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Exploring stereotypes of gender and social class representations in *The Hunger Games: Catching Fire*

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the representation of gender and social class stereotypes in The Hunger Games: Catching Fire. The data were collected by analyzing key scenes and dialogues in the movie, focusing on instances that reflect stereotypes. The analysis employed theories of gender and social class stereotypes to examine how these stereotypes are represented and portrayed within the main characters, Katniss Everdeen, President Snow, and Plutarch. The findings reveal that gender stereotypes are more dominant than social class stereotypes in the film. The main female character subverts traditional gender roles, displaying strength and independence in contrast to the conventional portrayal of women as weak and reliant on men. Additionally, social class stereotypes are depicted through discrimination and prejudice against lower-class characters. This research aims to enhance readers' critical understanding of gender and social class representations, promote gender equality, and encourage respect for social diversity.

1.   Introduction

Stereotypes have long been a significant topic of study and debate within the realm of social life. According to Marx and Ko (2019), stereotypes are widely held beliefs about the behaviors and characteristics of individuals associated with specific social groups. These generalized views influence how individuals or groups are perceived and treated based on assumed traits. In particular, gender stereotypes are critical in shaping biases and discrimination, impacting societal attitudes and behaviors (Bye et al., 2022).

Interest in gender issues has increased significantly over the past decade, partly driven by social and political movements advocating for gender equality, particularly how gender is represented in the media (Santoniccolo et al., 2023). Media serves as a powerful vehicle for perpetuating stereotypes, especially in Indonesian contexts, where women are often portrayed as submissive and emotional, while men are depicted as dominant and rational (Ariani, 2013). For example, male characteristics are commonly associated with physical attributes such as greater muscle mass, more body hair, and a deeper voice. In contrast, female characteristics are described as less muscular, with less body hair and a higher-pitched voice. Moreover, men are frequently seen as strong, unemotional, and independent, whereas women are perceived as weak, emotional, and dependent (Atillah et al., 2020). These portrayals reinforce patriarchal norms and exacerbate gender inequality in societal structures. Biases may influence these gender imbalances, which biases may influence social learning during adolescence and throughout adulthood (Erris & Khoshsaligheh, 2023).

In contemporary sociology, the study of identity has become a cornerstone for understanding how stereotypes and other social constructs influence individual and collective behavior (Brown, 2022, as cited in Cerulo, 1997: 385). This underscores the ongoing importance of critically examining stereotypes to challenge entrenched inequalities. As a powerful tool for reaching global audiences, mass media play a pivotal role in shaping public opinion and communication. They wield significant influence in persuading audiences, instilling beliefs, or spreading misinformation by presenting assumptions as facts. This central role places media in a position of authority, often regarded as a leading force in public discourse. However, media frequently exploit stereotypes and clichés to support narratives and reinforce dominant ideologies, sometimes at the expense of minority groups. Such portrayals can perpetuate biases, leading to unequal and discriminatory treatment based on media representations rather than actual realities. This can damage reputations and distort perceptions of individuals or groups, often beyond their control. Therefore, it is essential to critically evaluate the stereotypes and clichés promoted by the media, as they can lead to unfounded misconceptions and misunderstandings. Despite this, such expressions are sometimes used by those who do not hold the underlying assumptions. Among various media, movies have emerged as a significant platform for depicting and reinforcing stereotypes. As Wulandari et al. (2024) highlight, even educational materials in Indonesian schools, such as English textbooks, often reflect stereotypical roles, with male characters dominating active roles and female characters limited to nurturing or passive roles (Elbalqis et al., 2020). With its global reach, the movie industry amplifies these stereotypes, offering audiences a lens through which they interpret societal norms. Adaptations of popular literary works, in particular, provide a rich area for analyzing how stereotypes are constructed, perpetuated, or challenged internationally.

A critical area of analysis in popular media is gender stereotypes, which are deeply intertwined with societal expectations of gender roles. Rosyidah and Nurwati (2019) define gender roles as socioculturally determined distinctions between men and women, shaped by attitudes and conventions rather than biological factors. Gender stereotypes often uphold these roles, dictating how men and women should behave or be perceived. In The Hunger Games: Catching Fire, gender stereotypes are evident, but the portrayal of the female lead subverts traditional norms. Katniss Everdeen embodies strength and independence, challenging the conventional portrayal of women as weak and reliant on men.

