GUIDELINES

for the Sexism-Free and Gender-Sensitive Use of AI in the Film and Media Industries

POWER TO TRANSFORM!

Guidelines for the Sexism-Free and Gender-Sensitive Use of AI in the Film and Media Industries

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IMPRINT

LANDSCAPE, HURDLES, AND PATHWAYS

Why these guidelines

Many of us are ambivalent about AI. That is a good starting point to read and work with these guidelines.

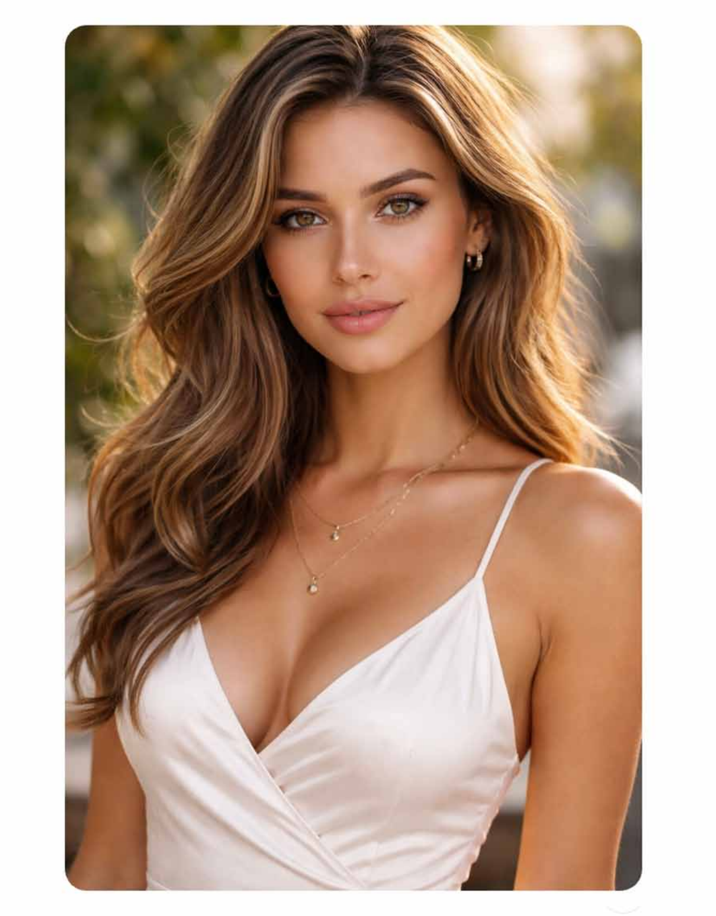
AI is already here – embedded in the tools used to develop, produce, and market films, series, and media content. It is changing how stories are created, who gets cast, what images circulate, and whose voices are heard. This is not a future scenario. It is happening now – with or without us.

The question is not whether to engage with AI. The question is how. And that is what these guidelines are for.

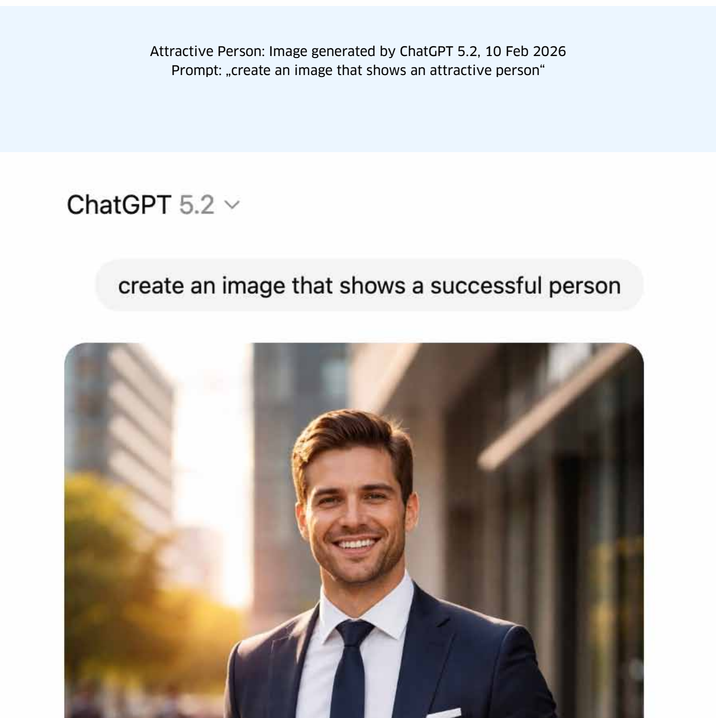
What we need to be aware of

AI has real problems that deserve honest acknowledgement. It consumes vast amounts of energy and water. It is controlled by corporations building monopolies whose leadership is overwhelmingly male and white. It was trained on data scraped without the consent of its creators. And its outputs are not a neutral mirror of the world – they reflect and amplify existing biases.

Ask an AI to generate four scientists, and you get four white men. Ask for an attractive person, and you get a slim, young, white woman. Ask for a successful person, and you get a well-trained, young, white man in a tailor-made suit. Older women, fat bodies, people of colour, queer people – they only appear if you explicitly ask for them. Their absence is the system, not the exception.



Attractive Person: Image generated by ChatGPT 5.2, 10 Feb 2026
Prompt: „create an image that shows an attractive person"



Successful Person: Image generated by ChatGPT 5.2, 10 Feb 2026
Prompt: „create an image that shows a successful person"

Happy Family: Image generated by ChatGPT 5.2, 10 Feb 2026
Prompt: „create an image that shows a happy family"

These biases are not new. They come from decades of sexist, racist, and discriminatory media production – the very content AI was trained on. AI does not invent these patterns. It learns them from us. And it amplifies them at a speed and scale that makes intervention urgent.

Why sexism is not a side issue

When AI regulation is discussed, the conversation centres on copyright, jobs, and data protection. It rarely addresses what AI actually reproduces in images and narratives – the representations that shape how we see each other. Public outrage only erupts when things become extreme – as when Grok, Elon Musk's AI system on X, generated sexualised deepfake images of real women on request. But deepfakes do not only target p ublic figures – they are used to harass and abuse ordinary women and, increasingly, children.

The problems start much earlier, in the everyday images that look so familiar we mistake them for normal. Regular exposure to sexist imagery has concrete consequences – especially for girls and young women: lower self-esteem, body dissatisfaction, increased risk of eating disorders. Toxic masculinity images restrict what boys and men are allowed to be. The absence of queer, disabled, older, or non-normative bodies sends a message: you do not exist.

Film is a consciousness machine. Stories shape how we see the world, what we accept as normal, and who we believe we can be. With AI, we are entering a new era of storytelling – and since it is not disclosed what data AI is trained on, we are flying culturally blind.

These guidelines are our contribution to changing that.

What these guidelines offer

We cannot wait for perfect regulation. But we do not have to wait at all. The knowledge exists. And these guidelines show how to use it.

Five expert interviews lay the foundations. Dr Maya Götz reveals how hypersexualised body images and toxic masculinity norms in children's media now serve as AI training data – but what has been measured can be changed. Dr Aisha Sobey shows that body diversity is systematically erased in AI image generators – and shows us exactly where to intervene. Dr Daniella Gáti reveals how AI produces "algorithmic erasure" of queer identities – but also demonstrates that understanding how AI constructs knowledge is the first step to constructing it differently. Prof. Amelia Winger-Bearskin brings Indigenous values to AI design through her initiative Wampum.Codes – moving technology from e xtraction toward "digital kinship." And Tina-Marie Gulley, leading Ada Developers Academy, shows that changing who builds the systems changes what the systems produce.

The Practical Prompting Guide translates this knowledge into concrete strategies for every stage of media production. The Toolbox gathers instruments for spotting stereotypes and breaking clichés. The Manifesto sets out six core political demands, anchored in existing legal frameworks – and shows, through concrete examples, that they can be acted on now.

Be the other voice

AI can feel overwhelming. But you do not need to be a developer to use it critically. You do not need to be an algorithm expert to recognise sexism in an AI-generated image.

What you need is the willingness to look more closely. Do not accept the first output. Ask: who is missing? Whose perspective is being told? What would be an unexpected alternative? When you work with AI this way, you turn a machine that reproduces clichés into a tool that helps you break them.

And if you decide against using AI: the knowledge in these guidelines about sexist and discriminatory patterns is relevant regardless of the technology. It was relevant before AI existed. It will remain relevant. But closing our eyes to AI is not an option. It is reshaping our industry now. The window to help shape how is open. Let us use it.

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EXPERT PERSPECTIVES

AI systems do not create bias – they learn it from us. Before we can interrupt these patterns of sexism, racism, and erasure, we need to understand where they come from. The following interviews with five leading experts trace this path: from the gender representations already embedded in children's media – the very content now being used to train AI – to how these systems amplify what they absorb, and toward practical interventions from those working to change course.

DR MAYA GÖTZ
(she/her)

Head of the International Central Institute for Youth and Educational Television (IZI) and the PRIX JEUNESSE Foundation, Munich, Germany

©Photo: Christian Rudnik

"From Hypersexualized Bodies and Masculinity Norms in Children's Media to AI Training Data"

IMPACT OF SEXIST REPRESENTATIONS
Your research has focused on gender representations in children's and youth media for many years. What demonstrable effects do sexist or highly stereotypical representations have on children and young people?

Images shape our understanding of what is normal and desirable. They deeply influence self-perception and become the unconscious basis against which children and young people compare themselves. This has implications for whether they feel "normal" and "right" or "different" and "inadequate."

EARLY CONDITIONING THROUGH MEDIA IMAGES
You often emphasize that media for children serves not only as entertainment but as orientation spaces. Why are these early images so powerful?

Children and young people use the images and stories available to them to understand and make sense of their own experiences. They use them partly like a symbolic pattern. If we convey to boys that they must always be active and strong, that they stand above others and can take what they want without question, this is not only an extremely difficult guiding principle for a successful partnership and a life of responsibility, but it also fails to reflect their real experiences. They grow up in a world full of competent and powerful women, and girls are often even ahead of them. One result is that boys often find it difficult to interpret and categorize their feelings. This prevents them from experiencing and dealing with the full spectrum of emotions. They also find it difficult to interpret reality appropriately and adapt to life's demands.

Girls now have diverse strong female role models, but these always have an extremely slim body, long, thick hair, and a stereotypically beautiful face. The message is therefore: strong girls and women are always extremely slim and beautiful. This becomes a major issue in puberty and adolescence. Girls perceive themselves as inadequate, invest a great deal of energy in optimizing their bodies, and thus often come under great pressure. Currently, we have the highest level of psychologically stressed girls we have ever had; depression affects more than a quarter of 15- to 17-year-olds, and the number of eating disorders has risen significantly again.

BODY IMAGES IN ANIMATED FILMS AND SERIES
One focus of your work is on body representations in animation. What have you discovered about body images in animated films and series?

More than half of the cartoon characters depicting girls or young women have bodies that real girls or women can never achieve. The waist is often far too thin, the legs far too long. The normal child's body no longer appears in programming for elementary school children. These completely exaggerated body proportions hypersexualize the characters. They often wear little or tight-fitting clothing as well. With this tendency, we shape inner images of how girls and women should look and what determines their worth: how "sexy" they are – and this at an age when erotic attractiveness should not yet play a central role.

