Chapter 3

Research Questions and Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This study uses qualitative research methodology with multiple techniques such as semi-structured interviews, complemented by oral histories, key informant interviews and archival research. The chapter explores the research questions that informed the methodological choices made during the study. The chapter also outlines the rationale for selecting qualitative research methods and techniques. In addition, the relationship between researcher and respondents, access issues, data analysis methods, and the limitations of the research are discussed.

3.2 Research Questions

This study is about how individuals, households and communities respond to socio-economic crisis in post-apartheid South Africa. Therefore, **the focus of the research is on the responses of individuals in households and communities to socio-economic crisis in post-apartheid South Africa in the wake of various forms of conflict and in a context of high levels of unemployment**. The following critical questions framed this study: First, what becomes of individuals as they lose employment and face poverty? What happens to their identities in their communities and their gender roles in households? What are the various ways in which individuals are dealing with poverty? Second, what becomes of households' structures and functions as they try to survive and protect their members from poverty? What resources do they have at their disposal? How are

these resources shared, distributed and/or allocated within and between households and the community? What happens to gender relations in this context?

Lastly, what social, political and economic networks, in the form of formal and informal community organisations, do people rely on to alleviate their poverty? What has become of these community organisations in the post-apartheid context? What "real" benefits, if any, do these organisations present for members? What are the possible struggles that emerge when the people of Mpumalanga and Enhlalakahle Townships in KwaZulu-Natal strive to survive in a crisis? Consequently, what happens to the nature of the relationship between the local communities, and the local and national state, as communities struggle to "make ends meet" in the post-apartheid neo-liberal context? Have government's transformative policies been successful in alleviating poverty in the two identified communities, and indeed the rest of South Africa?

These broad and specific research questions are informed by the literature examined in the next chapter, prior research conducted in the province of KwaZulu-Natal, and general observations made in the two communities during the pilot research. They also guided my research methodology, as well as the analysis and presentation of the research findings.

3.3 Research Methods

3.3.1 Qualitative research methods and techniques

The methodological choices for this study are informed by several factors. First, in-depth qualitative methods and techniques were informed by the broader research question. The main aim of this thesis is to identify and examine diverse livelihood activities of urban households in Mpumalanga Township in Durban and Enhlalakahle Township in Greytown. The purpose, therefore, is not to compare the two communities but rather to identify various livelihood activities that individuals, households and communities adopted to respond to the crisis of

unemployment and poverty in post-apartheid South Africa.

The use of in-depth qualitative techniques also meant that the focus of the research was narrowed to two case studies and a number of households and individuals. The merit of such case-study research, also described by Burawoy (1991, 1998, 2000) as an extended case-study method, is that it links the micro/personal to the macro/public, where both geographical and historical context is considered. Hence theorising takes place throughout the research process from sampling and transcribing, to data analysis informed by pilot research and analysis. On this basis, the findings are suggestive and indicative rather than exhaustive or generalisable. They nevertheless add to empirical knowledge about urban livelihoods in contemporary South Africa.

The aim of this research was to gain access to the meanings that people attach to their social world. The social and physical "world of everyday life" or the "lived experiences" of social actors were studied, observed and analysed. Specifically, this research privileged the lived experience of individuals, especially women, in households and communities by interviewing them and allowing them to tell their stories. The relations of power and the life-worlds of ordinary people were central in this research.[26]

The complexity and nature of the research questions also informed the choice of research methods and techniques. Since the aim of the study was to identify intra- and inter-household and community livelihood activities, triangulation was the preferred method to gain an "insider" perspective, to construct social facts from the perspective of the respondents and to obtain the relevant data.

The research methodology and techniques were chosen based on the assumption that people create meanings about their social lives, and that for one to uncover

[26] Refer to Dorothy Smith (1987) and Sandra Harding (1983, 1986). Both authors "combine a feminist critique of male-domination in society with a Marxist analysis of the oppressive rules of power in societies. They call for an approach that seeks to understand how women have become victims of a patriarchal order" (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:44).

these meanings in-depth contextual research techniques are most appropriate.[27] The process of constructing meanings and ideologies of the social world is complex and fluid, and specific but adaptable research techniques are required. For example, by interacting, observing and listening, the objective was to understand and interpret the meanings and intentions that underlie everyday human action and "not to explain human behaviour in terms of universally valid laws or generalisations" (Mouton & Marais, 1988:1).

