

CHAPTER FIVE

Gender and the visual media

“ The majority of consumers in Southern Africa are under educated rural women. They rely mostly on TV or the radio. In Xhosa the TV is called the umaonakude (that which sees afar) and in radio unomathotholo (supernatural voices speaking to you) with osiyazi (does not lie). This descriptive language reflects a belief that these tools are beyond reproach.

So when women are reported as poor, helpless victims, as physical objects, as useless leaders, the recipients of this information take this as true because:

- Mabonakude (nomathotholo) does not lie.
- Their own experiences of poverty and hunger tell them that this is the lot for women.
- Their own world, a microcosm of the patriarchal world, has never shown them as women playing an effective leadership or decision-making role ”

– Thenjiwe Mtintso, Chairperson of Gender Links, in the Foreword to “Whose News, Whose Views”

Key issues

- According to the Gender and Media Baseline Study, women comprise only 17% of news sources in Southern Africa.
- Counting exercises suggest that women constitute a quarter of less of the images in our newspapers everyday.
- Women are invariably depicted either as fashion models or victims of violence, while men are portrayed in a variety of roles.
- Gender stereotypes in the media have a powerful influence on the way we think, and on our perceived failure to meet societal expectations.



Introduction

A groundswell of research and activism leaves us in no doubt that the media throughout Southern Africa today distorts and misrepresents gender issues. There are two key issues where gender and the media, and by extension gender and images are concerned: representation and portrayal.

Women constitute half of the human population. Yet an alien species trying to understand our society from mass printed or broadcast material could be forgiven for thinking that women are a rare and hard to find breed, emerging in their youth for ritual beauty contests, or to use their best features (usually sexual) to promote luxury car sales. Most women, for most of their lives, live, work, love and die outside of the light of our media.

Media images regularly employ distinct “gender labels” for both men and women. Images “tag” the person by gender. This in turn feeds into gender-stereotyped concepts of behaviour. It assumes the imaged person will play to gender-determined standards. At times, gender-marked imagery quite openly reinforces and promotes gender oppression.

Exercise: Representation – where are women and men in the news?

Bring in a range of the days or weeks newspapers. Divide participants into groups and give each one a publication to analyse. Ask them to count the number of women and men in the pictures they see, and to calculate the total percentage of women, and the total percentage of men. Include adverts, and all pages. Group photos should also be included. Girls should be counted as women and boys as men. Make a note of the roles that are portrayed. During the report back, the information should be compiled on a flipchart in a simple table as follows:

PUBLICATION	% MEN	ROLES	%WOMEN	ROLES

Another approach is to pick a particular image, such as “Business Army Invades Africa” in **Handout eleven**. Count the number of women and the number of men. Count the number of white and black women – where are they located in the image?

Following the counting exercise, share with participants the main findings of the Southern African Gender and Media Baseline Study (**Handout twelve**). Please note that there are also country specific reports of this study. If possible get a resource person in your country to talk about the local GMBS.

For more information and for country reports of the GMBS go to www.genderlinks.org.za





handout eleven

Where are women and men in the news?



**African
BUSINESS**

June 1997 Number 222

KENYA: Bruising Battle To Control Coffee

TANZANIA: Flowery Smell Of Money

ERITREA: Investors Flock Into Mining

GHANA: First Test Tube Babies

South Africa's

BUSINESS ARMY INVADES AFRICA

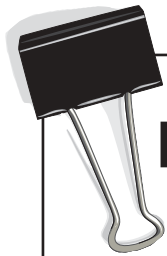
SPECIAL REPORT: BUSINESS SHAPES UP IN NIGERIA