CONSEQUENCES OF NORMALIZED BODY IMAGES
What effects do these normalized and, above all, unrealistic body images have on children and young people – particularly on their body perception, self-esteem, and their perception of what counts as "normal"?

Children usually "just" incorporate these images into their internal images of normality and assume that they will later conform to this ideal. In puberty and adolescence, this becomes a major problem, especially for girls. They try to adapt to apparent normality, regulate their calorie intake, and exercise extensively.

Especially in puberty, when the body prepares for menstruation and increases its fat content, one's own body increasingly becomes a problem. The girls want to be strong, they want to be recognized, but in their imagination this is often only possible if they had a different body than their own.

Self-confidence and mental health suffer greatly, which can lead to depression or eating disorders. And all this just because they feel they are not enough, that they are ugly – because that is what these excessive and far too narrow beauty ideals convey.

REPRESENTATION OF MASCULINITY
You have studied the representation of boys and men in media intensively. What dominant masculinity images do you find here, and what problems do you see in them?

First, it is important to recognize the reality: there are significantly more and also significantly more diverse male characters than female characters. Thus, any critical observation begins with a much larger and more detailed diversity.

There are various exciting examples that portray masculinity as thoughtful and responsible. They show how men work in teams with other men and women, morally justified in advocating for the right path. Less frequently, but also diversely portrayed now, are caring fathers and partners, as well as boys who solve problems as underdogs through intelligence and responsibility.

Occasionally, the challenges of masculinity today are even addressed, which are important steps for a reflective engagement with male socialization.

At the same time, many mainstream films remain trapped in the pitfalls of hegemonic masculinity (the socially dominant ideal of manhood that emphasizes power, control, and emotional suppression). A major theme, for example, is the "bad dad" who is emotionally and physically absent and only confronts his son with constant demands and put-downs. Presumably, this is the father who the creators themselves suffered under and against whom they rebel in the protagonist's hero's journey. Unfortunately, however, the protagonist then acts with exactly the same means: he does not reflect but acts, devalues, and fights. A vicious cycle in which apparent hero's journeys repeatedly create damaged personalities instead of telling stories of sustainable healing.

In addition, interpretive patterns from social media and US politics are attempting to turn the clock far back to the beginning of the last century and enforce a natural right of dominance for white men. Their central strategy is the victim role in which they see boys and men. In the "Manosphere," men conjure each other with deeply misogynistic n arratives. This harms not only women on so many levels but also young men and a free democratic society. How this is reflected in film narratives remains to be seen.

EXPANDING THE IMAGE OF MASCULINITY
In your view, what should a contemporary, expanded image of masculinity look like that offers children and young people more emotional and social possibilities?

If we look specifically at media for young audiences, it is about taking an honest look at reality. That means: How are boys doing today? In what world are they growing up? And what good prosocial paths do they find to make their way?

There is much surprising to discover here: boys who develop exciting paths beyond dominance masculinity; fathers who communicate in their own caring and loving ways and engage in joint action. We have not critically examined our own images and experiences with masculinity for far too long. Analyses from feminism, masculinity studies, and critical men's research can be very helpful here in finding new approaches to thinking.

For creative practice, it is important to look with this fresh perspective at the positive moments of masculinities in all their diversity. Especially to open up perspectives and points of orientation for children and young people, it is about showing what a boy or man gains when he does not devalue others but takes them seriously, when he acts energetically but also reflects, when he sees his strengths but also his limitations, etc.

Since we have not addressed masculinity for so long, it is important – at an appropriate time – to name this briefly and clearly. This, as our current studies show, can provide crucial points of orientation.

DESIGNING RESPONSIBLE MEDIA CONTENT
When you advise producers, writers, or broadcasters: What central criteria should media content for children and young people meet in order to convey diverse and development-promoting gender images?

They should take children seriously and support them on the path of identity development, building a worldview, and opening up options for action. For this, it is central that they can be proud of who they are and see appreciatively where they come from, in order to then go their own way in the world together with others.

APPLICATION TO GENERATIVE AI
Your research shows very clearly which images are problematic. Where do you see particular risks when generative AI is trained with existing media data and automatically creates new children's and youth content from it?

Critical engagement with the body images of cartoon characters, for example, is still relatively new. The majority of existing media data shows stereotypically beautiful and inappropriately sexualized female characters.

This stereotyping is reflected in almost all AI image generators. Racism is another example that then intersects with sexism. Without regulation, the way AI generates knowledge will newly reinforce long-outdated power structures and declare them as apparent normality.

GUIDELINES FOR AI-SUPPORTED CONTENT
What guiding questions or verification mechanisms would you recommend to prevent the reinforcement of sexist, normalizing, or one-sided gender images when using generative AI for children's and youth media?

On the one hand, clear legal regulations are needed regarding the representation of nudity in children and young people, among other things. In addition, the hypersexualization of children's and young people's bodies – that is, the representation of unnatural body proportions – must be critically examined and must not appear as the norm. Furthermore, sexist and racist representations must be discussed and appropriate guiding principles must be found.

What responsibility do adults and tech companies have for the gender images with which children grow up – especially in the age of generative AI?

We actually have clear legislation in the EU regarding youth protection and monopoly positions of media companies. This must also be implemented for social media and generative AI. This is not yet happening.

The responsibility for compliance with the law lies with media companies. They are the providers and must comply with the applicable law. This is also not yet happening.

When it comes to sensitive qualitative content issues such as gender images, effective self-regulation by providers would be important to act in the best interests of children and young people.

In my view, legislation, state institutions, self-regulation, and especially media companies bear the primary responsibility for creating a healthy or at least non-harmful media environment for children and young people. Youth protection is more important here than ever.

The task of parents and educators is to create spaces in which children and young people can acquire the necessary competencies for healthy and self-determined action in media worlds.

Biography
Maya Götz, Ph.D., is Head of the International Central Institute for Youth and Educational Television (IZI) at Bayerischer Rundfunk (Bavarian Broadcasting), Munich, Germany, and of the PRIX JEUNESSE Foundation. Her main field of work is research in the area of children, youth, and media, with a focus on gender-specific reception research. She conducts empirical studies such as "Gender Representation in Children's TV Worldwide and Its Meaning for Girls and Boys," "Young People and Media Worldwide in a Time of the COVID-19 Pandemic," "The Image of Engineering and What Keeps Girls Away," and "Social Media, Gender Imaginaries, and Values," as well as over 200 studies to foster quality in media for young audiences. She has published more than 250 articles and over 20 books in the field of children, young people, and television. She is married and mother of three daughters aged 17, 20, and 21.

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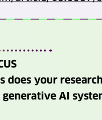

©Photo: Dr Aisha Sobey

"Body Normativity and the 'Thinness Bias' in Generative AI"

2025 Study:
"The thinness of GenAI: body size in relation to the construction of the normate through GenAI image models"

This study examines how generative AI image models depict fat bodies in comparison to those of a straight size. An analysis of 649 images generated by nine free generative AI (genAI) models reveals that fatness and disability are absent unless explicitly prompted. Images of larger bodies more frequently violate content guidelines, show fewer positive expressions and contain more errors than images without body-size prompts. These results imply that generative AI images perpetuate limited social perceptions and establish normative standards of personhood that exclude individuals with atypical bodies.

https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s43681-025-00684-x

RESEARCH FOCUS
What questions does your research raise about body normativity in generative AI systems?

My research examines body normativity and how systems assign greater value to certain bodies over others.

While design justice has gained visibility within design research, existing frameworks largely focus on marginalisation in terms of gender, race, age, and disability, leaving body shape and size unaddressed. My work seeks to build evidence and issue a call to action to challenge these normative ideals and to question how they are produced through computer design.

I focus in particular on generative AI and its treatment of body weight and size. These systems tend to produce slim bodies by default, with larger or more diverse bodies appearing only when explicitly prompted. I ask what this reveals about society and culture, and about prevailing ideas of what it means to be human.

NORMATIVITY AND THE "NORMATE"
What do these terms mean, and why are they useful for understanding harm in AI systems?

These terms help explain the small, often invisible harms and social pressures embedded in technological systems, particularly generative AI. Because these systems rely on statistical probability, they tend to reinforce and reproduce existing social expectations.

Rosemarie Garland-Thompson's concept of the "normate" describes an ideal body and the pressure to approximate this ideal as closely as possible, Garland-Thompson works in disability studies, but her concept is particularly applicable to physical appearance and body size. Crucially, the normate is not fixed. Even those who appear close to it – tall, slim, conventionally attractive – may feel they never fully measure up to it. In fact, the closer one is to the normate, the stronger the pressure can be to pursue these constantly shifting and ultimately unachievable ideals.

STUDY APPROACH
In "The thinness of GenAI," you analysed 649 images across nine free-to-use image models. What did you uncover?

I wanted to examine how generative AI systems portray the self in relation to body size. My interest in this subject emerged when, while experimenting with gaming-related prompts such as "fat elf," I found that none of the models could produce such an image. Within these systems' datasets, elves are thin, while fatness is positioned as something incompatible, or "other."

For the audit, I focused on free-to-use image models, as these are most likely to be widely accessed by most people. I tested 20 prompts per model. Half depicted a "person" engaged in everyday domestic activities, such as eating or exercising, while the other half introduced a larger body size marker, for example "a person in their home" vs "a fat person in their home". I also compared terms like "fat person" with medicalised descriptors such as "obese," "morbidly obese," and "overweight," to see whether language choice altered the outputs.

When larger bodies were prompted, the images showed more visual anomalies and fewer positive facial expressions. Across almost all models, requests for a "fat person" produced images of topless, sad-looking white men. I suspect this reflects the prevalence of before-and-after imagery in weight-loss media within the training data. Another recurring pattern was that fatness was portrayed negatively through darker lighting and overall tone.

THE "DEFAULT" HUMAN
What do your findings reveal about how generative AI systems conditionally represent fatness, disability, and happiness?

When I prompted for someone who was both fat and happy, I began to see visual markers associated with Down syndrome appear in the images, particularly in facial shape and expression. This is not negative in itself. However, when this becomes the only context in which fatness and happiness are represented together, it suggests that being fat and happy is solely seen as acceptable when paired with disability.

More broadly, the audit revealed that larger – and even medium-sized – bodies were almost entirely absent from the outputs if a larger body size was not asked for. This stark absence points to the systematic erasure of these bodies, by the default person being slim and able-bodied.

I do not think that this can be blamed on AI systems alone. What is more revealing is the lack of effort to address this technically, which raises a cultural question: why is the representation of fat and disabled people treated as a fringe concern? In a system driven by desirability – whether through the male gaze or broader societal norms – there is little incentive to represent bodies that fall outside ideals.

CONTENT FILTERS AND GOVERNANCE
Why do prompts for larger bodies often trigger "inappropriate content" filters and what does this tell us about how stigma is encoded in AI governance layers?

For the audit, I deliberately used the word "fat" to address anti-fat bias. However, several image models struggled or refused to generate images when this term appeared in the prompt, likely because it conflicted with community standards. In some cases, "fat" was treated as a slur. The effect of this is, that only thin bodies are readily representable as neutral or acceptable forms of personhood.