Equally significant is the movie's portrayal of social class stereotypes, which exposes systemic discrimination and biases against lower-class characters. Social class stereotypes often manifest in the treatment of individuals based on privilege, where those from higher socioeconomic backgrounds are favored over those from disadvantaged groups. In The Hunger Games: Catching Fire, these stereotypes are depicted through the stark contrast between the Capitol's elites and the oppressed districts, reflecting broader societal inequalities.

This study analyses the representation of gender and social class stereotypes in The Hunger Games: Catching Fire, a film adaptation of Suzanne Collins's globally acclaimed novel series. By examining key characters and their interactions, the study aims to uncover how stereotypes are portrayed and their potential influence on audience perceptions of gender and social class. The findings of this study align with the broader goal of fostering inclusivity and reducing bias, as suggested by Sitorus (2024), who emphasizes the importance of addressing stereotypes to promote a more equitable society.

2. Method

This study employed a qualitative approach to examine the representation of stereotypes in *The Hunger Games: Catching Fire*. This approach was chosen because it allows for an in-depth analysis of textual and contextual elements within the film. The research specifically investigates gender and social class stereotypes depicted in the movie. The primary data source was the official transcript of *The Hunger Games: Catching Fire*. Conversations, including monologues and dialogues, were extracted and analyzed to identify instances reflecting stereotypical portrayals. The data collection process involved three steps, the first step in the analysis involved reviewing the movie transcript to identify conversations or scenes related to stereotypes. Once relevant content was identified, the next step was to categorize these conversations into two main types: gender stereotypes and social class stereotypes, based on their content and context. Finally, the categorized data was compiled for further analysis, ensuring a systematic approach to understanding the portrayal of these stereotypes within the movie.

The analysis was guided by Drew's (2023), which classifies stereotypes into nine categories: gender, race, sexuality, social class, (dis)ability, age, nationality, political, and religious stereotypes. This study only focused specifically on gender and social class stereotypes, analyzing how these were represented in the movie and determining which type was more dominant. The analysis involved comparing the identified stereotypes to Drew's theoretical framework and interpreting their implications within the narrative and broader societal contexts.

The qualitative approach was deemed appropriate as it facilitated a nuanced understanding of the characters, dialogues, and scenes that embody stereotypes. Analyzing the transcript provided a reliable and systematic way to identify and categorize the stereotypes portrayed in the movie. This methodology also allowed the study to explore the deeper cultural and social implications, aligning with the research aim to contribute to critical discussions about media representations of gender and social class.

3.   Results and discussion

Personal relationships, the psychological toll of survival, and Panem's harsh political structure all impact the characters' behaviour in The Hunger Games: Catching Fire movie. As a symbol of rebellion, Katniss Everdeen's disobedience is motivated by her wish to save her loved ones and oppose President Snow's dictatorial rule. Peeta Mellark's devotion to Katniss and his plan to win over the populace to their cause to secure their survival influence his actions. Furthermore, the characters' desperation and strategic thinking are heightened by the strains of the Quarter Quell, where previous winners are compelled to reenter the arena.

Figure 1. The *Hunger Games: Catching Fire Poster*

These components show how outside influences, internal beliefs, and survival instincts influence their choices and behaviors throughout the movie. These sections will examine how characters embody or subvert traditional gender expectations, how gender stereotypes are employed or challenged, and how social class intersects with these portrayals.

3.1.   *Gender stereotypes in The Hunger Games: Catching Fire*

Gender stereotypes are widely recognized as socially constructed expectations and roles associated with individuals based on their gender. These stereotypes shape how men and women are perceived and behave within society. Gender stereotypes are typically divided into two main areas: Dominant Masculinity and Dominant Femininity.

Dominant masculinity refers to the socially constructed traits and behaviours traditionally associated with men, often considered superior or normative within a specific cultural context (Drew, 2023). These traits typically include strength, assertiveness, independence, and competitiveness, re-

inforcing existing power structures and gender hierarchies. Dominant masculinity is not fixed; it evolves according to changing social norms and beliefs, varying across cultures and historical periods.

