

An Analysis of a Week's Opinion Writing  
in Sydney Daily Newspapers: Who Speaks,  
How They Are Chosen & What Is Said

Maralyn Parker

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements  
for the degree Master of Arts (Journalism)

Faculty of Humanities  
University of Technology

Sydney

July, 1998

# Contents

---

<b>CONTENTS</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>INTRODUCTION &amp; OVERVIEW</b>	<b>5</b>
Culture & Hegemony	5
<b>LITERATURE REVIEW</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>METHOD</b>	<b>16</b>
Who Gets To Speak—Categories of Age Gender & Race	18
Content Analysis	19
Interview of Op-Ed Editors	20
Textual Analysis	21
<b>SOCIO-HISTORICAL CONTEXT.</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>CONTENT ANALYSIS</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>PART 1</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>GENDER AND AGE REPRESENTATION OF OPINION WRITERS IN THE SPORT, BUSINESS AND NEWS &amp; OP-ED SECTIONS OF EACH</b>	

<b>NEWSPAPER</b>	<b>29</b>
THE Daily Telegraph	30
Representation in sections according to age and gender in The Daily Telegraph	30
<b>THE AUSTRALIAN</b>	<b>33</b>
Representation in sections according to age and gender for THE AUSTRALIAN	33
<b>The Sydney Morning Herald</b>	<b>35</b>
Representation in sections according to age and gender in The Sydney Morning Herald.	35
<b>Total for the three papers</b>	<b>36</b>
Numbers of pieces published	36
Total representation in sections according to age and gender	36
<b>CONTENT ANALYSIS</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>PART 2</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>ANALYSIS OF THE NEWS&amp;OP-ED SECTIONS ONLY, USING HENNINGHAM'S NINE MEGA-CATEGORIES</b>	<b>38</b>
The Daily Telegraph	39
<b>THE AUSTRALIAN</b>	<b>41</b>
The Sydney Morning Herald	42
<b>Total for the three papers in hierarchical order</b>	<b>43</b>
<b>Total for each category with age and gender</b>	<b>44</b>

<b>INTERVIEWS</b>	<b>45</b>
THE Daily Telegraph	45
<b>THE AUSTRALIAN</b>	<b>49</b>
The Sydney Morning Herald	54
<b>SUMMARY &amp; CONCLUSION</b>	<b>59</b>
<b>Who gets to speak</b>	<b>59</b>
Total for all papers in each section according to age and gender	59
News & Op-ed section only - each paper according to age and gender	60
<b>What is being spoken about</b>	<b>61</b>
Total for all papers in each section	61
Total in content categories for opinion for all three papers in news & op-ed sections only	62
Content of opinion in the News & Op-ed sections in hierarchical order for each paper	63
<b>How do the opinion writers get to speak</b>	<b>64</b>
Opinion writers in the News&Op-ed sections for the snapshot week	64
The process of selection	65
<b>What are the ideologies and discourses being perpetuated</b>	<b>66</b>
<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>67</b>
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>	<b>70</b>
<b>APPENDICES</b>	<b>73</b>

# Introduction & Overview

---

In Australia in 1998 school children as young as ten and eleven years old are taught to deconstruct television, radio and print products, especially visual texts. There is no doubt Australians in general are becoming much more sophisticated consumers of the mass media. Studies of advertising and visual images in the media have made sexism, racism, homophobia and ageism relatively easier for Australian consumers to recognise, and therefore less difficult to resist. However the accompanying glut of opinion and analysis that now crowds local and national daily news print products has bourn scant attention.

The ideas and attitudes of the opinion givers and analysts are presented in their television, radio and print contexts as the commonsense of experts. And while readers, viewers and listeners will agree or disagree with these attitudes and opinions vigorously, the imbedded ideologies are rarely challenged. This is despite the fact that by their sheer volume and unrelenting daily production they must arguably be a major site of the hegemonic reproduction and legitimisation of discourses within our culture.

By using a snapshot of one week of local opinion and analysis in the daily print media in Sydney, Australia in 1998 this study will look at; who gets to speak; what is being spoken about; how the opportunity to speak arises; what ideologies and discourses are being perpetuated. The three daily papers offering general news coverage in Sydney - *The Sydney Morning Herald*, *The Daily Telegraph* and *The Australian* will be used for this purpose, including each of the six day's publications of each paper, from Monday to Saturday.

## Culture & Hegemony

In order to argue that opinion and analysis pieces in daily newspapers are a major site of hegemony at work in our culture, there is a need to examine the concept of culture and define the hegemonic process.

Pam Gilbert and Sandra Taylor (1991: 7) quote Fiske in their approach to defining culture as being 'that most slippery concept of all'. (1987:20) They draw heavily on Fiske's work in explaining culture as the way social relations of a group are structured and shaped by the powerful institutions

our society such as the family, education system, law, the family, mass media et al and the way those shapes are experienced according to race, class and gender, particularly Fiske's point that

Culture is deeply inscribed in the differential distribution of power within a society, for power relations can only be stabilized or destabilized by the meanings that people make of them. Culture is a struggle for meanings as society is a struggle for power.

Fiske 1987:20

Gilbert and Taylor expand this concept by giving a central importance to the meanings individuals construct of the sense of *the self* in particular how 'meanings related to gender are implicated in the construction of femininity. Such meanings are organised at a number of interrelated levels within a dynamic ideological system' (1991:7). This draws in part on the structural-functionalist approach going back to Parsons (1937 and 1951) which Billington, Strawbridge, Greenside and Fitzsimons explain in simple terms:-

People behave as they are expected to in a given situation because they have internalised the norms and values - the culture of society.

Billington, Strawbridge, Greenside and Fitzsimons, 1991: 5

But it also introduces the notion of ideologies. Marx's theory of ideologies as ruling ideas representing the view of the ruling class being the dominant forces in society and having control over the 'means of mental production' (Marx and Engels 1938:39) has been reinterpreted by Louis Althusser and Antonio Gramsci.

Althusser's model of the Base of the economy determining what happens within the Superstructure (Althusser 1977: 203) sees ideology as *not* being the false consciousness implied by Marx but as 'a structure of thought and consciousness in which we all think, act, and experience the world and ourselves' (Billington, Strawbridge, Greenside and Fitzsimons 1991: 25). While Althusser has also drawn on Gramsci's notion of cultural or ideological hegemony formulated during his imprisonment by the fascists in the early nineteen twenties, it is Gramsci's more complex and less structuralist and determinist notions of ideologies and how they work that are now viewed as more relevant (Billington et al 1991:25). Gramsci argued that the 'domination of ideas in the major institutions of capitalist society including the Roman Catholic church, the legal system, education system, the mass communications, media etc promoted the acceptance of ideas and beliefs which benefited the RULING CLASS (Jary and Jary 1991:271) .

And here we arrive back at the notion of common sense. Hegemony is at work within ideas we

accept as common sense - things we accept as 'normal' though they may not relate to our own experiences at all. For example many children growing up nowadays accept the idea of the nuclear family as 'normal' when they have had no personal experience of being part of a nuclear family. In the same way women may accept subordinate roles because they are constructed as normal for them.

It is through the hegemonic forces working from within institutions such as the daily newspapers that our patriarchal capitalist culture communicates and reinforces the ideologies which construct, underpin and legitimise the dominance of the white ruling class male. When marginalised groups are excluded from positions of power which produce knowledge in such institutions, patriarchal capitalist ideology can present itself as universal knowledge.

The media is vital within this process to keep the ideologies alive and the discourses current. However in Gramsci's view hegemony is also a complex process where it is possible for those it is at work on (individuals or groups) to be active. (Jary and Jary 1991:271). Billington et al agree - 'Hegemony refers to the way in which the consent of the subordinate classes to their domination is achieved: this is both a struggle and a process and it is never permanent' (1991:27). As Connell points out 'hegemony does not mean total cultural control and obliteration of alternatives. Such a degree of control does not happen in practice' (1987:251).

So the act of taking a snapshot to put the spotlight on who gets to speak, how and what is being said in the daily print media in Sydney, is to be part of the complex process where in Gramsci's view groups or individuals are being "active" against the hegemony of the daily reproduction of the views and values of white, middle aged men.

Regularities in what is said (discourse) and done (practice) are based on shared beliefs and values ranging across tasks accomplished, problems addressed, values articulated and research undertaken

Cherryholmes 1988:1

To understand the "regularities in what is said... and done" in news production it is important to analyse the discursive practices at work and uncover the "shared beliefs and values" which underpin them.

Discourse, Cherryholmes explains "refers to what is said and written and passes for more or less orderly thought and exchange of ideas" (Cherryholmes, 1988:2). At the same time it is important to identify the sites of production of the discourse within their historic and social context. These are the "regularities" that are at work.

The "shared beliefs and values" which Cherryholmes talks about are products of the hegemonic forces working from within institutions such as the education system, the law, the government and the media. Our patriarchal capitalist culture communicates and reinforces the ideologies which construct, underpin and legitimise the dominance of the white ruling class male in Australia. So women, aborigines and ethnic minorities become marginalised and are excluded from positions of power which produce knowledge in such institutions. Patriarchal capitalist ideology presents itself as universal knowledge.

The media is vital within this process to keep the ideologies alive and the discourses current. However in Gramsci's view (Jary and Jary 1991:271) hegemony is also a complex process where it is possible for those it is at work on (individuals or groups) to be active. Billington agrees - 'Hegemony refers to the way in which the consent of the subordinate classes to their domination is achieved: this is both a struggle and a process and it is never permanent' (Billington, Strawbridge, Greenside and FitzSimons 1991:27). As R.W. Connell points out 'hegemony does not mean total cultural control and obliteration of alternatives. Such a degree of control does not happen in practice' (Connell, 1987:251). So the news culture of news producing agencies are sites where not only the ideologies and discourses are reproduced, they can also be sites where contestation and oppositional discourses can arise. The deconstruction of news discourses is a powerful form of resistant activity. It is through such practices that women and marginalised groups such as Aborigines, ethnic groups and gays and lesbians can find ways to reveal the processes at work and attempt to change them.

# Literature Review

---

In 1989 *FAIR* (Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting) published its study *Are you on the Nightline Guest List?* (Hoynes and Croteau 1989 <http://www.pairoducks.com/local/-pencil/McNeil-Nightline>) showing that while ABC's Nightline is widely seen as the best television journalism has to offer in the US, its guest panellists were overwhelmingly drawn from white male professionals, government officials and corporate representatives. The study, carried out over a 40 month period and involving 865 programs, showed that 80 per cent of the US guests were professionals, government officials or corporate representatives, 92 per cent were white and 89 per cent were men. Nightline was clearly dominated by white male elites which indicated that despite its popularity and reputation it was in fact offering a very narrow set of perspectives.

A follow up study, a special FAIR report *All The Usual Suspects; MacNeil/Lehrer and Nightline* (Hoynes and Croteau 1990 <http://www.pairoducks.com/local/pencil/McNeil-Nightline>) looked at what had happened with the Nightline guest list since the first FAIR report and compared this to the guest list of PBS's MacNeil/Lehrer NewsHour. Like Nightline, MacNeil/Lehrer relies heavily on invited guests to provide analysis and commentary. The second study found that the Macneil/Lehrer guest list was even narrower than Nightline's and that there had been no significant changes to the Nightline guest lists since the first study, even though both host Ted Koppel and executive producer Richard Kaplan had publicly concurred with the original criticism.

The original study while identifying Nightline's most frequent guests as Henry Kissinger, Alexander Haig, Elliot Abrams and Jerry Falwell, authors Hoynes and Croteau (1990) made the point that:-

It is a basic sociological tenet that one's position in national and social hierarchies- race, class and gender- effects how one sees the world. Nightline's domination by white male elites is, in the long run, likely to result in a narrow set of perspectives on current issues that favor the interest of those elites.

Hoynes and Crouteau (1990) also rejected a simple quantitative analysis of the race and gender of the panellists as “not enough”.

Having token African-Americans, for example, who merely espouse the ideology of those in power does little to broaden the program’s scope. We were concerned that the guest list include a broader range of perspectives, not simply better demographic representation.

Ted Koppel’s response to the accusations by Hoynes and Crouteau in the first study in 1989 of Nightline reproducing a narrow perspective of current issues was:-

Ours is a news program...when we are covering the news, we try to go to the people involved in the news...What they have reflected in their analysis of our guest list is that over the 40 months [of the study] we’ve been dealing with a rather conservative Reagan Administration. If we had a liberal administration in office, you would suddenly see an enormous disparity in the other direction.

Los Angeles Times 2/6/89

Hoynes and Crouteau argue that this is the media-is-just-a-mirror-to-the-world theory and too simplistic. Rather, they argue, Nightline is holding the mirror in a certain direction- to reflect the opinions of those in power. They also make the point that the conservative guest list in fact was made up mainly of ex-office holders not those currently in government .

While the Nightline studies looked at who was given a voice - race, gender and occupation (looking specifically at political affiliation) and leaves open for further research the evidence of elite white male networks dominating news comment on US television, an analysis of what was being said was restricted to content analysis -what was talked about and by whom. No specific analysis of the broadcasts as texts were included. So while the studies talk about conservative ideologies these were nor specifically nominated nor detailed nor was any method outlined for detecting them. However the point that both news broadcasts were tapping into the same elite white male network,

the McNiel/Lehrer one being even more narrow than that used by Nightline, was well made.

The study by Judy Motion (1993) of New Zealand media discourse on the attempted Soviet Coup was more specific in using keyword and narrative analysis to deconstruct media discourse on the coup and “to determine the ideological orientation of news narrative” (Motion, 1993:69). The papers used in the study were the New Zealand Herald, Waikato Times and Guardian Weekly in the period 19th August to 24th August 1991. Motion’s contention was that “media language controls New Zealanders’ knowledge of overseas events” because media provide virtually the only information about such events (Motion 1993:70).

Motion looked at two meanings within each of the 105 articles in the study - the descriptive surface meaning (the story) and the inscriptive deeper meaning (the language). Both narrative theory and keyword analysis was used to uncover these meanings.

Of the 105 articles, 68 came from agencies . Of those from agencies 51 were from Reuter. Of those from Reuter, 21 were from the Soviet Union and in 8 of these no real author was acknowledged. Both the Waikato Times and the New Zealand Herald did not have correspondents in the Soviet Union. In line with narrative theory that each article has three authors - the real the implied and the narrator, Motion found that the dominant narrator in the articles was the ‘leader’. That is elite people were telling stories about themselves. The second dominant narrator was the media where media sources were presented as experts and the third dominant narrator was the ‘average person’, usually an unnamed man with grey hair presented as a factory worker, butcher, building worker or military personnel.

