

## CHAPTER 1: AIM AND MOTIVATION

The purpose of this research report is to examine how ideas and topics enter the print media for public discussion, specifically, by examining how opinion pieces and columns are chosen for the opinion pages in the *Sunday Times*. The research maps what topics are being discussed and who is discussing them from what perspective. In addition, I have aimed to establish whether, and in what ways, there is a relationship between the subject matter of the news pages and what is discussed in opinion pieces<sup>1</sup> and columns.

Research has overwhelmingly shown that the news media are able to influence what people perceive as important (Dearing and Rogers 1996: p7). For this reason, this research report seeks to establish what topics are broached in the opinion pages and columns and by whom. While much media research has been conducted on how news is selected and by what processes and criteria they are selected (Shoemaker 1991), the selection process that applies to opinion and analysis has rarely been examined. As well as examining this selection process, this research report hopes to establish what, if any, aspects of the professional ethos of news values inform the selection of content for opinion pages.

The *Sunday Times*, both as a representative of media and an influential news source, provides an imperfect space for public debate. As early as Walter Lippman's research in the 1920's, media have been seen as a privileged site for public discourse where ideas perceived to be important are discussed (Lippman 1922). However, it is not possible for the print media to provide unlimited and unmediated access to its pages. Therefore, it is important to understand how topics and issues enter this space because this will contribute to an understanding of what the role the media plays in the formation of public ideas and debate. With regards to South African media research, there is a dearth

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<sup>1</sup> Also, for the purposes of this research report, opinion pages refers to the section in the newspapers devoted to columns, leaders, and polemic.

of research on how opinion pieces and columns are selected by decision-makers, and this research seeks to contribute to an understanding of these processes. Conducting this research will also improve our understanding of how current agenda-setting theory, which examines the process by which some ideas gain a more prominent public profile, applies or does not apply to decision-making on the opinion pages, as well as its application to South Africa's unique history and political circumstances.

South Africa is not only a new democracy but also one with steep inequalities—race, class, gender—that has been undergoing a process of transformation since the 1980's. The theory of liberal pluralism in media contends that the free exchange of ideas is crucial to the health of that democracy (Bennett 1982: p27). For a new democracy, I would argue that a comprehensive totalling of topics in public debate are an important ideal for the safety of that democracy and evolution of public debate. Thus this research is also concerned with examining what persons or groups are privileged or excluded from debate. In the past, many parts of South African society were marginalized, they were excluded from political life and—in some cases—public life altogether. It is part of the process of transformation to include previously marginalized voices into the public debate.

In 2006, there was controversy over South African Broadcasting Corporation's blacklists (Cowling et al 2007: p62), the exclusion of certain commentators from being invited onto SABC programming. Many believe that these commentators have been excluded for their ideological viewpoints. If this is true then it suggests that the SABC would prefer not to allow some ideas or kinds of ideas onto its programming. The blacklist has caused a great deal of outcry. This suggests that there is a concern in South Africa, at least within media itself, that certain viewpoints are being marginalized and that a strong normative ideal exists in South Africa of what constitutes free public debate. As the largest, single provider of media, the SABC has an unparalleled voice within public debate. In an ideal situation, the SABC would provide a voice for all persons and political outlooks, thus in turn enhancing public debate. Aside from the

public broadcaster, one of the contributors to public debate is the *Sunday Times*. In its capacity as the largest weekly newspaper in South Africa, it provides an important forum for ideas. According to the research group, Mediatenor, the *Sunday Times* serves an agenda-setting role for South Africa (Mediatenor 2007: p3). This means that the *Sunday Times* has the ability to influence what the public and other media organizations perceive as important. Again, according to agenda-setting theory, this means that while the *Sunday Times* cannot change public opinion, it can set the agenda for discussion, prioritising certain issues and ideas over others.

This status as an agenda-setter also means, particularly for a young democracy still finding its feet, that the *Sunday Times* has an influential ability to decide by what standards and practices this young democracy will be held and what issues it assumes are important. This research will seek what themes and subjects are considered to be of importance in the opinion pages and will make a contribution to a research area that is looking at what is happening now in public debate in South Africa. It, broadly, seeks to understand what is the process by which topics and ideas enter the opinion pages. And what kind of criteria (i.e. professional, political, etc) are used to select opinion pieces and opinion writers (Hamilton 2006).

In late 2006, the *Sunday Times* underwent a change in format. After this change, the opinion section of the newspaper was greatly increased. New regular columnists were added and more space was created for guest writers. In addition to this, the space dedicated to reader's letters was massively expanded. Examining this period was useful because it allowed me to approach the *Sunday Times* at a moment when issues of selection in the opinion sections were present in the minds of decision-makers.

The research has examined whether opinion, in the view of decision-makers, is sometimes propelled by news and, by extension, news values. The research was conducted, by interviews with decision-makers, to provide insight into a wide range of factors that went into the process of selection creating a holistic view of the selection

process at the *Sunday Times*. I conducted some preliminary content analysis to understand the way the pages and layout were constructed, which allowed me to draw some questions to ask my interviewees. It also gave me a way of triangulating the information I gained while interviewing decision-makers against my understanding of the paper itself. The preliminary content analysis also helped create a common understanding of the *Sunday Times* between myself and the interviewees. This provided a basis from which to conduct the research. The advantage of this was also to provide an understanding of how professional ideals of media and journalism held by decision-makers sometimes fall short due to the practical limitations of production schedules.

Generally, the major focus of this research was the selection process for opinion articles at the *Sunday Times*. It examined the criteria used in the selection of both columns and of topics. It looked at the ways in which selections were made and whether the use of professional criteria was universal amongst journalists in liberal democracies, whether some of the criteria were unique to South Africa and particular to the *Sunday Times* as an institution. It also looked at why certain commentators might not be used and what topics might be considered out of bounds by decision-makers. Although the research mapped the content of the pages of a period of some weeks, it did not attempt a comparison of the issues and topics against the criteria decision-makers said they used to select articles. The content analysis was able to suggest certain factors at work in the selection, which could then be engaged in the interviews. A more comprehensive mapping of topics, issues and opinion writers, which would have been necessary for a full triangulation, was beyond the scope of a research report. It was also beyond the scope of the research to look at what topics are being neglected in the opinion pages.

## **CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW**

This research is broadly concerned with the relationship of media to public debate. Normative views of media in a democracy assume that media provide a space for discussion and that this discussion is important for the participants of that democracy. Media are one of the means by which such information is conducted to an audience. In South Africa, media have a special place as enshrined in the country's constitution. Further, because of its history of undemocratic marginalization of certain people, an independent media are seen as crucial to freedom of information and expression, in addition, the representation of people and ideas is perceived as very important. Some believe that equalizing this past inequity is a crucial part of the larger project of transformation and building of a South African national identity.

However, the media are not an open and unlimited space for all voices and all ideas in society. Commentators and issues are necessarily selected from a nearly unlimited set of possibilities. The process of selection is the focus of this study, which includes an examination of the individuals (called gatekeepers) who make the decisions, the criteria by which they make them and the professional ideologies and practices that inform their decisions. It also considers the relationship of the gatekeepers to wider social expectations of what public deliberation should be and how it should take place.

Of further importance to the examination of how gatekeepers choose stories is the consideration of news values as well as agenda-setting. For the purposes of this section we will examine the part of agenda-setting theory that describes how certain public figures have a high news value and therefore become 'agenda-setters'. We will also examine how certain topics find their way onto the news agenda and, as a result, the public agenda. In South Africa, a new democracy, it is important to understand how all

ideas and subjects find their way onto the public agenda. This public agenda is what then becomes the basis of public discussion and a contributor to the public sphere.

This research also incorporate public sphere theory to attempt to contextualize both gatekeeping and agenda-setting theory. Public sphere theory, as described by Habermas, is a way of describing a space between the state and individuals where rational discussions on matters of public import are discussed. I will use public sphere theory to describe how agenda-setters, often public persons themselves, participate in the public sphere and influence public discourse. I will also use the theory to contextualize the way gatekeepers make decisions on what is appropriate for publication. This will focus particularly on how conscious they are of normative ideas of media as a space for public debate and of its relationship to professional standards.

## **2:1 The Public Sphere**

### **2.1.1 Habermas and an overview of the Public Sphere**

The public sphere, as it is described by Jurgen Habermas, is a place of vague yet common definition as the space between the state and private individuals in which matters of public interest were debated in a rational manner. Components of the public sphere include places and processes of political activity, civil movements, and discussions held in public. But the aspect that concerns us for the purposes of this paper is the “press” also known as the print media. The media is considered an aspect of the public sphere and an important one. Media provides a forum, a place where the political sphere, public intellectuals and popular opinion can meet and collide.

Media’s importance to the public sphere has been, according to Habermas, present since its emergence. He describes it most vividly in relation to the Britain’s development into a parliamentary democracy. During the feudal period, the king and the state were one and the same. The king’s life was a state matter and there was no state without the king. The king’s life as well as state matters were rarely a matter of public discussion. This situation began to change with the emergence of a new economic class, the bourgeoisie. This new class of traders and manufacturers had some wealth and lived in urban areas. As a class, these people had growing economic muscle but were frozen out of the traditional routes of political power. Slowly, something akin to public opinion, and the public sphere, began taking shape. For participants, literacy and economic means were important criteria for entry into public debate but the most crucial prerequisite was the capacity for rational discussion. One public forum was the then-novel coffee shops. In these places men read newspapers aloud to each other and discussed the ideas proposed. Further driving the connection between the emergence of the public sphere and capital is the fact that many of these coffee shops were proto-stock exchanges where, for example, shares of merchant naval expeditions were traded.

The new rules of participation in public opinion were defined by this new class. It was generally expected that participants would have some property and be males. These were absolutes in the political period that saw the emergence of the public sphere. However, other criteria grew from this and remain relevant today. As stated before, matters of public interest could be debated in a way believed to be rational-critical, this was defined as being, “objectively congruent with the general interest, at least to the extent that this opinion could be considered the public one, emerging from the critical debate of the public, and consequently, rational” (Habermas 1991: p87).

At this point Habermas shows that public discussions connect back into public forums and go into the public sphere. Political parties of the time were not yet fully formed into the entities that we now understand them to be. There was no mass membership, conventions, policy papers and so on. It was not clear how or even whether they existed outside of a political forum. Newspapers and pamphlets, in contrast to today’s professional ideals of news such as balance and objectivity, were partisan and polemical and prepared to be read by the bourgeoisie.

### **2.1.2 Fraser and Counter Publics**

The Habermasian public sphere suffers from certain limitations, as many critics have subsequently argued (See Calhoun 1991). Nancy Fraser argues that what Habermas refers to as the ‘public sphere’ as a general representative forum was, in practice, excluding other groups who formed their own public spheres.

“Not only were there always plurality of competing publics, but the relations between bourgeois publics and other publics were always conflictual. Virtually from the beginning, counter publics contested the exclusionary norms of the bourgeois public,

elaborating alternative styles of political behaviour and alternative styles of public speech” (Fraser 1991: p116).

Fraser’s analysis is a critical addition to public sphere theory, and to understanding the public sphere in the South African context, because it manages to explain the public discourse of persons who are excluded from mainstream political activity and forums. Fraser listed four assumptions that challenged what she called, “Central to the bourgeois, masculinist, conception of the public sphere.” These were the assumption that social equality could be ignored, that a single public sphere is ideal, discourse should be about the ‘common good’ and discussion of private interests/issues restricted, and that a democratic public sphere requires a split between civil society and the state (Fraser 1991: p117-118).

### **2.1.3 The South African context**

In trying to understand the relevance of public sphere theory to South Africa, direct analogies are of limited use when the subjects are separated by the gulfs of sociology, geography and history. However, that does not mean the concept of the public sphere is useless when attempting to understand the relationship between political activity, public forums like the media and popular opinion. As some media theorists have argued,

The underlying question of democratic adequacy which Habermas addresses with regard to media organizations remains of central importance...Habermas starts from the principle that we need a democratic public sphere, a space of democratic exchange, based on ‘procedures whereby those affected by general social norms and collective political decisions can have a say in their formulation, stipulation, and adoption’ (Benhabib 1992: p87’. (Curran (ed) 2008: p39)

The previous public sphere was deformed and limited by the Apartheid state, in which race was a primary criterion for entry and exclusion. It could be argued that it is now shaped and limited by current political realities, particularly the hegemonic political power of the ruling party. In the national political landscape, the African National Congress is unrivaled as an electoral entity. The best its main rival, the Democratic Alliance, has been able to manage in terms of electoral victories at this point has been the winning of a few municipalities and a tenuous grip in a single province. Despite its electoral weakness, the DA is able to use as a tool what Habermas might describe as 'the sense of the people' that "denoted from this time onward an entity to which the opposition could appeal" (Habermas 1991: p64).

Various papers from the Constitution of Public Intellectual Life Project have taken Habermas' idea of the public sphere as a necessary starting point in trying to understand how public deliberation takes place. According to Hamilton, South Africa is fairly hospitable to public deliberation by its citizens. However, this deliberation is hampered by limitations in literacy, differing interpretations of the past, and the de-legitimization of certain speakers. Hamilton argues that the South African public sphere is:

The result of compromises negotiated amongst parties, special interest groupings and public administrators and the public is only included sporadically in this circuit of power. In addition, the fact that South African democracy was the result of a relatively rapidly negotiated political settlement means that many of the values of a democracy and the notion of public sphere nested at the heart of its operations are far from familiar to, or accepted by, the majority of South Africans (Hamilton 2006: p6).

Differences in the conception and understanding of the South African public sphere were also displayed during the controversy surrounding SAfm and the existence of SABC blacklists that resulted in accusations of political censorship against the SABC (Cowling and Hamilton 2007). The research done by Cowling and Hamilton found that

there was a high level of orchestration of debate and discussion, and disagreement over the criteria for the selection of commentators. These disagreements were located in two different understandings of public emanating from two contesting intellectual traditions. My research will build on this as it looks at the relatively under researched area of print media, the opinion pages, to determine the levels of orchestration of deliberation and the criteria used to select columnist and opinion writers.

Another unique condition of a potential South African public sphere is created by the political hegemony of the ANC. That is as an independent opposition structure itself. In many democratic countries, media is frequently called a 'watchdog' meaning that it examines and interrogates the behavior of the powerful on behalf of the public. This means that the media pays notice in particular to government or large corporations. In the South African context this has been mostly attention upon government and by extension, the ANC. This means that the media has an even larger impact and responsibility to a potential South African public sphere.

A useful way of understanding potential and actual distortions is to utilize Fraser's challenges to the Habermasian notion of the public sphere. I will address them in the order given in the previous section. The first of these suggests that persons who are not socially equal do not have an equal say in the public sphere, and that ignoring these inequalities is to the detriment of the weaker party. In South Africa, its inequalities of race and gender are mirrored in disparities of education, affluence and access to media. This was one concern of my research as I argue that this disparity can affect who is chosen as a commentator. My research sought to find whether *Sunday Times* decision-makers were conscious of this and how it affected their selections of contributors.

This moves us into the second challenge, the notion that a single public sphere is healthier than several separate ones. South African public discourse has clearly expanded to include many people and ideas that were previously marginalized. However there are still restrictions because certain ideas, like the aforementioned HIV

denialism, are considered irrational or unhealthy for public discourse. In addition to this, though, some rational commentators and ideas, such as tribal leaders and issues, are given short shrift in the South African public sphere, in terms of media and public discourse. Many of these persons and issues participate in counter publics that sometimes serve as tributaries into the larger public sphere. However, discussion on these issues in media is done strictly on the terms and rules of the bourgeois media.

Fraser's third challenge is a difficult one for me to broach. It is true that 'private issues' are considered outside the realm of public discourse. However, what is 'private' is a normative idea that is not shared by members of the same public sphere. This frequently crops up in debates on the public interest, one recent example being the publication of details from medical records of the Health Minister, Dr Manto Tshabalala-Msiang. Many of Tshabalala's colleagues criticised the *Sunday Times* for publication saying that private health information was not appropriate for public discussion. The *Sunday Times* argued that in this case private details were in public interest and therefore fit for public debate. In the ensuing lawsuit, a judge agreed with the paper. This displays Fraser's challenge very well, as what might be considered private can also be considered beneficial to public discourse.

The fourth challenge involves some ground which we have previously covered. Fraser argues that the Habermasian public sphere, because it maintains separation from political institutions, is inherently weak because it cannot have direct influence over policy. Strong public spheres, by contrast, participate in the political process. As mentioned above, political affairs are sometimes hashed out directly in media. Persons who are political figures make use of the media as a medium for their own ideas and, sometimes, grievances. Media as a part of the public sphere therefore has influence while also being influenced by the political realm.

There are several conclusions that we may draw from this discussion of the public sphere and its application to South Africa. Firstly, according to Habermas, the public

sphere is formed of different aspects of a society and nation. It forms not independently of the development of democracy, but as a concurrence. In South Africa, a country with massive inequities of race, economics, language and gender, a public sphere's components are difficult to determine, as well as whether an overall public sphere exists at all. That does not mean that we ought to throw the concept of a public sphere away. After all, it is still useful as a single concept unifying the relationships and intersections of political actors, public opinion and media. When applied to South Africa's unique history we find that the media's contribution to public sphere activity is in some ways stronger in the face of the weakness or immaturity in other civil and political organizations, political parties being one example. Though its watchdog role may be sometimes over trumpeted it does become more important in the face of hegemonic political power.

In the recent past and still today, South Africa is undergoing 'Transformation', a process by which the inequities of Apartheid are unwound allowing, ideally, the country to develop into a modern, multi-racial democracy with an economy that demonstrates racial parity. This has meant that many of the things that would have been considered counterpublic spheres during Apartheid were either incorporated or expanded into the larger public sphere. In terms of media, this has meant that the state broadcaster, the SABC, hired many independent journalists who would not or could not work in the previous mainstream media. It has also meant that many private publications, for example the *Sunday Times*, began widening the kind of stories published and diversified their commentators. It should be added that for private media much of the motivation for transformation was commercial in addition to political or social.

While transformation might demonstrate that the public sphere is becoming more inclusive, some ideas and commentators are still omitted, both in the *Sunday Times* and the public sphere. As a "middlebrow" newspaper, its imagined audience has expanded to include the black bourgeoisie but may not include, say, traditional tribal leaders. Nor

does it include ideas that are outside the confines of what the newspaper would consider rational discourse, say AIDS denialism.

## 2:2 Agenda-Setting

The topics that are broached, in the space of the media, are seen to constitute public discussion. In the United States there has been a tradition of thought, Liberal Pluralism, which argues that media ownership or elite control of media resources are not important, because so long as the ideas are thrashed out in the public sphere, the public will remain informed. “The clash of diversity of the viewpoints...contributed to the free and open circulation of ideas, thereby enabling them to play a role of a ‘fourth estate’ through which governing elites could be pressurized and reminded of their dependency on majority opinion”(Bennett 1982: p27). This idea has a long lineage and many proponents, among them J.S. Mill (Mill 1989: p24) who argued that the free discourse of ideas was not only a value for those exercising it but for the whole of discourse itself. In thrashing out ideas, bad ideas against better ideas or good ideas, discourse was elevated and an ‘improved’ truth was discovered. This new truth would itself then be buffeted by challengers in the process of free discourse. Habermas describes this process in some detail in his work on the public sphere, which was discussed earlier.

However, a belief in media elites as constructors and proponents of ideas has some qualifications; the notion that the media has enormous power to affect people’s opinions and actions was effectively debunked by early news effects research conducted in the United States during the 1950’s. Social scientists found that the mass media had relatively little impact on how people behaved, or opinions and beliefs. A person’s core beliefs were just that, core beliefs that could not be swayed by mass media consumption (Dearing and Rogers 1996: p13). One conclusion that might be made from this is that while people draw information from the media, regardless of any potential bias or viewpoint, the media consumer interprets the information in a way that accommodates their pre-existing worldview (Curran et al 1982: p12).

Later studies sought to find what the media could influence. Maxwell McCombs was able to establish a connection: media had an affect on public debate as a whole rather than influencing individual beliefs. His research found that choices made by media decision-makers affect what the public perceives as important. He called this effect agenda-setting. McCombs was able to demonstrate that salience—the relationship between what the media ranked as important issues and what the public viewed as important—was the link between what news topics were covered and the public’s perceptions of the importance of those new stories. “Agenda-setting effects—the successful transfer of salience from the media agenda to the public agenda—occur wherever there is a reasonably open political system and a reasonably open media system” (McCombs 2004: p37). However, the media agenda is in turn set by a number of individuals, events, factors and institutions.

The link has been established by social scientists researching trends in the United States and what could not be ignored is the agenda-setting role of policy makers, interest groups, and even celebrities. McCombs points out that some individuals or organizations carry their own agenda-setting power, for example a high-profile policy maker, and they therefore have an additional ability to set the news agenda. One example of this is the media coverage of illicit drug abuse in the 80’s. Though she was not a policy maker, US First Lady Nancy Reagan certainly had news value and her ‘Just Say No to Drugs’ campaign received a great deal of attention in the media. However she did not make drugs a media issue in a vacuum. The sudden death of Len Bias, a promising basketball player, from a drug overdose was the spark that lit the media’s interest (Dearing and Rodgers 1996: p19).

A similar agenda-setting faculty is provided in the United States by the *New York Times*. In a study on coverage of HIV/AIDS in US media by Dearing and Rodgers, they found that one of the reasons the disease was taken up slowly was due to a lack of coverage by the *New York Times* as well as executive policy makers (Dearing and

Rodgers 1996: p56). For me, this suggests that understanding agenda-setting in South Africa can literally have life and death ramifications.

Nancy Reagan was not an elected official, nor a policy expert and few people would accuse her of being a public intellectual. Reagan was, however, a political celebrity; a person whose high profile as the wife of then-President Ronald Reagan created media interest in her activities. Bias was a college basketball player who was generally considered the most promising new player of his generation. He was signing with a professional team that had recently won a national championship. The signing of his professional contract was itself a media event, a day later he had died from an overdose of cocaine. While many young people had died resulting from drug abuse, Bias' death caused drugs to enter the media agenda because he was already a newsmaker. To sum up, drug abuse was placed on the media agenda by the death of Bias, who had a high public profile, and was taken up by other public persons as an issue for public debate. What must be noted is that drug abuse was, statistically, a more serious problem before Nancy Reagan and the death of Len Bias brought it attention. As it rose on the public agenda it was actually becoming a less serious issue in the real-world. This speaks to the power of agenda-setters to alter public perceptions.

The role of the *New York Times* as an agenda-setter was also highlighted by this example. Drug abuse and drug related deaths began being covered in the *New York Times* after 1985 when the Reverend Jesse Jackson met with the editor of the *New York Times* to discuss the severe effect drugs were having upon black, urban youth. Jackson, another public person, convinced the *New York Times* that drug abuse was a serious problem that ought to be covered. *The New York Times* agreed and the issue was soon receiving coverage in other media organizations. What must be pointed out, and further demonstrates the power of the *New York Times*' agenda-setting, is that at the same time the coverage increased, deaths related to drug use had been on the decline and continued to do so (Dearing and Rodgers 1992: p31). I must further point out that what is considered important does not really reflect the reality but is a result of the discussed

factors that cause the issue to be taken up by the media. The agenda-setting power of the *New York Times* has a direct relevance to my research since the *Sunday Times* is the most influential print publication in South Africa and serves an agenda-setting function for South Africa similar to the *New York Times*.

### 2.3 Gatekeeping and News Values

Returning to where we began, the media and its role in discussion, we must also look to who decides what is discussed. Whereas agenda-setting theory looks at the impact of outside factors on the media agenda, gatekeeping theory looks at the process which exists in newsrooms. Gatekeepers are the individuals who work in media organizations and make decisions about what to publish and, in the case of Bias, have influence over whether a young death is perceived as simply sad or part of an epidemic. As I argued earlier, the amount of information available for dissemination is staggering but the space within media is limited. Deciding what is published for the public's consumption and what is withheld falls to the gatekeepers.

Studies have established that the gatekeepers, also referred to in this research as decision-makers, rather than foisting their personal views on a docile public, follow a series of professional ethics and protocols that led them to select what was newsworthy (Shoemaker 1991). These decisions were only partially informed by what they presumed the public would want to know as opposed to the public interest, what the public should know. In the 1950's a study was made of a male Chicago editor and how he chose what was published in the newspaper (White 1997: p383-96). Later, in 1991, the study was replicated but this time with a female editor who worked for a smaller paper in the American South. The more recent study found that regardless of their personal differences, Mr and Ms Gates made decisions about what was newsworthy using a similar professional ethos (Bleske 1997: p88-97).

Professionals who abide by these rules are operating from a viewpoint but one not necessarily based on personal orientation or political ideology. What these two studies demonstrated was that though separated by geography, gender and the space of 40 years, these two news professionals shared an ideology—but it is a professional ideology that relies on news values. Professionals who act in this function are known as “gatekeepers”.

“Gatekeeping is the process by which the billions of messages that are available in the world get cut down and transformed into the hundreds of messages that reach a given person on a given day” (Shoemaker 1991: p57). Shoemaker says that the descriptions of gatekeeping usually entail a selection of news items but that this view is limited. Gatekeeping, in her words, can also be used to explain the broader reach of message transmission, “withholding, transmission, shaping, display repetition, and timing of information as it goes from the sender to the receiver” (Shoemaker 1991: p57). The distinction between the idea of gatekeeping as a winnowing down of news items and the selection of topics for the opinion pages was important in answering my research question. This research shows that there is also a gatekeeping process in the selection of news stories for the news pages and the selection of topics and commentators for the opinion pages, and that their selection may be similar in certain respects and differ in others. The distinction and relationship between two processes of selection is not addressed by gatekeeping, which focuses mostly on news, or agenda-setting, which makes no distinction between the processes.

The angle and thematic discourse of news stories as they are selected is the product of individual professionals and their specific traits, among those that Shoemaker lists as the factors at play in the gatekeeping process are:

- Type of job—whether the decision-maker is a news gatherer (i.e. a journalist) or a news processor (i.e. an editor like the previously mentioned Mr. Gates) (Shoemaker 1991: p48).
- Organizational Socialization—The process by which the decision-maker learns the norms of values of their organization (Shoemaker 1991: p59). This means that every news organization has a particular audience and way of speaking to that audience. The journalist working for an organization learns to work within those particulars.
- Second-Guessing Process—the process by which a decision-maker examines or verifies a news item against their previous knowledge (Shoemaker 1991: p36).

- Values, attitudes, ethics—personal and professional criteria that are typically uniform for all decision-makers in the industry (Shoemaker 1991: p43).
- Decision-making strategies—the conscious application of professional criteria. In contrast to the above, these traits might vary between news organizations (Shoemaker 1991: p49).

Something that Shoemaker neglects to include, and that is pertinent to this research, is the historical circumstance South African media finds itself as a result of Apartheid. South African gatekeepers are conscious of the nation's history and its current inequities. Their decisions, therefore, are sometimes informed by this consciousness and participation in what is generally known as transformation. The degree to which this affects other decision-making criteria, including ones mentioned by Shoemaker, is something that will be more fully explored in my findings.

Another thing overlooked by Shoemaker is the encoding of the message within the news story. By using Stuart Hall's description of 'Encoding/Decoding' (Hall 1980), we understand that decision-making does incorporate qualities unmentioned by Shoemaker. The person writing a given opinion piece is infusing a news topic with any number of the listed qualities. What makes opinion different from the news is that this encoding is more overt. Unlike news stories, which are intended to be 'objective' and reflect an unwashed, but perhaps neatened, version of reality, articles on the opinion page are supposed to be a reflection of the writer's personae or position. If, for example, a trade unionist were invited to write in the opinion section the topic would probably be organized labour and would not be expected to be 'objective' but rather argued from the trade unionist's political position. In terms of personae, a columnist is expected to write in a more personal, individual voice. In post-Apartheid South Africa, media has sought to include many previously marginalized persons. To varying degrees, they are expected to write as previously marginalized persons while at the same time working within the strictures and audience expectations of their particular media outlet. The details and caveats of this will be examined later in the findings.

Another way of understanding this selection of news topics and of commentators is that media decision-makers take into account an understanding of the real world. This is described as ‘encoding/decoding’ (Hall 1980: p130). Professional ethos can be shaped by normative social considerations of what a professional believes an audience expects from their newspaper. The physical separation of news from opinion is part of that professional ethos. Items that are considered news, ‘hard facts’ are presented to the reader in a section which the informed newspaper reader expects to contain only news. Opinion pieces are confined to a few pages inside the newspaper solely reserved for opinion. This physical separation is not only a professional ethos but also what the informed reader understands to be a separation of what will be news and opinion.

This separation also reflects the different characteristics between news and opinion. McNair describes objectivity as a guiding journalistic principal and three of its characteristics differentiate news and opinion (McNair 1998: p68): the separation of fact from opinion, a balanced account of a debate, and validation by authoritative others. The first characteristic is self-describing in separation. This separation can be organizational; journalists might work in news or opinion but not both. A balanced account is not required for opinion because the articles found in those pages are usually expected to be polemical. The third factor is a revealing one. In the news pages journalists rely on validation by an ‘expert’ to provide authority to their articles. “The journalist has license to interpret the facts but cannot be seen to invent them” (McNair 1998: p71). However, in the opinion pages, the author is considered an expert themselves and can provide some authority without outside assistance.<sup>2</sup>

The application of the notion of objectivity results in “the distinction between fact and opinion, information and commentary, news and analysis” and “[the distinction]

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<sup>2</sup> In South Africa, news writers can often also be found on the opinion and analysis pages. In a newspaper in the United States, by contrast, news writers rarely write opinion pieces—or vice versa. In their case the professional separation is taken even farther.

must...be clearly made in the journalistic text” (McNair 1998: p68). The distinction is critical to the credibility of newspapers and news values. However, this distinction is rarely reflected in research on news production. While there is a large body of research concerning news values there is a lack of similar research on opinion, and opinion often included as part of news reporting. Part of the purpose of this research report is to find what about news values theory can be applied to the opinion section.

Despite the clear differences and the resulting separation my research assumed opinion pages and news pages could still share a relationship. In explaining what comprises an opinion page, it was thought important to look at what comprises ‘hard news’ (Jamison 2001: p40). Hard news has five characteristics:

1. Personalized or about individuals
2. Dramatic, conflict-filled and violent
3. Action, an event, an identifiable occurrence
4. Novel, deviant, out of the ordinary
5. Reports events linked to issues prevalent in the news at the time (Jamison 2001: p40).

For the purposes of answering my research questions, it is that last point which is more useful. “Stories about continuing issues generate audience identification and create the comforting sense of a pattern in the complexity of modern life” (Jamison 2001: p51). Similarly, opinion articles are often linked to topical issues and are often written from a perspective with which the audience recognizes is coming from within them as a public. In South Africa, this can mean the issue is told from a place of class, language or race. In the United Kingdom, by contrast, politically partisan newspapers are the norm. Thus opinion pieces are written from a clearly political or ideological position.

It is important to note that in news stories about contentious issues, they are presented in a way that can encourage a certain kind of contrarianism. In terms of news, it means that an issue will have two sides which may be presented by the journalist. These sides

are often part of 'official' or previously established sources. If we return to hard news, studies have found that of 2 850 stories appearing in the *New York Times* and *Washington Post*, 58.2% were produced from 'routine', typically government, sources (Sigal 1973: p121). This research sought to examine, in terms of opinion, whether routine, authoritative sources are more often chosen because of their relevance to a news event.

When examining gatekeeping theory and news values it is important that we make clear their relationship. Gatekeeping theory describes how media professionals make decisions. Among the factors that influence their decisions are news values. News values are the criteria by which media professionals use their judgement to decide what stories or issues have more relevance. This research will seek to find whether media professionals use similar criteria and judgement when acting as gatekeepers with regards to opinion pieces.

## 2.4: Conclusions

I have outlined the ways in which I have drawn from three theoretical ideas: the public sphere, agenda-setting and gatekeeping. Here I want to look at how these approaches intersect, overlap and inform each other when they are applied to my research projects. First, gatekeeping theory describes the practical professional process by which news professionals (gatekeepers) make selections of news. Agenda-setting details how the media, while not able to tell people what to think, is able to influence what topics the public perceives as important thus setting the borders of public debate. It also identifies how certain topics are placed on the media agenda. Finally, public sphere theory describes the spaces, physical and incorporeal, where public discourse may take place. These three areas all bring a different understanding to certain key issues of this research report.

What is considered pertinent for public discussion by decision-makers is determined by news values. A topic's news value is informed, in part, by whether it is connected to public figure. If we transfer the idea of gatekeeping and news values to agenda-setting, then we find that some topics will find a readier outlet in news due, in part, to the person who espouses them. The worthiness of a person to give comment is determined by professional criteria, part of which is informed by news values. This provides an important possible linkage of the topics on the opinion pages to the news section. If we view the media agenda as influential over public discourse then it can be argued that agenda-setting public figures and gatekeepers are able to influence public discussion and perhaps the public sphere at large.

This research has sought to make connections between the selection of news by gatekeepers and the process by which opinion is selected. Among the criteria that may be used to select an opinion topic is its relevance, in terms of news values, to the existing media agenda. This provides another possible intersection with public sphere theory as one of the criteria of contributing to public debate is whether the contribution

is rational-critical and contributes to the public good; or in the terminology of agenda-setting, whether the contribution is important enough to be put on the media agenda.

This research has sought to explore selection process of topics and commentators. It is this process that sets the landscape of the public debate and decides what sorts of contribution the media, in this case the *Sunday Times*, can make to public debate and political affairs and the public sphere at large.

## CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

The aim of my research was to identify how topics and contributors were chosen for the opinion pages in the *Sunday Times*. I also sought establish whether there were links between the opinion and news sections. In achieving this I made use of three methods of content analysis of the newspaper, qualitative interviews with *Sunday Times*' decision-makers, and participant observation. Content analysis can be described as “the systematic, objective, quantitative analysis of message characteristics.” (Neuendorf 2002: p1) But content analysis has limitations, the main being attempts to reliably categorize word meanings due to ambiguity in definitions and word meanings (Weber 1990: p15). Content analysis can easily describe what appears in the newspapers, not the process by which selection of the items is made. The process of selection was examined by the use of qualitative interviews and participant observation of the people responsible for the content, *Sunday Times*' decision-makers. Qualitative interviews are sessions of in-depth questions and answers with research subjects, often with follow-up questions. They are used to learn about the interviewee's 'life world', their experiences and the meaning of those experiences. It allows the interviewer to 'read between the lines' and formulate questions for the interviewee that is based on that reading (Kvale 1996: p30). Further assisting in understanding that life world is participant observation. “Through participant observation, it is possible to describe what goes on, who or what is involved, when and where things happen, how they occur, and what—at least from the standpoint of participants—things happen as they do in particular situations”(Jorgensen 1989: p12).

### 3.1: Interview subjects

This section details the gatekeepers, decision-makers and columnists who were interviewed for this research.

Mondli Makhanya: Editor of the *Sunday Times*. Makhanya had previously worked for the *Sunday Times* as a political editor before moving to the *Mail and Guardian*. He returned to the *Sunday Times* to his current position. He ‘chairs’ the leader conference.

Fred Khumalo: Editor of the News and Opinion section, formerly called ‘Insight and Opinion’. Khumalo had previously written for the *Sunday Times* in 1999 before leaving to write for multiple papers, among them the Afrikaans-language *Rapport*. Upon returning in 2003 he took up his present position. Khumalo also participates in the leader conference.

Andrew Donaldson: Deputy Managing Editor. He joined the *Sunday Times* in 1998 and was part of the team involved in the redesign of the *Sunday Times*. He refers to himself as a ‘helicopter’. His job entails moving and filling in wherever he is needed, writing features, and a possibly unhealthy preoccupation with Paris Hilton. Donaldson also participates in the leader conferences.

Gillian Anstey: Deputy Editor of Insight. Anstey spends the bulk of her time sorting and preparing reader’s letters for publication. She is also responsible for generating article ideas for the opinion pages but in an ad hoc manner. In contrast to her predecessor, who was also a woman, she does not participate in leader conferences. Unlike her predecessor, she must spend a great deal more time contending with letters. Anstey is also not interested in politics and, as such, is not interested in contributing to leaders.

