

Scroll, Swipe, Believe



An investigation into polarisation and its influence on social change and gendered online spaces among young people in contemporary society

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Introduction

Identity, values and beliefs are becoming increasingly more influenced through social media platforms rather than families and communities. Platforms such as TikTok, X, Instagram and other online platforms have become embedded into individuals' everyday lives, creating a more divided society due to personalised online environments that are enforcing gender-biased stereotypes in society. Originally, social media started as a tool to help individuals connect and communicate through apps like WhatsApp, Messages or Snapchat, evidently it has morphed into a strong agent of socialisation, able to alter values and habits globally. As personalised online environments continue to curate the information we consume, exposure to alternative perspectives become limited, contributing to the development of filter bubbles, echo chambers and increasing social and political polarisation.

This Personal Interest Project aims to investigate how increasing polarisation, reinforced through social media, has become a driving force of social change and contributed to the formation of gender stereotypes in contemporary society, leading to the rejection of opposing perspectives and the development of echo chambers within generations. Within this investigation, polarisation refers to the increasing divide in communities and individuals whose beliefs, values and identity become more opposed through the repeated exposure to similar viewpoints, leaving little room for developing alternate perspectives.¹ Understand the rising rates of media usage have transformed society towards affective polarisation, decreasing traditional behaviours amongst communities and its influence on relationships. Contrasting the link upon the Society and Culture concepts of identity, socialisation, power and authority and

¹ Schowalter, D. (2024). Social Media and Polarization. [online] Pressbooks.pub. Pressbooks. Available at: <https://openoregon.pressbooks.pub/socialmediaculture/chapter/social-media-and-polarization/> [Accessed 26 July 2026].

continuity and change to identify how digital platforms are influencing contemporary society.

To investigate these issues, both qualitative and quantitative research methodologies were undertaken to gather both personal and sociological evidence. The primary research includes a questionnaire contrasted of data gathered by participants through Generations X and Generation Z, other primary research methods included a content analysis and a personal reflection to help identify how social media has influenced identity and my own perspectives. These findings corollate with my secondary research gathered from articles, websites, reports, media articles and sociological theories, allowing the combination of both research methods,

The creation of social media and technology throughout my childhood has always been closely linked to myself and the community where I grew up. Since being given a phone at 12 years old, I have always been intrigued by the long-term effects technology has on adolescents, whether its negative or positive changes in their identity. Through the changes in traditional behaviours across generations, as children nowadays are growing up alongside technology and digital devices, it is much easier for adolescents to access any source of information. Whereas older generation weren't exposed to the likely misinformation and harmful content found amongst the media, as young people increasingly turn to online platforms to form opinions and values on social matters.

Ultimately, while social media has evolved communication and connection, this investigation seeks to understand the increasing influence the media has on young people's formation on identity and beliefs.

Log

My Personal Interest Project (PIP) process began with real world interactions with my peers, family and community about how impactful social media has been when it comes to gaining information and views surrounding political and social issues. These conversations encouraged me to reflect on my own usage of social media and whether I primarily use it for entertainment or negatively, like to scroll mindlessly or to look at situations in the world and see other people's views. Though, as conversations regarding my topic continued to grow, people still stopped and asked, 'What polarisation was?'. It then dawned on me that though people are continuing to be active amongst social media and engage with content that aligns with their views, they don't know they are allowing polarisation to happen, even encouraging it. So, this lead to my final selection of my topic, leading to my decision on my continuity and change component being a generational study, examining how social media and media platforms have become embedded into everyday lives over time. I then decided on my cross-cultural aspect which consisted of a gender comparison between males and females, enabling a deeper understanding of how polarisation is affecting identity, gender expectations and social change.

During my research, I redefined my focus multiply times. Initially, I intended to investigate social medias overall impact on adolescents. Though through my secondary research findings, I recognised recurring terms like affective polarisation, filter bubbles, echo chambers and personalised online environments. Which led me to see how these ideals were closely linked to one another, ultimately offering a clearer explanation for how and why social media affects people. I then began to equate social media and its effects on different genders, wanting to see if social media is creating a shift between traditional gender roles or each gender.

After expanding my secondary research, I began to understand my own assumptions of social media. Before I began my investigation I believed there was only one contributing factor on how social media is challenging society. Though, as I continued to unravel more on polarisation and social media, I understood that algorithms don't dependently result to polarisation, instead it's the repeated exposure to content that aligns with your pre-existing beliefs, ultimately contributing to confirmation biases. This allowed me to redefine my hypothesis to specifically focus on polarisation and how it is creating gendered online spaces, while also seeing how it is affecting political views and engagement, social change and its impacts on both platonic and romantic relationships. With uncovering the evolution of polarisation, it allowed me to gain my own perspective on polarisation and understand its grasp on traditional human behaviours that are being challenged by cognitive biases.

With further research into my topic, my primary research focused on the impacts polarisations is having on our personal experiences. At first, I conducted a questionnaire that focused on how social media is impacting individuals, whether they were apart of Generation Z or Generation X. This helped provide reliable results that helped shape my hypothesis and further secondary findings. Then I conducted a content analysis and personal reflection that allowed for deeper research with reliable data from professor lectures and my own personal biases.

Throughout my completion of my PIP, I unravelled the depth behind polarisation and how polarisation isn't the leading factor to close-minded people but rather it's the repeated exposure to confirmation biases that are creating echo chambers, leading to polarisation.

Chapter 1 -

Affective Polarisation: Transforming Internet Experiences for Generations

With the integration of social media into our everyday lives, political viewpoints expressed online through social media are significantly reinforcing individuals pre-existing beliefs, attitudes and behaviours. Social media has fundamentally changed the way political information is consumed and interpreted by creating algorithm-driven content that reinforce existing beliefs, which is creating users to become trapped in personalised bubble, leading to filter bubbles and contributing to the growing political divided between males and females. This chapter examines how political views are being altered because of social media and the growing separation of gender-based political perspectives. Affective polarisation is associated with supporters of opposing political parties, perceiving rival groups as wrong and unethical. Ultimately, this has contributed to an increase in the division between males and females².

Political parties have shifted towards social media as a campaign tool to spread their visions towards communities and individuals, with digital advertising becoming necessary in modern society. Political parties are beginning to target potential voters through TikTok and Instagram with enhanced advertising skills like crafting edits or short videos to expose their goals and visions.³ As short videos don't drain our attention span, they capture and keep our attention with videos that are designed

² I, Asim. (2025) Are young women more left wing than men - and, if so, why?, BBC News. Available at: <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cqyg89jzvl1o> (Accessed: 29 April 2026).

³ S, Gratham (2024) Communication Research and Practice , The rise of TikTok elections: the Australian Labor Party's use of TikTok in the 2022 federal election campaigning. Available at: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/epdf/10.1080/22041451.2024.2349451?needAccess=true> (Accessed: 05 May 2026).

