

## CHAPTER 5

### DATA ANALYSIS- SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES WITH LITERATURE

#### 5.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter assesses the data obtained following interviews with participants. In addition, it looks at similarities and differences between what participants said and what appears in literature under review, which is drawn from various disciplines such as developmental studies, economic sciences and sociology (Hoogeveen and Ozler 2006; cf. May 1998; Mbeki 2002; Terreblanche 2002; Smith 2005 etc.)

#### 5.2.1. THE REALITY OF POVERTY

For millions of South Africans poverty is a daily reality. Participants in this research share this condition with millions of South Africans. The majority of those who are poor are Africans. According to Hoogeveen and Ozler, 68% of the African population lives in poverty. Hoogeveen and Ozler correctly describe the picture as follows:

. . . using a poverty line of R322-00 (in 2000 prices), at least 58% of South Africans, and 68% of the African population was living in poverty in 1995, while poverty was non-existent for whites (Hoogeveen and Ozler 2006:59).

What Hoogeveen and Ozler note is still true even though they cite past statistics. Nothing dramatic in the economics of the country has changed to alter the situation noted above. In fact it may well be that the inequality gap has widened further. South Africa remains tainted by the vast inequalities of the past in all spheres such as education, health services, basic infrastructure, sanitation, safe and accessible water provision, electricity supply and housing. According to Hoogeveen and Ozler only a quarter of Africans have access to piped water in their houses whereas whites and Asians have universal access to such services (Hoogeveen and Ozler 2006:59). The researcher still has fresh memories of communal tap water, which was characterised by long lines during his days as a child. There are still millions of South Africans, the participants, who still do not have access to water in black residential areas. Some do not even have communal taps, but collect water from rivers and streams.

All participants have over the years experienced poverty. They have not known any other life than that of poverty. To them poverty is not merely an academic problem, but an existential reality. That poverty is a reality to them is confirmed not only by their response to questions listed in the interview schedule, but confirmed by even observation during the interviews. The surrounding environment in which they live and survive betrays poverty. They have been trapped in poverty, and there is little hope of escaping from this

trap. Smith describes it well in a global context:

. . . a billion human beings today are bound in poverty traps almost in unrelenting misery (Smith 2005:iv).

In the experience of the researcher it does not matter how hard the poor work and how hard they try to escape from poverty it is always a trap, from which it is difficult to extricate themselves.

The reality of poverty is not unknown to the current government of the day. At the occasion of his inauguration as President, on the 16<sup>th</sup> June 1999, Mr Thabo Mbeki had this to say:

Our nights cannot be but nights of nightmares while millions of our people live in conditions of degrading poverty (Mbeki 2002:27).

At a later occasion, of the 13<sup>th</sup> Conference of the International Aids Conference in Durban, on the 9<sup>th</sup> June 2000, the President said this about poverty:

The world's biggest killer and the greatest cause of ill-health and suffering across the globe is listed at the International classification of diseases. It is given the code Z59.5, extreme poverty (Mbeki 2002:47).

Though the statement created some controversy, as if the President was

denying the fact that HIV/AIDS is a killer, his point was that poverty contributes to many socio-economic ills in the world. In fact, poverty contributes to the prevalence of HIV/AIDS. This is without denying the fact that HIV/AIDS is caused by a virus. In addition the prevalence of HIV and Aids is more devastating to the poor than to the rich. They are the ones whose health care services are poor. They are the ones who struggle to access medication that improves their quality of live. They are the ones who cannot afford healthy food and other amenities that could make life easier for them.

The researcher agrees with the President, Mr Thabo Mbeki that poverty is a killer. Poverty cannot be allowed to continue unchallenged. The socio-economic and political structures that sustain poverty must be addressed. They must be rooted out and these socio-economic and political structures must be liberated and transformed. This is something that the ruling party, which used to be part of the broader liberation movement, does not seem to be doing well.

### **5.2.2. STRUCTURAL POVERTY**

In most cases poverty is not an accident of history, but it is systematically entrenched in socio-economic and political structures. Smith justifiably sees

poverty as a trap in which the poor are trapped:

Poverty is a cruel trap. For many of the unfortunate people who are ensnared in this painful leg-hold, escape on their own can be all but impossible (Smith 2005:ix).

The poverty trap, which is also often referred to as “structural poverty” is much more than just lack of income. The very conditions of poverty make it likely that poverty will continue tomorrow (Smith 2005:11). That poverty is a trap is also noted by Terreblanche who says that poverty traps set by apartheid remain an important explanation for the persistence and the worsening of poverty in South Africa (Terreblanche 2002:263). It is a fact that the poverty in South Africa does not get better. Like in most societies the rich are getting richer and the poor poorer. This is the irony of South Africa. Although there is now political stability, as well as a better economic outlook, the lot of the poor is not getting better. The fact that the participants have known no other life than that of poverty, having been brought up in poverty and poverty having followed them into their own households is an indication that poverty is insidious. It is a trap in which they are often forever ensnared.

Poverty is a trap. Often it does not matter how hard one works or what efforts are made, the poor remain poor. An example is offered by the efforts made by different poverty alleviating projects of non-governmental organizations and efforts by government since 1994. Such efforts have no chance of succeeding unless the root causes of poverty, as entrenched in socio-

economic and political structures, are addressed.

