Global journalism, local realities:

Ugandan journalists' views on reporting homosexuality

Rachael Borlase,
MSc in Media, Communication and Development

Dissertation submitted to the Department of Media and Communications, London School of Economics and Political Science, August 2011, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the MSc in Media, Communication and Development. Supervised by Linje Manyozo.

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ABSTRACT

In October 2009, MP David Bahati tabled the Anti Homosexuality Bill in the Ugandan Parliament. The subsequent media frenzy sparked public outrage at the local, national and international level, in favor of, and against, the proposed legislation. In their coverage of this issue, the Ugandan media has been condemned by human rights groups and media development organizations for failing to provide a balanced representation of pro-gay positions. To find out why this might be the case, this study seeks to find out how Ugandan journalists perceive and experience covering issues of homosexuality.

Theoretically, this research is rooted in ideologies of universal human rights, and by extension global journalism ethics, which argue for fair, balanced and accurate representations of homosexual rights. They are contrasted by political economy and postcolonial critiques which argue for a more contextual understanding of African environments, and the powerful influences on journalists' role in society.

The theoretical framework is tested through a series of face-to-face in-depth interviews with experienced Ugandan journalists who have covered issues of homosexuality. The study finds that Ugandan journalists, as a diverse group, respond to covering issues of homosexuality in different ways. It concludes the practice of journalism ethics in Africa is tied to the specific issue being covered, and that journalists adjust their identities to suit different circumstances, groups and locations. The practice of African journalism then, must be seen as a hybrid and mixture of international and local influences that are unique to the lived experiences of each individual. This ultimately supports the idea that media development initiatives in Africa, as they are being conceived in the West, must have a greater understanding of African contexts, but also must focus more on cross-cultural sharing and learning.

INTRODUCTION

When the Anti-Homosexuality Bill 2009[1] was tabled by MP David Bahati in the Ugandan Parliament on October 14, I was working in Kampala for the BBC World Service Trust. At the time, my primary role with that organization was to manage local media trainers in their attempt to help rural radio stations improve their capacity to report on governance and human rights-related issues. Our project objective, to help journalists obtain "a deeper understanding of the media's role in democracy both as a facilitator of contact between officials and the electorate and as a watchdog, and increased capacity to produce balanced, interactive programming"(BBC WST, 2008) seemed like a commendable initiative in helping Uganda's populace become informed and active citizens.

However, the introduction of the 2009 Anti-Homosexuality Bill put me in a precarious situation with my Ugandan colleagues. We could always agree on how to advise reporters on tackling issues of government corruption, service delivery and many human rights violations. Where our views differed, was on how to treat stories about the seemingly unfettered wave of homophobia taking over Uganda. I believed my colleagues needed to treat the issue as a human rights infringement and to uphold the basic principles of journalism – objectivity, fairness and balance – at all costs. However, this advice was uncomfortably received by the trainers and stations, who explained it was nearly impossible to interview pro-gay voices because audiences, and government, would not tolerate that point of view.

On the surface, this dilemma appeared to be about the clashing of ideologies between two opposing views of sexual rights and freedom. Eagleton (1991) describes ideology as the dominating power to legitimatize beliefs, and the "naturalizing and universalizing of such beliefs so as to render them self-evident and apparently inevitable" (Eagleton, 1991: 6). On the one hand, I prided myself for being from a progressively liberal country, where homosexual rights are supposedly synonymous with human rights.[2] On the other hand, equally fervid about their own cultural rights, many Ugandans maintained their country's (and continent's) fundamental and historical intolerance of homosexuality as way of upholding familial values and marriage as a union for reproduction (Gays and Lesbians of Zimbabwe, 2008).

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[1] The Anti-Homosexuality Bill, dubbed "the Bahati-Bill" seeks to reinforce existing anti-homosexual legislation in Uganda by proposing more severe punishments for homosexual acts, and those who support or promote them. For a full copy of the bill, visit: http://wthrockmorton.com/wp-content/uploads/2009/10/anti-homosexuality-bill-2009.pdf

[2] I do acknowledge there remains homophobic sentiment in many Western nations. However, the assertion made in this paper stems from the laws passed by many governments, including my own, to grant homosexuals equal rights. I am in no way insinuating that everyone supports homosexuality in Canada.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, media discourse about the 2009 Anti-Homosexuality Bill varied drastically between continents and countries, cities and villages, and the different media organizations that covered the story. In Uganda, Amnesty International asserted "the local media's treatment of this subject is reflective of widespread homophobia in Uganda and by extension, in African in general" (IWPR, Jan 26 2011). Vicious headlines such as "*100 pictures of Uganda's Top Homos Leaked: Hang Them*" (BBC, November, 2010) lead in the country's tabloid papers as regular "outing" campaigns published the names and pictures of people rumoured to be gay (Strand, 2011). Even respected national papers contributed to the frenzy by printing emotionally charged stories and debates: "*Can Preaching Morality Deal a Final Blow Against Gayism?*" (Daily Monitor, Dec 13 2009) and "*Homosexual Admits recruiting students*" (New Vision, March 23, 2009).

However, if Ugandan journalists were presenting "Africans as united in their denunciation of LGTB people" (Kaoma, 2010: para 1), many Ugandans felt the international media was telling them they "had to accept these people" (Pascal, 2011). Equally biased and sensational headlines denouncing Uganda's intolerance of homosexuality were aired and printed in many of the world's renowned news organizations. Stories such as "*The Worst Place in the World to be Gay*" (BBC Three, Feb 14 2011) and "*Anti-gay bigots plunge Africa into a new era of hate crimes*" (The Observer, Dec 13 2009) depicted a homogenous Uganda in anti-gay sentiment, and a vicious and hostile country for gay people to live. International media pressure on Uganda was enhanced by the plethora of condemnations from international governments and human rights organizations condemning the Anti Homosexuality Bill (Guardian, April 20 11; Human Rights Watch, 2009)

So it seemed, when it came to covering homosexuality in Uganda, the principles and procedures that govern many of the world's journalists were manoeuvred according to who was covering the story, and what their interests were. This contradicts the liberal ethical guidelines of "objectivity, fairness and balance" that so many countries, including those in Africa, have embraced as a normative ideal (BBC WST AMDI, 2006; Manyozo, 2011). Under this model, the media acts as "neutral conduits for information" (Wasserman, 2006: 80) that foster rational, plural and diversified public discourse on issues of public concern and scrutiny (IPDC, 2008). Furthermore, in an increasingly globalized world, advocates for *global journalism* (Ward, 2010) maintain that journalists must put the interests of their states aside, and expose worldly injustices as an act of "human solidarity" (Christians, 2010: 19).

However, the liberal journalism model, as it has been imported to and implemented in, Africa, has met resistance. Post-colonial critics of the liberal model (Banda, 2009; Nyamnjoh, 2005; Wasserman, 2010) maintain that it is ideologically driven by western norms and values of *individual* freedom and rights, which counter Africa's *communitarian* approach to life and communication. Political economists of communication (Mansell and Nordenstreng, 2006; McChesney, 2000) are equally sceptical, questioning capitalist interests in the liberalization of media laws and regulation that under the guise of equality, continue to serve dominant groups. The two critical approaches are not separate, since at the centre of their study is power; who possesses it, how it is maintained, but also how it is challenged.