Lastly, the sensitive nature of the issues explored in this study – such as power dynamics, subjectivity and meanings – often resonate with the subjective or personal meaning of lived experience. This makes the process of exploring these issues a very intricate experience. Lack of income and food or general poverty is sensitive issues and the respondents were for the most part unable to talk openly about them. On the other hand, respondents were prepared to talk about water and electricity cut-offs, since these were perceived as being experienced by the community as a whole – there was a victim (the community) and a perpetrator (the local government). This was also the case with household relations, especially where relations were strained because of domestic abuse and violence. Ill-health, particularly related to HIV/AIDS, was the most sensitive issue, because of the stigma attached to the disease.

These complex issues would not have been fully explored by only using, for example, social and household survey data (Hart, 1997; Rasavi, 1998). They require long, in-depth conversations with informants. This was done for the purpose of establishing trust between the researcher and the researched. There is only so much that context, observation, and human interaction and listening can provide a social researcher. This is especially true where respondents have to rely on memory and history. For a variety of reasons, respondents did not completely remember or even want to remember their experiences.

[27] Mishler (1986) also argues strongly that meaning is always and inherently contextually grounded. She makes a case for always "understanding human phenomena in context".

3.3.2 Sampling methods

The sampling methods chosen for this research were influenced by the aim of the research to identify diverse livelihood activities, given the crisis of unemployment and the unemployed in South Africa. The aim of the research was also to focus on women because of the assumption that, given their role in households and communities, they would have more insight into livelihood activities pursued in their households and communities. I assumed that it would be mostly women who would be unemployed and affected by poverty, and therefore that their experiences would be central for this research. Finally, I also assumed that because of their history, structure and nature households would be a good primary unit of analysis.

As such, non-probability sampling techniques such as purposive and snowball sampling were used in identifying individuals to be interviewed. These sampling techniques were appropriate given their strength in identifying unique and informative cases. Snowball sampling was the preferred method for "identifying and sampling the cases in a network" of "difficult-to-find populations" (Neuman, 1997:207; Bernard, 2000). Purposive sampling proved to be useful in selecting the two research sites as well as some respondents, thus allowing for an intensive research study (Neuman, 1997:176).

3.3.3 Choosing the research sites

The choice of the research sites was informed by the study's central aim of identifying responses to the crisis of poverty and unemployment. This was motivated by prior information gathered through pilot research and various other research projects conducted at the proposed sites. As such, several factors were considered. First, both sites are located in the province of KwaZulu-Natal. As will be shown later (see Chapter 4), this is one of the poorest provinces in South Africa, mainly due to the restructuring of the major industries (clothing, textiles and footwear) in the province and the resulting high unemployment rate. These industries were the major employers in the province, and employed mainly

women.

Second, both townships were established in the 1960s, according to apartheid regulations, and are now former labour reserves linked directly to former industrial zones. Mpumalanga Township is linked geographically to Hammarsdale, a clothing and textile industrial node. However, the decline of the industry resulted in retrenchment and unemployment for most workers from the township. Enhlalakahle Township has a similar history but a different industry, the footwear industry. Most respondents were employed in footwear factories located near the township (Bata Shoes was one of the biggest employers). However, footwear factories were mainly located in Pietermaritzburg, and many workers travelled to work by taxi. The restructuring of the industry meant retrenchments and unemployment in the township. However, Enhlalakahle's close proximity to a small town, Greytown, and other industries has meant alternative job opportunities for workers. This was not the case for Mpumalanga Township, which was located far away from both small towns and big cities.

Finally, in the late 1980s and early 1990s, both townships experienced severe political violence between supporters of the African National Congress (ANC) and the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP). The impact of this particular political history (outlined in Chapter 4) still continues and has shaped the livelihood activities of the two townships in different ways. Today, the two townships have different political leadership at the local level. This, according to interviewees, has had an effect on their day-to-day survival.

3.3.4 Interviews as a research technique

3.3.4.1 Introduction

Interviews were chosen as a technique based on the assumption that individuals could impart a great deal of information about themselves, and the information given could represent the way in which the respondents experience and make sense of their social world. The initial interviewees were purposefully selected,

and then snowballing was used to select other interviewees. This sampling method worked very well, given time constraints and issues of trust. Respondents were willing to be interviewed if they knew of a friend or neighbour who had been interviewed. It was always the case that respondents thought they did not have anything to tell me, but still answered my questions, which seemed to them a "normal conversation." It was often the case that respondents were willing to share their frustrations about the local and national government.

