

Chasing Perfection



“To what extent has blurred lines between ‘beauty norms’ in popular youth media translated into unrealistic expectations for young women through generations?”

Table of Contents

Chasing Perfection.....	1
Table of Contents.....	2
Introduction.....	3
Log.....	5
Central material.....	7
Chapter 1: The power of popular youth media in establishing and enforcing beauty norms.....	7
Chapter 2: The impact of beauty norms and conformity to norms.....	12
Chapter 3: Exclusion resulting from non-conformity to social norms.....	17
Conclusion.....	21
Resource List.....	23
Primary Annotations.....	23
Secondary Annotations.....	26

Introduction

Societal gender beauty norms have shaped us over generations. The focus of my Personal Interest Project (PIP) is “To what extent have blurred lines between ‘beauty norms’ in popular youth media translated into unrealistic expectations for young women through generations?”. Young women have consistently been subjected to idealised norms on their behaviour and appearance. Demonstrating how beauty standards have changed over time, how media creates and promotes perfection, which leads to social inclusion or exclusion. The core thesis reveals that women seek to meet society's high standards of beauty, enhanced by media portrayals. The time periods examined are 1965-1979 (Generation X) and 1995-2009 (Generation Z), they represent both my parents' and my own formative years.

This topic is of particular interest and importance to me, as a teenage girl that has felt the manufactured and unrealistic beauty norms that have greatly impacted my own identity and mental health. Our culture and upbringing help inform the way we see ourselves, however in early childhood years we continue to be influenced via all forms of youth media, depicting a vision of unrealistic perfection, femininity and beauty, like for example, Barbie. I am interested in critically analysing how this has shaped the standards of beauty and societal expectations that are imposed on young women today. Through this research, I hope to further understand the impacts which can lead to low self-esteem, body-image issues, and pressure on women to conform.

This study advances knowledge of society and culture by analysing how changing beauty standards throughout generations shape experiences of conformity, social inclusion and exclusion. Exploring how these norms are created and upheld by popular culture, the study examines how childhood movies like Disney Princesses and social media affect young girls' and women's self perceptions. The social and psychological consequences of not meeting idealised beauty standards can lead to feelings of inferiority and marginalisation.

In order to address continuity and change in my Personal Interest Project, I will look at how beauty standards have changed throughout time, paying particular attention to the distinctions and parallels between the aspirations of Generation X and Z and how cultural changes in expectations on appearance for women are shown by this cross-generational comparison.

My PIP investigates the causes of the changes and shifts in women's beauty standards. To thoroughly establish this framework of my study, secondary research will be utilised, including scholarly articles and reliable media sources, to examine the evolution of beauty norms and their impact across Generations X and Z. My primary research methodologies consist of a content analysis of movies and social media, that emphasise unrealistic beauty norms. Furthermore, a questionnaire was distributed to a range of people from both generations, to help obtain perspectives and research on these themes.

Overall, providing a greater understanding of how women's beauty norms have changed, or remained consistent over time. Revealing not just the changes that have occurred, but also how persistent demands to comply continue to affect women's self-perception, social inclusion and exclusion, self confidence and cultural identity.

Log

My Personal Interest Project (PIP) explores the question “To what extent have blurred lines between ‘beauty norms’ in popular youth media translated into unrealistic expectations for young women through generations?”. I have always been interested in how ‘beauty norms’ impact women, their mental health and society more broadly. My personal experiences with mental health and how it changed my perspective due to unrealistic beauty norms and this in turn has influenced my topic. I noticed platforms like TikTok and Instagram have enhanced these unrealistic expectations and wanted to explore how other arenas like childhood movies contributed and their impact on society. Originally, I was interested in how movies portrayed relationships and if they were realistic, but as I refined and explored my idea, I became drawn to how beauty expectations have constructed the way the youth compare themselves to media ideals. Inspiration for my idea emerged from personal experiences. Growing up with movies and social media, I wanted to examine how my parents' and others were influenced across generations. This was beneficial in helping me formulate a relevant and interesting idea by relating my own experiences to social issues.

A questionnaire and a content analysis were chosen as my primary research methods. The questionnaire allowed me to gather qualitative and quantitative data from both Generations X and Z, maximizing the participant's reach when asking about their experiences with beauty norms in the media, identifying generational differences and similarities. A content analysis was chosen to examine how beauty expectations are visually represented in movies from both generations. Illuminating the continuity and change of beauty standards over time, remaining consistent in the body image standards, while also highlighting subtle changes in diversity and style that are portrayed throughout time.

Throughout my PIP experience challenges arose. Ethically, I had an obligation to make sure the questions were non-offensive, particularly when it came to sensitive subjects like body image. I made sure all answers were anonymous and from asking non-invasive questions. It was also difficult to locate trustworthy materials when conducting secondary research. This was overcome by consulting and finding peer-reviewed articles, and scholarly articles.

Overall, it was challenging to keep up with the time management of the project due to other school commitments, and personal issues like losing my dog and Grandad this year, but I was able to keep to the deadlines and weekly goals set. This helped me maintain consistent progress throughout the PIP. My time management, critical thinking, and research abilities have all significantly improved as a result of this experience. Ultimately deepening my understanding of how youth media shapes expectations, specifically women's beauty, and has allowed me to engage with present-day issues from both an intellectual and personal perspective. Additionally, I feel more comfortable evaluating data, coming to conclusions, and articulating my thoughts in an organised, impactful manner. Reflecting on the PIP overall, it has enhanced my knowledge on social issues and taught me how to critically think and ethically apply research, effectively preparing me for future academic obstacles.

Central material

Chapter 1: The power of popular youth media in establishing and enforcing beauty norms

Historically, popular youth media has played a vital role in creating a perception of beauty ideals that continue to affect and pressure young women throughout generations. This chapter investigates how films representing female characters from both Generations X and Z, are portraying beauty ideals that young women have aspired to acquire in society. A questionnaire completed by both generations, providing insight into the continued prevalence of unrealistic beauty standards. From the films, to Generations Z's use of social media, beauty and perfection has been consistently portrayed by models or animated and manufactured characters, all playing a part in the rise of young women developing levels of low self-esteem and body image issues. While the idealised images of beauty portrayed by these media types have persisted in many ways and remain as a continuity, the media through which these standards are transmitted have ultimately evolved in the time periods 1965-1979 and 1995-2009.

Children's movies have presented an unrealistic standard of beauty and perfection such as, Disney princesses such as Ariel from *The Little Mermaid*, popular during Generation X's youth, and Cinderella, popular amongst Generation Z¹. These represent an idealised view of beauty, femininity and perfection. These characters are repeatedly depicted with flawless complexion, an ectomorph body type, perfect ladylike behaviour and grooming, promoting restricted and unattainable beauty standards. Exposure to these ideals in early childhood, can set unattainable beauty ideals to which girls feel they must aspire to. The ever increasing impacts on self-esteem, body image and mental health are some of society's greatest challenges and continues through more recent releases such as Princess Elsa from *Frozen*².

