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WAGE WORKERS IN A 'HOMELAND TOWNSHIP': THEIR EXPERIENCES
IN FINDING, MAINTAINING AND LOSING EMPLOYMENT

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MAGGIE'S FARM: A Folk Song by Bob Dylan [1]

I ain't gonna work on Maggie's farm no more.
No, I ain't gonna work on Maggie's farm no more.
Well I wake up in the morning,
Fold my hands and pray for rain.
I got a head full of ideas
That are driving me insane.
It's a shame the way she makes me scrub the floor.
I ain't gonna work on Maggie's farm no more.

I ain't gonna work for Maggie's brother no more.
No, I ain't gonna work for Maggie's brother no more.
Well, he hands you a nickel,
He hands you a dime,
He asks you with a grin
If you're havin' a good time,
Then he fines you every time you slam the door.
I ain't gonna work for Maggie's brother no more.

I ain't gonna work for Maggie's pa no more.
No, I ain't gonna work for Maggie's pa no more.
Well, he puts his cigar
Out in your face just for kicks.
His bedroom window
It is made out of bricks.
The national guard stands around his door.
Ah, I ain't gonna work for Maggie's pa no more.

I ain't gonna work for Maggie's ma no more.
No, I ain't gonna work for Maggie's ma no more.
Well, she talks to all the servants
About man and God and law.
Everybody says
She's the brains behind pa.
She's sixty-eight, but she says she's twenty-four.
I ain't gonna work for Maggie's ma no more.

I ain't gonna work on Maggie's farm no more.
No, I ain't gonna work on Maggie's farm no more.
Well, I try my best
To be just like I am,
But everybody wants you
To be just like them.
They sing while you slave and I just get bored.
I ain't gonna work on Maggie's farm no more.

[1] From Bob Dylan: Writings and Drawings, Herts: Panther Books Limited. 1974.

ABSTRACT

Workers domiciled in Qwaqwa, South Africa's smallest 'homeland', experience high rates of unemployment and job instability. Yet most terminations of employment are employee-instigated. This dissertation examines the reasons for employment instability among wage workers resident in a housing section in Phuthaditjhaba, the 'homeland's' only urban area.

The approach adopted in the dissertation is primarily ethnographic. It describes the everyday experiences of African workers and treats their own perspectives of their working lives as central. Quantitative and qualitative data, collected from two samples drawn from the population in the housing area selected for study, are presented.

It is argued that employment instability must be understood as a consequence of a web of interrelated circumstances and cannot be explained in terms of any one single causal factor. The following employment and employment-related circumstances are examined: workers' views of, and reactions to, wages and working conditions; problems with transport between places of work and home, and with workplace accommodation; conflicts of interest arising from domestic pressures undermining workers' ability to remain in a job; and the experience of joblessness. These various factors are then drawn together to show that workers do not perceive these factors in isolation from one another, but that they experience the oppressive conditions of their domestic and working lives as a totality. Any attempts to find ways to increase workers' job stability will have to look both within and beyond the workplace.

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NOTES ON TERMINOLOGY

In South Africa, few anthropological and sociological terms are devoid of political meaning. Throughout this thesis I have used inverted commas when referring to the 'homelands' to dissociate myself from apologists of apartheid who see the 'homeland' policy as a viable alternative to equal (one-person-one-vote) political participation in a unitary South African state. In an editorial comment in The Voice (21/10/1978) it was pointed out that: "Aristotle's conception of the state does not take places like Qwaqwa into consideration". I use the term 'homeland' rather than 'self-governing state', 'national state' or 'bantustan' because this was the only term was used by residents of Qwaqwa. Although the term 'bantustan' is well established in critical discourse in South African urban centres, many residents of Qwaqwa felt belittled thereby. The categories Africans, Blacks and Whites have been capitalized to show that these are not merely descriptive terms, but are official designations in terms of the South African Population Registration Act of 1950.

In reference to Phuthaditjhaba I use the terms town and 'township' interchangeably to indicate its ambivalent status among informants. A township can be defined as a residential area "set aside for African, Indian or 'Coloured' occupation, usually situated adjacent to or within commuting distance of a white urban area on which they are economically dependent" (Platsky and Walker 1985: xii). This definition accords with many emic perceptions of Phuthaditjhaba, as it was occupied exclusively by Africans and had remained a labour exporting area.

All personal names used in this thesis, except those of public figures, are fictitious. This is in deference to the wishes of some informants to remain anonymous, and because it is the first responsibility of the anthropologist to protect the identity of people with whom he or she works. A pseudonym would, however, be ineffective to conceal the location of the Appolo housing section to anyone familiar with Phuthaditjhaba.

Most quotations in the text reflect an interpreter's translations of the original verbal statements by informants in Sesotho or Zulu. Such translations have often been liberally transcribed and edited. Other quotations reflect transcriptions of interviews that I conducted in English, or my translations of interviews I conducted in Afrikaans. As a result there is little consistency in the use of African, English or Afrikaans idioms.

INTRODUCTION

Labour and life histories reveal a great deal about conditions of employment which studies of the workplace cannot do. Rather than merely exploring conditions at one point in time, they direct attention to the movements of workers between unemployment, different jobs, employers and workplaces. This thesis focuses on the life and labour histories of residents of the Appolo housing section of Phuthaditjhaba, the capital and only established town of the Qwaqwa 'homeland'. The histories show that few informants have experienced stability of employment since their relocation into Qwaqwa: they are marked by relatively short periods in particular jobs, frequent changes of employment and long phases of unemployment. An analysis of reasons for job terminations shows a preponderance of terminations by employees rather than by employers. In the context of these findings this thesis addresses the question: Why is it that, against a background of great unemployment, workers frequently change jobs?

Despite its obvious importance, worker mobility has received little attention in African labour studies. This is largely because most studies have focussed exclusively either on a single factory (Kapferer 1972), or mine (Gordon 1977, Moodie 1983), or on a particular sector of employment such as mining (Van Onselen 1976, Wilson 1972 a and Perrings 1978) or the railways (Grillo 1973). Though these studies contain valuable information on labour movements into and out of particular industrial enterprises or sectors of employment their focus provides insight into what is often merely a brief phase in the employment histories of workers. The scope for a study based on the collection of labour histories within a specific working class

residential area lies in its potential to capture the diversity of experiences cutting across types, sectors and places of employment. Although such a study precludes both participant observation of workplace behaviour and research about employers' perspectives, several other factors make it worthwhile. A residential study can reveal factors external to the employment situation which are of crucial importance to an understanding of job instability. These include: leisure, transport to and from work, domestic arrangements, and the nature of unemployment. Moreover, a residential study allows the researcher to maintain social distance from both management and workers other than the informants. Such social distance is beneficial in that it facilitates an atmosphere in which informants can relay their ideas and perceptions of employment experiences without fear of repercussions from the workplace.

APPROACH AND OBJECTIVES

Bozzoli (1983 a) points to two extreme tendencies among social scientists in their utilization of subjective and experiential evidence gained through the first hand testimonies of ordinary participants in the events of the past and the present. The first tendency is for analysts to use such material simply in an illustrative manner and to grant it a subordinate status to more "objective" evidence gleaned from statistics and reports of disinterested observers. "It is assumed that conceptual and theoretical issues are to be discussed and solved on a different plane from experiential ones" (p.8). The second tendency is to elevate such testimony "to a much higher status, being regarded perhaps as 'pure' uncontaminated material, itself the source of

meaning" (p.9). Although Bozzoli applies no labels to these tendencies, I would describe the former as structuralist and the latter as subjectivist [1].

My reservations as regards a structuralist approach are numerous. Firstly, as Bozzoli (1983 a: 9) points out, it is based on "a lack of trust in the evidence of ordinary people, and perhaps an assumption of the innate superiority of the conceptualizations of intellectuals". I concur with Harre (1979: 244) who states that: "Everyone is in a sense a fairly competent social scientist and we must not treat his or her theory about the social world and his place in it with contempt." Secondly a structuralist approach often tends to dehumanize its subjects of analysis by seeing individual action as a mere product of broader structural determinants. Such theories distort reality: even within a labour repressive economy, "conditions per se do not, by themselves determine how workers will react, rather it is their interpretation of relative conditions which decides how they will attempt to achieve their goals" (Gordon 1978 :117). It is thus essential to emphasize emic perceptions of reality as it is these perceptions rather than etic theories of reality which serve as reliable guides for social action.

Due to an over-reliance upon deductive methods a structuralist approach has the added shortcoming of reducing experiential and subjective evidence to those aspects most beloved by intellectual theories and to see only what theory permits. The approach is thus intellectually conservative insofar as it resists being guided towards new insights by the subjects of research and denies " their potential for positive contributions in the formulation of theory.

Purely subjectivist analyses can, on the other hand, be faulted on three different counts: (i) for examining individual ideas and actions in a socio-historical vacuum; (ii) for an uncritical acceptance of emic perceptions in accordance with the ethos of cultural and moral relativism; and (iii) unrepresentivity due to an outright rejection of quantitative evidence (cf. Smart 1977).

Although I reject extreme subjectivism, the approach adopted in this dissertation treats the experiences of African workers and their perspectives of their own situations as central. This is to compensate for the neglect thereof in South African intellectual discourse.

