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## **Index of Acronyms and Abbreviations**

ANDI	Agência de Notícias dos Direitos da Infância
IFJ	International Federation of Journalists
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UN	United Nations
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

## Introduction

International debates about the status of children in the media increasingly revolve around the role of the journalist with respect to the rights of the child. This includes discussions on how to protect the child in journalistic practices, as well as how to promote the well-being of children through media output.<sup>1</sup> This reality is taking place against the backdrop of the progressively increasing complexity of media practice, which comes as the result of globalisation processes. The developments in information and communications technologies, on top of the changing global political economy have resulted in growing concerns among academics, on account of the corresponding implications for the rights of the child.

On the one hand, the media represent an important ally for the human rights professional, which is due to their capacities to make international human rights norms and standards, as well as human rights violations, visible to the general public. The investigative nature of journalism is furthermore valuable for the purpose of monitoring human rights implementation and exposing the state's wrongdoings in this regard. On the other hand, human rights journalism requires extensive legal knowledge, as well as an understanding of the international human rights system, which is unlikely to be reached by the average journalist.

This is especially true in view of the changes in the international market and hence in the media landscape. In this modern environment, the media landscape furthermore demands that news media professionals work at a fast pace, constantly presenting the latest news.<sup>2</sup> Such circumstances in turn present a challenge to the quality

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<sup>1</sup> Nordic Information Centre for Media and Communication Research, *Guidelines and Principles for Reporting on Issues Involving Children*, [website] <http://www.nordicom.gu.se/en/clearinghouse/guidelines-and-principles-reporting-issues-involving-children> (accessed 2 March 2017).

<sup>2</sup> Cline Center for Democracy, *Media Data and Social Science Research: Problems and Approaches*, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, 2014, p. 3. Available from <http://www.clinecenter.illinois.edu/research/publications/Media%20Data%20and%20Social%20Science%20Research.pdf> (accessed 25 February 2017).

of human rights coverage, since human rights issues are generally speaking long-term events and not unique occurrences, and hence are unlikely to acquire much visibility in daily news items.

The implications of the work of the journalist with respect to children's rights are then only further complicated by the fact that coverage of children and children's issues is deemed particularly difficult by journalists around the world as it is. Reflecting this reality is the growing concern among both academics and human rights professionals with respect to the prevalence of certain trends in the portrayal of children in the news media.

Accordingly, the image of the child presented in news items is increasingly one of a problematic individual, or group of individuals, which has shown to negatively affect the policies which children are implicated in. Furthermore, the portrayal of children in mass media is often characterised by depictions of victimhood and objectification, wherein children are predominantly presented as casualties of circumstance and merely as recipients of action, rather than as individuals with agency. This in turn also entails negative implications for the overall implementation of the rights of the child, due to the power of such imagery to generate certain perceptions of the child, which may be ignorant of their dignities, as well as of their right to participate in decision-making processes which affect their lives.

Nonetheless, there appears to be an incentive for news media and human rights professionals to work together. This is because the practices of both of these professions each support the other, if only due to the fact that a major part of both of their livelihoods is that of investigation and of making certain pieces of information visible to wider audiences.

In line with this, the work of the journalist consists of collecting and disseminating information on a number of different topics, including human rights issues. Similarly, human rights in practice encompass a wide range of professions, with a significant number of them revolving around the investigation and monitoring of human rights realities, as well as the promotion of human rights norms and standards.



In view of this then, it appears that non-media human rights professionals can support journalists and other news media actors by acting as sources of information, and that journalists can support the practice of human rights by virtue of their communicative outreach.

Reflecting this, the dissemination of knowledge about human rights through the media has developed into being an essential component of news media practice, as is enshrined in relevant international documents. These documents exist in the form of, on the one hand, internationally agreed upon principles of journalistic practice, which outline the responsibilities of news media professionals with regards to the concept of human rights, and on the other hand, international human rights laws, which delineate the responsibilities of the state in terms of ensuring that media output is in line with the respective norms and standards. Such documents include the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) Declaration of Principles on the Conduct of Journalists and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR).

In light of these realities, this thesis sets out to define wherein the desirability of collaboration between news media and human rights professionals lies, particularly in view of facilitating the implementation of children's rights. This is done by first discussing the respective international norms and standards of practice. This serves the purpose of uncovering the similarities in concept and action, and hence better generating a better understanding as to why and how news media and human rights professionals can collaborate.

This is followed up by outlining the rights of the child under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, particularly Article 17, which outlines the child's right to information and the corresponding obligations of the state with respect to the media and supplemented by a discussion on the value of children's rights specifically, in media practice, as opposed to simply just human rights.

The practice of news media was evaluated by means of a quantitative media content analysis of newspaper articles, which ultimately served the purpose of exposing how prevalent children and their rights, according to the international human rights

framework, are in the media consumed by adults. The content analysis consists of a study of the online version of the ‘world news’ section of British quality press newspaper *The Guardian* over a three-month period, namely from March 2017 to May 2017. The results of this research are then evaluated in view of the preceding discussion and followed up by a discussion of possible ways forward with respect to means of improved collaboration between news media and human rights professionals at the local, national and international levels.

# 1. The Relationship Between the Media and Human Rights

## 1.1. International Norms and Standards of Practice

The worlds of the news media and of human rights overlap on a number of different issues, both in theory and in practice. This is evident in the respective sets of universal standards and principles agreed upon at the international level. Both disciplines are founded on a set of ethical norms and values, which essentially affirm the integrity of the individual and furthermore vow to contribute to the well-being of people. Moreover, the work of news media and human rights professionals alike relies heavily on the dissemination of information which is relevant to human life, as well as necessary for the realisation of democratic values such as liberty, egalitarianism and justice. This entails, in the case of the journalist, providing the public with information that is reflective of political, economic and cultural social realities. In the case of human rights professionals, communications largely consist of exposure of the violations of rights,<sup>3</sup> as well as the promotion of human rights standards. The two practices therefore also enable peaceful coexistence and, generally speaking, cultivate the welfare of society.

The similarities in theory and practice therefore suggest that these two disciplines complement each other in a way in which partnership between the professionals active in either of these fields could potentially be desirable for both parties. For example, in the case of human rights implementation, the media can act as a means of making rights themselves, as well as the respective violations, visible to the general public. This in turn serves the purpose of introducing human rights to public discourse, ultimately affecting both policy creation and implementation.

Human rights themselves, on the other hand, outline universal norms and standards, which may help journalists in solving the complex ethical predicaments they

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<sup>3</sup> M. McLagan, 'Principles, Publicity, and Politics: Notes on Human Rights Media', *American Anthropologist*, vol. 105, no. 3, 2003, pp. 605-612. Available from Jstor (accessed 17 June 2017).

often find themselves in in their daily practice. This includes providing guidance on how to report on controversial topics, such as female genital circumcision,<sup>4</sup> in an appropriate manner, how to treat individuals when they are used as sources of information,<sup>5</sup> as well as how to represent individuals in news reports. Such activities in turn simultaneously need to be done in accordance with a commitment to the protection of the privacy of the respective individuals, as well as sensitivity to, and respect for, their social identities. Human rights furthermore also protect both the media as an entity functioning in a state, as well as the individual journalist, from state interference, allowing news media professionals to perform their practice without fear of retaliation.

### 1.1.1. International Standards of Media Practice

In broad terms, the role of modern news media, and hence of the journalist in a globalised world, is to inform the general public about what is happening in society, be it at a local, regional or global level. This includes reporting on topics such as politics, health, education, as well as culture and entertainment. In other words, the press is entrusted with accurately representing social realities and fulfilling the public's right to information.

International norms and standards on ethical journalism and journalistic professionalism furthermore demonstrate a commitment to respect for the integrity of individuals, be it in the case of journalists using individuals as sources of information, or in cases where individuals are portrayed in their news reports. The Declaration of Principles on the Conduct of Journalists by the International Federation of Journalists, which was adopted in 1954 and continues to be endorsed by journalist unions and associations from numerous countries, exemplifies precisely these values.

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<sup>4</sup> T. Hammarberg, 'Children, the UN Convention and the Media', *The International Journal of Children's Rights*, vol. 5, 1997, pp. 247. Available from HeinOnline (accessed 2 March 2017).

<sup>5</sup> P. McIntyre, *Putting Children in the Right – Guidelines for Journalists*, Brussels, International Federation of Journalists, 2002, pp. 15-16. Available from [https://www.unicef.org/philippines/intl\\_journalists\\_guidelines.pdf](https://www.unicef.org/philippines/intl_journalists_guidelines.pdf) (accessed 15 February 2017).

The IFJ itself is a federation consisting of journalists' trade unions and mainly deals with the promotion of ideals of journalistic practice and with the realities of journalist freedoms and privileges. The organisation's activities in promoting ethical journalism and protecting the rights of journalists are furthermore carried out in view of the universal principles of human rights and democracy.<sup>6</sup> The Declaration of Principles on the Conduct of Journalists is a product of the deliberation and agreement of media professionals from various different cultures and traditions around the world, signifying its universality in describing ethical journalism worldwide.

As for the principles outlined in the Declaration, they reflect the 'core values of journalism – truth, independence and the need to minimise harm'<sup>7</sup> and furthermore delineate precisely what the obligations of the journalist are. This includes an emphasis on the importance of truth in media items, as per the first principle of the Declaration, which states that: 'Respect for truth and for the right of the public to truth is the first duty of the journalist'.<sup>8</sup>

From this it follows that news reports must be well-researched, containing an accurate description of the events and topics described, and that journalists should generally strive to be as objective as possible in their communications output. By acting as a source of information for the public, it is the journalist's responsibility to ensure that communications represent social realities in a manner which enables individuals to, for example, be able to make well-informed decisions when contributing to democratic processes, take voting for example.

Additionally, 'the issue of identity is at the heart of the journalistic endeavour',<sup>9</sup> since news items consist not only of reports on matters which affect people, but

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<sup>6</sup> International Federation of Journalists, *Constitution 2016-2019: Approved by the IFJ World Congress - Angers, France, June 2016* [website], <http://www.ifj.org/about-ifj/statutes/constitution/>, (accessed 17 May 2017).

<sup>7</sup> International Federation of Journalists (b), *Ethics*, [website] <http://www.ifj.org/issues/ethics/> (accessed 17 May 2017).

<sup>8</sup> International Federation of Journalists (c), *IFJ Declaration of Principles on the Conduct of Journalists*, Article 1, [website] <http://www.ifj.org/about-ifj/ifj-code-of-principles/> (accessed 17 May 2017)

<sup>9</sup> M. Jempson, 'Children in the Picture: Media Ethics and the Reporting of Child Labour', Background Paper for the International Conference on Child Labour Oslo, 27-30 October 1997, International Federation of Journalists Media For Democracy Programme, 1997, p. 9. Available from

furthermore of people themselves. It is therefore crucial that both individuals and groups of people are represented and portrayed in a manner which is fair, accurate and respectful of their integrity. The issue of discrimination is hence also addressed in the IFJ Declaration of Principles on the Conduct of Journalists, where the respective standard of professional conduct reads as follows:

*The journalist shall be aware of the danger of discrimination being furthered by the media, and shall do the utmost to avoid facilitating such discrimination based on, among other things, race, sex, sexual orientation, language, religion, political or other opinions, and national or social origins.<sup>10</sup>*

Such an approach to reporting on individuals in turn reflects democratic values and legitimises the work of the journalist in a society founded upon the values of liberty, justice and equality.

Furthermore, an important aspect of news media in a democracy is the self-regulation of practices. Media self-regulation acts as a means of ensuring quality of media output and of media professionals holding themselves accountable to the public. It moreover ensures their freedom and protects journalists from state interference. It is therefore important that the media themselves ‘play a leading role in this debate [before states] seek to control them with regulations’.<sup>11</sup> Self-regulation is an indispensable component of free media precisely because journalists work independently, so the corresponding codes of ethics and guidelines of professional standards fulfil the purpose of protecting and legitimising the work of journalists. The respective norms and values ultimately also serve the purpose of providing answers to any ethical dilemmas news media professionals may be confronted with in their work.

Hence, self-regulation measures need to be rigid enough where they delineate what is and is not appropriate, but flexible enough where they cater to all the situations

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<http://www.mediawise.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2011/03/Children-in-the-Picture.pdf> (accessed 19 May 2017).

<sup>10</sup> International Federation of Journalists (c), Article 7.

<sup>11</sup> McIntyre, p. 10. Available from [https://www.unicef.org/philippines/intl\\_journalists\\_guidelines.pdf](https://www.unicef.org/philippines/intl_journalists_guidelines.pdf) (accessed 15 February 2017).

news media professionals encounter in their work, which furthermore takes place in a society characterised by changing cultural perceptions and practices. All things considered then, the best ethical guidelines are ‘not a set of dos and don’ts, but rather a framework for thinking through ethical issues’.<sup>12</sup>

### 1.1.2. International Human Rights Framework

The concept of human rights, on the other hand, is grounded in the ‘recognition of the inherent dignity’ of each member of the human family, which in turn acts as the ‘foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world.’<sup>13</sup> Correspondingly, the human rights framework is less concerned with contributing to the well-being of society as such, and instead explicitly outlines the entitlements of each and every human being, which in turn ultimately allows for peaceful and meaningful coexistence. The entitlements of the individual deriving from international human rights standards furthermore act as specific sets of obligations of the state, which is the actor responsible for implementing human rights by either respecting, protecting or fulfilling the rights of the people. In the broadest sense, human rights are therefore legal rights afforded to each and every human individual, ultimately protecting persons from harmful exercises of state power.

The international human rights framework as it exists today relies heavily on the existence intergovernmental, as well as non-governmental, international organisations. Most notably, human rights are associated with the United Nations (UN), which is credited with having created the modern conception of human rights. Officially, the concept of human rights first appeared in the 1945 UN Charter, the foundational treaty of the UN. However, this treaty’s main focus lies in delineating the measures necessary for the maintenance of international peace and security. Human rights were later

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<sup>12</sup> J. Worthington and J. Park, *Telling Their Stories - Child Rights, Exploitation and the Media*, International Federation of Journalists, 2002, p. 6. Available from [https://www.unicef.org/malaysia/Telling\\_their\\_stories.pdf](https://www.unicef.org/malaysia/Telling_their_stories.pdf) (accessed 13 June 2017).

<sup>13</sup> United Nations General Assembly, *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, 1948, Preamble.

expanded upon when the UN adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, which has since become a symbol of the international community's acknowledgment of, and commitment to, protecting and serving each individual human being. It similarly serves as an illustration of the international community's aspirations to realising the well-being of humanity as a whole.

By formalising the concept of human rights, and recognising the universality of such entitlements, the Declaration henceforth served as the basis for the formalisation of more specific human rights norms and standards at the international level. This includes the legally binding United Nations human rights treaties such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), among others. These human rights conventions moreover need to be signed and ratified by governments in order for other actors to be able to hold the state accountable for their actions with human rights implications.

The UN hence acts as the governing body of the international human rights framework and controls the realisation of human rights by means of monitoring state implementation of the multiple UN human rights conventions, which delineate the state's obligations in protecting, respecting and fulfilling the rights of the individual. More concretely, the implementation of each convention is monitored by a respective Committee of independent experts who receive reports by the state itself, as well as by non-governmental organisations (NGOs), on the status of implementation of each of the individual articles of the respective convention.

Nonetheless, while the Universal Declaration of Human Rights itself is not legally binding, it gains its legitimacy simply by virtue of having been 'drafted by representatives with different legal and cultural backgrounds from all regions of the world'<sup>14</sup> and furthermore being the product of an executive intergovernmental entity. Hence, unlike with the United Nations human rights treaties, the provisions of the UDHR can be used as standards against which to measure the activity of all

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<sup>14</sup> United Nations (a), *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, [website] <http://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/> (accessed 27 June 2017).



governments, since state signatures and ratifications do not need to be taken into account.

