

Thesise / Theses 2009

Emma De Villiers- *Negotiating Femininity: Sa Teenage Girls' Interpretation Of Teen Magazine Discourse Constructed Around Seventeen*

Abstract: Adolescent girls' passage to womanhood is frequently exposed to a vast array of media products. Mass communication products have become educational devices, guiding young women towards an understanding of femininity and all its accompanying intricacies. We are taught gender lessons throughout our lives, but our teen years are of special significance in this regard. In a society that is becoming all the more media saturated, advertisers are capitalising on different desires and ideals that are being constructed in the media. Initially, only adult women were targeted, but these days a number of mass media products aimed specifically at young women have opened up a whole new market. Until a few years ago, South African teenage girls had only women's magazines aimed at adult women to refer to. These days, however, a number of teen magazine titles exist locally. The aim of this study was to look at teen magazines as an example of texts that are aimed specifically at adolescent women. More specifically, the study looked at the discourse on femininity within the pages of the text – what is the magazine in essence saying about womanhood? To take the research one step further, it was decided to look at how readers of the magazine engaged and negotiated with the text in order to inform their own understanding of femininity. The goal of the study was to determine how the discourse on femininity played out between the text and the reader. Combining quantitative and qualitative elements, the study was located within a cultural studies framework and referred to Stuart Hall's encoding/decoding model as a representation of the communication process. It was found that the magazine under scrutiny had twelve specific thematic categories that were most prominent. It was found that the femininity encoded in these texts revolved around consumerism, fashion and boys. The study found that the readers taking part in focus group research possessed a sufficient amount of educational "cultural capital" to be able to resist the dominant messages encoded in the texts, yet they seemingly chose not to. This study also indicated that the femininity that was constructed in the studied text did not take the greater South African context into account, and that it served to entertain readers from higher LSM groups rather than all South African girls.

Link: <http://scholar.sun.ac.za/handle/10019.1/2102>

Patricia Gassner- *Icons Of War Photography : How War Photographs Are Reinforced In Collective Memory : A Study Of Three Historical Reference Images Of War And Conflict*

Abstract: There are certain images of war that are horrific, frightening and at the same time, due to an outstanding compositional structure, they are fascinating and do not allow its observers to keep their distance. This thesis examines three images of war that have often been described as icons of war photography. The images "children fleeing a napalm strike" by Nick

Ut, "the falling soldier" by Robert Capa and Sam Nzima's photograph of Hector Pieteron are historical reference images that came to represent the wars and conflicts in which they were taken. It has been examined that a number of different factors have an impact on a war photograph's awareness level and its potential to commit itself to what is referred to as collective consciousness. Such factors are the aesthetical composition and outstanding formal elements in connection with the exact moment the photograph was taken, ethical implications or the forcefulness of the event itself. As it has been examined in this thesis, the three photographs have achieved iconic status due to different circumstances and criteria and they can be described as historical reference images representing the specific wars or conflicts. In this thesis an empirical study was conducted, questioning 660 students from Spain, South Africa and Vietnam about their awareness level regarding the three selected photographs. While the awareness level of the Spanish and the South African image was rather high in the countries of origin, they did not achieve such a high international awareness level as the Vietnamese photograph by Nick Ut, which turned out to be exceptionally well-known by all students questioned. Overall, findings suggest that the three selected icons of war photography have been anchored in collective memory. Ut, Robert Capa, Sam Nzima, semiotics, Spanish Civil War, the falling soldier, Vietnam War.

