CHAPTER 1

THE STUDY IN PERSPECTIVE

1.1 BACKGROUND AND JUSTIFICATION OF THE STUDY

As is happening in many other parts of the world, South African society is changing. A particularly striking observation is evident in the black population groups, where a shift from the traditional to a partially Western-oriented lifestyle is taking place. Food practices, which include food choices and food-related behaviour, are part and parcel of a lifestyle and therefore also subject to change (Bisogni, Falk, Madore, Blake, Jastran Sobal & Devine, 2007; Bisogni, Jastran, Shen & Devine, 2005; Murcott, 2000; Oltersdorf, Schlettwein-Gsell & Winkler, 1999). In fact, a gradual shift to a Western-style diet by black South Africans has been reported on for over four decades (MacKeown, Pedro & Norris, 2007; Vorster, Venter, Wissing & Margetts, 2005a; MacIntyre, Kruger, Venter & Vorster, 2002; Bourne, Lambert & Steyn, 2002; Labadarios, 2000; Labadarios, Walker, Blaauw & Walker, 1996; Van Eeden & Gericke, 1996; Bourne, Langenhoven, Steyn, Jooste, Nesamvuni & Laubscher, 1994; Crous & Borchardt, 1982; 1984; 1986; Manning, Mann, Sophangisa & Truswell, 1974; Lubbe, 1971; Leary, 1969; Oudkerk, 1965). It is suggested that these changes can be attributed to a variety of factors such as migration, urbanisation, acculturation, education and economic development (Vorster, Margetts, Venter & Wissing, 2005b; MacIntyre, *et al.,* 2002; Bourne, *et al*., 2002; Walker & Charlton, 2001; Labadarios, *et al.,* 1996; Walker, 1995; Bourne, Langenhoven, Steyn, Jooste, Laubscher & Van der Vyver, 1993).

South African society is multi-cultural and the indigenous African people of South Africa, upon contact with Western-oriented societies, seem to have gradually adopted or partially adopted the Western lifestyle. This has led to a change and/or adjustment to traditional food practices due to increased exposure to Western foods, mainly as a result of the effect of urbanisation and modernisation processes. Such interaction with Western-oriented food practices is reflected in a change in the dietary patterns of these people. In accord with what is reported for other African countries, this is characteristically a change from securing food from indigenous cultivated and gathered foods to becoming almost totally dependent on food provided by the commercial and industrial sectors (Raschke & Cheema, 2007; Weinberger & Swai, 2006; Gockowski, Mbazo'o, Mbah & Moulende, 2003; Ogoye-Ndegwa & Aagaard-Hansen, 2003). Moreover, several specifically South African studies confirm that a nutrition

transition[1] is taking place as a direct consequence of these demographic and lifestyle changes. Some positive consequences of these changes in dietary patterns include a decline in protein-energy malnutrition, infectious diseases and gastro-enteritis, especially among the very young, together with increased life expectancy (Labadarios *et al.,* 1996). Of greater concern in recent times are the negative consequences, particularly the increase in the occurrence of obesity and other non-communicable diseases associated with it, especially in the urban population (Vorster *et al.,* 2005b; MacIntyre *et al.,* 2002; Walker & Charlton, 2001). The changed dietary patterns of some South African ethnic groups to a Western-oriented food pattern, are characterised by an increased intake of protein, fats, sugar and salt and a decrease in the consumption of plant proteins, dietary fibre and complex carbohydrates (Vorster *et al*., 2005b; Bourne *et al.,* 2002).

Undesirable outcomes of the nutrition transition usually culminate in increased mortality and morbidity rates (Vorster *et al.,* 2005b; Bourne *et al.,* 2002; Labadarios *et al.,* 1996; Walker, 1995; Bourne *et al.,* 1993). It is reported that the occurrence of degenerative diseases continues to rise and an increased burden is being placed on the public health services in South Africa (Bourne *et al.,* 2002; Labadarios *et al.,* 1996; Walker, 1995: Bourne *et al.,* 1993). This partially explains why nutrition and food-related research in the South African context has been mainly of an epidemiological nature, directed to investigating the nutrient content of the diets and their health consequences for specific population groups and the compilation of risk profiles for chronic non-communicable diseases among the different South African population groups (Vorster *et al.,* 2005b; Bourne *et al.,* 2002; MacIntyre *et al.,* 2002).

The current knowledge base of the food practices of the South African population as a whole, is, however, still fragmentary and research limited. Most of the studies referred to above predominantly provide information on **what** some sectors of certain population groups eat and their research findings report solely on the nutrient content of the diets, although some include information on meal patterns and composition. Inadequate, if any, attention is given to the reasons **why** specific food items are chosen and included in the eating pattern(s) of the study group(s) concerned.

To be able to deliver meaningful consumer education and facilitation, and recommend sound nutrition interventions and education to all South Africans, a thorough understanding of **why** as well as **what** people eat is urgently needed. To be able to better understand the reasons

[1] Vorster, *et al*. (2005b:761) define nutrition transition "... as a stepwise sequence of characteristic changes in dietary patterns and nutrient intakes associated with societal, economic and cultural changes during demographic transition of populations."

for human food choices, an in-depth knowledge of the food practices[2], specifically the food choice process, is crucial as has been pointed out in various studies in other countries (Devine, 2005; Croll, Neumark-Sztainer & Story, 2001; Paisley, Sheeshka & Daly, 2001; Reynolds, Hinton, Shewchuk & Hickey, 1999; Falk, Bisogni & Sobal, 1996). Food practices and the embedded food choice process are guided by a number of interrelated and interdependent factors that are often context-specific (Sobal, Bisogni, Devine & Jastran, 2006:7; Devine, 2005; Furst, Connors, Bisogni, Sobal & Falk, 1996). Hence such studies require a holistic approach where knowledge of the socio-cultural, psychological, historical and demographic factors that contribute to the formation of food practices are all considered too. It is therefore imperative to investigate all related factors that could contribute to the development and change in the food practices within the different South African population groups.

Only one South African research group used a holistic approach and followed an integrated, trans-disciplinary approach to study the interactions between biological, psychosocial and environmental factors. The aim of this *Transition and Health during Urbanisation of South Africans* (THUSA) study was to determine the response of individuals and groups in transition to changing circumstances (Vorster *et al.,* 2005a). Its published research reports only commented on **what** was consumed by the study population in response to the changes and, once again, only in terms of the nutrient content. It thus seems, as far as the researcher could establish, that to date no South African study has dealt with **why** people consume the food they do as a result of the ongoing nutrition transition experienced by South Africans, and more specifically that of the indigenous African people who are exposed to continuously changing circumstances.

Unlike animals, human food consumption is shaped by a variety of factors apart from biological survival. Factors that relate to culture, social, historical, psychological, religious, economic and political aspects also come into play and have to be acknowledged and investigated (Sobal *et al.,* 2006:7). In this regard, Bryant, De Walt, Courtney and Schwartz (2003:3) refer to the dynamic relationships that exist between the biological, cultural, environmental and broader socio-economic factors. Rozin (2007:8) and Pelto, Goodman and Dufour (2000:1) similarly refer to the unique interrelationship between food and social forces that shape human food use and nutritional status. Food intake by humans is under the direct influence of culture (Rozin, 2007:13; Ferraro, 2006:22; Sobal *et al.,* 2006:8; Fieldhouse,

[2] Food practices in this study imply how the chosen food is used, and includes the food-related behaviour that is typical of an individual or a group. It is simultaneously regarded as a concrete manifestation of the culture and the effect of the socio-psychological structure and cognition of the individual and the influences from his various environments (Kittler & Sucher, 2008:2; Fieldhouse, 1995:1; National Research Council, 1945:13-14). The food choice process is regarded as an integral part of and embedded in food practices as concept.

1995:1; Fischler, 1980). It is thus important that both the biological (nutritional) and cultural component be included when seeking to understand human food consumption, as, for example, when changes in dietary patterns are being observed. Recognition of the cultural component also implies that food choice is embedded in a network of social meanings and takes a central place in social interaction (Sobal *et al.,* 2006:1; Ogden, 2003: 51, 59; Falk *et al.,* 1996).

Clearly, a relationship between social meanings, social interaction and food choice exists. It is people who give meaning to actions and events, and, through symbolic interactionism people have the ability to create, negotiate and change social meanings through the process of interaction (Sandstrom, Martin & Fine, 2006:1). In their choice of food people create meanings, but, in turn, it also reflects the meanings they associate with food (Furst *et al.,* 1996). Todhunter (1973:301) describes a whole assortment of meanings that can be reflected through food, such as status, prestige, friendship, feasts and rituals to name a few. She explains that food can also be a means of expressing, inter alia, individuality, sophistication, affection and, most of all, tradition, custom and security that too can be symbolised through food. In food choice some of the meanings relate to the food itself, but it is often the medium through which a whole range of meanings can be communicated (Ogden, 2003:52-53).

Due to its dynamic nature, culture changes. Food practices, as part of culture, are similarly subject to change. As cultural meanings are often expressed through food practices, it implies that the meanings attached to food practices can also change. Although culture changes, it is paradoxically also resistant to change, and the same applies to food practices and the meanings attached to it. Therefore, in some instances, the meanings attached to certain food practices, such as traditional food practices, directly contribute to the sustainability of the said food practices. On the other hand, new meanings can be created for a food or food practice which can then be instrumental in the expansion of the food practices of a cultural or social group and the associated meanings attached to them. Unfortunately most documented research regarding the dietary intake of the South African population, rarely mentions the cultural and other individual factors when reporting on food consumption and the assumption is made that limited, if any, attention is given to the reasons behind the phenomenon.

At the 18th International Congress of Nutrition held in September 2005 in Durban, South Africa, the New Nutrition Science Project, as part of the Giessen Declaration, was introduced to the nutrition community (Cannon & Leitzmann, 2005). One of the commendable objectives of the project states that more attention needs to focus on the social and environmental

dimensions of nutrition science as was done in the past. These two components, together with the biological aspect, could provide a more integrated and holistic approach to the study of human food consumption. This was necessary to not only prevent chronic diseases associated with lifestyle and to alleviate global malnutrition, but also, and more importantly, to obtain an in-depth understanding of the food choice process and the food practices of individuals and groups of individuals (Cannon & Leitzmann, 2005).

In America and Europe there has been renewed interest and focus on research dealing with the food choice process as part of the food-related behaviour of individuals and groups of people in recent years. Examples are the studies conducted by researchers at Cornell University (Bisogni, Falk, Blake, Jastran, Sobal & Devine, 2007; Devine, 2005; Devine, Connors, Bisogni & Sobal, 1998; Falk *et al.,* 1996; Furst, *et al*., 1996) and the initiatives of the International Union of Nutrition Sciences (IUNS) (Oltersdorf, 2003; Gedrich, 2003; Oltersdorf, *et al*., 1999). Most studies concerning food-related behaviour emphasise a holistic understanding of the food choice process to assist in promoting optimal nutrition education and consumer facilitation (Bisogni, *et al.,* 2007; Blake, Bisogni, Sobal, Devine & Jastran, 2007; Devine, 2005; Bisogni, Jastran, Shen & Devine, 2005; Oltersdorf, 2003; Devine, Sobal, Bisogni & Connors, 1999). From the studied literature it is clear that a similar holistic approach is fundamental to understanding and describing the food-related behaviour of the various cultural groups of the South African population.

In order to fully understand human food practices, all aspects of the social and cultural setting, the context in which it takes place, are to be addressed (Meiselman, 2007; Rozin, 2007:16; Bryant *et al.,* 2003:2; Falk *et al.,* 1996). When people confront others whose origin, world view and culture may differ in many aspects from their own, all interacting forces that are present have to be considered. The scope of these interacting forces and especially the resultant meanings that are attached to food, require an all-encompassing point of view. Context includes both the physical and social environments as well as all behaviour settings in which food consumption takes place (Sobal *et al.,* 2006:6; Furst *et al.,* 1996). To realise such a holistic research approach, necessitates an extensive theoretical framework as will be justified in Chapter 2 (see 2.3). The contextual approach is therefore deemed to be appropriate and includes the human ecological perspective as overarching theoretical perspective, supported by cultural and symbolic interactionism perspectives. A qualitative research design (see 3.2) was devised as it is closely associated with the contextual approach and suitable for investigating a multifaceted topic such as the food practices of a group of people. In order to understand the food practices of a group requires that the different contexts in which the food practices take place, including all the interrelated and interdependent factors that contribute to it, be uncovered. To expose as many of these facets

as possible, comprehensive descriptions from those who themselves engage in the food practices are sought.

Furthermore, this methodology will elicit an in-depth understanding of the research question that stipulates that the food practices of a group of people are based on knowledge and insight that recognises the cultural context in which food choice takes place. This includes the values, meanings and symbolism attached to food as well as **how, when, where** and **why** food is used. A comprehensive appreciation of the underlying reasons why specific food practices are followed will enhance not only nutrition education and intervention programmes, but will also contribute to improved consumer education and facilitation in this regard.

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

A comprehensive overview showed that limited information is available on the current food practices of the different ethnic and cultural groups in South Africa, and what changes have taken place with regard to their use of food. For example, it is not known to what extent traditional food practices are still adhered to by the various ethnic groups, whether they have been changed or discarded and for what reason(s). From the discussion presented as background to this study, it is evident that there are gaps with regard to what is known and documented about the food practices of the various ethnic and cultural groups in South Africa, and meanings attached to them.

To guide people in their decision making on food choices, health practitioners and consumer facilitators need to understand and explain the food practices of individuals or groups of individuals they wish to advise. It is important for them to know what is consumed as well as the significance of the underlying meanings attached to the associated food practices. The reason(s) why certain foods are chosen and consumed in a specific situation must also be known and understood.

Against this background, the research goal of this study is:

> ***To describe and understand how meanings emerge from the context and are used to construe the food practices of peoples living in Mmotla[3].***

[3] This particular community is situated in a densely populated village 55 km north-west of Pretoria in the vicinity of the Tswaing Meteorite Crater. This community could be described as being somewhere in-between an urban and traditional rural South African community.

1.3 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

In order to describe and understand how meanings emerge from the context and are used to construe the food practices of people from different ethnic groups living as community in Mmotla, a suitable conceptual framework to guide the investigation on the food practices and meanings attached to them in a South African context had to be developed. To achieve the aim of a holistic and integrated approach to the present study, various models, frameworks and methodologies in the field of food practices and the embedded food choice process and meanings attached to it, were to be studied (Bryant, *et al.,* 2003; Conner & Armitage, 2002:6; Pelto, *et al.,* 2000:2; Falk, *et al*., 1996; Furst, *et al*., 1996; Parraga, 1990; Krondl, 1990; Sims & Smiciklas-Wright, 1978). It became evident that, in the South African context, cultural traditions and customs, including food accessibility and affordability are some of the pervasive factors that guide the food practices of the majority of black South Africans (Vorster *et al.,* 2005a; Bourne *et al*., 2002; MacIntyre *et al.,* 2002).

The model by Sims and Smiciklas-Wright (1978) based on the ecological systems perspective, together with the food choice framework described by Fieldhouse (1995:27), was used as point of departure to compile the conceptual framework for the research as, between them, they address most of the aspects applicable to the South African situation. As pointed out by Rozin (2007:15), most of the existing models deal with the food choice process of individuals in developed countries where tradition and necessity are less important considerations and where the range of alternatives and opportunities in the food choice process is much broader. South Africa is classified as a developing country and many South African households still live with poverty (Kruger, Puoane, Senekal & Van der Merwe, 2005; Rose & Charlton, 2002; Walker, 2002). South Africans are often referred to as 'the rainbow nation' to illustrate the cultural diversity of its people. In this multi-cultural society people from various cultural groups are continuously in close contact with one another and acculturation is inevitable and a shift from the traditional to a partially Western-oriented lifestyle by black South Africans is noted (Mackeown *et al.,* 2007; Vorster *et al.,* 2005a; Bourne *et al.,* 2002; MacIntyre *et al.,* 2002). On the other hand, traditions and customs are not totally discarded or changed by all, and it is observed that some groups tend to cherish their traditions and customs even more than they did before. The goal of this study is to describe and understand the food practices and the meanings attached to them by the peoples of Mmotla. In order to achieve this, a complete picture of all the related facets of the food practices and meanings associated with them was required.

Three theoretical perspectives were chosen to assist in obtaining an in-depth understanding of the food practices of the participants. The human ecological perspective, as overarching

perspective, was selected to guide the understanding of the interacting dynamics between individuals or groups and the embedded forces in the different environmental levels in which they interact. It was complemented and supported by the cultural and symbolic interactionism perspectives. In a multi-cultural community, such as Mmotla, where cultural traditions and customs are still honoured in spite of acculturation, the cultural perspective was considered as an appropriate perspective to include. The cultural perspective allows for the study of change over time at the socio-cultural environmental level, including how social interactions and changes manifest on the socio-psychological and the individual environment. In addition, the symbolic interactionism perspective that focuses on the socio-psychological and individual level was selected in order to help in understanding the food-related behaviour and the meanings attached to the food practices that emerged from the social interaction that groups and individuals have with one another. Moreover, the symbolic interactionism perspective further enhanced and supported the cultural perspective, which also deals with the symbolic realm of social life.

In addition to the theoretical perspectives, other theories and theoretical models that could possibly guide or assist in the interpretation of the findings to understand and describe how aspects from the various environments contributed to the meanings attached to the food practices, were identified. Acculturation theories and the developmental model of food culture (Kittler & Sucher, 2008:11; Sobal 2000:7), were recognised as potentially useful to understand the dynamics and changes taking place at the socio-cultural and socio-psychological environmental levels.

1.4 RESEARCH GOAL AND OBJECTIVES

The research goal was to describe and understand how meanings emerge from the context and are used to construe the food practices of the peoples of Mmotla. The following objectives and sub-objectives with regard to food practices were initially set to guide the research:

1. To describe and interpret the food practices of the peoples of Mmotla and how these food practices developed and changed over time with particular reference to:
    - an overview of the historical development of their food practices;
    - their current everyday food practices;
    - the changes that took place in their everyday food practices;
    - the social occasions of this group of people and the meanings each of the occasions held for them;

- the food practices associated with selected special social occasions; and
- food practice changes that took place at selected special social occasion events.

2. To describe and interpret the environmental forces and/or the associated meanings from the socio-cultural and socio-psychological environments that manifest in the food practices of the peoples of Mmotla during social interaction at a particular social occasion by identifying these from within:
    - the socio-cultural environment; and
    - the socio-psychological environment .

3. To identify the salient codes (modern and traditional) and the meanings that are in interplay when food practices are negotiated to define situations, interpret meanings or assign new meanings to facilitate effective communication by identifying, describing and interpreting both:
    - the salient codes (traditional and modern) that are used to negotiate food practices for a particular social occasion in order to define the situation and interpret or assign meaning to the occasion; and
    - changes in the underlying codes and meanings that contributed to the changes in the food practices of this group of people.

1.5 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The purpose and nature of the objectives of the study require that a qualitative research approach be employed. The justification for this strategy being regarded as the most appropriate lies in the fact that it lends itself to studying people in their natural setting in order to understand, or interpret, the meanings people bring to their way of doing things (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000:3).

Food practices, as part of the culture of a group, are learned behaviours that are internalised and become part of the lifestyle of people. This implies that the culture of the group as it relates to food practices needs to be understood as well. The ethnographic research design was deemed to be a fitting design to achieve this. In order to ultimately present a descriptive, interpretative and holistic cultural portrayal of a group of people, their behaviour, customs and ways of life have to be studied (Fouché, 2005:271). Ethnography is tasked to study and describe a culture in order to understand the way of life of a group from their own point of view (Spradley, 1979:3). To be able to present the end result of producing descriptions, interpretations and representations of people's lives, as members of a cultural

group or society, the researcher is compelled to employ a combination of data collection techniques (Tedlock 2000:455). Participant observation and interviewing techniques are the techniques most often used in ethnographic research designs (Fouché, 2005:271; Babbie & Mouton, 2001:280), therefore the data collection techniques chosen include interviewing individuals and focus group discussions that are supported by participant observation and unobtrusive measures.