INSIGHT: DOGFIGHT OVER ZAIRE MINERALS BEGINS

TECHNOLOGY: SATELLITE RADIO TO BOOST EDUCATION



Australia: \$24.95 Austria: Adm 45.00 Bahrain: \$27.00 Canada: \$33.75 CFA Zone: CFA 1,000 Cyprus: \$21.40 Denmark: DKK 220	Egypt: \$24.00 Ethiopia: Birr 12.00 Finland: DM 49 Germany: DM 49.00 Ghana: Cedi 200.00 Japan: ¥700 Jordan: JRD 100	Kenya: KSh 400 Kuwait: Pk 600 Lebanon: L.L. 3,000 Morocco: Dh 200.00 Netherlands: Dfl 125.00 Nigeria: N100.00 Oman: OMR 10.00	Saudi Arabia: Riyal 200 Sierra Leone: Le 2,000 South Africa: R 20.00 Sweden: SEK 200.00 Tanzania: TSh 1,000 Turkey: TL 100.00 UAE: Dh 10.00	Uganda: USh 2,000 UK: £3.00 USA: \$3.95 Zambia: ZK 1,000 Zimbabwe: Z\$ 10.00 per US\$
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handout twelve

Here is the news: Where are the women? Where are the men?

By Colleen Lowe Morna and Jennifer Mufune



Caption: Tanzania, 2002 family portrait. Cartoon: Mum has replaced dad as head of the household in a wall hanging. Young brother looks lost. Older sister has become a nun. Mum wears a T-shirt reading: "this lousy T-shirt is all I got from the Beijing conference".

The message: women's rights are tearing the family apart. And who are the biggest losers? Women, of course!

The cartoon, one of over 25 000 news items monitored as part of the Southern African Gender and Media Baseline Study (GMBS) is as sad as it is telling.

Brainchild of the Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA) that promotes media freedom, and Gender Links, that advocates gender equality in and through the media, the study shows that women constitute only 17% of news sources in Southern Africa (compared to a global average of 18%).

While economic and political coverage took up about a quarter of news time and space, and sports another 20% coverage on gender equality accounted for a mere 2% of the total. Even then gender equality is often the subject of scare tactics and derision. Much easier, the study found, for women to be portrayed as sex objects than as equals!

The study was launched at a side event during the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women meeting in New York in February 2003 and in Johannesburg at a seminar bringing together high-level regional media officials, 7 March – the eve of International Women's Day.

There is a growing momentum globally for women to take over the making of the news on 8 March. With its slogan: "women and men make the news" the GMBS poses a bigger challenge. This is for women and men at all levels of decision-making, and consulting all strata of opinion, to make the news.

Just prior to the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995, and five years later, NGOs conducted one-day global snapshots of women and men in the news. Because of its one-month time span, the GMBS

covered a greater number of news items than the global studies, making it the most ambitious gender and media-monitoring project ever undertaken globally.

It also included qualitative and quantitative findings that help to move beyond simple number crunching to a deeper understanding of gender aware reporting.

As the study points out, just because a story is about women or has women voices does not mean it is gender sensitive. For example, an interesting story about Namibia's first woman valuer general is marred by frequent and irrelevant references to her being a good wife and mother. Among the quantitative findings are that women are much more likely to carry the personal labels mother, wife, daughter etc than men are to be referred to as father, husband, and son.

The qualitative research highlights instances of blatant sexist reporting, such as the crass sexual exploits that feature on the back page of the Windhoek Observer, or the reed dance in Swaziland reported under the headline: "the great boob show".

It also highlights the more common but equally insidious subtle forms of gender stereotypes. Examples include the "Kids Corner" in the Bulawayo Chronicle where the nurses and teachers are all women, the police officers and farmers are all men.

Another worrying dimension that the report highlights is the "gender blindness" of most mainstream stories. A story from Mauritius on teachers striking, for example, is based entirely on male sources, even though women predominate in the teaching service.

The quantitative research showed that the only topic category in which women's voices predominate is gender equality. Women's voices are not even heard in proportion to their numbers in occupational categories. For example, although women constitute 18% of members of parliament in the region, women comprised only 8% of politicians quoted. In South Africa women comprise almost a third of members of parliamentarians and cabinet minister, yet only 8% of those quoted in this occupational category.

Although the study is primarily about gender in the editorial content of the news, it offers interesting insights on gender imbalances in the news-rooms of the region through questions on who reported or presented news items.

