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Student perceptions of media representation of female lawyers

An examination of the perceptions of undergraduate law students in relation to the depiction and representation of female lawyers in the media and film.

A small scale qualitative case study of perceptions and opinions of first & final year law students.

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Objectives of session

- ▶ Background to research project
- ▶ Method & methodology of the project
- ▶ Results of research
 - ▶ *Macaulay (1987) Asimow (2000), Greenfield, Osborn & Robson (2010), Lucia (2005) Machura (2013)*

Current & historical discourses.

- ▶ Cultivation effect of media portrayal.
- ▶ *Gerbner (1973), Machura & Ulbricht (2001), Macaulay (1987)*

- ▶ Media Portrayal of female lawyers in film/television.
- ▶ *Greenfield, Osborn & Robson (2010), Lucia (2005) Machura (2013) Adam's Rib (1949) The Good Wife (2009-present), Silk (2012 -2014), Justice (1971- 1974)*

Methodology

- ▶ Semi structured interviews setting the context.
- ▶ Intervention with film extracts : examples included: Katherine Hepburn in 'Adam's Rib' (1949), Julia Roberts & others in 'Erin Brockovich' (2000), Emma Thompson as Gareth Pierce in 'In the Name of the Father' (1993), Mary Steenburgen in 'Philadelphia' (1993), Maxine Peake in 'Silk' (2012).
- ▶ Subsequent interviews.
- ▶ **Limitations:** sample size, subjectivity of extracts, suggestibility of students:
- ▶ Sharp (2002), Asimow, Greenfield, Jorge, Machura, Osborn, Robson, Sharp & Socklosie ((2005), Asimow (2000), Papke (1996), Dunwoody & Salzmann (2005)

Early analysis of interviews

- ▶ General acknowledgement of negative female depictions
- ▶ Acceptance of limitations in the profession based on experience
- ▶ Ability to distinguish between media story and the need to entertain & reality.
- ▶ Expansion of research : More research & questionnaires/collaboration.

References

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- ▶ Machura Stefan & Davies Llewelyn, 'Law is an Odd Thing - Liberalism and Law in the TV series "The Good Wife" Krim Journal 45 2013.
- ▶ Robson Peter, 'Women Lawyers on Tv - the British experience' - paper delivered to University of Chester forum May 2014.

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Filmography.

Adam's Rib, director: George Cukor, USA, 1949

Silk, (TV series, UK 2012 -2014)

Erin Brockovich, director: Stephen Soderbergh, USA, 2000

Philadelphia, director: Jonathan Demme, USA, 1993

In the Name of the Father, director: Jim Sheridan, USA, 1993.

Legally Blonde, director: Robert Luketic, USA, 2001

Judge Judy, (TV series, USA 1996-present)

The Good Wife, (TV series, USA 2009 to present)



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