# Mirrors in Media



An investigation into the role of social and film media in establishing stereotypes and expectations counter to those purported by waves of feminism in the 20th century

(A generational comparison of Generation X and Z perspectives)

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## Introduction

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My investigation into the role of social and film media in establishing stereotypes and expectations counter to those purported by waves of feminism in the 20th century significantly resonates with me and a large variety of the population. Throughout my research, I predict that lots of evidence and examples will be displayed which give lots of detail into the individual yet shared experiences of stereotypes towards women. My topic is specifically about proving the point that almost every female has experienced stereotypes to some extent, along with this the reasoning behind this being normal and accepted is due to film and media.

As a consequence of females being portrayed negatively in the media and films, it has become acceptable to treat them a certain way even after the development of feminism. Understanding how females are depicted in media texts is not only relevant for analysing literary and visual narratives but also for exploring broader social, cultural, and ethical implications. While some argue that progress has been made in recent years toward more diverse and empowering portrayals, others contend that harmful tropes and biases persist, perpetuating harmful norms and expectations.

I selected this topic because as a young female, the effects of stereotypes have heavily affected me, also with the fact that my generation is the most technologically advanced and more surrounded by media than ever before. Media often reinforces traditional gender roles and expectations, portraying women primarily in domestic or caregiving roles, while men are depicted as assertive leaders or providers. These limited representations can influence societal attitudes toward gender roles and shape individuals' perceptions of acceptable behaviour for women. Women are also frequently sexualised and objectified in media content, with their worth often tied to their physical appearance or sexual appeal. This objectification contributes to the normalisation of sexual harassment and violence against women by perpetuating the idea that women are lower than objects for male consumption.

My topic contributes to a better understanding of society and culture by developing a better understanding of change and continuity. Lots of change has occurred since the first wave of feminism which focused primarily on women's legal rights, particularly suffrage (the right to vote). Then the Second-wave feminism broadened the scope of feminist activism to address a

range of issues beyond legal rights, including reproductive rights, workplace discrimination, and sexual liberation. The third wave emphasised diverse perspectives and approaches within feminism. And now to the present, it is focused on using digital media and social networking platforms to mobilize activism, raise awareness, and challenge gender-based violence and discrimination. However, I acknowledge the fact there is still a large scale of improvement to be done which links to continuity. I have incorporated the use of primary research methods so they are specific and tailored to my research needs. Content analysis was used to watch multiple movies from all centuries so I can compare change and continuity over time, along with the different representations and portrayals of women. The questionnaire conducted has closed and open questions which allows me to have statistics along with examples written by participants to use throughout my PIP. Secondary research mostly focuses on articles written about specific celebrities such as Margot Robbie and Marilyn Munroe, this again allows me to reflect on the significant change which has occurred compared to modern-day stereotypes.

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The inspiration for this personal interest project was prompted after watching the movie Barbie and seeing the fame, harsh backlash and articles which were written about it. Although I was aware we live in a male-dominated world and society with unfair stereotypes against women, the movie delved into ideas which I often overlooked and accepted as normal. This triggered much curiosity and made me realise I have unknowingly allowed these stereotypes to happen around me and have experienced more unfair treatment than I realised prior. Further research on contemporary examples made me realise that the role of social media and film has had a major impact influence on the norms of today's current society. This leads to my hypothesis that almost every female has experienced stereotypes to some extent, along with this the reasoning behind this being normal and accepted is due to film and media.

Extensive secondary research was conducted to gain a more profound understanding of film and media in modern society and the evolution of stereotypes over time by the waves of feminism. Through conducting a content analysis of the movies of *Barbie, Legally Blond, Suffragettes* and *Little Women* extensive examples and evidence of the impact of films in establishing stereotypes and expectations and how directors can use their macro-level platform to create a better society. Throughout the interview, it was shown how much we live in a society that mass-consumes media and relies on it for information, education and inspiration.

Primary research was conducted to enhance the validity of my Secondary research. Firstly, a questionnaire was distributed online and received 52 responses. The quantitative data was very valuable in collecting statistics towards media consumption and what people witness online including the perspectives of people from different generations. However, there was a gender bias as 69.2 % of respondents were female and 30.8% male, hence the attitudes towards this topic may not have been an accurate representation. In order to override the bias and make sure it was not an issue, lots of research was required such as reading articles by men and having many male responses.

Through extensive primary research, including interviews, questionnaires, and content analyses, I gained profound insight into the pervasive unfair treatment and stereotypes that women face daily due to media and film. This research illuminated how media and film perpetuate harmful stereotypes and contribute to systemic inequality, often portraying women in a limited and biased manner. These portrayals reinforce negative perceptions and discriminatory attitudes, impacting women's opportunities and self-perception. Despite these damaging effects, media and film also play a crucial role in promoting positive change. They serve as powerful tools for spreading awareness about gender issues, and providing platforms for women to express their experiences and voices. Through various forms of media, stories that challenge stereotypes and highlight women's achievements and struggles can reach a broad audience, fostering greater understanding and empathy. Moreover, media and film can educate the public about gender equality, inspiring action and encouraging societal shifts towards more inclusive and equitable norms.

<p style="text-align:center"><span style="color:pink">**Chapter 1**</span></p>

**Hollywood: The Powerhouse Behind Film and Media's Influence**

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As the most technologically advanced generation to have ever been, we are forcibly consumed by the media and film even unknowingly. Hollywood is our biggest driver in film and media that has an exponential influence on our lives, television is something we are so familiar with, and for this reason, we adapt to the values and ideologies they display.