Gordon (1977 :5) notes that the structures of apartheid such as 'homelands', Group Areas, labour compounds, and influx control not only facilitate and maintain domination, but also enable their beneficiaries to maintain moral self-respect by making its victims invisible. Philip and Iona Mayer (1974), writing of life in East London during the 1960s, have pointed out that:

...while Black faces are common enough in town, the appearance of a White face in the locations is so uncommon as to draw stares. It is not only that casual visits are officially discouraged - at present no White person may enter the location without an official permit - but that occasion and inclination are lacking. The average White East Londoner may spend a lifetime in the city of his [sic] birth without ever setting foot in the locations; nor (probably) will he even wish to, for the locations repel by their poverty and squalor, and unnerve by their dense concentration of 'the other' race (p. 44)

The same still applies to the South Africa of the 1980s. Studies in the social sciences, however, often fail to make the everyday experiences and perspectives of African workers known. This is not only due to a highly exclusive readership, but also because

of the tendency to reify concepts such as "mode of production", "class", "state", and indeed "culture" too, thereby losing sight of individual actors. Inadequacy of sources may be another reason: Perrings (1978: 143-144), explaining the inability of many historical studies to account for perspectives from below, has said:

The evidence available is the evidence of managers and administrators; it is not the evidence of workers...empirical research into changing patterns of worker behaviour in the labour market must needs rely on the evidence of capital alone.

By emphasizing the emic perceptions of African workers, studies such as the present one have the potential at least to convey something of their lives to outsiders who have not experienced their way of living themselves [2].

In the presentation of subjective and experiential evidence I aim to locate the experiences, perceptions and actions of individual workers in the context of broader processes in the South African political economy. By doing this, one can begin to understand the effects of structural coercion, constraints and limitations on individuals' actions. Secondly, the presentation of emic perspectives does not imply an absence of a critical interpretation and evaluation thereof. In this regard it is essential, however, to distinguish between the perceptions of different informants and the anthropologist's interpretation thereof; so as to avoid the analytical danger of replacing informants' views with ones own and to enable the reader to draw alternative interpretations. Thirdly, quantitative evidence is utilized to depict demographic and economic trends. Quantitative data can serve as a useful tool in locating problems explicable

by qualitative evidence.

OUTLINE OF THESIS CHAPTERS

In the light of the methodological arguments spelt out above the initial part of this dissertation aims to contextualize subjective and experiential evidence gained from life and labour histories, and to comment upon its collection, validity and representivity. Chapter one locates the data relating to labour experiences within the context of Qwaqwa's recent history of population relocations, diverse settlement patterns, and inequitable distributions of employment opportunities. In chapter two I outline how fieldwork was conducted and present basic quantitative data pertaining to labour force participation which serves as a background for the qualitative data presented in the succeeding chapters. Discussion is devoted to problems encountered in the field, methods of data collection, sampling, and the reliability of field work data.

In the five chapters following I present an analysis and interpretation of the explanations informants provided for terminating employment. It is argued that different levels of investigation are required to account for job terminations and each of these levels is treated as a sub-theme around which each chapter is organized. In many respects my approach parallels one used to conceptualize disease causation by medical anthropologists and sociologists:

For too long a germ theory of disease has occupied the central part of the medical stage and it has been believed that to prevent or treat disease it is only necessary to break the most important link in a causal chain. However, the correct model of interpreting causation of disease is more that of an interconnected web rather than that of a chain... effective

medicine is that medicine which is deeply involved in combating the whole causative web of circumstances - socio-economic as well as medical - underlying morbidity and mortality...medical and sociological studies provide a clear demonstration that food, housing, employment opportunities and other similar non-medical factors play the decisive role in determining the morbidity and mortality rates... (Savage 1980: 140-142; emphasis added)

Chapters three to seven each focuses on a different aspect of such an interconnected web of causation, and the presentation of these themes in separate chapters is purely stylistic.

Chapter three investigates how workers perceived different jobs and how they evaluated the remuneration they received. Chapter four investigates why desertions were a common response adopted by informants. Desertions from work are examined in relation to other accommodative actions (i.e. attempts to stay out of trouble and to forge relations of patronage with employers), defiant actions (i.e. "dodging", illicit appropriations, and assaulting supervisors), protest and retreatist actions. Each of the next three chapters rests on a central argument that an analysis of the experiences and actions of workers within the employment situation provide a necessary, but insufficient means of explaining job terminations. It is argued that account should also be taken of (i) transport to and from work and workplace accommodation (chapter five); (ii) the domestic arrangements and considerations of workers (chapter six); and (iii) the nature of unemployment (chapter seven). These were regarded by informants as central rather than peripheral elements of the employment experience, and job terminations were often related to these considerations.

The dissertation concludes with a summary, and discussion of research findings in relation to other social scientific

literature on the subject of employment instability. The various themes are drawn together again, and I comment briefly on the implications of understanding job losses among Diappolo wage workers as a consequence of a whole web of interrelated employment and employment-related circumstances rather than the result of any single causal factor.

NOTES TO INTRODUCTION

[1] Theoretical paradigms such as structural functionalism, Levi-Strausian structuralism and Althusserian Marxism best epitomise the structuralist approach. Despite important differences between these paradigms they are essentially dualist insofar as they argue for the existence of a single essence to social life (either social structure or the unconscious structure of the human mind) existing beyond the realm of individual thought and action. The real task of the social scientist is thus not to record, describe and interpret individual perceptions, experiences and motivations; but to transcend the world of appearances and to uncover the hidden truth which is responsible for observables (vide Leaf 1979).

Phenomenological and interpretative paradigms are characteristic of a subjectivist approach. According to Moodie (1983) extreme subjectivism is most evident in the works of Schutz which emphasize intentionality and seek to understand action primarily with reference to the preconceived project of the actor. Schutz also tends to view self-identity, not as formed and sustained in the structures of interaction, but as consistent over time and founded upon purposeful conduct which is defined by the individual's intentions. Moodie (1983: 177) argues "an autonomous self-identity, 'working' in the paramount reality, may to some extent be possible for members of the ruling class...Schutz seems to have little conception for the alienation experienced in their 'working' by subordinate classes, those who are not trusted by their employers and are refused direction on the job".

[2] The extremely limited efforts of South African social scientists to publicize their research results for the benefit of non-academic audiences constitutes a serious breach of social responsibility. In this regard the aim of the 1981 and 1984 Witwatersrand History Workshops to stimulate the creation of "cultural commodities" such as popular books, photographic displays, films, recorded oral testimonies and performances sets a fine example (cf. Bozzoli 1983 a).

CHAPTER ONE

THE RESEARCH SETTING: MACRO AND MICRO SITUATIONS

It is the special and perhaps deepest dilemma of anthropological method that in viewing human life from close-up, anthropologists see a richness of everyday experience other social scientists characteristically miss; but they are in constant danger of local, partial understandings of events shaped by outside forces (Keesing 1976: 512).

My concern in this dissertation is the very close-up focus of individual life and labour histories. Yet it is necessary to contextualize data of this kind. I do not believe that the macro-level constitutes a more relevant focus than the micro-level for contemporary anthropological research [1]. But it is essential to be concerned with events at that level so as to enhance our understanding of everyday life situations by giving it generalizable and comparative value. Indeed, Murray (1980: 1) identifies the challenge to anthropologists as integrating ethnographic data with an appreciation of historical and current macro-level political and economic processes.

This chapter responds to that challenge by attempting to locate informants within the wider research setting. At a macro-level of analysis I suggest that the current employment situation in the 'homelands' can be illuminated by the concept of a dual labour market. I argue that political economic processes over the past two decades have disqualified most wage workers in Qwaqwa from access to high wage jobs on the primary labour market. Residents of the Appolo housing section of Phuthaditjhaba (my unit of observation) have, however, been advantageously situated due to their particular residential patterns and their relatively favourable access to employment opportunities in the 'homeland'.

THE DUAL LABOUR MARKET CONCEPT

Sharp and Spiegel (1985: 147) draw attention to the potential of dual labour market theory to illuminate the employment situation in the South African 'homelands'. The dual labour market, distinguishing between a primary and a secondary market, has been identified as a central feature of capitalist economies (vide Giddens 1973 and Littler 1982). In the primary market, jobs are stable and well paid, and workers have prospects of career advancement. In the secondary market, which is characterized by low wages, poor job stability and low chances of career advancement, these conditions are absent. This concept has been applied to labour markets stratified on the basis of gender and 'race'. Clegg and Dunkerley (1980: 401-9) show that social prejudice and the interruptions British women experience in marketing their labour have restricted them to low paid jobs in the secondary labour market. Likewise, 'racial' classification has been an important disqualifying factor regarding access to the primary labour market in South Africa. According to Burawoy (1975) this was epitomized in the mining industry, where legal enforcement of the colour bar reserved a range of jobs for White workers and barred Blacks from advancement into skilled and even semi-skilled positions.

Although the South African labour market has remained 'racially' stratified, other important lines of cleavage are emerging. Claassens (1979), Southall (1982), and Lacey (1983) note that since the late 1960s government legislation has had the effect of dividing the African working class into those with permanent rights of residence in common South Africa and those in the

'homelands'.

Africans who have qualified to reside permanently in urban areas of common South Africa "have been awarded greater mobility in terms of influx control, more stability in terms of family life and increasing access to jobs, training and union rights formerly reserved for Whites" (Lacey 1983: 47) [2]. This has implied increased access to the primary labour market. Schneier (1983) has, for instance, shown significant degrees of upward occupational mobility among urban Africans in Soweto and the Cape Peninsula. Upward mobility frequently occurred in skilled manual and clerical categories. A small stratum of executives, managers, and administrators, has also emerged [3].

These concessions to urban Africans have occurred in conjunction with increasingly repressive control over 'homeland' wage workers. Of particular significance, Lacey argues, is the "transformation of the workforce into legal 'foreigners' through the manipulation of nationality, citizenship and immigration laws" (1983: 46). An important tenet of this process has been the relocation of some two million Africans from farms, towns and cities in common South Africa over the past two decades (vide Surplus People Project 1983, Platzky and Walker 1985). The potentially politically volatile mass of unemployed, thrown out of work due to increased fixed capitalisation of agriculture and industry, has thus been situated in the 'homelands'.