The study found that the highest proportion of media women practitioners (45%) is in the TV presenter category, and lowest in the print category (22%). Women are more likely to be found in the "soft beats" like social issues and human rights. Yet male reporters are in the majority in all the beats-even gender equality. The study sees the latter as an opportunity, to improve the quality of coverage on this important issue through training male and female journalists.



Training tip: These exercises are a particularly telling way of demonstrating gender biases in the media, since they are not in any way contrived. They simply pick up on any news medium, in any country, at any time and demonstrate simply, quickly and concretely the imbalances both in the representation of women and men in the media, and in the way they are portrayed.

In almost every instance, no matter which part of the world you are in, women comprise one quarter or less of the images and sources of news. While men are portrayed in diverse roles – in politics, business, the economy, sports etc – women are overwhelmingly entertainers, sex objects, or victims of violence. Little in these snapshots would convey the role of women in the region as farmers, traders, peace builders, community activists, aspiring politicians etc.

In **Handout eleven** “Business Army Invades Africa” there are only two women; the white woman is in the front. The counting exercises are in effect mini monitoring exercises of the kind carried out in the GMBS. The GMBS provides the statistics to back what is fairly obvious from a quick glance through the media in any Southern African country: there are glaring gender gaps and biases.

Portrayal

Media images regularly employ distinct “gender labels” for both men and women. Images “tag” the person by gender. This in turn feeds into gender-stereotyped concepts of behaviour. It assumes the imaged person will play to gender-determined standards.

The Gender and Media Baseline Study includes a number of examples of gender bias in visual imagery. These come from every nation in the region; they reflect many of the same gender “labels”. Many of the gender “markers” appear to be cross-cultural or supra-cultural even at the point where they directly conflict with local cultural values and norms.

Exercise: Sex as a label

Look again at how photographs in the newspapers just examined portray women and men. Do these pictures often show the woman’s sexual features (covered or even uncovered?) Are women’s sexual features emphasised or exaggerated? Do pictures often show clearly the men’s sexual features (covered or uncovered?) Are they often emphasised or exaggerated?



Training tip: It is far more common to explicitly show, or even emphasise or exaggerate, sexual characteristics in pictures of a woman. Showing explicit sex is relatively less common in pictures of a man.

Sexual labels often are the first step to stereotyping gender

Showing the sexual characteristics of a woman often acts as the first step in stereotyping around gender. This label says: here is a woman, not a man. From this, the viewer can be expected to read the picture from a gender-biased perspective, using gender stereotypes common in the society.

Exercise: Gender stereotypes in the media

Handouts thirteen to twenty provide contrasting images of women and men taken from a variety of newspapers in the region. Many of these came from the monitoring that took place during the Gender and Media Baseline Study. Divide the class into smaller groups and give a handout to each one. Ask them to make lists about what the images say about women and what they say about men. Which of these types of images is most common? Which is closest to reality?



Training tip: Contrasting images, even when they are from a different time and place, is a useful wake-up call, because it says this is what is, and also this is what could be. The irony, of course is that most of the images in the media don’t reflect reality. Instead, they reflect extremes of society’s expectations of women and men, when the reality is almost always somewhere in between. It is simply not true, for example, that all men are violent and prone to war; or that women care only about their bodies. Every human being is a complex and amazing being. Yet, as the last sequence in this series shows, when women and men display personality traits associated with the other sex, we immediately want to “rationalise” them by turning them into

“tom boys” in the case of women and “sissies” in the case of men. What these articles show is that the mainstream media is very much a part and parcel of this kind of thinking:

Handout thirteen: This front-page photograph in the *Star* newspaper from the Iraq war is the ultimate in extremes: the male soldier and the semi-nude woman on his mind. Compare “Minki” with the woman freedom fighter in the photo from the Mozambican liberation struggle. How often does one see such an image in the mainstream media?