Over- sexualisation is one of the biggest issues specifically in movies such as *Mean Girls* (2004) and *Clueless* (1995)[1]. By the time these movies were released, society significantly changed what young people idealised. They admired Regina George and wanted the popularity of Cher Horowitz. Due to this being a common trend it created a large comparison and categorises between people who were like these stereotypical perfect characters and those who were not.[2] It forced girls to believe they "should" act and be a certain way such as having a perfect body, unblemished skin, revealing clothing and being submissive to men, which goes back hundreds of years to the first wave of feminism when women were just wives and mothers. Even childhood movies such as *Peter Pan* are homogenised examples of women due to how Tinkerbell is portrayed and the clothing she is put into, along with how she is characterised to be dependent and clingy to Peter. *Beauty and the Beast* is also an example of the sexualisation women face as Belle is said to be odd since she likes to read books, which creates a stereotype that beautiful girls with a man do not need that level of education and it is strange to do so, these movies unknowingly impact children from such young ages to grow up with a specific goal of how to act and look.  Media serves as a powerful mirror reflecting and shaping societal norms and values. When women are portrayed in diverse roles, it challenges traditional stereotypes and offers a more accurate reflection of the complexity and variety of women's experiences. This representation not only influences public perceptions but also has the potential to shape societal attitudes and expectations.

Through conducting primary and secondary research, I gained much valuable insight into this issue of females being heavily stereotyped in the media from multiple generations. My

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[1] Primary research: Content analysis
[2] Primary research: Content analysis

studies found that Generation Z was more aware of the prominent sexualisation of women in movies[3], this is likely because of the films which were created in the 1990s and 2000s, for example *how to Lose a Guy in 10 Days, Miss Congeniality* and *Just My Luck* are all focused on a female which is dependant upon a man. In my primary research, 90% of respondents agreed that the media have influenced their perspective on gender roles,[4] and 65% agreed that over the past 20 years gender stereotypes have increased[5]. It is very evident that popular 2000s movies that have female protagonists or main characters are solely surrounded by romance and love[6]. 100% of questionnaire respondents agreed that they had witnessed misogynistic and sexist content online, at least daily, weekly or every time they watch media[7]. This of course refers to apps such as Instagram and YouTube, but more specifically movies and films.

Public figures that are very prominent to sexualisation in Hollywood are actresses Margot Robbie and Marilyn Munroe. Although they existed in different times they have both experienced large scales of misogyny and are very influential role models to young women's perceptions of beauty. In recent magazines and articles[8], the two have been compared not only for their looks but how they both deserved more power in Hollywood. Marilyn is always associated with Hollywood and played a pivotal role in shaping it. After *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* she demanded more power, set up her own production company and negotiated an executive producer role, this was a remarkable and outstanding movement for her time, and Margot has followed suit by producing movies such as *Barbie, Suicide Squad, I Tonya*. Both Morgot and Marilyn have been trailblazers for their respective generations and are massive

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[3] Primary research: questionnaire , question 4 (2024)
https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfvtle2NSHo9RaZvV3jMnrWDQPszs7mCbAc6 5LKOkO_1Vl8fg/viewform
[4] Primary research: questionnaire , question 4 (2024)
https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfvtle2NSHo9RaZvV3jMnrWDQPszs7mCbAc6 5LKOkO_1Vl8fg/viewform
[5] Primary research: questionnaire , question 5 (2024)
https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfvtle2NSHo9RaZvV3jMnrWDQPszs7mCbAc6 5LKOkO_1Vl8fg/viewform
[6] Primary research: Content analysis
[7] Primary research: questionnaire , question 20 (2024)
https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfvtle2NSHo9RaZvV3jMnrWDQPszs7mCbAc6 5LKOkO_1Vl8fg/viewform
[8] Marlow Stern, 'Is Margot Robbie the next Marilyn Monroe? Not a Chance' (*The Daily Beast* 2 March 2015)
<https://www.thedailybeast.com/is-margot-robbie-the-next-marilyn-monroe-not-a-chance> accessed 29 July 2024.

contributors to the confidence of other women. Hollywood is a major influence in the global entertainment industry and has faced significant criticism, specifically on its sexualisation and damaging image of women. Hollywood has significantly contributed to gender stereotypes and perpetuating harmful and inaccurate portrayals of females. Female actors such as Marilyn Munroe, Margot Robbie, Florence Pugh, and Greta Gerwig[9] are all powerful women who have spoken out on the effect which films and media have created by frequently depicting in limited roles that only emphasise beauty, dependency and submissiveness when they could instead depict women not to be counterparts of men and be capable on their own despite the beauty. Regardless of age and generation, all questionnaire respondents agreed that the representation of females in media and film is so important and should be recognised as media plays a significant role in influencing self-perception and aspirations.[10] When females are consistently depicted in stereotypical roles, it can impact the way girls and women perceive their own potential. On the contrary, positive and varied representations provide role models, illustrating that women can excel in diverse fields, pursue ambitious goals, and contribute meaningfully to society. Recognizing this impact on self-esteem and aspirations emphasises the importance of accurate and empowering portrayals in order to improve our society for the greater good.

The values of Hollywood can have both positive and negative influences which drive and shape our Western world. The way women are portrayed in certain films that were created in the 1990s and 2000s did not set a good example to younger children watching it and forced girls to believe they "should" act and be a certain way such as having a perfect body, unblemished skin, revealing clothing and submissive to men[11]. Where as certain females over time have played a very constructive and beneficial effect by using their power and authority in Hollywood for the better to shape younger females to be self-sufficient, smart and independent. Over all the representation of females in media and film is a potent tool for challenging stereotypes, shaping societal attitudes, influencing individual aspirations, fostering inclusivity, and contributing to broader social change. Its recognition is crucial for creating a more equitable and empowering narrative that reflects the true diversity and complexity of women's experiences.