Mohau Pheko: Columnist. Pheko is a recent addition from the *Sunday Times* and does not come from a journalism background. She has a PhD in economics, is a business consultant and a gender activist.

Heather Robertson: Robertson is the managing editor of the *Sunday Times*. At the time of the research, she was the only woman to participate in the leader conferences.

Tony Sutton: Sutton is a former editor of South African publications. He currently runs a design company, New Design Associates, which participated in the redesign of the *Sunday Times*.

### **3.2: Preliminary textual analysis and interviews**

I first selected a time period of publication of the *Sunday Times* from which to do my study. I chose a five week period in April of 2007. This sample occurred after a change in the newspaper's format in December 2006 when the amount of space available for opinion was enlarged. The advantage of this was that having made changes to the paper, decision-makers were more conscious of the rationale behind some of the opinion items, not least the addition of two new columnists, Mondli Makhanya and Mohau Pheko, and the creation of a new page of opinion for a pre-existing columnist, Fred Khumalo. I sought to identify the different changes that had been made to the *Sunday Times*. This was done through a cursory reading and analysis of the paper, in which I established which pages were set aside for opinion and identified as columns, who the potential contributors might be and what topics might generally be chosen. With this information in hand, I then interviewed Andrew Donaldson. Donaldson, who was part of the process of planning the *Sunday Times*' news and opinion relaunch. He took me through the paper, explaining the rationale behind many of the changes. I also asked him to describe what parts of the paper he thought were news and which were opinion.

In this interview we also discussed the *Sunday Times* generally, its production process and issues of transformation around the paper in its selection of opinion contributors. This provided a base of knowledge from which to proceed. I also used this interview to organize permission to observe a leader conference and to establish an understanding with Donaldson over what I hoped to achieve with this research. This was important as

the leader conference is the meeting at which news decision-makers gather to decide what the topics and writers of the leader columns will be.

### **3.3: Participant observation of leader conference and subsequent interviews**

After receiving permission, I spent an afternoon at the *Sunday Times* observing decision-makers discuss potential leader subjects. The affair was rather prosaic; however it did give me the opportunity to watch the interaction of the various decision-makers and see what issues influenced the discussion and decisions. Perhaps most importantly, I was watching decision-making in action and seeing what factors were actually at play. This would provide me with knowledge of the process from which I could later question decision-makers in the interviews.

Following the leader conference, I interviewed key decision-makers Fred Khumalo, Gillian Anstey, Heather Robertson and Mondli Makhanya. I also, for a second time, interviewed Donaldson. Khumalo and Makhanya were interviewed as both decision-makers and columnists themselves. This proved interesting as it demonstrated the way their professional practice is determined by what responsibility they see themselves fulfilling at the moment. They gave me insight into not only how they chose topics but also how self-aware they were when they wrote in their personal voices and personae. I should also point out that I conducted the interviews as a fellow, though junior, journalist. I used language and reasoning in my questions that I expected they, as journalists, would understand and to which they could relate. This meant that we, in many ways, shared a normative understanding of media and of their roles as decision-makers and it allowed me to establish a rapport.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> This can be seen in the transcripts of the interviews, collected in the appendices.

I was able to question Makhanya, Donaldson and Khumalo as to how topics and columnists were selected and what link existed between news and opinion. Further, I asked them about the leader conference and to explain some of the issues of production, priorities and transformation that played out there as well as representation within the leader conference itself. I conducted the interview with Donaldson last. This gave me the opportunity to confirm and contextualize some of the things that I had learned from Khumalo and Makhanya. Because I was familiar with the opinion pages I could ask them about particular sections and from there build a line of inquiry that interrogated what they believed the mission and motivation of the opinion pages as a whole were. These might include agenda-setting in the Facing Leader, representation in terms of guest columnists and news values in the leader or Second Opinion.

After these, I then arranged to speak to Gillian Anstey. Anstey was not at the leader conference. Indeed, our interview was less about the leader conference than her absence from it. Anstey, however, was able to provide valuable information about the solicitation of opinion pieces and the practical criteria that go around their selection, particularly the contributor's style, clarity and adherence to the newspaper's production schedule.

Robertson was interviewed via e-mail, though to a much lesser extent than the other decision-makers. Over e-mail, I asked her about her irregular participation in leader conferences and why this was the case. In a weakness of my methodology, I interviewed Robertson after Makhanya. I therefore wasn't able to question Makhanya about the issues of gender that Robertson would raise. This actually points to the importance of my observation of the leader conference because her absence caused me to not prioritize Robertson as an interviewee.

Also interviewed via e-mail were Mohau Pheko and Tony Sutton. Pheko was interviewed only as a new columnist. I asked her how she chose topics and why she believed that she was chosen to be a regular columnist for the *Sunday Times*. This gave

me the opportunity to contrast the rationale for her hiring provided by decision-makers at the *Sunday Times*. It also provided insights into the differences of how Pheko, a columnist but not socialized in journalism, chose topics in contrast to experienced journalists such as Donaldson, Makhanya or Khumalo, who operate with professional norms and values.

The e-mail interview with Tony Sutton was needed as he was the designer responsible for many of the aforementioned changes at the *Sunday Times*. This provided me with general information about the motivations for some of the changes and added context to many of the issues raised in the first interview I conducted with Donaldson. Also among the issues I raised with during an e-mail interview were the differences in the planning of the opinion pages and the end result.

### **3.4: Quantitative analysis and final interviews**

One of the goals of my research was to identify any links between the topics in the news pages and those on the opinion pages. This was done with a quantitative analysis of the *Sunday Times* news section and opinion section for five weeks during April 2007. I attempted to classify the topics that were discussed in the opinion sections. I then counted the number of corresponding news stories in the same and previous week and measured the total amount of column/cm<sup>2</sup>. This informed me of not only whether there were links between the news and opinion sections but also which types of opinion articles had the most linkage with news. I also made note of what sort of persons were chosen to give comment as guest writers. This gave me an objective overview of the kind of topics that could be found in the *Sunday Times* and prepared me for my final interviews with Khumalo and Makhanya.

The subject of these final interviews was what they, as decision-makers, considered to be inappropriate for publication in other words, to investigate what was routinely not selected. This line of questioning, crucial to my research, was built upon my general

understanding of the *Sunday Times* as it exists and how decision-makers perceive its mission and character. Therefore, it was dependant on all the knowledge that I had accumulated over the course of the research. The questions of what are inappropriate subjects and commentators are sensitive and decision-makers are aware of the potential that accusations of censorship might be made against them. I therefore proceeded by first asking whether or not they would publish hate speech, which under its constitution is illegal in South Africa. After establishing that there were some issues that are unfit for publication we could they proceed into questions about topics and commentators considered unfit for reasons other than constitutional ones.

Ultimately, I organized the data into transcripts of the qualitative interviews and of the participant observation (the leader conference). I distilled the content analysis into spreadsheets. By examining and comparing the interviews I could piece together certain themes which emerged and were pertinent to my research question.

## CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

### 4.1: The *Sunday Times* Overview

The *Sunday Times*' 'News and Opinion' section is edited by Fred Khumalo, who is also a columnist. In its previous incarnation, the section was called 'Insight and Opinion', Khumalo's title, Insight editor, is a vestigial remnant of this nomenclature. For the purposes of clarity, Khumalo is referred to as the Insight editor. In addition to the opinion section, letters from readers and the 'Fred Khumalo Page', this section has a main front page feature, called 'the front of back', foreign news, technology and health stories as well as a main profile and obituaries. It also has three pages at its back with celebrity coverage as well as a large photograph on the back page which Khumalo refers to as 'the almost nude woman'. Opinion articles can also be found outside these pages. The Business Times section has its own opinion section. Andrew Donaldson, the deputy managing editor, has a column in the main section of the paper. During the period of the study, there was also a column written by David Bullard on the front page of the Business Times Careers section.

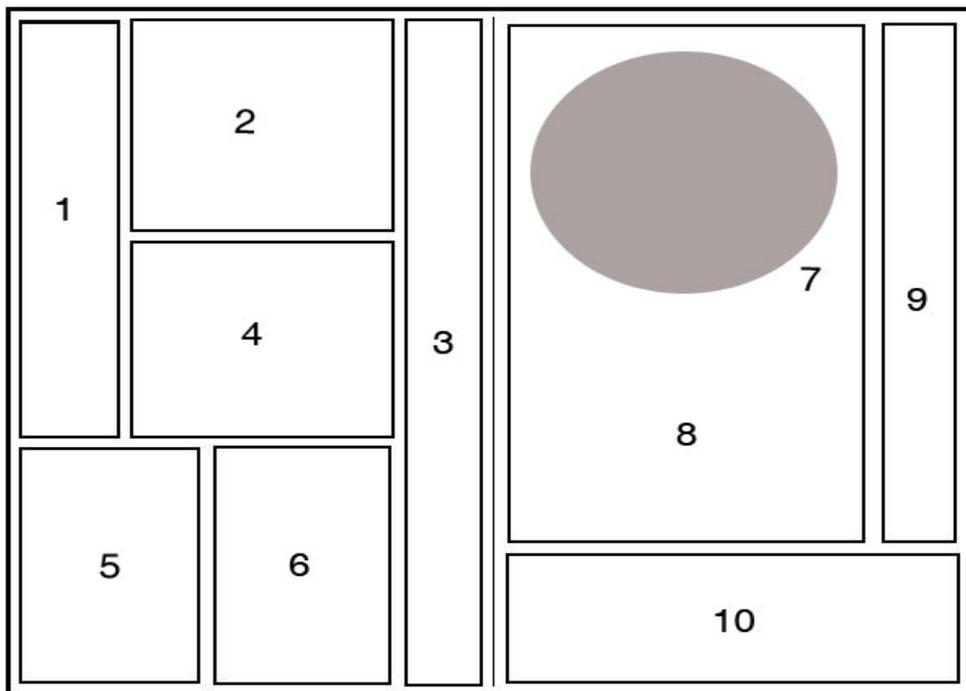
The opinion pages themselves have a standard format a graphic of which can be found at the end of the section. The left hand space, as is customary with newspapers, contains the first and second leader, the so-called, 'voice of the paper' (Graphic 1). Much of the page is also taken up with a cartoon, by the popular South African cartoonist Zapiro (Graphic 4).

The page has three regular columnists and a space called 'Second Opinion' which is meant for guest writers (Graphic 5). Three of the columns had become a presence on the opinion page following *the Sunday Times*' redesign. One, Hogarth, had been there previously. The three regular columnists are Mondli Makhanya, 'Hogarth' and 'Sis Beatrice'. Makhanya, who is also the editor of the *Sunday Times*, writes columns about

political issues (Graphic 2). ‘Sis Beatrice’ is a character—represented as cartoon, middle-aged black woman—who writes advice concerning issues of social mobility (Graphic 6). It had previously been on the second page of the news section but was moved as part of the redesign. Finally, Hogarth, like Sis Beatrice, is a character. It is written as a series of short ‘blurbs’ that occasionally interlink (Graphic 3).

The right hand page is dominated by the ‘Facing Leader’, a large opinion or analysis piece (Graphic 8) with an accompanying graphic (Graphic 7). The facing leader is called so because right hand pages are the first thing a reader sees as they open the paper, it is ‘facing’ the reader. This facing leader is usually written by a guest writer but is sometimes also the work of a *Sunday Times* staff writer. There is one regular columnist on the page, Mohau Pheko (Graphic 10). Pheko was another addition to the page after the redesign. The right hand page also has a regular item called ‘So Many Questions’, a series of questions and answers laid out in a conversational a style with a person who has been in the news recently (Graphic 9).

**Figure 4.1: The *Sunday Times* Opinion Page Layout**



## **4.2: Quantitative Findings Linking the Relationship between News and Opinion**

This portion of the findings examines the quantitative data of my research and demonstrates a general link between topics in the news and opinion pages. It also shows to what degree individual sections of the opinion pages have different levels of correlations with the news page. I will do this by examining the following sections: the first leader, the second leader, Mondli Makhanya's column, Fred Khumalo's column, Mohau Pheko's column, 'Second Opinion', the facing page leader, and Zapiro. A line-by-line breakdown of the connections between news and opinion can be found in the appendix.

My research looked at how often opinion articles published in the *Sunday Times* corresponded to published articles in the news section. It also showed the total amount of news stories appearing in the same and previous week as each opinion article, the average number of news stories for each opinion article and the average amount of column/cm that were dedicated to a news topic for each opinion article. What should be said is that the purpose of this research was not to compare the *Sunday Times* to other media, so whether opinion articles have more or less connection to the news section is relative within the sample.

The first leader had the most correlation with the news page. It averaged 2.6 news stories per first leader article. This is almost twice the correlation from the next most highest opinion article. A good example of this correlation is found in the week five of the sample when the first leader's subject was gang activity in Cape Town. In the news pages, there were a substantial, five news stories devoted to this subject. In every week of the sample there was correlation between the first leader and the news pages.

The second leader had less correlation than the first leader. It averaged 1.2 news stories for every second leader article. In only one week did the second leader not have any correlation with the news pages. This was in week five of the sample. The second leader's subject was teenagers in South Africa. There were no news stories that week or the previous week specifically about teenagers in South Africa. However, there were several articles published that week about gang violence. In addition to this, the first leader was dedicated to the subject. In this context of the previously mentioned gang articles and the first leader of the same subject, the second leader of that same week could be seen as tangentially related to the first leader as well as the news articles

Mondli Makhanya's column had a similar amount of correlation as the second leader. It averaged 1.4 news stories for every opinion article. There were three instances of opinion articles having no corresponding news stories. However, one of those was about public awareness of HIV which coincided with the launching of the *Sunday Times*' 'Know Your Status' project.

Fred Khumalo's column is the largest of those sampled and contains three sections. For the purposes of this research only the main section, which makes up the bulk of the space, will be examined. During the sample period, Khumalo was on leave for one week reducing the number of his articles quantified to four. His column averaged only .25 news stories per opinion article.

Mohau Pheko's column had about as little correlation as Khumalo's. Her column averaged .25 news stories per opinion article. Like Khumalo, Pheko was also on leave for one week of the sample period. Two of her articles were about trade issues. These did have correlating articles in the news section. However, they may reflect Pheko's professional interest as an economist and business advisor.

The Second Opinion column had some correlation. It averaged .8 news articles and per opinion article. Though lower than the leader articles and Makhanya's column there is

still significant correlation, the .8 number indicates that there was almost one correlating article for every Second Opinion article. In the two articles that did not have a correlating news article, the subjects were both related to crime. Crime is a frequently discussed issue in South Africa and is also extensively touched on in media, including the *Sunday Times*. So while those articles did not have a specific relationship to the news section, it was generally issue-driven rather than linked to a specific event.

The Facing Leader had the least correlation with the news sections. None of its topics had also been covered in the news section the previous or same week. However, two of the articles did have a very general reference in current events. One concerned Robert Mugabe's possible third term which had been covered in the news section weeks before and another was about Jacob Zuma and sexual morality.

Lastly, Zapiro averaged .6 news articles in the news section per cartoon. This is slightly skewed however as those figures come from only one week of the sample when the topic of Zapiro's cartoon on Robert Mugabe and the SADC which correlated with three stories from the news section the same week. The other weeks in the sample had no correlation. However, one of the cartoons was about the Proteas and Cricket World Cup. In a situation similar to the previously mentioned Fidentia collapse, the Proteas were a significant story, only one covered extensively in the sports section and not the main news section. Other subjects chosen by Zapiro included a scandal around then-World Bank President Paul Wolfowitz, another about the Rooivalk helicopter and arms manufacturer Denel, and Minister of Communications Ivy Matsepe-Cassaburri. So while Zapiro chose subjects that were in the news, he did not necessarily choose ones that were prominent or, in the case of Wolfowitz, local to South Africa.

To conclude, the first leader had the most significant correlation between news and opinion articles. This was followed by the second leader and Makhanya's column. Khumalo and Pheko's column had relatively little correlation with the news section. The least correlation could be found in the Facing Leader. Second Opinion had some

direct correlation however, when there was no direct correlation there issues had some salience with the general news agenda, in this case crime. The cartoonist Zapiro, for his part, while making use of current events did not have much direct correlation to the *Sunday Times* news section.

From this data, there are some general conclusions that we may draw. The first leader: will be relevant and about a 'big story'. The second leader may have less correlation with the news section. Makhanya's is a political column and topics are chosen more on his personal interest or whim but it is still a political column and will echo news. Fred Khumalo's column had very little correlation with the news section. This is possibly because Khumalo sees the space as for his personal reflections and is meant to be light-hearted. Pheko also had very little correlation. This is possibly because she is not a news professional but an academic and activist and is outside of the *Sunday Times* organizational socialization. When she does correlate, it is almost always in an opinion article that is published the week following the corresponding news story. This suggests that rather than getting news as a news professional she is receiving it as a news consumer, then writing about it as a news professional. The Facing Leader had almost a complete lack of direct correlation. But this makes sense considering that Khumalo claims that space is meant to trigger and encourage debate not necessarily reflect existing debate. Finally, the data tells us that Zapiro is generally relevant to news. But he works as a freelancer and, like Pheko, he does not work within the organization socialization of the *Sunday Times*. He also may be restricted by his medium. His column is a cartoon so it must literally be both visual and humorous

### 4.3: Production processes at the *Sunday Times*

This section looks at the production process of the opinion pages at the *Sunday Times*, specifically those that involve decision-makers. The paper has a weekly production schedule for its opinion section which I have mapped in order to provide an overview of how this weekly process plays itself out. This section only provides a basic, practical mapping as issues concerning gatekeeping, news values and agenda-setting will be described in other sections of the findings.

The pages of the news and opinion sections fall under the stewardship of the section editor, Fred Khumalo<sup>4</sup>, as well as his deputy, Gillian Anstey. Andrew Donaldson, the deputy managing editor, provides occasional and irregular assistance in the management of this section. The final decision-maker is the editor, Mondli Makhanya.

Khumalo describes his week, or rather his deputy's week, as beginning on early Monday. Anstey begins her morning by sifting through the letters that have been e-mailed overnight. According to Anstey, since the letter's page has been expanded and the *Sunday Times* began ending their articles with 'Tell Us' and an e-mail address the number of submissions has exploded to between 500 and 700 letters a week. These letters come from all sorts of people and Donaldson describes the diverse quality of them as follows, "they can be from anything from like very detailed, very logically, coldly rational, well-argued pieces to like: "Dear Editor, I think he's talking shit, yours sincerely" and that sort of thing. Hate mail."

On Monday afternoon Khumalo and Anstey begin discussing ideas for the Facing Leader as well as Second Opinion. However, the Facing Leader takes priority, due to

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<sup>4</sup> Prior to its redesign of the *Sunday Times*, the News and Opinion section was called 'Insight and Opinion'. Khumalo and Anstey's titles (and business cards) have not changed yet and retain the vestigial names.

its size and prominence on the page. Occasionally, Makhanya will “come with a suggestion as well,” according to Khumalo.

According to Khumalo these writers are often lined up in the previous week. Because many of the contributors do not understand the realities of a newspaper production schedule, they are given a ‘false deadline’ that allows Khumalo or Anstey enough time to find an alternative to the planned contributor. This false deadline is usually on a Tuesday, the same day as the first news conference of the week. At this time, the senior editors meet and discuss all of the articles their departments are working on and plan to place in the paper that week. It is at this time that an idea of what issues will be topical that week begins to take shape.

The second news conference is held on a Thursday when stories are being finalized for the newspaper. It is usually immediately after that the leader conference takes place, this is to determine the subject and content of the leader. According to Donaldson:

You have these discussions, “Friday, this is going to happen...and okay we have our leader and we got to point out x, y, z. A, b, c or whatever it is.” And then they’ll say, “let’s get Brendan [Boyle]<sup>5</sup> to write it. Or you will write it. Okay I’ll write it.” And then decide who is going to write and Mondli will go though it.

The participants of the leader conference are Makhanya, Khumalo, Donaldson, Paul Stober, the Business Editor, and Wally Mbhele, the Political Editor. Heather Robertson, the Managing Editor, is only able to attend irregularly. Her difficulties in attending have to do with logistics and gender roles. “If its after 5, [I have] to dash home to my toddler because his child minder leaves at 5.30 (something the men in conference seem not to have to take care of, and hence do not mind so their long

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<sup>5</sup> Brendan Boyle is a *Sunday Times* staff journalist.

lunches sometimes lead to late conferences which lead to late leader conferences which I cannot attend),” says Robertson

This suggests problems with gender representation in the leader conferences as Anstey, though she is Khumalo’s deputy, is not present by her own choice. While her predecessor, also a woman, attended, Anstey says that she is not interested in the political issues that the leader conference covers. There is also a practical consideration as, in contrast to her predecessor, Anstey must spend much more time editing the letter’s section which was expanded as part of the redesign. She estimates that that job alone requires about four days of her time, leaving less availability to meetings.

The conferences can go on for some time and are often argumentative. The leader conference that was observed for this research was a fairly prosaic affair. Makhanya took the lead and proposed two leaders: one about the coming Nigerian elections and the other on Cosatu’s distancing itself from Deputy ANC President Jacob Zuma. Makhanya and Donaldson say that this is the exception. In a more typical leader conference, “We argued and people shifted positions and at the end of the day the position of the *Sunday Times* prevailed,” says Makhanya. Leader topics, like Second Opinion, are often taken from the news section and are chosen on not merely what is topical but what will be of most interest on Sunday when the newspaper is published. Individual writers then come forward or are chosen to write it.

By Saturday, the opinion pieces are written, sometimes on the same day. Donaldson says that this is in some ways an ideal situation because by then, “you know where your opposition stands”.<sup>6</sup> According to Donaldson, knowing what other newspapers have published in their leaders allows the *Sunday Times* to see gaps or holes in their pieces.

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<sup>6</sup> Events at large can also affect the production process. The week during which the leader conference I observed occurred was also the week leading into the World Cricket Cup final of which South Africa was competing. Because the match was on Saturday, the Sports section was pushed back in the production schedule and the Opinion section pushed forward to Friday. Donaldson blames this for what he perceived to be a lack of quality and relevance in that week’s leader articles.

After the pieces are written and placed on page they are read through by the editor, Makhanya, one last time. At this time Makhanya or others might want to make last-minute changes. In some cases, the content of the pieces themselves might be questioned. “I’ve been called in and I presume that Fred has been called in from time to time, and been told I just want to look at what you’ve written. Are you sure you want to say this?” says Donaldson.

In summary, the production process is of critical importance to what is published in the *Sunday Times*. This process is determined by many practical factors that often have little to do with larger theoretical issues in media studies. These factors can include the punctuality of contributors, what is being published by other newspapers or how contentious an issue, or decision-makers, may appear. The production schedule also determines who is able to participate in the leader conference. In Robertson’s case, she is her household’s primary child caregiver and the decision-makers who schedule the leader conference, who are men, do not have the same responsibilities. This makes her unable to attend regularly.

## **4.4: Factors in the Selection of Topics**

This section looks at the factors that go into the selection of topics and builds upon, and depends heavily, on the previous section on the production processes. While that section covered the practical factors in the selection of certain topics, this one will focus on how news values and agenda-setting influence gatekeepers.

### **4.4.1: News Values**

This section begins with an examination of the selection process with regards to reader's letters. Though the letters were not the subject of my research, many of the criteria used to select them are similar to that of opinion pieces. Furthermore, some opinion pieces are moved to the letters' page if space in the opinion is limited. Examining the letters page first is also helpful because the sheer number of potential publishable letters causes the selection process to become even more observable.

Because of the large number of letters, Gillian Anstey must also apply very rigorous selection criteria utilizing news values. Fred Khumalo outlined her selection process as follows:

She looks for brevity, relevance, and topicality in the letters. And obviously issues of accuracy. Checking to make sure people are not making these things up or misunderstanding. The issue they are trying to debate or the point they are trying make, they are intimating the point they are trying to bring across. So, I think those are the criteria that she employs, the selection process...We strive for balance, a variety of topics. Because there's a temptation to deal with only the politics of this country but there are many other issues that confront us. The politics of sport for example. The politics of religion. And then there's entertainment. What makes a celebrity? We've been writing a lot about the

issue of celebrity. What makes a celebrity in the South African context? So it does elicit letters from our readers. So it must reflect the debate we have sparked in through our opinion pages.

What should be noted is that all of the criteria that Khumalo mentions are professional, not personal. An important tenet of gatekeeping theory is that media decision-makers use professional criteria, often engaging news values, which trump personal sentiment. This was expressed by Anstey in the course of an interview:

Well, we had a letter from Tony Leon and I felt it was being cut too much...So I needed to fit it on the page and the only way to do it was pull something else. And I pulled a long letter, which was the one I loved. It was a brilliant letter. And it was very interesting, thought provoking. I couldn't cut it much more than what it was. So I pulled it. And just had the Tony Leon letter. You do that. This is what...my job is about making decisions. And letting go of things and its something I find very hard to do.

This issue of selection is mirrored in the opinion pages and particularly drives leaders and Second Opinion. Contributions that are 'political' often take precedence as they are perceived as having more overall importance and general appeal. Political issues are often more tied to current news issues and events. This is demonstrated by an example of a situation in Second Opinion; it also exemplifies other factors that go into the selection of opinion pieces. The Second Opinion is routinely driven by news and events. Sometimes, this necessity causes decision-makers to go against their personal desires for what has more news value. Donaldson describes a situation in which a submission which was a response to a previous Facing Leader, concerning black writers. The topic was of great interest to him personally and would have gone in had not a more topical submission also been made:

This guy wrote this piece, he was named in a really provocative piece about literature and editing and books. And how we rush to print black novelists and we're selling them down the river because we're not editing properly and not making them revise this stuff. And the stuff feels half-finished and we're doing South African literature a disservice. One of the editors in the piece wrote a response, and it was...I wanted it to be used in the next week but there's no space. And I said, "well can't it go there" and they said "no it can't go there" there was a more pressing piece about Zimbabwe which should have gone into Second Opinion. And they were both really good. But I thought...the Zimbabwe piece is probably more important than the literature piece. But that's me thinking pragmatically rather than personally

When asked what made the Zimbabwe piece more 'pressing' Donaldson explained:

It was written by some big wig in the International Bar Council and it was a guy who had been round the table with Mugabe. He had been there; the International Bar Council had gone to Zimbabwe. And what he said was absolutely perfect. Like, [instead of] thousands of words, he said it in 750 words which is ideal for that space and he said, "these are the ways you can hold Robert Mugabe accountable, bang, bang." And it was succinct and it was irrefutable, and in the short term it was better to fill the hole. And it was a more important piece I thought than the other piece but my sympathies were with the guy who wrote the literature piece.

What is important to note is that this situation exemplifies how Donaldson is acting as a gatekeeper and his professional ideology trumps his personal sentiment. Though he has more interested in literature, he believed a political story should take priority. According to Donaldson's explanation the criteria for selecting the piece were:

- Importance and relevance of the writer

- Size
- Quality
- Importance of the topic

While the second and third criteria are fairly obvious, the first and fourth could bear more scrutiny. The topic, as mentioned above, is usually driven by news and events. In other words, ‘topical’ issues.

That opinion should be relevant in current events is demonstrated most obviously in leaders. According to Donaldson, during leader conferences the editor, Makhanya will open discussions by asking what are the important issues. “He runs things down and they sort of say...well...‘I think we need to look at Zimbabwe,’ and they’ll say ‘what are we going to say about Zimbabwe.’ Being that Zimbabwe has been in the news this week.” Here Donaldson is acknowledging the way news determines what will be discussed. This is also implicitly suggested by the production schedule. It is only after the last news conference, when the final decisions are being made of what will be in the news pages, that a discussion on what will be the topics of the leaders is discussed. This demonstrates the primacy of news to setting the agenda of the leaders. Leaders are often written on a Saturday. The reason being, according to Donaldson, that at this point the *Sunday Times* is aware of what other newspapers have said and can “look for holes” in their arguments.

What should be noted here is that when a final decision is made, that decision is made by Makhanya. However, Makhanya does not rule by dictate, he is still informed by his colleagues and by what he perceives the *Sunday Times*’ voice should be.

At the end of the day it is my opinion. But what goes into that opinion is kind of [an agreement], we reach it. But at the end of the day...if I’m on leave and there’s a position they want to take but they’re not sure about or how I feel about it, they phone [and ask] can we say this? Or else, “but we don’t think the editor

would necessarily agree with that.” I...because at the end of the day it’s not Andrew or Fred or Heather that’s going to have to go out there and defend a position. It’s me.

This section has shown us that the process by which a topic is selected for an opinion piece is influenced by production schedules and professional judgments (gatekeeping) about news values. Topics for the leaders are typically chosen from the news pages and not selected until after what will be news is being finalized. They are also sometimes influenced by what is presently in the public discourse, particularly rival newspapers. The selection of opinion pieces as a whole are chosen by a set of professional standards that look at relative importance—often political import—often at the expense of a decision-maker’s personal attachment.

#### **4.4.2: Agenda-setting**

The *Sunday Times* is the most influential newspaper in South Africa, an agenda-setter. Interviews revealed that decision-makers are aware of this influence and use it as the basis for selecting opinion articles. The previous section dealt with the ordinary professional criteria that went into the selection of contributions. This section deals with how the decision-makers’ desire to shape debate influences what is selected:

**Fred Khumalo:** What issues have to be explained this week? What analytical input are we bring to an issue? What’s the story today? So you think, how do you take this issue further rather than the surface reporting?

**T Kenichi Serino:** In other words it almost has to be based on what’s already in the news.

**FK:** Not necessarily.

**TKS:** What would be the exception?

**FK:** Ahh...let me see. This past weekend, sexual freedom in a democracy. It's not in the news, not in the news domain at all. [A guest contributor] just came up with an idea, she was going to address a conference at Wits, a conference on sexuality on so on. Why it should be an issue. This is a follow-up on the Civil Unions Act and its impact on our society. And how the constitution impacts on our individuality or individual sexuality and so on and we take these things for granted that sexuality is an individual thing it really is impacted on by the constitution, that was her argument. That was something that was not in the news. It has happened many times that we just think something that we feel strongly about. For example some time ago I wrote a piece on, okay, we see more and more books being published in this country especially fiction novels but we don't see any new black writers. I opened that debate. And that debate dragged on, it's now being debated in academia. Where are the black fiction writers? We don't...my brief from the editor; let us create the debate that will be followed by the rest of the pack. That is...what's [Makhanya's] favourite expression? "Let's set the agenda".

This demonstrates that the *Sunday Times*, aware of its status as an agenda-setter, chooses pieces not only on the basis of news but whether they will contribute to a debate. The example Khumalo uses, the facing leader, is the largest presence on the opinion page. When questioned about its particular lack of connection to the news section he affirms that the space is meant to propel ideas into public discourse, not necessarily to reflect current news issues or events. This is an example of how the *Sunday Times* attempts to produce debate.

This can also be seen in the composition of leaders. Though the leader is as connected to news as the facing leader is unconnected, decision-makers at the *Sunday Times* use it

as a platform to set the agenda. According to Donaldson, “Mondli often jokes, when he starts the leader conference on Thursday or Friday and we’re talking about the mampara or something, he’ll say, “So, what is the highest court in the land going to say on Sunday?” And he’s talking about that space.”

Makhanya describes the leader as an integral part of the tone of the opinion page and the paper-at-large. “That’s where the *Sunday Times* stands. Circumstances and issues. And it allows us as a newspaper to give direction to our readership and hopefully the country on the way we believe the country and the world should be going.”

The *Sunday Times* is aware of its importance as “the highest court in the land” that is as an influencer of public debate. For this reason, some opinion pieces, particularly the facing leader, will be chosen not necessarily because they are topical but because they are believed to advance and initiate public debate. Related to this, many of the pieces, such as those in Second Opinion, are responses to issues that have already been raised in the *Sunday Times* itself. The newspaper is also aware of its agenda-setting influence with regards to the leaders. In contrast to the facing leader, which is used to push ideas forward, the leader is connected to issues already in public discussion. The leader in this case is used to try to influence public opinion by providing direction.

## 4.5: Mamparas

Some attention should also be paid in regards to the selection of the ‘Mampara’. The mampara is decided on during the Thursday editorial conference. As the person selected is meant to be the source of ridicule, *Sunday Times* decision-makers are very aware of racial representation.

**T Kenichi Serino:** You jokingly said, “Mondli likes white mamparas”. Are you conscious of the race of the mampara? Of having too many of one race in one go?

**Andrew Donaldson:** That’s a joke between the two of us...

**TKS:** Of course...

**AD:** What had happened between the two of us, we would tend to get a lot of black mamparas. Because black people tend to be in charge. So, Mondli, personally, has to deal with people who will say to him, “you seem to be serving white interests...”

**TKS:** Yes...

**AD:** And, it’s an oft told charge against him. He probably should speak about it more than I because it is quite politically loaded. So when you do get a chance to do like high profile white people who put their foot in their mouths or fuck-up then its welcomed. But it doesn’t often happen.

**TKS:** Because the mampara is most likely to be a political figure...

**AD:** Or administrative...

**TKS:** A political or administrative figure.

The mampara will typically be a person with a public profile who is being ridiculed because of something they have done in the public realm. Because most public figures, particularly those in government, tend to be black, the likelihood of the mampara being black is great. At the same time, because of the legacy of Apartheid, the *Sunday Times* is reluctant to name too many black persons as mamparas.

**TKS:** Let's say you have five or six black mamparas in a row. Do you become more conscious...

**AD:** No.

**TKS:** You don't become more conscious of the race?

**AD:** Mondli will now and again say, "are there are any white ones we can consider?" [inaudible] Sometimes we do scratch around.

**TKS:** When there's no obvious one choice for one?

**AD:** Yes.

Donaldson is reluctant to admit that racial considerations play a role in the selection of the mampara. Finally, he suggests that when there is not an obvious mampara, someone who has been featured prominently in the news, they will try to produce a mampara who is white.

The selection of the mampara points to how decision-makers are displaying a professional ideology of news values in their selection of the mampara. As the

mampara will be a person who is probably be a public figure and will have committed an action that is the subject of public debate. However, this professional ideology is tempered by an awareness on the part of the decision-makers that they are currently living with the legacy of Apartheid, a South Africa in which many people were marginalized and sometimes ridiculed on the basis of their race. The *Sunday Times* is aware that accusations of racism can arise

#### 4.6: The Selection of Columnists

There is also a selection process for columnists, though one that varies greatly from the selection of articles. In the process of selection columnists, representation, qualifications and ‘personality’ are all considered. We can start to look at these issues by first looking at how the *Sunday Times* perceives the expectations of its audience. Mondli Makhanya, Fred Khumalo and Andrew Donaldson do agree that the *Sunday Times* has a target audience and must speak to that audience. Khumalo explains the positioning of the *Sunday Times*:

When I first joined here 80% of our readers were white, in 1995. So that has changed. The demographic has changed. What hasn’t changed now is that we are still addressing people of a certain class. Working class people do not really have a voice. [Generally] working class people do not have a voice. Especially here. We are a very middle class establishment.

Donaldson expands upon this idea:

The *Sunday Times* refers to itself as a middlebrow newspaper and they want a middle class readership. And they are hitching its ponies to the wagons firmly onto this emerging middle class. Those figures are reflected in the subscription numbers. All our new subscriptions are coming from townships, new burgeoning suburbs, ja so I mean. It’s happening; people are getting delivery in Soweto. I never would have imagined it ten years ago. And that’s their future, so that will possibly tie into their opinion.

This awareness of a changing audience, along with larger issues of transformation, informs the newspaper’s selection of columnists. However, these are not the only considerations as the paper also concerns itself with qualifications of the contributor and, in the case of regular columnists, ‘personality’.