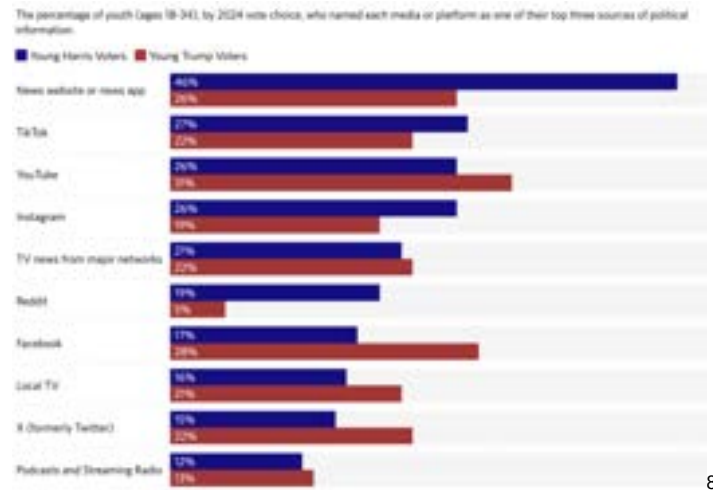
towards our interests and maximise our engagement, making it easy to swipe through dozens of videos rapidly. This leads to people getting captured into a cycle of negative self-thoughts and misinformation, like political misinformation or gender stereotypes⁴. Some campaigns have even gathered influencers and celebrities who have a heavy influence on younger people. In the 2024 presidential election in America, Kamala Harris, who ran the Democratic Party campaign, and Donald Trump, the Republican Party campaign, both featured celebrities like Beyoncé, Taylor Swift, Elon Musk and more to headline their rallies, including them for higher media visibility and voter turnout as a way to increase media visibility.⁵ These speakers, like Beyoncé, were featured in many news outlets headlined under Kamala Harris and the Democratic Party to encourage voters to investigate or even vote for Kamala Harris and her beliefs. Public figures can heavily influence people in society through their social and political issues worldwide. The trust individuals put on influencers from what they see on social media can almost be too much, few individuals stop to think “Is their personality real?”⁶ Ultimately, this leads to weakened independent political thinking across society, challenging young adults who are forming beliefs and values from their parents to develop opposing views and differing opinions.⁷

⁴ Primary research: Personal reflection

⁵ S, Shah. (2024) ‘All the Celebrities Hitting the Trail for Harris and Trump’, *TIME*, 28 October. Available at: [TIME article](#) (Accessed: 7 May 2026).)

⁶ Primary research: Personal reflection

⁷ Primary research: Personal reflection



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Percentage of American youth (ages 18-34) voters who gained their political information/sources from each social media platform

Generation Z responders (64%) indicated that they interact with political environments online. Within these respondents, 31% were males and 69% were females, contrasting the common thread of both genders interacting and viewing political environments on social media, highlighting how it is common among both genders.⁹ In comparison, 34% of respondents were Generation X, with 60% of Gen X reporting that they interact with politics online as well. Based on these findings, most people nowadays interact with news and politics through apps like TikTok, which is the primary source for information, and entertainment among young people.¹⁰ The reliance on social media for political information has major ramifications, especially through the amplification of personalised online environments that shape our existing pre-beliefs.

Individuals (especially younger people) create a filter bubble around their own views when interacting with social media, limiting their exposure to alternate perspectives

⁸ Youth rely on digital platforms, Need Media Literacy to access political information (2025) Circle at Tufts. Available at: <https://circle.tufts.edu/latest-research/youth-rely-digital-platforms-need-media-literacy-access-political-information#:~:text=Our%20research%20provides%20more%20evidence,political%20information%20from%20different%20sources>. (Accessed: 04 May 2026)

⁹ Primary research: Questionnaire (Q5)

¹⁰ Primary research: Questionnaire (Q3)

and reinforcing enclosed beliefs. The term '*filter bubble*' is often attributed to Eli Pariser, whose research argues that social media creates a closed information ecosystem and causes users to become trapped in personalised bubbles.¹¹ These bubbles amplify confirmation bias, as users tend to consume information that confirms their prior views, often contributing to the development of echo chambers and could even lead to political or social extremism. This was supported through my questionnaire findings, where a respondent commented that "algorithms are creating bigger divisions as they only strengthen our current viewpoints", while another explained "we are fed very different content which means we live totally different online lives"¹². These responses reinforce Pariser's argument that algorithm-driven platforms restrict exposure to diverse perspectives and allowing users to become increasingly driven by their own beliefs. Through the university lecture *The Technology that Divides Us* about the era of social isolation, Professor Chris Bail explores the 'prism' social media is creating and discovers through his studies that people are starting to struggle to understand opposing viewpoints.¹³ This raises the question of whether filter bubbles influence all users equally, because personalised online spaces intensify misunderstandings between genders, as they challenge the traditional roles of masculinity and femininity.¹⁴ Additionally, certain groups, such as feminist movements, may be more acceptant of political discussion rather than males, as females display a higher affective polarisation. Males have been more closely linked to a '*stronger disapproval of populist radical right-wing parties, as well as their greater concern for issues around gender and the natural environment*'¹⁵. This is significant because it illustrates how gender continues to shape political attitudes and social values. While social media provides greater access to political information, its algorithm-driven nature are decreasing the engagement with opposing perspectives, contributing echo chambers that encourage political polarisation, gender division and processes of social change. For example,

¹¹ *Filter bubbles* (2025) ECPS. Available at: <https://www.populismstudies.org/Vocabulary/filter-bubbles/> (Accessed: 04 May 2026).

¹² Primary research: Questionnaire (Q7)

¹³ Primary research: Content Analysis (The Technology that divides us (2023)

¹⁴ Primary research: Personal reflection

¹⁵ K.J, Han (2025) Gender and affective polarization - han - 2025 - european journal of political research - wiley online library, Gender and affective polarisation. Available at: <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/1475-6765.70023> (Accessed: 28 April 2026).

TikTok's "For You" page constantly recommends videos similar to those that a user has previously engaged with.¹⁶ As adolescents continue to interact with politics and gender-related content, algorithms progressively filter out alternative perspectives, ultimately reinforcing confirmation bias and enhancing echo chambers.

A lot of females increasingly prefer parties on the left and young men (mainly those in Western nations) prefer right-wing parties (e.g. the Republican Party)¹⁷, because of the cultural shift challenging traditional notions of masculinity.¹⁸ Masculinity is often used by political figures like Andrew Tate or Charlie Kirk, who back right-wing parties as a strategic tool to promote their ideologies, with the concepts of masculinity and the manosphere spread throughout digital platforms like X and TikTok to appeal to male voters by promoting traditional ideas such as dominance, independence and authority.¹⁹ The term 'manosphere' has allowed these groups to gain the support of young men through appealing to their desires for power, dominance and control.²⁰ In doing so, Tate and others have been able to create a sense of community and collective identity despite participating in an era of rapid social, digital, and environmental change. In contrast, young women are driven towards progressive movements that advocate for gender equality and social inclusion²¹, leading to the separation of political views. Further division between males and females, are creating

¹⁶ Grantham, S. (2024) Communication Research and Practice, The rise of TikTok elections: the Australian Labor Party's use of TikTok in the 2022 federal election campaigning. Available at: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/epdf/10.1080/22041451.2024.2349451?needAccess=true> (Accessed: 05 May 2026).

¹⁷ Australian Election Study (2022) The 2022 Australian federal election, Socio-Demographic Influence on the Vote . Available at: <https://australianelectionstudy.org/wp-content/uploads/The-2022-Australian-Federal-Election-Results-from-the-Australian-Election-Study.pdf> (Accessed: 28 April 2026). pg23

¹⁸ Đ, Milosav (2025) Are young men increasingly supporting the far right?, The Loop. Available at: <https://theloop.ecpr.eu/are-young-men-increasingly-supporting-the-far-right/> (Accessed: 05 May 2026).

¹⁹ Primary Research: Questionnaire (Q11)

²⁰ What is the manosphere and why should we care? (2025) UN women. Available at: <https://www.unwomen.org/en/articles/explainer/what-is-the-manosphere-and-why-should-we-care>.

