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Challenging gendered media mis(s)representations of women managers and leaders.

“Making the tea, chairing the meeting?”

**The ebb and flow of feminism and femininities in
television representations and professional practice**

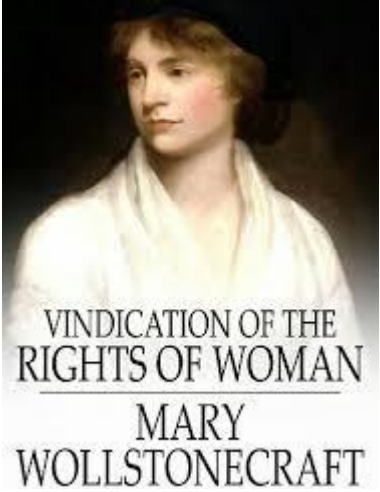
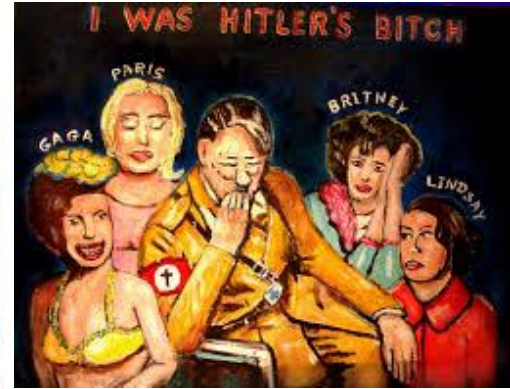
Dr Helen Rodgers, Dr Liz Yeomans and
Sallyann Halliday

Key discourses – Feminism and Post-feminism?



Feminism: 'I myself have never been able to find out precisely what feminism is: I only know that people call me a feminist whenever I express sentiments that differentiate me from a doormat...'

REBECCA WEST



The feminist movement was created to allow ugly women access to the mainstream of society.

QUOTE-ID.COM

Rush Limbaugh
American talk-show host
Born 1951



WAVES OF FEMINISM:

FIRST WAVE

SECOND WAVE

THIRD WAVE



Aim of the paper

- In this paper we attempt to develop the discourse on feminism and femininity and in so doing, to bridge the philosophical and often disagreeable/uncomfortable divide between feminism (as a world view) and post-feminism (as a critical tool though which to explore the challenges of gender in work and organizations) our aspiration here is to situate our discussions within the historical theoretical developments in feminist thinking and accentuate the relevance of this thinking to organizational practice.

Themes:

The emergence and manifestation of moderate feminism(s) in contemporary organizations.

The relationship between moderate feminism(s), post-feminism and neoliberal feminism in organizations.

Relation to literature

Ebbs and flows of feminism and femininities?

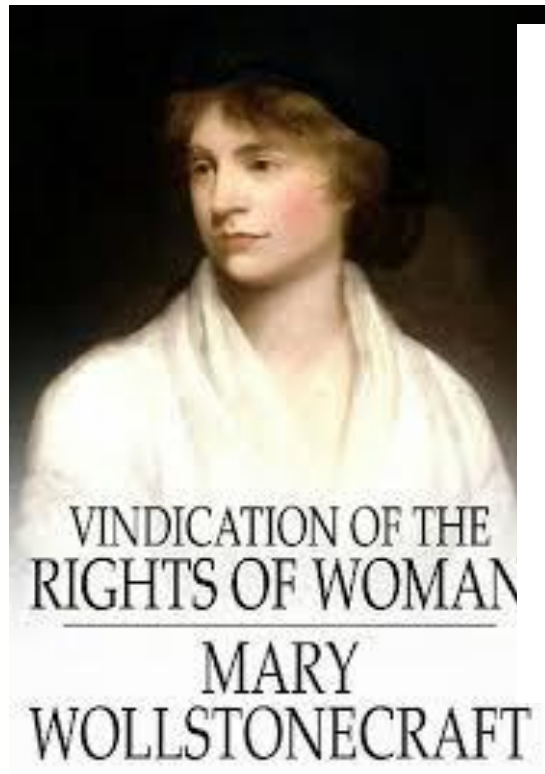
- *A broadening out of professional identities in the “location between feminism and femininity.” (Lewis, 2014 p.1857)*
- *Relationships between feminism and post-feminism? “A re-signification of femininity, making available to organisational actors a range of emerging femininities” (Lewis, 2014, p.1848)*
- *“as a critical concept can direct critical attention to the kinds of subject’s women (and men) are being asked to become”. (Kelan, find year?)*
- *Strong/powerful identities portrayed in the professionally regulated areas of police and government. PR is only partially professionalised; hence a struggle for identity in reality.*
- *Not “retreating to home as a matter of choice” remaining solidly and proudly within the public sphere.*

“I’m so sick of Theresa May’s shoes being discussed rather than her actual policies and what she does in Parliament, if you go to the Daily Mail, there’s pages and pages on her different outfits”.