If "gender and sexuality are the new yardsticks for democracy" (Haritaworn et al, 2006), and the news media shapes our "ethical norms of the present" (Chouliaraki, 2006: 7), then it is a critical time to research African journalists' perception covering issues about homosexuality. While there are strong theoretical arguments for – and against – the liberal framework, few projects have endeavoured to investigate how journalists position themselves in the debate in relation to their "identifications, roles and functions" (Kanyegirire, 2007: 4). Until we understand why journalists on the continent are not, and cannot, apply the liberal ideals in reporting gay issues, it seems futile to expect them to adhere to their ethical guidelines.

The paper beings by exposing the contradicting ideological debates between universal human rights and cultural relativism, and the way in which African journalists are expected and are free to reflect these opposing views. Using the conceptual framework as a guide, I will then present my research questions and the justification of my methodological approaches in helping me answer the research questions. Finally, I will end with an analysis and discussion of my key findings, by showing how the key themes that emerged from the data relate to my theoretical framework and what this means for future considerations regarding African journalism.

THEORETICAL CHAPTER

Human rights discourse about homosexuality

The dialogue about homosexual rights is rooted in the "rights revolution" that swept through western democracies after the drafting of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948 (Ignatieff, 2000). Though it would face resistance in the decades to follow, acceptance of homosexuals grew and pro-gay legislation was enacted, in the belief that human dignity could not be denied to persons based on their sexual orientation (Ignatieff, 2000); essentially, if we were to believe in fundamental human rights, they had to be guaranteed to all people, "by virtue of their being human" (ICHRP, 2002: 7). However, since the discourse on human rights began, there has been a tension between the rights of the autonomous individual and the rights of groups or nations. Human rights then, are "in conflict with popular sovereignty as an expression of national culture" (Ignatieff, 2000: 46) by countries who want to assert *their right* to possess their own identities. Gay rights have been particularly divisive in this regard. The "sexual revolution" (Ignatieff, 2000: 85), demanding that homosexuals not only be tolerated, but equally recognized and accepted, has been scorned by many cultures for diminishing familial and cultural bonds in order to promote selfish behaviour (Ignatieff, 2000).

While gay rights have been part of the social transformation within many liberal democracies, acceptance or tolerance of gay people in Africa has not had the same success. Currently on the continent, 38 out of 53 countries prohibit same-sex relations by keeping sodomy laws intact from the days of colonization, or have introduced new legislation that condemns homosexual acts (The Telegraph, Aug 24 2011). In Uganda for example, Section 145 of the 1950 Penal Code states that such "unnatural acts" are liable to life imprisonment (Uganda Penal Code Act 1950). The drafting of the 2009 Anti-Homosexuality Bill proposes more drastic punishment by introducing "aggravated homosexuality" which seeks the death penalty in some cases. It also targets people who aid, abet and promote homosexuality.

For liberal thinkers, it seems necessary to tackle Uganda's anti-homosexuality legislation with a human rights defence. Sylvia Tamale, Dean of Law at Uganda's Makerere University, outlines the numerous universal violations of the 2009 Anti-Homosexuality Bill:

> The bill would violate the principle of non-discrimination and would lead to violations of the human rights to freedom of expression, freedom of thought, conscience and religion, freedom of peaceful assembly, freedom of association, liberty and security of the person, privacy, the highest attainable standard of health, and life. (Tamale, in AI report)

However, the attack against the 2009 Anti-homosexuality Bill, and sexual rights in general, must be explored more deeply. In order to do this, the human rights discourse as a "regime of truth" (Grewal, 2005: vii) in which the world is now based upon, must be scrutinized and even *linked* to the growth of homophobic sentiment.

The universality of homosexual rights

Grewal (2005) challenges activists to not blindly assert a defence for human rights without questioning how something becomes universal to begin with. She insists that universality cannot be seen "as something organic but rather as a powerful force" (Grewal, 2005: vii). According to post-colonial scholars Douzinas (2007) and Mamdani (2000), the human rights discourse has been forced upon Africa through the proliferation of western moral ideals that have not helped contribute to equality, but instead have arranged "people in a hierarchy of superiority" (Douzinas, 2007: 82). Without respect for the broader historic, cultural and economic contexts of diverse nations, they argue that "the rights movement is intolerant of competing world views" (Mamdani, 2000: 3). Other scholars make no apologies for Africa's lack of adherence to international, regional and national human rights conventions (Halsteen, 2004; Nyamnjoh, 2004; Wasserman 2010). Nyamhjoh stipulates that there is no incentive for countries to comply with the liberal ideals "because of the marginality of Africa under global consumer capitalism" (Nyamnjoh, 2004: 39). Furthermore, when the western world appears to be forcing African government to adhere to their human rights obligations with a "morally solipsistic Eurocentric worldview" (Suzman, 2002: 5), African autonomy is asserted by invoking a defence for local culture and custom.

Homosexual rights in Uganda

The tensions raised above can be explicitly observed in many countries on the African continent that are currently debating homosexuality. As a counter-reaction to universalization, an argument for "protecting and supporting 'our own' social and political system" (Halsteen, 2004: 115) has emerged. It needs to be acknowledged that there are many driving forces behind homophobic sentiment in Africa including: the value put on African women who bear children, Christian and Islamic indoctrination in almost every corner of the continent, and more recently anti-homosexual campaigns led and funded by American evangelicals (Gays and Lesbians of Zimbabwe, 2008; Kaoma, 2010). In these processes, many African governments have publically denounced homosexuality as being "un-African" and an importation from western nations (Gays and Lesbians of Zimbabwe, 2008; Strand, 2011). If, then, homosexuality is considered a threat to the African way of life, this has made

room for the claim that gay Africans should not be able to exercise their sexual freedoms. The Ugandan government in particular has repeatedly used this "neo-traditional" (Halsteen, 2004: 12) ideology in order to convince citizens that granting homosexuals rights would undermine the country's collective moral identity:

> Homosexuality is akin to sodomy and you know what that means. There are grave consequences like HIV/Aids, psychological torture and others...It touches all Ugandans because it's a question of morals. It's a disease that must be fought. (James Buturo, former Minister of Ethics and Integrity Dec 13 2009)

This rhetoric is exactly what Haritaworn et al. (2006) predict in their critique of western gay rights movements seeking to challenge homophobia in foreign nations. Though their research focused on Islamic states, the lessons learned can also apply to Africa. According to these authors, the more homophobia is constructed as belonging to *the Other*, "the more anti-homophobic talk will be viewed as white, even racist phenomenon, and the harder it will be to increase tolerance and understanding" (Haritaworn et al., 2006: 83). Thus the discourse about homosexuality in Uganda is not only about homosexuality in itself, but also about the right for Africans to assert their own ideals in the face of what they view as western imperialism.

Thus the universality of human rights is not as straightforward and accepted as proponents would like. In the case of homosexual rights in Uganda, dominant ideologies have created an environment that is hostile to gay people and those who support them, convincing many people that homosexuals are in fact against the rights of their nation.