²¹ Kim (2023) The Social Media Revolution is reshaping feminism - national organization for women, National Organisation for Women-. Available at: <https://now.org/blog/the-social-media-revolution-is-reshaping-feminism/#:~:text=Social%20media%20has%20given%20women,hate%20speech%20on%20social%20media>

soundproofed echo chambers that reinforce opposing perspectives between genders. As a result, echo chambers surrounding political issues are increasing exposure to vastly different views and narratives for young men and women. Not only reinforcing division around gender stereotypes and expectations, but also between communities and families as people become less engaged in opposing opinions. Sometimes even turning towards social media because there is more media and topics expressed online for current generations to engage with.²²

Therefore, society needs to become more aware of the negative impacts that social media has on individuals, because if echo chambers continue to overpower society, resistance to differing perspectives and social change will deepen.²³ If left undisputed, the formation and development of political polarisation will increase along with confirmation bias.²⁴ As social media is packed with misinformation and bias spread by influencers who are extremely active on platforms like TikTok and Instagram, this provides a false sense of security to consumers who develop trust and interest towards them, thereby sustaining and perpetuating echo chambers.

²² Primary research: Questionnaire (Q3)

²³ Primary research: Personal reflection

²⁴ D, Angleova's. (2025). The Role of Echo Chambers in the Polarisation of Society. Athens Journal of Politics & International Affairs, [online] 2024, pp. 1-18, doi: <https://www.athensjournals.gr/politics/2025-6435-AJPIA-CBC-Angelova-02.pdf>

Chapter 2 –

Digital platforms – A Vehicle for Social Change

Worldviews, self-expressions and experiences are often shaped through parents and family.²⁵ From a young age, we gain our values and beliefs from the people we surround ourselves with, which is fundamental to who we become. Technology has made it evident that societal norms are challenged through the shift from traditional in-person communication to a digital-first environment.²⁶ This change has altered how adolescents experience relationships, identity formation and belonging. Through online communities, such as male activist who think of themselves as Andrew Tate's 'Alpha males' content or the growing 'trad wives' communities on Instagram and Facebook, social media has not only influenced individuals' development but also their attitudes and acceptance of change. As social media becomes a powerful agent of socialisation that reinforces adolescent identity formation, younger people begin to develop key values and beliefs from online influencers and digital platforms rather than families and face-to-face interactions.

Social media has transformed from a place of connection and reliability to an algorithm-driven digital environment. Originally, platforms like Facebook, Twitter and Instagram were central to connecting people globally, allowing users to communicate more quickly and maintain relationships. Social media is now used by 4.8 billion people worldwide, representing 58.9% of the population.²⁷ This shows the growing

²⁵ Primary research: Personal reflection

²⁶ A, Alsaleh. (2024) The impact of technological advancement on culture and society, Scientific reports. Available at: <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC11685575/> (Accessed: 14 May 2026).

²⁷ A, Nyst, 'Social Media Statistics Details' in *Undiscovered Maine* (https://umaine.edu/undiscoveredmaine/small-business/resources/marketing-for-small-business/social-media-tools/social-media-statistics-details/?utm_source=chatgpt.com, 29 December 2023)

dependence on digital platforms, as nowadays, platforms such as TikTok and Instagram have accelerated users involvement through social media trends. “Get Ready with Me” (GRWM)²⁸, luxury lifestyle content, “Day in My Life”²⁹ videos and “What I Eat in a Day”³⁰ trends encourage users to compare their lifestyle with people and online influencers who carefully curate their videos. This widens the potential impacts on young people, who are in stages of developing communication and interpersonal skills. In most Westernised countries, social literacy is centred on face-to-face interactions and direct communication. Its importance in society, helps foster respectful relationships, enhance empathy towards others and enable communities to stay active through participants involvement.³¹ Therefore, digital platforms have made social literacy move towards online interactions and the need to manage a ‘digital self’.³² The concept of a digital self is how one appears to a global audience, rather than just a social identity. 56% of people who completed my survey said that they see a difference in the way they act online than how they are in person.³³ Ultimately, exposing how most people end up creating a fake personality to feel included and socially acceptable is important because it demonstrates how social media influences identity formation, especially among young people, who now prioritise online approval over authentic self-expression. However, through social comparison and exposure to curated content, body image and self-perspective are also being challenged by online users. This is evident in ‘How Social Media Affects Young People’, as Faremo expresses how girls feel they “must be perfect in all aspects of society”³⁴, emphasising how social media is creating stereotypes towards females and gender-based

²⁸ Allaire, C. (2023). TikTok’s ‘Get Ready With Me’ Videos Are a Comforting Phenomenon. [online] Vogue. Available at: <https://www.vogue.com/article/tiktok-get-ready-with-me-videos> [Accessed 29 July 2026].

²⁹ Love (2024). SWATCH. [online] SWATCH. Available at: <https://www.swatchbyamda.com/blog/why-we-love-a-day-in-my-life> [Accessed 29 July 2026].

³⁰ Davis, H.A., Kells, M.R., Roske, C., Holzman, S. and Wildes, J.E. (2023). A reflexive thematic analysis of #WhatIEatInADay on TikTok. *EATING BEHAVIORS*, 50, pp.101759–101759. doi:10.1016/j.eatbeh.2023.101759 .

³¹ K, Bedford. ‘What Is Social & Emotional Literacy?’, Innovative Resources (Innovative Resources, 2019) <<https://innovativeresources.org/what-is-social-emotional-literacy/>> (accessed 14 May 2026).

³² K. A Mills, ‘Critical Literacy and Digital Futures’ in *Viden om Literacy*, no 34 (Nationalt Videncenter for Læsning, September 2023) <https://videnomlaesning.dk/media/5645/kathy-a-mills.pdf> (accessed 14 May 2026)

³³ Primary research: Questionnaire (Q10)

³⁴ Primary research: Content analysis (How is the Media Affecting Youth)

expectations. This perspective is supported by questionnaire data in which younger generations are becoming 'more fixated on appearance and material things' as well as more 'likely to compare themselves to others in real life or online'.³⁵ Change is occurring due to digital platforms, with a continuous influence on adolescents understanding of their self-worth and the development of their identity and values through constant comparison and unrealistic expectations they're putting pressure on themselves to ultimately 'fit in' amongst society.³⁶

In society, conflict is easily created when individuals or groups express views that differ from others.³⁷ The shift from traditional in-person communication has led to the creation of 'information cocoons', coined by Professor Cass Sunstein in 2006. Information cocoons describe a closed information environment, representing how personalised news or homogenous information bubbles, which are digital environments, create cocoons over user biases, leading to societal polarisation. These information cocoons further shape identity by restricting exposure to diverse perspectives, which is seen through some events around the world, like American elections surrounding Donald Trump, Covid 19 vaccine rallies and the Arab-Israeli conflicts. This is disrupting communities and exposing how social media intensifies political and social division.³⁸ Leading to people becoming distorted from reality, as people see those with differing views as not just wrong but dangerous or enemies, making simple conversations turn into debates by bringing up political or social issues all around the world.³⁹ Ultimately, this places strains on personal relationships and contributes to elevated social change or division at a meso or macro level in society. Relationships and groups form online as they centre around the same values and interests, like gym, beauty or travelling content. While information cocoons naturally

³⁵ Primary research: Questionnaire (Q7)

³⁶ Newport Academy (2023). Social media comparison & teen mental health. [online] Newport Academy. Newport Academy. Available at: <https://www.newportacademy.com/resources/empowering-teens/theory-of-social-comparison/> [Accessed 2 Aug. 2026].

³⁷ Primary research: Personal reflection

³⁸ Primary research: Personal reflection

³⁹ Primary research: Questionnaire (Q6)

isolate individuals from alternate perspectives, social media simultaneously creates new communities that offer shared belongings and identity.

