

## Introduction

### Problem statement

Discourse analysis (DA), one of the methods of research purportedly used by the Media Monitoring Project (MMP) during the recent South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC) Inquiry into issues of racism in this country's media<sup>1</sup>, is central to the main concerns of this dissertation. The problem that it attempts to address centres on two different, and yet related, issues. The first one of these pertains to the criticisms that have been levelled against MMP by some of the media practitioners and scholars who evaluated the research reports that resulted from the above mentioned inquiry, particularly, this media monitoring agency's conception and application of discourse analysis. A brief outline of these criticisms is provided in the next few pages of this introduction. Even though these media practitioners and scholars have used different terminology to identify / characterise the text-based research methods / techniques that were used by MMP, rather than the term 'discourse analysis', all of them have slated the SAHRC appointed researchers for the manner in which they applied the methods in question, as well as the methodologies thereof. Paradoxically, though, despite MMP's claim to have used discourse analysis and content analysis (CA) alongside each other

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<sup>1</sup> In 1998, the Head of the South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC), Barney Pitso, received a request, in terms of Section 7 (1) of the Human Rights Act, 1994 (Act No. 54 of 1994), from two professional bodies, the Black Lawyers Association (BLA) and the Association of Black Accountants of South Africa (ABASA) to investigate two newspapers publishing from Johannesburg: *Mail and Guardian* and the *Sunday Times*, for allegedly being guilty of racism (*Fan/nines: Inquiry Into Racism in the Media*: 2000:5). Guided by the democratically elected South African government's constitutional commitment to creating a non-racial and non-sexist society, in 1999 the SAHRC appointed a non-governmental media monitoring agency known as the Media Monitoring Project, and an independent researcher, Claudia Braude, to undertake a large scale investigation into newspaper and broadcasting reporter in the light of BLA's and ABASA's allegations. In the resulting project, MMP proposed discourse analysis as one of the principal methods of inquiry by which it carried out its investigation. In its report entitled *News in Black and White: An investigation Into racial Stereotyping in the South African Media*, one of several reports published by the SAHRC during the course of the project in question, MMP stated: "In using discourse analysis then our aim would therefore be to examine how racist ideologies in our society are represented in the media and what the media's relationship with race and racism is (1996:6).

method /approach that is emphasised in its report<sup>2</sup>.  
careful perusal of the MMP report points to the fact

that content analysis figured more pervasively than did discourse analysis during the said study.

The second issue pertains to the manner in which some of the media scholars and practitioners referred to above have characterised / identified the research methods used by the independent researcher, Claudia Braude, and MMP during their respective investigations. For instance, whereas Eve Bertelsen in her short critique, identified the method used by Braude as ‘discourse analysis’ and MMP’s as ‘content analysis’ (2000:19), Guy Berger in his response submitted to the SAHRC hearings, used the term content analysis to refer to the method used by MMP and ‘textual analysis’ to refer to that used by Braude (2000:8). Contrary to the perceptions of Bertelsen, however, Braude used the term ‘textual analysis’ rather than discourse analysis, to characterise the method that she used. This is in spite of her frequent use of the concept of ‘discourse’ in her report titled *Cultural Bloodstains: Towards Understanding the Legacy of Apartheid and the Perpetuation of Racial Stereotypes in the Contemporary South African Media* (1999). This point forms the subject of an elaborate discussion and Chapter Three.

Especially noteworthy about these perceptions / characterisations, is the fact that whereas some of these scholars have tended to see the method used by MMP as content analysis, discourse analysis is, as already noted, the method that is emphasised by MMP in its report. This in turn raises questions about the understanding that these media practitioners and scholars have of discourse analysis. Adding to this puzzle, is the fact that the initial

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<sup>2</sup> Having referred to the limitations which beset studies that used content analysis as a method of inquiry in its report, MMP states that contemporary studies elsewhere have attempted to eliminate these limitations by engaging in a discourse analysis, which either coupled with a quantitative assessment or on its own, provides a more detailed evaluation (1999:5-6). Hereafter, MMP cites several studies that have used discourse analysis and the advantages that accrue from using this method. Rather than this, MMP does not provide any explicit statement about the route that it followed in this regard, that is, whether it used discourse analysis in combination with content analysis or discourse analysis alone. It only becomes apparent as one reads its report that an attempt was made by this agency to use discourse analysis and content analysis alongside each other, The fact was that MMP attempted to use CA in combination with DA, was also mentioned by William Bird, the head of MMP operations during the racism in the media inquiry, during a telephonic conversation with the author of this study.

help complement the qualitative study conducted by  
of analysis. As the SAHRC stated in its final report:

“During the course of Ms Braude’s research it became evident that her work would be incomplete if we did not engage in some quantitative analysis of the incidence of racism in the media. The Media Monitoring Project was involved, as it had to be, in developing and refining the brief” (*Faultlines: An Inquiry Into Racism in the Media*, 2000:9). Taking into account this mandate, therefore, it is somewhat puzzling why a qualitative method of research such as discourse analysis was emphasised in the manner that it was by MMP, and how it also came to feature so prominently in its scheme of things.

Using the MMP report titled *News in Black and White: An Investigation Into Racial Stereotyping in the Media* (1999) as a primary text, this dissertation attempts to critically examine the basis and validity of the perceptions and criticisms alluded to in the foregoing. In particular, it attempts to address the following questions: (a) Did MMP misconceive and misapply discourse analysis as Keyan Tomaselli (2001), among others, has argued? (b) Do differences in the manner in which some media scholars have characterised the method used by MMP suggest a misunderstanding of discourse analysis on their part? Hopefully, answers to these questions will emerge during the course my study, or at least by the end of it. Before providing an outline of the criticisms that have been levelled against MMP, it is necessary to offer the background on the developments that have characterised media monitoring debates in South Africa over the past ten years.

For almost a decade now, the issue of methods and methodologies has been a recurring subject in the debates around media monitoring in South Africa. Ever since the concept of media monitoring gained a wider public currency in the early 1990s - as the days of apartheid began to wane - media monitoring agencies have had to bear the brunt of fierce criticism from stakeholders and other interested parties regarding the methods and methodologies that they have applied in monitoring the activities of the media. Debates and discussions on the monitoring methods and methodologies applied by these agencies occurred, for instance, between the Campaign for Open Media (COM) and academic institutions between 1991 and 1993 (Tomaselli *et al*, 1994:89). Such discussions included

ting Monitoring Project (BMP), which was initially  
which later changed its name to the Media Monitoring

Project (MMP). As the following comment indicates:

BMP claims to offer ‘Comparative Analysis’, ‘Content Analysis’ and ‘Discourse Analysis’. What is offered as methodology, however, is nothing more than very loose ‘levels’ and vague description of them. To operationalize a definition, a category or a method means to explain how analysis will proceed. To use current political jargon, research methods have to be as ‘transparent’ as the BMP wants the SABC to be. (Tomaselli *et al*, 1994:86)

Similarly, Stefan Sonderling (1994) registered his disenchantment with text / content-based methods used by media monitoring agencies. As an alternative to what he saw as a narrow or restricted conception of discourse analysis, for example, he posited a reconstitution of this method of inquiry, in which the emphasis would be moved from the study of the formal structure of language delinked from social context to an approach which studies the discursive character of human practice. According to Tomaselli, even though the approach posited by Sonderling has to some extent offered a comparatively broader conception of discourse analysis; media-monitoring projects (2000:5) too has ignored it. This includes the recent SAHRC *Inquiry Into Racism in the Media*, and of which the study conducted by MMP was a part.

Further discontent regarding certain aspects of MMP methodology has also been registered by Berger (1996) in relation to a study in which this organisation surveyed newspapers’ and radio stations’ coverage for the Task Group on Government Communication, commonly known as COMTASK. (See his unpublished paper titled *Keynote Address for Working Group 5, Communication Research and Civil Society, 1996*). In relation to the manner in which MMP extrapolated meaning from its sources, he writes:

Most fundamentally, MMP fell into the trap of assuming meaning is [sic] inherent in messages and as being independent of audiences’ understanding of them. This is probably its greatest weakness, and indeed

ptable given the way this issue has been  
communications research literature over the past

Similarly, in his paper that was first delivered at a conference in Harare (Zimbabwe) in 1993, Themba Masilela also argued trenchantly against the text-emphasis of media monitoring methods and methodologies that do not ensure that consultation occurs between those who undertake research and those that are subjects of research inquiries (1997:18). In Tomaselli's opinion, Masilela's caveat in the said paper regarding the methods and methodologies used in monitoring the activities of the media, could be seen to have anticipated most of the criticisms that have been levelled against the SAHRC's *Inquiry into Racism in the Media* (2000:4).

The situation alluded to in the foregoing, in turn, suggests that MMP has barely changed the practices for which it has been vehemently criticised since the early 1990s. In other words, MMP does not seem to have either learnt from or heeded these criticisms. Since then, the amount of scholarly interest into issues of method and methodology vis-à-vis media monitoring has not showed any signs of abating. The deluge of responses to the respective studies conducted by MMP and Braude into issues of racism in the media recently, bears a testimony to this fact. Berger (2000); Bertelsen (2000); Arnold De Beer (2000); Jeremy Gordin (2000); Gavin Stewart (1999); and Tomaselli (2000a), among others, have each expressed discontent, albeit with different emphases, about the methods and methodologies applied by MMP and the independent researcher, Braude, to investigate matters pertaining to racism and racial stereotyping in the South African media. Thus, this study is not unprecedented in its attempt to argue against MMP's conception and application of text-based research methods that it used during the SAHRC Inquiry.

One of the criticisms of the manner in which Braude and MMP have applied their methods and methodologies during the SAHRC Inquiry has been levelled by Stewart, an academic-turned newspaper editor. In his response to the SAHRC's *Interim Report* (1999) he writes: "Other ways of examining content - such as the methods of critical

analysis - encounter similar problems. The insights they  
they are largely in the eyes of the believerö (1999:9).

Similarly, in an opinion article that featured in the *Sunday Tribune* of November 2000, Gordin expressed discontent about the manner in which Braude conducted her research during the SAHRC Inquiry. In countering her claim that she was discouraged by the Commission from interviewing media professionals, he writes: "This though apparently not Braude's fault, seems a strange way to conduct research where the central findings are, at the end of the day, on the motives, conscious or unconscious, of media professionals" (2000:28).

A more sustained attack on the SAHRC Inquiry in relation to issues of methods and methodology has come from Tomaselli (2000). He charges, among other things, that:

Braude and MMP researchers, in writing up their separate sections, inexorably found racism, even in black-written reports, by imposing a deterministic form of media theory, which they term "textual analysis", via "cultural studies" without examining context from which that reporting was produced. MMP provided "discourse analysis" supported by an incomprehensible numerical analysis to give scientific validity to Braude's rhetoric. (2000: 9).

He further accuses MMP of misapplying discourse analysis as interpreted by the Dutch scholar, Teun van Dijk (1985). In particular, he criticises this media monitoring agency for having ignored the pre-conditions that Van Dijk (1985) has prescribed for an adequate use of this method. These include: (i) understanding media theories of how news is made; (ii) doing reception analysis on minorities within majorities; (iii) doing a sound discourse analysis which must take all relevant discursive and contextual parameters into account; and (iv) doing a critical social analysis of power structures and group or ethnic differences and conflicts involved (Response to the SAHRC's final report *Faultlines*, 2000b: 6).

By the same token, De Beer (2000) in his forthcoming article charges that the research methods used by MMP were extremely opaque and vague. He raises the question of how

st content of media texts and racist conduct by media  
w the SAHRC and its researchers determined the  
intention or meaning of a newspaper with a particular article whether different readers  
experienced it as racist or not. Even though Berger does not use the term discourse  
analysis to criticise the method used by MMP, he does, however, question Braudeø (and  
by implication MMPø) sole reliance on textual analysis (which is one aspect /  
component of discourse analysis) to conduct her research, He writes:

A different methodology, one which allowed for various (even  
contradictory) possible readings is entirely lacking. This is not surprising,  
because such an approach would have impelled Braude away from  
exclusive textual analysis towards some audience research ô some  
assessment of how and why audiences find or read racism into the media.  
(Submission for the HRC Investigation into Racism and the Media,  
2000:10)

In like manner, in her useful article titled ‘Race, Class, and Other Prejudicesø (2000),  
which featured in the *Rhodes Journalism Review*, Bertelsen finds the SAHRCø research  
(and by implication MMPø and Braudeø) deficient in the following aspects: failing to  
provide (i) a clear definition of the question to be investigated; (ii) carefully designed  
data; (iii) an appropriate design and methodology; and (iv) a rigorous analysis and  
interpretation. She particularly raises the question of whether race propositions which are  
embedded in complex news stories, can be appropriately coded by using what she  
describes as ‘content analysisö (2000:19), and which MMP tends to parade as discourse  
analysis. Bertelsen further criticises both Braude and MMP for failing to address the  
entire media cycle, engaging moments of production, distribution, and consumption  
during their respective investigations (2000:19). Noteworthy about Bertelsenø critique, is  
her predilection to characterise the method of research used by MMP as content analysisø  
and Braudeø as ‘discourse analysisø with the result that the latter characterisation does  
not accord with the claim made by Braude in her report.

While these seemingly inaccurate characterisations could in pan be attributed to the fact  
that discourse analysis in mass media research has now become more or less regarded as

cal content analyses (Krippendorff, 1980), they also  
opinion that the distinction between these methods of  
research was neither correctly identified by Bertelsen (2000), nor was it correctly  
understood and represented by MMP. Part of the reason for these inaccurate  
characterisations could be attributed to the fact that MMP did not explicitly state in its  
report that it had used discourse analysis and CA alongside each other; hence, this only  
becomes evident as one examines the presentation of its findings in the report. A further  
reason could be attributed to the fact that one of the two methods tended to predominate  
over the other in the MMP report, thereby leading some of the scholars to only identify  
the dominant one. As I demonstrate in Chapter Three, a careful perusal of the MMP  
report suggests that content analysis predominated over MMP's brand of discourse  
analysis (pun intended).

A close reading of the MMP report also raises question1 about the manner in which  
discourse analysis was conceived of and applied by MMP. If the discourse approach in  
mass media research has become more or less accepted as an alternative or addition to  
content analysis, as already noted, the problem posed by this nuance becomes evident in  
the MMP report. In it, MMP relied a great deal on frequency analysis, tables, graphs, and  
statistics, which tend to feature commonly in studies that have used content analysis as a  
method of inquiry, to present its findings, this was used in combination with the list of  
propositions, which can be regarded as pointing to a partial application of *propositional  
analysis* (PA), that the researchers formulated, and which MMP erroneously parades as  
discourse analysis. Not surprisingly, however, MMP's attempt to use CA and discourse  
analysis alongside each other is not unprecedented. In his book *News Analysis: Case  
Studies of International and National news in the Press* (1988), for example, Van Dijk  
himself, and whose trajectory regarding discourse analysis MMP purports to have  
followed, claims to have made a simultaneous use of content analysis and discourse  
analysis in order to investigate the reproduction of racist ideology in media texts.  
Similarly, in his other book *Racism and the Press* (1991a), Van Dijk has used discourse  
analysis and content analysis alongside each other to investigate issues pertaining to  
racism and the press.

Discourse analysis is one of the methods of research that was used by MMP during its investigation, as this organisation claims, this necessitates that we establish, among other things, whether or not the project's application of this method does meet the requirements of what Van Dijk (1985) calls 'a sound discourse analysis'<sup>3</sup> and what Norman Fairclough (1995b) describes as 'critical discourse analysis'<sup>4</sup>. Even though the relevance and appropriacy of discourse analysis as a method of research is itself questionable<sup>5</sup> - and this is a topic of research in itself - the present study is primarily concerned with the question of whether or not MMP demonstrates a clear understanding and proper application of discourse analysis in its report. In this vein, the question of whether or not racism exists in the South African media is peripheral to the main concerns of my study. While the separate study conducted by Braude, as part of the SAHRC *Inquiry Into Racism in the Media* does not form the primary focus of this dissertation, occasional reference is made to it as well.

## Background to the study

One of the significant developments that have taken place in the humanities and the social sciences in the past thirty-five years, beginning in the mid-1960s, is the widespread, multidisciplinary attention that has been given to discourse (Van Dijk, 1985:xi). This development has resulted in the burgeoning of a new method of inquiry (which has in turn developed into a fully-fledged field of inquiry) that has come to be known as discourse analysis. While the origins of discourse analysis can be traced back to classical rhetoric, various contemporary approaches that constitute this cross-disciplinary method emerged between the mid-1960s and mid-1970s. They emerged from

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<sup>3</sup> In Volume 4 of the series *Handbook of Discourse Analysis*, Van Dijk writes: 'Without a sound discourse analysis, which takes all the relevant discursive and contextual parameters into account, and without an adequate and critical social analysis of the power structures and group or ethnic differences and conflicts involved, we will of course yield the wrong assessment and hence misguided advice' (1985b: 8).

<sup>4</sup> According to Fairclough, critical discourse analysis involves an analysis of text, discourse practice, and social practice (1995b: 9).

<sup>5</sup> David Sless (1986) provides a valuable critical discussion on what he terms the 'delusions of discourse analysis'. Basing his discussion on Brown and Yule's (1980) theory of discourse analysis, he amply demonstrates how this method tends to fall into the trap of the cultural and literary studies' textual approach in which the interpreting scholar (or discourse analyst) assumes the role an omniscient purveyor and interpreter, thereby relegating that of the reader to a secondary position.

topology, semiotics, poetics, ethnography, stylistics, social psychology, linguistics, and other disciplines in the humanities and the social sciences that were interested in the systematic study of structures, functions, and processing text and talk (Van Dijk, 1991b: 108).

Discourse analysis arose as a reaction to a more traditional form of linguistics (formal, structural linguistics, represented mainly by Noam Chomsky's *generative grammar*) which focused on the constituent units and structure of sentence and which did not concern itself with an analysis of language in use (Mills, 1997:135), as discourse analysis claims or attempts to do. The past few decades have witnessed a proliferation of various brands of discourse analysis, each of which involves different emphases or levels and styles of analysis (Burman & Parker, 1993:3). By and large, the extant volume of studies involving the discourse analysis approach - both as a method of inquiry and an object of study - could be said to have grown by leaps and bounds across the spectrum of disciplines in the recent decades, more especially in the humanities and the social sciences.

As part of the developments alluded to above, studies involving discourse analysis have expanded to include mass media research. Even though the application of discourse analysis in this field is relatively new (Van Dijk, 1988:3), and while the number of studies in this regard are still limited (Van Dijk, 1991b: 108), this method is now being used increasingly in mass media research where it has become more or less accepted as an alternative or addition to classical content analyses (Krippendorff, 1980). Van Dijk notes that the applications of discourse analysis in mass media research are as diverse and varied as the very fields of discourse studies and mass communication themselves, and points out that much of these tend to have a linguistic orientation (1991:108). He sees the early stylistic studies of Leech (1966); Crystal and Davy (1979); Fowler (1991); Kress (1985); and Chilton (1985; 1988) as exemplifying this orientation, and points out that many of these works have been influenced by Halliday's systematic grammar (Halliday, 1978; 1985). Van Dijk notes that equally diverse in orientation, is the critical work of the

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1976; 1980) on the media representation of industrial and Walton (1983), and the cultural studies approach of the *Centre/or Contemporary Cultural Studies* (Hall, *et al*, 1980). Even though these approaches deal with language, images, and discourse, he further notes; they are not part of linguistics proper; instead, they pay special attention to the ideological and political dimension of media messages (1991b: 108). Van Dijk also notes that even though much of this work has been done in the United Kingdom, studies that have used discourse analysis in mass media research have now spread to countries such as the Netherlands, USA, Australia, Germany, Austria, and many others (1991b: 17).

Following Van Dijk's own landmark studies (1985; 1987; 1988; 1991b), in which he made extensive use of discourse analysis to conduct research into issues of racism and ethnocentrism in relation to minority racial groups in Europe, several similar or related studies have been conducted elsewhere. Brookes (1995), Fair and Astroff (1995), and Duncan (1996), among others, have used discourse analysis to reveal 'the ideological construction of Africa' (Brookes, 1995:1) or to reveal the 'reproduction of the ideology of racism' (Duncan, 1996:173). Similarly, Wetherell and Potter (1987) have employed discourse analysis in their analysis of the discursive structures of racism or to analyse the workings of a racist discourse. Even though discourse analysis has not been a subject of an intensive academic scholarship in mass media research in South Africa, as compared to Britain and the United States, there are clear indications that this method of inquiry has not been totally neglected. It has, for instance, been used in some cases as a method of inquiry and in others as an object of study. Studies in this regard mainly include journal articles and dissertations. While these studies primarily deal with the issue of discourse analysis in the context of media texts, some of these have been conducted in disciplines such as psychology and linguistics, as I show below.

In his article titled 'Taalhandelings Determinante in die Koerantkoppe' Elriena Delport (1999) employs the discourse approach to discuss the newspaper as a linguistic axis in the communicative interaction between the writer of the headline and the reader against the background of speech act theory. Discourse analysis also features in Les Switzer's (1998)

press: A Case Study in Reading a Cultural Text in  
p between language, text, and community in South  
Africa's subaltern world during the generation that ended in the early years of the  
apartheid era. Even though not dealing specifically with media phenomena, in his  
polemical article titled "The methodology of discourse analysis" Neil Lightfoot (1996)  
argues that discourse analysis fails to meet any of the criteria prerequisite to method and  
cannot, therefore, constitute itself as a method. In an MA dissertation titled "Media  
Representations of Satanism: A Discourse Analytic Approach" a work which appears in  
the National Research Foundation's (NRF) data base under the authorship of P.T.D.  
Constance<sup>6</sup> (1999), this candidate used discourse analysis to elucidate the ideological  
foundation of alleged satanic threat by examining local newspapers' portrayal of  
Satanists and satanic activities during a particular period in which the study was  
undertaken.

Similarly, Norman Fairclough's (1995b) concept of a "critical discourse analysis" forms  
part of Nikhil Bramdaw's (1994) dissertation in which he sets out to explore the  
exclusivist construction of Indian ethnic identity by the Indian-owned print medium  
during the 1994 South African elections, when various parties fought for what is now  
commonly referred to as the Indian vote. As mentioned earlier, the recent SAHRC  
Inquiry into issues of racism in the South African media has once again brought the issue  
of methods and methodology vis-à-vis media monitoring to the forefront of academic  
media debates in country. Apart from being prompted by the perceptions and criticisms  
mentioned earlier, the present study's critical examination of MMP's conception and  
application of discourse analysis has other specific aims, which in turn shed light on the  
relevance and significance of the study, as I show below.

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<sup>6</sup> Aside from the fact that the Department of Psychology at the University of Natal in Pietermaritzburg (UNP) denies having supervised the study in question, this dissertation also does not appear in the list of publications in the library of this university. It is for this reason that the *first* name of the author of the dissertation in question cannot be provided, hence only the initials of its author appear in the NRF database.