So-called Global Journalism

The media has been considered central in changing and shaping both positive and negative perceptions of homosexuals in many countries around the world (Morritz, 2009). According to Morritz, tolerance of homosexuals in the United States has been largely due to a shift from stereotyped media representations of gay people in the 60s and 70s, to the portrayal of gay issues that have become "an increasingly familiar feature of news and public discourse" (Morritz, 2009: 324). This shift in public perception is said to be possible because in order to live by the democratic ideals of individual freedom, the media is seen as being central in fighting for these rights (ICHRP, 2002; IPDC 2008). From this perspective, the media play a central role in "protecting basic liberties and human rights, monitoring political institutions and representative officials, promoting rational deliberation, and publishing important truths" (Ward, 2010: 49). As watchdog, the media must stand apart from state institutions and the market, and provide space for diversity and plurality in the public's right to exercise

their freedom of expression. This Habermasian approach to media as fostering a public sphere, assumes the "principles of inclusivity, rational constraint and public scrutiny" (Ward, 2010: 43) are, or at least should be, valued and upheld. In order to achieve these ideals, journalists are governed by codes of conduct that promote "truth, accuracy, fairness and impartiality" (BBC Editorial Guidelines, 2010) in their reporting. As such, the journalist claims to use reason when witnessing events, and thus comes to represent the "universal sensibility" (Muhlmann, 2004: 113) of someone who is mandated and trusted to tell the *truth*.

The liberal model, and media development initiatives that seek to emulate this framework, are steadfast in the belief that in an ever increasing globalized media environment, journalists must adhere to these so-called universal principles. Ward and Christians have written extensively on the media's obligation to "universal human solidarity" (Christians, 2010: 7) in which journalists have a sense of duty to truth telling that extends beyond the interests of their nation state. Ward in particular criticizes journalism that seeks to please audience's preconceived ideas about the world, when instead they should be providing a "critical, open public sphere of diverse, often unpopular views" (Ward, 2010: 51). Though these ideas seem to focus more on how western media outlets should be reporting and representing issues in the Global South, if they are "universal" then they must also apply to Africa. Thus the idea that "we should not allow local attachments to override fundamental rights and duties" (Ward, 2010: 156), means African nationality and culture becomes secondary to the "community of common aspirations" (Ward, 2010: 54) global journalism seems to promote.

Media is embedded in, and reproduces, ideology

While it might seem like a laudable venture for the news media to be non-discriminatory of nationality, race, religion, gender in their reporting of the world, most journalists "contribute to keeping the wheels of the social arrangement running" (Tomaselli, 2001: 10). According to Tomaselli, for all of its promises of "free expression", the liberal model often perpetuates "the free expression of ideas and opinions which are helpful or at least not harmful to the prevailing system of power and privilege" (Tomaselli, 2001: 33). This is not done in a way that appears *forced upon* those in weaker positions of power, but rather the messages engrained so as to appear "appropriate, legitimate, or inevitable" (Allan, 1999: 49). Taking from the Althusserian (1971) view of ideology then, this becomes how institutions and power holding groups "work in order to legitimize and maintain the current order, which is then made to appear as 'natural' (Kanyegirire, 2007: 15). Journalists, as products of those

institutions, are not isolated from these larger societal forces at play. Thus, journalists, seen as primary constructors of the "moral order" (Silverstone, 2006: 9) are also engrained in it.

This has large implications for the liberal model's faith in "objectivity", where journalists defend their work by claiming to separate 'facts' from 'values' in order to present the *truth* (Allan, 1999). If, as Silverstone asserts, "experience, both mediated and non-mediated is culturally specific" (Silverstone, 2006: 6), then truth must also been seen as relative to the context from which journalists witness and interpret experiences and events. For this reason, the journalistic aspiration to represent issues from an objective standpoint, or to portray things "as they really are" is as naïve as believing that the "inviolable interpretation of the event as action exists prior to the report (Edgar, 1992: 118). Furthermore, a society's tolerance and appetite for the truth is limited by a mutual understanding of what is morally acceptable according to value system through which it functions (Tomaselli, 2001). Thus we can see how the wheels of ideology are churned and reproduced.

Challenging dominant ideologies

This is not to say that dominant ideologies are not challenged. If this were true, there would never be social change. In this sense, we must account for the "resistance to power" (Cammaerts, 2008: 35) as described by Foucault. For Foucault (1980), power is not possessed, but rather exercised through knowledge and discourse; "it traverses and produces things, it induces pleasure, forms of knowledge, produces discourse" (Foucault, 1980: 119). Truth then, is only as real as the discourse that constructs it. From this position "power relations are seen as mobile and multidirectional" (Cammaerts, 2008: 35) meaning that dominant ideologies -or the "truth" - will always be countered by "actors with different ideological backgrounds, political aims and political strategies" (Cammaerts, 2008: 35). However, according to Tomaselli, there is often a limit to which the mass media is willing to challenge these dominant ideologies. He says even when journalists do "situate themselves outside of this hegemonic ideology" (Tomaselli, 2001: 32), these individuals risk "discursive and material sanctions" (Tomaselli, 2001: 32). African journalists, as will be revealed in the next section, face unique constraints in resisting dominant ideologies within the local, national and international context.

The problems with exercising global journalism ethics in Africa

In much the same way that human rights discourse has been criticized by post-colonial scholars for being "at odds with local realities" (Wasserman, 2007: 50) in Africa, so too has the application of universal journalism principles designed to uphold those rights. This section will first look at the political economy critiques of communication in Africa. It will conclude with postcolonial critiques of the liberal democratic model as being at odds with African cultural values.

Political economy critiques at the global level

Political economists (Mansell and Nordenstreng, 2006; Uka Uche, 1991) argue global economic and political power imbalances continue to contribute to Africa's inability to implement liberal media systems that are free, pluralistic and "ensure that all voices in society are heard" (BBC WST AMDI, 2006: 8). While reports from the International Commission for the Study of Communication Problems [ICSCP] 1980, and later the World Summit on the Information Society [WSIS] 2003 and 2005, have tried to address the problem of "one-way flows" of information, media infrastructure and content is still heavily dictated by richer nations (Mansell and Nordenstreng, 2006). While Graham (2009) agrees with these critiques, he argues too much research has emphasised power imbalances that are measurable at the level of consciousness. He believes the political economy of communication needs to move beyond "structural factors and labour processes" (McChesney, 2000) to learn how consciousness is produced (Graham, 2009). For instance, the BBC World Service, based in London, continues to be a dominant source of information *about Africa, for Africans;* "talk of 'electronic colonialism' might be excessive, but for all intents and purposes, the media that matter are Northern and Western" (ICHRP, 2002: 43). This proclamation does not only mean that often the BBC World Service reports on African issues more quickly and thoroughly than their local competitors, but also the messages, or values, embedded in vernacular reporting is heavily influenced by western ideals; *the media might not tell us what to think, but they tell us what to think about"* (ICHRP, 2002: 43).

Political Economy at the national level

At the national level, some scholars believe many African leaders liberalized their media laws in the early 1990s to "satisfy conditionality for access to international aid" (Bama, 2010: 296), rather than out of a genuine commitment to, or belief in, public discourse that would hold their governments to account. While the continent has seen a proliferation in private press and private broadcast houses, "the media in Africa are effectively controlled by government

and capital, who are both keen to feed the public with nothing subversive to their interests and power" (Nyamnjoh, 2004: 129). While it is true that on the continent laws used to stifle the media have been loosened, there is little assessment about whether new legal frameworks are being respected (Bama, 2010). Furthermore, though media regulatory bodies have been established to protect journalists' code of ethics, and in turn freedom of speech, closer examinations often reveal that these establishments are not independent and are governed by individuals with close ties to government (Shale, 2008). Thus, out of fear of reprisal from government, and the bodies closely connected to them, a culture of self-censorship has grown in the African media (Nyamnjoh, 2005; Whitten-Woodring, 2009). As a result, journalists often sideline their ethical standards in order to survive in the day-to-day operations of the media landscape (HRW, 2010).