Sarah, Politics undergraduate, (2015).



3 frames of reference

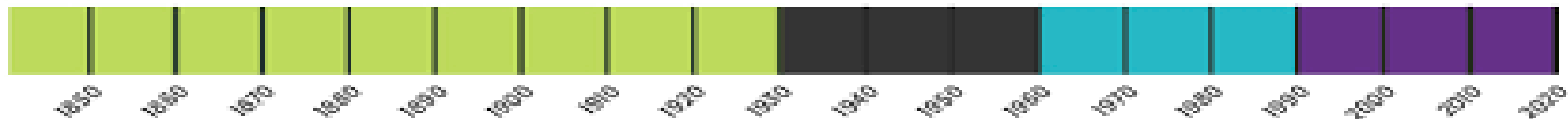


WAVES OF FEMINISM:

FIRST WAVE

SECOND WAVE

THIRD WAVE



Ebbs and flows:

- "Taught from their infancy that beauty is women's sceptre, the mind shapes itself to the body, and, roaming around its gilt cage, only seeks to adorn its prison" - Wollstonecraft (1792, 157).
- "fluidity over fixity, multiplicity over singularity and contradictions over consistency" ..inviting the expression of hybrid identities" (Budgeon, 2011, p.5).
- "when we speak of a wave, we typically mean 'one among others.' 'Wave' just doesn't sound like the right word for lone occurrences of something. Waves that arise in social political milieus, like waves that arise in water, become defined only in context, relative to the waves that have come and gone before. (Bailey, 1997, p.18 in Budgeon, 2011, p.6).

**“where one wave begins and one wave ends is often
"imperceptible" (Budgeon, 2011, p.6)**



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Women in PR: A case of moderate feminisms?

- “the onus is on the individual to ensure they are working in a business where pay reflects contribution and is increased entirely on merit, not gender” (Bussey, 2011).
- “I never want to go there again”. The restaurant clientele were “White, middle class and middle aged”.
- “I strongly feel there is a generation of men – the ‘Boomasaur’ I call them – more in the city/financial side of PR who need to go with the times. Until they do we won’t see real change. They have a house in the city and country and no idea what it’s like for women working in an environment that continues to operate under male norms and ideas of equality”.

Women in PR: A case of moderate feminisms?

: “You are a feminist if you want ‘control of your career, the ability to earn your own money and control your body’. I think there was a generation of women who were anti-men. I don’t think you have to be anti-men to be a feminist”

There is evidence that older, female practitioners (or former practitioners) did not recognise a collective responsibility to address gender inequalities and specifically women’s oft-interrupted path to the boardroom.

What about us?

“The thing that I'm most proud of in my time here, is setting up a very strong and effective women's professional network, (in my own time) it's been great to see the women's confidence grow. Now, what do I get from the men - what about us? Where is our network? Why can't you set one up for us?”

