Repackaged sob sisters and outsiders within: reading the female and minority journalists on The Bold Type and The Morning Show

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The version of Record of this manuscript has been accepted and will be available in Feminist Media Studies forthcoming at
https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/14680777.2023.2197565

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Female and minority journalists in fiction movies and series are underrepresented and often framed as emotional, unstable, inexperienced, and unprofessional. These representations reiterate and preserve existing inequalities in Western newsrooms in which female and minority journalists face many obstacles ranging from the glass ceiling to a gender pay gap. However, these representations also have the potential to subvert and challenge existing structures and imagine more inclusive newsrooms. Therefore, this study proposes a qualitative textual analysis of the representation of female journalists in the American fiction series' The Morning Show (AppleTV+, 2019) and The Bold Type (Freeform, 2017). Using a feminist media studies and intersectional perspective, it unpacks how the gendered power dynamics in newsrooms are represented in the series' narratives. We find that The Bold Type represents an idealistic version of an inclusive work environment aimed at creating equal opportunities among journalists while at the same time embedding this in broader patriarchal structures that restrict this representation. The Morning Show claims a more critical approach by representing a pessimistic and dysfunctional newsroom and including an explicit critique of the power relations that disadvantage female minority journalists.

Keywords: Female journalists; popular culture; postfeminism; pariah femininity; intersectionality

Introduction

Bob Woodward, Carl Bernstein, Charles Kane, and even Superman: What they have in common is that they are all world-famous characters who were featured in a fiction movie or series about journalism. Yet it is not a coincidence that they are all white, heterosexual, able-bodied, cisgender male journalists. Research shows that female journalists are underrepresented and often framed as emotional, unstable, inexperienced, and unprofessional (Matthew C Ehrlich 1997; Howard Good 1998; Brian McNair 2014; Chad Painter, Patrick Ferrucci 2012, 2015, 2017; Joe Saltzman 2003). Though research on (racial and LGBTQ+) minority journalists is more scarce, findings suggest that they are also underrepresented and mostly positioned within an outsider-within framework (Matthew C Ehrlich, Joe Saltzman 2015; Amanda Rossie 2009).

Few professions are as omnipresent in popular culture as journalism (McNair 2011a; Ness 2020). These representations significantly contribute to the public's opinion on journalism and how the profession positions itself in contemporary society (Hanitzsch and Vos 2017; Painter 2019; Saltzman 2005). From a cultural studies perspective, these stereotypical representations of journalists in fiction reiterate and preserve existing inequalities in Western newsrooms and society more broadly, as research shows that female and minority journalists face many obstacles to accessing and working in the profession (Van Leuven, Karin

Raeymaeckers Sarah, Manon Libert, Florence Le Cam, Joyce Stroobant, Sylvain Malcorps, Antoine Jacquet et al., 2019; David H Weaver, Lars Willnat, G. Cleveland Wilhoit 2019). However, fiction also has the potential to subvert and challenge existing structures and imagine more inclusive and equal newsrooms (Ehrlich 2005, 2006; Stuart Hall 1982; Jack Lule 2001; Brian McNair 2011b). Especially in the wake of recent societal changes such as #MeToo, initiatives such as Black Lives Matter, and in general the increasing awareness of structural inequalities surrounding gender, race, and sexual orientation, it is relevant to research whether such representations have shifted accordingly (Scarcelli, Krijnen, and Nixon 2021; Tally 2021).

Despite the omnipresence of journalism in film and television fiction and its potential to both preserve and challenge existing conditions for female and minority journalists, only a selective body of research has been conducted on the representation of female and minority journalists in fiction. Furthermore, most of these studies were conducted in the early 2000s and do not provide insights into how those representations might have changed, especially in relation to the abovementioned societal evolutions. Therefore, this study proposes a qualitative textual analysis of the representation of female journalists in the American fiction series' The Morning Show (TMS, AppleTV+, 2019) and The Bold Type (TBT, Freeform, 2017). To do so, this study uses a feminist media studies perspective to uncover how gendered power dynamics in newsrooms are represented in the series' narratives. Additionally, it employs intersectionality theory to expose how having a minority identity can function as a double burden in the gendered power dynamics represented in the series. To do so, we centralize concepts such as postfeminism (Rosalind Gill 2007), pariah femininity (Mimi Schippers 2007), and intersectionality theory (Kimberle Crenshaw 1990).