Focus group discussions are often used as an exploratory technique and serve the purpose of getting acquainted with the participants and their environments as well as opening up initial lines of communication and building up trust and rapport with the participants, regarded as essential prerequisites to creating and obtaining quality data (Greeff, 2005:300; Schurink, Schurink & Poggenpoel, 1998:316). Individual interviews can be useful as a complementary interviewing technique when the purpose is to gain an in-depth understanding of the personal views and/or perceptions of participants on a specific phenomenon (Kvale, 1996:6). In addition, further information about participants' natural and everyday environments was gleaned from observing them and using unobtrusive measures (i.e. photographs, recipes and other material artefacts) as data collection techniques.

Since female members of the household are customarily responsible for food acquisition and preparation, and that these tasks continue to be seen as the domain of women by black South Africans (Walker & Charlton, 2001; Coetzee, 1982:67; Krige, 1965), they were considered to be the most knowledgeable about the topic under review and be able to provide the required information. Therefore purposive sampling was done to ensure that the focus groups consisted of both younger and older female residents from all the cultural groups in Mmotla. Moreover, both specialists and laymen were included in the sample.

As foreseen, the gathered data was systematically analysed throughout both data collection phases and as an ongoing emerging process. Since the study deals with more than *what is*, and includes the *why it is*, it implies that explanations need to be sought. Seeking explanation is the same as theorising and designing analysis procedures facilitate theorising (Strauss & Corbin, 1998:22; Tesch, 1990:84-85). Theorising deals with the act of systematically integrating the various concepts from the data by clarifying relationships in order to explain a specific phenomenon. In this study, where the research was geared to uncovering the "connection" of food practices and their meaning, grounded theory was regarded as the most appropriate approach to pursue. Through her data analysis flow diagram, Tesch (1990:72) demonstrates that, when the research interest deals with the identification or categories of elements and the establishment of the relationships or

"connections", the grounded theory approach to data analysis is an accepted method to employ.

Data analysis actually commenced during the data collection phase and the constant comparison method was deemed to be reasonable and a sound approach and so was followed according to the guidelines suggested by Strauss and Corbin (1998) and Huberman and Miles (1994).

1.6 PRESENTATION AND OUTLINE OF THE STUDY[4]

This first chapter of the thesis spells out how the research developed and was conducted. A brief description of the second and ensuing chapters is given as an indication of the structure of the thesis that is organised in four sections. These sections were created to form a coherent presentation of the study as the following broad outline illustrates: section 1 (Chapters 2 and 3) contains the two chapters that address the conceptualisation, the theoretical framework and the methodology of the study. The findings of the research are presented in Sections 2 and 3. Section 2, comprises Chapters 4 and 5, where the external environments of the participants and their everyday food practices are described and Section 3 contains Chapters 6 to 8 that deal with the food practices on special occasions. In Section 4, the penultimate and final Chapters 9 and 10 respectively, present a discussion of the central themes that emerged from the findings and the conclusions derived from these. The chapters are described as follows:

Chapter 2 This chapter presents the main concepts and explains how the conceptual framework for the study was developed. The three theoretical perspectives chosen to inform the contextual approach to the study are justified and explained, including how each contributes to an understanding and interpretation of the findings.

Chapter 3 This chapter is devoted to the description and justification of the research design. The qualitative research methodology chosen for the study is defended. The research methodology and techniques used for the collection and analysis of data are validated and briefly explained. Measures taken to enhance the quality of the study are specified.

[4] Referencing method used in this study: Adapted Harvard method as compiled by the University of Pretoria Library Services.

Chapter 4 In this chapter the external environments of the Mmotla community are sketched and provide sufficient information to contextualise the current food practices of the participants. The geographic location of the village, a description of the physical environment together with a brief historical overview of the community, is given. This then serves as background for understanding the changes and development of the food practices that have taken place.

Chapter 5 Descriptions of the daily food practices and how participants view and use food are given, differentiating between weekday and weekend experiences. How these everyday food practices evolved and changed over time and the underlying meanings attached to these, receive attention.

Chapter 6 The findings on the food practices during initiation rites and the associated celebrations are described and interpreted for both gender groups in this first chapter dealing with special occasions.

Chapter 7 In this second chapter on the findings related to special occasions, the focus falls on traditional wedding celebrations and other special events. The emphasis is on the traditional Ndebele wedding because of its more involved procedures and the extensive descriptions given by the Ndebele participants. The procedures followed by the other groups are included to juxtapose similarities and differences. Other special occasions dealt with are those that are not part of the traditional celebrations of the participants such as birthdays, family-related occasions and celebrating New Year.

Chapter 8 This last chapter on the food practices associated with special occasions describes and interprets food practices typical of religious events, both those associated with Christianity and those related to ancestral ritual communication. As the last rite of passage, funerals are regarded as religious occasions and discussion on their specific procedures is included here.

Chapter 9 In this chapter the meanings of food and food practices and the symbolism attached to food are presented. Following the grounded theory approach to data analysis, a number of themes regarding the meanings and symbolism attached to food and food practices emerge from the findings. The analytical process for the development, refinement and interrelation of concepts is presented, together with structured explanatory frameworks that illustrate the relationships between the categories of concepts.

Chapter 10 In this last chapter of the thesis the conclusions derived from the main findings and how the research goal was realised, are given. The final inductively developed conceptual framework portrays the salient factors operating at the various environmental levels and how these contributed to the nature of food practices of the Mmotla people at the beginning of the twenty first century. The chapter concludes with a discussion on the contribution and significance of the study and its theoretical contribution. The practical implications of the findings and where future research can possibly be directed are highlighted.

SECTION 1

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY

INTRODUCTION

This first section addresses the conceptualisation, the theoretical framework and methodology of the study. It includes the introduction and conceptualisation of the main concepts and how the conceptual framework for the study was developed. The three theoretical pespectives selected are justified and explained, together with two other applicable theoretical models that were identified as useful to understand and explain change in food practices. This is followed by the chapter on the research methodology where the research design and process employed to achieve the research goal and objectives are presented.

The following chapters are included:

Chapter 2: Theoretical perspectives and conceptual framework

Chapter 3: Research methodology

CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 INTRODUCTION

As components of scientific knowledge, theoretical perspectives and conceptual frameworks are useful to understand and explain social phenomena (Mouton, 1996:180). The body of scientific knowledge has a definite hierarchical order and conceptual frameworks and theoretical perspectives hold a higher hierarchical order than statements of an empirical nature, definitions or concepts that occupy the lower levels (Mouton, 1996: 180). However, in the scientific literature the terminology used when referring to the higher levels of knowledge is inconsistent and often confusing. The hierarchical order of knowledge as explained by Mouton (1996:180) is helpful in this regard and used in this study to distinguish between the different levels of theoretical abstraction.

Initially a clear distinction between conceptual frameworks and theoretical perspectives is required. Mouton (1996:195) describes conceptual frameworks as the familiar structures of science and distinguishes three types, namely typologies, models and theories. Within the body of knowledge each fulfils a specific function[8]. In this study the term theoretical perspective refers to the highest order of theoretical abstraction which, according to Mouton (1996:180), is the broad theoretical paradigm or research tradition.

The aim of this study is to describe and gain an understanding of the food practices of a group of people and the meaning they attach to their food and food practices. This chapter sets out to conceptualise the two main concepts of the study namely food practices and their meaning. It then justifies and introduces the selection of the theoretical perspectives and models chosen to assist in exploring and describing the multifaceted phenomenon of food

[8] - Typologies have a classifying or categorising function based on single variables.
- Models provide a systematic representation of phenomena by identifying patterns and regularities amongst variables.
- Theories provide an explanation of phenomena by postulating an underlying causal mechanism.

practices and their underlying meaning. The developed conceptual framework for this study, based on these theoretical perspectives and models, is then presented and explicated.

2.2 CONCEPTUALISATION OF THE MAIN CONCEPTS

2.2.1 Food practices as concept

In this study the concept of **food practices** implies how the **chosen** food is **used**, and has embedded **food-related behaviour** that is typical of an individual or a group. It is, however, simultaneously a concrete manifestation of culture and the effect of the socio-psychological structure and cognition of an individual within a specific environment as relates to the processes of socialisation[9] and enculturation[10] as well as to the socio-cultural environment.

In order to explain food practices as concept as it applies to this study, requires that the food choice process, as an integral part of food practices, be described first. It is therefore necessary to first define the key concepts related to the food choice process before proceeding to the conceptualisation of food use.

In this study, **food choice** implies the process in which the individual makes decisions about what food(s) would be consumed out of the **available** and **accessible** food for a specific food event. **Food availability** and **accessibility** are either enhanced or restricted by components or systems emanating from the physical, political and economic environments (Bryant *et al.,* 2003:11; Pelto *et al.,* 2000:2). This is determined by the geography, climate and seasonality, combined with various technological driven influences that determine food transportation and distribution capabilities. Government policies as well as market-related factors are also acknowledged (Anderson, 2005:82; Fieldhouse, 1995:27; Sims & Smiciklas-Wright, 1978). However, from the available or potentially available food, not everything is selected for consumption, because human food choice is equally significantly guided by what food is regarded as **acceptable**. Factors from the economic, cultural and/or socio-psychological environments determine what is acceptable and these are often closely associated with the socio-cultural environment (Rozin, 2006:29-30; Bryant *et al.,* 2003:86; Fieldhouse, 1995:27; Parraga, 1990). Food acceptability as a related concept has two

[9] Socialisation, according to Segall (1979:187), "includes all the more or less direct teaching to which the individual is exposed". This teaching involves the inculcation of norms and customs by various socialisation agents (parents, teachers, elders and others) who are consciously shaping the individual according to the cultural model of a "proper" member of society. Fieldhouse (1995:3) gives a similar description and views socialisation as "a process by which culturally valued norms of behaviour are passed on from generation to generation".

[10] "Enculturation refers to the entire incidental learning that occurs through imitation of elders and others …" Segall (1979: 187).

dimensions and both of these overlapping dimensions apply to this study. The first dimension deals with the fact that culture, and more specifically its ideological component, as contained in the value and belief systems of a particular culture, primarily directs what food is regarded as acceptable (Rozin, 2006:24; Randall, 1982:124). Cardello (1996:2) views food acceptability "as a perceptual/evaluative construct" and further expands by explaining that food acceptability "is a phenomenological[11] experience, best categorised as a feeling, emotion or mood with a defining pleasant or unpleasant character. This explanation relates to the acceptability of food from a sensory evaluation perspective and represents the second dimension of food acceptability as concept. It is this overall like or dislike of a food item from a sensory evaluation point of view, together with the social, situational and marketplace factors that also contribute to the selection and consumption of food (Cardello, 1996:4). Human food choice therefore always takes place within the boundaries of what food is **available, accessible** and **acceptable**. It is only after the conditions of acceptability have been met that individual or personal factors come into play.

Three aspects guide individual food choices, namely, the food product itself, the characteristics of the individual and the food event or social situation in which the individual has to make the food choice (Rozin, 2006:27-29; Devine, 2005; Conner & Armitage, 2002:6; Shepherd, 1989:9; Randall & Sanjur, 1981). It is only during this stage that the individual's own personal values, beliefs and attitudes about the food, as shaped by culture, would steer the food choice process (Fieldhouse, 1995:3-6). Various environmental forces operate in the different stages of the selection process and the decisions that are made therefore incorporate not only decisions based on conscious reflection, but also those that are automatic, habitual and subconscious (Rozin, 2006:28; Furst *et al*., 1996; Fieldhouse, 1995:25-27).

How humans **use** food is part of the cultural pattern that guides food-related behaviour and relates to activities such as how the food is acquired, preserved or stored, prepared and presented. This includes not only how the food is served, but also to whom it is served, how frequently, as reflected in identified meal patterns, and how it is consumed (Kittler & Sucher, 2008: 2; Fieldhouse, 1995:1). Implied here is that food preparation and consumption involve social interaction between members of a household or a specific society. The classic definition by Margaret Mead (1945) on food habits strongly resembles this first aspect of the concept: " … the way in which individuals or groups of individuals, in response to social and cultural pressures, select, consume, and utilize portions of the available food supply"

[11] A phenomenological interpretation, according to Kruger (1988:37), is based on "a rigorous approach which attempts to clarify what appears or shows itself to us and the manner in which we encounter the world and fellow-man. It is concerned with how we are aware of the world and the manner in which we discover meaning in the world. "

(National Research Council, 1945:13). Here the emphasis is on food as a material aspect of culture, essential for survival and sustenance.

The second aspect of the food practices concept focuses on the contribution of the cognitive and socio-psychological domains, and indicates that these are of equal importance and need to be included to achieve a holistic inquiry of the food practices of a group. Levi-Strauss is often quoted as saying (in Bryant *et al.*, 2003: 221) that food is not only "good to eat," it is "good to think", becomes an applicable quotation at this point to indicate the pervasive role of cognition. The socio-psychology of food deals with how the thoughts, feelings and behaviours of individuals impact on food choice (Conner & Armitage, 2002:2). It is closely associated with the ideation approach to culture where culture is considered as a symbolic system that contains the "learned, shared and patterned sets of meanings" that enable humans to "perceive, interpret and evaluate life" (Lett, 1987:58). In this regard, Goode (1989:127) points out that food as material culture is essential for human survival but its consumption often simultaneously represents symbolic meaning with intricate rules for use. The continuance of preferred food habits is therefore not only for practical reasons but more often also because they are "symbolically meaningful behaviours" in a particular culture (Fieldhouse, 1995:1). This viewpoint that the symbolic domain of life as it relates to food be recognised, is included in the food practice concept in this study.

When dealing with the food practices of a group or an individual it needs to be kept in mind that people make food choices in different contexts. In this work the concept **context** is interpreted according to that of Furst *et al.* (1996), who view it as the environment or behaviour settings in which food consumption takes place, specifically described as the "physical surroundings and the social climate" of a food event or situation. Sobal *et al.* (2006: 6) and Sobal, Khan and Bisogni (1998) delineate food context similarly, and explain that both the physical and social environments, together with other systems that exist in these environments, such as the seasonal and temporal climate, social institutions and policies, are included when food context is referred to or discussed. Kaiser, a social psychologist, conceptualises context in the same way, and explains context as a setting or relationship. A context may even be within the individual self as (s)he attempts to understand her/himself and others (Kaiser, 1997:30). Context can also include the attributes of people and the entire history of their relationships and the nature of the setting in which the interaction occurs. She (ibid) also points out that the culture in which individuals live and the historical meanings that individuals associate with their material artefacts, inter alia, food and clothing, represent a general context that influences how people relate to one another.

The above interpretation of the concept context is not opposed to that of Coertze, an anthropologist, who regards the human environments as human adaptation to the natural world (Coertze, 1980:25-28). According to his existential viewpoint, these environments include the nature environment (earth, climate, etc.), the unseen, spiritual environment and a person's own inner environment. This is the result of human ability to objectify and reflect on personal inner sensations. In addition he maintains that the socio-cultural environment is an integral part of context and stems from the fact that people share their own reality with others. Thus human beings are simultaneously creators and products of culture. The very nature of an individual as a biological, psychic and social being makes survival and adaptation to the surrounding environments possible. Although it is the physical being which demands need for physical survival in the natural environment, it is the psychic being with its intellectual, emotional and spiritual characteristics, together with the attribute of being a social being that determines the unique ways in which adaptation to complex environments takes place. Moreover, it defines the social world, accumulates systems of knowledge and views of reality. Following the viewpoint of Coertze, human beings need food to survive, but the **ideas** and **ideals** of culture determine the way in which it is consumed. **Ideas** are represented in the ideation approach to culture, where culture is regarded as a symbolic system that represents the learned and shared meanings that people use to direct their lives (Lett, 1987:58). **Ideals** are similarly rooted in and derived from cultural and symbolic factors and could include aspects such as standards, norms, beliefs and expectations that guide or direct the food choice process (Sobal *et al*., 2006:5; Devine *et al.,* 1999; Furst *et al.,* 1996).

2.2.2 Meanings attached to food and food practices

All food is permeated with meanings and can mean different things to different people (Parraga, 1990). Furthermore people may attach different meanings to the same food in different contexts (Blake *et al*., 2007). Food is both a cultural as well as a social object (Kjaernes & Holm, 2007:512-524; Rozin, 2007:12-13; Sobal *et al.,* 2006:2; Bryant *et al*., 2003:2; Fieldhouse, 1995:1). In this regard Steelman (1976) states that food is cultural as it is the knowledge, beliefs and customs surrounding food that are shared by a cultural group that are passed on to succeeding generations and it is a social object, because the behaviour surrounding food is often shared with other people. This implies that meaning similarly is a social and cultural product that is created, negotiated and changed through the process of interaction, which indicates that meaning is not inherent in things or objects. In other words it is created by people and each person has to learn, discover or develop the meaning attached to objects on their own (Sandstrom *et al.,* 2006:7-9). This learning takes place through social interaction with other people through the process of socialisation and enculturation.

Culture is viewed as a symbolic system, made up of shared, identifiable, public symbols and meanings, which implies that a culture contains a complex set of symbols that are created, defined, labelled and understood by the cultural group who uses them (Lett, 1987:56). Humans thus have complex meaning systems that are representative of their culture and hence guide their behaviour. Through these meaning systems they understand themselves and others, and make sense of the world in which they live (Spradley, 1979:5). Symbols provide the mechanism through which culture is created and acquired (Sandstrom *et al.,* 2006:31) and as part of culture, food is often used symbolically (Kittler & Sucher, 2008:3; Bryant *et al.,* 2003:222).

Symbols are defined as objects that not only exist in and of themselves, but are created by humans to represent or stand for something else and whatever it represents, constitutes its meaning. It is humans who instil the meaning to an object and the association between a symbol and the meaning it represents is arbitrary assigned (Sandstrom *et al.,* 2006:29-30; Bryant *et al*., 2003:222). Anything can become a symbol and objects are then used on a daily basis as signals or symbols for the exchange of meanings between individuals. Through the use of objects (artefacts) a direct relationship between people and objects is established, and, in using objects as symbols, a communication relationship between two or more human beings is established (Roth, 2001). These symbols emphasise specific activities and provide for interaction between people in a socially accepted manner (Sandstrom *et al.,* 2006:31; Fieldhouse, 1995:3). The meanings humans assign to objects, could then refer to, or represent non-tangible concepts such as ideas, emotions, identity or religious beliefs. Food as cultural material or object also conveys meanings and is often used as a “language” or “code”, and then becomes part of a system of communication. Food practices can therefore be regarded as part of this organised communication system of a culture (Counihan, 2000:1516-1517).

A prerequisite to understanding the symbolic meanings or messages attached to food practices is familiarity with the non-verbal codes of the culture and the ability to decode the intended meanings. In this regard Roth (2001) cautions that the encoded messages are not universal but culturally specific and arbitrary. This implies that cultural knowledge and experience is required for the encoding process. Meanings attached to food are learned and shared in the cultural group and could thus be regarded as part of the cultural heritage of the group (Blake *et al*., 2007; Fieldhouse, 1995:37; Parraga, 1990). Symbolic systems represent the learned and shared meanings that people use to make sense of their lives.

Humans therefore not only use food to satisfy the basic physiological function of nourishment, but also as a medium to express faith, friendship, hospitality, identity, status

and even emotions such as joy, anger and love. In this way food has moved away from its primary function of serving the basic human need of nourishment and has become, according to Shaw and Clarke (1998:163), "increasingly linked to symbolic meanings, values and lifestyles" of local cultures. This confirms that food consumption decisions are linked to the cultural context in which it takes place and that food has meaning, and consequently conveys these because it is part of this cultural system (Counihan, 2000:1517; Roth, 2001; Shatenstein & Ghadirian, 1998).