Mveng also notes that poverty is structural. He adds an additional dimension by saying that “poverty is both anthropological and structural” (Mveng 1994:157). Poverty is structural, in that it is not an accident of history that the majority of the black people are poor. Neither is it inherently the fault of the poor that they remain poor. In certain quarters the poor are often blamed for their poverty and often wrongly accused of laziness. Nothing is further from the truth than this. It was designed that way and entrenched in the socio-economic and political structures, both of the past and the present. In the case of the present government they may have inherited poverty and its associated economic imbalances from the past. However the question that remains is: Have politicians done enough to redress the imbalances of the past? Almost 13 years since taking over power, can we still only blame the past as an excuse for the continuation of poverty, in which the majority of South Africans are trapped?

According to Boff and Pixley poverty is systemic. They state that the real reason why the poor are poor is as follows:

The poor are poor because they are exploited or rejected by a pervasive economic system. This is an exploitative and excluding system which means the poor suffer and are oppressed, it means that the system keeps them under it or outside it (Boff and Pixley 1989:3).

That poverty will continue even tomorrow is almost a foregone conclusion. The only hope seems to be for participants' children, provided they obtain the education, for which their parents are making great sacrifices. In addition, and more fundamentally there will be hope on condition that the socio-economic and political structures that sustain poverty are uprooted. Smith calls it structural poverty because:

it is not a temporary problem that people can eventually escape from through sustained efforts (Smith 2005:11).

This is in line with the often-quoted dictum that “the poor become poorer and the rich become richer.” The world’s economic order seems to be designed this way. According to Mveng:

It is based on the endless enrichment of some and the endless impoverishment of others (Mveng 1994:160).

This is the hellish cycle of poverty, which the researcher knows first hand and in which the participants are trapped.

Mveng also correctly calls it a “hellish cycle of poverty” (Mveng 1994:160). It is true that it is vicious cycle in which the poor are forever trapped. That poverty is structural implies that the socio-economic and political structures are designed in such a way to ensure that the poor remain poor, while the rich get richer.

### 5.2.3. GLOBAL POVERTY

Poverty is a global phenomenon, which is widespread. It is a phenomenon that is found in many different parts of the world and not only in Africa (cf. Wilson and Ramphela 1989:4). Unfortunately it is more severe in the developing world, especially in Africa. Smith also understands the intensity of the problem in Africa when he says that conditions of poverty are particularly desperate in Africa (Smith 2005:1).

The scale of poverty in the world is immense. This is despite the fact that we currently live in a relatively affluent era in comparison with the past (Smith 2005:1). Poverty is a phenomenon that does not seem to be under control, but is forever increasing. According to the World Bank the number of people living in absolute poverty has increased (World Bank 2000:257). In agreement with the above mentioned facts, the World Bank states that the dimensions of poverty are worsening in many parts of the world (World Bank 2000:83). The World Bank estimates that there are 1300 million people living in absolute poverty, who live on less than one US dollar per day (World Bank 2000:257; cf. Smith 2005:1). According to Nurnberger billions of people live in absolute poverty (Nurnberger 1999:5; cf. Snider 1997:2). The number of the poor is bound to increase if nothing drastic is done to address the problem of poverty. As Watkins correctly points out:

Left unchecked poverty will continue to claim victims on a growing scale (Watkins 1995:4).



Watkins says that, based on the present trends, the number of people living in poverty could rise to 1.5 billion by 2025 (Watkins 1995:4). If this speculation is right, the consequences will be too ghastly to contemplate. If this speculation is right, it will be an indictment on all of us for allowing poverty to increase without any challenge. In the South African context, it will be an indictment on the current government, which was elected on a ticket of “making South Africa a better place in which to live.” It will also be an indictment on the electorate who fail to make their elected officials accountable.

As a result of this poverty “a better place in which to live” remains an illusion for the majority of South Africans, as they face starvation, nutrition related diseases, infant mortality, premature death, drastically reduced life expectancy, chronically reduced standards of living and devastating impact of the HIV and Aids pandemic. These are just a few of the impacts of poverty on the poor.

#### **5.2.4. POVERTY IN AFRICA**

Poverty is particularly rife and widespread in the developing world, of which Africa is part. The World Bank estimates that almost half of the population in Africa lives on barely a U S 0.65 cents, that is, less than a dollar a day (World Bank 2000:83). The same figures are also cited by Parrat (Parrat 2004:5; cf.

Nepad 2001). Smith makes the same point with the seriousness of the problem of poverty, and says that about 20 countries in the Sub-Sahara are poorer than they were a generation ago (Smith 2005:1). Comparing the real income of the average person in Africa to that of an American, that of the latter is 50 times or more than that of an African in the Sub-Sahara region (Smith 2005:1). Despite the gains of the second half of the 1999 Sub-Sahara African enters the 21<sup>st</sup> century with many of the world's poorest countries (Nepad 2001; cf. World Bank 2000).

Poverty on the African scale is more than just an individual phenomenon. It is a social and political phenomenon (World Bank 2000:84). Mveng's writes:

Poverty as we experience it today in Africa is indeed a political problem (Mveng 1994:155).

According to the World Bank, Africa is not only poor, but it also suffers from vast inequality in income, in assets (including education and status), in control over public resources, in access to essential services, as well as pervasive insecurity (World Bank 2000:83). Participants in this research are subjected to cheap labour and also denied access to education, access to public resources and access to essential services. Hence the continuation of this structural cycle of poverty, which continues to destroy lives of millions of South Africans.

