Proceedings of a Workshop on Questionnaires held at the Southern Africa Labour and Development Research Unit, School of Economics, University of Cape Town, April 30 to May 1, 1982.
This working paper is the second to flow from work undertaken specifically for the Second Carnegie Inquiry into Poverty and Development in South Africa which was launched in April 1982. It is hoped that a number of such papers will be written during the months ahead as part of the preparation for the Inquiry and that they will be published in the regular series of Working Papers issued by the Southern Africa Labour and Development Research Unit in the School of Economics at the University of Cape Town.
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* * * * *
INTRODUCTION

The theme of this workshop might well have been 'All you ever wanted to know about questionnaires but were afraid to ask'. The meeting was organised as part of the Second Carnegie Inquiry into Poverty and Development and arose from a need, expressed by a number of social scientists working around the country, for an opportunity to share ideas and problems encountered in drawing up, administering, and interpreting results of questionnaires designed to gain information about people and the communities in which they live. Quite apart from the desire to learn about the potential and the limits of questionnaires in general, there was urgent need to learn more about questionnaires in the context of Southern Africa. Most books dealing with the how and why of questionnaires in the social sciences are written by and for those working in Europe or North America where conditions are in many respects critically different from Southern Africa, whether urban or rural.

A number of people thinking about their questionnaires, doing fieldwork, or writing it up were invited to attend the workshop. Happily most people could come and a fairly representative selection of researchers gathered together. Particularly encouraging was the willingness of the different universities and research institutes to meet travel costs. Thus, 22 social scientists (see p.77) drawn from nine different universities met in Cape Town for a day and a half of intense discussion. This was so stimulating that it seemed a good idea to share something of what we learnt, if only because all those present felt they would have saved themselves much wear and tear (and anxiety) if they could have attended such a teach-in before they ever got embroiled in the mysteries and frustrations of social research by means of questionnaires. Learning that other people wrestle with similar problems is most comforting to an isolated social scientist wondering why no text book ever prepared her (or him) for all the problems that seem to emerge in practice.

So this Working Paper has been drawn together, in the hope that it will prove useful as a rough chart to guide those embarking for the first time on the perilous journey of questionnaire research. It contains, first of
all, a number of papers prepared specially for the Workshop and subsequently revised. In addition, participants were asked after the Workshop to write down their comments on various points. The replies received were knit together without undue editing.

In the first two papers, Lieb Loots and Jane Prinsloo consider some of the basic points that those drawing up questionnaires must think about. This is followed by some useful hints prepared by Peter Moll and Charles Simkins on pitfalls to be avoided when processing and interpreting computer data. This is followed by two papers which might be summarised as advice to young researchers, based on the experience of actual field work in a rural reserve, and in two metropolitan areas, by Chris de Wet and Jane Prinsloo. At some stage during their research, social scientists using questionnaires are likely to be confronted by an anthropologist who, with or without tact, questions the very foundation of the research by comparing the superficiality of much of the responses elicited by questionnaires compared with the depth of knowledge of a society gained by an anthropologist, able to speak the language and willing to live for three years in one spot. This Workshop was no exception and Eleanor Preston-Whyte's 'lively' paper fed an important input into the process of thinking that went on amongst participants.

The next three sections are drawn from the post Workshop responses made by participants. In the first, participants were asked to assess who, in the light of their own research experience, were the poor in the areas they knew best and how poverty was defined? In the second, participants were asked to list information which they felt was required in any study of impoverishment. The third paper draws together those points which participants found most striking and useful to emerge during the course of discussion. Finally, there is a brief bibliography for those wishing to read further in this field and a list of participants together with their addresses, telephone numbers, and a brief outline of current research work.

Perhaps the two most striking conclusions to emerge from the Workshop are firstly the realisation that questionnaires are no short cut to understanding society. Questionnaires are no substitute for the long and patient work of an anthropologist spending years in the field. To take one example,
in subsistence agriculture it is impossible to gather such seemingly simple information as income data by marching in, asking the relevant questions, and expecting to get the complete answer at once. Adequate data can only be obtained by somebody prepared to spend time getting to know the people and then visiting each household at least once a month for no less than a year and gathering detailed information about production each time. Thus, and this leads us to the second conclusion, one rôle which properly designed questionnaires could play would be to enable a rapid sample survey of a community to be done which would enable a researcher working from the results to choose a small number of cases for in-depth study, knowing that the individual cases are reasonably representative of different characteristics of the community as revealed in the survey.

We hope that this Working Paper will prove useful as a rough chart to guide those embarking for the first time on empirical social research in Southern Africa. May we add that all comments, criticisms, suggestions, and further ideas will be gratefully received. We are only too mindful of the inadequacies of the present document and hope that some day a better guide will become available. In the meantime, a data bank of actual questionnaires used in the field is being built up at Saldru as a reference collection which may be consulted by any researcher wishing to see how others have set about asking questions. We invite research workers to add to this collection by sending to Saldru one copy of any relevant questionnaire which they may have drawn up and used.

This material was prepared for publication on behalf of the participants by a working party at Saldru, consisting of Peter Moll, Jane Prinsloo, Wilfred Wentzel and Francis Wilson.

F.W.
FORMULATION OF QUESTIONS

It may be appropriate to introduce my introduction with the following piece of doggerel, written by R.E. Rahl, professor of Sociology at the University of Kent:

A question I would like to ask
Concerns the purpose of our task!
May not obsession with precision
O'er cloud a noble vision?

To help the lot of the common man
Must be the aim of any plan,
Yet the market sees (tho' some may scoff it)
That from the poor there's little profit.

One thing's sure I can predict
The views of planners will conflict,
For truly 'twould be an amazing feat
If one man's poison were another's meat.

But facts ('tis said) speak for themselves
(And some people believe in fairies and elves)
But facts - let's face it - we select
And values guide what we detect.

I was asked to introduce this discussion in not more than five minutes. I gladly accepted, thus alleviating myself of the responsibility to give a scholarly treatment of the subject. On 'The formulation of questions' I am going to confine myself to the illustration of two general, but critical, principles with the aid of some actual examples. The main thrust of that which I want to say, can perhaps be summarised by paraphrasing Rahl's first and last verses:

The purpose of our scientific task
Concerns the questions we'd like to ask.
May not obsession with a noble vision
O'er cloud the need for precision.

Let facts really come from fairies and elves
And not our beliefs speaking for themselves.
Let the facts be what the people select
And not what our values guide them to detect.
The survey method of research has its shortcomings. I am also in sympathy with the anthropologists' emphasis on intensive micro-studies undertaken over a long period of time. However, I am convinced that there will always be a need for the means by which we can obtain, over a fairly short period of time or dispersed area, information which will enhance understanding, particularly of a comparative nature. The survey method with the questionnaires is therefore here to stay. As social scientists we must consequently concern ourselves with 'the questions we'd like to ask'.

I looked at a number of textbooks on research methods and found, to my astonishment, that almost all of them had no more than a short paragraph on the formulation of questions. It is as if the survey method of research is perceived to consist only of research design, sampling, data processing and analysis. Somewhere in between we unfortunately have to draw up a questionnaire with which we can go into the field. However, this might just be the weak link where our elaborate chain is going to snap.

This very workshop in fact testifies to the importance of a good and well-planned questionnaire. Even if a questionnaire, in the final analysis, is nothing but a list of questions, the precision of the questions still remains of the utmost importance. This is the case especially when the researcher is assisted by fieldworkers or interviewers, whether experienced or not.

I therefore wish to suggest that we ask ourselves two questions after every question we have formulated:

Does the question pinpoint the issue?
Is it phrased in such a way that it will be interpreted correctly and similarly by every respondent?

Does the question pinpoint the issue?

It almost goes without saying that a researcher ought not to embark on a survey before he has acquired a clear understanding of the issue he is investigating. Only then will it be possible to ask whether the question pinpoints the issue.

In a quality-of-life study the following question was asked:

'What at this moment makes you unhappy or unsatisfied with life?'
The information thus obtained was not used in the analysis. If we ask ourselves whether the question pinpoints the issue, it will become clear why the answers to the question were vague and uninterpretable. Whether the issue be housing, crime or transport, or for that matter any other factor affecting the quality of life of a person, it is only with one, or a series of, precise and specific questions that the issue can be pinpointed.

Do you feel that there is a need for an old age home in this area?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Don't know</th>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
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</table>

The above question from a recent socio-economic survey, does not at first glance present a problem. However, when we attempt to interpret the answer, we run into difficulties. Does a 'no' mean that there is no need for an old age home? Or only no need for an additional home? Or only no need where this particular family is concerned? And if the answer is 'yes', does it indicate the contrary? Or will our value-system always bias us to answer this question in the affirmative? Or is it even possible that the loyalty or respect towards elderly people in the household will prompt a negative answer? 'We do not know, because the question does not pinpoint the issue. Intervewees were asked the following questions on the use and provision of medical facilities:

(a) Are there medical facilities (doctors, hospitals) in your area?

(b) 1. Where do you go to if you need medical treatment?

2. Is there a particular reason why you go there?

Similar problems arise with these questions. The use of the word 'need' again poses a problem. How are 'medical facilities' and 'medical treatment' to be interpreted? Is the need for treatment perhaps defined as that for which you had to visit a doctor or a hospital? And if you didn't go there, in spite of being ill, should we not be interested in the reason why not? Even the last question does not altogether pinpoint the issue, as is reflected by this particular response: 'I go there because my husband is there'. The issue rather seems to be why the ill person is in that particular hospital, or another one, or not at all.
Consider the following 'compound' question:

Would you like to have a car, a job from 8.00-5.00, nice clothes and some responsibilities?

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<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Don't know</th>
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This question was put to vagrants and presumably explores the vagrant's adherence to one or more of society's (i.e. middle class) norms. But will an answer to this question really enhance a greater understanding of the issue? It even seems possible that any answer, yes or no, will only succeed in supporting our middle class presuppositions. Moreover, the question begs the question as to whether the 'likes' mentioned are necessarily consistent. Is it not possible that our middle class value system, particularly our work ethic, is compatible with not necessarily wanting a car and new clothes but wanting a job and responsibilities? This may well be the case for any other combination of things we would like to have or not have. It does not seem that the question succeeds in pinpointing the issue.

The next two questions on transport also appear, on the first reading, to be straightforward and direct. But do they pinpoint the issue?

1. If you drive to work by car, do you normally drive alone?

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<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

2. If you do not drive alone, how many people do you on average take to work with you?

   | 1 Person | 1 |
   | 2-3 Persons | 2 |
   | 4-5 Persons | 3 |
   | 5 and more Persons | 4 |
   | Drive alone | 5 |
   | Don't drive | 6 |
The whole purpose of conducting a socio-economic survey on the basis of a random representative sample, is to enable one to draw conclusions about the 'population' as a whole. That is presumably also the case with respect to these two questions. It is, however, doubtful whether this can be done with the answers obtained from these questions. 'If you drive...' does not enable one to say anything about the frequency of use. Does it, furthermore, only refer to people actually owning the car and thus exclude those who occasionally have a company car/delivery van etc. at their disposal? The questions also do not seem to allow for lift clubs. If I should drive one week and my friend the next, we will both be counted twice, as drivers and passengers. The use of concepts like 'normally' and 'on average' will not enhance clarification. It is more appropriate to ask direct questions referring to actual events in the recent past, e.g. 'How did you get to work yesterday? Who drove?' Whose car? How many people?'

Will the question be interpreted correctly? This obtains, to my mind, because these questions have remained uncomplicated.

Once again, it goes without saying that a researcher ought not to undertake a survey if he does not have an empathetic knowledge of the people he wants to interview and of the conditions under which they live. What is clear to the researcher might not be equally clear to the respondent, or even the interviewer. Before any major survey, a pilot study is necessary.

In the following example, the question was misinterpreted by many respondents who were not familiar with the term 'housing authority'. The use of the colloquial 'council' in a later survey solved the problem and was always understood to refer to the housing authority, i.e. with the specificity of the questionnaire.

Would you say:

- Housing authorities are interested in people - not interested in people?

You say they are... could you tell me why?

In a survey I undertook myself, the following two questions were asked in the pilot questionnaire:

In what year did you move to this town?

How long have you been working for your present employer?
The first question elicited a fair proportion of 'don't knows' or unreliable responses. The response to the second question turned out to be accurate and correct in more than 95% of the cases. The memory of most people seems to respond better to a duration question than to a question on some chronological point in time. It thus seems as if the interpretation of a question might even be affected by the way in which one's memory functions:

The next question is highly problematical:

Do you prefer to sleep alone (with your wife/girl) or to sleep with others at the Haven/Shelter?

| Alone | | Haven/Shelter |

A very ambiguous question indeed! The sexual ambiguities aside, it still seems possible that the question might be interpreted in different ways. Is the respondent being given a choice between sleeping alone or with others? Or is the choice between sleeping inside or out? Or is the respondent being asked about the sleeping arrangements at the shelter? Does the question refer to winter or summer, as sleeping patterns may change with the weather?

The next question presents interpretation problems on two levels. What does 'Rank from one to ten' mean? Must every item be given a number between one and ten independently of the other items? Or must the item be ranked relative to each other? On another level, one also wonders how the respondent is to differentiate between the various items. 'Shortage of housing', 'Allocation by a city council', and 'No choice' may well be interpreted as referring to the same thing.
Rank the following problems you have experienced from one to ten, with regard to housing:

<table>
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<th>Problem</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shortage of housing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Group Areas</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allocation by a city council</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of housing available</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No choice</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Too expensive</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Too small</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doesn't come up to my standard</td>
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<tr>
<td>Distance from work</td>
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Before concluding this section, let me emphasise that the formulation of a question cannot be done in isolation from the questions preceding or following it. Even the way in which the answer has to be recorded is important. The sequence of questions and the layout of the questionnaire may, if not given careful consideration, make nonsense of even a well formulated question.

Coding and Computation of Responses

The example below was a cardinal question in a survey aimed at establishing how students spend their time. The results could, however, not be used for the purpose intended for the simple reason that the numbers in the right hand column do not correspond to the number of tutorials (as do the numbers in the left hand column). It is thus a good illustration of how the way the answer is recorded may jeopardise even a question which is well formulated and understandable.
How many tutorials/small group classes of 40 minutes do you have to attend each week? (If a tutorial lasts longer than 40 minutes, mark the number of multiples of 40 you have to attend each week)

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In the next question this problem is compounded by the introduction of an unnecessary computation.

How many hours per week do you spend working in the library? First calculate the total number of hours per month that you spend in the library and then determine the average per week.