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[9] Primary research: Content analysis
[10] Primary research: questionnaire , question 9 (2024)
https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfvtle2NSHo9RaZvV3jMnrWDQPszs7mCbAc6 5LKOkO_1Vl8fg/viewform
[11] Primary research: Content analysis

## Chapter 2

### Feminism: The Modern Voice for Change, Challenging Norms

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Feminism is a social, political and cultural movement that seeks to achieve equality between all genders, mostly advocating for women's right to not only be recognised but acted upon. Feminism aims to dismantle the issues which arise between genders and dismantle the inequalities within society. Feminism originated when women spoke up about discrimination and oppression in the 1840s, and since then has developed into different waves and wider spread. Feminism aims to rectify the injustices of women being marginalised and empower women to be able to make choices without judgement, pressure and discrimination[12]. Feminism creates groups and unity for those who are oppressed. Over time protests and riots have been run such as the suffragette movement, abortion rights and workplace equality such as politics. I believe that film and media have created a positive platform to reshape the social value of women in social media and through films.

Social media is an incredibly effective tool for promoting gender equality, It allows people of all ages to amplify their voices and gives them an easy access platform an example of this is Movements like #MeToo[13] to gain momentum on social media, allowing survivors of sexual harassment and assault to share their stories and raise awareness on a global scale. The movement was founded by a survivor and activist named Tarana Burke. It was a hashtag and protest created that shares awareness and allows individuals to not only share their experiences but also prevent them from the future and help to improve the social value of women globally. Social media creates a global reach and enables feminists and campaigns to reach a worldwide audience, this connects individuals into unity and groups by bonding over values and understandings along with shared experiences to feel less alone. Global connectivity fosters solidarity and encourages women to act on a meso-global scale.

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[12] 'Four Waves of Feminism' (*Pacific University* 25 October 2015) <https://www.pacificu.edu/magazine/four-waves-feminism#:~:text=The%20wave%20formally%20began%20at,movement%27s%20ideology%20and%20political%20strategies> accessed 15 July 2024.

[13] 'Me Too. Movement' (*me too. Movement* 2 April 2024) <https://metoomvmt.org/> accessed 24 June 2024

Although social media is beneficial for amplifying and spreading awareness it can also be a very negative impact on young women. Throughout my survey, all participants agreed that media influences their perspective on gender roles at least a bit, and again they all agreed that women are sexualised in social media.[14] Social media fixates excessively on physical appearance and reinforces harmful beauty standards, Exploitation and commodification are also harmful factors in social media. Influencer culture refers to the recent phenomenon where individuals use their social media platforms to shape public opinion, promote products, and engage with a large audience. These individuals usually have a significantly large following on platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, and Twitter, and they use their influence to affect trends, behaviours, and consumer choices. Not only do they shape trends such as fashion but they can also contribute the beauty standards and influence body shape, which can even lead to surgeries. Social media creates a space which can perpetuate the objectification of women easily as Brands exploit women's images and stories for commercial gain a common phrase for this is "sex sells". Although 50% of Britons believe women are represented more positively in advertising compared with five years ago, according to a Marketing Week and YouGov survey of 2,000 UK adults, that still leaves room for 50% of participants to agree it has either worsened or maintained the same.[15] Everyday ads which we see whilst swiping through social media have also faced backlash for sexualising women, an example of this is perfume ads and more specifically the protein world "beach body ready?" ad made and banned in 2017.[16]  This Ad sparks lots of controversy as it promotes weight loss and harmful expectations, The ad features a black and white, curvy, fair-haired and fair-skinned woman in a bright yellow bikini. Her hair is long and lush, her lips full, and her waist is tiny. Next to her is the simple question: Are you beach body ready? "immediately followed by the introduction of "the weight loss collection", As if

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[14] 'How Influencer Culture Affects Young People Online | Internet Matters' (*Internet Matters* 31 October 2023) <https://www.internetmatters.org/hub/question/how-influencer-culture-affects-young-people-online/> accessed 15 July 2024.

[15] Hammett E, 'Beach Bodies, Boobs, Girl Bosses: Have Brands Got to Grips with How to Portray Women in Ads?' (*Marketing Week* 8 March 2020) <https://www.marketingweek.com/international-womens-day-2020-representation-in-advertising/> accessed 24 June 2024

[16] Wheatstone R, 'Sexist Adverts Stereotyping Women as Housewives to Be Banned by Industry Watchdog in Major Crackdown...' (*The Sun* 18 July 2017) <https://www.thesun.co.uk/news/4042522/sexist-adverts-banned-industry-watchdog-advertising-standards/> accessed 24 June 2024

to suggest you probably are not beach body ready, and that clearly the step to remedy that involves losing weight, making people buy their product.

Social media and its partnership with the news create a powerful allegiance that is difficult to ignore. Alongside social media, the news is a pivotal place for females to express their opinions and is the most watched place for older generations, and arguably the best place to protest and share. Julia Gillard made history as the first woman to serve as Prime Minister of Australia, holding office from June 2010 to June 2013. Her leadership marked a significant milestone in Australian political history and gender equality in politics.[17] Julia made many accomplishments over her time as Prime minister but a focal one is her Advocacy for Women's Rights and Gender Equality. As the first female Prime Minister of Australia, Julia Gillard broke a significant glass ceiling, serving as a role model and symbol of possibility for women in politics and leadership roles. 'Do you believe that women have an equal opportunity of holding high political office compared to their male counterparts?' and 90% of participants answered that they do not believe females have equal opportunities[18]. Only 34% of our politicians are women, which does not represent our population ratio, which is slightly skewed towards females. The bias towards men is partial because the nature and environment surrounding women in positions of power cause the traits that are positive, accepted and portrayed well in men to be negative and ridiculed when regarding men. e.g. an assertive man is an aggressive woman, a commanding man is a strict woman. When a woman speaks her mind and is assertive and confident, the world calls her aggressive but when a man does the exact same thing, they are called assertive and respective[19]. We hail men as leaders based on the history and stereotype of the gender that aligns them with leadership roles, whereas the woman gets stares as if she lost control. This undermines the woman's authority and removes the point she is trying to make. It is an indicator of gender bias and creates a double standard. During Julia's speech [20] played an important role in opening up the conversation about sexist