It stands to reason that if poverty is such a global phenomenon, it will be more devastating in the developing world, and in particular in South Africa.

#### **5.2.5. POVERTY IN SOUTH AFRICA**

Poverty in South Africa is unique, according to Wilson and Ramphela (1989:4). It is unique in the sense that in contrast to other countries, which never had any statutory racial discrimination, in South Africa poverty seems to be mainly concentrated amongst the blacks. When the regime transferred political power, the economic power remained in the hands of the whites, who are the minority in the South African context. Poverty is deep and widespread and the degree of inequality is greater than any other country (cf. Wilson and Ramphela 1989:4).

In terms of the Gini-coefficient, which is used to measure levels of inequality between countries, South Africa has the highest measure of inequality especially among the 57 countries for which data is available (Wilson and Ramphela 1989:4).

In South Africa poverty is characterised by the following:

- the width of the gulf between the rich and the poor, that is, the degree of inequality
- poverty existing as a consequence of deliberate policy
- material poverty in South Africa is reinforced by racist policies that are

an assault on people's humanity (Wilson and Ramphela 1989:4; cf. Bruggemans 2003:16).

There is consensus among researchers that South Africa is an upper middle-income country with per capita income similar to other countries such as Botswana, Brazil, Malaysia and Mauritius (Whiteford and Mcgrath 1994:1; May 1998:1; cf. Barberton, Blake and Kotze 1998:13). Expressing the same point, May says:

In per capita terms South Africa is an upper middle class income country but most African households experience outright poverty or vulnerability to becoming poor. In addition the distribution of income and wealth in South Africa is the most unequal in the world (May 1998:1).

The above may seem like a contradiction that South Africa is regarded as an upper middle class country. That is precisely the problem of South Africa, according to which, the wealth of the country, is only enjoyed by the minority of the population. According to Ndungane, Archbishop of the Anglican Church (Cape Town), we live in a society in which there are great disparities between the rich and the poor. The majority of Africans are excluded from enjoying this wealth. Writing in global context, and lamenting the conditions of poverty in

that context, Smith expresses some optimism, when he says:

The good news is that the world produces enough food for all (Smith 2005:5).

This is a contradiction of our society. Poverty is prevalent in the midst of plenty. Dickinson points out the contradictions of our society when he writes: “We live in the midst of paradoxes” (Dickinson 1983:3). Despite being the wealthiest country in Africa and being a middle class income country, South Africa displays human development more often associated with low-income countries (cf. Whiteford 1995:1). In relative terms South Africa is not necessarily a poor country. Whereas the reality of a not so poor South Africa may be a reality to the rich whites in South Africa, to the majority of the blacks it is far from the truth. The majority of the black South African citizens are poor. Thus the South African situation is marked by what Barberton, et al, calls “extreme income inequality” (Barberton et al 1998: 13). In South Africa we have destitution, hunger and overcrowding co-existing side by side with affluence (Barberton et al 1998:13).

Pieterse also confirms that 50% of the population are rated as poor and they live on less than R12-00 per day (Pieterse 2001:ix). Although poverty knows no race or colour, it is concentrated amongst blacks as a result of past racist legislation and structures that make it difficult for the country to move fast on redressing those imbalances of the past (cf. May 1998; Pieterse 2001). It is a fact that blacks constitute the majority of those who are poor in South Africa,

which according to Steve Biko, is “a land which is the natural backyard of the black people” (Biko in Stubbs 1978:89). The contradiction is that the blacks do not enjoy the fruits of the natural and other resources of the country in the same way that whites do.

South Africa is a wealthy country, relatively speaking in the African context. In fact, by standards of the developing countries, South Africa is the wealthiest country on the African continent, only followed by perhaps Egypt. Emphasizing the same point, Roux says:

Although South Africa makes up less than 0.5% of the world economy, in Africa, South Africa is a giant (Roux 1999:146).

The researcher agrees with Roux that South Africa is by far the largest economy in Africa, with 28% of Gross National Product (GNP), produced in South Africa (Roux 1999:146). In the Southern African context South Africa is the most developed in the region, which has some of the poorest and least developed countries of the world.

Sunter correctly concurs with Roux that South Africa is a relatively successful and sophisticated country. He particularly mentions its excellent infrastructural development such as roads, bridges, electricity grid, etc. In terms of development South Africa is second best to none in comparison with the rest of Africa.

However the fruits of these developments are unfortunately enjoyed by only a few of the citizens of the country. About this Sunter says:

The unfortunate thing is that all areas of the country do not enjoy the same quality of infrastructure (Sunter 1987:86).

Unfortunately those who have odds stacked against them in terms of infrastructural developments are blacks, whose areas are still subjected to underdevelopment and neglect.

### **5.3. MAIN FEATURES OF POVERTY**

Participants list the following necessities (needs) or commodities as absent or scarce in their experience of poverty, namely food, clothes, school fees and money for transport to school and housing.

#### **5.3.1. FOOD AND CLOTHES**

Food is one of the basic commodities that human beings cannot live without.

For participants lack of food had the following consequences:

- It led to children dropping out of school, and as a result compromising the possibility of escaping the cycle of poverty

- It led to various nutrition-related illnesses

Allen and Thomas point out that:

Nourishment is fundamental. The story of human history, reduced to essentials, revolves around the basic requirements for life (Allen and Thomas 1992:15).