### 4.6.1: Guest Columnists

Guest columnists are those who, solicited or not, contribute pieces to the opinion pages, either in the Facing Leader or Second Opinion. For them, the selection process often begins not with their selection but that of the topic which may be chosen first and then a suitable writer is found for them. In these cases issues of both qualifications and representation arise. As Khumalo says:

We prefer them to have credentials. Yes. So if, for example, a person writes on this topic, for example, I would phone her or him back and ask what qualifies you to write this? Yes credentials are very important because we don't want to end up with egg on our face by using a person who doesn't know what they are talking about.

According to Khumalo, he has a list of between 100—200 names of persons who he views as qualified to write in the *Sunday Times*. After a suitable topic is vetted, he then selects an appropriate writer from the list. Khumalo would not share the names on his list, as he considers the contents an asset to the *Sunday Times*, but he did say that it was compiled by himself, Anstey, and Makhanya and that the persons on it were qualified to speak on a variety of issues. In the cases where a submission is received from someone unsolicited, that person's qualifications are examined. According to Khumalo:

We prefer them to have credentials. Yes. So if, for example, a person writes on this topic, for example, I would phone her or him back and ask what qualifies you to write this? Yes credentials are very important because we don't want to end up with egg on our face by using a person who doesn't know what they are talking about. Which is why we have our preferred writers.

The desire for qualification is demonstrated in the quantitative analysis. In looking at who was invited to speak and what their professions were, I found that out that

academics were heavily favoured as half of those chosen in the sample as guest columnists could be called academics or researchers. These academics also tended to be writing on a subject related to their field of study.

In addition to professional qualifications, there is also a racial and gender component. He explains further:

**Fred Khumalo:** There was a conscious decision on my part to say we've had all these voices over the past years, let's have more voices. That means, let's change the racial demographic of our commentators. Not to say we won't use it if he comes up with an opinion piece, he is not our preferred commentator. We've got other voices who are as qualified. So why not explore new voices?

**T Kenichi Serino:** So by new voices you mean people who wouldn't have had a [previous] outlet in the *Sunday Times*?

**FK:** Yes, the marginalized of this world.

This idea, as enacted in practice, means that there will be more black contributors to the editorial page. According to Makhanya, "we do take into account that this person needs to talk to your readership and also draw new readership." But while representation is an issue, the *Sunday Times* also selects based on qualifications in keeping with its own professional standards and reputation. For this reason, decision-makers are selective about who is allowed to contribute to its pages. An unqualified commentator, regardless of race, would not be selected. These qualifications might mean professional, political or academic prominence; it can also be personal experiences. Most often, it is usually some sort of mixture of these. In the case of Donaldson's example of the Zimbabwe piece mentioned previously, the writer was perceived as qualified because of professional criteria mixed with first-hand personal experience.

Qualifications can also mean a potential contributor's ability to write for newspapers. According to Anstey, some potential contributors, particularly academics, are sometimes treated cautiously as they are unfamiliar with the format or demands of the production schedule. "We [tell] them, no academic references. No footnotes. Use the simplest, most basic language. Clarify everything. Just don't mention something, explain it. Anyone who is too turgid we wouldn't use." This means that in addition to expertise a contributor must be able to speak to a general audience while also submitting their articles on time and to length.

#### **4.6.2: Regular Columnists**

A different selection process is used with regards to regular columnists. More than anything else, the recurring criteria that sets them apart from guest columnists is 'personality'. The regular columnists on the *Sunday Times* opinion pages are Mondli Makhanya, the editor, and Fred Khumalo, the Insight editor. Both are, obviously, news professionals. Also on the page is Mohau Pheko, however her unique situation will be dealt with in her own section.

The research has indicated that professional qualifications and representation are important criteria for the selection of columnists. An example of the former is how Fred Khumalo came to be a columnist at the *Sunday Times*. He began writing it in 1996 while he was already working for the newspaper,

Right from the onset when I started writing this column, my predecessor was Charlotte Bauer, she used to have a column called 'Close-Up'. It was very tongue in cheek and so on, she went on leave and said I must fill in for her. So I wrote the column for a month in her absence. When she came back she said the thing is working so well, rather keep it. So that is how I got this column.

Khumalo, in other words, was a news professional on staff who was picked by a decision-maker to take their place. So through a month long 'trial' period, he demonstrated his ability to supply the qualifications the column demanded. In this case that qualification was to write about serious issues in a light manner.

This sentiment of 'a light touch that makes you think' is indicated in the header of his section as, 'Somewhat Serious, Somewhat Fun'. The section is also descriptively entitled, 'The Fred Khumalo Page'. This suggested that Khumalo, a decision-maker, was increasing his own prominence. "I was kind of embarrassed. Those people who understand the *Sunday Times* and think: ahh Fred, he's creating his own empire," says Khumalo.

But according to both Khumalo and Makhanya the reality was much more practical. They both said that Khumalo's column was quite popular but that it wasn't drawing as many readers as it could. The new format would focus on Khumalo as a personality as well as a columnist. According to Donaldson, the idea was imported.

It's a British tabloid idea. You look at the *Daily Mirror*, the *Daily Standard*, and the *Daily Mail*. A lot of their columnists get a page, and then they get a column with a lot of bits. And they wanted to copy that. Say, give you the page, the Fred Khumalo page it's basically, you write your column, you have a few letters that you answer that are specifically directed at you. You have a few little things on the side. A few recommendations. But your column is still basically the lynchpin of the page. And that's all that idea was really.

Makhanya explains how this idea was meant to be applied to Fred Khumalo and the *Sunday Times*, "Basically, it was to give his column a bit more, give him more entry points. He could have a lot more fun with various subjects. The column was working. But...it was basically to enable more elements. Those sidebars and also its more brighter. And you actually build more on his personality."

This issue of building a personality was also at work in Mondli Makhanya's column. He became a regular columnist when the *Sunday Times* went through its redesign. During the process, it was decided that the opinion page needed a column with a distinct political voice that was more individualistic than the merely the leader. Makhanya explains, "The column is basically about the personality of Mondli Makhanya as a commentator. It's basically a political voice for the newspaper." In addition to filling this perceived need, Makhanya viewed himself qualified to write a political column.

**MM:** It's just that politically I have a voice. As an individual, as myself. I came through as a political writer, I was political editor here and I used to have a column when I was political editor and then I left to go and edit the *Mail & Guardian*, and now write the occasional, month or so, piece. And when I came back here as editor I did not have a column initially. I just wrote the occasional facing leader piece. But then, there was a feeling that in addition to all the other columns we had. [David] Bullard has one, Fred [Khumalo]...

**TKS:** He's got an entire page now.

**MM:** Yes, an entire page. That basically what was needed was a strong political column. Ja, I'm here. That's basically why I have a column.

**TKS:** So okay but how is it different? Just because it's about a personality?

**MM:** Ja.

This issue of personality is a recurring one on the opinion page and for no one else is it as exclusively of interest as with Sis Beatrice. Sis Beatrice is represented in a caricature as a mature black woman who gives advice to readers who struggling to deal with issues of social mobility and transformation. During the period of the research sample

Sis Beatrice also happened to be a white male, Ray Hartley, the deputy editor of the *Sunday Times*.

**TKS:** Would Sis Beatrice be as successful if it was this white guy giving advice? Would it seem patronizing?

**MM:** No.

**TKS:** So why don't you just have Ray Hartley's picture next to it?

**MM:** No, no. The personality is the personality of Sis Beatrice. She is Sis Beatrice.

Makhanya maintains that the race or gender of the person writing the Sis Beatrice column is irrelevant because the audience understands her only as personality or caricature, taking her quite literally at face value. "But you know what? Maybe in a year's time it will be a black woman writing it. [Maybe] it's going to be some Indian woman in Durban who will be Sis Beatrice."

It should be noted that much of the space for opinion articles, and public debate, is reserved for journalists at the Sunday Times, and often decision-makers themselves. Mondli Makhanya and Fred Khumalo, who are both important decision-makers, have prominent space in the opinion section. The reasons for this may be practical, as there are no concerns about organizing guest writers for the space as well reasons of the aforementioned "personality" were journalists who are part of the decision-making process are also heard in their individual voices. The end result is that giving themselves space, and in making themselves public figures, they have taken up an ability to influence public debate beyond the straightforward gatekeeping role of selecting topics and commentators.

The selection process that occurs with regards to regular and guest columnists is similar. Both require the contributor to have qualifications in terms of expertise on subject and writing ability. However, a regular columnist must also be able to convey a personality with which the reader can feel familiarity, though not necessarily agreement. It's also worth noting that while Khumalo and Makhanya, as decision-makers, may make representation-conscious judgments when selecting commentators they did not seem to bring that up as criteria with regards to their own selection as columnists. This is in stark contrast to the selection of potential guest commentators and also with regards to the selection of Mohau Pheko.

#### **4.6.3: Birth of a Columnist**

During the time of the *Sunday Times*' redesign, it was decided that the page required a female voice; this would ultimately be Mohau Pheko. This expands further upon the idea of representation and of selecting commentators from groups that were previously marginalized. Like the examples used above, qualifications are an important factor. Pheko, in addition to being a gender activist, holds a PhD in economics and is a developmental consultant. In contrast to Makhanya and Khumalo, though, journalism and media are not her fields of expertise. As such, her selection provides an interesting study in how the selection process mentioned above works when a person is a relative unknown. Pheko was not a news professional and was unknown to most of the *Sunday Times* staff. According to Donaldson, "during the planning stages it was generally considered that they would get like a...fresh, spunky, irreverent black female voice for that corner of the paper...and instead they got Mohau. And I'm not going to say any more..."

Pheko was recommended to the paper by Khumalo. He describes the process by which she was selected, "when we were doing the redesign another thing that came through

was the paper is too, it's too heavy on testosterone. We need some other voices. We need women as well. Women's issues and so on.”

What is revealing about this is that while the *Sunday Times* decision-makers were aware that they needed a female voice, they had initially intended that voice to be confined to writing only about women's issues. This is a disconnect that Khumalo seems aware of:

**FK:** Yes, she was expected to say, okay. This newspaper, this country is kind of phallogentric and patriarchal and issues are being made from one perspective. How does this...The issues that are affecting this country and continent as well, how are they affecting women, how are they affecting children.

**TKS:** The...let me ask you this, and I guess I can ask her this myself, do you think that [inaudible]. For example, there's this thing where you or Mondli [Makhanya] can write about being men, or you wrote about women two weeks ago. But does she...how do I want to put this? Does she have to talk about women?

**FK:** You see that was the original plan. She has broken that. [laughter] And I think it works better that way. In the original thinking we were concerned about broadening the perspective of the opinion pages. But at the same time we were kind of blinkered in our thinking. She came in and showed us, without telling us verbally—no let's broaden this.

I should add that there are a variety of versions over what Pheko's brief initially was meant to entail. According to Makhanya, Pheko was selected as a woman who could write about larger issues.

**Mondli Makhanya:** She's a very vocal...she's a very strong voice on societal issues. She's a very strong voice on the economy, on developmental economics

for instance. She's a very strong voice. Gender and so on. And she's a very strong voice with politics....what we did not want who was going to deal with women's issues. We wanted a woman who was going to deal with issues as Mondli deals with issues or any other columnist.

**TKS:** No sitting in the kitchen?

**MM:** Yes.

**TKS:** But Mohau is a gender activist?

**MM:** Yes, she brings that too. There is a...look she's able to fulfil all those qualities. In terms of broad scope of interests she was just perfect.. Whether she was male or female. That's what made her ideal.

Pheko, for her part, maintains that her brief "has not changed much". She sees her role in the *Sunday Times* as considerably different from what decision-makers may have originally intended. She describes it as, "basically [to] use my international experiences in my travels to the African continent and other countries, as well as my political economic background to craft debates, information that stimulates debate. I was also requested to write women's rights pieces that attract a female audience."

What makes Pheko's case so interesting is that she was hired to fill a role for the purposes of representation. There was a belief amongst the decision-makers that the opinion page needed a female voice, in part for commercial reasons, to attract female readers. According to Khumalo, however, this voice was initially meant to speak about "women's issues...children's issues". Pheko, in one sense, successfully grew out of her brief. This is not to say she is not aware of her importance as the only woman on the opinion page.

I think I have a tremendous opportunity to raise women's rights issues as they relate to how we can build stronger and better partnerships between men and women and the household, work and social level. I also feel privileged to write a column that really allows a lot of freedom in expressing various views even when they are extremely uncomfortable, such as talking about women's bodies, issues that are considered cultural taboos for women. More than anything, I think that women have an extremely heightened intellect, which goes missing in many of our debates. Mine is but one small voice that hopefully resonates with millions of women and men who want to transform how we engage and socially transform our nation, continent and world.

Ultimately, the *Sunday Times* went looking for a black woman to for its opinion pages, for commercial reasons and as a counter balance to the 'testosterone' on the page. However, what made them select Pheko was her qualifications and a belief the readers would enjoy her. "We wanted a black woman and that's why she's there. It just so happens that she's a very fucking good black woman," says Makhanya.

What should be noted is that in the case of the selection of Pheko, three decision-makers privy to her selection provide three differing rationales for hiring her. However, these three rationales don't necessarily contradict one another. According to Donaldson, the *Sunday Times* wanted a woman who could write in an entertaining way, Khumalo claims that they wanted a woman to write on gender issues and was also entertaining. And Makhanya says that they wanted a black woman who could write on gender but would not be limited to such. Finally, Pheko herself sees her role as a privileged one and an opportunity to write about women's issues or on large issues from the perspective of a woman.

According to both Khumalo and Makhanya. Pheko is becoming known as a personality on the page and has provoked a great deal of responses from readers, particularly from women.

**Mondli Makhanya:** they're not saying, "We agree with you sister" whatever. They will respond to what she has said. They'll disagree with her but...there's a disproportionate number of women who are responding to her, basically than are responding to myself or Fred. So there is identification there. We did consciously want a black woman there.

**T Kenichi Serino:** Do you think she's coming across as a personality?

**MM:** Very much so. She's coming across very strongly as a personality. As I said, people identify with her; they write to her, on radio, she gets called into talk shows. People quote her in speeches and so on. So she has become a personality. We didn't make her. She was already made ...but the power of the *Sunday Times* is that it catapults a person.

This is a very interesting assertion by Makhanya as well as an accurate one. Pheko, as determined by decision-makers at the *Sunday Times*, is qualified to speak on matters of public importance. By selecting her they gave her prominence as a public intellectual and as someone whose ideas are fit for discussion. Utilizing the ideas of the public sphere and agenda-setting we find that the *Sunday Times* is not just adjudicator of ideas but of people as well.

#### **4.6.4: Conclusion**

In summary, there are two types of columnists on the *Sunday Times* opinion pages: regular and guest and two criteria for their selection: professional qualifications and representation. These qualifications are by no means mutually exclusive. In both types of columnists professional qualifications are the priority but there is also a desire to incorporate people who are perceived to have been excluded from mainstream public

discourse during Apartheid. In some ways, the issue of representation blends with professional qualifications. Pheko was hired as a woman, to alleviate the opinion page's 'testosterone' and to speak on women's issues. But in addition to her gender, she is also a gender activist, which also qualified her professionally to write on the subject. What must be added to this is that while the *Sunday Times* is seeking greater professional representation, the voices are still meant to speak to a middle-class audience. Though the racial demographics of the *Sunday Times* have changed, the economic traits have not. As in the past, the audience is perceived to be relatively affluent.

Lurking in the background of all this is the issue of personality; this can mean that readers react to a columnist as an individual. This is the rationale of giving Makhanya his own column. Though he has the most influence over the *Sunday Times*' leaders, the column is his space to write as an individual personality. In the case of Sis Beatrice, the reader is believed to find the personality entertaining.

Finally, what has been glanced at here is the *Sunday Time*'s ability to influence what the public believes is important to discuss but also who is believed to be qualified to speak on it. In other words, its ability to create public intellectuals. Let me add a qualifier first, at no point in the interviews did any of the decision-makers use the term 'public intellectual'. However, the way in which they use the terms of 'personality' and 'celebrity' are to describe someone who is invited to speak on issues outside of their home in the *Sunday Times*, on radio for example, and as someone is perceived as having important contributions to the public discourse. These are traits shared by public intellectuals. What is striking is that in this case, rather than arising organically, the public intellectual's 'creation' by the *Sunday Times* was at least partially self-conscious.

## 4.7: Beyond the Boundary: Decision-makers and the Limit of Reasonable Discourse

In previous chapters, I've looked at what topics and commentators are selected and the process that goes into selection. This examines how the *Sunday Times* sees itself as a space for public debate and the criteria by which it selects topics and commentators for that debate. But what has not yet been broached are the things that decision-makers at the newspaper view as outside the bounds of debate and therefore not appropriate for publication. Borrowing a Habermasian definition of public debate as rational debate becomes useful because this is a similar framework used by Mondli Makhanya and Fred Khumalo.

**Mondli Makhanya:** Obviously stuff that is defamatory would be out of bounds. Ja. And stuff that is...it's a difficult call to makes, stuff that we would regard as hate speech would be out of bounds...look it's a difficult call to make. It's not something that's....

**T Kenichi Serino:** It's slightly relative?

**MM:** Yea. Not tangible. Look we would never publish something that is openly xenophobic or openly racist, openly homophobic, and so on and so on. I don't think that...It will be stuff that is offensive for the sake of being offensive.

Khumalo agreed with Makhanya that hate speech was clearly out of bounds and not fit for publication not least because hate speech is illegal in South Africa. Makhanya laments that hate speech is still ill-defined, "You know when it comes to opinion...when it comes to you are saying that hate speech isn't really an issue but the problem in South Africa is that we have not defined hate speech." Both Makhanya and

Andrew Donaldson use the example of David Bullard<sup>7</sup>. According to Donaldson, “You get copy editors who go through Bullard’s copy and they would raise issues with Mondli, they would say, “there’s provocative and then there’s racist and we think he might be on the one side.” And Mondli brushes it off, “That’s what I pay him to do. That’s his brief”. Makhanya agrees that this happens but perceives his own role differently.

**MM:** Ja. As a legal, ethical question. I think it could, for instance you could probably find people who would argue very strongly that...let’s say...David Bullard’s column of last week might construe [hate speech].

**TKS:** Well, I hear that you get that quite often. That people or subs come to you saying that Bullard has...

**MM:** Bullard has gone overboard?

**TKS:** Yes.

**MM:** He does go overboard and he indeed does need to be pulled back.

**TKS:** Does he?

**MM:** Ja.

**TKS:** But that’s his job

**MM:** Ja. I’m the editor, and I do it to protect himself from himself.

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<sup>7</sup> During the period this research was being prepared, David Bullard was fired as a columnist at the *Sunday Times*.

Here Makhanya and Donaldson are describing the part in the process which professionals, for example sub-editors, play in vetting what is appropriate content. Makhanya and Donaldson, however, disagree slightly on how the editor executes his role. Donaldson perceives Makhanya as shielding Bullard from over-cautious sub-editors. Makhanya, for his part, believes that his role is to listen to this criticism and protect Bullard by not publishing content which might go too far. These two views are not mutually exclusive; it is not only possible but likely that both are true. The differences might be merely a matter of perspective whereby Donaldson believes that Makhanya tends to defend Bullard and Makhanya believes that he spends more time restraining him. This restraint, “to protect himself from himself,” is at least partly informed by legal considerations.

Another legal consideration is defamation. On this the law is clearer and the decision not to publish more direct, as Khumalo succinctly puts it, “Obviously, if a person writes a slanderous piece then I can’t publish it because someone could sue. Or if someone writes a piece which consists of inaccuracies or is simply based on lies then the factual basis of it can be challenged then therefore I can’t publish that because then I would be misleading my readers,” he says.

This brings us to another factor in the process of omission, what commentators are not valid. During the interviews I had asked whether the *Sunday Times* is not inclined to publish the work of certain commentators, specifically Christine Qunta, Ronald Suresh Roberts or Mathias Roth. Roth is most well-known as an HIV denialist. HIV denialism, as a topic, will be covered later in this section. Roberts is known, among other things, for his litigious nature and has himself unsuccessfully sued the *Sunday Times* for defamation. Qunta is perceived as his friend and intellectual and legal ally. They are considered to be, at the very least, apologists for perceived HIV denialism in the South African government. And according to Makhanya, neither of them is likely to be published in the *Sunday Times*:

**MM:** I would not have them, for the simple reason that they are dishonest. Their arguments are dishonest. Umm....I would much sooner. I would like...

**TKS:** How are they dishonest?

**MM:** Their arguments are not their own arguments.

**TKS:** In bad faith?

**MM:** It's exactly that point. They do it to in order to defend a particular position and they do so purely to...what's a stronger word than dishonest? Ja, they are very intellectually dishonest. And....they do not argue out of conviction and not out of believing whether a particular point of view is correct or not. They argue because it's what suits them at that particular point and what suits their position. Look, it's not about their ideological standpoint. During the course...during the period of people arguing about the third term which Christine Qunta and Ronald Suresh [advocates]...we had a guy who was writing for us and he made a very good strong argument which made you think about the third term...Well...And lots of strong arguments can be made, and were made for a Mbeki third term, but that particular one by Roberts Suresh Roberts....what Ronald argued it's not...it's driven by something else and purely on that basis.

Khumalo expands on this further saying that Qunta is “not an independent thinker herself. She's a puppet...on a string. And what she's saying, on the issues of [HIV] denialism, she's very defensive of [Mbeki]...So we see her as a pawn in a bigger game.” He had a similar criticism of Robert's, “He is a defender of the president.” Makhanya and Khumalo both believe Qunta and Roberts to take up ideological postures but for narrow, partisan reasons that are not explicit. This makes them, in the view of Khumalo and Qunta, ‘dishonest’ commentators and not unacceptable as opinion

contributors. In addition, they are linked to the presidency and the *Sunday Times* are aware of the importance of putting a critical distance between the paper and the government.

What should be noted here is that Khumalo points out that the *Sunday Times* had in the past published Robert's work. But Khumalo claims Robert's is no longer as good or versatile a writer as he once was.

**Fred Khumalo:** We used to publish Suresh's pieces but he hasn't said anything really new and kind of balanced about anything or anyone. He becomes repetitive and so on. I would be reluctant to use his stuff because of that. He is a defender of the president. We need a...

**TKS:** Sorry, a what?

**FK:** A defender. We need a balanced take on the issues. You might be from the DA. You might be from the IFP. But...we appreciate where you come from obviously. But when you debate, please engage with the subject at hand. Do not just attack people at random.

**TKS:** Yea.

**FK:** And unfortunately that is Suresh's weakness. He doesn't tackle subjects.

Khumalo makes a similar criticism of Qunta. He refers to a piece Qunta had written about the South African writer, Nadine Gordimer, in which he thought Qunta was being "vindictive".

**FK:** There was this piece that was published in the *Star*. A very long piece about Nadine Gordimer as a product of Apartheid. But so is Christine Qunta. We all are products of Apartheid.

**TKS:** I read that piece and I would agree that it was nasty in its tone. So I agree with you that it could be vindictive but what was personal about it that makes it not useable.

**FK:** Um...she is not tackling racism, or colonialism or Apartheid as a subject she is personalizing saying, "Nadine Gordimer is a manifestation of that, is a product of that" without actually substantiating that fact. So if for example she had submitted that piece to the *Sunday Times* I would have argued with her before I published as it appeared in the *Star*. I would have thrown it back her to say, "You are a product of Apartheid as well. What do you have to say to that? Can you refine that? Can you contextualize that?"

It is clear that Khumalo possesses disdain for both Qunta and Roberts, but what should be mentioned is that it is not necessarily their ideology but rather the way in which they make their arguments. Khumalo asserts that they make *ad hominem* attacks at the expense of engaging in issues of common interest. As a counter-example he mentions the Afrikaner commentator Dan Roodt.

**FK:** No. We're very open minded. We even publish Dan Roodt. You know. We publish his rubbish. [laughter] because sometimes he's very persuasive in his pieces.

**TKS:** Yea.

**FK:** I know some colleagues have said, "no why are we giving this fool space in the *Sunday Times*." No, I said you know what, I think we need that extreme

reflection in our society. Because he's not a lone ranger. He's got a constituency there. And if we close our minds to its existence then we might be missing something. I'm not saying let's consistently give them a platform. But let's try and understand...what their concerns are.

Khumalo here exemplifies something that is a major point of this research. Though he believes Roodt's work to be 'rubbish' his professional outlook takes priority. What satisfies this professional criteria is that he believes Roodt to be persuasive and representative of the outlook of many in South African society. I feel it's not a stretch to suggest that by 'society' Khumalo also means the *Sunday Times* audience.

One problem, however, remains. The *Sunday Times* and the *Star* are not very different papers in terms of audience. The *Star* is a daily newspaper which is only published around the Johannesburg metropolitan area. Yet they both have similar, middle-class audience. The *Star*, in contrast to the *Sunday Times*, believes that both Qunta and Roberts are appropriate for their paper. Khumalo has a lengthy, interesting theory about why the *Star* is willing to publish the work of those he calls, 'Defenders of the president'. It begins with a controversial story about the Minister of Health, Manto Tshabalala-Msiang. Many in government took great offence and some threatened to pull government advertising from the *Sunday Times*, a substantial source of revenue. Khumalo recounts:

When Essop Pahad (the Minister to the President) threatened that government would be pulling out advertising from the *Sunday Times* there were sounds of glee from the *Star*. Noises of glee because they were seeing it as an opportunity for them, for their people. "If government pulls their advertising from the *Sunday Times* then let's take it as the *Star*." That was the sense that I was getting at that time. So...you would see them publishing pieces by Suresh Roberts and...you're theory begins to gain ground that they are...in their camp.

So the integrity as far I could tell...see from my own personal space...there was lot of ass licking being done by the *Star*.

Khumalo is quick to add that this is only his personal opinion. The reason I've made note of this is what it says about Khumalo's outlook. Though they have a similar audience, he believes that the *Sunday Times* has an institutional philosophy and identity that differentiates it from the *Star*. And that this institutional identity sets it apart from other newspapers.

However, though it does have a philosophy as an institution it does not mean that all of the decision-makers at the *Sunday Times* are in agreement. Khumalo, for example, is adamant that no opinion article advocating the death penalty would ever be published.

It's a non-debate. That's why I don't have any time or tolerance for it. Not only do we have a constitution that embraces a right to life but...as an institution we are very positive in our values and the values we want projected through our pages. Therefore, the whole notion of the death penalty, which is a regression as far as I'm concerned, I don't think we want to entertain it whatsoever.

As previously mentioned, Khumalo also claims that he would not publish works that advocated HIV denialism. But with both of these issues Makhanya is more circumspect. Though he is reluctant to publish pieces that advocate either, he has his own qualifications. Makhanya claims that he would be willing to publish should certain criteria be met,

Let me answer it this way. Yes, I would have somebody argue that position. But then they would have to argue that. Simply asking for the death penalty is not enough. You would have to take into consideration that the constitutional court has said that it is unconstitutional. The person would have to be calling for a constitution amendment.

Makhanya, in other words, is willing to publish a piece that calls for the return for the death penalty provided that it is formulated within the context of a legal argument. An argument that argues only that crime is out of control therefore the death penalty needs to be reinstated would not be published on the opinion page.<sup>8</sup> This links back to Khumalo's argument that the *Sunday Times*' would not publish a pro-death penalty opinion because it's sentiment would go against the constitution. Here Makhanya is saying that a publishable article would need to explain how the constitution could be changed.

Makhanya also has more qualifications than Khumalo when discussing HIV denialism.

**MM:** I would not ban anything just because it was HIV denial. If, for example, one of the HIV denial professors wanted to write a piece for the *Sunday Times* for instance. And can justify why it is relevant at that moment I would have no problem running it. The only issue I would have, is what makes the debate relevant now? Because we've been through that. And those views have been reflected. We have run stuff before.

**TKS:** Okay.

**MM:** Ja, during the period of the HIV debate we ran the view of the denialists. But there comes a point where the debate become repetitive. And it's no longer...it's a restatement of their denial. I know for a fact when I was at the *Mail & Guardian* I had some clashes with some AIDS denial types because they

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<sup>8</sup> It necessary for me to note two potential exceptions. In the first, Makhanya mentions that the *Sunday Times* has published reader's letters that advocate a return to the death penalty. While it is in the same section, the letter's page is not necessarily the same as an opinion page. The second exception is the aforementioned David Bullard. Bullard has regularly called for a return of the death penalty, however it should be noted that he is not on the opinion page. His column appears, spatially, far away from opinion in the *Business Times* Careers section.

were trying to push stuff onto the paper and...stuff that I thought was simply being destructive for the sake of it.

**TKS:** What is an example of that then? Stuff that is being...

**MM:** For example, questioning the efficacy of condoms, you know. And it's the sort thing that goes around and around. It's not an ideological position that I think it should not be heard.

What's so interesting here is that this argument is from one of professional criteria and mirrors one that Khumalo had made on a different subject. One of Khumalo's justifications for no longer being interested in publishing Robert's work is that he claims Roberts is "repetitive". We have the same rationale being used by Makhanya to justify his lack of interest in again publishing the work of HIV denialists.

Makhanya also asserts that he has published the work of HIV denialists and, should the issue become current, would publish them again. But he adds a major qualifier in saying that he would not publish articles that were "destructive". In this case, articles that challenged the idea that condoms could prevent the spread of HIV. This is extremely revealing in that it identifies an example of what a decision-maker at the *Sunday Times* believes is outside the boundary of rational debate.

This returns us to where we began. Decision-makers while selecting what is published in the paper are also making decisions on what is not appropriate to publish. While they may not agree on what is inappropriate three issues arise. The first, and most obvious one is a legal issue whereby publishing material that is defamatory or hate speech can trigger legal action against the *Sunday Times*. I would like to note that there is some overlap in this regard to professional standards. Khumalo states that he would not publish any opinion piece that was not based on facts. To do so otherwise would jeopardize the credibility of the *Sunday Times*. Further, though they did not explicitly

say that they are philosophically opposed to hate speech I don't think it's a stretch to say that opposition to hate speech is not strictly a legal concern.

Their professional ideology and concern with news values also leads them to not choose pieces or commentators on the basis of whether they are 'repetitive'. Both suggested that if an issue or commentator improved in relevance then they could be published. Lastly, there is an issue of what constitutes rational debate. This speaks directly to the Habermasian public sphere as the *Sunday Times*, as a component of the South African public sphere should be disinclined to publish debate that is not rational. The differing outlooks of Makhanya and Khumalo suggest that determining what is rational is not simple, nor easy. However, they both have a conception of what is rational and what is not, what is appropriate for publication and what is not.

## CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

This research sought to find how topics and columnists were chosen for the *Sunday Times*' opinion pages. This involved examining how the gatekeeping process and professional values and practices, were applied to the selection of the opinion pages. It also looked at the general relationship between news and opinion. In conducting this research I triangulated with a content analysis of the opinion pages against qualitative interviews conducted with decision-makers at the *Sunday Times*.

As outlined in previous chapters, the *Sunday Times* went through a redesign in late 2006 and expanded its opinion section. This created much more space for regular columnists and additional space for experts acting as guest writers. But most dramatic was the increase in space for reader's letters. Previously, the opinion section only had space to publish a few letters. After the redesign the letters were given two pages and the space to publish several letters of differing subjects and viewpoints. The rationale for this was two-fold as it created a section of the newspaper that had an identity as opinion as well as creating additional space for potential advertisements. Ultimately, this increased massively the amount of space available for opinion and—by extension—public deliberation.

The research found that opinion topics generally followed the news. If a topic was prominent in the news pages then it could often also be found in the opinion pages. These methods also showed that some of the columns and sections, such as the leaders, are more devoted to topical news subjects than others. This showed that while the opinion pages provided a space for public deliberation, it was not a uniform space. Some of the opinion articles were tightly bound to the news section. Others were not connected and were intended to introduce ideas outside of current public debate.

Some of the columns and articles, particularly the facing leader, are not intended to be topical but rather to introduce new topics. Again, this goal that is asserted by decision-

makers in interviews was verified by an analysis of the pages. According to decision-makers, the rationale for this is to push issues into public discourse. The *Sunday Times*' is South Africa's most influential newspaper, a fact that decision-makers at the paper are aware of and for this reason believe that the paper has a special responsibility in pushing ideas forward.

The research found that the *Sunday Times* imagine themselves as facilitating debate, and in making their selection of opinion articles they drew on three imagined roles or contexts. Some of the selections are based on universal professional norms. These norms, news values, are generally consistent among journalists working in countries that are liberal democracies. In determining these priorities, decision-makers use professional standards of news that trump personal inclinations to choose topics. Topics for the opinion section that are chosen are often related to topics in the news section or as responses to other opinion articles.

There are also professional norms at the *Sunday Times* that are particular to journalists working in South Africa, a country that is undergoing a process of transformation from its racial, authoritarian past. This influences the decision-making that is shaped by news values and the selection of commentators to speak on them. The *Sunday Times* also sees its role in making proactive attempts to redress the inequalities of Apartheid by choosing commentators from groups that were previously marginalized.

Commercial factors are also at work, as decision-makers want commentators to whom the now racially diverse audience will respond. Both of these factors can be seen in the selection of Mohau Pheko as a columnist. Other than Pheko, the regular columnists on the opinion page were black men. Pheko was hired to alleviate the 'excess of testosterone', a problem as perceived by decision-makers at the *Sunday Times*, and to draw in new female readers. What is important to add is that while the decision-makers at the *Sunday Times* are seeking commentators from the previously marginalized, any possible contributor must be qualified and they should be perceived as an 'expert' on

the topic which they are discussing. This qualification, though, could be described as a universal professional norm.

Related to this, *the Sunday Times* also makes decisions about who is not an acceptable commentator. During the interviews, decision-makers said that certain commentators would not be considered because they were “dishonest” and did not make good-faith arguments. They might also be disqualified because of their connection to ideas that *Sunday Times*’ decision-makers believe to be beyond the realm of rational debate.

*Sunday Times* decision-makers are also working in a context that is considered unique - the newspaper itself. The editor of the *Sunday Times* will sometime open his leader conference by asking his staff, “What will the highest court in the land say this week?” It is because of this self-perception of importance that the *Sunday Times* will select topics that it believes is advancing the debate of issues of importance to South Africa. They are aware of their ability to influence not just their immediate readers but other media as well and, in turn, the entire country.

One of the ways they exert this influence in the opinion pages is by giving themselves space to air their own views. Three of the columns in the opinion section are written by *Sunday Times*’ decision-makers. This means that they are not only facilitating debate by inviting guest writers but also entering it themselves.

This public debate they imagine and sometimes enter is in the frame of the rational-critical in the Western Enlightenment tradition and is very similar to what is described by Habermas as the operations of the public sphere. But notions of what comprises rational-critical are normative. The *Sunday Times* provides a space for public discourse but also decides what is not valid for debate, such as HIV denialism, and prioritises topics in a limited amount of space. In a newspaper that is as influential as the *Sunday Times* this amounts to orchestration of debate. By virtue of selecting certain topics over

others, as an agenda-setter, the *Sunday Times* is able to influence what the public believes is public discourse.

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## **APPENDIX 1: EDITORIAL CONFERENCE APRIL 2007**

**Mondli Makhanya:** Alright...what should our leader be?

[Silence]

**Andrew Donaldson:** The maps? The maps could make a...

**MM:** No, no. Is there anything, in our last weeks' splash? About the debate in Cosatu around...and around the fact that the left is now tracking no, no not the Zuma camp's there seems to be a realism dawning within the rational left on the suitability of Jacob Zuma as president. And that kind of after a period of questioning and the clamouring...reason is beginning to dawn on this debate.

**Paul Stoiber:** Sanity is prevailing?

**MM:** It is a big jump from their congress in September I mean obviously it's the leadership. But they are not united. People are willing to question it....Speak?

**PS:** The second one?

**MM:** The second one is that the second most important country on the continent is undergoing a democratic process this weekend. 'Is Nigeria's democracy sustainable?' What does the world do to sustain it? If this one fails, the Obasanjo one succeeded because it was the first time, but this is like the first proper handover.

[Silence]

**AD:** If Nigeria fails, so goes the continent?

**Wally Mbhele:** On a practical level, what does that mean? What can the international community do? What can their role be?