The rise of online communities has significantly reshaped how adolescents form values and identity. Unlike traditional communities, which were formed through family and local environments, social media has enabled young males and females to adopt newer values and shared beliefs through online connections.⁴⁰ These digital spaces can create a sense of belonging and inclusion for people, especially for young people who struggle in their physical environments, both mentally and physically.⁴¹ Individuals are becoming more connected and interactive through online communities, as young people are in significant stages of development in their lives. Social media is becoming the fundamental driver of the way individuals shape their identity and understanding of society, exposing how online communities are increasingly influential in shaping gender identities and changing stereotypes.⁴² The continuing influence of new beauty standards, trad wives or gym bro communities online has influenced younger generations towards differing futures, expectations and norms that differ from those found in their communities and families. This is becoming problematic as younger people are being exposed to conflicting messages about who they are and how they should act, translating societal values into online values.⁴³ Engaging with content on platforms like TikTok or Instagram can lead to rapid exposure to trends and gender specific ideals and expectations. Multiple respondents have seen the rise of the manosphere and red pill culture in young men on social media, which promotes male superiority, anti-feminist ideology and hyper-masculine gender roles.⁴⁴ These ideologies highlight the ways social media is creating stereotypes and standards

⁴⁰ Primary research: Personal reflection

⁴¹ Office of the Surgeon General (2023). Social Media Has Both Positive and Negative Impacts on Children and Adolescents. [online] www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov. Available at: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK594763/>.

⁴² Primary research: Personal reflection

⁴³ Primary research: Questionnaire (Q11)

⁴⁴ Primary research: Questionnaire (Q12)

around the need to “be like a man”.⁴⁵ This is placing increasing pressure on young men to conform to hyper-masculinity ideals, shaping the way they experience relationships and identity while rejecting anything viewed as feminine and discouraging emotional vulnerability.

No singular digital platform has caused social change, it's the content and how users interact within the media that challenge society. With the exposure of online gendered communities reinforcing stereotypes around women and men, people express their values and beliefs more boldly online, through the comfort and support from the community they are around online.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ A, Radulovski. (2024). Are We Perpetuating Gender Stereotypes Through Algorithmic Decisions? [online] Women in Tech Network. Available at: <https://www.womentech.net/how-to/are-we-perpetuating-gender-stereotypes-through-algorithmic-decisions>

⁴⁶ Primary research: Personal reflection

Chapter 3 -

Connected Yet Divided: Social medias influence on Relationships

In a world of digital comforts and crutches, the potential for positive change seems limited. However, while digital spaces are a fraught area for young people to navigate online, there are still significant positive and negative impacts that can be unpacked for the benefit of contemporary societies. Social media platforms are helping both romantic and platonic relationships stay more connected than ever before, despite potential negative aspects that are challenging how relationships are formed, viewed and compared. Therefore, while social media has enhanced connectivity and redefined the maintenance of relationships,⁴⁷ it has simultaneously created new avenues for conflict and radical opinions.

Social media has altered how conflict, interactions and communication barriers are handled in relationships.⁴⁸ Relationship disagreements are increasing as more conflict plays out in public rather than private, mainly on social media platforms like Instagram, where people face judgment and criticism. *Love Island Australia*, *Married at First Sight*, and *Farmer Wants a Wife* were among the most popular reality television shows watched by Australians in 2025,⁴⁹ attracting millions of viewers and sparking public discussion on social media platforms about which couple they believe is most compatible or who they support. Online discussions surrounding reality television often become highly gendered, as this genre heavily relies on editing and traditional gender

⁴⁷ Primary research: Personal reflection

⁴⁸ R, Needle. (2024). Is Social Media Good for Relationships? | Psychology Today. [online] [www.psychologytoday.com](https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/mental-and-sexual-health/202405/is-social-media-good-for-relationships). Available at: <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/mental-and-sexual-health/202405/is-social-media-good-for-relationships>.

⁴⁹ S, Pennas. (2025). Nine's End of Year Ratings 2025 - Nine for Brands. [online] Nine for Brands. Available at: <https://www.nineforbrands.com.au/nines-end-of-year-ratings-2025/>.

roles to manufacture drama or conflict in relationships.⁵⁰ Consequently, audiences often judge contestants under gender stereotypes rather than relationship context, portraying women as ‘attention-seeking’ or ‘dramatic’. While men are judged on the traditional ideals of masculinity, being judged for showing vulnerability or praised for displaying dominance and confidence. Evidently, *The Technology That Divides Us* by Chris Bail argues that social media fosters an “Us vs Them” mentality that plays out in public, mainly on social media platforms like Instagram, where people can carry judgment and criticism from others beyond reality television. It influences how individuals perceive relationships through social media and their own experiences.⁵¹ This was reflected in my questionnaire findings, where one respondent stated how social media has created “a split between friends and people”.⁵² As a result, relationships, whether it’s romantic, platonic or familial, are being compared online, leading to reduced relationship satisfaction.⁵³ This culture of public judgments has created concepts of performative relationships, where individuals feel pressured to alter how their relationship is perceived in the public eye, illustrating how social media has reinforced social change not only through relationship outcomes but relationship satisfaction.

Furthermore, social media has transformed societal expectations surrounding relationships, creating new pressure around communication and public presentations. Exposure to idealised relationships online has contributed to growing comparison, where individuals are comparing their own romantic and platonic relationships against unrealistic standards through social media.⁵⁴ In my questionnaire findings, a respondent state “We are more reliant on the online world and compare ourselves

⁵⁰ The Reality of Gender: Analysing the Construction, Perception and Reinforcement of Gender in Reality Television, Using Love Island as a Case Study. (n.d.). Available at: <https://www.bristol.ac.uk/media-library/sites/spais/documents/Hannah.pdf>.

⁵¹ Primary research: Content analysis (Technology That Divides us)

⁵² Primary research: Questionnaire (Q12)

⁵³ M, Jarai. (2022). How does social media affect relationships? [online] Medical News Today. Available at: <https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/social-media-and-relationships#negative-effects>.

⁵⁴ Why Reality TV’s Depiction of Love Is Harmful - Women’s Media Center. [online] womensmediacenter.com. Available at: <https://womensmediacenter.com/fbomb/why-reality-tvs-depiction-of-love-is-harmful> [Accessed 15 July 2026].

more to others”.⁵⁵ Ultimately this shows how polarisation is directly leading to relationships and people's expectations changing.⁵⁶ Rather than viewing relationships as a lifelong commitment, Gen Z view relationships as experiences to collect, and move beyond. This is a critical shift away from Gen X thinking of a life-long, committed partnership.

As social media continues to shape individuals beliefs and attitudes, gendered online spaces are reshaping romantic relationships expectations by altering perspectives on masculinity, femininity and traditional gender roles. According to the Women in Tech Network,⁵⁷ increasing exposure to algorithm-driven platforms can reinforces user's pre-existing beliefs and gender stereotypes rather than challenging them, contributing to closed minded individuals in society to be limited to diverse perspectives.⁵⁸ This is evident through the growth of the manosphere and Red Pill movements on platforms such as TikTok, X and Instagram, where traditional masculine ideals include dominance, authority and limits in their emotional vulnerability are characterised as what is needed to be a ‘true’ man. If there is only one ‘correct’ way to be a man (or woman) and no flexibility in thinking allowed, there is potential for societies to becoming increasingly close-minded and narrow in their expectations of ‘normal’.