Hunger and its associated problems such as nutrition related illnesses, infant mortality and reduced life expectancy are the most pressing problems (cf. Allen and Thomas 1992:15). The hunger suffered by participants in this research may not have reached a point where one could classify it as famine, but rather what is called chronic under-nutrition (cf. Allen and Thomas 1992:15). This is too familiar to the researcher whose childhood experience was also marked by hunger and chronic under-nutrition. Furthermore the researcher observes this daily as experienced by members of the extended family and parishioners that the researcher ministers to. As a preacher to these people how does one preach about good news, when good news is only confined to the pulpit during Divine Service on Sunday? After the service it becomes business as usual as parishioners return to their poverty. In the context of pastoral care how does one extend pastoral care, as “a concern for the wellbeing of parishioners” when their physical wellbeing is not addressed. There is not even the slightest hint that it will be addressed. The researcher previously said: “Sermons and prayers were not enough for me and what will



make these enough for others?”

Researchers make a distinction between famine and chronic hunger, namely:

- Famine: This is acute starvation associated with a sharp increase in mortality. Famine is a crisis in which starvation from insufficient intake of food is associated with sharply increased death rates (Allen and Thomas 1992:15).
- Chronic hunger: This is rarely given international focus, but it may kill more people globally than acute crisis of famine does (Allen and Thomas 1992:15). Hunger is widespread and it is estimated that 31% of the world's population are undernourished (Allen and Thomas 1992:17). Although it is difficult to measure under-nourishment, it remains an existential reality for millions of people, and in particular for the participants in this research.

It is generally accepted that the phenomenon of endemic hunger is much more pervasive, as it affects many times the number of people who are threatened by it than famine. Researchers say that chronic hunger is one aspect, probably the most fundamental, of a wider set of deprivations understood as poverty (cf. Allen and Thomas 1992:28). Thus chronic hunger and poverty are closely related. There is a widespread agreement with the World Bank that under-nutrition is largely a reflection of poverty (Allen and Thomas 1992:28).

As far back as 1989, Wilson and Ramphele described the conditions of poverty and associated malnutrition South Africa as follows:

Thousands of South African babies are dying of malnutrition and associated diseases; two million children are growing up stunted for lack of sufficient calories in one of the few countries in the world that export food; tens of thousands of men spending their entire working years as lonely labour units in single-sex hostels whilst their wives and children live generally in greater poverty in the overcrowded reserves (Wilson and Ramphele 1989:4).

Though the above-mentioned statement was made almost seventeen years ago, it is still valid in its description of conditions of poverty and associated malnutrition. Wilson and Ramphele are correct in their description of the reality of poverty and associated malnutrition and diseases. Not much has changed since Wilson and Ramphele uttered the above-mentioned statement. In some ways matters are now worse.

As a result of hunger and under-nutrition children cannot study properly and adults cannot be fully productive as workers (Wilson and Ramphele 1989:4). This is just one of the many consequences of poverty and hunger. Wilson and Ramphele correctly point out to the contradictions of the South African reality:

South Africa is one of the few countries in the world which normally exports food in considerable quantities. Yet it is also a country in which there is widespread hunger and malnutrition ... and (*a country*) where diseases are associated with poor nutrition and take a heavy toll in deaths, particularly amongst children (Wilson and Ramphela 1989:100).

That there is so much food in South Africa that it can be exported in considerable quantities, while in our backyard there are people who go to bed hungry is confirmation that South Africa has serious problems as a result of socio-economic and political structures that sustain this poverty. It also confirms that poverty is neither accidental nor a matter of fate, but structurally imbedded.

### **5.3.2. COST OF EDUCATION: FEES AND TRANSPORT**

Education is a human right to which all the citizens of the any country should be equally entitled. Worldwide there are significant sections of communities, which are denied access to education. This also automatically excludes them from participation in the mainstream economy of their countries. They end up being marginalised. Smith says that there are close to one billion illiterate adults in the world (Smith 2005:3). According to Smith the World Bank estimated in 2003 that there are more than 100 million children who could not attend school due to poverty. (Smith 2005:12). The situation is probably

worse than it was in 2003.

Despite some saying that in South Africa primary education is free and compulsory, participants still have to pay school fees (funds) and other hidden costs involved such as uniforms, transport costs and food for learners at school. An additional problem in informal settlements and recently established township is that there are no schools in such places. Learners have to pay high costs for traveling. The researcher agrees with Biko who said that it is expensive to be poor (Biko 1978:97). In the middle class residential area of Centurion, which is a former white area in which the researcher resides, there are not less than three schools within the radius of 6 kilometres. However in Extension 12, there is not a single school operating except one that is still under construction.

All participants indicated that the cost for educating their children is too high for them. Paying for school and transport costs is a serious problem for them. They all regard education as very important, that is, as a tool that can help a person or a family (household) to escape poverty. The participants themselves were denied the opportunity to obtain decent education by the unjust South African system, marked by poverty. They are not fully illiterate because they can read and write. Their educational level, however, is not high enough to obtain well-paying jobs. They recognise the importance of education for their children. Seven of the participants have educational level that range from Standard 4 to 8. Only two of the participants have attained Standard 10 Therefore being able to read and write is not enough to take

them out of poverty.

Researchers are agreed that illiteracy is a major dimension of poverty (cf. Wilson and Ramphele 1989:141; Moodly 2000:130). In the context of this research even up to a certain level of literacy can hold functionally literate people hostage.