¹ Primary Research: content analysis

²A.Smith, 'Frozen in Time: When Will Disney's Heroines Reflect Real Body Shapes?' (the Guardian 28 November 2013) <<https://www.theguardian.com/film/filmblog/2013/nov/28/frozen-disney-female-body-image> accessed 12 April 2025

Research from the questionnaire 36.8% of participants agreed that childhood icons like Disney princesses and Barbie promoted unrealistic beauty standards, with many participants noting that these icons were depicted with "flawless skin and hair" and "perfect bodies" blurring the lines between reality and fantasy.³ As a result, young girls are frequently driven to adhere to these unrealistic standards, feeling inadequate if they don't achieve them. A content analysis of films from Generation X and Z indicated a persistent reinforcement of beauty criteria, developing idealised ideals for women from an early age. This suggests that unattainable beauty standards are not only reinforced by media, but also established in societal conventions, contributing to a cycle in which youth media reflects and perpetuates these values throughout generations. For Generation X, Ariel from *The Little Mermaid* (1989) the protagonist with "flawless skin", beautiful "Perfectly styled red hair" and the "Ectomorph Thin, small waist, the idealised body type"⁴. This characterisation of her looks reinforce a narrow conception of beauty, which suggests that physical appearance is the most important attribute a woman can possess, which was especially strong during the time when Generation X was growing up. Additionally, for Generation Z, Mia from *Princess Diaries* (2001) the protagonist, undergoes a transformation to change her appearance to become "acceptable" enough to be a princess⁵. Mia's physical transformation was significant and illustrated how appearance (hair, clothing, complexion, etc.) falls within social acceptance and being valued, perpetuating unattainable beauty ideals for Generation Z girls. This pressure influences how young girls perceive themselves, internalising the notion that their value is determined by how closely they meet these standards. Ultimately revealing that such images actively develop and reinforce beauty norms in Generation Z's minds, rather than just reflecting them.

Since Barbie's debut in 1959, she has represented an impossible standard of beauty with her unrealistic figure and stereotypical 'ideal' features throughout both Generation X and Z⁶. From the primary research questionnaire, 43.9% of the participants admitted that Barbie's appearance had influenced their concept of beauty, with the majority saying that the doll's slender waist, long

³ Primary Research: Questionnaire

⁴ Primary Research: content analysis

⁵ Primary Research: content analysis

⁶ 'Disney Princesses and Barbie Dolls: Friend or Foe for Children's Body Image?' (Media Dysmorphia 3 March 2013) <<https://caseycroucher.wordpress.com/2013/03/02/disney-princesses-and-barbie-dolls-friend-or-foe-for-childrens-body-image/?utm/>>

legs, blonde hair, and blue eyes affected their ideals of beauty and femininity⁷. Despite recent efforts to diversify and make Barbie more inclusive, the original versions, with a tiny hourglass form, perfect complexion, and Eurocentric features, have had a long-lasting influence on generations of young girls. This consistent portrayal reinforces a narrow definition of beauty, which can lead to body dissatisfaction, low self-esteem, and exclusion for those who do not conform to the ideal.

Barbie and Disney Princesses both served as cultural agents, reinforcing restricted and idealised beauty standards. They continually push the ectomorphic body type, perfect facial features, and feminine characteristics as desirable and necessary for social acceptance. The impact of such representations is enormous; 43.9% of study participants agreed that Barbie's unrealistic beauty ideals had considerably altered young women's self-perceptions across both Generation X and Generation Z⁸. According to Teen Vogue, exposure to classic Barbie dolls has a detrimental impact on young girls' body image, promoting the notion that thinness is key to beauty⁹. Demonstrating the long-term psychological impact that these images can have, particularly when seen during childhood.

Social media has a significant influence on Generation Z since it constantly enforces unachievable beauty standards, contributing to greater body dissatisfaction among young women. Social media has impacted Generation Z by propagating unreachable beauty ideals, leading to greater body dissatisfaction. Instagram and TikTok offer idealised, filtered and edited photos that stimulate comparison and self-observation. Which has ultimately seen the impact of "this has led to increased comparison to others' bodies, higher levels of dissatisfaction, and a stronger drive for thinness among young women."¹⁰ As a result, young women face low self-esteem and increased pressure to conform in order to feel accepted online and in reality. In a questionnaire participants were asked to consider how the image of beauty in popular youth media has changed over time and to highlight any parallels or differences they discovered, and

⁷ Primary Research: Questionnaire

⁸ Primary Research: Questionnaire

⁹ B McNamara, 'Study Shows Barbie Dolls Negatively Impact Young Girls' Body Image' (Teen Vogue 12 September 2016) <https://www.teenvogue.com/story/barbie-body-image-study?utm_source> accessed 18 January 2025

¹⁰ M French, 'What Is the Connection between Beauty Standards and Mental Health?' (Medicalnewstoday.com May 2024) <<https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/beauty-standards-and-mental-health#beauty-standard-exposure>> accessed 8 May 2025

many participants stated how Generation Z have it worse off due to social media, because “Due to there being more social media platforms to display such standards, the current generations are being faced with harsher standards and the do’s and don’ts”. Therefore, TikTok and Instagram, reinforce restricted, idealised beauty criteria, leading to the internalisation of prevailing values and pressing young women to comply in order to be accepted by society. Also, In a questionnaire, 93% of respondents agreed that influencers and celebrities have a big influence on what is considered beautiful, highlighting the impact of social media in enforcing these standards¹¹. The shift from traditional media (television and film) to new media (social media) has increased the pressure to attain standards of beauty for young women in Generation Z.

Although media beauty standards have been generally the same overall, there are a few exclusive differences in how these beauty standards have influenced Generation X and Generation Z. Generation X, as they grew up in the pre-internet era, were less exposed to the social media exposure to beauty standards. One of the Generation X participants commented, "We didn't have social media, so we were less exposed to these beauty standards."¹² However, Generation Z has grown up when social media has developed, which has enforced these unrealistic expectations to a more significant extent. Many Generation Z participants in the questionnaire commented that social media has both "changed for the worse"¹³ due to the spread of unrealistic beauty standards through beauty filters and influencers and constant comparison. However, social media has also been used to promote good societal change, as seen by the emergence of body positivity campaigns that challenge traditional beauty standards. These movements reflect a shift in society values and a greater awareness and opposition to hegemonic norms. Activities help to drive societal change by promoting diversity and encouraging young women to adopt a broader and more inclusive definition of beauty.

Ultimately, popular youth media has played a significant role in shaping young women's beauty standards across Generations X and Z. The generation gap between Generation X and Z illustrates the nature of these beauty standards, with social media introducing both challenges and opportunities for young women. However the message has consistently remained the same,

¹¹ Primary Research: Questionnaire

¹² Primary Research: Questionnaire

¹³ Primary Research: Questionnaire

beauty is a flawless ideal, frequently unattainable, and conforming to them takes a huge psychological cost. These issues must be confronted in youth media so that the well-being of future generations can be improved and the loop of unattainable beauty ideals be broken for the future generations.

Chapter 2: The impact of beauty norms and conformity to norms

Young women's self-perception is greatly influenced by the media. The effects of these beauty standards and the pressure to conform have a lasting impact on their identity and general well-being, specifically for Generation X and Z. These implications extend beyond physical appearance and include psychological suffering, social rejection, low self-esteem and body image issues. This chapter investigates how beauty standards function not only as visual ideals for young women, but also as powerful social codes that shape women's roles, behaviours, and relationships with themselves and others.

Conforming to these norms, Generation X (1965 - 1979) grew up watching films like *Cinderella* (1950) and *The Little Mermaid* (1989), which portrayed a certain femininity and appearance; slim, white, and subservient. Characters like Ariel and Cinderella were only considered worthy after undergoing body transformations or conforming to beauty standards¹⁴. These norms still impact these women from Generation X today. The pattern also continued for young women in Generation Z (1995 - 2009) in their popular youth media. A content analysis illustrated that in *The Princess Diaries* (2001), it demonstrated to Generation Z young women that Mia's makeover, “straightened hair, polished clothing, and beautiful skin”, was required for social and romantic acceptability¹⁵. Similarly, *Barbie A Mermaid Tale* (2010) reinforced the notion that beauty is necessary for identity and social worth, as Merliah battled to accept her natural characteristics and felt driven to “fit in” both on land and underwater¹⁶. This portrayal in both generations of youth media is not only a superficial narrative device, but it also reflects cultural attitudes that link beauty with worth and validation.

