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RESHAPING GENDER IN AIRLINE EMPLOYMENT

A great deal of progress has been made toward gender equality in aviation; however, complete gender equality at all levels has not yet been achieved. **Whitney E. Smith**, PhD researcher supervised by **Prof Scott Cohen** and **Dr Albert Kimbu** explored the perpetual construction of gendered discourse by examining how airline culture and ideologies constitute social reality through text, gesture, and symbolic signs.



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RESHAPING GENDER IN AIRLINE EMPLOYMENT

WHITNEY E. SMITH, PROF SCOTT COHEN & DR ALBERT KIMBU

While men predominantly hold positions as pilots, women are for the most part horizontally segregated into feminised service roles. These gender differences are problematic as they encourage stereotypes and confirm socially endorsed views of gender. Despite efforts to diversify the gender division of labour in aviation, the airline industry is historically and structurally influenced by gender. Adopting a feminist poststructuralist lens, the article deconstructs certain prevailing assumptions that exist within the sector by exploring

gendered meanings attached to occupational airline roles. Using qualitative document analysis of the femininities and masculinities produced and disciplined in airline culture, we explore the co(construction) of gender across four airlines - Emirates, KLM, Qantas and Virgin Atlantic. In doing so, this article provides new understandings of how perpetual constructions of gendered discourses remain deeply embedded in airline cultures.



FURTHER READING:

Smith, W.E., Cohen, S., Kimbu, A.N. & de Jong, A. (2021). Reshaping Gender in Airline Employment. *Annals of Tourism Research*

Link: bit.ly/3b9WzSQ

We hope this article raises awareness, challenges assumptions of representations of gender and encourages airline organisations to promote diversity of representation to achieve greater gender equality and bring about change at all organisational levels.