The cost of education is very prohibitive and this has caused some of the participants to drop out of school, except participants B and D. Participant B completed the matriculation certificate as a private candidate while she was already employed. This is familiar to the researcher as he also was forced to drop out of school before completing matriculation certificate, albeit reluctantly. This he did as a private candidate while employed as a messenger by the Provincial Administration of the Orange Free State. While working as a messenger with education better than that of his white bosses some of whom had only a standard six level of education, the wages of the researcher was five times lower than that of the white “bosses” who demanded to be referred to that way.

There is a constant fear among participants that the same reasons that forced them to drop out may force their children to drop out of school as well. Therefore we have what Wilson and Ramphele refer to as “a structural situation where education offers absolutely no guarantee of work except for the few” (Wilson and Ramphele 1989:148).

While education is important and should be encouraged acquisition thereof is often not a guarantee that one will get a good job. Having said that, there are some who managed to acquire jobs after acquiring education up to matriculation certificate level. It does improve one's chances a great deal if one has education above matriculation, that is, tertiary education. However in the case of participants and many others in the informal settlements the conditions are such that it is difficult to earn matriculation and beyond.

The South African society was historically structured in such a way that blacks were not entitled to the same education as whites. The policy of the government was to ensure that blacks were not educated for jobs beyond their proper station in an apartheid South Africa (Wilson and Ramphela 1989:148). That station for the so-called Bantu was expressed as follows by Dr H. F. Verwoerd, one of the architects of apartheid:

There is no place for the Bantu in the European community above the level of certain forms of labour (Christie 1985:12)

Christie is correct in pointing out the fact that there was no political will on the part of the National Party government to provide decent education for blacks. In contrast there was a political will to deliberately keep blacks from receiving decent education. In fact even private initiatives by institutions such as churches were sabotaged by the apartheid regime, by either closing down church schools or taking them over.

One National party politician once said (in 1945) that:

We should not give the natives any academic education. If we do, who is going to do manual labour in the community (Christie 1985:12).

In support of the above the same architect of apartheid, Dr H. F. Verwoerd, the then Minister of Bantu Affairs is quoted as having said in 1953, when Bantu Education was introduced:

When I have control over native education, I will reform it so that natives will be taught from childhood that equality with Europeans is not for them (Christie 1985:12).

The Bantu Education Act of 1952 was passed by an Act of parliament which instituted state control of education for Africans and established new curriculum designed to prepare blacks for a lower place in the economy of the country (Lewis Jr. 1990:14).

While the statements cited above were uttered in the past, the impact of the legacy of apartheid still remains with us even in the new democratic dispensation. This is seen especially with the facilities of schools in black townships as compared with those in former white suburbs. Schools located in black townships still do not have proper libraries, laboratory facilities or sports grounds (cf. Wilson and Ramphele 1989:148). The reality is still the

same thirteen years after political liberation. Following the release of the report of hearings by the Human Rights Commission, the Star of the 15<sup>th</sup> June 2006 stated:

Twelve years into the new democracy and yet the inequity in education, both in provisioning and the quality of education, still exists (Star, 15/06/06 article by Nomusa Cembu, p13).

The article was quoting the conclusion of public hearings on the right to basic education held in October 2005. It is tragic that schools in white suburbs and black townships still do not offer education of the same quality nor are the facilities of the same standards.

In presenting the report to the Education Department, the chairperson of the Human Rights Commission, Mr Jody Kollapen said:

The kind of education you receive is dependent on where your school is. The quality is higher in urban rather than in a rural area (The Star 15/06/06, p. 13).

While the divide between urban and rural areas is real, there is also the divide between townships and former white areas, especially in terms of facilities and qualified personnel. It is no wonder that there is a great trek by children whose parents can afford it by taking their children out of township schools to former white suburbs and city schools in search of quality education. It is



interesting that even teachers in township schools take their own children to either city schools or suburban schools. At one stage, when the researcher adopted a child of a relative and looked for a school in the suburb he encountered a number of teachers from the townships of Bloemfontein who were also in search of quality education for their children. There was a concession on their part that at their township schools where they are employed, there is no quality education and they were not prepared to subject their children to those institutions.

Following the hearings on education, Mr Kollapen conceded that despite efforts made in the past 12 years to equalise education, “this process has not always produced equality and equity for the learners” (The Star, 15/06/06, p13).

The report identified poverty as one of the nine issues that have an impact on accessing and enjoying the right to basic education.

The South African problem is that socio-economic and political structures are still designed in such a way that the majority of blacks are kept under white domination.

### 5.3.3. HOUSING

The South African housing situation, like all aspects of the South African society, remains skewed in terms of housing provision for whites and blacks. Blacks reside in townships and in informal settlements and rural villages whereas whites are in suburbs. This is notwithstanding the recent influx of middle class blacks, who are moving from townships to suburbs. However they are still a drop in the ocean. Conversely there is no movement of whites to predominantly black areas. In the black areas there is a massive housing backlog, which is estimated between 1.3 million to 3 million units. In addition there is also a backlog of infrastructural provision (Macroeconomic Research Group 1993:75). According to research done in 1993 by the Macroeconomic Group:

the South African housing system is dominated by physical and socio-economic structures inherited from the past (1993:75).

