



Unit 2: The role of the media in a democratic society

Role of the media in a democracy

- 
- **Electronic media-** ICT, computers, radios, TVs, cell phones, DVDs
 - **Print media-** newspapers, books, magazines, brochures, letters, adverts, billboards
 - **Freedom of expression-** you can say what you think and feel freely, give information and viewpoints
 - **Limitations-** boundaries, restrictions, limits
 - **Paparazzi-** photojournalists who follow or chase after celebrities and politicians in both their public and private lives, looking for scandal

- ❖ The role of the media is to inform society about daily events that are newsworthy and to entertain.
- ❖ Newspapers give us daily news, covering local and international events.
- ❖ Telephones keep people in touch with each other and allow them to send and receive messages immediately.
- ❖ Social media are websites and software programmes that allow you to interact instantly with a website or with other users.



The media's role is important in a democracy to:

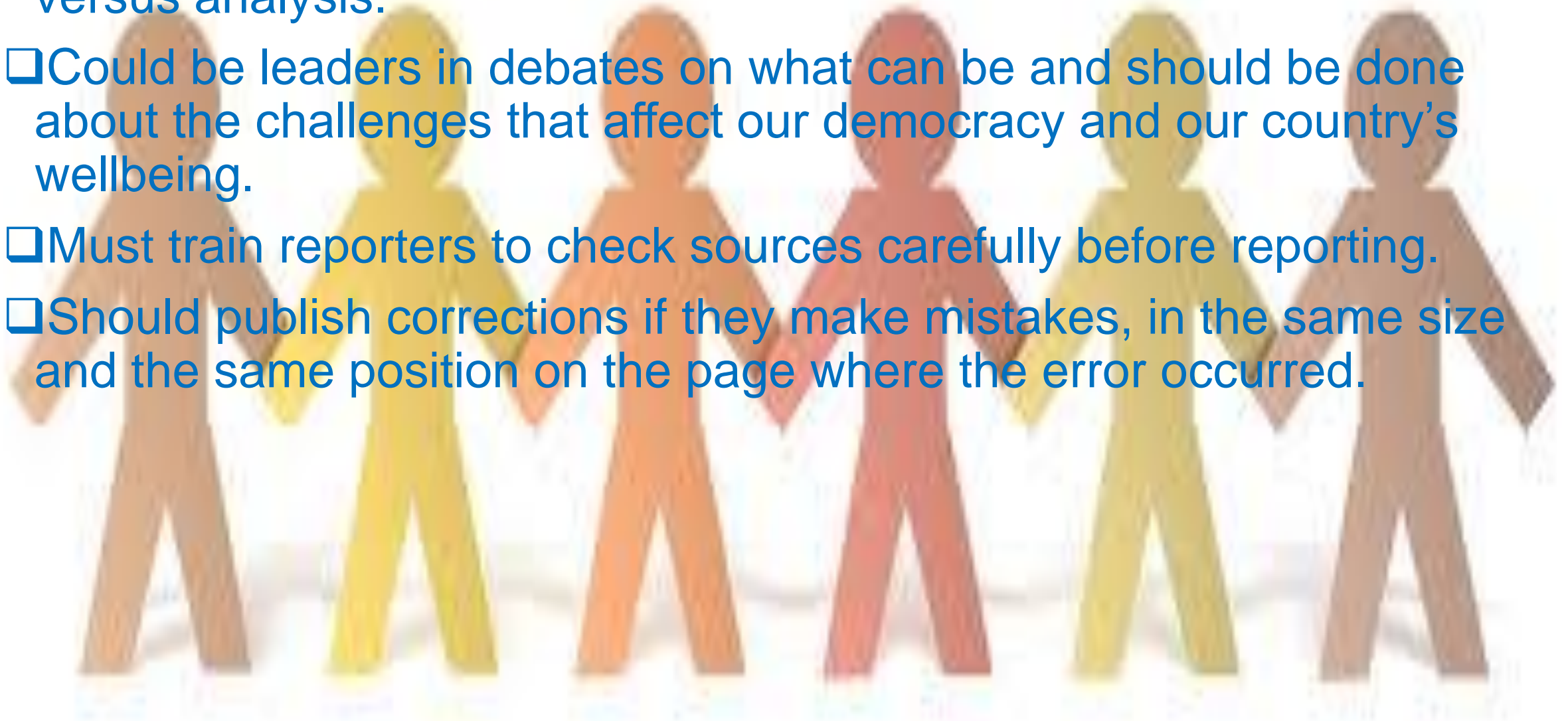
- ☐ Expose violations of human rights
- ☐ Report on unlawful activities, the courts and court cases
- ☐ Expose corruption and mismanagement
- ☐ Communicate, inform and educate
- ☐ Entertain
- ☐ Give political information that can inform voters
- ☐ Identify problems in our communities and country
- ☐ Promote debate discussion
- ☐ Promote nation-building by giving access to diverse viewpoints and world views as well as sports coverage
- ☐ Shape public opinion