Example:
You spend 20 hours each month in the library.
Divide into weeks $\frac{20}{4} = 5$ hours. Mark the 5 in the appropriate space.
Do not work in the library

| 01 |
| 02 |
| 03 |
| 04 |

The computation could much more easily and correctly have been done by the computer. All that need to have been recorded was the number of hours.
This is an example of an 'error' often made by researchers, i.e. to do the computer's work for it. The computer is much better at calculating than we are. This also applies to the classification of data. If we record as much detail as possible, it will always be possible at a later stage to change the classification with the aid of the computer.
Our previous example also illustrates another very common shortcoming in socio-economic surveys. The respondent is here asked to calculate the total number of hours per month spent in the library. The student is not told which month. Is it an average month or is it last month? And if it is last month, we will still not know whether last month was a representative month. This raises the question whether a month is the best period for this particular question. To me it seems as if a series of questions referring to specific days in the immediate past may very well result in more reliable information.

The next example illustrates how a question may be misinterpreted, or at least the answer biased, by the question preceding it. If the respondent has had unhappy experiences with the police its recollection may very well bias the answer of the next question.

1. How many times have you been picked up by the police? ______
   What for? ___________________________________________

2. What do you think of people in general? ______________________

3. Do you think it is wrong to be picked up by the police for sleeping on benches, in parks and on sidewalks?
   Yes: __________________________
   No: __________________________

Finally, let me give one example of a leading question par excellence. It comes from a questionnaire, put to schoolchildren, on which the research for a D.B.H. was based.

A good citizen is loyal to his family, his community and his country?
   Yes: ______ No: ______ Uncertain: ______

I would have been most surprised if anybody, regardless of his/her political position, gave an unqualified 'No' as an answer.

How do we avoid these pitfalls? Unfortunately, I cannot provide a recipe for the good formulation of questions. We can attempt to draw up a list of general rules of thumb, (e.g. 'be as specific as possible', 'refer to actual events or people rather than hypothetical situations or imaginary...
persons', and 'test whether you can answer the question satisfactorily').

However, I am of the opinion that we can get very far by simply asking ourselves after every question we have formulated:

Does this question pinpoint the issues?
Is it phrased in such a way that it will be interpreted correctly and similarly by every respondent?

Having started on a literary note, it is perhaps appropriate to conclude with an extract of wisdom from Lewis Carroll. It also serves as a final example of how not to formulate a question.

'Cheshire Puss', she began rather timidly...
'Would you tell me which way to go from here?'
'That depends a good deal on where you want to get to', said the cat.
'I don't care where...' said Alice.
'Then it doesn't matter which way you go', said the cat.
THE QUESTIONNAIRE AS A TOOL IN SOCIAL RESEARCH: PRELIMINARY GUIDELINES

Jane Prinsloo

Questionnaires are not an appropriate research tool for every type of information collection in social research. Many types of information can be more efficiently and accurately gathered through the researcher's own field observations, guided interviews with individuals known to have special experience or expertise with particular people or situations, or a review of existing documents and records.

In those instances when the use of a standardised questionnaire form does seem to offer the best way of discovering desired information, it must be clear that the process of designing and implementing a reliable instrument is neither quick nor simple nor particularly inexpensive.

It is useful for discussion to identify several major phases of questionnaire design and implementation:

A. Questionnaire Construction - Content and Form

The construction of a questionnaire is determined by what information is sought and from whom. How best to elicit answers?

Aspects for consideration:

a. Question construction. Does the question pinpoint the issue? Will its meaning be clear to all respondents? (See notes from L. Loots at SALDRU workshop, or S.L. Payne, The Art of Asking Questions.)

b. The length of the questionnaire. Many people feel that an hour is an upper limit to the length of respondents' willingness/ability to answer questions. This depends entirely on the nature of the questionnaire and its pertinence and interest to the respondent.

c. The language of the questionnaire. Generally, it seems desirable to have the interviewers speak the same language as the interviewee. The questionnaire, itself, should be in the language of the interview to ensure as much consistency as possible among interviewers.
If possible, it is desirable to have the answers recorded in the language in which they will be analysed. Decisions on these issues must be determined by the nature of the information sought, the number of interviewers, and the language abilities of the interviewers.

d. The amount of in-interview coding required of enumerators. Unless it is very basic, all coding requiring any discrimination or decision-making should be left to the processing of the questionnaire data. Again, this depends on the nature of the information, and the known abilities of the interviewers.

The issue of open-ended questions vs. those presented with a limited number of possible answers arises here. Responses to the former are difficult/time-consuming to manipulate, but appropriate when the researcher is unable to anticipate likely responses and/or when he is hoping to raise new issues through interviewees' experiences and insight.

e. Clarity and simplicity of the layout. Does the layout of questions and responses facilitate smooth, efficient progression through the questionnaire?

f. Pilot testing. Complete pilot testing prior to interviewer training. The training period offers an excellent time to test the effectiveness of questions when asked by interviewers, and to check translations, but ideally, all major alterations will have been made at the pilot, i.e. testing stage, and interviewers will not be delayed after their training while they wait for major corrections to the questionnaire.

B. Questionnaire Implementation - The Interviewers and Interviewing.

Aspects for consideration:

a. Type of Interview. Is the questionnaire going to serve as a precise guide to the interviewer, or does it provide just a general agenda of issues to be covered? The use of questionnaires is necessary if the project requires uniformity of questions over a relatively large sample population and/or is using numerous interviewers.

b. Who and When to interview. Unit of Analysis - does the information sought relate to the individual, the family, the household or the community? Who is the best person, or group of people, to give the desired information? When would they be most likely to be available and amenable to participating?
c. Establishing an appropriate sample frame and ensuring a random sampling of respondents. Highly project-specific.

d. Interviewers - their selection, training and supervision.

Selection. Aspects to be considered in selection include:
(i) The comparative importance of interviewer's previous experience vs. his local experience/acceptability. (ii) The importance of language facility related to the language of the questionnaire. (iii) Not all people are good enumerators. It requires certain skills of compatibility, ability to listen, dependability, etc. It is better to work with a limited number of good interviewers than with a larger number of mediocre ones. The whole survey can be no better than the information gathered in the interviews. Final selection should be made only after a training period has permitted the potential interviewers to learn exactly what the project entails and the project director has had an opportunity to observe the enumerators in training.

Training. (i) All questionnaires are different, and thus require a thorough training of interviewers. A careful training period allows the project director to identify the best interviewers (and cull the bad), and it will ease - though certainly not eliminate - the monitoring of completed questionnaires. Avoid the urge to move quickly into the field. Two weeks well spent in the classroom and with trial runs in the field are well worth the investment. (ii) The training program should include a detailed discussion of each question and of the purpose of the survey as a whole. Interviewers should be instructed to follow wording exactly for each question and probe, and should be instructed about procedures for recording useful information which emerges outside the questions. (iii) Detailed study and testing during training can also serve as a final check on the clarity and precision of the questionnaire, and the accuracy of any linguistic translations which may have been made. Alterations at this stage should be minimal, however. (iv) Make administrative details clear from the beginning, including: anticipated length of interviews, expected work schedules, amount and frequency of pay, transport arrangements, etc.

Supervision. It is absolutely essential - perhaps the single most important control on the quality of the survey data - that the project director maintain a continuous and immediate monitor on the in-coming completed questionnaires to make sure that enumerators truly understand
the questions, that information is complete and consistent, and that problem questionnaires are returned immediately for correction/ completion. It is expensive, but desirable to corroborate questionnaire responses through call-backs to respondents, employer checks, checks with official information sources, etc. This serves to check the thoroughness and accuracy of the enumerator, as well as the honesty/memory of the respondent.

C. From Questionnaire Responses to Computer Processing

Ideally, the researcher should know the capabilities of the computer package himself. If this is not the case, the researcher should work closely with his computer consultant from the first stage of questionnaire construction.

Aspects for consideration:

a. Writing the codebook. This is relatively straightforward when the responses have been pre-coded in the questionnaire (i.e. respondents were offered a limited number of alternative answers from which they could select.) Categorizing responses to open-ended questions is very time-consuming, but does permit the researcher to discover possible answers which might not have occurred to him.

b. Coding - reading all questionnaires and recording responses in the code necessary for insertion in the computer.

c. Clarifying the information sought from the questionnaire data. Ideally, this was clear when the questions were originally developed and included in the questionnaire. However, unanticipated responses modify this to some extent.

This entire phase can be highly time-consuming, especially when questionnaires contain open-ended questions. However, the care with which response categories are established, and responses are then classified is critical in determining the usefulness of all the raw data collected. Ill-conceived classification of responses can completely distort all the information gathered. For further discussion on computer processing of data, see notes from Peter Mol1 at the Questionnaire Workshop and the references listed in the bibliography generated by the Workshop participants.

D. Data Interpretation - Analysis of Computerised Information

(See notes from Charles Simkins at Questionnaire Workshop).
1. The long line of working from questionnaire stage to codebook stage to typing stage to programming stage to interpretation stage is at each point subject to error and misunderstanding. For accuracy’s sake, it is preferable that the programmer be involved from the beginning.

2. It is essential that the researcher have a clear idea of what kinds of information are being sought. A pilot survey, taken from questionnaire stage right through to interpretation stage, can be of help here. These perspectives will guide the programmer in setting up a codebook and arranging a program.

3. Open-ended questions are extremely difficult to computerize. The computer is a useful short cut in processing answers with a set number of alternatives (e.g. YES/NO or AGE IN YEARS). However, with open-ended questions the researcher has to look through many of the answers and select a suitable number of categories which would include all of them in some meaningful way.

4. If typing of cards is to be done by an outside agency, it is wise to consult about the job before a codebook is set up. This is all the more necessary when the data is 'sparse' as can happen with open-ended questions.

5. The coding of open-ended answers can be very tedious and time-consuming.

6. The people doing coding work must be properly primed to look for inconsistencies in the data they are processing.

7. For statistical applications of social research, the regular package programs like BMDP, SPSS and STATJOB ought to be more than sufficient. (See bibliography.)
1. Carry out (simple) one-way distributions on all variables for which this is meaningful. Use some of these, e.g. sex, age, to assess how representative your sample turned out to be. Note biases (e.g. too many old people, women) if these can be detected against background expectations. Explain them and think how these may affect further processing.

2. From the one-way tabulations and your research interests, think up hypotheses to test and devise statistical ways to test them. Write a relatively brief program to carry out these tests and interpret your results before continuing. From your interpretations, further hypotheses may emerge. Repeat the performance. Do not be afraid of 10 or even more computer runs of this kind. The important thing is to keep your orientation and not get bogged down in tabulations of everything by everything. Puzzle things out as you go or mark relationships as a basis for further observations.

3. Aim to publish no more than 15 or 20 tables in a final report. If the computer analysis has been thoroughly done, this will require rigorous selection. Regard the other tables as stations on the way to your final understanding - they will be reflected in how you write the text. The text should read continuously in itself, leaving readers to consult the tables or not, at will. If Step 2 is carried out properly, arriving at the final interpretation should not be difficult.
CONSTRUCTION OF A QUESTIONNAIRE ON POVERTY:
LESSONS FROM A RURAL VILLAGE SURVEY

Chris de Wet

He who would do good to others must do it in minute particulars.
Blake

There are two important issues with regard to the possible construction of a questionnaire seeking comparative data on poverty.

1. Contextualization of data obtained from the questionnaire

Data on demography, resources, income and expenditure, etc. are really only starting points for further investigation. For example, a rural Ciskei family with an average monthly household income of R60,00 and with no land rights is dependent upon other people for its members' survival. Here particular individual and family data become crucial to understanding strategies for coping with poverty.

Who does the family borrow money from when remittances do not arrive? From whom do they obtain access to arable land? Who helps them cultivate? How do they honour debts - in cash or kind?

To understand how a family copes with poverty we need to know about the extent and nature of the social networks of its members. To whom are they related in the area? What is their relationship with the neighbours? Whom do they help (with what) and who helps them (with what)?

This kind of contextualization of basic survey data requires knowledge of people's genealogies, of their membership of voluntary organizations, of the residential lay-out and history of a community - as well as a knowledge of ongoing activities and patterns within the community.

Such detail requires fieldwork within a community over a period of time, to get to know people and observe patterns. In turn, such fieldwork involves personnel and funds. Poverty seems to be understandable as a process through time involving a community or a group of people. As a
social process, it is a qualitative process. A few well-selected qualitative studies will surely tell us a lot more than a massive comparative printout of uncontextualized data.

2. Practical problems with regard to the gathering of comprehensive data while actually administering the questionnaire

Questions seeking factual data can rarely be phrased in sufficiently specific terms. While one may try to anticipate possible responses before constructing a questionnaire, only actual administration of questionnaires reveals the embarrassingly large range of actual responses - by which time it is often too late to patch the questionnaire. A sample of some of the problems and possible responses encountered in the administration of a socio-economic questionnaire in two rural Ciskei communities (in the Amatole Basin and in Cata, Keiskammashoek) is discussed below.

A. Identification of Respondent

Get as many of a person's names as possible - unless one has all of a person's names, it is not possible to trace his/her social network.

i) People are known by 'English' names for some purposes, by African names for other purposes.

ii) Married women have more than one African name.

iii) Maiden name helps to identify a woman's kin in an area.

iv) In the case of a widow, get her deceased husband's names.

v) Clan affiliation sometimes serves as a basis of co-operation.

B. Place of Birth, Residence

Get as much detail as possible on movement.

i) Place of birth.

ii) Place of parent's birth.

iii) Respondent's residential moves - also within the same area, as a result of, for example, setting up own house, divorce, government betterment schemes.

Data on movement tells about the stability and continuity of a community, as well as about the rootedness, experience and networks of individuals.
C. Marital Status

See marital status as linked to residence.

i) A woman may be unofficially not living with her husband, or temporarily staying elsewhere, but still be legally (and in terms of reputation) married.

ii) A woman may be living at home with her children, while her husband is away, and she is unsure whether he has absconded, or will come back.

iii) A woman's husband may have absconded, but she may still describe herself as being married.

iv) A couple (and children) may be living together.

v) A woman may be at home, while her husband and children are in town.

vi) A widow may have taken a lover, who helps her agriculturally, and stays with her, or may work and eat with her, but sleeps elsewhere.

vii) 'Are you married?' answer 'NO' (i.e. not by church rites).

