

Editor's Code Review

I would like propose suggest a modest revision to **Clause 12. Discrimination** which would have the effect of acknowledging that prejudicial coverage affects more than any individuals mentioned in a story. It can have severe consequences for members of the specific social group covered by the allegedly discriminatory copy.

Furthermore discriminatory copy can also influence the wider public, instilling hostility or misconceptions which harm social cohesions and understanding.

Stories which discriminate against, appear to encourage discrimination against or which promulgate misperceptions or inaccurate information about minority groups have far wider social repercussions than the impact of a story on a specific individual. Consider in particular Gypsies, Roma and Irish Travellers, the trans community, or asylum-seekers and refugees, and religious communities, notably Muslims and Jews, who suffer prejudice within society which is often exacerbated by stories in the press.

It should be possible for genuine, valid representative organisations to raise complaints about such copy. Some such 'third party' complaints may not stand up to scrutiny, and might perhaps be dismissed as vexatious. However it is vital that journalists and editors in an industry which still lacks diversity come to appreciate the harm that can be done by thoughtless, ignorant or even vindictive stories. Those best placed to understand the impact of problematic copy are those most likely to be affected by it.

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Where some individuals may lack the confidence or wherewithal to tackle the power of the press, their representative organisations may be better placed to file a complaint on their behalf and that of others who may be affected. Stories relating to mental health issues come to mind.

My proposal is simple. **In 12.1) DELETE the words 'an individual' and INSERT at the end of the sentence 'especially when referring to an individual'.**

The revised Clause 12.i) would then read

'The press must avoid prejudicial or pejorative reference to race, colour, religion, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation or to any physical or mental illness or disability especially when referring to an individual.'

Clause 12.ii) would remain as now.

'Details of an individual's race, colour, religion, gender identity, sexual orientation, physical or mental illness or disability must be avoided unless genuinely relevant to the story. '

I trust the Editors' Code Committee will see value in this revision.

Sincerely,

Mike Jempson
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