From the information captured on Table 1, in chapter four, the participants reside in the following kinds of housing:

- shacks rented from others and usually located at backyards of other houses
- R.D.P. houses i.e. low cost housing provided by government in line with its R.D.P. policy

The R.D.P. policy was formulated in response to the situation of poverty and aims at reducing inequality among the races and between the poor and the rich (cf. Whiteford 1995:1).

In spite of the hardships in former informal settlements there are other members of the community who are able to extend the RDP houses that are provided by the state. Others acquire sites on which they build their own houses in phases.

Some of the households live in a single room house (shack) with all members of the household sharing a single unit. One of the participants in the research conducted by Wilson and Ramphela as far back as the eighties said:

How can you respect each other when the mother, the father and the children are sleeping together . . . It is very humiliating (Wilson and Ramphela 1989:124).

This is still a reality in 2006 that households are occupying small dwellings in which facilities are shared with children.

The Star, 15/06/2006, reported in an article by Nomusa Cembi, titled “Poverty steals children’s right to proper schooling” on the hearings conducted by the Human Rights Commission. (Launch of the report of the Human Rights Commission on The Right to basic education). Furthermore it was reported

that in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, there are still people who live in the same humiliating circumstances as in the past.

It is interesting that despite being horrific the government's R.D.P. option is still desired by those residents (participants) occupying such houses. Those not yet allocated and still occupying shacks are waiting with anticipation to occupy RDP houses. It is important to note that the R.D.P houses despite being the better options for the poor and particularly the participants, they are far inferior to the match-box houses that used to be provided to blacks during the heydays of apartheid. The only difference is that the match-box houses did not legally belong to occupants but to the state, that is, to local authorities. In contrast, the R.D.P houses legally belong to occupants and they are usually given title deeds.

The poor communities, like the participants, are still subjected to the problem of inadequate housing and associated poor infrastructure, which leads to bad living conditions. This furthermore leads to destructive social consequences such as overcrowding, diseases, compromise of family values and destruction of the moral fabric of society etc. (cf. Wilson and Ramphele 1989:124).

These consequences lead to humiliating circumstances, as well as the breakdown of the moral fibre of the black community. These also lead to the breakdown in family and other African values and norms.

## 5.4. THE CAUSES OF POVERTY

### 5.4.1. APARTHEID AND ITS LEGACY

Apartheid policy was the cornerstone of the previous regime under the National Party, which came into power in 1948. How else does one explain the Land legislations of 1913 and 1936, which were promulgated before the dawn of National party rule? In the researcher's view the National Party did not invent apartheid. They just refined and perfected it. This policy separated races and maintained white supremacy, and blacks were wrongly regarded as inferior. Lewis Jr had this to say about this policy:

The National Party programme for reshaping the economy and society was based on racial classification and separation in all aspects of life in South Africa (Lewis Jr 1990:14).

Lewis Jr goes on to catalogue pieces of legislation that were immediately introduced by the N.P. that were meant to entrench this policy, namely:

- Population registration Act of 1950, which required that each person's race be defined in terms of legislation
- Prohibition of mixed marriages Act of 1949, which made mixed marriages between whites and other groups illegal
- Immorality Act of 1950, which prohibited sexual intercourse between

whites and other races

- Group Areas Act of 1952, and Native Laws amendment Act, which were meant to control the movement of blacks in white South Africa and also created the “reference” book, which was to be carried by only blacks. These were followed by Homeland laws that deprived blacks of their South African citizenship and made them “temporary sojourners” in white South Africa (Lewis Jr 1990:15).

Following official end of apartheid in 1994, the legacy of the policy of apartheid did not disappear with the dawn of the new South Africa. Post-apartheid South Africa still has significant remnants of apartheid’s legacy, which participants in this research correctly continue to blame for their poverty.

All but three of the participants cite apartheid and its legacy as the cause of poverty, namely A,C,D,E,G and H. What Wilson and Ramphele said as far back as 1989 is still valid today:

The roots of South Africa’s current poverty and of ongoing impoverishment go deep into the past (Wilson and Ramphele 1989:204).

With reference to the apartheid legacy, a leading Afrikaner academic, Prof. S. Terreblanche writes:

When in 1994, a democratically elected government came to power, it inherited a contradictory legacy: the most developed economy in Africa on the one hand, and major socio-economic problems on the other hand (Terreblanche 2002:25).

These socio-economic problems included poverty as one of the most serious problems inherited from South Africa's past. According to Terreblanche what makes the socio-economic problems so pressing, is that it is mostly blacks, who are at the receiving ends of such problems (Terreblanche 2002:25). In support of the legacy of the past that we inherited, Archbishop N. Ndungane, head of the Anglican Church in South Africa, also says that we inherited from apartheid a legacy of economic and social distress and dysfunctions (Ndungane 2003:20).

Participants agree that the apartheid policy of the past, in many ways, denied black communities opportunities. They were denied inter alia the following opportunities:

- to obtain decent education
- to stay wherever they wanted in their country of birth.
- to occupy certain jobs as a result of job reservation policies and laws
- to earn decent wages

- to enjoy essential services and amenities extended only to whites

This is the result of what May calls “institutionalised discrimination” which has left its mark on the South African society. This mark was left by the state driven underdevelopment that encompassed dispossession and exclusion of the majority of South Africans (May 1998:2). This is to the extent that May correctly points:

Although South Africa has undergone dramatic economic, social and political transition in the last decade, many of the distortions and dynamics introduced by apartheid continue to reproduce poverty and perpetuate inequality (May 1998:2).