Through face-to-face interviews, I was able to observe or experience as many facets of the interviewees (Ackroyd & Hughes, 1981:103). First, pilot interviews and semi-structured interviews, followed by oral history interviews, and key informant interviews were conducted in the two communities at selected intervals in 2002, 2003 and 2004 (see table 3.1). All interviews were conducted face-to-face. This method had a high response rate and permitted for follow-up questions to be posed and for responses to be elaborated on.

Open-ended questions were asked, allowing an unlimited number of possible answers. Neuman (1997) and Kvale (1996) correctly warn that open-ended questions are a drawback when different respondents give different degrees of detail to answers and that some responses are irrelevant, hence time-consuming. Even though conducting face-to-face, in-depth interviews was time-consuming, I was able to build rapport with the respondents and "seeing and feeling events from another's perspective" (Neuman, 1997:355). These interviews were also advantageous because they provided me with a deep level of interaction with the respondents. Open-ended questions seemed more valuable as diverse answers were necessary, especially when identifying the various ways in which individuals and households were responding to poverty and unemployment.

Table 3.1: Summary of interviews conducted in Mpumalanga and Enhlalakahle Townships- 2002-2004

Type of interview	Details	Quantity	Strengths	Weaknesses
Pilot	- Face to face, open ended interviews with young unemployed women. - Interview schedule was used as a guide	16	- Testing the interview schedule - Gaining insight into the research site - Evaluating research design	- Time constraints on the part of respondents - Problems of access (see section 2.5)
Semi-structured	Face to face, open ended interviews with household members young and old, women and men	44	- Opportunity to observe the social setting of respondents - Opportunity for probing	- Time constraints on the part of the respondents - Limitations posed by the social characteristics of the researcher (see section 2.6) - Problems of access (see section 2.5)
Oral history	Face to face, open ended interviews with unemployed older women	29	- In-depth information - Gaining trust of respondents - Gaining valuable insight into various households - Opportunity to observe the social setting of respondents - Opportunity for probing	- Limitations posed by the social characteristics of the researcher (see section 2.6)
Key informant	Face to face, open ended interviews with relevant community members, community leaders, and government officials	15	- In-depth information - Gaining trust of respondents - Opportunity for probing	- Time constraints on the part of the respondents - Limitations posed by the social characteristics of the researcher (see section 2.6)

Source: Fieldwork 2002, 2003, and 2004

3.3.4.2 Pilot interviews

Several pilot interviews were conducted at each research site. These were complemented by two focus group interviews. Two groups of five women aged between 28 and 35 were interviewed. While the intention was not to conduct focus groups, time constraints on the part of interviewees made these types of interviews the best option. Pilot interviews assumed the form of informal conversations, and, as such, a questionnaire was not used. An interview schedule

informed the general direction of the interviews.

There were several reasons for conducting pilot interviews. First, it was necessary to test the interview schedule, to ensure that questions were clearly articulated to allow for in-depth and relevant answers. Second, the pilot phase provided an opportunity to familiarise myself with the research sites. Lastly, feedback from the respondents allowed for necessary revisions of the interview schedule.

It was during these interviews that it became apparent that some research questions were working, and elicited in-depth responses. However, other questions needed to be recast or discarded. Some new questions were included in the questionnaire. A clear explanation of the research became important for its success. Logistical problems were also encountered, and the research design was altered accordingly.

As I quickly learned, the questionnaire was long and several visits to households were needed for each individual interview. Time was an issue for most young respondents who were job hunting. Job hunting – *ukufesa* in the local language – often meant waiting, often the whole day, outside the gates of factories in the hope of being called in to replace a dismissed or sick worker. They felt that they did not have time to be interviewed because when they come back in the late afternoon, they had household chores to do. For those who had given up searching for work, I asked to spend a day with them, and we would have conversations while they continued with their household work. Many interviews were conducted in this manner.

Other than one or two respondents that I knew in each township before starting with this research, I linked up with community organisations such as churches, and they assisted during the fieldwork. It was also often the case that families in the community were willing to host me for a few days and accompany me to interviews. This was especially valuable because the townships are small, a stranger was easily identified and questions could be asked about what I was

doing in the area.

3.3.4.3 Semi-structured interviews

From these pilot interviews, sixteen households in Enhlalakahle Township and thirteen households in Mpumalanga Township were selected for further study, and a total of forty-four semi-structured interviews were conducted.