Despite the increasing influence of social media on relationships satisfaction and expectations, social media continues to help maintain meaningful long-distance relationships, by enabling communication globally.⁵⁹ In 2024, the Australian Government introduced legislation restricting social media use for children under 16 to reduce adolescents exposure to inappropriate or harmful content and improve online safety.⁶⁰ While these restrictions are designed to shield young people from the

⁵⁵ Primary research: Questionnaire (Q7)

⁵⁶ Primary research: Personal reflection

⁵⁷ A, Radulovski. (2024). Are We Perpetuating Gender Stereotypes Through Algorithmic Decisions? [online] Women in Tech Network. Available at: <https://www.womentech.net/how-to/are-we-perpetuating-gender-stereotypes-through-algorithmic-decisions>

⁵⁸ Primary research: Personal reflection

⁵⁹ Needle, R. (2024). Is Social Media Good for Relationships? | Psychology Today. [online] Available at: <https://www.psychologytoday.com/au/blog/mental-and-sexual-health/202405/is-social-media-good-for-relationships>

⁶⁰ Human Rights Explainer: Proposed Social Media Ban for Under-16s in Australia. (n.d.). Available at: https://humanrights.gov.au/_data/assets/file/0026/57752/AHRC_Social-Media-Ban-Explainer.pdf.

harmful effects of social media, they have also reduced connectivity among friends and family across distances, as well as access to important news and global updates.⁶¹ This was reflected in my questionnaire through the concern that “without it, you can’t have instantaneous communication or access to news from all over the globe”, as another stated, “It allows people to connect across regions”.⁶² Ultimately, social media is seen as helping individuals to feel a sense of belonging, as it’s viewed by many as an essential tool for maintaining communication and connection. *Media News Today* suggests that social media itself isn’t harmful, it’s the way individuals choose to use and interact with platforms like TikTok, Instagram or X.⁶³ Furthermore, social media has challenged traditional understandings of relationships through individuals maintaining romantic and platonic relationships despite geographical distances, enabling connections that, in previous generations was challenging. Nevertheless, increased connectivity has also transformed societal expectations of relationships, creating pressure on individuals to maintain consistent communication and public visibility.⁶⁴

Even though social media has enhanced communication and helped sustain relationships by enabling individuals to connect worldwide. Social media has fundamentally reshaped the way relationships are experienced, maintained and commitments within contemporary society. Digital platforms have changed the form of relationships and public engagement where relationships continue to strive for online validation.

⁶¹ Human Rights Explainer: Proposed Social Media Ban for Under-16s in Australia. (n.d.). Available at: https://humanrights.gov.au/_data/assets/file/0026/57752/AHRC_Social-Media-Ban-Explainer.pdf.

⁶² Primary research: Questionnaire (Q12)

⁶³ M, Jarai. (2022). How does social media affect relationships? [online] Medical News Today. Available at: <https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/social-media-and-relationships#negative-effects>.

⁶⁴ Myserenitycounselor.com. (2025). Modern Love: How Relationship Dynamics and Expectations Have Changed Over Time. [online] Available at: <https://www.myserenitycounselor.com/blog/1278424-modern-love-how-relationship-dynamics-and-expectations-have-changed-over-time>.

Conclusion

Throughout this Personal Interest Project (PIP), I sought to investigate polarisation and its influence on social change and gendered online spaces in contemporary society. Initially, I began this PIP already believing that social media is creating divides between individuals by reinforcing their beliefs and values. However, through my research findings I uncovered that polarisation is enforcing social change and gendered online spaces that are becoming more complex and interconnected with social media, as it continues to increase every day, ultimately showing that polarisation is more woven into society than we realise. I uncovered the impact that algorithms and personalised online environments are having on individuals and how they are significantly contributing to socialisation. Whilst my hypothesis was primarily proven, I discovered more about algorithms and polarisation, highlighting that social media isn't the ultimate effect of polarisation and confirmation bias. Rather, it is the interactions between users, platform algorithms, online communities and existing beliefs that reinforce polarisation.

My hypothesis of polarisation reinforcing young people's identity and beliefs through social media algorithms and gendered online spaces, contributing to contemporary social change was supported by both my primary and secondary findings. Primary research methodologies, mainly content analysis and questionnaires, revealed how algorithms are encouraging cognitive biases and unrealistic gender expectations through personalised content. Ultimately finding that personalised online environments are leading to people developing a "Us vs Them" mentality, which is where people divide the social world into opposing groups because of what they see online, which is influencing both our political and social views towards a more prejudice and aggressive view towards opposing parties. Secondary research played a major role in real world events relevant to my topics impact on society, including events like the

2024 Social Media ban in Australia or Eli Pariser's concept on filter bubbles, which is where social media contributes to individuals developing a closed information ecosystem and causes users to become trapped in personalised bubble.

Completing my PIP has been an authentic experience that has expanded my understanding on echo chambers, polarisation and the elements that contribute to these processes. Ultimately, this investigation challenged my understanding of contemporary society, exposing that technology is no longer a simple tool for connection and communication but a new contemporary social force that is reinforcing identity, relationships and our perceptive of the world around us. Raising the question, who of ourselves is truly our own.

Resource List

Primary Research

Content Analysis -

This content analysis explored *The Social Dilemma* (2020), *The Technology That Divides Us* (2023) and *How the Media Affects Youth*, to delve into how polarisation, echo chambers and the development of gendered online spaces are being influenced by social media. *The Social Dilemma* highlights how major technology companies, mainly social media corporations, have contributed to the corrupt nature of echo chambers and misinformation. Featuring former Google and Facebook employees including Tristan Harris and Aza Raskin, to gain credibility by the number of experts and academic knowledge into echo chambers and misinformation. Though this documentary focuses on the negative consequences of social media, limiting discussion of potential benefits like increased connectiveness. Oda Faremo Lindholm's TEDx talk '*How the Media Affects Youth?*' discusses the representation of gender in the media, examining how young women are excessively more exposed to unrealistic expectations and beauty standards. Representing the increasing rates of mental health rising as women nowadays are more conscious of how they dress, look and their future. This helped gather more information and perspectives on which gender and communities are more likely to be negatively impacted by social media. Lastly, *The Technology That Divides Us* introduced the "Us vs Them" mentality, which is how individuals naturally evaluate an "in-group" (us) and stereotype the "out-group" (them). Also, the lecture evaluates into how social media acts as a 'prism' that amplifies the division in society creating heightened rejection of opposing perspectives.

Personal Reflection -

This personal reflection was used as a qualitative research method to uncover my own experiences with social medias positive and negative side. I'm apart of generation Z which means I've grown up alongside technology, this helped me uncover how digital technology has evolved through generations and the impacts technology is having on adolescents' development. My perspective as a female was useful in recognising the impacts media has had on myself while also understanding how different each gender consumes and engages with social media platforms. Some findings that influenced my study was encountering videos of "A Day in My Life" and "What I Eat in a Week" on TikTok, I began to question whether this content can promote a healthy lifestyle towards people or encourages an unrealistic beauty standard that allows young people to compare themselves to the influences on TikTok. While my personal reflection was beneficial to both my cross-cultural and continuity and change component and my PIP, it does not capture accurate information on my topic just my personal views. A personal reflection for one of my primary research methods was extremely beneficial to my PIP as it allowed for a valid source of personal information regarding my topic.