Internalisation occurs in childhood and continues into adolescence, including everything from fairy tales to filters. This internalisation process results from socialisation, in which popular youth media plays a significant role in forming personal identity and reaffirming gendered

¹⁴ Primary Research: Content Analysis

¹⁵ Primary Research: Content Analysis

¹⁶ Primary Research: Content Analysis

norms. Young women's poor self-esteem and body image problems are closely linked to media exposure that promotes thin, idealised bodies. This demonstrates how adhering to prevailing standards, particularly when encouraged by dominant institutions like the movie industry, may have long-lasting psychological impacts such as low esteem, eating disorders, depression, anxiety and social isolation.¹⁷ Despite being challenged more lately by body positivity groups, the generational consistency of these values shows how norms are upheld throughout time. Nonetheless, the temptation to fit in and conform to these norms is still extremely strong and reflects long-standing connections between social importance to physical beauty.

Beauty ideals are perpetuated through social reinforcement. This is shown in Generation X media showing films such as *Grease* (1978) and *Pretty in Pink* (1986) frequently featuring female protagonists whose worth is determined by their physical attractiveness. Sandy's transformation in *Grease* from an innocent, humble 'girl' to a sexually appealing 'woman' exemplifies how physical beauty correlates with social and romantic acceptability¹⁸. Similar, *Pretty in Pink*, Andie's changing appearance is crucial to her social acceptance and love attraction¹⁹. Reinforcing that young women have to change and conform to these beauty standards that society has set for them. Illustrating how these beauty norms act as a powerful socialisation tool, where young women's physical appearance is measuring their value and belonging, in society. Young women frequently feel that maintaining a particular appearance is necessary for acceptance in society, and many say that not meeting these expectations causes them to feel excluded, insecure, and depressed.²⁰ Appearance is seen as a sign of worth for young women who see their bodies as social capital, which feeds the cycle of conformity and comparison, which creates significant impacts such as mental health struggles e.g self esteem issues, eating disorders, body image distortion. Characters like Sandy and Andie, who are only welcomed once they have physically conformed to society's standards.

¹⁷ French M, 'What Is the Connection between Beauty Standards and Mental Health?' (Medicalnewstoday.com May 2024) <<https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/beauty-standards-and-mental-health#mental-health-conditions> > accessed 11 May 2025

¹⁸ Primary Research: Content Analysis

¹⁹ Primary Research: Content Analysis

²⁰ 'The Impact of Unrealistic Beauty Standards on Mental Health: A Deep Dive' (Commonbeauty.net 2024) <<https://www.commonbeauty.net/content/read/0000001173.html> > accessed 10 May 2025

While the form of media has changed from cassettes (Generation X) to social media platforms for (Generation Z) however the results remain the same: young women internalise the notion that their worth is conditional, depending not on who they are, but on how they appear and look compared to these beauty norms. Media that frequently sexualizes and objectifies women reinforces this internalisation, which causes anxiety, despair, and body dissatisfaction. Social media filters further alter girls' perceptions of themselves; many start changing their looks at the age of 13 and comparing themselves to unattainable ideals²¹. This internalisation is represented as a continuity throughout the generations because in the way that youth media has constructed and controls these beauty norms, intensifying over time. For Generation X their norms were communicated through magazines, tv, films and peers, which offered a limited exposure compared to Generation Z, due to social media. A questionnaire was conducted and the question was asked 'Do you think younger generations are more or less affected by media-driven beauty norms than your generation? Why or Why not? (or if your Gen Z explains the opposite).' The majority answered Generation Z more because of social media²². This 24/7 access to these beauty norms on social media for Generation Z have amplified the impacts on young women which is resulting in self-comparison and conformity is now felt not just expected, but is required.

Social media has been a vehicle for these restrictive beauty norms to grow, thrive and reach more young women than anything ever has beforehand. The dynamic is then shifted for Generation Z and their involvement with social media such as Tik Tok, Instagram have further reinforced these beauty norms which have resulted in further and more significant impacts. Generation Z is constantly comparing themselves to others online. Four in ten say that social media has made them more anxious about the way they look²³. This is a prime example of a negative impact that Generation Z has encountered because of social media online. Videos on these social media platforms that have these idealised beauty norms of the ectomorph body type, flawless skin and more are constantly praised by watchers in comments such as, "She's the perfect blueprint" and

²¹ CL Martin and D Ruble, 'Children's Search for Gender Cues' (2004) 13 Current Directions in Psychological Science 67 <<https://www.verywellmind.com/what-is-the-impact-of-media-on-girls-mental-health-5270556> > accessed 10 May 2025

²² Primary Research: Questionnaire

²³ S Pitt, 'Just the Numbers: Gen Z's Appearance-Based Social Media Concerns' (Beautymatter.com 8 August 2023) <<https://beautymatter.com/articles/genzs-appearance-based-social-media-concerns> > accessed 9 May 2025

“I want to be you”²⁴. These comments emphasise the social capital available to individuals who meet these beauty requirements in society. Social capital refers to the benefits individuals and groups gain through social connections and relationships.²⁵ Constantly viewing these beauty norms everyday and seeing the praise that they receive because they conform, has significant impacts on young women's mental health and self perceptions. Young women internalising these beauty idealised norms negatively affect their identity, which leads to low self esteem, increased anxiety, depression and body image issues. This overall illustrated how social media has increased the need to conform to these beauty norms and their psychological impacts.

For Generation X, social pressure to conform was mostly communicated through passive media consumption through platforms like films, television, and peer evaluation. In contrast, Generation Z is under increased participation pressure, with beauty turned into a social performance judged by digital platforms such as likes, shares, and comments on social media apps. This trend reflects an increasing societal expectation that women conform to beauty norms not just for personal gratification but also to get social recognition. Social recognition refers to being valued and accepted by others in society, which then can enhance an individual social status. This external validation shows how conforming to unrealistic beauty norms means approval and acceptance within society.

Both generations have encountered the impact of these beauty norms and what it is like to conform to them. They were both expected to have the ectomorph body type, flawless skin, and wear fashionable clothes. Conforming to these ideals have resulted in significant negative impacts. The media for each generation have changed but the standards that they are trying to enforce and the way they are enforcing them has stayed similar. From Ariel's slender waist to Merliah's always bikini-ready body, these characters are visually coded for young women to convey the message that thinness is associated with beauty, success, and social acceptability in all areas of society. This depiction suggests that conforming to these beauty norms may have an impact on life outcomes, which can include perceived success in the workforce and other sectors of society. The media reinforces the notion that thinness is linked with positive attributes such as

²⁴ Primary Research: Content Analysis

²⁵ C Staff, 'What Is Social Capital?' (Coursera2024) <<https://www.coursera.org/articles/social-capital> > accessed 10 May 2025

competency, which shows that physical appearance for young women impacts your opportunities and social status within society. In sharp contrast, Ursula, the only plus-sized female character in *The Little Mermaid*, is portrayed as malevolent, perpetuating detrimental preconceptions that equate larger body types with negative characteristics²⁶. This impacts young women by showing them all throughout their life that the main character and heroes are always “perfect” looking whilst the villains are ugly and are the exact opposite of the unrealistic beauty expectations. Overall resulting in body image issues and mental health complications for young women because not being able to conform to these ideals have significant negative impacts.