Handout fourteen: The images of women from the *Windhoek Observer* are in stark contrast to the woman factory worker in Johannesburg during a memorial service for the late African National Congress leader Walter Sisulu. It is almost as though they do not come from the same planet. Sadly, the former images are far more numerous in the media than the latter.

Handout fifteen: This cover page of the Sunday edition of the *Times of Swaziland* sends out two diametrically opposed messages about women. Above, women and men are graduating at the University of Swaziland. Below, the king is “picking” his tenth wife, a high school student. She is his property, available to be “taken”. What does this say about women, even those who have an education?

Handout sixteen: This image, from the front page of the *Star* newspaper, is about women prosecutors (“The faces whom the monster’s fear”). It illustrates the other extreme – the praise singing of women. The article describes how hard poorly paid women prosecutors work in the fight against crime, with “gentle voices”, “warm smiles” and “fragrant perfumes.” In glorifying all women (notice also how they are lumped together *en masse* in the picture, almost like a class photo) the story misses the central point: that women predominate in this area of the legal profession because it is the least well paid. It is not helpful to go from reporting women as objects and victims to reporting on them as heroes. This “blinds” reporters to the complex realities of life that are the grist of all good reporting and images.

Handout seventeen: Men are expected to be physically and emotionally strong. They find it difficult to deal with their emotions. Why is it that almost everywhere in the world men are responsible for the majority of crimes – especially violent crimes? Is the way that men are socialised as insidious as the way that women are socialised?

Handout eighteen: Men are also expected to provide for their families – in a physical sense. Notice how this is inculcated even in a young boy who finds that he must suddenly care for AIDS orphans. The image of the man in a shack, about to be evicted, but giving emotional care to his baby, is a refreshing example of how the media can challenge stereotypes.

Handout nineteen: Gender bias makes it impossible for the media to deal with well-rounded human beings – women and men. Thus the dad who is really just being a good dad by caring for his daughter becomes the “ideal mum” and Katherine Hepburn is said to have had universal appeal because “she was woman... but she was also man.”

How images construct and reinforce gender stereotypes

Images promote the hegemonic perspective of dominant masculinity: Most visual imagery in news media repeats, emphasises, and reinforces the concept of the dominant male. The “successful” male is often portrayed as assertive or aggressive, even violent; also rich and powerful.

Images define masculinity and femininity as separate and opposite when in fact they are mutually defining, with a continuum of intervening events.

Images define and classify subjects in terms of perceived “success” and “failure” in meeting specific gender standards and models. This is especially problematic where reaching those standards that turn out to be impossible.



SA babe is a blast with Yank tank crews

SECRET WEAPON: An American tank crewman shows off an essential piece of equipment that helps him get through the hot dusty days - a profile of Minki van der Westhuisen.

Teenage Minki is raising a desert storm

SELF-REPORTER

The Yanks could have chosen pictures of women to adorn their tanks, but they've obviously nothing to lose a touch of southern class.

Not the Southern Belle, but southern Belle.

The former pin-up girl's been spotted through the dust in the Gulf's desert Iraq desert in some other than Cape Town's Minki van der Westhuisen.

While South Africa's most famous girl is the cover of the latest GQ magazine, she was becoming the latest girl in thousands of soldiers' more than 2000 list songs.

But the teenager from Durban's the latest not about her "sweet rose" status only when her grand-

mother is. She's been recognized for on the front page of England's Daily Star tabloid newspaper, which was featured in Sky News satellite channel. The headline read: "Minki is the Yanks' New Lady". But, having just signed the prestigious worldwide Glamour magazine contract, Van der Westhuisen shouldn't have been surprised.

The 18-year-old from New Mexico was selected to succeed supermodel Claudia Schiffer after meeting off just four potential dates in New York.

But she insists that her mother now reads the US edition rather than she's not taking sides in the war.

Anyway, she also recently told the GQ's August via being associate editor Dean Cain. But by the way she has eyes for South Africa's new only.



FORCES' FAVOURITE: Minki on the cover of GQ magazine



Frelimo woman fighter – Mozambique National Archives.