Link: <http://scholar.sun.ac.za/handle/10019.1/2461>

Peter Kenny- News Agencies As Content Providers And Purveyors Of News: A Mediahistoriographical Study On The Development And Diversity Of Wire Services

Abstract: This study examines the history, development and diversity of news agencies. It studies the major agencies and pinpoints how smaller wire services that sometimes purvey niche news seek to offer a more diverse global news-flow. The linkage between news agencies and technological developments, and how wire services have helped advance technology, is examined since the first agencies began in the 1800s, up to the current era of the Internet. The rise of television and the subsequent ascent of the Internet prompted new demands for more diverse news procurement. This accelerated the convergence of different media and has exposed challenges and opportunities to news agencies, large and small. Alongside the telegraph, news wire services expanded from supplying news and information locally to being global players, helping the world shrink. The mediahistoriographical approach engages a critical examination of literature sources regarding the development of the major wire services, and some of the smaller players. The literature, along with interviews with news agency experts, provides the material to examine wire services. The study shows how some original agencies leveraged opportunities offered by their standing in powerful nations to become dominant transnational players. The ascendancy of the mega-agencies compounded limited news-flows from developed to poorer nations, while an expansion of diversified news-flows has not matched technological progression. This study concludes by recommending greater recognition of the importance of news agencies and more scholarly examination of them, as studies on them appear scarce compared to those on other media branches, such as newspapers, the electronic

media and the Internet. More studies into the development of both mainstream and alternative news agencies would pave the way for a better understanding of how they function and could provide clues as to how they might be able to better sustain themselves as more diverse entities for the benefit of the public discourse. Through the above, this dissertation seeks to contribute, in a small way, to rectifying a knowledge disparity regarding a key component of the mass media, namely the news agency.

Link: <http://scholar.sun.ac.za/handle/10019.1/1616>

Jacolette Kloppers- 'n Ondersoek Na Die Ontwikkeling Van Die Matie Studentekoerant Se Regulering En Selfregulering Sedert 1995

Abstract: The development of the regulation and self-regulation of Die Matie, official student newspaper of the University of Stellenbosch (US), were researched in this study. Die Matie is subjected to a complete code of conduct since 1995, which has been approved by the US council. This code developed after several conflicts with university authorities in a period in which South Africa changed into a new political system and when government became more tolerant towards the press. The origin and development of Die Matie's code of conduct, the operations of the Media Council, the origin and development of the Die Matie's Financial Advisory Committee, and developments in terms of the subsidy Die Matie receives from the US on an annual basis, are therefore studied with in the context of the regulation and self-regulation of the South African press in general. The theoretical framework with in which this study was done is the normative media theory because this theory focuses on the ideal role the media should fulfil in society. The normative media theory also offers a basis from which the media's responsibility and the quality of the media can be tested and controlled. The study has focused especially on the theory of social responsibility, which is one of the four original press theories and of which regulation and self-regulation forms a part. The methodology which has been used is that of historical research, a qualitative methode. This methode was refined even further more by using the approach of microhistory which, firstly, entails the analysing of a small area, and secondly acknowledges the researcher's personal experience of the subject. The study came to the conclusion that Die Matie firstly enforces self-regulation via its code of conduct, the Media Council and the Financial Advisory Committee. Secondly the editorial team has the freedom to publish whatever they would like to publish and to be as critical and controversial as they find necessary as long as they obey the regulations of the code of conduct. The study also finds that Die Matie's position is currently protected and that the university authorities and the Student Representative Council can not take any random decisions about the existence of the newspaper.

Link: <http://scholar.sun.ac.za/handle/10019.1/1892>

Emmanuel Mogoboya Matsebatlela - *South African Tabloid Newspapers' Representation Of Black Celebrities: A Social Constructionism Perspective*

Abstract: This study examines how positively or negatively as well as how subjectively or objectively the South African tabloid newspapers represent black celebrities. This examination was primarily conducted by using the content analysis research technique. The researcher selected a total of 85 newspapers spread across four different South African daily and weekend tabloid newspapers that were published during the period February to September 2008. The results from the data collected reveal that tabloid newspapers tend to overemphasize negativity when reporting about black celebrities. The findings also reveal a clear differential in the representation of black female celebrities vis-à-vis male celebrities. Unlike male celebrities whose roles were mainly defined in terms of political activities and personal disputes, female celebrities' roles were largely confined to relationships and sex. The language used by the four newspapers in their representation of celebrities appears to be humiliating and, in some instances, downright disparaging. There is little doubt that media representations of celebrities, whether positive or negative, serve as mirrors to how some members of society behave. To this end, there needs to be a shift from the current preoccupation with sensationalizing negative news when South African tabloid newspapers report on black celebrities. Tabloid newspapers should judiciously use their greater focus on celebrities' private lives to report on more positive personal stories that focus on the achievements of celebrities, including how some celebrities are living positively with HIV/AIDS. Since this study only focused on South African tabloid newspapers' representations of black celebrities, and only employed the content analysis method, further research is recommended on the impact of celebrities' representations on the South African society.