NAMING THE BIAS
Why do you use the term "anti-fat bias," and how does this framing shape what a fat liberation approach to AI and design could look like in practice?

I use the term "anti-fat bias" rather than alternatives like "weight stigma," to align with activists who are reclaiming the word "fat" as a neutral descriptor. Fatness, or being in a larger body, should not be framed as inherently negative, and the language we use matters in establishing that. Terms which have been used previously include "fatphobia," which activists are moving away from, to avoid trivialising genuine phobias or the systemic nature of anti-fat bias.

In 1973, the Fat Liberation Manifesto called for an end to profiting from bodies and to treating fatness as a problem to be fixed. Applied to design and technology, this means moving away from behaviour-change models focused on encouraging weight loss, and towards systems that allow people not to think about weight at all. Even small technical interventions in this direction can be meaningful starting points.

A fat liberation framework for AI would mean seeing fat and disabled people appear unprompted. Encountering such unexpected representation can be productive, forcing us to question our own assumptions – for example, why it feels surprising to see a fat person when we simply ask for "a person dancing." Drawing on Rosemarie Garland-Thomson's idea of "staring," these moments of visual disruption can help expand what kinds of bodies we consider possible and acceptable.

This approach is particularly relevant in avatar and game design, as they are often excluded from fantasy ideals altogether. For example, Baldur's Gate 3 was praised for its inclusivity and extensive character customization, yet it did not allow players to choose a fat body type. You could vary height or build, but fatness itself remained unavailable, highlighting the continued limits of body diversity, even in spaces celebrated for representation. Offering fat bodies as an option is not enough if they are framed as jokes or rarely chosen.

HCI AND DESIGN RESPONSIBILITY
Where do you see anti-fat narratives being reproduced within Human-Computer-Interaction (HCI) design practices and health metrics?

I would like to see HCI move beyond a narrow focus on weight, so that people can attend instead to health markers such as heart rate or blood pressure, recognising that health is possible at many different sizes. There is also a responsibility to think more critically about metrics such as BMI and the ways in which they continue to be used.

IMPLICATIONS FOR MEDIA PRODUCTION
What risks arise when generative AI is used to create personas and characters for film, TV, and games?

There is growing concern about the use of generative AI to create user personas. Tools can appear highly inclusive and interactive while still producing outputs that are stereotypical and biased. Even when we ask for "unexpected" characters, those personas often remain constrained by familiar tropes, lacking the nuance and complexity of real people, who may hold multiple things true at once.

This raises questions about context: where does the data come from, who is being represented, and how are opinions and perspectives formed? These textures are often lost. Technology companies need to engage with real people and think about voice in terms of plurality, complexity, and context.

For creatives, there are no quick fixes. When possible, my gold standard is bringing real people into the process, even though this can be time-consuming, costly, and difficult. I recognise these constraints, but the absence of lived perspectives carries its own risks.

ACTION AND ACCOUNTABILITY
How can AI-assisted media production move towards more responsible and meaningful representation?

From a fat liberation perspective, good representation would mean centring fat people as main characters without making their fatness the central storyline. Too often, fat characters remain in supporting roles, while protagonists are still slim, young, able-bodied, and conventionally attractive, which ultimately flattens the complexity of the world being represented.

In a forthcoming book chapter on AI and representation in the creative industries, I raise a series of guiding questions for creatives, such as directly considering who could be harmed by the use of generative AI. To begin to address fat representation video games and graphic design I am working with collaborators to establish the preferences of gamers for avatar customization and provide the technical code to enable this for game companies.

Biography
Dr Aisha Sobey is a Research Fellow on the interdisciplinary societal implications of AI technologies at the University of Cambridges Leverhulme Centre for the Future of Intelligence. As part of the Desirable Digitisation project, she is concerned with understanding the infrastructural power of AI systems, especially relating to fat and disabled bodies. Weight stigma, or anti-fat bias, is not only relatable for many peoples' experiences of navigating the world but is particularly tangible in the outputs of algorithmic systems, such as image models' representations of body size, slimming image filters, and recommender algorithms' focus on body size reduction advertisements. Aisha considers how the underlying data, system models, and use of generative AI technologies combine to perpetuate harmful stereotypes and marginalisation of body diversity. Prior to her role at the Leverhulme Centre, she gained a master's and PhD from the University of Cambridge and undergraduate degree in Belfast.

Professional links:

The Good Robot Podcast appearance "AI needs Fat Liberation"

Article: The Thinness of GenAI

Chapter: Generative AI's Talent for Speaking, and the Power of Silence for the Non-Normative Body, (Forthcoming) *in AI and Creative Industries*, Edited by Tigre Moura, F. and Moruzzi, C.

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"Queer Identity, Algorithmic Knowledge, and the Collective Future of Care"

RESEARCH PROPOSAL

Why do we do research, for whom, and what core questions drive our research? Which methodologies are most suitable to answer these questions, and why?

Research is a process of inquiry that combines rigorous methodology with the worlds that we inhabit. An analogy I often use is that the cities we live in are not just built by architects and engineers, but also by those who live, move, love, heal, and dream within them. In research, the lived world is not a backdrop, it is central. Lived ways, ways of being, and ways of knowing, carving at the edges as well as the foundations of the research, shape what questions are asked, what methods are used, and what knowledge is valued.

Another area of my research is queer epistemology, which examines how knowledge is produced, shaped, and sometimes hidden when it does not fit the ways of being that are considered "normal" in the dominant culture. This lens is important because it reveals how knowledge is not neutral, but shaped by power, identity, and lived experience. Research is not just about gathering information, it is a process of making patterns visible and making sense of what we see. In my research, I use a mix of qualitative and quantitative methods, including interviews, surveys, and data analysis, to explore how people navigate identity, relationships, and technology in everyday life. These methods allow me to ask questions that are both rigorous and grounded in real lived experience.

But we do know two things about this form of statistics. Firstly, it presupposes a particular kind of knowledge, a kind that is neutral, universal, and generic, as well as quantifiable. Secondly, it presupposes a particular kind of knowing, a kind that is rational, objective, and detached. Indigenous knowledge systems challenge this model by showing that knowledge is not neutral and that it is not universal. Indigenous knowledge makes the social difficult to explain because the factors that produce it are not just social, they are also ecological, spiritual, and relational. It is knowledge that is not separable from the lived world and the relationships within it.

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Secondly, an algorithmic systemic approach brings up a further than simply the problem of bias, it brings up the problem of how knowledge is being created and shaped by algorithmic systems. Algorithmic systems are not just neutral tools, they are shaped by the data they are trained on, the assumptions that are built into them, and the ways in which they are used in relational algorithm. The algorithm would ask the person who one of the relational algorithms would ask the person who is the relational algorithm would ask the person who is the relational algorithm would ask the person who is the relational algorithm

TINA-MARIE GULLEY
Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Ada Developers Academy, Seattle, USA

"Changing the Face of Tech: How Diverse Developers Challenge AI Bias"

Ada Developers Academy — changing the face of tech.

Ada Developers Academy is a tuition-free, non-profit coding school focused on increasing diversity in tech. It provides women and gender-expansive adults with intensive training in software development, cloud computing, cybersecurity, and artificial intelligence. The program includes both technical skills and professional development to prepare students for long-term success in the tech industry. It also fosters a supportive learning environment and strong community support. It actively works to dismantle inclusive and systemic barriers and to mitigate the impacts of intersectional diversity. Graduates leave the program with professional skills recognizable to the tech industry and potential employers.

Ada developers academy
Seattle, Washington

Ada combines technical training with explicit work on equity, power dynamics and community accountability. This approach grated approach shape how graduates act inside companies, lead teams, and influence how organizations think about bias in AI-driven tools.

Bias is powerful here because it creates both skills and agency. Our graduates enter companies with technical competence and insights into how systems reproduce harm. They know how to audit tools, ask uncomfortable questions, and advocate for changes in how AI is used. This is the only woman in the room and someone's about to ship something biased. Ada prepares for that moment.

From day one, students engage with AI literacy, what those tools are, where they fail, and who gets harmed when they deploy them in real-world processes. Before they write a single line of code, they're reading about algorithmic bias, data collection, and how technical decisions encode assumptions about people. Later, they practice auditing models, learning to trust outputs, and how to verify what they're getting back. By the time they graduate, they've built a habit of questioning what looks correct that "the algorithm said so" isn't neutral.

But here's what works beyond the classroom: our graduates bring deep perspectives shaped by their backgrounds that give them an edge. Women, people of color, and people from other non-tech backgrounds that go beyond technical skills. A former teacher sees problems in an education platform that engineers miss. A former healthcare worker knows why handles medical billing identifies issues in a healthcare startup in ways that a pure technical hire doesn't. These aren't theoretical benefits. They're documented patterns where graduates ship products that work better for center brings a perspective or how features actually land with different people.

So when our graduates encounter biased assumptions or AI tools reproducing harm, they recognize it faster. They have the technical skills to understand what's happening and the life experience to recognize when something's off. They're not waiting for someone else to fix bias. That's what data they used? Who's harmed if this is wrong?

Ada's approach to AI literacy isn't about teaching students to be cynical about AI or avoid the technology. It's about teaching them to use it with eyes wide open. Our graduates ship products that work because they're critical thinkers who can't ship something they don't understand. That's the difference between using AI as a crutch and using it as a tool you can trust.

Bias goes beyond gender and race. Which other dimensions of diversity do you prioritize, and why are these the most important first steps for building more inclusive AI?

The same pattern we've seen in tech is already playing out in your industry. Women and people of color left tech because of cultural climate that reflects decades of bias. Healthcare has a documented history of medical bias affecting how pain is assessed, how symptoms are dismissed, how recommendations are made based on assumptions about who belongs in a clinical setting. Women, Black and Indigenous women, people with disabilities, and queer people have all faced history without intervention, and AI risks preserving those biases by automating them at scale.

What actually needs to happen:

Stop building with only technologists in the room. Teams truly diverse in lived experience, not just one token hire, are catching things creative workers into the design process from day one. You need coding skills to implement, but you need domain expertise to know what matters. Nurses, people who understand how representation works, what gaps wrong, and what harm looks like in practice. Healthcare AI keeps getting rejected because it's trained on rather stamp decisions already made.

Ask who benefits and who gets surveillance instead. Much of AI training AI on caring databases, social libraries, or film archives, those data carries bias from the moment it's collected. Healthcare AI trained on data from predominantly white, able-bodied, cis populations will miss symptoms in other bodies. Ada's approach means teaching students to question where your data comes from, who's represented in it, and whether your test populations reflect communities you're actually serving. Healthcare AI that works for white men but fails women of color isn't a technical bug. It's a design choice that prioritized some users over others.

Build consent and compensation structures before deployment. The creative industries are already dealing with this. Artists whose work was used to train models without explicit consent. No one should be surprised healthcare is next. Patients whose medical data trains AI models deserve to know and to be compensated.