**MM:** You tell me?

[Laughter]

**MM:** I'm merely putting a leader subject on the table.

[Laughter]

**AD:** So things have been far from perfect for Nigeria so far. Judging by the reports, the overviews, so far looking at it. Where is this evidence of democracy? It hasn't really been in the forefront

**MM:** Since this last election it hasn't.

[Inaudible]

**AD:** Maybe the leader should suggest then. Maybe not as an optimist but a realist, maybe the problem can only be inherited.

**WM:** But Obasanjo managed his exit well enough to have a smooth transition well enough for his successor to take over. I doubt not.

**AD:** You know because he fought...

**WM:** You know. Him and Mbeki. They expected him to have managed the process. To run a smooth camp.

**MM:** [Inaudible]

**AD:** Maybe it's easier to do the Zuma one?

**MM:** No but also he tried to go for the third term. He actually had to be forced by popular opinion. Which was actually a good thing. The popular opinion. It kept him from changing the constitution.

**PS:** There's also an economic argument, made by a Botswana-based writer. It explains why no matter what bad press Africa gets there's an amazing amount of money flowing in...[Inaudible]

**MM:** So what kind of investors?

**PS:** Europe and Asia. Not so much America. And he also points to a number of specialist shops. Like the Merrill Lynches of the world. Spending a lot of money to open regional branches

**AD:** And what does our guy say, Rowan?<sup>9</sup>

**MM:** Is the point then that they went through how many years of dictatorship... '82... about 3 decades of dictatorship. They had a peaceful change. Obasanjo came through and he reigned...

**AD:** Governed...prevaricated

**MM:** And he set up democratic institutions. He was not the most perfect of leaders but during his period of governance there was a point of normalizing of Nigerian society. But obviously he did not go far enough as evidenced by this past weeks' election

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<sup>9</sup> Rowan Phillips is the *Sunday Times*' London correspondent.

process. But perhaps? We should take a much longer view of Nigeria. That the chaos that you see in the Nigerian election is not necessarily indicative of things going bad shit.

**PS:** Yes

[Laughter]

**MM:** Foreign investors are not thinking that. Beyond this handover there's a lot international organizations can do to support Nigeria's democracy and institutions of governance and so on. That it's not...basically things we did. We created our own institutions. [Inaudible]

**PS:** Then there's the mampara question?

**MM:** I mean people burst pipes to steal oil...I mean our guys steal copper from Telkom lines but still...[laughter].

**WM:** Our guys steal electricity.

**AD:** Is there a way we can mention a line in someplace. Compared to the last election that was tumultuous. The DRC one, it's not as tumultuous as that. And its not as chaotic as that. The Nigerian elections...

**All:** Yes

**MM:** But in the DRC there was no government.

**AD:** No there was nothing.

**MM:** The bottom line is that we cannot allow Nigeria to slide back.

**MM:** Who's our mampara?

**AD:** What about Naledi (Pandor)? Because of the maths? 'Cause I was thinking of Bangaru. But he wasn't a mampara, the people who gave him the money. Also there's that deeds....the Shaik we've done as well. Too many times before.

**MM:** Muppet<sup>10</sup>?

**AD:** Muppet, that's a good one. He's a white man. Mondli likes white mamparas. [Laughter]. The big fight build up and all that. Muppet, yeah.

**MM:** But cruel and vicious.

[Laughter]

**MM:** Two white mamparas in a row...why not...why not three? Okay.

**MM:** Okay. You do Nigeria?

**Fred Khumalo:** Is it because I'm black?

[Laughter]

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<sup>10</sup> According to expert sources, the term 'Muppet' in the South African sport context means, approximately, 'Arsehole'. In this context, they are referring to Kevin Pieterse. A cricketer who emigrated from South Africa to play for England.

## **APPENDIX 2: FIRST INTERVIEW WITH ANDREW DONALDSON APRIL 2007**

**T Kenichi Serino:** So your title is something like Deputy Managing editor of...

**Andrew Donaldson:** Deputy Managing editor, I'll give you a card, Deputy Managing editor news/features. It's a title. It doesn't mean I have a fiefdom or people that I look after. I'm like a helicopter, a cleaner. Like Fred Khumalo, who is the editor of Insight. He's been away for a month and when he was away I did his job. That's what I do basically.

**TKS:** Like a handyman?

**AD:** Ja. That probably has a lot to do with issues of transformation than you know anything else.

**TKS:** What issues of transformation? What is...

**AD:** When I joined the *Sunday Times* again, okay, 1998. October 1998. Its readership was roughly 60 percent white, 40 percent black. Its readership now is more than 70 percent black and about 30 percent white. So there has been that shift. Its not to say its losing white readers, its just growing...the black readers are growing. That's where its growth in the black readers in the emerging...The *Sunday Times* refers to itself as a middle brow newspaper and they want a middle class readership. And they are hitching its ponies to the wagons firmly onto this emerging middle class. Those figures are reflected in the subscription numbers. All our new subscriptions are coming from townships, new burgeoning suburbs, ja so I mean. It's happening, people are getting delivery in Soweto, I never would have imagined it ten years ago. And that's the future, so that will possibly tie into their opinion.

**TKS:** So what does that have to do with Fred Khumalo, I mean, who is Fred Khumalo?

**AD:** Fred Khumalo is the editor of Insight. So what he does is look, he's specifically tasked with finding people who write for his pages. So he would look for opinion writers, op-ed pieces and that sort of stuff. A lot of them are in-house writers. I mean, you have senior political correspondents. We do analysis pieces but there is a small core of writers who he would draw on, who would approach him. They are from think tanks...

**TKS:** But I mean, in a larger way is...where did Fred Khumalo come from?

**AD:** Fred was, when I joined the *Times* he was there. Then he left to go to one of the Afrikaans Sunday newspapers, *Rapport*.

**TKS:** Was this in '98 or later?

**AD:** I think it was after I arrived.

**TKS:** The second time you arrived?

**AD:** Yes, yes. After the second time and then he came back to the paper as Insight editor. So his specific responsibility is to, he more than anyone else has to guide the newspaper's opinion pages. Although it's not as simple as that. Because each week there's a series of editorial conferences, we present diaries. Thrown open to a round table discussion. Then once a week also there's what we call a leader conference, leader page conference. Where a small...four or five of us sit down and decide what the newspaper is going to say.

**TKS:** In the leader section?

**AD:** Ja. What is it going to say about this? And then we have one issue. You have the main editorial, the second editorial, a main editorial in the business section...we devote as much attention to the mampara. It goes to that order. Top leader, bottom leader, business, mampara. They would have that thing. So those are like the round table group affairs.

**TKS:** So a question, who are the four to five people?

**AD:** Okay there's the editor, Mondli, the business editor, Paul Stoiber, there would be me, there would be Fred. And there would be the political editor, Wally, or his deputy. So it's those. Usually, those five but sometimes four.

**TKS:** When does this meeting take place?

**AD:** Thursday or Friday.

**TKS:** So later in the week.

[Here I asked Andrew whether I could sit in on the meeting and explained why it was important to the research]

**AD:** One of the things is that the leader meetings are not as long as the usual editorial meeting. It starts on Tuesday; the various departments have their meetings and discuss what they're going to do. You sit from half past three till about five o'clock on a Tuesday. You go through everything, from the very proposed front-page story. You identify what possible front page right there and then on Tuesday. It goes through everything. It's tedious but it's also, you have to do it for that particular facility. You've got to know what every single fucking person is doing in a newsroom. And

there's a weeding process that starts, "No, not interested in that. No that's rubbish, no that story will be dead by Sunday. Are you serious, that's not a story?" You know what I mean? And then you have a second meeting; the first one is on a Tuesday, the second meeting is on a Thursday afternoon and by then the news editors, they're around the country, they would have known what stories will come, what stories are good. And...a large extent of what goes into the paper is dictated by the daily coverage. Very often people get stories and they sit on them and hope and pray that the dailies don't pick up on them because they will kill it. And that sort of thing. And if they do get it you hope they're still some sort of life in it.

**TKS:** So is that a big factor in editorials...

**AD:** Oh yes.

**TKS:** That the dailies don't hit it too much? Because the truth is that I don't read many of the dailies in this city.

**AD:** Okay.

**TKS:** But it doesn't seem like their opinion pages are the kind of things that you wouldn't read a lot of. The possible exception kind of being *City Press*

**AD:** Yes.

**TKS:** Which puts a lot into theirs. Is there another one that I might be missing or am I completely off base?

**AD:** No. I think...going through the Sunday papers, the *Independent* passes itself off as a very highbrow paper. But it's mainly a paper that's lifted itself from other places.

**TKS:** It's mostly from abroad?

**AD:** Yes. Because we're successful we have the resources, local resources when we can pay for reporters to go to places. We can buy stuff. We don't do check book journalism like the British papers do and that sort of thing. But if there is a story there we can fling resources at it. We can say: 'Okay, it's the ass-end of the world but we need to get people there but we can do it. It's going to be expensive but we can do it.' We have that. If you get a story on a Sunday that 95 percent of it has to be taken from wire copy. As long as you've got someone who can walk in, half an hour before deadline, and say 'I was here' and that goes right at the top and gives it an edge of authority. "We were there." That's the kind of thing that we can do.

**TKS:** And also with the wire copy you're sharing it with other newspapers...Lets...I hate to ask this question...

**AD:** No ask.

**TKS:** Because I always get eye rolls, but what is transformation?

**AD:** Well...

**TKS:** And what does that have to do with Fred Khumalo being editor?

**AD:** It doesn't have much to do with him, I mean, perhaps I didn't want to give that as an impression. Okay when I...because media is quasi in the public eye and it is privately owned business function rather than a parastatal. We often get government, members of parliament, Gauteng legislature people, they come in to look at the newsroom, they really come in and they come to count heads. They do that. Over the years that I've been there. It'll be ten years next year. The staff component has grown to represent the readership. So, just the demographics of the readership have come to

reflect the staff. The news room is 90 percent, 85 percent black. You're sub-editors tend to be white because they're working in a first language rather than a...

**TKS:** Second language?

**AD:** Yes. And your opinion people are now black because that's their, that's the bulk of the readership. Not exclusively black but it's mainly black. Its...those are the transformation issues that I'm mainly interested in. People who look on media, particularly private media, do look at ownership and look at more of the business-orientated things. Like who are the stake-holders in Johncom, is it a BEE company, what are their black equity practices? But that's not really my problem. It affects me in the long run, but I have no say. I'm a writer and a journalist; I've got a good job. That's what I'm basically interested in, is journalism. I'm not a businessman.

**TKS:** The big, giant macroeconomic policies aren't your...

**AD:** No, I'm interested in people who have skills who work as journalists. That's the bottom line. Those are the bricks that I work with. That's all I'm really interested in. People who can tell stories. That have the skills. They converse in laws; it's just your basic skills. Whether or not Johncom owns a share in this company or that company. Or who owns or what or where it blurs or who's getting enriched. It's not really what I should be concerned with.

**TKS:** Let me...so...In the big restructuring that happened in November or September...

**AD:** Yes.

**TKS:** Fred Khumalo got a whole page.

**AD:** Yes.

**TKS:** So...

**AD:** A lot of that was based on...it's a British tabloid idea. You look at the *Daily Mirror*, the *Daily Standard*, the *Daily Mail*. A lot of their columnists get a page, and then they get a column with a lot of bits. And they wanted to copy that. Say, give you the page, the Fred Khumalo page it's basically, you write your column, you have a few letters that you answer that are specifically directed at you. You have a few little things on the side. A few recommendations. But your column is still basically the lynchpin of the page. And that's all that idea was really.

**TKS:** To make it more similar?

**AD:** Yes, they wanted to copy what the British did with that.

**TKS:** So, about the person who took over his old space, Mohau Pheko, where did she come from?

**AD:** Mohau is like a gender activist, and I got to be quite diplomatic here. During the planning stages it was generally considered that they would get like a...fresh, spunky, irreverent black female voice for that corner of the paper...and instead they got Mohau. And I'm not going to say anymore...

[laughter]

**AD:** I've had to edit her for four weeks. Before Easter, I went away the week before Easter. And all through March I had to edit her. And it was, she's...she's earnest. And I must leave it at that.

**TKS:** The...so how did she get selected though?

**AD:** I think Fred came up with her. We...people are generally quite generous in the paper and they were like...going back to the redesign of the paper there were a lot of problems, day-to-day problems. As someone who was involved in the redesign and saying x, y, and z about certain things, I was...you're very sensitive and prickly about criticism. So Nadine Rubin, for example, who's a South African living in New York and has that fluffy section towards the end...

**TKS:** Yea.

**AD:** There was...a lot of people picked on her. I would have to defend her and say, look give it a chance its just news, she's finding her feet and Mohau didn't get that kind of criticism. But that's just the way it is, just because Nadine was on the other side of the world, so...ja...Mohau...I had never heard of Mohau, never read her before she had appeared in the paper. A great many of us hadn't. You spoke about eyes rolling, there's a lot of eyes rolling when the copy comes.

**TKS:** It seems like she's preaching to the choir. No one who isn't already convinced is going to enjoy it or be provoked by it.

**AD:** Yes. Mohau...if you look at the response she got in her column this week, or was it last week?

**TKS:** I think it was last week. She mentioned it this week.

**AD:** The response she got for, "White people steal as well"?

**TKS:** That's the one.

**AD:** I never read...the column for this week I didn't know about, but that was her last column that I edited and looked at and I was going away for a week's holiday and fuck it I just stuck it in and that's the last I saw of it. [inaudible] But I was surprised at the response that she got when I looked at the letter's pages. And I...how is it possible...because if you'll notice on the editorial, letter's page, in fact all through the paper they'll have that 'tell us what you think about it'. We get...um...they do generate a lot of letters. I mean people write, they just scribble and send off an e-mail. And a lot of what they write is just unusable because...well...its just garbage really. But there is a lot, people will write in about a lot of things. And I'm surprised that she would have got such a response from more than 500 letters that we get each day. I don't know however many the fuck it is. But that they would have devoted that much space on the letter's page. But it was a lot.

**TKS:** So how many letters does an article get? Or how many letters does the *Sunday Times* receive for leaders?

**AD:** I think usable letters I think...You must speak to the person who does it but I would its like between 500, 900 and a thousand letters a week. And they can be from anything from like very detailed, very logically, coldly rational, well-argued pieces to like: "Dear Editor, I think he's talking shit, yours sincerely" and that sort of thing. Hate mail.

**TKS:** So getting back to Fred or Mohau, do they have a specific brief? I mean Mohau was a gender activist was she expected to write...

**AD:** Mohau was...she was expected to write like a sassy, bright opinion piece from the black female perspective.

**TKS:** So I mean...

**AD:** I think she may failed...I don't know...she may yet be told to come back on board but it won't be my responsibility.

**TKS:** Well how long, I mean...

**AD:** How long does it take?

**TKS:** Yes.

**AD:** Well they have an attitude, someone might say, 'it wasn't what we wanted but it seems to be what people want so just let it ride'. It might be that attitude but I don't know.

**TKS:** So it just keeps. So if she were replaced, would she be replaced with another black female?

**AD:** I think so, ja. I think...you know...there may be a situation where if you are black, African journalist, female. Maybe you do not want to be typecast as a spunky babe.

**TKS:** You want to be perceived as serious?

**AD:** Yes. You want to trade blows with the other talking head...chattering classes...I mean I really don't know. I would think, maybe, it might be a tad, not demeaning, but a bit stereotypical. It's almost like a...a flip side of the Sis Beatrice coin.

**TKS:** I was just about to come to that...

**AD:** I'm glad [laughter]

**TKS:** It seems...it seems strange to me that you open up the *Sunday Times*' opinion page. So you go to the editorial and you see the leaders, Mondli, Zapiro, second opinion and then...Sis Beatrice.

**AD:** You know the thing about Sis Beatrice is...the idea for it came from what we call the third floor, the management. Somebody thought that it would be a good idea to have that thing. Which was probably copied from the *Spectator* or one of those British...

**TKS:** The British paper?

**AD:** The British news magazine. The right-wing...they have something called 'Ask Mary' which deals with social problems. And they thought that there are social problems that they have here as a result of this skyrocketing, burgeoning black middle class. In terms of social things. So yes, there is possibly a place for something like this but is that place on the editorial pages? That is a problem we have. The other problem that I personally have is that it's done by a white male.

**TKS:** Who is?

**AD:** It's Ray Hartley. But you didn't hear that from me. [laughter] But the point is...we can only imagine...and it is supposed to be humorous. So it doesn't really matter who writes it so long as it works.

**TKS:** But in terms of representation, you wouldn't have a cartoon picture of Ray Hartley or a white male.

**AD:** Ja. I know....I don't think Ray Hartley is very happy being lumped with...

**TKS:** What is his other job at the *Sunday Times*?

**AD:** He has to oversee the launch of the daily.

**TKS:** Oh.

**AD:** And that was announced in Sunday's paper. So he has...you know...a lot on his plate and now he has to imagine what problems people may have as a result...the idea started as, "People have moved in next door and now they're slaughtering goats on the front lawn. Surely they should be told how to behave properly?" Or one of those flippant, patronizing remarks and they got a column out of it. It's not supported by, let's say, reader feedback.

**TKS:** You mean the questions are made up?

**AD:** The questions are made-up; the whole thing is made up.

**TKS:** Some of them seemed a little too good to be true. And I'll tell you, some of us were guessing that it was David Bullard.

**AD:** No, no.

**TKS:** So...

**AD:** You gave him too much credit.

**TKS:** His internal agony aunt isn't as powerful as Ray Hartley?

**AD:** I think the idea that you have a column that poses as an agony aunt but is in effect a...

**TKS:** About class?

**AD:** Ja, about class. It's not a bad idea. I do take your point that maybe it shouldn't go there. But then you have a very bullish hands-on publisher named Mike Robertson who was the editor and finds it very hard to let go. And he often insists that he sits in and fall in with what he wants.

**TKS:** I have no idea...I'm just saying it's strange but let's....If I remember correctly the Sis Beatrice was here on the second page.

**AD:** Yes that's right. They took it out and put my column in.

**TKS:** Right. Your column is funny and flippant?

**AD:** That's what it's meant to be.

**TKS:** But it seems like even so, it would be a better mark for the opinion page.

**AD:** Well, I'm very grateful for a column because it took me a very long time to get one. When I finally I got it I thought 'Fuck it I can't be bothered'. But now I'm starting to enjoy it.

**TKS:** So the column is new to the new design?

**AD:** Yes, the column came with the new design.

**TKS:** So what was your position on the new designing?

**AD:** There was focus groups, I was just part of a team. There was a guy called...the actual physical design was by a guy named Tony Sutton. I don't know if you're

familiar with him. He's got an online publication called *Cold Type* and he's a design guru. He's quite good. He's an old South African but he's based in Canada. And he's done a lot of work around the world on newspaper design. I think he's expensive but he's probably quite worth it. So he could come in and say: 'look I don't think that's going to work I think you must do this. We want these kind of things. If you want columns then you must do this kind of thing'. We looked and just basically got templates. The actual design of what goes where. So what happened was they were going to take the sports section and make it tabloid.

**TKS:** Well that's what they did at first, they made the soccer...

**AD:** People hated the tabloid. Fucking hated.

**TKS:** So the focus group complained or did people ring on the phone...

**AD:** Oh people just moaned. It was a failure. Because if you've got a broadsheet paper and you do a tabloid for something that is newsy and people want that information and you turn it into a tabloid...But I think they made the decision to take it out of the second section of the paper which was Insight and Opinion. They then had to have a third section. Once they were set, never mind if sport was a tabloid or not, they had these spaces to fill. We were just sitting there sort of wondering what are we going to do? So they went to focus groups and people said they wanted health. And we tend to look at health as Aids. So we said let's do a 'pop health'. We do like, our health page is supposed to be about the trends in health. This is the new Pilates, this is where people are doing they're spinning, bicycling. This is the new drugs they've found.

**TKS:** What is the health section in the paper?

**AD:** It's the health page.

**TKS:** Oh, it's the page ten...

**AD:** Its...okay...second section...this is always going to be...this is what is called 'the front of back' and this is always going to be a news feature. Okay. The week before this we had those photographs of the Zimbabweans jumping over the fence because those were quite dramatic. [turning to the inside page] this is always going to be world, its supposed to be more news featurish. You would have other world news inside depending on its importance. This is the health page. You can see it's like...just health stories really and you pull them from various places. Then you have a technology page. And it's just...whatever it is. This is roughly the template of the paper.

**TKS:** So is the technology page mostly wire copy?

**AD:** Mostly wire copy. Now and again we get stuff...we are if you look at, let's say, Playstation 3. It comes out in the States, then it comes out in Britain and then we get it. So we will use wire copy for stuff like that. We're seldom going to break a technology story from here. When we do it'll probably go in the front section. So you do fish around, when Steve Jobs launched the iPhone we played that big. Because all the..."I want one of those", probably buy one in October of next year. Then we have profiles and obituaries. When we discussed the profiles, we wanted like the London *Sunday Times* profile which you take a guy who's in the news or a person whose in the news and you set about them without a by-line. You write an anonymous piece. Its like an opinion, it's almost like they were dead and you write a scathing piece. Well we fall into the trap where we're almost too nice to people. You know we speak to them and...those [London] *Sunday Times* and even the *Observer* obituaries, they don't speak to people. If Conrad Black's in the news that week. They tear him to pieces. They may speak to his friends, they'll get somebody who knows him well and they'll write this piece.

**TKS:** With no by-line?

**AD:** No by-line. And usually they'll have a good graphic rather than a photograph. A line graphic...a caricature. And we can't do that because we just don't have the resources it was discovered. So we got back to doing these soft...

**TKS:** What do you mean by resources? Do you mean just sourcing or...

**AD:** We don't have time. We don't have the people we can draw on at a moment's notice. We can't say: "Look, so-and-so is in the news. You wrote that biography on him two years ago now..." That sort of thing. We don't have that. This is just like a very soft news feature on this writer [referring to that week's profile]. She's probably deserving of the attention but you don't want it in this space. This could probably be a lifestyle piece.

**TKS:** Okay. Let's talk briefly about this. Fred's the Insight editor. Mondli's the editor. How do they choose their topics?

**AD:** It's a discussion. We all sit down...

**TKS:** So they ask other people.

**AD:** Yes. In a conference. They do about...sometimes fifteen around a table and then Fred presents his diary, let's say he says, he wants to get Loyiso to write something about black conspicuous consumption.

**TKS:** This week's?

**AD:** Yes, well, he had commissioned that before he had went on leave. It had been hanging around. And I had resisted using it. Because I thought it was crap. Partly

because Fred had already raised the issue in one of his columns. And partly because I thought....

**TKS:** Because its not really a current issue?

**AD:** Well because I thought it was specious. Like saying, "Look I'm successful, follow-me. This is the way to hang." It's a rubbish argument I think. So had he proposed that and I wasn't on leave, like this week, I would have spoken out against it. I would have said, "No that's crap. That's awful. No Fred you've written about it in your column. It was crap then it's going to be crap again. I've read the piece, its shit. Move on get someone else." And maybe I'd have been shouted at, someone else would say 'no, it's good' but those are the kind of discussions that take place. Then you leave and that's it, its over.

**TKS:** So how does a decision get made?

**AD:** You get shouted down. [laughing] The majority.

**TKS:** Just like that? So basically, you're....

**AD:** No, most people might say, "No, I want to read that". Okay fine, then you will read it.

**TKS:** Are there any rules at this meeting, generally.

**AD:** Okay you would, let's say, have the Business Times editor, the sports editor, the political editor, the Jo'burg editor, the metro editor, you would have Mondli, Fred, you would have the Deputy editor. You'd have some of the online people, they tend to be not saying much. That's about it. Then you would have the photographic people. [Inaudible] Then you have the foreign editor as well. Then you have the people who

are in charge of the more fluffy sections of the newspaper, like the gossip, they'd be there. So ja, there's a bunch of opinionated people in there who are just shouting at each other.

**TKS:** And somehow decisions get made?

**AD:** Ja, they do get made. You know.

**TKS:** So let me ask you a question, the...I guess I have two....

**AD:** Oh and then there would also be the production people as well. Like the layout people and the subs.

**TKS:** I have two, one of them is why does Fred, other than being the big boss, get the page. And Mondli...if the leader is the voice of the paper....

**AD:** The leader is the voice of the paper. Mondli often jokes, when he starts the leader conference on Thursday or Friday and we're talking about the mampara or something, he'll say, "So, what is the highest court in the land going to say on Sunday?" And he's talking about that space. So, and he runs things down and they sort of say...well..."I think we need to look at Zimbabwe," and they'll say "what are we going to say about Zimbabwe." Being that Zimbabwe has been in the news this week. What are we going to say....You have these discussions, "Friday, this is going to happen...and okay we have our leader and we got to point out x, y, z, a, b, c or whatever it is." And then they'll say, "Let's get Brendan to write it. Or you will write it. Okay I'll write it." And then decide who is going to write and Mondli will go though it.

**TKS:** What I'm getting at is if Mondli's column is a group effort...

**AD:** No. This is not a group effort this is his.

**TKS:** I thought you said that you sit around and...

**AD:** No. This is the leader.

**TKS:** No. I know, so Mondli completely chooses the topics on his own?

**AD:** Yes.

**TKS:** Same as Fred, completely chooses topics on his own?

**AD:** Yes. Like Fred's...I've been called in and I presume that Fred has been called in from time to time, and been told "I just want to look at what you've written. Are you sure you want to say this?"

**TKS:** And who tells you that?

**AD:** Mondli has called me in once. "Why do you have a problem with what I'm saying?" And then he says "well you've got here..." I had once written something to the respect that English-speaking South Africans were a pathetic bunch...I can't remember the exact words...in that we didn't have stirring anthems like 'De La Rey'. But that wasn't the point of my piece. [tape cuts out]

**AD:** It would be read...that I was...the self-deprecation...the self-loathing would have been too much. So that was his concern. I felt that his concern was not...it was there but it wasn't warranted. I was kind of like...but I'm not going to change it and he was happy with that. But we don't have that thing where we go...so he...you get copy editors who go through Bullard's copy and they would raise issues with Mondli, they would say, "there's provocative and then there's racist and we think he might be on the one side." And Mondli brushes it off, "That's what I pay him to do. That's his brief".

**TKS:** To annoy?

**AD:** Yep.

**TKS:** So Bullard gets a wide berth in choosing his topics?

**AD:** Bullard just does what he does.

**TKS:** While we're on the subject, Bullard in the Business Times Careers section, how does that happen?

**AD:** Look to be honest, they need to draw traffic there.

**TKS:** You mean Business Times Careers?

**AD:** Ja. We just...Its quite weird but they...he's got a loyal following, he's got a constituency and they know where to find him and they go there. His constituency is probably in the broader Business Times group.

**TKS:** By constituency you mean audience?

**AD:** Yes. Ja. He jokes about it being a 'ghetto' but I wouldn't complain.

**TKS:** Okay. Well I want to return to Bullard but since you've brought it up, I want to ask this, this week Fred Khumalo devoted a lot of space to talking about David Bullard's piece last week. I am right? He doesn't name him but....

**AD:** Let me see what he says. I must refresh. I don't rush to Fred you know.... Yes it is him. Huh. I think they're being a bit tongue and cheek here.

**TKS:** No I get that but I think, I don't want to push this because its not really my research, more for my personal curiosity but if Fred Khumalo gets a half of page of space it seems like a bit of a waste of space to talk about something that's internal.

**AD:** Ja. It does seem to be a waste of space with that column.

**TKS:** But he gets to decide what he writes about.

**AD:** Ja. No that's his. It's his decision alone. Tomorrow if he got a lot of letters saying, 'that's a waste of time' he might adjust his....yes.

**TKS:** So Mohau Pheko, does she have a brief?

**AD:** I'm under the impression that her brief was that she had to come up with a sassy sort of...I don't know if you're familiar with Julie Burchill, a British columnist, very opinionated. You either love what she says or you hate it to death. And there's no middle ground. They wanted someone like that.

**TKS:** So her brief, she isn't given a weekly brief on topics?

**AD:** No she isn't told, "You do this". She comes up with what she has to do.

**TKS:** And her general brief was to be a little bit...

**AD:** Ja.

**TKS:** No. I understand what you're saying. I read more columnists that I don't like.

**AD:** I'm more or less with you there. The columnists that I will read whether I agree with them or not. If they are going to inflame me but they have to be good at it. They can't be bad. Because it's no good getting an idiot who you're going to disagree with anyway because they're stupid. I mean I love reader's letters. I love opinions. To me it's more instructive than anything else in the paper. It's what people say. You want to know what's going on in the news pages because that's basically the spinal column of the thing but you look to opinion for other things. Ja, I think. [inaudible] Columnists like Ken Owen, who allegedly, ten years ago, was the editor for the *Sunday Times* and before that was the editor for *Business Day*. He had a weekly column.

**TKS:** Wait, wasn't he the guy who got into that huge...

**AD:** Yes. With Steve Mulholland.

**TKS:** Bullard also...

**AD:** Because he was a really skilled writer.

**TKS:** Who?

**AD:** Owen. When he wrote, he brought a weight, a gravitas that very few columnists have in this country. His arguments were moral, he was a beautiful writer. Forget the fact that he was a recovering alcoholic. He's like a vicious person. Personally, he was a horrible man. But he just wrote so well that you would want to read him. You would never agree with 80 percent of what he wrote or whatever. You just read him because he was a joy to read. Never agreed with him. It's one of those things. And I think that...it comes down to one of those transformation things that I've had a problem with. As in everything else...there are skill shortages and they are quite evident. I would...I worked with Lesley when Wits tried to do a feature writing courses and try to say 'this is feature writing'. In a way it was quite nice to see people come to the table and try to

improve their skills but the results weren't great. Newspapers...you just see a lot of room for improvement in newspapers. Whether it's us or the *Sun*.

**TKS:** Do you think part of it...

**AD:** That's going back to transformation.

**TKS:** For my own curiosity. When did Ken Owen write?

**AD:** In the 80's. He was the editor of the *Sunday Express* when I did my Sunday internship there in '83. So that's...fucking nearly 20 years ago.

**TKS:** Two questions for my own curiosity, is it a question of...were the writers bigger then or were the issues bigger then?

**AD:** I think the issues were bigger then. But they were also far simpler. It was a black and white thing, you know, straight down the line. There's Apartheid or not Apartheid. And it was so simple. Globally it was simple as well. If you were a white South African you were this. If you were black you were this. I think globally, the ANC was very successful in reducing it right down to simple things. 20/20 you get hindsight. I think there should have been a cultural boycott and I think there should have been a sport boycott but I don't think there should have been a cultural boycott. Because that was ideas. And ideas...

**TKS:** Those would be universally...

**AD:** Yes...Once you have the boycotts and start boycotting ideas...and that simplicity has come forward now in a post-apartheid society. "White bad, black good." You still have that and I think it will be with us for while to come.

**TKS:** So how does that reflect on the opinion page, in the US black people share surnames with whites. But here, even if you didn't have the pictures of Fred or Mondli or Mohau you would still be able to read a person's name and be able to make judgments or assumptions about a person's race. So how does what you just say about things being seen as black or white affect the content of that page?

**AD:** You know when I was...this past month when I was Fred, I worked with Fred's deputy who works on the letters page. And she went on leave for a week after Fred got back and before I left. So she worked with me, "This is how you do it, it takes a lot of your time, you go to do this, you got to do that". There was concern that I wouldn't do it properly, that it was a lot of work and I wouldn't be able to do it because I already had a lot on my plate. But I said "no, no it's fine." And before she left she said, "Oh and just try to mix it up, have as many black as white." And on one level, here's a white middle-age woman telling me I must be conscious of the racial content of what goes on the page. And I should be annoyed but she was right because when you go through the letters, you're going through the letters and there's so many of them. "That's rubbish, that's rubbish. That's a good point, I'll keep that." And you don't, you keep it because it's a good point, it's a really witty, honest, well-written response to something and it's added to the debate. Whatever it is something that selects the letter. It is not the race of the writer but that's what you have to look out for. It's almost...insulting really. If you think of it but those are the South African writers. They have a whole of brilliant fucking comments and they're witty and on the nail and you get one person to say, "These people are all fucking white men" and you're fucked. You got to mix it up all the time and have balance here, balance here. White, black, coloured, coloured, gay, straight...its just you have to be aware of things. In my day-to-day work as a journalist I don't think of these things as all. I just see something and I write, I respond. Often the stories are about race because they are South African stories. So that's when race comes into it. I do get response from people who say, "You're just a white man" but it's fine, I can live with that.

**TKS:** The letter pages, though they're not part of my research, are very interesting to me. Because for me, what happens generally in the big sense on the opinion pages happen much more quickly on the letters page. It's smaller, there's more of them. Much more quickly. So how does the decision to make sure that its mixed up relate to the decision as to who will be your columnist? Who gets to write? Or who will be your guest columnist?

**AD:** Okay I choose guest columnists when Fred was away. And I choose them purely on subjective terms. My interests are artistic, literature and music and stuff like this. We're now heading into a time of year when the *Sunday Times* focuses its attention on literary awards. So I chose pieces on the editing of books and everyone rolled they're eyes, "who wants to read that?" and I persisted. And I got a good response and I was happy. And there was a subsequent response that I wanted to run a week before but there was no space so it was run later. So that was me. I came to the table with those ideas and even though they shouted me down, I shouted back. And that's basically how...you seek allies; it's a weird system. [laughs]

**TKS:** Would it be possible for me to come to the meeting tomorrow or is that too soon, early?

**AD:** I wouldn't come tomorrow, come on Thursday.

**TKS:** But isn't the news diary meeting tomorrow?

**AD:** Yes but on Thursday we'll have another one that is more streamlined...it'll be long and tedious but...

**TKS:** All right. Let me write that down, 'long and tedious'. I got off topic but for my personal curiosity: you said there was a skill shortage. How much of that is informed by there not being a lot of feature writing in South African journalism?

**AD:** Journalism was taught. 20 years ago, journalism was taught at two different universities. It was taught at Rhodes, and they taught a certain kind of journalism there. And it was taught as a postgraduate course at Stellenbosch. And if you came from there...you pretty much were groomed for one or the other. Either you were a leftist or an academic erudite type or...when I look at Sunday journalism, you're not a newspaper of record.

**TKS:** Sunday journalism?

**AD:** Yes the Sunday papers. Your readers wake up the get the *Sunday Times*, they want to be informed, they want to be entertained, they want to be educated. But more importantly when you do those kind of things Sunday journalists set agendas. You come up with Sunday and you break a story, you break the story of Zuma being charged with rape. You put it on the table. And it was going to go away but it isn't going to go away now. So you set those agendas. And that's what Sunday journalism to me is really very good at. But when it comes to the entertaining and the informing, there's a pedestrianism to journalism in this country that I find crushing and self-defeating. People don't read newspapers...newspapers have a dwindling circulation because they're not keeping people. If you're covering a court case...and this is the thinking as well...Yesterday, Zuma was the big story of the week. And you've got a guy there Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and that's when the reporting ends. So Friday afternoon Saturday morning everything...so on Saturday you have a challenge to present everything that's happened to your readers. And so often what happens is people say 'no, that's old that happened on Tuesday so...' They don't encapsulate or present a story to readers in a way that maintains interest in case or takes it further or helps understanding of the case. There's just a...I have a problem. You also have to make it entertaining. Give us colour, tell us what happened. Don't just recycle or regurgitate what was said because we already know. Question, answer. Question, answer.

**TKS:** So let me ask this then, it's a vague question...well let me ask this first. You said that the *Sunday Times* is not a paper of record. But the *Sunday Times* is the most referenced paper in the country.

**AD:** Good for us [laughing]

**TKS:** No I mean...

**AD:** No, I know what you mean.

**TKS:** It's second only to *Carte Blanche*.

**AD:** When I say it's not a newspaper of record, like the *Star* for example, everything that happened today will be in the paper tomorrow. We're not like that. We choose. It's like...it's been great working on the *Sunday Times*. You have floods in Mozambique in 2000 you can say "how are we going to cover the floods that's not being done by the *Star* or any of the dailies. We'll look at a map. They're here but they can't go north of the river. Let's go north of the river. Let's see what happens on that side."