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[17] Gillard J, 'Julia Gillard' (*Juliagillard.com.au*2022) <https://www.juliagillard.com.au/> accessed 24 June 2024

[18] Primary research: questionnaire , question 5 (2024) https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfvtle2NSHo9RaZvV3jMnrWDQPszs7mCbAc65LKOkO_1Vl8fg/viewform

[19] The, 'BOSSED UP' (*BOSSED UP*6 August 2020) <https://www.bossedup.org/podcast/episode251> accessed 29 July 2024.

[20] 'Transcript of Julia Gillard's Speech' (*The Sydney Morning Herald*9 October 2012) <https://www.smh.com.au/politics/federal/transcript-of-julia-gillards-speech-20121010-27c36.html> accessed 24 June 2024

and misogynistic treatment faced by female politicians and leaders everywhere. This speech resonated globally and sparked conversations about gender discrimination and the treatment of women in leadership. Throughout its global presence specifically over the news she created a much-needed conversation and spread of awareness.

In conclusion, feminism is a profoundly important ideology that has truly reshaped the social value of women in social media and film. It has brought to light the pervasive inequalities and biases that have long existed, prompting significant cultural changes. The way in which women are now portrayed is not yet necessarily equal to men, but the difference is now noticed and improved upon, and meaningful change has begun. Feminism rectifies the injustices faced by women who are marginalized and empowers them to make choices without judgment, pressure, and discrimination. It seeks to create a world where women can express their identities freely and pursue their aspirations without the constraints imposed by very outdated gender norms. The growing presence of diverse female characters challenges traditional stereotypes and provides role models for young girls and women. When prominent figures like Julia Gillard, the first female Prime Minister of Australia, are celebrated and recognised in the media, it sends a powerful message. It shows that women can achieve great things and hold positions of power this inspires younger generations to believe in themselves and their potential. Moreover, the impact of feminism extends beyond media and film. It influences policies, workplace practices, and social norms, contributing to a more equitable and just society. By advocating for equal pay, reproductive rights, and protection against gender-based violence, feminism works towards creating an environment where all individuals, regardless of gender, can thrive.

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**Chapter 3**

**Revolutionizing Womanhood: Beyond the Status Quo**

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Though social change has been slow, and at times stilted, the progression of positive social change is possible through the careful planning and purposeful funding of female- focussed organisations. Alternate drivers of social change are essential to transform womanhood for the better. These will likely include the improvement of education and access to schooling, economic participation, the increase in female political representation, legislation to protect women, and the importance of technology and media in spreading awareness. However, the use of advocacy and global activism will likely be the major drivers of transformation, and play a pivotal and crucial role in women who are empowered to advocate for change, raise awareness push for policy reforms.

In order to transform the experience of womanhood we must acknowledge the stereotypes against them created by men and specifically in the workplace. Not only is the gender pay gap a worldwide issue but women often earn less than men for performing the same job, with factors like discrimination and undervaluation of women's work contributing to the disparity for women. However, there are also other common issues which arise in the workplace for females such as career advancement barriers, also known as the "glass ceiling,"[21] this is an invisible barrier which affects the progression of women in high leadership roles due to their gender and disregarding their abilities, qualifications and achievements. In the workplace there is a lot of evident gender bias towards men which persists in stereotypes, when jobs are hiring they are often seen to favour men over just as equally capable and dedicated women due to outdated and misogynistic stereotypes. A main issue which contributes to unfair treatment in the workplace is the stereotype which inhibits that all females wish to have children and do home caregiving roles, which can affect how capable they are. About four in ten working women (42%) in the United States say they have faced discrimination on the job

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[21] 'The Glass Ceiling: Definition, History, Effects, and Examples' (*Investopedia*2024) <https://www.investopedia.com/terms/g/glass-ceiling.asp#:~:text=The%20glass%20ceiling%20is%20a,to%20include%20discrimination%20against%20minorities> accessed 24 June 2024

because of their gender[22], women are four times as likely to experience gender discrimination as men[23] and there are 52 female chief executive officers leading Fortune 500 companies in 2023[24]. In the previous year, there were 44 of them. Although gender inequality affects our generation now it also has far-reaching effects on younger generations, influencing their perceptions, aspirations, and opportunities. When young people observe unequal treatment of women in professional settings, it can perpetuate harmful stereotypes and reinforce the notion that certain careers or positions are less attainable or appropriate for women. This can likely discourage women from pursuing their own ambitious goals just due to a stereotype. A very public example of this is the lack of female role models in leadership, without examples of women to lead and underrepresentation it affects the younger generations to believe they can do it too. There are various movements about this issue such as Equal Pay Day which is an annual event to symbolise how far into the year women must work to earn what men earned in the previous year and also raise awareness about the gender pay gap and advocate for better pay, this is often seen through social media campaigns.