The media should:

The media should be fair, honest and reliable. Freedom of expression comes with the responsibility to use this freedom with care, and to take note of the limitations of this freedom.

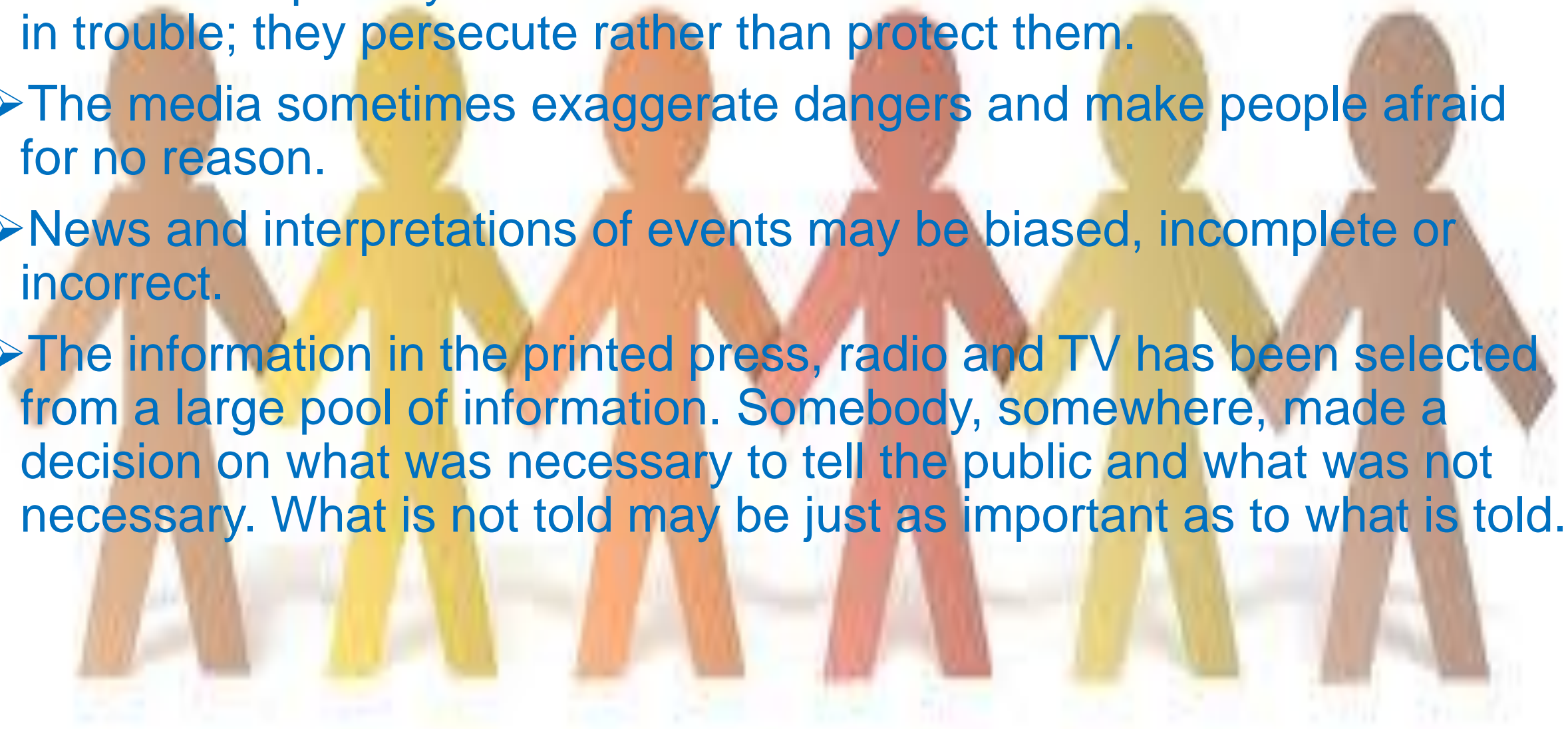
- ☐ *Should explain what is happening, and give enough information to explain why it is happening.*
- ☐ *Must explain issues without being sensational or trying to shock.*
- ☐ *Should focus not only on scandals or use untrue headlines just to sell papers or get their viewership and listenership numbers up so that they can charge more for advertisements.*
- ☐ *Should promote free and fair elections and give political parties equal exposure.*