Finally, thought it may seem obvious, the professionalization of the media in Africa according to liberal democratic indicators is seriously hampered by economic restraints. Though the direct consequences are felt directly by journalists who are often not adequately paid to do their jobs, broader implications include unbalanced representation of people and stories that favour the ruling elites who can, and do, pay for prominent coverage in news media content (Mwesige, 2004).

"The Individual" vs. "The Community"

Even if the global economy was more balanced, and African governments were more tolerant, postcolonial scholars maintain that global journalism would continue to clash with the cultural and communal values of life in Africa (Kasoma, 1996; Wasserman, 2007). According to these scholars, individualism contradicts the African ethic of *Ubuntu*, which guides-decision making based on communal consensus rather than viewing each person in a position of independence (Wasserman, 2007). Furthermore, while these scholars maintain global citizens might well deserve "truth-telling, human dignity and non-malfeasance" (Christians, 2010: 16), it is pointed out that that nuances within and between cultures must be examined when discussing ways to communicate social injustices (Wasserman, 2007).

As a result, African reporters, unlike their western counterparts, struggle between serving the rights of individuals and those rights which are perceived to be in the interest of communities. At the most fundamental level, says Nyamnjoh:

> To be of real service to liberal democracy, they [journalists] must ignore alternative ideas of personhood and agency in the cultural communities of which they are part. Similarly, attending to the interests of a particular cultural group risks contradicting the principles

of liberal democracy and its emphasis on the autonomous individual. (Nyamnjoh, 2005: 3)

Kasoma, though criticized for idealizing traditional Africa (Banda, 2009), contends that journalists have an obligation to uphold the "socio-political and ethical tenets of the society it serves" (Kasoma, 1996: 98). From this perspective, journalist should not separate themselves, or others, from the "mutual counselling and correction of African communal living" (Kasoma, 1996: 100). Thus, Banda claims that journalists in Africa need to once again realign themselves with the morals of their families, clans and tribes to avoid serving the selfish interests of individualism.

This does not mean the fundamental values between communities and individuals will be at odds. However, how values are communicated can vary. For instance, Wasserman admits that "while human dignity apparently has broad resonance across various ethical traditions, this broad theoretical spectrum also results in considerable differences in interpretation of the concept" (Wasserman, 2010: 77). In using an example of reporting HIV/AIDS-related deaths of prominent figures in South Africa, Wasserman says western media expose the stories based on the principles of freedom of expression, while "advocates for African values" (Wasserman, 2007: 42) felt the deaths should be dealt with privately, within the confines of specific communities.

Statement of conceptual framework

This study seeks to draw on the contentions explored in the above literature review as they relate to the coverage of homosexual issues in Uganda. In doing so, this paper draws heavily on the concept of ideology – including how ideologies become dominant and how they are challenged. The concept of ideology is used to explore the tension between two other key concepts: universal human rights and the relativism of cultural values. As this paper has argued, these are both discourses that represent competing views about how journalism should, or even can, be practiced. One the one hand is the concept of global journalism ethics, born out of the liberal democratic model, and seen by its proponents as "a journalism of public reason supports objective, informed discussion on essential issues in ways that respect all participants and the principles of justice" (Ward, 2010: 250). On the other hand this paper will also consider political economy and postcolonial critiques that place power relations in the center of their study to expose the local, national and international forces that influence African journalism.

Research Objectives

Therefore, drawing on the concepts identified above, this study attempts to look at how Ugandan journalists perceive covering issues of homosexuality in relation to ongoing ideological debates about human rights and journalism ethics. As was stated in the introduction, there has been little attention, if any, given to how African journalists reflect on their roles and duties in covering issues of homosexuality.

Thus, the overarching questions for this study are: How do journalists understand their role in covering issues of homosexuality in relation to their ideologies? What factors influence the way journalists cover this issue? How do journalists think the media *should* report issues of homosexuality for the Ugandan public?

The information attained from this study will enhance content analysis findings which show there is an absence of homosexual voices and pro-gay perspectives in the Ugandan media (Kaoma, 2010; Strand, 2011). By gaining an insight into journalists' *perceptions* and *experiences* of covering issues of homosexuality, a more holistic understanding of the influences that shape these stories will be provided. This will help future media development and human rights initiatives understand the complexities in reporting sensitive, and controversial, issues about homosexuality in the African context.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOY

In order to "obtain descriptions of the interviewees' lived world with respect to interpretation of the meaning of a described phenomena" (Kvale, 2007: 11) depth interviews (Bauer and Gaskell, 2000) with Uganda journalists were chosen as the best research method for this study.

Due to the sensitive nature of the subject, along with cultural differences between the respondents and interviewer, the interview experience was seen as one which sought to acknowledge power dynamics instead of ignore them. Since the international community has fervently condemned Uganda for the 2009 Anti-Homosexuality Bill, and I am a product of that community, it was important to create an interview context where we could comfortably acknowledge the differences, and potential tensions, in our backgrounds. Because of these considerations, it was a priority to carry out the interviews face-to-face in case the respondents felt "self-conscious and perhaps a little hesitant or defensive" (Bauer and Gaskell, 2000: 45).

It was also a priority to create a rapport with the respondents to establish mutual trust and openness, and to create an environment where the journalists could raise issues they felt were important to the subject matter being discussed. Thus, taking from Holstein and Gubrium's description of the "active interview", the interview was designed to elicit the "hidden feelings or attitudes and beliefs" (Berger, 1998: 55) of the respondents, but to also create an environment that accommodated "contextual shifts and reflexivity" (Holstein and Gubrium, 1995: 55). The semi-structured approach of the active interview also provides flexibility so that the "interview and its participants are constantly developing" (Holstein and Gubrium, 1995: 14) and are not restricted by the standardized formats of questionnaires.

Method set-backs and considerations

Though this research was an exercise in reflexivity, I was aware that depth-interviews between the respondents and myself would elicit information that was constructed to suit the context in which they took place (Gill, 1996). This could result in the respondents saying what they thought was "right" or "acceptable" as opposed to being open about their own "moral realities" (Silverman, 2001: 114). Furthermore, I was worried that given the sensitive nature of the subject, respondents might "refuse to answer questions, feign memory lapses, or balk at being drawn into a position implied by a line of questioning" (Lindlof and Taylor, 2002: 171). Consideration was given to other forms of interviewing, namely focus group discussions.

In using this research tool participants would have been encouraged to "talk and to respond to each other, to compare experiences and impressions and to react to what other people in the group say" (Gaskell and Bauer, 2000: 46).