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### **Aims, Relevance, and Significance of this study**

Research is both by definition and in principle a public matter. Anyone who engages / proposes to engage in it, has to come to terms with the reality that he / she will automatically enter into a public discourse arena, of which research scientists and scholars are guardians and custodians. As guardians and custodians of the discourse of research, they in turn form part of the broader community of researchers and scholars world-wide. Aside from being a public matter, research can be perplexing. One area that best exemplifies such perplexity is that of methodology. The source of this perplexity can be inferred from Paul Leedy's comment that: "Research methodology is a continuing process. It is a continuum that is ever changing, ever developing, and this aspect of research methodology has disturbed some" (1999:134). Paradoxically, though, methodology remains the hub of any research undertaking, for the success of the latter (research) depends largely on the perceptiveness and ingenuity with which a researcher applies it. As Festings and Katz have noted: " . . . no research results are any better than the methods by which they are obtained" (1953:1).

The significance and centrality of methodology to research is also underlined by Richard Rudner who notes that: "For the methodology of a scientific discipline is not a matter of its transient techniques but of the logic of its justification, The method of a science is, indeed, the rationale on which it bases its acceptance or rejection of hypothesis or theory" (1966:5). Hopefully, it must have been the recognition of these realities, among other things, that the SAHRC openly invited public responses to the studies that it commissioned MMP and Braude to conduct. As stated in their *Interim Report*: "In terms of the agreed methodology, all those institutions, corporate bodies, organisations, and individuals who have interest in responding to any part of the report are free to do so" (1999:2). The barrage of responses to the respective studies conducted by Braude and MMP also attest to the significance that scholars attach to the issue of methodology in any research undertaking.

the SAHRC is a significant one in the contemporary  
village. Inevitably, the results and findings thereof  
might, as was done to BMP's earlier reports,<sup>7</sup> be disseminated to the rest of the world's  
research and scientific community, whose unwavering interest in such matters, as has  
been suggested, cannot be underestimated. It is essential therefore that the methods and  
methodologies applied by MMP to arrive at its findings be subjected to a rigorous process  
of scrutiny. Thus, the critical process that this study entails is also aimed at making a  
methodological contribution. Critical research such as that proposed by the present study  
has both theoretical significance and relevance.

The notion of theoretical relevance is summed up by the question of whether or not the  
research will contribute to the advancement of a particular field of research and how  
useful this knowledge will be for further development of that field. Certainly, the issue of  
research methodology in MMP's study could have considerable repercussions for future  
investigations on the subject of racism. Criticism and evaluation are some of the essential  
means by which knowledge advancement is achieved, especially if an anomaly<sup>8</sup> is  
detected within a particular paradigm that is being used. By subjecting the methods and  
methodologies (in this case discourse analysis) applied by MMP to a rigorous process of  
scrutiny, this study hopes to make a vital methodological and theoretical contribution  
both to the existing corpus of studies on discourse analysis and as well as those which  
may be undertaken in future, both in this country and racism, in other parts of the world.

The study conducted by MMP is an initial step towards social intervention on the part of  
the SAHRC, and which is in turn aimed at eradicating the legacy of racism in the South  
African media. Social interventions such as the one proposed by the SAHRC will  
certainly benefit from the contribution that the present study hopes to make. Especially

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<sup>7</sup> Tomaselli *et al* state that the reports resulted from the studies conducted by the then Broadcasting Monitoring Project (BMP) prior to the landmark elections of 1994 in South Africa were published and widely distributed to foreign embassies and the press (1994:84).

<sup>8</sup> In his book *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (1962), Thomas Kuhn uses this concept to describe a situation whereby a particular paradigm that is being used produces results that deviate from the rules of normal science. He argues that if this aberrant tendency keeps recurring and resists attempts to assimilate it, this may prompt a suspicion that something is amiss with the currently accepted paradigm and set the stage for its demise or for a shift to a new one (see p.10 of the 1970 edition).

present an important *diagnostic tool* that can help to search. Therefore, apart from being done in order to fulfill academic requirements on the part of its author, this study has corrective evaluation as one of its aims.

## Theoretical framework

As already noted, the present study attempts to critically examine the MMP report under scrutiny against the background of the perceptions and criticisms alluded to earlier regarding MMP's conception and application of discourse analysis. In other words, or put differently, the MMP report is used as backdrop against which to examine and verify the basis and validity of these perceptions and criticisms. Obviously, providing a critical examination of discourse analysis in the context of research methodology, as the present study partly attempts to do, would necessitate an analysis that spans across the broader field of both research methodology and discourse analysis theory. A comprehensive or fully-fledged theoretical exegesis of these areas of study would clearly be a highly complex undertaking for the scope of this study. Given therefore the convoluted nature of research methodology and discourse analysis theory, this study has in part been premised on a *grounded theoretical approach*, which Neuman describes as a qualitative research method that uses a systematic set of procedures to develop an inductively derived theory about phenomena that is being studied. He points out that this approach allows theory to develop simultaneously with data collection and analysis (1997:334).

According to Neuman, one of the essential strategies by which *grounded theory* is generated and operationalised is *comparative analysis*; that is, it builds a theory by making comparisons. He cites two advantages that accrue from using this approach to theory. Firstly, *grounded theory* makes qualitative research flexible and let the data and theory interact. Secondly, it enables the researcher to remain open to the unexpected, and makes it possible to change the direction of research if it becomes necessary (1997:334). This approach to theory has proved to be valuable for the present study, which sought to investigate convoluted areas such as research methodology and discourse analysis theory.

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to deal with a variety of emergent / contingent issues  
work did not cater for. However, adopting a *grounded  
approach to theory* does not necessarily mean that this study has been approached  
without any theory, for as Neuman himself points out 'almost all research involves  
some theory' (334-37).

Guided by the *grounded* approach to theory, therefore, several theories were tentatively  
proposed and applied, and these subsequently provided a theoretical backdrop against  
which a broader picture of discourse analysis and content analysis has been painted, and  
against which MMP's conception and handling of discourse analysis has been examined.  
These include insights drawn from research methodology; discourse analysis theory<sup>9</sup>;  
content analysis theory<sup>10</sup>; reception analysis<sup>11</sup>; mass media society theory of the media;<sup>12</sup>  
mass society theory of media power;<sup>13</sup> and the 'effects model' of communication.<sup>14</sup>  
Whereas under research methodology and content analysis various theoretical insights on

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<sup>9</sup> A cross-disciplinary method of inquiry which studies the structures of texts and considers their linguistic and socio-cultural dimensions in order to determine how meaning is constructed. It developed out of two main traditions, namely, the Anglo-American and French traditions. In the Anglo-American context, on the one hand, discourse analysis concentrates on various forms of oral communication (everyday conversation speech acts, 'talk') from an interactional and ethno-methodological perspective, and investigates how power and authority are distributed in verbal exchanges. The French tradition, on the other hand, following the work of Michel Foucault, Louis Althusser, and Mikhail Bakhtin, constitutes its object differently, concentrating largely, although not exclusively, on written material in its institutional, social and political context (Markaryk, 1993:164).

<sup>10</sup> Content analysis theory does not form a coherent body of theory. Instead, it comprises a variety of loose insights that have been advanced by various scholars over the past five decades on the research technique known as content analysis. These include, among others, the work of Janis (1950) and Krippendorff (1980). For a more elaborate discussion of content analysis, see chapter 2 of the present study.

<sup>11</sup> 'Reception theory can be better understood by looking at the work of the Constance School of Reception Aesthetics. The members of the Constance School turned to the reading and reception of literary texts instead of to traditional methods that emphasise the production of texts or close examination of texts themselves. Their approach is therefore related to reader-response criticism which argues for a consideration to be taken of meanings that readers formulate out of texts, rather than those of authors (Markaryk, 1993:14). A similar idea applies to reception analysis in the context of media texts.

<sup>12</sup> This theory emphasises the interdependence of institutions that exercise power, and thus the integration of the media into sources of power and authority. It gives primacy to the media as a cause and maintainer of mass society and rests very much on the idea that the media offer a view of the world which is not only a potent means of manipulating the people, but also an aid to their psychic survival under difficult conditions (McQuail, 1987:62-63).

<sup>14</sup> Also known as the 'hypodermic needle model' the 'effects model' of communication is based on a mechanistic and unsophisticated view of the media-audience relationship, which sees the media as 'injecting' values, ideas and information into each individual in a passive and atomised audience, thereby producing a direct and unmediated effect (O'Sullivan, 1994: 137).

research report, such as those offered by Klaus Berger (1998) have been utilised, under discourse analysis, insights drawn from the broader field of discourse analysis have been used. These mainly include Fairclough's (1995b) concept of 'critical discourse analysis', Van Dijk's (1985) notion of 'a sound discourse analysis', and various other insights drawn from the vast field of discourse analysis. In addition to this theoretical framework, insights drawn from various mass media theories have also been used. These include Dennis McQuail's (1997) work on reception analysis, David Gauntlett's (1998) critique of the 'effects' model, and John Hartley's (1982) critical discussion on the news in relation to the concept of ideology.

## Methods and methodology

Notwithstanding the interconnected nature of qualitative and quantitative methods of research, and the attendant problem of drawing a clear line of demarcation between the two, at can, however, be said that the type of research undertaken in the present study is largely qualitative. It is qualitative in the sense that its orientation is organised around theorising, analysing, and interpreting the data that have been extracted from the MMP report. Unlike in the case of quantitative research, in which the researcher amasses vast quantities of data, and relies a great deal on graphs, tables, frequency analysis, and statistics to present his / her findings, this study attempts to interpret, analyse, and explain the MMP report in the light of the problem stated earlier. Attempts to solicit MMP's side of the story regarding the issue of discourse analysis were not successful, as the letter of response by William Bird of MMP attached to the appendix of this study shows. Nonetheless, the evidence extracted from the report seems sufficient to present a reasonable case for the argument regarding perceptions and criticisms cited in the opening paragraphs.

However, in line with the *grounded theoretical approach* alluded to under the previous subheading, this study mainly uses the *comparative method* of qualitative analysis to investigate how discourse analysis was conceived of and applied by MMP. It uses Van Dijk's (1991b) example on discourse analysis (which as mentioned earlier, is based on a



## Defining and doing content analysis and discourse analysis

Considering the perceptions and criticisms mentioned in the previous chapter regarding MMP's conception and application of discourse analysis, it seems both necessary and imperative not only to develop a clear understanding of this method of inquiry, but also to establish a clear sense of the distinction between it and content analysis. This is especially significant, given the affinity that exists between these research methods / techniques, and to which reference has been made throughout this study. Attempting to define discourse analysis, and making a clear sense of the distinction between it and content analysis, would have to address three fundamental questions, it seems reasonable to suggest. These are: What is discourse analysis? How does discourse analysis differ from content analysis in terms of definition and method of application? And, are discourse analysis and content analysis mutually exclusive? These three questions form the main focus around which the exposition in present chapter is constructed. There are several reasons why such a discussion is vital for my study, as I show below.

Foremost among these reasons, is Krippendorff's (1980) comment that discourse analysis in mass media research has now become more or less accepted as an alternative or addition to classical content analyses, a situation that seems to make the two methods prone to confusion by some scholars and researchers. Hopefully, the exposition in this chapter will help to clear up some of the misconceptions that underlie this confusion. Secondly, is Burman and Parker's comment that "it is very difficult to speak of 'discourse' or even 'discourse analysis' as a single unitary entity, since this would blur together different approaches subscribing to specific and different philosophical frameworks" (1993:3). Thirdly, is the further comment made by Burman and Parker that "there is a danger of pretending that there is a simple method for gathering discourses and of glossing over the differences between discourse analysts" (1993:2). And, as David Sless also puts it: "There is no single theory or method of discourse analysis and, as must be obvious from the spread of its subject matter, no single theory is likely" (1986:75). Accordingly, the reasons mentioned above, in turn, make it difficult for anyone to simplistically level a charge about whether or not discourse analysis has been

e, the field of study and the method of inquiry that the both highly convoluted.

As an initial step toward developing a clear understanding of discourse analysis and its method of application, the exposition in this chapter begins with a historical résumé of content analysis, and examines some of the definitions and insights that scholars have advanced in this regard. It then provides a discussion on how content analysis has been commonly applied in mass media research, a domain to which it naturally belongs (Deacon *et al*, 1999:16). A brief incursion into the history of the origins and development of discourse analysis follows. This is followed by an examination of various definitions of and insights on discourse analysis that scholars from diverse disciplines have propounded over the years. Drawing insights from Van Dijkø (1991b) cognitive model of discourse analysis, it then provides an example of how this method has been or can be applied in mass media research. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the differences and similarities between discourse analysis and content analysis, and attempts to address the question of whether or not these methods of inquiry are mutually exclusive. Thus, in establishing a clear understanding of what discourse analysis is, and in showing how it differs from content analysis, both in terms of definition and the method in which it is applied, this chapter sets the stage for the critique of the MMP report offered in Chapter Three.

Even though the intellectual roots of both discourse analysis and content analysis could be traced back to the previous centuries of European history, content analysis in its contemporary form precedes discourse analysis by several decades. Content analysis, on the one hand, has its intermediate precursors in such methods as *quantitative newspaper analysis*<sup>15</sup> (which developed towards the end of the 19th century), *propaganda analysis*<sup>16</sup> (which gained prominence during the period around the Second World War),

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<sup>15</sup> Quantitative newspaper analysis is a method used to provide the frequency measures of content factors in a particular newspaper product by means of selected advertisements. He states that it is designed in order to monitor the trends in the context of newspapers (Rademeyer, 1987:1)

<sup>16</sup> Propaganda analysis started out as an instrument for identifying individuals as õunethicalö sources of influence. According to the Institute for Propaganda Analysis (1937), Krippendorff points out, propagandists reveal themselves by their use of such tricks as õname callingö, using õglittering

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gained currency in the late 1950s). Writing in 1980, content analysis was about fifty years then, and that it has only been listed in the *Webster's Dictionary of English Language* since 1961 (1980:9). Contemporary approaches that constitute discourse analysis, on the other hand, only emerged between the mid-1960s and mid-1970s. For chronological reasons, therefore, it seems fitting that this exposition should begin with an examination of content analysis, and then follow with that of discourse analysis. Only then, it seems reasonable to suggest, can one be in a position to adequately address the question of what discourse analysis is, and subsequently the question regarding MMP's conception and application of this method of inquiry.

## What is content analysis?

### A résumé of the history and development of content analysis

While the origins of content analysis may be traced back to previous centuries of European history, empirical inquiries into communications content date back to studies in theology in the late 1600s, when the Church became worried about the spread of non-religious matters through newspapers (Krippendorff, 1980:13). Based on an anecdotal account by Dovring (1954-1955), Krippendorff speculates that probably the first well-documented case of *quantitative analysis* - one of the precursors or earliest versions of content analysis - involved a collection of 90 hymns (titled *Songs of Zion*) of unknown authorship in the eighteenth century Sweden (1980:13). He states that even though the said collection had passed the initial state censorship, it was soon afterwards blamed for undermining the orthodox clergy of the Swedish State Church, a situation which, in turn, led scholars to begin to count religious symbols in these songs. This controversy, Krippendorff points out, stimulated a methodological debate on the level of which the issue was finally resolved (1980:13).

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generalities, plain folk's identifications, cardstacking, bandwagon devices, and so on. Such devices, he further points out, were said to be easily identifiable in religious and political speeches (1980:16).

<sup>17</sup> Software developments made the computer more and more amenable to literal (as opposed to numerical) data processing, computer programmes for word counts became available, providing the basis for the use of computer programmes to analyse data (Krippendorff, 1980:190).

Loebel in 1903, and Max Weber at the German  
opose a large-scale content analysis of the press, an  
attempt which for a variety of reasons did not get off the ground (Krippendorff, 1980:13),  
there are several other factors that nurtured the development of content analysis. These  
include: (a) the fact that the new and more powerful electronic media of communication  
could no longer be treated as an extension of newspapers; (b) the fact that the period  
following the economic crisis after the First World War brought numerous social and  
political problems to which the new mass media were thought to be causal; and (c) the  
emergence of empirical methods of inquiry in the social sciences (Krippendorff,  
1980:15).

The turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century also brought about a considerable increase in the mass  
production of newsprint in the United States, a concern to assess markets, and interest in  
public opinion. Amidst these developments, journalism schools emerged, leading to the  
demand for ethical standards and for empirical inquiries into phenomena of the  
newspaper. Krippendorff points out that these demands, plus a somewhat simplistic  
notion of scientific objectivity, were met by what became known as *quantitative  
newspaper analysis* (1980:13-14). However, it was only later in the first half of the  
twentieth century, as mass production of the newsprint media began to gain ascendancy,  
that content analysis began to take shape, receiving a major impetus from its large scale  
application during World War II. One valuable account on the evolution and concerns of  
content analysis is offered by Deacon *et al* (1999). They note, for example, that  
Berelson's (1952) definition of content analysis as "a research technique for the  
objective, systematic and quantitative description of the manifest content" (1999:115)  
serves a useful purpose in highlighting the key aspects regarding the origins and concerns  
of content analysis as a method of inquiry. They argue that the claim to "objectivity" and  
the emphasis on "manifest" (i.e. observable) evidence reveal the scientific ambitions that  
prompted the development of this research technique. Like other quantitative techniques /  
methods of research that developed in the early part of the twentieth century, content  
analysis was designed to bring the academic rigour and authority of "natural" scientific  
inquiry to the study of human and social phenomena (Deacon *et al*, 1999:15). However,

was to receive a major impetus from its large-scale  
War II.

Another impetus to the development of content analysis, Deacon *et al* (1999) note, grew out of the widespread and coincidental concerns before the Second World War about the growth and influence of new mass media. The Institute for Propaganda Analysis (1937) is viewed by these authors to offer a classical example of the belief in the monstrous power of the mass media. At that time, they further note, it was widely supposed that mass audiences were highly susceptible to manipulation by the mass media. Content analysis was then seen to provide academics and politicians with the means to police the symbolic arenas of mass culture, and in particular, to detect the presence of propaganda. Deacon *et al* (1999) further point out that it was not just the positivists and politicians who saw value in developing a systematic and broad-ranging method for analysing trends in mass communications, but some of the towering intellectuals of the time, including Max Weber. A further impetus also occurred in the late 1950s as software developments made the computer more and more amenable to literal (as opposed to numerical) data processing, and as computer programs for word counts became available (Krippendorff, 1980:19). Since then, content analysis has mushroomed into numerous areas, and has since been used in other fields of study, rather than mass communication only. With this brief discussion of the origin and development of content analysis in mind, I will now turn to the definition of content analysis.

### **Defining content analysis**

Aside from the fact that the term *content analysis* is often used inconsistently within the literature (Deacon *et al*, 1999:115), and apart from the existence of various kinds of content analyses (Berger, 1998:55), it seems reasonable to view the research technique that the term denotes as being less prone to the conceptual confusion that has shrouded discourse analysis. Part of the explanation for this situation seems to lie in content analysis's concern with manifest content, and in its purport to be seeking to do research that is both objective and repeatable or replicatable, a goal that is immensely difficult to accomplish with discourse analysis. Whereas the term content analysis is generally used,

to cover any method that involves analysing content, it  
be a specific analytic approach (1999:115).

In their book *Key concepts in Communication and Cultural Studies*, O'Sullivan *et al* describe content analysis as 'the analysis of frequencies in manifest content of messages using the identification and counting of key units of content as the basis of its method' (1994:62). This definition renders content analysis somewhat akin to the categories of this method that Janis (1965) describes as *designation analysis*, *attribution analysis*, and *assertions analysis*<sup>18</sup>. As with O'Sullivan *et al*, Wood & Kroger state that conventional content analysis involves the coding of a text into mutually exclusive categories, the counting of category occurrences, and their statistical analysis (2000:32). O'Sullivan *et al* (1994) also state that content analysis stresses the *objectivity* and repeatability of its methods, and uses the *empiricism* of its data to define itself in contrast to more interpretative methods of studying content, such as discourse analysis and conversation analysis. They further observe that content analysis is non-selective, and works on the total *message*, or message system, or upon a statistically constituted sample. They therefore conclude that the results of content analysis may be expressed as figures, but are more frequently and usefully given as percentages (1999:115).

In his book *Content Analysis in Communications Research*, Berelson (1952) offers another enlightening definition of content analysis. As with O'Sullivan *et al* (1994), he defines content analysis as 'a research technique for the objective, systematic, and quantitative description of manifest content of communication' (1952:18). A more

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<sup>18</sup> According to Krippendorff Janis (1965) provided several categories of content analysis which go under the rubric of Semantic Content Analysis, a term that was used to designate procedures which classify signs according to their meanings, and these include the following:

- (a) *Designation analysis* - which provides the frequency with which certain objects are referred to, that is, roughly speaking, the subject-matter analysis e.g. reference to German foreign policy.
- (b) *Attribution analysis* - which provides the frequency with which certain objects are referred to e.g. reference to dishonesty.
- (c) *Assertions analysis* - which provides the frequency with which certain objects are characterised in a particular way, that is, roughly speaking, thematic analysis e.g. reference to German foreign policy (1980:33)

Content analysis is offered by Charles Wright who states

Content analysis is a research technique for the systematic classification and description of communication content according to certain usually predetermined categories. It may involve quantitative or qualitative analysis, or both. Technical objectivity requires that the categories of classification and analysis be clearly and operationally defined so that other researchers can follow them reliably. For example, analysis of the social class memberships of television characters requires clear specification of the criteria by which class is identified and classified, so that independent coders are likely to agree on how to classify a character. It is important to remember, however, that content analysis itself provides no direct data about the nature of the communicator, audience, or effects. Therefore, a great caution must be exercised whenever this technique is used for any purpose other than the classification, description, and analysis of manifest content of the communication (1986:125-126)

According to Arthur Berger (1998:26), content analysts assume that behavioural patterns, values, and attitudes found in the material which they analyse reflects and affects the behaviours, attitudes, and values of the people who create that material. He also points out that content analysis is an indirect way of making inferences about people. Instead of asking people questions, he further points out, content analysts examine what people read and work backward, assuming that what people read and watch are good reflections of their actions (1998:26). Obviously, this is the route that was followed by MMP, albeit unwittingly, when it failed to interview producers and consumers of the texts that it monitored, thereby relying solely on textual analysis. This in turn brings its study closer to content analysis than to discourse analysis. (This point also forms the subject of an elaborate discussion in the next chapter). However, Krippendorff has strongly objected to Berelson's (1952) definition of content analysis, which he sees as restricted. He contends that Berelson does not make it clear what content is or what the object of a content analysis should be. He thus concludes that such a definition has resulted in people seeing the term 'content analysis' as denoting nothing more than counting qualities (1980:22). He further states that other people have, as a result of subscribing to Berelson's definition, seen content analysis as a method of extracting content from the data as if it is objectively contained in them.

