



**EXAMINATION: JUNE 2021**

**PAPER: JOURNALISM 2A**

**SUBJECT CODE: JNS2AA2**

**EXAMINERS: MR. STEFAN KRIEK**

**TIME: TAKE HOME  
EXAM**

**MODERATOR: MRS. ELNA ROSSOUW**

**MARKS: 100**

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**THIS PAPER CONSISTS OF 21 PAGES. YOU MUST ANSWER ALL THE QUESTIONS IN ONE WORD DOCUMENT/HAND-WRITTEN DOCUMENT AND SUBMIT IT ON BLACKBOARD TO THE TURNITIN LINK. *YOU SHOULD INCLUDE YOUR STUDENT NUMBER AND SURNAME IN THE DOCUMENT NAME WHEN YOU SUBMIT***

**GUIDELINES FOR PREPARATION:**

- The exam paper will be distributed via an “EXAM” link on Blackboard ONE WEEK before the exam date on the timetable.
- This is a take-home exam, and therefore it is an open book exam. However, all the information you need to answer these questions are included on this exam paper. Thus, should you have trouble accessing your readings; you need not worry as this is an all-inclusive exam.
- You can spend ONE WEEK to prepare and write your answers to this exam. The exam should be submitted on Blackboard BEFORE MIDNIGHT on the exam date.
- A note on essay questions/ discussions: Please note that because you have access to all the necessary readings, we require insight and depth in your answers, especially essay questions. You cannot rely on just putting down information – you should engage with the provided readings and show insight.

**TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS**

- Minimum of one and a half (1.5) pages per question (written or typed – Arial: 12, 1.5 sp.)
- Since this is more in line with an academic essay, each answer must have *a minimum of three (3) in-text references*, and these *must come from the articles provided in their respective addendums* (so question 1 needs references the articles from addendum A etc.)
- You do not need to include a bibliography

**GUIDELINES FOR SUBMISSION:**

- The primary portal for submission is the JNS2AA2 Blackboard site. A TURNITIN link will be created where you will submit your exam.

- IF IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO SUBMIT ON BLACKBOARD FOR TECHNICAL REASONS YOU MAY SUBMIT ON THE FOLLOWING PLATFORM (AS DETERMINED BY THE LECTURER): email to [skriekuj@gmail.com](mailto:skriekuj@gmail.com)
  - PLEASE DO NOT SUBMIT ON ANY OTHER PLATFORM IF YOU HAVE ACCESS TO BLACKBOARD!
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**ANSWER ALLTHREE (3) QUESTIONS:**

**QUESTION ONE (1)**

*Do newspapers have a future in an increasingly digital climate? Read the three (3) articles provided in **addendum A** and critically discuss your answer.*

**(40)**

**QUESTION TWO (2)**

South African tabloids have been a subject of constant criticism from media commentators, members of the public and other role players.

*As a media scholar do you feel that the criticism levelled against the tabloid press is justified? Read both articles in **addendum B** and then critically motivate your answer*

**(30)**

**QUESTION THREE (3)**

"The view that identities are constructed through media representation is based on the assumption that the media is a representational system" (Wasserman, 2009: 260).

*Read the two (2) articles in **addendum C** and discuss the South African **news** media's reporting and representation of one, or both, of the following subjects (since sexuality and gender are strongly interlinked, you may discuss both). In your answer, refer mainly to **newspaper** media.*

- Sexuality (gay, lesbian, pansexual, bisexual etc.)
- Gender (male, female, transgender, cisgender, non-binary etc.)

**(30)**

**TOTAL FOR EXAM: [100]**

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## **Addendum A (for question 1)**

### **1. SA media faces 'grim future' as it battles falling revenues – Reuters study**

**By Lameez Omarjee (2019)**

Newsrooms are going to have to rely on subscription and membership models to ensure their sustainability in the face of declining revenues across various mediums, a study by the Reuters Institute found.

The recently released Reuters Institute Digital News Report for 2019 unpacks SA's media landscape. It shows that, while consumption of news in print form is declining, consumers are increasingly relying on digital platforms to get the news.

The research was conducted using a questionnaire completed by a sample of the English-speaking population in South Africa. It was completed between January and February 2019.

"Despite relatively high trust levels in the news overall, revenue for news media has been on a downward path for several years, with a 12% drop in ad spend last year for television, 5.6% for radio, and 7.7% for print," the report states.

"With newspaper circulation dying, broadcast revenue dropping and journalism resources eroding, news is going to have to increasingly rely on subscription and membership models to sustain volume and quality."

The research shows that, of those sampled, 16% of respondents claimed to pay for online news. There has also been a "surge of goodwill" through reader donations to independent publications like *Daily Maverick* and amaBhungane to support their investigative reporting.

"But this is an uncertain form of income, and with no sustainable revenue model available currently, South African media houses are facing a grim future," the report warned.

*Daily Maverick*, *Daily Vox*, *GroundUp*, *New Frame* and amaBhungane, rely on a combination of donors and crowdfunding. "AmaBhungane has been particularly successful when it comes to crowdfunding, with it listed as the single biggest source of revenue in 2017 and 2018," the report noted.