Food categories are often used to classify or define food as symbols to assist humans in making sense of food (Blake *et al.,* 2007; Sobal *et al.,* 2006:9-11; Furst, Connors, Sobal, Bisogni & Falk, 2000; Fieldhouse, 1995:49; Hertzler, Wenkam & Standal, 1982). A food categorisation schemata shows how people in a culture view food and it serves as indication of their priorities regarding food (Kittler & Sucher, 2008:7; Counihan, 2000:1517). Some examples of food categories are food groups (key nutrient foods), food preferences (like-dislike), food taboos, health foods and festive or celebratory foods. Each category has a special connotation depending on the content and **context** in which it is used. Meaning is then also associated with how a cultural group uses this food categorisation and this is simultaneously an indication of the values and beliefs that are assigned to the functional role that food has in a culture (Blake *et al.,* 2007; Sobal *et al.,* 2006:9-11; Furst *et al.,* 2000; Fieldhouse, 1995:37; Messer, 1984b:218; Sanjur, 1982:148-154).

2.3 THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES AND MODELS

To fully understand why people eat as they do, can only be accomplished when all the separate components of the complicated system of food choices and their interrelationships are understood (Krondl, 1990:14). This requires a comprehensive study of these components and prevailing influences to see how they contribute to human food practices, including the embedded food choice processes and the use of the selected food, as reflected in the behaviour of an individual or group. The available literature on this topic indicates that there are various approaches and conceptual models each with their own specific strengths and shortcomings that could be employed to understand food choice behaviour (Bryant *et al*., 2003:3-4; Conner & Armitage, 2002:6; Pelto *et al.,* 2000:2; Sobal *et al*., 1998; Furst *et al.,* 1996; Fieldhouse, 1995:17-20; Krondl, 1990; Sims & Smiciklas-Wright, 1978). As rightly pointed out by Rozin (2007:15), it needs to be borne in mind that the majority of models dealing with food choice are about individuals in developed cultures where tradition and necessity are less important forces in the food choice process and where the range of alternatives and opportunities for choice are more extensive.

After a review of the limited literature on conceptual models applied to the study of food choice and food practices, it was decided that the most appropriate approach to follow, in the South African context, would be a holistic approach such as is offered by the human ecological perspective, or an adaptation thereof. This approach provides the opportunity to include the whole spectrum of contributing factors from the different environments (Bryant *et al.,* 2003:2; Pelto *et al*., 2000:2; Sobal *et al*., 1998; Krondl, 1990:9-11; Sanjur, 1982:2,51; Jerome, Kandel & Pelto, 1980:15; Sims & Smiciklas-Wright, 1978). It is thus possible to address the reciprocity of the individual, physical and cultural environments in an integrated manner (Jerome *et al.,* 1980:15). Bryant *et al*. (2003:2) reasoned their choice of the ecological perspective on the grounds that it accommodates the biological, socio-cultural and physical environmental factors that direct the food choice process along the entire length of the food chain, from the production phase, throughout its processing and distribution, up to the final consumption of food by individuals or groups. In other publications Story *et al.* (2002) and Pelto *et al.* (2000:2) also justify the ecological perspective as a suitable model for understanding the factors that shape food practices. Story *et al.* (2002) emphasise the central tenet of this perspective, namely reciprocal causation between the different components, as justification for using this approach. They highlight the dynamic nature of the interrelated components by explaining that the environment shapes, maintains and constrains behaviour, and that humans on the other hand, create and change their environment through their behaviour. Pelto *et al*. (2000:2) accentuate the suitability of the ecological perspective on the grounds that a holistic analysis of the various components is made possible when this approach is used.

Since the human ecological perspective offers such potential for the application of a holistic approach, it is chosen as the overarching theoretical perspective for this study. Due to the intricacy of the food choice process, and to be able to understand and describe the food practices and the meanings attached to them, necessitates the inclusion of two other theoretical perspectives. To complement and enhance the human ecological perspective, the cultural and the symbolic interactionism perspectives were included. Each of these is relevant in its own right and applicable to a study of food practices, as each operates at specific environmental levels to augment the understanding of the meaning of the food practices that emerge from different contexts. Jointly they complement and enhance one another.

Through the combined application of these three theoretical perspectives, a holistic representation of food choice as behavioural process and the food practices linked to it, can be achieved to support the **contextual** approach to the study. This approach serves to guide the exploration of the various contexts and situations in which the meaning attached to food

could be described, showing how they develop in the social realm of life; why meanings manifest as they do; how they change over time; how the particular choice of food for a specific social occasion represents a set of codes that give meaning to social life; how aspects from and across contexts and over time influence these meanings; and how these meanings are interpreted and negotiated.

How each of the theoretical perspectives can assist in the interpretation and understanding of food practices is discussed in the next sections. The premises of each perspective are briefly explained and the relevance of the assumptions to the research goal and objectives of this study is clarified. Examples illustrate the points made.

2.3.1 Human ecological perspective

The human ecological perspective is a perspective that recognises humans as both biological and social beings, and deals with the interaction of humans with their environment(s) (Bubolz & Sontag, 1993:419). These authors emphasise that human ecology is concerned with interaction and interdependence of humans within the environment, and point out that the core of this perspective not only deals with how humans adapt to their environments but also how each of the environments is adapted by humans (Bubolz & Sontag, 1993:421). This implies reciprocity between humans and their environment(s). Environment, as conceptualised by Bubolz and Sontag (1993:432), is "the totality of the physical, biological, social, economic, political, aesthetic, and structural surroundings for human beings and the context for their behaviour and development." These are differentiated and comprise the following:

- the **natural physical-biological environment** (atmosphere, climate, soil, water, minerals, plants and animals);
- the **human-built environment**[12] that refers to everything made by people and the resulting "alterations and transformations" to the natural environment (roads, cultivated land, urban settlements, material artefacts);
- the **social-cultural environment** which refers to the presence of other human beings including their abstract cultural constructions (language, laws, norms, cultural values and patterns) and social and economic institutions.

It needs to be pointed out that Bronfenbrenner (1979:7-9) and other scholars in family studies (Bubolz & Sontag, 1993:423; Deacon & Firebaugh, 1988:29; Melson, 1980:21),

[12] In some food choice models the human-built environment is distinguished as the technological environment (Bryant *et al.*, 2003:4; Jerome *et al.*, in Krondl, 1990: 10; Sims & Smiciklas-Wright, 1978).

distinguish four different levels of environments, the micro-, meso-, exo- and macro-environments based on their immediacy in relation to the individual or group. Bronfenbrenner (1979:8) views the micro-, meso- and exo-environments as rooted in "the broad ideological values, norms and institutional patterns of a particular culture". This implies that the other environments (micro-, meso- and exo-) are guided by cultural norms, values and beliefs.

The environmental levels are presented in Figure 2.1 showing where and how they each operate in the food choice process. They are then briefly defined and explicated as they pertain to the present study.

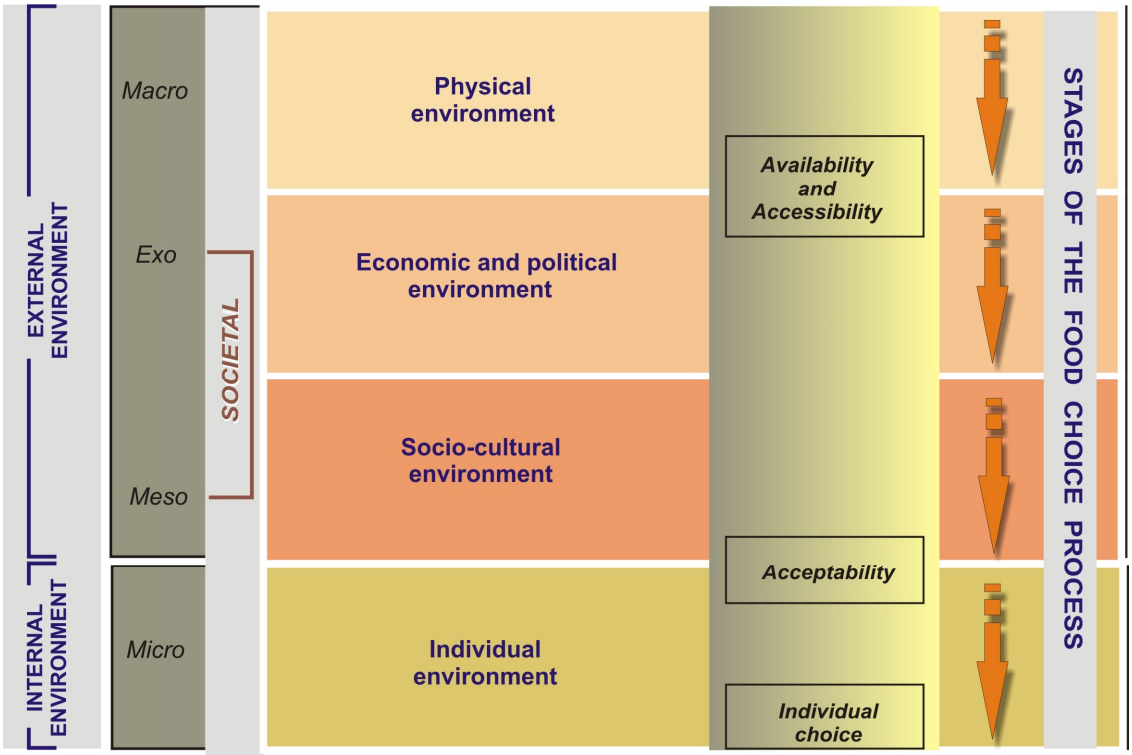

FIGURE 2.1: ENVIRONMENTAL LEVELS CONTRIBUTING TO THE FOOD CHOICE PROCESS (adapted from Fieldhouse (1995:27) and Sims-Smiciklas-Wright (1978))

2.3.1.1 Physical environment

The physical environment describes the natural and structural environment in which humans live. It refers to the natural-biological features of the environment such as the climate, soil and water resources, plant and animal life. This environment also includes the human-built environment. The physical environment determines what food is available for consumption and often creates both opportunities and constraints with regard to food availability in a specific area (Kittler & Sucher, 2008:12; Anderson, 2005:86-89; Bryant *et al.,* 2003:11).

From the available or potentially available food for human consumption as provided by the physical environment, certain underlying principles guide the final consumption choice. Issues such as affordability, together with cultural, socio-psychological and religious orientation, have a pervasive influence in determining what is available and acceptable for certain individuals or groups of individuals (Conner & Armitage, 2006:41; Bryant *et al.,* 2003:10; Conner & Armitage, 2002:1-3; Furst *et al.,* 1996; Fieldhouse, 1995:27).

2.3.1.2 Economic and political environment

The economic and political environment encompasses the political and economic systems that determine the way in which production, distribution, exchange and consumption of all goods, including food products, are managed (Bryant *et al.,* 2003:13; Pelto *et al.,* 2000:2). The political system refers to aspects such as governmental legislation, policies and controls that impact on production, processing and distribution. The economic system includes aspects such as income, the price of food, marketing strategies and consumer demand (Fieldhouse, 1995:26). People's access to food and other resources, and the capacity to exploit these resources, are largely determined by the forces present in the economic and political environment (Bryant *et al*., 2003:13).

2.3.1.3 Socio-cultural environment

The twin concept socio-cultural indicates that there is an interdependency and inseparability of the concepts, "social" and "cultural". In this regard Fieldhouse (1995:2) uses the early definition of culture by Tylor (1871) as explanation, namely that "culture is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, customs, and other capabilities and habits acquired by man as member of society." He argues that what is implied here is that there can be no culture apart from society and that culture describes the patterns of behaviour, and society refers to the people who participate in the culture. According to Coertze (1980:26), the term socio-cultural also implies the inseparability of people and their culture, because human beings create culture and yet are simultaneously products of culture. Similarly Ferraro (2001:25) explains that humans acquire culture only through the process of learning and interaction within their social environment. Societal behaviour, which is often unconscious behaviour, refers to the basic rules of living together on which a society (i.e. a social group) has agreed. The socio-cultural environment represents the complex interrelationships and interactions that exist among individuals, their culture and society. The socio-cultural environment provides a framework for the behaviour of a society including our food-related behaviour. Food is a cultural as well as a social object as explained by Steelman (1976:21): "Food is a cultural object in that knowledge, beliefs and customs surrounding food

are shared by members of a society and are passed on to succeeding generations. Food is a social object, also because behaviour surrounding food is often shared with other people". Food choice and food practices tend to be influenced by both social structures and social relationships that exist in a particular culture and people are often not conscious of the social rules that govern their food behaviour, and accept it as simply how things are done.

The concept culture consists of three structural components or sub-areas, namely, ideology, social organisation and technology (Bryant *et al.*, 2003:12, Hamilton, 1987). Ferraro (2001:22) aptly refers to these three components in his definition of culture as "everything that people **have, think** and **do** as members of a society" and views the three verbs as representing the components of culture, and summarises that "… all cultures comprise material objects; ideas, values, and attitudes; and patterned ways of behaving."

- **Ideology** According to Hamilton (1987:3) ideology "… is a set of cognitive rules, explicit and implicit, that helps and guides individuals in their behaviour; it defines good or bad, right and wrong, appropriate and inappropriate". According to Ferraro (2001:22) ideology is regarded as "everything that people think" and this includes the ideas, values, and attitudes that people "carry around in their heads". In other words, it is the intangible parts of culture (Ferraro, 2006:23). In terms of food, ideology includes the values, attitudes beliefs, norms and meanings that groups of people share with regard to food and includes the symbolic meanings and associated values placed on specific foods (Bryant *et al.*, 2003:13; Fieldhouse, 1995:30).

- **Social organisation** According to Radcliffe-Brown cited in Hamilton (1987:3) social organisation is "… the continuing arrangement of persons in relationships defined or controlled by institutions, i.e. socially established norms or patterns of behaviour." Bryant *et al.*, (2003:12) give a similar description and explain that it is how "social groups organise its members into families, social strata, communities, and other groupings." This includes how relationships and work is organised, for example, according to age and gender. In this regard Ferraro (2006:19) refers to the normative or expected patterns of behaviour of people when he explains that people behave in certain socially prescribed ways as represented in what they do. How food is distributed and exchanged often serves as a reflection of the social relationships that are part of the social organisation in a group.

- **Technology** Hamilton (1987:3) describes technology as "the means used to satisfy bio-material needs" and defines it as the physical objects or material culture including the techniques for their use that are employed by humans in order to adapt to their

physical and social environments (Hamilton, 1987). Bryant *et al*. (2003:12) similarly regard technology as being represented in the knowledge, practices and tools that a group uses to meet their needs for shelter and subsistence. The explanation of technology in terms of food given by Pelto *et al*. (2000:2), ties in with these ideas. According to them technology includes "…the entire range of tools and techniques that are utilised for the production, distribution, acquisition, storage and preparation of food."

2.3.1.4 Socio-psychological environment

It is acknowledged that the socio-psychological and individual environments are rooted in the socio-cultural environment. The cultural background and past experiences of individuals are assumed to be reflected in their personal knowledge base, beliefs, values and attitudes and guide their behaviour which would also relate to food choice and food practices. The socio-psychological environment deals with how thoughts, feelings and behaviour impact on food choice and how the interaction with others in the social environment contributes to what is eaten. What is eaten could even be used as a way of understanding people (Conner & Armitage, 2002:2). The constructs of ideas and ideals are important components of the interpretation of the environmental levels used in this study.

- **Ideas** are represented in the ideation approach to culture, where culture is considered as a symbolic system composed of beliefs and their associated behaviours (Lett, 1987:58). Symbolic systems as part of culture thus represent the learned and shared meanings, both explicit and implicit, that people use to make sense of their lives (Hamilton, 1987:3).

- **Ideals** can be described as the benchmarks (points of reference and comparison) or standards used to judge and evaluate what is acceptable behaviour in daily life experiences, such as food practices, in a specific situation. These ideals are rooted in and derived from cultural and symbolic factors and could include aspects such as standards, norms, beliefs and expectations that are used in the food choice process (Furst *et al.*, 1996). Devine *et al.* (1999) similarly explain that ideals are often based on deeply held beliefs and expectations about food and eating that provide guidelines and rules for making food choices. Sobal *et al.* (2006:5) define ideals as the standards and norms that people have learned and use as a guide when making food choices including what and how one should eat. This includes which foods are acceptable and preferable for consumption as ascertained through cultural norms.

2.3.1.5 Assumptions of the human ecological perspective

In the application of the ecological perspective to family ecology, Bubolz and Sontag (1993:425-426) listed a number of assumptions that rest on the basic premises of this perspective. One of these deals with human interaction with the environment and the interdependence between the different parts and the ecosystem as a whole. This basic premise as well as those relating to the sustainability of life and the implied physical and psycho-social well-being of humans is relevant to the present study. The applicable assumptions derived from these premises follow, together with examples of how each could be related to or interpreted in terms of food and food practices.

1. All parts of the environment are interrelated and influence each other. The natural physical-biological environment provides the essential resource base for all life; it is impacted on by the social-cultural and human-built environments and also influences these environments.

   Example: The natural environment, especially the climate, soil conditions and available water resources, determines what food could be produced and cultivated. The human-built or "man-made" environment, including technological developments for the production/cultivation, processing, preservation and distribution of food, affects what food is made available for consumption. The social-cultural environment, comprising technology, social organisation and ideology, guides behaviour and indicates what specific foods, from those available, should be chosen, based on what is regarded as acceptable for consumption in the particular group to which the individual or group belongs (Bryant, *et al.,* 2003:10-13; Sims & Smiciklas-Wright, 1978:174).

2. Humans interact with multiple environments.

   In the example posed above, the many different environments that humans are in interaction with during the food choice process are mentioned. This complex interaction with various environments is illustrated in the conceptual framework (see Figure 2.3).

3. Humans respond to, change, develop, act on, and modify their environment. Adaptation is a continuous process in ecosystems.

Although the ability to adapt to different environments is a characteristic of humans for survival, humans do not simply adapt to the environment, but also respond to it by changing, developing, acting on and modifying it to obtain the desired outcomes (Bubolz & Sontag, 1993:433). This implies that things do not stay the same and that humans have the ability to alter the environment. According to Bubolz and Sontag (1993:433), learning is an essential part of the process.

Example: The impact of the Industrial Revolution on humankind comes to mind: no other event has brought about, nor continues to effect changes in the way that people earn their living, the conditions of their material existence and the patterns of their daily lives, including their food patterns and the kind of food consumed. Industrialisation and the subsequent large-scale urbanisation influenced not only what people ate, but also when and where they ate it. This tendency still prevails today (Bryant *et al*., 2003: 60-62).

In response to the initial period of the Industrial Revolution, which was marked by appalling living conditions, poor nutrition, disease and death, technological advancements in transportation, refrigeration, food processing and preservation, later contributed to a remarkably improved diet, in quantity and quality, of the working class during the second half of the nineteenth century. The available food supply was modified and expanded. However, not only did the variety of foods increase but also the keeping quality and ease of preparation due to improvements in food preservation techniques, a trend that continues even now. The large number and increased variety of convenience food available to the modern time-poor consumer is another example of how humans adapt to changing circumstances by modifying and developing new food products to suit their present life-style.

4. Interactions between humans and environments are guided by two sets of rules, the physical and biological laws of nature, and human-derived rules. According to Bubolz and Sontag (1993:426), the human ecological perspective requires that both set of rules be considered.

   Example: One of the laws of nature dictates that all living organisms need food for survival. The human need for food for survival and sustenance thus guides human interaction with the natural physical-biological environment to cultivate and produce food for human consumption.

The social norms that relate to the use and allocation of resources, role expectations and distribution of power are examples of human-derived rules (Bubolz & Sontag, 1993:426).

Example: In traditional Zulu communities the meat of a slaughtered beast was apportioned to the different age and gender groups according to certain social rules (Bryant, 1967:266; Krige, 1965:56). Senior members in the group would receive the best quality (softer) and tastier sections.