Even while beauty standards have changed throughout time, their impacts have remained constant. The qualitative and quantitative primary research provided here shows how media-driven beauty standards have prevented self-expression, and have encouraged harmful social comparisons, and affect self-identity. Young women face pressures that measure their value more on appearance than on the soul of the person, whether through the digitally maintained image of a social media influencer or the transformation of a Disney princess. This chapter emphasises that beauty standards are psychological, social, and political forces that have a big influence on women's lives and go beyond simple aesthetic preferences. These standards have long-lasting effects that affect women's ability to negotiate the difficult surroundings of their identity and self-worth. In particular women may internalise these beauty expectations with the constant exposure in the media to these restricted idealised beauty expectations, which overall shapes how they view themselves and how they think others see them. The impacts of this then leads to identity issues, because they believe conforming to these beauty standards equals self worth. Young women as a result experience feelings of self inadequacy, body image issues and limits their feelings of belonging, highlighting the psychological impacts and consequences of conforming to beauty norms.

²⁶ Primary Research: Content Analysis

Chapter 3: Exclusion resulting from non-conformity to social norms

The pressure to conform to media-driven beauty ideals impacts not just personal identity but also defines society as a whole, with non-conformity frequently resulting in isolation, and marginalisation among young women. Beauty standards do more than establish how young women should look; they also define who belongs in society. In this regard, “belonging” refers to the emotional experience of being accepted and valued by others, whereas “inclusion” describes the structural or social mechanisms that allow individuals to participate fully in society. These notions can be viewed through the perspective of “in-groups” and “out-groups”; those who conform to the unrealistic beauty standards are those “in-groups”, while individuals who fail or refuse to adapt to these norms are frequently excluded, judged, or deemed invisible are the “out-groups”. This chapter investigates how compliance to these beauty norms functions as a social ‘way in’, and how exclusion can result in psychological suffering, social isolation, and identity breakdowns.

There is a clear visual division between inclusion and exclusion based on young women's physical appearance. A content analysis represented how youth media distinctly reveals division through certain unrealistic beauty norms, such as the thin ectomorph body and flawless skin, while others are excluded. Films targeted at Generation X, like *The Little Mermaid* (1989), portrayed a thin ectomorph body, Eurocentric, and traditionally feminine characters as a picture of beauty²⁷. Characters like Ariel are socially accepted and ultimately celebrated for following the physical transformation(s) that perfectly align with the beauty standards of the time. In contrast, women who don’t conform, such as Ursula in *The Little Mermaid*, are villainised and or mocked²⁸. These beauty portrayals reinforce a message that conforming to these unrealistic beauty norms is essential for worthiness and belonging for social inclusion in society. Feeling of

²⁷ Primary Research: Content Analysis

²⁸ Primary Research: Content Analysis

exclusion and inadequacy or being unsatisfied with their physical appearance, is what happens when individuals don't conform.²⁹ Ultimately, making them the "out-groups".

Youth media targeted at Generation Z maintains similar ideals such as a thin ectomorph body, Eurocentric, and traditionally feminine looks, to Generation X, but they are now presented with modernised narratives. For example, The Princess Diaries (2001) movie frames a social acceptance around Mia's physical transformation, her frizzy hair and spectacles are replaced with straight hair and makeup.³⁰ Although the film technically supports uniqueness, it associates social success with her physical appearance altering from a transformation to become princess. These depictions are consistent with respondents in the questionnaire strongly agreeing, 36.6% strongly agreed that famous childhood figures promoted unrealistic beauty standards, while others specifically stated that non-conforming characteristics, such as bigger bodies, acne, or a non-conforming outfit choice, were rarely, if ever, positively depicted³¹.

The mechanisms of social exclusion are further evident in contemporary digital platforms such as social media. The content analysis of TikTok videos showed that less than 10% actually featured body diversity or skin imperfections e.g acne. Posts that did align with thin ectomorph bodies, and fashionable styles received significantly more engagement, including comments such as "she's perfect" and "body goals."³² These findings are similar with Fardouly and Vartanian's research, which found that social media promotes upward appearance comparisons, resulting in feelings of inadequacy, loss of self confidence and more in young women.³³ The act of social exclusion refers to psychological and social marginalisation. Young women who haven't "fit" into the beauty standards are now frequently the targets of common types of exclusion which includes decreased social acceptance and cyberbullying. The "out-groups", has resulted in mental

²⁹B McKean, 'Beauty Redefined: Challenging Beauty Standards and Embracing Uniqueness - Psychologist Gold Coast - CBT Professionals' (Psychologist Gold Coast - CBT Professionals 5 June 2024) <<https://cbtprofessionals.com.au/beauty-redefined-challenging-beauty-standards-and-embracing-uniqueness/#:~:text=Beauty%20standards%20are%20constantly%20reinforced,don't%20meet%20these%20ideals> > accessed 11 July 2025

³⁰ Primary Research: Content Analysis

³¹ Primary Research: Questionnaire

³² Primary Research: Content Analysis

³³ Fardouly J and Vartanian LR, 'Social Media and Body Image Concerns: Current Research and Future Directions' (2015) 9 Current Opinion in Psychology 1 <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S2352250X15002249?utm_source=chatgpt.com > accessed 21 May 2025

health issues such as depression, anxiety, and lack of self esteem in young women, because those who don't fit the unrealistic beauty standards that society has created are frequently excluded and marginalised.

The idea of social exclusion due to beauty norms are supported by Tiggemann and Zaccardo. They discovered that viewers who do not adhere to the ideals of health and beauty frequently experience feelings of inadequacy as a result of being exposed to "fitspiration" imagery.³⁴ Social capital, likes, comments, and validation are all obtained through conformity. However, nonconformity results in shame, mockery, or invisibility. Women in Generations X and Z are socially rewarded for "fitting in," into these while being natural, unique and different is frowned upon. As a result, there is a culture in which social acceptance is traded for personal authenticity. The pressure to conform to these norms and social trends and the fear of social mockery and invisibility can lead to young girls struggling with anxiety, depression, and body dysmorphia.³⁵ The constant need to be in the "in-groups" creates mental health struggles among young women who are fearful of being socially excluded and being in the "out-groups".

The emotional effects of exclusion are far-reaching. Academic research shows that persistent appearance-based rejection increases risks of anxiety, eating disorders, and low self-esteem.³⁶ The primary research data supports this because 33.3% of respondents to the questionnaire admitted to experiencing anxiety or depression because of media driven beauty norms and standards.³⁷ Identity development is also compromised because of these beauty standards. In *Barbie A Mermaid Tale* (2010), Merliah resists her mermaid identity because it does not align with the real world norms. She says she feels like a "freak" for being different.³⁸ Furthermore, Sandy in *Grease* (1978) must alter her appearance and change a part of their personality, to gain

³⁴ M Tiggemann and M Zaccardo, "Exercise to Be Fit, Not Skinny": The Effect of Fitspiration Imagery on Women's Body Image' (2015) 15 *Body Image* 61 <<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/26176993/>> accessed 21 May 2025

³⁵ S Sharma, 'Mental Health Matters the Impact of Mockery and Trends on Self-Esteem of Girls' (Onlymyhealth6 January 2025) <<https://www.onlymyhealth.com/how-does-mockery-and-trends-on-social-media-impact-mental-health-of-girls-12977823045>> accessed 11 July 2025

³⁶ RM Perloff, 'Social Media Effects on Young Women's Body Image Concerns: Theoretical Perspectives and an Agenda for Research' (2014) 71 *Sex Roles* 363 <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/271740741_Social_Media_Effects_on_Young_Women's_Body_Image_Concerns_Theoretical_Perspectives_and_an_Agenda_for_Research> accessed 21 May 2025

³⁷ Primary Research: Questionnaire

³⁸ Primary Research: Content Analysis

acceptance from society and their peers.³⁹ Not only are nonconforming people socially excluded from the "in-groups", this ultimately has had a significant impact on females globally.