Semi-structured interviews were used, because they provide "the opportunity for the researcher to probe further, to uncover new clues, to open up new dimensions of a problem, to secure vivid, accurate, inclusive accounts, from informants that are based on personal experience" (Burgess, 1982:107). Information gathered included:

- Biographical information;
- Household income and expenditure;
- Responses to unemployment and poverty (lack of food, lack of income, ill heath, etc.);
- Nature of household relations; and
- Membership in community organisations.

These interviews were mainly with women (young and old) and other household members such as those who were regarded as the main decision-makers in the households. Therefore, men as "heads of households"[28] were also interviewed. These interviews proved to be important in examining more closely household dynamics, especially around issues of how resources such as income are distributed. Key household relations issues were also identified from these interviews. The deteriorating household relations were corroborated with perspectives offered by other household members. Interviews with men also probed their status and roles in their households and community. Interviews were held with other household members, particularly with young women because of their new role as income earners from the state through child grants. Conflicts

[28] The study problematised the assumed notion of "head of household". It is argued that a simple use of the category leads to biased understanding of decision-making processes in households.

about how they spent their income and their responsibilities in the household characterised most household relations. Interviews were also held with young men, particularly about their feelings on unemployment, crime as a "hidden livelihood" and their role in household relations.

3.3.4.4 Oral history interviews

According to Plummer (1983, cited in Babbie & Mouton, 2001), the merits for employing life histories includes the ability to obtain the subjective reality of individuals, best suited to uncover processes, confusions, ambiguities and contradictions of everyday life experiences. This offers a totality of the life experiences. Oral histories, an essential historical tool, were drawn from a sub-sample of semi-structured interviews. The aim was to reveal "otherwise hidden forms of consciousness" (Bozolli, 1998:148).

Twenty-nine oral history interviews were conducted in Mpumalanga Township and Enhlalakahle Township with older women. These interviewees were selected from twenty-nine previously identified households in the two communities. The aim was to trace how households were responding to the crisis of unemployment and poverty. These interviews were very intense and required several follow-up visits.

The selection of these interviewees was based on the assumption that women are at the centre of household reproduction, and interviews with them would be invaluable sources of uncovering and exploring experiences, which had been "hidden from history". They would also offer insight into the social and material framework within which women operate, the perceived choices and cultural patterns they experience, and the complex relationship between "individual consciousness and culture" (Sangster, 1998:89). Therefore, interviewing older women enabled me to gain insightful and greater understanding of intra-household dynamics and household production, reproduction and consumption patterns. While my assumptions were proven right, these interviews did not rule

out the option of interviewing additional household members. In fact, these interviews necessitated interviewing other household members again. This was despite the intention to move away from focusing on "who is the head of the household?" The categorisation of household headship remains very biased since in many societies, in the absence of men or for many other reasons, women become *de facto* heads of households. In fact, in a study on household heads and decision-making within households in Jamaica, Sdhanshu Handa (1994) argues that the simple male-female headship dichotomy conceals important differences in household income and intra-household resource allocation within the two groups. The relevant concept proved not to be headship *per se*, but rather the presence of a potential female authority figure in the household.

Indeed, the social context of the identified households is influenced by a specific patriarchal culture where women are not seen as "natural heads of households". This discovery on its own was important in further understanding household dynamics. Bruce (1989) argues that households can have multiple decision makers. Identifying only males as heads of household just because they are present obscures real intra-household dynamics. The fact that a male can be exclusively interviewed and his welfare seen as representing the welfare of the household also obscure the reality of many households. It is for these reasons that men were inevitably interviewed and a "thick description" of the identified households was achieved.

In Jamaica, women may have substantial bargaining power within the household regardless of their headship status (Handa, 1994). In fact, in the two communities in this study, it was mostly older women who were *de facto* heads of households, not only because of the absence of their husbands but also because of their economic status as earners, providers and often decision makers in their households. Unfortunately, this has led to conflict in many households, where men have felt powerless and undermined.

Oral history interviews were conducted with older women, often pensioners. These women not only had ample time to offer the researcher, they also had a great deal of information about the current state of their households as well as historical information. They also served an important role in ensuring the survival of their households, both long-term and short-term. Their economic and social position in households made them key respondents for this research.

