

CHAPTER TEN

Decisions at the desk

“ If you give a sub-editor a sheet of contact images for a picture, they will inevitably choose the one picture which is out of focus. ”

Peter Mackenzie

Key issues:

- Major decisions about the meaning of pictures are made in layout and design – by the desk visuals department or sub-editor, not the photographer.
- Photo-manipulation, “adjustment” and collages, done by the visuals desk, can have serious implications for gender imaging.
- Decisions on packaging and positioning often reinforce stereotyping and bias.



GL trainer Pat Made (right) works with a journalist during a training workshop on gender violence

Introduction

Taking pictures is just the first part of the story about how meaning is created around images. Meanings about gender images – like all published images – are made as much by the desk-bound visuals department, by the sub-editor and editor, as well as by the photographer confronting an event with a camera.

These choices, made at the desk, under pressure of deadlines, advertisers, and a whole collection of preconceptions about what will sell, tend to go for “what feels right” on the page and in the publication.

Where the photographer may have made a conscious decision about what the image says about gender, or about the event as a unique occurrence, the desk editor is more concerned with making it fit the overall publication. This becomes a recipe for increased clichéd and stereotyped imagery – particularly around gender issues. An image that challenges “perceived wisdom” about gender simply may not get used.

All of the decisions around how a picture is shown – the words around it, the size and placing on the page, even the type of newspaper or magazine that uses the picture, affect how the reader will understand the picture.

Often, it involves the whole chain from the reporter and or the editor who conceives the story, to the reader in bed on Sunday morning. And, as we saw in the previous chapter, the woman photojournalist is often excluded from this process.

Exercise: Who takes the decisions?

How does the publication you work for decide upon the photographic images that are used? Does someone (for instance an editor) ask for a photographer to take an appropriate picture, or do they choose it from existing images or from an image banks, or rely on images that are supplied with the story from their news source? Try drawing a “map” of how photographic images are chosen in your publication. Then, mark down whether, in your organisation, the people involved in choosing images are men or women.



Training tip: In most of our organisations and publications, the above exercise shows that key decisions about what images are shown, from the editor giving the briefing to the photographer on the beat to the layout artist, are made by men. The map may look something like this:

Layout and placing

Every person who studies design knows that placement on the page, size, and design factors like contrast and whether the page is “busy” can change what we see in a picture, and how we interpret it. Unfortunately, many sub-editors do not study design. The result is that even good pictures can be “lost”, by being too small or, by being placed next to a “loud” or conflicting picture.

Exercise: Thieves, marriage and success

With reference to the front cover of the *Zambian Sunday Post* in **Handout thirty-five**, what gender messages are sent out by the way in which the photograph is used and placed on the page?



Training tip: The story that goes with the image is a tiny piece in the corner. The way the image is used gives the impression that the woman is somehow linked to the thieves story. This is a classic example of using an image of the woman to “brighten up” the page when she has nothing to do with the issues at hand. Notice the gender assumptions in the tiny story that *is* about her. For example: “like any other wife, Maambo has to attend to all household chores and responsibilities.”

handout thirty-five

Sunday Post

No. 23705071 - Sunday April 12, 2003

www.post.co.zw

K3,000

There is no SARS, says Dr. Chitwano

By Noel Mubvumba

THESE is no SARS, Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) in Zimbabwe, and health workers in Harare should breathe easy.

Dr. Chitwano said clinical observations at a private patient hospital in Harare showed SARS was being brought in by many foreigners.

"Doctors in Harare had not yet come across any patients with SARS which has been found here in the Zimbabwean health system."

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They are still stinking and dirty . . . I HAVE NO APOLOGIES TO THIEVES — LEVY

By Jonathan Mwanawasa in Harare
I have no apologies to thieves, said President Levy Mwanawasa yesterday.

802 new places Access Finance into liquidation

By Noel Mubvumba
THE Harare-based Access Finance has been placed in liquidation by the court.



'Dont let marriage affect your studies'

By Joe Kaunda
Being married should never affect one's personal academic development, says Maambo Handahu Chilepa.