While the social interaction of a focus group may have elicited more "genuine" responses from some of the respondents, it may also have stifled opinions. Fern describes the "the fear of social disproval" (Fern, 2001: 106) that cause some participants of focus groups to "withhold their thoughts" (Fern, 2001: 106). While the respondents I chose to interview were all accomplished journalists within their own media organizations, the differences between rural versus urban, male versus female, and large media organization versus small could have resulted in a feelings of pressure since respondents would have been aware they were being "evaluated by group members" (Fern, 2001: 110). Given that in Uganda it is unpopular, taboo even, to express a pro-gay sentiment (Strand, 2011), I did not know if respondents would feel comfortable sharing this point of view among those who opposed homosexuality. Furthermore, since "safety and security of journalists remain frail in Uganda" (HRNJ-U, 2011: para 9) in light of anti-government riots in the country, I did not think congregating with a group of journalists to discuss a contentious political issue was responsible.

Sampling and recruiting of the respondents

Having worked within the media landscape in Uganda for two years, and specifically when the 2009 Anti-Homosexuality Bill was first tabled, I was familiar with the various media houses and high-profile journalists that covered the story. Furthermore, given that most of my work with the BBC World Service Trust was with the rural media, I had the advantage of also knowing smaller radio stations in more remote areas of the country that also gave attention to homosexual issues. While, the criteria for *which type* of journalist I wanted to interview was open, I interviewed journalists who had experience covering homosexual issues for well-established news organizations, as opposed to tabloid newspapers or music-based radio stations[3]. Thus I felt confident that in being asked to discuss the reporting of homosexuality the respondents were "capable of speaking reliably and validly for a population on the basis of their representativeness or informativeness." (Holstein and Gubrium, 1995: 74).

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[3] In being reflexive about the selection process I acknowledge that my criterion for who might be considered "reputable" is based upon my own western-centric background in journalism which prizes journalists who adhere to liberal democratic journalism ethics.

In the sampling process, I accessed respondents "via professional and personal networks" (Singh, 2001: 398). I used my former Ugandan colleagues and trainees to identify reporters within various media organizations who were known to report the 2009 Anti-Homosexuality Bill. In some cases I was also put in contact with interviewees via the "snowball" strategy (Heckathorn, 1997). Since I felt it was important to explore "the range of opinions" (Bauer and Gaskell, 2000: 40) of how journalists felt about covering issues of homosexuality, I did not limit the respondents to one geographical location or medium. Instead, I wanted to talk to "different members of the social milieu" (Bauer and Gaskell, 2000: 40). In the end, I interviewed 11 journalists who all ranged in age, experience, gender, medium, educational background, religion, and type of media organization.[4] The number of stories each journalist covered about homosexual issues varied drastically. Some respondents had filed ten or more stories, while others said their experience was limited to only a few reports. The news editors, of which there were three interviewed, said they edited between 20-50 stories about homosexual issues between when the 2009 Anti-Homosexuality Bill was tabled in October 2009 and when the research interview took place.

Since all of the respondents had busy jobs and schedules, the location and time of each interview was chosen by each individual. Most people chose to be interviewed in a private area of their workplace, though some requested to meet at coffee shops and restaurants.

Research tools

Interview Guide

The interview guide was designed to be semi-structured to reflect the main ideas in the theoretical framework. Given that I had lived Uganda, I also felt it reflected an informed understanding of the contentious issues regarding homosexuality in Africa. Thus I felt confident my line of questioning proved I was "familiar with the material, cultural, and interpretative circumstances to which respondents might orient, and with the vocabulary through which experience will be conveyed." (Holstein and Gubrium, 1995: 77) However, the guide also gave me the room to ask "follow-up questions and pursue topics that are of interest for a considerable length of time" (Berger, 1998: 57). This meant that each interview was unique, and that often topics were explored as they naturally arose. Some respondents felt comfortable boldly raising sensitive issues such as personal perceptions of homosexuality.

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[4] For demographic details of each respondent please see Appendix I

For others, since I did not want to appear intrusive, I eased into questions by asking about work experiences rather than personal feelings.

Each respondent gave permission to be recorded at the beginning of each interview. I also took hand-written notes of common and contradictory ideas that arose between the respondents. Once all the interviews had concluded, I listened back to all of the tapes – twice – to transcribe all the pertinent quotes and ideas that informed the analysis.

Data Analysis

In searching for meaning rather than for truth (Rabie, 2004), I analyzed the data using thematic analysis, while recognizing that the emerging themes were a construction of discourse as the interviews occurred (Gill, 1996). While the theoretical framework helped me navigate my way through the data, I also allowed "for themes to emerge directly from the data." (Fereday and Muir Cochrane, 2006: 83). For example, prior to the interviews and analysis, I did not predict how much the respondents would emphasize the role of the international media in their coverage of homosexual issues. Thus the "international media" became its own category, and the theoretical framework was re-explored. This approach concedes to Silverman's (2001) suggestion that while data analysis must be theoretically informed, there should not be a pre-mature closure on the issues before all data is explored.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

In this section I will attempt to draw out some of the key arguments that helped answer my research questions. Through repeated listening and organizing of my data, four themes emerged as key influences in how Uganda journalists perceive covering issues of homosexuality. They are: personal views about homosexuality in relation to cultural values and human rights, relationships to audiences, government influence, and the political economy of the international media.

Personal perceptions of homosexuality: cultural values and human rights

Personal views about homosexuality varied between the respondents with four saying they believed in sexual freedom, as described by Isaac: "Gay people in Uganda must live, they must be free. They must be free to walk on the streets of Kampala" (Isaac, 2011). However, only one of these respondents said they believe a person is born homosexual. Four other respondents claimed they had yet to make up their mind about homosexuality. For instance, Ssozi admitted he didn't have enough reliable information, "even myself I don't know about it. I don't know what's so good about it. I don't know how bad it is" (Ssozi, 2011). However, those who claimed to not have a personal position on the matter often inadvertently revealed negative attitudes towards homosexuality either by referring to the beliefs of their church or their cultural backgrounds. Three other journalists condemned homosexuality outright, believing it is a selfish lifestyle choice or something people are forced into. The most extreme view came from Pascal, "given my background, my faith, I came to hate those gays for good" (Pascal, 2011).

In general, acceptance or abhorrence of gay people was always related back to the respondents' varying degree of attachment to culture and religion, or belief in human rights and globalization.

Cultural values that do not recognize homosexuality

The most common theme that emerged linking the varying degrees of acceptance to homosexuality was the notion of African relativism. All of the respondents identified with being religious to some degree, however the correlation between a respondent's dedication to their faith and their views on homosexuality were not as pronounced as the notion African cultural values in relation to homosexuality. Many of the respondents believed that homosexuality did not exist on the continent prior to Western and Arab influence. Charles

pointed out, even today, homosexuality is not recognized in his tribe; "there is not even a word that describes it" (Charles, 2011).

Journalists who denounced homosexuality considered it an imposition from foreign nations. However, though these people held similar cultural beliefs, they had different views on how the media should deal with the issue of homosexuality. One respondent (Charles, 2011) believed that any publicity, either bad or good, was still drawing attention to the issue and so he refused to cover it. Other respondents (Pascal, 2011; Olive, 2011) saw the media as a platform for people "cured" of homosexuality to share their experiences about being lead astray. Pascal (2011) said he would never be willing to air the perspective of a gay person who wanted to be accepted by society as a homosexual.