Opsomming: Hierdie studie ondersoek hoe positief of negatief, asmede subjektief of objektief, daar oor swart beroemdes in Suid-Afrikaanse ponie- of skinderkoerante verslag gedoen word. Die ondersoek is primêr met behulp van die inhoudsanaliseonderzoekmetode uitgevoer. Die navorser het 85 koerante uit vier verskillende Suid-Afrikaanse dagblaaie en naweekponiekoerante gekies uit die tydperk Februarie tot September 2008. Die resultate toon 'n tendens in die poniekoerante dat oorwegend negatiewe verslagdoening oor swart beroemdes vooropgestel word. Die bevindinge toon ook 'n duidelike verskil tussen die verslagdoening oor beroemde swart vroue teenoor dié oor swart mans. In teenstelling met die mans wie se rolle hoofsaaklik ingevolge hulle politieke aktiwiteite en persoonlike dispute gedefinieer word, word beroemde swart vroue se rolle hoofsaaklik beperk tot verhoudings en seks. Die taalgebruik in die verslaggewing oor beroemdes in die vier poniekoerante blyk uiters vernederend, en in sommige gevalle, selfs degraderend en wrang te wees. Daar bestaan min twyfel dat verslaggewing oor beroemdes in die media, hetsy positief of negatief, weerspieël hoe sommige lede van die samelewing lewe. Om hierdie rede is 'n verskuiwing in die huidige behepthed met die sensasionalisering van negatiewe nuus in die verslaggewing oor swart beroemdes nodig. Poniekoerante wat op die persoonlike lewens van beroemdes fokus behoort na meer positiewe verslagdoening oor hul prestasies te strew, insluitend, hoe sommige beroemdes positief met MIV/Vigs lewe. Aangesien hierdie navorsing net op verslagdoening oor swart beroemdes in Suid-Afrikaanse poniekoerante kragtens die inhoudsanalisemeterde gefokus het, word verdere

navorsing aanbeveel oor die impak van verslagdoening oor beroemdes op die Suid-Afrikaanse samelewing.

Link: <http://scholar.sun.ac.za/handle/10019.1/2326>

Anri Van der Spuy- *The Media On Trial: An Investigation Into The Media's Portrayal Of The Law*

Abstract: The relationship between the media and the law is an important one, especially in an adolescent democracy like South Africa. On the one hand the law has the power to control the fundamental right to freedom of expression – the very core of the media's existence. On the other hand, however, the media are vital mechanisms through which the law can ensure that citizens know that justice is being done. The media are therefore also powerful; having the ability to influence people's perceptions of and respect for the law. The relationship between the media and the law is characterised internationally by frequent tensions and misunderstandings – a trend that has not escaped South Africa. Whereas some of these strains may be explained with reference to both the media and the law's respective duties in a democracy; many problems are also caused as result of misunderstandings and inaccurate expectations of both parties' responsibilities in a democracy. This study was thus launched from the premise that there is room and need for improvement in the relationship between the media and the law. The way in which citizens perceive the law (or legal consciousness) was investigated; as were the sources of such perceptions. Making use of a questionnaire distributed to a sample of students at two Western Cape universities, it was established that students' opinions of lawyers and judicial officers are generally positive, but that they do not have much confidence in the efficacy of the South African legal system. The feedback also indicates that news and popular media are the most important sources of such opinions of the law – a context-specific finding that echoes similar results obtained internationally. Popular media as an important source of perceptions give rise to several concerns. Not only do citizens struggle to distinguish between fact and fiction in popular media; but most of the popular (legally-themed) media available in South Africa are furthermore imported from the USA. This tendency, defined in this study as the Hollywoodization of South African law, lead to concerns that citizens may not only be basing their opinions of the law on fiction; but also that such media are premised on a very different (American) legal system from our own. The importance of news media as a source was investigated more specifically by making use of a case study (the Inge Lotz/ Fred van der Vyver story). The way in which pre-trial publicity and court reporting may lead to the sacrifice of a defendant's right to a fair trial was investigated by looking at the influences of news media coverage on the parties involved; the presiding officers, assessors and witnesses; and the perceptions lay audiences may have of the specific case and (consequently) the law in general.