Mwanawasa should not rule in anger, says Sata

By Wilson Mubvumba in Harare
PRESIDENT Mwanawasa should not rule in anger, says opposition leader Morgan Tsvangirai.

Levy is just scared -- Bishop Mususu

By Joseph Chitwano
PRESIDENT Mwanawasa is just scared, says Bishop Mususu.

While others imitate we originate

Cropping

A picture can also be affected by how it is cut – what is left in, what comes out, what is emphasised or made a larger part of the overall scene.

Exercise: Creating meaning through cutting

Use various images on a computer screen to crop and change contrast. Pay particular attention to the different kinds of gender meaning that can be given through this process.

Headings and captions

The words around an image – particularly headings and captions – can be critical to how a picture “reads”. These are often the decision of the sub-editor. Gender stereotypes are often introduced or reinforced in headings and captions.

Exercise:

Look through the day’s newspapers. Examine photos and captions. Are the headings, captions and images appropriate? Some examples are given in **Handout thirty-six**.



Training tips:

- 1) The story in *The Star* concerns research about how men who commit femicide (the killing of an intimate partner) often get much lighter prison sentences than women who, often after many years of abuse, end up killing their partners. There has been a campaign to get the President to use his prerogative to pardon women who killed abusive partners. The Justice for Women Campaign met with *the Star* newspaper that pledged its support for the campaign by giving it high profile visibility. But the front-page story that followed the launch of the campaign carried the title “Husband-killers seek mercy”. The headline suggests vengeance and gives the impression that women are trying to get away with murder. The image of two boxers, though referring to another story, is unfortunate. It seems to be a sub-conscious reinforcing of men’s power and hegemony.
- 2) The packaging of the “Mum Beauty” story in *the Namibian* gives no impression of the real issue: the reigning Miss World threatening to boycott this year’s beauty pageant over a human rights issue. The headline and image reinforce her looks – not her concern over a woman condemned to death for allegedly committing adultery.
- 3) The story about a girl forced to marry a dog captured headlines in many newspapers in the region in July 2003. In this version from a Mauritian newspaper, consider the light-hearted manner in which the story is written, and the pun on the word “pause”. Is there anything in the story and the way it is packaged that conveys a human rights abuse?

Inappropriate images

A common occurrence with gender specific stories in the region is the use of inappropriate images.

Exercise: Inappropriate images

Consider, for example, the illustrations in the stories in **Handout thirty-six**. What images are used?/ Why? What do they convey? What images could have been used?



Training tip: In the first case, a Mauritian newspaper uses a photo of two young women, from the back, with no caption, to illustrate a story on a task force on abortion, divorce and prostitution. These two women appear to have nothing whatsoever to do with the story, other than the fact that they are women. Granted, this is a difficult subject to illustrate. At worst, the story might have used a face photo of a member of the task force than of two anonymous women. The second case from a Lesotho newspaper is even more glaring. Even if it is difficult to illustrate a woman having a miscarriage in a factory, surely juxtaposing this story with a photograph of Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe (relating to a story in the inside pages) is at best unprofessional and at worst insensitive!



handout thirty-six

Captions and headlines

Husband-killers seek mercy

BY LANA JACOBSON

In a legal first, the justice for Women Campaign is to apply to President Thabo Mbeki next week for a presidential pardon for women who were jailed for killing their abusive partners after enduring years of abuse at their hands.

The women, who were all given lengthy jail terms, have exhausted all their options under the judicial system, and a presidential pardon is their only hope.

In 1997, Maria Scholtz, Harriet Chidi and Sharia Sebejan were sentenced to 20 years, 15 years and 21 years' imprisonment respectively for killing their husbands.

And in 1994, Meisie Kgomo was sentenced to death and Elsie Morare to 21 years for killing their husbands, who were both policemen.

During their court cases, presiding judges heard tales of physical abuse (including severe beatings), sexual abuse (rape of some of the women by their husbands and actual or threatened abuse of their children by their husbands); and psychological abuse (ranging from being locked up under "house arrest" to insults and verbal tirades).

