

Poster girls and daddy's girls: Collusion in gendered representations of women's career narratives

It is often asserted that the media misrepresents women professionals and leaders (Marvin et al., 2016). This claim implies two assumptions: a) female subjects do not wish to be portrayed in the manner that the media adopts, and b) the portrayals of women leaders are skewed or false. This study proposes to investigate the systemic nature of language and dynamic construction of business leaders' representations of their personal and professional identities (DeRue and Ashford, 2010) and career choices through career life story interviews. We expand work on print and visual forms of media analysis by exploring radio interviews as auditory cultural artefacts, using recordings of the BBC Radio 4 biographical feature, Desert Island Discs (DID). The voice of public British radio enjoys a vast worldwide audience and DID is one of its most long-standing and beloved programs, providing first-order insights into life events that shape career choices since 1942. As such, our study adds the aspect of verbal representation of women professionals in the media as opposed to the more common focus on physical appearance (Kelan, 2013), and responds to Broadbridge and Simpson's (2011) call to examine forms of gendered power, practices, and processes embedded in cultural norms. Our project also extends Cohen and Duberley's (2013) article on career narratives in Desert Island Discs (DID) and contributes to the few autoethnographic studies in business management literature.

Some important considerations for this project relate specifically to representations of power. The BBC is a national institution of the United Kingdom with a far-reaching scope of influence. As such, the study also takes into consideration the power and influence of the media giant, BBC, on the audience of one of its most well-established intellectual institutions, Radio 4. We address the extent to which the subjects of the interviews are powerless (Vähäsantanen & Saarinen, 2013) in the context of neoliberal, individualistic, and Western-

centric assumptions, and media representations perpetuate systemic vertical segregation through neoliberal discourse. Using Roberts' (2005) personal image construction model as a framework, the study examines dialogic interactions between interviewer and interviewee that tease out or silence opportunities to contradict or to collude with gendered representation. We explore the co-construction of gendered meaning using content analysis methods (Gioia et al., 2013) with specific focus on interviewer framing. Analysing self-representations and interviewer questions in 40 female and male interviewees in selected professional categories highlights the (mis-) representation of gendered identity via career choices, transitions and struggles. We question whether these women want to be represented as gendered or sexualized, and consider how both parties construct gendered social expectations of choices, whether men are also sexualized (if so to what degree), as well as the collusion of the interviewer in taking up cues from the castaway to reify gendered or sexualized constructions of women (and men), the choices they make, and the rationale for these.

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