Maddy, FCO, Senior Career Professional

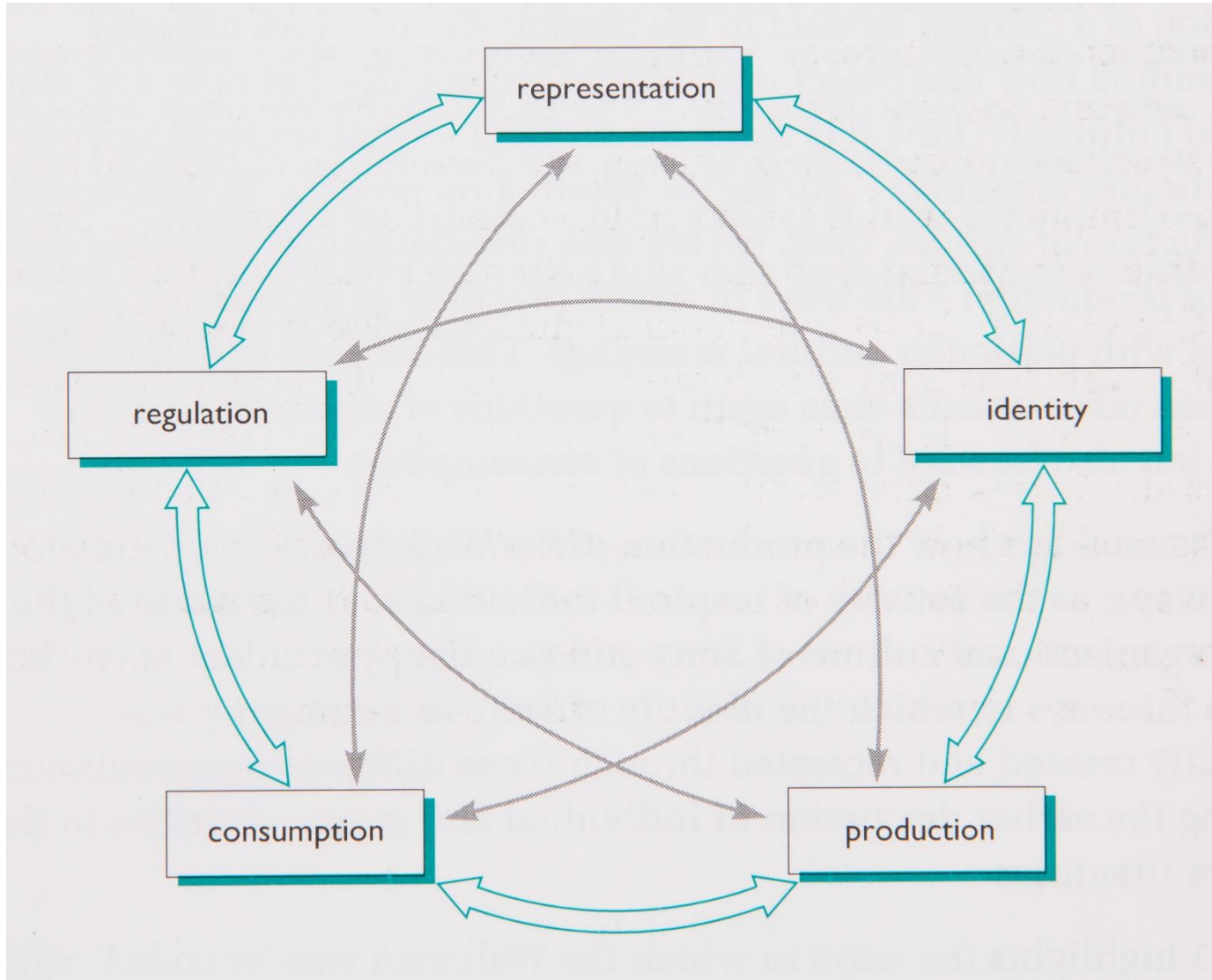


Questions and Discussion?

Proposition and Key questions for our research

- Television and other media representations of women in work play an important yet permeable role in the (re)construction and (re)negotiation of gendered professional identities.
- How is cultural meaning shaped for women working in these professions and consuming television as a cultural commodity?
- How are women and femininity being included in the organizational sphere? (Billing, 2011 in Lewis, 2014, p1848).

Conceptual Framework - The Circuit of Culture



du Gay et al 1997

Key discourses:

- Feminism – ‘the problematic nature of the obvious’ (Acker, 1990, p.40)
- 3rd wave feminism – populist “third wavers” offer a sexier “brand” of feminism connected to “girl” culture.
- Post feminism – “an attitude, a reaction formation, an always available hegemonic response to feminism not entirely linked to any particular historical moment” (Projansky, 2001, p.88).

Key discourses

- “Post feminist gender regime” (McRobbie)
- A rejection or denunciation of the excessive in “feminism”
- The domestication or taming of feminism such that the ‘wildness’ and ‘unpredictability’ of feminism is curtailed, so as to render it more docile, less threatening” (Dean, 2010b, p.394)
- “The retreat to home as a matter of choice not obligation” (Gill, 2007a; Negra, 2009)

Table 1: Research Participants

Profession/subject	Student Focus group Student prospectors	Early-career professional (1-5 years)	Mid-career professional (6-14 years)	Senior-career professional (15+ years)
Politics	Sarah, Ann, and Tom	Tom		
FCO			Penny	Isabella and Maddy
Criminology/Police	Josh and Louisa	Amy	Lucy	Natasha
PR	Hannah, Emma, and James	Victoria	Rebecca	Tracey

Early stages of Theorizing

Splintered Identities:

“So part of it is, I’ve splintered it a bit, so I can say, I can present myself in different ways to people. I can say, look (umm) I’m a civil servant, which they assume Bureaucratic, blah blah blah, or I can say I work on climate change issues and then that definitely gets a reaction as well (umm). So I will and do talk about the things I’m doing rather than my job description for instance, as a different way of connecting to people.”