An alternative driver for social change for women in the 21st century is the harassment and violence which women face in the workplace. Women frequently face various forms of harassment that undermine their professional and personal well-being. The most common example of this is inappropriate and unwelcome comments which females receive almost every day and can manifest in various forms.[25] Such behaviour can create a hostile and intimidating work environment, making it difficult for women to perform their job duties effectively. A global example of this is during acting, for example, actors such as Emma Waston, Margot Robbie and Marilyn Munroe have experienced online due to just doing their job. On Emma Watson's 18th birthday, she experienced this "I remember on my 18th birthday

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[22] K. Parker, 'Gender Discrimination Comes in Many Forms for Today's Working Women' (*Pew Research Center*14 December 2017) <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2017/12/14/gender-discrimination-comes-in-many-forms-for-todays-working-women/> accessed 24 June 2024

[23] Parker K, 'Gender Discrimination Comes in Many Forms for Today's Working Women' (Pew Research Center14 December 2017) <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2017/12/14/gender-discrimination-comes-in-many-forms-for-todays-working-women/#:~:text=Women%20are%20roughly%20four%20times,(16%25%20versus%205%25).> accessed 24 July 2024

[24] 'The Glass Ceiling: Definition, History, Effects, and Examples' (Investopedia2024) <https://www.investopedia.com/terms/g/glass-ceiling.asp> accessed 24 July 2024

[25] Primary research: questionnaire , question 14 (2024) https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfvtle2NSHo9RaZvV3jMnrWDQPszs7mCbAc65LKOkO_1Vl8fg/viewform

I came out of my birthday party and photographers laid down on the pavement and took photographs up my skirt, which was then published on the front of the English tabloid [newspapers] the next morning[26], she has also spoken out about how she was treated differently to her male co-stars during a celebration of gender inequality in the arts. For example, she says " I have experienced sexism in that I have been directed by male directors 17 times and only twice by women. Of the producers I've worked with, 13 have been male, and only one has been a woman" Her speaking out about this publicly helps to shed a light on the harsh realities that women working in film and television face.

Over time the societal expectations of women have improved, more addressed and become more accepting. These expectations include dressing in a typically feminine way, being polite, accommodating and nurturing and not being allowed to be expressive or assertive. Over time multiple riots and movements have been created to change these stereotypes and they have worked to improve the expectations. Throughout history and over the waves of feminism women have organised and participated in numerous significant riots and movements which have helped improve rights, equality and justice, such as the women's suffragette movement which took place in the late 19th century to early 20th century for the voting rights of females. The suffragette movement was a pivotal chapter in the history of women's rights and marked a time for activism and showed the determination for equal rights such as voting. The movement was run by the Pank Hursts and they used public tactics such as civil disobedience, including chaining themselves to railings, disrupting public events, and enduring hunger strikes in prison, drawing attention to the injustice of denying women the right to vote. Although they faced many arrests even imprisonment the suffragettes persevered and this resulted in contributing to legislative changes such as the Representation of the People Act 1918[27], granting women voting rights. This legacy has recently had a movie made on them, about a growing movement called the Suffragettes forever changed the lives of working wives and mothers. Galvanized by political activists, women join a diverse group of women who fight for equality and the right to vote. Follows the early

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[26] Sayer J, 'What the Paps Did to Emma Watson on Her 18th Birthday Is so Gross' (*Cosmopolitan*10 March 2016) <https://www.cosmopolitan.com/uk/entertainment/news/a41853/what-the-paps-did-to-emma-watson-on-her-18th-birthday-is-so-gross/> accessed 24 June 2024
[27]'1918 Representation of the People Act' (*Parliament.uk*2024) <https://www.parliament.uk/about/living-heritage/transformingsociety/electionsvoting/womenvote/case-study-the-right-to-vote/the-right-to-vote/birmingham-and-the-equal-franchise/1918-representation-of-the-people-act/> accessed 15 July 2024.

members of the Women's Social and Political Union and the story of their radicalisation from peaceful protesters to lawbreakers. Starring Carey Mulligan, and Meryl Streep and produced by Alison Owen and Faye Ward. Movements such as this are the leading drivers for social change which transform womanhood to be a better, more accepting and safer place for women. Due to such movements, the access to education for women has been increased which is a fundamental driver of social change, the improvement in education makes women more likely to participate in the workplace, engage in politics and share decisions. The movements have created empowered women due to gender equality allowing them to be more passionate about working and economic participation. Laws that protect women's rights, such as anti-discrimination laws, equal pay acts, and laws against domestic violence and sexual harassment, are vital in promoting social change.

Overall, there are many alternate drivers of social change that have occurred over the 3 waves of feminism which transformed womanhood for the better, such as legislations and laws, movements like the suffragettes, programs and websites which assist women to feel comfortable about issues and discriminations which they are facing and also create a community which they can belong and unite. This has resulted in the improvement of education and schooling access, economic and political participation and growth in technology and media in spreading awareness. Global advocacy and activism are pivotal for change and a better experience of womanhood.

## Conclusion

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The impact of social and film media on expectations placed on females is very evident throughout the 21st century, due to impacts such as the increased use of technology and access. Women are negatively and stereotypically portrayed in the media such as being loving, sexualised, placed in roles that have more danger and domestic violence, and especially being portrayed solely as homemakers and carers of the family, dependent on men, or as objects of male attention[28]. Due to this depiction of females, it impacts society's view of women and allows for this discrimination to continue. The current Generation Z is the most exposed to technology than ever before, and will only continue to increase, allowing those after us to see much more harmful content if change does not occur.

After reading this personal interest project I hope readers walk away with an increased awareness and consciousness of how important film and media are in influencing our society and internal thoughts. As a consequence of reading and conducting research, I learned a lot more about the female view on politics and the significance which Julia Gillard had on us as a country. I also learnt more about the growth of feminism which has occurred, movements such as the *Suffragettes[29]* were vital in change, despite the dangers they faced the riot and rebellion were extremely valuable, cherished and essential for women to be seen.

My project was about predicting and proving that lots of evidence and examples will be displayed which give lots of detail into the individual yet shared experiences of stereotypes towards women. My topic is specifically about proving the point that almost every female has experienced stereotypes to some extent, along with this the reasoning behind this being normal and accepted is due to film and media. Throughout my primary research method of questionnaire[30], this was very much proven as participants shared specific examples of when they have experienced stereotypes and furthermore, the effect that it played on them.