## **Print decline**

Consumption of print media is also continuing its decline, as data for the first quarter of 2019 shows that newspaper circulation declined 5% year-on-year, the research indicated. "Daily newspapers were the biggest losers, with a 10.5% drop, but weekly newspapers were almost as badly affected, with a 7.9% decline year-on-year," the report read.

Data for the last 10 years shows a 49% drop in circulation for newspapers. "No newspapers have a convincing route out of the print mire into a sustainable digital future," the report read. Paywall and subscription models implemented by papers like *Mail & Guardian* and *Business Day* are showing "disappointing numbers". The study pointed out that most digital advertising revenue goes to big social media and search platforms.

Meanwhile, 90% of respondents said they get their news online, including on social media. Data measured by IAB South Africa shows 11 of the top-15 local sites are news sites, but this does not necessarily translate into digital revenue, according to Reuters.

Respondents also indicated that they share news online, with 36% using messenger apps, 40% using social networks and 39% commenting on news using social media or news websites.

Social media is increasingly becoming a gateway to news. "A third [of respondents] said they prefer to come across news via social media, ahead of direct access (28%) through a news website or app."

In its conclusion, the Reuters Institute stressed that the opportunities afforded by the digital world must be leveraged to rebuild ties between producers of news and those who consume it.

(Source: <https://www.fin24.com/Companies/ICT/sa-media-faces-grim-future-as-it-battles-falling-revenues-reuters-study-20190616>)

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## **2. Are newspapers dead or adapting in the Age of Digital News?**

**By Tony Rogers (2019)**

Some say the Internet will kill off papers, but others say not so fast.

Are newspapers dying? That's the raging debate these days. Many say the demise of the daily paper is just a matter of time—and not much time at that. The future of journalism is in the digital world of websites and apps—not newsprint—they say.

But wait. Another group of folks insist that newspapers have been with us for hundreds of years, and although all news may someday be found online, papers have plenty of life in them yet.

So who's right? Here are the arguments so you can decide.

### **Newspapers Are Dead**

Newspaper circulation is dropping, display and classified ad revenue are drying up, and the industry has experienced an unprecedented wave of layoffs in recent years. A third of the large newsrooms across the country had layoffs between 2017 and April 2018 alone. Big metro papers such as the Rocky Mountain News and Seattle Post-Intelligencer have gone under, and even bigger newspaper companies such as the Tribune Company have been in bankruptcy.

Gloomy business considerations aside, the dead-newspaper people say the internet is just a better place to get news. "On the web, newspapers are live, and they can supplement their coverage with audio, video, and the invaluable resources of their vast archives," said Jeffrey I. Cole, director of USC's Digital Future Center. "For the first time in 60 years, newspapers are back in the breaking news business, except now their delivery method is electronic and not paper."

Conclusion: The Internet will kill off newspapers.

### **Papers Aren't Dead—Not Yet, Anyway**

Yes, newspapers are facing tough times, and yes, the internet can offer many things that papers can't. But pundits and prognosticators have been predicting the death of newspapers for decades. Radio, TV, and now the internet were all supposed to kill them off, but they're still here.

Contrary to expectations, many newspapers remain profitable, although they no longer have the 20 percent profit margins they did in the late 1990s. Rick Edmonds, a media business analyst for the Poynter Institute, says the widespread newspaper industry layoffs of the last decade should make papers more viable. "At the end of the day, these companies are operating more leanly now," Edmonds said. "The business will be smaller and there may be more reductions, but there should be enough profit there to make a viable business for some years to come."

Years after the digital pundits started predicting the demise of print, newspapers still take significant revenue from print advertising, but it declined from \$60 billion to about \$16.5 billion between 2010 and 2017.

And those who claim that the future of news is online and only online ignore one critical point: Online ad revenue alone just isn't enough to support most news companies.

Google and Facebook dominate when it comes to online ad revenue. So online news sites will need an as-yet undiscovered business model to survive.

## **Paywalls**

One possibility may be paywalls, which many newspapers and news websites are increasingly using to generate much-needed revenue. The 2013 Pew Research Center media report found that paywalls had been adopted at 450 of the country's 1,380 dailies, though they won't replace all the lost revenue from shrinking ad and subscription sales.

That study also found that the success of paywalls combined with a print subscription and single-copy price increases has led to a stabilization—or, in some cases, even an increase in revenues from circulation. Digital subscriptions are growing.

"In the age of Netflix and Spotify, people are coming around to paying for content again," wrote John Micklethwait for Bloomberg in 2018.

Until someone figures out how to make online-only news sites profitable (they've also suffered layoffs), newspapers aren't going anywhere. Despite the occasional scandal at print institutions, they remain trusted sources of information that people turn to cut through the clutter of (potentially fake) online news or for the real story when social media outlets show them information on an event slanted in any number of ways.

Conclusion: Newspapers aren't going anywhere.