5. Environments do not determine human behaviour, but pose constraints as well as possibilities and opportunities for humans.

   Environments could either restrict or enhance the well-being of individuals. Bubolz and Sontag (1993:433) point out two important aspects with regard to the environment that have to be kept in mind. First, the "adequacy of the environment and the range of choices perceived by individuals depend on their resources, needs, values and management plan"; and second, legislation and policies could determine access to opportunities for employment, education, goods and services.

   Example: The natural-physical environment as determined by the climate, soil and water resources, plant and animal life, as well as other features such as topography, all have a significant impact on human food choice and dietary patterns. Since the natural and climatic conditions of the natural-physical environment of different regions are not the same, the kind of food that could be cultivated, varies. People usually eat the foods that are readily obtainable in their environment, and consequently acquire a taste and preference for such available foods including the methods employed in their preparation (Bryant *et al.,* 2003:11). For example, the natural environment in the Arctic regions is not suitable for the cultivation of crops, however, many animals and fish are available for consumption. The Copper Eskimo who live at 69°N within the Arctic Circle zone, traditionally never obtained their food from plants but, through the opportunities and constraints offered by their natural environment, they acquired a preference for consuming an entire animal, including its entrails and organs. These organs provided the essential vitamins and minerals acquired from the meat of the available animals (Bryant *et al*., 2003:127-128).]

   In the South African context, legislation and policies during the *apartheid* era for example, determined the access for many people to goods and services such as

electricity. The lack or limited access to electricity in some areas determined the food preparation and storage methods used in households.

2.3.2 Cultural perspective and assumptions

The cultural perspective is based on theories and concepts from a variety of human sciences including anthropology, consumer behaviour, ethnic studies, cultural studies, semiotics, sociology and women's studies (Kaiser, 1997:48).

In the newer, interdisciplinary approach to the study of culture the symbolic realm of social life is addressed, where the study of cultural forms and social relations as related to the historical and contemporary value systems or ideologies that characterise a cultural group, are included (Kaiser, 1997:25). This approach incorporates a strong focus on the expressive culture, or the artefacts or products of culture. This perspective accommodates a description of the meaning of the material artefacts of a group as they have developed over time. There is an interest in how, and why, certain cultural artefacts are produced and used. Whenever people share a common culture they are likely to be exposed to a network of tangible products. The cultural perspective also deals with the signification or the development of meaning associated with cultural objects. It is not only the product that results in signification, but also the way people relate to these products and what they do to, or with it. A fundamental idea behind the cultural perspective, derived from semiotics, is that the perceiver of a cultural message is a vital part of the process of gaining meaning, in the way that he/she actively or passively participates in the process.

In her excellent book "The Socio-psychology of Clothing", Susan Kaiser (!997), uses clothing and appearance as field of application to explain human behaviour. For the purpose of this study the assumptions as posed by Kaiser (1997:49-54) are used in a similar manner for guidance in an attempt to understand human food-related behaviour.

The assumptions of the cultural perspective, according to Kaiser (1997:49-54), are given and made applicable to the study area of foods. Examples to illustrate how each assumption could be interpreted are included.

1. Collective values are produced and reproduced through cultural forms.

   These include material forms such as food, and relationships, as portrayed through the use of food, for example, to underline the position/status of a person. This assumption implies that food as material artefact represents shared values within a

culture that are linked to the belief system of the culture. This suggests that food communicates symbolic meanings.

Example: Bread is an excellent example of how food could be used as a symbol to portray various symbolic meanings. Bread is often referred to as the "staff" of life. In this instance bread represents food and sustenance. Another example often used, refers to the "breaking bread" with family and/or friends. Here the breaking of the bread symbolises the gesture of intimacy and friendship between family and friends enjoying a meal together. Bread also represents the body of Christ in the Christian sacrament of Communion (Kittler & Sucher, 2008:3), but the rite of sharing the bread during Communion also symbolises unity in Christ.

2. Cultural beliefs and values tend to be perpetuated when they are represented on a relatively unconscious level.

   Ideology (the principal beliefs and values) may be reflected in everyday objects, such as food customs, that people do not question and that they interpret with relative ease because of their shared meanings. For the duration of time that the custom is followed, the values underlying the custom are perpetuated.

   Example: In the instance of some of the indigenous groups in South Africa, the last sip of beer is always poured on the ground in honour of the ancestors. It is believed that it would keep the ancestors happy and when they are happy good fortune would be ensured for the living relatives of the ancestors. The beer as message maintains the belief and value.

3. People have the potential to transform their own realities by manipulating the objects in their cultural world.

   Objects, ideas and images provided by culture could be used in imaginative ways. They may be reorganised or combined in new ways. In this way cultural conventions may be applied in new ways or may be broken or bent to help the individual make sense of reality.

   Example: The explanation why Tswana females of childbearing age are not allowed to eat eggs, as documented by Grivetti (1978:1214), is an excellent example of how the reasons given for a cultural tradition are altered according to the situation. The following explanations have been recorded:

- Undesirable adolescent pregnancy: Girls who consume eggs will conceive at an early age and will therefore be unable to properly care for their babies.
- Maternal and child health: If eggs are consumed the mother will have a difficult labour and the child may die of impaired breathing.
- Based on homeopathy: If the mother eats eggs and has a successful delivery, the child will always annoy the family by making silly noises at dawn in imitation of the domestic cock.
- Fear of sterility: An argument that is used to scare adolescents and younger girls who look forward to marriage and having a family.

4. Culture provides abstract pictures or representations of social life.

   People experience their lives within a larger culture at many levels, from the practical to the imaginary. A cultural approach, drawing from the principles of semiotics, provides a framework for interpreting cultural images, dreams, fantasies and stories that allow people a means for escape or making sense of who they are and what they are doing.

   Example: Foods are classified or categorised in order to help people make sense of this world. Categorisation could, for example, be based on pre-scientific understandings of the interrelationships between food and disease, or the socio-cultural uses of foods (Bryant, *et al.*, 2003: 221; Fieldhouse, 1995:49). In some traditional communities food is categorised according to food for specific age and gender groups, and certain physiological conditions such as menstruation, pregnancy and lactation. The classification could also be based on the foods' actual or imagined properties or on their supposed effect on the body or on a disease process. Meat and red wine are regarded as masculine while light salads could either represent feminine or healthy food. Peanut butter is grouped as food for children and olives as food suitable for adults (Parraga, 1990).

5. People use codes to decipher the meanings of cultural representations of social life.

   A semiotic approach to cultural representations entails finding the cultural meanings that lie beneath the surface of messages. This approach also assumes that the world is coded and that meaning can be found in everyday cultural objects as well as in abstract cultural representations. Kaiser (1997:221) explains that codes are rules of association or they can be underlying patterns provided by culture similar to protocol or etiquette. Therefore it is not a concrete object itself, but rather an abstract pattern,

a type of cultural knowledge that forms the taken-for-granted reality of a culture. Codes guide the way symbolic materials are patterned so as to shape the creation and re-creation of culture.

Example: The following example indicates how different codes give rise to different interpretations of a situation. In traditional African households meals are served according to prescribed etiquette rules. Large portions of food are dished out to visitors and it is considered rude to eat everything on the plate as this is seen as the host not having supplied enough food. It is therefore considered etiquette to always leave a portion of food on the plate to indicate that the host has provided enough food. In the Western-oriented culture a clean plate after a meal indicates that the guest has enjoyed the food. The host considers the guest's acceptance of a second portion as a compliment to the host's culinary skills. In the first example, if the guest has to ask for, or accepts a second portion the host is considered stingy.

2.3.3 Symbolic interactionism perspective and assumptions

Charon (1998:12) describes symbolic interactionism as a perspective in social psychology that focuses on the human being in social interaction and that tries to understand human behaviour. A similar description is given by Kaiser (1997:39) who explains that it "is a perspective that pursues the study of social actions and social objects." Sandstrom *et al.* (2006:1) add to these by explaining symbolic interactionism as a perspective in social psychology that is concerned with the meanings that people give to actions and events including how these meanings are constructed and negotiated. Symbolic interactionism has at its core the link between symbols (i.e. shared meanings) and interactions (i.e. verbal and non-verbal actions and communication). Charon (1998:41) relates symbols to all that is human and points out that the symbol is the central concept of the perspective and that every individual depends on society to provide these symbols. It is useful for understanding how humans, in interaction with one another, create symbolic worlds and how these are used to shape human behaviour and maintain social order (LaRossa & Reitzes, 1993: 135-136).

Symbolic interactionism also stresses the process by which the individual makes decisions and forms opinions. The particular situation concerned determines the form of the interaction that emerges (Wallace & Wolf, 1980).

An example from an Ndembu ritual as described by Turner (1967:20-25) serves to indicate how the assumptions from the symbolic interactionism perspective could apply to this study and guide interpretation. The symbolic interactionism rests on seven assumptions that reflect

three central themes. The first theme deals with the importance of meanings for human behaviour in social interaction; the second theme with the development of a self-concept, and the third theme relates to assumptions on society (LaRossa & Reitzes, 1993:143-144; Blumer, 1969:2-6). The assumptions derived from the first and third theme are applicable to the present study and are illustrated by using examples from the Ndembu female puberty ritual with the exception of the last example.

The first theme deals with the importance of meanings for human behaviour and is based on Blumer's premises as described in Blumer (1969:2-3).

1. Human beings react to things on the basis of the meanings that the things have for them. Symbols are often used to define or represent the meanings.

   Example: At the Nkang'a, the puberty ritual of the Ndembu girl of Zambia, the milk tree is a dominant symbol. The *Diplorrhyncus condylocarpon* exudes a milky latex liquid. This obvious resemblance to milk resulted in various associations with human milk, its physical appearance, nutritional value as well as the nurturing bond between mother and baby. At the highest level of abstraction the milk tree stands for unity and continuity of the society. It is therefore no longer an ordinary tree but stands for tribal custom itself and is respected as such (Turner, 1967:20-21).

2. Meaning arises in the process of interaction between people.

   Meaning is a social product; it is created and not "inherent in things" – meanings therefore arise from the process of interaction between people, and are not a given, or passively received. Each person must learn, discover or develop an independent meaning (Charon, 1998:61; Wallace & Wolf, 1980:239). In this regard Sandstrom *et al*. (2006:7) emphasise that meanings are not simply learned through experiences, but are learnt through interaction with others. If we are to understand social interactions and meanings, the viewpoints of the different people in a situation should be taken into account. One context gives rise to a new context and in this way meaning changes. Symbolic interactionism accepts change and fluctuation in meanings as normal, because humans are creative and dynamic as they attempt to construct meaningful lives for themselves and others with whom they are connected. Within this fluctuation there are strands of continuity that seem to influence ongoing actions and social order.

Example: The milk tree can again serve as an example. Meaning can be identified at different levels of abstraction as it develops over time during the rituals. At a first level of abstraction the white juice of the tree stands for milk, at the next level of abstraction it stands for human breast milk. The third level describes the social tie between the mother and her child, and moves on to the next level of abstraction where it stands for the values of social organisation where the tree symbolises matrilinear descent, the principle on which the continuity of Ndembu people depends. It also stands for social order and structure in the Ndembu social life. It stands for tribal custom itself as it symbolises the total system of interrelations between groups and persons. At the highest level of abstraction, the milk tree stands for unity and continuity of the Ndembu society (Turner, 1967:20-21).

3. Meanings are handled in and modified through an interpretive process used by the person in dealing with things encountered.

   Individuals do not just respond directly to their environment but interpret reality through the symbols and the shared social meanings of their culture. Once symbols are learned, the individual is able to use the vantage point of the generalised other to negotiate the specific meanings of self, others and the social setting (LaRossa & Reitzes, 1993:143). Blumer (1969:5) explains that the individuals have to point out to themselves the meaning of the objects towards which they are acting. This is an internalising social process. Through this process of communicating with oneself interpretation becomes a way of handling meanings. The individual in this process selects, checks, suspends, regroups and transforms the meanings according to the experienced situation and the direction of the chosen action. Therefore, according to Blumer (1969:5), interpretation should not be regarded as a mere application of established meanings but as a formative process in which meanings are used and revised as instruments for the guidance and formation of action.

   Example: The milk tree can again be used as an example. The Ndembu learns what the milk tree stands for through the process of social interaction in the tribe. For the Ndembu woman the tree represents harmonious dependence. The child depends on the mother for nourishment. The Ndembu tribesman also equate nourishment and learning to the milk tree. The milk tree is compared to going to school where the tree equals the process of instruction in tribal matters, which follow after the initiation ceremony, under the milk tree. Being part of this socialisation process, the Ndembu girl evaluates and accepts herself in terms of the respective beliefs and values (Turner, 1967:22).

The third theme relates to symbolic interactionism assumptions about society.

4. Individuals and small groups are influenced by larger cultural and societal processes.

   Symbolic interactionists recognise that individual behaviour is constrained by societal norms and values (LaRossa & Reitzes, 1993:144). Social interaction is a process that shapes human conduct and, as explained by Blumer (1969:8), humans take into account what others are doing or about to do. They are therefore forced to direct their own conduct or handle a situation in terms of what is taken into account. In the process of considering the actions of others the individual may abandon an intention or purpose, revise it, check or suspend it, intensify it or replace it. Their own line of activity is fitted in some way or other into the actions of others.

   Examples: In societies such as the tribal Ndembu, individuals submit themselves to the rituals without questioning them.

5. It is through social interaction in everyday situations that individuals work out the details of social structure.

   Symbolic interactionism emphasises that social structure is dynamic and challenges the static view of the structural functionalists that social structure determines behaviour (LaRossa & Reitzes, 1993:144). Blumer (1969:6-7) explains that social position, status, role, authority and prestige represent social structure. This refers to the relationships that emerge from how people act toward each other during interaction. In any human society this is an ongoing process of fitting together the activities of its members. Structure and organisation is established and portrayed by this ongoing dynamic process.

   Examples: Generally, eating with someone is an indication of social equality between those who do so. In some traditional communities men may, however, eat separately from women and children. This act of eating together with only other males, not only establishes their class relationship towards each other; but also between them and women and children (Kittler & Sucher, 2008:5).

In addition to these three identified theoretical perspectives, and following Siebold's (2002) suggestion, various other theories and theoretical models were used to guide the analysis and enhance the interpretation and understanding of the food practices of the study group. These are dealt with separately in the next section.

2.3.4 Theoretical models

Two theoretical models considered useful to understanding and explaining the process of change in food practices are the developmental model of food culture and the dietary acculturation model. An explication of these two theoretical models follows.

2.3.4.1 The developmental model of food culture[13]

The developmental model of culture accentuates that, to be able to understand contemporary cultural forms and patterns, requires that the social processes that influence change be taken into account. A fundamental characteristic of human societies and their culture is change which reflects its dynamic nature (Ferraro, 2001:29; Pelto & Vargas, 1992). As an integral part of culture, food practices too are simultaneously undergoing development and change. Over the past two centuries practically all populations in the world have experienced dramatic changes in the food they consume and in their eating patterns (Bryant *et al*., 2003;62-72; Sobal, 2000; Pelto & Pelto, 2000:269). In this process, humans employ various adaptation mechanisms to enable them to meet their basic need for food. In this regard, Pelto *et al*. (2000:3) consider socio-cultural adaptations as the most common and rapid means of responding to environmental change. The socio-cultural adaptations are seen to involve both behavioural and technological innovations that are collectively described as socio-cultural processes (Pelto *et al.,* 2000:6).

Contemporary changes in food consumption and their patterns world-wide are therefore attributed to large-scale, ongoing socio-cultural processes. According to publications by author Gretel Pelto, various labels such as globalisation, modernisation, delocalisation, industrialisation, progress and acculturation are often used to describe these processes (Pelto *et al*., 2000: 6; Pelto & Pelto, 2000: 270). Although delocalisation has various different facets it is agreed that, overall, it is the shift from local autonomy to increased dependence on a distant and often worldwide system of resources (Sobal, 2000:3; Beardsworth & Keil, 1997:40). Pelto and Pelto (2000: 269) aptly describe delocalisation as the "processes in which food varieties, production methods, and consumption patterns are disseminated throughout the world in an ever-increasing and intensifying network of socio-economic and political interdependency."

[13] This model was originally put forward by Sobal (2000) to analyse how social dynamics impact on food and eating. In a later publication Kittler and Sucher (2004:11-12) referred to it as the "developmental perspective of food culture". According to the hierarchical order of knowledge as explained by Mouton (1996:180) this is strictly speaking a model and in this study it will be referred to as the developmental model of food culture.

In terms of food, a central feature of delocalisation is the greater dependence on commercial food sources in comparison with previous times. This means that food, energy and services that were previously provided and available within the local setting are now transformed into market exchange commodities. This implies that most of the food consumed reaches the consumer through commercial channels. It is further pointed out that, in industrialised nations, delocalisation is associated with an increase in the diversity of available food, whereas in the less industrialised countries of the world delocalisation tends to have the opposite effect. Many developing countries are still primarily dependent on locally produced food supplies (Pelto & Pelto, 2000:269; Beardsworth & Keil, 1997:41). The transformation from a subsistence economy to a market economy, together with the introduction of new technologies and the migration of people are all part of the process (Pelto *et al*., 2000:6).

According to Pelto and Pelto (2000:269) three fundamental developments contribute to the basic food-use change process. The first relates to the world-wide distribution of domesticated plant and animal varieties. Fresh strawberries could serve as example here, as this traditionally seasonal fruit has become available any time of the year due to a worldwide network of producers and suppliers (Kittler & Sucher, 2008:11).

The second development deals with the rise of increasingly complex, international food distribution networks and the growth of food processing industries. Advances in food accessibility for example, have been made possible through developments in the storage and preservation methods of food such as heat processing, preservation and packaging, while modern techniques employed in retailing and advertising have also significantly enhanced the status of the food industry as have technological improvements in transportation and refrigeration facilities stimulated the rise of commercial food distribution networks (Bryant *et al*., 2003: 63-65, 68: Beardsworth & Keil, 1997:34-40, 66; Southgate, 1996: 380-382)..

The third development concerns the migration of people from rural to urban locations, and from one continent to another. This contributes not only to the adaptation, and often exchange of culinary and dietary techniques, but also introduces another dimension, that of altered food preferences and the transfer of food knowledge (Pelto & Pelto, 2000:273).

Each of these developments has been strongly affected by national and international economic and political actions, over and above those of a more cultural and religious nature. The most pervasive of all these is the development of new technologies of which modern food processing technologies, together with advances in transportation and communication

technologies are the most significant (Bryant *et al.*, 2003: 63-66; Pelto & Pelto, 2000:272; Southgate,1996: 380-382).

The developmental model of food culture as described by Kittler and Sucher (2008:11-12), which is largely based on the model of social dynamics and food culture by Sobal (2000), offers a conceptual model to show how the socio-cultural processes described above are paralleled by trends in food and food consumption patterns. Figure 2.2 portrays the food culture changes that tend to occur during structural change where development aims at the Western model.