Schippendorff argues that "messages and symbolic phenomena other than those directly observed" (1980:23). This situation, he further argues, forces the researcher to make inferences about the *empirical environment* or the *context of data*. He thus concludes that "content analysis [entails making] inferences from data to certain aspects of their context and to justify these inferences in terms of the knowledge about the stable factors in the system of interest" (1980:27). As I demonstrate later in this chapter, it is in relation to notions of inference (which discourse analysis theoreticians such as Van Dijk prefer to call "implication") and context that content analysis is comparable to / with or similar to discourse analysis.

However, a closer examination seems to suggest that the difference between content analysis and discourse analysis in relation to the notion of context is a matter of emphasis and scope rather than a conceptual one, with the former tending to focus more on local context, and the latter tending to take a broader or an *extrinsic* view of context. The notion of *context* forms the subject of a further discussion later in this chapter. Bearing these definitions in mind therefore, I will now turn to the question of how content analysis is commonly applied or how it should ideally be applied. However, before doing this, a cautionary word is appropriate. The steps and procedures on doing content analysis and discourse analysis discussed during the course of the present exposition are meant to serve as a benchmark against which to examine the MMP report in the next chapter. Hence, both Content Analysis and Discourse Analysis do not only comprise a variety of approaches and perspectives, but also have various ways of doing them. This is in spite of the existence of some shared notions across them, especially with respect to methods of application. In this vein, the examples on Content Analysis and Discourse Analysis provided in this chapter should neither be seen to offer templates / a blueprint, nor are they meant to be prescriptive. Instead, they are meant to serve as a framework within which to address the question of how discourse analysis was conceived of and applied by MMP.

## Practical Guide

According to Krippendorff, one of the essential requirements of content analysis is to be replicable (1980:21). Subsumed under this requirement, Krippendorff points out, are notions of being *objective* and *systematic*, and for a research method (including the entire research process in which this method has been used) to be reproducible. In this vein, the rules that govern these processes must be explicit and applicable equally to all units of analysis. It is for this reason that, despite having several variations in the manner in which it is applied, content analysis has a fairly standard method of application, especially when it is compared with discourse analysis. Without citing an example of a study that has used content analysis, we provide an outline of the steps that content analysts typically follow when using this research technique, starting with conceptualising the research problem, and ending with the report. Krippendorff points out that a clear outline of procedures that are used in doing content analysis facilitates the interpretation of the findings and the replication of the process leading up to them (1980:169).

However, this is not to suggest that each and every content analyst will follow these procedures in a rigid manner. Instead, they can be seen to constitute a basic or standard framework for adequately applying this research technique. The majority of the studies that have been examined during the course of the current project in particular, have tended to follow this framework, with a few sporadic variations among them. Krippendorff states that any research process that uses content analysis involves three logically separate activities, which include *design*, *execution*, and *report* (1980:169). He notes, however, that the logical order of these activities does not imply their temporal sequence, hence the researcher may find himself / herself going back and forth, making adjustments to constraints, and finding compromises between conflicting requirements. Despite this though, the logical priorities of the research are maintained, for the *design* that is finally arrived at spells out what is to be executed, and the execution yields results that are finally reported. Below is a brief discussion of the steps referred to above:

...means realising an idea and operationalising a way of observing reality vicariously, Krippendorff, cites nine aspects of designing a content analysis:

- applying the framework for content analysis.
- searching for suitable data.
- searching for contextual knowledge.
- developing plans for unitising and sampling.
- developing coding instructions.
- searching for contextually justifiable procedures.
- deciding on qualitative standards.
- budgeting and resource allocation (1980:170).

## Execution

The typical order in which content analysis is executed is outlined in *The Logic of Content Analysis* (Krippendorff, 1980:176). Krippendorff states that this order is followed irrespective of whether the research technique is applied manually or by computer, whether its emphasis is on description or on elaborated inferences. The order or process of execution is said to contain one or more of the following:

- sampling units until the sample can be judged sufficiently representative of the universe.
- identification and description of recording units which must be reproducible and satisfy criteria of semantical validity where applicable.
- data reduction and transformation of data into a form required for analysis, retaining all relevant information.
- application of context-sensitive analytical procedures (analytical constructs) to yield inferences

ferences, testing hypotheses regarding relations between findings. The findings are determined by the methods and pragmatic validation of findings.

## Report

The report represents the final stage of any research process, including those that use content analysis as their method of inquiry, and it represents an authoritative account of what has been done, why it has been undertaken, its accomplishment, and its contribution to existing knowledge (Krippendorff, 1980:179). According to Krippendorff, a research report needs to be specific about the following aspects, and these in turn apply virtually to all research reports:

- A statement of the general problem to which the research pertains. It should convince the reader of the theoretical or practical importance of solving such a problem relative to what is currently known and / or the benefits that might accrue from solving it.
- An account of the background to the problem containing a review of the literature, where available, on how the problem has been approached in the past, what similar research efforts have shown, and arguments for why a content analysis promises to yield interesting findings.
- A statement of the specific objectives of the content analysis which governs the choice of data, methods, and design and how the objective relates to the general problem above specifically, an outline of the system under consideration, the data being analysed, their context, and the target of inferences all as seen by the content analyst. This should also contain a statement or at least an outline of the kind of evidence that would be accepted to invalidate the inferences made.
- A justification of the choice of methods and design. This requires matching the assumptions built into the analytical constructs and techniques with what is known about the context of data.
- The description of procedures actually followed so that the research can be replicated by others.

their statistical significance - goodness of fit where  
degrees of freedom are associated with each, and an assessment their  
probable validity.

- A self critical appraisal of the procedures followed and the results obtained in relation to the stated objectives, regarding the costs and benefits of its results, or in contrast with what is known through other methods (1980:179-180).

Similarly, Deacon *et al* cite more or less similar steps to be followed when applying content analysis: (1) defining one's concerns or what one seeks to investigate (2) deciding on what to count (3) deciding on the qualifying criteria (4) developing a workable sampling strategy (5) designing a coding frame (6) collection of data (7) analysing results (8) presenting the findings in the form of a report (1999: 115-122). Hopefully, these insights will serve a useful purpose later in the next chapter when a comparative analysis of the MMP's report is undertaken. Of particular significance in this regard, are insights on the issue of presenting the findings in the form of a research report. This aspect is further examined below.

## Writing a Report on the Findings of Content Analysis

With regards to report writing, Berger (1998) offers the following suggestions:

- Writing a brief introduction in which you give readers some background on the subject that has been investigated, stating what the study set to find out, and why the study is important.
- Offering operational definitions of all important terms or concepts and to explain why the unit of measurements used makes sense. That is, go into some technical aspect of the content analysis.
- Presenting one's findings in an easy-to-grasp manner. For instance, attaching comics pages that were analysed.
- Offering some hypotheses about what the results of the study suggest
- Explaining the problems encountered during the analysis and how these were dealt with.

analysis that has been given in the account provided exercise that content analysts engage in when using this method of inquiry. It does not, for instance, provide an idea about the problems that are attendant to such a process. A large-scale version of these processes cannot be given in a project of this type, for as Berger himself points out "There are many kinds of content analyses and many problems involved in conducting them" (1998:27). Hopefully though, some idea or opinion of the research technique that has come to be known as content analysis should have been formed from the foregoing discussion. As will become evident during the course of this study, it is against such a background that we can develop an understanding not only of the definition and application of discourse analysis, but also of the way in which these aspects of content analysis were handled by the MMP,

## **What is discourse analysis?**

### **A historical résumé of its origins and development**

Even though the roots of discourse analysis can be traced back to classical rhetoric, various contemporary approaches that make up this cross-disciplinary method of inquiry are a fairly recent phenomenon. It has been pointed out that discourse analysis emerged as a new trans-disciplinary field of study between the mid-1960s and mid-1970s in a variety of disciplines in the humanities and the social sciences. These disciplines, it has been further pointed out, included (among others) anthropology, rhetoric, linguistics, psychology, and others that were interested in the systematic study of the structures, functions, and processing of text and talk. In her book *Discourse: The New Critical Idiom*, Mills (1997) notes that the emergence of discourse analysis can be understood as a reaction to a more traditional form of linguistics (formal, structural linguistics) which focused on the constituent units and structure of the sentence and which does not concern itself with an analysis of language in use (1998:135).

The American linguist, Noam Chomsky, one of the foremost linguists of the twentieth century, is the leading exponent of structural linguistics, which is commonly known as *generative grammar*. Chomsky (1965) developed his linguistic ideas at the University of Pennsylvania, and later at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, the two institutions

therell, 1987:9). His basic concern was to produce a limited set of rules that generate grammatical sentences and only grammatical sentences. Chomsky took these rules to be representative of what speakers must actually know, that is, as representations of their cognitive systems. He further suggested that these rules may actually be part of every person's genetic make-up, inherited at birth (Chomsky, 1965). Potter and Wetherell (1987) note that the contrast between *generative grammar* and discourse analysis becomes evident as one observes three topics around which Chomsky based his ideas, namely *competence / performance discipline, the role of the speaker's intuitions, and the importance of the speaker's creativity*. A cursory examination of these three aspects is appropriate at this point.

### **Competence / performance distinctions**

According to Potter and Wetherell (1987), Chomsky argued that it is possible to distinguish between the underlying ability to produce grammatical sentences in particular situations and the actual production of particular sentences. More formally, these authors state that Chomsky distinguished between the set of rules which allows the speaker to generate grammatical sentences and performance itself which is subject to a panoply of speech errors, lapses of memory, distractions and effects due to context (1987:10). They further state that an approach which foregrounds competence independently of performance, as Chomsky's did, was seen by his detractors and opponents to pose conceptual difficulties. The question that these detractors raised was: How does the researcher get directly at the underlying rules if not by way of performance data via the actual language of various sorts?

Chomsky's explanation cited above, was also seen by Lyons (1967) to offer a highly idealised explanation, as compared to what actually happens in ordinary speech. Firstly, he argued that in Chomsky's model the data is regularised so that the pervasive errors, hesitations, and self-corrections are removed. Secondly, he contended that the data is highly standardised. Thirdly, he criticised the Chomskian model on the grounds that it is decontextualised, hence it separates sentences out from any specific context in which they might be used. In sum therefore, the theoretical insights that Chomsky propounded

ignore the essential features of material speech and  
Potter and Wetherell, 1987: 10).

### **Speaker's intuitions**

Chomsky identified linguistic performances that are suitable for analysis on the basis of the speaker's intuitions about which sentences are well formed and which are not (Potter and Wetherell, 1987:11). What this means is that the linguist does not try to find out what utterances conversationalists themselves treat as either well formed or badly constructed; rather, he uses his intuitions about what is and what is not a correct or proper sentence. Thus, implicit in this claim is the notion that all human beings know what is grammatical and what is not. In this view, intuitions decide on appropriate speech criticism, The problem with this assumption, Potter and Wetherell point out, is that it risks compounding the existing circularity with another. They therefore argue that when idealisation is combined with reliance on intuitions, it becomes hard to see how the theory could ever be falsified (1987:11).

### **Speaker's creativity**

One of the principal tenets of Chomskian psycholinguistics is that humans are capable of producing an infinite number of sentences simply through the use of various generational and transformational rules which make up a grammar (Potter and Wetherell, 1987:12). In this view, creativity is identified as one of the most essential features of language use. For Chomsky, it is the fact of creativity which makes children's learning so amazing, and which makes the behaviourist explanation of this learning, in terms of rewards, shaping and reinforcement schedules, so unconvincing. He poses the following question: If there is such a huge diversity of sentences in the child's environment, how does a child begin to deal with them? As Potter and Wetherell point out: "Chomsky believes that only a presence of a genetically programmed 'language acquired' device can make the surprising phenomenon of language learning possible" (1987:12). As with other tenets of Chomskian psycholinguistics, the notion of creativity was questioned on methodological grounds. Potter and Wetherell contend that if we accept the notion that speakers are so creative as Chomsky claims, there will be little point in looking at performance data, and

further state that the task of systematising such an attempt is leading to the point of impossibility (1987:12).

In contrast to formal or structural linguistics, whose basic principles have been sketched in the foregoing discussion, Mills notes: 'Discourse analysis is concerned with translating the notion of structure from the level of the sentence, i.e., grammatical relations such as subject-verb-object, to the level of longer text' (1987:12). In this view, discourse analysts are seen to be critical of the tendency of linguistics to concentrate solely on sentence structure, as Chomsky does. In contrast to the Chomskian tradition, discourse analysis has embraced performance data in all its messy and ungrammatical complexity. Michael Joey aptly captures the spirit of discourse analysis when he notes that:

Conversation [as one aspect of text involve[s] an interchange between two or more people in which each contributor may produce more than one utterance and each contribution builds normally upon previous contributions either directly or indirectly . . . In short, our everyday speech and writing, the sentence is only a small cog in the larger machine' (1983:1).

As a result of these criticisms, Chomskian structural linguistics had to face up to the fact that language is not an abstract realm, and that out there in the real world, language is made up from particular contexts (Potter and Wetherell, 1987:14). Against this background, discourse analysis was seen to offer a solution to the problems and limitations that beset structural linguistics. Since then, discourse analysis has mushroomed into a vast interdisciplinary field of inquiry. Having provided this background account on discourse analysis, I will now turn to an examination of some of the definitions of and insights on this method that scholars have put forward.

### **Defining discourse analysis**

According to Potter and Wetherell, the issue of defining discourse analysis is perhaps one area of this method in which commentators agree that terminological confusion abounds (1987:6). Similarly, Titscher *et al* note that the term discourse analysis is used in various ways in the relevant literature (2000:144). Potter and Wetherell (1987) see the problem surrounding the definition of discourse analysis as having arisen because developments in

concurrently in a number of disciplines that have in theoretical perspectives. Obviously, it is for this reason that Burman and Parker observe that "It is very difficult to speak of 'discourse' or even 'discourse analysis' as a single unitary entity, since this would blur together approaches subscribing to specific and different philosophical frameworks" (1993:3). In an attempt to map out the boundaries of the vast terrain that discourse analysis covers, it is necessary to look at some of the definitions and insights that scholars have advanced in this regard.

Discourse analysis is defined by Irena Markaryk (1993) as a cross-disciplinary method of inquiry which studies the structure of texts (both spoken and written) and considers both their linguistic and socio-cultural dimensions in order to determine how meaning is constructed. He states that discourse analysis developed out of two main traditions, namely, the Anglo-American and French traditions. In the Anglo-American context, on the one hand, discourse analysis concentrates on various forms of oral communication (everyday conversation, speech acts, 'talk') from an interactional and ethno-methodological perspective, and investigates how power and authority are distributed in verbal exchanges. The French tradition, on the other hand, following the works of Michel Foucault (1972), Louis Althusser (1971), and Mikhail Bakhtin (1981) constitutes its object differently, concentrating largely, but not exclusively, on written material in its institutional, social and political context (Markaryk, 1990:164).

Another useful insight into the concept of discourse analysis can be found in Fairclough's (1992) distinction between Foucault's approach to discourse analysis (which is predominantly abstract and theoretical, and neglects textual analysis) and what he terms "a textually- (and therefore linguistically) oriented discourse analysis" which goes under the acronym TODA. As will become evident in the next chapter, this distinction, and other insights to be cited during the course of the present chapter, will serve a useful purpose in pointing to the approach to discourse analysis that was adopted by MMP during its investigation. Two other useful definitions of discourse analysis are offered by Brown & Yule (1980) and Fairclough (1995b) respectively. Whereas Brown & Yule (1980) state that the concept of discourse analysis is used as a generic term for virtually

age in social and cognitive context, Fairclough notes understood as an attempt to show systematic links between texts, discourse practices, and socio-cultural practices (1995b: 16-17). As I demonstrate in the next few paragraphs, the notion of studying the text in context, is central to discourse analysis, and hence contextual analysis in relation to texts is a *sine qua non* of discourse analysis.

In their book *Discourse Analysis*, Potter and Wetherell (1987) discuss some of the major components of discourse analysis. Even though these authors write from the disciplinary point of view of psychology, the insights that they offer are equally enlightening. According to them, one of the themes strongly expressed by speech act theory and ethno-methodology was that people use their language to *do* things: to order, and request, persuade and accuse (1998:33). They state that the focus on language function (as in speech act theory and ethno-methodology) is one of the major components of discourse analysis. They point out, however, that language function is neither viewed nor understood in a mechanical way by discourse analysts, nor is the analysis of function seen as a simple matter of categorising pieces of speech; instead it depends upon the analyst's reading of context (1987:32-33). Such an understanding of discourse analysis is in line with van Dijk's definition of this method of inquiry, who writes: "In sum, discourse analysis studies the text in context" (1993:96). Clearly, as in the case of content analysis, the notion of context also figures in discourse analytic studies. Of course, in case of content analysis the emphasis on the notion of context is only nominal rather than a matter of priority, as is the case in discourse analysis. A more elaborate discussion of the concept of context is the subject of discussion under the next subheading.

One of the principal tenets of discourse analysis is that function (discussed above) involves construction of versions, and which are demonstrated by language variation (Potter and Wetherell, 1987:33). The term "construction" as used by these authors, seems apposite for three reasons. Firstly, it reminds us that accounts of events are built out of a variety of pre-existing resources, almost as a house is constructed from bricks, beams and so on. Van Dijk (1991) argues that such a construction takes place through two mental

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Secondly, the notion of construction implies active  
led, some are omitted. Finally, the notion construction  
emphasises the potent, consequential nature of accounts. Potter and Wetherell (1987),  
however, that the process of construction is not always deliberate and intentional, but  
construction emerges as people try to make sense of phenomenon or engage in  
unselfconscious social activity such as blaming or justifying.

### **The concept of context in discourse analysis**

While the notion of context may be generally assumed to have a simple and an unambiguous meaning, a closer examination of it seems to point to the contrary. This view is also shared by Wood & Kroger, who note that context is a problematic notion, hence it is always shifting, depending on what one specifies as text or as relevant (2000:135). However, Deborah Schiffrin notes that different assumptions exist about what aspects of context are relevant to the production and interpretation of utterances (1994:320). She notes, on the one hand, that speech - act theory and pragmatics, on the one hand, view context primarily as knowledge of the situation, whereas in international socio-linguistics and ethnography of communication context is regarded as  $\neg$ knowledge. She notes that variation analysis and content analysis, on the other hand, approach the notion of context differently. In variation analysis, for instance, context *is* seen to refer to a situation without incorporating knowledge of the  $\neg$ text as part of context, whereas content analysis focuses on how  $\neg$ text is a means of displaying, and how text creates knowledge including, but not limited to, knowledge of situation.

Aaron Circourel (1974) account on the concept of context is equally illuminating, and therefore deserves a mention. He draws a distinction between two kinds of context, namely, *local* and *broad* context. Whereas the broad concept of context, the extrinsic context, refers to the institutionalised framing of activities, a narrower view of context is created by the emergent processes of text or talk in the sense of locally organised and negotiated interaction (1992:292). Equally valuable insight into the notion of context is also provided by Ruth Wodak (1996) through her discussion on various levels of this concept. She argues that we may visualise context in the form of concentric circles. The

unit itself and the microanalysis of the text. The next and audience of the interactants with their various personality features, biographies and social roles. Following the second concentric circle, is the objective setting, which includes location in time and space, the description of the situation. The third circle is followed by the institution in which the event takes place. This may be expanded to include the history in which the institution takes place (1996:21).

In his discussion of news as a form of discourse, and which is based on a study which he conducted in this regard, Van Dijk points out that discourse analysis of news is not limited to textual structures (1991:116), and hence argues that these structures express or signal various underlying meanings, opinions, and ideologies. In order to show how these underlying meanings are related to the text, he further argues, there is a need for an analysis of the cognitive, social, political, and cultural context. Van Dijk points out that contemporary discourse analysis recognises that text and talk are vastly more complex, and require separate though interrelated accounts of phonetic, graphical, phonological, morphological, syntactic, micro- and macro-semantic, stylistic, superstructural, rhetorical, pragmatic, conversational, interactional, and other structures and strategies (1991b: 116).

Clearly, such an analysis of discourse is not limited to textual analysis, but also accounts for the relations between structures of text and talk, on the one hand, and of their cognitive, social, cultural, or historical contexts, on the other hand. Once a structural analysis (in which a distinction is made between different levels and dimensions of analysis) has been done, the discourse analyst proceeds to establish relationships with context. For instance, he may want to know how specific textual structures, such as headlines in the press, different categories of story-telling and argumentation, or a specific style or rhetorical device impinge on the reader or listener. That is to say, s/he may be interested in the actual processes of decoding, interpretation, storage, and representation in memory, and in the role of previous knowledge of readers in the process of understanding (Van Dijk, 1991b: 47).

...tive representations and strategies involved in actual ...es be influenced by the social and political contexts of the language users, such as their gender, class, or ethnic group membership, or the nature of the communicative situation (1991b: 48). In spite of being a powerful integrated framework for news discourse analysis, Van Dijk's "social cognitive" model referred to in the foregoing has several limitations and shortcomings. Fairclough (1995b) discusses some of these. Firstly, it focuses on representations; social relations and identities in news discourse, and pays little attention to the interpersonal function of language. Secondly, it analyses texts linguistically, rather than intertextually. Thirdly, it gives a one-sided emphasis to news-making practices as stable structures which contribute to the reproduction of relations of domination and racist ideologies, which backgrounds the diversity and heterogeneity of practices (1995b: 30).

As evident in the foregoing discussion, the notion of context in discourse studies includes a vast array of aspects, thereby confirming the following statement by Schiffin: "One obvious reason is that context can be tremendously broad and defined in different ways, e.g. mutual knowledge, social situations, speaker-hearer identities, cultural constructs" (1994:417). The importance of context in discourse analysis is made also by Mills, for she notes that: "discourse analysis has provided a range of tools for describing the structures and functioning of language within utterances, and it has forced many mainstream and traditional linguistics [and others interested in systematic study of structures, functions, and processing texts and talk] to shift their attention from words in isolation to words within context" (1998:142). All this leads us to the following definitions offered by Van Dijk: "Discourse analysis, thus is essentially a contribution to the study of language 'in use'; "Discourse analysis is a multidisciplinary approach to the study of language use and communication in their socio-cultural contexts" (1991:44); and "discourse analysis studies 'text in context'" (1993:96). Similarly, Fairclough notes that "Discourse analysis can understood as an attempt to show systematic links between text, discursive practices, and sociocultural practices" (1995b: 17).

Discourse analysis is offered by Fairclough (1992) via the distinction that he makes between what he terms ‘critical’ and ‘non-critical’ approaches to discourse analysis. He writes: ‘Critical approaches differ from non-critical approaches in not just describing discursive practices, but also showing how discourse is shaped by relations of power and ideologies, and the constructive effects discourse has upon social identities, social relations and systems of knowledge and belief, neither of which is normally apparent to discourse participants’ (1992:12). As a term used in the context of discourse studies, ‘critical discourse analysis’ (CDA) does not imply a homogeneous method within discourse analysis. Hence, even though its general theoretical background, basic assumptions and overall goals may be outlined, only its methodology can be presented with reference to specific approaches and with regard to specific theoretical backgrounds (Titcher *et al*, 2000:144). For the purpose of the present study, one prominent approach that goes under the rubric of CDA is worth examining. This is the CDA model in the form developed by Fairclough (1995b), which is largely influenced by the work of Michel Foucault, and which is, in turn, related to Halliday’s (1985) functional linguistics. Before examining Fairclough’s conception of CDA, it is necessary to look at some of the general principles that underlie this variation of discourse analysis.