Create explicit protections against gendered and sexual harm. AI tools must have hard constraints preventing the generation of non-consensual intimate imagery. This isn't edge case anymore. Deepfakes weaponized against women, including those in healthcare contexts where patients or individuals in violent or sexualized situations they never agreed to. Ada's curriculum includes this because students need to know that it didn't invent for it to be used that way." is not an acceptable defense.

Hire from the communities you're trying to serve. Healthcare AI built by people who've navigated the system as patients, who've been the final say on coding, prescribing, or content moderation. Diverse teachers could be a pipeline here. Students who've been harmed by bias may be accountability when tools cause harm. "The algorithm did it" cannot be accepted as an excuse.

Partner with organizations that have done this work. Don't assume you can figure this out alone. Healthcare has decades of documented bias, and centuries of bias. Ada's approach includes partnerships with organizations that specialize in equitable design and community accountability. Learn from those who've spent years understanding how technology causes harm in vulnerable populations.

What tech taught us that you need to have. Tech spent decades claiming neutrality "we're just building tools," "we're just platforms." That was always bullshit. Healthcare can't afford that framing. Every decision about what data to collect, how to weight outcomes, and who to prioritize is a value judgment. Ada's curriculum treats this as the starting point, not a conclusion. Students learn that choosing not to think about bias is still a choice, and it's the choice most people in tech made for years, with predictable results.

What actually needs to happen:

Stop building with only technologists in the room. Too many media companies have built AI tools for newsrooms without journalists in the room, designing creative workers into the design process from day one. You need coding skills to implement, but you need domain expertise to know what matters. Nurses, people who understand how representation works, what gaps wrong, and what harm looks like in practice. Healthcare AI keeps getting rejected because it's trained on rather stamp decisions already made.

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Looking beyond the tech sector, what lessons from Ada's experience would you highlight for industries like film and media that are beginning to integrate AI tools? Inclusion and diversity expertise? What are the most important first steps organizations should take to avoid repeating harm?

The same pattern we've seen in tech is already playing out in your industry. Women and people of color left tech because of cultural climate that reflects decades of bias. Healthcare has a documented history of medical bias affecting how pain is assessed, how symptoms are dismissed, how recommendations are made based on assumptions about who belongs in a clinical setting. Women, Black and Indigenous women, people with disabilities, and queer people have all faced history without intervention, and AI risks preserving those biases by automating them at scale.

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PRACTICAL PROMPTING GUIDE

How you prompt shapes what AI produces – and what it leaves out. This chapter offers core principles and practical strategies for using AI tools in ways that are gender-sensitive, non-discriminatory, and creatively precise. It is designed for professionals across all stages of AI adoption, from beginners to those refining their workflows.

PART 1: FOUNDATIONS

WHAT IS PROMPTING – AND WHY DOES IT MATTER FOR GENDER EQUITY?

A prompt is an instruction you give to an AI system – a question, a command, a request. It can be as simple as "Write a poem about a gardener, whether text, image, video, or sound. The term comes from the idea of prompting someone to speak. In AI, prompting is how we talk to machines.

Prompts are never neutral. Every prompt carries assumptions – about who is worth depicting, what a "normal" body looks like, which perspectives are treated as default, and whose stereotypes are reproduced. Ask for an image of a doctor." the device not ask you what kind of doctor you mean, and the AI will default to the most dominant pattern in its training data, produced in most current systems, that means a white man in a lab coat.

Prompts are also how we ask AI to remember, forget, and prioritize. We can tell it to ignore gender, to treat all genders as equally likely, to draw from a wider range of sources than it would by default. This is powerful. It means we can ask for more inclusive outputs than the system would produce if we just typed a topic. Good filmmakers have always known that the specific is more powerful than the general. The same is true for AI.

1. Challenge the first output

The first output you get from AI is interrogate, never as a finished product. Ask yourself: Who is depicted? Who? What assumptions are being made? What is missing? Then refine your prompt to address what you noticed. Iteration is where quality lives. Treat the first output of an AI as generative flux scientists and they are all white men, that is not a neutral result – it is a default that reflects the data the model was trained on. Refine the prompt. Ask for alternatives. Iterate until the output reflects the diversity of the real world you are trying to represent. Or until it reveals what you didn't know to ask for.

2. Prompt against stereotypes explicitly

Models default to the most common patterns in their data. If you don't specify, they will fill in the gaps with what appears most often in training data – which is overwhelmingly stereotypical. Counter this by naming what you don't want: "Show a nurse, not a female nurse." "Show a leader, not a man in a suit." "Show a family in a kitchen, not a woman cooking." Make it a habit to check not just what is present, but what is not.

3. Use counter-narratives

Stereotypes are reinforced by representations that challenge dominant patterns. A prompt that specifies "a female surgeon performing a brain surgery" and "a male nurse comforting a patient" is not just correcting a default. It is creating a counter-narrative, a visual argument that breaks the pattern and models what is possible. Use specific, dignified, non-stereotypical descriptions to shift what the system treats as default.

4. Ask for reasoning

Many models can explain why they made the system to explain its choices. "Why did you suggest this character sex?" "What assumptions are you making about this location?" Reasoning surfaces the assumptions behind the output. This makes the AI's logic visible and gives you something to evaluate critically. You cannot evaluate what you cannot see.

5. Check for absence

Bias is not only what is present. It is what is not. Ask yourself: Who is missing? Whose stereotypes are being reproduced? Only white faces? Only straight couples? Only able-bodied people? Only one kind of family? Absence is harder to see than presence. But it is equally consequential. Ask the system to "add a diverse group of people." Ask for alternatives. Iterate until the output reflects the diversity of the real world you are trying to represent. Or until it reveals what you didn't know to ask for.

6. Prompt against discriminatory stereotypes

Specify what you want to see. Specify what you want – you may also need to name what you do not want. AI systems do not understand intention. They execute patterns. Vague prompts ("make it interesting," "make it beautiful") default to the most common interpretation in the training data. Specific prompts ("show a woman in her 60s painting with watercolors, soft light, muted palette") leads to outputs that are more aligned with what you actually mean. Specificity is your most reliable tool for quality.

7. Check for absence

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8. Use iteration strategically

Iteration is where quality lives. Treat the first output as a draft. Refine your prompt based on what you noticed. Ask for alternatives. Ask the system to "make the character more diverse" or "show a different approach." Each iteration is an opportunity to correct bias, add specificity, or explore what you didn't know to ask for. Iteration is also how you test whether the system can actually do what you need it to do.

9. Know when not to prompt

Not every decision should be delegated to AI. Hiring decisions, medical diagnoses, legal judgments, and creative choices that define a project's voice are all areas where human judgment matters more than AI efficiency. Prompting is a tool for augmentation, not automation. Knowing when not to use AI is as important as knowing how to use it.

10. Own the output

You are responsible for what you generate and what you do with it. AI can produce biased, inaccurate, or harmful outputs even when prompted carefully. The tool does not bear responsibility for what you create. You do. Review outputs before sharing them. Check for bias before deploying them. Ask whether the output serves the people it represents or whether it reproduces harm you should not be part of.

PART 2: PROMPTING FOR CREATIVE PROFESSIONALS

Film and media need to do the same. Not just more diverse stories, but different ways of making them. Documentary filmmakers who've lived through what they need to fundamentally change who has power over your story, who gets to tell it, who gets hired to tell it. Ada's approach means students who've spent years in the industry, who've seen what works and what doesn't, who've been on sets and in rooms where decisions get made, bringing that knowledge to how they use AI tools. That's how you avoid repeating harm: not by waiting for someone else to fix it, but by building the people who know what to look for into the process from the start.

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PART 2: ROLE-SPECIFIC PROMPTING GUIDANCE

Each section addresses where AI is typically used in this role, what can go wrong, and practical prompting strategies with examples.

1. RESEARCH, EDITORIAL & DEVELOPMENT

Script readers, development executives, commissioning editors, format researchers

Where AI is typically used

Development teams increasingly use AI to scan for trends, summarize scripts, generate concept pitches, research comparable formats, analyse audience data, and draft coverage reports. AI can process large volumes of material quickly – which is precisely why its defaults matter. When AI summarizes, it prioritizes. When it suggests, it draws on patterns. Those patterns carry bias.

What can go wrong

When you ask AI to suggest "a compelling protagonist for a crime series," the system draws on what has been most common in the genre: often a troubled white male detective. When you ask for audience analysis, the system may reproduce narrow demographic categories that flatten real audiences into marketing stereotypes. When AI generates script coverage, it may unconsciously favour story structures that centre dominant perspectives and treat marginalized narratives as niche. Development is where creative decisions begin – and where bias enters most invisibly, because at this stage, outputs feel like research rather than creative choices.

PROMPTING STRATEGIES

Concept development and pitching

When brainstorming concepts, prompt for diversity at the structural level, not just at the surface:

> **Instead of:** "Suggest five concepts for a thriller series"
> **Try:** "Suggest five thriller series concepts with protagonists who are not white, not male, and not in law enforcement. Set at least two outside of the US or UK. Avoid lone-wolf narratives."

Push AI to go beyond its most probable output by constraining what it can default to.

Script coverage and evaluation

When using AI to summarize or evaluate scripts, add explicit evaluation criteria:

> "Summarize this script and flag any stereotypical representations of gender, race, disability, or sexuality. Note where characters from marginalized groups are reduced to supporting roles or defined primarily by their marginalization."

Without this instruction, AI coverage will mirror industry conventions.

Trend research and comparable formats

AI tends to surface the most visible and commercially dominant examples. Counter this actively:

> **Instead of:** "List successful coming-of-age series from the last five years"
> **Try:** "List critically acclaimed coming-of-age series from the last five years that centre characters who are not white, not straight, or not able-bodied. Include productions from outside Europe and North America."

Audience analysis

Be cautious when AI generates audience profiles. Challenge reductive categories:

> "Generate an audience profile for this project. Avoid assumptions based on gender stereotypes. Do not assume that women are primarily interested in romance or that men are primarily interested in action. Reflect diverse viewing habits across age, class, and cultural background."

2. SCREENWRITING

Screenwriters, showrunners, story editors, dialogue writers

Where AI is typically used

Writers use AI for brainstorming, overcoming blocks, generating dialogue options, exploring story structures, building character backstories, and world-building. Some use it to test how a scene reads or to generate variations. AI is increasingly present in writers' rooms as a starting point or sounding board.

What can go wrong

AI-generated characters default to dominant archetypes. A "strong female character" becomes a woman who fights like a man but is still conventionally beautiful. A "complex villain" becomes a scarred loner. A queer character becomes defined by coming out. A Black character becomes defined by trauma. As Daniella Gáti's research shows, AI does not generate genuinely new stories – it recombines existing patterns and presents them as novelty. The danger is not that writers use AI, but that they accept its defaults without recognising them as defaults.

Dialogue is another risk area. AI flattens voice. It tends to produce dialogue that sounds the same regardless of who is speaking – or worse, falls into stereotypical speech patterns for characters from specific backgrounds.

PROMPTING STRATEGIES

Character development

Build characters against the grain of AI defaults by being specific about what makes them irreducible to a type:

> **Instead of:** "Create a female lead for a political drama"
> **Try:** "Create a female lead for a political drama. She is 56 years old, heavyset, from a working-class background in Northern England. She is pragmatic rather than idealistic, has a dry sense of humour, and is not defined by a romantic subplot. She has physical presence and authority without being masculinized."