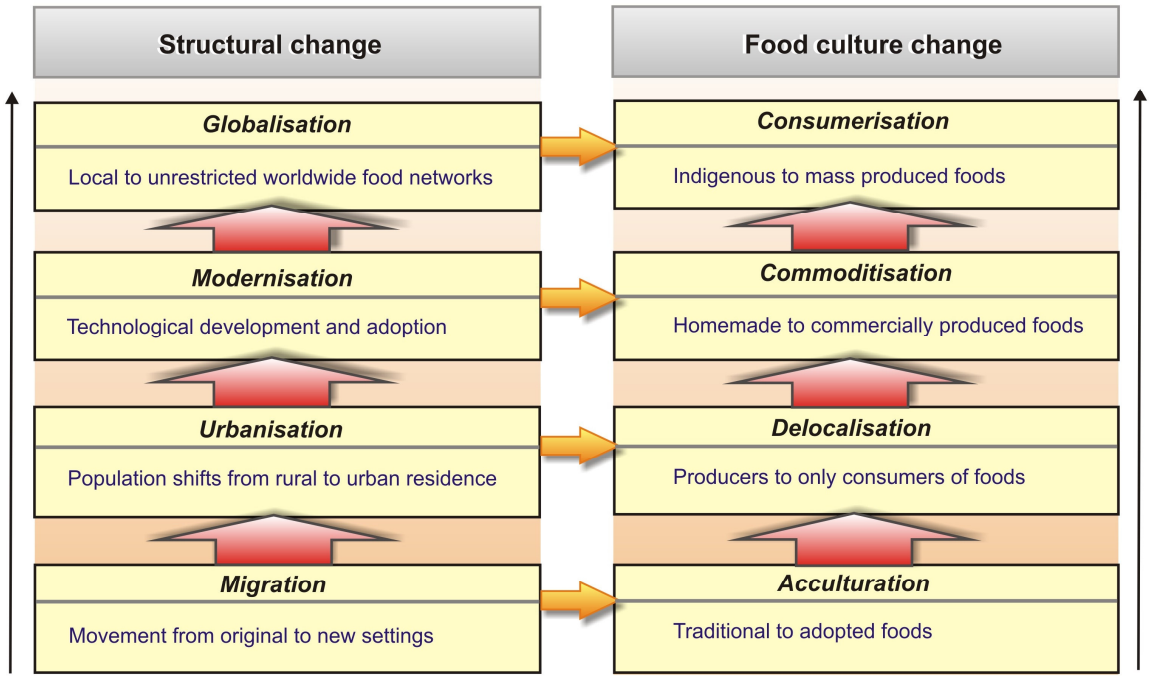

FIGURE 2.2: DEVELOPMENTAL MODEL OF FOOD CULTURE (Adapted from Kittler & Sucher, 2008:11; Sobal, 2000:7)

Socio-cultural processes lead to structural changes in society, which, in turn, influence food consumption patterns. Sobal (2000:3) explains these as a system of structural and cultural changes that should be viewed as a complex system of interrelated processes that operate together to result in "development" as societies move from traditional to modern ways of life. Similarly, Kittler and Sucher (2008:11) pose the assumption that cultures progress from being underdeveloped to becoming developed by means of engaging in these structural changes. Each of the structural changes and the paralleled change in food culture is briefly explained.

The first identified structural change of **migration** occurs when people move from their original place of residence to settle in a new location that could be in another region, urban area or country. New cultural contacts are created, and eventually the prolonged contact with the other culture(s) results in **acculturation**. Acculturation of food practices results from the introduction and acceptance of foods from other cultural groups and a movement from the original or traditional foods to the adopted foods. These food items are often incorporated into the traditional, original cuisine of the migrants, giving rise to the emergence of new culinary traditions and traits from this contact (Kittler and Sucher, 2008:12; Lee, Sobal & Frongillo, 1999b; Cwiertka, 1998).

Kittler and Sucher (2008:12) define **urbanisation** as taking place "when a large percentage of the population abandons the low density of rural residence in favour of higher density suburban or urban residence." These population shifts often mean that those previously involved in subsistence agriculture now become dependent on others for food that they can only procure if they have the necessary financial resources. This shift from producing food for own consumption to being dependent on commercial channels to provide daily food needs, is referred to as **delocalisation** in the food culture change process (Kittler & Sucher, 2008:12; Pelto & Pelto, 2000:269; Sobal, 2000:3).

Modernisation is the structural change that encompasses technological development and the adoption of these new technologies. This contributes not only to changes in the material culture but often also in cultural, social, economic and political shifts (Bryant *et al*., 2003:61; Sobal, 2000:2). The Industrial Revolution and subsequent ongoing industrialisation led to changes not only in food production and processing but also in food preparation methods and consumption patterns (Pelto *et al*., 2000:6; Sobal, 2000:2). In response to these material transformations brought about by modernisation, major changes in social structures as well as cultural beliefs, values and behaviours took place (Kittler & Sucher, 2008:11; Sobal, 2000:2). **Commoditisation** is the associated food culture change that arose from modernising the entire food chain from the production, processing, marketing to the distribution of food, including its preparation and consumption, through the application of advanced technologies (Sobal, 2000:2). Food thus became an economic object and treated by producers, industry and retailers as a commodity instead of an item for sustenance (Kittler & Sucher, 2008:11; Sobal, 2000:3).

Lastly, the fourth identified structural change of **globalisation** refers to the wide distribution of food products (often modified by advanced preservation techniques) around the world (Bryant *et al.,* 2003:70). This, according to Kittler and Sucher (2008:11), brings about the integration of food products produced at local, regional and national level into an unrestricted

worldwide network. In terms of food culture change, this leads to **consumerisation**, which refers to the transition of a society from being producers and consumers of indigenous foods to become mainly consumers of mass- produced foods (Kittler & Sucher, 2008:11; Sobal, 2000:3). People therefore become dependent on multinational corporations and mass production in the food industry who dominate the world food markets (Bryant *et al*., 2003:71).

As the first two structural changes of urbanisation and migration are prominent in the South African context, and because of the impact of acculturation on food culture change, it is deemed necessary to conceptualise acculturation and briefly reflect on the process of acculturation and how it applies to food practices.

2.3.4.2 Dietary acculturation

Acculturation, according to the classic definition in anthropology by Redfield, Linton and Herskovits in Jun, Ball and Gentry (1993:76) encompasses "… those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact with subsequent changes taking place in the original cultural patterns of either or both groups." Els's (1993:19) succinct description captures a similar understanding of acculturation in that he too views it as a process, emphasising that it is selected cultural elements that are involved in and contribute to changing cultural patterns.

It needs to be kept in mind, as Lee, Sobal and Frongillo (1999a) point out, that acculturation is a multidimensional process of adaptation by groups and individuals to a new society. This adaptation deals with changes relating to cultural, social, psychological, economic and political dimensions. A similar description is given by Park, Paik, Skinner, Ok and Spindler (2003) who state that "acculturation is a long-term process in which individuals modify or abandon certain aspects of their original culture as they adopt patterns of the new culture."

In the above definitions, it is implied that acculturation is a process that results in changes at the population and group level and various researchers distinguish between them (Satia-Abouta, Patterson, Neuhouser & Elder, 2002; Jun *et al.,* 1993; Segall *et al*., 1990:295). Berry (in Jun *et al.,* 1993) bases the distinction on the different phenomena at each of the two levels. At the population level, changes in the social structure, economic base and political organisation take place, whereas at the individual level, changes in behaviour, identity, values and attitudes occur. The process of acculturation could therefore be regarded as a process of adaptation by specific people to a changed or changing environment (Lee *et al.,* 1999a; Lee *et al.,* 1999b; Els, 1993:19). Satia-Abouta *et al.* (2002) describe acculturation at the individual level as the micro or "psychological" level and refer to dietary changes in

attitudes, beliefs, values and behaviours at this level. At the macro or group level, acculturation results, according to them, in physical, biological, political, economic and cultural change in the acculturating group or in the society as a whole. This view is in accordance with the ecological systems perspective and the model proposed by Segall (1979:186) that implies reciprocity and interaction between the individual and the various environments. When dealing with the development of food patterns, the same interconnectedness of the different environments applies, as change or development in one environment eventually affects the others (Pelto *et al.*, 2000:2).

Food practice, as part of the cultural pattern of a group, is therefore included in the process of acculturation. Some researchers in the field of nutrition use the term dietary acculturation when describing the acculturation process concerning food. The description by Satia-Abouta *et al*. (2002), for example, describes dietary acculturation as the process that occurs "when members of a cultural group adopt the eating patterns and food choices of another group." Similar to other domains in the process of acculturation, it is multidimensional, dynamic and complex. The process of dietary acculturation must also not be assumed to be a linear process that moves toward one of the opposite poles of being either acculturated or unacculturated, but should rather be viewed as a non-linear trend over time (Lee, Sobal & Frongillo, 2003; Satia-Abouta *et al*., 2002; Jun *et al.,* 1993:77). The relationship between these sets of factors is portrayed in Figure 2.3.

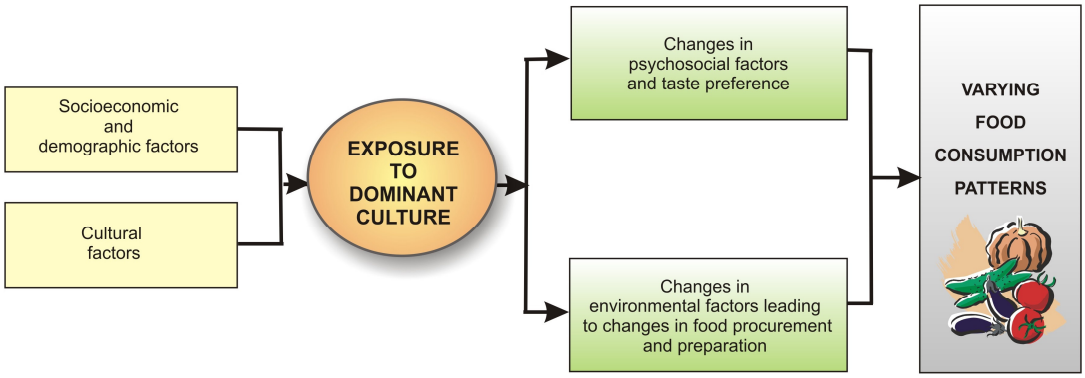

FIGURE 2.3: DIETARY ACCULTURATION MODEL (adapted from Satia-Abouta *et al.,* 2002)

In the dietary acculturation model proposed by Satia-Abouta *et al.* (2002) based on research conducted with immigrants, the complex and dynamic relationship that exists between the socio-economic, demographic and cultural factors with exposure to the host or dominant

culture, contributes to the degree of change in food consumption patterns. These different sets of factors seem to predict the extent to which the migrants may change their attitudes and beliefs about food, including their taste preferences, as well as their food purchasing and preparation practices. The food consumption patterns that result from these changes, according to Satia-Abouta *et al*. (2002), could then vary between maintaining the traditional eating patterns and varying degrees of adoption of the eating patterns of the host culture group.

Based on the theoretical perspectives and models described, a conceptual framework suitable to guide the investigation on the food practices and meanings attached to it for the South African context was compiled.

2.4 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

In Figure 2.4 the conceptual framework developed for the study is presented.

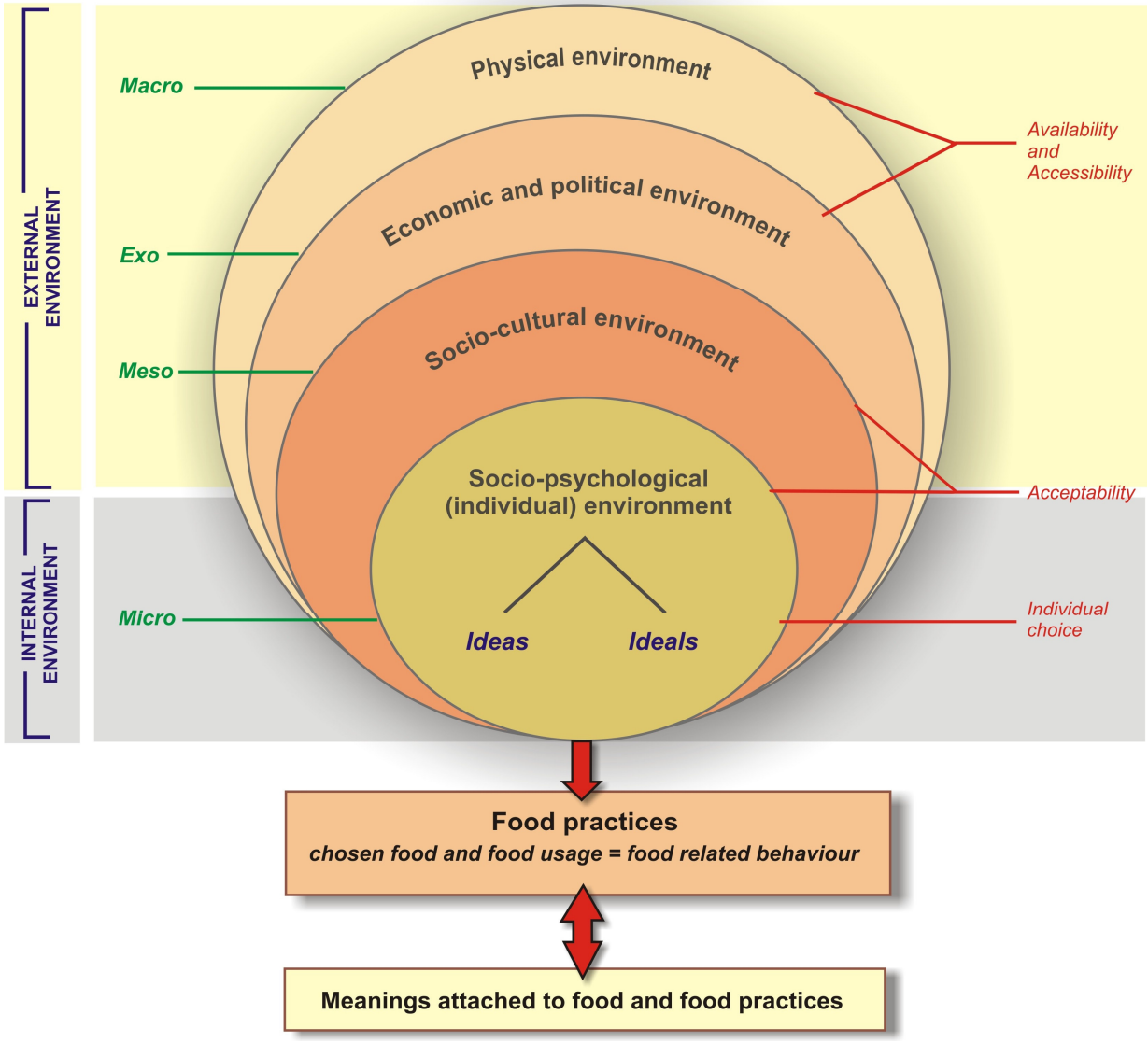

FIGURE 2.4: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The conceptual framework depicts the different ecological environmental levels and indicates where each operates in the food choice process from the broad macro-environmental to the micro-environmental level. Included are the different sets of interrelated and interdependent factors from these environments that contribute to food practices. The clusters or sets of factors are grouped together to facilitate a logical argument, and it is acknowledged that each environment and/or set of factors operates at different stages in the food choice process and in food practices. It should, therefore, be kept in mind that a particular factor or set of factors does not operate exclusively at one environmental level neither are all factors identified of equal importance to all individuals or groups of individuals in all contexts. The constant human interaction with and interdependency of the different environments at each level is implied – nested in each other. A multifaceted matrix is thus formed through the interrelationships and interdependency of the various environments and their related

components during the food choice process and subsequent food practices of an individual or a group. This underscores the complexity attached to human food choice and food practices.

Three theoretical perspectives, as fully analysed in section 2.3, were selected to aid in explaining and/or understanding the food practices of the study group and the meanings attached to the food practices in different contexts. Each of the theoretical perspectives operates at specific environmental levels to augment the understanding of the meaning of the food practices that emerge from different contexts. Where and how each theoretical perspective and model fits/slots into the conceptual framework is explained.

The **human ecological perspective** is the overarching theoretical perspective and reinforces the interacting dynamics that take place between individuals or groups and the environmental forces in the different environmental levels ranging from the micro to the macro setting in which they engage. Moreover, its dynamic nature also allows one to consider the relative changes that occur over time and, in this regard, links with the cultural perspective. Above all, it acknowledges that human beings and the different environments in which they exist form a unity and ought to be studied as such to promote a holistic understanding of human behaviour. This perspective is therefore appropriate to the exploration, interpretation and understanding of food choice and food practices in different contexts and over time.

The **cultural perspective** provides a useful framework to describe human behaviour as mirrored in the behaviour of the group or society over time and is used mainly at the socio-cultural and individual environmental levels. This perspective leads one to consider the meaning attached to food and food practices as they have developed and evolved over time. This implies that the past influences the present and the present the future.

The **symbolic interactionism perspective** focuses mainly on the individual level and offers a perspective that deals with the meanings that emerge from the interaction that individuals and groups have with one another. It particularly assists in understanding the human behaviour that results from these interactions. It therefore seems appropriate to apply the premises of the symbolic interactionism to describe the meaning attached to food; the role of food as a symbol in its own right and how food has obtained symbolic meaning; what meanings are attached to food in different contexts; and how food obtains new meanings with new or ongoing interactions with other groups.

To understand the dynamics and changes taking place at the socio-cultural environmental level the theoretical model of food culture change and the process model of dietary acculturation theory were selected to facilitate the interpretation and understanding of the dynamic nature of human food practices.

2.5 CONCLUDING SUMMARY

In this chapter, food practices and the embedded food choice process and the meanings attached to food and food practices were introduced and conceptualised as the main concepts of the study. The theoretical perspectives and models selected to develop the devised conceptual framework that guided the study have been justified, explained and presented. The theme of Chapter 3 is the methodology used to collect the data.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the research design and the process followed to achieve the research goal and objectives of the study. The rationale for selecting a qualitative research methodology is justified and the role of the researcher as research instrument and the competencies required to conduct a qualitative study, are reviewed. Apart from the methods and techniques employed to collect and analyse the data, the data capturing and analysis procedures are rationalised and briefly explained.

3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

As explained in the previous Chapter (see 2.2.1), food practice is a complex process and necessitates a holistic and contextual approach to uncover the factors that contribute to food practices. This, in itself, requires an in-depth knowledge of food selection processes to better understand the food practices of a group in a specific situation and context. To realise the overall goal of the study of describing and understanding how meanings emerge from the context and are used to construe the food practices of a South African community, requires that the various facets of the problem as illustrated in the conceptual framework be taken into account in the study's research design.

Therefore to understand the events, actions, processes and meanings surrounding food practices in their context, indicates that the idiographic research strategy is the most appropriate for this study. The idiographic or contextual strategy examines a single or specific event or case within its own context in order to understand it (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:272). According to Neuman (2000:511), this approach enables the researcher to obtain "detailed descriptions of specific events in particular time periods and settings" which is similar to the view of Mouton (1996: 133) and Geertz (1975:6) that the aim of this approach is to produce extensive "thick descriptions" of the phenomenon in its specific context. Following advice from the literature (Janesick, 2000:382; Neuman, 2000:146), the researcher studies the social setting or context to be able to fully appreciate the meaning that the participants themselves attach to the context they experience.

Furthermore, the research goal suggests that this study concerns the food practices of a group of people that warrant being described and understood as well. In order to uncover the meanings that an individual or a group attaches to their food practices it is required that the opinions of those who engage in these food practices, be sought. It is their perspective of the phenomenon of food practices as manifest in their food-related behaviour of food choice and usage that requires investigation. The qualitative research approach is well suited to capture how people view, experience and interpret their own world (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:271; Janesick, 2000:382). A qualitative approach as Schwandt (2000:200) emphasises, is based on “a profound concern with understanding what other human beings are doing or saying”. In this study the researcher therefore in the first instance seeks to understand the different contexts in which the food practices of the study group take place and how the people themselves understand and interpret the meanings they attach to these contexts and their typical food customs. In the second instance the researcher strives to attain a holistic overview of all the factors that contribute to the complexity and dynamic nature of food practices. Denzin and Lincoln (2000:3) stresses that qualitative researchers need to “study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them.”