Questionnaire -

This questionnaire helps me gather both qualitative and quantitative data regarding young people's experiences and consumption with social media, polarisation and gendered online spaces. Consisting of 30 respondents', with 22 females and 8 males, allowing a range of perspectives across generations, focusing on Generation X, Y and Z. This allowed a cross-generational comparison of attitudes towards social medias and polarisation. The questionnaire explored participants experiences with social media, political engagement online and the way social media is impacting their beliefs and value. After investigating the questionnaire, I gained deeper insight into my topic, which allowed for broader knowledge for myself and useful for my PIP. With a deeper understanding of polarisation, social media and echo chambers, I was able to draw together both my primary and secondary findings, which enabled effective triangulation throughout my PIP. Though I could've had more respondents as I was

originally aiming for 50 participants, this questionnaire was highly effective for my investigation. The results were highly applicable to my secondary research and central material of my PIP, thus enabling validity. After conducting both my questionnaire and other primary research, all the information was applied to my PIP.

Secondary Research

Allaire, C. (2023). TikTok's 'Get Ready with Me' Videos Are a Comforting Phenomenon. [online] Vogue. Available at: <https://www.vogue.com/article/tiktok-get-ready-with-me-videos> [Accessed 29 July 2026].

This article explores the TikTok trend 'Get Ready with Me' (GRWM) videos, arguing that they create a sense of belonging and connection while exposing users to curated videos with beauty, fashion and lifestyle content. It is useful for Chapter 2 as it demonstrates how social media encourages social comparison and the construction of a digital self. The article by Christian Allaire highlights how curated content can shape values and behaviours by consuming content every day. Although, Vogue is a reliable source it is a journalistic source rather than a peer-reviewed article and should consider the long-term effects this type of content has on young people.

Angleova, D. (2025). The Role of Echo Chambers in the Polarisation of Society. Athens Journal of Politics & International Affairs, [online] 2024, pp. 1-18, doi: <https://www.athensjournals.gr/politics/2025-6435-AJPIA-CBC-Angelova-02.pdf>

In D. Angleova's article on the 'Role of Echo Chambers in the Polarisation of Society', the article examines how communicating through social media is contributing to the growth of societal polarisation by fostering echo chambers. Angleova explains how echo chambers form due to "homophily" (bonding with others who have similar interests to you), contributing to a selective exposure of information and "confirmation bias", all of which increase due to social media algorithms that personalise content based on user behaviour. As adolescents are repeatedly exposed to reinforcing viewpoints, their attitudes become more extreme, deepening their values and beliefs. While the article does not focus specifically on adolescents, its findings are highly relevant to understanding youth identity formation. For adolescents who are in a critical age of developing values, beliefs and social identity within themselves, social media is creating a bubble around them, impacting their values and growth. This suggests that polarisation not only contributes to the creation of echo chambers but also shapes how

young people construct their sense of self, belonging and worldviews within digital environments.

Asim, I. (2025) Are young women more left wing than men - and, if so, why?, BBC News. Available at: <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cqxcg89jzvl1o> (Accessed: 29 April 2026).

BBC News examines the growing political divide between young men and women, exploring how young women are increasingly more open-minded when it comes to political issues, while young men are more likely to hold conservative views. This was helpful for Chapter 1 of my PIP because it provides recent examples of gender polarisation and demonstrates how political identity is becoming increasingly more influenced due to social media and online communities. This article examines how females hold higher affective polarisation as women increasingly view the world through liberal eyes leading them to hold deep distrust amongst males in right wing parties. This was very useful for my PIP as it gave more depth into how each gender views the world through political eyes, representing the divide in gender when it comes to politics.

Australian Election Study (2022) The 2022 Australian federal election, Socio-Demographic Influence on the Vote . Available at: <https://australianelectionstudy.org/wp-content/uploads/The-2022-Australian-Federal-Election-Results-from-the-Australian-Election-Study.pdf> (Accessed: 28 April 2026). Pg23

This report highlights Australians political attitudes and voting behaviours throughout the 2022 Federal Election. Examining how Australia society is experiencing increasing ideological divisions, particularly between men and women. On page 23, the report explores how women have become increasingly more open-minded while men have become more conservative, demonstrating a widening gender gap in political attitudes in Australia and globally. It also highlights when increases of each gender happened in Australia, in 2016 and 2019 there were 10% more men than women voting, then in 2020 the gap narrowed. A limitation of this source is how it focuses on adult voters rather than adolescents which is central in my PIP, though voters can only be 18 years

and older, this source still doesn't investigate the influence social media algorithms have on young people in Australia. Though, it is still useful for my PIP as it provides reliable quantitative data on the increasing gender polarisation in Australia.

Bedford, K. 'What is Social & Emotional Literacy?' Innovative Resources, 2019, <https://innovativeresources.org/what-is-social-emotional-literacy/> accessed 12 June 2026.

This article by Karen Bedford examines the concepts of social literacy and emotional literacy, arguing that these skills are helping our development around how we form relationships, empathy and effective communication skills. Bedford investigates the term emotional literacy as the ability to regulate emotions, while social literacy sustains positive relationships and connectedness. This source is reliable for Chapter 2 of my Personal Interest Project as it provides the theoretical framework of young peoples development of social skills prior to personalised online environments. By contrasting whether personalised online environments are a tool for social growth and changing identity formation amongst young people, it will help me gain a wider view on social change through contemporary society. Although this article is heavily reliable as it was produced by an educational organisation rather than peer contrasted journal, this article doesn't go directly into how both social and emotional literacy is impacted through social media.

Davis, H.A., Kells, M.R., Roske, C., Holzman, S. and Wildes, J.E. (2023). A reflexive thematic analysis of #WhatIEatInADay on TikTok. EATING BEHAVIORS, 50, pp.101759–101759. doi: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S1471015323000594>

This peer-reviewed study investigated a compilation of 100 “What I Eat in a Day” TikTok videos, there findings consisted of most videos promoting idealised lifestyle, clean eating and unrealistic body standards. These researchers argue that these trends may negatively influence vulnerable adolescents by encouraging social comparison and unhealthy views on your body or food. This source is highly valuable for Chapter 2 as it demonstrates how algorithm-driven trends are influencing adolescent towards reshaping their beliefs, attitudes and perception of appearances

through the repeated exposure to curated content. This study is highly relatable to my PIP as it supports my discussion of social media driving social comparison and reinforcing identity formation. Although, this study only consists of 100 videos of TikTok which can create a limited result in their findings.

Dorde, M. (2025). Are young men increasingly supporting the far right? [online] The Loop. Available at: <https://theloop.ecpr.eu/are-young-men-increasingly-supporting-the-far-right/>

This article by M. Dorde highlights how young males are becoming more influenced by far-right ideas and hyper-masculinity online movements. It explores the gender differences and how a growing economic and cultural shift is challenging the notions of masculinity which is encouraging young men towards far-right movements, as it creates fear of losing their rights and authority. Social media is filling the gap with 'manfluencers', promoting hyper-masculinity ideals of dominance, authority and wealth. Ultimately, this article highlights how far-right movements are offering a sense of purpose and validation to males who feel left behind by society. This article helps give a male's perspective on political polarisation and how social media is impacting males impact to vote far-right. A limitation of this article is that it focuses on European men and its influence over in Europe, and not Australian males.

ESafety Commissioner. (2025). An unfair fight – how algorithms are shaping our adolescents | eSafety Commissioner. [online] Available at: <https://www.esafety.gov.au/newsroom/blogs/an-unfair-fight-how-algorithms-are-shaping-our-adolescents>.

Algorithms are the invisible system that decides what we see online. While the algorithm is not harmful to people, its purpose is to maximise entertainment and interaction amongst users. Algorithms are spread across most social media platforms like TikTok, YouTube, Instagram, and Tinder, making these platforms more interesting towards your specific liking. Though social media can help adolescents cope with boredom or find new entertainment, it ultimately leads to a distorted reality, which can drag people into harmful behaviour, attitudes or thoughts, dependency increases, making it harder for adolescents to disconnect and misleading content, which affects

important topics shaping their worldview. The limitations of this article would include how, even though it's about the negative effects of social media, it doesn't compare the positives, which could ultimately affect the research, as to whether adolescents are becoming more confident or outgoing due to their engagement with social media or more insecure and mentally impacted.