Another dimension of population removals has been the enforcement of the migrant labour system and a rationalization of labour allocation. Burawoy regards migrant labour as incompatible with

employment in the primary labour market for two reasons. Migrants, legally regarded as foreigners, are unable "to influence the institutions that subordinate them to the other fractions of the labour market as well as to the employer" (1975: 1060-1). Secondly high rates of labour turnover could be prohibitively costly for jobs requiring training and experience for their effective performance [4]. Under the call-in card system, for instance, migrants were compelled to spend time and money travelling so as to re-attest their contracts annually at 'homeland' labour bureaux.

Recently there have been attempts by mine management to create a more stable workforce by issuing Re-employment Guarantee Certificates (RGCs) to reliable workers whom they would like to re-employ (cf. Spiegel 1980, Murray 1982 and Guy and Thabane 1984). Among the means to enforce migrant labour during this period are the selective distribution of requisitions at labour bureaux; and fines of R500 for persons housing illegals and of R5 000 for their unauthorized employment.

The confinement of 'homeland' workers to the secondary labour market is also evident in the decentralization of industries to the 'homelands' and development points near 'homeland' borders. Zille (1982: 65) argues that government spending in this regard is "intended to play a pivotal role in influx control because it is essential that control of movement should rest less on coercion and more on economic incentives". The willingness of industrialists to invest in the 'homelands' can also be seen as a consequence of reorganization in the conditions of production. This is specifically evident in textile, food, motor, and furniture industries where highly complex production operations

have been decomposed into elementary operations making unskilled work feasible (cf. Braverman 1974). To them the 'homelands' offer an inexhaustible supply of cheap, unorganized labour (cf. Lacey 1983: 48-49).

QWAQWA: AN OVERVIEW

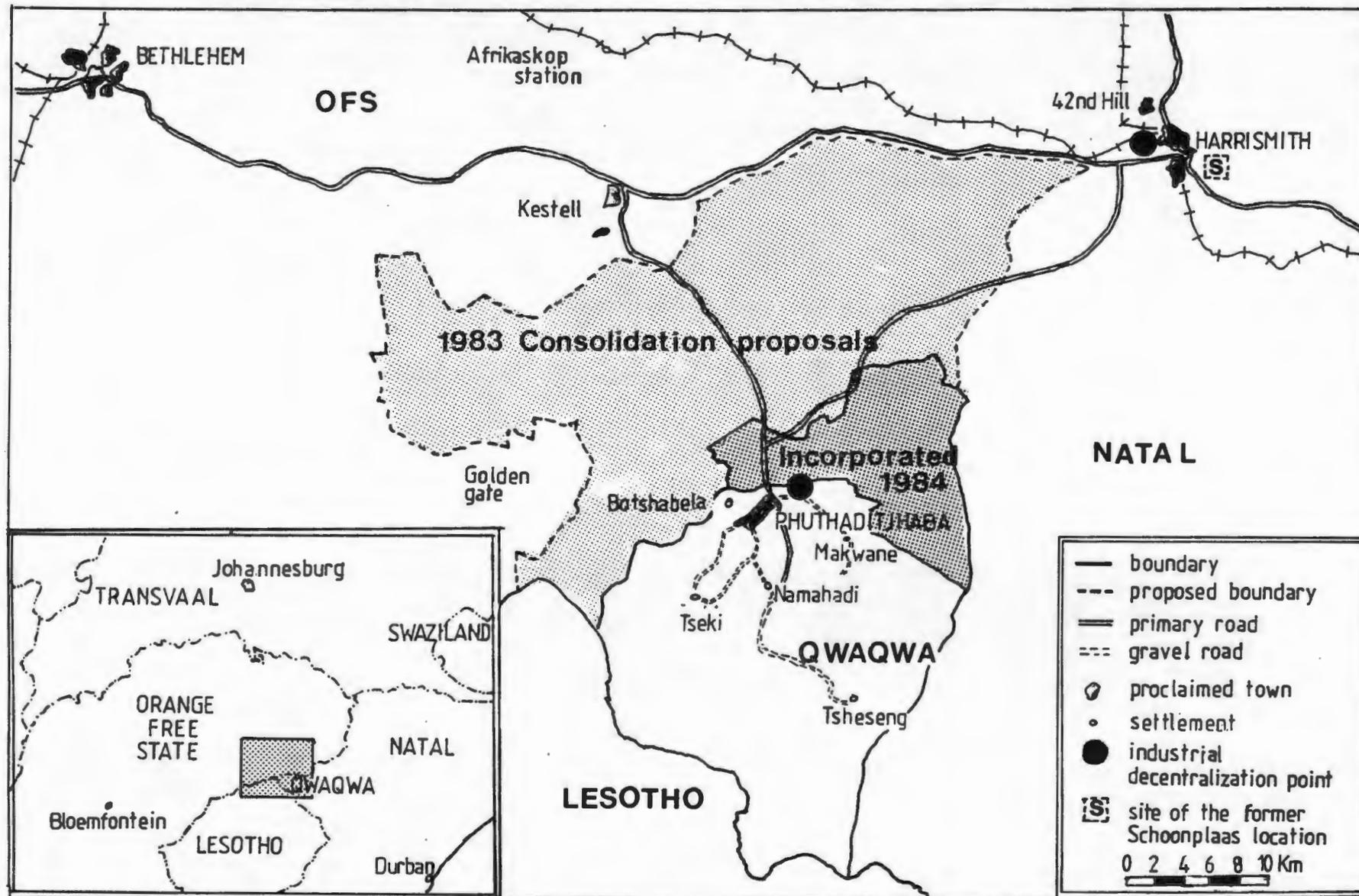
The processes of political exclusion from common South Africa, population relocations, the enforcement of a migrant labour system and industrial decentralization, are central themes in Qwaqwa's history. In the following discussion I examine different aspects of these processes and its effects in the 'homeland'.

Qwaqwa, previously known as Witzieshoek, is the official 'homeland' of the South Sotho 'ethnic national unit'. It is situated at the juncture of the Orange Free State (OFS), Natal, and Lesotho borders and currently comprises 480 square kilometres of Drakensberg mountainside. At present there are proposals to extend Qwaqwa towards Harrismith, Kestell, and Golden Gate (cf. map two). If these are implemented the present area of the 'homeland' will treble: there is, however, no indication yet as to when these plans might come to fruition (Martiny and Sharp 1984: 4).

Apartheid legislation has extensively affected the political status of the area. Under the Bantu Authorities Act of 1951, two Tribal Authorities were established for the Kwena and Tlokwa 'tribes'. A Territorial Authority was constituted in 1969, a Legislative Assembly under Chief Minister Wessels Mota was established in 1971, and in 1974 Qwaqwa was given limited powers

**MAP 2: QWAQWA IN RELATION TO BETHLEHEM, KESTELL,
AND HARRISMITH**

Source: QDC (1985: 14)



of self-government (cf. Quinlan 1986). Legislative Assembly elections were held in 1975 and 1980. In both cases the Dikwankwetla (Strong Men) Party headed by T.K. Mopeli, won a majority of the 20 elected seats in the 60 member Legislative Assembly. The other 40 members are Tribal Authority nominees. Qwaqwa's political future remains uncertain, however, as Chief Minister Mopeli has constantly rejected the option of 'independence'.

Relocation

Table 1 shows that since 1970 Qwaqwa has served as the reception area for thousands of relocated people. 'Homeland' authorities

TABLE 1: ESTIMATES OF QWAQWA'S DE FACTO POPULATION (1929-1982)

Year	Population estimate	Source
1929	8 000	Ross (1930: 87)
1970	23 860	Benbo (1978: 9)
1977	200 000	Benbo (1980: 27)
1978	250 000	Informa (1979: 4)
1980	300 000	Murray (1985: 289)
1982	4-500 000	Sharp (1982: 14)

have found it increasingly difficult to accommodate this staggering influx. In 1929 Witzieshoek was described as "already full" (Ross 1930: 88). In 1974 the chieftainess of a village where relocation had taken place was quoted as having said:

We are worried about the increasing numbers. It will ultimately bring slum areas into Witzieshoek due to a lack of sanitary, schooling and other facilities which should be provided for incoming families. I am wondering what to do. I envisage a breakdown of the whole system as more and more people arrive causing the government of Basotho Qwaqwa more embarrassment (Rand Daily Mail 2/10/1974)

The predominant response by political authorities in the 'homeland' has been to call for more land rather than an end to relocation. In 1972 former Chief Minister Wessels Mota argued:

If we don't get more land we will be forced to retreat to skyscraper buildings such as in Johannesburg and this is not something Basotho like [Qwaqwa Legislative Assembly 1972: 34, my translation from Afrikaans].

Chief Minister Mopeli has on occasions claimed half the OFS (Sunday Tribune 19/2/1976), but has also been quoted as saying: "If we introduce influx control [i.e. into Qwaqwa] the people will say we are guilty of the same action as the South African government" (Sunday Times 12/10/1977).

Residential patterns

The nature of relocation processes in Qwaqwa has been extremely diverse with two main types (vide Bank 1984 b, Sharp 1986). People removed from urban areas in common South Africa are settled in Phuthaditjhaba, Qwaqwa's only town, which had a population of approximately 25 000 in 1984. Here the state provides 'township' type services which include on-site water, flush sanitation and electricity in state-built houses. Since 1983 Phuthaditjhaba has been administered by a town council. Eight of the nine seats on the council were held by candidates who campaigned under the slogan Nna Le Mmuso (I'm with the government) and who were allegedly sponsored by the Dikwankwetla Party [5].

People from the OFS countryside have been excluded from the town and have been sent to one of the 76 closer settlement villages which are under the authority of hereditary chiefs [6]. Here mud-

brick housing is almost exclusively self-built and amenities are limited to a number of scattered taps. Aspects of the appalling conditions of life in these villages are described by Krause (1982), Niehaus (1984 a and b), and Sharp (1986).