(Source: <https://www.thoughtco.com/adapting-in-the-age-of-digital-news-consumption-2074132>)

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## **3. The writing was on the wall for SA newspapers long before Covid-19**

### **By Gasant Abarder (2020)**

This week Associated Media Publishing (AMP), which produced Cosmopolitan, House & Leisure, Good Housekeeping and Women on Wheels, shut down permanently — a sad day for South African media. The closure was exacerbated by Covid-19, but the writing has been on the wall for a while.

I've seen dwindling print circulations for various publications over 17 or so years. But the closure of AMP, which counted the globally recognisable Cosmopolitan magazine brand in its stable, brings into sharper focus the print media landscape — in particular newspapers.

Covid-19 has made the struggle to survive all the more difficult. The lockdown has seen newspaper sales drop sharply in an industry that can ill afford such disruption. But it was perhaps the first time the owners were paying attention to the disruption.

Their response: pay cuts, forced leave and threats of job losses after barely three weeks of the lockdown.

How did this multi-billion rand industry arrive here? To blame Covid-19 would be naïve.

The first sign of trouble in the 1990s was the demise of classified sections of newspapers. Back in the heyday, weekend newspapers were as thick as telephone directories with listings, auction supplements and property sections.

The arrival of Gumtree, OLX and other online classified sites was laughed off. But the ad execs started paying attention a short few years later when they started eating the newspapers' lunch. Classified sections of newspapers, once the big money spinner, are now single pages for death notices. An omen indeed.

But there was still a lifeline from the mid-1990s to the early 2000s. Display advertising remained a cash cow. Newspapers were still the preferred choice for the retailers such as Pick n Pay and Checkers. Ad execs were making cash hand over fist, despite declining circulations.

Then online advertising, as well as programmatic and social media arrived. Now Facebook and Google are now eating the lunch — ironically with content produced by newspapers. And big corporations have cottoned on to social media as an advertising, marketing and engagement tool all rolled into one, albeit a volatile one.

The point is, buying ad space no longer costs a fortune. Online and social media advertising spend is negligible to what newspapers used to yield.

Still, the owners stuck to their guns and didn't learn from Kodak's moment despite newspaper circulations going into freefall as 2010 approached. And somehow editors still regarded daily newspapers as publications of record — the first draft of history. Or more accurately, purveyors of yesterday's news. It was a romantic ideal that was set to fail. Social media was breaking the stories.

Instead of innovating, editors clung to the idea that news was only authentic when it was in a newspaper. The circulation told a different story. Newspapers then started "sampling" — free copies were delivered to airport lounges and to people who didn't ask for them.

The owners didn't want to listen. They expected the same profit margins despite the evidence that newspapers were in trouble.

But the newspapers that grew their circulation were owned by people who knew this was a long play and that an investment in quality journalism brought rewards. Look at The New York Times, The Washington Post and the Evening Standard. They invested in quality journalism and are now seeing the rewards after just a few years. The Evening Standard became a free paper to commuters on the London Underground. With guaranteed eyeballs, 650 000 copies were put in the hands of the commuters and advertising yields went through the roof.

The story of the Evening Standard reminds me of an opportunity to reimagine the Cape Argus, the newspaper I grew up with. It was doomed to fail as an evening newspaper when I took over as the editor with 57 staff members in 2009. When I left after the second stint as the editor in 2016 there were 10 employees – including me. Cost cutting was the order of the day.

The management experimented with the Cape Argus in 2012 and turned it into a “quality tabloid” aimed at a younger, mobile market. Advertisers were turned off, believing the smaller size meant less bang for their buck. It also moved into the mornings, eating into the sale of the sister morning paper, the Cape Times.

A few years later, under new ownership, the paper was successfully morphed into a Berliner — something of the size of the now defunct The New Age. Jermaine Craig, then the editor, did a fantastic job of turning the newspaper around and brought the advertisers back. But it wouldn't last — further cost and staff cuts were again just around the corner.

The brand was further eroded, when the group opted not to sponsor the global event that is the Cape Town Cycle Tour – which people still call the Argus (with apologies to race director Dave Bellairs).

The number of pages in the newspaper declined while the price was hiked up consistently despite the discomfort of editors.

In my last stint at the paper, I tried to do something different by introducing storytelling, such as allowing students to co-edit an edition at the height of the #FeesMustFall protests in 2015.

Lance Witten, the paper's deputy news editor at the time, and photographer Henk Kruger produced an impressive series on homeless people called The Dignity Project. The series was introduced by a homeless man who wrote the front page lead of his experience. Writer Danny Oostuizen, who succumbed to cancer last year, was later



employed as a columnist writing about the homeless of Cape Town and the difficulties they faced.

Although these projects were great brand builders, they could not undo the damage. There are no more greybeards in newsrooms. The veterans with institutional memory such as Michael Morris or Rodney Reiners, who could write superb articles about any story, were long gone.

There are now young, talented people who are paid less to do far more. They must tweet, shoot video and come back to the office to write a few stories.

