

University of Chester



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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.

Wendy Steel. Senior Lecturer in law @ University of Chester.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LS37SNYjg8w&feature=share&list=RDLS37SNYjg8w>

Harry Enfield BBC

Objectives of session

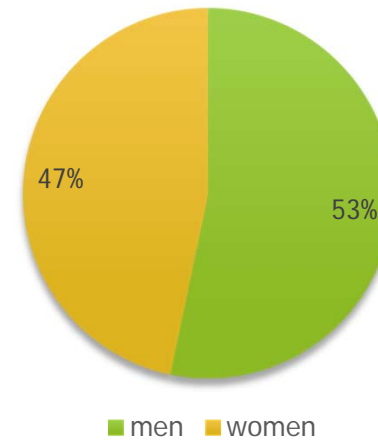
- ▶ Background to research project
- ▶ Method & methodology of the project
- ▶ Results of research
 - ▶ *Macaulay (1987) Asimow (2000), Greenfield, Osborn & Robson (2010), Lucia (2005) Machura (2013)*

Statistics:

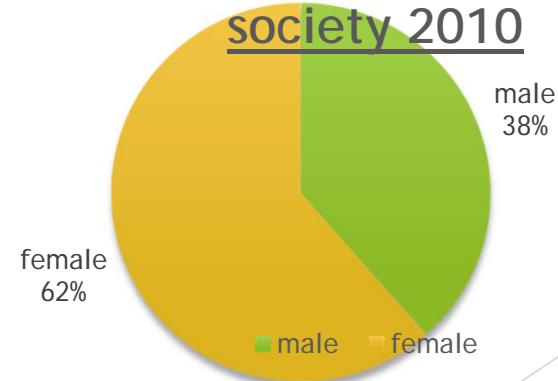
- Lawyers in practice
- Law students
- Law students @ Chester.
- (67% female)

- Law society annual statistical report 2010.
- SRA Diversity Monitoring Statistics 2012

Female/Male lawyers 2011



Female/male law students enrolled in law society 2010



Top of profession ?

- ▶ Number of barristers - 50% women
- ▶ Number of Queen's Counsel - 12%
- ▶ Number of High Court Judges.- 15%
- ▶ Source :<http://www.judiciary.gov.uk/>

Baroness Helena Kennedy
'Eve was framed' 1993

'It is tiring to have to be talking about why we have so few women in the higher ranks of the judiciary....but we do have to talk about it because the present situation is terrible'

Baroness Hale
2013 Daily Telegraph interview.

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

Statistics

The Judiciary of England & Wales - website below

<http://www.judiciary.gov.uk/publications-and-reports/statistics/diversity-stats-and-gen-overview>

The Law Society – Entry Trends Law Society's annual statistical report, 2010.

<http://www.lawsociety.org.uk/careers/becoming-a-solicitor/entry-trends/accessed-23/04/14>

Articles

Barnett, Emma(2013) Britain's most senior female judge: our legal system is still not promoting enough women. Daily Telegraph

15/03/13 <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/women/womens-business/9933203/Britains-most-senior-female-judge-Baroness-Hale-our-legal-system-is-still-not-promoting-enough-women.html>

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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. 2nd ed. Jennings Bryant & Dolf Zillman eds. Hills Dale, NJ: Erlbaum.

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Denver ed. 'Legal Reelism- Movies as Legal Text' (1996) University of Illinois press

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

Greenfield & Osborn ed 'Readings in Law & Popular Culture' (2006) Routledge Cavendish

Gies Lieve 'Law and the Media' (2008) Routledge Cavendish

Schultz Ulrike & Shaw Gisela ed. 'Women in the World's Legal Profession' (2003) Hart Publishing. Portland Oregon.

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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