'Development'

Development projects in Qwaqwa are largely concentrated in Phuthaditjhaba and have accentuated the difference between township and closer settlement. The Qwaqwa Development Corporation (QDC) has established three industrial parks on the outskirts of the town. QDC involvement in trade has led to the establishment of a number of tripartite companies, a beer hall, the "international" Hotel Qwaqwa, and a major shopping centre. Qwaqwa government departments have been responsible for the erection of two teachers' training colleges, an old age home, a town hall, an ostentatious new magisterial complex, a roofed central bus terminus, and have installed a network of powerful mast lights which illuminate the town's streets at night. Construction of a new hospital in Phuthaditjhaba began during 1977. The lavish five-storey building has been planned to accommodate 450 beds and will be fitted with the most up-to-date medical equipment. In 1981 the estimated costs of the project were R18 million (The Friend 3/3/1981).

In contrast, closer settlement residents shop in poorly stocked general dealer stores while recreation remains confined to home-brew drinking sessions. Commuters continue to use dusty bus stops without shelter from wind or rain. It is furthermore unlikely that outpatients from the villages will find the new hospital any

more accessible than they did the old one.

QWAQWA'S LABOUR MARKET

Access to the primary labour market

Only a small stratum of Qwaqwa's wage workers have access to the primary labour market. This category comprises those individuals who are responsible for the provision and administration of 'homeland' services; and migrant mineworkers. The former category includes personnel of the QDC, Setsokotsane (Whirlwind) Bus Service, and various government departments. Setsokotsane's employees comprise 327 drivers, superintendents, inspectors, clerks and technical staff. The company pays relatively high wages and opportunities for job advancement are facilitated by regular training programmes. In 1985, there were 3 725 permanent government employees in Qwaqwa of whom 2 584 (69%) were teachers (SADB 1985: 26). Their career advancement was inhibited, however, by low educational qualifications: 63% of all teachers have only a Standard six or eight certificate (SADB 1985: 1).

Noting steps by the Chamber of Mines to stabilize its labour force by the use of RGCs as well as the unionization of some migrants, Sharp and Spiegel (1985: 148) argue that migrant mineworkers can be classified as having access to the primary labour market. A senior manager for TEBA's (The Employment Bureau for Africa) mine recruiting office in Phuthaditjhaba corroborated this view. He said that the position of men with RGCs is improving owing to recently negotiated wage increases and the introduction of a special long service award made to men with 15 years experience. He was, however, concerned that Qwaqwa

had a poor reputation as a recruiting area: in 1976 only 12% of migrants completed their contracts.

It is hard to understand why Qwaqwa men break contract because on completion they will be given an RGC certificate...Perhaps it is because Qwaqwa men had not been used to getting so much money in the early days. After three months of earning R120 the man thought he was rich and wanted to come home. I have really struggled to build up the situation here.

By 1983 the completion rate had increased to 50%, but this compared unfavourably to recruits from the TEBA office in Maseru who have had a 90% "success rate" for quite some time [7]. The manager also mentioned that the number of new recruits being forwarded from the 'homeland' has greatly declined. Whereas up to 10 000 men were recruited from Qwaqwa within a given year during the late 1970s, TEBA began operating a quota system limiting recruitment from Qwaqwa to 5 000 workers per year in 1980. During the first half of 1983 there had, for instance, been no calls from any of the mines for novices because sufficient men with RGCs had applied for these positions. This has meant that men over the age of 25 years with no experience of mining stand little chance of ever gaining employment there.

Migrancy

The vast majority of migrants is restricted to the secondary labour market. They are recruited through five labour bureaux: a district labour bureau at the magistrate's office in town and four bureaux in the two Tribal Authority areas. These labour bureaux applied no quota system and the yearly number of contracts attested showed considerable variation. The Phuthaditjhaba labour bureau offered 8 489 contracts during 1983 and 8 027 from January to November in 1984 [8]. Considerably

fewer migrants were recruited from the labour bureaux in Tribal Authority Areas. 638 workers were recruited from the office in Namahadi (10 kms from Phuthaditjhaba) during the first three months of 1983. At the most outlying office in Tsheseng, however, only five workers were recruited over the corresponding period. Figures from the other bureaux were more difficult to decipher, although they seemed to be of a similar order to those of Tsheseng [9]. These data support Greenberg and Giliomee's (1983) observation that employers seldom recruit labour from Tribal Authority areas in the 'homelands' and that workseekers from these areas travel instead to district labour offices. Furthermore, the exclusively male composition of labour queues at recruiting points in Qwaqwa endorse their finding that women are specifically disadvantaged by the 'homeland' labour recruiting system.

Labour bureau officials said that requisitions were predominantly directed towards the acquisition of unskilled construction workers for the Sasolburg, Welkom, and Witwatersrand areas. These contracts offered limited job stability. The officials mentioned that from 1980 to 1982 there had been a great demand for unskilled labour for the construction of the Sasol plants in the northern OFS. Contracts were, however, available only for a two-year period, and jobs were terminated upon the completion of these plants. The limited bargaining power of migrants was demonstrated with the dismissal in 1984 of 6 000 workers at Sasol plants due to participation in a national two day work stoppage. Several workers from Qwaqwa were immediately recruited to fill these vacancies on a temporary basis. Two months later the contracts of dismissed workers were re-negotiated, they were re-

instated and Qwaqwa's scab labourers were dismissed [10].

Industrial decentralization

Initially industrial decentralization was more successful in Harrismith (50 kms northeast of Phuthaditjhaba see map 2) than in Qwaqwa. Until 1977 investment in Harrismith's decentralization programme by the Corporation for Economic Development amounted to R1.2 million (BENBO 1978: 41). Workers from Qwaqwa had been employed in Harrismith as commuters since the establishment of the Setsokotsane Bus Service in 1969. This flow of workers had been further stimulated by subsequent population relocations.

Table 2 shows a consistent increase in the number of Africans employed in Harrismith's industries from 1967 to 1979. Most employment opportunities were for unskilled workers in food processing and textile industries: generally associated with the

TABLE 2: AFRICAN INDUSTRIAL EMPLOYMENT IN HARRISMITH (1967-79)

Industrial sector	1967	1974	1975	1979
Food	111	287	332	736
Textiles	593	1 274	1 658	1 872
Wood and products	30	15	30	30
Other	232	201	199	289
Total	966	1 774	2 219	2 676

Sources: 1967 (Van Zyl 1968), 1974 and 1975 (Welthagen 1975), 1979 (Van Rooyen 1981).

secondary labour market. Sources seldom specify the number of commuters or numbers employed in other sectors. An exception is Van Rooyen (1981: 69,118-9) who calculates that there was a total of 5 080 African employees in Harrismith in 1979 of whom

28% (1 421: 788 male; 633 female) were commuters from Qwaqwa. 757 commuters were employed in industries. These figures do not, however, take account of domestic and casual work.

Figures from the Setsokotsane Bus Service, (see Table 3) provide a more complete picture of Qwaqwa's commuter population. These figures are in line with those of the South African Development Bank (1985: 15) which estimate that there were 3 900 commuters

TABLE 3: THE AVERAGE NUMBER OF WORKERS AS PASSENGERS ON LINES FROM QWAQWA TO HARRISMITH PER WORKING DAY (1979-84)

Year	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984
Workers as passengers	2 440	2 883	3 067	3 884	3 986	4 409

Source: Records of the Setsokotsane Bus Service

Note: "Workers as passengers" is the designation used in the records of the company to identify the number of commuters using weekly tickets. Workers are carefully distinguished from other passengers as only they are entitled to subsidized bus fares from the Department of Transport.

from Qwaqwa in 1982. Despite the consistent increase in the number of commuters, Harrismith displayed a slow industrial growth rate during this period. After 1981 only ten applications were received for the decentralization of industries and only 466 new employment opportunities had been created (Decentralization Board 1985: 18).

By contrast the emergence of employment opportunities in Qwaqwa has been a recent and more rapid phenomenon. In 1973, five years after the inauguration of decentralization in the 'homelands', the only industry in Qwaqwa was an art needlework factory employing 117 women (The Star 16/7/1973). Subsequently three industries were established, but by March 1977 two of these had

closed down (BENSO 1978: 40).

Only in 1981, with the designation of Phuthaditjhaba as a regional development point, was a major impetus created for industrial decentralization through improved investment incentives. The new package included: (i) a maximum of R500 000 of factory removal costs from metropolitan areas; (ii) the provision of factory premises at subsidized rentals; (iii) the provision of up to 50% of other capital requirements at subsidized interest rates; (iv) a cash refund of 95% of the average wages of all personnel up to a maximum of R110 per worker per month for a period of seven years; (v) subsidized housing loans for "key" personnel; and (vi) a railage rebate of 40% on finished products (Growth July 1983; The Argus 9/7/1985). These incentives are more attractive than those offered in Harrismith where a cash refund on wages of 80% is available at up to a maximum of R70 per worker. By 1985, 83 industries had been established in Qwaqwa at a total investment cost of R51,3 million (SADB 1985: 1).

Jobs in these industries are characterized by a number of secondary labour market conditions. Of 8 561 jobs offered in 1985, 7 061 (82%) were held by women and 1 500 (18%) by men. Of this workforce 38% were employed in textile, weaving and leather factories; and 17% in enterprises manufacturing fabricated metal products, machinery and equipment. Monthly wages varied from R49 to R128 for women and from R66 to R158 for men (SADB 1985: 1-4).