The language used for the different narrators positioned them for the reader. Leaders ‘said’ things which presented what they were saying as reasoned, neutral and factual. But average people ‘harangued’ and ‘shouted’ which made what they were saying emotional and partisan. Also while on the surface the coverage seemed complex with many angles and was ostensibly of events, the most frequently used keyword was ‘Gorbachev’. Overall Motion found that the coverage favoured western leaders’ language and promoted their political values. (Motion, 1993:73)

A study by Daniel Maguire in 1993 looked at four Australian newspapers coverage of the 1993 federal election - *The Age*, *The Australian*, *The Sydney Morning Herald* and *The Courier-Mail*. Maguire used a paragraph by paragraph analysis to decide which candidate the article dealt with and then further classified whether each paragraph was favourable or unfavourable. The issues being dealt with were analysed using Stempel and Windhauser's categories (Stempel and Windhauser 1991) of politics and government, economic activity, public health and welfare, education and classic arts, recreation and media, strength of candidate, horserace (polls), GST, industrial relations, employment and environment. Maguire found that: the leader (Keating) received the most coverage; most stories about major party leaders were neutral and that most non-neutral stories were unfavourable; Hewson got the most of the unfavourable coverage; *The Sydney Morning Herald* did more unfavourable coverage of Hewson than the other papers; *The Courier-Mail* was the most neutral and politics; and government stories were given the most coverage.

Maguire concluded that: there were justifications for comparing the 1993 Australian federal election to the US presidential elections because of the focus on the leaders and campaign activities and the resulting balanced coverage; party leaders did well in the coverage; and that politics and government probably got more attention because it was the area that was part of the leaders' agendas for the election. He also pointed out that Keating, who got more favourable coverage in total, won the election.

In 1995 Jim McKay and Philip Smith used both modernist and post modernist theories to interpret and discuss the common themes used by the Australian media in the coverage of the O.J Simpson story. As well as all items on prime television news and current affairs programs in Brisbane, which all used varying amounts of footage from US TV networks, all articles from *The Courier Mail*, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, *The Australian*, *Australian Magazine*, *The Bulletin* and *Time Australia*. that were more than two column inches long and published within a month of Simpson's arrest were used. Three main media frames were identified from this coverage as The Rise and Fall Of An American Hero, Hollywood/Los Angeles (Mysteries, Soaps and Mini-Series and Hollywood films) and The Media Feeding Frenzy (McKay & Smith, 1995: 62). McKay and

Smith argue that these three frames work to establish the “rise” of O.J. as an individual achievement and his “fall” as circumstances that he could not control; and why as a consequence the issue of domestic violence was marginalised and any discussion of a sports culture which reproduces violence and misogyny was silenced.(McKay &Smith,1995:64)

While McKay and Smith were not attempting to establish any network of opinion givers who were setting the pace for the coverage, they argue that the audience position was constructed “more favourable to voyeurism and titillation than mobilisation and concern” (McKay &Smith,1995:64) and contend that the general ideological effects”were to exonerate Simpson’s individual acts of violence against his former wife and to exscript violence against women as a normal aspect of hegemonic masculinity” (McKay &Smith,1995:64).

While my study of a snapshot of the daily press in Sydney is not an attempt to interrogate the content of the whole of each of the newspapers involved, John Henningham also used a snapshot approach to do exactly that - a content analysis - of print media in all of Australia’s capital cities in 1993.(Henningham, 1996:23). He took a sample of twenty issues of each of the daily newspapers in each capital city in Australia “using a slightly modified ‘structured week’ approach covering all months in the year” (Henningham, 1996:23). He applied a schema of 35 content categories, developing and drawing on those used by Mayer (1964) in the very first content analysis of metropolitan daily press in Australia in 1964 and the McQuail (1977) analysis of Australian papers in 1977. These categories were condensed into nine ‘mega-categories’ and the percentage of editorial space the newspapers as a group devoted to them calculated. Henningham found the percentage of space devoted to each category as follows, in order: economy/business/ finance 21.1%; culture and entertainment 18.7%; sport 18.4%; politics 12.3%; crime 9.8%; science and medicine 6.6%; international relations 5.8%; social issues/education/welfare 4.7%; accidents and disasters 2.4%.(Henningham, 1996:27).

Another finding by Henningham, relevant to my snapshot study, was that while the different papers varied in the amount of space devoted to the different categories, the differences were not as

great as could be expected. For example economy/business/finance took up 27.5% of *The Australian* editorial space, 20% of *The Sydney Morning Herald*, , 15% of *The Mercury* , 15% of *The Courier Mail* and 12.5% of *The Daily Telegraph*. Sport took up 26% of *The Daily Telegraph*, 24.5% of *The Courier Mail*, 19% of *The Advertiser*, 17% if the *Canberra Times*, 17% of *The Sydney Morning Herald* and 13% of *The Australian*. (Henningham, 1996:29).

Henningham concluded that:-

There is less difference than in the 70s between the tabloids and their broadsheet rivals in their attention to city based news and to politics. It is clear that without their volumes of finance and sport stories, Australian newspapers as a group would be rather slender products, strip away human interest and popular culture news, and they would be very thin indeed. The popular tabloid newspapers demonstrate the expected emphasis on sport and popular culture, but even in the metropolitan broadsheet newspapers, sport accounts for almost one fifth of total items, while popular culture (including entertainment) comprises not much less. At the same time tabloids are far from being simply vehicles of entertainment: they offer a significant proportion of news in the more 'serious' areas of politics and finance, while giving a degree of attention to social issues. (Naturally a topic based categorisation does not yield any information about how these issues are covered).

Henningham, 1996:32

Which is where my snapshot of opinion in the daily papers in Sydney will fit in. Who is giving their opinion about these issues? What areas are important enough to rate an opinion piece? What is being said? From his research Henningham summarises "It seems the oligopolisation of Australian newspaper ownership and the related shrinkage of newspaper titles has resulted in a greater tendency for newspapers to seek a broad popular readership, using similar formulae of newsvalue" (Henningham, 1996:33) Is this tendency reflected in the sameness of opinions being published in the various papers.

While Norman Solomon (1997) in 'Monotonous Tone of Op-Ed Pages Could Spell Trouble For Newspapers' in Shop Talk At Thirty in *Editor and Publisher March 29 1997* was referring to US print media he maintains that the line up of opinion found in op-ed pages is so monotonously conservative that it is turning away readers.

Although strong populist sentiment exists along two general paths in our society, only the right wing variety is well represented on the opinion pages of our daily newspapers'

Solomon, 1997:40

Solomon believes that millions of Americans feel alienated from local dailies because the ongoing discourse seems predicably narrow. "That's one of the big reasons why so many readers have been turning away from dailies... and towards papers with more progressive content." (Solomon, 1997:40). The 105 papers in the Association of Alternative newsweeklies now claim 17 million readers per week in the US and \$275 million in revenues.

Solomon also makes the point that although there may be more racial, gender and ethnic diversity of the people who write opinion for newspapers this does not necessarily mean there is a diversity of ideas. Solomon says "progressives should have a regular place at the op-ed table not just an occasional temporary seat."(Solomon,1997:40)

# Method

---

This study is a snapshot of who is speaking their opinion in daily Sydney papers, what they are giving their opinion on, how they may have been given the opportunity to air their opinions and what values and ideas are behind those opinions. There are three daily papers *The Daily Telegraph*, *The Sydney Morning Herald* and *The Australian* available daily from Monday to Saturday in Sydney every week. *The Daily Telegraph* and *The Sydney Morning Herald* are both state papers distributed throughout NSW and *The Australian* is a national paper also available in Sydney daily from Monday to Saturday. These were the three papers chosen for the study. There is a fourth paper available daily in Sydney from Monday to Saturday, *The Australian Financial Review*, however this is a national paper with a circulation of 91,000 that specialises in business and financial news so I decided to leave it out.

The snapshot was for one week from Monday to Saturday chosen at random. The week beginning Monday 23rd March 1998 was chosen. There is no significance in the choice of this week, it was just the week I was ready to begin collecting the papers and analysing them. Also there was no significance in choosing a week rather than a fortnight or a month except to confine the amount of work involved to something that was manageable in the time given to complete the thesis. Henningham's use of twenty issues of a paper covering all months of the year in a "structured week" format would have given a more extensive basis to the study. However again time constraints made such a choice out of reach. The point should be made however, that it is possible to build on this study of a random week, by adding extra weeks, to build up a more extensive picture.

The immediate difficulty with this snapshot study was however in deciding on the method and categories to use to determine who is speaking, what basis to use for the content analysis, how to uncover the processes behind being selected and to decide on the extent and basis for textual

analysis. Obviously textual analysis of all of the opinion and analysis pieces in one week in three newspapers would take a much longer commitment than this study would allow and while the exercise would be valuable in relevance to its findings, a sampling may also give a glimpse which could be just as useful. Also there is a third aspect of media analysis, reception theory, which John Thompson (1990) explains as the reception and appropriation of messages (Thompson, 1990:304) that this snapshot will not include, except in a general way as an argument for the relevance of doing a snapshot.

John Thompson (Thompson 1990: 269) argues that in analysing media a tripartate approach is necessary. First the social-historical characteristics of the institutions which produce and transmit the media message must be examined. This includes patterns of ownership, control within media institutions, relations between media and nonmedia institutions, including state organisations, the recruitment of media personnel et al. Second a formal or discursive analysis is necessary. this includes an analysis of complex symbolic construction, style, tone of language, structure of narrative or argument, use of specific devices, interconnection et al. Third is the reception and appropriation of the media message. This includes examining the circumstances and socially differentiated conditions within which media messages are received by individuals.

This snapshot study is drawing on the first and second parts of Thompson's approach in that both a social history of Sydney newspapers is examined as well as a more formal analysis of the media texts, which will start with a broader category and content analysis followed by what Thompson calls a "discursive analysis" (Thompson 1990: 269). However, while the third part of Thompson's recommended approach will not be used for this snapshot it is important to acknowledge reception theory and the place it has in studies of communication. That this snapshot has not included any research into the particular audience of the various pieces (except as a thumbnail sketch of the various readership and circulation of each of the papers) nor the details of the way they received the pieces nor any measurement of resulting effects, is not to dismiss this aspect. In fact a study of the ways that an audience receives media messages has influenced my plan of methods to use in looking at what is being said.

Mark Fishle and Karen Stenner-Day (1992) offer a sophisticated account of how media effects transpire by drawing on schema theory from cognitive psychology.

Schema are cognitive devices which are thought to aid their users in dealing with complexity by guiding the selection, interpretation and evaluation of new information; by providing inferences when information is missing or ambiguous; and facilitating its retention.

Fischle & Stenner-Day 1992:162

This theory recognises that the impact on viewers' attitudes are mediated by various audience attributes. People apply their prior knowledge which can be prompted by the way media frame the story. People cannot deal with all of the information presented to them by the media so they will avoid complex analysis and "opt for simple heuristics" (Fischle & Stenner-Day 1992:160). So the way media frame stories "has important implications for shifts in public opinion" (Fischle & Stenner-Day 1992:162). The frames can prime, by "bringing attention to certain criteria while de-emphasising or ignoring others" (Fischle & Stenner-Day 1992:162). So the schema which a viewer will apply is prompted by the frame given to a story. As part of the textual analysis section of this study I intend to look at media frames, not as a part of reception analysis embedded in cognitive psychology but as part of narrative deconstruction - a literature critiquing device.

## **Who Gets To Speak—Categories of Age Gender & Race**

In looking at who gets to speak a simple age, gender and race breakdown was the obvious starting point. The age categories are arbitrary. Forty and older, and under forty seemed a simple division, mainly because thirty something (under forty) could still be considered to be part of a younger set of writers given that most well known opinion makers in Sydney's print media such as Paddy McGuinness, Piers Akerman, Gerard Henderson, etc are in the forty and older category. A more delineating set of age categories could perhaps have been more revealing, however with such a dearth of younger opinion writers even the under forty division looked as though it would probably

yield no subjects in several of the content areas. Also with race I thought there would be so few other than Caucasian that I decided just on Caucasian and Other, with the view to making each of the writers who fitted the Other category, a special case. In embarking with this category it seemed that any Other voice would well come with all of the connotations 'The Other' brings as a subject that is exotic, often binary oppositional, and marginalised.

## Content Analysis

Where to start with the content analysis was next. Henningham's nine "mega-categories" of content; economy/business/finance; culture and entertainment; sport; politics; crime; science and medicine; international relations; social issues/education/welfare; accidents and disasters (Henningham, 1996:27) are a sound basis to start. However Henningham, as well as previously Mayer(1964) and McQuail(1977) upon whose work Henningham drew, were all analysing the news content of print media. As I was studying specifically opinion and analysis scattered throughout each paper it was easier to first categorise opinion pieces by the parts of the newspaper in which they appeared. The sections most prominent in all three papers where opinion is regularly published were - sports, business, entertainment and lifestyle, travel, and the news sections (which includes the op ed page and features sections such as Higher Education and Review in The Australian and News Review and Spectrum in The Sydney Morning Herald)as well as the weekend magazines.

The opinion in the entertainment and lifestyle sections of the paper could be the basis of a study of popular culture and opinion by itself and in some entertainment and lifestyle sections every story could be categorised as an opinion piece - from where is a good place to eat, to star ratings for the latest round of movies. TV and Gig guides are full of such pieces. Looking at whose preferences are reflected in these sections of the newspapers is not to be dismissed, however an opinion piece published here is not likely to help change government policy or introduce a different way of

looking at something with political or macro-social ramifications. For these reasons I did not include these sections in my analysis at all. For the same reasons I did not include any pieces from the travel sections nor from the specific IT sections.

Opinion published in the news sections of a paper, including the op-ed page, comprises the most accessible, as far as placement in the newspaper is concerned, of all opinion writing in the print media. This is the opinion readers get in the front of the paper and in the news and opinion sections of the Saturday papers. Therefore this is the category I concentrated on to form the basis for examining the processes involved in being selected as an opinion writer and to look more closely at content based on the Henningham mega-categories. It is also from this category that op-ed editors selected what they considered to be the best opinion pieces that were published during that week. These were used for the textual analysis section of the snapshot with the added significance that these were chosen as best practice by the gatekeepers.

## **Interview of Op-Ed Editors**

An examination of the process of selection is based on an interview with each of the op-ed editors who were in control of the op-ed pages for the particular week of the snapshot for each of the papers. The interview involved looking at the division of staff writers, regular contributors and others whose opinions appeared that week, the networks and contact lists invoked, the process of deciding on topics and seeking out writers to commission, criteria for a good opinion piece and what factors influence the decision maker in rejecting or accepting unsolicited opinion pieces. I asked each op-ed editor to select what they considered to be the best pieces for that week with the intent to use these as the subject for my textual analysis section.

# Textual Analysis

The second part of Thompson's tripartite approach introduces discursive analysis. Graeme Turner (1997) makes the point that "media text analysis is very different from content analysis". The academic disciplines "feeding into the practice of textual analysis do not come from the social sciences: primary influences include literary and film studies." (Turner, 1997:310). Just to see the opinion pieces as texts to be analysed is also to cross discipline boundaries.

To see media products as texts is to emphasise their complexity, to question their 'taken-for-grantedness' and to imply that they will repay the kind of close study customarily applied to culturally valorised works of art - poems, plays, novels, paintings and the like. The idea of the text, then corrects precisely the flaw in empirical or social science-based communication theory and its dealings with "the message": it problematises the way meanings are generated, it interests itself in the various textual forms employed (television genres, for instance) and it privileges the reader-text relationship over the sender-receiver relationship."