The impact of the legacy will be present for sometime to come, especially in view of failure on the part of stakeholders such as government and the business community to intensify programmes meant to address the inequalities and imbalances of the past.

#### **5.4.2. EDUCATION AND LITERACY**

Six of the participants cited lack of education as a cause of poverty, which in the researcher’s opinion, is related to apartheid and its legacy. It is interesting to note that all participants attained some level of literacy. They cannot, however, by any standards, be regarded as illiterate. The level of education they obtained, however, is not enough to help them escape from poverty. This



is very discouraging to those who are being encouraged to obtain education in order to escape poverty.

May says that there is a strong correlation between one's educational level and one's standard of living (May 1998:33). Thus the higher one is educated the better the chance of getting a good job and maintaining a high standard of living. The attainment of education alone cannot transform South Africa's poor. The access and provision of equal and relevant education can only be helpful if it is accompanied by transformation of all socio-economic and political structures of South Africa.

Although the participants are not totally illiterate, illiteracy in general is a problem in South Africa. It was a problem in the case of their parents, some of whom did not fully appreciate the value of being educated. In their defense, one can say that they were given very little or no incentives to value education. All participants regard education as a very important tool that can be used to escape poverty.

Generally speaking the level of illiteracy in South Africa is staggering. Wilson and Ramphele note:

Whilst the general level of education of the population as a whole is improving, the number of young illiterate, between the ages of 10 and 24, is highly disturbing (Wilson and Ramphele 1989:138).

Illiteracy is a major dimension of poverty all over South Africa (cf. Wilson and Ramphele 1989:145).

The plight of those who attend school is often compounded by having to go to school on empty stomachs. Wilson and Ramphele also highlight the plight of those children who go to school hungry by citing a quotation from one of the researchers:

The child who is hungry and ill-fed lacks the energy and enthusiasm to do his school work (Wilson and Ramphele 1989:145).

It is no wonder that some of the participants in this research dropped out of school due to the conditions at home that are not conducive to an effective educational environment. It was also because their parents could not afford the costs related to education. They live with a persistent fear that their own children might drop out of school. Pointing out to the many reasons for dropping out of school Wilson and Ramphele say:

In addition to hunger and the discouraging circumstances of many schools, there are three major reasons for the high drop out rate: sheer cost of education from the family's point of view. Fees and levies are not negligible, especially for those living below the bread-line, and costly uniforms are often required as well (Wilson and Ramphele 1989:146).

What Wilson and Ramphela left out is the cost of transport for many school children from poor communities. It is important to note a significant number of the poor communities live in newly established areas such as informal settlements where there are still no schools. As a result their transport costs are very high. In addition those who may wish to send their children to schools with better facilities in former white areas also battle with transport costs, in addition to restrictions on families with wrong addresses. This emphasises the point made some time back by Steve Biko who said: “It is very expensive to be poor “(Biko 1978:96).

#### **5.4.3. FAILURE OF PRESENT GOVERNMENT**

The present government is also blamed for much of the poverty that participants and their communities experience. Seven of the participants cite the present government as contributing to their poverty, namely A,B,D,E,F,G and I.

While the government acknowledges that poverty is a problem, not much is being done to address the problem of poverty in the view of the participants. There is an acknowledgement that poverty is a problem on the part of the ruling party, the A.N.C, which is quoted as having said:

Attacking poverty and deprivation must be the first priority of a democratic government (May 1998:1).

This acknowledgement is accordingly accompanied by policies and the pieces of legislation that are all meant to reduce levels of poverty and inequality. In terms of policy and legislative framework, the South African government is not lacking, however its glaring weaknesses are to be found in implementation of policies and service delivery.

The tendency to blame government is not unfounded. As it is conventional, during electioneering time the ruling party makes all sorts of promises as outlined in their manifestoes and policy documents which they later fail to keep. In its outlined intentions in terms of the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) the government, in 1994, described its policy as “integrated and coherent socio-economic framework” (Hoogeveen and Ozler 2006: 53). This policy framework set ambitious goals such as the following:

- job creation, which has not yet succeeded despite statements that economic fundamentals of South Africa are up to standards. South Africa is one of the few countries in Africa, where there is economic growth. However, that is economic growth without job creation and wealth creation for the poor.
- public works programmes have thus far failed to bear desired results. Funds are often made available to relevant government departments but there are problems of delivery
- land reform, with its three pillars: redistribution, restitution and land tenure.
- Major infrastructural projects such as housing, roads construction,

water provision services, electricity supply and housing provisions

While there are efforts to realize the above-mentioned, progress is not such that one can say it has significantly made a substantial change in the lives of the poor. It is for these reasons that, in agreement with many other people, participants blame the government for their continuing poverty, which remain unchanged in many communities.

#### **5.4.4. LOW WAGES**

Despite their hard work seven of the participants (A;B;D;E,F,G and I) cite low wages as a direct cause of their poverty. Wilson and Ramphele say:

In South Africa, as elsewhere, the proximate cause of much poverty lies in the fact that wages earned by men and women for the work they do are insufficient to cover basic needs for themselves and their dependents (Wilson and Ramphele 1989:54).

Therefore as a result of low wages, which some people refer to as “slave wages,” it is almost impossible that participants will escape poverty, regardless of how hard they work. They just see themselves working hard in order to enrich those few, in whose hands the economy of the country is held.