- ❑ Need to differentiate between facts and opinions, and reporting versus analysis.
- ❑ Could be leaders in debates on what can be and should be done about the challenges that affect our democracy and our country's wellbeing.
- ❑ Must train reporters to check sources carefully before reporting.
- ❑ Should publish corrections if they make mistakes, in the same size and the same position on the page where the error occurred.



Examples of when the media do not fulfil their roles responsibly include:

- Most media make money from advertisements and sponsors. The media therefore aim to satisfy the interests of their advertisers. These may not be the same as the interests of the public. The media may withhold information or give biased reports, to satisfy their sponsors.
- News entertains rather than informs. Some media are filled with gossip, scandals, sex and violence rather than facts.
- Political news is often more about personalities than about politicians' work and contributions. The media publicises the scandalous private lives of politicians and their families, which have nothing to do with their work.

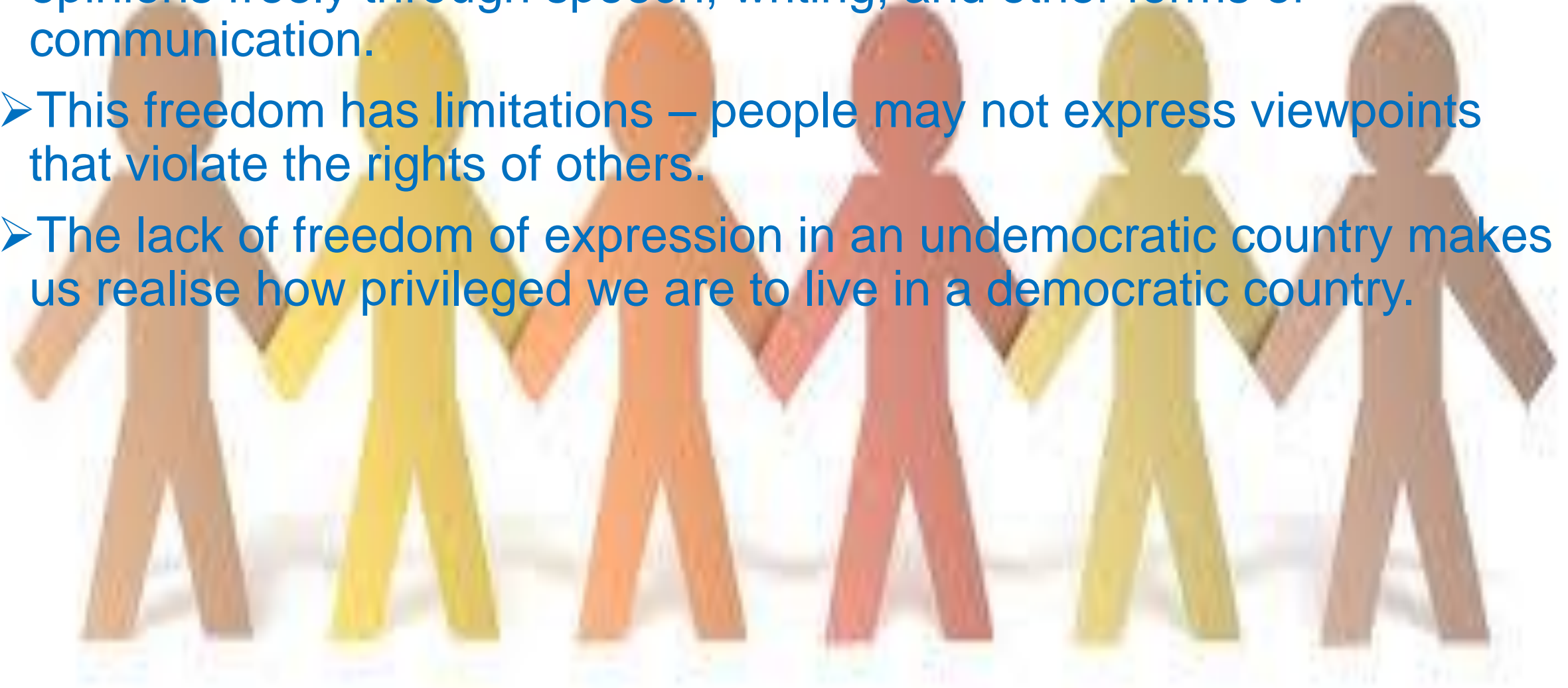
- 
- The lives of famous stars are made difficult by the paparazzi who invade their privacy. The media are like vultures when celebrities are in trouble; they persecute rather than protect them.
 - The media sometimes exaggerate dangers and make people afraid for no reason.
 - News and interpretations of events may be biased, incomplete or incorrect.
 - The information in the printed press, radio and TV has been selected from a large pool of information. Somebody, somewhere, made a decision on what was necessary to tell the public and what was not necessary. What is not told may be just as important as to what is told.