Turner, 1997:310

In inviting the op-ed editors to select the best opinion pieces that were published in their sections that week, the editors involved not only selected the pieces for me for my detailed textual analysis but also offered this study further insight into the process and criteria used for selection.

The work by Fischle and Stenner-Day on schema theory is the justification on which I will include an analysis of the way opinion pieces are framed. The work by Fischle and Stenner-Day demonstrates importantly that the way stories are told clearly influences the meanings that audiences receive. This adds another relevance to the work Jim McKay and Philip Smith (1995) did using both modernist and post modernist narrative theories to interpret and discuss the frames used by *The Australian* media in the coverage of the O.J Simpson story. The 'media frames can be understood as linguistic and symbolic conventions that media workers routinely employ to package information'." (McKay & Smith 1995:57)

I also intend to draw upon Van Dijk's work in analysing news as discourse (Van Dijk 1988:65) which includes things like perspective, semantic strategies, hyperbole, ridicule, presupposition and so on. Also in looking at where opinion pieces are placed in the paper and the layout and illustration of the pieces I will refer to the work of Kress and van Leeuwen's with reading images (1990) which includes the elements of visual composition such as salience, balance vectors, reading paths and so on (Kress and van Leeuwen, 1990:pp93-97)

# Socio-Historical Context

---

The significance of a snapshot of opinion and analysis in the daily papers in Sydney can be seen within its socio-historical context. According to Julianne Schultz (1997) Australia's media empires of the nineties such as John Fairfax Ltd, News Corp and Australian Consolidated Press not only grew from newspaper holdings but learned their "core values, methods and approaches" (Schultz 1997:23) from newspapers. This is why, even amidst dire warning about their decline and predicted demise they remain a powerful force within our culture. "Predictions of the demise of the press, even as circulation falls, have been made so often that they have lost meaning".(Schultz 1997:24)

The press began in Australia in Sydney as an agency of executive government. *The Sydney Gazette* first published in 1803 was mainly government notices that the editor was paid to publish, via a stipend which supplemented his income. This arrangement which prevailed until 1826 gave colonial administrators considerable power. Even after the publication of other, unofficial, newspapers began from 1824 "the relationship between the press and executive government continued to be close and subject to economic and political pressures" (Schultz 1997:27).

The first voice in the press to criticise the prevailing government came from Tasmania with Andrew Bent's attempts to assert editorial control in the *Hobart Town Gazette* which was published in the years from 1816 to 1836. Bent criticised Governor Arthur in editorials that "progressed from the mild and vague to violent" (Schultz 1997:27). Meanwhile in Sydney *The Australian* was founded in 1824 by Robert Wardell and W.C. Wentworth, without any official permission being given. This paper was joined by *The Monitor* in 1826 in which Edward Smith Hall attacked the autocratic rule of Governor Darling. It was partly due to the criticisms of Governor Darling by Smith Hall that led to the Governor's recall from the colony by the British government. (Schultz 1997:27)

Jules Francois Archibald as a young man writing for *The Telegraph* recognised and used opinion writing to influence the government in the rehiring and sacking of education officials. He went on to found *The Bulletin* in 1880 with John Haynes. The first edition of *The Bulletin* contained an editorial on censorship and a leader about being excluded from the execution of Captain Moonlight called 'The Press Snubbed' (Lawson 1983:35).

The early *Bulletin* is now revered by literary historians who have "both over-dissected and under-read it" (Lawson 1983:40) as a product of Archibald's genius as an editor and writer. However in many ways, while the views published were often sceptical of the establishment at the time, even *The Bulletin* was following, albeit with an Archibald bent, the British mid-nineteenth century practice of proprietors working as editors and so having an over riding influence on opinion that was published. The British proprietor/editors regularly published "fulminatory editorials laced with personal vim" (Silvester, 1997:45). Lord Northcliffe and other British press barons owned and controlled newspapers as a "means to an end. This was usually the advance of political cause or party, and...the pursuit of their own public or political career." (Seymour-Ure, 1991:12). Their views dominated the newspaper but were published as though they represented the "mass public" (Boyce, 1987:27). In this way *The Bulletin* was no different.

The newspaper [*The Bulletin*] was and is a major location for the working of what Raymond Williams called 'The dominative mode'. The domination...more particularly of the editorial corps over the audience.

Lawson 1983:xi

*The Truth* and *Smith's Weekly*, which was the springboard for Sir Frank Packer's dynasty, were two other Australian papers that along with the *Bulletin* "gave heightened argument and political debate in the lead up to Federation" in 1901 (Schultz, 1997:29).

The first column to be published regularly with a by-line, as claimed in *The Penguin Book Of Columnists* (Silvester, 1997:30), was "Lakeside Musing" by H.T.E. White in *The Chicago Tribune* in 1885. And here, in the US, the tendency emerged to recruit columnists from the ranks

of sportswriters. Ring Lardner, Arthus 'Bugs' Baer, Heywood Broun, Westbrook Pegler and Jimmy Breslin were all sportswriters previous to writing their columns. Several of Sydney's columnists captured in the snapshot which is the focus of this study, were also recruited from sports writing. Ray Chesterton and Mike Gibson who both write columns for *The Daily Telegraph* are both former sports writers.

The 1920s saw the emergence of the op-ed page, the page opposite the editorial. The invention was credited to Herbert Bayard Swope, the executive editor of the *New York World*.(Silvester,1997:45). The opinion of a paper's prominent columnists now stood beside its official voice. However both the editorials and the columns largely remained anonymous. By-lines for news stories only started appearing regularly in newspapers in the middle to late sixties.(Semour-Ure,1991:36). Editorials of course remain anonymous to this day. Although, in Australia Robert Haupt, when editor of the *National Times* in the early eighties, published signed leaders "showing they were not, after all, something more than human" (Bowman, 1988:45).

The question of whether journalists should be anonymous was under discussion in Australia as far back as 1857. In South Australia in 1882 there was an unsuccessful attempt to legislate against anonymity (Bowman, 1988:40).

In the sixties a trend emerged in Britain for specialist reporting to be extended from the political, diplomatic and industrial specialisation that already existed, to education, economic, home affairs and social services with an accompanying increase in space given for reflection and analysis in these areas.

In Australia by the end of the nineteenth century there was one or more newspapers published in all capitals of the six colonies and in every large provincial town. However during the twentieth century "consolidation and combination reduced the numbers of newspapers and grouped them under an ever decreasing number of owning companies" (Weston,Huges and Colin, 1983:56). This in turn reduced the number of sceptical voices heard in the Australian press as "most of the mainstream press was aligned with various elements of the establishment, an allegiance that

continued during the postwar and depression years. Although Labor movement newspapers continued to be produced, they failed to thrive as the press became irrevocably commercial in the second half of the century” (Walker 1980:21).

The conservative bias of Australian mainstream papers continued after the second world war as well. “Even the popular press was conservative in outlook...constrained to reporting the pronouncements of prominent men with little space provided for context, background or comment” (Horne, 1994:45). Between 1955 and 1990 metropolitan newspapers published 340 editorials on elections but only 44 supported The Australian Labor Party while 183 favoured the conservative Coalition of the Liberal and National (previously Country) parties.

In the seventies there was a move, world wide, to credit the increasing professionalism of journalists which emerged uncoincidentally with their willingness to take industrial and political action over professional and public interest issues (Schultz, 1997:27). In 1977 the third Royal Commission into press in Britain produced a list of editor’s basic rights which included the right to reject material provided by central management of editorial services. In 1981 a Royal Commission in Canada concluded that the relationship between editor and proprietor should be set out in legislation and in 1987 the Australian Journalists Association launched its own initiative, proposing a charter giving the editor sole control over content.(Bowman, 1988:50).

In the late nineties with the decimation of the Fairfax media empire as a result of young Warwick Fairfax’s failed attempt to take it over in the late eighties and the closure of several capital city papers, the main player in the daily press stakes in Australia is Rupert Murdoch, owner of both *The Australian* and *The Daily Telegraph* as well as major daily and or Sunday papers in all Australian Capital cities bar Perth.

After Murdoch who owns the lion’s share of newspapers in Australia is the John Fairfax Ltd holdings which own *The Sydney Morning Herald* and *The Age* in Melbourne as well as *The Australian Financial Review* and a major share of suburban newspapers. Kerry Packer, owner of television’s national Channel 9 is a player on the sidelines. Packer has a share in Fairfax already

and is manipulating for a chance to buy more with any relaxation of the current cross media ownership laws - which limits his ownership of any newspaper to 15 per cent in any city where he already owns a television station.

Both Murdoch and Packer are wealthy ruling class white middle aged men. And according to Bowman (1988:65) "The commonest characteristic of newspaper proprietors everywhere has been their belief in the divine right of proprietors. It is their paper to do with as they will. In Australia the belief is dying hard and perhaps it is only the optimist who thinks it is dying at all."

However Bowman also makes the point that with the commercialisation of the press came the demands of the advertising dollar. "...if anyone should ask this writer why newspapers are such dedicated supporters of the status quo, why they are saturated with the values of capitalism, acceptable and unacceptable both - why a left wing newspaper would be hard pressed to make ends meet - even why the press has been slow to care about smoking and health - if anyone asks such questions, why then *cherchez l' avertissement!*" (Bowman,1988:80)

The profiles of the three newspapers used in this snapshot study in March 1998 are as follows:-

	The Daily Telegraph	The Australian	The Sydney Morning Herald
<b>Demographics</b>			
male	696,000	271,000	490,000
female	589,000	138,000	405,000
<b>READERSHIP</b>	1,285,000	409,000	895,000
<b>AGE</b>			
18-24	142,000	37,000	112,000
25-34	244,000	88,000	164,000
35-49	361,000	137,000	256,000
50+	470,000	135,000	315,000
<b>Circulation</b>	440,000	121,627	232,000

Audit &Marketing figures NEWS LTD March 1998

*The Daily Telegraph*, a NSW state tabloid paper has the biggest circulation with 440,000. *The Australian* is a national broadsheet with a circulation of 121,627 and *The Sydney Morning Herald*, a NSW state broadsheet has a circulation of 232,000.

Gender of readership for the three papers is as follows:-

	<b>MALE</b>	<b>FEMALE</b>
<b>The Daily Telegraph</b>	<b>54.1%</b>	<b>45.9%</b>
<b>THE AUSTRALIAN</b>	<b>66.2%</b>	<b>33.8%</b>
<b>The Sydney Morning Herald</b>	<b>54.7%</b>	<b>45.3%</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>58.3%</b>	<b>41.7%</b>

Age distribution of readership for the three papers is as follows:-

	<b>18-24</b>	<b>25-34</b>	<b>35-49</b>	<b>50+</b>
<b>The Daily Telegraph</b>	14-17: <b>5.2</b> 18-24: <b>11.1</b> total: <b>16.3</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>28.4</b>	<b>36.6</b>
<b>THE AUSTRALIAN</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>The Sydney Morning Herald</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>12.7</b>	<b>19.3</b>	<b>30.1</b>	<b>34.8</b>

This snapshot study is taken in the context that readership of the three newspapers in the snapshot have in total 58.3% male readers and 41.7% female readers with *The Australian* having the greatest imbalance of 66.2% male and 33.4 % female readership. It is also taken in the context that total readership in the age group 18-24 (including 14-17 for *The Daily Telegraph*) of the three papers in the snapshot is only 13% with *The Australian* readership 18-24 comprising only 9% of all readers of *The Australian*. In total the biggest age demographic for all of the newspapers is the 50 and older age group at 34.8% with *The Daily Telegraph* at 36.6%, *The Sydney Morning Herald* at 35% and *The Australian* at 33%.

It could be expected that each of the newspapers would be concerned about, and be developing or proceeding with, policies to increase readership of females in general - given that just over 52% of the population of Australia is female, and that each paper should also be concerned about and be developing or proceeding with policies to increase readership of young people.

# Content Analysis

## Part 1

### Gender and age representation of opinion writers in the Sport, Business and News & Op-ed sections of each newspaper

---

The number of columns, comment/analysis pieces in each Sport, Business and News & Op-ed sections of each paper were counted and categorised into those written by males and those written by females and then further into those written by males under forty and forty and over, and those written by females under forty and females forty and over.

It was my intention to have a further division based on race, however as there was only one person who fitted the category of race Other than Caucasian who wrote an opinion piece that week - Mark Ella, an Aborigine, who wrote about Football for *The Daily Telegraph* - I left the category out. All of the 210 writers aside from Mark are Caucasian - which means 99.6% of opinion writers in the three papers were white - even more than the 92% of white opinion givers revealed in the Fair report study of the ABC (US) Nightline TV news show guest list (Hoynes and Croteau 1989).

# THE Daily Telegraph

## Representation in sections according to age and gender in The Daily Telegraph

Week Monday 23rd March to Saturday 28th March 1998

	MALE		FEMALE		TOTAL
	less than 40	40 and over	less than 40	40 and over	
SPORT	1	20	1		22
BUSINESS		4			4
NEWS&OP-ED	1	14	3	4	22
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>48</b>
	<b>40</b>		<b>8</b>		

Forty eight opinion pieces appeared in *The Daily Telegraph* in the sport, business and *News & Op-ed* sections of the paper for the 6 day week beginning Monday March 23rd 1998 and ending Saturday March 28th 1998. *The Daily Telegraph's* special interest in sport is evident with a total of **22** opinion pieces appearing in the sports section of the paper for the week which is the same as the total of **22** opinion pieces published in the *News & Op-ed* section of the paper.

Of the **22** pieces in the sports section only one was written by a women. This was Anne Sargent, who also fits the under forty category, commenting on Netball. Of the **21** pieces in the sports section written by males **20** pieces were written by males forty and over. Three of these were written by Ken Callender on racing and two were written by Jeff Wells, one on racing and another on the Olympics.

Jeff Wells is also represented in the *News&Op-ed* section as he wrote a piece for the op-ed page on boxing - this is one of **22** *News&Op-ed* opinion pieces which appeared in the paper that week. Of

the **22** *News&Op-ed* opinion pieces **15** were by males compared to **7** by females. The four columns that appeared in the business section of the paper were all by the same senior male journalist Terry McCrann.

No males less than forty commented on business. No females, either under forty or forty and over, commented on business. Only one female less than forty commented on sport and no females forty and over commented on sport.

The group with the most opinion pieces published in *The Daily Telegraph* that week was males forty and over. They dominated, taking about **79.1%** of the total space made available for comment. - **38** pieces out of a total of **48**. Dominating in all sections of the paper.

The person with the most to say was Ray Chesterton who wrote three opinion pieces for the week, followed by Piers Akerman and Malcolm Farr who both wrote two pieces each.

The group occupying the least space was males under forty with only **2** opinion pieces published that week with females forty and over with and females under forty, both with **4** opinion pieces published, not occupying much more space.

The representation of the opinion of all males with **40** pieces far exceeded that of all females with **8** pieces. Males took **83.3%** of the space made available for comment in *The Daily Telegraph* this week

Daniel Jefferies, Richard Kay, Vicky Ward, Jonathon Margolis and Peter Day were the only opinion writers, who were not regular Daily Telegraph staffers or columnists, who were given space that week for their opinions.