There has, as a result of adverse conditions of employment in Qwaqwa's industrial parks, been growing tensions between the

Dikwankwetla Party and employers. In 1984 the Qwaqwa Legislative Assembly appointed a commission to investigate complaints that workers were underpaid, did not receive leave allowances and were not compensated for injuries at work. At the opening of a brick and tile factory in August 1984 Chief Minister Mopeli warned that his government could not continue "singing songs of praise as more and more factories were being erected while employees in these were not properly remunerated". Pointing to growing unrest in certain factories, he urged industrialists to dispel the notion that they were in Qwaqwa to exploit workers and to enrich themselves from Decentralization Board subsidies (The Pinnacle 9/8/1984). The following month Chief Mopeli convened 75 industrialists to the Hotel Qwaqwa to discuss the wage problem. He warned employers that if they did not pay better wages a favourable climate could be created for politically inspired trade unions which would be a "sad day" in Qwaqwa (The Pinnacle 20/9/1984).

Dikwankwetla is nonetheless cautious not to go too far for fear of scaring off potential investors. This is evident in the composition of the liason group appointed to monitor the industrial situation: it comprises representatives of the Qwaqwa Legislative Assembly, the QDC and the Employer's Association. Although I have not gained access to the commission's final report, The Pinnacle (14/9/1984) divulged that a minimum of 30c per hour was recommended.

Unemployment

To date there has been no comprehensive survey on the extent of unemployment in Qwaqwa. The only figures available are for 1980

They range from 16% (SADB:

1985: 1) to 21% (Van Rooyen 1981: 99). These figures are, moreover, likely to be significant underestimates. Yet they make it clear that insufficient jobs are available for the 'homeland's' growing population. Case No. 1, below, which describes a riot by unemployed men in Phuthaditjhaba is indicative of growing feelings of discontent among workseekers.

Case No.1: The riot of the unemployed, October 1984

On the morning of 17 October 1984 approximately 400 workseeking men stoned the Phuthaditjhaba labour office after a contractor had failed to arrive as expected. The men then demanded to be addressed by Chief Minister Mopeli. After negotiations in which they rejected offers to be addressed by his representative, or to congregate in the town hall, the workseekers gathered around the labour bureau to listen to the Chief Minister. The following demands were articulated at the meeting: (i) that they be granted jobs without being asked to produce development tax receipts; (ii) an end to corruption in recruitment procedures; (iii) that men over the age of 25 be granted employment on the mines; (iv) the right to search for jobs in common South Africa without being arrested in terms of influx control legislation; and (v) that men, rather than women, be offered employment in Phuthaditjhaba's industrial parks. The Chief Minister replied that he had urged industrialists to pay higher wages and that their complaints would be investigated. An observer recalled that upon the Chief Minister's departure he heard men shouting: "We'll never vote for you again because you can't solve our problems"; and "We are still starving while you live a luxurious life".

The men then went on the rampage around a nearby shopping centre, stoning visible signs of wealth such as a restaurant, bottle store, and bank. A Coca Cola lorry was looted and female fruit vendors were assaulted. From here the men marched to Phuthaditjhaba's second industrial park, scaled a security fence, assaulted female workers and urged them to leave their jobs. A few factories were stoned, two technicians were injured and some men unsuccessfully attempted to set a wholesale enterprise on fire. Police soon arrived on the scene and baton charged the rioters. Bewildered women fled from the industrial park and factories closed for the day. 40 men were arrested and several injured rioters were taken to hospital in police vans. The following day a paraffin bomb was found burning in the labour bureau at a closer settlement village.

In the trial of those arrested the judge said that he could find no justification for the wilful destruction of property, but that he sympathised with the accused because they were jobless. Penalties imposed on 'ringleaders' varied from two to six months imprisonment. A journalist who was present at the trial summarized the course of events to me in the following words: "Those men were rioting because of hunger. You could see that they had hunger written all over their faces". (Sources: City

Press 21/10/84, plus the reports of a participant, a journalist and other observers).

This case provides substance to the argument that relocations concentrate a potentially political volatile mass of jobless people in the 'homelands'. Of particular significance is their isolation from urban political movements in common South Africa, and their expression of discontent towards 'homeland' authorities rather than the white supremacist state.

THE DIAPPOLO

I chose to work in Phuthaditjhaba rather than in Qwaqwa's closer settlements because previous studies in these villages had shown that most wage workers were employed as migrants (cf. chapter two) and I hoped to include workers employed both locally and in Harrismith in my sample. Urban areas as a whole are seldom, however, workable units for intensive, in-depth, anthropological research methods. Gutkind (1974: 145) argues:

Towns are large and highly complex entities: it is rarely possible to concentrate research on more than one or two areas or neighbourhoods unless the town is little more than a "township"...The research worker, therefore has no choice, but to limit the unit of study of his [sic] observations - an inevitability based on some arbitrary decisions [11].

By asking local residents if they knew where Harrismith workers lived, I was led to the Diappolo which became the unit of observation for this study.

The Diappolo (plural for Appolo: a housing type) comprises 300 semi-detached, four-roomed, double-storey houses and is the second oldest housing section in Phuthaditjhaba. It was built by the Orange Vaal Administration Board (OVAB), starting in 1970,



PLATE 1: THE APPOLO HOUSING SECTION (1973)

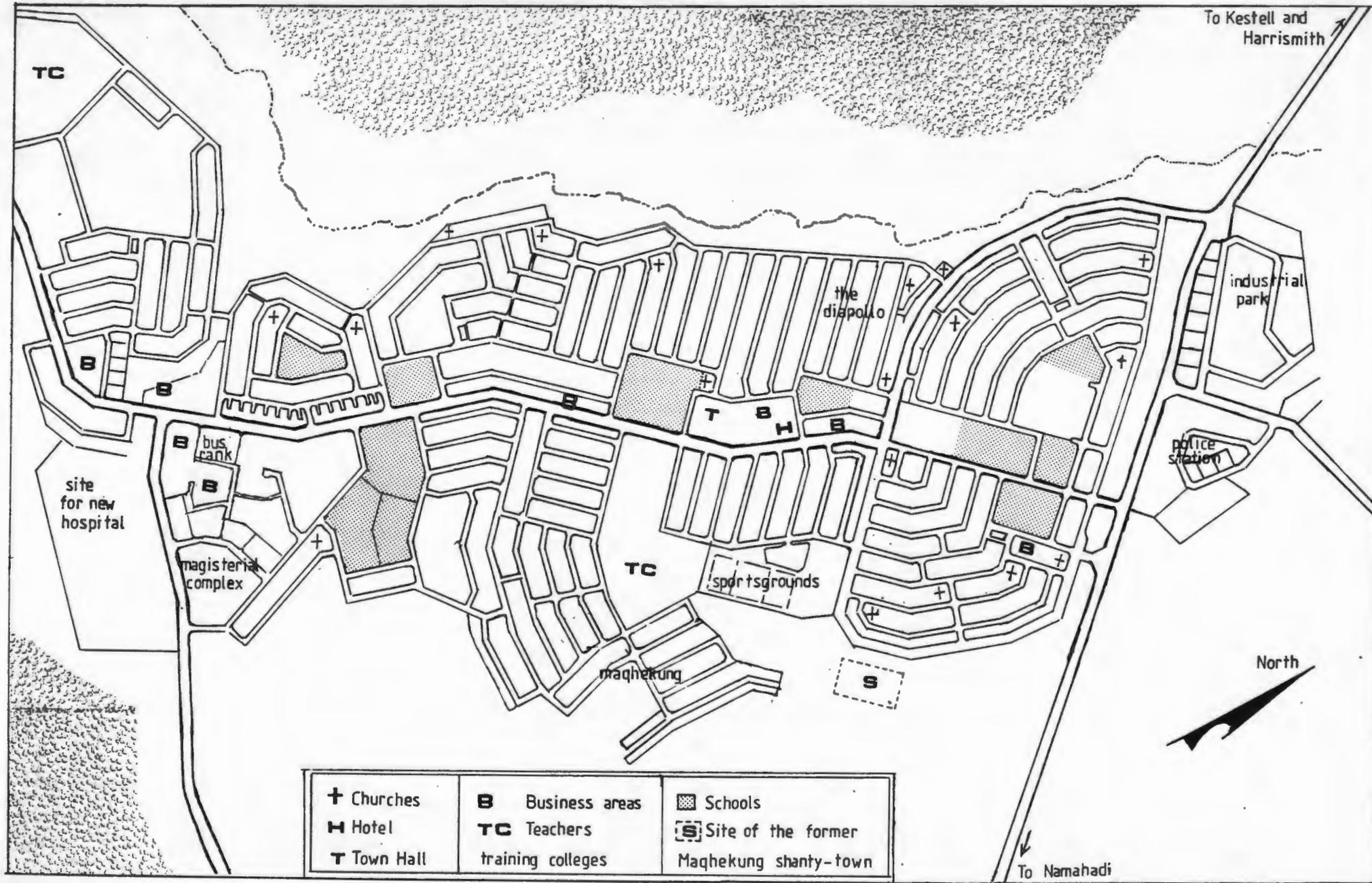
Source: Malan and Hattingh (1976: 107)

MAP 3: PHUTHADITJHABA ; A STREET MAP (1984)

Source: The Phuthaditjhaba housing office

Scale: unspecified

30



two years after the completion of Maghekung (470 two-roomed structures to accommodate the aged and the widowed). Initially the Diappolo lacked sanitary facilities, having only a single outside stand pipe tap. Residents were forced to dig pit-latrines in their yards. In 1977, however, flush toilets were built in outside rooms previously used for storage purposes and wash basins were installed. Building of Appolo homes ceased in 1974 when they proved unpopular among residents: elderly people complained that, in the dusk, it was dangerous to climb the steps leading up to the bedrooms on the second storey. During fieldwork in 1984/85 monthly rentals for an Appolo home, including water and garbage removal, was R16.60.

Subsequently the Orange Vaal Administration Board was contracted by the Qwaqwa Department of Works to build 4 000 residential units in Phuthaditjhaba. These are of the N51/9 type, as found in most 'homeland' towns, and are locally referred to as either a Single (bungalow) or Double (semi-detached). Monthly rentals for these homes ranged from R18.80 to R21 during the course of fieldwork. They are equipped with running water, contain at least a wash basin, toilet and shower and are wired for connection to an electricity network. Despite their construction, a great housing shortage existed in Phuthaditjhaba, with housing officials reporting that there were already 3 000 names on the waiting list for houses in 1982 (Robins 1982: 13).