D. Occupation - Who is Unemployed?

Two approaches should be blended here - people's view of their own position, and an analyst's view of their position.

i) A young man at home for a break between contracts may not have decided to go back, and may not know if he can go back but may still not regard himself as unemployed.

ii) A young man, at home for several years, may not see himself as unemployed, but may see himself as 'resting' or as doing some work at home.

iii) A person may be involved in sporadic informal sector activities, and see himself as employed.

iv) How is a man of, say, 55 years, who regards his working life as over, and who is not yet a pensioner, to be economically classified?

v) How is a young man, who calls himself unemployed, but is not trying to find a job, or turning down contracts, to be classified?

vi) How is a person who has been in town for 6 months doing odd jobs, and drifting, to be classified?

vii) Women who are involved in household activities, may say they are not working, but still see themselves as 'busy'.

viii) Are people who see themselves as able to survive at home (off others), and not needing to go and work, to be seen as unemployed?
E. Accommodation

Get actual number of houses/huts and rooms.

i) Rooms may not be classified as bedrooms by people, but may still be used as bedrooms.

People's descriptions of their dwellings as, for example, 'izinki' may tell us about their aspirations.

F. Definition of the Household

Distinguish household (as residential group) from homestead (physical structure) - many villages have empty homesteads, where, for example, the parents are in town and the children are with grandmother.

a) Members at Home Now

Get some practical indication as to who is actually at home - who eats here? Who sleeps here? (These may not coincide!)

i) People who are not members of the direct family may still be members of the household, e.g. grandchildren, a lodger, unrelated children.

ii) Two households may have merged into one, while still retaining two homesteads.

Get clarity about precise nature of relationship of each member to the head of household, e.g. 'grandchild' - whose child? - 'Daughter-in-law' - whose wife?

b) Who is Head of Household?

Important to distinguish de facto head of household (the person actually in charge, who makes day to day decisions) from de jure head (e.g. the man who is legally the title-deed holder, or moral head, but is away at present). Get de facto head's perceptions of 'who is in charge here' - this tells about perceptions of dependency.

c) Members away from Home

Make sure people actually come back - establish some period (e.g. two years) within which people must actually have visited home - establish dates of recent visits.
Problem cases:

i) A son who has in reality absconded, but whom his old mother still regards as part of the household.

ii) A son who has not been home for several years (or a husband), but who still remits.

iii) A man who has perhaps absconded, but still has rights to land at home.

iv) Children born to a 'concubine' in town - while the man has a wife and children at home.

Establish where people are - in detail, e.g. name of 'location', place of work, who they stay with.

d. Total Household Population

Ask for names of everybody belonging to the household - this provides a check on members away and at home and tells us who is actually seen as belonging to the household.

G. Access to Arable Land (excluding gardens)

Be careful of different systems of land tenure and how people describe their land-rights (e.g. 'do you own land?' invites the response of 'yes').

There are other forms of access to land than ownership:

i) Share-cropping someone's land, or a portion of it.

ii) Hiring someone else's land, or a portion of it.

iii) Paying the 'rent' for the year and having use of the land.

iv) Being given free use of someone else's land.

People may cultivate their own as well as someone else's land, or people may gain access to more than one person's land. Some people have rights to more than one field.

It is crucial to know who cultivates whose land and what the relationship is between 'landlord' and 'client', as certain types of access to land (e.g. share-cropping, hiring, gift) involve different advantages to landlord and to client. It is also crucial to know for how many seasons particular contracts have been going, as here, too, there are various strategies open to both parties.
H. Cultivation

Ask specific questions - not, for example, 'do you cultivate a field', rather 'did you cultivate this season - last season - when last did you cultivate?'

i) A person may not have cultivated in the current season but may have cultivated in the previous two seasons - and answer 'no'.

ii) A person may have cultivated someone else's field, and answer 'no'.

iii) 'Yes' or 'no' are often normative responses - if a person cultivated, but only a little, or badly, he/she may say no.

iv) A person may not see himself as cultivating, while the household has cultivated - ask the head of household.

Don't assume that because people have cultivated they have cultivated all their land. People may talk of cultivating X 'acres'. Find out how many 'acres' to a field.

I. Labour for Cultivation

Again, ask specific questions. When asked 'who cultivates', people sometimes only mention people involved in ploughing activities, and then only adults. Rather ask 'who leads oxen, drives oxen, holds plough, plants, reaps, hoes, weeds?' - as separate questions. Ascertain whether people are of the household, and if not, what the relationship is. We need to know, in detail, about patterns of co-operation - over time.

J. Draft Power

People may use cattle, or tractors, or both.

i) People may hire government, or private tractors, (and the rates may differ).

ii) People may use their own and other people's cattle - is this a gift, or a 'company' arrangement, or by hire?

Ascertain relationship between cultivator and cattle-lender. How many cattle involved in actual ploughing? Only oxen?
K. Equipment

Plough-shares, plough-yokes, cultivators, hoes, sleds.

i) People may borrow equipment - at a fee, or for labour assistance, or for other considerations. From whom?

Seed, fertilizer, insecticide.

i) Is seed bought, or stored from last year?
ii) Is fertilizer bought, or is manure used?
iii) Is fertilizer mixed in with seed during planting?

L. Agricultural Decisions

Specify specific decisions - a man may write home telling his wife to cultivate, but she may decide that it is too dry, or whatever. If he decides for cultivation, she must make the other decisions on the ground. Do male relatives of other households take part in agricultural decisions?

M. Crops Grown

People often mention only what they see as the major crop/s, e.g. maize. There is a perception of fields as being for maize, and gardens for vegetables.

i) Vegetables may be grown between the rows of mealies.
ii) Trees may also be grown in fields.

N. Gardens

'Garden' may be a vague concept, like a yard, or a space around the house - do people fence off and cultivate these areas?

i) A person may cultivate someone else's garden while not having his own.
ii) Trees may be grown in gardens.

O. Stock

The number of stock controlled by a homestead (i.e. actually in the kraal) may not be the same as the number owned by a household - people may keep stock at someone else's place, or may be keeping stock for someone else.

Specify sex, age of stock, e.g. oxen, heifers, tollies. Include pigs and poultry as 'stock'.
P. **Income**

Sometimes, we have to accept incomplete answers, as people may simply be unwilling to tell the truth.

a. **Pensioners**
   i) Various kinds of pensions, e.g. old-age, disability.
   ii) Pensions are often bi-monthly.
   iii) The figure people give as what they have received varies considerably - although the actual figure is usually constant.
   iv) Pensions may in fact not be arriving.
   v) People who qualify for pensions may not yet be registered.

b. **Informal Sector Income or Local Employment**

   Wages and salaries, casual work, hawking, selling services:
   i) These sources of income may not be regular, and accordingly difficult to quantify.
   ii) There may be sources of income people don't want to discuss, e.g. shebeening, herbalism, prostitution.
   iii) List specific examples of what you are looking for. For example, 'do you sell firewood?', 'do you sell thatching grass?'

c. **Remittances in Cash and Kind**

   **Cash Remittances:** Details must be obtained for a period of, for example, six months.
   i) Ask specific questions, e.g. 'when did he last remit - how much?', 'and before that, when last - how much?' to get a pattern of remittances.
   ii) Ask for each adult who is away - the respondent may not regard a person as remitting, when in fact they are.

   **Kind Remittances:** Detail is essential here - what exactly was brought home, when, do women remit more in kind than men do?

d. **Any Other Sources of Income**

   For example, 'Does your son who lives next door give you anything?'
Q. **Shopping**

Goods bought, places of purchase, frequency of shopping expeditions. Ask for goods purchased within a period, for example, the last two weeks or month.

i) Are goods bought cash or on account?

ii) Are some goods bought cash and some on account?

iii) Mention specifics, e.g. 'samp?' How many kg?', 'candles?', 'sweets?'.

iv) The cost people give for what they have bought may not correspond to the actual cost.

R. **Voluntary Organizations**

Churches, burial societies, sports clubs, savings clubs, religious groups, etc.

These organizations provide valuable networks for credit and assistance for people - to make sense of these networks we need to know about frequency of meetings, overlap of membership between organizations, unofficial functions of organizations.

S. **Perceptions of Own Living Conditions**

Questions comparing life 'here' with life elsewhere, or asking how people see their financial situation, or what their aspirations are, tend to produce a limited range of fairly predictable responses, e.g. 'I was born here, I want to die here', or 'my family are all here', or 'anywhere else could be better', or 'we need better services and more money'. Perceptions and aspirations are really only obtainable through in-depth discussions.

Many people were reluctant to answer these questions and gave safe, general responses.
The design and implementation of a reliable and useful social research project is, perhaps, a deceptively simple task. Among the critical issues to be resolved are decisions concerning:

- What to ask - what information is being sought?
- From what source can the information be most effectively gathered?
- What would be the most effective method of gathering information?
- Who should do the gathering?
- How should the information be processed?
- Scheduling the project.
- Budgeting for the project.

The first of these issues - What information is being sought? - and the last - What resources are available to the project? - will jointly provide the primary informants for decisions made throughout the project.

The following discussion offers a brief account of a few of the difficulties encountered - and the lessons learned - in responding to these issues during a project currently nearing completion at SALDRU. In retrospect, these difficulties seem to separate into two categories:

a) those which were resolved during the course of the project and thus remain merely as 'challenges met'; and
b) those which may have evaded entirely satisfactory solutions and have emerged as 'problems' potentially affecting aspects of the study's success.

I have discussed the difficulties chronologically, as they came up for consideration in the course of the project. Those which have remained as problems are summarised in conclusion.

The title of the project is 'Needs, Resources and Attitudes of the Poor'. The intent has been two-fold:

a) description - beginning to learn about life experienced in particular communities; and
b) exploration - revealing issues of general significance to a broader study of poverty in Southern Africa.
We have been primarily concerned with the perceptions and attitudes of people living in poverty concerning their problems, pleasures, goals, activities/abilities to generate income, involvement with their neighbours and community, opinions about causes of poverty and responsibility for remedies, and ideas about who they consider to be poor. Clearly, the most reliable source for this information would be the primary source - the poor themselves.¹

Here arises one of the first difficulties of the project - identifying who and where are South Africa's very poor. Where should we find our sample population? Our project was informed by the belief that people are in poverty when they are 'profoundly, comprehensively and chronically deprived in comparison with the rest of society'.² Deprived of what? ... of: material well-being (housing, food, clothing, medical care, amenities, etc.); opportunities for personal development (education, employment, creative expression, etc.); and opportunities to influence the conditions of their lives (participate in decision-making). Given this definition, it is clear that severe poverty is experienced in many areas of Southern Africa. Guided by limitations on project resources, however, we focused our study on several readily accessible urban African and 'Coloured' areas. While recognising the existence of severe poverty among other ethnic groups and in other geographical situations - especially rural African areas, we felt that our choice of focus could be justified by the levels of deprivation currently experienced in urban areas and by the continuing growth of South Africa's African and 'Coloured' urban populations.

Reflecting the project's exploratory function, it was necessary to draw responses from a variety of urban situations. The survey sample covered squatter and sub-economic housing communities in two urban centres (Durban and Cape Town). In Cape Town, furthermore, responses were sought from both African and 'Coloured' settlements. The selection of particular communities was then informed by discussions with community and social workers who have detailed personal experience in the potential survey areas, and were thus able to identify settlements where material deprivation and social difficulties appeared greatest.

Another difficulty arose at this stage - finding a suitable sample frame for selecting respondents. This can be a sensitive issue in any survey research project, but it becomes especially difficult when working in poorer areas - squatter settlements in particular - for which there are very few inclusive listings readily available to the public. All that can be done is
to keep searching to find helpful contact people within relevant municipal, provincial and national government agencies, or to find university or private organizations active in the proposed study areas. Ultimately, our project used different sample frames and modes of selection for each community. We felt this was acceptable as long as the sample universe was inclusive and the sample itself was random. (References for detailed discussions of sampling and sample frames appear in the attached bibliography).

The next major issue to be considered concerned the most effective method of collecting information from respondents in the various sample areas. Would it be more successful to develop a standardised questionnaire or to carry out an informal ethnographic study? The need to work in numerous communities seemed to indicate the use of a standardised questionnaire implemented by teams of interviewers working simultaneously in the various study areas. This decision gained further support from the belief that interviews would be most successful if carried out in the respondents' home language by a native speaker of the language.

One of the most sensitive and important tasks in implementing a successful survey research project is designing a questionnaire that is clear, concise, uncomplicated and thorough. (A detailed discussion of questionnaire construction is presented in the Workshop papers. (See also the attached bibliography.) Construction of our questionnaire was completed after extensive study of related literature, discussions with experienced individuals and several cycles of pilot testing in the field. The questionnaire which emerged from this process is relatively lengthy, including forty-one questions as well as three tables of information. The time required to complete the questionnaire depends on the size of the household and the inclination of the respondents. Approximate completion time is between one hour and one-hour-and-a-quarter. This length could have presented itself as a problem, but, on the whole, interviewers found respondents to be interested and willing to participate.

Clearly, one requirement of constructing a successful questionnaire is a clear understanding of the appropriate 'unit of analysis'. Were we interested in information concerning individuals, families, households and/or the community? And with whom should the interviewers speak to gain the desired information -
the household head, the primary earner, the eldest, the most articulate or some aggregate of household members? Our interest in essentially two types of information (some relating to the household as a unit and some relating to individuals within the household) created minor complications. Our interviewers requested to speak with the most senior household member present, as well as all individuals 18 years or over, who were present and willing to participate. This decision was made in the belief that information relating to the household as a whole (e.g. household budget) would achieve the fullest and most accurate answers if allowed to benefit from a collective knowledge. On the other hand, we were interested in the experiences and opinions of adult individuals on a number of issues which required personal responses from each individual. This duality required clear instructions in the questionnaire, careful training of interviewers, and continued review of completed questionnaires. It has also placed certain requirements on the computer processing of the information.

How to record responses? Because the survey was essentially uninformed by previous knowledge of likely responses to our questions, a significant proportion were framed as open-ended enquiries, allowing respondents to answer freely, unconstrained by preconceived response categories. The use of open-ended questions requires considerable skill on the part of the interviewer in soliciting and recording full, candid responses. However, it also has the potential of generating new perspectives on an issue. The insight gained through using this format in our survey has been rich, indeed. It is this ability to generate detailed and rich information which is, in fact, a primary 'drawback' to open-ended questions. It requires considerable skill and time to process the numerous 'bits' into a meaningful whole. For this reason, this type of question is usually reserved for small-scale surveys. Our study of approximately 700 households has been, perhaps, a bit ambitious.

