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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

## Books.

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Kennedy H 'Eve was Framed' 2nd revised edition (2005) Vintage London

Gerbner, G (2002) Growing up with television: The Cultivation Perspective. In Media effects : advances in theory and research. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Jennings Bryant & Dolf Zillman eds. Hills Dale, NJ: Erlbaum.

Greenfield, Osborn & Robson 'Film and the Law' (2010) Hart Publishing

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Lucia, C 'Framing Female lawyers' (2005) University of Texas press

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## Journals

Asimow, Greenfield et al 'Perceptions of lawyers- a transnational study of student views on the image of law & lawyers' International journal of Legal Profession, Nov 2005.

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- ▶ Asimow Michael, 'Bad Lawyers in Movies' (2000) Nova law Review.
- ▶ Sharp, Cassandra 'Scarlet Letter or Chastity Belt? What Legal Dramas of the Twenty first Century are "Telling" Law Students About a Career in Law ' Legal Ethics 2002 vol 5
- ▶ 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.



## References continued.

### 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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