The Morning Show is an American drama television series starring well-known actors including Jennifer Aniston, Reese Witherspoon, and Steve Carell, of whom the first two were also executive producers of the series. The narrative is inspired by CNN TV anchor Brian Stelter's non-fiction book Top of the Morning: Inside the Cutthroat World of Morning TV (2013), which elaborates on his own experiences with morning TV including rivalries over morning television ratings. Similarly, The Bold Type is also inspired by non-fictional journalistic events as it is based on the life and career of Cosmopolitan magazine's former editor-in-chief Joanna Coles, who is also the executive producer of the series. In contrast to The Morning Show, The Bold Type can be classified as a comedy-drama television series, leaving more room for humoristic portrayals of journalistic characters and events. The series' pose a good subject of study as they allow us to read the narratives via the lens of two newsrooms, thereby providing different perspectives on how gendered power dynamics take shape in two clearly distinct contexts with their own unique challenges and opportunities and their own specific generic approach. For The Morning Show, we focused on a sample of sequences from the first two seasons as these were the only seasons available at the time of the analysis. For The Bold Type, all six seasons were available, but because of the high number of episodes, we opted to restrict the analysis to a sample of sequences from the first and last seasons. We chose those seasons to be able to recognize any evolution in the representations. These series were

selected because of their relative "newness," their widespread availability, and their focus on issues that female and minority journalists face in the newsroom, including sexual harassment and racism. We found that both series set out to shed light on—and, by doing so, critique—gendered power relations in the newsroom. The Bold Type represents an idealistic version of an inclusive work environment aimed at creating equal opportunities among journalists while at the same time embedding this in the broader patriarchal structures that restrict this representation. The Morning Show claims a more critical approach by representing a pessimistic and dysfunctional newsroom and including an explicit critique of the power relations that disadvantage female and minority journalists.

Female journalists in the fictional newsroom

Since the beginning of film, journalism fiction has provided representations where women can play equal roles to those of men (Good 1998). In contrast to other fictional female characters who have been consistently underrepresented and reduced to a love object or dramatic catalyst, often in the form of a housewife character (Lauzen 2018, 2019; Lindner, Lindquist, and Arnold 2015; Sink and Mastro 2016), fictional female journalists have been represented as hard-boiled and hardworking characters constituting a sob sister stereotype. The sob sister comprises a characterization of female reporters as big- hearted, soft-minded, emotionally generous, and intellectually sloppy journalists willing to do the same as their male counterparts to get a story (Good 1998; Saltzman 2003). They are represented as independent journalists who outreport every male journalist, creating the perfect battle of the sexes. Some of the most famous early sob sisters are the fast-talking Hildy Johnson (Rosalind Russell) in His Girl Friday (1940) and the self-assured Torchy Blane (Glenda Farrell) in the Torchy Blane series (1937–1939). However, these representations also have to be nuanced as they simultaneously are represented as contingent on men when they inevitably screw up and succumb to their desire for a man, marriage, and children, again pushing women into a one-sided and stereotypical representation (Ehrlich 1997; Good 1998; Saltzman 2003). Female journalists tend to be placed in a double-voiced discourse in which they receive more agency and responsibility than other fictional representations of women but in the end remain subordinate to their male counterparts. The foregrounded plot seems to suggest a liberal attitude toward women's rights and abilities, but the subplot returns women to the world of traditional sex roles (Good 1998).

Furthermore, this is fortified by their sexualization as romantic and sex objects. More specifically, they are typically represented as romantically involved with sources or male colleagues, of whom the latter are mostly also their mentors (Ofa Bezunartea Valencia, María José Cantalapiedra, César Coca García, Aingeru Genaut Arratibel, Simón Peña Fernández, Jesús Ángel Pérez Dasilva 2008; Saltzman 2003). This trope has generated stereotypes of female journalists as "super bitch" and "super whore" (sic), representing them as professionally and personally subservient to men and willing to use sex for their careerist objectives, which they seldom effectuate (Painter and Ferrucci 2017; Saltzman 2003). This relates to the frequent infantilization of fictional female journalists, in which their professional growth is treated as

humorous and stunted by the male-dominated environment in which they work. Consequently, female journalists in contemporary popular fiction are generally younger than the male journalists and start to disappear from the age of 35 on. According to Valencia et al. (2008), this gendered ageist representation has reproduced existing gender barriers in three ways. First, the recurring split between professional and personal lives, in which women are expected to quit their jobs to become homemaking figures. Second, beauty standards, in which women are hired on the basis of physical appearance rather than intelligence and, thus, are more easily disregarded when they age. Third, the vertical gender segregation, which prevents women from reaching professional maturity and holding senior positions. The very characteristics that qualify women as sob sisters disqualifies them from more "serious" journalism and professional growth.