Everything I see in newspapers these days, with a few notable exceptions such as the Mail & Guardian, I've read the previous day on Twitter. They're still newspapers of record in 2020. It's not the fault of the editors. The greedy owners have eroded these fine institutions and thereby eroded the Fourth Estate – a key part of democracy.

If newspapers are to turn the corner, they need to be invested in. Bring back quality journalism and the grey beards. Hire decent sub-editors and pay them properly. It is a long play that will probably never happen.

The sad reality is that if newspapers in particular continue on this trajectory, as the vanity purchases of those who want to buy influence, we need to start writing their eulogies.

(Source: <https://mg.co.za/coronavirus-essentials/2020-05-02-the-writing-was-on-the-wall-for-sa-newspapers-long-before-covid-19/> )

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## **Addendum B (for question 2)**

### **1.Tabloid nation**

**By Herman Wasserman (2009).**

Notwithstanding their unprecedented commercial success, the South African tabloids have not been welcomed widely in the journalistic community. They have received criticism for their sensational approach to news, accused of fabricating stories and attacked for fuelling xenophobia. For many of their critics, it seemed sacrilegious that in post-apartheid South Africa, the freedom of the press should be used not to scrutinise the tumultuous post-liberation politics on the big stage, but instead to focus on the sensational events concerning little people in small towns, informal settlements and townships.

Yet it may be argued that the emergence of these tabloids represents one of the most interesting developments in the South African media landscape in the post-apartheid era when they are considered as manifestations of a society in transition.

The picture that emerges from an in-depth study of tabloids, the people who produce them and those that read them, is a complex and contradictory one. Some of the features of this picture include the following:

- **Local tabloids cannot be dismissed as “trash journalism”**

Although tabloid journalists insist that they uphold ethical codes, they do often engage in dubious reporting. But care should be taken not to confuse unethical behaviour with matters of taste. The fact that tabloids approach news from a sensationalist point of view, or use colloquial language, does not necessarily make them unethical. Dismissing tabloids as “trash” prevents the opportunity to use popular journalism as a window on broader societal processes and cultural, economic and political power networks. A simplistic dismissal of tabloid readers as gullible victims, uneducated and in danger of being influenced negatively by tabloids, ignores the interesting ways in which audiences interact with media texts and make these texts relevant to their daily lives and lived experience.

- **Tabloids can be read politically**

While it would be difficult to assess their influence on political behaviour, evidence from reader interviews suggests that it would be a mistake to conclude that tabloids serve to de-politicise their readers by merely peddling entertainment and diversion. Whether tabloid news will eventually inform voting behaviour, inspire social activism or instead only defuse the frustration and disillusionment of the poor without leading to meaningful political action, remains to be established over time.

As papers owned by big conglomerates intent on maximising profit, it is unlikely that these tabloids will ever question the logic of capitalism or encourage readers to join social movements. What did become clear from interviews with readers is that the political relevance of the tabloids lies in what can be referred to as the “politics of the everyday”. Tabloid stories about lack of social delivery, about struggles to get ID books or about communities’ fight against drugs are experienced as more relevant to the way politics are understood by tabloid readers than reports on the machinations of Parliament or party-political infighting.

## • **Tabloid journalists take their work seriously**

Although the common perception might be that tabloid journalists' attitude towards news is one of fun, gossip and irreverence, South African tabloid journalists for the most part display a very serious attitude towards their work. They display a remarkably strong commitment to the communities they report on and experience a significant amount of trust being invested in them by readers and communities. Editorial policies emphasise investigative work and time spent "in the field"; journalistic values that have fallen by the wayside in many of their mainstream counterparts where "cut and paste" desk journalism has become prevalent.

Tabloids deserve to be taken seriously – not only because of what they tell us about the society in which they operate, but also because they highlight the shortcomings of the mainstream press in reaching significant sections of the public. The role of the press in South Africa today cannot be understood if tabloids are lost from sight.

(Source: [https://themediainline.co.za/2009/03/tabloid\\_nation/](https://themediainline.co.za/2009/03/tabloid_nation/))

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## **2. Burn victims bear the brunt of Daily Sun's unethical reporting**

**By Tom Morwe (2012)**

Four articles published consecutively in Daily Sun are deserving of a MAD (see last paragraph) from Media Monitoring Africa (MMA) for violating the rights to privacy and dignity of two children burnt by electric wire cables. While MMA applauds the effort made by Daily Sun to create awareness about the dangers of live cables and ensure that amends were made to the families by the relevant authorities, the rights of the two children concerned were repeatedly violated in the coverage.

In the first article titled "Burned by live cable" (26/01/2012, p. 1 and 2), Daily Sun published a story on two children, aged 11 and ten, who suffered burns from live cables while playing. A very graphic image of the children shocked and dazed, crying with their clothes and skin burnt was published together with the article.

Apart from the image, the article gruesomely emphasised how "the children's laughter turned to screams as a mighty blast from a live electric cable ripped off their clothing and burned their skin from their bodies!" The revealing details are at most insensitive and can potentially cause psychological trauma to the children, their relatives and readers.