The Justice for Women Campaign was initiated by the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliations (CSVR) and is supported by the National Network on Violence Against Women. The campaign is being launched on Monday with the handing over of Scholtz's application for presidential pardon.



SECONDS AWAY: Lennox Lewis (left), the undisputed heavyweight champion of the world, weighed in at 115kg at the Big Top Arena in Carnival City last night. Challenger Hasim Rahman (right), was seven kilograms lighter at 108kg. The two do battle in the early hours of tomorrow morning.

■ To Page 2

Saturday Star, South Africa, 21 April 2001.

Mum beauty

Nigeria's reigning Miss World Agbani Darego (right) has refused to become involved in a threatened boycott of this year's beauty pageant in Abuja. Beauty queens from European countries, chiefly Norway, France and Belgium, said they would not attend the pageant because of death sentences for adultery passed by Nigeria's Muslim courts. The beauty pageant is due to take place on November 30. Asked about the boycott Darego said: "I am sorry, I won't answer that."

Photo: Nampa-Reuters



The Namibian, 11 Sept 2002.

NEWS ON SUNDAY, June 27-03 July, 2003



WHAT A LIFE!

There's a paws before 'I do'

A NINE-YEAR-OLD Indian girl was married to a dog amid religious chants after a priest told her parents the wedding would ward off evil.

The marriage between Karnamoni and a mongrel dog called "Bachchan" – after India's popular movie star Amitabh Bachchan – took place earlier this month in Khannan village, some 60 km northwest of Calcutta.

"The priest told the girl's family, who are poor tribal farmers, that because new teeth appeared on her upper gums rather than her lower gums, it was a bad omen and she would die," government welfare officer M.N. Rana told Reuters. "The priest said to ward off danger to her life, the parents should marry the girl to a dog, which they did," Rana added.

Officials and witnesses said Karnamoni married the dog, which has a brown, white and black coat, on a raised dais amid chanting of religious hymns and the feeding of the canine "groom" with rice. The communist government in West Bengal said it planned to investigate the wedding, although it was merely a ceremonial one and the girl will be free to marry a man when she is older.

News on Sunday, Mauritius, 27 June-3 July 2003

handout thirty-seven

Inappropriate images

LAWS DISCRIMINATING AGAINST WOMEN

Women and the task force – Abortion, divorce and prostitution

A member of various NGOs and board member of MAW discusses some social aspects, which the legal recommendations of the task force on the empowerment of woman may have overlooked.

EVER SINCE the publication of recommendations by the task force appointed by the Ministry of Women, Family Welfare & Child Development on laws discriminating against women, different views have been expressed particularly on main sensitive issues such as – Abortion, Divorce and Prostitution. Whilst the objective of the task force has been to empower the Mauritian woman by giving her certain legal rights, strong socio-religious traditional views on an issue such as Abortion or vice-versa may at some point have led the task force to overlook the social aspect of certain issues. I would like to discuss each of the issues mentioned above separately.

• Abortion

Here we are talking about abortion only in cases specified by the task force, where there is no doubt that the decision-maker can only be the woman directly concerned. It goes without saying that in normal married life both the mother and father are concerned with the decision to go ahead with an abortion.

The task force clearly stated specific cases where abortion can be allowed legally, in which the woman has no alternative but to go for abortion in order to protect her physical and mental well-being. For example, it is unfair that a woman, who is pregnant as a result of rape (by first grade criminal or by incest sexual relation forced on her) or who is carrying a child having aids or major physical abnormalities, should be forced to go through her pregnancy. The very fact that such a pregnancy results from a most traumatising experience can cause disastrous damage to the woman both physically and mentally, as well as a negative impact on the child.

In such cases, abortion is seen as the only solution. Where abortion is not legalised, many women still go for it illegally, accepting to be the subject of crude, barbarian and unprofessional practices causing further physical damage, and in so many cases, even death.