## 5.5. UNDERSTANDING POVERTY

Poverty is not a one-dimensional matter that can be reduced to statistics or numbers, but a complex, multifaceted matter that has many faces (cf. Wilson and Ramphela 1989:15). According to Oates as cited by De Jong Van Arkel:

poverty is more than simply not having money, goods, and luxuries (De Jong Van Arkel 1995:195).

From the understanding of participants it is understood as:

a condition of life in which the individual, family or community is unable to afford basic needs such as food, clothes, water, electricity, medical costs, school fees and housing

This compares very well with May's definition:

Poverty can be defined as the inability to attain the minimum living standard, measured in terms of basic consumption needs or income required to satisfy them (May 1998:1; cf. Pieterse 2000:1).

The two definitions contain essentially the same elements, though each has additional dimensions.

The first definition, stemmed from statements of participants emphasises the communal nature of the problem that affects a family or community, whereas May's definition is rather technical in that it refers to standards and measurement.

From the perspectives of the participants, there is consensus that poverty is not a simple, one dimensional matter but it is a very complex and multifaceted matter (cf. Wilson and Ramphele 1989:14;15).

The participants recognise the fact that poverty has diverse causes (cf. Wilson and Ramphele 1989:14).

In the South African poverty situation the most striking feature is the degree of inequality that exists (Wilson and Ramphele 1989:17).

The lack of the basic necessities of life is the cause of many problems experienced by the participants such as:

- Diseases
- Malnutrition
- Low living standards
- Death, even premature death
- High infant mortality
- Drastically reduced life expectancy

These are just a few of the problems associated with poverty.

These problems cannot be solved only by prayer, statements from the pulpit and home visitations. Although these are important, they must be accompanied by attention to socio-economic and political structures that are the root causes of the above-mentioned problems.

## **5.6. THE ROLE OF THE CHURCH IN ADDRESSING POVERTY**

All participants except F and H stated that the church is generally not doing much in addressing poverty. There is, however, consensus that the church is doing the following, albeit inadequate:

- collection of funds and distribution of food parcels which is not as regular as it should be, because poverty strikes the poor all year and there is need for a constant effort on the part of the church
- Bible studies and Sermons. The concern of the church regarding poverty and associated ills is often well articulated. However this constitute only Service in words and there is need of service in both word and deed.

Interestingly, participants F and H say that the church is doing enough. This emerges from direct experience of the care and support of the church during difficult times received by members of their households. Specifically, the areas in which F and H experienced the care and support are as follows:

-care and support to members in both families who were living with HIV/Aids. In the case of F it was the participant's brother and in the other case (H) it



was her husband.

-provision of material help during their difficult time.

The following areas are indicated as areas where the church needs to improve:

-poverty alleviation projects

-educational projects, which includes using the church buildings as centres of education and skills development and also including provision of bursaries for members of the church whose parents struggle to send them to school

-the advocacy role that the church must play in persuading and pressurising government and business to address the problems of poverty, including job creation and removal of inequalities

## **5.7. UNDERSTANDING PASTORAL CARE**

All participants except F and H understood pastoral care as the work of the pastor to care for the parishioners. They believe that, in their view, only the pastor is and should be involved in pastoral care by virtue of calling and training. Other people have not been trained and cannot be entrusted with pastoral care. From this perspective pastoral care is pastor-centred. In the view of the participants the church itself is pastor centred.

From what they said, pastoral care can be defined as:

“The work of the pastor that involves the caring of parishioners. It also involves comforting and counselling to all who experience all kinds of problems”

This understanding betrays a one-sided focus on the pastor at the expense of the laity. Thus all participants except F and H, see no role for other members to provide pastoral care.

In contrast to the rest, F and H recognise that there is room for the involvement of others. This is probably due to the direct support that they received from the church. In the words of F:

“The pastor cannot minister to so many people alone. Others can be trained. They can then serve as foot soldiers and only refer difficult cases to the pastor”

The two participants recognise the possibility of mutual care amongst members of the church.

As for pastoral care needs the following are identified by participants:

- the burden of being a single parent and having to provide for a large family. The burden is especially heavier for women who are often left

alone by either their husbands or boyfriends while they struggle single-handedly to provide for their children.

- conflict within families with regard to the use of available and limited resources for the survival of the families
- chronic debt, with participants having to borrow money from time to time with substantial interest charged by cash loan companies (registered) and individuals (*bomachonisa*) who launder money within the community.
- Need for the church to offer care in both words and deed
- Burden of poverty
- Continuation of poverty despite efforts to work hard and escape poverty
- Burden of struggle to feed the family by heads of households who are either unemployed or earn very little in terms of wages
- The need of assistance to provide education for their children
- Guilt as a result of inability to provide for ones family needs
- Having no houses of their own, that is, those who are still renting shacks.
- Illness and inability to afford decent medical care

These are some of the needs that pastoral care and pastoral caregivers have to respond to.

## CONCLUSION

The present chapter examined what participants in this research had to say about their experience of poverty and juxtaposed it with what is in selected literature. It attempted to assess similarities and differences between the following:

- Understanding of poverty from the perspective of the poor and compared that with literature
- Understanding of what pastoral care is
- The role of the church in addressing poverty

Having listened to poor participants in the present chapter, the next chapter will develop a model of pastoral care in response to the pastoral care needs and the challenges facing the poor. In that process the chapter will critique existing pastoral care.