

THE ORIGIN OF IDEAS IN THE 'PAPER FOR THE PEOPLE'

**RESEARCH INTO HOW THE *SUNDAY TIMES* CHOOSES TOPICS AND
COMMENTATORS FOR ITS OPINION PAGES**

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Abstract

The topics in the opinion pages of newspapers are the substance of much public debate and discussion. This research report focuses on the *Sunday Times*, one of South Africa's most influential newspapers, and seeks to understand how columnists and issues are chosen for its opinion and analysis pages. The research was conducted by interviewing decision-makers at the *Sunday Times*, observing them during their meetings and conducting a content analysis of the newspaper. The findings identify journalistic professional practice as a key element in the selection process, along with an awareness of, and to some extent, identification with, a national project of transformation in a post-repressive regime. The findings also point to how issues of transformation in South Africa affect how media decision-makers consider their own jobs and motivates them to make conscious efforts to push the media agenda forward in a way constructive to public discourse.

Declaration

I declare that this research report is my own unaided work. It is submitted for the degree of Master's of Journalism in the University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any other degree or examination in any other university.

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_____ day of _____, 2008

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Table of Contents	Page
Chapter 1: Introduction	1
Chapter 2: Theoretical Underpinnings and Literature Review	5
2.1: Public Sphere	
2.1.1: Habermas and an overview of the Public Sphere	7
2.1.2: Fraser and counter publics	8
2.1.3: The South African context	9
2.2: Agenda-Setting	15
2.3: Gatekeeping and News Values	19
2.4 Conclusions	25
Chapter 3: Methodology	
3.1: <i>Sunday Times</i> Interview Subjects	27
3.2: Preliminary textual analysis and interview	29
3.3: Participant observation and subsequent interviews	30
3.4: Quantitative analysis and final interviews	32
Chapter 4: Findings	
4.1: The <i>Sunday Times</i> Opinion Page Overview	34
4.2: Quantitative Findings Linking the Relationship Between News and Opinion	36
4.3: Production processes at the <i>Sunday Times</i>	40
4.4: Factors in the Selection of Topics	
4.4.1: News Values	44
4.4.2: Agenda-setting	48
4.5: Mampara	51
4.6: The Selection of Columnists	54
4.6.1: Guest Columnists	55
4.6.2: Regular Columnists	57

4.6.3: Birth of a Columnist: Mohau Pheko	61
4.6.4: Conclusion	65
4.7: Beyond the Boundary: Decision-makers and the Limit of Reasonable Discourse	67
Chapter 5: Conclusion	78
Bibliography	82
Appendix 1: Editorial Conference from 4 April 2007	85
Appendix 2: First Interview with Andrew Donaldson from 1 April 2007	90
Appendix 3: First Interview with Fred Khumalo from 23 April 2007	126
Appendix 4: Second Interview with Andrew Donaldson from 23 April 2007	145
Appendix 5: First Interview with Mondli Makhanya from April 2007	156
Appendix 6: Interview with Gillian Anstey from April 2007	178
Appendix 7: E-mail Interview with Fred Khumalo from 4 May 2007	207
Appendix 8: E-mail Interview with Heather Robertson from 29 May 2007	208
Appendix 9: E-mail Interview with Mohau Pheko from 31 May 2007	209
Appendix 10: E-mail Interview with Tony Sutton from 4 February 2008	212
Appendix 11: Second Interview with Fred Khumalo from November 2007	214
Appendix 12: Second Interview with Mondli Makhanya from February 2008	222
Appendix 13: Quantitative Data on the relationship between news and opinion	229

Table of Figures	Page
Figure 4.1: The <i>Sunday Times</i> Opinion Page Layout	35
Figure A13.1: News topics in the <i>Sunday Times</i> from week 1	228
Figure A13.2: News topics in the <i>Sunday Times</i> from week 2	229
Figure A13.3: News topics in the <i>Sunday Times</i> from week 3	230
Figure A13.4: News topics in the <i>Sunday Times</i> from week 4	231
Figure A13.5: News topics in the <i>Sunday Times</i> from week 5	232
Figure A13.6: Opinion articles and their correlation to articles in the news section from week 1	233
Figure A13.7: Opinion articles and their correlation to articles in the news section from week 2	234
Figure A13.8: Opinion articles and their correlation to articles in the news section from week 3	235
Figure A13.9: Opinion articles and their correlation to articles in the news section from week 4	236
Figure A13.10: Opinion articles and their correlation to articles in the news section from week 5	237
Figure A13.11: Opinion topics, their writers and occupations	238