This reflects non-fictional newsrooms, which are highly gendered (Leuven et al. 2019; Weaver, Willnat, and Cleveland Wilhoit 2019). Historically speaking, women only started to enter the newsroom with the rising popularity of women's pages, pigeonholing female journalists in lower-status soft news beats. Even though their numbers kept increasing during the twentieth century, this curve has flattened, and female journalists remain confronted by, among other things, the glass ceiling and a gender pay gap, of which the latter is most visible at the editorial level (Sara De Vuyst, Karin Raeymaeckers 2019; Levi Obijiofor, Folker Hanusch 2011). This invokes a revolving door effect, in which female journalists are forced to choose between their career and motherhood, framed within a neoliberal discourse of personal choice (De Vuyst and Raeymaeckers 2019). The latter can be interpreted through an inherently contradictory postfeminist discourse stressing the entanglement of feminist and anti-feminist themes often through its focus on, among other things, consumer culture, fashion, (sexual) pleasure, and individual choice. Postfeminism articulates how capitalist and neoliberal discourses can transform feminist causes into individual rather than political struggles, thereby confirming gender inequalities and repudiating feminist goals (Fien Adriaens, Sofie Van Bauwel 2014; Gill 2007). However, postfeminist discourse simultaneously mediates between traditional oppositions in feminism, such as the feminine versus the feminist, by articulating ideas critical of the traditional status quo as such while also having the potential to subvert patriarchal notions (Adriaens and Van Bauwel 2014).

The aforementioned dichotomy between the potential of female journalists to succeed and their inevitable failure was translated by Saltzman (2003) into an ongoing dilemma that female journalists face: incorporating masculine traits that characterize journalism as being aggressive, self-reliant, curious, tough, ambitious, cynical, cocky, and unsympathetic, while still embodying the female features that society desires, such as being compassionate, caring, loving, maternal, and sympathetic. This dilemma is an apt illustration of what Schippers (2007) describes as the relationship between hegemonic masculinity and femininity. The author builds on the conceptualization of Connell (1995) of hegemonic masculinity to examine an alternative model to identify multiple masculinities and femininities. She defines gender positions as articulated in relation to each other in terms of different but complementary characteristics (e.g., authoritative—compliant), in which the dominance of hegemonic

masculinity is enabled by hegemonic femininity. Consequently, women exhibiting traits associated with hegemonic masculinity "enacted by women-desire for the feminine object (lesbian), authority (bitch), being physically violent ('badass' girl), and taking charge and not being compliant (bitch, but also 'cock- teaser' and slut)" are regarded as contaminating the relationship between masculinity and femininity, constituting the term "pariah femininity" (Schippers 2007, 95). As previously illustrated, (fictional) female journalists are forced to balance traditionally masculine and feminine traits. Inevitably, they embody and display femininity that both underlines and deviates from a hegemonic feminine ideal and, consequentially, are equally met with labels such as "bitch" and "whore" (sic) to sanction their deviance from hegemonic femininity.

Contemporary representations of female journalists still deal with this attempt to reconcile journalism and femininity without being confined to soft news beats. The analyses of Painter and Ferrucci (2012, 2015, 2017) of the series' Sports Night (ABC, 1998–2000), The Newsroom (HBO, 2012–2014), and House of Cards (Netflix, 2013–2018) confirms that even though female journalists are increasingly represented in leading roles and management jobs, they are still positioned in existing overarching patriarchal structures. More specifically, they are represented as unprofessional, "overtly feminine," unethical, and lacking journalistic knowledge. The past decades have brought an increase in number and a change in context of the appearance of female journalists, pointing to more hopeful and realistic representations that address the unequal treatment of female journalists in the workplace (McNair 2011b, 2014; Painter and Ferrucci 2019). In their analysis of Good Girls Revolt (Amazon Prime Video, 2015–2016), for example, Painter and Ferrucci (2019) find that the television series—even though set in the 1970s—counters the dominant images of fictional female journalists as "super bitch," "super whore," unprofessional, weak, and incompetent by critiquing the demeaning and dehumanizing ways that male journalists treat their female co-workers. As such, the series subverts the negative portrayals of female journalists in many other fiction movies and series. Still, for many (non-)fictional female journalists, the bittersweet aftertaste of having to give up too much to achieve equality with men is still present (Ehrlich and Saltzman 2015; De Vuyst and Raeymaeckers 2019; Obijiofor and Hanusch 2011).

Minority journalists in the fictional newsroom

Whereas several studies have focused on the fictional representation of female journalists, such insights are mostly lacking regarding racial and LGBTQ+ minority journalists. Ehrlich and Saltzman (2015) touch upon the subject, stating that the difference narrative that accompanies the representation of journalists and positions them as fundamentally different from "normal" civilians is even more invigorated for minority journalists. Similar to people of color, journalists of color were largely ignored in popular culture until the 1960s, reflecting the large invisibility of racial minority journalists in newsrooms (Harry M Benshoff, Sean Griffin 2009; Ehrlich and Saltzman 2015; Mastro and Greenberg 2000). In contemporary representations, such characters still remain underrepresented or framed as "race-neutral." Ehrlich and Saltzman (2015) use the term to stress the common practice of rendering race and

ethnicity invisible in fiction by not commenting upon the character's race and ethnicity. On the other hand, some representations do stress the character's minority identity but only do so in relation to race-related journalistic topics (e.g., an Asian journalist who is pressured to report on Asian culture and neighborhoods).