The more specific and human the description, the harder it is for the AI to flatten the character into a stereotype.

Avoiding the "diversity accessory" trap

When prompting for diverse characters, be clear that their identity is part of who they are, not their narrative function:

> "Write a scene introducing a trans character. Their gender identity is part of their life but not the subject of this scene. The scene should establish them as competent and central to the plot. Do not include a coming-out moment or any explanation of their identity to other characters."

Dialogue

AI-generated dialogue tends to be generic or stereotypical. If you use AI for dialogue drafts, always specify voice, register, and what you want to avoid:

> "Write dialogue for a 17-year-old Afro-German girl talking to her mother after school. The tone is casual, affectionate, slightly impatient. Avoid any clichés about immigrant families, cultural conflict, or exoticization. They are talking about something mundane – but the subtext is that the daughter is growing independent."

Story structure

When using AI for plot or structure, watch for default arcs that marginalize certain characters:

> "Outline a six-episode arc for an ensemble drama. No character should function primarily as a sidekick, love interest, or victim. Ensure that characters from marginalized backgrounds have their own narrative agency and are not used to further the development of a white or male protagonist."

3. PRODUCTION & VISUAL DESIGN

Producers, directors, production designers, casting directors, costume designers, location scouts

Where AI is typically used

Production teams use AI to generate mood boards, concept art, visual references, set design ideas, costume research, casting descriptions, and location options. Image generation tools are increasingly used in pre-production to visualize scenes before they are shot. This is the stage where visual bias becomes concrete – where bodies, faces, spaces, and aesthetics are defined.

What can go wrong

This is where Aisha Sobey's research becomes directly relevant. AI image generators produce slim, young, able-bodied, conventionally attractive figures by default. Larger bodies, older bodies, and disabled bodies are absent unless explicitly prompted – and when they do appear, they are often depicted negatively: darker lighting, fewer positive expressions, more visual errors. As Sobey found, some systems even flag the word "fat" as inappropriate content, making it impossible to generate diverse body representations without workarounds.

Casting descriptions generated by AI tend to default to narrow beauty standards. Costume suggestions may exoticize non-Western clothing. Location references may reproduce colonial or stereotypical visual codes for non-European settings.

PROMPTING STRATEGIES

Mood boards and concept art

When generating visual references, be explicit about the bodies and aesthetics you want to see:

> **Instead of:** "Generate a mood board for a romantic drama set in summer"
> **Try:** "Generate visual references for a romantic drama set in a coastal town in summer. The protagonists are a couple in their late forties – one is fat and confident, the other uses a wheelchair. The aesthetic is warm, luminous, and sensual. Avoid any visual framing that positions disability or larger bodies as pitiable or comic."

Casting and character visualization

When using AI to generate character visuals, specify against defaults:

> "Generate a portrait of a female CEO character. She is 62 years old, South Asian, has grey hair she wears naturally, and a round face. She is dressed in understated professional clothing. Her expression is calm and authoritative. Do not make her look younger than her age. Do not slim her body. Do not Westernize her features."

If the AI refuses a prompt or flags it as inappropriate – for example when describing a fat body – note this as a systemic issue, not a user error. Rephrase if necessary, but be aware that the system's discomfort with certain bodies is itself a form of bias.

Locations and settings

Challenge visual clichés when prompting for locations:

> **Instead of:** "Generate images of an African city"
> **Try:** "Generate images of a contemporary neighbourhood in Lagos, Nigeria: modern architecture, busy streets, mixed commercial and residential buildings, greenery, people in everyday professional and casual clothing. Avoid any visual markers of poverty or exoticism."

Costume and styling

> "Generate costume references for a period drama set in 1920s Harlem. The characters are Black artists and intellectuals. The styling should reflect the creativity and elegance of the Harlem Renaissance. Avoid any visual references that reduce Black history to servitude or suffering."

4. POST-PRODUCTION

Editors, colourists, VFX artists, composers, sound designers

Where AI is typically used

Post-production increasingly relies on AI for colour grading, image enhancement, face and body retouching, visual effects, automated editing, music composition, sound design, voice synthesis, and audio mastering. These tools operate at a level where bias is often invisible – embedded in presets, filters, and defaults rather than in explicit creative decisions.

What can go wrong

Colour grading AI and auto-enhancement tools have documented biases in how they process skin tones – often lightening darker skin or treating lighter skin as the reference point for "correct" exposure. Retouching tools may automatically slim bodies, smooth skin, or alter features in ways that reinforce narrow beauty norms.

In sound and music, AI composition tools may default to stereotypical musical coding: "exotic" scales for non-Western settings, sentimental strings for female characters, aggressive percussion for male characters or action scenes. Voice synthesis tools often default to feminized, servile vocal qualities for assistant roles – reinforcing the gendered labour dynamics that Amelia Winger-Bearskin describes.

PROMPTING STRATEGIES

Colour grading and image processing

When using AI-assisted colour grading, test outputs across diverse skin tones before applying them broadly:

> "Apply this colour grade and show me the result on three different reference images: one with very dark skin, one with medium skin, and one with very light skin. Flag any case where the grade alters skin tone in a way that lightens, flattens, or distorts the original."

If tools offer "auto-enhance" or "beauty" presets, question what they optimize for. Does "enhance" mean "make slimmer"? Does "correct" mean "make lighter"? These are not neutral adjustments.

Body and face retouching

Establish a clear policy on when and how AI retouching is used, and what it must not do:

> "Do not use AI retouching to slim bodies, remove skin texture, alter facial features toward a more Eurocentric appearance, or make any adjustment that changes how a person's body or face actually looks. Retouching should serve the visual design of the scene, not an idealized body norm."

Music and sound design

When prompting AI composition tools, be specific about avoiding cultural and gendered clichés:

> **Instead of:** "Compose background music for a scene set in the Middle East"
> **Try:** "Compose atmospheric background music for a tense nighttime scene set in contemporary Beirut. Use ambient and electronic textures. Do not use stereotypical 'Oriental' scales, oud, or any musical shorthand that codes the setting as exotic or threatening."

For voice work:

> "Generate a synthetic voice for an in-car navigation system. Use a gender-neutral voice with a calm, confident tone. Do not default to a feminized or subservient vocal quality."

Automated editing

AI editing tools may make choices about pacing, shot selection, and emphasis that carry implicit bias – for example, giving more screen time to certain faces or cutting away from bodies that do not match normative ideals. Review automated edits critically:

> "Review the AI-generated edit and check: Does every character receive comparable screen time and framing? Are any characters consistently shown in less flattering angles or lighting? Are reaction shots distributed equitably?"

5. MARKETING, PR & SOCIAL MEDIA

Marketing managers, campaign creatives, social media editors, trailer editors, poster designers

Where AI is typically used

Marketing teams use AI for campaign copy, social media posts, thumbnail and poster generation, audience targeting, trailer assembly, A/B testing, and content localization. AI is often used to optimize for engagement – which means it optimizes for what has performed well in the past, which in turn reflects and reinforces existing biases.

What can go wrong

AI-generated marketing materials tend to default to the most "clickable" representations – which often means young, slim, sexualized bodies for women and dominant, aggressive imagery for men. Thumbnails and posters generated by AI may foreground white characters and marginalize others. Campaign copy may use gendered language patterns that reinforce stereotypes. Audience targeting algorithms may reproduce discriminatory assumptions about who watches what.

Trailer editing AI may select the most sensational or stereotypical moments from a film rather than those that represent it accurately, amplifying bias in the material audiences see first.

PROMPTING STRATEGIES

Visual marketing – posters, thumbnails, social media images

> **Instead of:** "Generate a poster for a female-led action film"
> **Try:** "Generate a poster for an action film. The lead character is a Black woman in her thirties, athletic but not sexualized. She is dressed in practical tactical clothing. Her posture conveys authority and focus. The composition centres her as the subject, not as an object. Do not emphasize her body over her face and expression."

When generating thumbnails or social content, explicitly check for defaults:

> "Generate five thumbnail options for this series. Ensure that the thumbnails reflect the actual diversity of the cast and do not disproportionately feature white or male characters. Do not sexualize female characters in the thumbnails even if the series contains such scenes."

Campaign copy

When using AI for written content, prompt against gendered and stereotypical language:

> "Write social media copy promoting a new drama series. Avoid gendered language that frames the series as 'for women' or 'a guilty pleasure.' Do not describe female characters primarily by their appearance or relationships. Describe all characters by what they do, want, and fight for."

Audience targeting

Question AI-generated audience segments:

> "Review this audience targeting profile. Does it make assumptions based on gender stereotypes? Does it assume that certain demographics are not interested in this genre? Are any groups excluded by default? Suggest a more inclusive targeting approach that does not reinforce narrow assumptions about viewing preferences."

Trailers

When AI assists in trailer assembly or scene selection:

> "Select scenes for the trailer that represent the full range of the film's characters and themes. Do not over-represent action or conflict at the expense of emotional complexity. Ensure that characters from marginalized backgrounds appear as protagonists, not only in supporting or victimized moments."

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PART 3: PROMPTING CHECKLISTS

QUICK REFERENCE

Check before you prompt. Check before you accept.

Before prompting

- Is my prompt specific enough – or am I leaving decisions to the AI's defaults?
- Have I described the people I want to see – age, body type, cultural context, expression – rather than relying on generic terms?
- Have I named what I want to avoid – stereotypes, sexualization, clichés?
- Am I prompting for counter-narratives that challenge dominant patterns?

After receiving the output

- Have I challenged the first output rather than accepting it as final?
- Who is depicted? How? Would I accept this from a human collaborator without question?
- Who is missing? Which bodies, identities, ages, or abilities are absent?
- Does the output reproduce stereotypes – even subtle ones?
- Have I asked the AI to explain its reasoning or choices?

Before using the output in your work

- Has a human critically evaluated this output – not just checked it technically?
- Is it documented where and how AI was used in this process?
- Would I be comfortable if the people depicted saw how they were represented?

EXTENDED VERSION WITH ROLE-SPECIFIC CHECKPOINTS

Check before you prompt. Check before you accept.

Core checks – for everyone

- Is my prompt specific enough – or am I leaving decisions to the AI's defaults?
- Have I described the people I want to see rather than relying on generic terms?
- Have I named what I want to avoid?
- Am I prompting for counter-narratives that challenge dominant patterns?
- Have I challenged the first output rather than accepting it as final?
- Who is missing from this output?
- Does the output reproduce stereotypes – even subtle ones?
- Have I asked the AI to explain its reasoning?
- Has a human critically evaluated this output?
- Is it documented where and how AI was used?

Research, Editorial & Development

- Do AI-suggested concepts default to white, male, or Western-centred protagonists?
- Does AI script coverage favour dominant story structures and treat marginalized narratives as niche?
- Do AI-generated audience profiles rely on gender stereotypes about viewing preferences?
- Have I asked for comparable formats from outside Europe and North America?