On the other hand, dominant femininity encompasses the socially constructed traits and behaviours traditionally associated with women, which are considered acceptable or conventional in a given society. These traits often emphasize nurturing, emotional expressiveness, empathy, and submissiveness, aligning with traditional gender norms. Like dominant masculinity, dominant femininity is fluid and shaped by cultural and historical influences, with some societies emphasizing strength and resilience as part of femininity's definition over time. Together, these concepts of dominant masculinity and femininity form the foundation of gender stereotypes, which influence societal expectations and individual behaviours based on gender. The portrayal of these ideas as follows:

3.1.1 *Dominant Masculinity*

The first dominant masculinity, the subvert of gender stereotypes, is women can not be role models for other people can be seen when the scene of Katniss challenges traditional gender stereotypes when a young girl expresses her desire to volunteer as a tribute in the Hunger Games, inspired by Katniss's bravery. The girl's words, "One day, I'm gonna volunteer. Just like you did," highlight how Katniss's courage serves as an inspiration, breaking the norm that women are rarely viewed as role models based on their actions. Traditionally, women are often admired for their physical appearance rather than their bravery or leadership, but Katniss defies this by being recognized for her strength and sacrifice.

The second evidence was found in the scene where Plutarch and Katniss meet at the celebration party for the winner of the 75th Hunger Games. A scene of people in the Capitol who lived in luxury. Parties in the Capitol are frequently extravagant shows of luxury, contrasting sharply to the districts' poverty and persecution. As the Head Game Maker, Plutarch represents the Capitol's power and manipulation, whereas Katniss, a victor and symbol of rebellion, represents opposition to that power.

Plutarch : So how do you like the party?

Katniss : *It's a little bit overwhelming.*

Plutarch : It's appalling. Still, if you abandon your moral judgment, it can be fun.

Katniss says that the party that was held for her was too much, it shows that she does not portray her feminine side. In the Capitol, she is supposed to portray femininity in a specific manner, such as beautiful, graceful, and enjoying luxury. However, her restlessness at the gathering reflects her opposition to the prescribed roles. Plutarch, as a masculine figure in a position of authority, must navigate and exploit societal conventions to keep control. His ability to make caustic remarks on the party's morality reveals a certain male privilege.

The third piece of evidence is found when Plutarch and Snow meet to discuss how to stop the rebellion.

Figure 4. Snow and Plutarch watched the rebellion in every district

Figure 4 shows President Snow talking with Plutarch while examining the rebellion in several districts. At that time, Snow saw that what Katniss did on the winner tour could not influence the people in the districts not to rebel.

Snow : Look at them. She's not who they think she is. *She's not a leader.* She just wants to save her own skin.

Plutarch : I think it's true.

When President Snow says that Katniss is not a leader, it shows that he dismisses Katniss' abilities and motivations. This perspective is influenced by traditional gender roles that often underestimate women's leadership potential and strategic thinking. The gender stereotype that Snow understands is that women are followers, not leaders. Snow states that Katniss is not a leader but is only concerned with her survival. Snow strongly believes that within the prevailing social context, women are less suited for leadership roles, a bias rooted in historical gender roles where leadership is mostly associated with men.

The fourth piece of evidence is found when Plutarch and Snow meet to discuss how to stop the rebellion. He talks to Snow about preventing the rebellion at all costs. They try to kill Katniss in the hope that there will be no more rebellions in any district.

Snow : But she's become a beacon of hope for the rebellion. And *she has to be eliminated*

Plutarch : I agree she should die. But in the right way. At the right time. Katniss Everdeen is a symbol. Their Mockingjay. They think she's one of them. We need to show that she's on of us. We don't need to destroy her. Just the image.

This conversation between Snow and Plutarch shows that male roles have traditionally held power, especially when President Snow says, "She has to be eliminated," which refers to eliminating

Katniss. Katniss, the main character in the story, struggles against this male authority and provides hope for change. Snow wants to get rid of her completely, which is a typical way for some powerful men to silence threats by using violence. However, Plutarch is more perceptive. He sees how important Katniss is as a symbol and suggests using her image to weaken her without killing her. This is a more cunning way to use force, unlike force like Snow. This also points to the problem that women in power are often seen as symbols, not people. Powerful men can use this advantage, taking away a woman's control over her image and actions.

The fifth analytical evidence was found in the scene when Katniss opposes the punishment given to Gale by the Capitol.