Specifically for female journalists of color, they are often represented in narratives surrounding sexualization, exotification, and objectification in which they are sexual and exotic objects and are shown unclothed and willing to engage in sexual relationships with sources. Some narratives have addressed the difficulties minority reporters experience in white-majority newsrooms (Ehrlich and Saltzman 2015; Rossie 2009). These include journalists of color being looked down upon, being valued less than their white counterparts, and being more easily judged and fired. They have to work harder to prove themselves and get away with less in comparison to white reporters. This can be linked to an outsider-within narrative in which journalists of color are positioned within the white male power structure of the newsroom and yet simultaneously find themselves outside of that structure by not being white or male. For female journalists of color, this forms an even bigger challenge due to the specific gender and racial intersectional challenges they face (Ehrlich and Saltzman 2015; Rossie 2009). Since the 1990s, feminist discourse has been reconfigured by intersectional perspectives to challenge the hegemony of white, middle-class, young, and able-bodied women. Crenshaw's intersectionality theory stresses that women have different intersectional identities that can reinforce each other when faced with oppression and as such can create a double or triple burden. Consequently, how women face oppression is dependent on the context and their different identity axes such as race and sexual orientation, which becomes especially relevant when studying a white, heterosexual, male-dominated field such as journalism. However, when not taking into account how these different identity characteristics can reinforce each other, "intersecting" (rather than "intersectional") identities is a more apt term (Crenshaw 1990).

Specifically for LGBTQ+ journalists, the (implicit) portrayal of lesbian and gay journalists dates back to the 1930s. They were stereotypically depicted as a source of derision or buffoonery translated into stereotypes such as that of the effeminate reporter, the harmless sissy homosexual, or the bitchy columnist (Benshoff and Griffin 2009; Ehrlich and Saltzman 2015). Only in the 1990s did LGBTQ+ journalists start to become more included and accepted in popular culture. Still, their sexual orientation often figured strongly in the plot as their only recognizable characteristic, and most often they were supporting characters who did not have romantic relationships, which made them non- threatening to heterosexual sensibilities (Ehrlich and Saltzman 2015; Kies 2016). In popular culture targeted at LGBTQ+ audiences and in that made outside of the U.S., more thoughtful depictions have started to appear in which LGBTQ+ journalists are not necessarily represented as afraid or embarrassed about their sexuality. Still, most narratives including LGBTQ+ journalists tend to focus on the struggles that journalists face in the newsroom concerning being out or outed, which is related to the frequently reiterated struggle and success trope in which the obstacles that LGBTQ+ people have to face to become comfortable in their own body and social environment are stressed

(Frederik Dhaenens 2013; Ehrlich and Saltzman 2015). The lack of representations of minority journalists and of diversity in those representations brings about a burden in which those representations come to portray a whole community. Consequently, this leads to a chaotic and oversimplified representation of the experiences of minority journalists, creating monolithic and undifferentiated identities defined by certain characteristics such as race and sexual orientation (Mercer 1990). Therefore, understanding which narratives the few fictional representations of minority journalists disseminate and how these narratives might have changed can provide critical insights into this area of study.

Reading the female and minority journalists in The Bold Type

The Bold Type takes the newsroom of a fictional print and digital women's magazine (Scarlet) as its subject. The inciting incident is the arrival of the new female reporter, Jane Sloan (Katie Stevens), who has to learn the ropes and aims to get promoted, invoking the female cub reporter stereotype (Ehrlich and Saltzman 2015; Saltzman 2003). The series represents the Scarlet newsroom as a welcoming and safe environment in which cub reporters can learn under the mentorship of a careerist but caring editor-in-chief, Jacqueline Carlyle (Melora Hardin). An in-depth interview with the series' original screen- writer and producer Sarah Watson revealed that this character was deliberately written as such to counter the dominant image of women (especially female mentors) as "catty" and "backstabbing." Furthermore, the newsroom is dominated by women, and the series immediately claims a postfeminist take on women in journalism. It does so through the colorful feminine wardrobe used by the characters for power dressing and the aesthetically traditional feminine décor. The Scarlet offices are bathed in light with colorful, mostly pink accents and contains hints of the series' focus on fashion and consumer culture through the presence of clothing racks and an entire "fashion closet." These elements, in combination with the narrative focus on sexual pleasure (in which women are not labeled as "whore" [sic]), individual choice, humor, and capitalist discourses, further support this postfeminist take. According to Watson, both the décor and the narrative were inspired by the New York-based Cosmopolitan magazine newsroom, as she worked closely with its editor Joanna Coles for the development of the series. This illustrates the balancing act between realism and entertainment in which an existing newsroom and its employees are used as inspiration for the series but are subsequently glamorized and exaggerated for cinematic effect, supporting a rather humoristic take on the trials and tribulations of (young) women working for a women's magazine.

