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Danielle Hueston

New York City College of Technology

## Calendar Girls Movie Character Analysis

*Calendar Girls* is a British comedy film that was released in 2003. It was directed by Nigel Cole, who is a popular English television and movie director. The film is based on a true story of a group of middle-aged women, from the county of Yorkshire, who published a nude calendar in 2000 in hopes of raising money for Leukaemia Research under the Rylstone and District Women's Institute after the death of one of their member's husband (Neal, 2003). Two of the main characters are portrayed by actresses Helen Mirren and Julie Walters. Walters plays Annie Clarke, the widow, and Mirren plays Chris Harper, Clarke's bestfriend and the brains behind the calendar fundraiser idea. Harper comes up with the idea while visiting Clarke's husband, John, in the hospital. She discovers how uncomfortable the couch located in the waiting room is and decides a calendar where members of the Women's Institute (W.I.) pose nude while doing traditional W.I. activities, like watering plants and knitting, would be a good way to raise money for a new one. Majority of the members are leery about participating at first but eventually Harper convinces ten other W.I. members, including Clarke, to do the photoshoot. Contrary to reality, the middle-aged women in the movie reside in a fictional village of Knapley and the Rylstone and District Women's Institute is called Knapely W.I.

Appearance includes features of the undressed body, such as its shape and color, and expression through gesture (Roach-Higgins & Eicher, 1992). It is also only recorded through the sense of sight (1992). According to cultural ideals for beauty Chris Harper does not present the epitome of beauty through her appearance. For one she lacks facial attractiveness because her face is not symmetrical (Adomaitis, 2019b). However this is manipulated constantly in the film with bangs which bring more proportion to her face. Secondly, her aging face and body, evident in wrinkles, conveys to the viewer that she is middle-aged, which also does not represent beauty

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(2019b). She is of average weight, and not obese or of big size. However the phenomenon of body image does influence Harper's self esteem (Adomaitis, 2019a). During her first photoshoot she appears to be very shy and reluctant to take off her robe and reveal her nude body. This can be the result of anything from her being insecure of her unattractive body or knowledge of the ridicule she may face from society. However, after being cheered on by her peers she continues with shoot happily. Other models of the shoot can be seen exercising and increasing their grooming methods in hopes of appealing more attractive for their shoots.

Frances Tempest was the costume designer for the movie. Through the dress, which is an assemblage of modifications and/or supplements to the body (1992), chosen by Tempest viewers are able to depict certain information about Chris Harper's character. Her looks worn throughout the majority of the movie include knitted cardigans and turtle necks and chiffon skirts that drape to her ankles. It can be determined that Harper is conservative through her dress tastes. She wears the same dime sized hoop earrings, black watch and silver necklace along with her wedding band throughout the entire movie. This furthers the idea of her simplistic social perception. Christina Baker, Kay Bilk, Deborah Jarvis and Karen Sherriff-Brown were the hair and makeup artists for the movie. Harper's body modifications are very subtle, she wears unnoticeable makeup to make her appear as if she is not wearing any. Her hair is also very natural and untouched.

There were several socio-cultural influences that affected Chris Harper's dress. The first is her own social role, which is a combination of behaviors, obligations, beliefs, and norms determined by people in a society. She is a mother of one boy, Jem, so one of her roles is to provide for her son. Most people in society view mothers as clean kept individuals who should

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dress tastefully. If Harper's character wore mini skirts for most of the movie society is likely to say she is not dressed properly for her role. There is a scene in the movie where Jem gets in trouble with the police for smoking what was later found to be oregano. Instead of staying home to figure out what was going on with Jem she takes off for her Hollywood interview, abandoning her mother duty according to Annie. As stated previously she is also a member of the W.I. This also influences why she is so conservative with her dress. Marie, the W.I. Branch President, represents the part of society who believes that failing to be modest lacks decency, which is why she shamed the idea of the calendar in the beginning. The setting of England is also a cultural influence on Tempest's choice of dress. England is quite a windy and wet country, so it makes sense that Harper wears garments revealing less skin. And although England is home on one of fashion's biggest capitals, London, English women have also been known for centuries for their modest style of dress.

Chris Harper faces a dramatic status change once she becomes well known worldwide for her calendar feature. She gets constantly followed around by press and asked to sign autographs from fans. The makeup and hair artists showed this change through her body modifications. Harper's very naturally wavy and untended to hair was changed to a more polished wand curl. Her extremely neutral makeup was enhanced, just a tad, and viewers were now able to see minimal eyeliner, blush and a coral lip color. Tempest also spruced up Harper's body supplements to signify her new status change. During her trip to Hollywood, for an interview to discuss the calendar, Harper wore a pant set which incorporated a blazer which appeared to be of polyester material. She paired the set with black shades and black pumps. This completely ventures from her normal, everyday clothing choices. This change instantly makes her appear to

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be of upper class rather than of middle class like she did in the beginning of the movie. In the next scene, while at the beach, she wears a sky blue tank top, loose fitted white striped capri pants and a pink tweed rain hat. Her modest attitude appears to fade as this is the most skin she has shown.

All aspects discussed identifies how socio-cultural influences can influence dress. Standard beauty ideals also has an influence on how individuals are perceived by society. Dress is important because not only can it dictate to others a person's "sense of style" but their class, occupation, education level and social role.



Chris Harper, *Calendar Girls*

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