

Media Research Group

**Bodies in Transformation:  
An Interdisciplinary Symposium on Fictional Representations of Bodies on  
Screen**

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**Ideal and Non-Ideal Victims: Representations of Violence Against Women**

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**Abstract**

Media and communication technologies play an influential role in both shaping and reflecting cultural attitudes on issues such as gender-based violence. This research examines how discourses of violence against women are constructed through screen-based media in the form of television and gaming. The television drama *The Fall* and the video game *Grand Theft Auto* are analysed in order to consider whether we are encountering weakening thresholds of violence against women. Based on the dichotomised notion of 'ideal' and 'non-ideal' women victims, the study examines how the discursive technique of foregrounding women's respectability potentially narrows the separation between 'them' and 'us' thereby increasing identification with the ideal victim, while foregrounding women's lack of respectability potentially widens the separation between 'them' and 'us' thus reducing identification with non-ideal, dispensable 'vermin victim'. The extent to which gendered embodiment in media imagery engages in sexualising violence is also considered. The study provides insights into what fictional representations can tell us about the socio-cultural climate and changing public sensibilities towards violence against women.