Although the Diappolo presented itself as a workable unit for fieldwork, it did not constitute a community in the sense that residents subjectively felt that they belonged together (cf. Weber 1968: 40-3). They perceived their housing as a symbol of socio-economic status, but attached greater importance to their

being residents of Phuthaditjhaba than to their residence in the Diappolo. This way they distinguished themselves from "farm people" in the villages ('closer settlements'). The social distance between residents of the township and closer settlements is depicted in the following conversation between a fashionably dressed woman, resident in the Diappolo (Pulane) and an unemployed man from the Botshabela closer settlement (Joseph) which I recorded in a local shebeen. Pulane visited the shebeen with a workmate on a Friday afternoon after work. When they arrived, Joseph, who had spent the day fixing the fence of the shebeen-owner's neighbour for a small fee was already noticeably intoxicated.

JOSEPH: Hey! I want you tonight!

PULANE: You? You devil! You don't even work because you are too lazy for working. I don't just go around with anybody. You can't even afford to take me to the hotel or to buy Mainstay or something...You?

JOSEPH: I want you tonight.

PULANE: You people from Botshabela are so troublesome. That village of yours is just like a farm. Just look at those shanties up there on the mountain. You don't even have taps or streets. Just look at these lights here. They are just like six TVs on a pole. And what have you got?

JOSEPH: Hey! What is the matter with you? Just the other night I had a woman who lives just over there [pointing to an adjacent row of houses]. You over here are not so smart. You are people just like us...Bloody woman.

PULANE: Atjhee! Go home you devil. Go and sleep with the village women.

Relocation

The absence of a unique and common Diappolo identity is ~~also~~ partially due to differential experiences of relocation and diverse places of origin. After their construction in 1971, the Diappolo were occupied by two categories of households: 70% originated from the old Schoonplaas location of Harrismith and were forcibly removed to Qwaqwa by the South African police when

it was demolished; 29% were relocated to Qwaqwa prior to the construction of the Diappolo and resided in a shanty-town north of Maqhekung.

1. Schoonplaas The Schoonplaas removals in March 1971 characterized, what Maré (1980: 25-8) calls "urban relocation". These were in line with the deproclamation of old African townships attached to OFS towns and the relocation of their inhabitants to the 'homelands' at that time (Surplus People Project 1983: 159). In this event 300 African homesteads were destroyed. 165 households, classified as Zulu, were removed to Kwazulu, and 135, classified as Southern Sotho, were relocated in Phuthaditjhaba. These households (approximately 2 000 people) were moved by lorries from the Departments of Bantu Administration and Defence (The Friend 10/3/1971).

The police colonel in charge of the removals was quoted as having said that they proceeded without any "major incidents" and that people co-operated with the authorities. "As soon as they knew the exact date that they would be moved they started demolition work on the houses themselves" (The Friend 20/3/1971).

This notion that people were content to be moved is contradicted by oral testimony. Recollections of these events elicited responses such as: "They should rather have killed us"; "If the government ever decided to move us back to Schoonplaas I would be the first to go. I would leave everything just here and go"; and "I don't want to talk about it anymore. Talking about it makes me feel too heartbroken". Evidence also suggests considerable resistance to relocation.

Schoonplaas was far from visably attractive. Hawkins (1982: 159)

for instance described the location as:

A village of hovels and shacks brightened only by an occasional garden plot...It was never a beautiful place and a visitor coming to Harrismith by train exclaimed upon seeing it: "If this is Harrismith I am sorry I came", but it served the needs of the natives living in town.

In retrospect, former residents were nostalgic about life in Schoonplaas, identifying low housing rents, the large homes and gardens, as well as the opportunity to keep cattle, as admirable aspects of the old location. Self-built homesteads, for which only R1.50 site rent was paid per month in 1970, sometimes had up to eight rooms and had large yards in which residents planted potatoes, cabbage, sorghum, spinach, and mealies. In addition many informants kept stock in Schoonplaas. Some paid nearby farm owners to let stock graze in their pastures. Others kept stock in their yards at night and paid shepherds to herd them on a nearby commonage during the day. An elderly informant, recalling that he and his father had kept 25 cattle, jokingly said: "We ate only meat every day. We should actually have changed to vegetables". Informants also longingly spoke of the times when, with dogs and knobkerries, they hunted dassies and hares on the Platberg and fished in the Wilge River with rods made from the branches of poplar trees. It was also said that hardly any unemployment existed in Schoonplaas: "Work was not scarce in Schoonplaas. It only depended on whether you wanted to work or not".

After residents heard about the government's intention to destroy Schoonplaas, a committee was formed to oppose the proposed removals. Meetings were regularly held in a local school hall on Thursday afternoons and in the yard of the committee leader on

Saturday mornings. By all accounts these meetings drew enthusiastic support. One informant recalled:

We were always told when there was a meeting. Many people attended and the hall was full every day...First of all the committee members would talk and then the sibonda [12]...They said that the place must not be destroyed because it belonged to us and we built the houses ourselves...Then, after the meetings, the people would do African dances and sing songs.

She remembered that the following songs were sung:

Mahlomola a Qwaqwa
E rona tjhaba santsho
nomerso o re kwaetetse ka thata
A makgo ngwana Mopeli [13]

The loneliness of Qwaqwa
We the Black nation
are being oppressed
Oh! The children of Mopeli

Ha Mopeli e nyane e kgolo
ntho e tsekwang [14]

At Mopeli's place is a small
and big bone of contention

In an attempt to prevent demolition the committee collected donations and hired a Ladysmith attorney to negotiate their demands with representatives of local government. By November 1970, however, it became clear that relocation was inevitable: the Administration Board offices of the old location were demolished and water supplies were disconnected.

The first police vehicles which arrived in Schoonplaas were stoned. Some men reportedly set their dogs on the police and fought them with knobkerries, while youngsters shot stones at the police with catapults. An elderly informant, having described these events, said: "It was all just like a big fight". The following day a large crowd attempted to march to the municipal offices in town to voice their discontent. The procession was broken up by the police, who arrested a few committee members and wounded two women in their legs. As a result the residents became demoralized: "The very same people who were fighting helped the

police to load their furniture". By April only a dilapidated graveyard remained. "They destroyed our houses, schools, churches and everything else".

2. The Maghekung shanty-town Households whose members removed to the Diappolo from the Maghekung shanty-town included both former residents of the countryside and township dwellers. Some people from the farms settled in Qwaqwa from the 1960s onwards to obtain migrant labour contracts. Others were more directly coerced to relocate through the abolition of "squatting" arrangements on Natal farms (cf. Maré 1980: 8-15). Former township dwellers came to Qwaqwa due to employment transfers, because they were refused permission to stay in OFS townships, to obtain business licences or to ensure schooling for their children.

Living conditions in the shanty-town were described as appalling. Most households lived in one-roomed corrugated iron shacks which were subject to extreme variations in temperature. One man explained: "Sometimes it was so hot that we had to sleep outside and when it was cold we had to use a brazier (paola)." For these reasons they were happy to move when informed by the Phuthaditjhaba housing superintendent that Appolo homes had been made available for them.

Since 1971 there have been tensions in the Diappolo between people from Schoonplaas and those from Maghekung. Relations have not been mutually supportive. An informant from Maghekung remarked:

From the beginning we did not get on well with the people from Harrismith. They always formed their own groups and never wanted to mix with us...They said that they did not like Qwaqwa, that it

was just like a farm and that they were clever...we were always taken to be the have-nots.

Another informant elaborated:

If you had a problem with one of those [Schoonplaas] people they would all be against you...I sometimes invited them to my phabadimo [givings to the ancestors; plural diphabadimo], but ultimately there would be a fight. They always fight when they are drunk.

3. Subsequent relocations After 1971 many households arrived in the Diappolo for diverse reasons and from various urban areas to occupy homes vacated by their original tenants. At the time of fieldwork approximately 40% of the original tenants of the housing section had left and gone either to secure more desirable accommodation in Phuthaditjhaba, or to closer settlements because they had been unable to afford housing rents (see chapter seven).

Most new tenants were from the 42nd Hill location in Harrismith [15]. Others were from Winburg, Reitz, Bethlehem, Virginia, Theunissen, and Soweto near Johannesburg. Households from 42nd Hill often moved because they were unable to afford the exorbitantly high housing rents there. Monthly rent, excluding water, varied from R28 for a two-roomed house comprising a kitchen and bedroom to R36 for a three-roomed house which also included a small dining room/lounge (Walwyn 1984: 20). Both housing types were equipped with a single tap and an outside bucket toilet. Moreover, there was serious overcrowding in the 2000 houses of 42nd Hill. In 1983 this was exacerbated when the Community Council announced that no new houses would be built or housing improvements effected by the Orange Vaal Administration Board (City Press 19/6/1983). An informant, whose household occupied a three-roomed house in 42nd Hill before moving to

Qwaqwa in 1983, mentioned:

We were usually nine people in the house, but when we had visitors for the night there could be as many as 13...Six would sleep in the bedroom, four kids in the kitchen, and another three people under the dining room table. All of us always slept inside the house, but there were others, especially those with two-roomed houses, who sometimes slept outside.

The following extracts from letters to the press highlight other unfavourable living conditions in the township:

..It is no exaggeration to say that some two-roomed houses are accommodating 14 people...Buckets sometimes remain full for a week without being emptied. There is no post office or surgery, nor any public telephones. There is a high rate of delinquency because of the lack of recreational facilities. All this is just the tip of the iceberg...(City Press 19/6/1983).