The mere existence of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights moreover has implications of duty for non-state actors as well. This fact is evident in the Declaration's mention of how knowledge of both the concept of human rights itself, and of the specific entitlements of the individual, are integral to the realisation of human rights. The UDHR explicitly calls attention to this fact in the Preamble:

*Now, Therefore THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY proclaims THIS UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS as a common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations, to the end that every individual and every organ of society, keeping this Declaration constantly in mind, shall strive by teaching and education to promote respect for these rights and freedoms and by progressive measures, national and international, to secure their universal and effective recognition and observance, both among the peoples of Member States themselves and among the peoples of territories under their jurisdiction.<sup>15</sup>*

It is thus clear that, while it is only states who possess explicit human rights obligations under international human rights law, other actors in society, and even individuals themselves, have both the duty and the capacities to facilitate the realisation of human rights. This mainly includes the promotion of human rights values by means of communication and education for example. Here, the implications for the work of media agencies and media professionals are clear.

The human rights framework furthermore provides the media, or rather, the journalist, with human rights, specifically relevant to their practice. Accordingly, the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights confirms that it is in the journalists' own interests to promote human rights because of their guarantee of protection from potential threats to both the journalist's professional output and their

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<sup>15</sup> United Nations, General Assembly, *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, 10 December 1948, Preamble.

personhood.<sup>16</sup> This is most evident in the provisions of the right to freedom of expression, as per Article 19 of the UDHR:

*Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.*<sup>17</sup>

The right to freedom of expression guarantees the freedom of the individual to engage in the communication of opinion without fear of retaliation by the government. However, since the freedom of expression is not an absolute right, but rather a qualified right, the state may enforce limitations on acts of communication, as long as this is done in the interest of either protecting national security, or of safeguarding democratic processes and is furthermore defensible in a court based on the rule of law.<sup>18</sup> Article 19 also outlines the individual's right to information. This right entails that every human being is entitled to the access of information which is of benefit to their political, social and cultural well-being.

Following from this, it appears that, on the one hand, the news media, in so far as they are self-regulating, committed to ethical journalism and functioning in an environment allowing for freedom of the press, and on the other hand, the international human rights framework, most notably manifested in numerous declarations and conventions adopted by the United Nations, both require the other, if either of them are to reach their fullest potential. The argument for the apparent interdependence of news media and human rights in turn seems especially convincing when considering the practices of both media and human rights professionals against the both the theoretical and operative characteristics of a democracy.

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<sup>16</sup> A. White, 'Ethical Journalism and Human Rights', in T. Hammarberg et al., (eds.), *Human Rights and a Changing Media Landscape*, Strasbourg, Council of Europe, 2011, p. 48.

<sup>17</sup> United Nations, General Assembly, 1948, Article 19.

<sup>18</sup> Council of Europe, Commissioner for Human Rights Issue Discussion Paper, Strasbourg, Commissioner for Human Rights, 2011, p. 7.

## **1.2. The Democratic Value of Media and Human Rights Practice: Making Children Visible**

The concept of democracy is universally recognised as embodying the conditions necessary for fostering meaningful human life, as well as peaceful coexistence between humans at the local, national and international levels. While agreement on this issue is not necessarily vocalised by all members of the international community, it nonetheless remains one of the core values of the United Nations<sup>19</sup> and is therefore an essential component of any discourse involving international norms and principles.

The democratic model is furthermore an essential component of both the modern media system and of the human rights framework. A democratic environment acts not only as a prerequisite for both the independence of news media and the realisation of human rights, but is moreover only realised if states fulfil their human rights obligations and possess free media. Democratic values and realities, such as liberty, equality and representation therefore go hand in hand with the concept of news media and human rights as they exist today. Given the similarities of the practice of news and human rights professionals in contributing to the well-being of society at large and of the individuals who inhabit it, including children, it therefore seems fair to discuss their respective roles in society and evaluate the potential for partnership in view of their respective contributions to democratic life and decision-making.

### **1.2.1. Representation**

The role of the news media, or rather of the journalist specifically, in the realisation and maintenance of a democratic society is acknowledged by practitioners and scholars alike.<sup>20</sup> Free media is indispensable to both the achievement and preservation of democracy since the media fulfils a number of functions essential to

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<sup>19</sup> United Nations (b), *Democracy*, [website] <http://www.un.org/en/sections/issues-depth/democracy> (accessed 27 June 2017).

<sup>20</sup> International Federation of Journalists (a), Section III: Objectives.

realising democratic principles. This includes the fact that journalists incorporate the voices of the people into their media pieces, making both individuals and groups of people visible to the general public in their reporting. It is therefore also noteworthy to point out the necessity of media pluralism and media diversity, if democratic principles are to be realised in the media landscape.

Representation is a key characteristic of democratic societies and an indispensable component of the concept of democracy. In practice, representation is often equated to the individual's right to vote and hence their capacity to determine how they are governed. However, while the process of voting is the formalisation of the right to have a voice, the concept of representation entails that people are also seen and heard outside of election time. This holds especially true since human societies are made up of persons with different cultural and religious backgrounds and furthermore differ along lines of age, sex, race and economic status. Since different people are likely to have different needs, and democratic societies are founded on liberty, justice and respect for human dignity, the needs of all people need to be accounted for. Given the dependence on the voice of the majority in a democracy, it is therefore all the more important that the voices of minorities or of the more vulnerable populations are not silenced.

Considering these facts in view of the news media's responsibility to accurately represent realities and avoid the discrimination of persons in their news reports, it follows that, in a perfect world, any given society's population would be appropriately reflected in the voices heard and the human stories portrayed in the news media. In other words, a local news media agency for example would ideally represent all the groups of people in that community, and do so in a manner which is appropriate and reflective of the community's demographics. Correspondingly, global media agencies, as well as international news sections of national newspapers, would ideally pay equal attention to all the different regions in the world. From this perspective, it is then important to scrutinise what exactly, and who exactly, appears in the media, and what the democratic consequences thereof are. What journalists choose to investigate, and what editors and media agencies choose to publish, may serve as an indication of what,

or rather who, is deemed newsworthy, and hence interesting and important in that respective society.

In light of this, Kus et al. affirm that the ‘representation of children in the print media provides important clues to evaluate the social position of children’.<sup>21</sup> This is true for a number of reasons, including the fact that media shape the public’s perceptions of realities through their work. This comes as a consequence of the stories and topics they choose to expose the public, and the salience with which they cover specific issues, as well as due to the way in which the respective media pieces are framed. The corresponding communications theories outlining these phenomena are agenda setting and framing, respectively.<sup>22</sup> Thus, in deciding how the audience learns specific pieces of information, media producers influence the public’s perception of said information. Furthermore, by determining which information the public consumes, the media moreover influence public discourse, ultimately also affecting what is on the public agenda, as well as how the respective topics are dealt with at the level of policy-making.

Since children, due to being under the age of 18, often also lack the right to vote in many democracies,<sup>23</sup> it is then even more important that they are made visible and that their voices are heard by means of alternate channels, the media being the most obvious choice here. The current state of representation of the child in the media however leaves for a lot to be desired, according to a number of scholars. For example, a content analysis study done by Kus et al. led to the result of only 168, out of a total 13,823 news items which they came across in their research, being related to the rights of the child.<sup>24</sup> To add to this, Thomas Hammarberg asserts that the study of media as

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<sup>21</sup> Z. Kuş, K. Karatekin, D. Öztürk and Ö. Elvan, ‘When the Child Gets in the News? A Case Study on the National Written Media in Turkey’, *Education Media International*, vol. 53, no. 2, 2016, p. 120. Available from Taylor and Francis (accessed 1 May 2017).

<sup>22</sup> D. A. Scheufele, ‘Framing as a Theory of Media Effects’, *Journal of Communication*, vol. 49, no. 1, 1999, pp. 103-122. Available through Wiley (accessed 25 February 2017).

<sup>23</sup> Even though in some cases the right to vote is granted at 16, even this lower age limit means that a significant portion of the population has no political voice

<sup>24</sup> Kus et al., p. 136

such, and newspapers especially, has led to the observation that when present, ‘children are described from a distance’.<sup>25</sup>

Accordingly, Goonaskera maintains that the ‘media are deeply implicated in patterns of discrimination operating in society against children [due to the] silence and neglect of child-related issues.’<sup>26</sup> Von Feilitzen even goes on to say that the lack of representation of children is ‘symbolic of the general oppression of children in society’<sup>27</sup>, illustrating the fact that, due to their age, children are not at a democratic disadvantage not only due to a lack of political rights, but also because of general attitudes towards them. This can for the most part likely be attributed to public perceptions of children as beneficiaries of adult activity, rather than as potential agents of change.

Franklin moreover argues that, in cases where political authorities discuss conflicting rights claims of two parties, those who ‘possess full citizen rights’<sup>28</sup> are more likely to be favoured in speech by said authority figure. Therefore, the argument follows that, since children cannot vote, politicians are more likely to discount the rights of the child in acts of communication, ultimately also affecting the rights of the child in practice.<sup>29</sup> The attitudes of political authorities and their respective communications are all the more worrying when one considers the fact that politicians’ voices are very common in news items and that their stances on a topic often act as a means of legitimising a specific perspective on the given topic. Likewise, politicians are not only subjects in, but also consumers of, news media, and hence not only affect what appears

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<sup>25</sup> T. Hammarberg, 1997, pp. 246.

<sup>26</sup> A. Goonasekera, ‘Introduction’ in A. Goonasekera (ed.), *Children in the News: Reporting of Children’s Issues in Television and the Press in Asia* in J. Tobin, ‘Partners Worth Courting: The Relationship Between the Media and the Convention on the Rights of the Child’, *The International Journal of Children’s Rights*, vol. 12, 2004, p. 144. Available from Brill (accessed 2 March 2017).

<sup>27</sup> C. Von Feilitzen, ‘Introduction’ in Ulla Carlsson & Cecilia von Feilitzen (eds.) *Children and Media Violence*, UNESCO International Clearinghouse on Children and Violence on the Screen, 1998 in Tobin, p. 144

<sup>28</sup> B. Franklin, ‘Children’s Rights and Media Wrongs: Changing Representations of Children and the Developing Rights Agenda’, in B. Franklin, (ed.), *The New Handbook of Children’s Rights: Comparative Policy and Practice*, London, Routledge, 2002, p. 16.

<sup>29</sup> Franklin illustrates this point by giving the example of an elected authority having to deal with a situation wherein, in a public setting, the child’s right to play may stand in conflict to the residents’ right to freedom from nuisance, p. 16.

in the media and how it is presented, but are moreover affected by the words of the journalist when they find themselves in the role of the audience.<sup>30</sup> This reality again underlines the importance of representation of people which is balanced, accurate, sensitive of their identity, as well as respectful of their inherent dignity.

### 1.2.2. Informing the Public

Since the concept of human rights is based on the notions that each individual is of equal worth and that humans are agents of change entitled to freedom, the human rights framework itself provides a basis for the standards of democratic life. Nonetheless an essential dimension of human rights implementation is that of human rights education, because it ‘is essential for the prevention of human rights abuses, the promotion of non- discrimination, equality and sustainable development, and the enhancement of people's participation in democratic decision-making processes’.<sup>31</sup>

According to the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Education and Training, human rights education is comprised of activities explicitly designed to promote knowledge of human rights, as follows:

*Human rights education and training comprises all educational, training, information, awareness-raising and learning activities aimed at promoting universal respect for and observance of all human rights and fundamental freedoms.*<sup>32</sup>

While not necessarily being an explicit commitment of all human rights professionals, a form of human rights education nonetheless permeates through the activities of the several different human rights professions. Human rights practice is

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<sup>30</sup> United Nations, Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Report on the Thirteenth Session, CRC/C/57, 23 September-11 October 1996* (b).

<sup>31</sup> Navanethem Pillay, former United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, in P. Kirchsclaeger, ‘The Relation between Democracy and Human Rights’, *Globalistics and Globalization Studies*, 2014, pp. 112-125.

<sup>32</sup> United Nations General Assembly, *United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Education and Training*, 19 December 2011, Article 2.

multidisciplinary and encompasses a wide range of fields, including legal work, research, advocacy and grassroots activities, and most of these professions essentially revolve around either exposing human rights violations, advocating for the realisation of human right standards, monitoring the fulfilment of human rights obligations, or actively contributing to the implementation of the rights of the individual. Therefore, human rights practice, broadly speaking, contributes to the distribution of knowledge of the concept of human rights, as well as of the corresponding state obligations.

In its essence, human rights practice also entails the monitoring of state activity, which involves holding the state accountable for any actions which violate international human rights laws. All these activities, in turn, act as a means of strengthening the realisation of democracy as they increases the capacities of both individuals and the states to foster the realisation of democratic principles.

Similarly to this, news media professionals are indispensable allies for anyone working towards the ultimate goal of realising human rights and achieving democracy due to the fact that ‘good journalism raises awareness of what is acceptable and unacceptable’.<sup>33</sup> This implies that the media act not only as a source of information of occurrences in society, but that they moreover shape the ethical values of the given society through their content. Tobin however responds to this widespread notion of the media as the source of public perceptions and conceptions when he mentions that it is ‘disingenuous to hold the media responsible for the image of children in society as it not only perpetuates but reflects the social, cultural and political values held by a society’.<sup>34</sup> Here, the interdependence and interrelatedness of human rights, free media and democracy become apparent.

It is in this respect that the position of the journalist as a child rights ally becomes apparent. Simultaneously, it has become evident how important it is to have children’s topics, and moreover the exposure of children’s rights violations, on the agenda in the newsroom. Here, the implication is that, by spreading information about

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<sup>33</sup> Council of Europe, 2011, p. 7.

<sup>34</sup> Tobin, p. 144.



the realities which concern the well-being of the child, the knowledge generated will in turn affect public policy and ultimately the implementation of the rights of the child. This is the common logic behind the exposure of human rights violations in general, since the underlying assumption here is that, ‘such information generates political action, whether through direct pressure on governments or corporations to change their policies, or through the mobilization [sic] of individuals on a grassroots level’.<sup>35</sup>

Furthermore, since the news media, when acting in accordance with democratic principles, protects society’s interests,<sup>36</sup> it appears fair to assume that news media report on issues which are of democratic relevance to their audience. This goes beyond merely presenting facts, which allow them to make well-informed decisions when voting, and implies that news items are relevant to the daily lives of individuals, affecting not only their political, but also social and cultural well-being.

However, since most news agencies do not have children as their target audience, and since children, young ones in particular, are not very likely to consume conventional news media, it is important to consider how journalists can reach children and affect their lives for the better, even if the information is not necessarily directed towards them. Regardless of the near invisibility of children in news media coverage, they are nonetheless affected by a majority of all public policy matters,<sup>37</sup> and hence deserve to be given the necessary attention in all relevant policy-making decisions, ultimately also implying that they should continuously occupy a spot in public discourse.

It follows that one of the most valuable contributions of the media to society is that of providing information and hence of providing knowledge. News items, to an extent, educate the public on the topic or issue covered in the individual report. Even in cases of press items that are about one-off events, it is common practice for the incident to be contextualised to a certain degree. This can range from comparing the event to

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<sup>35</sup> McLagan, p. 606.

<sup>36</sup> Kuş, et al., 118.

<sup>37</sup> M. Foley, N. Hayes, and B. O’Neill, ‘Journalism Education and Children's Rights: New Approaches to Media Development in CEE/CIS Countries’, *Irish Studies in International Affairs*, vol. 23, 2012, p. 1. Available from ResearchGate (accessed 1 June 2017).

similar incidents in the past, including a discussion of relevant national policies or international laws, or providing simple background information.

A report by the International Federation of Journalists containing children's rights guidelines for journalists then goes on to distinguish between different levels of effectiveness in reporting on children's rights issues, where articles can either 'generate noise and heat', 'generate light' or 'generate understanding', depending on the content and quality of coverage.<sup>38</sup> According to this rationale, articles 'generating noise and heat' grab the attention of audiences and often include the voices of authorities, while excluding the voices of children. They also do little to explain the situation at hand and do not discuss potential solutions. Moreover, such news items may even consist of language which presents the child as the problem. Articles in this category are also prone to presenting the child as a mere victim of the specific situation, with no agency of their own, which also has human rights implications due to the stereotypes such media pieces can perpetuate in society.

McLagan hence explains that media coverage, which consists of simply bringing attention to an event or an issue, is insufficient for generating action, if only because such pieces lack the educative component necessary for people to understand not only the implications of the issue presented, but also what led to the issue in the first place and what can be done to solve it.<sup>39</sup> Consequently, 'generating light' and 'generating understanding', as per the aforementioned IFJ report, consists of going beyond the mere recognition of a problem and hence of providing insight into the origins of the issue and presenting different points of view from different actors, including children.