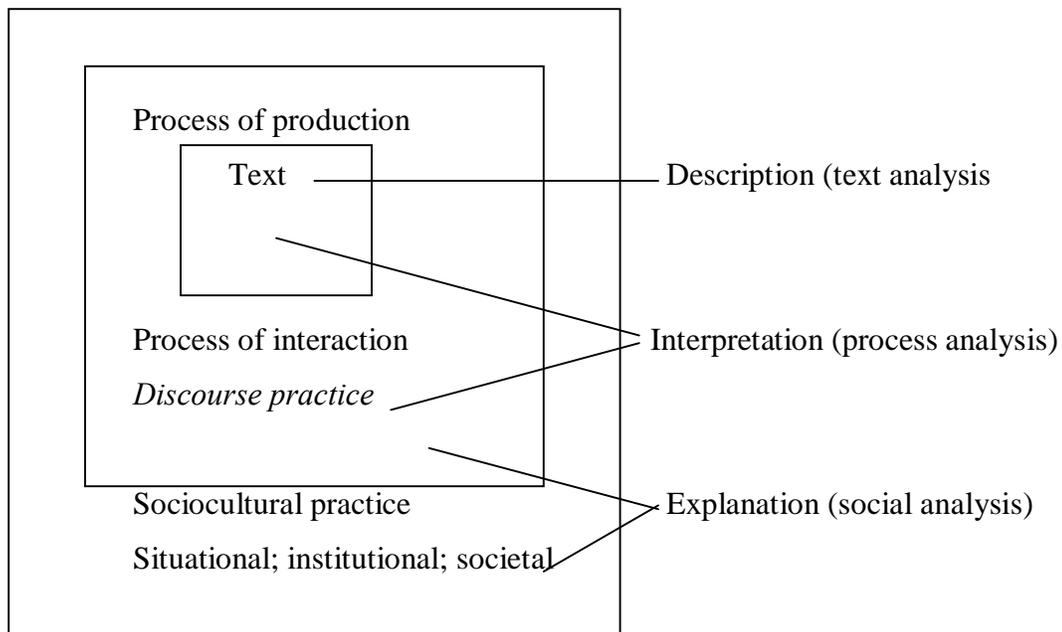
In their book *Methods of Text and Discourse Analysis*, Titcher *et al* provide the following summary of the principles on which CDA is based:

- CDA is concerned with social problems. It is not concerned with language or language use per se, but with linguistic character of social and cultural processes and structures.
- Based on the work of Foucault (1990) and Bourdieu (1987), power-relations are seen by critical discourse analysts to do with discourse, and therefore they study both power in discourse and power over discourse.
- Language use may be ideological. To understand this it is necessary to analyse texts to investigate their interpretation, reception and social effects.
- Society and culture are dialectically related to discourse: society and culture are shaped by discourse, and at the same time constitute discourse. Every single instance

or transforms society and culture, including power

- Discourses are historical and can only be understood in relation to their context.
- CDA conceptualises languages as a form of social practice, and attempts to make human beings aware of the reciprocal influences of language and social structure of which they are normally unaware.
- CDA sees itself as politically involved research with an emancipatory requirement: seeks to have an effect on social practice and social relationships.
- Discourse analysis is interpretative and explanatory. Critical analysis implies a systematic methodology and a relationship between the text and its social conditions, ideologies and power relations. (2000:146-7)

In his book *Critical Discourse Analysis: The Critical Discourse Study of Language*, Fairclough argues that critical discourse analysis should be viewed as integrating (a) analysis of text (B) analysis of processes of text production, consumption and distribution, and (c) sociocultural analysis of discursive event (1995:23). Fairclough's approach cited above is based on a three-dimensional conception of discourse, and correspondingly a three-dimensional method of discourse analysis. Below is a diagrammatic representation of the approach in question:



**Fairclough's three-dimensional conception of discourse (Source: Fairclough, 1995b: 98)**

approach is based on the idea that discourse, and any practice, simultaneously involves (i) a language text, spoken or written; (ii) discourse practice (text production, and text interpretation); and (iii) sociocultural practice (1995b: 97). In other words, it includes the linguistic description of language text, the interpretation of the relationship between the productive and interpretative discursive processes and the text, and the explanation of the relationship between the discursive processes and social processes. According to Fairclough, discursive practice involves text production, distribution, and consumption, and the nature of these processes varies between different types of discourse according to social factors (1992:78). As I hope to show in the next chapter, this framework of discourse analysis, that is CDA, will serve a useful purpose in evaluating MMP's conception and application of discourse analysis, hence its (MMP) attempt to operate within this framework. Similarly, 'critical' discourse analysis accords with Van Dijk's advice that 'Without a sound discourse analysis, which takes all relevant discursive and contextual parameters into account, and without an adequate and critical social analysis of power structures and group differences and conflicts involved, we will of course yield a wrong assessment and hence misguided advice' (1985:8). Even more pertinent for the purpose of my study, is the fact that 'critical' discourse analysis accords with Bertelsen's (2000) suggestion that in order to be valid and reliable, a study of racism in the media needs to address the whole media cycle, engaging moments of production, distribution and consumption (2000:19).

### **Doing discourse analysis**

As noted previously, it is difficult to be precise and definitive about a convoluted and an evolving field of study as is discourse analysis. In addition to the complexity caused by the existence of multifarious approaches that constitute discourse analysis, Burman & Parker's (1993) admonition that there no single method for applying discourse analysis is worth taking into account. This in turn points to the danger of simplistically levelling criticism to anyone for misapplying a method over which there is no universally agreed canon. As Potter and Wetherell have rightly cautioned:

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that there is no method to discourse analysis in of an experimental method or content analysis. what we have is a broad theoretical framework concerning the nature of discourse and its role in social life, along with a set of suggestions about how discourse can best be studied and how others can be convinced findings are genuine (1987: 175).

Therefore, in citing Van Dijk's example on how to do discourse below, and in critiquing MMP's application of discourse analysis, full cognisance has been taken of the problems and limitations alluded to above. However, the example in question should be seen to serve a useful purpose in capturing the spirit of the discourse analytic approach: studying the text in its context. Accordingly, a word of caution is also necessary at this juncture. In addition to the scenario given above, cognisance should be taken that discourse analysis is a vast field of study, and the application of its insights does not only depend on the needs and purposes of each researcher, but also on a specific discipline and context in which it is used. As the example from Van Dijk (1991b) cognitive model of discourse analysis given below will demonstrate.

### **A Practical Example: The Study of News in the Press**

The example selected for the present exposition is taken from Van Dijk's article titled "Media Contents: The Interdisciplinary Study of News as Discourse" (1991b) in which he provides a *partial* and an *informal* analysis of an incident reported by the British tabloid *Daily Mail* of Saturday, 21 January 1989 (see the specimen of the article in question at the end of the present chapter). The choice of an example by Van Dijk is especially fitting for the present study, since the Media Monitoring Project purported in its report under scrutiny to have followed the trajectory of this scholar in order to conduct its own research (see p.6 of its report *News in Black and White: An Investigation Into Racial Stereotyping in the Media*). In the article in question, Van Dijk states that a complex analysis of discourse is not limited to "textual" analysis, as it attempts to account for the relations between structures of text and talk, on the one hand, and of their cognitive, social cultural, or historical "contexts", on the other hand (1991b: 110). For this reason, he provides an example that is limited in its focus. As he puts it: "I briefly indicate which

particular social, political, or ideological implications,  
more critical analysisö (1991b: 36).

Nonetheless, Van Dijk's example provides some idea about how one goes about doing discourse analysis. The news item in the example formed part of a corpus of reports, background articles, and editorials in the press about ethnic affairs which was part of a larger project on racism in the press, and the project was also a part of another larger research program about the reproduction of racism in discourse, not only media discourse, but also everyday conversations and textbooks (Van Dijk, 1991b: 111). The following account is a summary of the report in question as given by Van Dijk. The particular news report deals with the last act of a dramatic episode that had angered the conservatives, and hence the right-wing press, for a long time: the sanctuary sought by a Sri Lankan refugee, Viraj Mendis, in a Manchester church. After having lived for more than two years in the sacristy of the church, Mendis was finally arrested during a massive police raid on the church, which led to protests not only from church officials, but also from many anti-racists and other groups defending the rights of immigrants and refugees. When the final recourse to legal action failed, Mendis was put on a plane to Sri Lanka.

## TEXT SEMANTICS

### Local and global coherence

According to Van Dijk, both discourse analysts and ordinary language users are primarily interested in meaning: what the text or talk is about, what it means, and the implications it has for language users (1991b: 112). He points out that part of the answer to this question is given in the text semantics, which formulates interpretation rules for words, sentences, paragraphs, or whole discourses. One important semantic notion that is used to describe meaning is that of proposition, which he defines as "the conceptual meaning structure of a clause" (Van Dijk, 1977). And one of the important notions studied in text semantics is that of the *local coherence* of the text: how are subsequent propositions of the text bound together? In this case, one of the major conditions of such local coherence of the text is that their propositions refer to facts that are related, for example by relations of time, condition, cause, and consequence (Van Dijk, 1991b: 112).

...entence of the lead paragraph is said to express two  
Sri Lanka and There was a bid to release him, and  
which are said to be both temporally (after) and (indirectly) causally related (he was  
deported because the attempt to get him released failed). Two expressions in the  
propositions refer to one and the same person: Mendis. The propositions are seen to be  
conceptually related (flying and airport, illegal and release). The concepts are  
parts of the scripts of airtravel and arrest. The reader's social knowledge of such scripts  
provides a large number of missing links between the concepts and propositions of the  
text, a semantic iceberg of what is actually expressed (1991b: 112). Thus, this  
dependence on world knowledge and beliefs also makes coherence subjective and  
ideological: what is coherent for the journalist may not be for all the readers.

Besides the kind of *referential* local coherence cited above, propositions might also be  
functionally coherent, as when the second proposition has the function of a Specification,  
Paraphrase, Contrast, or Example, relative to the first proposition. In this vein,  
propositions in news reports are said to be often connected by more specific ones that  
give further details. In the next sentence what the dramatic bid consisted of is: who did  
what, where and how. Later sentences are said to feature paraphrases of the previous  
ones. It is one of the crucial properties of discourse that it is not only local but also  
globally coherent. Thus it becomes crucial that beyond meaning relations between  
subsequent sentences, a text has semantic unity. Such global coherence is described by  
what readers know as themes and topics. If the *Daily Mail* report may then be represented  
as a list of propositions, reduced to a shorter list of macro- propositions or main topics,  
and through a repeated application of macro-rules we are able to arrive at a list of main  
topics:

Viraj was deported to Sri Lanka;  
an attempt by a priest to have him released in Zurich failed;  
at Gatwick airport many groups protested against his deportation;  
Mendis was arrested after having sought sanctuary in a Manchester church.

In order to derive such topics, Van Dijk points out that we need vast amounts of world  
knowledge; that expulsion may involve transport as well police officers, and that it may

demonstrators. Accordingly, special emphasis on specific  
tions.

## Implications

According to Van Dijk (1991b), one of the most powerful semantic notions in a critical news analysis is that of *implication*, a concept which is somewhat akin to that of *inference* in the context of content analysis. He states that this is because much of the information of a text is not explicitly expressed, but left unsaid. This feature of discourse and communication, he argues, has significant ideological dimensions, hence the analysis of the *öunsaidö* is sometimes more revealing than the study of what is actually expressed in the text. Words, clauses, and textual expressions are seen to carry various types of implication: entailments, presuppositions, and weaker forms, such as suggestion and association. Van Dijk (1991b) states that in the general discourse about minorities, especially in the right-wing news reports about minorities and refugees, the use of the words such as *öillegalö* in referring to Mendis not only means that he has broken the law, but associates him with other immigrants and refugees with crime.

Similarly, the use of *öMarxistö* also has negative implications, which makes Mendis a less credible refugee. Doubts are also said to be raised by the description of demonstrators *öwho arrive in luxury coaches.ö* Van Dijk (1991b) further states that many ideological implications follow from irrelevant things that are news actors. The strategic use of irrelevance is seen to occur when Mendis is called a Marxist, and demonstrators are associated with revolutionaries, blacks, lesbians, and gays. The mention of irrelevant detail like the cost of the coaches used by the demonstrators further suggests that they and the *öloony leftö* are wasting the taxpayers' money.

## **SUPERSTRUCTURES: THE NEWS SCHEMA**

According to Van Dijk (1991b), topics in discourse analysis are usually organised by an abstract schema that specify what the overall function of the topics of the text. Such a schema is called superstructure. News reports follow a hierarchical schema, consisting of such conventional categories as *Headline*, *Lead* (together forming the *Summary*), *Main Events*, *Context*, *History*, *Verbal Reactions*, and *Comments*. In relation to the *Daily Mail*

...e or relevance may have ideological implications. The police face *õrentamob furyõ* expresses two macro-propositions; namely, that Mendis is deported and that police are confronted with the angry reaction of the protesters. These two propositions summarise the main information of the text, and thus signal that the two events are important for the paper. The Lead and the subsequent sentences provide further details of these topics, in the Main Event category (featuring information the expulsion and demonstration) as well as in other categories such as a brief history (Mendis having been in Britain for thirteen years). And some general context (the policies of the Church regarding sanctuary). Van Dijk (19915) states that it is characteristic of a right-wing tabloid like the *Daily Mail* to pay little attention to social and political events, whereas relatively many details are given about demonstrators. In this case, demonstrators and Mendis are not allowed to speak. The entire organisation of the schematic superstructure of this news is consistent with the ideological position of the *Daily Mail*.

## STYLE AND RHETORIC

According to Van Dijk, style results from the choices between alternative ways of saying more or less the same thing by using different words or different syntactic structure. Such stylistic choices are also said to have clear social and ideological implications since they signal the opinions of the reporter about news actors, as well as properties of communicative situation and group membership of speakers. The choice of words such as *õmobõ* and *õrentamob,õ* instead of *õcrowd* and *õdemonstrators,õ* may, according to Van Dijk, be interpreted as signalling the ideological position of the reporter about left-wing demonstrators, while at the same time discrediting them for the readers (1991:116). The same applies to the use of words such as *õhowling,õ õscreaming,õ* and *õfuryõ*, instead of mild descriptions such as *õvigorously protestingõ*. In the headline clause, “**Mendis flown out,õ** mention is not made of the authorities who flew him out or who put him on the plane. Van Dijk states that the rhetoric of this report resides mainly in the hyperboles and words used to describe the demonstrators.

## SOCIOCULTURAL CONTEXTS

Discourse analysis is not limited to textual structures, hence these structures express or signal various underlying meanings, opinions, and ideologies. In order to show how these underlying meanings are related to the text, there is a need for an analysis of the cognitive, social, political, and cultural context (Van Dijk, 1991:118). The cognitive approach is premised on the fact that texts do not have meanings, but are assigned their meanings by language users or by the mental processes of the language. Thus, in line with his cognitive model of discourse analysis Van Dijk (1991b) argues that a discourse analyst needs to spell out the cognitive representations and strategies of the Journalists in the production of the news report and those of the reader when memorising it.

## COMMENTARY

As has been emphasised, the example cited above cannot be taken to be fully representative of various methods of doing discourse analysis, especially given the existence of a vast number of approaches to this method of inquiry. However, it does serve to highlight two significant points about discourse analysis. Firstly, that doing this method goes beyond frequency and attribution analysis, textual analysis, and looks at the broader milieu which surrounds the text (whether spoken or written) that is being examined. Secondly, that discourse analysis involves detailed analysis and explication. This is in stark contrast with content analysis which involves a much more mechanical process of categorisation, neglects the possibility of multiple categorisation, and aims to quantify the relationship between categories . . . , and [does not] provide the sort of sensitive, penetrating analysis provided by discourse analysis (Wood & Kroger, 2000:33). Having provided an account of the definition of discourse analysis and content analysis, as well as the ways in which these techniques are commonly applied in practical research situations, I will now identify the differences and similarities that exist between them. Hopefully, such an exercise will also serve a useful purpose in the next chapter in determining whether or not MMP misperceived and misapplied discourse analysis.



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## between discourse analysis and content

### analysis.

Undoubtedly, a clear distinction between content analysis and discourse analysis is essential if we are to determine the validity of the criticisms that have been levelled against the Media Monitoring Project's conception / understanding and application of discourse analysis. While the validity of the said criticisms (whether perceived or real) are likely to become even more salient when the MMP report selected for the present study is compared with the insights that have been developed in the exposition provided in this chapter, it is necessary at this point to summarise the distinctions between discourse analysis and content analysis. If the discourse analytic approach in mass media research has now become more or less accepted as an addition or alternative to classical content analysis, as has been emphasised throughout the present study, it seems evident that the two research techniques have several points in common, as well as several points of difference.

The similarities between discourse analysis and content analysis immediately become evident as one examines their definitions. Both content analysis and discourse analysis are concerned with analysing particular phenomena as they manifest themselves in texts (either written or spoken). In this vein, both can be used to examine written communication material such as novels, plays, television scripts, as well as magazines and newspaper accounts. Both content analysis and discourse analysis serve as a means to learn about people by examining what they write, what they produce on television, or make movies about. However, they differ in terms of their scope in this regard. While content analysis mainly seeks to measure the amount of particular phenomena in the media or the frequency with which it appears in it, discourse analysis is mainly concerned with the underlying meaning and context of texts. In doing this, discourse analysis subsequently provides a detailed explication and interpretation of such phenomena. Even though content analysts also describe and interpret data when writing a report, they usually do not cover the scope that is normally covered by discourse analysts, as the example from Van Dijk's (1991b) article has illustrated.

based on notions of being *systematic* and *objective*. In the same procedure, discourse analysis does not have a simple method of operation (Burman and Parker, 1993:2), but depends largely on the researcher's discretion and the acuity with which he operationalises its procedures. As Berger points out in relation to content analysis: "If you do not have a uniform measure that is easily quantified, your data will not be worth very much" (1998:28). In this manner, discourse analysis could be said to be even more highly subjective when compared with content analysis. Even though the notion of *context* is theoretically / nominally central to both content analysis<sup>19</sup> and discourse analysis<sup>20</sup> *context* is in practical research situations, variously dealt with by content analysts and discourse analysts. While content analysts are concerned, among other things, with the study of manifest content, measuring the frequency with which particular phenomena occur, and sometimes comparing and contrasting such phenomena, discourse analysts primarily concern themselves with the study of the language in use or with the study of the text in context. As mentioned earlier, the notion of context in content analysis is only nominal rather a matter of priority.

Another point of divergence between content analysis and discourse analysis lies in the manner in which they present their findings, especially in relation to analysis. Berger points out that content analysis is based on counting and measuring, and tends to give its findings in numerical form (1998:29). Part of the rationale behind such a quantified presentation of the findings, Berger further points out, is for others to be able to replicate the research and see whether or not they can get more or less the same results. Of course, in the final analysis the need for research methodology to be replicable applies to all research. However, content analysis involves coding into exclusive categories, and relies on predetermined categories and interpretations. Furthermore, it relies on the calculation

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<sup>19</sup> Krippendorff states that in using content analysis, the context to which data are analysed must be explicit, and should include all surrounding conditions, antecedant, or consequent (1980).

<sup>20</sup> According to Van Dijk, a complex analysis of discourse is not limited to *textual analysis* but it also accounts for the relations between structures of text and talk, on the one hand, and of their cognitive, social, cultural, or historical *contexts* on the other hand (1991b: 110-111). Elsewhere, Van Dijk includes under the notion of *context* factors such communicative situations, relations between in-groups, institutions, and many other properties of social structure and culture that further analysis (1993:11).

ing reliability, or the statistical analysis of relationships

As has been shown in the example of a newspaper report on the deportation of Viraj Mendis to Sri-Lanka given earlier, discourse analysis is more ideal for a detailed examination of a single text or a limited number of texts. For example, it can be used to analyse single court case, such as the OJ Simpson trial. However, it cannot be used alone to deal with a large number of texts, as was the case with Van Dijk's case studies on the issue of racism in relation to the minority groups in Europe, where it was used in combination with content analysis. Accordingly, this distinction touches on the question of whether discourse analysis and content analysis are mutually exclusive or not, and this forms the subject of the next subheading.

### **Are discourse analysis and content analysis mutually exclusive or complementary?**

The following account taken from Van Dijk's book *Racism and the Press* (1991a) might serve a useful purpose in shedding light on the above question. In it, he points out that the different types of discourse material that had been collected for his large project on which the book referred to above is based, amounted to many thousands of newspaper articles, transcripts, and copies of other texts (1991:10). He points out that a thorough analysis of a single text in a sophisticated discourse analytic framework would require many days of work and would result in many dozens of pages of research results. He thus concedes that this type of precision cannot be attained when dealing with thousands of texts, as was the case with MMP. He offers the following explanation on how he circumvented the problem mentioned above: "Because of the number of news reports, this qualitative discourse analysis is combined with a more classical, quantitative content analysis of news reports. Both content analyses and discourse analyses, however, are integrated within a more complex, interdisciplinary framework of socio-political and ideological theory formation and analysis. (1999:10). There are two valuable insights that emerge from this explanation, as I demonstrate below.

if not impossible, to offer a thorough application of study that deals with a large number of texts, as was the case with the study conducted by MMP. In this vein, the type of analysis offered in the example from a report in the British tabloid *Daily Mail* (cited earlier) is not feasible when dealing with large volumes of data. Secondly, it seems that for a study that is dealing with a large number of texts, and uses discourse analysis as its method of inquiry, using content analysis seems to be unavoidable. This is especially so when the findings of the study have to be presented in the form of a report. While clear explanations on how the research proceeded are essential and have to accompany the findings, one cannot present a report that is not accessible to a broad public because discourse analysis tends to offer a highly technical exegesis about the phenomena with which it deals. Viewed in the light of the account provided above, it seems reasonable to concur with Krippendorff's (1980) contention that discourse analysis could be seen as an alternative or addition to classical analysis. Thus viewed, content analysis and discourse analysis is not mutually exclusive, but complementary. As with most qualitative and quantitative research methods generally, discourse analysis and content analysis can be operationalised simultaneously. As I argue in the next chapter, it appears that a lack of clear explanation of this reality by MMP resulted in scholars conflating the two methods of inquiry.

## Conclusion

Viewed in the light of the foregoing exposition, it seems reasonable to surmise that even though concepts of discourse analysis and content analysis represent two very different methods of inquiry or 'species' (to use Wood & Kroger's characterisation), the two are not mutually exclusive, but complementary. In response to the issue of characterising the respective methods used by MMP and Braude during the SAHRC Inquiry, it seems plausible to put forward the following tentative conclusions. Such conclusions are essential since an analysis of the MMP report is still to be undertaken in the next chapter, in which more substantive evidence to support my claims will be adduced. Thus, it seems reasonable to suspect that these methods (discourse analysis, content analysis, and textual analysis) were somehow not clearly comprehended, and correctly identified by some of

MMP report. Why for instance did Bertelsen (2000) call it as discourse analysis when Braude identified it as textual analysis? Similarly, why did MMP emphasise discourse analysis as one of the principal methods that it used whereas, in fact, no discourse analysis is apparent in its report?