..The Orange Vaal Administration Board and their lackeys, the so-called Community Council...let us live a miserable life under the most squalid conditions. The bucket system is a health hazard that frustrates us. The rent is too high for the conditions under which we live. We need a post office, public telephone and social worker...(City Press 21/7/1985).

People from elsewhere removed to Phuthaditjhaba for more varied reasons. Of particular significance were pre-Riekert measures precluding the transfer of Section 10 1 (a) and 1 (b) rights from one magisterial district from common South Africa to another. One man, who initially possessed Section 10 rights for Winburg, took a job in Welkom for seven years while living in a migrant hostel: he thereby had to forfeit these rights and was instructed to relocate to Qwaqwa after his parents died. Others moved due to employment transfers, or because the 'homeland' offered better educational facilities for Sesotho speaking pupils than OFS townships, and easier entrance into the teaching profession. These households often found it extremely difficult to obtain tenancy of Diappolo houses and periods on the waiting list for these homes sometimes exceeded four years. While they waited some sub-let rooms from others in Phuthaditjhaba or stayed with

relatives in closer settlements.

Former residents of 42nd Hill have been incorporated into networks of friendship and association comprising people from Schoonplaas. Others have also sought to establish such relations with those relocated from similar areas.

People from the same township in common South Africa colloquially referred to each other as "home boys" or "home girls". The English term is commonly used by Sesotho and Zulu speakers and bears no derogatory connotations as does "boy" when used by an employer. This concept bears an ironic similarity to that of the amakhaya network which Wilson and Mafeje (1973) and Philip and Iona Mayer (1974) identified among Xhosa speaking migrants in Cape Town and East London respectively. As in these urban centres, "home boy" groups in Phuthaditjhaba facilitate social support among relocated people in the 'homeland' context. Among migrants to town, who attempted to maintain control over land and stock at home, these groups were shown to sustain contact with the reserves (ibid). Harrismith "home-boy" networks in the Diappolo were similarly not devoid of economic significance. Harrismith has remained an important centre of employment, and recruitment to jobs there often depend upon accurate information regarding the labour market. Many home-brew shebeens in the Diappolo, which were almost exclusively patronized by former inhabitants of Harrismith, provided the venue for talk both about life in the old location and current labour issues. Moreover, diphabadimo and stokvels (saving clubs, cf. Hellman 1953: 411) in the Diappolo were frequently attended by current 42nd Hill residents.

Changing patterns of labour force participation

Patterns of employment in the Diappolo do not merely represent a microcosm of the broader employment situation in Qwaqwa. Diappolo residents have had advantageous access to existing employment opportunities by virtue of their experiences prior to removal and due to the Diappolo's close proximity to Qwaqwa's industrial parks and district labour bureau.

Since the first occupation of the Diappolo, most households have relied upon the earnings of people employed in Harrismith. Although only three buses transported commuters from Qwaqwa in 1971 they were utilized, almost exclusively, by former inhabitants of Schoonplaas. Commuters were, however, often unable to maintain their jobs for any length of time as buses were overcrowded, constantly in need of repair, and seldom punctual. Although conditions of transport have greatly improved and there has been a growth in the number of employment opportunities in Harrismith, participation in these jobs by inhabitants of Phuthaditjhaba in general and the Diappolo in particular, has declined. This is because subsequent population relocations into other residential areas of Qwaqwa generated increased competition for jobs on the Harrismith labour market. This is reflected in figures citing the composition of Qwaqwa's commuter population which were obtained from officials at the Setsokotsane Bus Service. In 1979, 782 (32%) of the average number of 2 440 commuters transported to Harrismith per working day were from Phuthaditjhaba. By 1984, only 670 (15%) of the average number of 4 409 commuters were from Phuthaditjhaba.

As a result, residents of the Diappolo have increasingly taken up employment as migrants or in local jobs. Although hardly any men had been employed as migrant mineworkers, between 1978 and 1981, many obtained contracts to work at SASOL and on various construction projects. Others by-passed the labour bureau system entirely and searched for work in common South Africa illegally. Only subsequent to this were their jobs regularized by specific requisition. A common strategy was to stay with friends and relatives in urban areas whilst seeking employment.

In more recent recessionary conditions, few Diappolo workseekers consider waiting for contracts at the labour office as an effective strategy to obtain employment. Overcrowding at the bureau is depicted in the following description given by an informant who had waited there unsuccessfully for three months during 1983:

Most of the people played dominos and others just waited. But when an employer arrived everybody ran because the man to arrive first would get the job. Sometimes when an employer arrived we would throw our pass books at him. Many people have lost their books in this way and I have often seen fights there. This happened when some workers slipped whilst running to an employer and others ran over them. Then they retaliated.

It has been relatively easier for residents to obtain jobs at Qwaqwa's industrial parks. This is because workseekers are recruited from the factory gates on an almost first-come-first-serve basis. Phuthaditjhaba residents, who live in close proximity to these factories are thus advantageously situated. It is they who are most likely to know when and where employment is offered. As most of these jobs are reserved for women, however, the labour histories of Diappolo men were marked by increased periods of unemployment during the course of fieldwork (cf.

chapter seven).

CONCLUSIONS

In this chapter the broader social, political and economic context in which fieldwork was undertaken has been outlined. It has been argued that any attempt to understand the experiences of individual workers in isolation from both structural features of the South African labour market and the concomitant historical processes, aimed at the geo-political exclusion of large numbers of Africans from common South Africa, would be a futile exercise. Central in this regard have been: population relocations, the creation of 'homeland' governments, the enforcement of labour migration, and industrial decentralization.

These processes have not, however, had a homogeneous impact upon all 'homeland' residents and it is essential that temporal and regional diversities be recognized. In Qwaqwa there have been, and still are, important differences both in residential patterns and in access to available employment opportunities between inhabitants of Phuthaditjhaba and closer settlement villagers. This theme is explored further in the latter half of chapter two where I discuss differences in labour force participation between the Diappolo and a closer settlement village.

NOTES TO CHAPTER ONE

[1] This impression is conveyed by Wolf in his highly acclaimed book Europe and the People Without History (1982). Wolf uses the world economic system as his unit of analysis.

[2] Significant measures in this regard are: the elimination of the former practice of preventing workers who qualify for urban residence in terms of Section 10 1 (a) and 1 (b) from seeking work outside their Administration Board area; the introduction of the 99 year leasehold system; and attention to secondary education and industrial training.

[3] Schneier (1983) found that of 987 respondents in a Soweto survey 50% were employed in higher ranking occupations than those held by the head of the household in which they grew up, whereas only 17% were employed in lower ranking occupations. For a sample of 922 workers in a Cape Peninsula survey these percentages were 39% and 18% respectively. These results are compared to a survey of 383 contract workers in Cape Peninsula hostels which show that informants had remained employed in unskilled jobs: 7% had been upwardly and 6% downwardly mobile. He concludes that the movement of Africans into more skilled occupations, previously reserved for Whites, has been confined to the ranks of those with permanent residence in urban areas.

[4] Wilson (1972: 174-5) argues that in industries employing oscillating migrants the annual labour turnover could be 100%. He notes that in 1970 the annual cost of labour turnover on the gold mines was between R3 and R4 million.

[5] Town Council elections held in Phuthaditjhaba during September 1983 were characterized by widespread disinterest and rejection. A poll of only 9% was recorded among 5 468 registered voters.

[6] The term closer settlement can be defined as "a type of settlement established for African people on reserve or Trust land that is for residential purposes only - no agricultural land is attached - and far more rudimentary in the type of facilities it has than a township" (Surplus People Project 1983: xiii).

[7] During 1983 the Qwaqwa cabinet were invited to the Virginia mines by management to see improvements in conditions of employment. "The management of the mines wanted the cabinet to help in solving some of the problems they are faced with. Some of the workers employed at these mines work for less than three months. Asked what causes the high turnover..., the general manager said it might be that recruitment is not done properly" (Lentswe La Basotho June 1983).

[8] These figures include workers registered through call-in cards and through requisitions as well as 'illegals' who found work in common South Africa by their own accord and only subsequently had their jobs regularized by specific requisition.

[9] Figures of the total number of migrants from Qwaqwa are hard to come by. A 1982 estimate by the National Manpower Commission (1983: 4) placed the number of migrants from the 'homeland' at 60 000. By all indications this is a vast overestimate as figures are enumerated in such a way that individuals renewing contracts within the same year of recording them are recorded twice (cf. Muller 1984: 33-35). By contrast the Qwaqwa Minister for the Interior estimated that in 1978 there were 21 387, and in 1979 22 000 migrants recruited from Qwaqwa (Qwaqwa Legislative Assembly 1979: 207 and 1980: 78). These figures approximate those of Van Rooyen (1981: 99) who suggests that 18 500 migrants were recruited from Qwaqwa in 1979.

[10] This has been widely interpreted as an attempt by employers to get rid of the Chemical Workers Industrial Union (cf. South African Labour Bulletin December 1984, January/February 1985, March/April 1985)

[11] Van Binsbergen (1981: 80) agrees. There is, he writes, "no obvious, let alone natural, unit of study." The choice of a time and place in which to do fieldwork is, always, arbitrary.

[12] This word derives from the Nguni term isibonda (lit. a supporting ridge-pole) used to denote headmen created by the system of indirect rule introduced in the Transkei during the early 20th century (vide Hammond-Tooke 1975: 80). The Sesotho equivalent is sebota. Diappolo residents only used this term when referring to the committee leader, not when speaking about local authorities in Qwaqwa.

[13] This reference is to Paulus Mopeli, the first Kwena chief to settle in Qwaqwa in 1867 (cf. Steytler 1932: 48).

[14] This chant is adapted from the song E nyane e kgolo ntho e tsekwang popularized by Tau ea (Lion of) Matshekha from Lesotho.

