

Masculinity in the Kitchen: Gordon Ramsay's media persona



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Who is Gordon Ramsay? Why choose him?

- One of Britain's most recognizable chefs in the industry (Scottish)
- Most well-known for his abrasive personality → aspect of masculinity?
- Numerous appearances on TV and the internet over the last few decades provide lots of material

How relevant is this analysis to Cultural Studies / Celebrity Studies?

- It can show that cultural differences can influence how a celebrity is represented
- It can prove relevant to further research of how celebrities are recognized depending on the audience's cultural background and personal factors

1) Ramsay's representation in media

How is Ramsay portrayed in his TV shows? His social media? Are there similarities / differences? Can depictions of masculinity be found?

Aspect of masculinity:

- How do his appearances in media correspond to his socially constructed persona as a "man"? What kind of man?

Comparisons between UK and US representation:

- Analysis of depiction of the star persona portrayed in selected episodes of Kitchen Nightmares US and Kitchen Nightmares UK → comparison

Personal social media used: TikTok

- Interactions between Ramsay and his fans on TikTok
- Through #RamsayReacts people can send videos of them preparing dishes for Ramsay to critique
- Does the way he presents himself differ from the persona on the shows?

2) Representation in television

UK:

- willing to teach young, inexperienced chefs and reach his professional standards
→ use of "strategic bullying" (cf. Balwant 2021)
- portrayal of Ramsay's main persona
→ Johnston's "chef-artisan" persona
= main focus being professional cooking and fine dining; depiction as a craftsman who had to work hard to reach his status; "Chef-artisans prominently display the tough-skinned masculine perseverance required to move from humble culinary student to high-end restaurant success." (cf. Johnston 2014)



"Masculinities are institutionalised in commercial kitchens and processes of institutionalisation are reinforced in popular media. The male-dominated nature of the industry is nothing new; the physical demands of working in a professional kitchen is one of the most exclusionary factors of chefing, and not limited to women. But the professional kitchen is also an environment that encourages homosocial bonds. I have shown that to operate successfully, the professional kitchen typically requires homosociality, a devaluation of the feminine, and sometimes the exclusion of women."

(Nancy Lee 2014)

US:

- dramatic music and jump cuts highlight and enhance Ramsay's abrasive persona
→ more screaming, cussing and confrontational situations than in the UK version of the show
- utilization of "destructive leadership behaviors"
→ "Specifically, Ramsay appears to consciously direct emotional outbursts toward owners and/or employees when creating a sense of urgency, unfreezing current mindsets, creating a guiding coalition, and shifting toward a new vision." (cf. Balwant 2021)
- characterization of this persona as a "strategic tyrant" or "hired gun" (cf. Balwant 2021)
→ relational problems between people are disregarded and the completion of the goal is the only focus



3) Self-presentation on TikTok

- display of a generally light-hearted persona
- references to jokes popular with the audience ("Where's the lamb sauce?")
- critique of dishes similar to the TV persona
- portrays more of a secondary persona according to Johnston
→ Johnston's "gastrosexual" persona
= gender-transgressive, masculine type; generally heterosexual; embraces cooking at home; can display elements of female cooking personas; boundary between professional and amateur kitchen still intact; tries to empower home cooking in others (cf. Johnston 2014)
- The celebrity persona narrows down the boundaries between themselves and the audience while still upholding their professional status.



4) Ramsay as a holder of multiple star personas

Differences in personas

- while the constructed star persona remains the same in both versions of the show, different levels of aggression are being portrayed, resulting in slight differences
- self-representation on social media leads to a new star persona different to the ones being constructed on TV while still upholding some similar properties

Masculinity

- while occurring to a lesser extent on his TikTok, the abrasive personality, emotional outbursts and his ascribed role as a leader paint the picture of a masculine chef in a male-dominated industry, following many traditionally masculine stereotypes (cf. Mosse 1998)

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