Having attempted to provide some theoretical background on discourse analysis, therefore, it seems that we now have a better platform from which to address the question of whether MMP misconceived and misapplied discourse analysis, and the next chapter will delve a lot deeper into these questions. However, before embarking on the critique of MMP report, it is necessary to make one important point about research in general, and which in turn has pertinence for the application of both content analysis and discourse analysis in particular. In addition to the insights on discourse analysis and content analysis sketched in this chapter, it is essential to note in passing that there are certain basic requirements that are prerequisite of any worthwhile research project. These include a clearly defined question to be investigated; carefully designated data; appropriate design and methodology; and rigorous analysis and interpretation (Bertelsen, 2000:19). As I demonstrate in the next chapter, these requirements will prove to be useful in critiquing the MMP report.

## **The MMP Report and Discourse Analysis: A Critique**

According to Krippendorff, in highly institutionalised settings, where the motivation is understood and procedures are codified, a research report may be limited to what deviated from standard procedure. In such a case, he further states, the decision maker may only be interested in the results, relying on the researcher's reputation and credentials in order to surmise that the job has been done well (1980: 179). This seems to be the attitude that was adopted by the SAHRC when it relied on the reputation and credentials of its researchers, Claudia Braude and the Media Monitoring Project, to accept and ratify the findings of the latter's inquiry into issues of racism in the South African media. As the SAHRC noted in its final report: "The Commission wishes to place on record its appreciation of the manner in which all the evidence was presented." Finally, let it be known that we are presenting this evidence without comment or evaluation. It is not necessary for us to pass judgement on the accuracy or otherwise of the testimony presented to us. Fortunately, there was a large measure of acceptance of the evidence presented" (*Faultlines: An Inquiry Into Racism in the Media*, 2000:18).

In contrast to the scenario referred above, Krippendorff states that the situation in scientific inquiries is entirely different. In such a case, the findings are not accepted independently of the procedure through which they are obtained, and such procedure must be replicable elsewhere (1989:179). As I attempt to show below, it is in relation to the above mentioned aspects of research that the problems surrounding the entire SAHRC Inquiry into issues of racism in the media arose. Even though the SAHRC may have not initially seen or intended the study that it commissioned Braude and MMP to conduct as / to be a purely academic / scientific pursuit or exercise, it unwittingly found itself having to face two stark realities. First, that it was dealing with a highly contentious subject, that is, racism, and which presents problems not only to the South African society, but also to the world at large. Second, and perhaps more importantly, that research is in principle a public matter, hence anyone who engages in it has to comply with the rules and conventions that govern its discourse and practice as prescribed by the global community

ed earlier, these researchers and scholars, in turn, act research discourse and practice. Presumably, then, it must have been the recognition of these realities that the SAHRC openly invited all interested parties to respond to any part of its reports, especially in relation to the issue of methodology (see the SAHRC's *Interim Report*, 1999:2).

Paradoxically, however, some of the rules and conventions that govern the discourse and practice of research (including the theoretical implications thereof) seem to have been ignored, if not flouted, by the SAHRC appointed researchers. This is in spite of the fact that some of the criticisms and suggestions that have been made in relation to the recent SAHRC Inquiry have also been made in relation to previous monitoring projects undertaken by MMP. In the final analysis, whether the SAHRC commissioned inquiry was primarily intended to be a scientific or a non-scientific pursuit is immaterial; hence the researchers (and the SAHRC itself) had to face up to the reality that their research had to reflect both the conceptual and scientific rigour that is expected of any worthwhile research effort. In this vein, William Bird's explanation in the letter attached to the appendix of this dissertation to the effect that MMP does not have the time and staff to engage in the sort of academic research that he sees this study to represent, does not exonerate his agency from criticism. This situation also points to one of the intractable problems of our time, namely, the undertaking of research as a commercial transaction, which, unfortunately, often results in the work of poor quality and total disregard for scientific rigour. This is often a corollary of limited time frames within which, most of these research projects have to be carried out, and the partisan interest that tends to underlie some, if not most of them.

Thus, this chapter begins by offering a critique of the MMP report against the background of the framework of procedures that govern the presentation of a report on the findings of a research effort. The issue of procedures that govern the writing of a sound research report and the basic requirements of a worthwhile study are only discussed in so far as they impinge on the issue of MMP's conception and application of discourse analysis. The second part of my critique offers an analysis of the MMP report

and methodological framework of critical discourse analysis in South Africa that falls under this concept. While most of the insights on critical discourse analysis are drawn mainly from the work of Fairclough (1995b), the works of other scholars across the broader field of discourse analysis and mass media theory are also considered.

## **Part One: The MMP report vis-à-vis discourse analysis**

I begin with an examination of various aspects of the introduction of the MMP report. For the purposes of my study, the entire MMP report is attached to the appendix (in which it appears as Appendix One) of this dissertation.

### **Stating the problem to which the research pertains and the background thereof**

The following comment by Paul Leedy regarding the importance of stating the problem to which the research pertained at the beginning of the research report is illuminating:

After a few paragraphs of introductory remarks (if the writer chooses to make them), stating the rationale and the background or the relevance of the document should set forth clearly and unmistakably the problem that has been researched. The statement of the problem, as well as other information needed to understand it comprehensively, should comprise the first chapter of the final report. (1993:3 16)

As is evident from the first two pages (p.3- 4) of the introduction to the MMP report, it opens with a statement to the effect that in approaching the racism in the media project, MMP's concerns were framed by three distinct, but interacting elements: freedom, power, and responsibility (*News in Black and White: An investigation into Racial Stereotyping in the Media*, 1999:3). The rest of the discussion that follows this statement provides an explanation of how these three elements are related to each other, and how they framed its investigation into racial stereotyping in the South Africa media.

There seems to be a sense in which the account of the MMP report referred to above could be seen to be incorrectly posted, especially because, hereafter MMP makes no

ambiguous brief regarding the problem that its study  
some background information pertaining to it. For  
instance, anyone who has neither had an opportunity to read the report which preceded  
MMP's, namely the SAHRC's *Interim Report* (1999), nor even heard about the SAHRC  
*Inquiry* at all, will almost certainly be baffled immediately upon starting to read the MMP  
report. It should be noted or remembered that the *Interim Report* (1999) included the  
report that resulted from the study conducted by Braude. In its report, MMP neither  
makes any allusion to these earlier studies and publications, nor does it provide any  
explanation regarding the mandate regarding its engagement in the SAHRC *inquiry*,  
which, as already noted, was aimed at providing a quantitative analysis to complement  
the qualitative study carried out by Braude.

Even when the problem to which the MMP study pertained is stated indirectly, via the  
aims of the study in the section under the heading "methodology" (p.5-6), these are in  
themselves confusing as MMP somehow misstates / disarticulates some of these (the  
aims). The SAHRC's Terms of Reference, for instance, states the aims of the inquiry into  
racism in the media as follows:

- To investigate the handling of race and possible incidence of racism in the media and whether such may be manifested in the products of the media constitutes a violation of fundamental rights as set out in the Constitution.
- To establish the underlying causes and examine the impact on society of racism in the media if such racism is found to be manifested in the products of the media.
- To make findings and recommendations as appropriate of Reference. (*Faultlines: inquiry Into Racism in the Media*, 2000:8)

In contradistinction to these aims, MMP states that:

This project is concerned with the content of the media and the extent to which it is racist and therefore it is concerned with the extent to which the media supports and maintains the ideology of racism. (*News in Black and White: An investigation Into Racial Stereotyping in the Media*, 1999:6)

Nonetheless, MMP does correctly state one of the aims of the inquiry, as expressed in the SAHRC's Terms of Reference, and subsequently the problem that the study sought to investigate, when it claims that:

then, our aim would therefore be to examine how racist ideologies in our society are represented in the media and what the media's relationship with race and racism is. (*Faultlines: Inquiry into Racism in the Media*, 1999:6)

Thus, if the study conducted by MMP was primarily meant to complement the research that had been carried out by Braude, as already noted, there was a need for such information to be relayed at the outset of the report. In other words, if the study conducted by MMP was part of the broader SAHRC project, this ought to have been explicitly stated from the very beginning of the report. This includes the mandate that was given to them by the SAHRC. Such information would at least make the reader aware of the need to consult the SAHRC's *interim Report* (1999) released earlier, in order to learn about the problem which the MMP's research study sought to investigate, and the background thereof. The lack of a clear statement of the problem has serious repercussions not only for MMP's methodological framework, but also for its claim to have used discourse analysis, as I demonstrate in the next few paragraphs.

In a characteristic and typical fashion that discourse analysis and 'critical' discourse analysis have a reputation for, and which Titscher *et al* argue 'tend' to determine [their] interest in advance (2000:165), MMP followed a similar trajectory. The *a priori* assumption contained in the first quotation (cited above) provides a salient example of this lapse, as MMP purports to be certain that there is racism in the media. And, hence its claim that it sought, among other things, to determine 'the extent to which the media is racist and the extent to which it maintains the ideology of racism' (*News in Black and White: An investigation into Racial Stereotyping in the Media*, 1999:6). This claim is also reiterated in the conclusion of the report on page 57. This type of wording of the problem and the aim of the study clearly begs the following questions: How much racism was already there in the media when MMP began its investigation? What is it that MMP set out to investigate if it already knew the answer? Without denying the fact that racism and racist practices still exist in this country's media in a myriad of guises and subtle practices, there is obviously something suspect about such ill-formulated statements,

findings / results of an investigation. This is in spite of evidence to suggest that in certain instances, some sectors of the media colluded with, and even supported the apartheid government's racist agenda in various ways.

The findings that have been tabled before the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) over the past few years are one example of such evidence. Of course, this is not to ignore the struggle that was waged by the South African English-language Press against the Apartheid State, and about which Tomaselli *et al* (1987) provide an immensely valuable critical discussion. In the same book, these authors also provide a useful discussion on the limitations and contradictions that characterised the struggle waged by the press against the Apartheid State and its policies. However, the charge regarding MMP's pre-emption of the outcomes of its study is not unprecedented. In their critique of one of the research reports based on the study carried out by the Broadcasting Monitoring Project (BMP), which later became MMP, Tomaselli *et al* (1994), for instance, levelled a similar charge. They observe that 'BMP makes numerous assumptions and unidentified **a priori** assumptions. These anticipate the Project's findings. Distinctions need to be made between assumptions and conclusions. They are not the same' (1994:86).

Paradoxically, MMP researchers were fully conscious of the criticisms against contemporary discourse analysis and discourse analysis theory, as stated at the bottom of page 6 of the introduction to the MMP report. At the top of page 8, MMP provides an explanation of four complementary ways in which it attempted to eliminate the problem regarding discourse analysis theory and discourse analysis. These include: (a) not only examining whether the media supports racist ideology, but also seeking out where the media actively challenge racism and racist ideology; (b) providing a constructive critique of the media, by not alleging racism in media content but to demonstrate where race and racial identity was represented in a stereotyped or prejudicial way; (c) examining the media as an interrelated body of information rather than a set of individual mediums; and (d) setting out a measurable criteria for achievement beforehand in the form of a list of racist propositions founded upon racist stereotypes which exist in our society (*News in*

into *Racial Stereotyping in the Media*, 1999:7). The report is useful for MMP to state clearly and unambiguously

at the outset of the report the problem to which the research pertained and the background thereof. This includes the mandate given to it by the SAHRC.

As opposed to the vacillation that MMP makes in its report regarding the problem that its study sought to investigate, stating the problem clearly at the outset of the report would have made it more clearer why discourse analysis could be seen to be an appropriate method for its project. If the mandate given to MMP was to provide a quantitative analysis to complement Braude's qualitative analysis, it is, therefore, puzzling how discourse analysis came to be foregrounded in the manner that it was by MMP, hence this method is executed mainly by using words, rather than by using numbers or quantitative techniques (Wood & Kroger, 2000:136). Aside from this, Braude herself does not make any explicit claim to having used this method. In fact, as Wood & Kroger point out, discourse analysis entails more than a shift in methodology from a general, abstracted, quantitative to particularised, detailed, qualitative approach (2000:3), a situation which makes it less suitable for studies whose primary focus is on the quantitative aspect of the research. This in turn raises questions about the nature of the interaction and co-operation between the independent researchers (Braude and MMP) during the course of the SAHRC *inquiry Into Racism in the Media*. Thus, while the criticism being made relates to the issue of chronology, logic, and procedure regarding the presentation of the report, it does also question MMP's choice of discourse analysis as one of the methods of research that it used.

### **Offering operational definitions of important terms and concepts, including discourse analysis.**

A research report is not only expected to provide operational definitions of all important terms and concepts, but also to explain why a particular unit of measurement that has been used makes sense (Berger, 1998:34). Obviously, in case of the MMP report, fiercely debated concepts such as racism and discourse analysis ought to have been elaborately and unambiguously defined in the early stages of the report. Admittedly, MMP does

definition of racism as "A complex societal system in which dominant peoples of other origins, especially in Europe, North America, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand" (1991b: 24). But even in this respect, the evaluators of the SAHRC Inquiry have expressed discontent about such a narrow conception / definition of racism. Tomaselli, for instance, has argued that "This definition, which is offered without qualification, was borrowed for its allegedly 'neutral' content, rather than using one arising out of the South African experience" (2000:9). He further argues: "However, the problem with Van Dijk's definition is that it assigns to racism a blanket origin in a specific place among specific peoples. It effectively homogenises *all* people of one continent and essentially one skin pigmentation in ideological terms, thereby forcing individuals and racially defined communities to find other definitions for race based oppression or violence elsewhere" (2000:9). Similarly, Jacobs and Masuku (2000) have argued that the Commission failed to adopt a definition that is functional to the South African experience.

In the introduction to its report, MMP have this to say about the alleged / perceived threat to freedom of expression pronounced by certain sectors of the media regarding the SAHRC media inquiry: "Whether these fears were justified or not was not the issue as much as the method used for investigating racism in the media" (1999:3). Despite this ostensible / avowed claim by MMP to having attached particular significance to the issue of methods, no attempt was made by this agency to either provide a clear definition of discourse analysis or an adequate justification for its choice of this method of inquiry. Neither does MMP indicate clearly the approach that it followed in this regard, that is, either an approach that relies exclusively on discourse analysis or that which relies on a combination of discourse analysis and some form of quantitative analysis. This is indeed surprising, considering what the SAHRC claims in the final report *Faultlines: Inquiry Into Racism in the Media* (2000).

MMP states, for instance, that it became evident during the course of Ms Braude's research that her work could be incomplete if they (SAHRC) did not engage in some quantitative analysis of the incidence of racism in the media. It is for this reason, as the

ed (2000:9). Aside from the fact that the MMP report  
is mandate, through MMP's claim to having used  
discourse analysis, it could (by implication) be seen to have attempted to go beyond it.  
Thus, in making the emission regarding the definition of discourse analysis, let alone  
mentioning the approach to discourse analysis that it used, MMP does not only seem to  
have taken too much for granted, but it also failed to take cognisance of a number of  
critical issues regarding this interdisciplinary method.

First, that discourse analysis does not form a single unitary entity, hence it comprises a  
variety of approaches that subscribe to specific and different philosophical frameworks.  
Second, that there are certain nuances between discourse analysis and content analysis,  
hence the use of the former in mass media research has become more or less accepted as  
an alternative to the latter, a situation that sometimes leads to a confusion of these  
methods among some researchers. Third, that discourse analysis is an evolving and a  
highly convoluted field of inquiry, and therefore needs to be defined clearly. Fourth, and  
perhaps more importantly, the fact that whilst textual analysis (TA) is a major component  
of discourse analysis, the latter cannot be done without contextual analysis, hence the  
study of the text in context constitutes the *raison d' être* of this method. Put differently,  
contextual analysis or the study of the text (both spoken and written) in context is a *sine  
qua non* of discourse analysis. Taken together, these factors make it imperative for any  
study that purports to use or to having used this method of inquiry to offer a very clear  
statement of definition and method of operationalizing it. Surprisingly, these factors do  
not seem to have been taken into account by MMP. Once again, history seems to have  
repeated itself in this regard as MMP was also criticised in its earlier studies for the same  
neglect. As Tomaselli *et al* wrote in reference to the BMP study referred to earlier: "No  
**definitions** of any conceptual term or category are offered in the analysis itself" (1994:86).

Having made reference to studies that have been conducted elsewhere, especially those  
that have used conventional content analysis: (Braham, 1972), and those that have used  
discourse analysis (Duncan (1996), Fair & Astroff (1991), Brookes (1995), and Van Dijk

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accrue from using the latter method, an assumption is that the latter method is all too well known to merit any definition and explanation. Thus, a claim is made without either substantiation or qualification that: "In using discourse analysis then, our aim would therefore be to examine how racist ideologies in our society are represented in the media and what the media's relationship with race and racism" (*News in Black and White: An Investigation Into Racial Stereotyping in the Media*, 1999:3). Obviously, such a lack of definition or sufficiently nuanced definitions of problematic concepts such as racism and discourse analysis in the MMP report, does not only pose problems to a layman, but to initiated persons as well. This problem is even more acute for an evolving, and a highly convoluted method such as discourse analysis.

**A statement of objectives governing the choice of data, methods, and design vis-à-vis the general problem that the study attempts to address.**

In almost all the works in which he used or discussed the discourse analytic approach, Teun van Dijk, one of the scholars whose approach regarding discourse analysis MMP purports to have followed, does not only provide a fairly elaborate description of this method of inquiry, but he also makes a painstaking effort to explain how it should be operationalised. His books *News Analysis: Case Studies of International and National News in the Press* (1988), *Racism and the Press* (1991b), and his article titled "Media Contents: The Interdisciplinary Study of News as Discourse" (1991a) are cases in point. In *Racism and the Press* (1991), Van Dijk states that "discourse analysis aims to show how the cognitive, social, historical, cultural, or political contexts of language use and communication impinge on contents, meanings, structures, or strategies of text or dialogue, and vice versa, how discourse itself is an integral part of and contributes to the structures of these contexts" (1991:45). Similarly, in the article cited above, he provides this lengthy and yet informative description:

One of the characteristics of discourse analysis is that it describes text and talk in terms of theories developed for several levels or dimensions of discourse. Thus, whereas classical linguistics and semiotics made an overall distinction between the form (signifiants) and meaning (signifies) of signs, current discourse analysis recognises that text and talk are vastly

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separate though related accounts of phonetic, morphological, syntactic, micro-and macro-semantic, stylistic, superstructural, rhetorical, pragmatic, conversational, interactional, and other structures and strategies. Each of the structures which may be interpreted or function at other levels, both within and outside the traditional linguistic boundaries of the sentence, as well as in the broader context of use and communication. (199 1:110)

Indeed, such information is significant since it forms an integral part of both the methodological and theoretical brief that informed Van Dijkø (1991b) research study. Even though MMP does provide a statement regarding the aims and objectives of discourse analysis, as already noted, much of it only contains information about the advantages that accrue from the use of this method, rather than a clear statement of objectives and justification for its choice of this method. These aims and objectives are stated on pages 5 and 6 of the report, as I show below.

The report states, for example, that in contrast with studies on racism undertaken in Britain, which relied mainly on classical content analysis, discourse analysis is preferred because it would help MMP to solve, and even eliminate, the problems and limitations with which these studies had to contend. The problems and limitations that are seen to have beset previous studies are: (1) Their failure to distinguish between the attitudes of various newspapers they examined; (2) Limiting the role of the media to 'the way they create awareness of issues and establish what is on the agenda for public discussion rather than what they say about these issues or in the degree to which what is said may change opinions' (1999:5).

Thus, for MMP, the following advantages will accrue from using discourse analysis: (i) 'providing an analysis of the values and attitudes of the media under scrutiny and aims to establish the ideological links those attitudes and values have with the ideologies occurring in our society'; and (ii) 'allow [ing] an understanding of how the framing and treatment of content through the discourse of news impacts on the ideologies being represented' (*News In Black and White*, 1999:5). Aside from the above mentioned oversights regarding the aims and objectives of discourse analysis, even when the

are alluded to by MMP, especially via the work of the same method, these are not related to the general problem of the study and its *design*. The upshot of all this is that readers are left to their own devices to surmise that because discourse analysis was used by other scholars to investigate the same problem as that investigated by MMP, it was therefore both logical and appropriate for this organisation to do likewise.

### **Justifying the choice of methods and *design*, and describing the procedures that were followed so that the research can be replicated.**

While MMP does make a scant attempt to justify its choice of discourse analysis via the advantages that accrue from using this method, and through citing the work of other scholars, a clear and an elaborate statement in this regard is missing. Despite the vast number of advantages that accrue from the use of discourse analysis, this method of inquiry is not without its problems and disadvantages. Van Dijk (1985) states, for example, that experience has shown, on the one hand, that structural analysis of texts or conversations may be as abstract and as far removed from the actual language use as in structural linguistics, and to which discourse analysis emerged as a reaction. He states, on the other hand, that experience has shown that studies of language in the social context may pay attention to trivial or hardly critical examples of language use and communication (1985:5).

Similarly, David Sless (1986) provides an immensely useful discussion regarding the flawed nature of the entire discourse analysis project / enterprise. In reference to the application of this method by Brown and Yule (1983), he argues that there is no simple way in which an interpreting scholar can ensure that his / her account is what he /she claims it to be (1986:75). He argues that the scholarly mode in which he /she operates in turn allows him /her privileged position that is potentially powerful because it implies that his /her reading has been done on behalf of the reader. As he puts it: 'In effect this implication, if spelt out, says if you - my reader- were in my position, with my knowledge and understanding, you would read this particular text in the way that I have; I therefore assume the power of doing your reading for you' (1986:75). He thus concludes that

far removed from the object being studied (1986:79). In the present chapter, discourse analysis is, especially if it ignores issues of *discursive practice* and *sociocultural practice*, also susceptible to the criticisms that have been levelled against the textual approach of cultural and literary studies that Sless points to.

In Volume 4 of the series *Handbook of Discourse Analysis* (1985), van Dijk also provides a valuable discussion on the relevance, benefits, and shortcomings that are attendant upon discourse analysis. Similarly, Fairclough (1995b) and Titscher *et al* (2000) provide a valuable discussion of the problems that discourse analysis poses as a method of research. At a local level, Neil Lightfoot (1996) goes to the extent of arguing that discourse analysis fails to meet any of the criteria prerequisite to method, and cannot therefore constitute itself as a method. Surely, all these factors make it imperative for any one using this method of inquiry to provide a clear statement that justifies his / her choice of it. In addition to this, discourse analysis is not only relatively new but also still evolving, as new insights continue to be generated from a diversity of disciplines, especially those in the humanities and the social sciences.