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[28] Primary research: questionnaire , question 15 (2024)
https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfvtle2NSHo9RaZvV3jMnrWDQPszs7mCbAc65LKOkO_1Vl8fg/viewform
[29] Primary research: Content analysis
[30] Primary research: Questionnaire

My research consisted of a questionnaire[31], interview[32], and content analysis[33] which all helped me to form a stronger grasp on the effects of media and film both past and present on how our society responds. The research proved further that social and film media are very impactful in establishing stereotypes and expectations counter to those purported by waves of feminism in the 20th century. Through conducting and comparing *Barbie, Little Women, Suffragettes* and *Legally Blonde[34]* which vary significantly in timelines, I saw a change occur specifically between the *Suffragettes* and *Barbie*. Both movies promote change in the treatment and rights of women. This is very useful and effective in proving the waves of feminism and positive change that occurred over time.

My social literacy has increased as I have become a lot more aware of the treatment of women in public such as workplace issues specifically politics, violence and harassment and movements which have been made to help with these sadly common issues. Learning about legislations such as the Representation of the People Act 1918[35] and the treatment of women like actors Emma Watson, Marilyn Munroe and Margot Robbie who have spoken out about inappropriate and unwelcome comments which they have received almost every day and can manifest in various forms. Such behaviour can create a hostile and intimidating work environment, making it difficult for women to perform their job duties effectively.

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[31] Primary research: Questionnaire
[32] Primary research: Interview
[33] Primary research: Content analysis
[34] Primary research: Content analysis
[35] 1918 Representation of the People Act' (*Parliament.uk*2024) <https://www.parliament.uk/about/living-heritage/transformingsociety/electionsvoting/womenvote/case-study-the-right-to-vote/the-right-to-vote/birmingham-and-the-equal-franchise/1918-representation-of-the-people-act/> accessed 15 July 2024.

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## Primary research

**Questionnaire conducted with Gen Alpha 2012 - 2024, Gen Z 1997 – 2012, Gen 1981 – 1996, Gen X 1965 – 1980, Boomers 1955 – 1964 and published March 2024.**

The questionnaire was useful for conducting prefatory research, obtaining both qualitative and quantitive information specifically in regards to the evolution ver time from generation Boomer to alpha. The questionnaire included 24 questions ranged both open and closed-ended responses. Questions include To what extent do you agree with the statement: "Women are often portrayed solely as homemakers and carers of the family, dependent on men, or as objects of male attention"?, The questions were diverse and allowed me to have a variety of diverse answers. The responses helped me to prove my hypothesis of the impact which film and media have on the treatment of women in society, some of these responses highlighted the the negative impacts of media and news but they also foregrounded the positive impacts such as the increase of education and spread of awareness. However, it was very evident that some of my questions were too ambiguous and led to vague responses, which would therefore impact the accuracy of the findings. Moreover, the process of obtaining and collecting responses can be time-consuming, and it is difficult to maintain an equal distribution of generations for equal results. There was a significant discrepancy between male and female respondents with 69.2% being female and 30.8% male, which may have led to a bias in results. The questionnaire was very useful in obtaining elementary opinions and examples.

### Content analysis

Content analysis was a very useful methodology for me to employ given the nature of my project and its foundations being media and film. Through studying the films *Barbie, Legally Blonde, The Suffragettes* and *Little Women* I was provided with lots of insight into the evolution of feminism and the issues in society over centuries. Content analysis can however

be very time-consuming due to rewatching quote taking and analysis. For myself, it was the most valuable form of analysis and I referred back to it the most. Content analysis allowed me to quantify and further analyse scenes. To create an effective comparison between films, there must be systemic examination and categorising in order to be effective. Through creating an assorted table with headings such as year made, producer and director, Gender-related language (quotes, subject, stereotypical dialogue), Female or male protagonist lead. This allowed me to divide data and organise data into quantitive content analysis with tallys and analyse important quotes. The common theme of my data was that all movies aimed to help spread awareness about different stereotypes such as beauty standards and the roles of females in the household.

**Interview**

The interview I conducted with an expert feminist from Newcastle University was made up of 5 thorough questions, the small amount of questions allowed for them to be answered to a very thorough extent which provided much useful information. The process of transcribing and collating results however can be very time-consuming. Despite this, the information was extremely valuable and carefully tailored to my PIP. The expert opinions were reliable and very informative, which helped in the development of the chapters. The interview was particularly focused on their opinion of equal counterparts with respect and personal experiences which she had witnessed or seen. The results were both reliable and accurate, directly from her university studies and teaching and activism as a feminist herself. Interviews as a primary research method are highly useful to the overall resolution and thesis of my PIP, they are essential in strengthening the arguments presented in all 3 chapters.

**<u>Secondary research</u>**

**Gillard J, 'Julia Gillard' (*Juliagillard.com.au*2022) <https://www.juliagillard.com.au/> accessed 21 July 2024**

Julia Gillard was Australia's first female prime minister and made history as the first woman to serve as Prime Minister of Australia, holding office from June 2010 to June 2013. Her leadership marked a significant milestone in Australian political history and gender equality in politics. Julia made many accomplishments over her time as Prime minister but a focal one is her Advocacy for Women's Rights and Gender Equality. She played a crucial role in

governenmt and was pivotal to aspire younger generations, specifically females ij aspiring to leadership positions. Her website has very influential and important information on female politics, relating mostly to Chapter 2 which focuses on politics in news and media. This website may present some bias due to it being written to highlight her as an individual, but it does contain many statements written by others which allows for multiple opinions. This is a valid and reliable source with little bias.