Freedom of expression and limitations

- **Whistle-blower-** a person who reports illegal or immoral activities.
- **Investigative journalists-** news reporters who try to find information that is of interest to the public, but that someone or an institution may try to hide.



- Freedom of expression means that you can express your ideas and opinions freely through speech, writing, and other forms of communication.
- This freedom has limitations – people may not express viewpoints that violate the rights of others.
- The lack of freedom of expression in an undemocratic country makes us realise how privileged we are to live in a democratic country.



The Constitution states that everyone has the right to freedom of expression, which includes:

- ✓ Freedom of the press and other media.
- ✓ Freedom to receive or impart information or ideas.
- ✓ Freedom of artistic creativity.
- ✓ Academic freedom and freedom of scientific research.



Constitutional limitations to freedom of expression

The right to freedom of expression does not include:

- ✓ Propaganda for war.
- ✓ Incitement of imminent violence.
- ✓ Advocacy of hatred that is based on race, ethnicity, gender or religion.
- ✓ Incitement to cause harm.



The Protection of State Information Bill

- This Bill is also known as the Secrecy Bill because it proposes long jail sentences for journalists or whistle-blowers or anyone who makes state secrets public.
- State secrets usually include information that the general public and other countries don't need to know.
- This information is used to protect the public and the country.
- Although it is necessary to protect our country's state secrets, there are fears that this Bill may be abused to protect some corrupt officials.
- The negative aspects are that this legislation may harm investigative journalists, because it may gag or silence opinions.