The research questions revolved mainly around household history and current status, and were not necessarily about the interviewees. The research questions were divided as follows:

- Biographical information about all household members (age, gender, education, health, etc.);
- Household income and monthly expenditure;
- Reproductive household work;
- Responses to unemployment and poverty (lack of food, lack of income, ill heath, etc.);
- Social and political networks of households;
- Household access to services (water, electricity, transport); and
- Household relations.

The advantage of using oral histories was that it enabled me to give a rich description and gain valuable insight into the various households. Historical and in-depth information that was given helped in understanding particularly the changes over time of household structure and character. Furthermore, the history also shed light on the reasons for the changes in households and communities. Indeed, intra- and inter-household and community livelihood activities were understood in a historical context. Despite this, the oral history approach has been criticised for being subject-centred, essentialist and humanistic in its assumptions and for ignoring the important role played by power relations in human interaction (Goodson, 1995, 1998; Babbie & Mouton, 2001). Hence, oral history interviews were complemented by semi-structured and key informant interviews as well as archival research to capture, among other things, the power relations that shape

these households and communities.

3.3.4.5 Key informant interviews

The research aim was to look at the household as the primary unit of analysis with, local communities forming the study's secondary unit of analysis. This was necessary because, households do not function in a vacuum – they are shaped and influenced by their context. In turn, they also shape and influence that context. A focus only on households and their members would have missed the supportive and pivotal role played by context and also by household members in shaping their environment. Therefore, I found that national government policies, local government programmes and various community organisations helped to reveal, "hidden livelihoods". As such, key informants from the community, the local and national government were identified and interviewed. In this way, I focused on both intra- and inter-household livelihood activities that respondents pursue.

A total of fifteen key informant interviews were conducted with members of local community organisations, local leaders and government officials. The majority of key informants were identified from the semi-structured and oral history interviews. All interviews were conducted face-to-face and open-ended questions were asked. This allowed a range of questions to be asked, which yielded detailed responses. Research questions were divided into several themes, which included:

- Background information about community organisations (name, membership, aims and objectives);
- The history of the organisation in the two communities;
- Projects, policies or programmes of organisations or government aimed at alleviating poverty in communities; and
- The successes and failures of these organisations.

3.4 Archival Research

This study also used archival or documentary research and analysis. Archival or documentary research refers to the examination of *documents* in order to further understand the social world and to trace events, origins and the development of places (Denzin, 1978; Leedy, 1989; Hill, 1993). The archival information used included letters to and from the government and individual community members. These correspondences were often about land ownership, renting and buying of houses, and work permits. Government notices detailing rules, laws and regulations about who was allowed to do what, were also sourced.

The logic behind building and expanding the townships was also uncovered in such government notices and correspondences. Historical newspaper articles from the archives of the Greytown Gazette and the Natal Witness revealed the broader political economy of the two townships. These articles often covered the political violence, the resistance that took place in the townships and the economic development of the two areas. Furthermore, this research used government documents such as the Population Census and the October Household Survey.

Archival research was used to gather information that would otherwise not have been obtained through oral histories and the in-depth interviews. However, it is not a "technique in-and-of-itself"; rather it was selected on the basis of its unique data source (documents) which can be used in a variety of research methodologies" (Berg, 1989:3). It was also important for understanding the context of the research.

The first step of this research was gathering background information about the two research sites, and spending time in national and local archives sourcing relevant information on the two sites. The following questions were used as a guide:

- When and why were the townships established?
- Who was staying in the townships and why?
- What was the economic, political and economic environment of the

townships?

- How has this environment changed over the years?
- What were the significant socio-economic and political turning points for the townships?

3.5 Access to Households and Respondents

Researching households is often difficult, especially since they are seen as private spheres of our society. What takes place in the household is always deemed private and not easily accessible for "outsiders" such as social researchers. The first challenge of this research was, therefore, to gain access to households, to interview individuals and to observe household relations.

Not only was I an "outsider" in this community, but also in the households where I wanted to conduct interviews. It became even more evident that households are very much private spaces, where terms of entry have to be negotiated and entry is not always guaranteed. However, the fact that I was referred to by a friend or neighbour made access to the participants easier. Nevertheless, there were benefits of being an "outsider". Once access was gained, I found that respondents were willing to talk about their problems to someone who was not from their community. At some level, they did not want their neighbours to know that they were poorer than them. Issues of confidentiality and anonymity were thus very important.