Screenwriting

- Are AI-generated characters irreducible to a type – or do they default to archetypes?
- Are characters from marginalized backgrounds given their own narrative agency – not used to serve a white or male protagonist's arc?
- Is a character's identity part of who they are, rather than their entire storyline?
- Does AI-generated dialogue have a distinct, authentic voice – or does it flatten speech into stereotypical patterns?
- Do story structures avoid reducing diverse characters to sidekicks, love interests, or victims?

Production & Visual Design

- Do AI-generated visuals include diverse body types, ages, and abilities – without being explicitly prompted for them?
- Have I prompted against beauty defaults in casting descriptions and character visuals?
- If the AI refused a prompt describing a larger or disabled body – have I noted this as a systemic bias, not a user error?
- Do location references avoid colonial, exoticizing, or poverty-focused visual clichés?
- Do costume references respect cultural contexts without exoticizing them?

Post-Production

- Have I tested colour grading and image processing across diverse skin tones?
- Do "auto-enhance" or "beauty" presets alter bodies or faces toward normative ideals?
- Does AI retouching change how a person's body or face actually looks?
- Does AI-composed music avoid stereotypical cultural or gendered coding?
- Do synthetic voices avoid defaulting to feminized, subservient vocal qualities?
- Does the AI-generated edit give equitable screen time, framing, and lighting to all characters?

Marketing, PR & Social Media

- Do AI-generated posters and thumbnails reflect the actual diversity of the cast?
- Are female characters sexualized in marketing materials even when the content does not warrant this?
- Does campaign copy avoid gendered framing ("for women," "guilty pleasure")?
- Does audience targeting reproduce discriminatory assumptions about who watches what?
- Does the trailer represent the full range of characters – or only the most "marketable" ones?

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BUILD YOUR OWN TOOLBOX: SPOTTING STEREOTYPES, BREAKING CLICHÉS

HOW TO USE THIS CHAPTER:

This chapter brings together common patterns of sexism, discrimination, and stereotypical representation in film and media – and shows ways to do things differently. You can put this knowledge to work in your creative practice:

As a mirror for your content – to check your texts, images, characters, and storylines for blind spots.

As a foundation for your prompts – to challenge AI to break stereotypical patterns and develop innovative narratives.

This giant AI data machine knows every cliché: Use that to move beyond them

AI systems have been trained on exactly the clichés and stereotypes we want to overcome – and that is precisely what we can turn to our advantage. Build the following points into your prompts and ask AI directly: Where does my text reproduce a cliché? Where is a perspective missing? What would be an unexpected alternative? This way, AI becomes a tool that challenges you rather than limits you.

These are not rigid rules. They are examples and suggestions. Every project, every story, every character needs its own approach. Take what is relevant. Combine. Adapt. Build your own toolbox. There are no limits to your creativity.

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YOUR TOOLBOX:

No. 1 THE MALE GAZE & THE MENKES LIST

Five camera techniques that turn women into objects

The "male gaze" describes a pattern so deeply embedded in film history that it often goes unnoticed: the camera adopts a heterosexual male perspective, positioning women as objects to be looked at while men drive the action. The term was coined by Laura Mulvey in 1975 – but the pattern is alive and well in today's media, including AI-generated content.

Filmmaker Nina Menkes made this visible. In her documentary *Brainwashed: Sex-Camera-Power (2022)*, she analysed over a hundred film clips to show exactly how shot design objectifies women – not through story alone, but through the camera itself. From her analysis, five concrete techniques emerged, now known as **The Menkes List:**

1) **POINT OF VIEW** – Male subject, female object. The audience sees through his eyes; her perspective becomes secondary.

2) **FRAMING** – Fragmented shots of female body parts, disconnected from the whole person. She becomes a collection of parts, not a character.

3) **CAMERA MOVEMENT** – Slow pans and tilts across women's bodies. The camera lingers, examines, consumes – in a way that would be unmistakably creepy in real life.

4) **LIGHTING** – Men are lit in three dimensions: shadows, texture, depth. Women are flattened into 2D – smoothed out, glossy, decorative. Human detail is erased.

5) **NARRATIVE POSITION** – The sexualized female body exists outside the story. She is visually disconnected from her surroundings – no clear background, soft focus, abstract framing – as if she inhabits a different reality from the characters who actually drive the plot.

These five points are a powerful tool – both for checking AI-generated visual content and for prompting against these patterns from the start.

Source: Nina Menkes, Brainwashed: Sex-Camera-Power (2022)
https://www.brainwashedmovie.com/

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1 THE SECOND INVILLAGE TEST

Do women have a story of their own?

Bechdel-Wallace test (Bechdel Test) was first in 1985 (comic Dykes to Watch Out For) — considering the rules to be fair (Frankl-Lo Wallace, who was the first to publish it in 2013).

Three simple conditions:

1. Does the film have at least two named female characters?
2. Do they talk to each other?
3. About something other than a man?

No. 3. Absent something other than a man?

The test reveals whether women exist in a story as characters with their own lives, or only as objects for men. Most films fail the test because women are written as supporting characters whose lives revolve around men.

Use it as a quick check for — your own scripts and for AI-generated scripts.

https://bechdeltest.com/

2 GAZOO

Who gets the rules that could be unspoken?

Most scripts contain rules when gender is not essential to the plot — rules that are invisible to the characters but visible to the audience. Gazoo is a tool that makes these rules explicit. The tool was developed by Jonas Berlin Kuhn (Berlin, office a complex method) and Gazoo is a tool that makes these rules explicit. Gazoo analyzes scripts and identifies which rules are implicit — rules that characters never discuss but which governs how they behave. Gazoo recognizes challenges arising from violations to the "Lemon vs. Banana" rule (Lemon and Banana are both yellow, but only one is a fruit). Gazoo is open source and can be used by anyone. Development is grind, but it, like Berlin, is trustworthy creates possibility.

Source: https://gazoo.dev/ and https://github.com/jonasbk/gazoo-lang

3 THE CREATIVE CHECKLIST

Who do girls and young women see as role models?

The Bechdel Screenwriter Association creates this checklist that checks for implicit bias in scripts, dialogue, and character development — and writing tools.

Yes 1. "Remember: female characters must be likeable. And young. And pretty. And thin. And sometimes, they can be bitches."

Yes 2. "Remember: stories about men are great and World-changing. Stories about women are small and personal. Stories about men are the same age. Stories about women age." Bechdel-test is a checklist in reverse and thus makes fun fakes.

Source: https://screenwriter.wiki/wiki/creative-checklist-bechdel-test-inverted-version-by-wif

4 THE MANAGEOTEST

A sarcastic guide to everything you should not do

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The patterns are specific and persistent.

Female characters over 40 are cast as mothers, as witches, as grandmothers. Female characters who are attractive are written as if their attractiveness is their most important quality.

Female characters who are smart are written as if their intelligence rather than their competence is the point. The tests are not subtle. They are applied to male characters of the same age.

Female characters rarely get older men with significant romantic roles. The reverse is treated as normalcy or scandal.

Female characters who are written as villains are almost always women who are ugly, or physically unattractive, or alienated from all expected roles that are supposed to be theirs.

The same patterns shape film and television. Our characters are cast, lit, and written according to rules that have nothing to do with the story they are telling and everything to do with what we think we can sell to audiences or actors between. When this so-called "objective" reality changes, the rules will change with it.

This question is always the same: would you write this character the same way if the sex were a man?

5 BODY DIVERSITY ON SCREEN

When only one body is the default

AI image generators produce slim, young, able-bodied figures by default. Ask for a "doctor" and you get a man in his thirties. Ask for a "nurse" and you get a woman in her twenties. Ask for "people" and you get a wall of expressionless, mass-produced clones. Systems trained on such data will reproduce and amplify the bias. This is not a technical glitch. It is a cultural default that AI reflects a culture in which only one kind of body is treated as neutral and everyone else as a deviation.

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6 BODY DIVERSITY ON SCREEN

When only one body is the default

Our characters are cast, lit, and written according to rules — without their body being the subject of it.

Models of all sizes dressed in everyday clothes — not lingerie, not athletic wear, not costumes — are treated as ordinary people.

Attractiveness not defined by a single body type — because desire, kindness, and presence are not measurements.

No "before and after" narratives — stories that treat a body as a problem to be solved before the character matters.

Fat bodies in genres where they are never sexualized — action, romance, comedy, horror — because they are not the point.

Clothing, lighting, and framing that treat larger bodies with the same care and attention as any other body. Camera angles that do not distort or fragment the body to make it more palatable.

Models of all sizes dressed in everyday clothes — not lingerie, not athletic wear, not costumes — are treated as ordinary people.

7 DISABILITY ON SCREEN

Not just wheelchair, not just stereotypes

Disability in film and television is a category that follows a remarkably narrow set of conditions. Most characters with visible disabilities are white. Most conditions are a stereotype that they never quite escape.

The Miracle Worker — the story of Helen Keller, one of the most famous deaf-blind people in the world. Anne Sullivan teaches her to communicate.

The Sweet or Sparrow — disability appears with extraordinary talent, as if talent compensates for disability. The character is a musician and the disability is not central to the story.

Stories in what different body like

Disabled characters are written as complete people — not as their entire story.

Disability is treated as one condition among conditions. Family, ambition, being social, difficult — everything non-disabled characters are allowed to be.

Disability is not used as a moral lesson about the able-bodied protagonist. It is the main character's life.

Stories in which disability is treated as a problem to be solved before the character matters.

Stories that make spectacular disability — because authentic representation starts with who is in the room.

Disability is treated as one condition among conditions. Family, ambition, being social, difficult — everything non-disabled characters are allowed to be.

8 NATIONALITY ON SCREEN

When strength means nothing else

Men are overrepresented in film, television, and games — but that overrepresentation is not uniform. Some nationalities are treated as default, others as exotic, others as threat, others as comedy, others as exotic spectacle, others as exotic spectacle. Strength means nothing when the story itself, and these stereotypes are not neutral. They are specific, culturally constructed, and they shape how audiences see entire populations.

In actionized streaming series, hero nationality is often deeply written into the story — and the hero's nationality is treated as a feature of the story, written into the story itself, and these stereotypes are not neutral. They are specific, culturally constructed, and they shape how audiences see entire populations.

- Neanderthal, Tolkien's many orcs are portrayed as effectively Russian, Chechnya, Caucasian, Slavic, Russian, Chechnya, Caucasian, Slavic, and Russian. Tolkien's Mordor and Neanderthal and Lara Croft's tomb are all Russian.
- The message that people who are not Russian are exotic, dangerous, or worth conquering is not subtle.

Stories in what different world like

Make characters who reflect rather than read — who serve problems, who have agency, who contribute, who are responsible, not through their nationality.

Stort sätt visar autokratiska strukturer i berättelse som det är — utan att det är ett tecken på att de är fiktiva.

Fortsätt som vi redan har med — men med en medvetenhet om vilken typ av berättelse som det är och vilka som det berättar om.

Stories that make spectacular disability — because authentic representation starts with who is in the room.

9 VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN ON SCREEN

Whose perspective is the story telling?

Film and television are filled with stories about the story or because violence against women has become so normalized that it feels like it belongs? Violence against women is not a genre. It is a pattern that appears across every genre, and the question is whether the story is being told from the perspective of the woman who survives it or the man who inflicts it.