Since these kinds of articles are more thorough and in-depth they therefore most likely entail news coverage of the given issue over a longer period of time, rather than as a one-off event. Since the media can to a certain extent be deemed as performing an educational role in society,<sup>40</sup> particularly if media coverage consists of pieces which could be said to 'generate light' or 'generate understanding', it would appear reasonable

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<sup>38</sup> McIntyre, pp. 27-28.

<sup>39</sup> McLagan, pp.606-607.

<sup>40</sup> United Nations, Committee on the Rights of the Child, 1996 (b).

to assume that a certain degree of human rights education can be performed by the press.

However, journalists have to be as independent and objective as possible, in order to ensure the public's trust in their words. In light of this, it is important to note that journalists should never be branded as promoters of particular interests, not even the universally agreed upon standards of the human rights framework.<sup>41</sup> It is therefore vital that any incorporation of human rights journalism into the newsroom is carried out with news media professionals themselves leading the initiative.

Regardless, the rise in number of human rights conventions and declarations in the past few decades, as well as the increase in awareness among the general public of the concept of human rights, in itself implies that human rights are now more newsworthy than ever. This validates the case for the press to not only report about human rights fairly regularly, but to furthermore frame the reports on both individual incidents and ongoing problems as human rights issues, so far as it would be relevant to do so. This also seems true when considering the value of the human rights framework in providing universal standards against which to measure individual events and overall issues in society.

Furthermore, by outlining state obligations on a wide range of issues, international human rights laws provide a framework with which to evaluate state responsibility and action, or lack thereof, in incidents and issues which fall under the scope of human rights. Journalists hence can not only promote knowledge of the standards themselves, but furthermore generate understanding of how they are, or are not, prevalent in society, which is true for reports consisting of either local, national, or international occurrences.

In light of the previous discussion on the role of the journalist, it therefore appears that news media professionals can ultimately improve the well-being of people in society, but also indirectly contribute to the implementation of human rights, simply by committing to genuine journalistic professionalism. This holds true because

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<sup>41</sup> Council of Europe, 2011, p. 4.

people who are better-informed about the concept of human rights and about their specific entitlements, are more likely to be able to understand the legal obligations of their governments, hold the political elite accountable to their actions and therefore ultimately be more likely to be able to ensure the implementation of their human rights.

Correspondingly, Heinze and Freedman maintain that most of the public's general knowledge about human rights springs from the media,<sup>42</sup> since news agencies, generally speaking, do include mention of rights in their news items on occasion. Topics such as the rights of children, sexual and reproductive health and poverty, to name a few, are furthermore increasingly being framed as human rights issues,<sup>43</sup> as a consequence of the multitude of developments at international, national and local levels. From this it follows that, while children themselves might not necessarily be consumers of news media, the more easily accessible information about their rights is to their parents and teachers for example, the more likely these actors are to demand the realisation of children's rights.<sup>44</sup>

Nonetheless, neither the prevalence of human rights in the news, nor journalist knowledge of human rights standards, and correspondingly the human rights education happening through the media should not be overstated, since, generally speaking, the concept of human rights is given little attention both in journalistic training and in practice.<sup>45</sup> It therefore seems unfounded to believe that human rights are likely to only be mentioned, let alone be discussed or used as a context for evaluation of news situations, unless it is explicitly relevant to do so. In this case, examples of the most likely mentions of human rights in news items may include reports on international

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<sup>42</sup> R. Freedman, and E. Heinze, 'Public Awareness of Human Rights: Distortions in the Mass Media', *The International Journal of Human Rights*, vol. 14, no. 4, p. 492. Available from Taylor and Francis (accessed 3 March 2017).

<sup>43</sup> Speak Up Speak Out, *Media, Journalism and Human Rights*, [website] <http://www.speakupspeakout.internews.org/?q=section-2-concepts-skills-and-tools/media-journalism-and-human-rights> (accessed 1 June 2017).

<sup>44</sup> S. Angle, T. Baerthlein, N. Daftari, B. Rambaud and N. Roshani, *Protecting the Rights of Children: The Role of the Media. Lessons from Brazil, India and Kenya*. Internews Europe, 2014, p. 9.

<sup>45</sup> C. Hamelink, 'Introduction Human Rights and Media', *Critical Arts*, vol. 15, no. 1-2, 2007, p. 5. Available from Taylor and Francis (accessed 1 June 2017).

human rights conferences or on developments in national human rights legislation and policy.

Hamelink supports this point when he asserts that a lot of people still are not very familiar with the concept of human rights and how it can improve their lives and protect them from the state.<sup>46</sup> While there does seem to be an increase in the presence of human rights in the news, due to various developments in the international community and within individual states, deliberation of the concept remains superficial. Accordingly, even in cases where people are aware of human rights as a concept, they may not be aware of the fact that many of their daily problems related to food or shelter for example, are actually human rights problems.<sup>47</sup> This in turn affects the extent to which people are capable of holding their governments accountable. This furthermore has implications for the state of democracy and the public's right to have access to information which is relevant for their political, social, cultural and economic well-being.

Nonetheless, by functioning as a source for information on occurrences and developments around the world, the news media are often confronted with, and make visible, human rights topics, which has value in itself, even if the human rights connection is not explicitly made. This is because news items covering human rights violations, even if not framing the situation as a human rights issue, nonetheless expose perpetrators, putting pressure on them to remedy the situation. Since state activity is commonly reported on in news items, it is therefore also apparent how journalists and media professionals can monitor state activity in a manner which is consistent with the international human rights framework.

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<sup>46</sup> Hamelink, 2007, p. 3.

<sup>47</sup> Hamelink, 2007, p. 4.

### 1.2.3. Monitoring State Activity: Exposing Human Rights Violations

The international human rights framework is defined by not only outlining state responsibilities, but furthermore monitoring the status of implementation of the universal human rights standards by the respective state actors, as laid out in the individual international legal documents. At the level of the UN, this entails the state having to regularly submit reports of the measures taken in view of their obligations to the different human rights treaty committees. These reports, along with reports submitted by relevant non-governmental organisations, are then considered by the respective committee and recommendations for areas of improvement are provided.

Similarly, given the work that journalists do, they are expected to act as the ‘eyes, ears and voices of the public’,<sup>48</sup> particularly with respect to the monitoring of government activities. Since journalists possess the skills to collect information, analyse it and communicate it effectively, they are furthermore entrusted with relaying the information necessary for democratic life to the people. This in turn implies their responsibility in ultimately also scrutinising government activity. Therefore, Keane points out that, ‘when used affectively [sic] and in accordance with its purpose, media becomes the fourth power of the democracy’.<sup>49</sup> This comes as a consequence of the fact that, they are ultimately ‘casting the public’s shadow’<sup>50</sup> onto the actions of the different state organs, holding state authorities accountable for the actions and the consequences of their actions.

While the state is ultimately in charge of protecting of the rights of the individual, which entails that governments adopt the measures necessary for ensuring that people are protected from other actors hurting them, states themselves simultaneously are the most likely actor to violate human rights, be it by failing to provide adequate protection from explicit harm or simply by failing to fulfil the legal

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<sup>48</sup> Jempson, M., D. Searle, and C. Barry, *The Media and Children’s Rights*, MediaWise and UNICEF Handbook, UNICEF and MediaWise, 2005, p. 4.

<sup>49</sup> J. Keane, ‘Medya ve Demokrasi’, in H. Şahin, Çev., İstanbul, Ayrıntı Yayınları, 2010, in Kuş, Karatekin, Öztürk & Elvan, p. 118.

<sup>50</sup> Kus, et al., p. 118.

entitlements of the individual. Precisely due to these two realities then, state activity should maintain a constant presence in news coverage.

Likewise, with the exposure of human rights violations comes the exposure of both the perpetrators responsible for the violation of rights, as well as the victim of their (in)actions. The portrayal of perpetrators, together with the portrayal of the corresponding victims of human rights violations, in turn raises the issue of the sensitivity with which the subjects presented in the media need to be dealt with. It hence becomes a question of how the media itself has to act in order to not violate the rights of the individual through their output. In these cases, the public's right to know, and the inclusion of information in the news item for the sake of the integrity of the piece, need to be balanced against the human subject's right to privacy for example.

On the one hand, publicising information about the victim of a human rights violation, and using them as a speaker in the media piece, legitimizes the information in the news item. This is the case since having the victim as a speaker humanizes the situation and gives a voice to those, whose experiences and opinions need to be heard the most, ultimately also generating greater understanding the situation and the consequences thereof.

On the other hand, being the victim of a human rights violation can be a very sensitive and even traumatising issue, meaning that journalists dealing with such subjects either have to be very well-trained in dealing with such situations, or that they may have to entirely abstain from including the individual in the media piece. As with human rights, and the respective decisions that need to be made in courtrooms for example, there are no simple solutions to the judgements journalists have to make in such situations.<sup>51</sup> Media exposure is therefore often referred to as a 'double-edged sword', due to the fact that, while it does 'shine the spotlight on responsible individuals and companies [...], all too often innocent victims [are] caught in the glare of publicity.'<sup>52</sup> From this it follows that due consideration needs to be afforded to the

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<sup>51</sup> Council of Europe, 2011, p. 8.

<sup>52</sup> Jempson, 1997, p. 4.

image of the person portrayed through both the language and images used, as well as by the way the specific subject matter is framed.

It is generally accepted that the media have a substantial impact on public perceptions, precisely through the use of language and images, and the impressions each of these make on the audience. Due to this, as well as the wide reach of the news media, particularly in recent decades, with the advances in information and communications technologies, and furthermore the legitimacy accorded to press items by the general public, journalists are required to apply very high ethical standards in their reporting. Particularly for the sake of disseminating information that is as objective as possible and in the interest of the public, which is made up of individuals with human rights, journalistic practices must be based on respect for the integrity and reputation of the individual. Accordingly, it appears that the profession of journalism and news media reporting requires extensive training not only on matters of collecting and presenting information, but of dealing with human subjects both directly and indirectly. News media commitment to human rights therefore necessitates that human rights are integrated into the newsroom by means of training and educating news media professionals on the concept of human rights, both as it exists in theory and in practice.

To summarise, there are definite similarities between human rights and media, both in concept and in practice. Human rights and media furthermore appear to protect and implement each other's interests and main duties. The potential for collaboration between journalists and human rights professionals is therefore evident. Nonetheless, both these actors find themselves carrying out their jobs in a changing landscape, due to changes in information and communications technologies, as well as the resulting developments in the world economy. It therefore appears important to discuss the implications of globalisation for the work of both news media and human rights professionals, and to do so in view of the implications for the rights of the child.



### 1.3. Developments: Past and Present

Both the concepts of journalism and of human rights, as we know them today, as well as the international norms and standards which form their basis, can be argued to have developed into their modern forms directly following the end of the Second World War. On the one hand, the beginnings of the media system we are familiar with seem to be traced back to 300 years ago, when journalists ‘inspired American rebellion against the British [and] defended the cause of revolution in France’ for example.<sup>53</sup> Generally speaking, journalists back then ‘challenged the slavery, inhumanity and ignorance that were an obstacle to the creation of free and open societies.’<sup>54</sup> Nonetheless, the modern media landscape, consisting of international media networks and the relevant actors’ explicit commitment to ethical and professional journalism, can be traced back to the developments in international media and journalism discourses which followed the Second World War. After the War, during which ‘false news of racial supremacy was rampant in news media’,<sup>55</sup> the International Federation of Journalists relaunched itself,<sup>56</sup> before adopting the Declaration of Principles on the Conduct of Journalists, which continues to be significant to this day.

The origins of the modern conception of human rights on the other hand, are often traced back to the Enlightenment period, which gave rise to the values such as the principle of liberty, and hence freedom from unreasonable government. The roots of this concept can be traced back to ‘ancient ideas of universal justice and [...] medieval notions of natural law’<sup>57</sup> as well as varying theories on natural rights throughout

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<sup>53</sup> A. White, *To Tell You The Truth: The Ethical Journalism Initiative Report*, Brussels, International Federation of Journalists, 2008, p. 20.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> White, 2008, p. 24.

<sup>56</sup> First in 1946, when it turned into the International Organization of Journalists, and then again in 1952, when it became the organisation as it is today  
International Federation of Journalists (d), *Mission Statement*, [website] <http://www.ifj.org/about-ifj/mission-statement/> (accessed 17 May 2016).

<sup>57</sup> D. Sidorsky, ‘Contemporary Reinterpretations of the Concept of Human Rights’, in Sidorsky, (ed.), *Essays on Human Rights*, p. 89, in Steiner, H. J. and P. Alston, *International Human Rights in Context: Law, Politics and Morals*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2000, p. 327.

history.<sup>58</sup> They also serve as a means of protecting people from their governments. Nonetheless, the concept of human rights as such came about with the establishment of the United Nations in 1945, and even more significantly, with the Universal Declaration on Human Rights in 1948. Here, the atrocities against human life and dignity committed during World War II inspired the international community to come together and formalise a commitment to preventing the reoccurrence of such large-scale attacks on human life. Following the activities of certain states which led to widespread human suffering and the failure of the international community to put an end to it earlier, the international community could finally agree that such events could not happen again. All things considered then, the modern concepts of human rights and journalism, along with their respective modern practices, both appear to be grounded in historical periods which witnessed a rise in awareness of the equality of all humans and were formally recognised in the ways we know them today after a global sense of aspiration.

In this day and age however, it is furthermore of vast importance to consider the human rights and media discourse, as well as the respective international commitments, against the backdrop of globalisation. Given the new realities humans face as a consequence of rapid advances in information and communications technologies, including the increased connectivity between people and the accompanying developments in the global political economy, due consideration needs to be given to what the previously discussed international standards and norms mean in the changing international environment. This is especially true considering that it is almost undeniable that ‘the media now has a greater capacity to influence the thoughts and values of persons than at any other time in the history of civilisation’.<sup>59</sup>

Cecilia von Feilitzen furthermore maintains that innovations in information and communications technologies have not only influenced the development of media, but that media globalisation itself has in turn influenced and intensified economic, political

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<sup>58</sup> Freeman, M., *Human Rights: An Interdisciplinary Approach*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, Cambridge, Polity Press, 2011, pp. 15-36.

<sup>59</sup> Tobin, p. 139.

and cultural globalisation.<sup>60</sup> She elaborates on this when she mentions that the relationship between media globalisation and globalisation as such is characterised by ‘relationships of dominance and dependence between countries and cultures as well as between rich and poor people within and between nations.’<sup>61</sup> The media itself therefore plays a part in the human rights consequences which come as a result of globalisation processes.

The news media landscape has changed quite notably as a consequence of globalisation, particularly in terms of the production and consumption of news. Increases in access to technology and uses of the internet furthermore entail an increase in means of both receiving and disseminating information, since developments such as the internet and social media networks diminish the significance of distance when it comes to the ability of people to communicate with one another. These developments in turn have implications for the work of the journalist because of the increased outreach of their work and the corresponding change in their audiences. The media landscape has thus also developed to increasingly consist of online news websites, as well as news channels which provide updates 24 hours a day, 7 days per week, expanding the overall number of news items made available through the media.<sup>62</sup>

The fact that this is furthermore all supplemented by developments such as international media networks progressively employing people abroad, and in turn making local stories available to much larger audiences<sup>63</sup> appears to be a positive development, both for the cause of raising awareness of human rights and for the quality of the work of news media professionals. Globalisation processes ultimately allow easier access to information, ensuring more thorough coverage of issues, as well as allowing for increased visibility of issues.

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<sup>60</sup> C. von Feilitzen, ‘Children, Young People and Media Globalisation: Introduction’, in C. von Feilitzen and U. Carlsson, (eds.), *Children, Young People and Media Globalisation*, Göteborg, The UNESCO International Clearinghouse on Children, Youth and Media, 2002, p. 13.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Committee on the Rights of the Child, General Discussion on Media

<sup>63</sup> Speak Up, Speak Out.

Tobin however warns that these realities need to be evaluated ‘against the reality that this new world order is driven [by] competitive commercial objectives’<sup>64</sup> and not the international community’s commitments to either international human rights standards or media professionals’ pledge to ensuring quality and objectivity in the news. In fact, the increased liberalisation of the global economy is negatively affecting both the rights of individuals and of media professionals.