**TKS:** Holes in the stories?

**AD:** Its fantastic and you have a lot of time to do stories like that then on a Saturday morning and they say, "okay this is what you've done and this is what the agencies have done and these are the pictures." And you can do that breaking, up-to-the-minute stuff as well as all the investigative stuff. It's a good newspaper to work for I think. Ja but you can have an opinion I suppose.

**TKS:** Okay. This kind of gets to my other question. How does that lead into the opinion pages. For example, the big right hand sidepiece.

**AD:** Yes.

**TKS:** Just in terms of size isn't matched by any of the weeklies.

**AD:** That...Fred gets to choose what goes on that. And I think that often it's not linked often enough to hard news. You that...it could be more...like this week conspicuous consumption that's a bit out of left field. It might have been a soft week, I wasn't at work this week, your Easter stories tend to be very depressing, I mean its about road kill. It's about death. You know you could do what the *Mail & Guardian* did on Thursday with a big feature on religion and stuff like this. But...I don't think there's been much happening and I also don't think that they're tuned enough into international news in that thing. They don't comment or do a lot of analysis there...

**TKS:** With the exception of Zim?

**AD:** Zim is like...not really international any more. It's very much a local thing. It's an extraordinary story just because of African news reluctance to weigh in on it.

**TKS:** And the effects are seen here.

**AD:** Yes.

**TKS:** And there was that big spread on what was happening on the border.

**AD:** Ja.

**TKS:** There...why so many domestic stories for that space?

**AD:** Fred is the agenda driver there. But in a way his ideas and suggestions are presented in conference and you can argue and say 'no that's rubbish' often they're so leftfield you don't want to...but ja, I have...I've written pieces for that section and I...I come up with...that I like...I think I did this one.

**TKS:** The PW Botha?

**AD:** No, I did him a week later.

**TKS:** Well this is actually....

**AD:** I did him as a facing leader. And that would have been a week after this. This is an old paper eh?

**TKS:** Yes. I brought that just to compare. Let me ask you this. I've met Justice Malala and he's a young guy.

**AD:** He's the wealthiest journalist in the country.

**TKS:** Well...

**AD:** When he edited *This Day*.

**TKS:** That might be related to why...I've heard that *This Day* paid very well.

**AD:** Very well and we all called it 'This Year'. [laughter]

**TKS:** No, my point is that he's pretty young, in his thirties yah?

**AD:** Ja.

**TKS:** So he might have been about 13 years old when Botha left?

**AD:** Ja.

**TKS:** Very, very young. So what brings him to write the lead of what would have been one of the larger stories of the week?

**AD:** This guy...he had no paper.

**TKS:** Malala?

**AD:** Yes. No one wanted to lose him. He's around office quite a bit. This would have happened, he could have pitched it quite easily. He would have had their ear.

**TKS:** But if you're talking about this project of transformation, what, what, what?

**AD:** Because he was...Justice was on the political staff, then he was a London correspondent. Then he was a New York correspondent. And then he resigned. He had a really good run at the *Sunday Times*. Considered a really bright guy and they really wanted him.

**TKS:** So it was just a question of he having the contacts, had it really together?

**AD:** Though you've touched on something quite interesting. He would have been quite young when he left.

**TKS:** Why not...I mean obviously you were working as a journalist at the time Botha left?

**AD:** Yes.

**TKS:** So why not any other?

**AD:** Interesting question. Maybe he needed the money. Because he would have been paid three rand a word for that.

**TKS:** No problem with that. Also perhaps the reader isn't aware of his age. Just let me take a look at my checklist...

**AD:** But that's a very good question. A fucking good question. Because there's like political commentators well into their 60's who are still writing and they would have been commentators then. There are editors, retired editors who still write occasional pieces who were called in by Botha and just berated and screamed at. Gruesome. They used to do that. You read Harvey Tyson's book, *Editor's Under Fire* and he talks about that. The guy was a bully, he was a fuck-up. He had that national security council he would say, "Uh. The papers have it all wrong. Get them all in here" and they'd all come in and he'd scream and rant and shout, and he did that. Justice would never have been...even know that. Maybe the audience he writes...it would have been appropriate for him to do that.

**TKS:** That would have been Fred's decision?

**AD:** Oh that one? Very much.

**TKS:** Just let me check my...let's ummm...on the editorial page, where does the Second Opinion come from?

**AD:** Those are people, people write in and they phone up and want to say what to do a piece or respond to something. It can be in-house it can be...I could write a second opinion.

**TKS:** So they're almost all unsolicited. You never go to this person and say, "Hey, can you write about this topic."

**AD:** No.

**TKS:** In contrast to the [facing page leader]...

**AD:** This is done with a bit of discussion beforehand. But I must say, one thing that I was...there's a guy named Charles Leonard who works as the Anglican Archbishop of South Africa's PA. And he bumped into Mondli somewhere on the line. And he said, "The archbishop wants to write something about mediocrity in this country, the culture of mediocrity." And Mondli said, "That's a good idea." And then Mondli comes to me and says, "See if you can chase him up and firm him up on that." And then I would phone this Leonard guy and he said, "Well he's a busy this week and it was just an idea." And in the end it never came about. So that's the kind of ideal space that would have said "If you could give me 1600 words then..."

**TKS:** So wait, its 1600 words then?

**AD:** Yes, its 16 or 17 or I don't know.

**TKS:** This space right here [Second Opinion]?

**AD:** No, that's about 700, 800. Here [facing leader].

**TKS:** Oh so that's....so the Second Opinion is not meant to be literally a second opinion.

**AD:** I think they were wanting it to be like that. You want someone to say, "Hang on, I want to take issue with what that person said." And either...dismiss their argument or add to it or somehow take it a bit further. There is a great danger with the sheer paucity of contributors, potential contributors, that you can come up with something off the top of your head and they'll consider it for Second Opinion even though it could quite possibly be the first opinion or wholly an original one. If the Second Opinion...that's the problem I have with names like Second Opinion just because through experience that you're not only going to get second opinions...so just call it something else.

**TKS:** So is it...if you're having a Second Opinion in that space. And you have Mondli, and Fred and Mohau on the page as well as the leaders from the paper. For me, it [inaudible] to have a contrary voice at the paper that says, "No, you're looking at it the wrong way. This, this, this." Is it a practical reason, that you can't always have that because people don't always come in with their copy or there's so much other copy to use.

**AD:** There's a lot of copy. And having been Fred for a month, it's quite...its tough. You've got to make decisions, you've got to say to somebody, "look you wrote a very nice piece but it's been overshadowed. And if I had another page I would find a space for it." That happens every single week. It does.

**TKS:** What are some of the ones that when you were there, didn't get in?

**AD:** Well, Derek Hanekom is the deputy minister of something, I can't remember what it is. He visited a rural Aids project. And he wrote a really good, not a very big piece but a little sweet, 750 word, piece that was really very original and very nice. And I thought it should go in because a lot of cabinet ministers send you stuff written by their

press people and just put their name on it. And they shriek, and storm, and stamp their feet. And question your motives for not running their pieces and stuff like this and you sort of have to say 'well it's not very good'. But his was very good and it was his own, and it was personal and heartfelt and, okay, it could have gone in. But there was not a place for it. And I felt, shit, if the guy woke up one Sunday disappointed that his piece wasn't used, when initially we were really quite enthused about it, I couldn't blame him. I would understand that. This guy wrote this piece, he was named in a really provocative piece about literature and editing and books. And how we rush to print black novelists and we're selling them down the river because we're not editing properly and not making them revise this stuff. And the stuff feels half-finished and we're doing South African literature a disservice. One of the editors in the piece wrote a response, and it was...I wanted it to be used in the next week but there's no space. And I said, "well can't it go there?" and they said "no it can't go there" there was a more pressing piece about Zimbabwe which should have gone into *Second Opinion*. And they were both really good. But I thought...the Zimbabwe piece is probably more important than the literature piece. But that's me thinking pragmatically rather than personally. But I'm glad it did get used even if it was later.

**TKS:** So what are some of the pragmatic reasons the Zim piece is bigger than the literature piece? I mean I could guess some of the reasons but why don't you spell them out?

**AD:** The Zim piece that I had to use in the end...because it was written by some big wig in the International Bar Council and it was a guy who had been round the table with Mugabe. He had been there, the International Bar Council had gone to Zimbabwe. And what he said was absolutely perfect. Like, thousands of words, he said it in 750 words which is ideal for that space and he said, "these are the ways you can hold Robert Mugabe accountable, bang, bang." And it was succinct and it was irrefutable, and in the short term it was better to fill the whole. And it was a more important piece I thought than the other piece but my sympathies were with the guy who wrote the

literature piece. And when I left work, I wrote a memo to Fred, “Sorry I couldn’t use this piece. I think it must be used. Please find a place for it.” I’m glad that he did. Even if it came in two weeks late at least it got in. Or a week late when it should have come it. So that’s it. It was just a space problem, and it’s really quite common.

**TKS:** So the Zim piece was really just more pressing?

**AD:** I think it is. Given the culture of the Zim news at the time, we broke the story...we came up with this figure that there were 49,000 refugees coming into the country each month and it was picked up everywhere that figure. All the newspapers quoted that figure, last week...or this week. They did. I was in Cape Town when the *Cape Argus* wrote the piece about Zim refugees flooding into the country and into the city.

**TKS:** Working as restaurant workers. The horror.

**AD:** No, they’re great restaurant workers, that was a bit facetious. The thing in Cape Town when you look at the numbers in the stories, they’re getting 2 percent of the 49,000.

**TKS:** And the rest are off the radar?

**AD:** The thing about Cape Town is that it’s so...it has a long way to go before it understands that it’s an African city. The problems they have there are quite unusual. There’s too many British people on holiday there.

**TKS:** I was there in January; it was a bit of a playground.

**AD:** No, it’s great. It’s very pretty, I was born there, I’m going to go back.

**TKS:** Before I get completely off-track I should finish this up. You're role in the reformatting, if you had to sum it up in 20 words how would you put it?

**AD:** The reformatting process took...there were meetings, and meetings and meetings. And I was constantly in that meeting and we just bounced ideas and said, "We think we need this, we need that, we want." In the reformatting I pressed and pressed for a diary of some sorts. Just with myself in mind.

**TKS:** What do you mean by a diary?

**AD:** Well a column, where you look at the week's events and talk shit. Not a serious diary where you say, "Monday, this happened". But sort of say, "look, this is my week" and that was what I wanted. When they freed up space people came in and we decided what we wanted. We wanted more international gossip. We wanted Mohau or some who would do the job Mohau is doing....

**TKS:** Or not doing?

**AD:** [laughing] That's the sort of...that was, I wouldn't say the predominant, I wanted to get involved because of that. It was really meetings. There were things that I suggested that didn't get accepted. I thought they shouldn't have a lot of the foreign news in there. I would have wanted more arts and cultures but the *Sunday Times*...its fine, they didn't. I knew I wouldn't get anywhere with that anyways.

### **APPENDIX 3: FIRST INTERVIEW WITH FRED KHUMALO**

**T Kenichi Serino:** How do you select opinion, how do you select leaders? Just take me through your process. Like you said your week starts on Monday?

**Fred Khumalo:** Yes. We start on Monday, my deputy Gillian Anstey actually edits the letters. Letters to the editor. She receives between 600 and 700 a week. Which is why she has to be here quite early on a Monday, to start the selection process. And she looks for brevity, relevance, and topicality in the letters. And obviously issues of accuracy. Checking to make sure people are not making these things up or misunderstanding. The issue they are trying to debate or the point they are trying make, they are intimating the point they are trying to bring across. So, I think those are the criteria that she employs, the selection process. To a shortlist of maybe 20 letters. By late Tuesday or early Wednesday she will sit with me and say, “this is the shortlist”. Which one should be the lead letter of the letter’s page? Look at it, decide, maybe the issue of this week is the De la Rey song? So we dedicate a half page of the letters page. So all letters related to that debate will be put in a layout format which show you, “this is the issue”. We strive for balance, a variety of topics. Because there’s a temptation to deal with only the politics of this country but there are many other issues that confront us. The politics of sport for example. The politics of religion. And then there’s entertainment. What makes a celebrity? We’ve been writing a lot about the issue of celebrity. What makes a celebrity in the South African context? So it does elicit letters from our readers. So it must reflect the debate we have sparked in through our opinion pages. So that’s basically the start of the week, Monday is letter selection and so on. And at some stage on Monday the two of us will sit down. We have already discussed our tentative diary for the week. The previous week. By diary we are referring to the topics, the pieces that will be carried in the news and opinion section of the paper. Because that section has a formula. The front section...the front piece is called the ‘front of back’ that has its own formula. We try to do a long, 1100 up to 1400 words. A feature that’s very

popular and in touch. Racy. If you have been reading the paper you would know that a standard feature of the paper. It can be about the rise of crime but...

**TKS:** Is it important that it be visual?

**FK:** Yes, We want something that is going to grab the reader. So the reader has been going through the main section, then there's a break. This is the beginning of a new section, it's got its own look, its own identity which should be evident from the very first page. So we want it to be visual, very entertaining. It might be long but it has to be entertaining.

**TKS:** Do you think that was a problem with the previous News and Insight section? Part of the change in December, it was much blander, the colour scheme was blue and black, there wasn't as colourful.

**FK:** It was a colour section, it was the manner it was used. We sacrificed visuals for words. We had it filled with words at the expense of visuals and that can be intimidating to the reader sometimes. The reader has already gone through 28 pages of news; they need some kind of relief. It's a new terrain that they are entering and that should be evident on the page itself. Which is why we decided to be very deliberately more visual.

**TKS:** How does that relate to the inside editorial page? Was there more of an effort to make it more visual? Because your page is very visual. Now you have a large picture facing on the right side. You also have the Sis Beatrice and second opinion. It's much more lighter than previously appeared. So what was your motivation?

**FK:** The criticism that was levelled to us by our readers, we did focus group research. We would invite at least five of different demographics in terms of income, age, education and so on. The various groups had their own preferences on terms of what

they would like to see in the second section of the paper. The recurring criticism was that it was too heavy. We sat down and analyzed their points, the points that came out of the research it was clear it was not the copy or writing itself that was heavy it was the design, the visual impact of the paper. So we had to re-look and bring in some new elements to the reader. For example my page, is a new element. I used to have a column.

**TKS:** On the bottom right?

**FK:** On the bottom-right. Yeah. And it was decided because that column was very popular, our research indicated that it's always popular. But it was kind of hidden away. It wasn't attracting new readers. You know. It was, the regular readers were very happy and writing in and so we wanted to get more readers. And indications are...we decided to make it even more visual and even more personal. We used a personality...identification for the page or identity tag.

**TKS:** Yeah, 'The Fred Khumalo's' page pretty much says it all.

**FK:** Ja.

**TKS:** Um...and I ask this as part of the process...how does somebody get their own page at the *Sunday Times*?

**FK:** It's a...hard work I think. Hard work, and of course talent and imagination.

**TKS:** Does being the editor of the opinion pages help?

[laughter]

**FK:** No. No. In fact, I was worried how it would...okay.

**TKS:** Go on.

**FK:** People out there do not know that I am the Insight editor and so on. So when we did the redesign and Stephen Hawes, who is our product development manager came with the dummy page, I said ‘Stephen, where did this come from?’ He says, “No Fred, figures do indicate that your column is very popular. Now if we tag it properly it will attract even more people and if we put a personality just like we’ve been doing with Gwen Gill, if we put a personality to the page imagine what would happen?” I was kind of embarrassed. Those people who understand the *Sunday Times* and think: “ahh Fred, he’s creating his own empire”. [Laughter] So yeah, the question you asked, “What does it take?” I think its hard work experience. Because I’ve been writing this column off and on since ’96. I first joined the paper in ’96. I left in ’99. Now I’m back in 2003. During those years when I was still here I started the column, it worked, research indicated that it was quite popular. So when I came back they said I must resuscitate it.

**TKS:** When you were gone you worked for *Rapport*? In ’99?

**FK:** ’99 I worked for a number of newspapers.

**TKS:** What I’m getting at, when you’re writing your column what kind of brief do you have at the *Sunday Times*? Do you have an idea in terms of your audience, “well I can talk about this subject, this will be of interest.”

**FK:** It’s very open-ended actually. Right from the onset when I started writing this column, my predecessor was Cheryl Bowles [sp?] she used to have a column called ‘Close-up’. It was very tongue and cheek and so on; she went on leave and said I must fill in for her. So I wrote the column for a month in her absence. When she came back she said the thing is working so well, rather keep it. So that is how I got this column. My brief to myself, because the editor has never said ‘write this’, I want to tackle

serious issues whether in politics, or social-political events or even religious matters for example. But serious issues with a very tongue in cheek treatment. A light touch that makes you think. I don't know if it's successful.

**TKS:** So just for contrast, was your brief different at *Rapport*?

**FK:** Yes, it was different. At *Rapport* it was very specific. We have been living in this laager, this white Afrikaner cocoon, we have been left behind by developments in this country. I was surprised when I got there. Senior reporters didn't know who the minister of Home Affairs was; they were so in their own world. Cut off. After 1994 they were just left behind. They didn't know what hit them so the brief was very specific. "Fred you come from that world, you understand and you're an experienced journalist. Please take us with you into that world."

**TKS:** Take the paper into that world or the audience?

**FK:** Ja, the audience. The Afrikaners do not know what is happening so we as *Rapport* are in the dark. So we cannot enlighten our readers we need help. So they approached me and said be our entry into this world. Be our ear and our eye into this world. It was a very political appeal on their part. So I started writing the column from that perspective. And in addition to writing that column I was writing politics for the paper. And was a political advisor for the editor, whenever he took a political decision I had to be consulted. "Do you think this is reactionary? Do you think..." I wrote leaders, I wrote leaders ja, well, four of us, four or five, there were four or five leader writers at *Rapport* and I was there.

**TKS:** Do you think, and this is more for my own curiosity, but do you think there's a difference, the leader is very anonymous, its written by the newspaper whereas your column or Mohau's or Andrew's has a picture of a face. In your experience, do people interpret what's written differently based on the face or [inaudible]?

**FK:** Readers?

**TKS:** Yes.

**FK:** Readers assume that it is the editor.

**TKS:** Writing the leader?

**FK:** Yes, they assume it's the editor, so whenever they have a problem with the leader they inform the editor, "Why did you say this?" And he has to take responsibility because he's the editor. Ja, generally people, well you're a student of journalism so you know these kind of things, but the readers think the leader is written by the editor.

**TKS:** Well in the *Sunday Times*' case Mondli has his own column, so if the leader is perceived to be the editor's then does the audience accept another column from Mondli or do they begin to think its redundant?

**FK:** Its only recent, a recent thing that people...most people don't know that Mondli is the editor. Because, we were laughing...before I went on leave, this would be in February, we received a letter from an angry letter. Writing to the editor, saying "you must stop that Mondli Makhanya of yours writing the shit he is writing."

**TKS:** I've seen that one actually.

**FK:** You saw it [laughter]. But your question is still valid. If people know that Mondli Makhanya is the editor, and they assume the leader is written by him do they need an additional opinion? Yes they do. Because in that space of his it's his own take not the institution. If you read carefully, my column will contradict the leader. It has happened because I have my own take. And...there would be some kind of disjuncture as well

between Mondli's column and the *Sunday Times*' take on a issue. I can't think of a good example right now...okay, Mondli has no tolerance for example, as Mondli, for gay people.

**TKS:** Okay.

**FK:** But as an institution we protect their rights. We have written leaders in advocacy for the protection of their rights. If they want to get married, if same sex people want to get married, why not? We have a constitution in this country.

**TKS:** Well, let me ask you this. I read the *Sunday Times* but will I ever see a column by the editor that says, "Well, I really can't tolerate these gay people".

**FK:** I don't think he would be [laughing] as bold as that. I don't think so. I don't think he would.

**TKS:** Or write a column that says, "I don't think gay people should be able to get married" which is an opinion a lot of people in this country have? Would you ever see that in his column?

**FK:** In his column, I don't know. I don't think he would go to that extreme. He has indicated that these are his own feelings, his own sentiment on an issue. So you look at the leader as the voice of an institution. Even the writing style is different. When I write a leader I change my voice, entirely.

**TKS:** So where did the leader topics come from? Because in the conference I sat in on, Mondli pitched out both.

**FK:** Yes.

**TKS:** Do they always come from him?

**FK:** No, no. It was just that he was feeling strongly last week about those two topics. What happens is, how many leader writers do we have? Andrew Donaldson, myself, Mondli, the political editor, and sometimes Heather, Heather Robertson.

**TKS:** Is Wally the political editor?

**FK:** Wally. So we have those people, in a normal week the leader conference will be after the second conference of the week on a Thursday. So we sit, bring difference ideas to the table. Discuss, debate. Tear them apart. And we settle on the two and we decide which one is going to be on the top, which one is going to be on the bottom. Because there are going to be differences on that. And we discuss what we want to say on a particular issue. Debate that further. We agree and then someone is assigned to write it. Sometimes, when individuals feel strongly they will say 'no I will not write that because I do not approve'. It happens.

**TKS:** Okay. So the Second Opinion, at what point do you select a Second Opinion writer or article?

**FK:** Second Opinion. Normally we think a week ahead. For example, this week we are thinking...we assign someone to write on something that is of interest or topical.

**TKS:** But isn't it an outsider or is it a staff member who writes it?

**FK:** No, no. Second Opinion we prefer outsiders. Now and then we do get offerings from our own people but we want to broaden this scenario so that we attract outsiders.

**TKS:** Is that the motivation for 'Second Opinion'?

**FK:** Yes, we need outsiders. So we assign political analysts, commentators, academics, we've got a whole list who we engage now and then.

**TKS:** Could I see that list, is that possible?

**FK:** It's our [laughing] it's our arsenal.

**TKS:** Okay. So how do people get on that list? How do you select those people?

**FK:** Hmm...Okay...of course, Ndjabulo Ndebele, I'll mention some of them Ndjabulo Ndebele is one of them, we know he's a good writer, he's a good thinker, and he's prominent. Okay, maybe what you want to know is the criteria that we employ for these people? They have to be independent thinkers, we prefer independent thinkers. Not people who are in one camp or the other politically, Okay, now and then we would invite Zwelinzima Vavi but he is not our preferred writer. But if we feel that the topic needs a person who is going to explain a particular issue from a particular point of view, the labour point of view, then we ask him. Or if we want to check on something on the Communists then we ask Blade Nzimande and so on and on. But we prefer independent writers.

**TKS:** Okay.

**FK:** Local and international. Tony Sutton is based in the US he is originally from here. We have engaged him to write for us now and again. Yes, so we would assign a person to write a piece a week before. Sometimes, okay people write...

**TKS:** Just let me be clear, the topic comes first?

**FK:** Yes.

**TKS:** And how do you choose the topic?

**FK:** It might be something that's in the papers this week. Maybe somebody reporting very shoddily on child matters. Its just a throw-away kind of story and we think 'is this a trend?' If this is a trend then what influences, what informs this trend? So we might get a child psychologist to explain this to us. So we look at this list, who would be more intimate with this kind of topic. We assign this person. But sometimes, and this happens quite often, we do receive tons and tons of unsolicited pieces and we go through those. Sometimes you get a very good one. From the basket of unsolicited articles and we phone that person back, yes, we like your article it can be used next week.

**TKS:** A person, who you use, does that person have their own credentials or could it be some housewife in Freestate?

**FK:** We prefer them to have credentials. Yes. So if, for example, a person writes on this topic, for example, I would phone her or him back and ask what qualifies you to write this? Yes credentials are very important because we don't want to end up with egg on our face by using a person who doesn't know what they are talking about. Which is why we have our preferred writers.

**TKS:** Let's talk about Mohau Pheko's column; it's your old space, so how did she come to have it?

**FK:** When we were doing the redesign another thing that came through was the paper is too, it's too heavy on testosterone. We need some other voices. We need women as well. Women's issues and so on. So we thought about people and she had written for us before. One...well not on a regular basis because she has her own company she's a consultant. And I thought of people who would write about serious issues in a way that could engage ordinary readers. Because there are a lot of people tend to be too

academic and heavy and as a reader you don't understand what they are saying. And she's got this way with words, she could be discussing globalization, she could be discussing African debt and so on. She writes in a manner that is accessible to ordinary people who ordinarily wouldn't be very, very interested in that topic. She makes them understand why it would be important to them that they should know this. So I suggested, we were having a brainstorming conference, who should we get so I raised her name. Well some of my colleagues didn't know her properly, there were concerns that she was too political, she might be as boring as before. She's done well. Well, I don't know. You could tell me, you are an outsider, a reader, what is your take?

**TKS:** I find her a little dull.

**FK:** Dull?

**TKS:** Well, as an outsider...“see white people steal also” one was good example. The first half was very interesting I thought and then the second half became rhetorical. It just seems like she feels the need to have the answer to always the big issue. Sometimes I think for a columnist, it's more fun just to ask the questions.

**FK:** Ah.

**TKS:** Like your columns...or my favourite columns in this country or in the US was Molly Ivins in the US. I also liked Vukani Mde's column when it ran in the *Weekender*. It only asked...

**FK:** It just raised questions.

**TKS:** Yes. So what is her consultancy business?

**FK:** She's a...she would advise countries on debt control for example, she's an economist she has her PhD in economics. And she would consult for companies on their strategies and so on. A company wants to break into Africa, the continent. What are their political views? She knows them very intimate, she's well travelled, she's travelled all over the world. She understands many of the African countries' problems and issues and concerns. So she's a go-between.

**TKS:** So she doesn't have a brief?

**FK:** Yes, she doesn't have a static kind of brief.

**TKS:** Did she have a brief coming in? When she started was she expected to write about certain issues in a certain way?

**FK:** Yes, she was expected to say, okay. this newspaper, this country is kind of phallogentric and patriarchal and issues are being made from one perspective. How does this...The issues that are affecting this country and continent as well, how are they affecting women, how are they affecting children.

**TKS:** The...let me ask you this, and I guess I can ask her this myself, do you think that [inaudible]. For example, there's this thing where you or Mondli can write about being men, or you wrote about women two weeks ago. But does she...how do I want to put this? Does she have to talk about women?

**FK:** You see that was the original plan. She has broken that. [laughter] And I think it works better that way. In the original thinking we were concerned about broadening the perspective of the opinion pages. But at the same time we were kind of blinkered in our thinking. She came in and showed us, without telling us verbally—no let's broaden this. She has done.

**TKS:** Okay. Let's...umm. Only two more things and I'll stop taking your time. The main editorial on the right hand page, what is the genesis of that? I mean, do you come up with the topic first, the writer?

**FK:** Ahh, okay...we call that the facing the leader. We come up with the topic. We assign the writer. Could be an outsider, could be our own person. That should be very analytical, doesn't necessarily have to be political.

**TKS:** How do you come up with the topic?

**FK:** Just sit and brainstorm, the two of us but sometimes the editor will come in as well.

**TKS:** Who's the two of you?

**FK:** Myself and Gillian Anstey. She's my deputy. Ja, the editor will come with a suggestion as well. What issues have to be explained this week? What analytical input are we bring to an issue? What's the story today? Maybe this thing as well. So you think how do you take this issue further rather than the surface reporting?

**TKS:** In other words it almost has to be based on what's already in the news.

**FK:** Not necessarily.

**TKS:** What would be the exception?

**FK:** Ahh...let me see. This past weekend, sexual freedom in a democracy. It's not in the news, not in the news domain at all. She just came up with an idea; she was going to address a conference at Wits, a conference on sexuality on so on. Why it should be an issue. This is a follow-up on the Civil Unions Act and its impact on our society. And all other how the constitution impacts on our individuality or individual sexuality

and so on and we take these things for granted that sexuality is an individual thing it really is impacted on by the constitution, that was her argument. That was something that was not in the news. It has happened many times that we just think something that we feel strongly about. For example some time ago I wrote a piece on, okay, we see more and more books being published in this country especially fiction novels but we don't see any new black writers. I opened that debate. And that debate dragged on, it's now being debated in academia. Where are the black fiction writers? We don't...my brief from the editor let us create the debate that will be followed by the rest of the pack. That is...what's his favourite expression? 'Let's set the agenda'.

**TKS:** Is that what your function is as a Sunday paper or is it more with being the *Sunday Times* in general?

**FK:** The *Sunday Times* is the agenda-setting newspaper in this country. Everything we write about in our lead story will be followed in the course of the week. And our columns, our features will be followed. There will be debate.

**TKS:** When you look at these topics, you're aware you're the number one agenda-setter, in print?

**FK:** Yes, we have to think, okay, it's been in the news maybe we can do an analytical piece, yes, but maybe we can go a step further.

**TKS:** Last question, David Bullard, why does his column appear in the Business Times section?

**FK:** Because...the Business Times is...it's always been very impersonal. I recall, he was put in that spot back in 1994 or '95 to infuse some life into that section of the paper, bring a personality of the section of that paper. That's why he's there. The Business section.

**TKS:** To make it more lively?

**FK:** Yes.

**TKS:** What is...I lied, I have one more question. Why is Sis Beatrice, its kind of an advice column, previously it was on...

**FK:** Two.

**TKS:** Page two. Why is it in the opinion section?

**FK:** To liven it up as well. Ja. We felt it was hidden on page two. Not many people read page two. And the analysis, the news and opinion section needed that light element. Okay, I write a light column as well but we wanted something more.

**TKS:** So...Mohau was meant to be light, and Sis Beatrice is also meant to be light?

**FK:** Mohau was not meant to be light but to bring a new perspective. Mohau's columns are not light [laughter] not by any measure. Ja...okay what are we leaving out. We have a formula. The news and opinion section has a formula, if you look at it, there are elements that always have to be there. You take out the section of the paper; the front page of the back section is what we call the 'front of back'. The feature you analyzed earlier. Flip the page and you get the obituaries. Sometimes they'll be on the other page. And it's a very popular section of the paper. I don't know why people are obsessed with dead people but it's very popular. And Chris Barron writes those obituaries very well; he's even published a book of them which is selling very well. [laughter] So you have that, that's a standard feature of that section. Then you have the profile. And the profile generally has to be someone people should know about, who's this fool, where does he come from? What makes him tick?

**TKS:** The obituaries are also profile writing.

**FK:** Oh, yes. Except dead people can't respond. [laughter] Yes, so you have obituaries, profiles, letters, the leaders page.

**TKS:** So the news and opinion section, what I'm hearing, in your mind is just one big organic section. It's meant to work together.

**FK:** Yes.

**TKS:** So its not just...for me coming from my experience in the US, you open up the back page and get editorial but what you don't get is a giant gossip and celebrity section. How in your mind does the gossip and celebrity section work with the rest of the news and opinion section which is very serious?

**FK:** I think you want to, okay, it's very serious you want to lighten up. You close the section you move to sport. But you want to close the section on a lighter note. That was the rationale. How we saw it.

**TKS:** Okay.

**FK:** It's always not been like that, the paper has changed it has evolved a lot. The almost nude women, for example, used to be on the back page of the first section.

**TKS:** Yes.

**FK:** Gwen Gill used to be some place else. In the news section.

**TKS:** I think she was on eight or six.

**FK:** In the first section?

**TKS:** Yes.

**FK:** Ja so, it was decided that we would take the first section and make it news and some longish pieces but news, news. News driven and the second section would be features, opinions, columnists. Gwen Gill is one of them. [inaudible]. Ja, that was the thinking. We need to pace it in such a manner it needs variety and so on.

**TKS:** I think that's really it. That you for your time Mr. Khumalo.

[Khumalo discussed his list of potential editorial contributors. He was asked if he could share the names on the list]

**FK:** Unfortunately, [laughing] I can't share my list with anyone.

**TKS:** Is it your list?

**FK:** It's not a yearly list. It's just a list.

**TKS:** No, is it your list? Who wrote the list?

**FK:** Well, the editor contributed, Gillian and myself. And we kept adding.

**TKS:** And how many people are on it?

**FK:** Lots. Lots.

**TKS:** Over a hundred?

**FK:** Ja.

**TKS:** Over two hundred?

**FK:** No [laughing]. They are very representative of professions, the politics of the people. There are medical people, sociologists, political commentators.

**TKS:** Is there a racial component? Would you rather have a person of a certain race or ethnicity...

**FK:** Yes.

**TKS:** Discussing a certain issue?

**FK:** No, no. Not certain issues. There was a conscious decision on my part to say we've had all these voices over the past years, let's have more voices. That means, let's change the racial demographic of our commentators. Not to say we won't use it if he comes up with an opinion piece, he is not our preferred commentator. We've got other voices who are as qualified. So why not explore new voices?

**TKS:** So by new voices you mean people who wouldn't have had an outlet in the *Sunday Times*?

**FK:** Yes, the marginalized of this world. There's this new guy...I'm sharing the list already [laughter] but in any case, we used him. He heads the School of Business at Fort Hare University. We've entered him onto the list of our commentators. Because he's good, he's funny. He tackles economic issues in a very tongue and cheek manner.

**TKS:** Is there ever a practical problem with a commentator? For example, you might have someone commit but you're coming up on deadline and...

**FK:** Ja. That's the bloody thing, which is why we try to commission them beforehand. Give them a false deadline. Say, we need the piece on Tuesday but actually we need the piece on Wednesday. So they are put under pressure. Academics are like that generally.

**TKS:** And that's really it. I know I've said that before.

[Khumalo also spoke about the demographics of the *Sunday Times*]

**FK:** What did I want to say? Ja, look. We are...okay...the demographics of our readers have changed drastically over the years. Ten. Five years. I'm not sure about the figures now; Mondli might have shared them with you. We are read by more black people than white. When I first joined here 80 percent of our readers were white, in 1995. So that has changed. The demographic has changed. What hasn't changed now is that we are still addressing people of a certain class. Working class people do not really have a voice. [Generally] working class people do not have a voice, especially here. We are a very middle class establishment.

## **APPENDIX 4: SECOND INTERVIEW WITH ANDREW DONALDSON**

**T Kenichi Serino:** About the news conference

**Andrew Donaldson:** Yes

**TKS:** At the leader conference. Mondli [Makhanya] came up with both ideas right?

**AD:** Yes

**TKS:** Is that normal? Is he the one who usually generates with ideas for leaders?

**AD:** We wait for him to start discussions, really, with you know. I generally write every single mampara.

**TKS:** Yeah

**AD:** [inaudible] And...sometimes he does say... “Well, what should the *Sunday Times* say this week?” is his key signature to start the meeting. And sometimes people do find strong ideas about what to say although they’re not many strong opinions roughly...I tend to sort of not want them to write sort of prosaic leaders and sort of like the obvious issues of the day, and from the right or left. If there is some discussion...generally ...then prosaic wins out.

**TKS:** Why do you think prosaic win out?

**AD:** Because...there’s common sense...and you know it’s a mainstream paper...middle brow...they’re probably more mindful of those goals than I am.

**TKS:** So it's meant to be very general?

**AD:** Yes

**TKS:** I'll come back to the mamparas in a second because I want to cover that too but...the two leaders were, the one on Nigeria...

**AD:** Yes. They were an embarrassment.

**TKS:** Election wise? Yeah...no...it was that....but Fred [Khumalo] wrote the Nigeria piece? It was a while ago.

**AD:** Can't remember.

**TKS:** Okay, who wrote the Cosatu piece?

**AD:** Don't remember.

**TKS:** Well the reason I ask, on the tape it sounds...Mondli points to Fred and says, "You're doing Nigeria." And then Fred jokingly says, "Is it because I'm black?"

**AD:** It would have been him then. Now I remember yeah.

**TKS:** Of course it's a joke...

**AD:** Yeah...

**TKS:** What goes into why Fred is writing the piece?

**AD:** [silence]

**TKS:** Or if you want to speak generally, why would Fred do a piece like that?

**AD:** I don't know. Only in that...we wouldn't have someone in Nigeria. We'd only have AP stuff. We'd only have syndicated stuff....There are concerns about Nigeria...So Fred should have been able just as well as anybody. I...did you see the letters in response to that? The *New York Times* ran a piece like, "Africa is losing faith in the ballot box". So it might have been a mistake.