When considering a qualitative study, two important issues arise. First, it needs to be kept in mind that findings from such a study cannot be generalised to larger populations or other contexts (Babbie & Mouton, 2001: 272; Mouton, 1996:133). However, they can be transferred to another context, depending on the richness or “thickness” of the description of the findings. Second, the design of the study is developed as “an emergent design” during the course of the study (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:275). The qualitative research design is therefore not, as is the case in quantitative research, a fixed step-by-step plan, but allows the qualitative researcher to “create the design best suited“ it as the research progresses (Fouché & Delport, 2005: 83). This flexibility in the design of qualitative studies allows the researcher to adapt and make changes to the research design when needed, in order to refine and extend it, thus enabling the researcher to uncover information about humans and their ever changing social worlds (Fouché, 2005:269; Babbie & Mouton, 2001: 275,279; Neuman, 2000:122-123).

The ethnographic research design is the most appropriate design for this study that strives to capture and understand the food practices of the study group and the meanings attached to them. The core of ethnography is to understand the meaning of people’s actions and events (Spradley, 1979:5). Ethnography therefore, provides a detailed account of how people experience life in a particular culture, and includes how the values, beliefs and social rules are used in the process, apart from aspects such as typical activities, technology, ways of

communication and meaning-making. This provides an opportunity for researchers, over a period of time, to learn from those they are studying in order to reach a better understanding of their beliefs, motivations and behaviours (Henning, Van Rensburg & Smit, 2004:42; Tedlock, 2000:470). It actually enables the researcher to uncover the complex meaning systems that are representative of their culture and behaviour. This total picture then portrays how people construct their own social world or reality, through their own interpretations of it, and through actions based on these interpretations (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995:10,11).

The task of the researcher is then not only to capture people's ways of life in the form of research data, but also, as Tedlock (2000:455) explains, "Ethnography involves an ongoing attempt to place specific encounters, events, and understandings into a fuller, more meaningful context. It is not simply the production of new information or research data, but rather the way in which such information or data are transformed into a written or visual form. As a result, it combines research design, fieldwork, and various methods of inquiry to produce historically, politically, and personal situated accounts, descriptions, interpretations, and representations of human lives. As an inscription practice, ethnography is a continuation of fieldwork rather than a transparent record of past experiences in the field."

Qualitative researchers, in their quest to understand the way of life of others, strive to give an insider perspective of those they are studying, the "emic" perspective as opposed to an outsider or "etic" perspective, where outsiders award meaning to events and experiences from different viewpoints (Henning *et al.*, 2004:44). One of the larger goals of ethnography, according to Spradley (1979:232), is to give a holistic, "emic" description of life. In the same way, Tedlock (2000:471) argues that humans, as the object and subject of an inquiry, "… exist in multiple strata of reality …". This viewpoint implies that humans not only exist in the realm of meaning, but also live and function in various other environments from whence the realm of real meaning emerges. Although Tedlock (2000:471) uses the term "material and organic strata" her explanation implies a holistic approach and "strata" in her exposition could be equated with the different human ecological environments. Ethnology, as research design, is thus also compatible with the human ecological perspective, chosen as the overarching theoretical perspective for this study.

Before proceeding to a detailed description of the methodology, the pivotal role of the researcher in a qualitative study will be spelt out. The researcher, as link between the research design and the collection of the empirical evidence, performs the role of research instrument (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000:371; Schurink, 1998:258).

3.3 THE RESEARCHER AS A RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

The researcher plays a central role and becomes the most important 'instrument' in the qualitative research process as observer, interviewer and interpreter (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:271; Neuman, 2000:347; Janesick, 2000:386; Hammersly & Atkinson, 1995:19). As part of the "strategy of inquiry" the qualitative researcher uses personal skills, practices, knowledge and methods to obtain the necessary data for a study (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000:371). This implies that the background of the researcher, which includes aspects such as the researcher's training, experience, values, beliefs and interests, affects the perspective of the researcher as research instrument. As Janesick (2000:385) points out, qualitative researchers accept the fact that research is ideologically driven - one cannot pretend that research is value-free. In this regard she urges qualitative researchers to not only identify and articulate their own beliefs and ideology, but also to describe and explain the social, philosophical and physical location of the researcher in the study, including their role in it (Janesick, 2000:385,389).

The researcher in the present study has acquired specific competencies as registered dietician during her training and in her work where she was involved in counselling clients. She knows how to probe for information with regard to people's food choice and the related practices. Following an anti-positivistic research approach, as required in the present study, was a natural outflow of the researcher's previous experience. Apart from conversational skills, Kvale (1996:147) advises that researchers in the interview situation should be knowledgeable about the topics they are investigating, including the theme and context of the inquiry (Kvale, 1996:108). For the present study it was essential to have knowledge not only of food practices in general and of those more specific to the ethnic and cultural groups represented in the study, but also insight concerning the cultural background and customs of all the different South African ethnic and cultural groups.

As lecturer in the socio-cultural aspects of food at undergraduate and post-graduate level, as well as experience in previous research and outreach projects, the researcher gained insight into the eating patterns of most South African cultural and ethnic groups. Particularly helpful was her participation in the multi-cultural, quantitative investigation into the food habits and food preferences of the conscripts, representative of all ethnic groups, in the former South African Defence Force (SADF).

Cross-cultural research requires the researcher to be competent in working with and dealing with the often fragile and sensitive relationships that emerge when engaging in projects with people from cultural groups different from their own. These situations have their own unique

challenges and demands. Throughout her professional career, the researcher dealt with people, formally and informally, as clients, post- and undergraduate students and colleagues from different ethnic and cultural groups. In particular, as lecturer responsible for the training of dietetic students in nutrition counselling, valuable and appropriate experience was gained through exposure to, and participation in, a number of cross-cultural community outreach projects dealing with nutrition education in communities in and around the greater Pretoria area. During the course of this study, the contact and the frequent open discussions with colleagues and specifically graduate students were important sources of information and verification, especially as the community being interviewed for this research endeavour, was ethnically and culturally akin. Moreover, in managing and working in a comparable situation, the researcher became conscious of the way of life of these communities as well as the needs and difficulties that exist from the people's own perspective, thus supporting Spradley's (1979:24) insightful observation. It also sensitised and made the researcher aware of the protocol and etiquette rules applicable at meetings in these communities.

Certain aspects relating to the code of ethics for the profession of dietetics (Hudson, 2006:341) are also part of the code of conduct required of qualitative researchers. It is expected from professional dieticians to conduct themselves with honesty, integrity and fairness, and to protect confidential information. Sensitivity to cultural differences without discriminating against others on the basis of race, ethnicity, creed, religion, gender, age, disability or sexual orientation, together with respect for the unique needs and values of individuals, are essential too. Objective evaluation of others and situations requires that all reasonable effort needs to be made to avoid bias of any kind. These codes have become so ingrained in the researcher's personal and professional conduct that they have become the natural way of dealing with others.

In preparation for this research, a systematic study of the available academic literature on aspects relating to food practices and their development was undertaken. This included a thorough search of the literature available on the food practices of all South African ethnic groups. Attending appropriate short courses further contributed to the knowledge and skills required to undertake this study. The two short courses on qualitative research methodology and the use and application of the computer software package Atlas.ti (Muhr, 2004), respectively, also provided valuable information that enhanced expertise in the field.

Researchers are part of the social world they study and cannot escape or be separated from it, due to the close interaction often required with those whom they study (Nieuwenhuis, 2007:79; Fouchè, 2005:271-272; Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995:16). As part of the socially created research setting, the researcher cannot take a neutral stance in the collection and

analysis of data (Neuman, 2000:347). The value commitments of the researcher therefore have to be transparent and this requires that researchers become sensitive to the social relationships formed and the personal feelings that develop in the course of fieldwork (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000:367; Neuman, 2000:355). The researcher has an effect on the people studied and, because this cannot be eliminated completely, it is essential for the researcher to understand and minimise this reactivity, or to consciously monitor it (Hammersley & Atkinson; 1995:18). Therefore, it is not possible to conduct a value-free inquiry.

On the one hand, the researcher is responsible for establishing good rapport with those being studied by gaining their trust; as this enables the researcher to get close enough to the participants "to generate legitimate and truthful descriptions" (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:271). On the other hand, the researcher then also has the added responsibility of being unbiased when describing and interpreting the research findings. How the researcher, as primary research instrument, is involved in the data collection, analysis and interpretation, and how this effect is monitored, should be made quite clear. In this regard, Kvale (1996:117) emphasises the role of the researcher and states as follows: "The person of the researcher is critical for the quality of the scientific knowledge and for the soundness of ethical decisions in any research project. By interviewing, the importance of the interviewer him- or herself is the main instrument for obtaining knowledge." It is thus imperative that researchers describe and justify their own role in the research process and systematically exploit their own participation in the settings to produce accounts of the social world (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995:21).

3.4 THE RESEARCH PROCESS

3.4.1 Choosing the research site and gaining access

Neuman (2000:352) mentions that the choice of a research setting should be guided by the potential "richness of the data, unfamiliarity and suitability". Richer and more interesting data is more likely to be found in settings where there is a network of social relations and various activities. Schurink (1998:254) gives the same advice by stating that the selection of a setting must be where "the process to be studied will be most likely to occur." Unfamiliarity refers to an unknown setting with strangers as participants. Neuman (2000: 352,355) is of the opinion that it is easier to notice cultural differences, cultural events and social relations when the researcher is not familiar with the surroundings. The suitability of a research setting refers to ease of physical access as well as other practical and logistical issues such as travelling distance, the available time and skills of the researcher and the researcher's personal

characteristics and feelings (Strydom, 2005:279; Neuman, 2000:352; Hammersly & Atkinson, 1995:54).

3.4.1.1 Suitability of Mmotla as research setting

Mmotla was chosen as a research setting, because it fulfilled the following criteria. A fairly large number of social activities and interactions were taking place there and, although colleagues of the researcher were involved in the community, the inhabitants of the village and the surroundings were new to the researcher. Logistically the village could be easily reached as the travelling time is approximately one hour's drive from the University of Pretoria. The good relations that existed between the University of Pretoria and this community contributed to the fact that the researcher was well received in the community and never felt threatened when visiting the village on her own.

The village of Mmotla, is a densely populated area in the vicinity of the Tswaing Meteorite Crater, near Pretoria. The majority of the residents live in brick houses although the typical housing in this area contrasts between the traditional type of housing and temporary and permanent structures. A taxi service operates between the area and the city. Adults can therefore work in the city and return home at night. Services such as electricity and refuse removal are available, tap water is currently only to be had in some residential areas and in the others it is in the process of being installed. In these areas, water is only provided at fixed points from where it has to be transported to the various households in large plastic containers, usually with the aid of wheelbarrows. Community structures such as schools, churches, *spaza* shops[14], a grocery store, butchery, local cafés, a garage, beer halls and crèches are in place. Various social networks exist and are active in the village such as community, church and other social organisations. Examples of these are women's groups and other groups formed by churches, informal support groups and burial societies. Kinship ties are still fairly strong and the chieftain system with its initiation traditions is still in operation. Consequently members of the community are in contact with both traditional and modern western-oriented lifestyles.

As is the case in many South African communities, a large percentage of the residents are unemployed and the literacy level is low. A few income-generating projects operate in the village including a literacy project (an Adult Based Education and Training project), an initiative of the National Department of Education to improve the literacy skills of adults to

[14] A *spaza* shop is usually operated in a suburb, sometimes in the yard of the owner, and could be described as a small-scale informal convenience store where a limited number of basic food items, toiletries and cleaning aids can be purchased.

equip them to become literate or to upgrade their literacy skills. Members of the community actively support it.

3.4.1.2 Access and establishing trust

Following the guidelines of Neuman (2000: 252-254) and those of Strydom (2005: 279), the following strategy was followed to gain access to the Mmotla community.

The Department Consumer Science at the University of Pretoria has been involved in an income-generating project since 1996. Lecturers assisted the community in establishing a beadwork project. A colleague is still actively assists and advises members of this now self-sufficient and successful community project. Since its inception a good relationship between the Department of Consumer Science and the bead workers has prevailed. The venue of the beadwork project was used as one of the 13 venues of the literacy project where training was offered on three mornings a week. Initial access to the community for participation in this research was negotiated through the beadwork project with the help of a colleague through the kind offices of the chairperson of the beadwork income-generating project through the researcher's colleague. At an introductory meeting held with the members, this colleague explained the aim of the research and the research procedures in detail, particularly the data collection and recording techniques. She emphasised the important role of the participants in the whole process. This initiative to make the aim of the study clear to prospective participants, laid a foundation of trust and ensured that good rapport with the participants was soon established. Moreover, interest in the study was stimulated, an important factor for success, as rightly pointed out by various other researchers too (Neuman, 2000: 354; Schurink, 1998: 258; Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995:72).

The group was informed that publications on the traditional and current food practices of the different South African population groups and the importance of preserving and recording their culinary heritage were limited. In this study the researcher simply wanted to know what people in the Mmotla community eat and record how familiar they were with traditional foods and the extent to which they were still used today. The idea that they themselves would play a part in documenting their own culinary heritage appealed to them and they were delighted about being specially invited to be part of the project. This, no doubt, not only contributed to their willingness and enthusiasm which lasted throughout the study, but also definitely made the researcher's entry into study setting easier.

The researcher's colleague identified a member of the beadwork project who was fluent in Afrikaans, English and Tswana and who had good organising skills and leadership qualities,

as somebody who could act as translator and facilitator in the group and individual interviews. This would help overcome the language-barrier between the participants and the researcher. She was approached and was willing to assist. By coincidence, the facilitator of the literacy project was also present at the venue during the first information/negotiation meeting. He spontaneously volunteered to assist in the research project and indicated that he had previous experience in survey research and had completed undergraduate courses in research methodology. These two people assisted with the data collection and they fulfilled various roles that could be described as informants, gatekeepers, translators, scribes and facilitators. Since they were respected and familiar figures in the community, the researcher was well received by the local people. As rightly indicated by Schurink (1998: 258), the involvement of indigenous people who are part of the setting to be studied, is one of the most successful ways to gain access to a setting.

To sum up, successful access to the community and the establishment of trust could be attributed to the community's positive attitude and relationship with the colleague involved in the beadwork income-generating project and the good introduction of the study she presented. Equally significant were the neutral topic of the research and the eagerness of the different cultural groups in the community to have their culinary heritage recorded. Finally, yet importantly, the enthusiasm and support of the two gatekeepers who also acted as facilitators and translators during the data collection phase of the research, cannot be underestimated. This laid a firm foundation for the researcher to build rapport and further relations with the participants. Neuman (2000:356), points out that trust is a key aspect in developing good rapport with participants, which in turn, is essential to understanding participants in order to obtain the recommended insider as well as outsider point of views. In this study it was further equally important to gain an in-depth understanding of the various environments in which the participants lived and interacted.

In the interpretative research paradigm sampling, data collection and analysis are closely interconnected and the methods and techniques employed are typically guided by the research question (De Vos, 2005:341). This implies that a degree of flexibility is allowed in data collection and accommodated as the study proceeds and takes shape. Such an approach enables the researcher to acquire the accumulated knowledge to enhance understanding of the phenomenon under study. This is possible through the inclusion of various data sources on account of their information richness and the freedom to adjust the data collection techniques accordingly (Fouché & Delport, 2005:74-75).

3.4.2 Data collection phases

The data collection evolved in two distinctive phases. After the initial immersion stage, and as more knowledge was gained on the food practices of the peoples of Mmotla, the data collection moved to the second phase to enhance and aid in achieving the holistic and in-depth understanding of the food practices of the study group. Due to the specific objectives of each phase of the study, the methods and techniques of sampling and data collection employed are presented separately. However, before attending to the detail of the data collection techniques in each of the two phases, a brief review of the roles of the researcher as instrument in obtaining the data in the field is given.

Fieldwork requires the researcher to be alert and sensitive to what is happening in the field and be disciplined about recoding the data. This in itself has personal consequences as social relationships and personal feelings also come into play (Neuman, 2000: 355). In the process of their fieldwork researchers need to fulfil multiple roles in order to gain an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon under study. These roles develop during the course of the fieldwork and can be arranged on a continuum by the degree of involvement that the researcher has with the participants (Strydom, 2005: 280; Neuman, 2000:356-357; Adler & Adler, 1994:379). Two models are used in literature to illustrate this. Gold's classic typology of research roles describes a range of four roles through which observers may gather data (Neuman, 2000:357; Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995:104). These range from the complete participant, the participant-as-observer, the observer-as-participant, and the complete observer. This typology indicates the degree of attachment or detachment of the researcher at each level. The complete observer takes on an invisible or covert role, while in the observer-as-participant role, the researcher is usually known to the study group but has limited contact with them. In the participant-as-observer role the researcher is overt and becomes a close friend of those studied and, lastly, in the complete participant role the researcher acts as an intimate member and shares undisclosed information of the group (Neuman, 2000:357). The second model by Adler and Adler (1994:379) similarly suggests three membership roles that the researcher could occupy namely peripheral-member-researcher, active-member-researcher and complete-member-researcher. These membership roles similarly indicate the degree of involvement of the researcher with the study group. On the one pole of this continuum, the peripheral-member-researcher maintains a distance between self and those studied, whereas in the complete membership role as the opposite pole, the researcher converts and is regarded as a committed member of the group.

In this study the researcher could be regarded as peripheral-member-researcher according to the model by Adler and Adler and following the typology of Gold the role of observer-as-

participant was the role most frequently occupied. It should be kept in mind, as Neuman (2000:358) points out, that the researcher's level of involvement depends on a number of aspects that are unique to each study. Amongst these are the negotiations and relationships with the study group members, the specifics of the field setting, the researcher's personal comfort, and the particular role adopted in the field. These roles can change and different roles apply at different stages of a study as researchers often move from outsider to insider levels as the research process unfolds in the field (Strydom, 2005:280; Neuman, 2000:358). Each level of involvement has its advantages and disadvantages and researchers should be aware of how it influences the data collection techniques and quality of the collected data (Strydom, 2005:280; Botha, 2001; Neuman, 2000:358).

Being a white female researcher in the South African context placed specific limitations on how the data collection in the present study was conducted. This in itself contributed to the peripheral-member-researcher role occupied by the researcher in this study and largely determined the data collection techniques employed. Due to other commitments the researcher visited the research setting weekly over a period of 20 months on day trips. Logistics and time allowances were other considerations that guided the selection of data collection techniques. Each is justified and addressed in the discussion of the applicable data collection phase where it was employed.

The aim of the **first phase** of the study was to explore and become acquainted with the community, to gain an understanding of the life world of the participants and simultaneously to get a broad overview of the food practices of the community and to determine to what extent traditional food practices have been changed, adapted or abandoned. Focus group discussions, participant observation and a number of unobtrusive measures were employed as data collection techniques to aid the researcher in becoming acquainted with the research setting and the dimensions of the food practices of the study group. During the first phase it emerged that specifically the Ndebele group continued to adhere to their traditional food practices during certain special celebrations. This was in stark contrast to the other ethnic groups in the community, who have adapted and changed their food practices. A decision was thus taken to delve deeper into these traditional food practices that were still followed by the Ndebele group and make use of the opportunity to gain an in-depth insight and understanding of the reasons why they continue to adhere to traditional food practices in some situations, as opposed to the other groups who seemed to have discarded these. This decision led to a second phase in the data collection process.

In the **second phase** of the study the aim was to obtain specific theoretically important data from the Ndebele in order to gain more and deeper insights into the traditional and adapted

western-oriented food practices from this specific ethnic group. To obtain the in-depth understanding of the food practices of this group, individual interviewing with enculturated Ndebele females were conducted. Similar to the first phase, this was complemented by participant observation and unobtrusive measures as supporting data collection techniques.

The data collection and data analysis were tightly interwoven and took place concurrently as ongoing, cyclical and iterative processes in both phases of the study as described in literature (Maree, 2007:81; De Vos, 2005: 341; Huberman & Miles, 1994:429). The description of the sampling and data collection techniques employed in each phase of the study is, however, given first, followed by data analysis procedures as separate section.