A further challenge generated by the use of open-ended enquiries is the mechanical awkwardness of recording the responses on computer coding forms and, subsequently, transferring them onto computer cards. An open-ended question may generate a pool of perhaps ten possible answers. Of these ten answers, some respondents may mention only one, while others mention as many as four or five, or even more. If each potential response is assigned a particular row and column number on the computer coding sheet and the computer card, it is clear that there will be numerous blank spaces on these completed forms reflecting the unmentioned potential answers. Evidently, this failure
to have dense responses (i.e. an answer for every column on the coding sheet and computer card) significantly increases the possibility for error in initial coding of responses and in typing of coded responses onto computer cards. Furthermore, it increases the number of computer cards required for each respondent, thus increasing the cost of recording and processing data. These are problems we have not been able to resolve. Staff at the University of Cape Town computer centre are endeavouring to develop a computer package capable of easing some of these difficulties.

In a final note on recording responses, some mention should be made on the use of tape recorders. While the recorded interview is a common element in many ethnographic studies, our interviewers did not use tape recorders. There were several reasons for this:

1. Responses taped in the respondent’s language would still require translation for analysis by the primary researcher.
2. We had assured respondents that all information given during the interview would be entirely confidential. Even so, we found some people were apprehensive about giving information on informal sources of income, legal status, and certain attitudes which they felt could be held against them as criticisms of the South African government. We felt that the use of tape recorders would be inhibiting.
3. The cost of recording equipment for all interviewers would have been prohibitive.
4. Editing and processing taped interviews is extremely time consuming.

The use of a tape recorder would be advantageous when:

1. The number of interviews is quite limited.
2. Interviews take the form of free-flowing guided discussions unaided by a questionnaire format.
3. The primary researcher is able to speak/understand the respondents’ language(s).
4. The researcher is confident that the nature and quality of responses would not be inhibited by the presence of the recorder.

The quality of information gathered through questionnaire research is largely dependent upon the quality of the interviewers. The selection and training of interviewers thus becomes an issue of primary significance. Should individuals be selected on the basis of prior experience with interviewing; familiarity
with, and personal acceptability in the community to be studied; educational level and linguistic abilities; or simply availability and enthusiasm? How much time should be devoted to training interviewers, and what are the most effective methods of training? (For a detailed discussion of these issues, see the section on Selection and Training of interviewers in the Workshop papers.)

Our interviewers were located and selected in a variety of ways. In Cape Town, Xhosa interviewers were sought by word-of-mouth through a number of educational, health-care and community organizations. Primary requirements were an ability to speak and write both Xhosa and English, an availability and willingness to work full-time for about six weeks. 'Coloured' interviewers were largely found from a list of individuals who had worked successfully with the project's field work organizer during a previous project. Requirements were similar to those for Xhosa interviewers - facility with Afrikaans and English, and availability. Individuals to carry out Durban's Zulu interviews were also solicited by word-of-mouth from a number of sources. Selection criteria varied slightly from those guiding the project in Cape Town. A facility for rapid translation from Zulu to English was not critical. Interviewers needed to be available for work during evenings and weekends rather than throughout the week.

One group of individuals selected for work on the Durban interviews deserves brief mention because of the unanticipated problems they created. Several of the applicants had had previous experience completing questionnaires for Market Research Africa. Counter to the Durban organizer's hopes, these interviewers, as a group, did not handle our questionnaire well at all. Furthermore, they were considerably more difficult to deal with on administrative matters. This experience reconfirms the idea that all questionnaires are different, and the qualities required of the interviewer will change with the nature of the questionnaire. Interviewers need to be retrained for each new research project, and should be selected only after the training phase has been completed.

Basic training of interviewers was carried out in an essentially similar manner in Cape Town and Durban. Classroom discussions of the project, the details of the questionnaire, and the interviewing process led to multiple field tests. Discussions of experiences and results gathered during field work followed. The Durban portion of the project devoted considerably more time to classroom role-playing. Perhaps interviewers in Durban subsequently found their initial
interviews easier to manage, but the quality of the results do not seem to indicate particular benefits from emphasizing role-playing as a training technique. From my experience in our study, the most productive training sessions occurred when trainees carried out trial interviews in households comparable to those selected for the survey sample and then met en masse with the primary researcher to discuss the details of responses to each question and the various problems encountered during interviews. These discussions on the details of questions and responses can serve several significant functions.

- They help to clarify for the interviewers the intent of the study in general, the meaning of specific words in each question, and the expectations of the primary researcher concerning recording of responses.
- They also permit the researcher to give final refinements to questions - especially the translations of questions - from the collective understanding of the field workers.
- They give the primary researcher the opportunity to observe and interact with potential field workers to select those who will be most suited to the project.

One strategy worth consideration would be integrating the final pilot run of the questionnaire with training interviewers. It is generally advisable, however, to keep the time between training and actual field work to a minimum to assure the interviewers' continued availability and interest.

When individuals within the survey sample do not all speak the same language, an additional issue emerges. At what stage should the questions and responses be translated to and from the language of the respondent and that of the researcher? Will the translations carry the same meanings and intent as the original questions and responses? These are issues of some significance in Southern Africa where multi-lingual questionnaires are common indeed. They are also issues on which there seems to be no agreed-upon policy. Strategies range from

a) writing the questionnaire in the primary researcher's language, and allowing each interviewer to translate questions into, and responses out of the respondents' language, to

b) using a translator (either professional of community-based) to translate the original questionnaire into the survey population's language(s) and requiring the interviewers to record responses verbatim in the language of the interview. These responses would then be translated in an unhurried manner by interviewers, a translator, or the primary researcher.
The critical issue is consistency. Will all the respondents actually answer the same question? And will responses which may be identical in the respondents' language emerge identical after the translation process? The first model mentioned above offers the least control, but could be adequate if the number of interviewers were limited, and if the interviewers and the primary researcher worked closely to ensure a thorough and uniform understanding of the survey's meaning and intentions.

The second model offers the greatest control, but is prohibitively cumbersome and time-consuming for all but the most limited surveys. The second model also adds to the cost of the project by necessitating two copies of the questionnaire for each interview. (One in the respondent's language and one in that of the researcher). This, in fact, is the model initially tried by our project's Durban organizer. Mid-way through the project, their interviewers switched to the first model - English responses on English questionnaires with interviewers translating to and from Zulu.

Once again, the appropriate method must be determined by the requirements and resources of each particular project. I feel, however, that a third model can be suggested as a generally acceptable strategy. The questionnaire is written in the primary researcher's language. A translator who is from, or extremely familiar with the survey population, translates the questionnaire after extensive discussion with the primary researcher on the intention of the project as a whole, and the specific meaning of each question. During interviewer training, the questionnaire is discussed in both the original and translated forms. And, subsequent to field testing, the translation is confirmed by comparing the primary researcher's intentions with the understandings of the interviewers and respondents. Responses are recorded in the primary researcher's language on the translated questionnaire. (e.g. English on Xhosa). This model ensures that all respondents are presented with identical questions. Hopefully, the involvement of interviewers in verifying the initial translation would help them in accurately translating responses back into the researcher's language. The primary drawback of this model is the necessity of having relatively fluent bilingual interviewers.

The process of implementing the questionnaire in the field presented further issues potentially affecting the quality of our project. For a detailed discussion of this phase of a survey project, see the section on questionnaire implementation in the Workshop papers. I will mention just those items which were significant within our own project. Central among these were:

a) organizing payment for interviewers' work - complicated in our case by the necessity to apply for funds through University administration;
b) co-ordinating work schedules and organizing transportation arrangements;
c) encouraging maximum community acceptance of our project and interviewers;
d) maintaining interviewers' enthusiasm and productivity;
e) maintaining close ongoing supervision of the quality of responses recorded by interviewers.

What emerged as the single element most significantly affecting the success of this phase of the project was the ability of the field organizer/supervisor to keep a close and constant interaction with the interviewers.

Once the field work is under way and completed questionnaires begin to accumulate, the penultimate phase of the project can begin. Integrating responses from individual questionnaires into a substantive summary of findings can be done in a number of ways. Should information be recorded and analysed through a computer, or should it be processed 'by hand'? Processing responses through a computer is particularly useful when a permanent, readily accessible record of information gathered through the research is desired. This is particularly so if there are interesting responses which, for some reason, do not receive particular attention in the initial analysis of information. The type of information best suited to computerization includes those enquiries soliciting single responses (i.e. 'select one of the following...'), and whose range of responses can be anticipated, and thus pre-coded. When responses cannot be anticipated and/or when enquiries permit a varying number of responses from interviewees, computer manipulation becomes considerably more difficult and time-consuming.

In our project, which fits the latter description, it has been necessary to establish response categories for coding information by reading through a significant number of completed questionnaires (approximately 200), recording all responses presented, and identifying the minimum number of categories capable of covering all suggested responses. Subsequently, each questionnaire must be read and its responses assigned the appropriate response code. This process has been extremely time-consuming. There are, however, significant benefits associated with post-interview coding of responses. The possible distortion of information through the use of inappropriate response categories is a problem faced by any attempt to summarise survey information. Post-interview creation of response categories can benefit from the richness of unconstrained responses and the exposure of the researcher to the variety of responses to develop response categories more sensitive to, and accurately reflective of respondents' answers.
Furthermore, while the process of establishing codes and, subsequently, coding all responses is extremely labour- and time-intensive, it does provide the researcher with an opportunity to become thoroughly familiar with the types of information emerging from the survey. This exposure provides an important informant for the researcher’s computer analyses.

The previous discussion has dealt largely with problems of method. In retrospect, several difficulties relating to content have also become apparent. These include questions which have been omitted and questions which could have been asked more effectively. While there are innumerable questions which might have been included, the following are a few which would have been of particular interest.

1. Concerning the employed, it would have been useful to have a series of questions on the length of an individual’s current job, the length of his previous job, and the time between when he was unemployed.
2. For those who are working and looking for employment, why?
3. For those who are not working and not looking, why?
4. A specific enquiry on the extent and nature of children’s economic activities.
5. An enquiry on the legal status of all individuals within the household.
6. Concerning household living conditions, the number of rooms per dwelling and the total number of individuals occupying the dwelling.

**CONCLUSION**

Though challenged by the numerous difficulties previously discussed, our project appears to have generated a considerable amount of rich and useful information about individuals’ experiences and attitudes, about the operation of households, and about the quality of community life in some of South Africa’s poorest urban areas. Our study has also been able to indicate issues worthy of further in-depth investigation in a general study of poverty in Southern Africa.

In retrospect, however, there are two key aspects of the project which have emerged as ‘problems’, having ‘evaded entirely satisfactory solutions’ during the course of the study. One problem concerns the length of time required to process the completed questionnaires, and stems from our use of open-ended questions over a relatively large sample size in the absence of an elegant computer package to record and manipulate the responses. The second problem concerns the quality of information actually gathered through the interviews.
This seems to relate to several factors: willingness of respondents to give full and candid responses; training of the interviewers; and most significantly, the quality of ongoing supervision and interaction between the fieldwork supervisors and the interviewers.

Our desire to achieve both breadth of coverage and openness to responses led to an integration of the qualities of a quantitative questionnaire and a qualitative ethnographic study. The positive qualities associated with an essentially quantitative survey include:

- wide coverage (approximately 700 households and 4 000 individuals spread over six basic living situations).
- uniformity of questions presented to interviewees.
- opportunity to use interviewers potentially more 'acceptable' to the target population than the primary researcher might have been, and thus possibly capable of generating more candid responses.

The advantages associated with essentially ethnographic studies from which we hoped to benefit include:

- opportunity for respondents to give answers free from the suggestions and limitations of preconceived responses, hopefully generating rich insight and perhaps raising new issues or new perspectives on anticipated issues.
- opportunity for post-interview creation of coding categories, thus hopefully generating more sensitive response categories.
- greater sensitivity to nonnative/qualitative information.

While trying to gather the benefits of each mode of research, we have also had to face the difficulties associated with each. Negative aspects associated with quantitative questionnaires include:

- a certain loss of control by the primary researcher with the use of questionnaires and interviewers. The project becomes highly dependent on the quality of interviewers' work.
- less opportunity exists for empathy and trust to develop between respondents and the interviewer than in situations where one individual maintains prolonged personal involvement with a community.
Difficulties associated with the more open questioning style associated with ethnographic studies include:

- open-ended inquiries may require greater thought on the part of respondents, greater effort and care in recording responses by interviewers, and considerably greater time and skill in categorizing and manipulating responses by the survey analyst.
- the interview, itself, may be lengthier.
- time required to process the results is immense, relative to that required for manipulation of pre-coded responses.

Whether the final product reflects the potential difficulties or the advantages of these methods of research depends to a certain extent on the quality of the questionnaire instrument, and, perhaps most critically, on the quality of the interviewers. Our project seems to have generally benefited from the breadth of coverage and richness of response resulting from integrating these two research modes. The primary problem associated with our method has been the unanticipated length of time required to process completed questionnaires.

The second major problem in the study concerns the training and supervision of interviewers. We found that interviewers often failed to get information about all the individual adults in the household. The effect of this omission is a considerable loss of richness in analysing responses by age, education, sex, occupation, etc. To the extent that the information was potentially available but unobtained, I suspect that this difficulty could be resolved most effectively through changes in interviewer training, more adamant instructions printed throughout the questionnaire, or more immediate and meticulous review of completed questionnaires by the fieldwork co-ordinators. This last solution is the one which I feel is the most critical. A continuous review and critique of recorded responses would also help to avoid the incomplete or poor quality of recorded answers which occur due to interviewer confusion, fatigue, boredom or impatience. From the experience of our project, it seems that an immediate review of completed questionnaires by the fieldwork supervisor and a close interaction between interviewers and the supervisor are among the most critical elements determining the success of a study such as ours.
Footnotes

1. The larger study was complemented by a limited number of guided discussions with secondary source people in the form of community and religious leaders, social workers, medical officers and others whose daily work provides them with an informed overview of life in our target areas.


3. In Cape Town, interviewers read from Afrikaans or Xhosa questionnaires and spoke in the appropriate language, but recorded answers in English. Initially, Durban interviewers recorded responses in Zulu. The entire questionnaire was then translated onto an English copy at some later time. This strategy was dropped mid-way through the project because it was found to be too cumbersome. Interviewers then worked directly on English questionnaires. Further discussion on translating questionnaires appears later in this paper.

4. Probably reflecting our focus on poorer communities where unemployment is relatively high, there does not seem to be any significant difference in the quality of responses gathered over weekends as opposed to during work days.
WHY QUESTIONNAIRES ARE NOT THE ANSWER:
Comments and Suggestions based on a Pilot Study
of the Rural Informal Sector in KwaZulu

Eleanor Preston-Whyte

INTRODUCTION

The Workshop was set up to consider the use of questionnaires in research on poverty in South Africa. Most of us assumed that we were discussing what some writers term interview schedules – that is fairly rigid lists of questions administered by one or more interviewers in a fairly formal interview situation, with the interviewers writing down the answers or coding responses on behalf of the interviewee. As used by purists (Pelto, 1970), the word 'questionnaire' is often restricted to surveys carried out by post, in which the subjects fill in the answers and return the questionnaire themselves. In the type of research we were considering, the use of mailed questionnaires is clearly inappropriate – many of 'the poor' are not living within easy access of postal services and the practical, emotional (and even financial) burden of filling in a questionnaire of this sort and mailing it would make the chances of a reasonable response very low indeed. The use of mailed questionnaires was thus not seriously considered at all.