Filter bubbles (2025) ECPS. Available at:

<https://www.populismstudies.org/Vocabulary/filter-bubbles/>

This article evaluates Eli Pariser concept of filter bubbles, highlighting the state of intellectual isolation that can result from personalised content where a website or media platform selectively guesses what information a user would like to see. This source is reliable for my PIP as it clearly defines how filter bubbles, over time, form echo chambers, creating the term 'personal ecosystem of information.' Only receiving personalised information can confined individuals to be limited to accepting opposing viewpoints, this will help with my secondary research as it gathers how filter bubbles are affecting individuals and what they lead to. Though the limitation includes how small this article is, it could have more information and could show which social media platform is at risk of being the most likely to create filter bubbles.

Gerber, H. (2022) The Reality of Gender: Analysing the Construction, Perception and Reinforcement of Gender in Reality Television, (University of Bristol) Available at: <https://www.bristol.ac.uk/media-library/sites/spais/documents/Hannah.pdf>

This academic paper by H. Gerber examines the relationship between social media platforms and political polarisation, highlighting how algorithm-driven platforms are contributing to the formation of echo chambers and are reinforcing political beliefs. This article demonstrates how social media encourages users to engage only within content that supports their beliefs and views. Collecting data to provide evidence that when we are exposed to beliefs that confirm our own, we allow social media to transform our behaviours and attitudes, contributing towards political and social polarisation. This paper gives reliable evidence for my Personal Interest Project as it

explores how social media algorithms contribute to echo chambers and creating confirmation bias.

Grantham, S. (2024) Communication Research and Practice, The rise of TikTok elections: the Australian Labor Party's use of TikTok in the 2022 federal election campaigning. Available at:

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/epdf/10.1080/22041451.2024.2349451?needAccess=true> (Accessed: 05 May 2026).

This journal by Susan Grantham highlights how the Australian Labour Party used TikTok in the 2022 federal election campaign to engage younger voters and ultimately reshape political campaigns through social media. This article examines how social media, mainly TikTok, transformed the elections and voters opinions as parties exposed their values and political systems online, making politics more available to younger views. Though the limitations of this article are how it only examined one political party and not all parties in the 2022 election, meaning it TikTok may not have been used for all political parties in Australia to expose their views.

Han, K.J. (2025) Gender and affective polarization. European Journal of Political Research - wiley online library, Gender and affective polarisation. Available at: <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/1475-6765.70023> (Accessed: 28 April 2026).

This journal by Kyung Joon Han investigates why women exhibit higher levels of affective polarisation than men across Western nations. It argues that the gender difference between political parties is because of woman's stronger dislike towards radical right-wing parties and their greater concern for gender equality and environment protection. Affective polarisation is the emotional divide in politics, where people feel stronger towards their own political group and hold deep dislike towards opposing groups. This journey is relevant to my research as it gives data into how our political views are heavily influenced by our gender, which can be strengthened through personalised online environments. Though it is very useful to my PIP, it only investigates the Western nations and not specifically one country or the whole world.

Jarai, M. (2022). How does social media affect relationships? [online] Medical News Today. Available at: <https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/social-media-and-relationships#negativeeffects>

The article by Mate Jarai on How does social media affect relationships, examines both the negative and positive aspects of social media on relationships and its impact on them long-term, arguing that though there are negative aspects of social media on relationships, it ultimately helps with maintaining connection and long-distance communication. This article introduces a new term surrounding relationships called 'phubbing' which is the act of ignoring someone you are with to go on social media and explores how social media is entertaining jealousy amongst relationships. It is evident that social media is reducing quality face-to-face interactions which is essentially to our mental health as it reduces the feeling of loneliness and keeps our mind active. This article is useful for my Personal Interest Project as it identifies the positive aspects of social media in relationships while comparing them to the negative.

Johanson, A. (2024). SWATCH. [online] Lifestyle, Why We Love a “Day in my Life”. Available at: <https://www.swatchbyamda.com/blog/why-we-love-a-day-in-my-life> [Accessed 29 July 2026].

This article explores the rising trend of a “Day in my Life” video on TikTok, arguing that these videos are creating a sense of belonging and community by allowing viewers to gain insight into influencers life and routines. Johanson highlights that although this content could inspire productivity and creativity, it often is curated into an unrealistic life, which can create closed-minded views on life. This is useful for my all my Chapter in my PIP as it provides evidence that social media is contributing to individuals contrasting a digital self, enhancing identity formation and individuals comparing themselves to online influencers. However, it only talks about why we love “Day in my Life”, leaving out individuals continues engagement with these videos which can create a consistent curated content “For You” page.

Kim (2023) The Social Media Revolution is reshaping feminism - national organization for women, National Organisation for Women-. Available at: <https://now.org/blog/the-social-media-revolution-is-reshaping->

[feminism/#:~:text=Social%20media%20has%20given%20women,hate%20speech%20on%20social%20media.](#)

The article from the National Organisation for Women highlights how social media has transformed modern feminism by providing new opportunities for awareness, protest and global connection. It argues that platforms have become a powerful tool for activism and social justice, allowing younger generations (especially Gen Z) to reshape female movements by increasing awareness of women's rights issues online. Social media is a platform for women to share their experiences and become more aware of social movements and issues against women, allowing women to become advocates for greater equality. This is useful for Chapter 1 in my PIP as it gives an understanding of females political perspective and why nearly all females have the same view towards politics.

Mills, K.A. 'Critical Literacy and Digital Futures' in Viden om Literacy, no 34 (Nationalt Videncenter for Læsning, September 2023)

<https://videnomlaesning.dk/media/5645/kathy-a-mills.pdf> (accessed 14 May 2026)

This article by Professor Kathy A Mills explores how social media and artificial intelligence have transformed the way adolescents' access, interpret and interact within the "Second Machinal Age". This article argues that traditional literacy skills like listening and speaking are no longer sufficient as individuals must develop critical algorithmic literacy because of the change in the modern world. This new literacy helps to understand the platforms such as TikTok, Instagram and X, which ultimately shape what users view and interact with online. This article is useful for my Personal Interest Project as it gives insight into the way social media is reinforcing society, contrasting data that represents how social media is challenging traditional norms and values.

Motte, A. (2025). Nine's End of Year Ratings 2025 - Nine for Brands. [online] Nine for Brands. Available at: <https://www.nineforbrands.com.au/nines-end-of-year-ratings-2025/>.

This report analyses trends across Australians audience, and their viewing of trends from Nine Entertainment's Television and digital platforms from 2025. Highlighting

Married at First Sight, Love Island and Farmer Wants a Wife as some of the most watched shows across Australia, with Love Island Australia having increased 70% of watchers now contrasting people ages 16-34 years old, showing the increase in reality television through digital media. This source is valuable for my Personal Interest Project Chapter 3, as it represents the statics of Australian watching reality TV and representing how young people are the most active in engaging with reality TV, supporting my argument that shows like Love Island and Married at First Sight are influencing relationship expectations of love among young people. Although, as this report is conducted by Nine Entertainment to ultimately promote its own media platform, it can include favourable data that don't highlight the social impacts of these shows.