3.4.2.1 Phase one of sampling and data collection

At the onset of the data collection stage of an ethnographic study the researcher first needs to build trust and rapport with the participants. Appropriate techniques for establishing rapport are asking questions, listening and observation (Neuman, 2000: 356; Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995:100). Rapport, helps the researcher obtain an understanding of the participants, which in turn, is a precondition for greater depth that paves the way for the next step, namely, adopting the participant's perspective or creating empathy (Neuman, 2000:356-357). To get acquainted with the social and physical environments of the research setting, and to establish rapport with the participants, focus groups and participant observation were selected as principal data collection techniques in this first phase. These were supplemented by a number of unobtrusive measures. Although participant observation and unobtrusive measures were used in both data collection phases, they are addressed in this section.

(i) Sampling and criteria for inclusion

The sampling technique associated with qualitative research is that of non-probability sampling (Babbie & Mouton, 2001: 166; Neuman, 2000:196). The purpose of non-probability sampling is for the explicit purpose of obtaining the richest source of information to answer the research question. Therefore specific cases, events or activities are included to clarify and deepen understanding (Nieuwenhuis, 2007:79; Neuman, 2000:196). It is not concerned with representativeness but deals more with how enculturated the chosen persons are to the research topic (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:288; Neuman, 2000:196; Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995: 45; Miles & Hubermann, 1994:30).

Purposive sampling, where sampling is based on the judgement of the researcher in order to get all possible cases that fit the criteria set was done for the first phase of the study. This decision is supported by recommendations proposed by Strydom and Delport (2005:329) and Neuman (2000: 196).

The community composition of Mmotla consists of various cultural groups, of which the Ndebele, Tswana, North Sotho, Tsonga and Swazi are well represented. Available female members from all these cultural groups formed the study group as they are customarily responsible for the acquisition and preparation of food. Such a decision was an acceptable practice as noticed by other researchers (Walker & Charlton, 2001; Coetzee, 1982:67; Krige, 1965:47; Schapera & Goodwin, 1962:159). The aim was twofold: first, to obtain general information from the various cultural groups on their current way of life in the community and to sketch the everyday food practices and those applicable to special occasions. In the second place, it was to ensure that sufficient data on traditional and current food practices would be captured, therefore, younger as well as older adult females, as well as specialists and lay people were included.

Turner (1967:27-43) advises to include participants, both specialists and lay people, from all the major cultural groups residing in a community. Specialists are able to supply more objective and comprehensive information and can include enculturated individuals such as *isinyangas* (traditional practitioners) and *isangomas* (diviners) and older females, especially those who still adhere to traditional beliefs and practices and those who have knowledge of earlier social customs. Lay people were those knowledgeable about traditional customs and food practices and who still take part in traditional rites and ceremonies.

(ii) Focus groups as data collection technique

Data collection started with focus groups as an “exploratory technique”, because it was believed that this was an appropriate method to get acquainted with the participants including their environments and to become familiar with the food practices followed by individuals and groups in the community. The role of the researcher at the onset of the study is compared by Hammersley and Atkinson (1995:99) to that of a novice, who needs to be introduced to the study setting and equipped with the necessary knowledge in order to find the way and cope in the new situation. The role of the researcher upon entering the field was that of a novice or stranger who required orientation and induction training in order to get the required insider’s point of view (Neuman, 2000:356). Focus groups proved to be a suitable technique to orientate the researcher and establish the necessary rapport with the participants.

Greeff (2005:300) explicates focus groups as an appropriate technique to create the needed lines of communication between researcher and participants. In the larger process of such communication the worlds of the researcher and participants are connected and this facilitates in narrowing or closing the gap between them. In the same vein Schurink *et al.* (1998: 316), regard focus groups as a good point of departure to acquaint the researcher with the participants' views on the phenomenon under study. They view focus groups as a technique to learn how people talk and think about the phenomenon of interest. The researcher, however, not only gets familiar with the language that the participants use to describe their experiences but, in the process, also gets acquainted with their cultural values and styles of thinking and communication about the research topic.

A focus group is basically a group interview where the data and insights are produced by the interaction between the group members in the focus group under the guidance of the researcher or moderator who supplies the topic(s) for discussion (Fontana & Frey, 2000:651; Morgan, 1997:2). The manner in which the focus group is planned and conducted should facilitate open discussion in which each participant is in a position to share experiences and attitudes, to make and respond to comments, ask questions to qualify, clarify, and also to build upon the responses of the other group members and, in doing so, more in-depth information is uncovered by the researcher (Schurink *et al.,* 1998:314; Betts *et al.*, 1996:280). The resultant group interaction process thus produces ideas or statements and provides meaningful information that may not be generated when other data collection techniques are used (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:292; Morgan, 1997:2).

Schurink *et al.* (1998:314) point out that, in using this technique, the researcher is in the position to inductively develop concepts, theories and typologies that are grounded in and reflected by the intimate knowledge the participants have of the phenomenon under study. In this work, it concerned their own food practices. Via the participants' own perceptions, using their own words and their own expressions, the focus group creates "emic data" which, when used together with "etic data", helps to uncover and gain insight into the world of the participants (Schurink *et al.,* 1998: 315).

Apart from being an appropriate data collection technique in exploratory studies (Betts *et al.,* 1996:279), the focus group is also an effective technique to obtain data from adults with low literacy skills (Keim, Swanson, Cann & Salinas, 1999; Betts *et al.,* 1996). Most of the participants in this study could be described as having low literacy skills. Other advantages of focus groups relate to the cultural background of the participants and the type of data that can be obtained. In cross-cultural studies like the present study, focus groups seemed to be acceptable to cultural groups where a high premium is placed on group participation,

because the participants were more at ease when they were interviewed as a group as opposed to individually. In this study, this was the case at the beginning of the data collection phase. Trollip (1991:77) reports the same experience with a group of Ndebele women, and ascribed this to the cultural background of the participants, where the group and group participation were important, and argued that this could be a reason why this technique was successful in her research. Achterberg (1988:247) suggests that when participants are interviewed in a group, a wider range of information, insight and ideas is produced as a result of the combined group effort. Babbie and Mouton (2001: 292) point out that a large deal of interaction on a topic can also be observed in a limited space of time through focus groups. Achterberg (1988:247) supports these views and feels that the focus group "speeds up the interview process and the accumulation of data".

Since the group creates meaning among themselves rather than individually, the researcher is able to explore situations and is in the position to get hold of information that would not otherwise be available or accessible (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:292; Morgan, 1997:8). Fontana and Frey (1994:365) raise another point by commenting that a group discussion sometimes facilitates "recall aiding", in which participants are stimulated by the discussion and this helps some participants to remember or recall incidents or events from the past that they might have not thought of or seen as relevant or valuable. This contributes to cumulative and elaborate data over and above the individual responses that are created during the focus group (Fontana & Frey, 1994: 364).

An account of the procedures to capture the data follows. Similar procedures were followed in both phases of this study, therefore a detailed description is presented as part of phase one of the data collection. The account of the procedures below similarly applies to the individual interviews conducted in phase two.

Data was captured through audio tape recordings of the focus group discussions and individual interviews. Field notes of observations and impressions during the focus group discussions, interviews and visits were kept by the researcher as well as the two facilitators and were later added to the transcriptions to produce a comprehensive data set of each research visit to Mmotla.

Permission to record the focus group discussions and individual interviews were requested at the beginning of the first meeting with the participant(s). The participants had no objection and, after the initial shyness and self-consciousness, it seemed as though they completely forgot about the recording and the interviews and discussions took place in a relaxed atmosphere. The biographical information of each participant was also requested during the

first interview. This was played back to them with the excuse that the researcher had to check whether the recorder was recording properly. The participants were initially very amused to hear their own voices. This technique also seemed to serve as an effective ice-breaker. The playing back of the first few minutes of the recording of each contact session served another purpose, and that was to check the audibility of the recording. Participants who spoke softly then often realised themselves that they had to speak up, even though they were also constantly reminded by the facilitators to do so when the need for such intervention arose.

Following the guidelines of Kvale (1996:127-128), the researcher introduced each contact session (focus groups and individual interviews), by presenting the themes or issues for discussion and, if a follow-up event, a point was made of enquiring whether any item raised in the previous session(s) needed further clarification or explanation. Spradley (1979:59) advises that the researcher needs to "remind the informant where the interview is to go." The contact session ended with debriefing and an offer to verify and elucidate uncertainties.
The two facilitators served individually as independent interpreters and scribes during the focus groups and individual interviews.

The interview themes[15] and probes for each contact session were typed out and the researcher made copies available to them. This helped and ensured that the interpreters understood the aspect that was under discussion, which, in turn, aided in translating the probes and questions more accurately. The male interpreter also acted as scribe and took notes in English as the conversation in the groups or individually was mostly in Tswana. These notes were then used as a back-up recording of the main points raised. This was valuable as some sessions were very lengthy and involved so, if the interpreter missed something that was mentioned, it could then be retrieved and added. Initially this also served as a safety blanket for the interpreter who was nervous in the this role in the beginning, and the assurance that someone else was also listening and translating, definitely led to a more natural conversation between translator and participants. These notes were also a useful back-up in case the tape recordings were not audible, or when the tape recording failed, as has happened on one or two occasions during data collection. The researcher directed the question to the female interpreter who then posed the question in Tswana with answers then being translated back into English. At her request, the scribe also assisted, from time to time, with the translations and explanations.

[15] See Addenda A and B for the probes on the environmental resources of the village and the list of topics that served as interview themes during focus group discussions and individual interviews.

The second and succeeding focus groups and interviews always started with a clarification cum briefing session on aspects from the previous session that were unclear to the researcher. These included uncertainties with regard to the data and its interpretation. These points were then discussed and verified with the participant(s). Apart from the clarification of queries at the beginning of contact sessions, a summary of the themes previously discussed, and their interpretation, was periodically reported on for the participants' reflection and comment. This gave them a sense of really being recognised as members of the research team, following the advice given by Babbie and Mouton (2001:310), Neuman (2000:369) and Kvale (1996:88) who refer to this as 'member checks'. Moreover, the role of the "socially acceptable incompetent", when certain aspects needed to be verified or clarified (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:290), was also adopted.

Apart from the audio tape recordings, the researcher and the two facilitators constantly made field notes during the focus group discussions and individual interviews. The aim of this note taking was also explained to the participants at the beginning of the first contact session and they had no objection to it nor did they feel threatened by it. In fact, some even checked to see that we noted aspects that they regarded as important information.

Different formats were used depending on the level of extensiveness. The translator took only cryptic notes to help her remember the key points of a discussion. The scribe took extensive notes during the conversations in Tswana. The researcher's notes were cryptic and included key words and phrases of important and interesting items and distinctive aspects that came up during the conversations. Concise notes complied by the researcher also related to interpretations, observations, impressions of interactions and other environmental aspects that occurred during interviews and afterwards. Following the advice of Neuman (2000:363) and Hammersley and Atkinson (1995:175-176), the cryptic notes that were taken during the focus groups and interviews were transformed into legible and meaningful notes directly after leaving the field. These were kept according to the guidelines of Schurink (1998:285) and Trollip (1991:79). Authors such as Miles and Huberman (1994), Strauss and Corbin (1998) also emphasise the importance of keeping field notes and editing these into a legible and understandable format as soon as possible after each contact session. Schurink (1998:285) distinguishes three different types of field notes, namely observation notes, methodological notes and theoretical notes. This taxonomy was followed and the field notes duly kept during the data collecting and capturing processes are briefly described.

Observation notes These are accounts of what happened during the fieldwork and provide an excellent method to capture the researcher's immediate impressions and feelings.

Observation notes dealt with the who?, what?, when?, where?, under what circumstances? How did the participants react? (Miles & Huberman, 1994:51-52).

Theoretical notes These are the researcher's "self-conscious notes" on what was thought and experienced during the observations and includes the private statements by the researcher on what could possibly "bear conceptual fruit." The researcher "interprets, infers, hypothesises, conjectures; … develops new concepts, links these to older ones, or relates any observation to any other…" (Schurink, 1998:286).

Methodological notes These are contained in the reminders, instructions and critical comments that researchers write to themselves (Schurink, 1998:286). Strauss and Corbin (1998:217) refer to these as operational notes. In essence, they are pointers or reminders of what was thought about, what needs to be done, or where to go next. Miles and Huberman (1994:51) also regard these as important notes and included similar notes on their contact summary sheet.

In this study three focus groups were formed with adult females and between 11 and 12 contact sessions were held with each of the groups. A total number of 35 focus group contact sessions were conducted during the first phase of the study. These focus group contact sessions continued until, as recommended in literature (Greeff, 2005: 306; Neuman, 2000:375; Kvale, 1996:102), all interview topics were covered and data saturation was reached.

(iii) Participant observation

Concurrently with the focus groups and individual interviewing, participant observation and unobtrusive measures were also employed as data collection techniques for this study. These techniques were considered appropriate to attain the research objectives as formulated, and were chosen to complement and reinforce each other. Each technique as such provided the means to view the problem from different points of view and enhanced triangulation (Babbie & Mouton, 2001: 275; Strauss & Corbin, 1998:11; Trollip, 1995:151; Miles & Huberman, 1994: 438). The process of participant observation as conducted in this study is presented next, followed by the unobtrusive measures employed.

The researcher had the opportunity to observe the participants in their own natural environment and through direct contact with the participants (Henning *et al.*, 2004:82; Schurink, 1998:279-281; Adler & Adler, 1994:378). The description by Schurink implies that the researcher has to get involved in the everyday lives of the research participants in their

own environment to give an "insider perspective" of their life world. In other words, not only data on how "they go about their everyday lives" is revealed, but the researcher also has the opportunity to gain a better understanding of the personal or individual viewpoints of the participants (Henning *et al*., 2004:84-85; Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995:1-2).

In this study the researcher engaged with the life world of the subjects by conducting the research in their own environment, namely the village of Mmotla. The role of the researcher was that of observer-as-participant. Driving through the village to reach the participants and venues where the focus groups and interviews were being conducted, was an opportunity to examine, at first hand, the everyday world of community dwellers and to interrogate, observe and record data relevant to the research problem. Data on the natural surroundings and available resources that impacted on food practices described the structural environment (see Addendum A). For example, the poor soil conditions, semi-arid climate and lack of water were natural conditions that severely hampered crop production. Another aspect was the availability of resources such as electricity and piped water. Most of the households did not have piped water so water had to be bought from neighbours who were fortunate enough to have boreholes or transported from central water points in large plastic containers by wheelbarrow. Particular attention was paid to noting the location of formal as well as informal facilities where food products could be purchased. Through personal visits to these, the researcher became acquainted with the food procurement options available in the village and the prices of these products.

Another feature of participant observation is to facilitate the process of being placed inside the world of the participants, also results to promote empathy with the participants and fuller appreciation of their situation. Although becoming an "insider" allows researchers to "be non-judgemental about the stance, position feelings and world-view of others", the researcher has to be constantly aware of the "dualistic role" that has to be fulfilled (Schurink, 1998:282-283). On the one hand, the researcher has to become involved in the life world of the participants, whilst on the other hand, the researcher must guard against getting too involved with the participants and losing objectivity in the process (Adler & Adler, 1994:381). The advice of Hagan (in WJ Schurink, 1998: 283) is therefore applicable: "The observer must attempt to mentally operate on two different levels: becoming an insider while remaining an outsider." Hammersley and Atkinson (1995:115) have a similar opinion on this matter and give the following guideline: "There must always remain some part held back, some social and intellectual 'distance'. For it is in the space created by this distance that the analytical work of the ethnographer gets done."

Adler and Adler (1994:381) caution that there are certain limitations to participant observation that could directly affect the validity of the observations. A researcher's "own perceptions" might obscure the reality of the observation. This was overcome in the present study by encouraging the facilitators and participants to assist in the interpretation of the observations and asking them to clarify and explain uncertainties and misconceptions expressed by the researcher. To ensure that reliable observations were recorded, the researcher was involved in the community for a long time and field observations were made, under varying conditions, over a period of 20 months.

(iv) Unobtrusive measures

Other material, such as photographs, newspaper articles, documents and artefacts provided by the participants or other people, were readily available in the field setting and, in some cases, as advocated in the literature, photocopied or photographed with permission (Schurink, 1998:284; Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995:18).

These unobtrusive data sources, such as photographs, maps, diagrams, charts, nutrition education flash cards and dishes prepared by the participants with the recipes of these dishes formed part of the data collected.

Photographs Photographs were used as data source to confirm and verify certain practices and customs. Important aspects with regard to acculturation were, for example, noticed by studying these photographs. The photographs also confirmed that some of the traditional practices were still followed. These photographs were either taken by the researcher or received from the participants from their family photograph albums. Sometimes the researcher requested some of the photographs, while on other occasions, they were spontaneously shown to the researcher to illustrate certain aspects that had been discussed. Permission to make copies of these to use as research resources was granted.

Maps The participants in the first focus group drew a map of the village to explain the layout of the village to the researcher. The most important venues and landmarks were indicated as well as the different residential areas.

Sketches The researcher supplied sketches of beef and sheep carcasses and requested the participants to draw or fill in how these were divided between family and kinship members at the different celebrations, where applicable.

South African Sugar Association's nutrition education flash cards The flash cards as well as pictures of indigenous vegetables were used to assist in the identification, description and verification of food items mentioned or described by the participants.

Recipes and dishes of traditional and modern food The participants prepared and provided the recipes of all the traditional and modern dishes that were mentioned during the discussions. The researcher took photographs of the prepared dishes. These helped the researcher recall them and, in some cases, when consulted in conjunction with the recipes, helped to clarify confusing and even conflicting information.

3.4.2.2 Phase two of sampling and data collection

After conducting the focus groups, the researcher had a broad, general overview of the food practices currently followed by each of the ethnic groups in the community. A significant aspect that emerged from the focus group discussions was that the Ndebele group, in contrast to the other ethnic groups, appeared to be more conservative with regard to following traditional food practices at certain special celebrations and occasions. The decision was then taken to continue with the Ndebele group in order to delve deeper into why they continue to cling the traditional food practices as opposed to the other groups who seem to have adapted, changed and in some cases even abandoned certain traditional food practices.

In the second phase of the study, individual interviews were conducted to gain a deeper understanding of the traditional and current food practices of the Ndebele group in this community. As pointed out by Frey and Fontana (2000:651) and Morgan (1997:22) the focus groups were a good starting point for the individual interviews, not only in providing the required background on this group but also to identify individuals who would be suitable interviewees. The focus groups were further particularly useful to reveal the range of future informants' thoughts and experiences prior to the individual interviews as Morgan (1997:22) rightfully indicates.

(i) Sampling technique and criterion for inclusion

The objective of the second data collection phase was then to obtain specific theoretically important data from Ndebele participants in order to gain deeper insight into the meanings attached to the traditional and modern food practices from this particular ethnic group. Theoretical sampling was followed during the second phase of data collection. This type of sampling is recommended when the grounded theory approach of data analysis is used, and

the rationale for the sampling process is based on the emerging concepts that are relevant to the evolving theory that transpires during the data analysis. It supports the production of as many categories and properties as possible to enhance the grounded theory approach of data analysis as Strauss and Corbin (1998:202) advocate. By implication this means that, during the research process, the theoretical interest that develops or the new insights that are gained, guide or steer the decision of what data needs to be collected next and where the data could be collected (Neuman, 2000:200; Schurink, 1998: 254; Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995:42) and hence which participants should be included. It thus builds on certain characteristics or criteria that help to develop and test the researcher's theory and explanation (Silverman, 2000:105). In theoretical sampling the researcher purposively tries to include cases that would help reveal features that are theoretically important about a particular setting/topic as Neuman (2000:196) explains. The criterion set for the individual in-depth interviews was that only thoroughly enculturated Ndebele females who still engaged in traditional food practices were eligible for inclusion.