The piece by Daniel Jefferies was bought from the wire services. The pieces by Richard Kay (who wrote about Prince William), Vicky Ward and Johnathon Margolis (on Leonardo Di Caprio) were taken from the Daily Mail. *The Daily Telegraph* pays for a service which allows use of Daily Mail copy. Peter Day an independent publisher who owns a paper in Sydney's west, who knows Col

Allen, the editor of *The Daily Telegraph*, rang and asked Col if he would be interested in an unsolicited piece that is pro the airport at Badgery's Creek. Col agreed to read Peter's copy and decided to publish it.

There were no other local casual contributors of opinion for the news and op-ed sections of *The Daily Telegraph* this week. All of the remaining opinion pieces were written by regular columnists and staffers employed by *The Daily Telegraph* and located in Sydney or by opinion writers from *The Daily Mail* in London (the two pieces on Leonardo Di Caprio, both also probably used by other Murdoch papers around Australia and that by Richard Kay about Prince William, fir this category). *The Daily Telegraph* has an arrangement to use copy from *The Daily Mail* - also a Murdoch paper. The Peter Ruehl column is syndicated. It also regularly appears in other Murdoch papers around Australia.

Both Mike Gibson who is a regular contributor and Ray Chesterton who is a senior staff journalist, who both have regular columns in the op-ed section of *The Daily Telegraph*, started their careers as sports writers. Piers Akerman is a former Murdoch executive and former editor of *The Herald Sun*, a Murdoch daily in Melbourne.

# THE AUSTRALIAN

## Representation in sections according to age and gender for THE AUSTRALIAN

Week Monday 23rd March to Saturday 28th March 1998

	MALE (age)		FEMALE (age)		TOTAL
	less than 40	40 and over	age less than 40	40 and over	
SPORT	7	7			14
BUSINESS		18	2		20
NEWS&OP-ED	4	26	2	8	40
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>74</b>
	<b>62</b>		<b>12</b>		

Seventy four opinion pieces appeared in *The Australian* for the 6 day week beginning Monday 23rd March and ending Saturday 28th March in the Sport, Business and News & Op-ed sections. The majority, **40** pieces, were written for the News & Op-ed sections of the paper. Half as many, **20** pieces, were written about business and a smaller number again about sport, **14** pieces.

In *The Australian* that week males forty and over writing opinion for the News & Op-ed sections had the most say followed by males forty and over writing in the Business section. **Males took 83.7% of the space made available for comment with women having only 16.3 % in *The Australian* this Week.** The opinions of females under forty being the least represented. **Males forty and over took up 68.9 % of the space made available for comment in *The Australian* for this week**

No females of any age commented on sport and no males under forty and no females forty and over commented on business.

The person with the most to say was Frank Devine who wrote three opinion pieces for the week. Devine is also a former editor of *The Australian*, as is Paul Kelly who also wrote a political opinion piece during this week. Paul Keating a former Prime Minister of Australia was also a contributor this week - he regularly contributes opinion pieces to *The Australian*.

The opinion piece by Alan Whitehead was taken from The Observer - *The Australian* pays for a service in order to use copy from this paper.

**Of the 40 opinion pieces published in the News & Op-ed sections of *The Australian* for the week 24 were written by staffers, 8 were written by regular contributors and 10 by casuals. Some of the regular contributors are Dr Rose King and Phillip Adams. Of the ten pieces written by females eight were written by contributors. The two staff writers who gave their opinion in the paper this week were Jane Fraser writing in Antipathies in the Review section of The Weekend Australian and Susan Kurosawa writing her column in *The Australian Magazine*.**

# The Sydney Morning Herald

## Representation in sections according to age and gender in The Sydney Morning Herald.

Week Monday 23rd March to Saturday 28th March 1998

	MALE (age)		FEMALE (age)		TOTAL
	less than 40	40 and over	less than 40	40 and over	
SPORT	7	20			27
BUSINESS		16	1	2	19
NEWS&OP-ED		31	5	6	42
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>88</b>
	<b>74</b>		<b>15</b>		

The Sydney Morning Herald published 88 opinion pieces in the six day week from Monday 23rd March to Saturday 28th March. The majority of these (42) were opinions in the news and op-ed section, followed by comment on sport (27) and last was business with 19 opinion pieces.

Males forty and over dominated the space made available for opinion, with males forty and over commenting on news in the news and op-ed sections having the most say, followed by males forty and over commenting on sport, followed by males forty and over commenting on business. Males in total took about 85 % of the space made available for comment in The Sydney Morning Herald for that week. Only 13 of the total of 88 opinion pieces in the sports, business and News&Op-ed sections were written by women.

## Total for the three papers

### Numbers of pieces published

There was a big difference in the number of opinion pieces published in the Sport, Business and News&Op-ed sections of the daily papers this week. *The Daily Telegraph* published **48** pieces, *The Australian* **74** and *The Sydney Morning Herald* **88** - nearly double the number published in *The Daily Telegraph*. The fact that *The Australian* and *The Sydney Morning Herald* are broadsheets and *The Daily Telegraph* is a tabloid does not fully account for this huge difference in the number of opinion pieces published, as in *The Daily Telegraph* the space made available for opinion and comment as an op-ed section take up a page and a half (all of pages 10 and 11 with only space for the leader and the political cartoon taken out) which would arguably be equivalent to the space made available on the one broadsheet page that *The Sydney Morning Herald* and *The Australian* make available each day. *The Australian* and especially *The Sydney Morning Herald* makes more space available throughout the paper ( not just on the op-ed page) for opinion.

### Total representation in sections according to age and gender

Week Monday 23rd March to Saturday 28th March 1998

	MALE (age)		FEMALE (age)		TOTAL
	less than 40	40 and over	less than 40	40 and over	
SPORT	15	47	1		63
BUSINESS		38	3	2	43
NEWS&OP-ED	5	71	10	18	104
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>156</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>210</b>
	<b>176</b>		<b>33</b>		

Overwhelmingly male opinion dominated in all sections of the daily papers for the week beginning Monday 23rd March 1998 to Saturday 28th March 1998. Only one opinion piece on sport out of a total of 64 was written by a female. Only 5 of the 43 opinion pieces on business were written by women, while 28 out of the 104 opinion pieces in news & op-ed were written by women.

The group with the most to say was men over forty giving their opinion in the *News & Op-ed* sections, followed by men over forty commenting on sport, followed by men over forty commenting on business. All but one of the 210 opinion writers were white - 99.6%

**In total men gave 83.8 % of the opinions published during the snapshot, with men over forty accounting for 74.3 % of the columns, comment/analysis articles published that week.**

# Content Analysis

## Part 2

### Analysis of the News&Op-ed sections only, using Henningham's nine mega-categories

---

The week beginning Monday 23rd March was chosen at random for the snapshot study. During this week; the Oscars were awarded in Los Angeles ; two boys aged 11 and 13 shot dead four schoolmates and a teacher and wounded a further 11 in Jonesboro, Arkansas; the row over the "toaster" building development at Circular Quay continued with new complaints about purple windows; and Yeltsin sacked his entire cabinet. On Friday March 27th The three papers in the study, *The Daily Telegraph*, *The Sydney Morning Herald* and *The Australian* all carried the same image on their front pages of 11 year<sup>old</sup> Andrew Golden from Jonesboro, Arkansas, taken from a home video and sold on the wires by AP, where he is seen aiming a pistol. No major accidents or natural disasters, either local or international, were reported this week.

Each of the opinion pieces written in each paper in the News sections and Op-ed pages was categorised according to the nine mega-categories used by Henningham, which are as follows:-

### *Henningham's (1996) nine mega-categories*

- ◆ Politics
- ◆ Crime
- ◆ Sport
- ◆ Accidents & Disasters - A&D
- ◆ Science and Medicine - S&M
- ◆ Social issues/Education/Welfare - S/E/W
- ◆ International Relations - IR
- ◆ Culture and Entertainment - C&E
- ◆ Economy/Business/Finance - E/B/F

## **The Daily Telegraph**

Using Henningham's (1996) nine mega-categories for content analysis, the columns and comment/analysis pieces in the news and op-ed sections of the paper for *The Daily Telegraph* for the week beginning Monday 23rd March to Saturday 28th March week were as follows:-

<b>Politics</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Crime</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Sport</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Accidents &amp; Disasters</b>	<b>nil</b>
<b>Science and Medicine</b>	<b>nil</b>
<b>Social issues/Education/Welfare</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>International Relations</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Culture and Entertainment</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Economy/Business/Finance</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>23</b>

Of the 23 opinion pieces that appeared in the news and op-ed sections of *The Daily Telegraph* for this week, Politics and Social issues/Education/Welfare were the main categories equally represented with 6 opinion pieces written in each of these two categories.

Two of the six political opinion pieces were written by Malcolm Farr, *The Daily Telegraph's* Chief Political Correspondent. One was by Piers Akerman, one by Ray Chesterton and one by Peter Day, the publisher of Quakers Hill Press in Sydney's West - which was pro the airport at Badgery's Creek. The only political opinion piece written by a woman that week in *The Daily Telegraph* was by Miranda Devine who wrote about what she saw as the political damage done to Cheryl Kernot's image by her decision to pose in a red dress for a woman's magazine.

There were 4 opinion pieces written about crime and 4 about Culture and Entertainment. Three of the 4 that fit the Culture and Entertainment category were written about the film *The Titanic* and its stars, with Mike Gibson writing in his column about the film and Jonathon Margolis and Vicky Ward writing, from London, a love-him and hate-him piece about Leonardo Di Caprio.

Jeff Wells who writes opinion pieces regularly for the sports section of *The Daily Telegraph* wrote an op-ed piece about boxing - the only opinion piece on sport that made it into the news and op-ed section of the paper for the week.

One of the opinion pieces on crime was a piece written by Daniel Jeffery's from Arkansas about the Jonesboro shootings.

	MALE		FEMALE	
	less than 40	40 and over	less than 40	40 and over
<b>News &amp; Op-ED</b>	C&E 1	Politics 5 Crime 3 Sport 1 S/E/W 2 IR 1 E/B/F 1 C&E 2	Politics 1 Crime 1 C & E 1 S/E/W 2	S/E/W 2
	1	15	5	2

There were 23 columns/analysis/comment pieces in *The Daily Telegraph* for the week beginning Monday 23rd March to Saturday 28 th March 1998 in the news and op-ed sections of the paper. Fifteen of the 23 were written by men over forty who also wrote about the widest range of topics. The subject most written about by men over forty was politics, followed by crime. The group with the next widest range of opinion pieces was females less than forty. Both men less than forty and

women more than forty wrote opinion in only one field, Culture and Entertainment for males younger than forty and Social issues/Education/Welfare for females forty and over .

## THE AUSTRALIAN

Using Henninghams nine mega-categories for content analysis the columns and comment/analysis pieces in *The Australian* in the news and op-ed sections of the paper for the week beginning Monday 23rd March to Saturday 28th March week were as follows:-

Politics	9
Crime	nil
Sport	2
Accidents & Disasters	nil
Science and Medicine	1
Social issues/Education/Welfare	15
International Relations	2
Culture & Entertainment	9
Economy/Business/Finance	2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>40</b>

Of the 40 opinion pieces published in the news and op-ed sections of *The Australian* for the week the category of Social Issues/Education/Welfare was the most represented with 15 pieces published. This was followed by Politics and Culture & Entertainment both with 9 pieces published.

There were no opinion pieces published about Crime or Science and Medicine during this week.

	MALE		FEMALE	
	less than 40	40 and over	less than 40	40 and over
<b>News &amp; Op-Ed</b>	Politics 1 Sport 1 C&E 1 S&M 1	Politics 8 Sport 1 S/E/W 8 IR 2 E/B/F 2 C&E 5	S/E/W 2	C&E 3 S/E/W 5
	<b>4</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>8</b>

Thirty of the forty opinion pieces published in *The Australian* this week were written by males who also wrote about the widest range of topics. Males forty and over had the biggest say over the

widest range. Males forty and over wrote equally about politics and Social issues/Education/Welfare. Women under forty only wrote about Social issues/Education/Welfare. Women forty and over only wrote about Social issues/Education/Welfare and Culture&Entertainment.

## The Sydney Morning Herald

Using Henningshams nine mega-categories for content analysis the columns and comment/analysis pieces in *The Sydney Morning Herald* for the week beginning Monday 23rd March to Saturday 28th March in the news and op-ed sections of the paper were as follows:-

Politics	11
Crime	4
Sport	1
Accidents & Disasters	nil
Science and Medicine	1
Social issues/Education/Welfare	14
International Relations	1
Culture and Entertainment	10
Economy/Business/Finance	nil
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>42</b>

Of the 42 opinion piece published in *The Sydney Morning Herald* in the News&Op-ed sections of the paper for this week the category most represented was Social issues/Education/Welfare with 14 pieces published. This was followed by politics with 11 pieces published and then by Culture&Entertainment with 10 piece published. There were no opinion pieces on Accidents and Disasters or on the Economy/Business/Finance published in the News&Op-ed sections of the paper for this week.

	MALE		FEMALE	
	less than 40	40 and over	less than 40	40 and over
<b>News &amp; Op-Ed</b>	nil	Politics 8 Crime 4 S/E/W 8 IR 1 C&E 9 S&M 1	Politics 3 S/E/W 1 Sport 1	S/E/W 5 C&E 1
	<b>0</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>

Thirty one of the 42 columns/analysis/comment pieces in *The Sydney Morning Herald* for the week beginning Monday 23rd March to Saturday 28 th March 1998 in the news and op-ed sections of the paper were written by males forty and over who also wrote about the widest range of topics. Allan Attwood, a senior staffer wrote three opinion pieces that week, two on Culture&Entertainment and one on Crime. Females under forty wrote about Politics and Social issues/Education/Welfare and Sport.

The person with the most opinion published in *The Sydney Morning Herald* this week was Allan Attwood a senior staffer who writes comment pieces in many fields from Culture&Entertainment, Politics, Crime and Social issues/Education/Welfare. Michael Millet, also a senior staffer, wrote two opinion pieces on Politics for this week.

## Total for the three papers in hierarchical order

Social issues/Education/Welfare	35
Politics	26
Culture and Entertainment	23
Crime	8
International Relations	4
Sport	4
Economy/Business/Finance	3
Science and Medicine	2
Accidents & Disasters	nil
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>105</b>

Using Henningham's nine mega-categories in the news and op-ed sections of the three papers for the week beginning Monday 23rd March for six days to Saturday 28th March, the category with the most opinion pieces published was Social issues/Education/Welfare with **34** pieces, followed by Politics with **28** and then by Culture&Entertainment with **20** pieces. As during this week the Oscar awards were presented in the US the number of pieces fitting into the category of Culture & Entertainment may have been inflated. Also it was the week of the Jonesboro. Of course any snapshot would be similarly skewed by whatever is seen as newsworthy at the time.

Even though each paper has a specific sports sections with its own columns and comment/analysis, each of the news and op-ed sections of the three papers still carried comment on sport. Similarly each paper has a Business section but *The Daily Telegraph* and *The Australian* still carried comment on Economy/Business/Finance in their news and op-ed sections.