All of the respondents who did not support homosexuality simultaneously believed in human rights. However, these journalists did not believe the Anti Homosexuality Bill, or hatred targeted at gay people, was a human rights violation. One of the respondents said homosexuals should categorically be denied their rights (Pascal, 2011), while two admitted they had never before considered homophobia within the context of human rights (Charles, 2011; Ssozi, 2011).   This supports Halsteen's research in Uganda that human rights are often "bent according to vested interests" (Halsteen, 2004: 121). Journalists who claimed they sought out to expose human rights violations such as graft and child labour, were concurrently ignorant of, or opposed to, human rights that involve homosexuals.

Homosexual Rights are Human Rights

The journalists who said they accept gay rights did so from the point of view that they are "with the times". This meant rather than equating homosexuality as being intrinsic to the African way of life, they saw it as the inevitable force of globalization, "changing" African identity. Interestingly, only one journalist who supported homosexual rights believed that a person is born gay; the rest believed it was a lifestyle choice.

The journalists who strongly viewed homosexuality as an individual human right said they approached covering the issue from a balanced manner, specifically seeking out gay people to be part of their stories (Richard, 2011; Emmanuel, 2011; Isaac, 2011). These journalists wrote their stories using first hand sources, rather than copying stories from other sources or giving the bare facts of the proceedings in parliament when the Anti Homosexuality Bill was being discussed. As Richard claimed, he proposed a feature piece to try and contextual the debate about homophobia in Uganda:

> So, I sat with this homosexual man, and we shared a table and a drink. And I went to the Christian pastor and we shared a table and no drink. And we chatted face to face, eye to eye. And trying to understand, to listen to both sides, and understand where they are coming from. (Richard, 2011)

However, respondents who possessed strong sentiments *in favour* of gay rights did not necessarily go out of their way to pitch stories on the subject. Often journalists felt that balancing the story with the pro-gay point of view was enough coverage of the issue, and did not feel it was necessary to give a more in-depth portrayal of gay Ugandans. These journalists generally felt that to go beyond telling a balanced account of the 2009 Anti Homosexuality Bill proceedings would appear as if they were trying to promote homosexuality, which would be breaching their ethical codes of objectivity and impartiality (Emmanuel, 2011; Isaac, 2011). This supports findings of the ICHRP that journalists are often dismissive of covering human rights violations when they are not deemed "newsworthy" (ICHRP, 2002). In the daily editorial decisions of what will make the news of the day, journalists weigh the news values of particular stories and events; what is *new*, what has *impact*, what does the public *needs to know*. In this story selection process, journalists have "no duty to privilege human rights stories over others" (ICHRP, 2002: 3).

Relationships to Audiences

As was discovered by Kanyegirire (2007) in his study on the perceptions of African journalists in relation to their role of reporting regional development initiatives, journalists will preserve, defend or enhance their various identifications depending on the issue being discussed (Kanyegirire, 2007). This means, according to Kanyegirire, emphasis upon which journalists see themselves as an African, Ugandan, and a journalist is always in fluctuation, and prioritised dependent upon the circumstances.

In the case of reporting homosexuality, there was a strong division between the respondents who felt they had an obligation to cater to the priorities of their audiences with those who believed they had an obligation to challenge dominant perspectives about homosexuality. By and large, journalists who worked in rural media houses emphasised their identification with the *Ugandan community*. On the contrary, most of the reporters who work for national media outlets in Kampala felt more attached to their *journalistic identity*. As was revealed in the findings, this has huge implications for the enactment of liberal journalism ethics.

Telling audiences what they want to hear

Several journalists interviewed for this study maintained their obligation to cater to the needs and priorities of their audiences. Ssozi believed that relationship had to be honoured above all else: "we have to be at par with our listeners. We need to know what they want, and we need do what they want. Nevermind that we need to be objective" (Ssozi, *2011)*. This perception was primarily held by journalists working in smaller radio stations, broadcasting to specific communities of people, rather than to the country at large. However, this sentiment was also held by a national radio reporter who insisted after travelling the country, homosexuality was not an issue people were talking about:

> I know that as a journalist I am supposed to be an agenda setter, ok? – but I also think that the agenda I am supposed to set is supposed to be the agenda that affects my audience most, you know. Issues of poverty, issues of maybe nepotism in this country, these issues are far higher than the issue of homosexuals. (Charles, 2011)

These respondents repeatedly inferred that a) Ugandans in their areas did not have an interest in homosexual issues and b) those who do take an interest in the topic, only do so from the anti-gay point of view. For this reason, the respondents admitted they did not try to balance the stories they covered about the Anti-Homosexuality Bill, and therefore often ended up advocating on its behalf.

To understand this more deeply, it is important to consider the relationship African radio journalists have with their listeners. Community radio, as it has been conceived of in African media development initiatives, "taps into community communication and promotes rural citizenship in Africa by engaging with the people and facilitating debates among them" (Ocwich, 2010: 245) The emphasis has been on diminishing the boundaries between radio stations and citizens, thus giving regular people a sense of ownership over their local communication outlets. While the reporters interviewed work for a mixture of *community* and *commercial* radio stations[5], and obviously the degree to which regular Ugandans have influence over content is limited by the financial interests of station owners, there was a strong sense among the respondents of feeling tied to their listeners. They described the relationship as; "part of my listeners", "serving the community", "identifying with people" (Billie, 2011; Mary, 2011; Pascal, 2011; Ssozi, 2011). Ironically however, in the case of reporting homosexuality, journalists considered their community of listeners as a

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[5] The difference here being that some of the stations' revenue comes from advertising, while some of the content is funded by a mixture of government, donor support and local NGOs. Given the limited space, there is not room to go deeper into the nuances of community radio in this paper.

homogenous group – a group opposed to homosexuality - which goes against the community radio values of seeking diversity.

The perception that these journalists are *embedded* within their communities also supports the idea that African journalists, to a larger degree than their western counterparts, seek communal recognition (Nyamnjoh, 2005; Kasoma, 1996). Aside from the fear of financial repercussions in broadcasting "unpopular views" in their communities, there was also a feeling amongst the respondents that their personal relationships with their communities would be damaged in reporting the pro-gay side of the story. On the more extreme side, reporters felt their personal safety could be threatened. Mary described what she thought would happen if her station was seen as promoting homosexuality: "People will turn against you, and then can even kill you" (Mary, 2011). However, most journalists shared the sentiment that communities would "brand" (Billie, 2011) any journalist balancing a story with a pro-gay voice as an outsider, or at worst, as a homosexual. It is important to mention this point because rural radio journalists *live* in the communities they serve. "Branding" thus can have more direct social and material consequences for rural journalists than those who work for national media who may be reporting a different location than where their stories are being consumed.

 It is important to recognize the one rural journalist who tried to report the Anti-Homosexuality Bill within the context of human rights. Billie (2011) said he could not balance the story because no one in his community was willing to publicly defend gay rights on the radio. This again points to the larger societal influences of anti-gay sentiment in Uganda, thus showing that even when the media tries to counter dominant ideologies, they are often "minimised by the overwhelming solidity of accepted common sense" (Tomaselli, 12: 2001).

Challenging Audiences

Generally, the perceptions of those working for national media organizations emphasized less of an obligation to appease widespread homophobic sentiment. In fact, all three national newspaper journalists felt it was *necessary* to challenge dominant homophobic sentiment in the country. Richard believed this was his duty no matter what story he was covering, "there is always that aspect of journalistic enterprise which seeks to advance progressive views; to guide society (Richard, 2011).