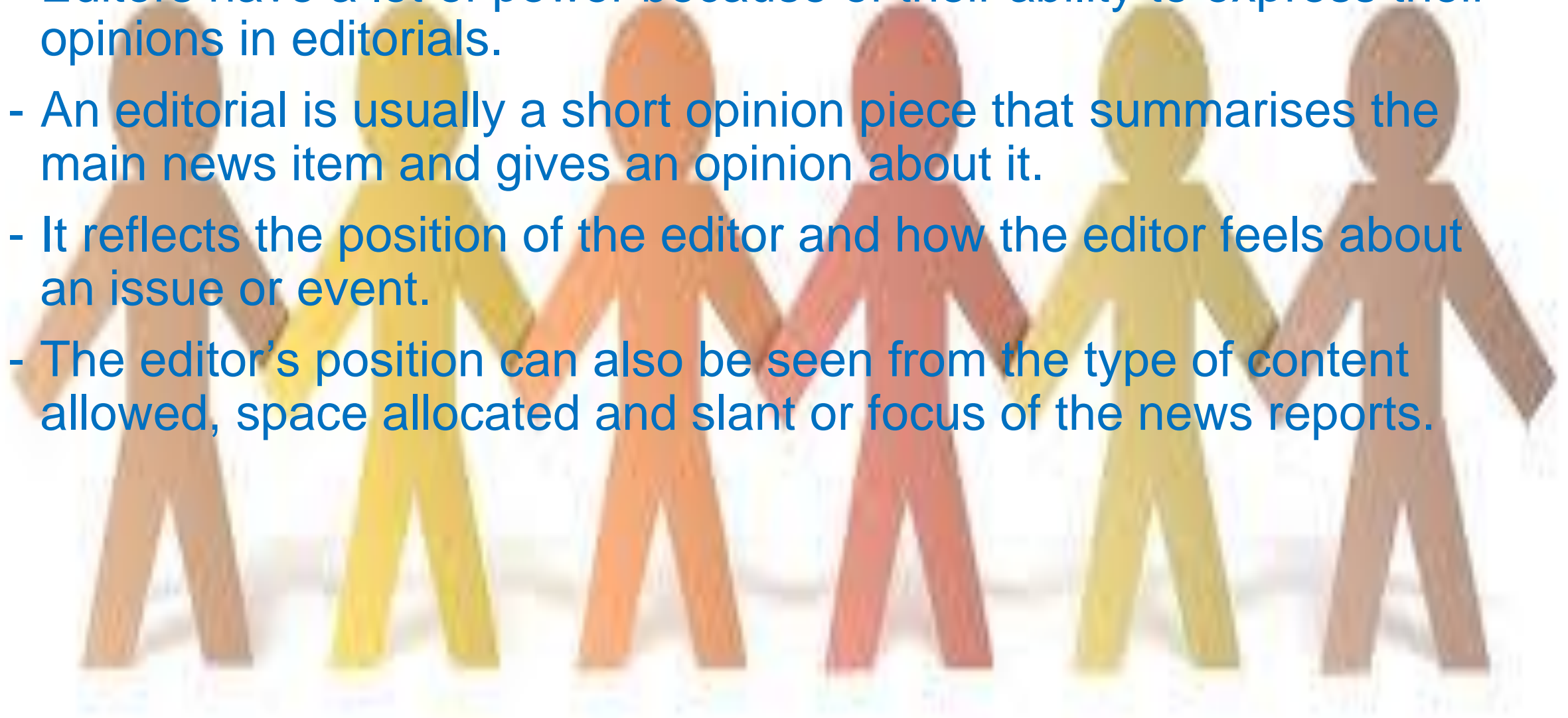
Extent to which media reporting reflects a democratic society

1. Topics covered

- Editors, managers and bosses choose the topics to cover in their social media; these topics don't necessarily have neutral opinions. - Many of them are guided by commercial interests.
- The topics covered are determined by how newsworthy it is and what the entertainment value is.

2. Positions taken by editors

- Editors have a lot of power because of their ability to express their opinions in editorials.
- An editorial is usually a short opinion piece that summarises the main news item and gives an opinion about it.
- It reflects the position of the editor and how the editor feels about an issue or event.
- The editor's position can also be seen from the type of content allowed, space allocated and slant or focus of the news reports.



3. Space allocated

- Space allocation refers to what page an article appears on in a newspaper or magazine, how much time is given to it in a TV or radio broadcast, whether it appears at the beginning or end of a news report etc.
- Space allocation is not always fair.
- Analysts spend a lot of time looking at which stories on the Internet get the most hits or visits, what is tweeted about most etc. – this information is used to inform editors of future space allocation, as they try to compete to make their products what readers, viewers and advertisers want.



4. Geographical distribution

- The accessibility of information for different groups in SA is not equal – especially in rural areas.



Critical analysis of the media

- ❑ It is important to critically analyse the media to evaluate their balance and fairness in reporting.
- ❑ Pay attention to their selection of content; sources used; types of stories; level of commercial content; sensationalism; interest; exaggeration; accuracy.



Critical analysis of campaigns

- ❑ Campaigns are movements, drives or crusades that push, fight or advocate for an issue.
- ❑ Some campaigns are not helpful as they can humiliate politicians or celebrities for personal reasons.
- ❑ Mandela Day campaign: this campaign aims to encourage people to make a difference by working for positive change.



Coverage of sport, sports personalities and recreation activities

- The media tends to focus on men's soccer, rugby, cricket, golf and motor racing.
- Sports such as netball, women's soccer, hockey etc. are often under-reported.
- Sportsmen dominate the sports media over sportswomen, who struggle to get media coverage.
- Media do not report equally on famous sportsmen and sportswomen.
- Women are often referred to in sexist terms as 'girls', whereas men are referred to as 'men'.
- Women are described in terms of their attractiveness; not their ability.

Complete activities: 4 (page 123), 5 (page 125), 6 (page 128) & 7 (page 130)