Aside from accidents and disasters - the category with the least amount of opinion published that week was Science & Medicine.

## Total for each category with age and gender

	MALE		FEMALE	
	less than 40	40 and over	less than 40	40 and over
News & Op-Ed	C&E 2 Politics 1 Sport 1 S&M 1	Politics 21 S/E/W 18 C&E 16 Crime 7 IR 4 E/B/F 3 Sport 2 S&M 1	S/E/W 5 Politics 4 Crime 1 Sport 1 C&E 1	S/E/W 12 C&E 4
	5	72	12	16

Males forty and over had the most to say in every category, commenting most about Politics with 21 opinion pieces published on Politics that week, next about Social issues/Education/Welfare with 18 pieces and then about Culture and Entertainment with 16 pieces.

Females forty and over commenting on Social issue/Education/Welfare was the group with the next most pieces published with 12 opinion pieces on S/E/W published that week.

The topic most written about by women was Social issues/Education/Welfare and the topic most written about by men was Politics.

# Interviews

---

The purpose behind interviewing each of the op-ed editors for the three papers studied in this snapshot was to uncover more information about who gets to speak and how they get to speak - which includes what the op-ed editor looks for in a piece of opinion writing and what process, networks, contact lists are invoked as well as the method used to commission or accept and reject unsolicited pieces.

While the filter of the op-ed editor's view point no doubt skews what is accessible for analysis from such interviews, the view point is unique and powerful enough to form a basis as a stand alone study. I believe the information uncovered in this section of my study to be very valuable not only in terms of way it reveals hegemony at work - the big picture- but also on the micro level it is full of vital information writers involved in or ambitious to be involved in opinion writing for the powerful dailies should be aware of.

## THE Daily Telegraph

The op-ed editor for *The Daily Telegraph* for the week beginning Monday 23rd March 1998 was Sandra Lee, who also writes a column for page 10 (editorial page). Sandra is a mid-thirties journalist who was the foreign correspondent in New York for *The Daily Telegraph* before being appointed assistant editor. Sandra said she was asked by the editor Col Allen to write a regular column because Col liked the way she wrote. Sandra was op-ed editor for the week of the snapshot. However she also shares the job with Ian Moore who is *The Daily Telegraph* leader writer. Ian Moore is a past editor of *The Sunday Telegraph* and *The Sun Herald* in Melbourne.

Sandra was very interested in my study and asked a lot of questions about what I was doing. She especially wanted to challenge the idea that I should be analysing particular texts. She did not think that the ideology revealed by such an analysis would be valid in categorising a writer. "I think people are more fluid than that," she said. "What a writer thinks about one thing can be conservative, but the same person can be progressive in thinking about something else."

Age or gender is not considered when looking for someone to write about a topic. Sandra said that she looks for someone who is articulate, who knows the topic and who can write a well reasoned, educated argument or analysis - irrespective of age or gender.

However sometimes the situation lends itself for a particular age or gender. Sandra remembered the time when Germaine Greer was in Australia and "she gave a particularly provocative speech in Melbourne about penetration and criticised young feminists". In this case it was appropriate, Sandra said, to get a young woman to respond. But this was unusual. "Age and gender would not normally be part of the criteria," she said

Sandra uses her own personal list of contacts when she needs a writer. However this still doesn't mean she is spared ringing around the universities when a specialist comment is needed. As far as getting on the list is concerned - it is a matter of trial and error. If writers are asked, particularly in the case of academics, and they produce good copy on deadline they will be put on Sandra's list. However "academics are notoriously slow writers who have trouble meeting deadlines and their writing is usually filled with jargon".

As far as setting the agenda with op-ed opinion - sometimes the opinion published is in reaction to an event and sometimes the editorial team sets an agenda. When setting an agenda the ideas come from conference (editorial conference that takes place three times a day at *The Daily Telegraph* where the assistant editors and editors of the different sections meet with the editor and talk about the stories that are currently being written for the next edition). Or the idea might come from the editor, Col Allen. Then it is Sandra's job to find the writers.

If a piece is commissioned and it is not good enough Sandra said she contacts the writer and tells them how it needs to be addressed. However she said as the briefing she gives is usually very detailed this does not happen very often, but it does happen. “Bad writing, not addressing the issue, trying to push some agenda or lobbying” are all of the things that could mean a piece is rejected. And once rejected a writer is not likely to be used again.

Many unsolicited pieces are sent in Sandra said and she has a go at reading every one of them. “But it has to grab me in the first two paragraphs.” It is very rare to come across a good and timely piece of work that was unsolicited. So rare that Sandra could not remember the last piece that she chose to use via this method.” Mainly the stuff we get in is just not timely, “ she said.

Malcolm Farr, Maralyn Parker and Kerryn Phelps are all given space to write their opinion because they are experts in their fields of politics, education and medicine respectively, Sandra said.

Malcolm Farr is the Chief Political Correspondent for *The Daily Telegraph*, Maralyn Parker (the author of this study) is *The Daily Telegraph* Education Columnist and Editor of I.N.K. the Interactive News for Kids web site. Kerryn Phelps is a medical doctor who was writing a column when this snapshot study was undertaken but who no longer writes for the paper. Kerryn’s private wedding to another woman in the US was revealed by *The Sunday Telegraph*, *The Daily Telegraph*’s sister paper and the story was taken up widely by other media.

Ray Chesterton, who had the most opinion pieces published this week is a former sports journalist who is in his fifties. Col Allen, the editor liked his writing and the fact that he is opinionated, so much so that he made him a columnist, Sandra said.

Piers Akerman is an ex-editor of the Herald Sun and the Adelaide Advertiser and had been running Fox TV in Washington DC before he returned to Australia. Sandra said Col made him a columnist for *The Daily Telegraph*.

Peter Ruehl was poached from *The Australian Financial Review* by a decision made in Melbourne by Steve Harris as editor in Chief at the Herald Sun. Peter’s column is also carried by the Herald

Sun, The Adelaide Advertiser and The Hobart Mercury.

Miranda Devine is the daughter of Frank Devine, past editor of *The Australian* and current columnist for *The Australian*. Col Allen liked her writing and offered her a column.

Mike Gibson is a past sports writer and TV commentator. John Hartigan, Editor In Chief of *The Daily Telegraph* and *The Sunday Telegraph* is responsible for getting Mike to write a column for *The Daily Telegraph*. He was offered the column when David Brooks was editor, before Col Allen took over as editor. However Mike and Col socialise away from work.

Mark Day is the former editor of the *Daily Mirror* and ex-owner of the *Truth* newspaper in Melbourne. He is also a TV commentator and radio broadcaster. John Hartigan Editor In Chief of *The Daily Telegraph* and *The Sunday Telegraph* is also responsible for offering Mark a column in *The Daily Telegraph* Sandra said. He was also writing his column before Col Allen took over as editor.

Peter Day the only casual writer of opinion in *The Daily Telegraph* for this week wrote a piece pro the airport at Badgery's Creek. However Sandra could not tell me how he was chosen to write for the Op-ed page. Ian Moore however, told me that Peter had contacted Col about writing the piece. Col told him to write it and send it in. Col liked it and it was published.

And while Sandra concedes the domination of men over forty may look like a blokey network in operation at *The Daily Telegraph* she insists that a columnist is chosen for their body of work. Sandra cites both herself and me, the Education columnist, as proof that the space given to opinion writing is not sewn up by a network. Sandra said she worked her way up through the paper's hierarchy to the senior journalist level without any network connections, then she was offered a column by Col Allen based on her ability to write.

And here I need to briefly recount the way I was offered the Education column in *The Daily Telegraph*. I was writing a monthly column for the boutique newspaper *Sydney's Child* on education when - on the strength of that along with regular contributions to *The Sydney Morning*

*Herald* and Sun Herald - I rang the then deputy editor of *The Daily Telegraph*, Campbell Reid (now editor of *The Australian*) and asked would they like me to write an Education column. Campbell said yes, and I have now been writing the column for five years. I had never met Campbell and knew no-one who wrote or worked for *The Daily Telegraph* at that time I approached the paper.

Sandra believes that the culture at *The Daily Telegraph* is changing in that women do have a voice and that it is increasing. However she laments, "Why can't a man think like a woman and a woman think like a man? Why do people think some things are just for men and others for women?"

Sandra gets lots of press releases and invitations to things that are distinctly female oriented. And lobby groups expect she will be interested in issues and events that are female skewed. The trouble is it annoys her enough for her to ignore most of it. She came over to my desk after we had finished the interview waving around a kit on breast cancer "Why don't they send this stuff to Piers or Mark Day?" she asked.

Sandra said she would choose three pieces for me as best practice. However she had not had time to do so by the due date for the submission of this thesis.

## THE AUSTRALIAN

Jill Rowbotham is a thirty something woman who had only been doing the op-ed editor's job for *The Australian* for one month when the snapshot was taken. She said there was no strict process on a daily basis that was used to decide who would get a voice on the op-ed pages. "I have informal conversations all the time with senior colleagues about the page" she said. And these often produce ideas and even pieces that senior journalists want to show her in the hope she will like them enough to give them a run on the page.

Often Jill will get ideas from the morning conference at *The Australian*. She also airs her ideas here

and sometimes the conference of senior journalists and assistant editors may not like those ideas and she has to go away and think of something else. She said she does get a lot of suggestions from the “top” as to what she should be covering, which she said is an indication of how seriously the page is taken. Occasionally she will have an opinion piece that is taken from the op-ed page and put into the front or news section of the paper because of its newsworthiness - “it’s an indication of the calibre of the writers we use” - which means she then has to find something else to go there.

There is a stable of staff writers at *The Australian* who have regular spots, such as Frank Devine, Allen Wood, Paul Kelly and Greg Sheridan. Both Frank Devine and Paul Kelly are former editors of *The Australian*. The current Editor of *The Australian*, Campbell Reid speaks with Frank Devine on a daily basis about what he is writing. These senior writers come up with their own ideas, although they may ask Jill what else will be on the pages for that day. Jill said she never interferes with anything they want to do although occasionally she might suggest a topic.

Jill has some regular contributors who write for her, these include Malcolm Fraser a former Prime Minister who writes a piece every fortnight for the op-ed page, Michael O’Conner and Simon Longstaff who write every month. Longstaff is an ethicist from the St James Ethicists Centre.

As well as the regular contributors Jill has some casual writers she likes to use fairly often. One of these is Barry Dickens who Jill thinks is a very good writer.” He can be humorous as well as serious and he can be whimsical and off beat. She liked the piece he wrote about Anzac day in particular. “He can take a sideways look at events” she said.

*The Australian* had an audit meeting for the opinion pages last September and since then Jill said there has been a definite attempt to try to get more women and more young people writing opinion for *The Australian*. However Jill said, “I am limited by the numbers I can find, to who can write. I often try young people out and am trying to set up a stable.”

Jill is also looking among the younger staff members for opinion writers. Georgina Safe wrote a piece for her about young people and credit, for example.

Sometimes Jill gets lucky and a young person with talent will submit a piece. Misha Schubert fits this category. Misha was a presence at the Constitutional Convention in Melbourne and was eventually hired by *The Australian* Melbourne bureau. Jill said she is impressed by young people who seek her out and says not enough do so. But she dismisses the idea of advertising for young contributors. "We would get too many, we would be inundated."

Another way Jill gets writers is to go to the staff specialists in the field and ask them to use their contacts to find someone. When she wanted someone to write about the Higher Education West report she went to Jane Richardson, editor of *The Australian* Higher Education Supplement and asked her who might be the best person. This worked very well because Jill ended up with a debate about the report between Professor Peter Karmel and Dr Carolyn Allport of the Tertiary Teachers Union.

There is also an op-ed policy of running a debate (since the audit meeting last September). Jill said she tries to do this once a week in the op-ed pages and likes a yes/no debate format. However she concedes it can be difficult to find people who will argue sides. She also likes to run issues that may not fit the yes/no debate but can have a range of opinions or perspectives. *The Australian* used this format to air issues around the Asian Crisis.

As far as trying to get a balance between men and women, Jill said that she is committed to good content more than to gender equity. But women are increasingly coming up with good content. "The good women writers are out there," she said. "It is just a matter of getting them to contribute. Women are just not putting themselves forward."

However there are a lot of people who want to write for *The Australian* op-ed pages. Jill said she was away for two days and came back to 44 voice mail messages mainly from people wanting to know how to submit or wanting to promote themselves as possible contributors. Jill gets about ten pieces of unsolicited writing every week along with about another ten that she has told people to send in on spec after they have spoken to her. It is rare that any of these are good enough to publish, but it does happen. Sometimes if the writing is not good enough but the ideas are

excellent Jill might spend some time discussing it with the writer and asking them to resubmit.

Rarely she will work on the piece herself, with permission from the writer, to get it up to standard to publish.

Beatrice Faust rang and offered to write a piece and Jill was delighted to get the call “out of the blue because she is a considerable presence in Australian intellectual life”. Jill held onto Beatrice’s piece “until the subject came up” and then ran it. Jill hopes Beatrice will submit more articles in the future. Susie O’Brien is young unknown writer who rang up on spec and asked if Jill wanted a piece she had written. It was submitted and accepted and Susie has submitted another piece since. Jill is delighted to have found a good young female writer.

John Harms is another young writer who is known for his flair for writing about sport. He wanted to write about Leadership which is out of the field he usually writes about. Again Jill accepted the piece and held onto it until it could be used.

Jill laments not being able to run more pieces on the op-ed page. There are only 4 piece per page per day, she said. One of these goes to a columnist, two might go to a debate and then another to a contributor who writes regularly. Then if issues break they have to be aired on these pages. All of these things are restraints on what Jill can run. Sometimes it is intended to give a piece a run but it misses out for these and other reasons. “We do get some doggedly persistent people” she said.

It is a policy never to pay a politician, official, head of an association or union official , if they write for the op-ed pages. “We do pay academics though,” Jill said. She tries to personally brief all of her op-ed page writers. As well as writing Jill may commission art work for the op-ed pages.

The leader writers for *The Australian* are Nigel Wilson and Michelle Gillcrist, however Jill said she did not confer with them and sometimes ran pieces that conflicted with the opinions in the leader. However when there was an issue in the news, such as abortion, she said she would be very careful to make sure the coverage of opinions was balanced.

So what makes a good op-ed piece as far as Jill Rowbotham is concerned?

It has to be an opinion - not a reported story and it has to be an opinion that is argued to the end of the piece. It doesn't matter if it is controversial but it cannot be irrational or hysterical.. Along with lively copy the topic must be interesting and timely. It doesn't matter if the arguments are not linear, Barry Dicken for example wanders around with his writing, but he still argues well. Jill likes people to have a distinct voice. And having said all that she insists that she is not too rigid really about what a good op-ed piece should be.

However she is very clear about what she wants for her op-ed pages. She wants a page that reflects what is happening as it is happening. The tone should not be excluding, though she allows that it can come across as exclusive as it is hard to get a voice there. It should allow the maximum flexibility in opinion writing with a wide range of opinions along with a bit of quirkiness. If young writers want to find themselves there they have to be able to give an insight into how their generation thinks. "You need a real credential to be able to write a good opinion piece," Jill said.