The second article titled "Who let this happen?" (Daily Sun, 27/01/2012, pp. 1 and 2) is a follow up to the initial article. In their "bid to find out the truth of shocking cable blast",

Daily Sun visited the two boys in hospital. The journalist further questioned one of the victims amid mentioning that the boy was “speaking with difficulty from his hospital bed”. Like the previous article, Daily Sun published insensitive pictures of the two boys lying in their hospital beds and covered with bandages.

The articles, both front page stories, are very intrusive, and fail to respect the privacy and dignity of the children. The pictures could have been taken differently in order to protect the children’s identities. More so, the articles should have hidden the identities of the victims as they are very vulnerable and have undergone a very traumatic experience.

The third follow-up article from Daily Sun, “Blast boy dies in hospital!” (30/01/2012, p. 2) flouts the boys’ rights, by calling one of the boys “blast boy”. Section 9 of the South African Press Code stipulates that “Exceptional care and consideration must be exercised when reporting on matters where children under the age of 18 are involved. If there is any chance that coverage might cause harm of any kind to a child, he or she should not be photographed or identified unless a custodial parent or similarly responsible adult consents or a public interest is evident.” While the journalists might defend themselves under the public interest mandate as well as informed consent clause, the onus is on the journalist to always defend and support the best interests of the child.

“Officials step up to help blast boys’ families” (Daily Sun 07/02/2012, p. 10), a fourth-follow up article to the previous ones, exacerbated the violation of children’s rights by also name-calling the boys. In this article, it is mentioned that the Johannesburg Roads Agency and City Power officials plan to help the families of the two boys, referred to repeatedly as “blast boys”. Name calling in this tragic context is offensive, degrading and may consequently upset the child and the two families. By calling the children “blast boys”, the journalist further stigmatises them.

While some might argue that the stories are in the public interest and therefore necessary to make the public aware of the dangers of live cables, the children’s best interests are not prioritised in the articles. The best interests of the child should always take precedence before any other issue. This violation disregards the Children’s Act and Section 28(2) of South Africa’s constitution which states that: “The best interests of the child are paramount in all matters concerning the child.”

Thus, MMA requests Daily Sun to guard against the violation of children’s rights and adhere to the ethical and legal guidelines when reporting in matters involving children. The need to exercise a highest degree of caution is necessary especially when dealing with children who are sensitive and vulnerable.

*1. Media Monitoring Africa highlights cases of good and best practice, where the media has promoted the rights and welfare of children, otherwise referred to as “GLADs”, as well as feedback on cases where the rights and welfare of children have been compromised through poor and irresponsible media coverage, referred to as “MADs”.*

(Source: <https://mma-ecm.co.za/burn-victims-bear-the-brunt-of-daily-suns-unethical-reporting/>)

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### **Addendum C (for question 3)**

#### **1. Queer people fight for fair representation in the media**

**By Carl Collison (2017)**

Associated Press recently announced its acceptance of the gender pronouns “they”, “them” and “their” when referring to nonbinary people — a move hailed as a positive step in securing greater visibility for queer identities.

Already in effect online, the change will be included in the 2017 AP Stylebook on May 31, regarded as the template for most major newsrooms in the United States.

The entry reads: “In stories about people who identify as neither male nor female or ask not to be referred to as he/she/him/her: Use the person’s name in place of a pronoun, or otherwise reword the sentence, whenever possible. If they/them/their use is essential, explain in the text that the person prefers a gender-neutral pronoun. Be sure that the phrasing does not imply more than one person.”

Media Monitoring Africa director William Bird says: “This is a significant step forward. When one of the major wire news services does this, making it more reflective of the audiences they speak to, it provides an opportunity to advocate and say to other media houses: ‘Have you seen this?’ It might sound like a small thing, but organisations could now approach their media as to whether they will be following suit and if not, why not?

“Also, it’s a small, easy change that can be implemented. And one which has the potential to be a good conscientising tool, because this is not language that is common in the media. Although I imagine the *Mail & Guardian* has discussed these things and has a policy on it.”

Although this may be true, the *M&G* is by no means above reproach. After being featured in this newspaper’s Friday section, artist Dean Hutton — who identifies as

nonbinary and prefers the pronoun “they” — took issue with what they felt to be an erasure of their identity. The article saw all Hutton’s preferred gender pronouns replaced with references to “the artist” or “Hutton”.

Following a telephonic apology from the arts editor, however, Hutton now says: “It was handled incredibly well; the way which she spoke to me. So, something that could have been experienced in a violent way was mitigated by an editor who understands what it is like to be misidentified.”

Bird says that, given the sensitive nature of reporting on gender identity, errors are bound to creep in.

“What is clear from research we have conducted into sexual orientation, gender identity and gender is that even those in the media who are aware of these issues perpetuate some of these stereotypes. And when it is pointed out to them, they would say something along the lines of, ‘Wow, we’ve got to change that’.”