This in turn has negative implications for the lives of the already disadvantaged in particular, including children. Hamelink for example discusses how increasing market control of media content means that content which is attractive to advertisers and is catered towards larger audiences continues to surge, ultimately decreasing the likelihood of the fulfilment of children’s information rights, as well as the general prevalence of human rights in the news.<sup>65</sup> Hamelink also goes on to mention the fact that the linguistic needs of ethnic minorities for example are more prone to being ignored in this new media landscape.<sup>66</sup> Also particularly worrying is the fact that little attention seems to be paid to the consequences of media globalisation on the general livelihoods of children, which is all the more perplexing considering the fact that children they constitute such a large portion of the world’s population.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Tobin, p. 139.

<sup>65</sup> C. J. Hamelink, ‘Media Globalisation: Consequences for the Rights of Children’, in C. von Feilizen and U. Carlsson, (eds.), *Children, Young People and Media Globalisation*, Göteborg, The UNESCO International Clearinghouse on Children, Youth and Media, 2002, p. 38.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> Von Feilitzen, 2002, p. 14

## 2. The Rights of the Child with Respect to the Media

### 2.1. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

#### 2.1.1. Summary of Rights and General Principles

The Convention on the Rights of the Child, broadly speaking, contains the legal entitlements afforded to individuals under the age of 18,<sup>68</sup> which states who are parties to the Convention must respect, protect and fulfil in view of their respective obligations under the respective provisions. This entails enacting appropriate legislation and policies, as well as the allocation of resources, as deemed necessary for meeting their obligations under these international human rights laws.

The UNCRC is furthermore afforded the status of being the most extensive of the UN human rights treaties.<sup>69</sup> Therefore, while children inherently possess human rights, there is value to be found in framing rights issues pertinent to children as children's rights issues specifically. Given the reality of significant implementation gaps between the rights of the child as illustrated in international norms and the actual realisation of the provisions within international human rights law, the question of why exactly the implementation of the rights of the child prove to be such a challenge.

The treaty itself, as well as the specific rights and provision within it were adopted in line with the international community's vow to ensure that the development of the child is meaningful and in line with the human dignity inherent to all individuals. Accordingly, the UNCRC acts as a means of:

*Recognizing that the child, for the full and harmonious development of his or her personality, should grow up in a family environment, in an atmosphere of happiness, love and understanding,<sup>70</sup>*

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<sup>68</sup> Outlined in Article 1 of the UNCRC

<sup>69</sup> Bentley, K. A., 'Can There Be Any Universal Children's Rights?', *The International Journal of Human Rights*, vol. 9, no. 1, 2005, p. 109. Available from Taylor and Francis (accessed 1 June 2017).

<sup>70</sup> United Nations, General Assembly, *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child*, 20 November 1989, Preamble.

and of serving as a reminder of the fact that:

*Considering that the child should be fully prepared to live an individual life in society, and brought up in the spirit of the ideals proclaimed in the Charter of the United Nations, and in particular in the spirit of peace, dignity, tolerance, freedom, equality and solidarity,*<sup>71</sup>

the individual rights of the child are to be implemented against the backdrop of the spirit which underlies all the norms and standards throughout the Convention.

The Convention consists of 54 Articles total and contains a wide range of rights, including civil and political rights, as well as economic, social and cultural rights. More specifically, the Children's Rights Information Network has grouped the wide range of rights according to the different themes that are covered in the Convention, among which are the themes of: family and alternative care, education, justice, violence and armed conflict.<sup>72</sup> The UNCRC furthermore outlines the value of collaboration between the state, children and parents for the realisation of the rights outlined within the treaty.<sup>73</sup>

Moreover, four of the Convention's articles are simultaneously also afforded the status of general principles, which in turn are deemed to be of distinct importance in terms of rights realisation. These are as follows: the principle of non-discrimination, the principle of the best interests of the child, the right to life and the right to participation.<sup>74</sup> These particular rights earn their significance with respect to the effective implementation of all the other rights by virtue of the fact that they ensure that the state's fulfilment of their child rights obligations are fair, respectful of the particular contexts and furthermore the particular needs of individual children, as well as a

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Child Rights International Network, *Themes*, [website] 2017, <https://www.crin.org/en/home/rights/themes> (accessed 4 April 2017).

<sup>73</sup> B. A. Smith, 'Respecting Children's Rights and Agency: Theoretical Insights into Ethical Procedures', in D. Harcourt, B. Perry and T. Waller, (eds.), *Researching Young Children's Perspectives: Debating the Ethics and Dilemmas of Educational Research with Children*, Oxon, Routledge, 2011, p. 12.

<sup>74</sup> Articles 2, 3, 6 and 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, respectively.

guarantee of the overall development of the child. Nonetheless, despite the importance of these articles in particular, all rights of the child are interconnected and interdependent, as are human rights in general, so the implementation of any particular right necessarily entails appropriate implementation of other rights.

By virtue of the generally empowering nature of human rights then, the rights of the child furthermore function as a means of reconstructing perceptions and attitudes of adults towards children. Social constructivist theories for example emphasise how the nature of childhood as we know it is defined by society, rather than being a product of the essence of the lives of young persons.<sup>75</sup> In line with this, the entry into force of a legal document which defines persons under the age of 18 as distinct rights-holders has been noted as a notable step towards increasing the recognition of children as individuals, each with their own distinct dignities and identities. It has likewise led to a more widespread recognition of children and youth as agents of change.<sup>76</sup> Pupavac similarly asserts how this in turn has also positively influenced the way children themselves perceive their role in society.<sup>77</sup>

Accordingly, the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund affirmed that indeed the transformation of attitudes might be the most positive consequence coming as a result of the existence of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.<sup>78</sup> This is due to the fact that it seems to be responsible for a shift in notions of what childhood entails, correspondingly also influencing not only the way children are perceived, but moreover how they are treated. All things considered, it then appears that the language of children's rights has value due to the fact that it provides for a

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<sup>75</sup> V. Pupavac, 'Punishing Childhoods: Contradictions in Children's Rights and Global Governance', *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding*, vol. 5, no. 3, 2011, p. 287. Available from Taylor and Francis (accessed 23 May 2017).

<sup>76</sup> Council of Europe, *Council of Europe Strategy for the Rights of the Child (2016-2021) Children's Human Rights*, Strasbourg, Council of Europe, 2016, p. 7.

<sup>77</sup> Pupavac, p. 287.

<sup>78</sup> S. Livingstone, 'Reframing Media Effects in Terms of Children's Rights in the Digital Age', *Journal of Children and Media*, vol. 10, no. 1, 2016, p. 9. Available from Taylor and Francis (accessed 28 February 2017).

‘distinctive way of talking and thinking about children’,<sup>79</sup> one that is in line with their empowerment. Such a reality is meaningful at various levels of interaction with the matter of children’s rights as such, as well as with their livelihoods in general, be it at the individual, national or international level.

Nonetheless, despite near universal ratification, the rights of the child continue to be neglected and furthermore even violated worldwide. As is the case with UN human rights treaties in general, compliance with the provisions found in the treaties themselves and hence the implementation of human rights is proving to be a challenge. This comes as a consequence of a multitude of factors, which may include not only a lack of genuine commitment by the states themselves, but also a lack of collaboration between relevant actors, or even a lack of available resources necessary for the implementation. The latter of these may in turn entail a lack of financial resources, lack of existence of relevant institutions, or a lack of knowledge on how to effectively implement the rights of the people. Kaime for example calls attention to the fact that levels of both awareness and understanding among authority figures, be they at the national or the local level, are inconsistent.<sup>80</sup> The need to attend to the reality that there are gaps between commitments to the rights of the child at the international level and commitments at the national level therefore prevails.

Furthermore, on top of the potential lack of knowledge about human rights and the realisation of respective provisions at the level of the state are, there might also be a lack of knowledge among the general public. This in turn affects the status of implementation of rights due to the implication that a populace ignorant of the breadth of their entitlements is less likely to apply pressure on their government to take appropriate actions. Moreover, a widespread lack of knowledge entails a lack of widespread debate about what human rights implementation entails, both worldwide, as

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<sup>79</sup> M. King, ‘The Child, Childhood and Children’s rights within Sociology’, *King’s Law Journal*, vol. 15, no. 2, 2004, pp. 281. Available from Taylor and Francis (accessed 1 June 2017).

<sup>80</sup> T. Kaime, ‘“Vernacularising” the Convention on the Rights of the Child: Rights and Culture as Analytic Tools’, *International Journal of Children’s Rights*, vol. 18, 2010, p. 647. Available from BrillOnline (accessed 23 May 2017)



well as in individual contexts, which in turn may also hinder the effective realisation of not only human rights in general, but also children's rights in particular. It is here where the role of the media becomes relevant in terms of the contribution to the rights of the child in a given society.

### 2.1.2. Article 17: Duties of the Media

The obligations of the state with respect to the media entail, most notably, the right to freedom of expression and the guarantee of access to information. Under the right to freedom of expression, children have the right to 'seek, receive and impart information [...] either orally, in writing or in print [...] or through any other media of the child's choice'.<sup>81</sup> The logic behind such a right is that it is precisely through this freedom that humans learn how to interact with society, both on a personal level and in view of democratic participation and that it allows for criticism of the government without fear of retaliation.<sup>82</sup> This in turn empowers individuals, including children, in their status as members of a community, at the individual, national and international level. As a consequence of this, it furthermore enhances the development of the child not only along social lines, but also mentally, because it allows for their active involvement in the shaping of their own livelihoods.

More relevant to the role and duties of the media as such however is Article 17 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which outlines the child's entitlements with respect to access to information. The Article outlines the obligations of the state as follows:

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<sup>81</sup> United Nations, General Assembly, 1989, Article 13.

<sup>82</sup> Barendt, *supra* n. 7 at 6-23, in S. D. Langlaude, 'On How to Build a Positive Understanding of the Child's Right to Freedom of Expression', *Human Rights Law Review*, vol. 10, no. 1, 2010, pp. 33-66. Available from SSRN (accessed 23 May 2017).

*States Parties recognize the important function performed by the mass media and shall ensure that the child has access to information and material from a diversity of national and international sources, especially those aimed at the promotion of his or her social, spiritual and moral well-being and physical and mental health.*<sup>83</sup>

This Article, similar to Article 13 on freedom of expression, highlights the importance of the media, particularly with respect to the child's self-realisation. Accordingly, states are obligated to ensure that media sources and appropriate materials are not only available, but moreover explicitly conceived of a way which is necessary for ensuring healthy and meaningful development of the child.

Furthermore, while states are the only actors who have human rights obligations they can be held legally accountable for, it has become apparent through discussion of the concept of human rights that the realisation of the respective principles and norms entails cooperation from a wide range of actors. The media in particular is regarded as a partner of indispensable value to the international human rights framework and is furthermore specifically implicated in the state obligations with respect to the rights of the child under the CRC. While the burden of duty ultimately falls with the state, it is nonetheless evident that, under international children's rights law, the media are obligated to internalise the respective normative framework in their practice.

This is likewise underlined in Article 17 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which goes on to outline in more detail what the obligations of the state are with respect to the child's right to access to information. As follows:

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<sup>83</sup> United Nations, General Assembly, 1989, Article 17.

*To this end, States Parties shall:*

*(a) Encourage the mass media to disseminate information and material of social and cultural benefit to the child and in accordance with the spirit of Article 29;*

*(b) Encourage international co-operation in the production, exchange and dissemination of such information and material from a diversity of cultural, national and international sources;*

*(c) Encourage the production and dissemination of children's books;*

*(d) Encourage the mass media to have particular regard to the linguistic needs of the child who belongs to a minority group or who is indigenous;*

*(e) Encourage the development of appropriate guidelines for the protection of the child from information and material injurious to his or her well-being, bearing in mind the provisions of Articles 13 and 18.<sup>84</sup>*

From this it follows that state obligations with respect to the media require states to take the necessary measures to ensure that a wide range of media is available to the child, both for the sake of diversity in sources and for the sake of respecting the specific needs of individual children, that some media is furthermore designed with the explicit purpose of fostering the development of the child, and that the child is shielded from any materials which may be harmful to their welfare.

The Committee on the Rights of the Child has furthermore expanded on not only state obligation, but also the ensuing duties of the media so to speak. For example, the Committee has called attention to the fact that the media taking the initiative with respect to children's rights is necessary for the protection of the child's legal entitlements.<sup>85</sup> This is due to the fact that the media possess the capacities necessary to promote the values and principles enshrined in the international children's rights framework, as well as the fact that they act as a means of educating and shaping society through their communications. In line with this, the Committee has delineated that

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<sup>84</sup> United Nations, General Assembly, 1989, Article 17.

<sup>85</sup> United Nations, Committee on the Rights of the Child, 1996 (b).

‘proactive measures for the promotion of important values such as, for instance, peace, tolerance, international understanding and respect between the sexes’<sup>86</sup> by the media are of vital importance for the realisation of children’s rights.

Supplementing this, the Committee has moreover called attention to the value of the media as a means of monitoring the state, and hence of monitoring the actual implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.<sup>87</sup> This is due to the nature of news media reporting in particular, which shares a logic similar to that of state monitoring by virtue of the investigative and scrutinising nature of journalism. By internalising the values of the CRC furthermore, journalists will then be better equipped to not only promote the rights of the child, but moreover to use the Convention itself as a benchmark against which to evaluate children’s news in general and state activity in particular.

Ultimately, the Committee maintains that ‘nuanced and well-informed reporting is to the benefit of the rights of the child’.<sup>88</sup> Accordingly, they support the production of materials which will benefit journalists and other media professionals in fulfilling these final aims. This in turn makes it all the more clear that the human rights framework can greatly benefit from the work of media professionals, but also that journalists themselves can find value in the Convention on the Right of the Child, beyond the fact that it is a near universal legal document.

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<sup>86</sup> T. Hammarberg, ‘Children and Harmful Influences from the Media. The Significance of the UN Convention’, in U. Carlsson and C. von Feilitzen, (eds.), *Children and Media Violence*, Göteborg, The UNESCO International Clearinghouse on Children, Youth and Media, 1998, pp. 23.

<sup>87</sup> Hammarberg, T., ‘The Child and the Media. A Report From the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child’, in U. Carlsson and C. von Feilitzen, (eds.), *Children and Media Violence*, Göteborg, The UNESCO International Clearinghouse on Children, Youth and Media, 1998 (b), p. 31.

<sup>88</sup> United Nations, Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Report on the Eleventh Session*, CRC/C/50, 8-26 January 1996 (a).

## **2.2. Why Human Rights Are Not Enough: The Case for Children's Rights in the Newsroom**

Since human rights protect every single human individual, including children, it may seem that the adoption of newsroom guidelines in line with the concept of human rights, as well as an increased commitment among journalist education facilities to ensure trainings on human rights reporting, could suffice in terms of improving the status of children in the media. However, deliberation of international children's rights laws exposes precisely why such measures do not suffice in safeguarding the rights of the child both in, and through, media practice. Reasons include the fact that a lack of explicit commitment to children's rights is not in line with international children's rights law, as well as the fact that, broadly speaking, existing journalistic practices do not seem to be appropriate for handling stories about children. This ultimately entails a lack of representation of children in mainstream media, as well as a misrepresentation of their being by media professionals.

### **2.2.1. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child as a Tool**

Yasemin Karaman-Kepenekci maintains that, generally speaking, no distinctions are made between children's rights and human rights because the former is simply perceived as being equal to the latter, when in reality children's rights are actually a 'very important distinctive field'.<sup>89</sup> She supplements this assertion by pointing out that the protection of children also happens to be one of the most fundamental problems faced by society.<sup>90</sup> This is true not only by virtue of the fact that the need for the protection of children and for the facilitation of their development along mental, physical, emotional and social lines is arguably one of the most universally agreed upon

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<sup>89</sup> Karaman-Kepenekci, Y., 'An Analysis on Children's Rights in Stories Recommended for Children in Turkey', *Journal of Peace Education*, vol. 7, no. 1, 2010, pp. 66. Available from Taylor and Francis (accessed 27 February).