Identified first were not households but individuals who had been retrenched. In Mpumalanga Township, I identified women who had been retrenched from the textile and clothing industry, and in Enhlalakahle Township, women retrenched from the footwear industry were identified. Gaining access to key informant interviewees was not difficult and I was never refused an interview. These women were traced back to their households, where, if present, permission was requested from heads of households to conduct interviews.

3.6 The Researcher and the Respondents

The ascriptive characteristics of a researcher, such as age and gender, play a significant role in the research and on the relationship with a respondent during an interview. In the case of this research, my gender and race played a beneficial role, especially when interviewing women in the two communities. The respondents and I shared "a subordinate structural position by virtue of [our] gender" (Finch, 1984:76). This was also because "women are almost always enthusiastic about talking to a woman researcher, even if they have some initial anxieties about the purpose of the research ..." (Finch, 1984:76).

The dichotomy between "us" and "them" at times did not exist. This was reflected during the interviews with women, who made statements such as "you know how things are ..." and "we ..." These and similar statement reflected that the respondents felt that we "shared" the same experience based on our gender and race. As Finch (1984) and Oakley (1981) state, the idea that woman researchers offer a sympathetic ear encourages many respondents to talk to them.

All respondents felt very discontented, and were thus very willing to share their problems and frustrations with me. Interviews were conducted in their vernacular languages, thus making facilitating easy communication. However, because of differences in accents, it was sometimes not easy to understand what the interviewees were saying and vice versa. However, because of the rapport that had been built between interviewer and interviewee, we were always able to ask for clarification. We often laughed about how Setswana speakers (my home language), and particularly people from Gauteng (my home province), speak isiZulu differently from Zulu speakers from KwaZulu-Natal.

Given that I was mainly interviewing older women, my age became a concern during some interviews. It was obvious that issues such as domestic violence were not shared freely. Probing was very useful and so were follow-up interviews and household visits. I maintained the confidentiality of the participants throughout the research process. All households and some respondents were also guaranteed

anonymity. Pseudo names are thus used in the thesis. As the custodian of privileged information, I had a responsibility to protect both the information and identity of some respondents.

The research also had to comply with a key qualitative research principle – "validity of data". The validity of data is based on "a negotiation of the ethical and political dimensions" of the relationship between interviewer and interviewee (Babbie & Mouton, 2001).[29] Negotiating the relationships between interviewer-interviewee was achieved by gaining the consent of interviewees.

While "we" and "us" were often used when gender issues were discussed,, it was also true that statements such as "you young people of today", "you young girls …", and "you are too young to understand" were often used. Furthermore, my level of education, perceived class status, and coming from Gauteng (a big urban and metropolitan area) were also issues of concern during the research process. For most interviewees, I could not possibly understand what they were experiencing, I was not poor because I was studying at a university, could afford to travel and stay in KwaZulu-Natal, and was living in Johannesburg, a comparatively rich city. Most interviewees were at initially reluctant to talk to me, but some were willing to "educate" me because of my "lack of knowledge" regarding their experiences.

3.7 Qualitative Data Analysis

The process of qualitative data analysis (QDA) is a complex one. According to Seidel (1998), QDA is about **noticing or observation, collecting and thinking** about interesting things. It is a complex and nonlinear process, where the researcher goes back and forth between the three stages in an attempt to gather reliable data. Thus, QDA is an iterative and recursive process that is mostly infinite. All three stages of the analysis are linked and occur simultaneously. As I

[29] The "reliability of method" and "generalisability of analyses" are also classified as key principles of the qualitative research method. For a detailed discussion of these principles, see Mason (1996).

was noticing and observing interesting issues in households at the two research sites, I was also making mental notes as well as thinking about the information. A selective process of organising, analysing, editing and interpreting data was used to allow for rigorous analysis.

The primary phase of QDA is that of collecting research data. This is also referred to as the "immersing" of researchers in the social world to familiarise themselves with their research sites. In this research, noticing and collecting was confined to three modes – observation, recording data, and reading and coding data.

Observation became the key to collecting. In fact, in most cases, observation was the only available research technique I could use given the sensitivity of household issues, the reluctance of respondents to allow the use of a tape recorder and the need to gain the trust of respondents. Household visits took the form of conversations and observations rather than note taking and recording. At most, the respondents knew my role as observer in the community and household.