In what follows, I will use the term questionnaire loosely, that is, meaning an interview schedule drawn up for use by interviewers. I would, however, like to emphasize an important point which emerged from discussion and that is that interview schedules or questionnaires can be more or less formal, depending on the needs of the investigator and the stage reached in the study itself. I would suggest, indeed, that in much of the research on poverty which we are planning for the future, we should consider the use of an informal aide memoire (Hubert, Forge & Firth, 1968) rather than a formal schedule, certainly in the early and exploratory stages of the investigation. This can consist initially simply of a list of topics to be raised and explored with informants in order to examine the field, gain qualitative information and, most important, probe vital areas to be explored more fully in a more formal schedule or in case studies. The reasons for this suggestion are argued, if somewhat forcefully, in the following paper presented at the Workshop:
I. **Problems in the Use of Questionnaires arising from the Exploratory Nature of the Research itself**

I must admit to some ambivalence on the topic of questionnaires or interview schedules. I have used them in earlier studies, and am at present piloting a new set for a forthcoming study of Black women's involvement in so-called 'informal' money-making activities in rural KwaZulu. At the same time, I have major reservations about their use and am sceptical, in particular, about relying on questionnaires in the early phases of research in social and economic environments alien to that of the investigator. These apprehensions multiply in studies of poverty and so-called 'informal sector' activities where, almost inevitably, those who formulate the questions come from a privileged and secure economic background and are entering what in South Africa is still a largely unexplored and, I think, a little understood field. This is an area where survival is not merely a matter of cash in hand - of money earned or made in some recognizable way, but also of money borrowed, money shared, money saved and invested, not only in banks and building societies, but often with friends and relatives, and also of goods and services moving through complex transactional fields made up of personal ties and obligations. It is, in short, an area where day-to-day existence is eked out as much by the manipulation of personal and often long-term reciprocities, as by the acquisition of hard cash through the impersonal transactions of the market place. It is this field, wider than that usually thought to be encompassed by 'making money', which is one I would argue is virtually impossible to plumb through standard questionnaire techniques alone. It is simply too complex and widely ramifying for the short, unambiguous and self-limiting questions which we are told should make up a good questionnaire (Payne, 1951).

Of even greater concern is the possibility that in the formulation and administration of questionnaires we may miss and even cut off knowledge of various aspects of survival strategy. Even if our informants might wish to expand on these issues - recognizing better than we do the realities of their lives - the format of a questionnaire often inhibits them. Few people experiencing the formal interview in which most questionnaires are administered, will volunteer extra information. Not unnaturally, they assume we know our own business. But I would question if we do, in fact, always know what we are looking for, and if we do, are we asking the questions in the correct way. Let me give you a pertinent example drawn from the work of an American anthropologist, J. Spradley, when studying the culture of survival in Skid Row. I could produce similar cautionary tales from my own experience, but I want you to
appreciate that it is not a personal eccentricity on my part to worry about these issues! Spradley and McCurdy (1975) give the example of an anthropologist who might ask an apparently simple and unambiguous question like "How much income did you earn last year?" Something like the following may occur - 'Unknown to the interviewer', to quote them:

'the informant translates this question into, "How much income did you earn last year?" something like the following occurs. First, unknown to the ethnographer, the informant translates this question into "How much _money_ did you get last year from working at a steady job?" Because he only "worked" for three weeks picking apples during the year, he replies, "A couple hundred dollars." Then the ethnographer may ask, "Where do you live?" Again, because the informant knows the anthropologist's culture, he translates this question into something like, "He wants to know if I have a home or apartment where I stay all the time," and the reply is "I don't have a place to stay." These same answers could then be elicited from other informants, leading the ethnographer to conclude that these are "homeless men" who live on less than $500 per year. Yet hidden from view is the extensive cultural knowledge that tramps have about ways to make it, about the sums of money they acquire yearly by such actions as junking and panhandling, and about hundreds of places they "lop", and "homes" such as cars and under bridges'. (In Spradley & McCurdy, 1975: 35). (See also Spradley, 1979).

So through the framing of questions we may miss whole areas of vital experience which are part and parcel of the lives of our informants but which we, coming as we do from another social milieu, simply to not anticipate. The basis of this problem lies largely in the fact that we forget that the people to whom we administer questionnaires are also active participants (and often either unconscious, or even conscious obstructors) in the process of social research. At best, informants may, in trying to please us (as in the example), give us material in what they think are our own categories. Similarly, they may filter their information to fit in with their past experience of the concerns of the category or group represented by the interviewer. In this country, Blacks assume they know what interests Whites and often give this type of information willy-nilly. A similar problem arises when informants assume that we do not understand many of their cultural categories or beliefs. Thus Africans may simply not mention witchcraft and sorcery because they believe that Whites either do not know about these beliefs, or else they are likely to pooh-pooh their existence and ridicule the informant for mentioning them. There is also the issue of what the interviewee wishes to hide from the interviewer; it is far easier to do this in reply to simple set questions than in more complex, in-depth discussions.
So the type of information we want is simply going to slip through our fingers unless we are very careful — you may say that meticulous piloting could go a long way to deal with this problem. I agree, but I have an uneasy feeling that many of the things we want to know — have to know — if we are to understand the dynamics of living with poverty, can only be discovered by some sort of personal experience of it. The closest we can come to this is through an initial period of participant observation before the formulation of the questionnaire. I would point out that most sociologists and economists are formulating their questionnaires against a known environment — that of their own social world — and so in a sense they know the parameters within which their informants operate and they know what questions to ask. In studying poverty and the informal sector amongst Black South Africans, most of us are in a new social world and we need a period of sensitization — of being on the spot to observe constraints and strategies people turn to, so as to appreciate the problems and crises poor people have to deal with each day.

It is for this reason that I am dubious about the formulation of any type of standard questionnaire or interview schedule for use in related studies across the country. In my experience, even if the topic is the same — say informal sector activities — the problems can differ radically as, say, between urban and rural areas. I have myself been involved in studying African women in both areas and the local situation provides many unexpected nuances and opportunities which have to be recognized and explored. Similarly, I have recently started supervising a student working in the informal sector amongst Indian women. I thought it would be a fairly simple case of the transposition of questions and areas of interest from my ongoing research with African women. Not at all — the research situations are as alike as chalk and cheese! For instance, Indian women seem to operate against the background of a far more developed commercial network than do many African women. Their activities are often carried on as an extension of the business and commercial networks of husbands or other male kinsmen. This opens up a whole new dimension for investigation. Even if we can produce some standard list of strategic questions, I emphasize that they will have to be adapted and expanded to fit local situations. A possible answer here may be the formulation of a set of open-ended questions or the use of an aide memoire to probe new areas rather than a formal questionnaire — though this raises many problems for the eventual processing of data. Above all, I would stress, however, that any adaptation will have to be done by fairly experienced people — experienced both in the social sciences and in the local field. It will be of little use to hand out a complex questionnaire or aide memoire to numerous minimally trained interviewers.
This is highly skilled and sensitive work. The less exact the question, the more room for variation in administration.

This raises the general topic of using interviewers and here again I have reservations. Clearly, one cannot get a large quantity of data without their help, and there may be situations in South Africa where Black interviewers are the only people who can do the type of research we require. At the same time, few interviewers are, in my experience, as committed to research, or are as sensitive to the nuances of social situations, as are trained social scientists. When we use open-ended questions - and I think these are vital - we run into problems unless the people administering the questions know what they are doing and record faithfully all nuances of the response. I will return to the problem of interviewers later in this paper.

Turning to a slightly different issue raised by 'informal' sector studies, one may seriously question the level of reliability which one is likely to achieve from a one-off set of questions about money flow, particularly when these questions are sprung on people out of the blue. Quite apart from reluctance to answer, it has been my experience that even with the best will in the world many people cannot easily answer the questions to which we would like the answers. For instance, a common question 'How much do you make in a day, a week, a month?' Well, where no records are kept, people may simply not be able to remember. In addition, our informants may not be used to computing things in this manner (one which Western economists might view as economically prudent and rational). To force people to give answers to questions like the above may, indeed will, I would predict, elicit answers of the most astronomical inaccuracy. I have myself tested the response to these sorts of questions by observations over short periods, to the amazement not only of myself, but also of my informants. Again, one needs to build in some check mechanisms here, or to treat one's conclusions with care. No doubt this is a topic to be followed up under 'evaluation' of results. This requires the personal touch of the fieldworker. For example, in working out shebeen 'profits', I spent many hours - not in the shebeens drinking - but behind the scenes in measuring the various containers used in making and brewing beverages in order to try and assess the costs of production. The answer may lie in a number of detailed case studies aimed at getting qualitative information to expand, and check quantitative data.
Yet another critical research problem in this area is that of variability. Income from informal sources is often highly variable in itself, e.g. more sales are made during weekends or over holidays than on weekdays in the tourist trade and in shebeens and even shackshops. However, it is important to realise also that individuals themselves give differing degrees of time and energy to money-making, depending on their needs. Women have said to me 'I must sell hard tomorrow - it is Stokvel day on Wednesday and I need my R60 to play with'. Similarly, events like school openings and family crises can play havoc with income. No really accurate assessment can be made through one-off questionnaire administration or even one short case study. Indeed the answers will be counterproductive in that they will overformalise the situation and give the wrong impression - possibly one of regularity and organization where none exists.

It is not only a matter of how much money is 'made' - it is the wider framework of socio-economic activity and strategic borrowing/lending/giving to which I referred in the Introduction, which presents us as investigators with the greatest difficulties. Single interviews cannot tap the range of this activity and indeed people cannot be expected to remember in full the details which we are seeking. These transactions cover the few cents borrowed here, the rand made there; the potatoes begged from a neighbour, or the 5 cents given to a child for school lunches or bus fare; the money given to the beggar or put in the plate on Sunday; the meat brought into a family on Sundays by the daughter's lover. I do not think we will be able to understand poverty without documenting these minutae. But it won't be done through standard questionnaires - we will have to supplement these by detailed case studies built up on the basis of regular visits and interviews to record and question on these matters. What would be useful here would be for people working in this field to get together and swop information and ideas as how best to collect and standardise this type of qualitative material. I know that what I am doing tends to be highly idiosyncratic and probably of limited value because it is not really standardised in any way. I reiterate that what we have to get away from is using a single questionnaire: we need sets of questionnaires, or aide memoires and case studies for different phases of the investigation. I would appeal also for more creativity in developing new techniques for dealing with our research problems, and also for collaboration to make our results useful in terms of comparability.
II Practical Problems

Much of the economic activity engaged in by poor people to make ends meet is defined by the authorities as illegal. The people concerned may feel that they are putting themselves at risk by answering the questions put to them in a questionnaire - however much the interviewer stresses the confidentiality of the study. Quite apart from being open to prosecution, many of the ways of making money 'informally', such as brewing and prostitution, are frowned on by the community and especially by the 'establishment'. This inhibits open discussion. Though people hesitate to reveal things of this sort in interviews, one may learn of them indirectly through observation and may even be told about them if one is sufficiently known and trusted. Both circumstances depend, of course, on building up rapport with one's informants over time.

I suspect that we are dealing with something more difficult even than investigating illegal or disapproved activities. We are trying to probe what has come to be a sub-culture of survival. The participants perceive their transactions as private - certainly as something to be hidden from outsiders, competitors and officialdom (the latter being often connected in the minds of informants with questionnaires and forms), and certainly the formal White world of 'legitimate' money making. If this is so, we are investigating a situation where survey techniques and questionnaires are completely inappropriate. I have worked with interviewers and research assistants who volunteered the information to me that they know that so-and-so 'is doing some sewing, though she did not admit to it'. The interviewer saw the signs - a machine, a big bag of material scraps! A possible solution to the problem may be the use of interviewers who are not only sensitive and observant interviewers but ones who are also known by the community, i.e. 'insiders' who themselves have experience of what is 'going on' and can ask about it in a matter of course fashion. This would involve not 'Do you make money by brewing?' but 'Is brewing a good way of making money - how much do you make?'; not 'Where do you get your stock?', but 'Do you get your stock from so-and-so?' Here one runs into the problem of 'leading questions'. Alternatively, it must be admitted that many people may tell outsiders things they would never reveal to neighbours or people known to the community. Clearly, as with any research technique, one has to balance out the advantages and the disadvantages of any particular course of action.

I may digress here to chronicle an experiment in which a research colleague, Catherine Cross from the Centre for Applied Social Sciences at Natal University, and I have been involved recently, in the hope of overcoming the problems outlined
above. Last year, in preparation for my study of the rural informal sector, I wanted to get some idea of the magnitude and nuances of these activities in one specific local area. It seemed to me naive and foolhardy to attempt exploratory interview work on these topics myself - my race and to some extent my sex were against me. Had I had the time to work myself into a community - to let them see me, test me out, get to know me and my intentions, some of this suspicion could have been overcome. Also, being in a community for a long time means one can observe as well as question directly - by no means such a threatening way of obtaining information. I could not, at that point, however, involve myself in long-term participant observation. In discussing this problem with Catherine Cross, she, however, suggested that we collaborate and launch a pilot study in an area where she was currently working on another anthropological study. I had, incidentally, worked in this same area myself some years previously so I had some idea of the general social structure and current social conditions of the community. At the time Miss Cross had working for her two research assistants, drawn from the community itself. She had trained them over about three years to work with both tightly phrased and open-ended type questionnaires. We discussed the potential difficulties of the project with them, but they felt that they could pursue the topics in which we were interested. In fact, they gave us invaluable leads as to what to look for! It is for them and with them that we finally developed a set of questionnaires which have, we feel, been largely successful. In some cases, the research assistants felt it unwise to arrive with and fill in a formal schedule and they used the list of questions we drew up as an aide memoire, making minimal notes during interviews and then 'writing up' more fully later. This eased possible tension and suspicion, but, more importantly, avoided giving informants the initial idea that the interview would continue for hours simply due to the length of the schedule. Where interviewees showed boredom, the research assistants simply broke off and returned to finish their questions at a later date. This allowed them also to build up more rapport with informants and to cover topics in more depth and even to check information.

