

GENDER, POVERTY & INEQUALITY

WOMEN'S DAY SEMINAR PRESENTED BY:

Dr Catherine Ndinda – **Human & Social Development (HSD)**, Cape Town

Dr Sikhulumile Sinyolo - **Economic Performance & Development (EPD)**, Pretoria

Dr Konosoang Sobane - **Social Policy, Knowledge Mobilisation, and Impact Assessment (SoKIA)**

Dr Benita Moolman - **Global Citizenship Programme, Centre for Innovation in Learning and Teaching (CILT)**,
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“Sensexualisations” of women celebrities in media: A critical discourse analysis of new websites

Konosoang Sobane (SoKIA)

“Sensexualisations” of women celebrities in media: A critical discourse analysis of new websites

- Women's portrayal in the media and the implications that it has on public perceptions of women continues to be a cause for concern
 - Elias 2018 Tanzania- women's portrayals still perpetuate stereotypical roles and traits
 - Tijani-Andele (2016) Re-enforcing traditional gender roles and norms rather than challenging them, e.g woman as occupying domestic domains
 - The most prevalent role portrayal in magazine advertisements was that of a physically decorative woman, The less prevalent portrayals included career woman (Holtshauzen, 2010, South Africa)
 - Intersectionality of women is less illuminated
 - ❖ There is more to be done on media's portrayals of the changing roles of women, to influence perceptions of women as professionals or career drivers

Why the interest on media and gender

- Media is one of the pillars that:
 - mirror,
 - influence and
 - create or recreate gender roles and thus has a potential to reinforce or redress gender stereotypes in society
- Has the potential to produce and reproduce ways of seeing each other (public perceptions and narratives about each other)
- ❖ If we need to reinforce positive perceptions about women the media is a good platform to start

Theoretical approach

- **Social Constructionist Approach** which approaches meanings, notions, or connotations as socially constructed (Fairhurst and Grant, 2010)
- **Critical feminist epistemology** – argue for research practices emphasising engagement with social location and power relations connected to text production
 - Premised on notion that all knowledge is situated (for example, Mbilinyi, 1992; Stanley & Wise, 1990),
 - and that patterns of knowledge production are an expression of power (Bennett, 2000; Mohanty, 1991; Zeleza, 1997; Zeleza, 1996).
- **Critical Discourse Analysis** which looks into how social power and inequalities in a given context are constituted and reproduced through text (Fairclough 1989, Van Dijk (2001) and Wodak and Meyer (2001)

What does one find in the selected news websites?



- Sexualised images of women that reinforces the discourses of the bodies of women as:
 - vain and decorative attractions
 - sexualised and visually accessible
 - Foregrounding of their bodies as currency of their identity, and no images about their professional identities



Feminine identities as discursively constructed in the landing page

- Linda Mtoba's baby bump pics will **melt your heart**
- A beautiful side profile image of herself
- Sexy
- The beau
- The forever eye candy and stylish actress
- The newly-divorced
- Mrs Husband as she crowns herself
- The panty-less dancer
- The controversial nude dancer
- Ex-fiancee
- ❖ These feminine identities are constructed
 - as centred on the value of beauty,
 - Sensationalisation and sexualisations of their bodies
 - their relationship with men (wife, divorcee ex-fiancee)
- ❖ The readership does is not given a sense of their professional identities, which would have constituted an aspiring identity

Masculine identities in visuals



- Masculinity is constructed as professionally active, and linked to material and public achievements.
- There is not much reflection nor mention of their bodies and looks thereof,
- These mirrors the deeply embedded and inherent patriarchal structures and relationships in our societies and
- demonstrates a discursive complicity with these patriarchal relations, reinforcing the gendered constructs around men and women

Masculinities as discursively constructed

- Television personality
 - The star
 - The presenter
 - The most talked about host
 - The most recognised and dynamic host on air
 - A multi-faceted personality
 - The Big Dawg in entertainment
- ❖ Emphasis is on career identities and none about bodies
- ❖ Identities are more aspirational

Conclusions

- Reporting about men and women in media-
 - Sensexualisations
 - Weak-ifying
- These discursive practices as representations of wider social practices
- Their potential influence of perceptions and narratives about men and women and on equality