Another dimension is added to this balancing act through the series' exploration of gendered obstacles and structural inequalities in the newsroom. It attempts to expose the structural inequality in which female journalists remain subordinate to men by representing a recurring tension between the board of the media company and the editorial team. This is visualized using the contrasting décor of the plain boardrooms, consisting of a male-dominated staff, and the aesthetically feminine Scarlet newsroom, consisting of a female-dominated staff. It is striking that the series positions the magazine as a brand aimed at empowering women both inside and outside of the newsroom and simultaneously highlights

how this positioning is still embedded within the broader patriarchal and capitalist structures of the company and Western society at large. Watson situates this tension within the reality of developing a female-centric TV series as a woman in Hollywood mirroring the struggles that female journalists face:

> As powerful as that magazine is, they still have to answer to a bunch of white men. And a lot of what they dealt with at Cosmo did mirror a lot of what I dealt with. My immediate network executives were women, but the person deciding whether the show could go on air was a man. And there was definitely some pushback. *(Sarah Watson, producer & screenwriter The Bold Type)*

This underlines the inherent relationship between neoliberalism and postfeminism, in which feminism is deprived of its political significance and used for commercial gain (Adriaens and Van Bauwel 2014; Gill 2007). Consequently, being a feminist first and foremost has to be profitable both in the series and in the writers' room. The series illustrates how editor-in-chief Jacqueline, the only woman who has a sliver of power in those higher echelons, also has to work within that framework. Narratively, this tension is expressed in Jacqueline's power moves, in which she goes against the wishes of the board —often associated with a slow-motion close up of her high, colorful heels—which stand in opposition to her acts of molding young reporters into sob sisters to fit the profit- oriented goals of the board. The latter is expressed in the narrative surrounding above- mentioned cub reporter Jane Sloan, who has to resist being branded as a sob sister. In line with horizontal gender segregation in newsrooms, she is expected to focus on soft and sensational news topics stemming from a gendered and commercialized view of journal- ism. Jane attempts to claim a more political and hard news voice in a soft news-oriented environment by challenging the hierarchy between soft and hard news and reconciling both in her writing. This illustrates how female journalists are still represented as con- fronted with a dilemma between adopting traditionally masculine and feminine characteristics, even in a more feminine-branded news environment. In spite of her attempts, she is often not taken seriously among other more "serious" journalists, especially because of her explicit feminine way of dressing and her association with a women's magazine, which stresses the importance of writing from personal experience. In episode three, she states:

> The Congresswoman's press secretary literally looked me up and down and said, 'not tonight, Scarlet.' Like all we write is fluff. I felt so judged. *(TBT, S1: E3)*

Jane convinces her editor-in-chief to launch a political vertical but still does not fully succeed in reconciling the expected traditionally feminine characteristics and being a hard news journalist. She eventually decides to leave Scarlet for a hard news-oriented digital magazine in which the newsroom contrasts with that of Scarlet through its traditionally masculine aesthetic consisting of dark decors with brown hues. As such, at first glance, Jane seems to

succeed in breaking through this horizontal gender segregation that still dominates newsrooms. However, she is also required to change her ward- robe to fit her new work environment, in which fashion has less of an emphasis, and quickly realizes that the new magazine is not a fit for her. She decides to return to Scarlet, where she is eventually promoted, resulting in her getting her own office and staff, but only after having abandoned her political vertical to start a vertical about feminism. Furthermore, when editor-in-chief Jacqueline retires and asks Jane to take over her position, she declines and quits her job at Scarlet to pursue her new-found dream of being a "traveling writer." As such, the series still represents a fairly "feminine" work environment where female journalists are pigeonholed in soft news beats and media sectors.

Nevertheless, this narrative is partly countered by the representation of the character of Kat Edison (Aisha Dee), the digital-savvy head of social media, who identifies as a queer black woman. When Jane declines the editor-in-chief position, the position is offered to Kat, who gladly accepts. In contrast to other characters such as Jane, Kat is more explicitly put forward as a political and activist young woman who is not afraid to butt heads with anyone, including members of the male-dominated board. She is also one of the few non- white and non-straight characters who adopts a rather "modern" approach to the struggle and success trope (Dhaenens 2013). Watson stressed the importance of including narratives that deviate from recurring tropes, reflecting the lived reality of New York. Therefore, Kat's storyline is centered more on "a fun and sexy romance than a big questioning story." When Kat realizes that she is attracted to women, she is not con- fronted with shame and openly explores her sexual orientation without the need to immediately label it. As such, Kat's character counters several patriarchal and stereotypical narratives. Nevertheless, she is embedded in a context that focuses on "intersecting identities" rather than "intersectional identities." Representational intersectionality recognizes how different identity characteristics might create a double or triple burden. However, in this representation, obstacles related to identity characteristics are narratively mostly ignored or only stressed in relation to specific topics. Therefore, it can rather be interpreted as "checking the boxes," in which the above-mentioned burdens remain unexplored. As such, the series illustrates how patriarchal and racially/sexually stereo- typical notions can simultaneously be reiterated and subverted. Even though The Bold Type represents powerful (non-white and non-straight) women who climb the career ladder, are hard-headed, make their own choices, and are sexually active without being labeled "whore" (sic), these representations do not form a direct threat to the hegemonic masculinity that is still present in most newsrooms, because of the feminine newsroom environment the narrative is embedded in. The series' postfeminist approach fortifies this premise, as its inherent focus on femininity, fashion, and feminism in combination with a soft news outlet further upholds the chasm between female journalists and "serious" journalism.