**TKS:** So the Nigeria leader was too optimistic?

**AD:** It was like blinded by the guff.

**TKS:** The what?

**AD:** The usual guff.

**TKS:** And what does that mean?

**AD:** Well you know when you talk about lofty ideals. 'The ballot box is a precious thing. They decide. Nascent'. All of those things that have been used for so long. [inaudible] You know it's an oil-rich country, and in most oil rich countries the populace has not been enriched. So perhaps those people...yeah.

**AD:** [inaudible] No the editorial meeting...they were rush decisions. The leader conference...

**TKS:** Are they always a rush decision?

**AD:** No, no. Not to that extent. The sentiment is there. A sentiment...that's yes....choose your leaders by the ballot box etc, etc. Also, one of the unique things is the printing circumstances. Sports, that section runs [inaudible—here Donaldson referred to the circumstances around the cricket world cup and how that caused the sports page to be pushed last in the production schedule and the editorial pages to be pushed forward] That section [editorial] went to bed a day earlier than it usually does. Which is quite extraordinary.

**TKS:** So by Friday night?

**AD:** By Friday mid-day. You still had to go through another about 24 hours before that stuff goes normally goes through. You can't hold it back on about Saturday night. So mid-day Friday, its 36 hours and you wake up and it's a different world.

**TKS:** Yeah.

**AD:** There is a problem with that. The only reason we had that was late night sports schedule deadlines. The cricket. So they had to push through everything else first, it was extraneous.

**TKS:** I noticed that...

**AD:** All the papers had the same coverage.

**TKS:** Well you were publishing things that had happened on Saturday night. It's a very thin margin to publish

**AD:** Well the first deadline is at six, that's when we send to the outer regions. Unless you get more printing capacity you can't really grow. You get a lot of advertising

toward the end of the year. You can stack them with 12 instead of 10 [in the delivery trucks].

**TKS:** So in terms...editorial is an early page?

**AD:** It normally can be written on a Saturday morning, which is a good time to write an editorial because you know what your opposition has said. It's a bit more difficult if you're writing on a Friday because you do not know what the Saturday papers have said or, for that matter, what the afternoon papers have said.

**TKS:** But what Saturday papers, and let me clarify by opposition, you mean your competition?

**AD:** Yeah.

**TKS:** What Saturday papers are your competition?

**AD:** Well there's the *Saturday Argus*, the *Saturday Star*, *The Natal-Mercury*. There's one or two others. There's one or two others. *The Weekender*. There are others.

**TKS:** Getting to the mampara. During the meeting, you throw some ideas out then you settled on Kevin Pieterse...

**AD:** Yes

**TKS:** The former cricket captain....

**AD:** Yes

**TKS:** Then you jokingly said, “Mondli likes white mamparas”. Are you conscious of the race of the mampara? Of having too many of one race in one go?

**AD:** That’s a joke between the two of us...

**TKS:** Of course...

**AD:** What had happened between the two of us, we would tend to get a lot of black mamparas. Because black people tend to be in charge. So, Mondli, personally, has to deal with people who will say to him, ‘you seem to be serving white interests...’

**TKS:** Yes...

**AD:** And, it’s an oft told charge against him. He probably should speak about it more than I because it is quite politically loaded. So when you do get a chance to do, like, high profile white people who put their foot in their mouths or fuck-up or then its welcomed. But it doesn’t often happen.

**TKS:** Because the mampara is most likely to be a political figure...

**AD:** Or administrative...

**TKS:** A political or administrative figure.

**AD:** Yes.

**TKS:** I mean let’s say you have five or six black mamparas in a row. Do you become more conscious...

**AD:** No.

**TKS:** You don't become more conscious of the race?

**AD:** Mondli will now and again say, "Are there are any white ones we can consider?"  
[inaudible] Sometimes we do scratch around.

**TKS:** When there's no obvious one choice for one?

**AD:** Yes.

**TKS:** Okay, I think that might be it,

**AD:** That's okay.

**TKS:** Those were the two big ones. Just let me ask, as matter of course, is it normal for Fred to take a back seat during leader meetings? Because he didn't say a word...

**AD:** No not really. It might have been a long lunch. There's...those leader meetings are like, I don't normally attend the news conferences. There's too long. So sometimes, I'm standing in for one of the department heads. When it comes to the leader conference, I'm usually sitting there taking notes. Those news conferences, you came to one on Thursday?

**TKS:** Yes.

**AD:** That's the second one of the week. Then we have one on a Tuesday. Then we have one on the Friday morning then one on Saturday morning then one of Saturday afternoon. They depend on which section of the paper we're dealing with at the moment. You decide the lead story by Saturday afternoon. It's the last thing we do on a Thursday it comes...[we can say we do have an idea of what is coming around]. We

should be in a position to formulate an opinion on this, tell people what to think. What we think is a sensible position. That may change, normally, on a Friday afternoon or Saturday morning. Especially if it's a late breaking story. But because leader, editorial leaders tend to be political, we kind of know. We know for example this is what the issue of the day, this interpretation of this bill, so you kind of know what your position of the week is.

**TKS:** So, just to be clear, is the front page, the spread? So last week's splash is the Cosatu story, Zuma....

**AD:** Yes.

**TKS:** Does that drive leaders sometimes, what last week's splash was?

**AD:** It does sometimes when you look at; let's say what happened, I mean there's a malaise at the *Sunday Times*, that affects reporting at the *Sunday Times*. Sometimes you come out with a story on Sunday that says x, y, z. And Monday, Tuesday the papers are full of denials of x, y, z and by Wednesday, Thursday the issue has moved to the middle of the week, daily papers, and there might be a grudging rethink of x, y, z. And by Friday x, y, z had in fact been done. So it's a way of using... that's what spin does. You come out with something strong. Someone holds back. So when someone asks, is there anything left in last week's story, the Cosatu story, is there any way we can take it forward? Come back strongly this week? Offer readers the chance to...say we got it right. Mondli has taken it up with the national editor's forum. Saying...weekend papers more like the *Sunday Times*, work hard on stories that say x, y, z and then the editors of daily papers are quite happy to run allegations against those stories, often with no proof whatsoever...You have these headlines, that are quite weird, "Zuma NOT seeking presidency".

**TKS:** Like you didn't know the allegation was there?

**AD:** Yes. That's not actually...heedless of journalism, on Sunday afternoon some spin doctor calls up, you know, the newsroom of the *Star*, "I just want to rubbish this story," the *Star* is happy to oblige. And very often they won't mention the newspaper that wrote the story. They'll just say 'a Sunday paper'. So [Mondli]'s against that kind of stuff. I can see that point.

**TKS:** You mean by 'that kind of stuff' playing one newspaper off the other?

**AD:** Yes. You know you wouldn't really run the story if it hadn't been thoroughly checked out. The probabilities looked at, asked why you are running the story. If you couldn't say, 'this is what's going to happen'; 'this is what's going down'. And this is the evidence you produce...this is the province of the news defence... [the story is checked out]. You get to the point where you know the story is completely accurate. Then on Monday morning you get a complete denial from some appointed, nameless official. So...so that's what he probably would have meant by the Cosatu story.

**TKS:** So. It's driven by...the *Sunday Times* drives its own leaders. The *Sunday Times* comes up with a story and the fact that other papers pick up on it becomes the subject of a leader? Or am I completely off?

**AD:** Well not completely off but not completely right either. Why would...if...what the leader would have...to try to do is say look last Sunday we had a story and it said this and it's a concern to everyone because of this, and despite denials during the week we can now report that it has gone further, this is why we should...we quite often have those kind of editorials. And it's probably something the dailies are going to look at...

**TKS:** The leader?

**AD:** Well not only the leader but that aspect of reporting stories. You're not in a vacuum as a Sunday paper. There's Sunday, then unrepresented until next Sunday. A daily can take a Sunday story and take it further Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday that sort of thing.

**TKS:** So is a Sunday paper the start and the finish?

**AD:** In that way, yes. Cause the daily is just another, "this is what you've been told" it's just a way of promoting the Sunday papers. The Sunday paper is the mother ship. The daily is the [inaudible].

**TKS:** Who has said that?

**AD:** Well, Mike Robertson the publisher of the *Sunday Times* has said that it's the...Ray Hartley has also said that at conferences. Just the dailies are a way of bolstering the Sunday.

**TKS:** So the leader is for the coming week. For me, the example of the news conference, the main leader was for a story that hadn't happened yet and your second leader was for a story that had happened last week.

**AD:** Yes.

**TKS:** Is it a toss-up then? Is it to pre-empt stories or is to revisit stories?

**AD:** A bit of both. I mean there are stories that you can predict. You say, you have an election in Zimbabwe it will take place on a Wednesday. But given the mechanics of an election the polls wouldn't close until Friday. And then you get the results on a Monday. So then you would pre-empt. You say...given the council of x, y, z we can predict x, y, z. So there is that sort of thing. Sometimes you have stories like flooding

in Mozambique. The whole week people have been subjected to images...things like people getting rescued from trees that kind of stuff. And you have to say something about it. You sit and you think, 'what are we going to say'? Maybe there's something to say in the SADF helicopters...which were used in beating down liberation people played a part. So you have these discussions. What you're trying to do is pick up things that others have overlooked. It's like pre-empting, a situation will emerge, each is particular. There's no rules. "We can't do this story because its been around for three days," its not that.

**APPENDIX 5: FIRST INTERVIEW WITH MONDLI MAKHANYA**

**T Kenichi Serino:** So I'm going to start off with a broad question, if that's alright by you, if the *Sunday Times* opinion page has a mission, then what is it?

**Mondli Makhanya:** Basically, I would say it is the tone and the position and the viewpoint of the newspaper, for a start. But it is also to generate and spark debate and give air to various opinions. There are opinions that are obviously ours, the leader is. That's where the *Sunday Times* stands. Circumstances and issues. And it allows us as a newspaper to give direction to our readership and hopefully the country on the way we believe the country and the world should be going. Where we stand on the various issues of the day. And then, there's obviously then there are two of those. Sorry, what I didn't say was most of the space is given to what we consider is important to them. There are two leaders, and we decide what will be on the top and the shorter, bottom. This past week for instance, the week you were with us, there was a bit of consensus.  
[laughter]

**TKS:** I was going to ask about that. Everyone sat down. Poof. And then left.

[laughter]

**MM:** It wasn't....there's usually quite a bit of....

**TKS:** Contentious.

**MM:** Contentious. And this past week would have been a good one. We fought quite a lot for the top leader. Basically, and the divisions were around the rightness. First of all, we disagreed about the rightness and the wrongness. And it was...overriding the

demarcation board<sup>11</sup>. There was some disagreement about that...basically at the end of the day he has got executive powers and he can do that. And some people basically, that was the position of some people. And then the opinion of some other people was that at the end of the day you can only have so much consultation. And there was quite a lot of discussion around that. Then the discussion...then there was the most contentious bit was whether we should come down harder on the minister and the government or whether come down harder on anarchy. And, we never...we argued and people shifted positions and at the end of the day the position of the *Sunday Times* prevailed.

[laughter]

**TKS:** It was only going to end one way.

[laughter]

**MM:** Yes, it was only going to end one way.

**TKS:** So let me ask you this then, let's go to the week I was there. And the two leaders were the Nigerian elections and Cosatu distancing...beginning to distance itself from Zuma. So the Nigeria thing, no one is going to say that elections are bad or that Nigeria isn't at a crossroads. That's fairly straightforward. But the Cosatu one, no one...like the idea was going to be that the left is going to become more rational and that they're saying that this guy...maybe we shouldn't get behind this person. And there wasn't a lot of disagreement in the room about that. So what I'm getting at, are there some ideas that aren't going to be debated that much in that room? Because you could make a very nice argument that Zuma and Cosatu are meant for each other.

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<sup>11</sup> The topic Makhanya is referring to here is the demarcation of the provincial border between Gauteng and Northwest which triggered protests, some of them violent, in the town of Khutsong.

**MM:** Hmmm... Yeah.

**TKS:** But no one made it...

**MM:** I think broadly...philosophically, at least at the executive level. We agree on certain things, on various principles. I think...I don't think you'd find somebody here who'd think that Jacob Zuma is good for South Africa. I don't think you'd find anyone...it's a very trite example...that democracy is not good for Africa [laughter]. Yeah. I think some, there are many issues which, broadly, issues around the good society. And then there are some nuances. Where for instance you'd find...sometimes you'd get some real tough disagreement and real discussions on whose more to the left and whose...there is quite a bit on that on social policy and economic policy and so on. When it comes to an issue like social grant we don't always see eye-to-eye.

**TKS:** Like what kind of social...

**MM:** Let's say...you're familiar with the government's basic income grant?

**TKS:** It's proposal?

**MM:** The proposal around that. For example there would be...there's always divergence around that. And basically how much the government should be involved in social welfare. There's a lot of...there is divergence on that front. And there is divergence on...the president. We don't all agree on the qualities of the president.

**TKS:** So at the risk of being flippant...and this really isn't for my research...but on the executive level at the *Sunday Times* is it, "anybody but Zuma"?

**MM:** I would say so. No, not quite [laughter] But we know we don't want him.

**TKS:** Let me ask you this...your opinion page is meant to speak up for your readers, to inform them. So what informs your readers to say, "Zuma is not such a great guy".

**MM:** That would be our position as a newspaper; we don't believe he would be good for the country. Obviously...there's corrupt and there's corruptible. And that is a position that we've held and that's where the influence of the editor, at any newspaper, the editor comes in. From the very beginning I've been very [inaudible] about Jacob Zuma. So, over time it also begins to shape the standpoint of the newspaper.

**TKS:** So you would say that the decision comes from you as an executive...

**MM:** I would say leadership on that...

**TKS:** And then it transmits to the readers?

**MM:** Yeah.

**TKS:** You're not thinking of what the readers want...

**MM:** No, no. In terms of our leader, whether or readers agree or disagree on that position we are there as a newspaper to give them that leadership. And that's what newspapers should do. There are issues where we would be at divergence...disagreement with our readership. I think a large proportion of our readership would be against...

**TKS:** Civil unions?

**MM:** Civil unions for instance. A large proportion of our readership would be for the death penalty and we would take a position opposite that. And there would be issues

where our readership is split. Issues such as affirmative action or black economic empowerment. We've got a readership that is 60 percent black and 40 percent white. And you'd probably find there was a split down the middle but we, as a newspaper, would have a position on that. And sometimes on the position...we would hope to win them over to a position that is where the *Sunday Times* stands. As for the rest of the opinion pages, whether I like Zuma or I don't like Zuma, that is irrelevant. If you come to me with an opinion piece from outside that says, "This is why Zuma is great to be president." By all means I will give you that space. We will give you that space to express that opinion.

**TKS:** Where would that space be? Is it Second Opinion or...

**MM:** Second Opinion or facing leader.

**TKS:** While we're on facing leaders...part of my research is going through the opinion page and seeing what topics are on the opinion page and seeing how they link up to the news. What I find usually is that an opinion piece usually links up with what is in that week or the previous week's news. The exception, though, is the facing leader. Because, for example, in the month of April you had pieces about Zuma's sexual morality and black consumerism. And in the month of April...March there was one about books. Which really aren't in the news at all. I mean, Zuma's sexual morality was in the news, like, a year ago. What's the process?

**MM:** This past week, God was not in the news at all. Did you see that?

**TKS:** Yeah, 'God is not Great'. The Christopher Hitchens.

**MM:** Ja. Is not in the news...It's a space is not meant to react to the news at all. It's a...we brainstorm that...we'll actually go out and seek opinions from people. And sometimes they come to us. "I had this big opinion that I want to express." That

was...a lot of it is basically about leading debate. And sometimes it is linked. Sometimes it will be.

**TKS:** Well yeah.

**MM:** It will be something, let's say the peer review mechanism. And it's also meant to be not just opinion but have a lot of analysis. It gives you, it's what 400 words more? 400 words longer than the opposite page. It has a lot more to express. It is in a sense the bigger, meatier piece in the opinion section. And it hasn't quite gotten to the point where I want it to be in terms of diversity of subject.

**TKS:** Can you give me an example?

**MM:** For instance it tends to be political. Which is fine. Opinions are political, a lot of them. It tends to be a lot...South African. And what I would like...Fred is getting it there now....basically, like this week for example just go, let's talk about religion. Let's get somebody talking about literature for instance. And also kind of get someone to tackle international relations on that page. And also issues such as...just a subject for instance about basically...the African language. Whether the African languages is dying. Just a much greater diversity, the more underlying issues that are not in your face.

**TKS:** So a broader view?

**MM:** Yes, much broader.

**TKS:** Let me change topics then...are there...I've asked Fred about your column and the leader. And I said that for most people perceive the leader to have been written by the editor. Rightly or wrongly. Because the editor's in charge. And that's kind of what

I perceived at the conference I went to, even though I knew it was the exception because Andrew and Fred had told me that it was weird.

**MM:** Yeah.

**TKS:** So the difference between your column and the leader say, is that your column is just what you want to say and the leader is more of a collaborative process and is the voice of the newspaper.

**MM:** Yeah.

**TKS:** But are...since people do perceive you and newspaper as one are there some ideas or topics that you'll never approach or some viewpoints you'll never espouse? I mean, Bullard can go on about the death penalty in space but over in Business Times Careers. Are there certain viewpoints that you just never want to see in the *Sunday Times* opinion page?

**MM:** No. Absolutely not. You know what...

**TKS:** Well like in your column, would you ever have a column that said, "I think not having the death penalty is a mistake"?

**MM:** No, no, no. I would never contradict the position of the *Sunday Times*. I would not, in the *Sunday Times* leader conference, approve a leader that was in contradiction to me.

**TKS:** So it is one and the same?

**MM:** No, no. Basically...at the end of that whole discussion, obviously we'll come to consensus but if the consensus is that crime has gotten so out of control and South

Africa should reopen the debate around the death penalty and that's the overall consensus of everyone around the table. I wouldn't approve. Because I don't believe so. So at the end of the day it is my opinion. But what goes into that opinion is kind of...we reach it. But at the end of the day...if I'm on leave and there's a position they want to take but they're not sure about or how I feel about it, they phone [laughs] can we say this? Or else but we don't think the editor would necessarily agree with that. I...because at the end of the day it's not Andrew or Fred or Heather that's going to have to go out there and defend a position. It's me.

**TKS:** Yes.

**MM:** And I'm not going to go on 702 [laughs] and say, 'no this'.

**TKS:** No, I got you.

**MM:** Then...but then...I would never at any point...I and the leader can never be in contradiction.

**TKS:** Well, let me ask you this then. If your column and the leader are never going to be in contradiction then why do you need a separate column?

**MM:** No, because the column is more...the column is basically about the personality of Mondli Makhanya as a commentator. It's basically a political voice for the newspaper. It need not be myself. It could be Wally Mbhele, the political editor.

**TKS:** You mean the leader?

**MM:** No I mean the whatamalcolit, the column. It need not be myself. But I...okay let me put it this way...it's a little bit uncomfortable talking about Mondli. [laughter]

**TKS:** Let's talk about some other hypothetical editor out there [laughter]

**MM:** No, no. It's just that politically I have a voice. As an individual, as myself. I came through as a political writer, I was political editor here and I used to have a column when I was political editor and then I left to go and edit the *Mail & Guardian*, and now write the occasional, month or so, piece. And when I came back here as editor I did not have a column initially. I just wrote the occasional facing leader piece. But then, there was a feeling that in addition to all the other columns we had. Bullard has one, Fred...

**TKS:** He's got an entire page now.

**MM:** Yes, an entire page. That basically what was needed was a strong political column ja, I'm here. That's basically why I have a column.

**TKS:** So okay but how is it different? Just because it's about a personality?

**MM:** Ja.

**TKS:** But the viewpoint is never going to be different. Because you're saying that you would never actually disagree with the paper...

**MM:** But it's...

**TKS:** And the paper would never disagree with you?

**MM:** But the style is different.

**TKS:** Okay.

**MM:** The style is different. The style is my style. There are things I could never get away...

**TKS:** Like what?

**MM:** Because the style is more formal. The leader style is more formal. It's a more formal style of writing.

**TKS:** Okay.

**MM:** Whereas in the leader I can say the word 'I'.

**TKS:** You can write about having to come into work on Freedom Day?

**MM:** Ja. Ja. Exactly. I can throw in a few barbs here. So it's like...it can be, ja, you can entertain that you can't do in a leader.

**TKS:** I have to ask this question, why are there no women in the leader conference?

**MM:** You know it's...I...was there no women that day?

**TKS:** Fred mentioned that Heather Robertson is sometimes there...

**MM:** She comes...

**TKS:** But there weren't any that day.

**MM:** She comes...it is something we intend to address. There used to be. Fred's previous deputy always used to come.

**TKS:** Okay. Who was?

**MM:** Celene Jacobs was always there and then she left.

**TKS:** So why doesn't Gillian Anstey...

**MM:** She's not as political...I mean she's....Celene was a much more political person so when you're sitting around discussing Khutsong she's....This is...

**TKS:** Do I need to turn off the tape recorder now?

**MM:** Yes is a...no...

**TKS:** Okay.

**MM:** It's just a...It's just a different personalities. She's not weaker in any way.

**TKS:** Well can I say it's a matter of personalities? Because that's part of...again it goes to my research which is about theory and practice. And sometimes...there's no theory behind it, its just not their forte.

**MM:** Ja. And then...in the writing of leaders. Once its there often not what we do is form it out. If there's something in health, we get the health correspondent to write it.

**TKS:** Let me ask you this, how many leader conferences does Heather attend? Does she attend every other one or...

**MM:** No, every one. It's just that day she wasn't here.

**TKS:** She just happened to not to be there?

**MM:** I'd actually forgotten that she wasn't there.

**TKS:** Let me ask, so you said there's this thing you were trying to correct and by 'correct' you meant bring in more women.

**MM:** Yes, exactly. But you don't want to have women in there just for the sake of it.

**TKS:** Just because they're women.

**MM:** Just because they're women. We have women at senior...its not a question of seniority either...if you go into a normal editorial conference...did you?

**TKS:** Yes.

**MM:** The demographics are very different. But for that discussion you are looking for something, you are looking for perspective.

**TKS:** So let...from your point of view why is it important that you have women, qualified women there?

**MM:** What was that?

**TKS:** To have women...

**MM:** Because it is untenable that discussion where you are formulating the position of the paper where you have that gap that you do not have...it is not...it just looks bad. [laughter] Let me put it that way. It is not that they come from any different opinion from the rest of that. They're not going to come there and defend...

**TKS:** With a radically different perspective?

**MM:** Yeah. On a legitimate...

**TKS:** Is it about perception, so that when graduate students come to you and start asking questions...

**MM:** No. But I also feel uncomfortable. It's something that is always...I see it when Heather is sitting there and she is the only woman in the room. Its like we were sitting in a room and its obvious there's only one black person in the room.

**TKS:** It doesn't feel like....

**MM:** Yes. But I suppose...I could be wrong there, there would be a difference in perspectives. I'm sure that when *Rapport* sits down at its news conference it's...they've got Afrikaners sitting around its table. And the perspective that will come out will reflect that whereas when we sit here...actually I don't know what their racial composition is. Basically we just sit there as the *Sunday Times*...

**TKS:** Well it just yourself, Wally, Fred and Andrew.

**MM:** And Paul.

**TKS:** Oh yes, Paul Stoiber.

**MM:** Paul and Heather.

**TKS:** So this comes to my next question...so like at *Rapport* you have Afrikaners sitting around the table but their readers are Afrikaners for the most part...well actually I'm not sure about that.

**MM:** No. Afrikaners and Coloureds.

**TKS:** Ja, so is...when I speak to Andrew about this and having Fred there and yourself and Mohau. And we're talking about representation on the page, his viewpoint is that our middle-class readers is changing because its now 60 percent black, 40 percent white and you want to reflect that. Is that a factor? Because in this country, even without pictures, you could read someone's by-line and know a lot about that person. You know their race, their ethnicity and of course their gender. When you're selecting someone to write, are you conscious of that?

**MM:** Firstly, you mean columnists?

**TKS:** Columnists and outside writers.

**MM:** Look, columnists definitely. We do take into account that this person needs to talk to your readership and also draw new readership. For instance, Mohau for instance. We wanted a black woman and that's why she's there. It just so happens that she's a very fucking good black woman.

**TKS:** Okay, 'cause there's lot of black women who aren't Mohau. What are the qualities that caused you to select her?

**MM:** Okay. She's a very vocal...she's a very strong voice on societal issues. She's a very strong voice on the economy, on developmental economics for instance. She's a very strong voice. Gender and so on. And she's a very strong voice with politics....what we did not want who was going to deal with women's issues. We wanted a woman who was going to deal with issues as Mondli deals with issues or any other columnist.

**TKS:** No sitting in the kitchen?

**MM:** Yes.

**TKS:** But Mohau is a gender activist?

**MM:** Yes, she brings that too. There is a...look she's able to fulfil all those qualities. In terms of broad scope of interests she was just perfect. Whether she was male or female. That's what made her ideal. And she's been good. She gets a lot of letters. And she gets a lot of letters not just of colour. Women across the colour line identify with her.

**TKS:** But they're saying...

**MM:** No, they're not saying "We agree with you sister" whatever. They will respond to what she has said. They'll disagree with her but...there's a disproportionate number of women who are responding to her. Basically than are responding to myself or Fred. So there is an identification there. We did consciously want a black woman there.

**TKS:** Do you think she's coming across as a personality?

**MM:** Very much so. She's coming across very strongly as a personality. As I said, people identify with her; they write to her, on radio, she gets called into talk shows. People quote her in speeches and so on. So she has become a personality....it's a....we didn't make her. She was already made, she was already a...but the power of the *Sunday Times* is that it catapults a person. She's a...you should put that there...she's a developmental consultant, that's what she does.

**TKS:** No, I know she's a consultant for emerging markets...I think that's it and I was so worried that we wouldn't have enough time. I think we've come to the end. Let me

finish with this though. In terms of the redesign...some of the things that have changed...opinion was expanded mostly because sport moved out to its own section. Fred gets his own page. Mohau comes in. You get your own regular column. The facing leader, correct me if I'm wrong, but it got larger. And you got Second Opinion. What were some of the rationales behind those changes? Let's start with Fred, why does Fred get his own page?

**MM:** Basically, it was to give his column a bit more, give him more entry points. He could have a lot more fun with various subjects. The column was working. But...it was basically to enable more elements. Those sidebars and also its more brighter. And you actually build more on his personality. And you get a lot of people, anecdotally...we'll get the research on it...what we've found is that people who would not have read him where he previously was migrate to the page. It's a page in the *Sunday Times*, you can't miss it.

**TKS:** And it's helpfully labelled too.

**MM:** Yes, exactly [laughing] 'the Fred Khumalo Page'. And then, obviously I said...we also wanted to give readers space to breath. So the letter's page gave the readers....remember when we could only have five or six letters [in the previous insight and opinion section] and then now it's got so much space. The interactivity thing was such a huge consideration. We wanted people to interact with the *Sunday Times*. The 'Tell Us', 'Tell us what you think'. So wanted people to be talking and to have interaction with the *Sunday Times*. And some of the other elements was, health was a big issue. And it was taking its chances on the news pages. So what you'd find was that a health story as news, we weren't getting enough of this new drug that was invented, or nutrients or new research and so on. So we gave health its own page, again that's a woman's page. And also towards the end there's celebs and so on.

**TKS:** It seems a little odd to have ten pages of seriousness and then have some very glossy stuff. But that was part of the redesign to have Gwen Gill and Craig Jacobs....

**MM:** Ja, why that was...it moves...it's a flow towards the back, it culminates in the back page. It reads towards the end. And people actually go backwards, they move from the back page.

**TKS:** So when you're restructuring, you have column for yourself and Second Opinion. Where does Second Opinion come from?

**MM:** Second Opinion is basically, for anybody who wants to respond to us, or anybody who wants to respond to an issue. Not quite polemic but it's for anyone who has a strong opinion.

**TKS:** When you formulating it, when you were naming it, was it meant to be an opinion contrary to the *Sunday Times*?

**MM:** Not necessarily. No it's just anything out there. And often, people respond to last week's. I'd like to have more space for that kind of thing. The initial thing was we wanted to bring Sis Beatrice, we wanted to have two opinions on that page but then we decided to bring in Sis Beatrice.

**TKS:** She was an odd selection for an opinion page?

[laughter]

**MM:** Odd but it's so popular. It used to be on page 2 remember.

**TKS:** Ja. Where Andrew's is now.

**MM:** Ja. And look it took off but people overlooked it. Page 2 didn't have an identity. So people would kind of like, pass it. We put Barry Ronge there but people didn't...people wanted him back in the magazine. So people would go straight from page one to page three. And so Sis Beatrice didn't really become a personality. And then we moved Sis Beatrice to the leader page, now Sis Beatrice is huge. It's...what it is basically commentary.

**TKS:** Commentary...well, I read it. I do. [laughter] But what's it commenting about, from your point of view?

**MM:** Kind of like show...social-political relationships. Nouveau Riche kind of...

**TKS:** Social mobility?

**MM:** Ja. That's what it is.

**TKS:** So let's get back to representation, we were talking about having an opinion page that was more like the readers.

**MM:** Ja. With mine it was...obviously mine was about the personality.

**TKS:** Well with Sis Beatrice, doesn't it defeat the purpose, in a small way, to have Sis Beatrice written by a white man?

**MM:** Who's this?

**TKS:** Who's this?

**MM:** Who's the white man? Sis Beatrice is Sis Beatrice.

**TKS:** Oh, come on.

[laughing]

**MM:** She's there, she's out there.

**TKS:** Oh, I can meet her!

**MM:** I hope she's in today, you know this flu bug...

**TKS:** I'd have to go down to the *Sunday Times* daily office to speak to her right?

[laughter]

**TKS:** But seriously, is it more important that it be perceived as having been written by 'Sis Beatrice', this aunty who is going to help you out?

**MM:** Sorry, what's the question?

**TKS:** Is it...I mean with Sis Beatrice be as successful if it was this white guy giving advice? Would it seem patronizing?

**MM:** No.

**TKS:** So why don't you just have Ray Hartley's picture next to it?

**MM:** No, no. The personality is the personality of Sis Beatrice. She is Sis Beatrice. And you know, people write to Sis Beatrice.

**TKS:** Do they? Cause the questions seem to good to be true sometimes.

**MM:** Well no...Okay some of them, we obviously write...stuff like that and Sis Beatrice answers. But this is the thing, after Sis Beatrice moved to that page she started getting a lot of...because there's an e-mail address below her picture. So and people have started writing in. And it's a mixture of two types of people. Some people get it.

**TKS:** And the others?

**MM:** And some people want advice. [laughter]. Some of the stuff that never gets printed...cause...

**TKS:** You can put that in a compendium of Sis Beatrice at some point. The uncensored...But what kind advice?

**MM:** People ask about relationships and things like that.

**TKS:** So they treat her like an Agony Aunt?

**MM:** Ja.

**TKS:** Of course that's not...

**MM:** Right.

**TKS:** Okay.

**MM:** But she's now got her personality developed. But you know what, maybe in a year's time it will be a black woman writing it. It's going to be some Indian woman in Durban who will be Sis Beatrice.

**TKS:** So it's more...

**MM:** It's about the personality.

**TKS:** Like Hogarth?

**MM:** Yes, exactly. Hogarth has changed personalities many different times.

**TKS:** Or like Krisjan Lemmer, when he was there?

**MM:** It's just of question of you getting....

**TKS:** What do you think that personality gives the reader?

**MM:** Having the personality of Sis Beatrice?

**TKS:** Yes.

**MM:** Basically its commentary about social mobility. These are the things that people are talking about in bars and like that. It's entertainment, look it's the lighter side of that heavy page, of that heavy package. It's an entry page.

**TKS:** So let me put it this way, The Fred Khumalo page is something that is meant to make you think and sometimes laugh.

**MM:** Exactly, after Mondli's rantings and ravings it's...and the outrageous stuff about God on that side. And it's done wonders for eyes on that leader page. Like on that leader page and facing leader page.

**TKS:** It's drawing traffic?

**MM:** Ja. It seems to be. Because you have people who would kind of read that page because there's a subject that interests them. But since she's there they'll go there to read her.

**TKS:** So it's...you were saying that when Sis Beatrice was on page two she didn't draw that much traffic, now that she's been moved she's been drawing traffic...

**MM:** Yes. Because your normal leader page reader, your serious reader might have missed her when she was there. Now everybody sees her. And I've actually been surprised because now we have people asking me...who is she? How does she know these things? Why so informed about everything?

**TKS:** Well, I'll tell you that I was operating under the theory that it was David Bullard for longest time. But I was told that I gave him too much credit.

**MM:** [laughs] and then there was a leak?

**TKS:** A small leak.

**MM:** A small leak.

**TKS:** But enough. No...I think that's it. I've taken up more than my allotted time.

**MM:** That's cool.

## **APPENDIX 6: INTERVIEW WITH GILLIAN ANSTEY**

**T Kenichi Serino:** But I do...I want to talk to you in your capacity as Fred's deputy. So Fred mentioned that he bounces some ideas of you. What's that process like?

**Gillian Anstey:** Never not extensive enough

**TKS:** What does that mean?

**GA:** There's never as much of it as should be. Because my job is...What has happened is that the job of the deputy, and this is very boring practical stuff.

**TKS:** No, no please.

**GA:** The job of the deputy changed the moment we did two things. One, increased the letter's page in size and two, when we started putting these little 'tell us' all over the paper. Suddenly, it became insane. One week we had one and a half thousand letters. Another week we had a thousand. It's hard to tell but probably, right now, we're sitting on about 500 a week. I came in late now, an hour and a half late, and there were 40 letters in one queue and 21 in another. So that's 61 letters already from last night and 1 ½ into my working day. Okay. So and they don't stop. Just...they keep piling up. Which means that the job of the deputy changed because it's going through those letters and processing the page for the layout on a Thursday. It's effectively four days of my week. In between, I do the obituaries which I'm sure you're not interested in.

**TKS:** Umm...

**GA:** Or are you?

**TKS:** No, not for this research.

**GA:** I do that. So I manage that page too. I don't write them. But...I have to check there's no local ones. I select from the overseas ones, okay, they get the final decision. I have to organize the pictures. I have to do that today for example.

**TKS:** Okay.

**GA:** As much in terms of who's died so far. It's terrible who's died.

**TKS:** Okay.

**GA:** Okay. That's why I say there's little consultation. After those two pages which are my responsibility alone. Then I assist on the rest. I also do that Q&A. That's the 'So many Questions'. So that's between me and Chris Barron who writes it. And with Fred's approval and the editor's approval and conference's approval. So we have to have at least one idea by this afternoon and we don't have one yet. Is that the kind of thing you're interested in? How do we find the person?

**TKS:** Well it's...

**GA:** But you asked me about the consultation so in between we do throw out ideas. So for example when I was sent the diary now. Which goes to conference and everyone to decide I didn't know about half the stories. No, let's be fair. I didn't know about the facing leader, that was news. It happened that I wasn't here this morning, I was at the dentist, and I didn't know about the [inaudible] it was being discussed. I was busy with...But that's not a problem. Fred ultimately has a say. Fred has Second Opinion and...a lot of it is discussed with the editor. I don't know if this ties in with what they told you. I once had this job. Before I had this job I did Fred's job for a week a year or two ago. And Fred had to go away urgently for a week. And I was intrigued how much interference there was from top editorial on the inside pages.

**TKS:** You mean Mondli?

**GA:** Mondli and the deputy editor as well. Everyone had a say. And I kind of got the feeling that, even then, that it wasn't just...Sorry.

[Here Anstey received a phone call about an opinion piece, "Fred really decides that". She then gives the caller Khumalo's e-mail address. "Thank you, good-bye". After she hangs up she turns to me]

**GA:** I'm customer care for this paper. Sorry.

[laughter]

**GA:** I am. I'm very...actually very polite to these people. I've already told him what I just told him.

**TKS:** So who was that?

**GA:** A reader.

**TKS:** Okay.

**GA:** I deal with the readers like you fucking don't know. Sorry. Is the tape on? You just don't know, "Where is this letter I sent? Why don't you...."