Opsomming: Verhouding tussen die media en die reg is 'n belangrike een, veral in 'n jong demokrasie soos Suid-Afrika. Aan die een kant het die reg die mag om die hart van die media se bestaansreg – die grondwetlike reg op vryheid van spraak – te beheer. Aan die ander kant is die media ook 'n noodsaaklike meganisme wat aan landsburgers oordra wanneer geregtigheid

geskied, en wanneer nie. Die media kan dus die doeltreffendheid van die reg in 'n demokrasie ernstig beïnvloed. Die verhouding tussen die media en die reg word wêreldwyd met misverstande en probleme gekenmerk – 'n tendens waarvan Suid-Afrika nie afgesonder is nie. Hoewel van dié stremminge veroorsaak word deur die partye se onderskeie natuurlike pligte in 'n demokrasie, word sommige probleme ook veroorsaak deur misverstande en onregverdige verwagtinge van wat beide partye se verantwoordelikhede behels. Die studie is gevolglik onderneem met die uitgangspunt dat daar moontlikheid vir verbetering in die verhouding tussen die media en die reg is. Die wyse waarop burgers die reg beskou of ervaar (waarna in die studie verwys word as legal consciousness of regbewussyn) word ondersoek; en só ook die bronne van burgers se regsbewussyn. Deur gebruik te maak van 'n vraelys wat aan 'n groep studente by twee Wes-Kaapse Universiteite uitgedeel is, word daar vasgestel dat studente oor die algemeen baie respek het vir die regslui, maar min vertrou in die Suid- Afrikaanse regstelsel het. Die terugvoering bepaal ook dat nuus- en populêre/ gewilde media die belangrikste bronne van regsbewussyn is. Dié bevinding, wat kontekstspesifiek tot Suid-Afrika is, bevestig soortgelyke gevolgtrekkings wat internasionaal ook aanvaar is. Die feit dat populêre media 'n belangrike bron van regsbewussyn is, lei tot talle bekommernisse. Behalwe dat daar reeds bevind is dat gebruikers van dié media nie kan onderskei tussen wat feite en wat fiksie is nie, word daar in Suid-Afrika hoofsaaklik Amerikaanse populêre media met regstemas versprei. Die gevaar is dus dat Suid- Afrikaanse burgers dalk besig is om hul indrukke van die reg te baseer op beide fiksie én 'n Amerikaanse voorstelling van die regstelsel (die sg. Hollywoodization van die Suid- Afrikaanse reg). Die studie beskou verder die belangrikheid van die nuusmedia as 'n bron deur 'n gevallestudie van 'n bekende Suid-Afrikaanse moordondersoek en regssaak (die Inge Lotz/ Fred van der Vyver-saak). Die aard van beide voorverhoor-publisiteit en hofverslaggewing en die moontlikheid dat dit skade aan die regverdigheid van 'n verhoor kan verrig, word veral van nader beskou. Spesifieke aandag word ook geskenk aan die moontlike invloede van dié tipe mediadekking op die betrokke partye; die onafhanklikheid van voortsittende beamptes, assessore en getuies; en die indrukke wat by gewone burgers oor 'n spesifieke saak – en dus die reg in geheel – geskep kan word.

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