Myserenitycounselor.com. (2025). Modern Love: How Relationship Dynamics and Expectations Have Changed Over Time. [online] Available at:

<https://www.myserenitycounselor.com/blog/1278424-modern-love-how-relationship-dynamics-and-expectations-have-changed-over-time>

This article contrasts how relationships expectations have evolved through the implication of social media into everyday lives. It argues that modern relationships are content with being single, prioritize independence and personal fulfilment, rather than traditional relationship expectations surrounding early marriage and family roles. This article is useful for Chapter 3 of my PIP as it provides sources on how our generations have evolved through the integration of social media and its effects on relationships changing into independence alongside partners. However, considering it is written by counselling services rather than academic sources, it naturally consists of professional opinions not academic research.

Needle, R. (2024). Is Social Media Good for Relationships? | Psychology Today.

[online] Available at: <https://www.psychologytoday.com/au/blog/mental-and-sexual-health/202405/is-social-media-good-for-relationships>

This article explores both the negative and positive impacts social media have on romantic relationships, it also discusses when using social media in relationships for communication and engagement the couple needs to do it right and know how to use

it. As social media continues to shape individuals, it also shapes the way individuals think what relationships are and how they're created. This is valuable to Chapter 3 of my Personal Interest Project as it supplies both an aspect on the drawbacks and benefits of social medias impact on relationships rather than presenting a one-sided argument.

Nyst, A. 'Social Media Statistics Details' in Undiscovered Maine

(https://umaine.edu/undiscoveredmaine/small-business/resources/marketing-for-smallbusiness/social-media-tools/social-media-statistics-details/?utm_source=chatgpt.com ,29 December 2023)

This article provided insight into how social media has become embedded into more than half of people's everyday lives. It highlights the rapid growth of social media across generations and different age groups, demonstrating how platforms such as TikTok, X and Instagram have become more than communication platforms but platforms to gain values and beliefs. 59.9% of the population use social media this includes adolescents, showing the wide spread of use of social media, representing how it is reinforcing their identity and ideals. This article helps scale the amount of people using social media and help with each chapter showing how much it can impact social change. Though, this article could include more on which countries and age are most on social media to help with my chapters to gain another perspective.

Office of the Surgeon General (2023). Social Media Has Both Positive and Negative Impacts on Children and Adolescents. [online] www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov. Available at: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK594763/>.

This source provides insight into a detailed representation of the effects social media has on adolescents' strengths and vulnerabilities. Brain development is a critical factor to consider when assessing the effect of social media on growth and adolescence aged 10-19 years, when they are undergoing a highly sensitive brain development stage. So, assessing how social media may be associated with distinct developmental changes in our brains is important to see how behavioural and emotional skills, as well as social behaviour, have changed over time. Also, seeing how social media has changed the way generations have grown or evolved, with the impact of the internet.

The limitation of this article is that it's a small section of a textbook about social media on youth, this could be very useful in the research on all aspects of its effects on adolescents over time. Helping me through Chapters 2 and 3 to give insight into the positive and negative social media has on the growth of adolescents and how it impacts their adulthood in the future.

Radulovski, A. (2024). Are We Perpetuating Gender Stereotypes Through Algorithmic Decisions? [online] Women in Tech Network. Available at:

<https://www.womentech.net/how-to/are-we-perpetuating-gender-stereotypes-through-algorithmic-decisions>

This article examines how media algorithms can unintentionally create gender stereotypes, which start to affect all aspects of people's lives. Social media is a global app, and as some countries grow in their equality, other countries don't, creating echo chambers where there are different views and values that are the norm for them, ultimately amplifying content that aligns with users' beliefs, like gendered bias. Some adolescents begin to be impacted both mentally and physically through the limitations they must face in expressing their identities. Making them exposed to negative views on their identity and beliefs, like gender-biased stereotypes that include career choices and inclusive language ('throw like a girl' or 'be like a man'), overall impacts individual identity formation. The article will help my research as it provides insight into both the struggles social media has with men and women, peer-reviewed article.

Rurak, A. Why Reality TV's Depiction of Love Is Harmful - Women's Media Center. [online] womensmediacenter.com. Available at:

<https://womensmediacenter.com/fbomb/why-reality-tvs-depiction-of-love-is-harmful> [Accessed 15 July 2026].

Rurak's article argues that reality TV is creating an unrealistic expectation of love by representing love as a competition and purely physical rather than an emotional connection. It represents that on shows like The Bachelor may transform viewers expectation of representations, especially young women who consume reality TV more

regularly. In *The Bachelor*, one in 25 women has a chance of winning a man's heart, which implies that men are rare prizes that women should fight over. Showing portrayal of love being a competition rather than emotional connection. This is useful to my PIP as it shows how the media is shaping young people's relationship expectations, helping with research for chapter 3. The bias of this article includes, that it only shows the impact *The Bachelor* is having on love not all Reality TV shows, limiting the wide range of data.

Shah, S and Schneid, R. (2024) 'All the Celebrities Hitting the Trail for Harris and Trump', TIME, 28 October. Available at: https://time.com/7098928/celebrities-hitting-the-trail-for-harris-trump/?utm_source=chatgpt.com (Accessed: 7 May 2026).

Simmone Shah and Rebecca Schneid explore the role of celebrities influence on young people's political engagement during the 2024 United States Presidential Election, examining how public figures may shape the political attitudes among young people through social media. Celebrities such as Beyonce, Taylor Swift and more supporting for Harris, while Elon Musk, Nicki Minaj and Charlie Kirk endorsed Trump, demonstrating how public figures can persuade voting because of their engagement in political campaigns contributing to political polarisation and identity formation. This is useful for Chapter 1 of my PIP, as it provides credible sources for political events in contemporary society. The limitation of this article includes how it is for American political campaigns not around the globe, even though Australia has a prime minister not a president, looking into the impact influences have in Australia on voting would be helpful for my PIP as well.

UN Women (2025). What is the manosphere and why should we care? [online] UN Women. Available at: <https://www.unwomen.org/en/articles/explainer/what-is-the-manosphere-and-why-should-we-care>

The manosphere is a loosed network of communities that claim to address man's struggles as well as their dating lives and fitness, highlighting that these groups are united by an opposition to feminism. This article examines that man think that the false

narrative of feminism and gender equality has costed them rights, leading to communities of the manosphere. While many males don't share the same beliefs, they are united by their misogynies, a prejudice and resentment of women and girls. Nevertheless, this source is highly valuable to my PIP as it gives insight into male's perspective and how social media is influencing them towards anti-feminism movements. The limitation of this data is that even though it comes from the UN women there isn't many women perspectives of how the manosphere has impacted them, creating a bias around the perspectives of the manosphere and how it is impacting society.

K, Siegel-Stechler, K, Hilton & A, Medina. Youth rely on digital platforms, Need Media Literacy to access political information (2025) Circle at Tufts. Available at: <https://circle.tufts.edu/latest-research/youth-rely-digital-platforms-need-media-literacy-access-political-information#:~:text=Our%20research%20provides%20more%20evidence,political%20information%20from%20different%20sources> (Accessed: 04 May 2026)

This article by Kelly Siegel-Stechler, Katie Hilton and Alberto Medina examines how young people are now gaining political information and ideals of social media, going on to uncover how voters in America are more likely to see President candidates from social media platforms and be influenced to vote. In 2024, Youth who voted for former Vice President Harris were more likely to see information on her through Instagram and Reddit, while Youth who voted for Trump relied on YouTube and Facebook. Ultimately this article shows how social media and digital platforms are playing a significant role in young people's political information diet. Though this article has given my PIP a lot of data and information, it is data from America and not worldwide giving it limitations. Though it was very helpful for Chapter 1 to see views on different countries and how social media is becoming embedded into every countries daily activity.