Therefore, those who condemn abortion on the basis of saving the "life in the womb" are in fact disregarding the human right of the woman to "live" a life, unharmed from physical, mental and psychological trauma.

One has to realise that, in today's society, woman is more exposed to crime. It is to be noted that people are very often subject to crime at home as well – such as rape. Therefore the values of ancient society, where woman was well protected within the four walls in an extended family, need to be reviewed.

• Divorce by mutual consent

Divorce and marriage are opposite sides of the same coin, the former bringing an end to the latter. Once the conjugal relations break up to the point where both the spouses feel totally unhappy together any more, they wish to terminate the marriage in order to have a more peaceful existence, for educated, mature and understanding couples, divorce by mutual consent seems to be a more appropriate solution than to go for divorce at fault, which requires the production of supporting evidence against one of the spouses to show



find a job and fend for themselves. It would also help to establish institutions to provide short and practical training programmes to cater for those women who need to acquire skills in order to obtain a job and support themselves financially.

On the other hand, though long procedures of divorce cases give sufficient time to the couple to reconcile and lead a happy married life again, divorce is not an end in itself. It therefore seems wise to propose that a couple should be allowed to apply for divorce by mutual consent only after a minimum of one year of marriage when, in spite of all efforts, both the spouses cannot any more live a happy and peaceful conjugal life. This would ensure that the couple would have given sufficient thought to solving problems before opting for the easy solution of separation.

In divorce cases where it is proven that the husband was at fault, it is essential to protect the interest of the woman and the children. Legal procedures should be more rapid for finalisation of divorce and settlement of alimony, especially if the victim is incapable of earning her living. The recommendation for setting up a Family Court should be implemented without delay.

As divorce often means the loss of conjugal roof for women. A woman without a secured roof can become the prey of drug dealers, pimps, and other law offenders. It is therefore proposed that Government set up very low cost accommodation to shelter these victims at a low rent or for free over a defined period of time, until these women are able to

• Prostitution

Prostitution is more of a social problem than a legal one. By simply enforcing laws to put prostitutes or those enjoying their services in prison will not simply put an end to prostitution, which is known as "le plus vieux métier du monde".

Whilst some prostitutes opt for the streets for easy money, it is a sad fact that most women practising prostitution have been victims of pathetic circumstances. These prostitutes have always been looked at by most women as feelingless objects of sexual pleasure for men and with contempt.

A society where prostitution does not exist at all belongs to Utopia. It is also impossible to exercise control over "deals" taking place amongst the four walls of a bedroom. The issue rather pertains to those who are victims of a network and a system, which they abhor. Society must make place for those willing to quit prostitution and allow them to integrate without any stigma. Mechanisms must set up to offer the skills or education required to opt for a career

other than walking the streets, as well as other facilities such as temporary shelter or financing schemes.

In the cases of those prostitutes who are not willing to change, they should be officially registered for better control. They should also be legally made to go through regular medical check-up as it is the case in many countries, to avoid transmitting any sexual diseases and particularly aids.

The exploitation of women should be of course legally prohibited. No brothel should be allowed to operate whereby a person would be making money by forcing people to prostitute themselves. Such persons should be legally punished with long term imprisonment.

When it comes to child prostitution, any adult, including tourists, caught engaged in such activities should be severely punished by long-term imprisonment. There is today much concern for the problem of child prostitution, especially as it has been brought to attention that many of these pervers are people in positions of power. Our island is visited by numerous tourists and many of them come to Mauritius not only for "Sand, Sea & Sun" but for "Sex" as well. It is therefore a priority to focus on the problem and take appropriate measures to punish the culprits and ensure that tomorrow's adults enjoy the innocence of childhood, free from physical and psychological trauma.