The three pieces that Jill picked out as best practice were as follows:-

Barry Dicken in *Adrift, lest we remember*, writing about leadership. Jill likes Barry's style of writing. She pointed out that he was a "professional writer" - a playwright and novelist. She liked the quality of his writing and the timeliness of his opinion piece.

Greg Sheridan in *Asia desperately needs Japan to become a leader* writing appealed to Jill because Greg is a "good punchy writer. He is not afraid to be feisty and give them what for.". He also writes in a plain way, not convoluted in thought or ideas.

And lastly Jill chose Cyndi Tebbel in *Commonsense rejects the folly of confining body image*. Cyndi has "the authority of having been the editor of a woman's magazine. Her writing is authoritative and of high quality," Jill said.

# The Sydney Morning Herald

Kerry Myers is a fifties something male who had spent five years as Editor In Chief of Fairfax suburban papers - Fairfax Community Newspapers - and then as a senior sub-editor for *The Sydney Morning Herald*. As he put it "I came up through production". He worked as the acting op-ed editor for 5 months, during which this snapshot study was undertaken. Kerry is now the editor of the Letters page and Geraldine Walsh is op-ed editor.

Kerry believes that aside from timeliness the qualification of the author of comment is the most important criteria for a good comment piece. "Expertise in the field of comment is the most important criteria," he said.

As far as ideas are concerned Kerry did not try to give ideas to any of the regular writers of opinion for *The Sydney Morning Herald*, but he did generate ideas for contributors. Often conference would come up with ideas that he used or the editor would suggest ideas.

Generally he would brief the writers himself, sometimes after he himself had been briefed by a staff writer on the issue. He said he did not give a lot of instruction except when briefing academics to remind them that they were not writing for an academic audience. "Academics tend to over write," he said. If he has commissioned a piece it is rare that he would not run it. Sometimes he confesses to doing some "judicious editing" on contributions by academics which often the academic would not even notice.

*The Sydney Morning Herald* has an electronic contacts list which is inherited by each new op-ed editor. It comes with the job. There are thousands of names on it, Kerry said. He passed it on to Geraldine when he left the job to do the letters page editing.

As far as women and younger writers are concerned he said he was always on the lookout for

young writers. Kerry said he would often look at what was on the page and decide a woman might be needed. "It is important to prevent the op-ed pages from becoming a boys' club," he said. Kerry believes that the voice of younger writers is not heard enough but thinks this is because "Maybe quality comes with experience. There is a wisdom that comes with age and experience," he said. Having a young person's perspective on an issue is important but there is a problem in finding young people who can write. His advice to young writers is "Put your hand up. Write some pieces and send them in."

If he needed a voice on a particular issue he said he would first seek out a staffer. For example if it was a medical subject he would look for the medical writer. Also he would sometimes seek out someone who may have been quoted in a story to write a piece about the issue involved. Kerry said he would often approach universities to find someone for him. He found Graham Potter at Sydney University particularly useful for finding people for him.

As far as Kerry is concerned there are two categories his writers fit into. The first are the people who approach him with an idea with merit, and the second are the people he has to seek out. Unfortunately most of the people who call in with ideas are not suitable and Kerry usually tells them that the subject has been exhausted and that he cannot use any more about it. Sometimes he will tell a caller to send in a draft. "A lot of people do this", he said. However often then his response will be to reject the idea. Then there are people who are keen enough to send in unsolicited pieces. In fact "We get inundated with unsolicited pieces. Every academic in Christendom writes in," Kerry said. However he also said that he does "browse" through everything that is sent in and occasionally will find something he can use. "There might be a gem hidden in the dross" he said.

The policy for the op-ed page is usually on Monday to canvas different not necessarily conflicting views or to set up a for and against argument. One person Kerry sought out for this page in the snapshot week was Mark Burgess who is secretary of the Police Association, to get him to write about zero tolerance on crime. Both Mark and Kevin O'Rourke who wrote a conflicting view about

civil rights, Kerry got from his inherited contacts list. Other writers of opinion that day were Chris Erskine on the Oscars that was taken from the wires - from the Los Angeles Times and Peter Wills writing about scientific research. John Alexander the editor in chief of *The Sydney Morning Herald* suggested to Kerry that he get Peter to write a piece. Gay Alcorn and Jenny Allum were the only two women with opinion pieces that day. Gay is an Age (sister paper) columnist and this piece had already appeared in *The Age*. Kerry liked it because it was a “modern look at marriage”. Jenny Allum is a private school principal who wrote a piece anti changes to the HSC for the Schools page.

On Tuesday Allan Attwood’s first piece for the week was published. Allan Attwood is the SMH New York correspondent. Kerry often asks him to write a piece or Allan will suggest a piece he can write. Allan was the opinion writer with the most pieces published this week in the SMH, with three pieces published. Michael Millett’s first piece for the week was also published on the Tuesday of the snapshot week. Michael is also a senior staff writer. He is the Chief Political Correspondent in Canberra. Michael regularly writes a column every Friday for the op-ed pages. The piece published on a Tuesday was a comment piece in the front of the paper - to go with a news story. Peter Fitzsimons is also a staffer, a sports journalist. He approached Kerry about doing a light hearted piece for the op-ed page. Gerard Henderson is a regular contributor for the op-ed page. Gerard is head of the right-wing think tank *The Sydney Institute*. Chris McGillon is a staffer who writes on religion. He regularly writes for the op-ed page also. The only two women who wrote opinion that day were Neela Banerjee who is the Moscow correspondent for *The SMH* and Gloria Steinham who had written a piece for the *New York Times* that the SMH bought off the wires. Kerry liked Gloria’s piece because it dealt with president Clinton’s sexual peccadillos in a” kindly “way. Kerry said Gloria’s name is good enough to run anytime but the topic made the piece even more attractive.

On Wednesday in the snapshot week the SMH op-ed page carried a regular column by staffer Ross Gittins who is the SMH economics editor as well as a piece by Allan Ramsey who is the chief political commentator. Allan has two columns each week on the op-ed page. Allan Attwood’s

second opinion piece, about the Oscars, was published and a Russian academic, male, Kirill Nourzhanov wrote about Yeltsin. Kerry said Kirill approached another staffer on the paper and gave him the piece which was handed on to Kerry. Kerry liked the piece because it was “timely and informed”, so he ran it. The only woman who wrote opinion that day was Neela Banerjee writing about Russia in the front news section.

On Thursday Paul Keating, former prime minister, writes a regular column for The SMH. On this day in the snapshot week Allan Attwood has his third opinion piece published in the front news section. Kerry consulted his contact list again to find Jock Given, a well known media commentator, to write about the new digital TV deal. PD McGinness, who is a staffer, wrote his weekly column and Margo Kingston and Sally Loane were the only females published. Margo, the SMH Canberra correspondent wrote an opinion piece for the news section and Sally Loane volunteered a piece on rugby. She suggested the idea to Kerry and he agreed that she should write it. Kerry said he did not often knock back a piece written by a staffer, but it does happen. Usually the offers come from senior staffers who do a good job anyway.

There were only three opinion pieces in the news and op-ed sections of the SMH on Friday Contributor Richard Akland, who now fronts the TV show Media Watch wrote his regular column and Michael Millett, political staffer wrote his second opinion piece for the week. Stephanie Dowrick is what Kerry calls an occasional contributor. She calls when she thinks she can contribute. This week she wanted to write about Clinton in response to Gloria Steinham’s piece earlier in the week.

On Saturday with the Good Weekend, Spectrum and News Review 16 opinion piece were published in the SMH. Kerry does not handle opinion pieces for other parts of the SMH. But of the 16 opinion writers on Saturday, 12 were men forty and over who wrote for every section of the paper, four were by woman forty and over - and these all appeared in the magazine The Good Weekend or in the News Review section.

Kerry wanted to point out that in the week that I had chosen for the snapshot neither Anne Summers nor Catherine Lumby appeared, though both are regular contributors to the op-ed pages.

The three pieces Kerry chose as being examples of best practice were as follows:-

Peter Fitzsimons on Tuesday op ed *Hey, you, get offa my cloud ( or at least my foot)* which was a light hearted piece about people living in crowded Sydney when the rest of Australia is virtually empty. Kerry said he liked it because it was light hearted - a bit of lateral thinking, a way of looking at something differently.

Allan Attwood writing about the Oscars *There's a perverse pleasure in missing the boat* on the op-ed page on Wednesday about not watching the Oscars, not even watching the Oscar winning films. he liked this piece for the same reasons he liked Peter Fitzsimons piece.

And lastly Kerry picked out the piece by Paul Keating *We're not a fair-weather friend* on international relations. Kerry said "In a week which saw a lot of criticism over Indonesia and Australia's past relationship there, it was interesting that Keating was justifying relationships with Indonesia."

# Summary & Conclusion

---

## Who gets to speak

Overwhelmingly male opinion dominated in all sections of the daily papers for the week beginning Monday 23rd March 1998 to Saturday 28th March 1998. In every paper men forty and over dominated in every section. The group with the most to say was men forty and over giving their opinion in the *News&Op-ed* sections, followed by men forty and over commenting on sport, followed by men forty and over commenting on business.

In *The Daily Telegraph* men forty and over gave **79.2%** of all opinion in the Sport, Business and News sections of the paper. In *The Australian* it was **68.9%** and in *The Sydney Morning Herald* it was **76.1%**. The 8 and 10 per cent lower rates for *The Australian* could perhaps be due to the new policies flowing from the audit meeting on the op-ed page which was held last September which Australian op-ed editor Jill Rowbotham refers to in the interview.

All but one of the 210 opinion writers were Caucasian - 99.6%

## Total for all papers in each section according to age and gender

	MALE		FEMALE		TOTAL
	less than 40	40 and over	less than 40	40 and over	
SPORT	15	47	1		63
BUSINESS		38	3	2	43
NEWS&OP-ED	5	71	10	18	104
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>156</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>210</b>
	<b>176</b>		<b>34</b>		

It is depressingly interesting to note that the pattern of representation follows the stereotypes.

Young men have a voice (15 pieces out of 63) in analysing and commenting in sport, women forty and over have none. Young men have no opinion about business it seems and not much on general news (5 pieces out of 104). Whereas young women have a token say about sport (one piece out of 63) and business (three pieces out of 43). And while young women and women forty and older do have opinions about news (10 and 18 out of 104 respectively), in total for all sections - Sports, Business, *News&Op-ed* - young women take only **6.6% of all opinions** pieces and both young men and women forty and older each have a **9.5%** say.

In total across the three papers men forty and over dominated opinion and analysis in all sections with **74%** of the total number of pieces published in the Sports sections, **88.3%** in the Business sections and **68.2%** the *News&Op-ed* sections.

Only one opinion piece on Sport out of a total of 64 was written by a female. Only 5 of the 43 opinion pieces on Business were written by women, while only 28 out of the 104 opinion pieces in News & op-ed sections were written by women.

### **News & Op-ed section only - each paper according to age and gender**

	MALE		FEMALE		TOTAL
	less than 40	40 and over	less than 40	40 and over	
<i>The Daily Telegraph</i>	1	15	5	2	<b>23</b>
<i>The Australian</i>	4	26	2	8	<b>40</b>
<i>The Sydney Morning Herald</i>	0	31	5	6	<b>42</b>
	5	72	12	16	<b>105</b>

In the News & Op-ed sections of the paper males dominated with males forty and over taking **65.2%** of the total pieces published in *The Daily Telegraph*, **65%** of *The Australian* and **73.8%** of *The Sydney Morning Herald*.

**In total men gave 83.8 % of the opinions published during the snapshot, with men forty and over accounting for 74.3 % of the total number of columns,**

**comment/analysis articles published in the Sports, Business, News&Op-ed sections of the papers that week and men forty and over dominating in every section. All but one of the 210 opinion writers, were white.**

The point needs to be made here that this is just a simple quantitative analysis which Hoynes and Crouteau point out is “not enough”). They suggest a further examination of “perspectives not just demographics” as so called “token” opinion givers can espouse the ideology of those in power. (Hoynes and Crouteau 1990)

## **What is being spoken about**

### **Total for all papers in each section**

	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>SPORT</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>30 %</b>
<b>BUSINESS</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>20.5 %</b>
<b>NEWS&amp;OP-ED</b>	<b>104</b>	<b>49.5 %</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>210</b>	<b>100 %</b>

Of the 210 opinion pieces published in the three papers for this week in the Sports, Business and News&Op-ed sections the largest number, 104, were in the News&Op-ed sections of the papers. This means the News&Op-ed sections account for 49.5% of the total number of opinion pieces published in all papers this week in the three sections studied. In the Sports sections of the papers 63 opinion pieces were published, which is 30% of the total number and in the Business sections 43 pieces were published which accounts for 20.4% of the total number of opinion pieces published in the three papers this week in the three sections studied.

It is interesting to compare these figures to those found by Henningham in his 1996 study of the overall content of all the daily newspapers produced in state capital cities and in the national capital in 1993 (Henningham 1996:23), ten papers in all including the three papers in this snapshot study.

In this study - which was looking at content in all sections and of all articles - Sport took 18.4 % of the total content of all the papers, Economy 21.2% with the other categories 41.6% and Culture and Entertainment 18.7 %.

A more detailed analysis of what was being spoken about during this snapshot was confined to just the news and op-ed sections of each paper using Henningham's nine mega-categories for content analysis.

### **Total in content categories for opinion for all three papers in news & op-ed sections only**

Social issues/Education/Welfare	35	33.3%
Politics	26	24.8%
Culture and Entertainment	23	21.9%
Crime	8	7.6%
International Relations	4	3.8%
Sport	4	3.8%
Economy/Business/Finance	3	2.8%
Science and Medicine	2	1.9%
Accidents & Disasters	nil	nil
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>100%</b>

The category with the most opinion pieces published was Social issues/Education/Welfare with **34** pieces, followed by Politics with **28** and then by Culture & Entertainment with **20** pieces. This was the week the Oscar awards were presented in the US which would have influenced the number of pieces fitting into the category of Culture & Entertainment. Also it was the week of the Jonesboro shootings which may have affected the number of opinion pieces on crime. Of course any snapshot would similarly be influenced by whatever makes the current news list.

Even though each paper has a specific sports sections with its own columns and comment/analysis, each of the news and op-ed sections of the three papers still carried comment on sport. Similarly each paper has a Business section but *The Daily Telegraph* and *The Australian* still carried comment on Economy/Business/Finance in their news and op-ed sections.

Aside from accidents and disasters which had nil comment pieces published that week - the category with the least number of opinion pieces published that week was Science & Medicine with 2 pieces published.

### Content of opinion in the News & Op-ed sections in hierarchical order for each paper

<i>The Daily Telegraph</i>		<i>The Australian</i>		<i>The Sydney Morning Herald</i>	
Social issues/Education/Welfare	6	Social issues/Education/Welfare	15	Social issues/Education/Welfare	14
Politics	6	Politics	9	Politics	11
Crime	4	Culture & Entertainment	9	Culture & Entertainment	10
Culture & Entertainment	4	Sport	2	Crime	4
Economy/Business/Finance	1	International Relations	1	Sport	1
Sport	1	Economy/Business/Finance	1	International Relations	1
International Relations	1	Science & Medicine	nil	Science & Medicine	1
Science & Medicine	nil	Crime	nil	Economy/Business/Finance	nil
Accidents&Disasters	nil	Accidents&Disasters	nil	Accidents&Disasters	nil
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>42</b>

Social issues/Education/Welfare was the category of the most opinion pieces published in all papers, with *The Daily Telegraph* also publishing an equal number of pieces about politics. Politics was the next category for *The Australian* and *The Sydney Morning Herald* with *The Australian* publishing an equal number of pieces on Culture & Entertainment.