**Gillis, E 'Feminists "waves" and the Question of "post-Feminism", Dedman College (website)**
**<https://www.smu.edu/Dedman/Academics/Programs/WomGenStudies/Scholarshipsan dAwards/PastWinners/GillisEssay>, accessed 22 July 2024**

Elizabeth Gillis's article feminist waves and the Question of 'post-feminism' provides a timeline for the waves of feminism and addresses the term of post-feminism. It explains how much of an impact media and generations have on the waves and how we develop feminism. The source provides crucial prefatory information and helped me further understand the concepts of the 'waves'. Published under the Dedman College 'Women and Gender Studies' section, this article is highly reliable. While it is limited in length this source provides much accurate and reliable crucial details. There is little bias present in this article as it includes frequent referencing. This source is very informative for all my chapters and helped me understand the difference between the waves and how media has developed over time for better and for worse.

**Internet Matters' 'How Influencer Culture Affects Young People Online (*Internet Matters* 31 October 2023)**
**<https://www.internetmatters.org/hub/question/how-influencer-culture-affects-young-p eople-online/> accessed 21 July 2024**

This website features contributions from Sajda Mughal OBE, Will Gardner, and Julia von Weiler, all of whom are experts in influencer culture and its impact on children and younger generations. They specifically address the negative influence of the online world, emphasizing how heavily edited and curated content creates an artificial and superficial

environment. This recognition is crucial for understanding the distorted realities often presented to young audiences. The website significantly enhanced my understanding of the importance of being aware of the impacts and extensive consumption of online content. It highlights the necessity of recognizing the potential harm caused by influencers who promote unrealistic standards and lifestyles, which can adversely affect young people's self-esteem and mental health. Although highly relevant to my topic, the website is somewhat limited in its word count and depth. As a result, it does not provide a comprehensive discussion of the effects of influencers, leaving some areas unexplored. Nonetheless, it offers valuable insights into the broader implications of influencer culture and underscores the need for critical engagement with online content to mitigate its potential negative impacts on younger audiences.

### *Investopedia* 'The Glass Ceiling: Definition, History, Effects, and Examples (2024) <https://www.investopedia.com/terms/g/glass-ceiling.asp> accessed 21 July 2024

The glass ceiling is a concept popularised in 1986 which discusses the social hierarchy and invisible barriers which prevent women from advancing in their careers. Throughout this article by Investopedia, I was highly informed on the multiple barriers against women and this was very relevant to chapter 3 when discussing workplace issues and unfair treatment. As this is written by a female Julia Kagan some may assume that bias is present however it has been looked over by Andrew Schmidt and Ryan Eichler both male which allows for little to no bias. It provided knowledge and information on the history of females at work and statistics such as "The number of female chief executive officers leading Fortune 500 companies in 2023. In the previous year, there were 44 of them." Over all this website was extremely insightful into the injustices and unfair treatment which women face in the workplace and was a crucial reference for Chapter 3.

### 'Me Too. Movement' (*me too. Movement* 2 April 2024) <https://metoomvmt.org/> accessed 21 July 2024

The Me Too movement, founded by Tarana Burke (born 1973), is a pivotal force in contemporary social justice. Burke, an American activist hailing from New York City,

initiated the movement in 2006 to empower women who have faced sexual harassment and assault. Her approach was rooted in creating a platform where survivors could share their experiences and support one another. In exploring Burke's website, it becomes evident that her work has had a profound impact on raising awareness and fostering a sense of solidarity among those affected. This impact is particularly evident in Chapter 2 of my research, which examines the significance of amplifying voices and experiences to build a supportive community. The Me Too movement's website offers valuable insights and personal narratives from feminists, which have greatly enhanced my understanding of how media can be harnessed for positive change. The website not only provides crucial information but also highlights the movement's role in influencing public discourse and promoting a culture of accountability. By delving into these resources, I have gained a deeper appreciation for the transformative power of media in advocating for justice and supporting marginalised voices.

**Pacific university ('Four Waves of Feminism'25 October 2015) <https://www.pacificu.edu/magazine/four-waves-feminism#:~:text=The%20wave%20fo rmally%20began%20at,movement%27s%20ideology%20and%20political%20strategie s> accessed 21 July 2024**

This article, authored by Martha Rampton and published by Pacific University, was written a few years ago and provides an in-depth analysis of the four waves of feminism. Beginning with the first wave in the late nineteenth century and continuing to the present fourth wave, Rampton meticulously explores the evolution and progress of each wave, highlighting their pivotal contributions to shaping contemporary society. Rampton discusses the crucial role of the media, particularly the news, in disseminating information and raising awareness about feminist issues. She underscores how media coverage has been instrumental in bringing feminist discourse to the forefront, facilitating broader societal understanding and engagement. Despite its insightful content, the article may exhibit some bias as it reflects the perspective of a single author. Nevertheless, it contains a wealth of valuable facts and information that significantly enhanced my comprehension of the distinctions between the different waves of feminism. Through Rampton's detailed examination, I gained a deeper appreciation for the historical context and ongoing impact of each wave, as well as the media's essential role in advancing feminist causes.

**Parker K, 'Gender Discrimination Comes in Many Forms for Today's Working Women' (*Pew Research Center*14 December 2017) <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2017/12/14/gender-discrimination-comes-in-many-forms-for-todays-working-women/> accessed 21 July 2024**

The website on gender discrimination by Parker K was exceptionally insightful, providing a plethora of statistics that were instrumental in enhancing the depth of my Personal Interest Project (PIP). Parker K's analysis delves into a comprehensive survey conducted in various workplaces, encompassing perspectives from both genders and spanning multiple generations. This methodological approach ensured a rich diversity of opinions and responses, making the findings robust and representative. One of the most striking statistics highlighted in Parker K's work is that among employed adults, women are about twice as likely as men (42% versus 22%) to report experiencing at least one of eight specific forms of gender discrimination in the workplace. Furthermore, the data reveals that women are approximately four times more likely than men to feel they have been treated as if they were not competent solely because of their gender. These statistics were particularly resonant as they mirrored the findings from the questionnaire I conducted. By cross-referencing Parker K's comprehensive data with my own research, I was able to substantiate my arguments with concrete evidence. This alignment not only bolstered the credibility of my project but also provided a compelling narrative that underscored the pervasive nature of gender discrimination in professional environments.