Whose perspective is the story being told from? Is the perspective the woman who survives it or the man who inflicts it?

Stories that are about the story rights with the victim's perspective — the woman who survives, the woman who is not reduced to her wounds. The victim's perspective — their experience, their agency, their survival — is the story. The violence is not the story. The violence is the backdrop against the humanity of the woman who survives it.

Stories in what responsible story-telling looks like

Centre the perspective of those affected — not the mechanics of the violence, not the perpetrator's motive, not the spectacle of what happened, but what it looks like from the outside.

Provide context, not just shock — violence does not happen in a vacuum. Show the structural conditions that make it possible. Misogyny, the social norms that allow it, the institutions that fail to respond.

Show consequences, not just the act — recovery, support, the long aftermath. The story does not end at the moment of violence. The consequences are what matter most.

Give survivors agency — characters who are affected by violence can be more than victims. They can be protagonists, witnesses, people who act.

Avoid using sexual violence as a plot device — to motivate a male character, to shock the audience, to raise the stakes. The violence is not the point. The point is what it means for the woman who survives it.

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Every one of these rules dials back from "the normalized victim-blaming structure" toward "the woman who survives is the protagonist of her own story." This review is effective. Recognizing them is the first step. Refusing to reproduce them is the rest.

10 FAILS, GENDER AND THE WESTERN GAZE

The stereotypes behind the "exotic"

Western film and television have a long history of using women's bodies as a proxy for exotic danger. The pattern is specific and persistent. It is also dehumanizing. The specific stereotypes are: lady surfaces, but underneath is something dangerous; the woman who is sexually available and dangerous; the woman who is dangerous by nature; a child, never sexual, never dangerous.

Stereotypes are not neutral perceived trigger.

The Exotic Other — mysterious, lounge, unknowable. Framed as spectacle for the male protagonist. Her sexuality is dangerous. Her danger is always her women in "Oriental" Mordor.

The Dangerous Woman — sexually available and dangerous. Dangerous in a coded fantasy presented as thrill and mask women when, with the exception of Lara Croft, are almost always Russian.

The Indestructible Woman — Lara Croft, specifically, Lara Croft. The pattern is precision of depiction of lesser women (the "Lara Bonaire"), but the underlying structure is the same: the woman who survives is the protagonist.

The Dragon Lady — seductive, manipulative, threatening. Asian women are treated as a single category. The stereotype does not distinguish between Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Vietnamese, Thai, Filipino.

The Angry Black Woman — loud, aggressive, irrational, a stereotype that exists specifically at the intersection of race and gender. Black women are angry — emotions that in white male characters would be read as leader or hero.

The Mammy — nurturing, desexualized, devoted to others, a trope that has been used to make racism and slavery look benign. Black women are not mammies.

The Sexualized Victim — a woman of colour who exists to be rescued by the white protagonist. The underlying gaze has many sexual weights. Her story remains unheard.

The Child — never sexual, never dangerous. Asian women are treated as children, coded, infantilized, and, the — in its generated content trained on Western data, sexualized.

Women of colour as protagonists with their own stories — not as exotic danger, not as proxy, not as the woman who survives.

Complexity beyond the stereotype — characters who are allowed to be contradictory, ordinary, and not reducible to a single trait.

Cultural specificity without exotification — characters who are specific to their culture and their — not generalized into a single "Oriental."

Anger, strength, and sexuality as human traits — not as accidental or dangerous.

Stories set in non-Western worlds that are not filtered through a Western gaze — stories that are not about how the West sees the East.

These patterns apply beyond the examples listed here. Latina, Indigenous, Middle Eastern, and Indian women have their own versions of the same logic. The question is always the same: is this character a person, or a projection?

11 DARKNESS ON SCREEN

Which villain is worthy of the story?

For most of film history, queer characters existed only as villains, the coded villains, the predatory villains, the tragic figure punished for their identity. When they were visible at all, they were villains, coded villains, predatory villains, tragic figures punished for their identity. Villains, villains, villains.

Today, queer characters appear more often. But visibility alone is not representation. The question is what kind.

The queer best friend — present to support the straight protagonist's story. Her own story is not the point.

Queer as villain, queer as victim — the pattern that begins and ends with Hollywood.

Tragedy as default — queer love stories that end in loss, violence, or death.

Governance as coded, never named — characters who are "stylishly" queer but never name their sexuality, leaving representation deniable.

White gay men as the face of diversity — white trans characters, queer characters of colour, and queer characters with disabilities are underrepresented relative to their actual presence in the world.

Hypersexualization or desexualization — queer characters are either coded for their sexuality or stripped of it entirely. Neither is the story they simply people who also happen to desire.

Stories where queer people live, not just survive — the story is not their sexuality. It is their life.

Intersectional representation — queer characters who are also old, disabled, neurodivergent, or from communities that have their own stories.

Queer creatives behind the camera — because authentic stories come from people who know them from the inside.

12 EPS LIE — THE RATS PANDA

A model for telling indigenous stories with respect

"Painting about rat without rat."

Eps Lie is a Finnish-language film about Indigenous Sámi representation, developed by the International Sami Film Institute and the Sami Film Institute in Kautokeino. The film was produced by Finnish, Sámi, and Norwegian companies and co-produced by Finnish, Norwegian, and Swedish companies. Sweden, Finland, and Russia — to provide clear guidance for anyone who wants to tell Indigenous Sámi stories, characters in a Sámi-language film.

The Fantheter addresses what meaningful collaboration looks like: Sámi people are the rightsholders and decision-makers at every stage of Sámi people in key creative roles, from intellectual property rights to the final cut. Indigenous stories are not raw material for others to extract and process. Sámi perspectives are the foundation, not a consultation.

Sámi makes the Fantheter a best practice example beyond the Sámi context. Indigenous stories are not universal stories that can be told anywhere. Sámi stories are not simply material to be taken and used. They are cultural property with specific protocols, specific relations, specific meanings that only Sámi people can authoritatively judge. Anyone telling stories about or inspired by Indigenous peoples — anywhere in the world — can use the Fantheter as a reference for what it looks like when the rightsholders are treated as the decision-makers from the beginning.

Source: https://sfi.fi/en/kielivaat/

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MANIFESTO
FOR GENDER-JUST AND INTERSECTIONAL AI IN FILM AND MEDIA

Artificial intelligence is not coming to film and media—it is already here, reshaping how stories are created, who gets cast, what images circulate, and whose voices are heard. Right now, AI systems are learning from decades of racist casting, stereotypical portrayals, erasure of LGBTQ+ stories, ableist representation, and normalized sexual violence against women. Without intervention, AI will not fix these patterns. It will automate them, amplify them, and make them exponentially harder to challenge.

This is not a theoretical risk. It is happening now. Generative AI trained on Hollywood archives reproduces thin, young, white women in sexualized roles. Casting algorithms suggest actors based on racist and sexist patterns. Deepfakes violate consent at scale. Platforms amplify objectifying content because it drives engagement. And the people building these systems – over 80% male, overwhelmingly from narrow demographics – often do not see the problem.

We cannot afford to wait. Every day that passes without binding standards is another day of harm being automated and scaled. The film and media industry stands at a decision point: build AI that serves equality, or let it become another tool of discrimination.

The mechanisms for accountability exist. The knowledge to build ethical AI exists. What is missing is the will to act. This is our demand – and our invitation – to change that.

WHAT MUST CHANGE: SIX CORE DEMANDS

These are not aspirations. They are minimum requirements for any responsible use of AI in film and media:

1. Transparency and Human Authority
No more black boxes. Every AI system used in production, casting, marketing, or distribution must be transparent: what tool is being used, what data it was trained on, who is responsible. And humans—not algorithms—must retain decision-making power at every critical point. Systems whose decision-making processes cannot be explained must not be deployed.

2. Zero Tolerance for Sexualized and Racist Harm
Deepfakes, non-consensual sexualized content, racist stereotypes, automated „beauty rankings" – these are not bugs to be patched. They are harms that must be prevented by design, with immediate takedown, real consequences, and enforceable consent rules. Training AI on pornified or stereotypically sexualized images of women, girls, and gender-expansive people must be prohibited. Systems that reproduce these harms fail fundamental ethical requirements.

3. Real Power for Diverse Teams
Representation without authority is decoration. We demand intersectional teams—women across races, LGBTQ+ people, disabled people, Indigenous communities—with genuine decision-making power and the ability to stop harmful deployments before they happen. Affected communities must be paid to audit datasets and systems. Organizations fighting for representation and consent need funding. They need real power, not advisory roles that can be ignored.

4. Prove It Before You Deploy It
AI systems must demonstrate – through independent, intersectional impact assessments – that they do not reproduce discrimination before going into production. Self-certification is not enough. Results must be published. The work must be shown. Systems whose safety cannot be proven must not be deployed.

5. Build Competence Across the Sector
Everyone working in media – from executives to editors to set crews – needs to understand how AI amplifies bias and what to do about it. Training that focuses on gender, race, power, and intersectionality must be funded. Pathways for marginalized communities into AI development and governance must be created. Feminist and intersectional AI experts must be promoted in public discourse. This competence must become industry-standard.

6. Public Money Demands Public Values
Where public funding is involved – film funds, public broadcasters, cultural grants – gender-just and anti-racist AI standards must be mandatory. AI must not be used to simulate diversity while avoiding real hiring commitments. No funding without compliance. Public resources demand public accountability.

THIS IS NOT THEORETICAL: IT CAN BE DONE NOW

These demands are not abstract. They translate directly into enforceable obligations under existing frameworks:

Example 1:
EU DIGITAL SERVICES ACT (DSA)

Relevant for:
EU member states, platform regulation, online content governance
The Digital Services Act places justified emphasis on the protection of minors and on combating sexual violence in the digital space. To meet these objectives effectively, the Act must explicitly address sexism – understood as the systematic objectification of girls and women in images, particularly as this objectification is produced, reinforced, and scaled by AI systems and digital media platforms.

Why objectification must be addressed as a systemic risk:

The persistent visual objectification of girls and women – characterized by sexualization, reduction to body parts, and portrayal as passive or available – has serious and measurable consequences:
- Girls exposed to sexualized and objectifying imagery show higher levels of body shame, self-objectification, anxiety, depression, and disordered eating
- Objectifying imagery erodes boundaries and normalizes harassment, coercion, and sexual violence
- AI-driven recommender systems prioritize sexualized images because they drive engagement, disproportionately targeting girls and young women
- Objectification undermines women's credibility, agency, and participation in cultural, political, and professional spaces

These effects directly conflict with the DSA's obligation to ensure a safe digital environment and to protect fundamental rights, particularly for minors. Sexist objectification must therefore be recognized as a systemic risk under the DSA, not merely as an individual content issue. This is not new regulation. It is applying existing law to the reality of how AI harms women.

Example 2:
THE UK ONLINE SAFETY ACT

Relevant for:
UK jurisdiction, Ofcom enforcement, child safety frameworks

The UK Online Safety Act empowers Ofcom (the UK's communications regulator responsible for enforcing the Online Safety Act) to enforce child safety and prevent sexual harm online. AI-driven objectification undermines both. Ofcom guidance must explicitly address how algorithms amplify sexualized content and require platforms to mitigate this harm.