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

judgements around the world, but also because the livelihoods of children ultimately affect the welfare and development of society at large. Research furthermore shows that already the experiences a child makes at a very young age affect how they develop throughout life.<sup>91</sup>

It is therefore even more vital to ensure that people know not only of the consequences of a child's environment and experiences growing up on their ongoing development, but also of the respective consequences on the development of society as a whole. The need for children's rights issues to be continuously debated and reflected upon therefore seems apparent. This also holds true in light of the fact that national and local children's rights policy and legislation needs to account for needs specific to the children in that particular environment, a reality which is constantly changing and developing along with society itself.

In terms of the role of the news media professionals in respecting and promoting children's rights specifically, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child should be on the radar of journalists, not only because of the standards which are found within it, but moreover because of the Convention's status in the international community. The UNCRC was adopted by the UN General Assembly in November 1989, entering into force less than a year later in September 1990, which is the fastest any of the UN human rights treaties were opened for signature and ratification. The Convention has since been almost universally signed and ratified, with a total of 196 states being party to the convention, making all of these states legally bound to the provisions found in the document.<sup>92</sup> The Convention on the Rights of the Child therefore serves as an outline of the world's commitment to ensuring that children are protected and can develop in a manner which is beneficial to their livelihoods and general well-being.

Furthermore, given the number of issues covered by the Convention's articles, Hammarberg moreover maintains that the UNCRC deserves to be incorporated into

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<sup>91</sup>United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund, p. 15.

<sup>92</sup> United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, *Status of Ratification – Interactive Dashboard*, [website] 2017, <http://indicators.ohchr.org/> (accessed 16 June 2017).

media practice and news reporting, due to the fact that it provides indicators on complex and sensitive subject matters such as child abuse, child labour, refugee children, and children in armed conflict, among many others.<sup>93</sup> Coincidentally, these also happen to be some of the most prevalent children's rights issues in the news, due to their particularly distressing nature.

Franklin also warns of the dangers of being ignorant of the rights of the child, particularly in the media landscape, when he mentions that existing constructions of children reflect a 'particular "adult gaze" and [are] designed to serve adult purposes'.<sup>94</sup> This comes as a consequence, first of all, of the inherent power imbalance between adults and children, which stems out of the difference in age and experience.<sup>95</sup> Accordingly, adult stances towards children are naturally prone to being characterised by feelings of knowing what is best for the child and therefore ultimately being less committed to ensuring the child has a say in matters which affect them. Due to this alone, children are already at a disadvantage in terms of being able to ensure the realisation of their rights. In line with all of this, a report by Internews Europe describes how 'a patronised attitude towards children and youth severely limits the space that children get in the mainstream media',<sup>96</sup> which again carries with it implications for national policy and legislation processes, as well as the implementation of the respective standards.

Considering this in on top of previous discussions then, the case to be made for including trainings on human rights in journalism education therefore lies in the fact that human rights are universally relevant, provide insight into, as well as answers for, a wide range of controversial issues covered in the news, and are moreover a set of legal obligations against which to measure government activity. Furthermore, in reporting about different groups of people, in this case children, or even sub-sets of groups of children, such as migrants and refugees, it would be appropriate to pay special attention

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<sup>93</sup> Hammarberg, 1997, p. 243.

<sup>94</sup> Franklin, p. 29.

<sup>95</sup> R. Coleman, 'Journalist's Moral Judgement about Children', *Journalism Practice*, vol. 4, no. 3, 2011, p. 260. Available from Taylor and Francis (accessed 12 June 2017).

<sup>96</sup> Angle et al., p. 8.

to the rights specific to their situations. Journalists, by communicating on issues concerning the rights of the child, would thus ideally have a working knowledge of children's rights and furthermore contextualise individual news events concerning children's rights according to the provisions and principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The Convention furthermore discusses the image of the child, highlighting the uniqueness and worth of every individual, as well as the treatment of the child, which is especially relevant to journalists who find themselves writing about children and working with children as sources of information, respectively. Therefore, since the media influence public perceptions and attitudes, and it is particularly important that journalists pay close attention to how they handle stories about and involving children, the use of the UNCRC as a tool in the newsroom seems to be fruitful in terms of fulfilling the journalistic endeavour.

### 2.2.2. Journalist's Attitudes

In addition to the discussed allegedly widespread attitudes towards children is the apparent lack of awareness among people on how they treat children. For example, some news media professionals furthermore deem their common sense as being an adequate enough means of determining both how to work with children and how to write about them, even in situations where the subject matter is a more sensitive one.<sup>97</sup> Considering this from a human rights perspective, such realities seems especially worrying, considering that even professionals trained in human rights matters, who practice human rights daily, are often confronted with complex ethical questions, for which there are no straightforward answers.

This is often the case in situations where individual rights may to a certain extent stand in conflict with one another. Coincidentally, the right to freedom of expression is

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<sup>97</sup> C. Ponte, 'Mapping News on Children in the Mainstream Press', *European Societies*, vol. 9, no. 6, 2007, p. 739. Available from Taylor and Francis (accessed 20 February 2017).



one of the most common examples of a human right that often needs to be balanced against others both in the courtroom and in policy-making processes, exposing how complicated the ethics of journalistic practice can be in a world governed by human rights standards.

Furthermore, given the impact that language has on people's perceptions, it is all the more important for professionals who communicate to the general public to be sensitised to the needs of the child, and to these needs into account when describing specific situations and events. Here, the portrayal of refugee children in the news serves as an example of why journalists need to pay particular attention to the words they choose and way in which individual stories are framed so as to avoid the stigmatisation of this group of people.<sup>98</sup>

Some scholars also point out the fact that there seems to be a trend in the news media of portraying children either as mere subjects, with no agency of their own, negatively affected by circumstance, or as perpetrators of unacceptable, and even illegal, behaviour.<sup>99</sup> In other words, children are predominantly presented as 'victims' or as 'villains' in news items. Correspondingly, the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child maintains that the matter of the image of the child portrayed in the media is of utmost importance in discussions of the media in relation to children's rights, since it can either 'create or convey respect for children and young people or spread prejudice and stereotypes'.<sup>100</sup>

It is moreover highly important for media professionals to be well-versed in practices which are appropriate for dealing with children as sources of information, and that these practices are in line with the rights of the child. While broadly speaking, journalists are committed to the protection of the child, both because of their general standards of ethical practice and because of the widespread agreement on the need to enable healthy development of children in society, their attitudes do not necessarily

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<sup>98</sup> Children's Rights International Network, *Changing the Narrative* [website] 2017 (b), <https://www.crin.org/en/home/what-we-do/policy/childrens-rights-and-refugee-crisis/problem/changing-narrative> (accessed 14 April 2017).

<sup>99</sup> Franklin, pp. 28-32.

<sup>100</sup> United Nations, Committee on the Rights of the Child, 1996 (b).

translate to their practice. Again, this reflects the intricacy and complexity of the implementation of the provisions found in international human rights law and children's rights law especially. Accordingly, Kenita Coleman conducted a study in which she studied the commitment of professional journalists in the United States of America to children's rights, in an effort to expose how closely related what media professionals say they are doing and what they actually are doing are. The results of the study showed that despite good intentions and a self-proclaimed commitment to the protection of the child among many journalists, there was a gap between their statements and the ways in which they actually protected the children who were the subjects of their media pieces.<sup>101</sup>

On the other side of the spectrum are cases of journalists who knowingly seek to avoid covering stories about children, for a number of different reasons. Through a discussion of the debates that have been held in news media circles on the coverage of children's issues, Foley, et al. assert that lack of enthusiasm is likely a common attitude among journalists.<sup>102</sup> They highlight this by calling attention to a statement made by journalist Kelly McBride from The Poynter Institute, an educational facility offering trainings to students of journalism, as well as practicing journalists:

*As a young reporter, I dreaded any feature assignment that meant writing about children. My aversion was rooted in two false presumptions. First, I assumed that stories about children were puff pieces just like cute animal features. [...] Secondly, I thought children were impossible to write about, mainly because they are so hard to quote.*<sup>103</sup>

Ultimately then, it appears that the current status quo of journalist attitudes towards children's stories and their capabilities in covering them are not particularly conducive to supporting the implementation of children's rights. It therefore appears appropriate to seek to increase the effectiveness of the existing debates among news

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<sup>101</sup> Coleman, p. 266.

<sup>102</sup> Foley, et al., p. 8.

<sup>103</sup> Kelly McBride in Foley, et al., p. 8.

media professionals on how to successfully integrate children's rights into their practice.

## 3. Media Content Analysis

### 3.1. Problem Formulation

As per the Preamble of the Guidelines and Principles for Reporting on Issues Involving Children adopted by journalist organisations from 70 different countries:

*Informed, sensitive and professional journalism is a key element in any media strategy for improving the quality of reporting concerning human rights and society. The daily challenge to journalists and media organisations is particularly felt in coverage of children and their rights.<sup>104</sup>*

This document furthermore outlines the commitment among journalists to represent children's rights in the news in the following principle:

*Media organisations should regard violation of the rights of children and issues related to children's safety, privacy, security, their education, health and social welfare and all forms of exploitation as important questions for investigations and public debate. Children have an absolute right to privacy, the only exceptions being those explicitly set out in these guidelines.<sup>105</sup>*

Accordingly, it is widely accepted that journalistic professionalism in coverage of issues relevant to the life of the child is essential for the protection of the child's well-being, as well as that children's rights issues are fundamentally newsworthy. It is however also acknowledged that precisely the reportage of children and their rights is particularly difficult for journalists all over the world and is an issue that continues to be debated. The widespread concern at the international level began, most notably, in 1997 with a report published by the International Federation of Journalists.<sup>106</sup> Shortly thereafter, the Guidelines and Principles for Reporting on Issues Involving Children were drafted in 1998, and then adopted in 2001 at the Annual Congress of the IFJ.

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<sup>104</sup> Nordic Information Centre for Media and Communication Research, Preamble.

<sup>105</sup> Nordic Information Centre for Media and Communication Research, Principles.

<sup>106</sup> Foley, et al., p. 8.

Evidently then, both the need for, and complexity of, children in the news is a reality which concerns media professionals around the globe.

In the years following the adoption of the aforementioned Guidelines and Principles, international debates concerning the realities of children and the media have since increasingly begun to account for the fact that globalisation brings with it a number of changes, which significantly affect both the lives of children and the work of the journalist. Developments in information and communications technology, increased interconnectivity and rising concerns over the online privacy of individuals, especially children, furthermore lead to questions on how to protect children and how to maintain journalistic professionalism in this new world order. These debates are mainly concerned with ensuring the protection of the child's privacy, in view of the increased communications resources of the digital age.<sup>107</sup> Changes in the international economy and corresponding shifts in the market, have moreover have led to an overall decrease in resources available to news agencies, as well as in the quality of news coverage.<sup>108</sup>

In addition to this, multiple scholars are noting an increase in negative portrayals of children in the news, a phenomenon which seems to have begun in the 1990s, with the mass media now frequently presenting children as perpetrators and as a problem in society.<sup>109</sup> This trend prevails in juxtaposition with the widespread image of the child as a victim, as a part of which children are portrayed as the greatest casualties of adult (in)action, ultimately diminishing the value placed on children as agents of change and as being in charge of their own destinies.

While displaying the plight of children around the world may be a result of journalists' good intentions, from a communications perspective, such trends infantilise the child in the eyes of the public, which may ultimately affect how young people are perceived and treated in society at large. Both these trends in turn perpetuate stereotypes of children among the general public, which runs the risk of negatively influencing the implementation of children's rights through public policy. The increase in reports on

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<sup>107</sup> Livingstone, p. 5.

<sup>108</sup> Council of Europe, 2011, p. 8.

<sup>109</sup> Franklin, p. 16.

children as criminal has already shown to affect the rights of the child due to ‘populist and authoritarian policy responses’,<sup>110</sup> which could potentially be attributed to the widespread perception of increased wrongdoings by young persons.

News coverage of children, just as well as news coverage of other groups of people, needs to be accurate, well-informed and sensitive to their particular situation. Persons under the age of 18 comprise a very diverse population, which can be further divided along lines of age, gender, maturity, among others. Thus, news media professionals need to account for this in their reports, rather than presenting children as a homogenous entity by means of grouping young people together in their reports.<sup>111</sup> The generation and dissemination of stereotypes therefore need to be recognised and appropriate countermeasures implemented.

The media moreover act as an indispensable tool for representation and participation. This implies that children, who comprise about a third of the world’s population, as well as the issues which are relevant to their livelihoods, would ideally make up a significant portion of overall media output in any given society. This is especially important due to the fact that children’s voices are often overlooked, even in matters which directly affect them, due to the power imbalance between adults and young persons.

Widespread notions of children as not being capable of making rational decisions and adults ultimately knowing what is best for the child in turn are not in line with the principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which almost all UN member states are legally obligated to adhere to.<sup>112</sup> Ultimately, representation of children in media consumed by adults may act as a means of making children’s voices and concerns heard in society, and ensuring that the rights of the child are continuously on the public agenda.

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<sup>110</sup> Franklin, p. 37.

<sup>111</sup> Livingstone, p. 9.

<sup>112</sup> The only exception being the United States of America

The media are furthermore implicated in the state obligation of promoting the rights of the child, as per Article 17 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, making it all the more appropriate to discuss media activity in view of the UNCRC. Ultimately, in response to the range of issues concerning the rights of the child and the media, Hammarberg has called attention to the need for international cooperation in this regard, so as to bring about collaboration and an exchange of appropriate techniques on respecting children's rights in and through the media.<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> Hammarberg, 1998 (b), p. 32.

### **3.2. Purpose and Objective of Research**

The intention behind the discussion in previous chapters was to outline the overlap between news media and human rights theory on the one hand, and their respective practices on the other hand. This was done in order to evaluate the extent to which collaboration between news media professionals and human rights professionals can be valuable for the purposes of children's rights implementation. Ultimately, the aim of this research is to add to the debate on how to improve means of collaboration between the professionals active in these two fields, and hence to arrive at conclusions on how best to maintain a relationship between them in terms of ensuring the visibility of children and children's rights in mainstream media. This latter part of the discussion is to be supplemented by the collection of unique data which delineates the representation and portrayal of children in the news, as presented in the following sections.

The preceding literature review and analysis of international laws, norms and standards served the purpose of determining what the alleged status quo of children in the news is. This was done as a means of uncovering the main areas of concern in current debates. Since this research is being carried out from a human rights perspective, it was then necessary to review what children being in the news entails in view of the norms and obligations under the Convention on the Rights of the Child, as well as comments and concerns made by the Committee on the Rights of the Child.

In any case, it is clear that outside of making children visible, and doing so in a way which is not harmful to their well-being, making the UNCRC visible and promoting the norms and standards outlined within it is the common underlying theme, across all areas of discourse on children in the news. In light of this, the extent of the prevalence of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child in the news, either explicitly, or by means of reflecting the values within it, serves as the point of departure for this research paper.



It is the ultimate aim of this thesis to contribute to the discussion on children's rights and the media by collecting data uncovering the current situation of children's rights coverage and to consider the implications thereof in view of existing concerns and debates at the international level. Furthermore, due to the increasingly international nature of even local media, the study of local media and their reporting of international issues may offer insight into the characteristics of coverage of international events, which in turn may uncover any issues or features which could potentially be important to discuss at the international level. As such, the research consists of an evaluation of the extent to which stereotypes of children prevail in the media, as well as the representation of children along lines of gender and geographic location.

The logic behind the data collection moreover is to discuss potential solutions to any results achieved which may be deemed problematic. By applying a human rights lens to the analysis of media coverage and using the principles and standards outlined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child to evaluate content, it is anticipated that some insight can be gained into the important question of how local media practice can be improved upon, in view of the rights of the child. Since this thesis is heavily focused on norms and standards of practice, as enshrined in commitments by the international community, and the increasingly international nature of news media, ideally the results considered against the backdrop of relevant literature will provide insight into what can be done at the international level as well.

The questions which arose in the development of this research and hence the questions which are sought to be answered, are as follows:

*Main research question:*

- "To what extent is the international human rights framework present in the press' coverage of children's rights issues?" Investigating how children and children's rights issues are portrayed in the news, in view of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

*Additional questions:*

- How newsworthy are children and children's rights issues? Which children's rights topics are the most newsworthy?
- How prevalent is the concept of human rights as such, or children's rights specifically, in press coverage of children's rights issues?
- To what extent are children from different geographic regions equally represented in international news?
- To what extent is there an equal representation of gender? Are different genders portrayed differently?
- Is coverage of children's rights issues rather negative, or positive, or are both negative and positive developments with respect to the livelihoods of children equally portrayed in the news?

