxieties rather than children's real experiences.



**Griffin (1993)** – Identified media stereotypes of youth and children as either 'dysfunctional', 'suffering', or 'deviant', shaping how even younger children are seen.

# Media Representations of Teenagers / Youth

Teenagers are commonly shown as rebellious, lazy, dangerous, or anti-social, but sometimes as fashionable or idealistic in youth-targeted media.



**Cohen (1972) – The Mods and Rockers study showed how media exaggeration of youth conflict caused moral panic and labelled young people as ‘folk devils’.**



**Osgerby (2004) – Found that youth representation changes over time: during the 1950s–60s youth were romanticised as rebels and icons, but later seen as threats.**



**Wayne et al. (2008) – Found that young people were rarely shown positively in the news, with 82% of stories about them linked to crime.**



**McRobbie (1991) – Argued that young women are now sometimes shown as empowered and independent, especially in post-feminist media, though this often still links to consumerism and appearance.**



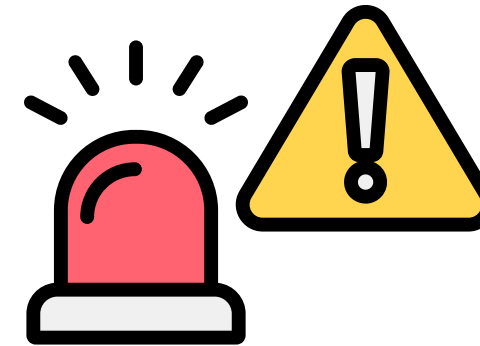
**Griffin (1993) – Suggested youth are seen as ‘dysfunctional’ (problems), ‘deviant’ (dangerous), or ‘suffering’ (victims).**

# Media Representations of Adults (Middle-aged)

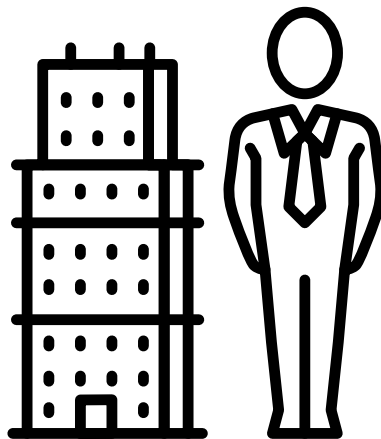
Middle-aged adults are shown as responsible, hardworking, successful, and often the 'norm' in media. They dominate positions of power in film, TV, and news.



**Williams and Ylanne (2009)** – Found that middle-aged characters in advertising are portrayed as independent and successful consumers, often symbolising stability.



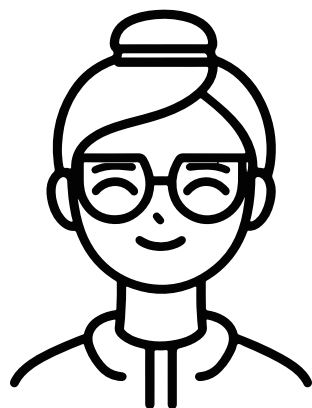
**Brooks (2012)** – Found that middle-aged adults in reality TV are often portrayed as incompetent parents or in mid-life crisis, reflecting anxiety about ageing.



**Curran and Seaton (2003)** – Media ownership and production are dominated by middle-aged men, leading to a bias toward middle-aged values and concerns.



**Gauntlett (2008)** – Argued that modern media gives more varied portrayals of adults, showing new family forms, gender roles, and lifestyles beyond the traditional nuclear family.



**Tuchman (1978)** – Described the “symbolic annihilation” of women over 40 in media - they often disappear from leading roles, while middle-aged men remain central.

# Media Representations of the Elderly

Older people are often underrepresented and when shown are frail, lonely, or out of touch - though some newer portrayals show active ageing and independence.



**Biggs (1993)** – Found that older people on TV are portrayed as either powerful and wise or comical and foolish, with few realistic depictions.



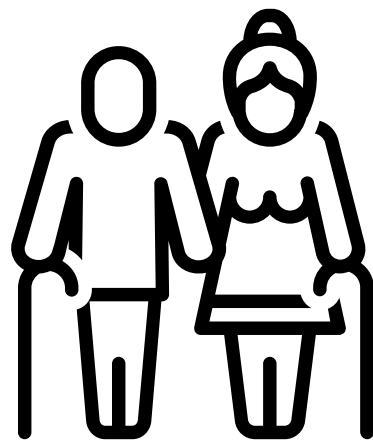
**Williams and Ylanne (2012)** – Found that adverts aimed at older people increasingly show them as active and fun, especially in travel and leisure marketing, reflecting the “grey pound.”



**Cuddy and Fiske (2004)** – Found that older adults are often stereotyped as incompetent but warm, which can seem positive but still reinforces ageism.



**Blaikie (1999)** – Noted the rise of “positive ageing” images in lifestyle media (e.g., older people as fit, fashionable, or adventurous), linked to consumer culture and later life affluence.



**Age Concern (2000)** – Found that only 15% of media images included older adults, and most were negative (ill, lonely, or dependent).