Beauty standards serve as cultural gatekeepers because of social inclusion and social exclusion. Despite its apparent appeal, inclusion is frequently contingent on conforming to impractical beauty standards. Additionally, social, psychological, and emotional harm are caused by exclusion, whether it be overt or covert. In this sense, beauty transcends appearance and turns into a metric of value. The repercussions of nonconformity for young women in all generations go beyond simply being "different"; they also include being erased from society.

³⁹ Primary Research: Content Analysis

Conclusion

When completing my Personal Interest Project (PIP), I have developed a greater understanding of how blurred beauty norms in popular youth media have translated into unrealistic expectations for young women in Generations X and Z. This PIP supported my thesis and increased my understanding of how societal expectations are formed, internalised and continued through evolving media platforms. Unrealistic beauty norms have societal consequences, revealing how the normalisation of unattainable beauty standards throughout generations affects young women's identity formation and mental health.

A questionnaire and a content analysis were my primary research methods. My PIP is centred around popular youth media and their portrayals of beauty norms, and overall how they contribute to impacts on young women in Generations X and Z. The content analysis helped me analyse how movies from both generations translated into blurred lines of beauty expectations, for example, *Grease* for Generation X and, *Barbie Mermaid Tale* for Generation Z. A content analysis for social media was also conducted for platforms Tiktok and Instagram, helping me track how social media moulds and changes ideals about beauty, desirability, and femininity. The questionnaire was distributed to a range of people from Generations X and Z. Responses revealed that women from both generations felt pressure by beauty norms represented in their media. However, Generation Z's responded more intensely due to their increased exposure to social media. This demonstrated how the media's reach and intensity have changed over time, supporting my argument that, despite changes in delivery methods, unclear and shifting norms are still unattainable.

My secondary research helped me prove my thesis. Articles and academic sources helped me understand how beauty standards are rooted in popular youth media. Psychological studies have also helped me learn the impacts that these blurred lines in beauty norms have endured in young women. This deepened my capacity to synthesise complex ideas and apply them meaningfully to real life contexts.

Concepts of socialisation, conformity, non-conformity and power, were central to my PIP and understanding, also while continuity and change were crucial. While standards of beauty have remained exclusive, the way they are expressed changed, demonstrating how cultural values persist despite advancements, e.g technology.

My cross-cultural concept was between Generations X and Z. Both generations, media platforms have significantly evolved , however the expectations of beauty haven't, displaying continuity and change. My understanding of how cultural concepts shaped by generational context and how continuity and change coexist in society have improved.

Overall, increasing my understanding of how media, culture and blurred lines between popular youth media impact individuals identities and societal expectations. Applying the course concepts such as conformity, non-conformity and power, helped me understand society and culture as a course and apply it to real life. I learnt to question dominant beauty expectations that the media is creating and reinforcing for women, and recognise their impacts on the wellbeing of young women. Despite these challenges, I remain steadfast in my personal belief that true beauty is deeper than the external facade, as it comes from within.

Resource List

Primary Annotations

Content Analysis conducted with Generation X and Z Films. Completed 6 April 2025

A content analysis was conducted as a primary research method, to help answer my hypothesis, “To what extent has blurred lines between ‘beauty norms’ in popular youth media translated into unrealistic expectations for young women through generations?”. It was conducted with films from both Generation X (1965-1979) and Z (1995-2009). For both Generations three movies were analysed each, for example; Generation Z movies were Cinderella (1 hr 19 mins), Barbie Mermaid Tale (1 hr 15 mins) and Princess Diaries (1 hr 58 mins), and Generation X movies were The Little Mermaid (1 hr 28 mins), Pretty in Pink (1 hr 36 mins) and Grease (1 hr and 46 mins). These movies were analysed for their generation due to their highly influential nature in their formative years, causing them to have a significant impact on what each generation thought was beauty and perfection. Overall, 33 hours was spent analysing these movies under a qualitative coding sheet with the headings; Age of the Main Character(s), Female Character Appearances - (Hair, Eye Color, Clothing, Characteristics/ Personality, Skin), Body Types (different body types presented) (ectomorph, endomorph, mesomorph), Beauty Standards / Conformity Examples (Quotes or Scenes), Any evidence of diversity in Females (Race, body type, style differences — or lack of it?), Enforcers of Beauty Norms and why do they conform (Peers, society, love interests, family, media, "the world", Culture) and lastly Female gender roles (Career focus? Romance-centered? Passive vs. active?). The content was useful to my PIP by helping me examine any patterns throughout the movies e.g Barbie has a Ectomorph - Thin, small waist (the idealised body type) as does Ariel, from The Little Mermaid. The issues faced when conducting the content analysis was the time consuming nature of the methodology. To help try and address the issue, I created a clear and concise coding sheet to help know what to look out for and keep on track while analysing. I also set aside time in sessions to help avoid fatigue and create nuanced answers without being rushed, which helps increase accuracy, reliability and validity. Due to being Generation Z, the results may have bias connected with them as I may have seen my movies worse as I grew up with them and already knew the impact and beauty standards shown and enhanced. Overall, the content analysis was useful as my primary research methodology, by helping obtain detailed results about my topic.

Content Analysis conducted with Social Media, TikTok. Completed 7 April 2025

A content analysis was conducted as a primary research method, to help answer my hypothesis, “To what extent has blurred lines between ‘beauty norms’ in popular youth media translated into unrealistic expectations for young women through generations?”. It was conducted with social media platform TikTok. TikTok was chosen to be analysed as the social media platform due to the influential nature from comments, likes, videos and instant gratification. Overall, 5 hours was spent analysing the social media platform, under a qualitative and quantitative coding sheet with the headings; Number of Posts Featuring Beauty Products (Observed in 100 Videos), No. Beauty Norms Portrayed that are observed in 100 Videos (e.g., Flawless Skin, Body Types, clothing, Perfectly styles hair), Any evidence of diversity in Females (Body type, style differences, Not perfect hair, Not Flawless Skin) - Observed in 100 Videos, and finally, Comments on Beauty Norms Posts. This content analysis was useful for my PIP as it helped me analyse any patterns on the social media platform, such as the types of comments on beauty norm tiktoks. The issue faced when conducting the content analysis was that it wasn’t generation specific like my hypothesis, due to Generation X growing up without any social media. This caused an impact on the results which overall impacts the accuracy, reliability and validity that can be shared in my chapters. To address this issue, when referring to social media in my chapters I have had to keep the information non-generation specific and general that also can be backed up by secondary resources. Due to being Generation Z, the results may have bias connected with them as I may have seen social media as worse as I grew up with the platforms and already knew the impact and beauty standards shown and enhanced. Overall, the content analysis was useful as my primary research methodology, by helping obtain results about my topic, in the social media general sense.