I would emphasize that the questions we asked came out of combined (and by this I mean mine, Catherine's and the interviewers') experience of the community, its social structure and of the way people there are likely to face and cope with 'economic' crises. We were particularly fortunate in being able to draw upon the background provided by two previous socio-demographic surveys of the community conducted by Miss Cross and also upon the research assistants' knowledge of the local community and upon their bona fides in that community.
I use the term 'research assistants' advisedly as the two people concerned are far more than interviewers in the normal sense of the world. They are, indeed, observers in the sense suggested above, as much as interviewers. Miss Cross and I made a practice of holding long 'debriefing' sessions with our assistants in which we went over the completed questionnaires and probed for further material. We are both of the opinion that our study would have been less successful had we not used our assistants in this way - as something between interviewers and the so-called 'key informants' often used by anthropologists (Pelto, 1970: 95).

An important point to emphasize is that the project would have produced far less information had we not launched it against an already fairly full research background. We were particularly fortunate also in that being able to slot our questionnaires on informal money-making into an ongoing study, we saved a good deal of time and research energy. We did not have to collect basic census data on all the people or domestic units interviewed, as this had been done during the past few months. This meant time saving as far as the interviewers were concerned, but also time saving for those investigated. There is nothing more irritating for informants than having to answer interminably long questionnaires. Social researchers compiling their schedules seldom consider the boredom and irritation factor of proposed interviews. They are carried away by their own interest in the topic of their investigation, forgetting that informants seldom share this feeling and are often simply doing the interviewer a favour in answering the questions at all. Informal sector studies are particularly open to this problem as one requires so much general 'background' in order to assess and evaluate what is being done and achieved in this sphere.

This leads me to a few final remarks which deal with rather more technical aspects of setting questionnaires - but which I cannot resist, as I know that from personal experience, I invariably fall foul of them!

III. Technical Problems

a) Length and complexity

Length is the biggest of 'technical' bugbears - and results, as I have indicated above, from over-enthusiasm on the part of the researcher. Studies have shown that the reliability of material decreases with the length of a questionnaire - even when an experienced interviewer is administering the
questions. One extreme view is that no questionnaire should be longer than one page! Certainly, it should not involve direct questioning for more than half to three-quarters of an hour. Given the fact that interviewers have to write down the answers, this often means that it is better to split questionnaires into two or even three sections, and return on successive occasions. This strategy, of course, presupposes that your first set of questions have not scared off or bored your informant to the extent of eliciting a closed door or mysterious disappearance when you reappear for the next session!

Apart from length, a problem arises with questions which are inappropriate or seem meaningless to the informant. In my experience, people often become embarrassed or uneasy if they cannot answer many of the questions you ask. Inquiries about actual total daily takings or 'profit' from informal sector activities often create this type of difficulty when the informant does not normally compute his takings in this way. Careful piloting is necessary to pick up this problem. Questions which regularly receive non-replies should be carefully reconsidered, rephrased or dropped. Often, of course, the reason why they elicit no clear answer may involve a study in its own right, and may even set one off on a fruitful line of research.

Try, where possible, to frame questions in terms of the concrete, even if this lengthens the questionnaire. One's wording and conceptualization is likely to be more simple with a concrete question than with general propositions. In addition, informants find it easier to answer with a definite case in mind. Thus, I find a set of questions like 'When did you last buy anything from a shackshop? What was it, and how much did it cost? Why did you buy there?' is better than the more general 'Why do people buy at shackshops?' You get specific concrete data and can also be relatively sure that you are not getting merely an opinion which may or may not reflect reality. (Of course, you have to be sure that your informant will know what a shackshop is! A question designed to fit one field situation, as was the one above, may not fit another).

I personally have found that questionnaires with many split questions are difficult for interviewers to handle. Clearly, much depends on one's subject and one's interviewing personnel. On the whole, however, I would argue for simplicity as far as possible. One has to realise that there comes a point when the complexity demanded by a research problem may mean that questionnaires are not the best technique for getting answers. The more stages and loops in the schedule, the more possibilities of error, not only in administration,
but also in basic conceptualization. It is often woolly thinking and lack of clarity over the aims of the research in general and of particular issues which make for complex wording and the necessity of split questions. The setting of successful questionnaires is a very complex exercise in itself; it can also be time consuming beyond our wildest calculations. Of course, time consuming usually means expensive as formulation time costs money in brains and collaboration. I make a plea, then, for adequate time to be budgetted for research proposals so that questionnaires can be properly thought out and tested.

b) Translation

Another minefield. Whole books have been written on how to formulate questions in good, clear, unambiguous English (Payne, 1951; Berdie & Anderson, 1974). Few writers dare to speculate on what happens when these questions are translated into another language or languages. Professional translators are seldom social scientists and I am sure the experience of having to turn to the Afrikaans side of a national questionnaire to understand what we are being asked, is something many of us have experienced. How much more likely are these problems where we are translating into Bantu or Indian languages in South Africa and where the researcher has little or no real fluency or knowledge of the language into which the translation is being made? One is then at the mercy of the translator. Errors are usually due to ignorance of the real purpose of the question, but there could also be disastrous results if the translator unknowingly chooses words which offend the members of the community being studied - a very real possibility in South Africa today.

Another problem which can arise is that local usages of a word may differ dramatically over a seemingly small geographical distance and even modern, current or 'slave' usage may not coincide with the definitions given in standard dictionaries. Miss Cross related the following incident to me and it seems to sum up a fair range of the pitfalls which can befall even a most wary researcher and one who knows the context and language into which the translation is to be made reasonably well. In a recent study of land tenure she wanted to distinguish two types of field - the main maize field attached to a woman's house, and a smaller, more specialised field often situated in a vlei area which is used for growing sweet reed (imfe) and other wet land crops including, in the modern context, vegetables.
For the latter, the word isife seemed appropriate as it is defined in the dictionary as 'a plot of sweet reed' or a 'supplementary garden plot'. It seemed, on the face of it, that there had been a slight shift in meaning of the word for sweet reed to this type of field used for growing it. In contradistinction, the term insimu - 'cultivated land or garden' was used for the main field. This appeared to work in one area, but when the distinction was used in another area, only 3 kms. away, it was clear that something had gone wrong. Informant after informant said 'Yes, I have an isife, it is next to my house, my main field'. Clearly, the important distinction was being lost. When discussing the problem with her research assistant, the latter remarked comfortingly that she was right in her Zulu usage and the local people wrong! Even so, the local usage had to be followed if the research was to be successful.

The problem of finding somebody to translate one's questionnaires is often great where no suitably trained personnel are attached to universities and research institutes. One often finds that discussions with interviewers and local research assistants seem the best solution. Again, however, a warning! Interviewers may, for reasons of their own, alter the sense of the questions slightly. For instance, if a particular question is difficult to ask or often raises embarrassment, it may seem to the interviewer quite justifiable to shift the meaning slightly. If the researcher is not aware of this, the whole object of the question may be defeated and the 'findings' be incorrect. I have, myself, picked up this type of change in previous research. One simply has to be wary and ever-watchful. It is for this reason that the researcher or question-setter really does need to be involved in not only the piloting but also the process of checking the results of interviews. It is only in this way that problems of the type mentioned throughout this paper can be picked up and ironed out. It means a lot of hard work and, as has been clear throughout discussions at this Workshop, questionnaires are no easy, quick solution to the problems of getting research data.
WHO ARE THE POOR?

The following three chapters consist of a collection of responses submitted after the Workshop. This chapter contains a diverse selection of observations generated by Workshop participants' research among some of Southern Africa's most deprived peoples. Participants were asked to draw from their fieldwork experience to identify categories of people who are poor and to highlight factors producing poverty. These brief profiles illuminate facets of poverty encountered in a broad spectrum of research contexts, viz., urban, rural, village, 'White' farms, etc.

The name of the researcher is appended to each statement and more information about his/her research interests and whereabouts can be obtained from the concluding chapter.

Rural Production in the Transkei

Part of my 1981 project dealt with the quantification of the agricultural output in the rural areas of Transkei. Lack of basic facilities, both economic and social, in the rural areas of Transkei is the main contributor to the poverty of the inhabitants. This also has been, and continues to be, a stumbling block for the emergence of a supportive market in these areas. In such circumstances, those who have access to the larger markets can obviously improve their conditions, at least relatively. Alternatively, those who enjoy certain political privileges are relatively better off. As a result, some villagers are poorer than others. One cannot obviously explain an intricate issue such as poverty in a few lines.

(I. Abedian)

Why Workers on 'White'/Capitalist Farms are Poor

It appears, though it is not certain, that most farm workers are amongst the poorest employed people in South Africa. The immediate causes of this are their relative lack of school education and skills which are readily usable in urban industry, though many have a great depth of agricultural skill and experience. More fundamentally, they lack bargaining power because of the
easy availability of unskilled workers (reflecting in turn the high level of unemployment in South Africa), because of their relative lack of legal rights, and because (reflecting both of the above) they are almost completely unorganized as a group/class. Most fundamentally, all of the above are consequences of the nature of the political economy within which they find themselves, in which, for example, wages are supposed to be based on skills/productivity with little recognition being given to the pleasantness or otherwise of working conditions, and in which capital is generally in a powerful position to keep labour unorganized. To this, one should also add influx control and labour categorization regulations, which even if they are not fully effective, do certainly make it more difficult for farm workers to find urban employment.

(M. de Klerk)

Why Village People Studied are Poor

Most of the people living in the villages I am familiar with could well be called 'poor' for a combination of reasons:

1. They are unable to generate locally, either in terms of food or of cash, what they need to survive at an 'adequate level' (basic health and community maintenance - housing, schooling, social obligations, etc.).

2. They are unable substantially to change their circumstances, i.e. they are unable to overcome their basic dependency on income, services and assistance coming from the wider South African society.

3. They (by and large) do not see themselves as able to break out of this dependency.

4. They (by and large) lack the motivation to break out of their situation.

5. They accordingly have a limited view of the wider processes of South African society.

Some people are poorer than others because they lack access to one or several factors of well-being:

1. either arable land or the money/labour to cultivate it;

2. regular sources of income;

3. effective local networks which serve as channels for distribution of assistance, encouragement and money;

4. sound physical and/or psychological health.

(C. de Wet)
Why are People Poor?

I am somewhat of a 'structuralist' and would normally place the emphasis on these causes of poverty. However, for your purpose, I think it will be more useful if I emphasize two other types of causes of particularly the distribution of poverty. (Why some more than others?) I have become more convinced as my experience increased, that I have perhaps been underplaying, in my own scheme of things, the observation that 'culture' may, or often appears to be, dysfunctional to the alleviation of poverty. The values, religious, social or otherwise, of a society appear to have some relevance to the way in which that society copes with poverty. Or, to put it differently, it may very well be that 'culture' in some instances acts as the 'reverse' of the 'Protestant ethic'. The other 'factor' I have increasingly become aware of, is that some individuals seem to be better equipped than others to cope with poverty. Even under the same 'objective' conditions, the distribution of 'psychological and emotional resources' seems to favour some in dealing with poverty. All this sounds very vague, and indeed it is. In fact, I don't quite know whether I agree with what I appear to say. It may appear as if I am saying that these factors cause poverty. That is not at all the case. Indeed, these factors may very well be the result of poverty. In any case, I think we should not ignore the possibility that certain 'cultural' and/or 'psychological' factors may somehow be related to the varied ways in which members of a society are affected by poverty. The reason I brought this up (thus taking the risk of being misunderstood and wrongly labelled), is that I don't know what to make of it myself. Investigating it can therefore only lead to greater understanding and insight. This seems to be a task for the anthropologist. But somehow I have become aware of an increasing uneasiness when looking at poverty from a strictly structural perspective. I still maintain, however, that structural factors, e.g. accessibility to income-generation opportunities, are of primary importance in explaining poverty.

(L. Loots)

The Definition of Poverty

The definition (roughly only) of poverty I am using in this current survey is defined as follows:

The individual is poor, if he does not have access to the following:

(a) Productive assets, i.e. land, house, cattle, etc.
(b) Financial resources, i.e. cash income and credit.
(c) Social and political organisations, i.e. agricultural cooperatives, rural authorities, hospital, etc.

(d) Social network, i.e. how to get things done or find it out.

(e) Knowledge and skills, i.e. experience and skills.

(f) Relevant information, i.e. newspapers, TV, official pamphlets, etc.

My checklist would be centred around the six points. I am right now busy developing a questionnaire that would at least give some information on the obvious aspects of these points, which I hope to have available in the near future.

(S. Louw)

Who are the 'Poor' in a study of African Women Traders in Rural KwaZulu

In comparison with many other Africans, women traders seem relatively well off - their earnings go to cover the gap between being able to keep children at school, pay for fees and books, and even give them money each day for lunch. They also help to build houses and purchase furniture. However, one has to ask what their lives (and those of their families) would be like without the additional income and here it is clear that most women 'work' because they have to - not because they want to, or see it as a career. However much women may come to enjoy trading - or the excitement and 'freedom' it may offer, they go into this field initially because of financial need. In all areas where I have worked, 'poverty' also consists of not having access to piped water and adequate health facilities. Cholera is now a real threat, typhoid an everpresent reality, and there is no clinic or hospital which can be reached speedily without a car, especially at night. Bus and train transport exist fairly readily, but in times of severe illness, reliance has to be placed on local taxis, at great cost.

(E. Preston-Whyte)

What were the Characteristics or Indicators which suggested that the People interviewed during the 'Poverty: Attitudes and Resources' Survey were living in Poverty?

How have the results of the study altered or refined my perceptions of who are the poor?

It was the intention of our survey to talk with households which could be classified as poor or severely deprived. The definition of poverty informing
our selection of a sample population was drawn from the relativist definitions. People are in poverty if they are '...profoundly comprehensively, and chronically deprived in comparison with the rest of society' (Riffault & Rabier, The Perception of Poverty in Europe, 1977. Commission of the European Communities). Deprived of what? ...of:

(a) Material well-being. (Housing, food, clothing, medical care, amenities, etc.)
(b) Opportunities for personal development. (Education, employment, etc.)
(c) Opportunities to influence the conditions of their lives: to participate in decision-making.

Lacking a sophisticated sample frame, it was decided to carry out our interviews in African and 'Coloured' areas of squatter and sub-economic housing, in the belief that the majority of people living in these situations are observably lacking in many of the elements which characterize a generally acceptable living situation. The selection of particular communities was then informed by discussions with community and social workers who have detailed personal experience in the potential survey areas, and were thus able to identify areas where material deprivation and social difficulties appeared greatest.