Criticism can also be levelled against MMP's *research design*. A *research design* refers to the procedural network of analytical steps through which the scientific information is processed. It accounts, among other things, for the way data were obtained, what was done to that data during the course of the analysis, and provides others with instructions as to what to do in order to replicate the results. The *research design* is especially significant when one considers Potter and Wetherell's observation in relation to a discourse analysis report that "The goal of a research report is to present analys[es] and conclusions in such a way that the reader is able to assess the researcher's interpretations" (1987:172). To this, it could be added that both the steps that were actually followed and problems that were encountered during the course of research ought to be spelt out in the research report.

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some of the requirements that are requisite to any  
g dealt with some of these in a perfunctory and an  
inadequate manner, MMP states that in order to eliminate the problem regarding  
Discourse Analysis being a method that confirms its own assumptions they: òí set out a  
measurable criteria for achievement beforehand in the form of a list of racial and racist  
propositions upon racist stereotypes which exist within our societyö (19.99:7). These  
propositions appear on the pages from 7 to 10 of the MMP report included in the  
Appendix One of this study. MMP states that its use of discursive propositions differs  
from other studies that have used this system of processing, analysing, and coding data,  
in that it did not limit itself to items that were explicitly racist. Instead, it also included  
those items in which race was implicit in the contents of stories (1999:9). It states, for  
example, that the news from other African countries and news about African governance  
and black empowerment were also included (1999:7).

The MMP report states that for every item identified in the manner cited above, the  
content was analysed to reveal whether the item supported or challenged any of the listed  
propositions. This was done by examining the language used both in the headline and in  
the body of the item, the images that accompanied it, and how it was introduced on the  
radio or television. If the items raised a proposition but did not either strongly support or  
challenge it, it was coded as being neutral. In addition to adopting a system of coding and  
processing data that used propositions, MMP claims to have captured and included other  
aspects relating to the date, placement of items, source, type of item (NEWS OR  
INTERVIEW), location of the story and the subject or topic of the item (1999:9). This is  
followed by a list of various forms of mass media (newspapers, radio stations and  
television) whose news items were selected for monitoring over a six-week period (from  
Monday July 12 to Friday 20 August 2000), as well as the commercial names by which  
the companies that own and control these forms of media are known. And finally, an  
account is given of the profile or status of the people who carried out the actual  
monitoring and coding process (first language speakers who were also post-graduates),  
and an explanation of how this was done. In brief, this information provides a synoptic  
account regarding the research *design* and *execution* of the study conducted by MMP as

of the introduction in the report under investigation. Berger (2000) to make the study conducted by this organisation superior over that conducted by Braude, and which he argues 'relie [d] far too much on personal interpretation and hidden assumptions about what constitutes racist representations' (2000:11). However, two main problems occur with the assumptions underlying MMP's approach to the issue of *research design* and application of discourse analysis. The first one relates to its claim to have set out measurable criteria for the achievement of its objective in the form of a list of racial and racist propositions founded on racist stereotypes which exist within the South African society. The second one relates to MMP's heavy reliance on *propositional analysis*, an *a priori* tool of processing data that raises one of the problems that lie at the heart of discourse analysis.

The problem regarding the claim by MMP to have set out measurable criteria in relation to racial stereotyping and racism can be extrapolated / inferred from the following comment by Guy Berger. He writes:

The MMP's implicit promise is that here are more objective and explicit standards for measurement - unlike Braude's subjective and implicit approach. Although the MMP's research would need to be complemented by studies into how audiences actually interpret stereotypes, what the MMP points to are the objectively 'preferred readings' that are inscribed in the racial logic and deep assumptions of a given 'media text' (2000:11-12).

Ironically, the 'preferred readings' that Berger refers to are often coloured by the subjective consciousness of the interpreting researcher / scholar, and cannot therefore be objective. If MMP sought to provide a measurable, and therefore an objective and a more standard form of measurement to carry out its investigation, it seems doubtful that discourse analysis was the right sort of method to achieve this objective. Hence, discourse analysis is an inherently subjective method of research, perhaps even more so than other text based research techniques such as content analysis, document analysis, and conversation analysis. This can be partly attributed to the method's heavy reliance on

the part of the discourse analyst, and which are often al prejudices and idiosyncrasies.

Even more problematic with MMP's *research design* in general, and the entire research in particular, is its heavy reliance on *propositional analysis*. Aside from this, the concept of proposition is in itself not as simple as might be assumed, for it has a very different meaning in discourse analysis studies. According to James Renkema, the concept of a proposition is taken from the fields of philosophy and logic, and is used in a general sense in discourse studies "to denote the minimal unit of meaning" (1993:54). He states that a proposition consists of a verb, the predicates, which serve as its nucleus and consists of one or more arguments which relate to the nucleus. Van Dijk and Kintsch's (1983) definition of the concept of proposition is equally illuminating, and therefore deserves a mention. They note that: "a proposition is an abstract, theoretical construct which is used to identify the meaning, or what is expressed by a sentence under specific contextual restrictions (speaker, time, place), and which is related to truth values" (1983:111). In this vein, a proposition can either be true or false. Furthermore, *propositional analysis* is based on a *propositional schema*, which consists of a list of several atomic propositions (Van Dijk and Kinsch, 1983:112). They point out that the schema used for discourse comprehension is always constructed, and the raw material that it uses may be general, decontextualised knowledge or some personal experience (or a mixture of the two) or merely remotely similar knowledge structure or experience that is transferred to the present situation via analogy (1983:319). *Propositional analysis* is often confused by scholars as propositions have often been tied too closely to truth values.

According to Renkema (1993), in using the concept of proposition in discourse analysis, it is convenient to disregard other aspects, such as circumstances in which the sentence is uttered or writer's attitude concerning sentence. Differences among different sentences that make up a proposition are disregarded. The elements in the propositions are not to be equated with words in the text as these (elements) can be rephrased in different ways (Renkema, 1993:52). Thus viewed, the concept of proposition can be regarded as a tool

analysts to deal with data. Accordingly, then, the question of whether *propositional analysis* can be equated with discourse analysis? Clearly, the answer is a negative one, especially when one examines the definition of discourse analysis provided in the previous chapter: "the study of the text in context". *Propositional analysis* is only a small facet of the broader project of discourse analysis; it is a technique that is operationalised by a discourse analyst in order to analyse / process / deal with data. This is especially significant if one takes into account that discourse analysis involves much more than coding and the assessment of relationships between coding categories (Wood & Kroger, 2000:32), and for which propositions are generally used. In fact, as Wood & Kroger (2000) point out, strictly speaking, discourse analysis does not involve coding into categories at all.

Seen in this light, *propositional analysis* is not equivalent to discourse analysis, a method of inquiry that mainly seeks to study the "text in context" or "language in use". In the light of the definition of discourse analysis cited above, it can be argued that discourse analysis cannot occur without some study of the context, whether local or global, hence such a study is, as has been emphasised, the *raison d' être* of this method of inquiry. The absence of research into context in the SAHRC investigation, as MMP and Braude "failed" to go beyond texts to interview producers or consumers of the messages" (Berger, 2000:11), is sufficiently great to support the view that both researchers did not do any discourse analysis.

The fact that *propositional analysis* cannot be equated with discourse analysis is also evident from the three shortcomings / limitations to the former as discussed by Kinsch and Van Dijk (1983). Firstly, as with Rekema, they state that the *propositional analysis* model is not based on the text itself, but on a text base in the form of a sequence of propositions. This model, they argue, only describes the processes that take place after the text has already been divided into propositions. In this vein, the discourse comprehension processes that take place in order to form a text are not dealt with. Secondly, it is not made clear that readers have to draw inferences on the basis of information that is not provided in the text. Thirdly, they state that in this model

analysis) a reader's knowledge prior to reading the text is knowledge can help to facilitate the assimilation of the text (1993:193). Viewed in the light of the above mentioned reasons, it can be argued that the 'propositions-driven method' - to borrow Tomaselli's (2000) characterisation of MMP's brand of discourse analysis - that is masqueraded by this organisation as discourse analysis cannot be taken to demonstrate a clear understanding of this method of inquiry on their part.

## **MMP's presentation of the research findings.**

### **(a) The issue of discourse analysis vis-à-vis content analysis**

In its report, MMP states that contemporary scholars have attempted to overcome the limitations posed by content analysis by engaging in a discourse analysis which, either coupled with a quantitative assessment or on its own, provides a more detailed and an informative evaluation (1999:5). As noted earlier, MMP does not indicate the route that it followed in this regard. That is to say, no clear statement is provided in the report to the effect that MMP used discourse analysis and content analysis alongside each other. Instead, only discourse analysis is emphasised (see p.6). It is only in the section under the heading 'general findings' (from page 11 to 59) that one learns that apart from attempting to use discourse analysis, MMP also used an additional method with a strong quantitative element.

A broad survey of the MMP report provides a factual testimony regarding the extent to which it is pervaded or dominated by statistics, graphs, and tables - all of which feature commonly in studies that use content analysis as a method of inquiry - and through which MMP presents the results of its findings. As Berger reminds us: 'content analysis provides numbers. The technique is based on counting and / or measuring, and the findings are given in numerical form' (1998:28). Similarly, Deacon *et al* also point out: 'The purpose of content analysis is to quantify salient and manifest features of a large number of texts, and the statistics are used to make broader inferences about the processes and politics of representation' (*News in Black and White: An Investigation Into Racial Stereotyping in the Media*, 1999:116). These are followed by

that accompany the statistics and graphical report, and most of these are based on the list of propositions that the researchers formulated.

A careful reading of the MMP report does not pose a great deal of difficulty to the reader in order to for him / her to establish some kind of pattern regarding the representation of the results of the study. As the graphical and tables found in the first ten pages of the report (from pages 11 to 19) illustrate. For example, having provided a graphical representation of the topics identified on page 11, an explanation of or commentary about the data in the graph is provided on p.12. It informs us, among other things, that the items dealing with race issues tended to feature in crime stories, with over 200 items, while items specifically dealing with racism, as the subject, also received extensive coverage with just under 200 itemsö (*News In Black and White: An Investigation Into Racial Stereotyping in the Media*, 1999:12). The report states that crime as a subject featured the most in these items. The explanation given to support this claim is that such a high level of crime can be understood in the light of a crime situation in South Africa. The report further states that issues of racism and racial stereotyping also featured quite highly in stories about international politics, with most of these items being located in Africa. Economics and business are reported to have received just under 90 stories and these tended to focus on issues of affirmative action and black empowerment (*News in Black and White: An Investigation Into Racial Stereotyping in the Media*, 1999:12).

The above mentioned pattern is also found in the next graph on p.13 in the next item under the subheading -locationø in which statistical data on the provincial distribution pattern of stories that are perceived to contain racial stereotypes is provided. The explanations and commentaries that follow the graph in question focus on the numbers and frequencies with which stories that dealt with race and racism occurred. The report states, for example, that the majority of these stories were of national importance and amounted to 423. These graphs and figures are followed by explanations that support the claims that have been made. Such as the hardly convincing statement that õ not only does the lack of items and provincial bias suggest less newsworthy items in these

suggests that there is less racism in these provinces (MPP's *Investigation Into Racial Stereotyping in the Media*, 1999:14). Similarly, in the graph on page 15, the focus is on frequency analysis, as the reader is bombarded with figures of the type of news items that were monitored and their sources. The reports states, for instance, that editorials, comments from independent commentators and analytical pieces featured fairly highly, adding to 222 items, even though it was outweighed by the news being close to a thousand (*News in Black and White: An Investigation Into Racial Stereotyping in the Media*, 1999:15).

Following the same trajectory of frequency analysis, from pages 16 to 19, the report provides a statistical representation (presented both in numbers and percentages) of the extent to which news items supported or negated the propositions constructed by researchers. As has been done in the preceding section of the report, these are followed by brief and scanty explanation to support them. Noteworthy about the few examples that have been given, is the amount of focus on, and interest in the frequencies with which stories identified as either racist or containing racial stereotypes occur in various kinds of mass media, and in certain parts of the country. Also noteworthy about these examples, is the sketchy and skimpy nature of the explanations that accompany the graphs and statistics. This does not accord well with discourse analysis which relies a great deal on penetrating analyses and detailed explication.

Tomaselli has also made the observation regarding MMP's use of frequency analysis. He writes:

MMP's content analysis offers merely the frequency with which certain items appear in the media. The Project's reports consider "discourse analysis" to be a list of keywords which indicate whether some report or source constitutes or represents one of a restricted list of interest groups. Publicising what is effectively multiple choice-choice frequency monitoring as "discourse analysis" appears to cover the decision to classify any ideology, rhetorical manoeuvre or policy statement as "discourse" (2000:12).

As is evident in the rest of the report, there is considerable focus on the frequency with which particular news items seen by MMP to contain racist stereotypes occur. In so

itself into both *attribution* and *assertions analysis*, Content Analysis. As noted earlier, whereas *attribution analysis*, on the one hand, provides the frequency with which certain objects are referred to, *attribution analysis*, on the other hand, provides the frequencies with which certain objects are characterised in a particular way. Particularly noteworthy in these examples of frequency analysis, is the fact that these have been done against the background of the absence of contextual analysis.

As can be observed from the foregoing discussion, it is content analysis that dominates the MMP report, rather than discourse analysis, except for the list of propositions that were formulated by researchers, and which as mentioned earlier, are not based on the texts themselves. In addition, even though the list of propositions formulated by the researchers do figure prominently in the MMP report, given this monitoring agency's failure to study the text in context, it seems plausible surmise that the MMP report does not demonstrate a clear understanding of discourse analysis on the part of this media monitoring agency, that is, MMP. Hence, the argument that has been maintained through this study, that studying the text in context is the *raison de' être* of discourse analysis. As with Braude's cultural studies textual approach, contextual analysis for MMP seems to be a matter of allusion rather than practically doing *discourse practice* and *sociocultural practice*. Also notable in the MMP report, is the researchers' neglect of the aspect known as *warranting*, an important requirement in doing discourse analysis. It consists of providing justification and grounds for one's claims (Wood & Kroger, 2000:163). As has been demonstrated, the report contains a number of claims that are made without either substantiation or justification. Neither does MMP provide examples on how it went about doing discourse analysis in relation to these items.

### **(b) Lack of 'demonstration' in the form a representative set of discourse excerpts in the report.**

Reference was made to Potter and Wetherell's (1987) comment regarding the significance of the final report in discourse analysis research, namely, that it represents more than a presentation of the research findings, and hence constitutes part of the

procedures itself. An allusion was also made to their  
h report is to present analyses and conclusions in such  
a way that the reader is able to assess the researcher's interpretations. Following this line  
of thinking, these authors argue that a representative set of excerpts from the area of  
interest or the area that is being investigated, should be included along with a detailed  
interpretation which links analytic claims to specific parts or aspects of the extracts  
(Potter & Wetherell, 1987:172). This aspect of the report is referred to as demonstration,  
and involves the presentation of one or more discourse excerpts, followed by their  
detailed analysis (Wood & Kroger, 2000:183).

According to Potter and Wetherell (1987), the entire reasoning process from discursive  
data to conclusions should be documented in some detail, and each reader should be  
given the possibility of evaluating the different stages of the process, and hence agreeing  
with the conclusions or finding grounds for disagreement. In such a case, they further  
contend, a sizeable portion of the article will be taken up with extracts from transcript or  
documents and the rest will be detailed interpretations which pick out patterns of  
organisation in the materials. They do, however, acknowledge that in practice, this means  
that the analytic section of a discourse article will be considerably longer. For this reason,  
only a few extracts can be selected.

Thus viewed, discourse analysis reports will contrast with traditional content analysis  
reports in which readers are presented with a definition of particular categories, and even  
one or two extracts / examples of these, but virtually none of the interpretative work on  
which the research is based appears in the text (Potter & Wetherell, 1987:173). Clearly,  
the point about including excerpts of the text returns us to the comment made in the  
previous chapter, via the work of Van Dijk, regarding the problem of dealing with large  
volumes of data while using discourse analysis. As noted above, Potter and Wetherell  
(1987) themselves acknowledge this limitation, and therefore, suggest that only a few  
excerpts should be included. Bearing the above discussion in mind, we can now raise the  
following question: Was this aspect of writing a research report taken cognisance of by  
MMP?

It points to the fact that the procedure discussed above MMP did not provide any representative sample of the items that it identified as racist or as exhibiting racist stereotypes. Instead, MMP relied on a number of questionable and deeply flawed strategies, as I show below. MMP's main strategy centres on *propositional analysis*, which, as has been mentioned, is only one aspect of discourse analysis, and therefore cannot be taken to demonstrate a clear understanding of this method by anyone who uses it. This is used in combination with frequency analysis, as MMP desperately attempts to show the recurrence and pervasiveness of racial stereotypes in the media texts that it examined, as well as the frequency with which the media reports on issues of racism; and in the process, conflates racism with racist reporting. As in case of the opening graphical representation of the overall results of MMP findings on page 11, the graph on page 13 (under the heading 'Location'), begins with an explanation of the purpose of the graph, namely, that it represents the geographic location and relevance of the stories monitored that dealt with race, racism and racial stereotypes. It proceeds to cite the number of stories of provincial and national importance (which amounted to 423). It then offers a brief and shallow account of the reasons that underlie provincial bias in news reporting and why this particular trend exists.

Surprising in this instance, is the unconvincing and blanket assertion (already referred to elsewhere) made by MMP that 'not only does the lack of items and provincial bias suggest less newsworthy items in these provinces, but also to some degree suggests that there is less racism in these provinces' (*News in Black and White: An Investigation Into Racial Stereotyping in the Media*, 1999:14). A similar pattern is also found in the graph on page 15, in which the purpose of the graph is stated, and the number of different types of news genres (news items, editorials, analytical articles, and current affairs programmes) that dealt with issues of race are cited (from page 16 onwards). In this case, the presentation of the findings centres mainly on *propositional analysis*, what might be seen to form the fulcrum on which MMP's presentation of its findings rests. Once again, the focus of the analysis in this instance, centres on the list of propositions that are

the report, as well as the account on the frequency with which disjunctive propositions occur.

Noteworthy about the section on propositions referred to above, is the fact that MMP simply provides examples of headlines taken from various media sources rather excerpts of actual texts. As evident in the examples regarding the proposition 8 (Black foreigners threaten South African society) and proposition 8A (foreigners are criminals) below:

Some examples, which supported the proposition, were:

•evil minded Nigerians blamed for violence

(Star, 10/08/1999:8)

•Publiek gernaan teen Nigeriese

(Burger, 28/07/99:9)

While others Challenged the proposition:

•Refugee fears for his life

(Independent on Saturday, 17/07/1999:2)

•Don't blame Aliens

(Sowetan, 11/08/1999:8) (1999:17)

Apart from the fact that the texts monitored during the MMP Inquiry were studied in isolation from their context, the examples cited above, point to the fact that MMP did not even include excerpts of the texts which it monitored. Neither did MMP provide any examples of how it operationalized the propositions and stereotypes that it identified. As Berger has also noted "the MMP provides no information nor even illustration in its report on how exactly it operationalized the stereotypes it identified. It lays out the tools used, but keeps hidden how it actually wielded them" (2000:12). He thus concludes that "We have no way, therefore, of saying whether and how and why these stereotypes were legitimately identified or not" (2000:12).

Once again, on the basis of MMP's failure to include examples of how it operationalized discourse analysis in its report, it seems difficult to ascertain how this method was actually used by this agency. By the same token, it is impossible to believe that the texts were actually studied in their context, for one cannot solely rely on the basis of a headline to surmise that sufficient contextual analysis has been done. In a manner that is typical of

ual analysis, which despite grounding its categories of  
y ignores focus on empirical producers and recipients  
of media messages, MMP appears to have followed the same route. Thus, having  
examined some of the aspects of MMP's presentation of its results, as found in its report,  
I will now examine the report against the background of the concept of 'critical discourse  
analysis'

## **Part Two: The MMP report and 'critical discourse analysis'**

By claiming to have followed the route of Van Dijk (who despite positing a cognitive  
model of discourse analysis remains a staunch advocate of CDA) regarding discourse  
analysis, MMP's approach implied a systematic methodology and a study of the  
relationship between the text and its social conditions, ideologies and power relations.  
Hence, Van Dijk claims that 'The critical momentum of such an approach [critical  
discourse analysis] lies in its focus on relevant socio-political issues, and especially  
makes explicit the ways power abuse of dominant groups and its resulting inequality are  
enacted, expressed, legitimated, or challenged in or by discourse' (1993:96). Like CDA  
also, MMP conceived of the language of the texts that it examined as representative of a  
form of social practice that served to reproduce racial stereotypes, and attempted to make  
people aware of the reciprocal influences of the language in these texts and the social  
structure of which they were not clearly aware. As I show below, the MMP and SAHRC  
reports provide ample evidence to support the claims made above.

From its very beginning, the SAHRC Inquiry into racism in the media was only  
politically motivated, but also politically charged. Upon its receipt of the requests of BLA  
and ABASA to investigate both the *Mail and Guardian* the *Sunday Times* for being  
allegedly guilty of racism, the Commission immediately submitted the dossier of these  
allegations to the newspaper houses concerned and invited response. These newspaper  
houses refuted these allegations together with a challenge to the jurisdiction of the  
Commission and the *Locus standi* of the authors of the communication (*Faultlines:  
Inquiry Into Racism in the Media*, 2000:5). In response to these refutations, the  
Commission rejected the claim that the authors had no *locus standi*, and asserted that as

the interests of black people, the two organisations  
the interest in the matter (2000:5).

What ensued thereafter was a series of heated exchanges (via the media) between the SAHRC (and those who supported the Commission's initiative) and those who perceived the Commission to be bent on trampling over one of the fundamental pillars of democracy fetishly held and jealously guarded, that is, freedom of expression. This situation culminated in the issuing of subpoenas by the Commission to certain editors of the print media with the intention of securing their participation in the hearings forum that it had organised. Aside from the fact that the issue of racism (on which the inquiry centred) is itself a political matter, the interventionist and corrective objective behind the inquiry was clearly destined to have political consequences. By and large, therefore, the very nature of the research that was undertaken by the Commission and the independent researchers was politically involved research, and thus fitted Titscher *et al* notion of 'politically involved research with an emancipatory requirement' (2000:14), which is one of the tenets of CDA.

In justifying its choice of discourse analysis, MMP states that this method does not only provides an analysis of the values and attitudes of the media, but it also aims to establish the ideological links those attitudes and values have with the ideologies occurring in our society (1999:5). Evidently, such an approach to discourse analysis, articulates one of the principles of CDA that language use is / may be ideological (Titscher, *et al*, 2000:146). The fact that MMP attempted to operate within the framework of CDA also becomes evident as one looks at Fairclough's (1995b) definition of 'critical' approaches to discourse analysis. He states, for example, that 'critical' approaches to discourse analysis do not just describe discursive practices, but should also show how discourse is shaped by relations of power and ideologies, and the constructive effects discourse has upon social identities, social relations and systems of belief, neither of which is normally apparent to the discourse participant (1992:12).