Questionnaire conducted with Generation X and Generation Z. Published 15 January 2025

A questionnaire was conducted as a primary research method to help answer this hypothesis, “To what extent has blurred lines between ‘beauty norms’ in popular youth media translated into unrealistic expectations for young women through generations?”. It was conducted with Generations X (1965-1979) and Z (1995-2009). The questionnaire consisted of 18 questions, with both quantitative and qualitative types of questions. There were a total of 57 respondents, 54.4% consisted of Generation X and 45.6% was Generation Z. Questions included; ‘How often do you notice unrealistic beauty standards in the media you consume?’ And ‘How do you think media-driven beauty norms impact young women differently across generations? and if so, why or why not?’. The questions were diverse, this resulted in useful information to use throughout my PIP. The usefulness of the questionnaire allowed me to narrow down areas of concerns and impacts that Generation X and Z were experiencing due to unrealistic beauty

expectations in popular youth media. However, it was clear that some questions were too long and broad due to the restricted answers, which led to unreliable answers to those specific questions and impacted my accuracy. Reading through the results, I realised that I needed to back up more research with professionals to increase accuracy, reliability and validity. It was also difficult and time consuming to keep up the balance between Generation X and Z responses. As there were more Generation X responses this may have led to bias within the results. Due to the responses mainly being answered in my location and demographic, this may have led to some bias due to it being a small scale of responses, as they may have answered all questions similarly due to their accessibility to technology and youth media. Overall, the questionnaire was useful as my primary research methodology, by obtaining both detailed and general opinions about my topic but will need extra research to fully support my PIP.

Secondary Annotations

A.Smith, 'Frozen in Time: When Will Disney's Heroines Reflect Real Body Shapes?' (the Guardian 28 November 2013)

<<https://www.theguardian.com/film/filmblog/2013/nov/28/frozen-disney-female-body-image>
accessed 12 April 2025

Annotated resource one, main argument(s) is that Disney continues to constantly portray their female characters, specifically their Heroines; with unrealistic standards of a body shape and that are hyper-feminised and do not actually reflect real life women's bodies. Annotated source one also critiques Disney for constantly creating these narrow beauty standards for example, slim waists, flawless skin, and wide doe eyes which overall declines any diversity or real life perceptions of beauty and femininity. Whilst also highlighting the inconsistencies of the powerful messages the movies are trying to portray empowerment but refuse to make diverse physical appearances. Furthermore, calls for Disney to start creating realistic physical appearances for their female Heroines. The intended audience is for people interested or critics of Disney, and just general readers of the Guardian interested in these topics. The conclusion was made that Disney doesn't create enough realistic looking female characters that it sends problematic messages to young audiences on what 'beauty' looks like. Thus, it was useful for my PIP topic and was used in my chapter(s), because it supports my examination of beauty standards in popular youth media, especially in childhood movies like Frozen. There was limited bias in this article source. The source relates to my PIP through the issue of body image and beauty standards being a blurred line in childhood movies and their impacts on young women. The article was thought provoking and helpful to see the issues in Disney movies' female portrayals.

Country Girl Management, 'How Beauty Standards Have Changed' (Country Girl Management, 2 August

2023)<<https://www.countrygirlmanagement.com/free-stuff/blog/how-beauty-standards-have-changed/>> accessed 6 November 2024

Annotated resource Two, Country Girl Management is a modeling and youth empowerment agency that helps and shares insight into beauty and fashion culture in society. Annotated source

two displays all the types of ‘beauty expectations’ from the 1920s to the 2010s. The source states how quickly and often beauty standards and norms have changed and how they will continue to change. In the 1920s the beauty norms for women were small chests, straight figures with minimal curves and a bob. Then quickly switching to the 1930s–1950s, women were ‘celebrated’ for having an hourglass figure and curves. Then to the 1960s–70s, women were seen as beautiful if they had long lean legs, straight figures with no curves. Then in the 1990s, the source states that society had an obsession with becoming as thin as possible, no curves, translucent skin. Then in the 2000s, women were ‘expected’ and wanted to have washboard abs and toned bodies. In the 2010s Kim Kardashian made a wave by bringing curves back once again, having big bottoms, perfect “glass” skin, and of course having the slim hourglass figure. This is intended for teens and women interested in fashion, body image, and the generational shifts in beauty that have occurred. The source uses the chronological approach to compare fashion and beauty trends over time through generations. The author concludes that beauty standards change rapidly and are shaped by pop culture, media, and celebrity influence. This was helpful for exploring my PIP question because it taught me what the beauty norms and expectations were through the generations and years. The decade-by-decade breakdown of beauty norms was easy to follow and informative to help with my PIP for my generations, and was used for background research. There was limited bias in this article source. Source two connects to the course concepts of continuity and change through the generational differences in beauty. Overall it was helpful to understand how beauty standards aren’t ever fixed but have just changed across time and generations.

Cypher E, ‘Entertainment Sets Unrealistic Expectations’ (Twice-Told Tale2024)

<<https://twicetoldtale.org/2537/entertainment/entertainment-sets-unrealistic-expectations-2/>>

accessed 6 November 2024

Annotated resource three investigates the idea of how the entertainment industry has and does set unrealistic expectations for women. Youth media such as movies like Devil Wears Prada, Barbie, Clueless, Keeping Up With the Kardashians and TikTok were all pointed out as having made waves in the ‘unrealistic expectations’ set on young women. The source states the side effects and impacts these media have had through generations. Barbie was one of the main

examples—how the dolls only ever had the ‘perfect’ body type for 57 years and it wasn't until late 2016 that the “Barbie Introduces New Body Types” collection was released. The source explains how for 57 years young girls played with these Barbies and thought they had to look like that. Keeping Up With the Kardashians is also discussed—what some would call the “Kardashian Standard” has had a negative impact on young women. TikTok is also stated to have created unrealistic expectations for women such as having the “perfect legging legs.” This source is targeted towards teens, educators, and students who critically want to and do engage with the media. The source is using cultural examples, personal voice, and media analysis to help support the arguments. The author concludes that mass media across multiple platforms has reinforced unattainable beauty ideals that harm young women’s self-image. This source was helpful when exploring my PIP question because it delves deep into what types of youth media has created unrealistic expectations for women, and was used for background research. The examples from popular media helped me understand how these norms were deeply embedded in popular youth culture. This relates directly to socialisation, gender expectations, and youth media. There was limited bias in this article source. It was overall effective in showing how popular culture influences what women feel they should look like.

‘Disney Princesses and Barbie Dolls: Friend or Foe for Children’s Body Image?’ (*Media Dysmorphia* 3 March 2013)

<<https://caseycroucher.wordpress.com/2013/03/02/disney-princesses-and-barbie-dolls-friend-or-foe-for-childrens-body-image/?/>> accessed 5 May 2025

Annotated resource four explains how Disney Princesses and Barbie promote unrealistic beauty standards and norms that impact young girls mental health, self-esteem and body image. It demonstrates how the repeated exposure to these unrealistic expectations such as Ectomorph body type and flawless skin in movies from a young age lead young girls to internalise these standards and are led to believe that is what ‘beauty’ and ‘perfection’ is. The article also analyses how this influence on young girls has an impact and leads to low self-esteem, development of harmful beauty ideals, and body dissatisfaction. Overall, it questions if these icons such as Barbie are actually empowering young girls or just damaging them at such a young age. The intended audience is general readers who are interested in this topic and/ or professionals

wanting to learn more about the impacts. The conclusion made is that Disney princesses and Barbie dolls largely act as “foes” rather than friends, because they are damaging young girls' minds of what they think is ‘beautiful’, by promoting unrealistic standards. There is limited bias in the source, but should have more supplemented facts to be more reliable. Overall, relating to my PIP because of the unrealistic beauty norms being analysed in childhood movies and their impacts which made this an article to help me prove my point in my chapter(s).

dmitriy, ‘Generational Perceptions of Beauty: Timeless Takes and Evolving Aesthetics | Associates in Plastic Surgery’ (Associates In Plastic Surgery (associatesinplasticsurgery.com)16 July

2024)<<https://www.associatesinplasticsurgery.com/articles/generational-perceptions-of-beauty-timeless-takes-and-evolving-aesthetics/> > accessed 6 November 2024

Annotated resource five analyses the perceptions of beauty through generations. The source says that the era we grow up in greatly impacts how we perceive and appreciate beauty, this is because of the types of media, stereotypes and more, were around in those generations. It explores how baby boomers, generation x, millennials and generation z perceive beauty and the standards. Baby boomers were said to associate beauty with “classic Hollywood glamour and natural elegance”. Generation X were stated to be influenced by the grunge movement, and the rise of the supermodel which heavily influenced their perceptions of beauty. Millennials were born in a generation of change and were influenced to have a more inclusive view on beauty norms. And finally Generation Z challenged the change even more and are making social change, and they are said to see beauty as a form of self expression and everyone is not meant to look or be the same. There was no clear bias or author's perspective in this source because it was just on how the perception of beauty is different for each generation. This was helpful for exploring my PIP question because it showed me how each generation perceived beauty, and was used for background research.