For Hutton, the media needs to be more mindful. “In general, journalists, subeditors and editors sit in an incredibly powerful position, with no experience of being othered. Because of this position, they are willing to let a set of essentially random style rules overrule an individual’s dignity and right to dignity in the way in which they wish to be addressed and identify,” they say.

The problematic ways in which queer people are represented in the media goes further than an unwillingness to break away from these “essentially random style rules”.

Anastacia Tomson, a transgender woman and author, says: “I’ve been the subject of numerous headlines suggesting that I was ‘born in the wrong body’ or a ‘woman in a man’s body’. My body is neither ‘wrong’, nor is it a ‘man’s body’. I’m a woman, and it is my body. It is perhaps unique and different to some other bodies, but it is nonetheless my body.

“Those sorts of phrases strip us of agency over our bodies and serve only to reduce our personal histories and experiences to stereotypical, reductive and inaccurate concepts.

“Too often, those who are retelling our stories will either twist the narratives to fit their own preconceptions, or will simply be insensitive to the nuances and complexities that surround transgender identity.”

Clinical psychologist Itumeleng Mamabolo says: “The heteronormative way of engaging with people is problematic because it assumes that there is a norm and everyone is measured by that standard. Making assumptions about somebody and writing that they were, for example, ‘born in the wrong body’ implies that there is somehow a ‘right body’

to have been born in. For someone trying to come to terms with themselves as a complex being, this will cause added distress and trauma.”

In a bid to prevent these incidents from recurring, Tomson says she has taken to “briefing journalists beforehand and insisting they read a style guide on appropriate language for discussing trans issues prior to undertaking interviews”.

The style guide Tomson refers to is the *Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (Glaad) Media Reference Guide*, “to be used by journalists reporting for mainstream media outlets and by creators in entertainment media who want to tell the stories of LGBTQ [lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and questioning] people fairly and accurately”.

Glaad chief executive and president Sarah Kate Ellis writes in her introduction to the reference guide: “Media coverage of LGBTQ people has become increasingly multi-dimensional, reflecting both the diversity of the community and the growing visibility of LGBTQ people’s families and relationships.”

Tomson says: “I think that although representation might have improved in recent years, there is still a long way to go. Queer is still seen as outlandish, deviant or sensational. Too often, portrayals of queer identity lose the complexity and humanity of the individuals involved, and seek to simplify the pertinent issues so that they fit into the often flawed mainstream idea of what constitutes queer.”

Shaun Westley, a reader of *The Daily Voice*, laid a complaint with the press ombudsman in July last year against the Western Cape-based newspaper, after the paper ran a front-page headline that said: “Maak die moffie vrek”.

Westley says “the paper’s argument was that they were speaking the language of their readers. But my argument was that language, in itself, is a tool of violence and that these micro-aggressions ultimately shape people’s perceptions of others and how they classify them.”

His bid to have the newspaper apologise for having “perpetuated the dehumanisation of the gay community” was ultimately dismissed.

Athena Marsden is a 23-year-old transgender woman who, after being interviewed for a feature in a local newspaper, says: “I was quite shocked at the way in which my transness was positioned in the article and how there was a blatant disregard for gender identity.

“Prior to the interview, the journalist and I had spoken about how to refer to me, but he chose to write about me in a way that made me feel objectified.

"I can't really remember if I approached the paper about the article as I was in the thick of exams, but to a degree I felt that my complaint wouldn't be taken seriously. I think it's really easy to feel reduced to 'that angry trans woman'."

South African media houses may not be perfect in their coverage of lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, intersex and questioning (LGBTIQ) people, but Bird says significant progress has been made.

"In South Africa we've improved quite a bit. In the late 1990s, there were the stereotypical portrayals of queer people, you know, marching through the streets during Pride parades, wearing women's clothes or whatever. But this in itself was a major shift from how reporting had been done before.

"More recently there was the shift towards victimisation. So a strong focus on reports of corrective rapes and murders.

"Still, South Africa is remarkably progressive in that we are generally open to talking about these issues. In many other African countries there is a reluctance; it is generally seen as deviant behaviour."

Delane Kalembo is the programmes officer at the organisation African Men for Sexual Health and Rights (AMSHeR), which has been conducting sensitisation workshops with journalists in West African countries for the past four years.

"We initiated the programme in that region because we found that journalists there always reported on homosexuality in derogatory ways. So we undertook work with media organisations in sensitisation workshops on the issues LGBTIQ people face. For example, when referring to someone who is intersex, not to use the word 'hermaphrodite'. In this way, we are trying to work towards ensuring a greater humaneness in the way they report on queer issues."

According to Kalembo, the programme has yielded the desired results. "We monitored how they frame these issues in their reports and there has been a complete improvement. We are now hoping to replicate this in other regions as well as speaking to education institutions to have a module around LGBTIQ sensitivity included in journalists' training."

The organisation might have their work cut out for them, because not everyone is pleased with the work they are undertaking.

"At the start of one of our workshops, the police came in and ordered us to stop. They said we could not come into the country to influence their journalists. We eventually



continued the series of workshops, but had to be extra cautious about having any possible snitches in the sessions.”