### 3.3. Methodology

#### Quantitative media content analysis

This thesis makes use of the method of content analysis in order to arrive at conclusions, which will help provide answers to the aforementioned questions. Simply put, content analysis is ‘a research technique for the objective, systematic, and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication’,<sup>114</sup> as per Berelson’s definition of the method. By means of methodical analysis of different forms of content, this approach allows for a categorical summary of the characteristics found in a given sample of media pieces. In the case of this research paper, it is being used to study and evaluate only written media.

Originating as a means of studying the characteristics of ideology in communications, specifically propaganda, content analysis is now used by researchers from different fields, including journalism and communications, political science, sociology and psychology.<sup>115</sup> Media content analysis furthermore has been deemed the ‘the primary message-centred methodology’<sup>116</sup> as it has become increasingly popular among researchers studying various forms of media communications.

Quantitative content analysis techniques were used for the purposes of this thesis. The data presented in this research paper were collected by means of both topic- and subject-specific coding, where the former measured the portrayal of the respective children’s rights issue and the latter measured the portrayal of children in the specific news item, as well as any other actors who were quoted in the text. The codes developed serve the purpose of summarising the content of the news items collected in a way

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<sup>114</sup> B. Berelson, *Content analysis in communication research*. Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1952, in Lombard, M., J. Snyder-Duch and C. C. Bracken, ‘Content Analysis in Mass Communication Assessment and Reporting of Intercoder Reliability’, *Human Communication Research*, vol. 28, no. 4, 2002, p. 588. Available from Wiley (accessed 25 February 2017).

<sup>115</sup> Riff, D., S. Lacy and F. Fico, *Analyzing Media Messages: Using Quantitative Content Analysis in Research*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, New Jersey, Routledge, 2014, p. 4.

<sup>116</sup> K. Neuendorf, *The Content Analysis Guidebook*, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2002, in Macnamara, p. 1.

which allows for comparison between the individual reports, as well as for an overall evaluation of the status of children in those reports.

### **Sample**

The data collected cover a three-month period of news coverage from British newspaper *The Guardian*. The data reflects *The Guardian's* media items in the 'world news' section of the online version of the newspaper, which were published between 1 March 2017 and 31 May 2017. Data collection was restricted to analysis of the text of the respective media pieces, with no attention being paid to any supplementary images. The placement of the individual articles, in comparison to other articles published on the online platform on the same day was not accounted for either. This approach and sample were chosen due to the availability of resources of the researcher.

The choice of an English language newspaper was moreover deemed appropriate precisely because of the widespread consumption, and hence international reach, of English language media. It is especially important for news consumed at such a large scale and by such a wide range of persons to be ethically agreeable and factually accurate, due to the implied potential of some of the world's most commonly cited news sources to influence public perceptions across the globe.

*The Guardian* was furthermore selected as the newspaper to be researched both due to its status as British quality press. The newspaper's status as quality press implies high degrees of journalistic professionalism, hence also suggesting the reliability of information published. This in turn suggests that trust in the presented information is high among the general public. Furthermore, the implied high standards of professionalism and ethical practice suggest that children's rights are more likely to be respected by this particular newspaper. In view of previous discussion, this could potentially mean that the writers and editors are more likely be aware of children's rights in general, and hence reflect that in the media pieces published by the newspaper. It is therefore deemed important to truly evaluate the extent to which children's rights issues are represented in such a newspaper, and moreover to analyse the image of the

child portrayed and to do so in view of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

This particular newspaper was also selected because of the way in which all the online media pieces are archived, as the overview of articles on the online platform allowed for a simple process of data collection. The choice to study the online rendition of the newspaper was made on the basis of the availability and accessibility of the material by virtue of it being on the internet.

The decision to only code articles from the ‘world news’ section, as opposed to all the news items published online during that period also because of time constraints, and the corresponding need to limit sample size, and because this particular section allowed for the study of the representation of different regions. This in turn may provide insight into the question of how international *The Guardian*’s coverage of children’s issues is.

The articles which were ultimately selected for the coding process were ones which explicitly state that they are about children and explicitly mention the age of at least one of the child(ren) as being under 18 years of age. Correspondingly, only articles which had at least one of the following words in the title were selected: ‘child(ren)’, ‘girl(s)’, ‘boy(s)’, ‘teen(s)’, ‘baby(ies)’, ‘adolescent(s)’, ‘toddler(s)’. However, the headlines of all news items published in the ‘world news’ section were read, in order to be able to recognise if there are any other articles which may be about children. These were made note of. The choice to only select articles explicitly about children was made on the basis of the fact that this suggests that children are the main focus of the article, making the article more appropriate for the purpose of answering the research question(s). Next, articles were read in order to determine if at least one of said individuals was said to be under 18 years old, since terms such as ‘teen’ may refer to individuals who are no longer considered children under the UNCRC.

Additionally, only articles which reported about topics and issues which are included in the UNCRC were coded, due to only articles of this nature being relevant to answering the main research question. Since the main objective of this particular

research is to investigate the visibility of the international human rights framework in the media's coverage of children's issues, irrelevant articles which were nonetheless about children were disregarded.

The codebook was developed by the researcher, with variables which were deemed necessary for answering the research questions being established for the coding process.<sup>117</sup> The codes were designed based on the questions of how prevalent the Convention on the Rights of the Child is in the media, what is discussed when children and/or their rights in the media, how it is discussed, and furthermore how the child(ren) is/are portrayed.

The data collection process consisted of human coding of the individual articles. The data was collected and summarised using SPSS. Microsoft Excel was then used to create graphs for the purpose of presentation of results in this paper.

### **Limitations**

The nature of the methodology of content analysis alone is a limitation, which needs to be kept in mind when analysing the data collected and drawing conclusions from the results. Moreover, since human coding relies heavily on researcher interpretation of the given texts, a key limitation of this thesis is the lack of at least one other person contributing to the development of codes on the one hand, and the interpretation of articles, on the other hand.

It is due to these circumstances that codes which measure the explicit mention of terms and facts were developed. The limited availability of resources of the researcher, including time, also limited the breadth of the sample, further reducing the representative value of the data collected. Overall, since content analysis ultimately functions as a means of summarising and analysing the texts of a given sample, any conclusions drawn from the results are not necessarily representative of neither the

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<sup>117</sup> Codebook attached as Appendix A

specific source of the texts, in this case, *The Guardian*, nor written news media as a whole.<sup>118</sup>

Furthermore, since quantitative content analysis in particular consists of the quantification of text, which is inherently qualitative, the full meaning behind the coded texts cannot be captured. As Macnamara asserts:

*In simple terms, it is not valid to assume that quantitative factors such as size and frequency of media messages equate to impact. Nor is it valid to assume that these quantitative factors are the only or even the main determinants of media impact.*<sup>119</sup>

The value of the results would therefore potentially be strengthened by a simultaneously carried out qualitative analysis of the given media pieces.

This methodology alone furthermore does not provide insight into the effects of the texts on the audiences consuming them, so content analysis research is ideally supplemented by simultaneous studies of public perceptions. This may consist of conducting a content analysis of news coverage in conjunction with surveys of what the public considers the most pressing issues at the time, to measure the correlation between media agenda and public agenda, for example.<sup>120</sup>

Any emerging patterns which may be uncovered in the data collection process do however maintain value by virtue of the fact that they allow for insight into the characteristics of some of the news coverage of children, which may ultimately lead to further questions being asked and more intensive research being carried out. Ultimately, the descriptive aspect of media content analysis nonetheless offers into what is being consumed by people, which has value in itself.

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<sup>118</sup> Cline Center for Democracy, p. 7. Available from <http://www.clinecenter.illinois.edu/research/publications/Media%20Data%20and%20Social%20Science%20Research.pdf> (accessed 25 February 2017).

<sup>119</sup> J. Macnamara, 'Media Content Analysis: Its Uses; Benefits and Best Practice Methodology', *Asia Pacific Public Relations Journal*, vol. 6, no. 1, p. 6. Available from OPUS (accessed 15 February 2017).

<sup>120</sup> D. Riff, S. Lacy and F. Fico, *Analyzing Media Messages: Using Quantitative Content Analysis in Research*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, New Jersey, Routledge, 2014, p. 14.

### **3.4. Summary of Data**

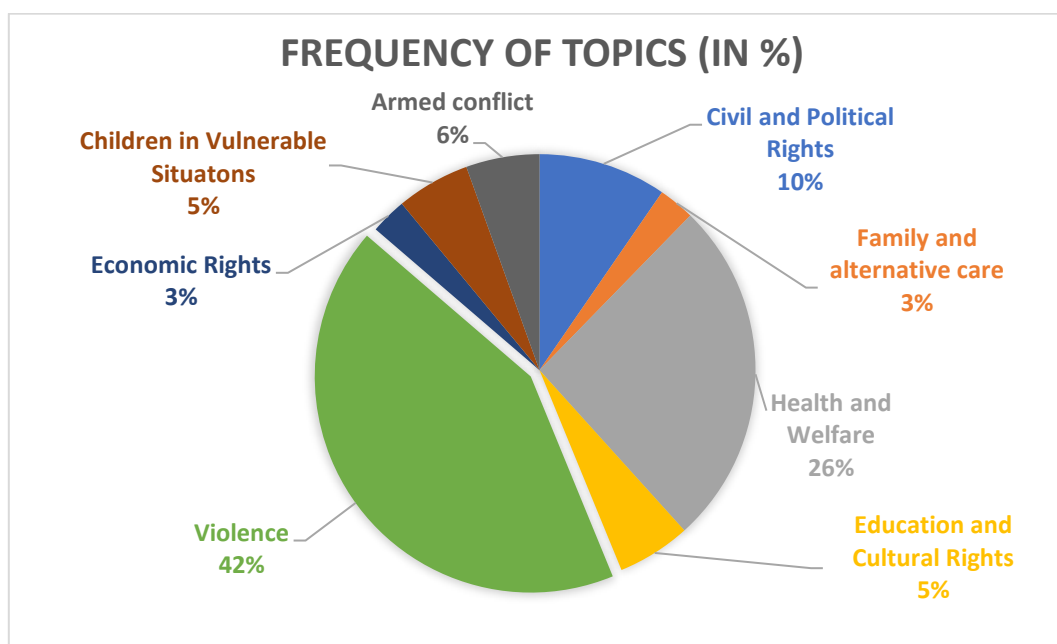
A total of 73 articles were coded in the process of data collection. Within this sample, 58 articles were either hard or soft news items, 9 articles were feature stories and 6 were opinion pieces. From this alone it would appear that *The Guardian's* coverage of children's rights issues consists mainly of reports on specific events and developments which have occurred around the world. The overall number of 73 articles over a three-month period moreover suggests that children's rights are not particularly prevalent in *The Guardian's* 'world news' items, as it is very common for more than 20 articles a day to get published in this particular section.

#### **Topic-specific results**

In terms of what the newspaper's coverage of children's rights issues entailed, it is evident that certain topics received more attention than others during this time period, as is pictured in Figure 1 below. Most notably, the topic of violence made up 42 per cent of all the articles published between 1 March 2017 to 31 May 2017, which were coded in this thesis. The second most common topic was that of health and welfare, which made up 26 per cent of the total articles. These two topics alone constituted 68 per cent, and hence roughly a third of all the articles covering children's rights over the respective time period.



Figure 1: Depiction of the frequency distribution of different children's rights topics



Due to the apparent overrepresentation of these two types of rights within this sample, in comparison to other rights of the child, these results may potentially serve as an indication of what the writers and editors of *The Guardian* deem to be the most newsworthy rights of the child. From the results discussed so far then, it would appear that the presence of children's rights in news coverage is to a great extent defined by reports of specific events, which fall under the theme of violence. This in turn implies that children's rights coverage, which is explicitly about the child, is defined by rather sensational occurrences. Correspondingly, 26 out of the total of 30 articles about violence were hard or soft news items. Similarly, 15 out of the total of 19 articles about health fell under the same category of news item type.

While these numbers alone do not account for neither the tone, nor the actual specific issues covered within each of these categories, they do seem to suggest an inclination towards, when explicitly portraying children and their rights, doing so mainly in circumstances which can be considered rather distressing, by virtue of the nature of their subject matter.

Moreover, the low number of explicit portrayal of children in issues such as education and economic rights may be a slight cause for alarm given the influence either of these have on the livelihoods of children all over the world. Even though this research does not account for all the news coverage of these topics that occurred during the three-month period studied, it nonetheless might serve as an indicator of the fact that education and economic rights are generally covered without explicit deliberation of where children, who are nonetheless affected by any changes in society regarding either of these two, stand with respect to the specific developments reported about.

However, since news coverage is heavily reliant on what is going on around the world, the representative value of emergent patterns over a specific time period needs to be evaluated alongside acknowledgement of the fact that the output of news media actors in particular is in a constant state of change. Accordingly, the representation of certain topics and issues must be attributed not only to the agency of journalists and editors, but moreover to circumstance. Nonetheless, the large gap both between these two sets of rights, as well as between the two in comparison to the rest, does suggest a slight predisposition in *The Guardian's* newsroom towards portraying children in the context of singular and more distressing events.

Furthermore, despite these articles covering issues which are moreover contained in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, not a single article of those considered for this paper made reference to the Convention. In addition to this, only two articles made reference to the concept of children's rights. In both these cases, reference to the rights of the child consisted of a simple mention of the concept, without any further discussion of what it entailed, neither in theory nor in practice. It therefore appears that the events and developments reported about in the *The Guardian* are virtually never framed in the context of the legal entitlements specific to persons under the age of 18.

Worthy of note furthermore is the fact that, in one of the very few cases when the concept of children's rights was mentioned, the description was not necessarily an accurate reflection of the international human rights framework. In this instance, the

article maintained that, ‘a UN Committee on the Rights of the Child in 2014 expressed alarm over the widespread sexual abuse of children’,<sup>121</sup> implying that there are multiple committees at the UN monitoring state activity with respect to the rights of the child, which is not the case. While this is just one case of such an occurrence, and furthermore is not necessarily a depiction of the respective writer’s lack of knowledge in this area and potentially a result of inappropriate wording, considering this reality on top of the overall lack of prevalence of children’s rights does suggest that children’s rights are not a major point of focus.

The concept of human rights on the other hand appeared in 12 different articles, where nine articles consisted of mere mentions of the concept. One article briefly discussed the concept, and two articles had the term ‘human rights’ either in their heading or sub-heading, hence also consisting of slightly more elaborate discussions of the concept. These latter two articles furthermore fell under the theme of violence. Similarly, five out of the nine articles which mentioned the concept also fell under the theme of violence. The other topics which had respective articles mention the concept of human rights furthermore had one article per the respective topic make reference to rights. These include civil and political rights, family and alternative care, economic rights and armed conflict.

Accordingly, the extent of the presence of the international human rights framework in the press’ coverage of children’s rights issues, in terms of explicit mention of either the framework, or the norms and standards it consists of, appears to be very limited in the case *The Guardian*.