MMP implicitly embraced the above mentioned  
s (1996) view that the media wields a tremendous

amount of power:

The media [the actual products or messages] are also powerful in that they are unavoidable. Either from direct viewing or reading, or from second-hand reports, media provide the lion's share of our knowledge and beliefs concerning life outside of our direct experience (cited in the MMP report, 1999:3)

In line with the aforementioned principle of CPA, MMP further espoused Elliot's view that 'Individuals in the audience are necessarily vulnerable to the impact of the media in all of its social functions' (1999:6). In spite of the fact that this position expresses the now refuted [mainly by audience researchers / reception analysts such as McQuail (1987) and critics of the 'effects model' such as Gauntlett (1998)] transmission model of some early scholarship on media effects, it does serve to suggest that MMP viewed discourse (the whole process of social interaction of which texts are part) as having to do with power-relations. This further accords with one of the principles of CDA cited by Titscher *et al* that 'CDA studies both power in discourse and power over discourse' (2000:146). Be that as it may, however, especially pertinent for this part of the present chapter, is the extent to which MMP demonstrates a clear understanding and a proper application of discourse analysis in general and 'critical' discourse analysis in particular.

## **MMP and Text-Oriented Discourse Analysis (TODA)**

One of the striking features of the entire SAHRC Inquiry, as reflected in the respective reports of its independent researchers, is the tendency on the part of the latter to focus on media products or messages, in which they purport to have found evidence of racial stereotyping, and subsequently of racism. Not surprisingly, it is due to their sole focus on textual analysis that these researchers have been fiercely criticised by scholars such as Berger (2000); Tomaselli (2000); and De Beer (2000), among others. Obviously, such text-centrism goes against Bertelsen's (2000) comment that while the scrutiny of news texts is generally regarded as a standard activity in media studies, it is now generally

involves a good deal more than canny textual analysis.

í a study of racism in the media needs to address the whole media cycle, engaging moments of production, distribution and consumption. In short, to acknowledge that news is generated by an organizational complex: media ownership and control; gatekeeping mechanisms; professional codes of journalism; marketing and distribution; and audiences (2000:19)

Bertelsen's (2000) position dovetails with those that are embodied in Fairclough's (1995b) notion of 'critical discourse analysis' and Van Dijk's (1985) notion of 'a sound discourse analysis' which advocate a more holistic approach to the study of media messages. The question worth raising at this point then is: Were the principles of CDA referred to in the foregoing properly adhered to by MMP during its investigation? As I hope to demonstrate in the discussion that follows, the answer is a negative one. Notwithstanding MMP's claim that its method entailed a combined use of content analysis and discourse analysis (telephonic communication with Bird, an MMP researcher), I shall argue that in the final analysis its methodology is also prone to the same criticisms that have been levelled against the text-centred approach of both cultural and literary studies used by Braude. Of course, one has to admit that the final criticism lies with the Commission whose instruction was that the Inquiry be limited to the products of the media, hence '[its belief] that what makes the impact on public consciousness is not what goes on behind the scenes, but what they actually read about themselves and what it conveys about the society they live in' (Pityana, 2000:3). In addressing this question, therefore, I will examine MMP's application of CDA in conjunction with the method used by Braude in her research.

## **The MMP and the notion of *discursive practice***

### **(i) The absence of research into the media industry**

In her report - dubbed by the evaluators of the SAHRC Inquiry as 'the Braude Report' - Claudia Braude offers the following explanation for her failure to interview the personnel who worked inside the media industry:

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to be beyond the scope of my research, I was  
ing media professionals about work related and  
organizational issues. Missing in this report is direct and rigorous  
engagement with the media industry. This is clearly an area for future aspects  
of the SAHRC Inquiry need to address. (1998:14)

As has been argued throughout this study, the failure on the part of MMP to study the text in its proper context has serious repercussions not only for its claim to having used discourse analysis, but also for the entire research. Against this background, it is not surprising that Braude's and MMP's research methods have been criticised by some of the evaluators of the SAHRC Inquiry for this lacuna / neglect. Tomaselli (2000), for example, argues that while cognisance needs to be taken of the reason given by Braude in the above quotation, the absence of research into the media industry in her report does not absolve her from criticism. As a professional researcher, she should have known the seriousness of the implications of such neglect for her research. An almost similar criticism is made by Gordin in an opinion article that featured in the *Sunday Tribune* of November 2000. In response to Braude's claim that she was discouraged by the Commission from interviewing media professionals, he writes: "This, though apparently not Braude's fault, seems a strange way to conduct research where the central findings are, at the end of the day, on the motives, conscious or unconscious, of media professionals" (2000:28).

Contrary to Bertelsen's (2000) claim that the method used by Braude is discourse analysis, the latter characterises her method as textual analysis, which is only one aspect of discourse analysis. As the following extract from her report illustrates:

The textual analysis in this research is aimed to examine the politics of signification, namely the ways in which certain events get currently signified in particular ways. Moving from the content to structure of media production, from the manifest meaning to the level of the code, it aimed to go deeper than the literal message (the denotation) in order to consider the overall symbolic meaning (the connotation). Textual analysis aimed to identify the second-order meanings, i.e. the meanings beyond the literal. (1999:16)

report that her analysis sought to go deeper than the consider the overall symbolic coded meaning at play, and to identify the second order meaning operating beyond the literal meaning, does seem to point in the direction of a discourse analytic approach. However, her failure to do contextual analysis (which entails, among other things, an analysis of the ways in which texts are produced by media workers in media institutions) seems to disqualify her method as either discourse analysis or CDA. Viewed in the light of the SAHRC's instruction to its researchers not to interview professionals in the media industry, and to focus solely on media products, it seems plausible to assume that the route followed by Braude in this regard was also followed by MMP.

If CDA seeks to go beyond linguistic description to include *discursive practice* (which includes text production and text interpretation), this is clearly missing in the MMP report. In passing, though, a point of clarification regarding the production of textual meaning seems necessary at this point. This is especially so, given the insights that have been advanced by *reader response* critics [such as Stanley Fish (1997); Umberto Eco (1999)], and *reception* theorists [such as Hall (1980); McQuail (1997)] in the recent decades. They state, for example, that readers of texts and recipients of media messages equally play a significant role in the creation of meanings of such texts, as opposed to those that are originally intended by producers / authors of texts. McQuail articulates this position when he writes: "It should by now be axiomatic that content (whether sent or received) does not equal effect because: many alternative ways in which messages can be interpreted and applied by their receivers; the fact that societal conditions and contents encourage some, and discourage other, effects; the sheer inefficiency of the whole media-delivery system" (1987:179).

In case of media messages, the first stage of production occurs inside the media industry when news items, editorials, etc are manufactured by media workers, refined by editors, and packaged into final products that are ready for consumption. The second stage occurs when consumers of media messages read, decode, and create their own meanings out of these texts, and even going to the extent of adapting these to their own life circumstances

er (2000) asks the following pertinent question in relation to the independent researchers: How can one tell if a story is racist if one has not spoken to the producers of that story and its readers and audiences? Viewed in this light, therefore, the failure of MMP to do research into the media industry does not only cast doubt on its claim to having used discourse analysis, but it also discounts its implicit claim to CDA, whose other level of analysis, as already mentioned, includes the notion of *discursive practice*.

## (ii) The absence of audience / reception analysis

Reception analysis was not done by the SAHRC appointed researchers as part of their investigation into racism in the media. Once again, this goes against the point made by Bertelsen (2000) that for a study of racism in the media to be valid and reliable, it must address the entire media cycle, engaging moments of production, distribution, and consumption (2000:19). Similarly, it also goes against one of the principles of CDA, namely, that in order to determine the ideological nature of language use in media texts, it is necessary to investigate their interpretation, reception and social effect (Titscher *et al*, 2000:146). This is especially significant given MMP's claim in its report that the media are powerful and that audiences are highly vulnerable to its impact (1999:3-4). In line with these assumptions, therefore, it is only through audience research / reception analysis that the extent of such impact and effects can be determined with some degree of accuracy. In dealing with the question of CDA and the absence of research into the media audience / reception analysis in MMP study, it is useful to examine the manner in which this issue was dealt with by both research teams during their respective investigations. The issue of audience research / reception analysis also raises an interesting, and yet puzzling question. If the Commission dissuaded the researchers from interviewing media professionals because it feared that it could / would be seen to act [ing] like the censorship police of old (Pityana, 2000:3), it can be equally asked what its fear was in relation to the consumers of media messages?

As has been done in relation to the exposition on *discursive practice*, it seems convenient to begin with Braude's approach to the issue of audience analysis, hence MMP almost

she only focused on media texts / messages. The  
will serve a useful purpose in giving us an idea of how

she dealt with the matter in question:

While submitting each headline, picture, caption, article and newspaper to a discrete, sometimes microscopic analysis, I simultaneously treated the accumulated material as one overarching text. Crossing components of the newspapers, genre news articles, editorials, letters, sports and culture pages, opinion pieces, newspapers and days, this text becomes the body of common sense, taken-for-granted knowledge of the average media consumer. (1998:57-58)

A close examination of the approach adopted by Braude regarding the issue of audience analysis, as stated in the quotation, suggests that she operated within the analytical practice of cultural studies which, although rooted in literary-analysis-cum-interpretation, emphasises extratextual frameworks of explanation (Jensen, 1991:29). Jensen states that while the categories of analysis in the cultural studies approach are grounded in theories of subjectivity and social context, the primary medium remains the interpreting scholar / researcher. In case of Braude's research, it would be Braude herself. In regards to the approach in question, focus tends to be placed on the overarching discourses of culture, rather than their local, empirical producers and recipients (1991:29). Jensen also states that although the earlier British Cultural Studies approach does refer to the genre in question, its reader positions, and associated social uses, it is still preoccupied with the message or discourse of communication. This is in spite of its habitual, sometimes ritualistic references to the concreteness, specificity, and difference to cultural practices (1991:28).

Accordingly, such an approach remains firmly within the *logos* tradition of the humanities which has tended to approach *texts* as loci of meaning to be extracted by (more or less) competent readers through a hermeneutic effect (Jensen, 1991:136). Nonetheless, the text-centred approach that characterises Braude's research is perhaps not surprising, given her literary studies background. The deficiencies of the cultural studies textual approach (especially its postmodernist form) can be inferred from Douglas

how this approach can be enriched by a dialogue  
of the Frankfurt School. He writes:

Transdisciplinary approaches to culture and society transgress borders. In regards to cultural studies, such approaches suggest that one should not stop at the borders, but should see how it fits into systems of textual production, and how various texts are thus part of genres or types of production, and have an intertextual construction, as well as articulating discourses in a socio-historical conjuncture. One should not, therefore, stop at the borders of the text or even its intertextuality, but should move from text to context, to the culture and society that constitutes the text and in which it should be read and interpreted.  
(1997:25-26)

A more trenchant attack on the humanistic / cultural textual studies approach has come from reception analysis, which is the audience research arm of modern cultural studies, rather than an independent tradition (McQuail, 1997:19). As already noted, this method emphasises the role of the reader in the decoding of media texts. Following the initial findings in the early 1980s [e.g. Morley (1980); Hall 1980)], it has almost become axiomatic to assume that most media messages are polysemic (i.e. have multiple meanings) and are therefore open to several possible interpretations (McQuail, 1997:19). In contrast to humanistic textual studies, reception analysis suggests that both audiences and contexts of mass communication need to be examined as socially specific, empirical objects of analysis (1991:137). Accordingly, advocates of reception analysis, such as Tomaselli (2000), strongly oppose the transmission / effects model of Braude and MMP, which is premised on the now dated *hypodermic model* of the media. This model is based on the notion that media messages are injected into audiences with direct effects upon the groups which receive the message. As Stuart Price aptly puts it, "The *hypodermic model* of the media is based on the idea that media messages are directly absorbed into the hearts and minds of the people" (1997:107.108). Accordingly, this model portrays the media as inordinately powerful. Clearly, reception analysis is not only in harmony with discourse analysis in general, but also with CDA in particular, as articulated by Fairclough (1995b) and Titscher et al (2000), hence it puts emphasis on studying ways in which texts are

w their meanings adapted to people's own life

Even though MMP does attempt to deal with the issue of audiences in its report, the manner in which it does this seems equally suspect, if not questionable. The issue of MMP's handling of audience analysis is found on pages 76-78 in its report included in the appendix of this study. As is evident from the extracts in question, in the same way that MMP failed to solicit the opinion of those inside the media industry regarding the media messages that it identified as racist or as containing racial stereotypes, it also failed to obtain a first hand opinion of the consumers of those messages. Thus, despite its claim to having used discourse analysis, MMP slips into the very pitfall of the textual approach of Cultural Studies, which even though it grounds categories of analysis in theories of subjectivity and social context, completely ignores focus on the local, empirical producers and recipients. As already noted, it is a problem that is also found in the study carried out by Braude. It has been pointed out that one of the principles of CDA is that it regards language as ideological, and in order to determine this, it advocates the analysis of texts in order to investigate their interpretation, reception and social effects. Thus MMP's failure to do reception analysis undermines, and even contradicts, its claim to CDA.

Furthermore, the type of audience analysis provided by MMP in its report is based on the market oriented conception of audiences, which is mainly useful for media industries and for analysing media economics (McQuail, 1997:9). According to McQuail, the market-oriented view of audiences sees media products as commodities or services offered for sale to a given body of potential consumers, in competition with other media products, and in an environment where the media is entirely commercial (like in the USA), and these potential or actual consumers can be seen / regarded as a market (1987:220). In this case, the concept of market is sometimes used to indicate specific population areas, and sometimes to indicate aggregates of population (1987:220). He points out, however, that despite its usefulness and pragmatism, this conception of audiences is not only

. He cites the following problems as being associated with audiences cited above:

It links the sender and receiver in a calculative rather than a normative or social relationship, as a cash transaction between producer and consumer rather than a communicative relationship. It ignores the internal relations among consumers, these are of little interest to service providers. It privileges socio-economic criteria and focuses on media consumer. (1997:9)

McQuail (1997) further states that since people in audiences do not normally have any awareness of themselves as belonging to specific markets (in this case, particular forms of media), the market discourse in relation to the audience is implicitly manipulative. The type of audience analysis cited in the extracts from the MMP report is further rendered problematic by the fact that it is largely based on the propositions formulated by the researchers and their preferred readings of media messages, rather than on the responses of consumers of media messages themselves. It portrays consumers of media messages as a homogenous entity, thereby ignoring differences that are based on class, socio-economic backgrounds, race, gender, and other such factors. Another criticism of the research conducted by Braude and MMP in relation to audiences has been made by Tomaselli. He argues that their approaches are based on:

A visual imperialist thesis, which disempowers audiences and readers from any response other than that imposed (i.e. imposed) by the researcher. In all the reports cited here, the researchers project their intentions and the readers' interpretations, irrespective of the readings that receivers themselves might make of the messages being analysed. (2000:15).

Similarly, Berger notes that 'The problem with MMP's stereotypes is that they exist in the fixed form, without contradiction and certainly without the chance of being read in a different way by the public' (2000:15).

Two pertinent criticisms of the 'effects model' upon which the MMP study is based, are offered by David Gauntlett (1998) in his useful article titled 'Ten wrong things with the effects model' and which can be seen to provide a desiderata of the flaws that inhere in

ence, therefore, these criticisms deserve a brief discussion. Gauntlett criticises the 'effects model' for tackling social problems backwards. According to this scholar, a researcher who uses the 'effects model' begins with the media and then tries to establish connections from there on to social beings, rather than the other way round (1998:121). He sees this 'backwards' approach as flawed in that it looks at individuals, rather than the society, in relation to the mass media. In contradistinction to this model, he contends that in order to explain the problem of violence in society, for instance, researchers should begin with that social violence and try to explain it with reference to those who engage in it, by attempting to understand their identity, background, character, and so on. He thus concludes that studies which take the perpetrators of actual violence as their first point of reference, rather than the media, come to rather different conclusions.

Secondly, Gauntlett criticises the 'effects model' for not making any attempt to understand meanings of media texts. In line with this view, he argues that the 'effects model' performs a double deception of presuming that (a) the media presents a singular and clear-cut 'message' and that (b) the proponents of the 'effects model' are in a position to identify what that message is (1998:127). He thus argues that the meanings of media content are ignored by the 'effects model' in the simple sense that assumptions are made based on the appearance of elements removed from their context, and even in the more sophisticated sense that in context the meanings may be different for different viewers. Echoing the view that has been emphasised throughout this dissertation in relation to audience analysis, Gauntlett states that in-depth qualitative studies have given support to the view that media audiences routinely arrive at their own, often heterogeneous, interpretations of everyday media texts (1998:127).

Viewed in the light of the above mentioned problems and criticisms, therefore, MMP's handling of the issue of audience / reception analysis seems to open itself to Jensen's comment-cum-criticism regarding reception analysis. He writes: 'For most research purposes, an operationalization of categories that establishes aggregated, decontextualized sets of 'data' which only subsequently are interpreted as 'findings'

to meaning as produced by audiencesö (1991:140). In  
argue that due to MMP's failure to do reception and  
producer research, it also failed to comply with one of the essential principles of CDA.  
Of course, this is not to ignore the instructions of the Commission to the independent  
researchers to focus on media products only. Nonetheless, it can be simultaneously  
argued that if MMP had a better understanding of what discourse analysis entails the  
concept of textual analysis would have been a better term for it to use to characterise its  
method. After all, textual analysis is the method that MMP appears to have used (albeit  
disingenuously) in combination which content analysis, rather than discourse analysis.

### **MMP and the notion of *social practice* / *sociocultural context***

MMP's compliance with the principles of CDA can be further unravelled by examining  
its report against the third dimension of a discursive / communicative event posited by  
Fairclough's (1995b) three dimensional conception of CDA, namely, that of *social  
practice* / *sociocultural context*. As already noted in the previous chapter, *social practice*  
relates to different levels of social organisation: the situation, the institutional context, the  
wider group or social context. Fairclough's position regarding *social practice* is informed  
by the view that the wider social contextual matrix must be attended to because it shapes  
discourse practices in important ways, and it is itself cumulatively shaped by them  
(1995b: 50). Clearly, this position is informed by Michel Foucault's (1972) view that  
while discourse constitutes subjects; it is in turn constituted by subjects. At the level of  
*social practice*, questions of power ideology, and identity formation are of central  
interest; hence power, ideology, and identity formation are seen to have a potential effect  
on each of the contextual levels.

According to Fairclough (1995b), the analysis of texts and practices should be mapped on  
to the analysis of the institutional and wider social and cultural context of media  
practices, including relations of power and ideologies. As he puts it: "Sociocultural  
analysis [or analysis of *social practice*] needs to address such issues as the relations of  
power that underlie the emergence and continuity of particular discourse types,  
ideological effects that might be associated with them, ways in which they construct

at they project, and so forthö (1995b: 52). In arguing by the SAHRC appointed researchers was conducted within the framework of CDA, reference has been made to the fact that issues of power, ideology, identity construction, and representation are central to this framework of discourse analysis. I will therefore examine the manner in which some aspects of *social practice* were dealt with by MMP. Not only will this serve to determine whether MMP did comply with the requirements of CDA, but it will also help to shed light on the manner in which this method was applied by this organisation.

In approaching its project, MMP subscribed to Elliotø (1996) view, which depicts the media as an inordinately powerful medium, and sees individuals in the audience as necessarily vulnerable to its impact in all its social functions. Clearly, such a conception of media messages partly situates MMPø project within the framework of *mass society theory of the media*, and *mass society theory of media power*. The former theory, on the one hand, emphasises the interdependence of institutions that exercise power and thus the integration of the media into sources of power and authority (McQuail, 1987:62). As McQuail points out: òMass society theory gives primacy to the media as cause and maintainer of mass society and rests very much on the idea that the media offer a view of the world, a substitute or pseudo-environment which is a potent means of manipulation of people but also an aid to their psychic survival under difficult conditionsö (1987:62-63). This view is also informed by C. Wright Millsø view that òBetween consciousness and existence stands communications / mass media which influence such consciousness as men have of their existenceö (1951:333).

Following the trajectory of *mass society theory of the media*, the *mass society theory of media power*, on the other hand, posits the notion that the media is controlled in a monopolistic way and is a principal and an effective means of organising people into masses, audiences, consumers, markets, electorates etc (McQuail, 1987:82). In this vein, this theory advocates the notion that mass media are a voice of authority, the givers of opinion instruction and also of psychic satisfaction. This theory also sees the media as a form of non-democratic control from above. Furthermore, it stresses this potential of the

ts to such power, mainly because of its monopolistic  
he part of the audience to answer back (McQuail,  
1987:82). Even though the *mass society theory of media power* differs considerably from  
vulgar Marxist theory of media power, which sees the media as forming part of an  
ideological arena in which various class views are fought out within the context of the  
dominance of certain classes, it is in certain ways similar to it. It shares with it a tendency  
to accentuate and exaggerate certain features of media, while foregrounding the issue of  
media power and domination (McQuail, 1987:85).

Having granted immense power to the media in the manner that is espoused by Elliot  
(1996), and having defined racism in terms of domination that is both structural and  
ideological, MMP argues, on the one hand, that structural racism is about structures in  
our society that are racially dominated and dominating (*News in Black and White: An  
Investigation Into Racial Stereotyping in the Media*, 1999:6). In line with this view, it  
argues that since access to the economy and economic wealth in South Africa is  
dominated by white people, and they are seen to have the potency to use this domination  
to maintain its social position. In relation to ideology, on the other hand, MMP perceived  
racism to be about the reproduction of the existing racial domination of one group over  
another through the maintenance and support of that system via an array of discourses  
and values that together maintain a racist hegemony (1999:6). Accordingly, MMP  
concludes that the separation between structural and ideological manifestation of racism  
is revealed in the media through the difference between the content of the media, which it  
perceives to be representative of ideology, and the ownership and management of the  
media, which it termed the structure (1999:6)

Following the line of thinking cited above, MMP further states that its project was  
concerned with the content of the media and the extent to which it is racist and the extent  
to which it supports and maintains the ideology of racism (*News in Black and White: An  
Investigation Into Racial Stereotyping in the Media*, 1999:6). In making this claim, it  
implicitly advocated the view of media content as evidence of communicators and their  
organisation, and the view of media content as evidence of effect. According to McQuail

based on the notion that insofar as media content is individuals or groups, it is reasonable to see it as telling something of their intentions, attitudes and assumptions about the audience, the latter is based on the notion of equating evidence of content with evidence of effect. The view of content as evidence of effect also derives from the commonsense view that so much of any given kind of media content must have some effect on those who consume it (McQuail, 1987:179). As I demonstrate below, due to the fact that MMP's treatment of various aspects of *social practice* (power, ideology, representation, and construction of identity) is based on the now dated 'effects model' which poses serious conceptual problems, and which in turn casts doubt on its conception and application of CDA. I therefore begin my examination of *social practice* with the notion of power, and address the question of how the advocates CDA conceive of media power.