We also need to pay attention to a new phenomenon in prostitution in Mauritius – that by female workers hired from overseas for factories in Mauritius. Here I would like to quote from an article "You ne veut plus se prostituer", published in page 2 of *L'express* of 7 February 2002 where it shows clearly the helpless situation of a chinese female factory worker forced to prostitution:

"... Encore assommée de fatigue, You se rend au rez-de-chaussée et réalise qu'elle a été dupée. Avant qu'elle n'ait le temps de reprendre ses esprits, la surveillance et une autre compatriote la contraignent à s'habiller et la mettent dans un taxi qui la conduit dans un hôtel miteux de Ste-Croix. Un marin philippin l'y attend et l'oblige à avoir des rapports sexuels avec lui toute la nuit. Elle le quitte vers cinq heures du matin après qu'il lui ait remis \$100 (Rs 3 000) et Rs 200 pour le taxi. C'est le même qui la ramène devant la maison où elle vit. La surveillance est à la porte et lui ponctionne de facto Rs 1000..."

To conclude, the task force has taken positive steps in bringing out the burning issues regarding discrimination against women and bravely recommending laws to empower and protect women, who have been victims for far too long due to lacking legal framework.

However, these recommendations do not suffice in themselves. There is a need for the authorities to make the necessary efforts to provide for the right support and conditions in order to allow women their right to serenity. Furthermore, the input of women to the country's economic, cultural and social progress should not be disregarded.

The country needs healthy and happy women working for it, rather than a bunch of helpless victims.

Hence, the application of the legal recommendations need support in terms of training, education

Woman gets miscarriage in factory

By Tsepang Mncina

A pregnant woman got a miscarriage when a fight broke between two factions of workers at the C-River Textile Firm in Maseru Industrial Area on Friday last week, resulting in dismissal of 69 workers. Daniel Maraisane, General Secretary for the Lesotho Clothing and Allied Workers Union (LECAWU) told our reporter on Monday.

According to some workers who were chanting and singing dirges against the C-River management in front of LECAWU offices, one of the supervisors used vulgar language against workers irrespective of a crystal clear regulation that no one is supposed to use unacceptable expressions at works. Failure to abide by that law is punishable by expulsion.

However, workers said the 'immoral' supervisor had never been disciplined despite their regular reporting to the authorities, but their delegates were the ones who were fired. The action prompted workers to report the matter to their shift stewards, who in turn asked the management why the supervisor was still on duty after such misconduct.

The shift stewards appealed to the management twice to take action against the supervisor, instead of addressing the issue the management called Hoohlo police to arrest workers. As a result, they went on strike.

When they asked the police to intervene, they were told that the police could not solve the matter. The Directorate of Dispute Prevention and Resolution solves such matters. The matter was presented before company's

consultant who decided to dismiss workers and shift stewards.

The dismissal of workers is the main reason behind the strike. However, some workers did not go on strike, since there were three factions affiliated to two unions, LECAWU and NUTEX while other were not affiliated to either of the unions.

Those who went on strike threatened to assault those who were not willing to join their strike.

On Thursday, Seabata Likoti the executive committee member of LECAWU pleaded with the striking workers to go back to their respective duties as he was solving the matter with their employers. The employer, who is of Chinese descent, and LECAWU did not come to an agreement and the strike continued.

The workers were given a period of time from 7 am to 12 noon if they are not on duty they are fired. The workers who were on duty threw working implements like rolls of threads at those who pushed their way in the factory to cause distortion in the factory. In this process the pregnant woman in the factory got miscarriage.

On Friday the management of factory and other supervisors selected 69 workers who were branded as wrongdoers and were fired.

Maraisane said he suspected that the River Company has an intention to abolish LECAWU in their factories by slowly getting rid of his workers. He sited the example of the O River at Thetsane Industrial Area was closed and 372 workers lost their jobs.



Insensitive images

The propensity of newspapers to try to use sex, or more precisely women's bodies, to sell their newspapers (see Chapter five) often leads to grossly insensitive illustrations when such images are used to adorn pages whose content is addressing serious human rights violations.

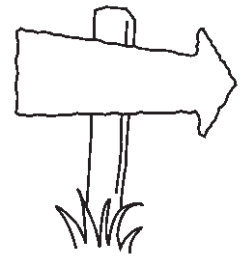
Exercise: In poor taste

Examine the two clippings in **Handout thirty-eight**. What are the stories about? What are the images about? Why were these images used? What messages do they convey?