In terms of the framing of the topics, the results indicate that a noteworthy portion of *The Guardian*’s coverage of children’s rights topics in the ‘world news’ section consists of references to state activity. With respect to the causal attribution deciphered in the individual articles, either specific governments, or individuals

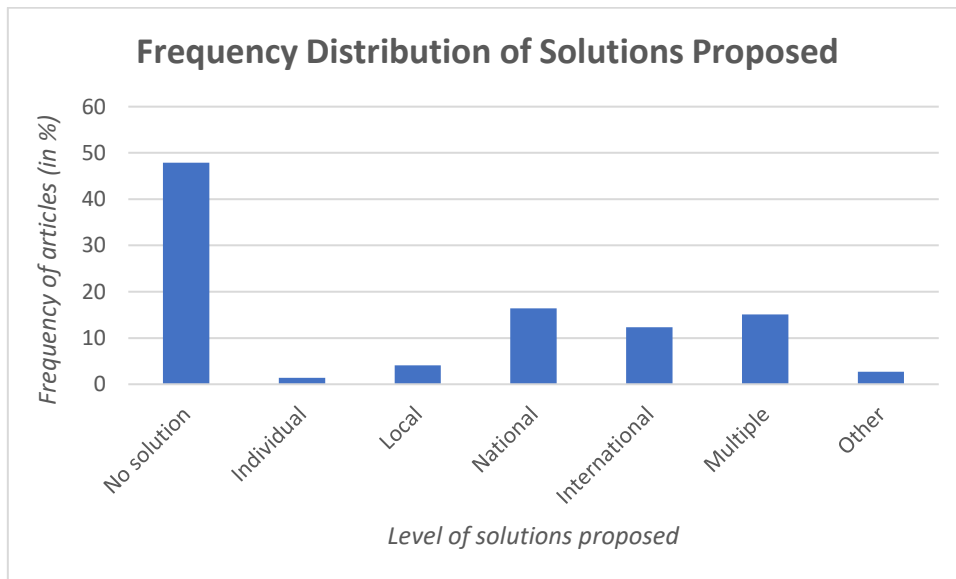
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<sup>121</sup> The Guardian, ‘Indian Court Allows 10-year-old Rape Victim to have an Abortion’, *The Guardian*, 17 May 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/may/17/indian-court-allows-10-year-old-victim-to-have-an-abortion>, (accessed 17 May 2017).

functioning in their capacities as an extension of the state, were the most represented in terms of their actions being referenced as the origin of the specific developments and occurrences reported about. Accordingly, 43.8 per cent of articles suggested, either directly or indirectly, that state actions were relevant to the particular situation depicted in the news item. Since the state is not only the primary guarantor of the rights of the child, but moreover also the most likely violator of the human rights of children, it ultimately seems appropriate that news coverage of issues relevant to the rights of the child predominantly refer to the role of the state, be it positive or negative.

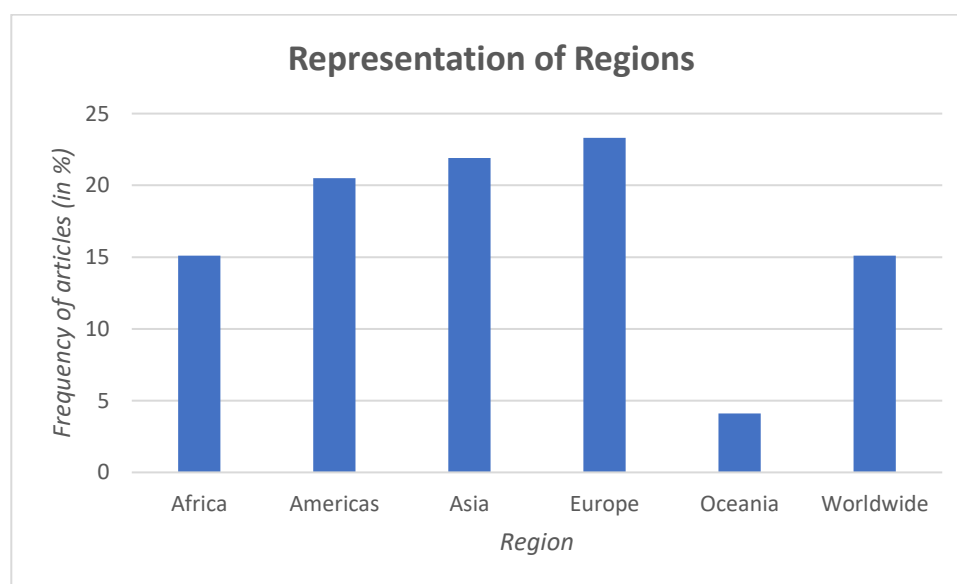
Similarly, in cases where articles discussed potential solutions to the problem at hand, the mention of solutions at the level of state activity were the most prominent, as depicted in Figure 2 below. The second most common type of discussion of solutions was that of delineating multiple solutions, at multiple different levels. This is reflective of the complexity of children’s rights realities and the corresponding need for a multi-faceted approach to implementation of the specific entitlements of the child. Proposed solutions at the international level were third most prominent, which is reflective of the international character of human rights in general.

*Figure 2: Depiction of the frequency distribution of types of solutions discussed*



Nonetheless, only about half of the total articles actually presented any form of solutions. This could possibly be attributed to the fact that such a large number of the articles were hard or soft news items, and hence more likely to simply cover the facts of a specific occurrence without going into too much depth concerning the context behind the occurrence.

Figure 3: Depiction of the representation of different regions



Generally, the data exemplified a rather equal distribution of articles with respect to their coverage of the regions of Africa, the Americas, Asia and Europe, with Africa being a little below average. Oceania was clearly underrepresented in comparison to these four regions, as depicted in Figure 3 above. The underrepresentation of Oceania may be explained by the fact that it is the least populated of the regions. Nonetheless, Europe appears to be the most reported about, despite the fact that it definitely is not the most populated region. This however is not surprising considering the fact that this is the region *The Guardian* originates from, which may entail not only a largely European workforce, but moreover a largely European audience and hence would explain the emphasis on European issues.

The fact that news concerning children worldwide is at an equal level to one of the regions moreover may be a result of the fact that children's rights issues can in some cases be a worldwide phenomenon. This is the true in the case of rising levels of pollution and the ensuing health side effects for example. Overly framing children's rights issues as worldwide phenomena however ultimately runs the risk of not only portraying all children around the world as a homogenous entity, but of moreover reducing the recognition of the diversity of identities of children and the contexts they live in.

### **Subject-specific results**

With respect to how children as human subjects in the articles were portrayed, some of the deliberations of the previous literature review seems to be mirrored within this specific set of articles. In reflection of widespread concerns regarding children predominantly being presented as having something happen to them, rather than of actively doing something, the articles coded throughout this research process consisted predominantly of portrayals of children as objects. Out of all the articles, 80.8 per cent were found to predominantly refer to the child in the passive manner. While such reporting may serve as an indication of the fact that, to a large extent, children's lives are affected by the actions of others, it moreover perpetuates the already prevalent conception of the child as victim, and furthermore as an actor not particularly capable of agency.

The circulation of stereotypes by virtue of portraying individuals merely as belonging to a particular group in turn runs the risk of portraying members of that particular group as a homogenous entity. International discourses revolving around children are particularly likely to consist of such manners of description of the life of the child, especially in recent years with the rise in terms such as 'global citizens'. The numbers of children portrayed in each individual article were thus measured in order to determine the extent to which reporting about children consists of coverage of children as a group, or as individuals.

The results in turn showed that 27.4 per cent of articles were about an individual child, while 2.7 per cent were about multiple children, yet with each of the child subjects being acknowledged separately. That leaves the rest of the articles as having consisted of reports about specific groups of children (50.7%), or moreover even as children as a homogenous entity (19.2%), where the latter entailed that the media piece was about children as such and the topic covering the situation of the respective issue at the global level.

The explicit attention to particular identities of the children portrayed was likewise measured by means of evaluating the representation of gender across all the articles which were coded. In this case it was revealed that almost half of all articles (46.6%) made no explicit mention of the gender of the child subjects, or were simply about 'children' as a group, while 6.8 per cent explicitly portrayed both male and female children. In terms of the frequency of articles which were solely about female children or solely about male children, the results show that 31.5 per cent of all articles in the sample were explicitly only about females, or about rights issues specific to the female child, while comparatively less than half of this percentage of the articles consisted of articles depicting only males (15.1%).

While this may seem as an indication of the fact that issues and occurrences concerning only boys are overlooked in news coverage of children's issues, it can simultaneously be explained by the fact that female individuals generally speaking, constitute a more vulnerable population than male individuals. Accordingly, considering the general format and content of news items, as well as the general focus on violence and health, it appears that these might be the reasons why news coverage which consists of explicit mention of gender would be more likely to be about females.

As for the speakers included in the articles analysed, the most represented category was that of state officials and authorities functioning in their capacities as extensions of the state, making up 21 per cent of the total speakers coded. The next most represented category of person was that of academics and researchers, at 10 per cent. Persons under the age of 18 on the other hand made up 9 per cent of all the

speakers coded. From these results, it then follows that during the three-month period, in the articles which were explicitly about children, children's voices were portrayed one out of ten times. The voices of people occupying an authoritative position were portrayed twice as often, in comparison.

Similarly, figures of authority were most prominently featured as the first speakers in the articles, while children were the third most prominent in this regard. Second most prominent were academics and researchers, as well as representatives of the United Nations or one of its agencies, with speakers from these two categories being equally as represented in the first speaker category. Here, the order in which the speakers is important because it ultimately suggests an order of importance in what the speaker has to say. This is the case since news items are typically structured in terms of most important things being in the beginning, with less important information so to speak then contextualising the main point behind the article.

In addition to this, consistently depicting the points of view of the government so to speak, and affording the representatives of the state a higher status in news reports, ultimately also legitimises these viewpoints more so than it does those of others, including the general public, and particularly relevant for the purposes of this paper, children.



### **3.5. Discussion of Data**

#### **Overall implications**

Generally speaking, the results are not very positive when considered from a human rights perspective. This is because they largely confirm some of the main concerns expressed by scholars and human rights professionals alike. Most evidently, the lack of visibility of children, and especially of their rights, in the news implies a general lack of visibility, or even acknowledgement, of their rights in society at large. This is not to say that people, including journalists, are not aware of the fact that children rights have specific rights by virtue of being under 18 years ago, but rather that a lot of the potential power of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child is lost if issues relevant to the rights of an individual or not framed as such.

However, considering the fact that news agencies are simply mediators of information first and foremost, who are furthermore responsible for covering an extremely wide array of issues in their news items, it is understandable why children's rights promotion is not at the top of their agenda. This is further validated by the fact that the media are ultimately also guided by market forces and not only their commitments to contributing to democracy and human rights. Moreover, due to the very nature of the news and the corresponding media pieces predominantly being about singular occurrences, human rights coverage might not always be appropriate.

Additionally, the lack of explicit mention of children does not necessarily equate to a lack of presence of children in the news. The news does inherently portray the livelihoods of children in pieces about education for example, where the focus may not be on the people in education as such, but rather on the institution itself. It is nonetheless worthy to evaluate the extent to which children, and especially in children's rights, are made visible in the media, in view of previous discussions on what media content entails both for attitudes among the general public and ultimately for policy-making.

### **Potential areas for further research**

The value of this research could moreover be strengthened by supplementing the data collected with further data, particularly if the data is collected over a longer time period. It would then also potentially be valuable to make note of the rate of occurrence of articles explicitly about children.

Research on the prevalence of children's rights in the news could furthermore also be complemented with research on the prevalence of human rights, in order to determine how newsworthy the concept of human rights as such is, and to then compare it with trends delineating the newsworthiness of the rights of the child.

In terms of studying the *The Guardian's* coverage of human rights and children rights, it might moreover be interesting to compare and contrast news items of the 'world news' section with the national news. Referring back to previous discussions on the role of the media as a means of monitoring state activity, it might then be valuable to determine if there are any considerable differences between the extent to which the concept of human rights in general, and children's rights in particular, appears in news items.

## **4. Ways Forward**

### **4.1. Implications for the Media Landscape**

Due to the emphasis on self-regulation in media practice, it is necessary to begin the discussion on how to improve the current situation by debating what the media themselves can do, rather than by considering means by which they can be controlled. Here, potential ways of increasing children's rights coverage as such, as well as increasing the depth of media items about children, can be discussed at both the national and international level.

#### **International level**

It is clear that journalists around the world are not only aware of the importance of coverage of children's rights issues but are contributing to the international debate on how to ensure appropriate coverage of children and the topics relevant to their welfare. Already existing international documents delineate the standards of journalistic professionalism and principles of practice, which are respectful of the rights of the child, but not necessarily a guarantee of the fulfilment of children's rights through the media. It is moreover recognised by the media themselves how fundamental of a role they can play in uncovering children's rights realities and promoting the norms and standards the child is entitled to under international human rights law. However, as is conventional for any form of international commitment to realising the welfare of humanity, implementation gaps between norms and actual practice prevail nonetheless.

In the case of children in the media, this can be attributed to a number of factors. This includes the fact that children make up a demographic that is already particularly vulnerable when it comes to visibility and participation, due to a number of factors. On the one hand, their age and the corresponding lack of power to protect their own interests, makes it easier for their voices to be disregarded, and hence for their specific

needs to be unaccounted for. On the other hand, public perceptions of children affect how they are treated, as well as how matters which affect their livelihoods are handled.

This extends to the perceptions of media professionals, who then run the risk of representing the child in a manner which is inconsistent with their rights. Moreover, since the media not only shape the values of a given society, but moreover reflect already existing norms and beliefs, it then becomes clear how complex and interconnected with other factors the process of ensuring the representation of children in the media worldwide truly is. This holds especially true when considered against the backdrop of globalisation and corresponding changes in technology, politics and the global economy.

With journalists worldwide already committed to practices which are founded upon the principles of democracy and human rights, there now remains a need, from a human rights perspective, to strengthen the commitment to children's rights specifically in the media, and to ensure that these commitments are realised in practice. In this regard, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, due to its near universality and its discussion of a wide range of issues relevant to the livelihoods of children, both in general and with respect to the media, may act as a powerful tool for providing guidance.

Accordingly, international media organisations, such as the International Federation of Journalists, can foster further collaboration between media professionals and moreover between human rights professionals and journalists in these debates. Debates in this regard will furthermore generate an exchange of norms and practice from a wide range of individuals and cultures, allowing for the increase of knowledge on how best to ensure the realisation of children's rights through journalistic professionalism. Ideally, this would consist not only of regular conferences held specifically for this reason, but of the maintenance of a network which allows for the constant exchange of ideas between professionals and across geographic regions. The regularity of debate would furthermore allow for journalists and other media professionals to adjust their practises to the evolving global landscape.

## National level

While international standards strengthen the worldwide commitment among news media professionals with respect to journalistic professionalism, the development of more specific guidelines and codes of conduct is likely to be more effective if done at a smaller scale. This is because of the need to account for the particularities of the specific contexts in which individual media agencies and media professionals practice their work, so as to ensure that journalistic practice is appropriate for that particular environment.

Accordingly, ‘the diverse individual and contextual factors that shape media uses, meanings and consequences appear at odds with a universalist approach’.<sup>122</sup> Therefore, while international debate can be of immense value, the regulation of practises should nonetheless be left to individual media agencies themselves. This is both due to the fact that self-regulation is inherent to the work of the media, as well as the fact that journalists work in societies which are defined by constantly changing and evolving cultures and norms.

In accordance with this, the installation of mechanisms at the national level, which allow for constant debate both among media professionals, and between media professionals and the general public, may ultimately generate practises which are more in line with the human rights of the child. Here, the activities of Brazilian civil society organisation, the News Agency for Children's Rights (ANDI), originally named Agência de Notícias dos Direitos da Infância, may serve as an example of good practises. These include the creation and publication of ‘league tables’, which described the representation of children’s rights issues in different media outlets, hence shining the spotlight on media sources, particularly if they occupied lower ranks.<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> Livingstone, p. 9.

<sup>123</sup> Jempson, M., *Children and Media – A Global Concern: An Overview of Issues, Contacts and Resources*, The PressWise Trust, 2003, p. 5. Available from [https://www.unicef.org/magic/media/documents/Children\\_and\\_media.pdf](https://www.unicef.org/magic/media/documents/Children_and_media.pdf) (accessed 23 May 2017).

ANDI furthermore encourages the collaboration and cooperation between news media professionals and children's rights civil society organisations.<sup>124</sup> This serves the function of providing journalists with a reliable and consistent source for children's rights information. Such an approach ultimately led to the increase in children's rights issues portrayed in the news, as well as a progression in quality of coverage of children in Brazil.<sup>125</sup> Due to the successes witnessed as a consequence of these activities, such models are now also being implemented in other states in Latin America.<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>124</sup> Angle, et al., p. 23.

<sup>125</sup> United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund, p. 25.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid.

## 4.2. Implications for the State

Due to the legally binding nature of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the nature of international human rights laws, which delineate state obligations to install laws and policies in line with their human rights obligations, the state nonetheless occupies the role of the primary guarantor of child rights protection in and through the media. This entails the creation of laws and policies which not only create an environment conducive to the realisation of the rights of the child, but moreover requires states to actively ensure the fulfilment of the rights of the child. Accordingly, implementation of the rights of the child under Article 17 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child requires states to ensure that the child has access to a wide range of media, and ultimately a wide range of information.