Edwin, ‘Lights, Camera, Insecurity’ (Mindless Mag27 August 2023)

<<https://www.mindlessmag.com/post/lights-camera-insecurity#:~:text=Hollywood's%20influenc>

[e%20on%20beauty%20standards&text=However%2C%20these%20standards%20were%20often,beauty%20ideals%20and%20reinforcing%20stereotypes](#) . > accessed 6 November 2024

Annotated resource six, Edwin writing this article for Mindless Mag, which is a platform that discusses fashion, entertainment, and overall social issues. The main argument of the source is that Hollywood and other industries have always historically shown narrow beauty norms by them showing celebrities as the standard. These portrayals, mostly in films and media, have reinforced these unrealistic body ideals which have then contributed to damaging stereotypes. This article is challenging how magazines and videos have constantly showcased these beauty standards, leading to negative physical, emotional, and mental consequences for young women. The intended audience is particularly younger individuals interested in issues surrounding identity, media, and gender, and its issues. The text refers to secondary research, which means they were citing studies that discuss the impact of media exposure on body dissatisfaction, though formal references are not included. The author concludes that ongoing exposure to unattainable beauty ideals has significantly contributed to body image issues and declining mental health among youth. While the lack of academic referencing affects the text's reliability, it remains useful for my PIP due to its thematic relevance and accessible analysis, and was also used for background research. There was limited bias in this article source. The article's clear structure and relatable examples helped support my investigation into how media continues to influence beauty standards and reinforce appearance-based pressures across generations.

Fardouly J and Vartanian LR, 'Social Media and Body Image Concerns: Current Research and Future Directions' (2015) 9 Current Opinion in Psychology 1

<<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S2352250X15002249?> > accessed 21 May 2025

Annotated resource seven, has the main arguments of how social media has contributed to body image issues, especially in young women. It argues that social media platforms like Instagram and Facebook constantly expose its users to idealised visions and images of beauty that have been edited, which is ultimately encouraging self compassion, which leads to low self esteem, body image issues and more. It also argues how the initiative nature of the platforms e.g liking, commenting, have negative impacts on users because they focus on appearance which

contributes to negative self-evaluation and body dissatisfaction. The article also wants for future directions to stop this from happening and come up with strategies to help with negative thoughts on body image. The intended audience is Psychologists, researchers and students that are interested and focusing on this topic. This is a peer reviewed article that is very reliable due to Fardouly and Vartanian the authors are established researchers in the field of body image and psychology. There is no clear bias in this article. This was helpful to my PIP chapter(s), by providing a scientific foundation that links social media use to body image concerns, especially in young women and which complements my focus on popular youth media and unrealistic beauty standards. The article was thought provoking and helpful to see the issues in social media with body image and its impacts.

French M, 'What Is the Connection between Beauty Standards and Mental Health?'

(Medicalnewstoday.com May 2024)

<<https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/beauty-standards-and-mental-health> > accessed 6 November 2024

Annotated resource eight discusses the idea of what the 'beauty standards' are and also how they are affecting the mental health of young people. The source discusses how the media in today's society is causing more pressure for young people, especially women, to look a certain way and have a specific body type. The source gives evidence from a 'meta-analysis from 2008' source that showed the exposure of the thin-ideal body types through the media is directly related to body image concerns among females. The source also explores what 'beauty standards' actually are, and how people are exposed to these standards placed on them. The source also exposes how these unrealistic standards (e.g. having the perfect body image, being 'beautiful', having clear skin etc) have a major effect on the mental health of these young people. They majorly increase the risk of low self-esteem, depression, anxiety, eating disorders and more. The intended audience is young adults, mental health professionals, young people concerned with body image. This source uses secondary research from expert interviews and psychological studies, which includes a meta-analysis. The author concludes that unrealistic beauty standards and media influence significantly worsen the mental health of young people. This source was reliable for my PIP. This was helpful when starting to explore my PIP question because it told me what

‘beauty norms’ are and how they are affecting young people today and it was also helpful for my background research, and was used in my chapter(s). The use of medical research and expert opinions made the article reliable. The source links to the course concepts of identity, persons and socialisation. There was limited bias in this article source. This source was overall insightful and helped me understand how beauty standards have impacted youth mental health.

Martin CL and Ruble D, ‘Children’s Search for Gender Cues’ (2004) 13 Current Directions in Psychological Science 67

<<https://www.verywellmind.com/what-is-the-impact-of-media-on-girls-mental-health-5270556>

> accessed 10 May 2025

Annotated source nine main argument is how the media is affecting girls mental health, by examining gender roles portrayed in the media, media still perpetuates traditional gender roles, impacts that include body dissatisfaction, on young girls mental health all due to the media. The authors also examine that this search for gender cues influences children’s mostly young girls’ self-concept, preferences, and social interactions, by reinforcing gender norms and stereotypes. The intended audience is parents, teachers, therapists, and concerned citizens who can help girls develop healthier media habits. The authors come to a conclusion that the media plays a crucial role in feeding information to young people on gender roles and cues. Also, how these cues children have a heavy reliance on and this is impacting their identity on self perception, beauty, gender roles and more. They also came to the conclusion that we need to have a ‘healthier gender development’ because it will then provide a more diverse and non-stereotypical gender representation for them to learn off. This source was very helpful and reliable for my PIP, because it is a peer-reviewed academic journal known for its concise reviews of psychology. Martin and Ruble are authors that are experts in developmental psychology and gender studies, making this a source that has no viable bias and has high reliability. Overall, useful for my PIP chapter(s), to help prove my thesis and be backed up by a reliable, academic and scientific source.

McKean B, 'Beauty Redefined: Challenging Beauty Standards and Embracing Uniqueness - Psychologist Gold Coast - CBT Professionals' (Psychologist Gold Coast - CBT Professionals5 June 2024)

<<https://cbtprofessionals.com.au/beauty-redefined-challenging-beauty-standards-and-embracing-uniqueness/#:~:text=Beauty%20standards%20are%20constantly%20reinforced,don't%20meet%20these%20ideals> .> accessed 11 July 2025

Annotated source ten's main arguments include how beauty standards are constantly reinforced by the media and societal norms, which creates immense pressure to conform to these unrealistic beauty norms. Also, examines how these standards are negatively impacting individuals mental health, which is leading to body image issues, anxiety, depression, low-self esteem and more. The article also argues and comes to the conclusion that we have to push against, challenge and redefine these unrealistic beauty standards to include diversity and individuality rather than one fixed ideal for the whole of society, which will improve the negative impacts endured. The intended audience included general readers seeking mental health advice or are interested in this topic. This source is reliable due to its non-visible bias and is based on professional experts and evidence based psychological results in this topic. Overall, it was useful to my PIP chapter(s) by reinforcing the major importance of challenging narrow beauty norms, wanting to promote diversity and seeing its impacts, negative and positive.