Penny – FCO, mid career professional

Private/Public role conflict =

“Why do they assume that I am going to make the tea? Because I’m not, I’m chairing the meeting!”

Maddy – FCO, senior career professional



Culture and connection -

“Two of my favorite shows are Absolutely Fabulous: I love that show. And Patsy in there she runs a magazine and Edina has her own PR agency. And in Sex and the City, you’ve got Samantha and she doesn’t need a man. Whereas, the other two, they are desperate. But what they have in common is that they are very strong, opinionated women. I think I may have subliminally chosen a career path off the back of [these shows], while identifying with characters like that. Yes, I watched both of them as I was growing up.”

Victoria – PR early career professional

Appearances can be deceptive? - Contrast and paradox

“And I think it’s pretty clear, in Australia anyway, if you’re a female politician you’re going to have to deal with a whole set of issues about appearance and very, quite frankly, sexist things that a male politician just won’t have to deal with.”

Penny - FCO, mid career professional

Inter-generational values -

“The young women need to dress and act for the part Some of them look like Miss Whiplash.... There’s an issue of young women having a voice full stop. I think that it maybe feels unfeminine to be more business-orientated.”

Tracey – PR, senior career professional

Positive associations - the ‘glorification of the glamorous’ in TV drama

“She’s amazing, she’s strong, she’s powerful, she’s confident, she’s sexually active...and she’s leading the investigation.”

(Gillian Anderson as Stella in *The Fall*)

Sarah – Politics undergraduate



Feminine Femininities “hierarchical relationship existing between different modes of femininity” (Lewis, 2014, 1859)

Emotive realism (Featherstone 2010)



“I think they’ve got better at it ...as a force...one of the ones that was filmed in our Force area was the Happy Valley series with Sarah Lancashire.... Sarah actually came and spent a significant amount of time with officers on patrol so that the role that she portrayed was much more real and I think that’s the key - she spoke to people doing that job and spent time with people and saw first hand what it really is like rather than trying to portray a role that in her own mind should look like.”

Natasha – Police, senior career professional

“Interactive mirrors” (Coleman, 2012)

The ongoing backlash -

– Looking the part?

“I’m so sick of Theresa May’s shoes being discussed rather than her actual policies and what she does in Parliament, if you go to the Daily Mail, there’s pages and pages on her different outfits”.

- *Behaving outside of the norm -*
- *“Hillary Clinton was referred to so much as a bitch during her [2008] campaign ...when all she was doing was asserting herself. If you’re a man and you’re asserting yourself you’re confident, you’re charismatic, and you’ve got style whereas if you’re a woman doing it [asserting yourself] you’re a bitch, you’re manipulative.”*

Sarah, Politics undergraduate

Representation

“Emancipatory change” – Jorgenson & Phillips, 2002)



“There’s been a real focus on diversity and hearing different voices, so I get the sense that maybe once the organization was very mono-cultural, which is sort of straight White men...old... [laughter] and they had all the leadership positions and did all the talking but it’s quite clearly, everyone’s decided that that can’t happen in this world anymore.”

Penny – FCO, mid career professional

- *“Things are changing slowly, we’ve been promoted, there are more female directors and we have a female High Commissioner coming in now. It is opening up, but there are still a lot of Oxford/Cambridge types too.”*
 - Isabella, FCO Senior career professional

*“Why do they assume that I am going to make the tea?
Because I’m not, I’m chairing the meeting!”*

Maddy – FCO, senior career professional

*“If you say you are a PR girl, I think that people
automatically think you’re a party girl; that you’re up for a
good time, that you’re not particularly intelligent maybe”*

– Victoria, PR early career professional

Identity

“Sometimes women feel that in particular roles or to achieve promotion or get on they almost kind of have to take on male traits and I don’t think everybody can do that and everybody is comfortable doing that. If they have children, they are generally the primary carer, and some of these environments require you to be on call and have quite complex shift patterns, and if you don’t have a partner or family who are able to provide that care, it’s very difficult. Because where do you get childcare at 3 am when you’re on call? So I think there are some barriers certainly that are more challenging [for women].”

Natasha – Police, senior career professional

Media Consumption

Closer influences, Family, teachers, lecturers:

“I always wanted to be a fighter pilot, Dad was in the Royal Air Force and the fact that I can’t see (laughter), was a bit of a drawback. I thought, Foreign Office, next best thing. What’s not to love?”