(ii) Individual interviewing as data collection technique

A degree of flexibility was maintained in the interview situations conducted for the current study. The discussions were in the form of conversations and each was adapted to promote the natural flow of the conversation according to the communication style and temperament of the interviewee. The purpose of the individual interview in this study was to obtain the Ndebele participants' personal perceptions of their food practices and the meanings attached to them through carefully planned, semi-structured discussion. Although a list of themes was at hand to guide and remind the researcher what had to be covered in each interview, the list of topics was not used in a prescriptive manner. It should, however, be kept in mind, as Schurink (1998:298) points out, that the researcher is not passive in this whole process, but is "… directing the interviews by means of a definite research agenda in order to gain information on the phenomenon they study." In other words, the researcher defines and controls the interview situation (Kvale, 1996:6) and, although the research interview is very similar to an everyday conversation, it is conducted according to an interview guide where certain themes, and sometimes suggested questions, are included (Kvale, 1996:27). Babbie and Mouton (2001:289) distinguish individual interviewing as an "open" interview because it allows participants to speak for themselves instead of only providing answers based on the researcher's pre-determined hypothesis-based questions, as is the case in structured interview.

Although the researcher had a general plan of enquiry, in the form of themes and probes, the set of specific questions was not asked in a formalised way. The focus was on the

participant's perspective and experience. Neuman (2000:370) also regards the interview as "a joint production" of the researcher and the participant, where the active participant's insights, feelings and cooperation are deemed essential parts of the discussion process that will reveal subjective meanings. The semi-structured individual interview was a suitable technique to learn from each interviewee and her situation, as Neuman (2000:371) explains.

Another important facet of the individual interview that Taylor and Bogdan (1984:77) as well as Schurink (1998:299) emphasise, is that the participants express their perspectives, experiences or situations in their own words, and are thus sharing their "emic" experience. Kvale (1996:29, 105) holds the same opinion and, in addition, points out that the purpose of the research interview is to describe and understand the participants' lived world, their "self-understanding" and relation to it. Insight into the life world and own experiences of the participant contributes to the researcher's "insider-view" into the lives of the participants by literately "taking the role of" or putting the researcher in the shoes of the participants (Fontana & Frey, 2000: 655; Cassidy, 1994).

In this study, the individual interviews were used as a complementary technique, to obtain an in-depth understanding of some of the topics that were only broadly discussed in the focus groups. It further provided the opportunity to be more focussed, to delve deeper and accommodate perspectives that were underrepresented in the focus group discussions. Moreover, as suggested by Botha (2001) as well as Morgan (1997:23), individual interviews also afford enculturated participants the opportunity to elaborate on topics that were not fully uncovered or explored in the focus groups. The conversation style of the interview also tended to put the participants at ease and promoted a more relaxed atmosphere that brought about even better rapport with the participants.

Themes for the interviews were based on the concepts and categories that emerged from the data analysis of the focus groups, as well as other aspects identified by the researcher in publications that needed further clarification, in-depth discussion and uncovering. Following the advice of Babbie and Mouton (2001:289) and Falk *et al.* (1996:258), only a general plan of inquiry was developed and no specific questions were formulated beforehand. The themes served as stepping-stones to guide the interview, serving as reminders or checks for the researcher. Therefore, as recommended, care was taken that the interviews were not too structured to ensure a flexible, iterative and continuous process, that simultaneously allowed for the probing of emergent themes as they developed (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:289; Falk *et al.,* 1996:258).

As advocated by Falk *et al.* (1996:258), all first interviews conducted with the individuals were based on the same list of interview themes. Themes for the second and following interviews were developed after transcription and preliminary analysis of the first interview and were personalised for each participant. Emerging themes were covered in the second and successive interviews. From the second interview onwards, the identified themes were also explored by using the premises of the theoretical perspectives used in the study. This further enhanced the holistic and contextual approach of the data collection process.

The individual interviews as data collection technique in the second phase of the study were similar to the focus groups in phase one complemented by participant observation and unobtrusive measures. A description of the latter two data collection techniques were given under the first phase (see 3.4.2.1).

3.4.3 Transcriptions

The researcher transcribed every 90 to 120 minute focus group discussion and individual interview verbatim directly after each field visit. Voice tones and pauses were ignored as this was a translated version of the conversation. Although transcription was extremely time consuming, the advantage was that familiarisation and interpretation occurred simultaneously. This was indeed beneficial, endorsing the viewpoints of Kvale (1996:160) and Henning *et al*. (2004:105). Missing and unclear aspects were detected and listed and these could then be clarified at the beginning of the next focus group discussion or individual interview. Over and above this, listening to the recordings, typing up the transcriptions and conducting the first round of coding of the data, also helped in planning subsequent contact sessions. The researcher realised what had to be dealt with next, which aspects had to be probed further or needed clarification or could be verified according to the literature studied. These thoughts and ideas were then recorded in the theoretical and methodological sections of the field notes and included in the interview schedule for the next contact session.

To establish whether the translator had, in fact, translated all the relevant information that was requested, and as discussed by the participants, the transcriptions of the focus group discussions held with the first focus group, were initially also checked by an independent Ndebele graduate student who stood outside the context of the study. This Food Science graduate was fluent in Tswana and isiNdebele and had a sound background of the Ndebele as well as the Sotho-Tswana customs and traditions. He had successfully completed an undergraduate course in the socio-cultural studies of foods, and this, and as well as his Food Science background, contributed to his understanding of the research objectives. It was

found that the translations were an accurate and true version of what was requested and discussed.

Separate audio tapes were kept for each contact session with a label indicating the type of data collection technique and the date. The transcriptions of every contact session were kept in separate word processing files. Hard copies of the transcriptions were used as working documents during data analysis.

3.4.4 Data analysis

How the data of a qualitative study is analysed, is guided by the research paradigm and theoretical approach of the study (Babbie & Mouton, 2001: 491; Miles & Huberman, 1994:430). The justification of the research paradigm and theoretical approach has been given (see 3.2). In the same vein, Babbie and Mouton (2001:491), as well as Kvale (1996:179-180), indicate that how the analysis takes place depends on the content and purpose of a study. The topic of the research and the research question ("the what?") and their (*or its)* purpose ("the why?") are determining factors, because the theoretical conception of "what" is investigated should provide the basis for making decisions of how the content is analysed. In addition to this, Babbie and Mouton (2001:491) add that how one wants the content question to be answered also needs to be decided, however, this is often already indicated by the research paradigm and theoretical approach of a study.

A comprehensive guideline on the data analysis approach to consider for different types of qualitative studies is given by Tesch (1990:77-99). As this study seeks to explore the food practices of a specific group of people and to understand and describe the associated meanings attached to them, the research interest of this study fits under the "discovery of regularities", according to Tesch's (1990:84) framework. The "discovery of regularities" is described as dealing with the identification and categorisation of elements and the establishment of their connections. As a number of the formulated objectives for this study deal with the identification of elements that relate to food practices and their meaning, this approach was regarded as the most suitable to follow. In her explanation, Tesch (1990:84) indicates that it is particularly suited to studies that aim to systematically and insightfully describe the phenomenon under study, as is the case in this study on the meaning of food practices. She further stresses that such studies often deal more than just *what is*, by including the *why is it?* Seeking explanations is regarded as similar to theorising, therefore the analysis procedures need to facilitate theorising (Tesch, 1990:84-85) as is the case with grounded theory. The grounded theory approach to data analysis was accepted as the most appropriate for the present study and thus chosen as the preferred form of analysis.

Babbie and Mouton (2001:499) describe grounded theory as an approach that accommodates the study of a relatively unknown social phenomenon around which no theory may yet exist. This is, for example, the case in the present study as there is no theory up till now on the meaning of the food practices of this group of people. As rather simplistically explained by Babbie and Mouton (2001:499), the process of grounded theory entails that theory is literally built from the ground up, and the building blocks are the concepts that are grounded in the data, obtained through analysis. The more formal definition by Strauss and Corbin (1998:23) is also applicable here as it concisely includes the steps involved in the grounded theory approach. “A grounded theory is one that is inductively derived from the study of the phenomenon it represents. That is, it is discovered, developed, and provisionally verified through systematic data collection and analysis of data pertaining to that phenomenon. Therefore, data collection, analysis and theory stand in reciprocal relationship with each other. One does not begin with a theory, then prove it. Rather, one begins with an area of study and what is relevant to that area is allowed to emerge.”

Data analysis is an ongoing, emerging process in qualitative research. This implies that data analysis begins, and proceeds consecutively, with data collection and is not separate to, or done after the completion of the data collection (Strauss & Corbin, 1998:11; Kvale, 1996:177; Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995:206). The grounded theory approach, as outlined by Strauss and Corbin (1998), formed the basis of the data analysis in this study. Techniques, procedures and guidelines described by other researchers were also incorporated, a decision endorsed by other scholars (Kvale, 1996; Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995; Huberman & Miles, 1994).

3.4.4.1 The grounded theory approach to data analysis

The transcribed text obtained from the audio taped recordings was edited and supplemented with applicable notes, comments and/or interpretations from the field notes and other relevant data gathered. As advised by Strauss and Corbin (1998:207), analysis of the transcriptions obtained from a data collection session followed directly after the transcriptions were completed. In doing so, the researcher created the opportunity to become more familiar with the data, and to reflect on the data collection process and the data that it produced, as suggested by Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995:206. This procedure also guided the planning of, and preparation for, the next data collection opportunity.

Before proceeding with the description of the grounded theory process of analysis, it should be mentioned that the data analysis for this study was initially performed manually according to the guidelines of both Strauss and Corbin (1998) and Miles and Huberman (1994), and it

began during the data collection process. Unfortunately the opportunity to attend a short course on the computer software package Atlas.ti only arose after the data for this study had already been collected, and the software package itself was only available for use by the researcher over a year later. The volume of raw data collected from 35 focus group sessions and 26 individual interviews was, as could be expected, fairly large and extensive. It was, therefore, decided to re-run the analysis process with the Atlas.ti software package. The data analyses performed by both these methods are presented. As the same coding principles applied to both the manual as well as the computer-aided methods, a detailed description of the manual data analysis is given first. A brief description of the computer-aided method then follows.

3.4.4.2 Manual data analysis procedures

Following the transcription of the audio tapes, the coding of the information began and was done according the guidelines given by Strauss and Corbin (1998) and Huberman and Miles (1994). To help the researcher make sense of the data, the transcriptions were read through several times, heeding the advice of Hammersley and Atkinson (1995:210). The coding procedures started with open coding. Steps such as axial coding, memo writing, data display, data reduction, data aggregation and selective coding followed. It has to be kept in mind that these steps are not linear and that some took place simultaneously with others and at times the researcher moved back and forth between them (Strauss & Corbin, 1998:58).

Miles and Huberman (1994:56) emphasise that coding is analysis. The first step in the process of analysis is where the researcher organises the raw data into conceptual categories through the creation of themes or concepts that are then labelled or coded. Codes or labels are attached to words, phrases, sentences or paragraphs and the data is thereby analytically categorised into themes (Neuman, 2000:421). Coding is therefore regarded as the first step in data selection and reduction and this process should ideally be guided by the research questions.

Open coding As the first step of the analytical process, concepts were identified and their properties and dimensions discovered in the data, as suggested by Strauss & Corbin, 1998:101). The data was literally “opened up”, according to Strauss and Corbin, (1998:102), or “broken down” (Neuman, 2000:422). The purpose of this step was to expose the thoughts, ideas and meanings contained in the text and, in doing so, the themes in the data were identified and brought “to the surface” (Neuman, 2000:422). Moreover, this step provided the opportunity to closely examine the data thus enabling the researcher to note and compare

similarities or differences. The transcriptions were re-read several times at this stage, to code and note the identified themes, concepts, events and situations in each of the transcriptions.

It is important to take note of Strauss and Corbin's (1998:109) guidelines for this initial phase of microanalysis. Here comparisons are made and questions asked to dig deeper into the data and discover the "range of potential meanings contained within the words used by the respondents and develop them more fully in terms of their properties and dimensions." By doing this, conceptual ordering takes place, which is regarded as the first step in theory building (Strauss & Corbin, 1998:19-20,103).

Axial coding After some conceptual categories were identified from the coded data, the next step in the coding and analysis process, namely axial coding, followed. This is the process where linkages or relations between concepts, categories or subcategories are established (Neuman, 2000:423; Strauss & Corbin, 1998:123). Here the coding takes place around the axis or centre of a category, which, in turn, is then linked to the identified properties and dimension it possesses. Axial coding is also regarded as a form of data reduction or condensation and, according to Strauss and Corbin (1998:124), this helps the researcher "to see the data", because what happens, is that the fractured or broken down data from the process of open coding, and, in fact, reassembled in a new way. In doing this, answers to questions such as who?, when?, where?, why?, how? with regard to the categories are sought. Using the guidelines of Huberman and Miles (1994:429), the linkages between concepts or categories were displayed as mini-frameworks or diagrams. As pointed out by Neumann (2000:423), axial coding stimulates thinking about possible linkages between concepts and themes and displaying them in various formats facilitates the process.

As advised by Strauss and Corbin (1998:88), the analysis of the focus group discussion with the first group was used to "open up" the mind of the researcher to all the possible meanings contained in the data. The same process was repeated for the other focus groups, and their data displays were put together with the data displays created from the axial coding of the first focus group. In doing this, the data displays were constantly refined as new or additional data became available. This also resulted in the constant comparative method described by Glaser and Strauss (in Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995:213). During this systematic process of sifting and comparing the practices, relationships, concepts and categories, similarities and differences between the different data sets were noted.

Selective coding Selective coding is the process of integrating and refining the theory and is considered the last type of coding to be performed in grounded theory. In this process a core category is chosen to which other categories are then systematically related. The

relationships between the core and other categories are validated and, if necessary, categories are further refined and developed (Strauss & Corbin, 1998:143). Similarly, Babbie and Mouton (2001: 501) describe the core category as the main story line, or the object of study that is identified or chosen. The story is, however, told in an analytical manner and the researcher needs to show all the properties and dimensions related to the core category and then relate all the other categories to the story line or core category.

Memos In the data analysis phase similar types of notes to those done during fieldwork were kept. These written records of analysis relate to the formulation of theory in the grounded theory approach (Strauss & Corbin, 1998:197). Two of the three types of notes were described under field notes, namely theoretical and operational notes (see 3.4.3.4). The third type, the code notes, contains the products of the three types of coding (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:501). These are notes, according to Neuman (2000:424), that researchers write that relate to the themes that are coded. They also serve as an aid to drawing conclusions (Huberman & Miles, 1994: 429). In this regard, Strauss and Corbin (1998:110) refer to memos as "the researcher's record of analysis, thoughts, interpretations, questions and directions for further data collection." They therefore relate to those aspects that were unclear, missing or peculiar and need to be checked or addressed during a following contact session.

From the data obtained in the focus groups new themes emerged. These, together with the already identified themes, were used to compile aggregated descriptive summaries of the practices and procedures as they relate to the food practices in this community. Achterberg (1988:247) sees these summaries as serving another form of data reduction and preliminary analysis. The transcriptions, field notes and observations were then put together in a more coherent, systematic and organised manner that created a data set that was easier to handle.

The aim of obtaining a broad overview of the food practices of this community was achieved, and baseline data from which to work was then available. It served as valuable data and background for the researcher when conducting individual interviews. Subsequently, additional information and insights obtained from analysing the individual interviews was added to the aggregated descriptive summaries. On completion of the analysis of the individual interviews, it was possible to read the complete reduced data set and the major themes of the study could be identified.

3.4.4.3 Data analysis with the Atlas.ti software package

A range of computer software packages is available to assist in qualitative data analysis. The history and development of the type of packages and attributes of each is not addressed here, as most good qualitative research methodology textbooks nowadays usually address this topic extensively. However, a few important aspects regarding the function and use of computer-aided qualitative data analysis are referred to briefly. These packages are currently designed, not to perform the analysis, but rather to facilitate the data analysis (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:503). In essence this implies that they help to organise the data better, to store text more carefully, and as is the case with Atlas.ti. They perform a sort and retrieve function that is faster and more accurate compared to doing these data analysis tasks manually.

The computer-aided data analysis was done using the Atlas.ti software package, "The Knowledge Workbench" by Thomas Muhr (2004; 1997). It offers a code-and-retrieve function and provides support for theory building by facilitating the connections between codes to perform a higher order of abstraction of the data. Atlas.ti is based on the grounded theory methodology (Muhr, 1997:1). Coding principles are similar to those applied in the manual coding process, with the added advantage that the software can cope with multiple and overlapping codes and coded segments can be comprehensively and rather quickly retrieved.

Before proceeding with the description of the procedures followed, the different levels of the operation need to be explained. Atlas.ti provides data analysis in two modes or levels, the textual and conceptual. At the textual level, activities include the segmenting or coding of the primary documents and compiling or adding annotations to these. The filing and indexing of passages from these primary documents, as well as secondary materials such as memos and annotations, facilitates their retrieval at a later stage. At the conceptual level, the unique networking feature of Atlas.ti allows one to visually connect selected passages, memos and codes into diagrams that graphically represent or outline complex relations in the data (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:513; Muhr, 1997:7). Muhr also refers to a third level in Atlas.ti, namely the organisational level, which serves to connect the above two levels. All administrative functions related to the project are dealt with at the organisational level.

The strength of computer-aided data analysis lies in the ability to order, structure, retrieve and visualise data. In this regard, Muhr (1997:1-2) states one of the objectives of Atlas.ti is to serve as "a powerful workbench" for the qualitative analysis of large bodies of textual, graphical and audio data. Another objective relates to the capacity of Atlas.ti to facilitate in uncovering complex phenomena hidden in data in an exploratory, but focussed manner.

Muhr explains the main principles of the Atlas.ti methodology by using the acronym “VISE”, which stands for Visualisation, Integration, Serendipity and Exploration.

Visualisation in Atlas.ti refers to the direct support offered to the way humans think, plan and approach solutions. Complex properties and relations are visual through tools it offers that help to keep the researcher focussed on the data. When working on details (another fundamental design feature), the integrated whole of the project is still within reach through the “hermeneutical unit.” Serendipity stands for the intuitive approach to the data, browsing through data leads to making relevant discoveries. The process of getting acquainted with the data is systematic although an exploratory, discovery oriented approach is followed (Muhr, 1997:2).

The computer-aided data analysis proceeded according to the steps as described by Muhr (1997:8). The transcribed text was computerised using the Atlas.ti software programme. In Atlas.ti all the transcribed texts are stored as data files called “primary documents” in an “idea container”, which contains or encloses all data related to the project, namely the Hermeneutical Unit. Similar to manual procedures, the coding of the data follows. The text is read through and codes assigned to selected text passages. Coding data literally means that the data is categorised, and this facilitates the comparison of data segments that are differently or equally coded. These equally or differently coded segments are assigned to files and stored in the Hermeneutical Unit. From these coded segments the researcher is able to build networks, which, together with the codes, super codes and memos, are regarded as the cornerstone of the emerging theory.

Although the decision to re-run the data analysis with Atlas.ti had time implications, the benefit to the study was that a more detailed and refined analysis resulted. This was made possible through the find-and-retrieve function that definitely added value when the selective coding step was done as it enhanced the ‘thick descriptions’ that could then be compiled with more ease. The manual data analysis also had its advantages. It familiarised the researcher with the data set and provided a working knowledge of the grounded theory approach of Strauss and Corbin (1998). This also proved to be beneficial as the Atlas.ti programme is based on a grounded theory approach, and steps used were similar to the manual analysis process.

3.5 ETHICS

The study was approved by the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Natural and Agricultural Sciences of the University of Pretoria. Participation in the study was on a voluntarily basis and those who participated gave their verbal informed consent to participate prior to the first focus group discussion or individual interview in which they participated. Participants could withdraw from the study at any time and confidentially and anonymity was ensured and honoured through out the study.

3.6 CONCLUDING SUMMARY

In line with the goal of the study the rationale for the idiographic research strategy and methodology followed was justified. Appropriate methods and techniques to obtain the research goal were put forward. In the following chapter the external environments of the participants is described, to serve as background to the rest of the findings and their interpretation.