War and sex
handout thirteen



handout fourteen

Women as sex objects versus women as workers



Images from the back page of the *Windhoek Observer*.



Woman factory worker at a commemoration for ANC leader Walter Sisulu in Johannesburg, May 2003. Photo by workshop participants.



handout fifteen: One country, two worlds for women

TIMES OF SWAZILAND
SUNDAY
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JOURNEY'S END: Graduates line up for singing in yesterday's graduation event held at the Kwaluseni campus of the University of Swaziland.

King picks No. 10

A SUNDAY EXCLUSIVE



KING MSWATI CHOOSES TENTH BRIDE, A BEAUTIFUL 18-YEAR-OLD ST. MARK'S HIGH STUDENT, FROM LAST SATURDAY'S REED DANCE AT MBANGWENI ROYAL RESIDENCE.

REPORTS ON PAGE 8-9

SPRING IS HERE!



2001 Nissan Altima 2.0 SE LE 1900 P/V (mileage 14,500km)	E140,000.00
2001 Ford Focus 1.2 SE Silver A/C + P/V	154,700.00
1997 Nissan SR 2000 SE LE 5/Car + Camper	155,000.00
1998 Honda A2500 TR 5/Car + Camper	1100,000.00
2000 Nissan SR 2000 SE LE 5/Car	1100,000.00
1997 Toyota Hilux 2.4D P/V	170,000.00
1998 Audi A6 2.8 Executive	197,500.00
1998 Nissan SR 2000 SE LE 5/Car 4x4	1100,000.00
1997 Toyota Camry 2.0 5/Car P/V + A/C	540,500.00
1998 Ford Astra 1900	1100,000.00
1997 Nissan SR 2000 SE LE 5/Car 4x4	1100,000.00
2001 Nissan SR 2000 SE LE 1900 P/V	1100,000.00
1998 Toyota Camry 2.0 Sport	140,000.00

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handout sixteen: Wonderful women

SPACE WALLCHART TOMORROW
 TRANSFORMER will publish a special wallchart to mark the 50th anniversary of the space race.
AND TODAY SHOWS on a special feature on the film.

THE STAR
 MAY 19 60
 THE STAR

The Star

LOTTO
R8m JACKPOT
FULL GUIDE > 5

TUESDAY APRIL 13 2009 Singapore \$2.00 Annual subscription: \$2.00

The faces the monsters fear





handout seventeen

“Men must be strong”

Comment&Analysis

The west stereotypes Asian men as weak, subservient, effeminate. No wonder they're fighting back

A complete balls-up

BODY LANGUAGE

Tania Branigan

Hiller has only got one ball, Goetting has two but very small. Hirunier is very strong and Goetzels has no balls at all.

When World War II trope song that ditty, the words were tongue-in-cheek. Sixty years on, we appear to be taking these matters rather more seriously. For an event tabloid stories tell us, we should blame Osama bin Laden's career on his similarities to Goetting.

"He grew up with military air and organs due to testosterone deficiencies" the News of the World informed its readers last week, tracing his anti-Americanism to a Yankee girlfriend who saw him naked and laughed. Medical treatment allowed him to father 12 children, but did little to



Masculinity: is it all in the crotch?

can Sir John Keganah told Daily Telegraph readers that Western armies fight "down to beat an stand-up battle"