Reading the female and minority journalists in The Morning Show

The Morning Show revolves around the ins and outs of the newsroom of a fictional television broadcast news morning show (The Morning Show). The series provides a more dramatic image of a toxic work environment, in which Bradley Jackson (Reese Witherspoon), a new female reporter, becomes a pawn in the political power play of mainly male veteran reporters. Its dramatic narrative focuses on sexual harassment in the workplace, and the use of rather dark decors clearly distinguish the newsroom environment from the one previously discussed in The Bold Type. The use of more traditionally feminine clothes, such as dresses and heels, in this case cannot be interpreted from a postfeminist sensibility but is rather used as a visual tool to underline the power structure between male and female reporters, in which the latter are represented as subordinate, especially through their continuous sexualization by their male counterparts. Here too, the gendered structural inequality in newsrooms is challenged through a focus on the tension between the board of the network and the editorial team. The series— aided by its generically more dramatic representational conventions—actively deconstructs that chasm by portraying the misogynistic and toxic work culture that infantilizes and sexualizes female journalists to stunt their professional growth. The male board is represented as an old boys' network responsible for covering up multiple cases of sexual abuse of powerful male journalists toward subordinate female journalists, creating a toxic work culture that enables the sexualization and objectification of female journalists. This theme is directly related to the heavy profit-oriented focus of the company in which soft news and sex appeal sell. The female journalists are continuously forced to conform to an image of the female journalist that will sell on television. Being beautiful and sexy is considered more important than intelligence and skill, invoking a narrative in which female journalists are easily criticized and scrutinized on the basis of looks and their personal life (Ehrlich and Saltzman 2015; Painter and Ferrucci 2012, 2015, 2017; Saltzman 2003). This is especially visible in the narrative of the new female reporter, Bradley, who attempts to brand herself as a "serious" journalist. She does so by using more traditionally masculine ways of dressing and advocating for more hard news on The Morning Show. Even though she regularly pushes through hard news topics, she is eventually forced to adopt more traditionally feminine characteristics in exchange for more political coverage on the morning news and loses a job as an anchor for the (harder news-oriented) evening news to her male co-worker. She states:

> You told me all this singing and dancing and playing along was gonna buy me some freedom around this place. I mean I dyed my hair; I hosted their celebrity bowling show, I did stupid TikTok dances on TV. I did everything short of tattooing UBA on my ass, and for what? *(TMS, S2: E1)*

This narrative is further fortified in relation to other female journalists, including female TV host Alex Levy (Jennifer Aniston), who is confronted with ageism. She is represented as having become obsolete because of her age, something that her male co-host, who is in the same age bracket as her, does not experience. Even though she eventually succeeds in maintaining

the position, it is underlined that when female TV anchors reach a certain age, they are no longer deemed (sexually) desirable by the public and need to be replaced. This echoes the common narrative in which older female journalists are replaced by younger women, stressing that they are not hired because of skill and intelligence but because of their appearance (Ehrlich and Saltzman 2015; Saltzman 2003; Valencia et al. 2008). Even though this representation might seem dated, it is powerful because it illustrates that this is still the reality for many female journalists.

The series offers a critique by demonstrating how female journalists are forced to deal with the obstacles generated by these power relations and how this often pushes them into a "super bitch" or "super whore" (sic) narrative. Both Bradley and Alex, who attempt to go against the board, are explicitly labeled as too emotional or angry. It exposes the double standard that still exists in which being emotional and angry is tolerated for men but not for women, echoing Schippers (2007) conceptualization of pariah femininity. The narrative explores the different femininities and masculinities that exist simultaneously, in which female journalists are encouraged to adopt characteristics associated with hegemonic femininity as these are non-threatening to the dominance of hegemonic masculinity in the newsroom. Women like Bradley who adopt characteristics typically associated with hegemonic masculinity are repudiated by being labeled "bitch" or "whore" (sic) and by being denied opportunities to advance their careers. Even more, they are molded into adopting typically hegemonic feminine characteristics, enforced by the commercial argument that this is what appeals to the audience. Still, these hegemonic feminine qualities do not provide them with more opportunities but rather enforce more sexualization and infantilization toward female journalists.