Figure 5. Katniss stopped beating Gale

In this scene, Katniss's reaction to Gale's torture reflects both traditional and non-traditional gender roles. Her immediate cry to stop the beating shows her protective and nurturing instincts, typically linked to femininity. However, her quick decision to confront the soldiers and risk personal harm challenges these expectations, showcasing bravery and assertiveness traditionally associated with masculinity. Gale's response adds complexity as he adopts the traditional masculine role of protector by urging Katniss to stay away. His willingness to endure the punishment for her safety and his stoic acceptance of the beating reinforce the emotional strength and resilience often tied to masculinity.

The sixth piece of evidence was found in the scene where Katniss is about to shoot a wired arrow at the dome area of The Hunger Games. In this scene, Katniss displays significant courage and sacrifice by shooting an arrow at the Hunger Games dome, causing it to malfunction and revealing the Capitol as the true enemy. This action challenges traditional gender norms, as it demonstrates heroic traits typically associated with male figures in literature and media. Katniss's decisive and risky move reflects a form of heroism that defies expectations. Finnick's warning to Katniss, "Remember who the real enemy is," highlights his protective instincts, reflecting the traditional masculine role of safeguarding others, particularly women, from danger.

The seventh piece of evidence was found in the scene when Snow and Plutarch discussed how Katniss impacts the people in the district. President Snow asks Plutarch for ideas on how to kill Katniss. Snow thinks that if Katniss were alive, it would give the people hope of being free from the colonization of the Capitol in a less straightforward way. In some districts, Katniss symbolizes freedom and courage for them.

Snow   : What do you propose?

Plutarch : Shut down the black markets. Take away what little they have. Then double the amount of floggings and executions. Put them on TV. Broadcast them live. Show fear, more fear.

Snow   : It's won't work. *Fear does not work as long as they have hope. And Katniss Everdeen is giving them hope.*

Plutarch's approach to power, focusing on increasing violence and repression, reflects a traditionally masculine reliance on dominance and aggression. His "iron fist" strategy emphasizes control through fear. In contrast, President Snow acknowledges that fear alone is ineffective if there is hope, with Katniss representing that hope. This contrast highlights a shift away from traditional masculine power dynamics, showcasing the effectiveness of emotional manipulation and hope as alternative control methods, diverging from the typical reliance on brute force.

The eighth piece of evidence highlights a scene where Snow and Plutarch speculate that Katniss, driven by a desire to protect Peeta, may betray her allies. They believe this betrayal would damage her image and undermine her influence. Katniss's determination to fight and survive contradicts traditional gender stereotypes, as women in media are often portrayed as passive or needing protection. Instead, Katniss embodies traits associated with masculinity, such as strength, resilience, and independence. Snow and Plutarch's view that a betrayal would weaken Katniss's leadership underscores the expectation that women leaders must meet higher moral standards and are more harshly judged for emotional or relational decisions. This reinforces the stereotype of women as unreliable leaders.

The ninth evidence is found in the scene where The Hunger Games arena is destroyed and Katniss is taken out of the arena by Plutarch, which depicts a scene rife with intrigue. While Katniss remains unaware, Plutarch appears to be manouvering to secure her removal from the Games. This veiled attempt is further obscured by the presence of her mentor, Haymitch, and the other tribute, Finnick, who is likely clouding her perception of the situation.

Katniss : Where is Peeta?

Plutarch : Now Katniss, you have been our mission from the beginning. The plan was always to get you out. *This is revolution and you are the Mockingjay.*

When Plutarch says, "This is a revolution, and you are the Mockingjay." it shows that Katniss is positioned as a symbol of the revolution. Traditionally, women have often been cast as symbols or figureheads in narratives, which can undermine their autonomy and reduce their role to one of representation rather than active participation. By making Katniss the Mockingjay, Plutarch and the rebellion's leaders emphasize her symbolic value over her personal agency. This can be seen as fitting into a gender stereotype where women are valued more for what they represent than for their individual capabilities and decision-making power. Katniss is a strong and capable woman, but she is herded into a role that serves the interests of others, potentially overriding her autonomy.

3.1.2 *Dominant Femininity*

In analyzing gender stereotypes, the writer found two dominant femininities. The first evidence is found in the scene where Katniss first meets Mags at the Tributes' training ground. The evidence where Katniss and Mags discuss acts of bravery provides insight into gender stereotypes and depicts female strength and inspiration within the narrative. The dialogue between Katniss and Mags highlights themes of female solidarity and mutual inspiration, which challenge traditional gender stereotypes that often depict women as isolated or in competition with one another.