Training tip: The first story is about a woman accused of witchcraft for refusing to sleep with a man. Yet the image that adorns the page is one of a half nude model with the caption “mainly for men” – sending home messages about women as objects for the pleasure of men, a message in direct conflict with that of the accompanying story about the violation of women's rights. The second case study is the front page of a Mauritian newspaper. It is about a Mauritian woman student murdered in the UK. Yet the image of a fashion model has nothing whatsoever to do with the story. It is intended to “sell” the newspaper, with little regard for the subject of the headline story.

Signposts: Chapter Six: Sex Sells, or does it?



Faking and manipulation of pictures has become a common issue for the sub-editor and the layout artist as a result of changing technology, and particularly the use of computers and digital imagery.

Manipulating photographs to take out the “wrong” bits or to put in the “wanted” parts is now easy, hard to detect, and common. It is usually all done on the computer. Often this involves shifting lighting effects, focus, or intensity. It includes cropping pictures, taking out unwanted detail or visual “errors”, eliminating dust marks or stray light, or even the date-line that the camera added to the film.

Exercise: Making up meaning

With reference to **Handout thirty-nine**, get participants to discuss how images are manipulated. The handout contains a claim about manipulation during the Iraq war, and an example from a local newspaper for participants to ponder.



Training tip: The example is almost certainly a manipulated image. The girl child is out of all proportion to the rest of the picture. She seems to be unrelated to others in the photo. The intended message is one of terror and fear. An interesting question to ask is whether a picture of a boy child would be manipulated and used in the same way.

Manipulating photographs adds to gender stereotyping

The best known and most widespread form of manipulation where gender is concerned is to “touch up” the appearance of models – to make the woman's waste thinner, to enlarge her breasts, to take out wrinkles or expression. Many people ask, why do so many women complain that they can never reach the global model standards? The answer is, because these standards are faked to being with; the images that pose these standards are often created through the computer programme called photo shop.

Exercise: Getting more than you expect

Discuss the photo-manipulated picture in **Handout forty** that has led to protests from gender activists. Do you feel these protests were justified?



Training tip: Note that the advertising agency responsible for this photo manipulation justifies it on the grounds that his readers – a visually “sophisticated” audience reading an advertising agency publication, would accept the photo manipulation easily.



handout thirty-nine

Manipulating images during the Iraq war

On April 9, the day Baghdad fell, the *Evening Standard* in London plastered a photograph of rejoicing Iraqis all over its front page under the headline: “Jubilation on the Streets of Baghdad – Freedom.”

But was the picture all it seemed? Doubts have been raised on an American website called the Memory Hole. It was in no doubt that the photo had been faked.

The website...claims the picture shows the same man in a turban three times, a man in sunglasses and white open-collared shirt twice and several other unidentified objects apparently repeated. None of it conclusive, given the undoubted prevalence of Baghdadis in white shirts and sunglasses...

It is not the first time in the Iraqi war that there has been controversy over allegedly faked pictures. On April 2, the Los Angeles Times sacked its staff cameraman Brian Walski for doctoring a photograph of a British soldier directing a crowd of covering Iraqis in Basra – a picture it had used on its front page two days before.

Walski's crime was to amalgamate two photographs taken moments apart to improve the dramatic composition. Unfortunately, in doing so, he managed to duplicate identifiable members of the crowd. Like most major US papers (and the Guardian) the LA Times has a policy of not altering news photographs, and Walski duly walked the plank with maximum embarrassment.

Yet, although he had used computer technology, Walski was doing no more than war photographers have done through history. Some of the most famous, iconic, images of war are not quite what they seem. The question is whether the degree of deception merits the condemnation. Each case is different.

(The Guardian Unlimited /Media Guardian Special report: Iraq – the media war/Stephen Bates Monday May 5, 2003)



Is the image above manipulated? Why? What gender messages are conveyed?