The duty to "offer minorities a platform to advance their views" (Emmanuel, 2011) caters to the Ward's theory of patriotism (2010) within the journalistic practice which encourages an exercise in restraint from the patriotic feelings towards one country. Instead then, to serve one's nation means to "help a reasonable, informed public to exist" (Ward, 2010: 51). However, in the case of the three national newspaper reporters, this attitude was also afforded by the fact that the journalists did not experience direct hostility from the public, nor did they claim to receive pressure from the paper's managers or owners. While all three reporters did say there was widespread resentment from their readers for publishing pro-gay positions, it was targeted at the gay people featured in the stories and not at the journalists themselves (Emmanuel, 2011; Isaac, 2011; Richard, 2011). This is an interesting contradiction to the rural radio journalists who felt their personal reputation, and even safety, was in question when covering issues of homosexuality. Interestingly however, Isaac described one situation where colleague intimation caused one reporter to abandon coverage of the story:

> There is a friend of mine who went to Oxford, and when he came back he was pushing for the gay thing. In the paper he was writing stories about gay. So in the newsroom people were joking, "hey this guy might be gay, we need to investigate". So in fact this guy was forced to, to like give up the story. (Isaac, 2011)

In summarizing the findings of this section, it becomes clear that those who work for national media versus those who work for local media, experience less direct public influence when covering issues of homosexuality. This affords them the ability to connect more with their individual journalistic identity than to their identity as a member of the Ugandan community. As a result, there is more room for national journalists to act as agenda *setters* as opposed to *followers*. However, there are exceptions to this claim when we begin to consider other influences within the working environments of the media houses.

Government Influence

Overall the respondents felt government did not directly intervene when they wrote or broadcast stories about homosexuality. However government influence cannot be overlooked – or underestimated.

The most direct example of government influence came from Rachel, who works for the state's television broadcaster. Rachel said her attempt to give balance Anti Homosexuality Bill was stopped before it was aired by her bosses who were given direct orders from the Minister of Ethics and Integrity. "So I actually had a one-sided story because I had Bahati in Parliament presenting his Bill and what the MPs had to say, but I did not get hopes from the gay people to know what they think about the bill" (Rachel, 2011).

Several of the rural journalists indicated that government officials in their communities meddle in station affairs on a regular basis either directly, or through station owners (Mary, 2011; Pascal 2011; Rachel, 2011; Ssozi, 2011). This was explained by Rosebell who concedes that when taking a close look, many of Uganda's radio stations are owned by government representatives or by business owners with close ties to the ruling party: "So you are not going to go on a minster's radio station and say, "yeah gay" - you will be fired the next day" (Rosebell, 2011). A recent assessment of Uganda's media landscape carried out by the African Media Barometer in 2010 found that along with the state-owned Uganda Broadcasting Coorportation, members of the ruling party are building up a media conglomerate called the New Vision Group which is in possession of more than fifteen media houses across the country (ABM: 2010).

This will explain why a lot of journalists in Uganda cannot conceive of presenting anti-government positions on issues of homosexuality, or many other matters of public concern. It points to a larger claim that in Uganda press freedom is increasingly under threat (HRW, 2010). The repercussions of this have meant that many Ugandan journalists "play it safe" (Mwesige, 2004: 84) when exercising their watchdog role on contentious issues of public policy (Mwesige, 2004). Thus the apparent nonchalance government displayed in the coverage of the Anti Homosexuality Bill does not indicate a tolerance of government for pro-gay voices. Instead it indicates "internalised assumption of what is expected of the media" (Nyamnjoh, 2005: 72) which results in content that government does not oppose in the first place. Or as Ssozi aptly asserts,

> If ever you want the police to call you, you just talk of politics. Just talk of bad things. They will just invite you there and then … But with these other kind of programs, the homosexuals, agriculture, no problem! The government cannot call you because you have talked about homosexual. What are they going to ask you about? (Ssozi, 2011)

The political economy of the international media

This last section of analysis moves beyond the local and national actors that have influenced Ugandan coverage of homosexual issues. The role the international media has played in these local media processes is perhaps the most complex, and least apparent, group of findings. International news organizations, in their relentless coverage of homophobia in Uganda, dictated while at the same time deterred, local coverage of homosexual issues. Or as Rosebell describes, "the international media obsession has translated to a Uganda obsession" (Rosebell, 2011).

When the Anti-Homosexuality Bill was tabled in the Ugandan Parliament, "all of the guys who were in the gallery that day just said, "well, this is another one of those "other" stories. They wrote the stories and the editors likewise dumped it on page four and page five or something" (Emmanuel, 2011). According to some respondents, within hours of the story being posted on Ugandan media websites, "the issue had gone viral on the web...Before we knew it, international journalists were flocking all over the country" (Emmanuel, 2011). The force by which western media organizations exposed the Anti- Homosexuality Bill and Ugandan homophobia around the world took many of the respondents by surprise. At the time, not one journalist interviewed said they could have predicted how such an "unimportant" (Isaac, 2011) issue to most Ugandans would turn into a global story of great tension and debate.

As many of the respondents explained, the story might never have left the sidelines of page five had the story not been picked up by all major international news organizations (Emmanuel, 2011; Isaac, 2011; Rosebell, 2011). However, it did not seem to be a question – and thus an unconscious decision was made – that the Ugandan media follow suit. Emmanuel explained:

> The comments from the West were informing what they were reporting here. So Ugandan journalists just sat back and said "well it seems you international media are paying more attention to this Bill, so you do the coverage.(Emmanuel, 2011)

Many journalists interviewed said it was the international media, and subsequently the international community, which dictated how much attention the story deserved, and was given, in Uganda. As the respondents explained, if they were not trying to keep up with the sheer volume of international stories being covered around the world, they were reporting on the international community's *reaction* to the 2009 Anti Homosexuality Bill (Emmanuel, 2011; Isaac, 2011; Richard, 2011; Rosebell, 2011). This again supports research carried out by the ICHRP (2002) that while technology fosters the ability to spread local messages and values, the unbalanced relationship between the North and South means the the "moral vernacular used by Southern media is essentially western-influenced" (ICHRP, 2002: 70). Admittedly, this influence was more reflected by respondents who work in Kampala for national media organizations. As Richard explained, the leading journalists of the country,

> watch CNN and Al Jazeera, read the BBC online, you know, the Guardian, Telegraph or the Sun, Daily Mail, Mirror...New York Times...so ummm...you're leading sort of Ugandan journalists is sort of a much more westernized kind of journalist. (Richard, 2011)

Perhaps ironically, the ways in which the Ugandan media tried to mimic the international media's portrayal of homosexual issues was in fact counter-productive in trying to change homophobic sentiment. According to Rosebell:

> The story has been simplified. I go the gay rights activist and I pick my bite, and I go to an extreme religious leader denouncing homophobia and I pick my bite...So I don't see stories that are covered that go a get Ugandan voices that say, "hey, I have a sister who is gay, and I don't agree with this, but this is where life as come to, and I'm learning, and you know I'm struggling." That story is dead. (Rosebell, 2011)