No paper published any comment on Accidents and Disasters this week.

## How do the opinion writers get to speak

Each paper in the snapshot has a mixture of staff writers and regular contributors of opinion as well as occasional casual writers of opinion.

### Opinion writers in the News&Op-ed sections for the snapshot week

	<i>The Daily Telegraph</i>	<i>The Australian</i>	<i>The Sydney Morning Herald</i>
Staff - including pieces from the wires	20	13	24
Regular contributors	2	18	8
Casual	1	9	10

The one casual piece that *The Daily Telegraph* published this week was by Peter Day which was pro the airport at Badgeries Creek. Peter is an independent publisher of a community paper in western Sydney. He approached the editor of *The Daily Telegraph*, Col Allen, about writing a piece. He was invited to send it in and it was accepted.

The casual writers for *The Australian* for this week included four male academics who had opinion pieces published in the Higher Education news section of the paper. It also included Susie O'Brien a young writer who first made contact with the paper by sending in unsolicited copy which was accepted. Another casual this week was Beatrice Faust who called in with an idea which was welcomed and Cyndi Tebbel who called in wanting to write something in response to Beatrice Faust's article.

*The Sydney Morning Herald* published the most pieces by casual writers, however most were writers that the op-ed editor Kerry Myers got from using his inherited contacts list - Mark Burgess, Kevin O'Rourke and Jock Given fit this category. The only casual writer published on the op-ed page who approached the paper and was accepted this week was Kirill Nourzhanov who gave a piece he had written to a staffer to pass on to Kerry, and it was accepted.

## The process of selection

There is no set process for the selection of opinion writers for each of the papers. Rather an ad hoc method that is similar at each paper, whereby a mixture of the use of contact lists, suggestions from the editor and editor in chief, approaches from staff journalists, the taking of casual suggestions from outside writers and the (rare) use of unsolicited material that is sent in, is used.

While each of the op-ed editors has the power to select writers for their op-ed pages, the people who decide on the majority of opinion writers - the regular columnists and contributors- are the editors and editor in chiefs. In *The Daily Telegraph* for example John Hartigan the editor in chief for *The Daily Telegraph* and *The Sunday Telegraph* was instrumental in getting both Mike Gibson and Mark Day column space.

And while each op-ed editor was aware of an imbalance of gender and ages no action had been taken in particular to change things. Although *The Australian*, in their op-ed audit meeting last year, according to op-ed editor Jill Rowbotham, had discussed issues around the gender and age of their writers.

While the op-ed editor of *The Sydney Morning Herald* at the time of the snapshot, Kerry Myers, said that "It is important to prevent the opinion pages from becoming a boy's club", in the news and op-ed sections of *The Sydney Morning Herald* for this week males forty and over wrote 73.8% of the total number of opinion pieces published - more than for *The Daily Telegraph* and *The Australian* at 65.2 and 65% respectively.

The power of the inherited electronic contacts list owned by the op-ed editor at *The Sydney Morning Herald* is evident in the selection of at least three of the casual writers for this week for the paper. One writer Peter Wills was selected because the editor in chief, John Alexander, suggested he be used..

Each of the op-ed editors claimed that they attempted to read every unsolicited piece of writing that

was sent in to them. Sandra Lee said however that it had to grab her in the first two paragraphs and Kerry Myers said he “browses” through the pieces of unsolicited opinion writing he is inundated with because “there might be a gem hidden in the dross.”

However it seems one of the most effective ways to get an opinion piece published if you are known as an expert, have a special interest in any field, or if you are a well known academic, is to telephone the editor or the op-ed editor and ask if they are interested in a piece. This is the way both Beatrice Faust and Cyndi Tebbel were published in *The Sydney Morning Herald*, Barry Dickens in *The Australian* and Peter Day in *The Daily Telegraph*.

However it seems the people who are also likely to get a casual piece of opinion writing published are the journalists who are already on staff, for example Sally Loane and Peter FitzSimons at *The Sydney Morning Herald*

## **What are the ideologies and discourses being perpetuated**

As I had already written well over 15,000 words and had found such fertile ground in the first three sections of my investigation of the snapshot week I did not proceed with the textual analysis. I had intended to use the three pieces chosen by each op-ed editor as best practice, for textual analysis. I was hoping to uncover similarities at this level of investigation in the way similarities have been found for the three papers in an age and gender and content analysis of this snapshot.

A major reason for including textual analysis however, was to uncover the ideologies and discourses that were being used. Such an analysis would have added a valuable further dimension to this snapshot.

## Conclusion

Males forty and over dominate opinion writing in every section of the daily papers. This is despite two of the papers having a young (less than forty) female op-ed editor. It is interesting that *The Sydney Morning Herald* appointed Geraldine Walsh to take over the op-ed editor's job from Kerry Myers. This means that each of these daily papers now has a young female op-ed editor. Perhaps this in itself is an indication that the managers of the papers realise there is a problem with representation.

It is also interesting to note that each of the op-ed editors thought that the criteria needed for good opinion writing - expertise in a field and quality of writing - were the very criteria that made it difficult to find young writers and female writers. This was presented as normal. The people who can write are men over forty because they have the expertise, experience and skills to do so. As Kerry Myers said, "Maybe quality comes with experience. There is a wisdom that comes with age and experience." This wisdom obviously does not extend in an equal way to women who are older and experienced. And the idea that a younger person's or female point of view is valuable of itself does not seem to be a major consideration. Rather the op-ed editors seem to be looking for females and young people who can write like men who are forty and older.

Jill Rowbotham said, "The good women writers are out there. It is just a matter of getting them to contribute". However none of the papers has any particular method worked out to find them.

Although each op-ed editor made selections for their pages, the people with the most influence are the editor and editors in chiefs who make suggestions either directly or via the news conference and who choose the regular contributors of opinion as well as the paper's columnists. Jill Rowbotham said she does get a lot of suggestions from the "top" and Sandra Lee did not know how the only casual writer for the op-ed pages that week had been chosen (the editor had chosen him without consulting Sandra).

In this snapshot week at least four former editors of daily papers - Paul Kelly, Frank Devine, Piers Akerman and Mark Day and two ex prime ministers- Paul Keating and Malcolm Fraser had an opinion piece published on the op-ed pages.

Sandra Lee, the only op-ed editor who actually writes an opinion piece regularly for her paper, actively works against being labelled as a writer who is particularly interested in women's stuff. "Why can't a man think like a woman and a woman think like a man?" she asks.

While *The Daily Telegraph* published as many opinion pieces on sport as it did on news, *The Sydney Morning Herald* and *The Australian* published more opinion pieces on news than on sport, with *The Australian* giving the highest proportion of opinion writing to news.

Each of the papers had about the same mix of content for their opinion writing in the news and op-ed sections with social issues, education and welfare taking the most space this week. This is perhaps an indication that each of the papers follows a similar formula for selecting the news that they consider to be newsworthy. For example even though there were floods and droughts and wars in various parts of the world this week, none of our papers thought any were worthy of comment and analysis. This reinforces Henningham's view (1996:34) that "the oligopolisation of Australian newspaper ownership and the related shrinkage of newspaper titles has resulted in a greater tendency to seek a broad popular readership, using similar formulae of news value".

The argument that Ted Koppel used in response to criticism of the narrow perspectives aired during the Nightline news program he hosts, that the choice of people he had on his program merely reflected what was in the news, is relevant here. Hoynes and Crouteau responded to Koppel's claim that the media is "just a mirror" as "too simplistic. They argued that in fact Nightline was holding the mirror in a certain direction to reflect the opinions of those in power - white ruling class men." (Hoynes and Crouteau, 1990)

The same argument can be applied to the opinion published in the daily papers in Sydney as uncovered by this snapshot study - it reflects the interests of white men aged forty and over

because it is in their direction that the mirror is facing.

The very nature of the process of deciding who gets to speak and what they will speak about is so embedded into the news room culture - the twice and thrice daily conferences, the suggestions of the editors (all male) and the editors in chiefs (all males forty and over) and the simple fact that the overwhelming majority of opinion writers are males forty and over who come up with their own ideas - that it seems even the op-ed editors themselves are not entirely clear about where the ideas come from that are used.

The findings of this snapshot poses more questions than it answers - probably the biggest is, are the women and young people who do manage to get a voice in the daily papers saying anything that is different to that being said by white males forty and over? And are the writing qualities and the topics selected that are seen by the op-ed editors as best practice, qualities that are particularly attributable to male writers forty and over rather than to young writers and women writers? Grist for the mill of another thesis writer.

# Bibliography

---

- Curthoys, Ann and Schultz, Julianne and Hamilton, Paula (1996) "A History of Australian journalism, 1890 to the present:report on a research project", in **Australian Studies in Journalism: Towards a history of Australian journalism**
- Evans, Katherine (1994) "The Copytaker and the Telephone Researching a Cultural History of Journalism" in **Media Information Australia No 73 August 1994**
- Jenkins, Helen (1990) "11.News as Discourse" in **Media Information Australia No 55 February 1990**
- Solomon, Normon (1997) "Monotonous Tone of Op-Ed Pages Could Spell Trouble For Newspapers" in "SHOP TALK AT THIRTY" in **Editor and Publisher March 29 1997**
- Greiner, Nick (1993) "The smart-alec culture: a critique of Australian journalism" in **Australian Studies in Journalism, 2 , 1993**
- Gersh Hernandez, Debra (1997) "Profile Of The News Consumer" in **Editor and Publisher January 18, 1997**
- Fischle, Mark and Stenner-Day, Karen (1992) "How media influence public opinion:a schematic approach" in **Australian Studies in Journalism, 1, 1992**
- Maguire, Daniel (1993) "Four newspapers' coverage of the 1993 federal election" in **Australian Studies in Journalism, 2, 1993**
- Stein, M. L.(1996) "In Search Of Hometown Pundits" in **Editor and Publisher December 14 1996**
- McKay, J and Smith, P. (1995) " Exonerating the Hero - Frames and narratives in media coverage of the O.J. Simpson story", **Media Information Australia, 75/1, February 1995**□
- Motion, Judy "Deconstruction of the media discourse on the attempted Soviet coup" in **Australian**

**Journalism Review Vol.15 (No 2) July-December 1993**

Leiberman, Trudy "BARTLEY'S BELIEVE IT OR NOT!" in **Columbia Journalism Review**  
**July/August 1996**

Hoynes, William & Croteau, David (1990) "ALL THE USUAL SUSPECTS;  
MACNEIL/LEHRER and NIGHTLINE", **A Special FAIR Report, May 1990**

Boyce, D. G. (1987) "Crusaders without chains: power and the press barons 1896-1951" in  
Curran, James, Smith, Anthony & Wingate Pauline (Eds) (1987) **Impacts and Influences.**  
**Essays on Media Power in the Twentieth Century**, London: the University Press,  
Cambridge

Seymour-Ure, Colin (1991) **The British Press and Broadcasting since 1945** one of the  
series *Making Contemporary Britain*, London: Basil Blackwell Ltd

Weston, J. S. and Hughes, C. A. (1983) **The Mass Media in Australia, Second Edition**,  
Queensland: The University of Queensland Press

Bowman, David (1988) **The Captive Press** Victoria: Penguin Books Australia

Silvester, Christopher (ed), (1997) **The Penguin Book of COLUMNISTS** London: Penguin

Schultz, Julianne (1997) "The Press" in Cunningham, Stuart & Turner, Graeme (eds), (1997) **The**  
**Media in Australia 2nd Edition**

Turner, Graeme (1997) "Media texts and messages" in Cunningham, Stuart & Turner, Graeme  
(eds), (1997) **The Media in Australia 2nd Edition**

Nightingale, Virginia (1997) "Media audiences" in Cunningham, Stuart & Turner, Graeme (eds),  
(1997) **The Media in Australia 2nd Edition**

Turner, Graeme (1997) "The active audience: receptive traditions" in Cunningham, Stuart & Turner,  
Graeme (eds), (1997) **The Media in Australia 2nd Edition**

Thompson, John, B. (1990) "Ideology and Modern Culture - Critical Social Theory in the Era of

Mass Communication” in **A Social Theory of Mass Communication**, Cambridge:  
Polity Press

van Dijk, Teun, A. (1988) “RACISM AND MEANING: AN EXAMPLE” in **Racism and the  
Press**, London: Routledge

Henningham, John (1996) “The Shape of Daily News - a content analysis of Australia’s  
metropolitan newspapers” in **Media International Australia No 79 - February 1996**

Lawson, Sylvia (1983) **The Archibald Paradox** Melbourne: Penguin

Davies, Mark (1997) “**gangland - cultural elites and the new generationalism**”

# Appendices

---

The  
**Daily Telegraph**  
**Columns, Comment/Analysis**

**Week**  
**Monday 23rd March to Saturday 28th March 1998**

THE DAILY TELEGRAPH

MONDAY March 23rd 1998

	MALE		FEMALE	
	less than 40	40 and over	less than 40	40 and over
SPORT	Paul Kelly - Football	Ken Callander - Racing Jeff Wells - Racing Mike Sheahan -Football		
BUSINESS				
NEWS&OP-ED		<b>Malcolm Farr</b> <i>No sound barrier for the noisy airport debate</i> <b>Ray Chesterton</b> <i>Aftershock of a time bomb</i>		<b>Maralyn Parker</b> <i>The Basic Trouble-it's a test of skills in disguise</i>

THE DAILY TELEGRAPH

TUESDAY March 24th 1998

	MALE		FEMALE	
	less than 40	40 and over	less than 40	40 and over
SPORT		Bob Cooper - Golf Philip Micallef - Soccer Gordon Bray - Football Ron Christie - Olympics		
BUSINESS		Terry McCrann		
NEWS&OP-ED		<b>Piers Akerman</b> <i>Life in jail doesn't mean dying there and The special privileges committee</i> <b>Peter Ruehl</b> <i>Soft centre from Oz in Suharto's IMF candy jar</i>	<b>Miranda Devine</b> <i>Red dress but redder face</i> <b>Sandra Lee</b> <i>A community grown used to crime</i>	

THE DAILY TELEGRAPH

WEDNESDAY March 25th 1998

	MALE		FEMALE	
	less than 40	40 and over	less than 40	40 and over
SPORT		Ken Callander - Racing Terry Smith - Football Dean Ritchie - Cricket		
BUSINESS		Terry McCrann		
NEWS&OP-ED		<b>Mike Gibson</b> <i>Epic Voyage of imagination</i> <b>Mark Day</b> <i>Sydney's a big winner, on location</i>		<b>Maralyn Parker</b> <i>Funding madness and How schools differ two mothers report</i>