Ignoring the state-sponsored threats to their work, Kalembo says: “We also have civil society organisations in the region engage with media around breaking stories and what should be picked up in those stories, because so often only the sensational is picked up on. The violation of those persons’ rights were never at the heart of the story.”

For Tomson, this kind of active engagement is needed to ensure accurate representation of queer people in the media.

“We really need straight and cis allies to heed the call and to support the idea that prejudice can never be accepted or tolerated. I think it’s important to work at dismantling the idea that there is something broken, immoral or wrong with queer identity because, in many instances, this is the fundamental starting point from which stigma and prejudice grows,” she says.

“Active protection of human rights, liberties and freedoms for people — especially those in minority groups, such as queer folk — must be a prerequisite.

“We also need to carefully interrogate who is telling these stories. When it comes to matters of queer identity, those best qualified to speak are those who are queer themselves. It all comes down to agency. We don’t need to be patronised or condescended to; what we need is a platform for our own voices to be heard.”

### **When media and state combine forces**

Diane Bakuraira is a gender non-conforming Ugandan activist who says that, after being outed in the Ugandan press, her life “was never normal again”.

“It happened after I told my story about being a gender nonconforming person living in Uganda to a British newspaper. The Ugandan media saw the article after it was posted online. But they twisted the story completely, changing my story to something else. The impact of that was really disturbing for me, because before that — before the article and the [Anti-Homosexuality] Bill coming into effect — I had always lived my life openly. People never really cared how I identified.

“But after that article, my life was never normal again. I lost some of my friends because of the lies this paper wrote about me. I had to change my movements, switching from using public transport — which, of course, costs me a lot more.

“Emotionally, too, it has really tainted me. I had to stay away from work and seek refuge, because I was attacked one night on my way home from work. They beat me

very badly, shouting that they knew the kind of work I do and where I work; that I must move out of that area because they don't appreciate my kind of people living there. I eventually had to relocate; move out of an area I had felt safe in before that."

A report titled *From Torment to Tyranny — Enhanced persecution in Uganda following the passage of the Anti-Homosexuality Act 2014* found that, in 2012, 19 cases of persecution perpetrated against Ugandan LGBTIQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer) people were reported.

This figure had, from December 20 2013 to May 1 2014, rocketed to 162.

This, the report noted, "represents an increase of between 750% and 1 900% on previous years — an increase which can only be explained by the passage of the Anti-Homosexuality Bill and the virulently homophobic atmosphere this has engendered in Uganda".

The virulently homophobic atmosphere is exacerbated by mainstream media, which Bakuraira refers to as "hatemongers" — a sentiment shared by Mutyaba Gloriah, programmes officer at queer rights organisation, Freedom and Roam Uganda.

"Media in Uganda has misrepresented us on so many occasions, causing not only government but the general public to hate us. During the period of the Anti-Homosexuality Bill, there was a lot of media outing during that time. The tabloids that were publishing these stories and outing people were doing it for financial gain, because that story trended for about a week — every day there were different people being outed," says Gloriah.

Although the Bill was overturned based on a technicality, Gloriah says: "We still face the consequences of that Bill. And this is where the media comes in, again: when the Bill was passed, the president made a statement at a press conference announcing this. But when it was nullified, he didn't come out and clarify that. There was no press to cover that. So there are people who think the Bill still exists and so continue to suppress us and our work."

Bakuraira adds: "This is why we never share our stories with media here. They always twist our stories. We just don't trust mainstream media."

(Source: <https://mg.co.za/article/2017-04-06-00-queer-people-fight-for-fair-representation-in-the-media/>)

## **2. The representation of the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Trans-gendered people**

**By Alan Ford (2002)**

### **Introduction**

The Bill of Rights enshrined in the South African Constitution clearly and unambiguously outlaws discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, gender and marital status (Act 108 of 1996, chapter 2, paragraph 9). Yet Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Trans-gendered (GLB&T) people remain stigmatised and marginalised in South African society. GLB&T people are confronted on a daily by social and institutional discrimination and little is known about the challenges and concerns facing them.

### **Representation in the media**

Issues affecting GLB&T people are virtually absent in the news media and, on the rare occasions they are represented, they are often misrepresented. Preliminary monitoring by the Media Monitoring Project (MMP) reveals that articles and photographs published in the news media fail to capture the diversity and complexity of GLB&T people.

Majority of coverage is received during Gay Pride Week and this is often limited to photographs taken at the annual March. The media's coverage of Gay Pride Week tends to be reported as just another event and a source of entertainment to the public. It is common practice for newspaper and television reports to carry photographs of people dressed as drag queens, with a lot of emphasis on fashion. Such emphasis is a misrepresentation as "drag queens" only represent a segment of GLB&T people. In this regard the media needs to broaden its representation of GLB&T people from its limited representation.