Additionally, by narratively exploring several workplace relationships—including those related to sexual misconduct—the series illustrates how female journalists are often judged for their relationships with male co-workers, of whom the latter do not experience that same scrutiny. This again echoes that women who adopt hegemonic masculine traits such as "sleeping around" are reprimanded for that behavior by being labeled a "whore" (sic). This is especially visible in the narrative analysis of producer Mia Jordan (Karen Pittman), who had an affair with Mitch Kessler (Steve Carell), a co-host who was fired because of sexual misconduct. Instead of blaming Mitch's behavior, Mia's co-workers blame her and frame the events as her using sex to get promoted. It reiterates the focus on promotion and professional gain in which female journalists are framed as sleeping their way to the top, regardless of whether they had the intention to do so and actually benefited from it (Painter and Ferrucci 2017; Saltzman 2003). In episode seven, Mia states:

> Everybody's got their fucking opinions, and you know what? Have 'em. I just wanna move on with my fucking life. [. . .] We're all human. We all have regrets. [. . .] We are all just people who wanna do our jobs. Do good work. So, that's what I'm gonna focus on. My work. 'Cause I'd like to be known in this world for something other than fucking Mitch Kessler, and I think I deserve that opportunity. *(TMS, S1:E7)*

Even more, one of Mitch's victims, Hannah Shoenfeld (Gugu Mbatha-Raw), was promoted by the network's president Fred Micklen (Tom Irwin) in exchange for her keeping quiet, which contributed to her committing suicide. The narrative explores how the female journalists try to function in a structure that constantly overlooks them as well as punishes them when they try to do something about it, and critiques this by illustrating how this imposes a severe mental burden. In contrast to the male journalists, almost all female journalists are represented as dealing with some form of issue with mental and/or physical health such as anxiety, anger, or depression directly stemming from the pressures they experience at work. It underlines the severe impact such events have on the mental health of female journalists and illustrates how female journalists deal with such struggles. The series shows that female journalists are forced to individually handle such problems and inevitably succumb to the pressures of the profession, resulting in disastrous outcomes including a suicide.

Furthermore, the series represents a wide spectrum of minority journalists including several African American, Asian, and Latino/a men and women, some of whom identify as non-straight. The series explores an outside-within narrative in which the most recurring obstacles minority journalists are confronted with are being overlooked, used as a token, and pigeonholed in diversity news topics. The series underlines how minority journalists with different intersectional identities (rather than intersecting identities, such as in The Bold Type) have different approaches to dealing with such obstacles because they are confronted with a double or triple burden. It is apparent that the men with a minority identity try to fight the structures that disadvantage them more explicitly than the women with a minority identity, who are more prone to adapt to that structure. Whereas characters such as Daniel Henderson (a Black, gay man played by Desean Terry) are represented as addressing their superiors to talk about racism and homophobia in the workplace, characters such as Mia Jordan (a Black woman) and Stella Bak (a Korean woman, played by Greta Lee) are less confrontational and try to operate within the structure created by their non-minority counterparts. In particular, women in higher-up positions do so to protect their careers and sometimes even play an active role in keeping other minority journalists sidelined. When Stella becomes head of news, she sidelines Daniel by making sure he only gets to cover diversity topics, stating he does not have "the it-factor." Furthermore, she reprimands Yanko Flores (a Latino man, played by Néstor Carbonell) because of a culturally insensitive comment he made on television. This stands in contrast to the behavior of other non-minority journalists, such as Alex and Mitch, who get away with much worse. Alex, for example, disappears for a week without warning the network without any consequences, and Mitch gets away with years of sexual misconduct, which the network has helped to cover up. This illustrates that more minority journalists at higher levels do not necessarily create a better work environment for minority journalists.

Lastly, the series represents a rather traditional struggle and success trope, albeit not in relation to all LGBTQ+ characters. Whereas the sexual orientation of Daniel is not explicitly stressed, the series does focus on Bradley's coming out as a bisexual woman. Bradley is represented as repressed and ashamed of her sexual orientation, especially in relation to her

conservative family. When falling in love with Laura Peterson (Julianna Margulies), a fellow female journalist, she is forced to come to terms with her sexual orientation and is eventually publicly outed. The narrative illustrates how LGBTQ+ people are still seen as deviant and underlines the impact of a public outing. Laura reveals to Bradley that when she came out in the nineties, she was fired because of her sexual orientation, which stunted her career and caused her to have troubled relationships with her friends and family. She sympathizes with Bradley, who is now going through the same thing, but also stresses that times have changed. She states:

> We're talking about a situation where you being different can work to your advantage now. [. . .] And I don't know. I have to tell you there is something inside me that wants to resent you for not being grateful for this. I see someone who is walking the same path, honestly, a path I helped lay. And it's a little annoying, and I'm envious. That's it. I lost a job for being gay. You should embrace it. *(TMS, S2:E4)*

It is stressed that being an LGBTQ+ journalist can create many obstacles for one's career and personal life but can also be used to one's advantage. Laura even encourages Bradley to use her identity strategically to get more journalistic assignments, as this is something that was not possible when she was just starting out. This underlines how the series addresses the obstacles that minority journalists experience by narratively positioning them in an outsider-within framework.

