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Between science, politics and human rights: media coverage of the blood controversies

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ABSTRACT:

South Africa obtained a new constitution in 1994 that enshrined the right to sexual orientation, race and gender equality, as well as – crucially – ensuring the "freedom of the press and other media". However, consequent national debates appear to indicate that the country is still grappling with issues of sexual orientation and of sexual practices.
It is against the complexity of this background that this research examines – through a focus on reported conflict over South Africa's blood transfusion service – how certain debates and controversies around issues of race and sexual orientation arose and played out in the media.

The editorials and opinion pieces of both *The Star* and *The Citizen* newspapers were more than mere platforms for debates to unfold upon. While both publications did undoubtedly provide a seemingly neutral platform for the two controversies to play themselves out, which included ample input from their readers, both publications from their editorial position intervened in a wide range of editorials, opinion pieces, commentaries and one cartoon. Thus, in fact, they played a powerful role in the curating manipulation of the debates.