Media & Marketing

May 31 2003

Women tear strips off 'insulting' creator

Full Monty advert draws wrath for 'not respecting women and children'

BY YOLANDA MUFWEBA

Do you think this Full Monty advertisement promoting Internet company DataPro is offensive and degrading? The man who came up with the concept, Mike Rossi of Creative Outsourcing in Johannesburg, doesn't think so. In fact, he doesn't know why so many women's rights groups and others in South Africa have complained.

Rossi says the advert was deliberately exaggerated to turn a "boring" or stale product into something "that will grab people's attention". The idea was that with DataPro "You get a LOT more" value than expected. The advertisement was run in the March edition of IT magazine *Brainsstorm*.

"Whenever we do ads we try to create as much impact as possible. Sometimes it's controversial. We thought the best way to do this would be to use hyperbole. Nobody else consulted had a problem." The use of the human body in advertising was a common concept, he pointed out.

"There are magazine publications and newspapers who quite happily publish the human body. I get the point that they are trying to make.

"But you have to look at this ad with a bit of a smile because it is showing value. The value is that you can feed three babies with three breasts," said Rossi.

One of those objecting to the advert is Charlene Smith, Johannesburg rape survivor and journalist.

"DataPro and its advertising agent display scant respect for women and children in placing such a puerile, insulting and degrading ad.

"The design is set up to invoke Renaissance imagery of a mother with small children draped around her. In Renaissance imagery cherubim or small angels are usually naked little boys. DataPro and its advertising agency use a naked girl child in this ad - this in the country with the highest incidence of child rape in the world; about 40% of all rapes, according to police statistics, are against children.

"While the whole world is on red alert against child abuse and rape, some sectors of South African society carries on as though nothing is wrong ... advertisers and media houses, the arbiters of public taste, behave as though there is no need to behave with greater care toward the rights of children and women.

"The adult woman in the ad is depicted with three breasts. She is shown as nothing better than a milk cow.

"DataPro shows women are little better than cattle, and the dignity of children is worth nothing. There is a thin line between wit and degrading and insulting attitudes. DataPro, their advertisers and *Brainsstorm* lack the finesse to understand that."

Smith, representing the Rape Action Group and Media Against Violence, and a number of other people have complained to the Advertising Standards Authority.

But Rossi feels it would have made no difference if the advertisement had been done with any changes.

"If it was a grown-up lying there naked, or a baby? If it was a boy showing his willy, would it make a difference? To me it's just a baby. I don't look at it like that (as encouraging rape) and neither did the others who saw it. You can't please people all of the time, there's always going to be someone who has a problem. And you find those who complain, don't necessarily have a problem with the ad, but with themselves."

Rossi argues that the advertisement was specifically done for the pages of *Brainsstorm* magazine.

"I don't think their readers are that naive. The target market is quite brainy, they are not a bunch of silly people. It's South African practice to use hyperbole when there is a dull subject."

DataPro marketing manager Carine Conradie stood by Rossi and said the relevance of the Full M advertisement to an IT business was shown in a concrete way.

"By employing a hyperbole to illustrate how something that might be abstract - such as added, unexpected value, as is the case here - can be portrayed in a concrete way, makes it easier to understand."



TOO MUCH? the advert which has offended the sensibilities of some women in South Africa.

The second advertisement run in the campaign was the image of a chicken with five legs illustrating "You get a LOT more" with DataPro.

"We also developed an ad with a chicken with five legs. Once again this hyperbole illustrates the unexpected added value. Just imagine a chicken with five drumsticks?" However, the advert was pulled after there were complaints, said Conradie.

handout forty

Is this freedom of speech?

Collages

Another increasingly common use of photographs comes from collages and “mixing” pictures. Collages, are a normal technique of graphic illustration. However, they can be easily misused, especially in a news context. One critical issue for photographic collages arises around the level of visual literacy of the audience. Do they read the collage as something that has happened in real life, as the picture “reports” it, rather than as an artist’s invention? A second critical issue is that collages increase the scope for imposing the artist’s point of view on the image – becoming an easy venue for bias and stereotyping.