Moreover, state obligation under Article 17 also entails that the state supports the media in the dissemination of information necessary for the child's mental, physical and social development. This implies that the obligations lie not only with respect to media produced explicitly for children, but also media output at large, so as to ensure the promotion of the values of the UNCRC among the general public.

This furthermore requires the state to provide the media with resources necessary for the realisation high standards of journalistic practice. This can be done by for instance ensuring that journalists have access to all the data relevant for the status of the rights of the child in the respective state, as it is the state which possesses the largest amount of information in this regard.<sup>127</sup> Allocation of resources with regard to quality of journalism may moreover entail state encouragement of collaboration between media professionals, both within the respective state, and internationally.

It therefore also seems it may be appropriate for states to implement their obligations under Article 17 by means of guaranteeing some form of a 'media watchdog', which monitors the media output of news agencies functioning in that state and fulfils additional activities, similar to what the News Agency for Children's Rights

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<sup>127</sup> Worthington and Park, p. 4.

in Brazil is doing. The value of media watchgroups has been explicitly stated by the Committee on the Rights of the Child, who furthermore asserted that the ‘positive work of media watchgroups in various countries should be encouraged and “good ideas” transferred between countries’.<sup>128</sup> They furthermore maintain that this is a means of ensuring the participation of the general public in discussions on matters of children in the media.

Ultimately, implementation measures are to be carried out in view of not only the state’s, but moreover society’s role in realising the rights of the child and promoting the norms and standards of the UNCRC. All in all then, it appears that:

*Strong political commitment paired with the allocation of sufficient resources and a broad societal awareness of the rights of the child are needed to ensure that children are seen and treated as full rights-holders.*<sup>129</sup>

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<sup>128</sup> United Nations, Committee on the Rights of the Child, 1996 (b).

<sup>129</sup> Council of Europe Strategy, 2016, p. 7.



### **4.3. Implications for the International Community**

For the purposes of ensuring the implementation of the rights of the child, any discussions in this regard need to account for what can be done at the level of the United Nations. Hammarberg maintains that meaningful change with respect to representation of children and their rights in the media is likely to only come about through action at the level of the United Nations.<sup>130</sup> This holds true both due to the fact that this would entail that states themselves have taken the initiative to implement further commitments to ensure the rights of the child through the media, as well as the political value behind decisions made by the UN General Assembly for example.

At the end of the day, the Committee on the Rights of the Child, as well as the main organs of the UN, represent the international community as a whole, and moreover embody the means of generating new paths forward with regard to human rights implementation. The Convention on the Rights of the Child in itself is already a powerful tool, yet particularly in view of developments in recent years, it may be appropriate to embellish on the already existing rights of the child by continuing discussion on best practices and putting forward the results of these discussions. Here the tools available to the Committee outside of the standard state monitoring procedure, including their General Comments, Substantive Statements and Decisions could be of particular value.

In any case, while the UN human rights treaties outline human rights in a way which allows for the implementation of the specific rights in a manner which is compatible with individual societies and contexts, an elaboration on what the obligations of both the state and the media are under Article 17 of the UNCRC could nonetheless ensure the protection of children worldwide, if appropriate actors from numerous countries and cultural traditions are included in the discussion.

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<sup>130</sup> Hammarberg, 1997, p. 244.

## **5. Conclusion**

In conclusion, it appears that there are a number of different ways in which the worlds of news media and of human rights overlap, both with respect to the norms on which they are based and their respective practices. This has become evident through the comparison of international norms and standards which define either of these landscapes.

In terms of their respective conceptions, both the news media and human rights spring out of a commitment towards not only improving the well-being of humanity, but more specifically of protecting and actively promoting a high quality of life for individuals. Both these concepts and practices are furthermore defined by their contribution to the creation and maintenance of democracy, by virtue of their emphasis on the worth of the individual as an agent of change and their commitment to ensuring human coexistence based on the principles of freedom, equality and justice.

In practice, both news media and human rights professional rely on the collection and exposure of information which is relevant to the lives of human beings. It is precisely in this regard where the potential for collaboration between the two becomes particularly relevant. Accordingly, it appears that media and human rights professionals can each support the practice of the other along the lines of the collection of information, as well as effective communication of such information.

Furthermore, since the presentation of information which is relevant to the lives of human beings entails that individuals themselves are being portrayed in the communications of either of these parties, it moreover appears that they can cooperate on matters of how to not only respect the dignity of persons, but moreover how to actively promote their well-being by means of framing for example.

With respect to how the journalist can contribute to the rights of the child, it additionally appears that the media can not only generate and perpetuate negative stereotypes, but moreover facilitate a shift in public perceptions in terms of how children are acknowledged and treated. For the latter of these two to occur however, it

appears that news media professionals need to take the initiative to actively integrate the concept of not only human rights, but more specifically children's rights, both in their educational facilities and in their newsrooms. This conclusion stems from the fact that, while appropriate treatment of children and children's rights issues may seemingly be a matter of common sense, due to the near universal recognition of the need to protect children, intention does not necessarily translate in practice.

Accordingly, the data presented in this paper confirms that, in the case of *The Guardian*, the prevalence of the international children's rights framework in press items is rather minimal. From a human rights perspective, such results entail rather negative implications, especially in view of what this means for the implementation of the rights of the child.

However, any discussions on the matter of how prevalent certain concepts of themes are in the news, must be considered against the backdrop of what is inherent to the practice of journalists and media professionals, particularly in a world defined by neoliberal market forces.

Ultimately, it appears that the most prominent underlying theme characterising the discussion on increasing the effectiveness of reporting on children's rights issues is that of increased collaboration between relevant actors. This includes media professionals, human rights professionals, the United Nations, governments, and very importantly, children, their parents and the general public.

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# Appendix I

## CODEBOOK

### SELECTION OF ARTICLES

**1. Is there an explicit\* mention of children in the title?\***

*Yes/No*

*If yes, then proceed to no.2*

\* This entails use of at least one of the following words: ‘child(ren)’, ‘girl(s)’, ‘boy(s)’, ‘teen(s)’, ‘baby(ies)’, ‘adolescent(s)’, ‘toddler(s)’.

All headlines of all articles published in world news section are to be read in case there are any other titles which suggest the article is explicitly about children. In such a case, the anomaly is to be noted.

**2. Is at least one of the human subjects portrayed under 18 years old? (Explicitly)**

*Yes/No*

*If yes, then proceed to no.3*

**3. Does the article cover a children’s rights topic, as per code ‘C-TOPIC’?**

*Yes/No*

*If yes, then proceed to coding*

## ARTICLE CHARACTERISTICS

<b>Category</b>	<b>Coding value</b>	<b>Description</b>
A-ID	e.g. 1, 2, 3	Identification number
A-DATE	e.g. 010317	Date of publication on website
A-TYPE	1 = hard/soft news 2 = feature 3 = editorial	
A-TITLE	e.g. ‘	As per the website of the article itself; not the title used in the ‘world news’ website of the paragraph, as the latter was often a shortened version of the former
A-LENGTH	e.g. 324	No. of words

## **Appendix III CONTENT-SPECIFIC CODING**

### **1. What is the main topic of the media piece, as per UNCRC Articles?<sup>131</sup>**

#### **Category: C-Topic**

Does the main topic of the media article fall under the scope of the rights of the child?  
(If more than one, the one to be coded to be determined by what is more prevalent,  
which right is higher up in the article)

Topic	Coding value	Description
Civil and Political Rights	1	Article 12: Right to be heard Article 13: Freedom of expression Article 14: Freedom of thought, conscience and religion Article 15: Freedom of association Article 16: Protection of privacy Article 17: Access to information
Family and alternative care	2	Article 5: Parenting guidance and the child's evolving capacities Article 9: Separation from parents Article 10: Family reunification Article 18: Parental responsibilities Article 19: Protection from abuse and neglect Article 20: Protection of a child without a family Article 21: Adoption
Health and Welfare	3	Article 24: Right to health Article 6: Right to life, survival and development Article 18(3): Appropriate assistance for parents Article 26: Social security Article 27: Standard of living Article 33: Drug use
Education and Cultural Rights	4	Article 28: Right to education Article 29: Aims of education Article 31: Leisure, recreation and cultural activities

<sup>131</sup> As grouped together by Child Rights International Network (CRIN)  
Child Rights International Network, *Themes*, [website] 2017 (a),  
<https://www.crin.org/en/home/rights/themes> (accessed 4 April 2017).

		Article 23: Children with disabilities Article 30: Children of minorities or indigenous populations
Justice	5	Article 12: Right to be heard Article 40: Administration of juvenile justice
Violence <sup>132</sup>	6	Article 19: Protection from abuse and neglect Article 6: Right to life, survival and development Article 32: Child labour Article 33: Drug abuse Article 34: Sexual exploitation Article 35: Sale, trafficking and abduction Article 36: Other forms of exploitation Article 37: Torture and deprivation of liberty
Economic Rights	7	Article 26: Social security Article 27: Standard of living Article 32: Child labour
Children in Vulnerable Situations	8	Article 2: Non-discrimination Article 20: Protection of a child without family Article 21: Adoption Article 22: Refugee children Article 23: Children with disabilities Article 25: Period review of placement Article 30: Children of minorities or indigenous populations
Armed conflict	9	Article 38: Armed conflicts Article 22: Refugee children
Not applicable	99	Does not fall under the scope of children's rights

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<sup>132</sup> Includes the CRIN category of sexual exploitation and abuse

**2. Is there an explicit mention of the concept of human rights?**

**Category: C-HR**

	Coding value	Description
No mention	0	The term ‘human rights’ does not appear; No mention of ‘rights’ as such
Brief mention	1	The term/concept is mentioned but not discussed beyond mere mention
Mentioned and discussed	2	Mention of the concept is supplemented with an explanation, i.e. deliberation of individual rights, obligations of the state
Main focus of article	3	The term/concept appears either in the headline or sub-headline and/or first two sentences

**3. Is there an explicit mention of the concept of children’s rights?**

**Category: C-CR** Scale:

	Coding value	Description
No mention	0	The term ‘children’s rights’ does not appear
Brief mention	1	The term/concept is mentioned but not discussed beyond mere mention
Mentioned and discussed	2	Mention of the concept is supplemented with an explanation, i.e. deliberation of individual rights, obligations of the state
Main focus of article	3	The term/concept appears either in the headline or sub-headline and/or first two sentences

**4. Is there an explicit mention of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child?**

**Category: C-UNCRC**

	Coding value	Description
No mention	0	The words ‘Convention on the Rights of the Child’ does not appear
Brief mention	1	The Convention is mentioned but not discussed beyond mere mention
Mentioned and discussed	2	Mention of the concept is supplemented with an explanation, i.e. deliberation of individual rights, obligations of the state
Main focus of article	3	The term/concept appears either in the headline or sub-headline and/or first two sentences

**5. Does the discussion depict a negative or a positive development in view of the child/ren's well-being?**

**Category: C-DEVELOPMENT**

	Coding value	Description
No evaluation	0	
Negative development	1	
Positive development	2	
Both negative and positive developments	3	

**6. Is reference made to the cause of the specific issue reported on?**

**Category: C-CAUSE**

	Coding value	Description
No causal attribution	0	
Person under the age of 18	1	
Family members or acquaintances of the child	2	
Private individuals who are not known to the child	3	
The state or individuals acting in their capacity as an extension of the state	4	
Private companies and businesses	5	
International organisations and/or agencies	6	
Non-human event	7	
Terrorism	9	
Other	99	

**7. Are any potential solutions discussed? If so, at which level does the article propose for solutions?**

**Category: C-SOLUTION**

	Coding value	Description
No discussion	0	
Individual	1	
Local	2	
National	3	
International	4	
Multiple	5	
Other	6	

**8. Which region does the article cover?<sup>133</sup>**

**Category: C-REGION**

	Coding value	Description
Africa	1	
Americas	2	
Antarctica	3	
Asia	4	
Europe	5	
Oceania	6	
International	7	I.e. Discussion of worldwide phenomena

**SUBJECT-SPECIFIC CODING**

**9. Is the child portrayed in a subjective or objective manner?**

**Category: S-AGENCY**

	Coding value	Description
Subject	1	The child is portrayed as actively doing something/described in the active form
Object	2	The child is portrayed as having something happen to them/described in the passive form
Both	3	

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<sup>133</sup> As per UN division of regions  
<https://unstats.un.org/unsd/methodology/m49/>



**10. How many children are portrayed in the media piece?**

**Category: S-NUMBER**

	Coding value	
One single individual	1	There is only one subject under the age of 18
Multiple individuals	2	There are multiple subjects
Group of children		E.g. The news item is about children attending a specific school
Children as a homogenous entity		About 'children' in general

**11. Is the child explicitly evaluated either positively or negatively?**

**Category: S-DEVELOPMENT**

	Coding value	Description
Neither	0	
Rather negative	1	
Rather positive	2	
Both positive and negative	3	

**12. Which gender is represented in the article?**

**Category: S-GENDER**

	Coding value	
No mention	0	<b>No explicit mention of the gender of any of the children</b>
Solely female	1	
Solely male	2	
Both	3	

**13. Who is the first, second, third, fourth and fifth speaker in the article?**

**Categories: S-SPEAKER1; S-SPEAKER2; S-SPEAKER3; S-SPEAKER4; S-SPEAKER5**

	Coding value	
No speaker	0	
Person under the age of 18	1	
Family member or acquaintance	2	
Member of the general public	3	
Representative of a children's rights organisation	4	
Representative of a human rights organisation	5	
State official or representative <sup>134</sup>	6	
Representative of the UN or UN agency	7	
Other intergovernmental organisations	8	
Media professional	9	
Human rights professional	10	
Academic or researcher	11	
Representative of an NGO not related to human rights	12	
Other	99	

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<sup>134</sup> Includes other authority figures who function as an extension of the state

## **Abstract**

International debates about the status of children in the media increasingly revolve around the role of the journalist with respect to the rights of the child. This includes discussions on how to protect the child in journalistic practices, as well as how to promote the well-being of children through media output. Reflecting this reality is the growing concern among both academics and human rights professionals with respect to the prevalence of certain trends in the portrayal of children in the news media. In light of these realities, this thesis sets out to define wherein the desirability of collaboration between news media and human rights professionals lies, particularly in view of facilitating the implementation of children's rights. This is done by first discussing the respective international norms and standards of practice. The practice of news media was then evaluated by means of a quantitative media content analysis of press coverage of children's rights issues. The data presented in this paper then points to the fact that the prevalence of the international children's rights framework in individual press items is rather minimal. To conclude the discussion, this thesis then summarises the potential means of ensuring the visibility of children and of their rights in the news media.

## **Abstract (auf Deutsch)**

Internationale Diskussionen über den Status von Kindern in den Medien, drehen sich zunehmend um die Rolle von Journalisten, in Bezug auf die Rechte des Kindes. Dazu gehören Diskussionen über den Schutz des Kindes in journalistischen Praktiken, sowie über die Förderung des Wohlbefindens von Kindern durch die Medien. Dies spiegelt sich wieder, in dem Anliegen, sowohl unter Akademikern wie auch unter Praktikern, in Bezug auf die Prävalenz bestimmter Trends bei der Darstellung von Kindern in den Nachrichtenmedien. Angesichts dieser Realitäten soll in dieser Arbeit festgelegt werden, inwieweit die Zusammenarbeit zwischen den Medien und Menschenrechtsexperten wünschenswert ist, insbesondere im Hinblick auf die Erleichterung der Umsetzung der Kinderrechte. Dies geschieht zunächst durch die Erörterung der jeweiligen internationalen Normen und Standards der Praxis. Die Praxis der Nachrichtenmedien wurde dann, mittels einer quantitativen Medieninhaltsanalyse der Presseberichterstattung über Kinderrechtsfragen, ausgewertet. Die in dieser Arbeit vorgelegten Daten weisen darauf hin, dass die Prävalenz des internationalen Kinderrechtsrahmens in einzelnen Presseartikeln eher gering ist. Um die Diskussion abzuschließen, fasst diese Arbeit dann die potenziellen Mittel zur Sicherstellung der Sichtbarkeit der Kinder und ihrer Rechte in den Nachrichtenmedien zusammen.