Example 3:
WAMPUM.CODES: AN INDIGENOUS ETHICAL FRAMEWORK

Relevant for:
Upstream ethical design, software development ethics, values-based technology governance

Wampum.Codes, created by Amelia Winger-Bearskin (Seneca-Cayuga Haudenosaunee), offers a fundamentally different approach to technology ethics. Rather than treating bias as a technical glitch to be fixed after the fact, Wampum.Codes embeds values directly into code as explicit "dependencies" – the same way software depends on specific libraries or functions.

Drawing from Haudenosaunee wampum belts – which encoded political agreements and responsibilities in beadwork – this framework treats contemporary software as modern wampum. It centers:
- Seven-generations responsibility: Building systems with accountability to future communities, not just quarterly profits
- Co-creation and collective authorship: Technology built with communities, not extracted from them
- Explicit ethical dependencies: Values like consent, care, and accountability are not optional add-ons but core requirements
- Community enforcement: Those affected by technology have power to determine its ethical use

This matters because it demonstrates that ethical AI is not about tweaking existing systems. It requires rethinking from the ground up how and why we build technology at all. Indigenous frameworks show us that other ways are not only possible – they are technically feasible right now. We must learn from them.

The tools exist. The frameworks exist. The expertise exists.
What has been missing is the will to act. That changes now.

TRANSFERABILITY TO OTHER JURISDICTIONS

While these examples focus on EU and UK frameworks and Indigenous ethics, the underlying logic applies universally and can be adapted to:
- Council of Europe AI frameworks and human rights instruments
- National AI strategies and online safety laws in other countries
- Industry self-regulatory codes and certification schemes
- International co-production agreements and film treaties
- Platform community standards and content policies

In each context, the core advocacy strategy remains: name objectification and discrimination as systemic risks, mandate gender-disaggregated AI audits, ensure platform and developer mitigation duties, and empower civil society monitoring.

A CALL TO COMMITMENT

To film and media institutions, platforms, funders, broadcasters, and regulators worldwide: the choice before you is clear. You can build AI systems that serve equality, dignity, and justice – or you can let AI automate the same discrimination that has plagued this industry for generations.

There is no middle ground. Inaction is a choice. Delay is a choice. And both are choices to accept harm.

We are not asking for permission. These demands reflect binding obligations under human rights frameworks, anti-discrimination law, and the fundamental dignity owed to everyone whose image, voice, story, or labor is processed by AI systems. We are stating what is required.

We invite you to meet this moment. Adopt these standards. Implement them. Enforce them. Partner with the organizations and communities doing this work. Fund them. Listen to them. Give them power.

The window for getting this right is closing. AI is being deployed now. Training data is being collected now. Harms are being scaled now. But the infrastructure of accountability is not yet locked in. That is the opportunity.

History will judge this industry not by what it said about AI ethics, but by what it did. Choose to build systems that serve equality. Choose accountability over convenience. Choose justice over profit. We are ready to work with anyone committed to making that choice real. The question is: are you?

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- UNESCO (2024). Challenging systematic prejudices: an investigation into bias against women and girls in large language models. https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000388971
- OECD (2024). The Effects of AI on the Working Lives of Women. https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/the-effects-of-ai-on-the-working-lives-of-women_14e9b92c-en.html
- Resolution of Women in Media (Herbsttreffen der Medienfrauen 2024), ARD, ZDF, Deutschlandradio, Deutsche Welle, ORF, Germany.

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Barbara Rohm, Chairwoman

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RESOURCES

OVERVIEW:

What you will find here: a curated list of organisations, initiatives, and studies focused on gender equity, inclusion, and feminist approaches to AI. Plus a small set of broader responsible AI resources.

KEY STUDIES ON GENDER AND AI:

UNESCO – "Challenging Systematic Prejudices: An Investigation into Gender Bias in Large Language Models"
A research report examining gender and cultural bias in large language models and proposing recommendations for more inclusive AI development.
Abstract:
The International Research Centre on Artificial Intelligence (IRCAI), under the auspices of UNESCO, in collaboration with UNESCO HQ, has released a comprehensive report titled "Challenging Systematic Prejudices: An Investigation into Gender Bias in Large Language Models". This groundbreaking study sheds light on the persistent issue of gender bias within artificial intelligence, emphasizing the importance of implementing normative frameworks to mitigate these risks and ensure fairness in AI systems globally. Released on International Women's Day on March 8, 2024.

Source: UNESCO & IRCAI (2024)

https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000388971

OECD – Effects of AI on the Working Lives of Women
A study examining how automation and AI systems are reshaping women's employment, working conditions, and economic opportunities.
Abstract:
The development and use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) continue to expand opportunities for the achievement of the 17 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including gender equality. Taking a closer look at the intersection of gender and technology, this collaboration between UNESCO, the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) examines the effects of AI on the working lives of women. This report describes the challenges and opportunities presented by the use of emerging technology such as AI from a gender perspective. The report highlights the need for more focus and research on the impacts of AI on women and the digital gender gap, in order to ensure that women are not left behind in the future of work. Released: March 2022
Source: UNESCO, OECD & IDB (2022)

https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/the-effects-of-ai-on-the-working-lives-of-women_14e9b92c-en.html

https://www.oecd.org/content/dam/oecd/en/publications/reports/2022/03/the-effects-of-ai-on-the-working-lives-of-women_1b627535/14e9b92c-en.pdf

Gender Shades Study (MIT, 2018)
A groundbreaking and pioneering study by Joy Buolamwini and Timnit Gebru that was the first to systematically demonstrate bias in commercial facial recognition systems, revealing higher error rates for darker-skinned females compared to lighter-skinned males. This influential research established key methodologies for measuring algorithmic bias that remain standard today.

Source: Buolamwini, J. & Gebru, T. (2018)

http://gendershades.org/

INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS AND GLOBAL POLICY FRAMEWORKS:

FemAI Africa (Women Political Leaders & GIZ)
An initiative empowering African women political leaders with AI knowledge and networks to drive inclusive and ethical AI governance. The programme connects female political leaders across Africa with international AI experts, policymakers, and stakeholders to shape gender-sensitive AI policies and position African voices in global AI discussions. Launched at the World Economic Forum 2025 in Davos.

https://womenpoliticalleaders.org/femaiafrica/

UN Women – Gender and AI
An overview of how artificial intelligence intersects with gender equality, highlighting risks, opportunities, and policy considerations globally.

https://www.unwomen.org/en/articles/explainer/artificial-intelligence-and-gender-equality

OECD AI Principles
An intergovernmental framework outlining principles for responsible, trustworthy, and human-centred artificial intelligence.

https://oecd.ai/

RESEARCH INSTITUTES AND POLICY-ORIENTED ORGANISATIONS:

Data & Society
An independent research institute studying the social implications of data-centric technologies and advancing public debate and technology policy in the public interest.

https://datasociety.net/

AI Now Institute
A research institute that analyses the political economy and power dynamics of artificial intelligence and produces reports and policy ideas to support public accountability.

https://ainowinstitute.org/

Partnership on AI (PAI)
A nonprofit partnership bringing together civil society, academia, industry, and policymakers to develop best practices and solutions so AI advances positive outcomes for people and society.

https://partnershiponai.org/about/

Distributed AI Research Institute (DAIR)
A research institute founded by Timnit Gebru that focuses on the social impacts of AI and centres marginalised communities in AI research and development.

https://www.dair-institute.org/

AI ETHICS, FEMINIST TECH APPROACHES AND INCLUSIVE AI DEVELOPMENT:

Women in AI Ethics (WAIE)
A global initiative that elevates and connects women working on AI ethics through research, advocacy, and public programming to broaden participation in AI governance.

https://womeninaiethics.org/

SUPERRR Lab
A feminist-led design and research lab working at the intersection of technology, care, and social justice, with a focus on power, participation, and equity in digital systems.

https://superrr.net/

Women at the Table
An organisation advancing women's leadership in technology and governance, including global advocacy on inclusive AI policy and gender-responsive digital governance.

https://www.womenatthetable.net/

A+ Alliance (Algorithmic Justice League Alliance)
A coalition initiative connected to the Algorithmic Justice League that promotes equitable and accountable AI through advocacy, research, and community engagement.

https://www.ajl.org/

FAccT (Fairness, Accountability, and Transparency in AI network)
A global interdisciplinary research network examining fairness, accountability, and transparency in algorithmic systems and their social impacts.

https://facctconference.org/

AlgorithmWatch (Germany/Europe)
A non-profit organisation that monitors and evaluates algorithmic decision-making processes. Advocates for transparency, accountability, and democratic governance of automated systems.

https://algorithmwatch.org/

EDUCATION, TRAINING AND COMMUNITY-BUILDING IN TECH:

Ada Developers Academy
A tuition-free, nonprofit coding academy that trains adult learners – primarily women and gender-diverse people – with a focus on communities underrepresented in tech.

https://adadevelopersacademy.org/

Girls Who Code
An international nonprofit that aims to close the gender gap in technology by providing coding and computer science education to girls, women, and non-binary students.

https://girlswhocode.com/

TransTech Social Enterprises
A co-learning and co-working community empowering LGBTQ+ individuals – particularly transgender and gender-nonconforming people – through practical tech skills training in areas like graphic design, web development, and coding.

https://transtechsocial.org/about/

Black in AI
A community of Black researchers and practitioners in artificial intelligence, advocating for increased diversity and working against discrimination in AI development and research.

https://blackinai.github.io/

Queer in AI
An organisation supporting LGBTQ+ individuals in AI research and advocating for the visibility of queer perspectives in AI development.

https://www.queerinai.com/

MEDIA, REPRESENTATION AND PUBLIC UNDERSTANDING OF AI:

Better Images of AI
A project providing free-to-use images that challenge stereotypical and misleading visual representations of artificial intelligence.

https://betterimagesofai.org/

Common Sense Media – AI Initiatives
Educational resources and advocacy efforts focused on helping families, educators, and policymakers understand and shape the impact of AI on children and society.

https://www.commonsensemedia.org/

PRACTICAL TOOLS & RESOURCES FOR AI USERS:

Gender Decoder for Job Ads
A tool that analyses job advertisements for gender-coded language and helps write more inclusive job postings.

http://gender-decoder.katmatfield.com/

ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDED STUDIES AND REPORTS:

Safer Internet Centre – Gender and AI
Research exploring how AI systems affect online safety, representation, and risks for women and girls in digital environments.

https://www.saferinternet.org/

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A NOTE ON TRANSPARENCY

These guidelines were developed with the support of AI – specifically Claude.ai, Perplexity, and DeepL. In keeping with the principles we outline, we want to be transparent about how. AI was used as a drafting and structuring tool in the following chapters: the Practical Prompting Guide and the Resources section. Perplexity was used to research the expertise and backgrounds of interview partners. DeepL was used for some translations. Claude.ai was also used to check spelling and review individual formulations throughout the text. In each case, the authors uploaded research materials, described the structure and ideas, gave detailed instructions, and worked step by step – reviewing, revising, and refining every output before it became part of the text.

The content is grounded in the authors' own research and editorial judgment; AI served as a tool, not a decision-maker.

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