While processing of the questionnaire responses has not been completed, initial reviews of the results seem to offer several useful refinements for identifying the 'poorest' people of the society. Briefly, a few of the tentative indications of the initial review of the questionnaires are:

1. Residential location, in itself, is not a dependable indicator of poverty. Location in a squatter area is more clearly an indication of poverty for a 'Coloured' household (in Modderdam), than it is for an African household (in Crossroads). There are a variety of reasons for residing in an African squatter area, many of which see the location as a positive opportunity for improving one's quality of life. In the 'Coloured' community, however, there are considerably more alternatives to the squatter situation, and the reasons for remaining in squatter housing are more clearly lack of ability to take up one of the other housing alternatives.
2. While remaining the primary indicator of poverty, observable material deprivation does not necessarily give a full reflection of a household's experienced quality of life. Given a particular level of material deprivation - of material poverty - the experience of the quality of that poverty will be determined by a number of non-tangible factors.

(a) An individual's perception of his alternatives, of his opportunities to move out of poverty. Those people who seem to experience the greatest, most intractable poverty are those who perceive no way of changing their position.

(b) To a certain extent, by an individual's perception of his condition of poverty as the result of external factors rather than personal failure.

(c) The quality of experienced poverty also seems to relate to the level of community interaction and co-operation. In communities where residents have mutually supportive networks, households seem to be able to absorb the periodic crises more readily than households which have no communal links. This support is both material and moral, and is least likely to exist in settlements with an unstable population.

3. The opportunity to participate in informal sector activities is highly significant in improving the quality of life in poor communities. Poverty is exacerbated in situations where individuals or households are somehow excluded from informal economic activities.

Drawing on the household information gathered in the questionnaires and the observations of the interviewees identifying the poor, an initial review of the completed questionnaires highlights the following situations as generators of especially severe poverty:

- In Durban, respondents perceived migrants and people 'on the farm' as experiencing the greatest poverty.

- In Cape Town, on the other hand, respondent observations and questionnaire data seem to indicate that the most severe poverty is experienced not by migrant workers - who have employment - but by those people who do not have passes permitting them to find legal employment.

- African Cape respondents also mentioned 'people in the country without urban connections' as a particularly disadvantaged group.
Those people ('Coloured' or African) who are caught in peri-urban situations where they are employed in agricultural work, paid rural wages and must face urban prices for housing, food, etc.

Those people who have worked on 'White' farms, and, after becoming too old to work on the farm, find themselves forced to relocate without resources.

'Coloured' squatters (in Modderdam) where networks of communal support seem non-existent and the levels of anomie and hopelessness seem extremely high.

(J. Prinsloo)

Poverty in South East Lesotho and Matatiele

In general, poverty in both S.E. Lesotho and in Matatiele is a facet of the system of oscillating labour migration. Most of the active labour force from these areas is employed in wage-labour in South African industry and they experience and see the wealth associated with it, while being unable to accumulate similarly or to industrialize locally.

In particular, the most poverty-stricken seem to be those in households which have no active wage-earning member nor any local resources such as arable land, livestock or locally saleable skills. By and large, these are households headed by old widows whose children do not support them. Particularly hard-hit are those who have been widowed relatively recently and who, having managed since to maintain themselves by drawing on the resources accumulated during the working lives of their husbands, now find themselves unable to maintain themselves at the standard to which they had become accustomed. They seem to find the transition to destitution particularly traumatic. Children in such households may find themselves farmed out, often as servants and herders in exchange for their own maintenance and small contributions to the maintenance of their household head.

(A. Spiegel)

Poverty Among Workers on Elgin Fruit Farms

People are poor because they find themselves in a set of circumstances usually from birth and do not possess the resources - including motivation, skills, knowledge - to remove themselves from such circumstances.

(M.J. Thomas)
IMPOVERISHMENT: SOME GUIDELINES TO INFORMATION REQUIRED

This chapter assembles a host of considerations that should feature prominently in the preparation of questionnaires designed to research the process of impoverishment. The focus is very much on detailed aspects of the process which should be probed. It provides a wide-ranging number of suggestive signposts to actual questions. These are but tentative guidelines and do not, by any means, constitute a comprehensive checklist.

I. Notes from M. de Klerk

Items which could be included on a poverty questionnaire checklist:
(beyond those suggested at Workshop)

1. Dependence of family on income from seasonal employment
2. Nature of seasonal employment
3. How income/resources coming into the family are distributed
4. How poverty is perceived or felt by the various family members, especially children and old people
5. The seasonal pattern of poverty.

III. Notes from C. de Wet

Community Level:

1. History
   a) Length of establishment of the community
   b) Major changes in community demography (in-migration, out-migration, epidemics, baby boom)
   c) Major personalities, events, processes in the community's history
   d) Relations with wider community, authorities, over time
   e) Real income, over time

2. Cycles
   a) Movement between community and wider society
   b) Fluctuations in periods of activity, type of activity, income patterns
   c) Festivals and rituals

3. Demography
   a) Sex and age pyramids at home and away
   b) Population trends, over time
4. **Resources** (e.g. Land, fuel, water, transport, services, housing)
   a) Type
   b) Condition
   c) Access

5. **Activities and Patterns of Co-operation**
   a) Economic
   b) Social
   c) Ceremonial

**Household Level**

1. **History**
   a) Length of time in the community
   b) History of movement as a unit both within the community and outside it

2. **Demography**
   a) Sex/age pyramid, at home/away, education
   b) Relations between members
   c) Changing composition of household (i) within one year, (ii) across years
   d) Dependency ratios

3. **Resources**
   a) Land
   b) Garden
   c) Housing
   d) Stock
   e) Possessions
   f) Income
   g) Education

4. **Expenditure**
   a) Types of expenditure
   b) Frequency of expenditure
   c) Terms of payment
   d) Informal and ceremonial expenditure
   e) Estimates of labour inputs in household chores, agriculture

5. **Diet**
   a) Daily
   b) Monthly
6. Activities and Patterns of Co-operation
   a) What is produced
   b) By whom
   c) What happens to it
   d) Participation in wider community activities

Individual Level

1. Life history
2. Personal demographic data
3. Networks - inside and outside community
4. Needs and aspirations

III. Notes from L. Loots

Rather than list specific questions, I will indicate the broad area on which I would like questions to be put. To me, it seems as if poverty has an important bearing and is influenced by employment and migration patterns (or the lack of them). I think a series of specific questions on the respondent's experience (in the recent past) of the labour market and spatial mobility will be very useful.

IV. Notes from J. Prinsloo

The following list suggests some areas of potentially useful research in the study of poverty in South Africa. While the list was originally developed during discussions of questions relevant to research in South Africa's rural 'Reserves', the issues and concerns raised are equally pertinent to an understanding of poverty in other South African situations (on 'White' farms, in small towns, in urban centres, etc.).

1. Urban-rural links: Economic, political, social/cultural, skills/literacy.
   To understand these various links, it would be necessary to look at the flows of 'money in, money out' and 'people in, people out'.
2. Poverty as it affects particular classes of individuals:
   - the elderly
   - the ill or handicapped
   - children *
   - individuals who are post-work and pre-pension
*Areas of interest concerning children in poverty:
   - productive roles contributing to the household
   - education - including availability, 'focus' or type of education, attitudes toward education, etc.
   - health
   - relationship of children to household - are they nuclear family, relatives, boarders, etc?
   - attitudes towards future - effects of instability of life on development, motivation, aspirations, etc. (not for regular questionnaire research)

3. Poverty as an aspect of certain stages of an individual or family's life cycle:
   - the young family
   - the middle-aged family, lacking children, employment and pension, etc.

4. The role of pensions: Who gets them and how they circulate.

5. Vulnerabilities - points of critical dependence: (e.g. rural dependence on pensions and urban remittances). Perhaps identified in crisis situations.

6. Who has access to jobs? What are the constraints on access to employment? (e.g. classification as 'farm labour' from birth):
   - Employment and unemployment
   - Relationship between education and training and employment
   - Understanding the magnitude and dynamics of the real unemployment levels
   - Reasons for not working and not looking

7. Informal sector activities: What and who?

8. Land rights and tenure: Differential access to land and stock holdings.
9. Taxation: Formal and informal. And relatedly, provision of public services to the poor. (Note both individual and general taxes).

10. Participation in the political process: Opportunities for participation in decision-making. Ability to influence decision-making and bureaucratic action. (Include questions concerning contributions, gifts, etc., to officials).

11. Dynamics of household economics: Including, inter alia:
   - Community transactions (formal and informal. This would have to be aware of monetary, in kind and service, exchanges.)
   - Indebtedness
   - Non-productive spending

12. Mobility: Who migrates? Who doesn't?
   - How long have you been here?
   - Where was previous residence?
   - Why and how did you arrive at current location?

13. Who becomes rich, and how?

14. Evaluation of some Basic Needs or Indicators of Poverty:
   Access to private consumption, public services, collective decision-making:
   - Water
   - Food
   - Fuel
   - Health care
   - Decision-making
   (Note that alienation may be the critical element in determining the 'quality' or nature of poverty, and must be considered along with material deprivation.)

V. Notes from A. Spiegel

1. Histories of land allocations, land tenure systems and land usage in respective areas - especially relating to 'betterment', 'rehabilitation', 'self-sufficiency', etc. attempts, and resultant relocations of people.
2. Internal differentiation of local populations - related both to linear processes of class formation and to cyclical processes of family/household growth/development. This would focus attention on categories of the population which are more vulnerable to sudden changes in circumstances in local conditions.

3. Attitudes to poverty and relative wealth of different categories of the population - linked to conceptions of social structure and hierarchies.

4. Local resource management: food, land, fuel, building materials and health, and what proportions are imported - using what resources for purchases.

5. Intra-household differentiation - distribution of resources, particularly food and expenditure on health care services.

VI Notes from M.J. Thomas

In our discussion on the checklist we seem to have glossed over what seeing 'the community contextually' (Loretta's words) meant. The following need to be considered:

1. Population:
   . Demographic breakdowns
   . Life statistics - births; infant mortality; deaths

2. Housing:
   . Scheme housing (economic)
   . Home ownership/rented
   . Scheme housing (sub-economic)
   . Flats
   . Mixed
   . Shanties
   . Squatters

3. Formal Structure (functional data):
   . Roads - tarred/untarred/urmade
   . Schools (preschool, primary, secondary) - size, staff, facilities
   . Recreation - fields/sportsclub buildings, church building
     - community halls, cinemas
. Police stations(s), beerhalls/bars/liquor outlets
. Religion - number of ministers resident
. Health/medical - clinics, number of doctors resident

4. Welfare Services:

5. Social Pathology:
   . Incidence of alcohol abuse/unemployment/gross overcrowding/
     child neglect/and truancy
SALIENT POINTS OF THE WORKSHOP

The statements assembled in this section capture those features of the Workshop which participants found particularly valuable. They also contain echoes of the lively and enthusiastic discussions which made the Workshop both an instructive and a very pleasant occasion. Each participant was at liberty to comment on any aspect of the proceedings which he/she found noteworthy or striking.

I. Notes from I. Abedian

1. The fact that I was not the only person struggling with the formulation of a questionnaire for research work in the rural and informal areas was, to me, the most important point. Although it is of little comfort to know that everybody else has the same problems, the inherent complexities of such research work are not adequately appreciated by those who have not been involved in this type of research. This obtains, to my mind, largely because these problems have remained unexpressed.

2. Certain degree of familiarity with the society, community or the unit of research is essential.

3. Before any major survey, a pilot study is necessary.

4. Training the translator (for the field work) is preferable to the translation of the questionnaire.

5. If the computer is to be used in the final tabulation, the programmer should be involved right from the start, i.e. with the formulation of the questionnaire.

6. The phrasing of the questions is vital and every possible care should be taken to avoid multi-meaning questions.

7. If possible, 'mailed questionnaires' should be avoided.

8. Acceptable channels of receiving the data should be found. This directly relates to the nature of the research. For instance, it may be useful to approach churches and other institutions to gather the data that might be available to them.
II. Notes from M. de Klerk

First of all, as always, just meeting people with similar interests and problems: the name and address list was very useful.

My own immediate work is not a poverty measurement study, but it is possible that I will be involved with such a study involving workers and the unemployed on 'White' farms before the Rural Poverty Conference. With this in mind, some of the points for investigation suggested by others which I found most helpful were:

1. Which workers have land rights (in Black rural areas).
2. Which households have heads who are becoming too old for heavy manual work but are too young to qualify for pensions - most vulnerable to poverty.
3. Which older farm workers are citizens of 'independent' Black states and are likely to be sent there on retirement (where they are unlikely to receive pensions).
4. Families dependent on income from employment vulnerable to mechanization.

On the analytical side, I found the following points helpful:

1. Don't spend too much time on high-powered statistical analysis, e.g. analysis of co-variance, etc.
2. Don't worry too much about small exceptions and small missing items of data.
3. Do look for key relationships, then develop interpretation in widening circles from these.
4. Don't be afraid to draw conclusions and express them for criticism.

III. Notes from C. de Wet

1. Attitudes cannot be satisfactorily obtained through questionnaires.
2. It is nevertheless important to obtain information on attitudes about causes of poverty and responsibility for poverty, as well as about poor people's perceptions of other, wealthier people.
3. The historical dimensions of a particular community's process of impoverishment need to be understood.
4. We need to know in detail what happens to money in a community.
5. We need to look at networks and patterns of co-operation.
6. Crisis situations can tell us a lot about what poverty actually 'means'.

7. We cannot understand status considerations and local values (e.g. why a family buys an expensive radiogram instead of fixing the leaking roof, or buying new jerseys for the children) until we understand poverty behaviour as an active process.

8. Children reflect the basic problems of poverty - both in terms of their state of well-being and of their outlook on the world.

IV. Notes from L. Loots

What struck me most from our discussion, is how many mistakes are made because people have not undertaken a proper pilot study. It is important to realise that a pilot study does not end when a draft questionnaire has been put to the first five people at hand. It actually involves rehearsing the whole project, including data manipulation with the computer, tabulation and analysis. This is the only way in which one can establish whether the questionnaire will give the data for the sort of analysis one intends to do.

V. Notes from S. Louw

The striking point was what NOT to do, i.e. not to ask leading questions, etc. After working through five or six questionnaires, I finally figured out what NOT to do, but that was unfortunately only a very small part of my problem, although a very important one.