**_Parliament.uk_ '1918 Representation of the People Act' (2024) <https://www.parliament.uk/about/living-heritage/transformingsociety/electionsvoting/womenvote/case-study-the-right-to-vote/the-right-to-vote/birmingham-and-the-equal-franchise/1918-representation-of-the-people-act/> accessed 21 July 2024**

This informative website provides much historical context into the history of women's voting rights and it is particularly important for my chapter on chapter 3 as it delves into workplace issues and female rights such as voting. This movement was led by the suffragettes. Although the website is limited in length it provides reliable and accurate information on the significant

change and law which was made, granting the vote to women over the age of 30 who met a property qualification.

**Sayer J, 'What the Paps Did to Emma Watson on Her 18th Birthday Is so Gross'**
**(*Cosmopolitan*10 March 2016)**
**<https://www.cosmopolitan.com/uk/entertainment/news/a41853/what-the-paps-did-to-emma-watson-on-her-18th-birthday-is-so-gross/> accessed 21 July 2024**

Cosmopolitan is a magazine renowned for its in-depth coverage of pop culture issues. One of its notable reports, penned by Jo Sayer, focuses on an incident involving Emma Watson on her 18th birthday. Published on March 11, 2016, this report details the unfortunate event where Watson was subjected to invasive and inappropriate behaviour, with men attempting to take photos up her skirt. Sayer's article not only recounts the incident but also highlights Emma Watson's response and her outspoken stance on the matter. Watson, a prominent young actress, utilized her platform to condemn such behaviour and advocate for greater respect and privacy for women. The article provides extensive insights into Watson's public statements and her ongoing efforts to raise awareness about these issues. This report from Cosmopolitan effectively illustrates the darker side of media exposure and the troubling consequences of easy access to personal information and images via social media. It provided a concrete example of the adverse effects of media exposure on individuals, particularly young women.

**Stern M, 'Is Margot Robbie the next Marilyn Monroe? Not a Chance' (*The Daily***
***Beast*2 March 2015)**
**<https://www.thedailybeast.com/is-margot-robbie-the-next-marilyn-monroe-not-a-chance> accessed 29 July 2024.**

Article by Marlow Stern and published by the daily beast, is based upon a comparison between Margot Robbie and Marilyn Munroe and encapsulates the development and continuation of females over many decades. The source goes into much detail on both Margot and Marilyn's lives which was extremely helpful for context about them as individuals. It addresses the issues Marilyn faced such as being a sex symbol in 1952, when nude photographs surfaced of Monroe taken during a private shoot in 1949, and delves into the issues which Margot has faced not being respected in the film world due to her beauty. It also

addresses issues of them being seen as dumb "Monroe was also, by most accounts, much smarter than her "dumb blonde" persona would indicate and she was often very insightful in interviews." this very much helps throughout chapter 1. Due to the statistics and facts provided, there was not much bias, however, many opinions were given by the writer which may present little bias. Along side other research on impactful females in hollywood this was highly useful in informing me on issues which they face and stereotypes around them.

**Sydney Morning Herald ('Transcript of Julia Gillard's Speech' 9 October 2012)**
**<https://www.smh.com.au/politics/federal/transcript-of-julia-gillards-speech-20121010-2**
**7c36.html> accessed 21 July 2024**

Julia Gillard's speech in October 2012 is a very famous speech that is still often spoken about today and was a very important factor in my PIP when investigating women in leadership and power positions. The speech was voted by The Guardian readers in 2020 as the number one most unforgettable moment in Australian TV history, so is therefore a very contemporary example of the importance of media and news in spreading awareness and how it can be used as a positive outlet. This speech being so popular on social media also is a prime example of easy access to information and how it plays a massive role in shaping stereotypes and expectations. This transcript has nothing but the speech on it and therefore no bias present. It was extremely helpful to pull quotes and analyse them for my PIP, especially in chapter 2.

**Wheatstone R, 'Sexist Adverts Stereotyping Women as Housewives to Be Banned by**
**Industry Watchdog in Major Crackdown...' (The Sun 18 July 2017)**
**<https://www.thesun.co.uk/news/4042522/sexist-adverts-banned-industry-watchdog-adv**
**ertising-standards/> accessed 21 July 2024**

Richard Wheatstone's article on sexist ads that stereotype women as housewives provided a variety of examples which I referred to throughout my personal interest project, such as a poster saying "Are you beach body ready?" which promotes unhealthy body images of women, and ads of women cooking, cleaning and being submissive to men. Having these examples was extremely useful; to reference and further prove my point about media and film having such a large impact on creating stereotypes, specifically for younger generations that see these harmful ads. The website by The Sun has many examples of females being

portrayed negatively and thoroughly examines the ads and why they should be removed, along with the backlash received from general public and out modern day society. The website explains how the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) said stereotypes such as women being better at childcare and men being more capable of carrying out DIY are 'damaging and unhelpful'. Overall, this website has proven to be an invaluable resource, offering a plethora of sustainable examples that I can refer to for my personal interest project. The comprehensive and well-organized information has greatly enhanced my understanding and ability to apply sustainable practices effectively. It provides an extensive collection of examples, which has significantly contributed to the depth and quality of my project.