THE DAILY TELEGRAPH

THURSDAY March 26th 1998

	MALE		FEMALE	
	less than 40	40 and over	less than 40	40 and over
SPORT		Gordon Bray - Football Jeff Wells - Olympics Bruce Wilson - cricket		
BUSINESS		Terry McCrann		
NEWS&OP-ED	<b>Jonathan Margolos</b> <i>Hate him</i> (cons Leonardo DiCaprio)	<b>Piers Akerman</b> <i>Carr throws credibility to the wind and AT&amp;T's worthy view of little help at home and Circular Quay visionaries need a kick in the brass</i> <b>Peter Ruehl</b> <i>Freedom of speech laws guilty by reason of inanity</i> <b>Ray Chesterton</b> <i>Francis final arena raises more questions than answers</i>	<b>Vicky Ward</b> <i>Love him</i> (pros Leonardo DiCaprio) <b>Miranda Divine</b> <i>Was it something I said</i>	

THE DAILY TELEGRAPH

FRIDAY March 27th 1998

	MALE		FEMALE	
	less than 40	40 and over	less than 40	40 and over
SPORT		Murray Bell - Racing Peter Frilingos - Football Bruce Schumacher - Fishing	Anne Sargent - Netball	
BUSINESS		Terry McCrann		
NEWS&OP-ED		<b>Daniel Jefferys</b> <i>The playground of terminator schoolboys</i> <b>Peter Day</b> <i>Airport protesters deny west a chance to fly</i> <b>Ray Chesterton</b> <i>Marshalling art of self-defence</i> <b>Richard Kay</b> <i>Cloak of shyness slips to unveil Son of Diana</i>		

THE DAILY TELEGRAPH

Saturday March 28th 1998

	MALE		FEMALE	
	less than 40	40 and over	less than 40	40 and over
SPORT		Tom Ramsey - Golf Ken Callander - Racing Ray Kershler - Football Ron Dufficy - Racing		
BUSINESS				
NEWS&OP-ED		<b>Malcolm Farr</b> <i>Carr wishes he could snap back into power</i> <b>Jeff Wells</b> - op ed page <i>A bet Bill didn't want to place - boxing</i>	<b>Sandra Lee</b> <i>The crowd that ate the oxygen</i>	

**THE SYDNEY MORNING HERALD**  
**Columns, Comment/Analysis**

**Week**  
**Monday 23rd March to Saturday 28th March 1998**

THE SYDNEY MORNING HERALD

MONDAY 23rd 1998

	MALE		FEMALE	
	less than 40	40 and over	less than 40	40 and over
SPORT	Richard Hinds - Football	Peter Roebuck - Cricket Paul Roos - Football		
BUSINESS		Ross Gittins Brian Hale Malcolm Maiden		
NEWS&OP-ED		<b>Greg Bearup</b> - <i>Relations</i> <b>Mark Burgess</b> p17 <i>The key to keeping streets safe</i> (more powers to police) <b>Kevin O'Rourke</b> p17 <i>The key to keeping streets safe</i> (smarter policing) <b>Chris Erskine</b> p17 <i>Homegrown paparazzi get the</i> <i>point of the Oscars</i> <b>Peter Wills</b> p17 <i>Share the excitement of what</i> <i>medical science has to offer</i>	<b>Gay Alcorn</b> p17 <i>Marriage lines</i> <i>redrawn</i>	<b>Jenny Allum</b> p12 <i>HSC Hurdles</i>

THE SYDNEY MORNING HERALD

TUESDAY 24TH 1998

	MALE		FEMALE	
	less than 40	40 and over	less than 40	40 and over
SPORT		Spiro Zavos - Football Malcolm Knox - Cricket Roy Masters - Football John Huxley - Soccer		
BUSINESS		Max Walsh Glenn Burge		
NEWS&OP-ED		<b>Allan Attwood</b> <i>You 're nobody till somebody                      limo-locks you on Jefferson</i> <b>Michael Millet p7</b> <i>PM digs in as ALP shots rain down</i> <b>Peter FitzSimons p19</b> <i>Hey you get off my cloud (or at                      least my foot)</i> <b>Gerard Henderson p19</b> <i>The fatal human frailty that marred                      the genius of Oscar Wilde</i> <b>Chris McGillon p19</b> <i>It's time to settle some differences</i>	<b>Neela Banerjee p13</b> <i>Guessing game over                      Nemtsov promotion</i>	<b>Gloria Steinham p19</b> <i>America's sexual                      obsessions</i>

THE SYDNEY MORNING HERALD

WEDNESDAY 25th 1998

	MALE		FEMALE	
	less than 40	40 and over	less than 40	40 and over
SPORT	Richard Hinds - Cricket Richard Hinds - Tennis	Phil Gould - Football Roy Masters - Football Peter Roebuck - Cricket		
BUSINESS		Noel Whittaker Max Walsh Glen Burge	Ali Gripper	Anne Lampe Annette Sampson
NEWS&OP-ED		<b>Ross Gittins</b> p17 <i>The sickening state of social status</i> <b>Alan Ramsey</b> p17 <i>Humbug in the house</i> <b>Alan Attwood</b> p17 <i>There's a perverse pleasure in missing the boat</i> <b>Kirill Nourzhanov</b> p17 <i>Yeltsin fights for his life in the Moscow jungle</i>	<b>Neela Banerjee</b> - pg9\ <i>Russians stunned by Yeltsin sackings</i>	

THE SYDNEY MORNING HERALD

THURSDAY 26th 1998

	MALE		FEMALE	
	less than 40	40 and over	less than 40	40 and over
SPORT	Paul Kent - Football	Peter Roebuck - Cricket		
BUSINESS		Max Walsh Glenn Burge		
NEWS&OP-ED		<b>Alan Attwood</b> - pg9 <i>Shooting horror shakes                      America:what is happening to our                      children</i> <b>Paul Keating</b> p19 <i>We're not a fair-weather friend</i> <b>Jock Given</b> p19 <i>Taking a punt with TV</i> <b>Mc Guinness</b> p19 <i>Caught between a rock and a harsh,                      post-modern place</i>	<b>Margo Kingston</b> -pg7 <i>Back to white man knows                      best</i> <b>Sally Loane</b> p19 <i>Odd animals in the pack</i>	

THE SYDNEY MORNING HERALD

FRIDAY 27th 1998

	MALE		FEMALE	
	less than 40	40 and over	less than 40	40 and over
SPORT	Darren Beadman - Racing Alan Aitken - Racing	Max Presnell - Racing John Huxley - Racing John Holloway - Racing Greg Growden - Football Michael Cockerill - Olympics Peter Roebuck - Cricket Mark Ella - Football		
BUSINESS		Max Walsh Glenn Burge Richard Ackland		
NEWS&OP-ED		<b>Richard Ackland</b> p15 <i>The Bar has its own little list</i> <b>Michael Millett</b> p15 <i>Howard takes out insurance for a Wik election</i>		<b>Stephanie Dowrick</b> p15 <i>Sad picture of a president</i>

	MALE		FEMALE	
	less than 40	40 and over	less than 40	40 and over
SPORT	Richard Hinds - general about sports	Roy Masters - drugs in sport Max Presnell - Racing Peter Roebuck - Cricket		
BUSINESS		Ross Gittins Robert Gottilebsen Paul Clitheroe		
NEWS&OP-ED		<p><b>Antony Green</b>- pg11 <i>Decision sees the Labor Party get its just deserts</i></p> <p><b>Ambrose Evans-Pritchard</b> - pg21 <i>Weapons and media violence an explosive mix</i></p> <p><b>Leo Schofield</b>-pg32<i>Autumal days at last</i></p> <p><b>Hugh Mackay</b> pg32<i>This hybrid mosaic is us</i></p> <p><b>Richard Glover</b>-<i>Spectrum Embarrassed by old man emu</i></p> <p><b>Morris Gleitzman</b>- <i>GdWkend</i></p> <p><b>Mark Trevorrow and Bob Downe</b> <i>the two of us</i></p> <p><b>Mike Carlton</b>-<i>NewsReview Ugly sister syndrome Horses for courses</i></p> <p><b>Mike Seccombe</b> - <i>NewsReview (Kookaburra)</i></p> <p><b>McGuinness</b> - <i>NewsReview The legal profession is a law unto itself</i></p> <p><b>Alan Ramsey</b> - <i>NewsReview Fair is just a four letter word</i></p>		<p><b>Moya Sayer-Jones</b> <i>Gd Wkend - Her Say Auto Suggestion</i></p> <p><b>Melissa Sweet</b>-<i>Gd Wkend Health -Pet Theory</i></p> <p><b>Adele Horin</b>- <i>NewsReview In the public interest</i></p> <p><b>Jane Freeman</b>- <i>NewsReview Necking takes on a new meaning</i></p>

**THE AUSTRALIAN**  
**Columns, Comment/Analysis**

**Week**

**Monday 23rd March to Saturday 28th March 1998**

THE AUSTRALIAN

MONDAY 23rd March 1998

	MALE		FEMALE	
	less than 40	40 and over	less than 40	40 and over
SPORT	Stuart Rintoul - Football Fred Paule - Surfing Greg Pritchard - Football	Mike Coward - Cricket		
BUSINESS		John McIlwraith Peter Switzer		
NEWS&OP-ED		<b>Glenn Milne</b> - pg11 <i>Volatile Queensland Liberals ignite over Parer debacle</i> <b>Frank Devine</b> - pg13 <i>Moral yardstick the only effective way to measure abortion</i> <b>Matthew Abraham</b> - pg13 <i>Playing with electricity can be fatal</i> <b>Amin Saikai</b> - pg 13 ANU <i>Uncle Sam at a loss in the Persian Gulf</i>		<b>Ilan Synder</b> - pg13 Monash <i>Something sinister in the online vision</i>

THE AUSTRALIAN

TUESDAY 24th March 1998

	MALE		FEMALE	
	less than 40	40 and over	less than 40	40 and over
SPORT		Warwick Hadfield - Cricket		
BUSINESS		Mark Westfield Alan Wood Bryan Frith		
NEWS&OP-ED	<b>John Harms</b> -pg 15 <i>True leadership unites heart and mind</i>	<b>Barry Dickens</b> - pg15 <i>Adrift, lest we remember</i> <b>Alan Wood</b> -pg 15 <i>Trade pact is hardly the stuff of conspiracies</i>		<b>Beatrice Faust</b> - pg15 <i>Home truth: you needn't be in the church to be a paedophile</i>

THE AUSTRALIAN

WEDNESDAY 25th March 1998

	MALE		FEMALE	
	less than 40	40 and over	less than 40	40 and over
SPORT	<p><b>Stuart Rintoul</b> - pg 13 <b>OP-ED</b>  <i>Will the AFL's heart always belong to Melbourne - yes</i>                      Joe Lovejoy - Soccer                      Murray Hegecock - new Spts mag                      Robert Lusetich - new Spt mag</p>	<p><b>Graeme Leech</b> - pg 13 <b>OP-ED</b>  <i>Will the AFL's heart always belong to Melbourne - No</i>                      Mike Coward - Cricket                      Mick McGuane - Football</p>		
BUSINESS		<p>Mark Westfield                      Bryan Frith                      Les Coleman                      Garth Alexander</p>		
NEWS&OP-ED	<p><b>Cameron Stewart</b> - pg10  <i>Postcard from new York</i>  <i>Can we talk? Cabbies wish not</i></p>	<p><b>John Lloyd</b> - pg 13  <i>Boris the Slayer's reckless leap into abyss</i>  <b>Paul Kelly</b> - pg 13  <i>Tax split Howard's most potent foe</i>  <b>Graeme Turner</b> - h ed pg40  <i>Ethics are still important</i>  <b>McKenzie Wark</b> - h ed pg40  <i>Students deconstruct media thesis</i>  <b>Stuart Cunnigham and Terry Flew</b>                      -h ed pg41  <i>Journalism versus culture a pointless game</i>  <b>Gavin Moodie</b> - h ed pg 42  <i>Public funding for private unis: dream or nightmare</i></p>		

THE AUSTRALIAN

THURSDAY 26th March 1998

	MALE		FEMALE	
	less than 40	40 and over	less than 40	40 and over
SPORT				
BUSINESS		Mark Westfield Brian Frith	Rochelle Burbury	
NEWS&OP-ED		<b>Dennis Shanahan</b> -pg 2 <i>PM feels no need to pull trigger</i> <b>Paul Bedi</b> -pg 6 -Postcard from India <i>The monkey on a nation's back</i> <b>Frank Devine</b> -pg 11 <i>Outrage tempered by pragmatism</i> <b>Mike Steketee</b> -pg 11 <i>That same old (unhealthy) stalemate</i> <b>Paul Keating</b> - pg11 <i>Strategic links offer a pivotal role in rebuilding our region</i> <b>Alan Whitehead</b> - pg13 from THE OBSERVER <i>Canberra's bitter pill is hard to swallow</i>	<b>Susie O'Brien</b> -pg 11 <i>Shock value teed up by PR machine</i>	

THE AUSTRALIAN

FRIDAY 27th March 1998

	MALE		FEMALE	
	less than 40	40 and over	less than 40	40 and over
SPORT		Mike Coward - Cricket		
BUSINESS		Mark Westfield Geoff Leuhman Bryan Frith		
NEWS&OP-ED		<b>Greg Sheridan</b> - pg12 <i>Asia desperately need Japan to become a leader</i> <b>Duncan Campbell</b> -pg12 <i>PM moves his Queen into place</i> <b>Alan Oxley</b> -pg 12 <i>Be afraid:economic uncertainty is global</i>		<b>Cyndi Tebbel</b> -pg12 <i>Commonsense rejects the folly of confining body image</i>

THE AUSTRALIAN

Saturday 28th March 1998

	MALE		FEMALE	
	less than 40	40 and over	less than 40	40 and over
SPORT		Mike Coward - Cricket		
BUSINESS		Tery McCrann David Uren Peter Switzer David Bryant- Pers Fin	Jill Margo	
NEWS&OP-ED	<b>Mark Ragg</b> - Review pg16 <i>Mess with hormones and boys won't be boys</i>	<b>Huw Watkin</b> -pg14 Postcard from Cambodia <i>Cambodia wants fauna-free food</i> <b>Frank Devine</b> - Review pg29 <i>That's Language Mmmm. chunky</i> <b>Michael Duffy</b> - pg 27 Focus <i>A long history of public enmity</i> <b>Phillip Adams</b> -Review pg36 <i>Playboy of the western world</i> <b>Brian Matthews</b> The Aus Mag pg11 <i>Bleeding onto the page</i>	<b>Chana Liebovici</b> - Review pg16 <i>Saturation Sisterhood</i>	<b>Ramona Koval</b> - pg25 Focus <i>Ah yes, what a time they had in the 60's</i> <b>Susan Kurosawa</b> - The Aus Mag pg 46 <i>Present tense</i> <b>Gretel Killen</b> -The Aus Mag pg 49 <i>Baby, it's a dog's life</i> <b>Dr Rosie King</b> - Review pg16 <i>Suckers for Fantasy</i> <b>Jane Fraser</b> Review pg 36 Antipathies <i>Acting dumb</i>