Katniss   : I saw you volunteer for that young girl. *It was really brave*

Mags   : Not me. I can do it because I saw you do it.

Katniss   : Prim is my sister.

When Katniss says, "It was really brave" to Mags because she replaced someone else to compete in the Hunger Games, it shows a positive stereotype of women supporting each other. Her bravery, linked directly to Katniss's actions, showcases a cycle of female empowerment and solidarity. This counters the stereotype of passive women by portraying them as capable of inspiring and uplifting one another. The exchange between Katniss and Mags highlights the impact of role models across generations. Since Katniss is younger than Mags, Katniss inspires the older woman, suggesting that strength and courage are admired regardless of age. This challenges the stereotype of a one-way flow of guidance and shows inspiration flowing in multiple directions. Katniss and Mags display bravery, but their interactions reveal how female strength is perceived. Katniss's acknowledgment validates Mags's courage, highlighting the recognition of female bravery. This counters the stereotype of overlooked women's contributions. Mags's humility, attributing her bravery to Katniss, redefines it as shared and communal. Bravery becomes cultivated through mutual support, breaking away from the individualistic notion of heroism often associated with men.

The second evidence is found when Katniss and Peeta dance at the party and Peeta feels bad about his district's condition.

Figure 11. The Hunger Games: Catching Fire

In Figure 11, Peeta discusses the ongoing disparity in food availability between his district and the Capitol. People in his district struggle to find sustenance, while those in the Capitol wastefully discard food in a grotesque display of excess. Peeta says, "People are starving in District 12," proving that the condition of the people in his district contrasts with that of the Capitol's elite, who are accustomed to waste and throw food away. This disparity underscores the profound social inequality that exists within the world of "The Hunger Games." District 12, representing the working class, struggles with basic survival needs like food and shelter. In contrast, symbolizing the affluent and privileged class, the Capitol indulges in extravagant excess, going so far as to vomit food to consume more, highlighting their opulent lifestyle.

3.2. Social class stereotypes in The Hunger Games: Catching Fire

Social class stereotypes refer to individuals' or groups' preconceived notions and beliefs about people from different social and economic backgrounds. These stereotypes often reflect and reinforce societal inequalities, shaping how people perceive and treat others based on their social class. Social class stereotypes can be divided into two main categories: high social class stereotypes and low social class stereotypes.

High social class stereotypes typically portray individuals from wealthier, more privileged backgrounds as refined, intelligent, and successful, often emphasizing ambition, power, and sophistication. These stereotypes contribute to the idealization of the upper class and the perception that they possess qualities associated with leadership and authority.

In contrast, low social class stereotypes often depict individuals from lower socioeconomic backgrounds as lazy, uneducated, or dependent, reinforcing negative views about poverty and social mobility. These stereotypes may also portray people from lower classes as inferior or incapable, perpetuating societal divisions and contributing to the marginalization of certain groups. Together, these stereotypes reinforce existing power structures and inequalities between social classes. In this section, the writers explored the social class stereotypes in The Hunger Games: Catching Fire movies, such as the high and low social class stereotypes.

3.2.1 *The high social class stereotypes*

President Snow is talking to Katniss. In this conversation, Snow orders Katniss to defuse the rebellion that occurred in several districts with her love story with Peeta. Snow thinks that this way, the power of the Capitol would be stronger, and there would be no revolution as long as he is alive.

When Snow says, "You convinced the people in The Capitol. Unfortunately, not everyone in the districts fell for it," it shows that the people in the Capitol is that they easily believe in Katniss and Peeta's love story. Meanwhile, people in several districts see Katniss's actions as defiance against the Capitol, and there will be hope for a revolution. It is assumed that the people in the capital already have an affluent and even luxurious life, so they do not have to worry about survival. Meanwhile, the people who live in the districts have to work hard to fulfill the needs of the people in the Capitol.

The second piece of evidence was discovered when a lavish party was to be held at the Capitol.

Figure 12. The Hunger Games: Catching Fire

Figure 13. The Hunger Games: Catching Fire

In Figure 13, we can see that there is a social gap between the residents of the capitol and District 12. They have to extract coal and give it to the capital cheaply. The capitol's arbitrary actions towards some districts have left them worse off, and they have to barter when they need food.