Preliminary monitoring reveals that articles and photographs published in the news media fail to capture the diversity and complexity of GLB&T people. For example, a photograph published in the *Sunday Independent* (30/09/01, pg. 1) focused attention on drag queens at the Gay Pride March and comments on the attire of the participants. The caption at the bottom of the photograph reads, "The other rainbow nation was out gender bending in Johannesburg yesterday. Fishnet stockings, spandex, sequins and some impossibly high heels were part of the 12th Annual Gay and Lesbian Pride Parade. Pamphlets and condoms were handed out like candy. While this year's march had a celebratory feel, there was a lone protestor who said discrimination against gays was still rife in black communities." The issue of racism and discrimination against homosexuals is mentioned but not further explored, and focus is clearly on the "gender bending" nature of the event.

An earlier photograph that appeared in the same newspaper (12/08/01, pg3) also depicted a drag queen and was headlined "Woman for a day". In this instance, the caption reads, "Jessy, left, was a princess for the evening with a tiara perched on her purple bob, while Thelma Klench sported sixties blonde bouffant at a 'divas and bitches' bash at a JHB gay club to celebrate Women's Day. The party promised special rewards for those pitching up in drag and plenty of girls, and several hundred boys, unleashed their inner woman". No article accompanies the photograph and while there is a caption the photograph is not contextualised- even though the festivities are linked to Women's Day, the piece does not explore the links between this event and the commemoration of a national holiday.

While it is perfectly reasonable to cover the Annual Gay Pride March or festivities in celebration of Women's Day, which has the benefit of raising awareness of GLB&T pride, it is insufficient to report on them almost exclusively during the holding of an annual event. It is necessary that the media provide in-depth coverage on issues about GLB&T people and represent them as being part of broader society. Coverage of GLB&T people tends to represent them as "outside the norm" as an "other" who are different from the rest of society.

The GLB&T people comprises a diverse range of people from different race, class, gender, educational system or any racial group but cut across all groups and sections of society. The media, however, has a tendency to represent GLB&T people as homogenous and amorphous, and fails to communicate the importance of some of the issues facing them. This reinforces the marginalisation and stereotyping of people who are gay, lesbian, bisexual or trans-gendered, leading to generalisations and stereotyping that can translate into discrimination. Furthermore, the media does not represent the concerns and difficulties faced by GLB&T people as being of importance and of value.

The media needs to represent different people, and the specific issues they face, in a comprehensive and thorough manner. GLB&T people should be depicted as a part of society, one that has some special interests but also one that faces many of the same challenges as every other citizen. More seriously, the media often fails to report on violence against members of GLB&T people. According to organisations such as the Triangle Project & the Gay and Lesbian Equality Project, rape, discrimination and racism feature prominently as issues of concern within GLB&T people, yet the mainstream media gives it little or no coverage at all. For example, a gay black person in a squatter camp may have a completely different experience of being gay from Steven Cohen.

It is crucial that the media represents the concerns of GLB&T people within the broader framework of human rights. This would communicate the message that issues affecting GLB&T people are of importance and value and should be treated with the same gravity

afforded to issues affecting heterosexual people. Mainstreaming is important, too, because it does not make these issues and concerns exclusively the domain of GLB&T people. In the same way that violence against women also affects men and children, so violence against gays and lesbians should affect all people.

There are however, some exceptional items which deal with issues and challenges faced by GLB&T people. The first was a breakthrough court ruling that enables gay and lesbian couples to adopt children, which was covered by various newspapers, including *The Star*, *Citizen*, *Sowetan*, *Beeld* and the *Sunday Independent*. In a case testing the provisions of the Bill of Rights, Ms Anna Marie de Vos, a Pretoria High Court judge, and her life partner, Ms Suzanne du Toit, challenged sections of the Child Care Act and the Guardianship Act in the Constitutional Court which prevented them from jointly adopting their two children. The Constitutional Court ruled that such a provision was unconstitutional.

The second was an application brought by Kathy Satchwell, a Johannesburg High Court judge, to challenge the Judges' Remuneration and Conditions of Employment Act that excluded same-sex partners from various benefits available to married spouses. In terms of an amendment to the Act, Satchwell's partner, Lesley Carnelly, will now be entitled to receive death benefits if Satchwell dies and can be registered as a dependent on her partner's medical aid. Certainly, these issues need more coverage in the media and not only when the issue is raised by prominent individuals in society.

## **Conclusion**

The media should represent GLB&T people in terms of the complexity and diversity afforded to other people. GLB&T people also have careers families, friends, needs and a wide range of interests. It is necessary to communicate and mainstream issues of interest to the gay, lesbian, bisexual or trans-gendered people through the media i.e. transform what is perceived as "other" to normal and acceptable. Mainstreaming issues of concern and interest to GLB&T people would serve to conscientise and educate people, promote understanding and tolerance, and challenge homophobia and discrimination. This could significantly contribute to lessening the marginalisation of GLB&T people and meaningfully promote the rights embodied in the Constitution. It is essential that the media represents all of South African society's diverse people and cultures and works as a force to counter discrimination.

(Source: <https://www.mediamonitoringafrica.org/images/uploads/ADUMMGLB.pdf>)