

Sexism in advertising...

Women are portrayed as powerless

by Mary Jane Hamilton

"We can all [gain] more power by seeing how ads restrict us," says Chris McCormick, professor of Sociology at Dalhousie University. "[They show us] how we should act and look in the world."

"We learn our gender." He says that to a certain extent, gender is constructed through the media.

Ads have numerous effects on women. "Women can feel devalued by photos [in advertisements]." In many ways, women are made to believe they must please men. They feel they get "power from being what men want them to be."

Women are taught how they should look and should strive to be if they are not "the ideal women." "Women are taught that if they are not desirable, attractive...they won't be satisfied. Women feel they must live up to this stereotype to feel safe."

Most ads show women as

sexual, usually in powerless situations and most show women as sexual. Men are hardly ever portrayed in powerless situations.

McCormick has been studying gender in advertising for five to six years, and teaches it in his class in Deviance and Social Control. He says men are stereotyped as well, but not to the same, or detrimental way that women are. Men are shown they must be successful, rich, and powerful. This idea of men being powerful and dominant often causes violence in male-female relationships. Men are taught they must always have control.

McCormick says we take beauty for granted. We learn what to look for in someone that makes them beautiful. "Someone has defined what a beautiful woman looks like."

When he does presentations on sexism in advertising, he sometimes finds that men do not (or will not) see how women are

objectified, or that McCormick is reading too much into the ads.

"It is not in men's interest to see gender inequality. They would have to give up their power." Some people feel looking at one ad does not mean anything, but "the one ad is part of a bigger picture. It isn't the one ad. [It is] the overwhelming pattern of ads."



"[Because] we all want to be desired..., we create that first impression. We impress people with our appearance."

Sexism is a circular problem. It shows us how the public feels, which influences the advertisers, which causes the advertisers to show how we feel, et cetera.

"We unconsciously reproduce the status quo," says Heather MacLeod, of MediaWatch (which informally monitors the media). "The media does have an effect...Children are influenced by television. They learn what it means to be a little boy or a little girl."

It affects the way we see our roles and the way we perceive ourselves. We are told we are not okay the way we are. We are offered "products to improve ourselves."

The media offers men "macho-myths," that men must be powerful. Women are shown what the perfect woman is and this causes obsessions with dieting.

Many eating disorders, such as anorexia nervosa and bulimia,

are caused by this image (which is almost impossible for most women to achieve). The film, *The Famine Within*, shows how these images affect women. Women talk of their experiences with dieting, and almost certainly near-death experiences, trying to be the perfect woman.

They talk about how many other people believed the women looked better slimmer. This becomes an obsession for them and they soon believe there is nothing better than being thin. Most of them feel, "I would rather die than be fat."

MacLeod says, "[In Canadian prime-time television,] 70% of the actors are male, and 30% are female." Men are more prevalent on news and public affairs shows. In 1988, 45% of TV news announcers were women and only 27% of TV news reporters were women (according to a report by Erin Research on the portrayal of gender on Canadian radio and television). "Eighty-four percent of eyewitness accounts are by men. It is not because women are not present... Men are given more authority."



Criteria...

Gender female

by Lara Morris

As you may notice, this issue of the Gazette, with the Women's Supplement, is the result of a woman-only initiative. This project is in keeping with the Gazette staff's philosophy of proactive journalism and is timed in conjunction with International Women's Day.

Woman-only events and projects provide an empowering forum in which women work together, learn from each other and share our skills and experiences. The Women's Issue and Supplement provides such an opportunity in a number of ways.

The Women's Issue presents women with the chance to make issues of concern to us priorities for what is covered by the paper. The Women's Supplement offers insights into women's talents and creativity. Together the Issue and the Supplement present information from a women's perspective.

They also afford you, the reader, with the opportunity to develop your awareness and interest in these issues. Such opportunities are too few and far between, after all I'm still looking for a Canadian distributor of MS. magazine!

In the Women's Issue attention is focussed on female newsmakers, artists and athletes; attention that is sometimes lacking even in the *Gazette*. Of course, the *Gazette* is nothing like the conditions we may face as women listening to, reading, watching, or working in mainstream media.

Ever look at the publisher's or editor's names of Canada's national newspaper? Perhaps the CBC or CTV National news hits closer to home? While conditions are slowly changing, the majority of the people who present the news to us are men. Take that thought one step further and consider how who reports the news affects how it is reported, and our perceptions of authority in society.

Men dominate the 'news' (too frequently either they are reporting it or they are it). How many women would be newsmakers if they weren't raped or killed by their male partners?

Women share common experiences. We survive in a misogynist society where many of us are raped or killed and as survivors we share our strengths. In the Women's Issue and Supplement our sharing continues from the writing and editing of stories to the production of the paper. Not only do women set the agenda for the paper, but we put it all together in the end.

A woman-only layout night provides an atmosphere in which women feel comfortable to speak our minds without feeling inhibited by men. This woman-positive environment also gives us the chance to try new things.

As you pick up the paper this week a number of women will be watching you and smiling to themselves. In the spirit of International Women's Day, we are proud of our accomplishments, we continue the struggle for women's equality and we are celebrating ourselves - women.

Clark being reviewed

by Jennifer Seamone

Beginning on February 15, the committee on the Presidential Appointment will begin to hold interviews in efforts to determine if President Howard Clark should be offered another term in office, or if a full search for a new president should be started.

Interviews are being held across campus and in the public sector to help the committee make its final decision, due on April 15 1991. Deliberations and procedures are the responsibility of the committee which will be solely in charge of choosing who will be interviewed.

The committee's Terms of Reference state they will be expected to interview the vice presidents, the registrar, the chief Librarian, CUPE, IOUE, the president of the Student Union, and several others. Views of representatives of the indigenous Nova Scotia Black and communities at Dalhousie, the government and off campus community will also be sought.

The general student population is invited to submit written or oral

reports on a variety of issues and questions regarding the President's contributions to the university, the challenges facing Dalhousie, student issues, and administrative management.

Committee chair, Allan Shaw, confirmed that although no official interviews are being held within the student body, the submissions and opinions of students would hold as much weight as any other. However, he was reluctant to give any sort of quantitative explanation.

The entire process will be carried out confidentially and is therefore not open to public or student scrutiny. Its secrecy ensures that no comments about deliberations will be made accessible until its presentation to the Board of Governors and the Senate on April 15.

"The report will not be made available to the public but there is good student representation on the Senate and the Board of Governors," said Shaw, "so, the student body will be aware of the committee's findings."

Dean Smith, president of the Dalhousie Association of Biology Students was concerned with the lack of input from 'B' societies, such as his own. Presidents of societies and their executive best know the views of the students and the problems they face in relation to administration and the University," said Smith, "even more so than the President and Vice President of the Student Union."

"This is a relatively new thing in Canada," explained Shaw, "and the way we are conducting it is not common for presidential reviews."

"But," Shaw added, "it is not a negative thing at all, it came up because the President's term is coming to an end and the governance documents suggest a search committee be set up eight months before its completion. It is a positive thing, and President Clark is in full support of the idea," Shaw emphasized.

Deadlines for submissions from the student body end Friday March 22, and all comments will be held in confidence.