There have been significant critiques of the international media's simplification of Africa's problems (Bourdieu, 1998; Mamdani, 2007), resulting in a "dehistoricized and dehistorizing, fragmented and fragmenting" (Bourdieu, 1998: 7) portrayal of the continent's issues. However, these critiques have tended to focus on how these portrayals influence the perceptions of *western audiences'* views of Africa. What must also be considered, if the African media is replicating stories from a western position, is how this is also impacting African audiences' and readers' perceptions of *themselves.*

Of course not all journalists followed the western media's lead. In fact, as research has shown, the Ugandan media often neglected to report pro-gay voices in their stories, did not often frame the issue within the human rights context, and generally depicted the country as a unified homophobic nation (Kaoma, 2010; Strand, 2011). However, this apparent neglect of journalism ethics, must too be seen as an acknowledgement of, and counter-reaction to, the domineering ideological influence of the international media. Pascal (2011) said if Ugandan journalists were not adhering to values of objectivity, neither was the international media: "They are more into saying, "no, you should do this, you should not segregate those people, these people have blood, they are like you" (Pascal, 2011). This resentment was felt by many of the respondents who, as a form of resistance to what they perceived as moral imperialism, asserted their "African values" in media reporting of the homosexual issues. This resistance took many forms, as has been already observed in this paper from actively denouncing homosexuality on the air (Pascal, 2011; Ssozi, 2011), to actively avoiding coverage of the issue (Charles, 2011).

A discussion on the findings' implications for global journalism ethics

The analysis of the data has exposed vast, and sometimes contradictory, accounts of journalists' perceptions and actions in relation their coverage of homosexual issues in Uganda. Ultimately, what it has indicated is "the practice of journalism ethics reflects the specificity of the context in question" (Banda, 2010: 124). Context, in this case, is not only in reference to what many postcolonial scholars have described as the homogenous economic,

social and cultural realities of "Africa". Context instead, has been observed within the ideologies of each journalist in relation to their immediate and distant worlds.

It has been possible to generalize some of the perceptions journalists hold in relation to covering issues of homosexuality. However, Ugandan journalists, as professionals "whose principle responsibility is the reporting of the world and making it understandable" (Silverstone, 2006: 151), are not a homogenous group. They do not all conceive of universal journalism ethics as the "rational normative principle" (Ward, 2010: 174) upon which African journalism can flourish. Certainly when it comes to covering issues of homosexuality, some journalists feel the duties to uphold their ethical guidelines *contradic*t the morals of their communities and country.

Nor do all Ugandan journalists believe that cultural relativism, in its pure and unadulterated form, is realistic or even desirable, given the complex globalized realities of today's world (Banda, 2010). Rather, these journalists feel it is their duty to *resist and challenge* the dominant norms of societal structures and beliefs, and in this process, accept this often requires telling people what they do not necessarily want to hear (Ward, 2010).

The point is that how Ugandan journalists perceive of their roles is influenced by a number of local, national and international influences that are sometimes in isolation, but are more often entangled in the "ideological repertoires" (Christians, 2010: 137) of competing interests. In negotiating their way through these influences, media practice has become "hybritized and creolized" (Banda, 2009: 237). This means that Ugandan journalists, as products of their cultures, but also of the processes of globalization, often chose their identities and make decisions to "fit the circumstances of specific locales, times and populations" (Kanyegirire, 2007: 107). As Rosebell explained, this adjustment is necessary in order to continue to be accepted within African communities, but to also be in the position to challenge them:

> You must understand that these are complex issues of a society and you can't just say right and wrong, no. You must be able to look at where this person is coming from and understand and also challenge them, but challenge them in a way that you have understood where they are from. (Rosebell, 2011)

This of course does not mean African journalists have been, and will be, fair to all people, at all times. Instead, as has been revealed in the academia, international media, and even amongst the journalists themselves, they are sometimes at fault for "undermining the dignity of those who are their subjects" (Silverstone, 2006: 151) as well as "deliberately or ignorantly distorting the meaning of events" (Silverstone, 2006: 151). Certainly in the case of covering homosexual issues, socio-cultural ideologies predominated much of the media discourse,

which was often overtly, or covertly, infused with hatred targeted at this minority group (Strand, 2011). However, to condemn these journalists for breaking their code of ethics would be in some ways, missing the point. As scholars and media development experts, both in Africa and around the world, continue to discuss the future of African journalism, ethics must, "respond to the lived experiences of journalists" (Banda, 2009: 239). Africa, as so many postcolonial scholars have pointed out, is not a monolith; neither are African journalists.

CONCLUSION

Eighteen months ago I was advising Ugandan journalists how to uphold their journalistic principles in covering issues of homosexuality. Too easily I dismissed their hesitance, and resistance, as conflicting values between Africa and the western world (Banda, 2009). Too naively did I believe that accurate, fair and balanced reporting would be the solution, or even a possibility in some cases, in encouraging Ugandans to accept homosexuals. At the time, I felt discouraged that the journalism model I always coveted was being ignored and moulded to suit the circumstances and realities of the social and economic landscape in Uganda.

Today, my reflections have changed. If postcolonial scholarship seeks to challenge the "established institutionalization of knowledge" (Shome and Hedge, 2002:250), rather than scrutinize what is wrong with African journalists, it is important to question why these normative principles are at odds with African journalists' realities and identities (Nyamnjoh, 2005). This will require an increase in "mutual learning and cross-cultural emphasis" (Banda, 236: 2009) that is yet to infuse global discussions about the future of journalism, and media development initiatives on the continent (Manyozo, 2011).

As this study has shown, it is necessary to dispel the belief that "packaged and prefabricated media development indicators" (Manyozo, 2011: 230) should, or can be, adopted and adhered to in Africa. However, so too must it be recognized that African journalists hold hybridized and fluid identities that respond to the international, national and local influences in different ways. The future of journalism ethics in African cannot ignore western ideals and influences that have been ideologically embedded into the continent's media landscape. For this reason, research needs to move beyond discussing how the international media's representation of Africa impacts the views of the international community, and focus on how African journalists, as products of the international media, are shaping Africans' views of themselves. However, nor can it be ignored that African journalists are resisting the ideals of global journalism when they feel their local moral ideals are in jeopardy.

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APPENDIX I – RESPONDENT DETAILS

Name	Sex	Job Title	Media Organization	Medium	Location	Years Exp.	Education	Religion
Charles Odongtho	M	Reporter/Host	URN	Radio	Kampala	13	BA	Christian
Rosebell Kagumire	F	Blogger	Freelance	Internet	Kampala	6	MA	Christian
Rachael Naluwagga	F	Reporter/Host	UBC	TV	Kampala	4	BA	Christian
Emmanuel Gyezaho	M	Reporter	Razor	Newspaper	Kampala	8	BA	Christian
Mary Wakigo	F	News Editor	Signal FM	Radio	Mbale	3	Diploma	Christian
Billie Oto	M	Reporter/Host	Unity FM	Radio	Lira	7	High School	Christian
Richard Kavuma	M	Reporter	The Observer	Newspaper	Kampala	15	MA	Christian
Pascal Mwenuka	M	News Editor	Buddu FM	Radio	Masaka	5	BA	Christian
Ssozi Sekimpi	M	News Editor	Equator FM	Radio	Masaka	4	Diploma	Muslim
Isaac Imaka	M	Reporter	Daily Monitor	Newspaper	Kampala	5	BA	Christian
Olive Mutezi	F	News Editor	Mama FM	Radio	Kampala	5	Diploma	Christian