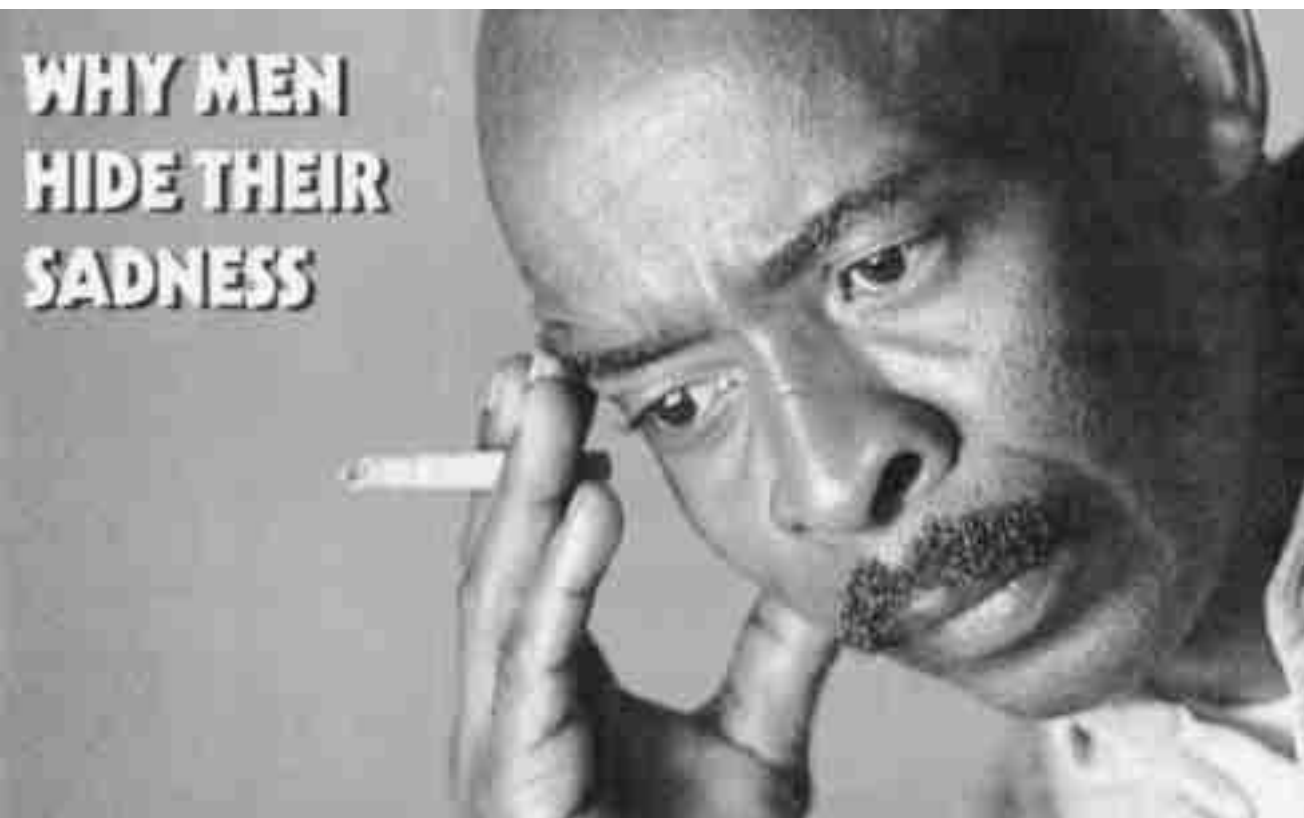
into form. The result is that Asian men in Europe have been emasculated, not by feminism but by white

The predictable upshot of our ideology is that young men are becoming increasingly muscle and expressing it through general hostility, physical assertiveness, or more worryingly religious fundamentalism.

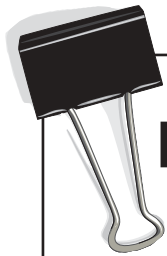
Fyrene Nasser Hamed, one of the few Arab men to prosper through physical strength, took up boxing because his family was harassed by racists. The National Front stopped calling when they learnt that the Hamed boys were handy with their fists.

Fundamentalism is equally potent in its symbolic form. We know that the growth of Islamism in the west has little to do with the streets of Mecca. It is, in part, about racial pride: rejecting a society that rejects you and confirming your status as an outsider. But it is also about sexual identity, about being a man in a world that treats you as a boy. And it works. We understand its unbridled aggression and, because it scares the hell out of

Mail and Guardian, 23 – 29 November 2001.



The Star, 17 July 2002.