McNamara B, 'Study Shows Barbie Dolls Negatively Impact Young Girls' Body Image' (Teen Vogue12 September 2016)

<https://www.teenvogue.com/story/barbie-body-image-study?utm_source > accessed 18 January 2025

Annotated source eleven, examines the exposure to Barbie dolls at a young age has had a negative affect on young girls' body image and self-esteem. It explains how Barbie body proportions of a slim waist, bum and boobs, which then promotes an unattainable and unrealistic body/ beauty standard for young girls and young women. The article comes to the conclusion that there is a need for diversity and realistic dolls to provide healthier beauty role models which will support positive body image development in young girls. Although it touches on there is more need for diversity it does acknowledge that there has been a slight change and development

in diversity compared to early years and generations by trying to manufacture varied body types in Barbie dolls. This source's intended audience is youthful, socially aware readers that are interested in this topic. This is useful for my PIP chapter(s), by using real research linking Barbie dolls to negative body image issues and mental health, on young girls. There is no clear bias in this source. Overall, this source is using references to actual research studies on this topic and its impacts, which adds credibility, reality and usefulness to my PIP.

RM Perloff, 'Social Media Effects on Young Women's Body Image Concerns: Theoretical Perspectives and an Agenda for Research' (2014) 71 Sex Roles 363

<https://www.researchgate.net/publication/271740741_Social_Media_Effects_on_Young_Women's_Body_Image_Concerns_Theoretical_Perspectives_and_an_Agenda_for_Research

>

accessed 21 May 2025

Annotated source twelve, the main argument is how social media impacts young women's body image concerns by providing constant exposure and gratification to idealised, edited images of unrealistic beauty and perfection. It points out how social media is interactive and peer-driven which is increasing the need to look 'perfect' and conform to these beauty norms, and its leading to negative effects of self comparison which is impacting their mental health. The article comes to the conclusion that social media has significant impacts on young individuals' body image and mental health, and how the results and examination on current social media and its impacts isn't enough and is calling for more as the impacts are so significant. The intended audience is academic audiences that want to learn more about the topic and the impacts. The reliability and credibility of this source is high due to the author being an established expert in media psychology, and being a peer-reviewed academic journal. There is no bias sighted in this source. Overall, this source was helpful and useful for my PIP chapter(s), by providing expert results on my topic and the impacts on young people.

S Pitt, 'Just the Numbers: Gen Z's Appearance-Based Social Media Concerns' (Beautymatter.com 8 August 2023)

<<https://beautymatter.com/articles/genzs-appearance-based-social-media-concerns> > accessed 9 May 2025

Annotated source thirteen, analyses and presents data driven results showing that Generation Z experience high levels of appearance related anxiety due to their high social media use. It demonstrates how social media platforms like TikTok and Instagram are increasing the constant need to conform to these unrealistic beauty standards that are constantly exposed to on these platforms. They also use tools like editing apps, filters and more to make them look 'perfect', which is leading to constant self comparison which is contributing to body image and mental health issues. The data base of Generation Z always comparing themselves which has led to significant impacts for them is high. The source comes to the conclusion of how social media is significantly contributing to physical appearance based pressures among Generation Z, which is leading to widespread body dissatisfaction and mental health concerns for them, and that this needs to be helped or stopped. The intended audience for this source is socially aware and beauty industry-conscious individuals that want to learn more data based facts on this topic. There is no clear bias in this source. This source is reliable due to its relevant statistics and survey data, throughout to help prove its points when wanting to current consumer behaviour and digital trends affecting Generations Z mental health. Overall, it was useful for my PIP chapter(s), because its current generation specific data on how Generation Z is impacted by social media.

S Sharma, 'Mental Health Matters the Impact of Mockery and Trends on Self-Esteem of Girls' (Onlymyhealth6 January 2025)

<<https://www.onlymyhealth.com/how-does-mockery-and-trends-on-social-media-impact-mental-health-of-girls-12977823045> > accessed 11 July 2025

Annotated source fourteen, argues that young girls' mental health and self-esteem are greatly impacted by online trolling, beauty trends, and mocking on social media platforms. It also demonstrates how the comments and trends on social media have become spaces where girls and women are feeling judged instead of uplifted which is impacting their mental health. Displaying how self comparison is higher than ever in women due to social media and is leading to anxiety, depression, and body dissatisfaction. The source also emphasises how young girls and women are being scared of social exclusion due to not conforming to the unrealistic beauty standards and

is negatively impacting. The sources came to the conclusion that there is a desperate call for digital accountability, and emotional support for young people from their parents, schools and more. The intended audience is a general audience who is interested in helping young girls or interested in the topic. This source has no visible bias and the reliability is increased due to mental health trends and draws on real-world observations made in the source. This was helpful for my PIP chapter(s), because it highlights social media impacts on young girls and women and the idea of social inclusion and exclusion in relation to conforming.

C Staff, 'What Is Social Capital?' (Coursera2024)

<<https://www.coursera.org/articles/social-capital> > accessed 10 May 2025

Annotated source fifteen, defines social capital 'as the value created through social networks, relationships, trust, and mutual support within communities or groups.' It also examines how social capital can lead to positive outcomes, for example, increased collaboration and emotional support. The intended audience is a broad audience that is interested in knowing what social capital is. There is no bias in this source. This source's reliability comes from having accurate and informative information of social capital. It was helpful for PIP chapter(s), by helping me define and understand social capital as a concept to include in my chapter to help prove my hypothesis.

The Impact of Unrealistic Beauty Standards on Mental Health: A Deep Dive' (Commonbeauty.net2024) <<https://www.commonbeauty.net/content/read/0000001173.html> > accessed 10 may 2025

Annotated resource sixteen, main arguments consist of arguing how unrealistic beauty norms are perpetuated by the media and have significant negative effects on mental health, which includes increased anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem. It also highlights how social media contributes to the growth of these norms by promoting continuous self comparison while encouraging validation based on physical appearance. The intended audience is broad, socially conscious individuals that want to learn more about the topic. The source comes to the conclusion that addressing these unrealistic beauty ideals will require increased media and social

literacy, diverse and realistic representation of beauty in the media as well as societal shifts away from narrow beauty ideals to try and change these negative impacts. The reliability of this source comes from well-researched content throughout the article. There is no visible bias in this source. This source was helpful to my PIP chapter(s), because it displays the media's role in shaping body image and unrealistic blurred lines of what beauty really is and its psychological outcomes, which falls under my PIP topic.

M Tiggemann and M Zaccardo, "Exercise to Be Fit, Not Skinny": The Effect of Fitspiration Imagery on Women's Body Image' (2015) 15 Body Image 61
<<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/26176993/>> accessed 21 May 2025

Annotated source seventeen, article analyses the impact of "fitspiration" images that has arisen and how social media content is promoting fitness and health on women's body image and its impacts. It says how "fitspiration" is good by promoting a healthy lifestyle, but now social media and young people have taken it too far and is now having negative impacts such as body image issues and decreasing mental health. It examines how "fitspiration" is promoting an unrealistic body type and is pressuring women to conform to a narrowly defined unattainable "fit" look. This source's intended audience is academic and professional audiences that need and want more information on this topic. There is no clear bias in this source. This source is highly reliable and creditable, due to it being a peer-reviewed academic journal that is used for research on body image and related psychological issues due to external factors. Also, Tiggemann and Zaccardo, the authors, are respected researchers in their field of this topic. This was helpful and useful for my PIP chapter(s), by introducing this idea "fitspiration" as another unrealistic beauty ideal that social media is promoting and how it also is leading to negative psychological impacts on young women.