**TKS:** You're so....[inaudible]

**GA:** It's a great way for the reader to communicate with the paper. It just happens to be me. With the letters. So you see. It's not just reading the letters or selecting them. It's

all the liaison. “Could I have a surname please? Oh, is this supposed to be a pseudonym?” All the e-mails. All the phone calls. I phone them, they phone me. All these long e-mails. Anyway, it’s an interesting job. This man’s a bit mad. Even admitted it, he said ‘I’m a bit mad’. You know, I don’t want to talk to him. I won’t discuss any issue with readers. They want to talk about Zimbabwe with me. I’m being serious.

**TKS:** It’s not your job

**GA:** Exactly. I tell them my view is not relevant. ‘Well let’s do it privately’, I say I can’t talk on behalf of the paper. Then they say ‘let’s do it privately’ so I say no, as long as I write for the *Sunday Times* it’s not personal and private. To be quite honest I don’t really talk to anyone about Zimbabwe. But I don’t say that. I have to deal with people’s views all day coming from those e-mails and really people, they think... ‘I want to speak to you as deputy editor of Insight and Opinion’ and I repeat to them, “if you want to submit then talk to Fred Khumalo.” They want to talk, what do I think...you know.

**TKS:** Okay.

**GA:** I don’t think...sorry...

**TKS:** So?

**GA:** So is there a discussion? Yes, there is up to a point.

**TKS:** So let me ask you about this phone call. That wasn’t a serious, potential submitter?

**GA:** Yes, possibly, but he must submit to Fred Khumalo.

**TKS:** Oh, so he's a professional of some sort?

**GA:** No...possibly. He's from Capetown. I know the name, he's written before. He might be an academic.

**TKS:** So...

**GA:** He writes letters. He hasn't written a piece that's been published as far as I know. [inaudible] but its pointless submitting to me.

**TKS:** No....

**GA:** I tell you all I'm going to do is forward it to Fred. I might say, "Oh, this is a piece about that..." and look at it or something. But my primary aim is do what I have to do as I've explained. That's first. You know its two pages in the paper it's very...

**TKS:** No, no! I...

**GA:** It's not like it's not important.

**TKS:** No, no, of course.

**GA:** [inaudible] the letter's have disappeared. It's happened before. My main aim for today, if you really want to know...

**TKS:** Okay.

**GA:** Is to get those letters back. And I'm going to get them back if I have to go up to online. There's all sorts of things that I have to get done. I think I have to get I.T. to

take it seriously. If I achieve nothing else today, and get a Q&A idea, then I'm fine.  
No, do you understand?

**TKS:** I think I do.

[inaudible]

**TKS:** So this guy came to you with an idea?

**GA:** He wants to talk to me about it. It's a waste of time.

**TKS:** Okay. So you would never go to Fred and say, "Hey Fred, this guy has this idea and I think it's nice."

**GA:** I might.

**TKS:** You might?

**GA:** Yes, I might but it's not my priority. Because, I've got a lot of other things to do and not just when the letters have disappeared. I have to pay you not to say that.

**TKS:** Don't worry, this thing is only going to be read by four people. Honestly.

**GA:** It's very serious. The letters have disappeared. Hopefully we will access them. We did last time. But we had them by Tuesday morning...No, it's not my priority and also I don't have the final say. So I could say, "We've got to run the profile on X" and no one else would agree with me and I'd lose out. Of course Fred could also lose out. Fred could go to conference and they'll just shout him down...No one person has....

**TKS:** So let me just...

**GA:** If there's any one person who has power here then it's the editor.

**TKS:** So, Fred made a comment... You don't attend the leader conferences?

**GA:** No, I don't want to. I wrote one leader, but it was about something I knew...that I wanted to write. I don't write analysis pieces. I know that sounds bizarre. Here I am sitting in this section. I got a good idea of what works and what doesn't. But personally I don't like writing that. It's the one kind of writing I don't like. I'll write news, I'll write features, I'll even write the bimbo...

**TKS:** Bibbo?

**GA:** Bimbo stuff. Like 'this celebrity has done this', you know I heard on the radio this morning that...I wasn't surprised...that people are putting 50,000 rand insurance on a handbag. Because people are buying Louis Vuiton bags. I mean they are like 5, 10 thousand or whatever...They start at a couple of thousand so it makes sense that people are insuring them. And the fact that the insurance company paid out 50,000 but it's an interesting trend that's happening in this country. Now those are the kind of things that appeal to me. As well as other stuff.

[laughter]

**TKS:** Okay...but you're predecessor in this job...

**GA:** Celene [Jacobs]?

**TKS:** Used to go to....

**GA:** She wrote leaders. She didn't have letters like we do.

**TKS:** So it's a combination of this new format taking up so much of your time?

**GA:** The letters?

**TKS:** Ya. The letters.

**GA:** It's a full-time job. In fact it could almost be a job on its own. Although, I must tell you if I look objectively, and not in terms of my own perception, the amount of time I spend on other sections like obituaries and the Q&A, it's quite a lot. So that does take up chunks of my time. But the main focus is the letters. Because I mean it's very important. The editor takes them very seriously. They get a huge response.

[inaudible]

**GA:** So that's my first priority. The leader conferences I don't go to. I don't have a say in what the leader's are. And it's fine. I mean, I think the reason Celene did also...as I said from the beginning is the job has changed. The 'deputy' part of the job, and I've even discussed this in my performance assessments, its not so...but on the other hand...the week before last Fred wasn't here on a Thursday and a Friday and it was interesting because I had to do his job. And it was interesting because I had to do my job and his job. Although, he pre-determined what was going to be there, I didn't actually make decisions...I do deputize for him. I do have a say, I do have contribute a lot of ideas. So for example, I went to him now and asked, 'why is that the profile' because I had suggested last week, Nick Haysom who used to be a big SRC leader years ago at UCT he was an anti-apartheid lawyer and he's now political advisor to the Secretary General of the United Nations.

**TKS:** Really?

**GA:** It's an amazing job that a South African's got. So...wow...we did profile him two years ago on the 6<sup>th</sup> of March 2005 because I had checked it. But if I felt that it was justified. And I did argue for it. And Fred agreed and the editor agreed. But for some reason he wasn't down. I don't know. I'm not certain whether the reporter's got it down now....

**TKS:** For this week?

**GA:** For this week but I think we should do him because he was appointed last week. But yes, there's an idea that I submitted. So. And I feel very strongly about that. But if the editor had said oh no we had done him two years ago. Which we had. It was two years ago. Two years is a long time.

**TKS:** And a lot had happened.

**GA:** Ja. So I think it's an amazing appointment and let's do him. So yes, I did argue for that.

**TKS:** So then...

**GA:** So I probably argue for a lot of things more than I realize. But I felt strongly on that. It's a great appointment.

**TKS:** So...did that appear?

**GA:** That'll go in this week in News and Opinion this week or next week. As a profile.

**TKS:** So that'll be on the...

**GA:** I can show you the profile page, in News and Opinion. Because I tell you the News and Opinion section. The analysis section consists of the facing leader with the illustration, the leader, the sis Beatrice, the...Mondli's column—which is unbelievably popular—I can talk to you about that if you want because I get the responses....what else is on that page? The Second Opinion. Which I think we could have space for more than we seem to have at the moment. Space for more like opinion things. Because there's a lot of people submitting who are not getting...and they're just getting....and they're interesting. They're very interesting.

**TKS:** Where do those come from?

**GA:** People submit, I cannot believe it.

**TKS:** Just Joe Schmo?

**GA:** He's probably one [referring to her phone call] mad people.

**TKS:** Still calling...

**GA:** I was quite intrigued that our facing leader this week was on something I turned down from a someone who had submitted saying no its very much the *Star's* argument and I spoke to Fred are you interested in it and he said no and now somebody here is writing on the very same thing and shit it's very embarrassing. I don't have the power. I think that says it all. Because, I rejected him on Fred's thing. So I...and it was turned down. I don't really have the power. If the editor had said, 'No, we've done Nick Haysom, too recently'. I wouldn't even...what's the point?

**TKS:** So this one, when it was turned down when you generated it...

**GA:** It was a reader. A reader submitted a story. And he actually referred to an article in the *Star* in his opening paragraph. I said, you know what; people seem to think that newspapers are happy to discuss all newspaper issues. But in fact it's quite competitive. So the *Star* is discussing tape recorders and we're discussing [inaudible] diary. We're not going to discuss tape recorders as an opinion piece, generally. But now we seem to be jumping on the band wagon. But we rejected it at first.

**TKS:** What was the issue, may I ask?

**GA:** I don't know the whole thing, but it's on Christine Quanta who is very outspoken and Nadine Gordimer the writer. I didn't read it. But I knew enough to know it was a *Star*...oh! Because it had mentioned it.

**TKS:** So what was it that changed? Has the topic become more...

**GA:** I have no idea. I just saw it on facing leader and thought, 'oh, okay'. You see I wasn't part of that. Decision-making thing. And because I have...I wasn't part of that decision-making and because I have so many other things to do, in terms of what I do have to do I haven't got time to delve into why. Or care. If that makes sense. I have my own...

**TKS:** Gotcha...

**GA:** No it's not like...

**TKS:** No, it's a full-time job.

**GA:** No, you know what it is? You kind of do what you have to do in life. Primarily. And then you do the other things. I'm fighting I.T. at the moment. Because they seem

to think that I'm having a tantrum about my little world like I lost my 'favourites' or something.

[laughter]

**GA:** You know what I'm saying?

**TKS:** Because you like reading those letters so much...

**GA:** It's like a personal, little...because you know what happens is...if they do lose...I was with someone the other day when their favourites disappeared. It was, 'ahh' I'm phoning I.T.'" It's not that case. That's justified if you lose your e-mail address or something. That would be...it's not my e-mail address this is the letters for entire...I've got sport furious, I've got...they're the only ones who've bothered to respond. But I have to inform everyone...and they're...but I've got my own issues. My own job. And I do come up with ideas. And I felt I hadn't come with an idea for a week or two...a few weeks. So last week I had a bit of time on Friday so I went through the papers, if you want to know how we get ideas, I think its very news driven. That's what I picked up on the discussion on Sunday. I think our things are very news driven. So we're supposed to have a plan and a diary. And sometimes we can plan ahead but most of it is based primarily on that week.

**TKS:** You mean, Friday, Saturday?

**GA:** No, we make decisions now. I'm saying where's that profile? Isn't that supposed to be the profile this week? The Q&A we are going to have to sort out now. I may not be able to do this survey now if we don't have a Q&A idea because I might have to start contributing my own ideas. You know I had a bit of a problematic week. I had to this tooth, an hour at the dentist this morning. I had to go to a funeral. So I haven't focused my attention on the Q&A. But if we don't have one when I get back to my desk then

that will become my priority for that moment. Do you understand? It's to find ideas. And how will I find ideas, I'll go through the papers. And I'll help Chris. Who's the Q&A guy. But then we can go to conference this afternoon, half past three. And Fred will say ja, that's okay. And then they'll just kill it and then they'll say, 'no, you must do x'. And we'll say yes, okay fine. I always tell Chris not to start until we get confirmation from the editor. You're not allowed to start working on it. It's just a waste of energy. Don't waste your energy in this job. That's the golden rule. Keep to deadlines. Be totally accurate and don't waste your energy. Like I don't spend 15 minutes talking to Mr. Withers from Capetown when my perception means nothing. If however he needs to be explained why his letter wasn't used I would talk to him for 15 minutes. I won't be charmed about it but I will. Do you understand I can't focus this energy everywhere? I sound like a horrible person. I'm not at all. I'm actually very sweet.

[laughter]

**TKS:** Sweet?

**GA:** I'm coming across...no, it's, I have to prioritize.

**TKS:** Ya.

**GA:** I have got a hectic job. Because I came in late today I am going to have to suffer one of these nights. It's a laborious process. Initially. You make the selections then you have to fill in like, what story refers to the day that its published. Check all the quotes because the readers always...they don't quote correctly from the articles. They paraphrase or they dump things.. I check every single one of those quotes. I do that on about 50 letters finally. When I get to and then use about 12-15 of those. Do you understand. Lots of hours. And it's Thursday morning.

**TKS:** So what did they do before, the readers' letters section was so.

**GA:** Battle to get about six or seven letters to use. I remember the week I did Fred's job. As a backup. You don't get training here. No one tells you your job. It's the Q&A, obituaries, the letters and help Fred. But no one like eases you into it, advises you. And I remember that week I re-wrote one letter from top to bottom. So that we could use it. Because we had so few to consider. Now I just about cried because last week were two brilliant letters and I couldn't use them. But the one I used as my main letter the guy pulled it from the page for all sorts of other reasons.

**TKS:** What...

**GA:** [sighs] but now I'll use it this week.

**TKS:** What were some of those other reasons?

**GA:** Well, we had a letter from Tony Leon and I felt it was being cut too much. And the editor had spoken to me about the letter so I gathered it was quite important to him. He takes the letters very seriously. He's always talking to me about them. Everybody is very interested. How the letters this week? What they are writing on? Because it's quite a responsibility and I do ultimately choose the letters. Sometime the editor has a say. But I thought the Tony Leon was being cut too much. So I needed to fit it on the page and the only way to do it was pull something else. And I pulled a long letter, which was the one I loved, and it wasn't just me. It was a brilliant letter. And it was very interesting, thought provoking. I discussed with people. It's really interesting. I couldn't cut it much more than what it was. So I pulled it. And just had the Tony Leon letter. You do that. This is what...my job is about making decisions. And letting go of things and it's something I find very hard to do. So it's a trauma for me. I'm constantly, "I love you letter, bye-bye." Out, out. By Thursday I know everything about the letters. I've read them three times. I know exactly, I know the paper...I don't know the

paper that well today. But normally...I send every letter to every reporter. So I have to know who wrote the story. So...you asked me about the deputizing. I do have a say and I am expected to come up with ideas. And I do. What other ideas have I come up with? Recently I can't remember. I'm quite into education as much as I...I'm just sceptical about the value of a three year undergraduate journalism. No, I mean serious. I think it's better to travel the world or do a general degree. And then travel. I get a lot of stuff from Wits actually. They're very good. I read their stuff and get quite a lot of ideas for facing leaders from speeches that are going to be made on campus. I'm not interested in education per se but the kind of things that Wits do. I often submit those as ideas. They're interesting. We did one on sex. I can't remember what the idea was about.

**TKS:** Zuma's sexual morality...no, it was about freedom and sexual morality.

**GA:** Ja, it was a visiting lecturer, Robeson (Sp?).

**TKS:** That was driven by a lecture he gave at...

**GA:** It was she.

**TKS:** She?

**GA:** Alright. That one I came up with. And that was facing leader. I negotiated that, I dealt with it. I am...ja, so I do. Next question?

**TKS:** I think that was it.

**GA:** What else did they say what the aims were in the section? Because one of the things that I do think that happens though is this general idea that we need to have more women both featured as profiles and writers. But in the end the news wins. And the

news is always male. And it's very political. As much as they say...they being there's this perception here. When I got this job, 'cause I want to tell you I'm not very political. I'm not interested in discussing it with anyone. But I'm interested in what happens around me. I'm in newspapers. And they said, 'no we don't want it to be so political, we want different stuff'. But they don't. Politics wins. Politics wins. There's an obsession with the succession debate. Was that on the radio? There's an obsession with it. I don't want to read another story on it. And I don't want to read another story about. I know that seems really stupid and silly.

**TKS:** You're going to have a long trip until 2009.

**GA:** I know. But it's the ANC thing at the end of the year. Oh! I'm interested in other things. Like...I wasn't surprised about the bags. That's the most interesting...I'm interested in electricity. Because I had a power failure and I had to get up at 6:30 to do something and it was like, 'Oh! No!' 'Cause I knew it was going to be minus 1. But we did have a big thing on Eskom in Business Times last week on page three. But you see...I do have to know everything. But politics...Do you think our opinion pages are too political?

**TKS:** Ummm...

**GA:** But you see we do set an agenda I suppose.

**TKS:** Ya. I think that...it's got...I think they're looking for things that affect everyone and are important to discussion.

**GA:** That are in?

**TKS:** Public discussion.

**GA:** But they push things. Like the religion thing last week. That wasn't in public discussion.

**TKS:** No, or, the black consumer.

**GA:** Oh. That's brilliant. Those things very popular.

**TKS:** Wasn't there something about books in March? Something about black writers being pushed?

**GA:** Oh wasn't that about black academics not getting published?

**TKS:** Yes.

**GA:** That was a fantastic topic. An amazing response. A phenomenal response.

**TKS:** But those aren't political issues.

**GA:** No but anything...things that appeal to our readers. And believe me I know more than anyone because I'm the only one that reads every single thing that comes in here. They love anything that has to do with culture. Or, things to do with race. So something like black academics aren't getting published. They aren't getting the same opportunities and you just get...people just respond like you wouldn't believe. Business Times...

**TKS:** That's the same thing as reader interest isn't it? Or reader motivation. If you're talking about race then you're saying that readers are more motivated...

**GA:** No, they're intrigued by things like that. You'll have a story that will be small on the bottom of the page...about Umquomboti, traditional beer being bad for you. And it wasn't even a page lead. It was small.

**TKS:** Oh, causing throat cancer?

**GA:** Ja. That's right. Wow. You don't even know how many letters. We got hundreds of letters on that.

**TKS:** No, I remember reading those letters...

**GA:** I chose some of them...

**TKS:** And people took great offence.

**GA:** Yes, and I chose some of them and I had to choose the diverse views but you do not know how many letters. It was very interesting and people...what I find interesting is what we, as the paper, find important and interesting. What we use as the page lead, as we call it, the main story on the page and what attracts the most response. In fact, I haven't checked today's letters and we lost Sunday's temporarily. We only had two letters on our splash.

**TKS:** Hitchens?

**GA:** No.

**TKS:** Oh. The front of back?

**GA:** The main story on the front page which was Chippy Shaik.

**TKS:** Oh. Chippy Shaik's degree?

**GA:** Two letters. It was very interesting. Although I don't know what came in on Sunday. It could have been  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the letters. You see, this is why we have to find them. It's a very distorted view. They will find them because the next step is, I'm going to forgo all the other steps and go to the editor and say, 'you deal with them'. No seriously. It's that serious. No, I don't know if I've helped you.

**TKS:** No, loads.

**GA:** Why? How have I helped you?

**TKS:** That...

**GA:** Things that you shouldn't know, heh?

**TKS:** No, just how decisions are made. And how your...

**GA:** The editor gets the final say. No matter what anyone else tells you here. The editor. I will go out on a limb and say that.

**TKS:** No, no. That's what he said to.

**GA:** Did he?

**TKS:** Ya.

**GA:** Because I will go on the record for that one. 100 percent. The editor has the final say. That's it. The entire management could disagree with him; he has the final say on everything.

[inaudible]

**GA:** Yes, people have the right to voice their opinion. They're encouraged to voice their opinion. I think I even get assessed on how much I say during conference. I must say, 'oh no, I think that's boring, and I've read that already and wa-wa-wa.' And today I haven't even read a newspaper so won't have read anything. But this job is very demanding. I have to be so informed. And I'm not informed today. You know I was at the dentist's from 8. I didn't have electricity this morning so I couldn't listen to the radio. I haven't read the newspapers. You have to know what's going on. At least, I have to the radio. Do you understand? I'm going to be hyperventilating just now because I won't know what's going on. Well look, the editor has the final say and that's it. We're encouraged to talk and the editor has the final say. So he said it to?

**TKS:** Yes.

**GA:** Yes, he does. But we are encouraged to come up with ideas. And I think they would like me to come up with even more ideas. But you know what, the reality is, I know I sound like I'm going on and on, is that I have got to do those letters. They're the priority. And if it comes down to doing the letters and going through the *Star*. The letters win. Because they're not interested on Thursday if...they just want to know if you're ready with the letters. And when you get like 500 and you have to select your 12 to 15, it's a nice feeling when I hand them in. Because I feel like the choices are there because I put all that energy into them. I'm usually quite happy. Even if I pulled the brilliant one out. I'm going to use it this week. Its about a guy, someone accused him of sexual harassment. It's great.

**TKS:** I'll look for it this week.

**GA:** It's a no-name one. I mean I've got his name. It's like...I really think if I didn't have the letters, no, not think. I know. If there wasn't the letters and there wasn't as many as there are now. And then I had to do obituaries and Q&A, I'd play far more of a role in the choices because as you can gather I'm not meek and mild and I have views. Which is why I suppose I'm in the job. Like in the letters, "I like this one, I like this one." I do sometimes know but there is collaboration. I'll often, often go to Fred and say, like last week we had a letter from the DA and we had a letter from Tony Leon. This was interesting. And the DA's, Tony Leon's spokesman or whatever said, "We know the party has sent you a letter but we'd rather you used this one. And I thought, 'Fuck you, don't you tell us what to do'. The one from the DA was rude. But it made for great reading. You know that, 'bitch, bitch, bitch' very nicely written. And the one from Tony at first I glance I thought it was bit dour but once I read it properly I thought it was very nice. And I didn't know which one to use because they were both saying the same thing. I went to Fred, said 'please help me'. So that's collaboration. I said, "I need your advice, I need your editorial decision'. Not for legal advice. For legal advice I can go to the legal department, 'Is this defamatory'?"

**TKS:** So that's you asking him for collaboration?

**GA:** Yes. Because I need a second opinion.

**TKS:** What about the other way. Does he say, "Gillian, I need an assist".

**GA:** He'll discuss it with me. But I'll actually go in to ask. He will say, 'what do you think of this'? But I mean...there are one or two weeks...or there was one week in particular where insight and opinion just bored me. Because it was too political. And it bored. Sometimes I read a piece and 'Oh God!' and I can't wait to get to the end. But that's not often. And...like I thought our piece on Nigeria was fantastic.

**TKS:** The leader?

**GA:** No, the one the week before...

**TKS:** Oh. The facing leader?

**GA:** Dele [Olojede]...what's his name?

**TKS:** I don't know. I was thinking to before the election, it was the week before.

**GA:** I know. I just think he writes like a dream. I dealt with him because Fred was away. I just love that person. Dele phoned me and said, 'I've got a piece' I'll just say, 'submit'. I won't even ask what it is. Because he's just an amazing writer. I just...he's interesting. It's so interesting to work with top people. And how professional they are and how they write just a little over the required length. As opposed to the people who write 500 words over and think, 'oh, they'll just make the space'. Meanwhile we just have that required space. People are very arrogant. But the true professionals, like Dele, who's won the Pulitzer prize. And believe me I think he deserves it because his writing is wonderful. He writes about 250 over so we have something to sub and he doesn't throw tantrums because we removed a comma.

**TKS:** He's a professional then.

**GA:** Ja. It's nice.

**TKS:** Isn't that the benefit of working with someone who's a journalist?

**GA:** Who Dele?

**TKS:** Yes, because as opposed to someone who's an academic.

**GA:** Academic...we just give them the whole thing. I edited a higher education supplement and we told them, no academic references. No footnotes. Use the simplest, most basic language. Clarify everything. Just don't mention something, explain it. Give them those rules and they're fine. Well...

[laughter]

**GA:** No, they are. Anyone who is too turgid we wouldn't use. Oh. This is something they do that they probably didn't tell you. They love to change things at the last minute.

**TKS:** What do you mean?

**GA:** So the page will be done, the facing leader. And they'll go, 'we don't like it' and pull it.

**TKS:** This'll happen on Saturday night?

**GA:** No, no. Friday. When it's done. Friday. Like, one week I opened the letters page and there was a different letter. The main letter. The editor had got it and pulled the letter. They pull everything. They love to change...they change everything. There are two reasons for it. The first is that they want it to be as good as possible. So I'll say Dele hasn't submitted and he often submits late, which he does, and we're going to go with this. 'No' says Mondli. 'We will wait for Dele's piece'. Okay. But there are limits to how long and true enough he handed it in on Friday morning and we got it in. But it's like there's that thing of this is better and we'll use this.

**TKS:** And the second reason?

**GA:** Because they can. Because its power. [Laughter] I think. I'm the outsider. I don't have the power. I'm allowed to voice things. I do. I have to come up with ideas

and I do. It's no use coming up with ten ideas this week and they were useless. I mean, I'll only submit an idea that I believe in. It's, you know, it's hard to come up with ideas. I'm always a week behind because I'm on the letters page. But I can say what...if you ever wanted to do a thing on who our readers are, what they're interested in, boy could I talk on that. Or how I do the letter's page because I've no model really on how I'm doing what I'm doing. How I make the selections. Because there are a whole lot of criteria to consider. Pictures. You have to think pictures. So if you ever do that, boy, I'm equipped to, because its four days of my week.

**TKS:** Ya. That's another research project for somebody else.

**GA:** Ja, okay. I'm hoping to go overseas to work on another paper.

**TKS:** Oh what?

**GA:** It's an editorial exchange thing that we got yesterday. I'm going to apply for it this weekend. I probably won't get it. Because, it's to the States, and you ideally shouldn't have spent much time there. And I was on a fellowship years ago to Duke University.

**TKS:** What newspaper will you be exchanging with? Do you know?

**GA:** No, I don't know. But I would like to go. And you go to Washington and New York...

**TKS:** Gillian, last question how do you spell your last name?

**GA:** My name is...I could give you my card...I don't know if I've helped you.

**TKS:** Yes, you have.

**GA:** I've spoken too much.

**TKS:** Yes, terribly too much and it's been a great help.

**GA:** Why?

**TKS:** Because it's great to have someone to talk about the process. This is all about the process.

**GA:** Your thing...why...how did Fred say he comes up with ideas?

**TKS:** Umm...

**GA:** I think he meets people, hey?

**TKS:** Yes, he meets people, he said he gets ideas from you, he said he goes through the newspaper, and sometimes something will just strike him. He said that's what happened with the black consumer thing.

**GA:** No, it came out of a conversation, that's not true. The black consumer thing came out of...they have these panel discussions...oh fuck that's what I got to do today. I've to organize one; I've got to speak to Fred about a list of names. Take a deep breath. I won't make it today. I won't make that today. No, not with the letters. The letters missing is a real trauma. The...they have these panel discussions, they bring experts in, they discuss it and we run an edited version in the paper. They discuss it. We had one on crime recently. One on morality. One on B.E.E. They have them in Business Times and News and Opinions. Nice to seem them every now and then. They have these experts in. That's my job to find these experts for another panel. We had one recently, about four weeks ago, six weeks ago.

**TKS:** About what? Zuma's sexual morality thing, no?

**GA:** It was on...crime. And it was Johnny Steinberg and...I can show it to you I've got all the papers. Then they went to lunch. And Loyiso, from Fort Hare University. Makhubani, I think is his surname, he spoke on it. About its like, 'it's good to show off in the township' is that the one you're talking about? 'It's good to show off, people must see that you can achieve, that you're from them and look at what you're driving now and look how well dressed you are'. And so Fred asked him to write a facing leader. He's a very out-spoken guy. Very full of himself. But fun. I like him. I've only spoken to him over the phone. In fact, I think I've only spoken to him over e-mail. But quite fiery ones, and is very full of himself. Calls himself, 'Mr. Controversial'. 'Hello Mr. Controversial', I say. Fred then wrote the column on that idea and then two weeks later, because he didn't submit on time, Loyiso handed it in. And we had a facing leader on it. I can show you...

**TKS:** How often do the facing leaders just not come through at all?

**GA:** Oh, people are horrific. There's one that still hasn't come through that Fred mentioned two weeks ago. Maybe it's not just coming through anymore. It's a hell of a lot of admin in this job. I've got to check the obits, check that we got the pictures, I submit the names to the person who has to find the pictures and sources them or tell us we don't have them...How did you know that Celene used to go to leader conferences. Did you speak to her?

**TKS:** Mondli mentioned it.

**GA:** Oh. So was he cross that I don't go?

**TKS:** No, he's not cross.

**GA:** I'm curious.

**TKS:** Um. Okay. Well, he just said...pretty much...almost word for word what you said. That you're not interested and you're not a political person.

**GA:** Did he say that?

**TKS:** Yes.

**GA:** No, I told him that.

**TKS:** Well then he repeated what you said.

**GA:** So he accepts that, or was he cross about it?

**TKS:** No, he just said that's why.

**GA:** No, I [inaudible] the leader conference. Did he say that? No, it is, I'm not. No one thinks of me as a political. But I can do this job. That's the irony. Because I'm interested in things that are newsworthy. I mean the fact that Nick Haysom got this job at the United Nations is a political thing. It is political. So it's not like I don't have that awareness or whatever. No, I'm not worried. I'm not political. If you look at what I've done before, I'm not anywhere near it.

**TKS:** So what is this new facing leader about, the argument around Nadine Gordimer?

**GA:** The argument between Christine Quanta. And you can Google her. She's a lawyer. She's outspoken. I don't know. And Nadine Gordimer. I'm amazed that we're running it. Another thing is...I said we don't but we often run things that have been elsewhere.

But I think that's the *Sunday Times*. We reinforce things in people's minds. But the other idea is that we also break things. I don't know. It's a strange paper. It satisfies a lot of needs.

**TKS:** It's a broad church.

**GA:** It is, hey? You must see our reader's letters. We have them all, from the white right-wingers, to the black revolutionaries, to the white intellectuals to the housewives. You name it. I mean, the best thing, and I'll often get so excited. When was it? Last week, and the letter didn't go in the end, but it was like 'but who would have known that when the ANC took power that they would be exactly the same as the previous government?' and you're thinking 'oh, this is a white...a white whinger' and you get to the name at the end and its Themba Da-da-da.

**TKS:** No, that did go in, didn't it?

**GA:** Did it?

**TKS:** I saw a letter just like it in the letter's page.

**GA:** Maybe it was similar. Did it go in?

**TKS:** Ya. It was a letter that pretty much said exactly that.

**GA:** Maybe I've lost it.

**TKS:** It could be a different letter but it just read...

**GA:** Maybe it did. Oh, that was like that one, I'm going to kill that guy, because I found the letter in the *Star* on Friday but I didn't tell anybody because we had already

done the page. It was someone from Braamfontein. I'm going to kill that guy. If he writes another letter I'm going to ask him if he submitted it to the *Star*. See I know...no, it did go in, that's right. Because when we pulled one letter that one went in. See, I told you, I know our readers. Oyez! I've forgotten his name. Khatsi, Themba Khatsi or something, from Braamfontein. He writes quite a bit. He writes quite well. Could be a student.

**TKS:** So a regular letter writer?

**GA:** Not every week. But...my favourite letter writer, he used to write three or four a week, stopped writing. And I keep thinking I must go back and find his thing and ask him, 'where are you? Are you alright?' And then we have a regular...he was the main letter writer last week. [inaudible] We've used him; I've made list now, four times. Twice as the main letter. It's a lot. So I can talk about the readers if you ever want to talk about that. I'm an expert. Because nobody has as much contact with them.

## **APPENDIX 7: E-MAIL INTERVIEW WITH HEATHER ROBERTSON**

**T Kenichi Serino:** About how often do you attend leader conferences?

**Heather Robertson:** Most weeks.

**TKS:** What sort of things prevent you from attending all of them?

**HR:** Attending to briefing news editors on news conference decisions; if its after 5, having to dash home to my toddler because his child minder leaves at 5.30 (something the men in conference seem not to have to take care of, and hence do not mind so their long lunches sometime lead to late conferences which lead to late leader conferences which I cannot attend).

**TKS:** What is your job title?

**HR:** Managing Editor: News

## **APPENDIX 8: E-MAIL INTERVIEW WITH MOHAU PHEKO**

**T Kenichi Serino:** When approached to do a column for the *Sunday Times*, who approached you?

**Mohau Pheko:** Fred Khumalo my editor.

**TKS:** How did they describe your brief?

**MP:** My brief was basically use to my international experiences in my travels to the African continent and other countries, as well as my political economic background to craft debates, information that stimulates debate. I was also requested to write women's rights pieces that attract a female audience.

**TKS:** How has your brief transformed since then, if at all?

**MP:** My brief has not changed much although from time to time I do some pieces on human interest in South Africa. I have also been requested around New Year for example to do a funny of light piece. My pieces generally debate geopolitical issues as well as issues such as Xenophobia, Halaal food, women's rights, and male female relationships to poking fun at MP's wanting salary hikes.

**TKS:** How do you see your role on the *Sunday Times* opinion page?

**MP:** My role is a very privileged space that gives me the space to engage and expand debate in South Africa in a small way. I am always chaffed when radio stations or TV broadcasts use my column to further debates through talk shows. I view my role as gazing and navigating through some difficult debates together with thousands who read the *Sunday Times*. Many of the pieces are sourced from conversations I have with people or triggered by a movie or personal

experience. My role is to widen the debate around the political economic and social issues of our time and to allow for diverse views and voices in order to break the hegemonic debates that is creeping into our society.

**TKS:** How do you choose topics for your column?

**MP:** Lots of conversations personal experience, a movie, a song, a new item, activist sending me topics on various issues of concern to them like climate change and global warming. My own personal experiences.

**TKS:** As the only female writer on the page, do you believe you have any special responsibilities?

**MP:** Special responsibilities? I think I have a tremendous opportunity to raise women's rights issues as they relate to how we can build stronger and better partnerships between men and women and the household, work and social level. I also feel privileged to write a column that really allows a lot of freedom in expressing various views even when they are extremely uncomfortable, such as talking about women's bodies that are considered cultural taboos for women. More than anything, I think that women have an extremely heightened intellect which goes missing in many of our debates. Mine is but one small voice that hopefully resonates with millions of women and men who want to transform how we engage and socially transform our nation, continent and world.

**TKS:** One more question though mostly for my own curiosity. Now that you've been writing for awhile are you finding it difficult to come up with new topics or has it been more or less the same as when you began?

**MP:** No, I am often overwhelmed with topics! I sometimes have to write three pieces and decide which to send in. A lot of people send me things to write about.

While I try to have a rather eclectic mix of topics it gives me the vantage point of scolding, advocating and making people laugh or giving new or different information about an issue.

## **APPENDIX 9: E-MAIL INTERVIEW WITH TONY SUTTON**

**T Kenichi Serino:** What was your role in the redesign of the *Sunday Times* both a year ago and in the major overhaul three years ago?

**Tony Sutton:** I was design consultant for both of the projects. For the main redesign three years ago, Stephen Haw, the paper's assistant editor in charge of special projects and I did the complete job, section by section. We brainstormed ideas with section editors and produced prototype pages which we presented to senior management executives. Much of the process was done at the time when there was no editor-in-chief, in the period before Mondli Makhanya took over. With the revamp just over a year ago, my role was different in that much of the work was done by an in-house team before I was called in my job was to fine-tune the paging and to work with Haw on visualizing both the content and layout of the key change pages, including page 2, the revised editorial and social pages and the news review section.

**TKS:** What were some of the priorities that the *Sunday Times* had in the redesign that happened one year ago?

**TS:** There were two main areas of focus: The first was business driven, the need to accommodate more advertising into the paper, especially the main section. That gave Makhanya the opportunity to add new news focus pages, rework the leader pages, shift and expand the social pages and to move sports into its own section.

**TKS:** The opinion page underwent some of the more dramatic changes: Makhanya got his own column, Khumalo was spun off into his own page, Sis Beatrice was added to the page, etc. What were some of the ideas and concerns that informed that changes made in the opinion pages? What were the priorities?

**TS:** The changes in the opinion page began with the need to adjust Page 2, which we

had restyled in the major redesign of 2004. Our thinking at that time was that the page should provide a breathing space between the hard news of the front page and the rest of the main section, which was why we shifted Barry Ronge's column from the Magazine to anchor the page. Reader response to that was negative, so Ronge was shifted back to the magazine, Sis Beatrice replacing it as the key element. This was never a satisfactory change and there was also dissatisfaction with other page elements so it was decided to rethink the page while we were working on the expansion of the news and opinion pages. The changes in the opinion pages were driven by three forces: Makhanya wanted his own weekly column; we needed to give Khumalo more space; and the revamping of Page 2 meant that Sis Beatrice would have to move; and the editorial page was deemed the ideal place for the column.