Pressures at the desk

The pressures on the decision about which images of gender should be used, and how they should be used, may be built into the design of the publication. The sub-editor or layout person may have relatively little choice about where and how they use particular pictures. These problems around packaging and positioning often reinforce gender bias and stereotyping.

Three particular problems that add to gender bias in publications are:

- Using **stock images**: Where a picture is chosen from an image file or bank to illustrate an event, rather than being taken specifically, it is far more likely to be a generalised and stereotyped image, tied into the story through a caption or heading. This leads to many of the “packaging” problems regularly seen around gender issues.
- **Advertising**: Advertising promotes its own, often extreme, biases around gender. Editors and sub-editors need to include advertising in constructing pages. The advertising image plays a significant role in what the page communicates about gender. The companies placing adverts at times insist upon being in specific sections of the paper, and may refuse to be placed with certain images or stories.
- **“Beats”**: Dividing the publication into “beats” is often part of the sub-editor’s job. “Woman’s pages” are the classic example of how gender divisions and stereotypes are built into beats. “Sports” and “motoring” are often seen as mostly men’s sections.

New approaches

The first step that all of the people involved in developing the meanings of pictures – from taking them to packaging them – need to be aware of is their roles in defining gender messages. This means editors, sub-editors, and the visual department need training in gender awareness, and in visual literacy.

Second, all of the people involved in the process need to learn to negotiate with others in the team, to promote balanced and sensitive gender imagery. More often than not, editors, sub-editors, and visual department staff do want to become both more visually literate and more gender sensitive. Some further thoughts on this are contained in **Handout forty-one**.



handout forty-one

Negotiating change

What is the perception of the visuals department in your newsroom, and what changes have you made to improve the perception of the visuals department?

I choose to see myself as an equal to all my journalism colleagues. I am not just an artist, designer, photographer, I am a journalist. I tell stories with visuals. After all, before there were written words, humans used speech and drawings to communicate.

So, why do we treat ourselves as second-class citizens in newsrooms? Now, I know you know how that feels, because many visuals departments have experienced that same treatment from some reporters and editors for a long time.

The good news is that many newsrooms have set up systems that involve visual journalists in front-end planning. When all the players are involved in the story up front their roles become equal. If your newsroom still has a second-class atmosphere, what would it take to change that? Sometimes a simple change in the way you do business—including the visual staff in story-planning meetings, for example—can lead to significant changes in perception.

Define what your goals are and enlist the people that you work well with. Then, begin to slowly work on the difficult relationships by building respect and trust.

Say your goal is to be involved in the front end of the story-planning process. There are many small steps to be taken to get the results you want. If you usually see the story once it's already been written and the photos have been shot, approach the reporter or editor with the work you've done and talk to them about it in a non-threatening way.

You could say something like “I really like the story you did, but I think I could have done a better job with the design, photo, infographic. One thing that could help me understand the story better and produce better quality work would be to sit in when you are first talking about the story. Then I can get feedback directly from you about the important points in the story.”

Or, “I'm unhappy with the approach I took in this graphic. With a little more time I think I could have done some research or reporting to clarify my understanding and make it more meaningful to readers. Also, if you could you give me a buzz on the front end, I could do some of my own reporting, and leave you more time for your reporting.”

These scenarios offer no hostility toward another person, offer no blame, and focus on communicating better with readers and improving how you do your job.

My experience has been that when I stop blaming others for the situation and take responsibility for the choices I've made, I regain my power and dignity.

The system may have been set up the way it is long before you got there, but that doesn't mean you have to follow the herd. Sure, there are people who are fine with the way it is. They come in, do their jobs, and go home. And, that's cool. But, if we are to move ahead, we are the ones who have to take responsibility and make changes in how we do our jobs and relate in the newsroom.

By Anne Conneen, Poynter Institute visual department/photojournalism teacher, 5 April 2003