Maddy – FCO, senior career professional

Skills and personal interests:

“Public relations offered something creative, involving writing. A better fit than marketing, which was a more aggressive thing; PR seemed to capture that creativity”

Rebecca – PR, mid career professional

Media Consumption

Gendered roles negative associations with TV representations and other forms of media -

“Things are portrayed and you perceive them as, “yeah, that’s a male, that’s a female job” and when you do come to make a choice for work you do choose you might think to yourself as well “I’m not like that, I couldn’t be hard like that.” So that imagery that was portrayed to me at the time, maybe by the media stopped me from making that career choice.”

Amy – Police, early career professional

Prosumers -

“So, for instance, on Twitter, I’ve had responses to my tweets saying that they are going to fuck the feminist out of me, it’s horrific, it’s disgusting.”

Sarah – Politics undergraduate

Representation

Strongest reaction from research participants

Resentment for TV representations, disconnected from reality.

“A lot of women coming through still think PR is fluffy and consumer driven and that’s why a lot of cosmetic agencies and fashion agencies get away with things such as unpaid internships.”

Tracey – PR, senior career professional

Life imitating art? Shaping behaviors (Mavin, Bryans & Cunningham, 2010, p.556) -

“People would use the language they had seen on the television. They would use things like “I’m going to take this line.” I used to find a lot of Alastair Campbell-isms played back at me. I definitely felt I wasn’t living up to that and because of that they didn’t get where I was coming from. You sometimes felt you had failed expectations if you hadn’t successfully managed to demonstrate media manipulation.”

Rebecca - PR, mid career professional

Discussion

Ebbs and flows of feminism and femininities?

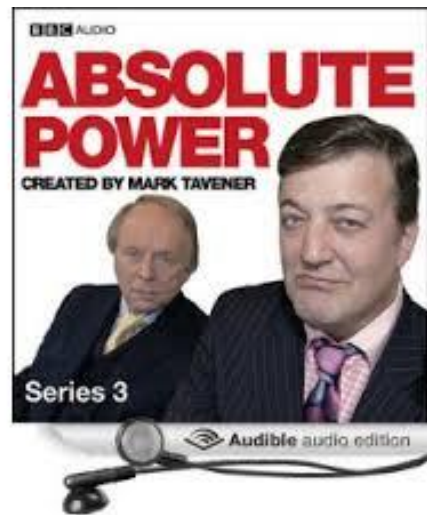
Strong/powerful identities portrayed in the professionally regulated areas of police and government. PR is only partially professionalised; hence a struggle for identity in reality.

A broadening out of professional identities in the “location between feminism and femininity.” (Lewis, 2014 p.1857)

Relationships between feminism and post-feminism? “A re-signification of femininity, making available to organisational actors a range of emerging femininities” (Lewis, 2014, p.1848)

Not “retreating to home as a matter of choice” remaining solidly and proudly within the public sphere.

TV representations of the PR professional



TV representations of the Police



TV representations of Politics and Government



Research Ethics

- Research ethics approval
- Course Leaders approval
- Consent Informed and signed up
- Confidentiality and anonymity
- Publication approvals

Methodology (primary data)

- Qualitative research design involving:
 - Initial discussions with course leaders in Criminology, Public Relations and Politics at Leeds Beckett University (January)
 - Recruit participants and survey televisual/media influences
 - 3 focus groups with first year students attending above courses (February)
 - 6-9 semi-structured interviews with practitioners at senior, middle and entry level (each in fields of criminology/police, public relations and politics) (February)

Analysis

- Critical Discourse analysis – defined as “emancipatory and politically committed to social change” (Jorgenson & Phillips, 2002, p.54).
- “interdiscursivity and intertextuality” (Fairclough, 1992, p.117)..... Some discourses will be privileged over others at a given point in time.
- Identifying dominant discourses and responses to these discourses (e.g. Feminism, post-feminism).

Findings – Regulation

- Aspects of regulation in social structures facilitating progression into senior positions in two professions:
- The Gender Agenda – Police
- Gender Mainstreaming (Booth and Bennett, 2002; Rawlings, 2013) - Politics and Government
- Long term structural change: Hard work
- *“obviously we as force, as other forces do, have roles that for whatever reason don’t tend to attract women and we have to work really hard to understand why that is and break down some of the barriers”*

Lucy - Police mid-career.

Are Women in the Media Only Portrayed As Sex Icons? Statistics Show a Massive Gender Imbalance Across Industries

Infat. Acad in Williamsburg, October 15th 2018



Representations of Gender



The Representation of Women in the Media

Gender: MS1 Representations and Responses