**TKS:** Did the vision for the opinion pages transform over the course of the redesign project? Did priorities change?

**TS:** The vision for most of the pages changed as we moved along. Redesigning a major newspaper is not a static operation; changes are continually being made as the project progresses and, of course, changes to one page often spill into other areas. This transformation is a continuing process during the life of a newspaper; if you need an example of this, look at the development of the sports pages of the *Sunday Times*. They first were integrated into the existing Soccer Life pull-out. A few weeks later, the size was changed to broadsheet, and a few months ago the title was changed to Sport with Soccer Life as a subsidiary line and a new display typeface.

**APPENDIX 10: SECOND INTERVIEW WITH FRED KHUMALO**

**T Kenichi Serino:** So I guess I'll come right to it. I'm finishing the research.

**Fred Khumalo:** Yes, yes.

**TKS:** What I'm going into are things that are outside the opinion pages. Things that wouldn't be covered. Off the top of your head can you think of some viewpoints or views that wouldn't have a space in the *Sunday Times*?

**FK:** Viewpoints that wouldn't find a space in...

**TKS:** Yea. That you wouldn't. For example, hate speech. Wouldn't be...

**FK:** Ja. Hate speech would be out of bounds. And the whole debate around the death penalty. It's a non-debate. That's why I don't have any time or tolerance for it. Not only do we have a constitution that embraces a right to life but also...is there something wrong with your tape?

**TKS:** Maybe but I'm taking notes as well.

**FK:** Okay. Not only do we have a constitution that embraces the right to life but as an institution we are very positive in our values and the values we want projected through our pages. Therefore, the whole notion of the death penalty, which is a regression as far as I'm concerned, I don't think we want to entertain it whatsoever. What else? I can't think of any specific viewpoints....

**TKS:** Can I throw something out there? Like HIV denialism? Would that be an example?

**FK:** Oh yea! Another scenario. All the denialists we are reluctant to use their opinion pieces.

**TKS:** Okay. So that means, like, Mathias Roth will probably never get a space.

**FK:** Ja. That kind of stuff.

**TKS:** Is there anything else? Certain commentators...let me give you an example. I interviewed Andrew Donaldson quite a long time ago. And it was after Christine Qunta wrote her piece in the Independent Group newspapers about Nadine Gordimer. And he said that you had had a debate over it. Over whether or not you should cover it because it would...give something more oxygen or raise someone's profile who maybe otherwise wouldn't be raised.

**FK:** Umm...ja. We would be reluctant to use...because she...she's not an independent thinker herself. She's a puppet...on a string. And what she's saying, on the issues of denialism, she's very defensive of the president [Mbeki].

**TKS:** Okay.

**FK:** So we see her as a pawn in a bigger game.

**TKS:** So if she's a puppet...then who's the master?

**FK:** The president. On issues of Aids.

**TKS:** You mean Mbeki?

**FK:** Ja.

**TKS:** Um...okay...so that falls under HIV denialism. But you wouldn't...talk about her piece regarding Nadine Gordimer because she is also a HIV denialist?

**FK:** Ja. If the subject at hand was AIDS then we wouldn't consider her as a commentator but on issues of broadcasting we have quoted her because as you know she was involved at the SABC and she still is. In a debate about whether or not the SABC board is only reflective of one aspect of the debate over media freedom we would interview her and we would solicit her views. And we have done that.

**TKS:** Right. But would you not solicit her for a piece? Either a facing leader or Second Opinion?

**FK:** No. Personally no. Its not a matter of institutional policy but as a leader of that particular section of the paper...her arguments are very personal, vindictive and I don't think that's the kind of debate...or the kind of style I would want her to take on my pages.

**TKS:** How is it...I've seen her stuff...I've read it and I wouldn't disagree with you that it's vindictive but personal how...

**FK:** There was this piece that was published in the *Star*. A very long piece about Nadine Gordimer as a product of Apartheid. But so is Christine Qunta. We all are products of Apartheid.

**TKS:** I read that piece and I would agree that it was nasty in its tone. So I agree with you that it could be vindictive but how was personal about it that makes it not useable?

**FK:** Um...she is not tackling racism, or colonialism or Apartheid as a subject she is personalizing saying, 'Nadine Gordimer is a manifestation of that, is a product of that' without actually substantiating that fact. So if for example she had submitted that piece

to the *Sunday Times* I would have argued with her before I published as it appeared in the *Star*. I would have thrown it back her to say, ‘You are a product of Apartheid as well. What do you have to say to that? Can you refine that? Can you contextualize that?’

**TKS:** So let me ask you....the piece got published in the *Star*. What is the difference...well it first appeared in the *Daily News* and was then picked up by the other Independent Group newspapers.

**FK:** Ah, okay.

**TKS:** So what is it about those newspapers and they way they make selections that you would say is different than how the *Sunday Times*? Because I mean, they publish Ronald Suresh Roberts’ work and...ah...well let’s come to that. Would Ronald Suresh Roberts be published as a facing leader or Second Opinion in the *Sunday Times*?

**FK:** Um...there’s some problems...well, I have detected what I thought what are problems with the approach of some of the Independent titles especially the *Star*. When Essop Pahad...um...threatened that government would be pulling out advertising from the *Sunday Times* there were sounds of glee from the *Star*. Noises of glee because they were seeing it as an opportunity for them, for their people. “If government pulls their advertising from the *Sunday Times* then let’s take it as the *Star*.” That was the sense that I was getting at that time. So...you would see them publishing pieces by Suresh Roberts and...your theory begins to gain ground that they are...in their camp. So the integrity as far I could tell...see from my own personal space...there was lot of ass licking being done by the *Star*. That is not the *Sunday Times*, this is Fred Khumalo speaking.

[laughter]

**TKS:** Okay. So in terms of...you think the *Star* would publish those pieces in the context of they are looking to take advertisers and be the alternative to the *Sunday Times*?

**FK:** That's my view.

**TKS:** So why doesn't the *Sunday Times* just publish Qunta's work or Robert's work on its own merits? Or does it not have merits in terms of your audience?

**FK:** We used to publish Suresh's pieces but he hasn't said anything really new and kind of balanced about anything or anyone. He becomes repetitive and so on. I would be reluctant to use his stuff because of that. He is a defender of the president. We need a...

**TKS:** Sorry, a what?

**FK:** A defender. We need a balanced take on the issues. You might be from the DA. You might be from the IFP. But...we appreciate where you come from obviously. But when you debate, please engage with the subject at hand. Do not just attack people at random.

**TKS:** Yea.

**FK:** And unfortunately that is Suresh's weakness. He doesn't tackle subjects.

**TKS:** Is...let me set this question correctly, I want to ask whether his lawsuit was a factor or at around the time of the lawsuit was when his work itself went down this path of becoming nastier and less thought-provoking.

**FK:** I didn't actually...thought about the lawsuit. But at some stage his work started veering off...it became, well, directionless. So you don't want to give him a platform from which he can start shooting at random. You don't want to be the co-conspirator [chuckles].

**TKS:** I think this is going to be the last question. When you view the opinion pages, and we can look at things people look at *Beeld*. Like the column on Satanism.

**FK:** At *Rapport*?

**TKS:** *Rapport*, yes, sorry. When you're doing opinion pieces do legal factors, or in this case, commercial factors come in? Like for example do you see an opinion piece, polemical in nature, a piece might go into slander, legal slander?

**FK:** Obviously, if a person writes a slanderous piece then I can't publish it. Because someone could sue. Or if someone writes a piece which consists of inaccuracies or is simply based on lies then the factual basis of it can be challenged then therefore I can't publish that because then I would be misleading my readers. For example, if someone were to say in their opinion pieces, 'when Thabo Mbeki became president in 1994' that's practically incorrect. And let's say that person is arguing...is basing the central point of their piece or debate on Mbeki coming into power in 1994...you miss one fact and the whole edifice collapses. And of course if you write something that is defamatory about someone then I can't publish that because I will be sued.

**TKS:** Kay. But I mean...at the same time often you're writing about political figures then sometimes you have to be a little bit defamatory. I mean...he's not on the opinion pages...I don't want to use him as an example. I was going to say David Bullard but my feeling is that David Bullard isn't a great example of the opinion pages because what he's trying to do is different and he's in a different section. But...I'm sure it's in possibility that someone will write a facing leader or second opinion piece that says,

'this person, who is the head of this ministry, is doing an awful job and they're well overdue to be sacked'.

**FK:** That's not slanderous.

**TKS:** It's not defamatory?

**FK:** No, I mean, this is my opinion. Manto is incompetent. I'm not defaming her. I'm just stating my point of view. I don't see on what basis she can take me to court. I don't see it.

**TKS:** But she did just that.

**FK:** What?

**TKS:** She did that.

[laughter]

**FK:** Or perhaps, used state resources to take you to court.

**FK:** But she did that on the basis of the stolen medical reports not on our comments that she's a thief.

**TKS:** Okay...If...just to sum up. Some ideas are outside the bounds of debate of the *Sunday Times*' opinion page. HIV denialism, hate speech and the death penalty. Is there anything else?

**FK:** No. We're very open minded. We even publish Dan Roodt. You know. We publish his rubbish. [laughter] Because sometimes he's very persuasive in his pieces.

**TKS:** Yea.

**FK:** I know some colleagues have said, 'no why are we giving this fool space in the *Sunday Times*?' No, I said you know what, I think we need that extreme reflection in our society. Because he's not a lone ranger. He's got a constituency there. And if we close our minds to its existence then we might be missing something. I'm not saying let's consistently give them a platform. But let's try and understand...what their concerns are.

**TKS:** So lets...to summarize, someone like Dan Roodt. Your personal feeling is that his work's rubbish. But you would still publish him because he represents a certain voice in this country...

**FK:** Ja.

**TKS:** And his work is persuasive. In contrast to somebody like Christine Qunta who...Qunta might also represent a lot of people in this county but her work is not persuasive.

**FK:** Not persuasive. So there are many factors involved in the choices one makes.

**TKS:** I think that's it.

## **APPENDIX 11: SECOND INTERVIEW WITH MONDLI MAKHANYA**

**Thomas Kenichi Serino:** Okay. I'm going to come right to it. I'm finishing the research. To refresh you're memory, it's about the *Sunday Times* opinion pages. What topics are chosen, commentators. One of the things I wanted...what I wanted to know is what are some of the things that are out of bounds for the *Sunday Times* opinion pages?

**Mondli Makhanya:** Well look. Obviously stuff that is defamatory would be out of bounds. Ja. And stuff that is...it's a difficult to call to makes, stuff that we would regard as hate speech would be out of bounds...look it's a difficult call to make. It's not something that's....

**TKS:** It's slightly relative?

**MM:** Yea. Not tangible. Look we would never publish something that is openly xenophobic or openly racist, openly homophobic, and so on and so on. I don't think that...It will be stuff that is offensive for the sake of being offensive.

**TKS:** Okay. But in this country though, things like hate speech are also banned. As a legal matter. But what about something more...like HIV denialism. Would you publish a piece that advocated HIV denialism or came from that point of view?

**MM:** I would not ban anything just because it was HIV denial. If, for example, one of the HIV denial professors wanted to write a piece for the *Sunday Times* for instance. And can justify why it is relevant at that moment I would have no problem running it. The only I would have, is what makes the debate relevant now? Because we've been through that. And those views have been reflected. We have run stuff before.

**TKS:** Okay.

**MM:** Ja, during the period of the HIV debate we ran the view of the denialists. But there comes a point where the debate becomes repetitive. And its no longer...it's a restatement of their denial. I know for a fact when I was at the *Mail & Guardian* I had some clashes with some AIDS denial types because they were trying to push stuff onto the paper and...stuff that I thought was simply being destructive for the sake of it.

**TKS:** What is an example of that then? Stuff that is being...

**MM:** For example, questioning the efficacy of condoms, you know. And it's the sort thing that goes around and around. It's not an ideological position that I think it should not be heard.

**TKS:** Well...like an example with Manto. Would you allow Manto to write a piece that said, beetroot and garlic is a cure for AIDS?

**MM:** I would love a piece by Manto saying beetroot and garlic is a cure for AIDS because then she would have to say exactly how it works and I would love the Minister of Health to explain this.

**TKS:** [laughter] Alright...Okay.

**MM:** Yes. But she would have to...the problem with AIDS denialist opinion is...its repetitive and it doesn't...it actually goes around old science. And it hasn't gone anywhere in the past 20 to 25 years. There's a...you know when it comes to opinion...when it comes to you...are saying that hate speech isn't really an issue but the problem in South Africa is that we have not defined hate speech.

**TKS:** Yea.

**MM:** Until we actually know what hate speech is, until it has actually been tested.

**TKS:** Because as a legal question it has not been tested?

**MM:** Ja. As a legal, ethical question. I think it could...for instance...you could probably find people who would argue very strongly that...let's say David Bullard, I must not put things in people's ears, [laughter], David Bullard's column of last week might construe that.

**TKS:** Well, I hear that you get that quite often. That people or subs come to you saying that Bullard has...

**MM:** Bullard has gone overboard?

**TKS:** Yes.

**MM:** He does go overboard and he indeed does need to be pulled back.

**TKS:** Does he?

**MM:** Ja.

**TKS:** But that's his job

**MM:** Ja. I'm the editor, and I do it to protect himself from himself.

[laughter]

**TKS:** Well...let me tell you...I spoke to Fred on this as well. And Fred used the example of the death penalty. Would you have someone...would you have pieces....I mean, Bullard has said 'bring back the death penalty' using stronger words than that. But Bullard is not on the opinion page. He's in Business Times Careers section. Would you have someone in the opinion section who said 'we need to bring back the death penalty'?

**MM:** What did Fred say?

[Laughter]

**MM:** We don't want to contradict

**TKS:** Well, he's your employee so you would know better than I would.

**MM:** No, again. An argument would have to be made. I'm trying to think of a piece that we had...see whether we actually had anything that goes in that direction. Let me answer it this way. Yes, I would have somebody argue that position. But then they would have to argue that. Simply asking for the death penalty is not enough. You would have to take into consideration that the constitutional court has said that it is unconstitutional. The person would have to be calling for a constitution amendment. What we have had reflected in the past is people saying that we have to now open the debate on the death penalty. And...we've had letter writers for instance; I think we've run a lot of letters saying about the death penalty especially when the crime rate is very high. I don't think we have in recent memory; I may be mistaken here, run a serious opinion piece by an individual actually,

**TKS:** The only one, I read the *Sunday Times* too, and the last one, the only one I can remember is the Kader Asmal Second Opinion reaction to Jacob Zuma's proposing. You know how Zuma is better than I do he proposes things without proposing them.

**MM:** Ja.

**TKS:** Asmal wrote a piece...

**MM:** Taking to task. Ja. But I can't remember us having a serious argument, having a senior member of society or an academic or someone like that writing a piece arguing for the death penalty. Not because we have rejected them, ja, but I don't remember anyone coming forward. But should they do so I would want more than, 'crime is out of control, let's bring back the death penalty', anyone can say that. I would want a constitutional argument around it.

**TKS:** Okay. Last question: this is interesting to me because Fred said something similar; Fred said he wouldn't have it. But he said that there was a standard. That it had to be professional and correct. And he used the example of Christine Qunta whereby Qunta had written this sort of hatchet piece about Nadine Gordimer in the *Star* newspaper and Fred had said we wouldn't have used it because it wasn't well-written and it included a lot of ad hominem attacks but he also said that Qunta is, and also Ronald Suresh Roberts, he called them defenders of the president, meaning Mbeki, so is there something in there, is somebody called a bad faith commentator. I mean, would you have Christine Qunta or Roberts on your page now? I mean, you've had Roberts before, but would you have them now?

**MM:** I would not have them, for the simple reason that they are dishonest. Their arguments are dishonest. Umm...I would much sooner. I would like...

**TKS:** How are they dishonest?

**MM:** Their arguments are not their own arguments.

**TKS:** In bad faith?

**MM:** It's exactly that point. They do it to in order to defend a particular position and they do so purely to...what's a stronger word than dishonest? Ja, they are very intellectually dishonest. And....they do not argue out of conviction. And not out of believing whether a particular point of view is correct or not. They argue because it's what suits them at that particular point and what suits their position. Look, it's not about their ideological standpoint. During the course...during the period of people arguing about the third term which Christine Qunta and Ronald Suresh...we had a guy who was writing for us and he made a very good strong argument which made you think about the third term...Well...And lot's of strong arguments can be made, and were made for a Mbeki third term, but that particular one by Ronald Suresh Roberts....what Ronald argued its not...its driven by something else and purely on that basis.

**TKS:** Okay. Well, we've hit ten, so I'll ask you one more question and that's it. Is that then the difference between Xolela Mangcu? Because what Xolela wrote took a position that he was very open about. He supported Tokyo Sexwale and he came to the platform at his public conversations and then after Sexwale dropped out Tokyo took, sorry, Xolela took a... 'We need to support someone to stand against Mbeki'. So what is the difference...would you say the difference between him doing that and someone like Roberts is that perhaps Xolela is perhaps he is more open or is it...

**MM:** I think Xolela believes what he writes.

**TKS:** He believes?

**MM:** Ja. He believes what he writes and he argues his point and he puts forth a cogent argument whether it is about...the issue whether Tokyo took money, whether he was....

**TKS:** Oh that.

**MM:** It did become an issue obviously. He didn't hide it...

**TKS:** Right...

**MM:** He was open about it....

**TKS:** Okay...

**MM:** It wasn't a secret...ja. His arguments are not dishonest.

**TKS:** Okay.

**MM:** And there have been times when he's made wrong calls and he'd come back at times and say 'Look, I was wrong on that one'.

**TKS:** Yea. I don't visualize Roberts ever saying that.

**MM:** Ja.

## Appendix 12: Quantitative break-down of news and opinion articles from sample month of the *Sunday Times*

Figure A12.1: News topics in the *Sunday Times* from week 1

Date of Publication:	Total space in cm <sup>2</sup> :	Related Topics:
1/4/2007		
Mugabe extends term	300	Zimbabwe, Zanu-PF, Mugabe
HIV: Everyone knows someone	280.5	HIV Awareness Campaign
Child Massacre	278	Crime, Children
Public Official Pay Raises	253	Merit Pay, Remuneration, Public Officials
Lotto Suspended	240	Good Governance, corruption
Mugabe extends term	240	Refugees, Zimbabwe
Jo'burg Sinful City	239	Vice, Morality
Woolmer Murder	216	Crime, Cricket
Derek Rodgers	214	Sleeping Disorder, British Television
Race in Hostels	206	Race Relations, University
Prince Harry Drunk	194	Prince William Groping
Gandhi's 'Prostitution Street'	171	Vice, Prostitution, Street Renaming
Sold Patrol Ship	164	Good Governance
Black Woman Deported	151	Racism, Immigration
Mbeki and Women's league	142.5	Presidential Succession, ANCWL
Zuma's man raided	140	Zuma, Infogate, NIA
Manneburg Memorial	139	Sunday Times Heritage Project
DRC Futures	126	Bemba, Civil Conflict
Mogadishu Occupation	105	Ethiopia, Somalia, Occupation
Zimbabwe fleeing	99	Mugabe, Refugees, Borders
Heist Gang in Court	94	Consumerism, Crime
Women against Crime	93.5	Crime, children, women
Arab-Israel Peace Plan	93.5	Middle East Peace
Transportation revolution	77	Public Transportation Reform
Wealthy family fishing	75	Conservation
Gerry Rantseli Wedding	70	
Consumer Debt	67.5	
Throat Cancer	61	
Zuma Sues	60	Zuma, Sunday Times, Lawsuit
Maradona in Hospital	56	Soccer
N1 Accident	55	
Land expropriation	52.5	Transformation, land reform
Shane Warne Marriage	40.5	
Freshly Ground and Marijuana	38.5	Drug use, politicians

**Figure A12.2: News topics in the *Sunday Times* from week 2**

Date of Publication:	Total space in cm <sup>2</sup> :	Related Topics:
8/4/2007		
Jack the Ripper	467.5	Vice, Prostitution, Serial Killings, Crime
DRC Rebels	355.5	DRC, Elections, Development
Zim Refugees Working in SA	315	Zimbabwe, Immigration, White Collar Labour
Woolmer Murder	293	Crime, Cricket, World Cup
Daycare Effects	275	Children, Caregiving
HIV: Everyone knows someone	270	HIV Awareness Campaign
SAA Restructuring	265	Airline Business, Good governance
MP Payment	232.5	Merit Pay, Remuneration, Public Officials
Pope Slams Neo-Colonialism	231	Imperial Exploitation, Globalization
Andrew Tladi Murder	230.5	Crime, Kgomotso Tladi
Memorial to Soldiers	214	Sunday Times Heritage Project
Karoo Kids Cash in at Festival	209	Klein Karoo Nasionale Kunstefees, Street Performers, De la Rey
Zuma: Pray for Us	202.5	Churches, ANC
US \$1 Billion Election	184.5	US Presidential Election, Campaign Spending
Son of Minister Drunk Driving	162.5	Charles Nqakula, Crime, Drunk Driving
Iran Hostage Crisis	141	Iran, Middle East, Britain
Bank Fraud	133	Roslyn Perumal, Crime
Lotto Plans	133	Lotto Suspension, Good Governance
US in Zimbabwe	132	Zimbabwe, MDC
Venezuelan Booze Ban	127.5	Hugo Chavez, Prohibition, Socialism
Zim Refugees Working in SA	105	Zimbabwe, Immigration, Family Support
Zim Brain Drain	101	Zimbabwe, Professional Skills
Patrol Ship Sale	95	Good Governance, Independent Probe
Justice over Stillborn Baby	91.5	Civil Suit, Pregnancy, Medical Malpractice
Transvestite at Karoo Festival	91	Gender, Art
Zim Refugees Not Going back	90	Zimbabwe, Immigration, Repatriation
Ex-Cricketer Fraud Trial	90	Crime, Cricket, le Roux
Meerkat Man	89	Meerkat, Anthropomorphism, Conservation
Church slams Selebi	82.5	2010, Prostitution, Selebi
Uganda Adultery	76	Adultery law, Gender equity, Uganda
Union Fined	67.5	Satawu, Security Guard Strike
Eritrean Female Ban Circumcision	66.5	Eritrea, Female Genital Mutilation
Foreign Aid	56	Foreign Aid, G8 Richest Countries
Home Affairs Restructuring	54	Good Governance, corruption
SA Cookbook	45	Cooking
Sunday Times Daily	40	Sunday Times
Erwin the White Sangoma	30	ANCYL, Alec Erwin, Presidential Succession
Charges against Sparg	27	Corruption, Scorpions

**Figure A12.3: News topics in the *Sunday Times* from week 3**

Date of Publication:	Total space in cm2:	Related Topics:
15/4/2007		
A Sporting Chance	362	Rural Sport Tournament
Tammy Child Murder	299	Crime, Child Welfare
French Elections	279	France, Elections, Candidate Gaffes
Judge Impeachment	266	Hlophe, Good Governance, Corruption
Food Price Burst	263.5	Food Prices, Inflation
Cosatu dumps Zuma	238	Zuma, Presidential Succession, Cosatu
Graca's HIV Test	237.5	Get Tested Campaign, HIV Awareness
Royal Romance Ends	236	Prince William, British Royals
Members sue ANC	232	Eastern Cape, ANC, Lawsuit
South African Music Awards	217	Simphiwe Danzi, Afrikaans Music
Three Heists while on Bail	210	Crime, NPA, Court Efficacy
Nigerian Elections	202.5	Nigeria, Civil Violence, Fraud, Elections
Jews and IQs	181.5	Race, Intelligence
Murdered Swimmer	165	Crime, Sport
Working Women	157.5	Women in the workplace, Family Welfare, Divorce
Shop Lazy Councillors	157.5	Local Government, Thabo Mbeki, Good Governance
US Shock Jock	157	Don Imus, Racism
Chinese Fish to SA	140	Fishing, China, Trade, Food Supplies
HIV: Everyone knows someone	137.5	HIV Awareness Campaign
Get Tested	134	Get Tested Campaign, HIV Awareness
Cape Winery	115.5	Farm, Divorce, Lawsuit
Flight Sculpture	115.5	Sunday Times Heritage Project
South African Jews	115.5	Race, Intelligence
Children in Rehab	115	Drug Addiction, Child Welfare
Ex-Dean Charged	104.5	Plagiarism, Crime, Pumela Msweli-Mbanga
Food Regulation	96	Government, Food Prices
SA Men on Image	77	Metrosexuality
Madonna to Madiba	72	Celebrity, Mandela
Wages vs. Food	63	Inflation, Food Prices, Strikes
HIV+ Councillor	58.5	Crime, HIV
SABC/Government Flack	54	Good Governance, SABC, Conflicts of Interest
Gay show on SABC	34	Homosexuality, SABC

**Figure A12.4: News topics in the *Sunday Times* from week 4**

Date of Publication:	Total space in cm2:	Related Topics:
22/4/2007		
Mandela Monarchy	546	Mandela, Tribal Issues
Crime Map	377	Crime
Get Tested	371	Sunday Times Campaign, HIV
VTU Murders	322	Crime, Race
Nigerian Elections	275	Elections, Nigeria, Corruption
Baby Jordan	247	Crime, Children
Mbeki Shut Out	235	Presidential Succession, KZN
Everyone Knows Someone	220.5	Sunday Times Campaign, HIV
Socialites at War	201	South African Celebrity
Kadwa Murder	185.5	Crime, Family
French Elections	184.5	Elections, France, Sergolene Royal, Gender Issues
Seremane Refuses to Quit	173	DA Succession, Race
Math Exam Pull-Out	170.5	Education, Good Governance
SA Millionaire Death	162	Celebrity, Drug Abuse
Man-Eating Lions	147	Lions, Man getting Eaten
Pneumonia Vaccine	143	Health, Children, Pneumonia
Bollywood Wedding	137.5	Bollywood, Celebrity Wedding, Aishwarya Rai
Proteas Pitch	116	Cricket World Cup Semi-Final
Politicians Pay	101	Political Parties
Abortion for Bush	94.5	Partial Birth Abortion, United States, George W Bush
SA Youtube	90	Braii Jokes, Internet
Goniwe's Fate	79	ANC Politics, Sexual Harassment
Safa owes	77.5	Safa debt, Bafana Bafana, Soccer
Cheese Missing	77	Celebrity, Internet
VTU Murders	73.5	Crime, Vice
Fidentia Auction	71.5	Business, Scandal
Alec Baldwin's Anger	59	Celebrity
Mbeki Meets	29	Service Delivery, Gauteng
Secret Trial Opposed	21	Court, Nuclear Proliferation, Good Governance

Figure A12.5: News topics in the *Sunday Times* from week 5

Date of Publication:	Total space in cm2:	Related Topics:
29/4/2007		
Sword against Bullets	459	Bulhoek Massacre, Sunday Times Heritage Campaign
Gangster Accountant	319	Gangs, Crime, Apartheid
Mogadishu Terror	292.5	Somalia, War, Civilian Casualties
War on Gangs	268	Crime, Gangs, Western Cape
Crime Calm	262.5	Nqakula, Crime, Foreign Investors
Know Your Status	256	HIV, Sunday Times Campaign
Radio Host Fury	242	Radio, Xhosa Women, Ethnic Slur
Jenna-May Foetus Death	238	Crime, Spousal Abuse
Man Sues Tycoon Wife	234.5	Divorce Law, Illegitimacy
Khanyi Doesn't go Home	225	Celebrity, Relationships
Curvy SA Model	209.5	Plus-Size Models, Fashion
Wife Beaten	196	Crime, Spousal Abuse
Mbeki says Zuma says no Conspiracy	185.5	Presidential Succession, Zuma, Mbeki
Kerzner set on Namaqualand	176	Development, Tourism, Environment
Rwanda Genocide Legacy	175.5	Genocide, Africa
The Gangs	152	Crime, Gangs, Western Cape
Cosatu Battles for Soul	130.5	Cosatu, ANC, SACP, Presidential Succession,
Obama no shake Clinton	125	Obama, Presidential Debate, Clinton
Calls to Mbeki to Remain	124	Mbeki, Presidential Succession, Third Term
Freeing Presidency	119	French Politics, Election
Prince Harry to Iraq	112	Iraq, British Royalty
Gerry Rantseli Marriage	98	Celebrity Marriage
Abortion Ship	93.5	Holland, Abortion
Campus Massacre Film	93	Film, Crime, VTU
Housing Office Closes	74	Service Delivery, Crime, Gangs
Drive-by	71.5	Crime, Gangs
Turtle Record	66	Bizarre
Judge Orders Gere Arrested	59.5	Vice, Crime
Patrol Ship Fuel	58	Patrol Ship, Good Governance
Princess Diana Concert	56	British Royalty
Cops Hound Barker	33	Crime, Bizarre

**Figure A12.6: Opinion articles and their correlation to articles in the news section**

Date of Publication:	1/4/2007		Number of times mentioned in news section previous week.	Number of times mentioned in news section same week:	Total space devoted to issue in news section in cm2:
Opinion Pieces:	Headline:	Topics:			
Leader 1:	"SADC Fiddles while Zimbabwe Burns"	Southern African Development Community's handling of the Zimbabwe crisis	n/a	3	639
Leader 2:	"We can't let this plan derail"	Public Transportation	n/a	1	540
Mondli Makahaya:	"The Phony War Over Aids is Over: Now the Real Battle can Begin"	Acknowledgement of AIDS by public figures	n/a	0	0
Fred Khumalo:	**Khumalo was on leave**	n/a	n/a		
Mohau Pheko:	"'You see, white people steal too', so ditch the myth	Public perceptions of race and crime	n/a	0	0
Second Opinion:	"ANC Snubs Others in Bid to own Struggle History"	ANC, PAC	n/a	0	
Facing Page Piece:	"Culture of mutual resentment precludes nonracial future"	Social Justice, Black Victimhood, White Privilege	n/a	0	
Zapiro		Mugabe, SADC Leaders,	n/a	3	639

**Figure A12.7: Opinion articles and their correlation to articles in the news section**

Date of Publication:	8/4/2007		Number of times mentioned in news section previous week.	Number of times mentioned in news section same week:	Total space devoted to issue in news section in cm2:
Opinion Pieces:	Headline:	Topic:			
Leader 1:	"Mistake to damn all MPs equally"	Minister of Parliament payment and performance	1	1	485.5
Leader 2:	"Scuttled by a ship of fools"	Government Patrol Ship Sale, Public Mismanagement	1	1	259
Mondli Makahaya:	"Those who don't recall history get to be Mugabe's dupes"	Zimbabwe and the Southern Africa Development Community	3	0	639
Fred Khumalo:	"Loose cannons can't touch the real power brokers in today's SA"	David Bullard, Black women as ironic power figures	0	0	0
Mohau Pheko:	"Break silence about beneficiaries of trade in women"	Human Female Trafficking	0	0	0
Second Opinion:	"Bold campaign helps to salve blasts of apartheid"	Sunday Times heritage project, South African history	1	1	353
Facing Page Piece:	"Say it out loud: I'm black, I'm rich and I'm proud"	Black consumer culture, displays of wealth	0	0	0
Zapiro:		Rooivalk, Denel	0	0	0

**Figure A12.8: Opinion articles and their correlation to articles in the news section**

Date of Publication:	15/4/2007		Number of times mentioned in news section previous week.	Number of times mentioned in news section same week:	Total space devoted to issue in news section in cm2:
Opinion Pieces:	Headline:	Topic:			
Leader 1:	"Time to hand SAA to experts	South African Airways financial feasibility	1	0	265
Leader 2:	"Take the Test"	Sunday Times HIV testing campaign	0	2	371.5
Mondli Makahaya:	"Baloyi a saddening example of corrupting quest for wealth"	Danisa Baloyi, Fidentia, Black economic empowerment	0	0	0
Fred Khumalo:	"We are up to our own stilettos in shallowness"	Celebrity culture in South Africa	0	0	0
Mohau Pheko:	"To hell with increasing the salaries of MPs"	Minister of Parliaments financial compensation, Economic empowerment of the poor	1	0	232
Second Opinion:	"Not Even Zuma will try to take ANC from Mbeki"	Presidential sucession debate	1	1	268
Facing Page Piece:	"Mugabe's Rigging of the polls begins in brutal earnest"	Zimbabwe, Mugabe's Presidential Term	0	0	0
Zapiro:		Ivy Matsepe-Casaburri, Good Governance, Corruption	0	0	0

**Figure A12.9: Opinion articles and their correlation to articles in the news section**

Date of Publication:	22/4/2007		Number of times mentioned in news section previous week.	Number of times mentioned in news section same week:	Total space devoted to issue in news section in cm2:
Opinion Pieces:	Headline:	Topic:			
Leader 1:	"If Nigeria falters, Africa will suffer"	Nigerian elections	1	1	479.5
Leader 2:	"Cosatu's Dawn of reason"	Zuma losing Cosatu support	1	0	238
Mondli Makahaya:	"By dragging its feet, business is begging for state interference"	Transformation and Business	0	0	0
Fred Khumalo:	"At last a prophet is honoured in his land"	Bulhoek Massacre, Enoch Mgijima, Sunday Times Heritage Project	0	0	0
Mohau Pheko:	"AU needs leader who can pull plug on trade bullies"	African Union, Leadership, Trade Agreements	0	0	0
Second Opinion:	"Our Consitution is a danger to society"	Constitution, Crime	0	0	0
Facing Page Piece:	"Sexual freedom: a matter of conscience and of law"	Sexual Freedom in a democracy. Civil partnerships	0	0	0
Zapiro		World Bank, Wolfowitz, Corruption, Hypocrisy	0	0	0

**Figure A12.10: Opinion articles and their correlation to articles in the news section**

Date of Publication:	29/4/2007		Number of times mentioned in news section previous week.	Number of times mentioned in news section same week:	Total space devoted to issue in news section in cm2:
Opinion Pieces:	Headline:	Topic:			
Leader 1:	"Cape's 'war' is for all to fight"	Gang Violence in Cape Town	0	5	884.5
Leader 2:	"Adolescent blues"	Teenagers in a new South Africa	0	0	0
Mondli Makahaya:	"Beware, lest we make Russia's mistake in choosing leaders"	Russia's transformation into democracy and leadership, South African leadership, Presidential Succession	1	3	675
Fred Khumalo:	"A joke's a joke, even when it treads on some people's toes"	Xhosa women, ethic jokes	0	1	242
Mohau Pheko:	**Mohau Pheko was on leave**				0
Second Opinion:	"Crude Theories on Crime given the lie in Calcutta"	Cultural explanations of crime	0	0	0
Facing Page Piece:	"Jacob Zuma's Bankrupt sexual morality afflicts millions of us"	Moral Regeneration Movement, Zuma, Hypocrisy, Zuma Rape Trial	0	0	0
Zapiro		Cricket, Proteas Choking, Sport	0	0	0

**Figure A12.11: Opinion Topics, Writers and their Occupations**

	Second Opinion Writer	Second Opinion Topic	Occupation	Facing Leader Writer	Facing Leader Topic	Occupation
Date:						
1/4/2007	Michael Cardo	ANC and PAC	Academic/ Researcher	Achille Mbembe	Social Justice, Black Victimhood, White Privilege	Academic/ Researcher
8/4/2007	Ebrahim Rasool	Sunday Times heritage project, South African history	Political Figure	Loyiso Mbane	Black consumer culture, displays of wealth	Academic/ Researcher
15/4/2007	Bantu Holomisa	Presidential succession debate	Political Figure	Trevor Ncube	Zimbabwe, Mugabe's Presidential Term	Newspaper Publisher
22/4/2007	Letepe Maisela	Constitution, Crime	Writer/ Business Consultant	Ruthann Robson	Sexual Freedom in a democracy. Civil partnerships	Academic/ Researcher
29/4/2007	Amartya Sen	Cultural explanations of crime	Academic/ Researcher	Mmatshilo Motsei	Moral Regeneration Movement, Zuma, Hypocrisy, Zuma Rape Trial	Activist/ Writer