The process of **recording data** was carried out by using a tape recorder, taking notes during interviews and keeping a fieldwork journal. The use of a tape recorder was always negotiated beforehand with respondents; often respondents preferred their responses not to be recorded. In some cases where a tape recorder was used, the respondents were not free in expressing their opinion. In those instances, second and third interviews were scheduled where a tape recorder was not used. During these times, more information was gathered and respondents felt more comfortable in answering even the most sensitive of questions.

A fieldwork journal was kept throughout the research process. In it I noted my direct observations during household visits, interviews and informal discussions that conducted with community members. However, the journal also included my personal research process notes. These notes served three purposes: they offered a way to evaluate direct observation or make inferences when the notes were later reread, they were later used as a source of data, and they helped me to relieve

stress.[30] In addition, analytical notes were included in the journal to record methodological issues and to plan my way forward.

Lastly, careful **reading and coding** of collected data was important. This step in analysis is linked to a process of extracting themes from the data using the language of the respondents. Coding means breaking up of data in analytical ways (Terre Blanche & Kelly, 1999:143). Thus, codes became "tools to facilitate discovery and further investigation of data" (Seidel, 1998:2). Coding took the form of both manifest and latent coding, such as extracting explicit words, terms and actions from text, but also looking for implicit meaning in the content of a text.

Qualitative data analysis also involves summarising data through a process of **enumeration** and searching for relationships in the data. Enumeration is the process of quantifying data and presenting it in statistical formats. In the case of this research, a Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to interpret the standardised research data. Descriptive statistical information is provided for all households' interviews (see Chapter 5). Variables such as age, gender, marital status, education, household income and expenditure, and household assets are quantitatively presented.

The secondary phase of analysis involves thinking about or examining the collected data. This was an important stage of data analysis as it engaged with existing literature and illustrated the novelties of the research and its contributions to the literature or subject. Interpretation of data is presented in the following chapters not just as summaries or descriptive accounts but also analytically. These analytical chapters explore the patterns of relationships, recurring themes and "general discoveries" about various responses to poverty and unemployment at intra- and inter-household and community levels(Seidel, 1998:3).

[30] For more details about the usefulness of personal notes, refer to Neuman (1997).

3.8 Problems and Limitations

According to Neuman (1997), researchers are often criticised for being biased when expressing the views of rarely heard perspectives, what Becker (1970) called "the hierarchy of credibility". The sampling methods (purposive and snowball) used in this research pose a limitation to this research in that neither of these methods is representative. While the two communities could signal broader trends in many of KwaZulu-Natal and South Africa's communities, they are nonetheless not representative. This is equally the case with the interviews conducted in each community, as those interviewed and the households identified are not necessarily representative of the whole township.

While the researcher's characteristics, such as gender and race, were helpful during the research process, age proved to be a challenge, especially during household interviews with older women. The cultural beliefs of not talking to young people, especially young women, about what is perceived as sensitive was often cited to me when I posed sensitive questions. Such cultural issues also came through in other interviews where age or gender was discussed. My race, gender and age either questioned or enhanced my credibility when talking about certain issues.[31]

The "what's in it for me" question was always asked by those interviewed. While most respondents were willing to be interviewed, some were reluctant, especially when the rewards were not monetary or immediate. This was especially true when previous experience of being interviewed was not positive or yielded negative results for the community and those interviewed. Therefore, the community reaction to this research was often shaped by previous research done in the area. For example, monetary rewards were often expected since in one or two research projects in which they had participated, they were paid for their participation. A clear explanation of the research became important for the success of the research.

[31] Similar research experiences were expressed by the author in a study of the informalisation of work in the footwear industry where women were the main respondents (Mosoetsa, 2001b). See also Scheper-Hughes (1983) and Whitehead and Conaway (1986).

Small gifts in the form of food were often offered after several household visits.

3.9 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have stated the research questions that informed the study. In addition, the research methodology and techniques have been discussed. The success of the methodology has been measured by the degree to which I was led and surprised by the data and the extent to which the theory has been inductively generated.[32] It is through the discussed method and techniques that I was able to capture data relating to "hidden and overt livelihoods", the changing nature and structure of the household, changing gender dynamics in the households and community, the contradictory role played by community organisations (particularly the local government), and the profound role played by older women in both communities.

The second part of the thesis provides a discussion of the micro context and implications of South African policies. The following chapters provide the empirical evidence of how the respondents in Mpumalanga and Enhlalakahle Townships have responded to the enormous problem of not only poverty and unemployment but also of HIV and AIDS.

[32] For a detailed discussion of deductive and inductive research strategies, refer to Earl and Mouton (2001).