Discussion

We found that from their own distinct perspective and generic approach, both series set out to shed light on—and by doing so, critique—gendered power relations in the news- room. The Bold Type does so by representing an idealistic version of an inclusive work environment aimed at creating equal opportunities among journalists while at the same time reflecting a realistic approach by embedding this in the broader patriarchal and capitalist structures that restrict its initially claimed idealistic vision. The Morning show claims a more critical approach by offering a more pessimistic and dysfunctional version of the newsroom and including a more explicit critique of the power relations that disadvantage female and minority journalists.

First, regarding the representation of female journalists, the results show that older stereotypes such that of the sob sister, "super bitch," and "super whore" (sic) still persist, albeit repackaged into newer stereotypes such as that of the veteran female TV reporter and the unexperienced female cub reporter. This underlines how modern representations of female journalists are still confronted with a dilemma in reconciling the traditionally masculine world of journalism and the feminine expectations society has set for them. In both series, this crystalized in the opposition between being a hard news or soft news reporter, underlining the continuous gendered division of news beats and news media. For each series, these recurring stereotypes are embedded in a different newsroom environment and

characterized by a different generic approach, resulting in two distinct perspectives on the gendering of journalism. The Bold Type adopts a postfeminist perspective, in which embodying traditional feminine characteristics and being a good (female) journalist are not mutually exclusive, representing an idealized view of what a newsroom could or should look like. Simultaneously, it also brings attention to how this narrative is still embedded in the broader patriarchal and capitalist structures of the newsroom, mirroring the struggles that female journalists at Cosmo—which served as inspiration for the series—and producer Sarah Watson herself face in their workplace. As such, the series sets out to provide an empowered image of female journalists while at the same time critiquing gendered power relations in the newsroom. However, it does not fully succeed in doing so because of gendered power relations at play during the production process in addition to a narrative focus on a women's magazine newsroom, where powerful women do not pose a real threat to the male hegemony that still dominates most newsrooms. The Morning Show provides a more direct critique of how the current organization of newsrooms disadvantages women. It does so through a more generically dramatic approach that highlights the obstacles female journalists still face, including sexual harassment, sexualization, and ageism. This is closely related to the commercialization of journalism, which is also highly gendered. Both series address the unequal power relations between male-dominated media ownership and the female editorial staff of the newsroom, but The Morning Show more explicitly underlines how highly profit-oriented news businesses bring about and preserve the sexualization and objectivation of female journalists. By representing the impact of these practices on the mental health of female journalists, the series addresses and critiques the double burden female journalists have to carry.

Second, regarding the representation of racial and LGBTQ+ female minority journalists, The Bold Type attempts to represent an inclusive newsroom in which minority journalists are not considered different or deviant. The series does so by not stressing the identity characteristics that differentiate minority journalists from their non- minority counterparts and by representing a newsroom in which those minority journalists are not confronted with obstacles regarding their minority identity. However, again it does so in the context of a newsroom where such intersecting identities are no threat to hegemonic masculinity, as such failing to critique the still very white and heterosexual newsrooms. The Morning Show, on the other hand, uses an outsider-within framework to illustrate how minority journalists are still considered deviant in such newsrooms and consequently confronted with obstacles that stunt their professional growth because of their intersectional rather than intersecting identities. It also represents a striking difference between how male and female minority journalists deal with these obstacles, in which the first tend to address them and the latter tend to ignore them to fit in, again stressing the above- mentioned double burden of female minority journalists. Lastly, the series also underlines the very different and complex experiences of minority journalists in which their identity can function both as an obstacle and in their favor.

As such, both series illustrate how fiction has the potential to subvert and challenge existing structures while at the same time it can also reiterate those same structures. This

tension is embedded in its broader production process as producers and screenwriters, similarly to the fictional female journalists they create, have to balance different objectives and interests that are also embedded in (gendered) power relations. Nevertheless, both series indicate that journalism fiction has become more sensitive to the obstacles that female journalists face, whether they succeed in effectively critiquing those or not. Therefore, how the above-mentioned recurring stereotypes might be repackaged to subvert and challenge the hegemonic masculinity in newsrooms from an intersectional perspective merits further investigation—both in Western and non-Western contexts, as the latter was not explored in this paper. Furthermore, audience research is scarce regarding this topic of study. Little is known about how these representations can contribute to restructuring non-fictional newsrooms by challenging the obstacles that are still in place for female and minority journalists. By expanding existing knowledge, especially in relation to female and minority journalists, we hope to have highlighted the importance of studying the fictional representation of journalism and to have sparked interest in how it can aid in highlighting and possibly even changing the lived circum- stances of female and minority journalists.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

Funding

This work was supported by Fonds Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek – Vlaanderen [FWO.3F0.2021.0021.01].

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