The general conception of media power by critical discourse analysts is described by Fairclough and Wodak in the following manner:

CDA sees discourse 'language in speech and writing' as a form of social practice. Describing discourse as social practice implies a dialectical relationship between a particular discursive event and situation (s) and social structure (s) which framed it. A dialectical relationship is a two-way relationship: the discursive event is shaped by situations, institutions, social structures, but it also shapes them. (1977:55)

Following the 'pluralist' view of dominance or domination, which stresses the capacity of the differentiated public to its alternative wishes, and to use the media rather than be used by them (McQuail, 1987:86), reception analysts have amply demonstrated the weakness of the 'effects-based model' and top-down conception of media power as espoused by MMP. According to the 'pluralist' view, the media respond to the public demand than vice versa. Contrary to the assumptions of the 'effects model' recent studies [McQuail (1987); Laden (1997)] point to the fact that content (whether as sent or as received) does not equal effect because of many alternative ways in which messages can be interpreted and applied by their receivers. McQuail (1987) also provides a further explanation which in turn reveals the shortcomings of the 'transmission model' - to use Tomaselli's (2000)

model of the media - on which MMP's view of media that the dominance exercised by the media can have different causes other than the media itself. In case of mass society, for instance, he argues that such dominance may be attributed not only to elite management, but also to the destruction of community forces. He further argues that these forces may have weakened the capacity of the community to resist authority and act autonomously, so that it is more vulnerable to, and dependent on, control from above (1987:87). To draw an example from contemporary South African experience could serve to illustrate this point. The media might be seen to be currently wielding immense power because of the introduction of a democratic system of government, which has in turn resulted in the weakening of the negative attitudes that were displayed against it (the media) during the apartheid. This situation could be attributed to the introduction of the rule of law. In such a case, the source of media power would be extrinsic rather than intrinsic.

As with its conception of media power, MMP's conception of the notion of ideology equally raises questions, a situation that can be attributed to this organisation's operation within the framework of the 'effects model' of the media, which tends to equate media content with ideology. As might be known, the concept of power and ideology are closely connected, hence the latter is often viewed as meaning in the service of power. As Thompson points out: 'Ideologies are propositions that generally figure as implicit assumptions in texts, which contribute to producing or reproducing unequal relations of power, relations of dominations' (1990:45). Aside from being linked to the issue of power, the concept of ideology in media studies is also linked to issues of representations and construction of social identities: 'The ideological work of media language, i.e. particular representations of the world, particular constructions of social identities, and particular constructions of social relations.' (Fairclough, 1995b: 12). In reference to the distinction or separation between structural racism and manner in which it is ideologically reproduced, for instance, MMP notes: 'The separation is revealed in the media through the difference between content of the media (ideology) and the ownership and management of the media (structure)' (*News in Black and White*, 1999:6). Before

Media content with ideology is necessary to develop a  
and this forms the subject of the next few paragraphs.

One useful account on the concept of ideology is offered by McQuail, who defines it as:

Hidden but intended bias embedded in texts, is harder to investigate, partly because (like propaganda) it is concealed and can only be uncovered by close interpretation and argument. It cannot easily be demonstrated by content analysis in the way that unwitting bias in selection can be demonstrated and it can often take the form of omission or structuring of elements within texts.  
(1992:194)

An equally illuminating account of ideology is also offered by Fairclough (1995b). He begins from the notion that media texts do not mirror realities as is generally assumed. Instead, he argues, they constitute versions of reality in ways which depend on the social positions, interests, and objectives of those who produce them (1995b: 103-104). In line with this view, he states that the analysis of representational processes in texts comes down to: an account of what is made explicit or left implicit, what is included and what is excluded, what is backgrounded, what is thematised and what is unthematized, what processes are drawn upon to represent events and so on (1995b: 104).

He further states that exploring whether a particular implicit proposition or set of propositions are working ideologically is one issue within a general set of questions that can be asked whenever one representation is selected over other available ones, or whenever identities or relations are constructed in one way rather than the other. He suggests that the following questions can be asked in relation to the issue of representations and ideology: (a) what are social origins of a particular option? (b) where does it come from? (whose is it?) (c) what is the effect of this choice, including its effects (positive or negative) upon various interests of those involved? The last question is even more crucial, given the argument made earlier that it is only through communicating with those who are involved in the consumption of media messages that the effects on them

ed before, this aspect did not form part of the SAHRC

An even more valuable account of the concept of ideology, especially the manner in which it is consumed, is offered by John Hartley (1982) in his book *Understanding News*. As with the account given above, his account also serves to shed light on the restricted nature of MMP's conception of ideology. He begins from the notion that the way in which humans make sense of both their personal environment and the world at large occurs through discourses which themselves have made them what they are. In this view, their individuality is seen as no more than 'a site of intersection' of many different and differing discourses. Thus viewed, a discourse becomes a continuous, generative, and interactive process in which the people's individuality produces and reproduces these discourses whilst being reproduced by them (1982:142).

Implicit in this view, is the idea of a relationship between two poles of objective (mediated) reality and subjective (experienced) reality, a relationship that decides the meaning that is finally produced out these two poles. He argues that each of the two poles have a say in the 'dialogic' production of meaning, including ideological meanings. He further argues that ideology cannot be construed as a final product flowing into people's consciousness from outside, as the 'effects model' presupposes. In this vein, he points out that news texts do not result in ideological meanings without being 'realised' by people's subjective consciousness (1982:142). He thus concludes that we need to consider how ideology is re-produced at the moment of its consumption as we read news texts. Obviously, this can only be achieved if reception analysis is done by a researcher. Unfortunately, this was not done by MMP as part of its investigation.

According to Fairclough, ideological analysis of the media has lost much of the prestige that it had during the 1970s, partly because of a changing political climate and partly because of difficulties with this sort of analysis (1995b: 47). He points out that it has been criticised for assuming ideological effects of texts upon audiences without actually investigating how audiences 'read' texts. He further points out that ideological analysis

approach to texts which, as already emphasised, are never  
illustrated in relation to the second and third dimensions  
of Fairclough's (1995b) three dimensional model of CDA, namely, *discursive practice*  
and *social practice*, a clear understanding of media theory is indispensable not only for  
discourse analysis, but also for the understanding of the entire field of media. This is  
especially crucial for a field of inquiry that has become so vast as mass media /  
communication studies now has. In concluding this examination of the MMP report in  
relation to CDA, therefore, it seems necessary that we make a brief incursion into the  
issue of theory in relation to CDA and media monitoring.

## **MMP vis-à-vis Critical Discourse Analysis, Media Monitoring and Media Theory**

In his instructive article titled "Media, Racism, and Monitoring" Van Dijk writes:

Media monitoring requires media theory. Whether they do good or bad,  
we need to know how and with what consequences the media do so. This  
is especially true, for the role of the media in the reproduction or the  
challenge of racism worldwide but especially in Europe and North  
America. We need to know how exactly news or advertising talk shows or  
other programmes are involved in the increasing ethnocentric, if not racist  
societies of the North. (2000:7)

To this comment, he adds that media monitoring should be carried out by people or  
groups who understand media practices, products and organisations, or who are  
specialised in a relevant dimension of media performance or its role in society (2000:9).  
Undoubtedly, these comments are both pertinent to and crucial for both individuals and  
organisations whose area of speciality is to monitor the activities of the media, as Braude  
and MMP do. These comments are also significant in several other ways, and two of  
these are worth a mention. Firstly, mass communication studies have grown to become a  
vast and complex area of inquiry in the past century, and this requires a varying set of  
theoretical ideas to explain and account for the media phenomena that it deals with.  
Secondly, a concept such as racism and the method of inquiry that is known as discourse  
analysis do not only form part of contentious debates among media practitioners and  
scholars, but are in themselves highly complex areas of study.

Therefore, it seems both necessary and imperative that any study of media phenomena in relation to these concepts (racism and discourse analysis) should be able to provide sound and sufficiently nuanced theoretical explanations in order to adequately account for such phenomena. Unfortunately, studies that are based on commercial transactions are often restricted by time constraints and partisan interest from carrying out research that is sound and rigorous, a situation that is regrettably untenable. As a consequence, such studies often fall into the trap of the self-serving interest which characterises *administrative research*, which carries out research within parameters of established media and social institutions and provides material that is only of use to these institutions. Obviously, this contrasts with critical communication research which has a sense of broader application.

As has been demonstrated in relation to issues of *social practice*, especially in relation to issues of power and ideology, there is a dire need on the part of the researcher to have a sound understanding of the plethora of diverse theoretical accounts that underpin these concepts. Recent theories, for instance, point to the fact that concepts of power and ideology do not operate in a unilateral kind of way that the advocates of the effects / transmission model, who tend to follow the trajectory of Louis Althusser (1971) regarding ideology, presuppose. Instead, as Hartley points out:

Given the prestige of the dominant ideology, and its reproduction in so many influential spheres (family, school, media, and politics), the continuing existence of so many forms of resistance suggests that its readers are not easily duped. The structural fissures in class divided societies keep throwing obstacles in the way of the smooth sway of dominant ideology (1982:142).

A number of studies, for instance, point to the fact that the Gramscian (1922) notion of *hegemony* provides a far better explanation than those offered by power and ideology. Norman Fairclough is one case in point. In his study, he proceeds from an essential connection between discourse and hegemony, and views the control over discursive practices as a struggle for predominance over orders of discourse. Hegemony is

ly and unstable, and orders of discourse are an area of  
n Titcher *et al*, 2000:151).

It has also been indicated in relation to Fairclough's notion of *discursive practice*, that this dimension involves various aspects of the processes of text production and text consumption, which entails taking into account institutional routines such as editorial and gate-keeping processes involved in producing media texts, and interpretative processes involved. Most of these theoretical matters could not be accounted for by MMP's effects model which, as Gauntlett points out: 'is substantiated with no theoretical reasoning beyond the bald assertions that particular kinds of effects *will* be produced by the media' (1998:127). Gauntlett argues that the lack of firm theory has led to the 'effects model' being based on a number of weak assumptions which include, among others, the notion that the media (rather than people) is unproblematic starting point for research; that researchers have the unique capacity to observe and classify social behaviour and its meanings; and that researchers need not attend to various possible meanings which media content may have for the audience (1998:127).

### Summary of findings of the study

The problem that this dissertation has attempted to address has been defined as having two aspects to it, and both of these centre on the responses of the media practitioners and scholars who evaluated the reports of the SAHRC Inquiry into racism in the media. The first one of these aspects pertains to the criticisms that these media practitioners and scholars have levelled against MMP's application of text-based methods (and methodologies thereon during its part of the aforementioned inquiry, especially this media monitoring agency's conception and application of discourse analysis, and which it allegedly used in combination with content analysis. These include the responses of Bertelsen (2000), Berger (2000), Gordin (2000), Stewart (2000), and Tomaselli (2000; 2001), among others. Even though these scholars differ in terms of the foci of their criticisms, all of them slated the SAHRC appointed researchers for the manner in which they applied the text-centred methods and methodologies during the said inquiry. The second aspect relates to the differences in the manner in which some of these scholars have characterised the method(s) of research used by MMP to conduct its research. Such as when Bertelsen characterised the method of research used by MMP as 'content analysis' and Braude's method as 'discourse analysis' (2000:19), and when Berger identified the method used by MMP as 'content analysis' (2000:11), and Braude's as 'textual analysis' (2000:8).

In view of the criticisms and perceptions alluded to above, an attempt has been made to address the following questions: Does the MMP report reflect any of the anomalies that have been pointed to by some of the aforementioned scholars regarding MMP's conception and application of discourse analysis? In other words, does the MMP report suggest / reflect a clear understanding and proper application of discourse analysis on the part of MMP? And, given MMP's claim to having used discourse analysis in combination with content analysis during its part of the inquiry, do the characterisations of the text-based methods that it used suggest a clear understanding of discourse analysis on the part of some of the media practitioners who evaluated the reports that resulted from the SAHRC Inquiry?

As mentioned above, Chapter 2 of my study has dealt with content analysis and discourse analysis, with a view to shedding light on the misconceptions that seem to exist in relation to these research methods / techniques. In so doing, an attempt has been made to set the stage for the critique of the MMP report offered in Chapter 3. Even though it emerged that there exists a large variety of brands of / approaches to discourse analysis, a broad, and therefore an operational definition of this method / approach, has been identified. Having noted that discourse analysis emerged as a reaction to traditional structural linguistics, represented mainly by Chomsky's *generative* grammar, which focused on the structural aspects of texts, it has emerged that discourse analysis can be best understood as a method that stands in stark opposition to this now dated approach to the study of texts.

Following the aforementioned line of thinking, a broad definition discourse analysis has been identified. Discourse analysis has been defined both as an approach that attempts to (a) study the text in its context or to study language in use (Van Dijk, 1988:); and as (b) a method that attempts to show systematic links between texts, *discursive practices* (production, distribution, and consumption), and *sociocultural practices* (Fairclough, 1995b: 17-18). Viewed in the light of these definitions, it has been found that the notion of *context* is central to discourse analysis, and hence it could be regarded as the *raison d'être* of this method of inquiry. In other words, the notion of studying the text in context or contextual analysis is has been found to be a *sine qua non* of the method of research or approach that is known as discourse analysis. Drawing from the insights offered by Burman & Parker (1993) and Sless (1986) respectively, it has emerged that apart from the existence of varieties of discourse analysis, there is no single theory and method of application for this approach.

As well as establishing that the notion of *context* is central to discourse analysis, it has also been demonstrated that this notion is very broad. It has, for instance, been shown to be multi-faceted, in that it includes a vast array of aspects, and which Wodak (1996) argues can be visualised in the form of concentric circles. These might range from the microanalysis of the text; the speakers and audiences of interactants with all the elements

the objective setting, which includes location in time situation; and the entire institution in which the communicative event takes place. In contrast to discourse analysis, content analysis, has been defined as a research technique that mainly concerns itself with the analysis of frequencies in manifest content of media messages using the identification and counting of key units as a basis. It has been further established that CA seeks to determine the manifest content of written, spoken, or published communications by systematic, objective, and quantitative analysis (Berger, 1998:23). It is based on the on counting and / or measuring, and the findings are given in numerical form, so that others can replicate the research and see whether they get the same numbers (1998:29).

Thus, in line with the definitions cited above, a number of similarities and differences have been found to exist between CA and discourse analysis. The similarities between content analysis and discourse analysis, on the one hand, include the following:

- a) Both CA and DA are concerned with discursive / communicative events as they manifest themselves in communication and media texts (both written and spoken).
- b) Both CA and DA put varying emphasis on studying the text in context, with the latter putting a more heavier emphasis than the former.

The following differences have, on the other hand, been found to exist between CA and DA:

- a) Whereas CA stresses objectivity, and replicability of its research results, discourse analysis is characterised by a high degree of subjectivity, hence the perception and interpretation of each and every text is essentially subjective (Sless, 1986:77).
- b) Whereas CA does not provide any direct evidence / data about the nature of the communicator, audience, and effects, in line with the emphasis that discourse analysts put on the notion of context, contemporary communications research literature points to direction in which discourse analysis can hardly gain any credibility if it does not attempt the entire media cycle, including a study on audience / reception analysis.

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es, on the one hand, tend to put a lot of emphasis on the definition of discourse analysis as a method that studies the text, in context, in CA, on the other hand, the emphasis on notion of context is only nominal. It is not prioritised in the manner that it is in discourse analysis studies.

d) In line with the notion of being objective and systematic, whereas CA tends to follow a fairly precise method of operation, discourse analysis does not have a simple arid straightforward procedure, a fact that can be attributed to the existence of various brands of IDA.

e) Whereas studies that use CA tended to present their findings mainly through statistics or numerically, graphs, and tables, discourse analysis tends to rely a great deal on interpretation and detailed analysis.

(f) In content analysis, on the one hand, content that is coded is limited to the representational, referential or propositional meaning of the unit. Depending on the categories that are used, the coding may involve varying degrees of interpretation, but both the categories and the way that material is to be determined and coded are pre-determined, that is, they are not guided by discourse. Furthermore, there is usually a check on the reliability of the coding via some sort of quantitative assessment of the degree of agreement among coders. Discourse analysis, on the other hand, involves much more than coding and the agreement of relationships between coding categories. It provides the sort of sensitive, penetrating and detailed analysis (Wood & Kroger. 2000:33).

Accordingly, it has been found that in spite of the few similarities that exist between discourse analysis and CA, they are considerably different. As Wood & Kroger have also noted: discourse and content analysis are two different speciesö (2000:33). It has been established that even though both CA and discourse analysis include textual analysis, the latter (textual analysis) is not equivalent to discourse analysis, as Bertelsen presupposes, hence the study of the text in context is requisite to this method. In this vein, it has emerged that some of the methods used by the independent researchers were not correctly identified, and therefore clearly understood, by some of the scholars, However, the insights drawn from the respective studies conducted by Van Dijk in his books *Racism*

sis: *Case Studies of International and National News*,  
alongside each other, confirm that these methods are

not mutually exclusive. Instead, they complement to each other, and therefore can be used together. This, in turn, confirms Krippendorff's (1980) claim that discourse analysis in mass media research has come to be regarded as an alternative to CA. Nonetheless, the issue of how well the two methods were used together by MMP was not so much an issue, as was the question of how the latter (discourse analysis) was conceived of and applied by this organisation. Given that an attempt to solicit the response of MMP regarding the issue of their study and discourse analysis did not materialise, the account provided in Chapter 2 on CA and discourse analysis has served useful purpose in making up for this lacuna.

Having provided the relevant theoretical account on content analysis and discourse in Chapter 2, and having defined and provided examples on how these methods are commonly applied in practical research situations, and having also drawn the distinction between them, Chapter 3 of my study has offered a critique of the MMP report. As already mentioned, the MMP report has been approached from two angles, namely, that of the procedures that are normally followed when presenting the findings in a research report vis-à-vis discourse analysis, and that of critical discourse analysis as discussed by Fairclough (1995b). Guided by these objectives therefore, Chapter 3 has been divided into two parts. In relation to the writing of the findings in its research report, it has been demonstrated that the MMP report reflects several conceptual and chronological lapses on the part of MMP, and these, in turn, vitiate the report's effectiveness as a communicative document. Such as when the report failed to meet the requirements that are expected of any sound or worthwhile research. For example, when MMP fails, to state clearly and unambiguously the problem to which the research pertained; to offer operational definitions of important concepts such as discourse analysis and *propositional analysis*; to provide a convincing statement that justifies its choice of methods; and when it pre-empted the outcome of its research. In so doing, MMP fails to clarify some of the essential issues, some of which are central to its choice of discourse analysis.

, it is essential for a research report to provide a brief overview that gives readers some background on the subject that has been investigated, stating what it set to find out, and why the study has been undertaken. Similarly, Bertelsen (2000) points out that the problem to which the research pertains should be explained as clearly as possible. These procedures were not adhered to by MMP in its report, perhaps because its report was part of several instalments of the SAHRC Inquiry. Possibly, MMP may have presumed that people had already read earlier reports, such as the *Interim Report* (1999) and Braude's. Nonetheless, it is in relation to the basic requirements of writing a research report that the MMP committed a serious error, that is failing to offer operational definitions of all key concepts and terms, including discourse analysis.

It has been found, for instance, that while MMP did attempt to provide a definition of racism, even though this is a restricted view of this concept, no attempt was made to either explain what they understood discourse analysis to mean. Neither did MMP specify the Approach to or brand of discourse analysis that it used. As argued earlier, this is an important consideration, given that discourse has grown to become a highly convoluted area of inquiry, comprising a diversity of approaches. In this vein, MMP can somehow be seen to have taken too much for granted. Furthermore, it has been established that MMP's brand of discourse analysis centres on the list of propositions which researchers formulated. It has been argued that *propositional analysis* is only a small facet of discourse analysis. It is a technique that is used to code and process data, rather than equivalent to discourse analysis. Thus, its failure to explain what it understood discourse analysis to mean; to state the approach to discourse analysis that it used, and its sole reliance on textual analysis, and to study media texts in context, seem sufficient to suggest that it did not demonstrate a good understanding of this method of inquiry. The same applies to the application of this method.

By and large, it has been established that MMP's understanding and application of discourse analysis, as reflected in the report under scrutiny, fails to meet the requirements of what Van Dijk (1985) characterises as 'a sound discourse analysis', and what

as 'critical discourse analysis'. With regards to the to account all relevant discursive and contextual parameters. It also failed provide an adequate and a critical social analysis of power structures and group or ethnic differences and conflicts that are involved in *issues* of racism vis-à-vis media. Similarly, with regards to the concept of 'critical discourse analysis', MMP only went as far as the first level of Fairclough's three-dimensional conception of discourse, namely, textual analysis, thereby omitting two other levels, that is, *discursive practice* and *sociocultural practice*. As has been demonstrated in chapter 3, MMP did not only fail to provide a critical and sufficiently-nuanced discussion of issues of power and ideology, it also failed to account for ethnic and class differences that exist among various groups that consume media texts in this country. Accordingly, most of the criticisms that have levelled against the SAHRC Inquiry in general, and the study conducted by MMP in particular, have been found to be valid, And finally, judging from MMP's repetition of the mistakes for which it has been criticised in the past, it seems that this organisation has neither learnt anything from, nor heeded these criticisms.

### Concluding Remarks

As noted earlier, the issue of methods and methodologies vis-à-vis media monitoring is part of ongoing debates among media scholars and practitioners in this country. Allusion was made to the fact that these debates date back to the early part of the previous decade, as the spectre of apartheid began to wane. However, even though the present study is primarily intended to fulfil academic requirements on the part of its author, it is plausible to view it broadly as an attempt to contribute to these debates. Given that these debates are still continuing, this study neither purports to offer an authoritative account on issues of method / methodology and discourse analysis, nor does it attempt to be conclusive about issues that have been examined. Thus viewed, it has avoided the trajectory of William Bird of MIMP, who stated that the issue of the SAHRC *Inquiry Into Racism in the Media* is, from the point view of his organisation, closed. (see his response letter which appears under Appendix Three of this study). Instead, it is hoped that its engagement with the subject of discourse analysis will serve to shed valuable insights into some of the issues that are central to the debates around media monitoring in South Africa, especially those that pertain to methods and methodologies.

A lot has already been said in Chapter Three and Chapter Four respectively, about MMP's conception and application of discourse analysis in its report. For this reason, a further explication of the issues that have been dealt with in these chapters would only amount to a superfluous exercise of repetition. Obviously, a number of conclusions can be extrapolated from the expositions provided in the chapters in question. In fact, the theoretical account on discourse analysis in Chapter Two, the critique of the MMP report in Chapter Three, and the findings of my study in Chapter Four, speak for themselves. Thus, the task of evaluating and drawing conclusions on the claims made and the findings presented in this dissertation, can only be left to those who will have an opportunity to read it. In this vein, this study throws down the gauntlet to all parties that have vested interest in the debates on media monitoring vis-à-vis methods and methodology to evaluate the claims and criticisms that have been put forward.

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