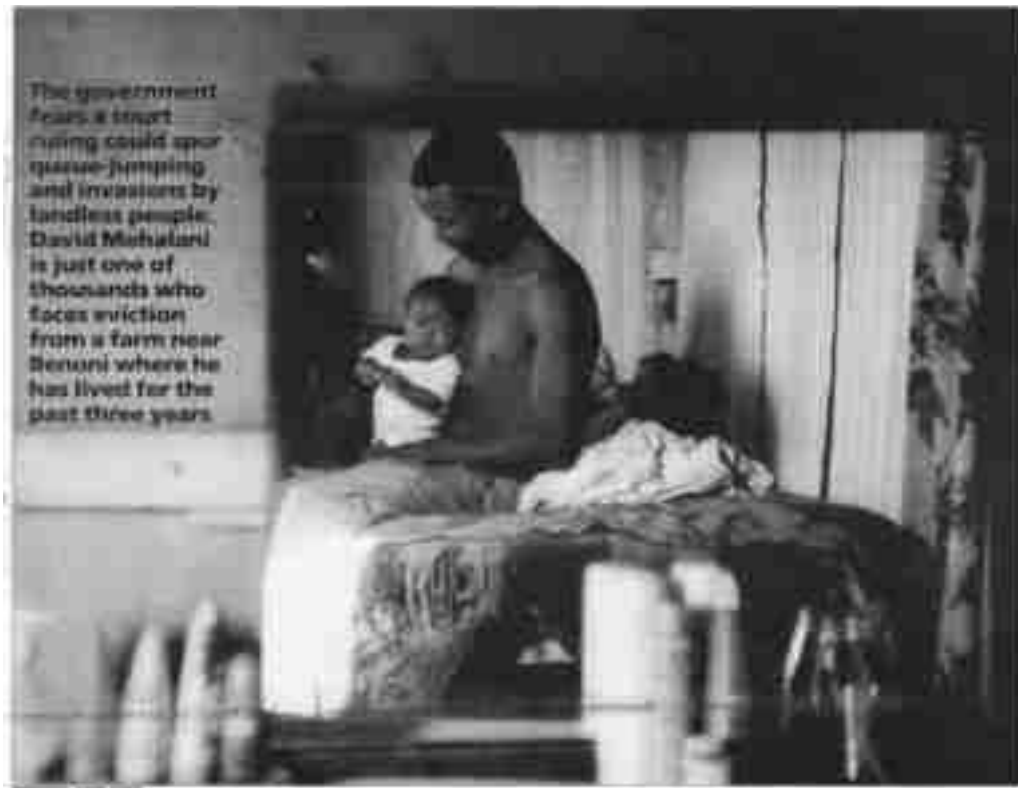
handout eighteen

What should men provide?

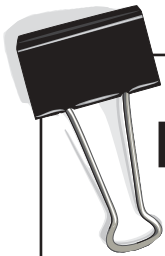


ThethaNathi, March 31 – April 4, 2003.

Government faces test over 40 000 squatters



Mail and Guardian, 17 – 23 January.




handout nineteen: Gender benders


Dad is an ideal mum



The Star, 16 June 2001.



'She was woman'



Legendary... Hepburn, pictured here in 1990, is dead at the age of 96

...but she was also man. Universal appeal was the real secret of actress Katharine Hepburn who died yesterday

The Star, 30 June 2003.

The effect of gender stereotypes in the media

When the media – and our larger society – assumes and promotes gender norms, our images also portray degrees of success and failure in living up to these norms. Many people – both individuals and groups – are unable to meet stated gender norms. This leads to frustration, failure, self-hate, and even violence.

Two examples indicate the negative impact of unreachable gender norms:

- Eight million women wish to look like super-models – and only eight women do. Most women cannot meet the physical standards for female beauty commonly promoted in the media.
- Many men – especially in poor and disrupted situations, and particularly where communities are subjected to war – are unable to meet gender norms that call upon them to protect and defend their families. One result is self-hate, up to and including suicide. Another response is to resort to gender violence, including violence against other men.