Caesar   : And then tonight, the tour that began in the hollow of District 12 will end where?
Effie   : *The Presidential Palace. The party of the year.*

As Effie said, "The Presidential Palace. The party of the year." proves that parties can only be held at the Capitol. The economic relationship between the Capitol and District 12 exemplifies the exploitation of the lower class. District 12 labor for meager pay, fueling the Capitol's wealth while remaining impoverished. This demonstrates the inequality of perception, leading to the stereotyping of the lower class as economically disadvantaged. The differences in living standards between districts, with District 12 struggling to survive, perpetuate the social gap and marginalization of the lower class. The Capitol's arbitrary actions, such as worsening conditions and forcing bartering for food, highlight the ruling class's capricious use of power, further marginalizing the lower class.

3.2.2 *The low social class stereotypes*

Two key lower-class stereotypes were identified in the analysis of social class stereotypes in *The Hunger Games: Catching Fire*. The first example occurs when a District 11 resident is executed for raising three fingers, a peaceful symbol of gratitude that the Capitol interprets as rebellion. This harsh punishment illustrates the extreme oppression faced by the working-class people in the districts, who are exploited for their labor and live under constant threat from the Capitol. Katniss' plea, "Please leave him alone!" highlights the powerlessness of the lower class in resisting such treatment. However, the three-finger gesture also becomes a symbol of resistance and solidarity, challenging the stereotype of the lower class as passive victims and demonstrating their capacity for defiance and unity in the face of injustice.

The second piece of evidence was found when the Capitol army brutally and inhumanely destroyed all the people's possessions.

Figure 15 The Capitol army ambushed the District 12

When the capitol army attacked her district by burning and destroying all the items suspected of being smuggled, even the people of District 12 were tortured; anyone who did not follow the rules was tortured. But we can see how deprived their lives are even finding food is very difficult.

Katniss : They were fighting back. I should have eaten the berries in the arena and died like I was supposed to. Then everything would be back to normal and everyone would be safe.

Gale : *Safe for what? To starve? Work like slaves? Send their kids to the reaping?* You haven't hurt people, Katniss.

The ambushing scene in District 12 represents the working class's enduring poverty and deprivation, with the Capitol's brutal attack reinforcing the stereotype of the lower class as vulnerable and subjugated. The Capitol's extreme measures, such as the destruction of possessions and public torture, serve as a stark reminder of the consequences of dissent and silence potential uprisings. The daily struggle for basic sustenance, particularly food, is a pervasive issue that underscores the social-class

stereotype. The Capitol's policies exacerbate these conditions, revealing the profound economic disparity and systemic neglect faced by the lower class.

Based on the analysis of gender and social class stereotypes represented in *The Hunger Games: Catching Fire*, it was found that both dialogue and scenes in the film reflected these stereotypes. The analysis identified a total of eleven gender stereotypes and four social class stereotypes. Within the gender stereotypes, two main types emerged: dominant masculinity, with nine instances, and dominant femininity, with two instances. Regarding social class stereotypes, two main types were found: higher-class stereotypes, with two instances, and lower-class stereotypes, with two instances. These findings demonstrate that in *The Hunger Games: Catching Fire*, gender stereotypes are more prevalent and dominant than social class stereotypes.

4.   Conclusion

The analysis of *The Hunger Games: Catching Fire* revealed various gender and social class stereotypes that influence the audience's perceptions of gender roles and social status. Eleven gender stereotypes and four social class stereotypes were identified, with gender representation proving to be more dominant. This dominance is largely attributed to the portrayal of the female protagonist, Katniss Everdeen, who challenges traditional gender stereotypes through her strength and bravery while also displaying emotional traits commonly associated with women. Social class stereotypes are also evident, particularly in depicting social inequalities, prompting the audience to consider the existing social system critically.

To deepen the understanding of stereotypes in The Hunger Games: Catching Fire, it is recommended to expand the analysis to include other types of stereotypes, such as age and political stereotypes. Additionally, exploring other characters that reflect similar stereotypes could enhance the analysis of gender and social class representation in the film. Expanding the scope would provide a more comprehensive understanding of how stereotypes function within the movie.

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