VI. Notes from E. Preston-Whyte

I think the discussion of the problems of finding, training and organizing interviewers in the field. This happens to correspond with a major current concern of my own. The point was made that as much time has to go into checking completed schedules as into the interviewing itself, and that in any study there must be a full-time 'organizer' whose job it is to see that the interviewers are doing their job properly. Loretta's story of having to take her interviewers out, feed them and literally 'make a party' of the field work was instructive - if daunting. Very few of us realise this and I think our research suffers as a result.
VII. Notes from J. Prinsloo

1. Situations of poverty can be effectively understood only if they are consciously viewed within their (a) systemic, and (b) larger historical contexts.

   a) How is survival in one situation of poverty linked economically, socially, politically to other elements of the society? An understanding of survival in rural (or urban) poverty requires a simultaneous understanding of the links existing between urban and rural situations.

   b) How does the experience of poverty, recorded in a specific situation, emerge from an historical process of impoverishment? It is important that research on poverty investigate specific conditions of poverty and the responses to these conditions. (e.g. rural reserves, rural White farms, urban squatters, urban townships, etc.) Radical solutions to these problems can be achieved, however, only if the historical sources of the process of impoverishment are understood.

2. The study of poverty, the assessment of whether it exists, the 'understanding of the historical process of impoverishment' - are awkwardly and persistently subjective issues.

3. Re: Interviewer training. P. Wakelin is establishing an intensive training course for interviewers. Is there enough demand for enumerators to keep them occupied - to ensure trainees are not lost to dependable regular employment? Perhaps the best solution is to follow the pattern suggested by L. Loots in hiring a relatively extensive number of potential interviewers for a training period, directly related to a specific research project/questionnaire. After the agreed-upon training period, a small cadre of the most effective interviewers can then be hired to carry out the research project.

4. Related to the No. 3 (above), implementation of reputable surveys involving questionnaires is neither quick nor inexpensive. Questionnaire work provides a classic case of 'If it's worth doing, it's worth doing well'. Poorly executed questionnaires are likely to be uninformative and/or misinforming.

5. To understand the economics of surviving in poverty, research - and the questionnaire - must address the individual, the household and the community. In instances when co-operative action, mutual support, sharing, etc., are significant, the community is the necessary level of economic analysis.
VIII. Notes from A. Spiegel

1. Questionnaires are only really useful after one has done intensive work and needs some statistical detail to fill it out.

2. Necessity of going to very basic elementary questions, e.g., not 'How many animals do you have?', but 'How many cattle do you or members of your household have which are (i) kraaled at home, (ii) kraaled with somebody else, (iii) lent out (mafisa, ukusisa) to somebody else; (iv) out at the cattle-post; and how many calves are there in each category?'

3. The notion of vulnerability as a measure of poverty. How do people cope (or not cope) with changed circumstances in the constraints which govern their lives? What are these constraints?

IX. Notes from M.J. Thomas

For me, the salient points of the Workshop were:

1. The importance of precision in setting questions.
2. The explanation of pilot studies and their use.
3. The discussion on the use of data and the narrowing down of the data used in doing the write-up.
4. The importance of being clear on the statistical method used and what one wishes to show.

Eleanor's paper and C.de Wet's discussion showed the importance of an in-depth study to give a good picture of what is occurring in an area. Chris' paper on questionnaire construction was particularly useful in showing how to tap detail. Chris Tapscott's comments on the value of various questions were useful. The paper by Lieb Loots was probably the most helpful, in pointing out the pitfalls in drawing up a questionnaire. The need for precision in coding and interpretation of facts was drilled home well. James' discussion on interviewers was also useful. This topic could probably merit a section on its own. Peter's discussion on the importance of what the researcher wants from a questionnaire/survey and the use of facts obtained to show this, was also valuable.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

Subsequent to the Questionnaire Workshop, participants were asked to identify references which they have found particularly useful in guiding their research on poverty. The following bibliography was generated in response to this request. Included are suggestions for readings on both method and content of studies on impoverishment. Appreciation is here expressed to S.J.H. Louw, Peter Moll, Eleanor Preston-Whyte, Jane Prinsloo and Andrew Spiegel in particular for their contributions to this bibliography.

Survey Methods and Questionnaire Design


Anthropological Approaches to Research


Poverty and Approaches to its Study: General


Paradigms of Poverty


Indicators of Poverty


Informal Sector


Dewar, D. & Watson, V., Unemployment and the Informal Sector: Some Proposals, Urban Problems Research Unit, University of Cape Town, Cape Town, 1981.


(Enquiries directed to the author via USAID, Office of Urban Development, Washington, D.C.)

Urban-Rural Links

Sen, Jai, The Unintended City: An Essay on the City of the Poor, Catholic Relief and Social Services, Calcutta, 1975.


Cameron, Colin, Attitudes of the Poor and Attitudes toward the Poor: An Annotated Bibliography, Madison, Wisconsin, Institute for Research and Poverty, 1975.


Computer Processing


(Pamphlet: copies available from the department).


University of California, BMDP: Biomedical computer programs, P-series 1979, Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1979, 880pp.


ABEDIAN, I.
School of Economics, University of Cape Town
Phone: 021 - 69 8531 Ext. 225.

Previous Research:
1. Quantification of economic production and estimation of income within the Transkeian economy for 1980.

Current Research:
1. Updating and expanding the macro-economic analysis of economic production and income for 1981.
2. The economics of public resource allocation in the Republic of South Africa, i.e. examining the economic consequences of government distributive policies for the various 'population groups'.
3. 'Tourism Policy for the Homelands'. (In collaboration with C.Tapscott).

ARDINGTON, L.
Institute of Development Studies, University of Natal, Durban.
Phone: 031 - 25 3411 Ext. 362.

Current Research:
A Quality of Life study of rural Blacks in Natal involving a survey of a sample distributed into the following categories:
1. Traditional.
2. Areas adjacent to a growth point.
3. White farms.

The study focusses on the following:
1. The availability of and responsibility for facilities.
2. The structure and aspirations of households.
3. Constraints on breaking out of poverty.
4. Urban bias and rural poverty.

BROMBERGER, N.
Department of Economics, University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg.
(Subsistence Agriculture Study Group)
Phone: 0331 - 63320 Ext. 313.

Previous Research:
Investigated decisions directing agricultural investment and activities.
Current Research:

A household survey of a rural/peri-urban area, Vulindlela, involves a survey of 4400 households covering: composition of household (demographic); crop yields; ownership of cattle; incomes; migration; unemployment; income distribution within households; perspectives on the allocation of household resources, and poverty.

DE KLERK, M.

School of Economics, University of Cape Town.
Phone: 021 - 61 0618.

Current Research:

(For M.A. thesis)

DE WET, C.

Department of Anthropology, Rhodes University, Grahamstown.
Phone: 0461 2023 Ext. 13.

Current Research:

1. Agricultural, economic and social effects of the implementation of a rural betterment scheme during the mid-1960s in a rural Ciskei village. (For Ph.D.)

2. Participation in a socio-economic survey of the Amatole Basin area of Ciskei during 1981, including a month's field work in one of the Basin's 13 villages, looking at patterns of economic co-operation.

ELOFF, J.L.

Instituut vir Ontwikkelingstudies, Randse Afrikaanse Universiteit.
Phone: 011 - 72 6500 Ext. 866.

Current Research:

As per E. Moody.

FOSTER, D.

Department of Psychology, University of Cape Town.
Phone: 021 - 69 8531 Ext. 354.

Current Research:

The process of attribution of causality in analyses of poverty.
LE ROUX, P.
Institute for Social Development, University of the Western Cape.
Phone: 021 - 97 6161.

Current and Projected Research:
1. Investigation of housing conditions and financing.
2. Transportation.
3. Allocation of Public Resources.

LOOTS, L.
Institute for Social Development, University of the Western Cape.
Phone: 021 - 97 6161 Ext. 203.

Research Projects (Poverty-related):
1. A comparative study of unemployment and employment patterns in a rural (reserve) village and an urban township.
2. A study of rural-urban migration in the Western Cape. The importance of employment and economic factors were explored.
3. An investigation of employment decision-making by both employees and employers (or work-seekers). (Projected research).

LOUW, S.J.H.
School of Administration and Management, UNIBO.
Private Bag X2046, Mafikeng, 8670.

Research Projects:
1. Transkei household income and expenditure survey (UNISA).
   Assisted in doing the actual survey and did some data analysis as well.
2. An article on Human Capital using the UNISA survey as data.
3. Income differentials in Bophuthatswana. (Current research).

MOLL, P.
Southern Africa Labour & Development Research Unit, University of Cape Town.
Phone: 021 - 69 8531 Ext. 440.

Presently employed as a part-time research worker for the Investigation into Poverty and Development in South Africa. He is researching food supply and nutrition policy and is also working as a computer programmer.
MOODY, E.

Instituut vir Ontwikkelingstudies, Randse Afrikaans Universiteit. 
Phone: 011 - 726 6902.

Research Projects:

1. Socio-economic survey of Venda and Gazankulu.
2. Socio-economic survey of 'Coloured' households in 26 localities in Johannesburg, covering:
   (a) Housing
   (b) Transport
   (c) Education
   (d) Local Government

NATRASS, N.

Southern Africa Labour & Development Research Unit, University of Cape Town. 
Phone: 021 - 55 8285

Employed as a part-time research worker for the Investigation of Poverty and Development in South Africa.

PRESTON-WHYTE, E.

Department of African Studies, University of Natal, Durban. 
Phone: 031 - 81 4653.

Current and Projected Research:

1. About to begin a fairly large study of African women's participation in so-called 'informal sector' activities and in small business enterprises in rural KwaZulu. This study involves assessing and describing rural poverty in KwaZulu and in looking at ways to ameliorate it. The method of gathering data will be that of participant observation and in-depth interviewing, using an aide-memoire rather than a formally constructed schedule of questions.
2. The above project grew out of a smaller piece of research into the money-making activities of Zulu women in the tourist trade along the north and south coasts of Natal and KwaZulu.

PRINSLOO, J.

Southern Africa Labour & Development Research Unit, University of Cape Town. 
Phone: 021 - 69 8531 Ext 217.

Current Research:

Exploratory survey of squatter and sub-economic housing communities in Cape Town and Durban. (L. van Schalkwyk administered the Durban survey). The central element of the project is a 41-question questionnaire administered
in Xhosa, Afrikaans and Zulu to a total of about 700 households. (450 in Cape Town, 250 in Durban). A series of guided discussions were conducted with community and religious leaders, social workers, medical officers and others whose daily work provides them with an informed overview of life in the poorer communities of Cape Town and Durban.

SIMKINS, C.
School of Economics, University of Cape Town.
Phone: 021 - 698531 Ext. 732.
Current Research Interests:
2. Projected urbanisation rates worked out for the Urban Foundation.
3. Resettlement.

SPIEGEL, A.
Department of Anthropology, University of Cape Town.
Phone: 021 - 698531 Ext. 301.
Previous and Current Research:
1. Migrant Labour: Avenues for the diffusion of remittances focussing on a S.E. Lesotho area. (Previous research).
2. Conditions of life in a rural areas project: Differential living standards in the Matatiele region. (Current research).

TAPSCOTT, C.
Institute for Management and Development Studies, University of the Transkei.
Phone: 0471 - 3492.
Current Research:
Much of current research relates to ironing out deficiencies in the existing system of data collection.
Projected Research:
1. Diffusion of knowledge in rural areas (Transkei).
2. Networks of control over resources in rural areas and the political consequences of these.
3. The economics of tourism in the Transkei.
THOMAS, J.

Bonair, Price Drive, Constantia, 7800.
Phone: 021 - 74 4244

Previous and Current Research:

1. Unemployment in Bishop Lavis, Cape. (SALDRU).
2. Field work co-ordinator on SALDRU/Carnegie Survey of squatter and sub-economic housing communities in Cape Town and Durban.

THOMAS, M.J.

Elgin Community Development Committee, P.O. Box 4, Grabouw.
Phone: 0240 - 2346.

Current Research:

Conditions on the farms in the Elgin/Grabouw area involving:

1. A profile of the community.
2. A survey to ascertain the number of labourers working in the area and to obtain other related data.
3. Presently compiling a questionnaire for both labourers and farmers.

VAN DER BERG, S.

Department of Economics, University of Stellenbosch,
Phone: 02231 - 71140

Research Projects:

1. Formerly worked at BENSO.
2. Investigating Basic Needs and Quality of Life through manipulation of Census data.

VAN SCHALKWYK, L.

Centre for Applied Social Sciences, Durban.
Phone: 031 - 25 3411 Ext. 367.

Research Projects:

Collaborated with J. Prinsloo on researching squatter and sub-economic housing communities in Cape Town and Durban.
WAKELIN, P.

Institute for Management and Development Studies, University of the Transkei.
Phone: 0421 - 3492.

Research Projects:
1. Currently working on refining the process of data collection.
2. Working out a programme for the training of interviewers.

WENTZEL, W.

Southern Africa Labour & Development Research Unit, University of Cape Town.
Phone: 021 - 68 8531 Ext. 440

Current Research:


WILSON, F.

Southern Africa Labour & Development Research Unit, University of Cape Town.
Phone: 021 - 69 8531 Ext. 453.

Current Research:

Director of the present Inquiry into Poverty and Development in South Africa.

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To anybody interested in what is happening in Southern Africa at the present time, it is clear that an understanding of changes taking place in the field of labour is crucial. The whole debate about the political implications of economic growth, for example, revolves very largely around different assessments of the role of black workers in the mines and factories of the Republic. Many of the questions with which people involved in Southern Africa are now concerned relate, in one way or another, to the field generally set aside for labour economists to cultivate. The impact of trade unions; the causes of unemployment; the economic consequences of different educational policies; the determination of wage structures; the economics of discrimination; all these and more are matters with which labour economists have been wrestling over the years in various parts of the world.

At the same time there are many who would argue that these issues are far wider than can be contained within the narrow context of 'labour economics'. These issues, it is pointed out, go to the heart of the whole nature of development. In recent studies, commissioned by the International Labour Office, of development problems in Columbia, Sri Lanka, and Kenya, for example, leading scholars have identified the three crucial issues facing these countries as being poverty, unemployment, and the distribution of income. Thus the distinction between labour and development studies is becoming more blurred as economists come face to face with problems of real life in the Third World.

It is here too that an increasing number of people are coming to see that study of the political economy of South Africa must not be done on the assumption that the problems there are absolutely different from those facing other parts of the world. Indeed it can be argued that far from being an isolated, special case, South Africa is a model of the whole world containing within it all the divisions and tensions (black/white; rich/poor; migrant/nonmigrant; capitalist west/third-world; etc.) that may be seen in global perspective. Be that as it may, the fact remains that the economy of Southern Africa (for the political and economic boundaries are singularly out of line with each other) is one of the most fascinating in the world. It is one on which far more research work needs to be done, and about which further understanding of the forces at work is urgently required. It is in order to attempt to contribute to such an understanding that Saldu is issuing these working papers.