[15] The new 42nd Hill location of Harrismith was completed in the early 1960s. After it was built, many residents of Schoonplaas occupied homes in 42nd Hill. The township is also known as Phomolong, but most informants preferred the English term. This is because the township was built on the site of a British military base called 42nd Hill, established in Harrismith during the Anglo-Boer war. Africans often assisted British forces as spies (vide Steytler 1932).

CHAPTER TWO

ESTABLISHING INDICES OF LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION

This chapter has two aims: to outline how fieldwork was conducted and to present basic quantitative data which serve as background material for the qualitative data dealt with in succeeding chapters. It is essential for anthropologists to assess their methods of fieldwork, the nature of their interactions with informants, and the context in which research was conducted, as such factors are significant variables which affect research results. As Ellen (1984 :9) puts it: "The quality and character of ethnography depends upon the circumstances of its production". An outline of basic quantitative information is necessary to identify broad social trends; to establish relationships between different variables; to provide a measure for precise comparison with the results of different studies, and to define the typicality of experiential and subjective evidence.

DOING FIELDWORK IN PHUTHADITJHABA

Anthropological research in South Africa's 'homelands' is beset by serious methodological difficulties, not only because of direct political constraints, but also due to the sensitive nature of social relations in this deeply divided society (cf. Welsh 1975). In order to conduct research in Qwaqwa I was obliged to obtain a permit (see Appendix 1), which prohibited me from living amongst my informants as we were not of the same 'population group' (i.e. 'racial') classification. During my stay in the 'homeland' between August 1984 and February 1985, accommodation had to be secured in a residential area reserved exclusively for occupation by people classified white [1]. Widely

shared perceptions by Qwaqwa's inhabitants of this white area, which some jokingly called "Stellenbosch" [2], are reflected in the following excerpt from a letter in Qwaqwa's weekly newspaper, The Pinnacle (30/3/1984).

...there are flourishing signs of apartheid practiced in the heart of the homeland. There prevails separatism as clearly the whites have created for themselves white spots in the homeland. There are four such residences which have been fenced off from the rest of the area in fact three such residences with high security fencing...This place has gone to the extent of using one entrance into the residential white area and one finds a watchpost in the form of a building erected at the entrance, which goes on to prove that in due course there will be a security asking for permits into the area....Let us educate equally in Qwaqwa by opening all education facilities to all peoples but not have a school specifically erected for a special race, as is happening at Stellenbosch...The other day I was disgusted to listen to a complaint of a white lady who outrightly retaliated with no compromise towards black women using the same toilet that she uses...we detest anything fostering discrimination.

In the same month a member of the Qwaqwa Legislative Assembly described inhabitants of the white residential areas, mainly industrialists, as "not even able to shake hands with blacks because they think they are too dirty" (The Pinnacle 16/3/1984).

A further obstacle to research was that, despite a few excellent lessons in conversational Sesotho at the University of Cape Town prior to fieldwork, my knowledge of African languages was limited to a few basic Sesotho words and phrases. In order to overcome the language barrier I employed, at different times in the project, two male primary school teachers as interpreters and field assistants. As it turned out this was a blessing in disguise as both resided near the Diappolo and were well known and well liked by inhabitants of the housing section. It is primarily due to them that I gained acceptance in the Diappolo. Despite enormous differences in personality, both showed great

interest in the research and proved to be friendly, highly competent, trustworthy and responsible. My experiences in this regard reinforce the observations of Crapanzano (1980) and Segar (1986) who write about the use of field assistants in positive terms. In Crapanzano's opinion material collected with an assistant has an intimacy of tone and detail which cannot be obtained when working alone. With a local assistant interviewees do not feel that they are alone with a total stranger. He goes on to discuss some of the other merits of interpreters:

...the slowed rhythm of the meetings, the possibility of observing often illuminating distortions within the translations, the ability to deflect responsibility for questions and misunderstandings to a Third, and the opportunity to discuss the meetings afterwards...(1980: 147)

Segar (1986), furthermore, points out that discussions with an interpreter is one of the most useful sources of information, but argues that much depends on the interpreter's personality and style of representing the anthropologist (p. 23-6).

In the initial stages of fieldwork I was introduced to Diappolo residents at a series of working-class shebeens. As many people (especially those who were not relocated from Harrismith) did not patronize these shebeens, I was introduced to other informants only when interviews began.

The first impressions that Diappolo people had about who I was and what I did varied widely. Some thought that I was an electrician because they had, at some stage, seen Whites doing electrical repairs at a local school. Others, after seeing me talking to a wealthy Phuthaditjhaba resident who was separated from his wife, thought I was a lawyer. Some believed me to be a bottle store owner selling liquor to local shebeeners. An elderly

gentleman assumed that I was a Catholic priest because he had seen my car parked outside the Catholic Church. "In all my life", he said, "the only Whites that I have ever seen entering the homes of Black people have been Catholic priests." Perceptions which I found harder to dispel were that I was a policeman (Criminal Investigation Department), or a "politician", or a "communist" whose only interest in speaking to the people was some kind of political gain.

With the assistance of my interpreters I introduced myself as a student from a university/school in Cape Town who wished to learn about the people of Qwaqwa. I stressed that I was especially interested in their life and employment histories. I explained that upon my return to Cape Town I intended writing a thesis/book about what I had learnt. At the same time I assured them that I would not include in the text the names and house numbers of those who spoke to me, and that they would remain completely anonymous.

Most residents understood the explicit aims of the project without much difficulty. This is possibly because they identified me as "having something to do with" education: my interpreters were teachers, and many respondents had, at some time, heard of school projects. I found that after research had progressed, more and more residents came to be aware of, and interested in, my activities. Word spread through neighbours and friends, and many came directly to me for explanation. My reputation preceded me in other regards. One informant remarked: "I heard about you and that you are all right because you enjoy mogomboti (a type of home-brewed beer)". Another said that he was willing to be

interviewed because he had "heard the questions you ask are not too difficult". A common question asked by informants was of what benefit the project would be to them. To this I replied that the study would be of no immediate benefit, but would present them with a vicarious opportunity to tell people at universities and elsewhere what it is really like to live and work in Qwaqwa.

It is possible to identify a continuum of attitudes towards me and my questions. At the opposite extreme to the positive response outlined above, a minority of residents were openly antagonistic and suspicious, and did not wish to be interviewed. On once approaching a number of young adults I was told: "We don't want you here. Makgoa (Whites) are bad people". Others said that they were busy and regarded answering my questions as "a waste of time" or that they were "working well and had nothing to tell me". In such instances I responded by explaining that they were under no obligation to speak to me and that I respected their right to privacy. I made no further appointments with such individuals.

Many informants fell in the middle ranges of this continuum. They were neither antagonistic nor particularly well-disposed towards research, and they answered my questions with little elaboration. My impression was that they regarded interviews as something merely to get over and done with. One informant, for instance, described a job that he once held as boring. "I was just working to pass the time, just like I am passing the time now by telling you this story".

Gutkind (1974: 146) has remarked on the kind of positive response mentioned above and which he encountered in his research among

the urban unemployed in Lagos. He found that informants literally demanded that he saw "how bad things are and how badly we are treated". Similarly, Van Binsbergen (1980 :63,73) working among the Nkoya of Zambia, found an eagerness among informants to have themselves put on the ethnographic and historical map in a province dominated by people adhering to other ethnic labels.

During one interview it became clear that some people believed our discussions would be "of help" to them. While I was conducting the interview, a well-dressed man entered the informant's kitchen. When my informant explained my activities to him, he showed little interest and promptly departed. After he had left, the informant commented: "Those people are eating well. They don't have any problems and that is why they can't understand the project".

I gained the impression that many residents received me favourably as they perceived contact with me to be a rare chance to interact informally and talk with someone classified as White. They seemed to value the opportunity to drink tea, soft drinks or home-brewed beer in a situation which contradicted expectations of behaviour under apartheid. One man once asked me to hold his two-week-old baby daughter and remarked: "She is too young even to know that a white is here in our house holding her". On another occasion, whilst in the company of a few young adults, one told another: "Don't call him a white (lekgoa)! He is a person (motho)". Others said that they thought it was "good for South Africa's future to see Whites and Blacks mixing".

Reasons for my favourable reception by other residents were more

telling sociologically. This was especially so amongst pensioners who welcomed any company. To them conversations with me provided relief from the monotony of inactivity. Interviews with these people were extremely relaxed and informal, and I often found myself spending more time answering questions on the lifestyle and 'customs' of Capetonians, students, and Whites than I did posing them.

It was clear that sometimes people chose not to disclose information to me, specifically about problems experienced in the 'homeland' or at work because they feared that this would place them in a precarious position. A further possibility is that they regarded me as an unsympathetic listener. This tendency, evident in both the suspicion that I was a policeman and in the manner in which I received some refusals, may certainly have skewed the information obtained. I feel that this was balanced, however, by the fact that others thought interaction with me was potentially beneficial to them, and were thus not reluctant to criticize and to highlight problems experienced.

Sampling

Of the 300 Appolo houses, 75 (i.e. 25%) were sampled. As the houses were laid out in six rows, a 25% sample was taken in each row. My original intention was to interview the inhabitants of every fourth house, but I found that this was impossible due to five refusals. Where this occurred other informants who expressed a willingness to volunteer information were interviewed instead. The sample taken can thus not be described as strictly random. Though I followed no set interview schedule, the questions asked were always designed to ascertain the places from which residents

were relocated, their dates of arrival, details of their ages, employment status, and the nature of their domestic arrangements. Data obtained in this manner are essentially static and they do not provide any indication of employment stability or instability. This information is collectively referred to below as deriving from the 'house population sample' [3].

To gain a diachronic perspective of labour force participation, 90 life and labour histories were collected from individuals in the sampled houses. To obtain as wide a sample as possible, residents of varying employment statuses were interviewed. This distribution is shown in Table 4 below. Information collected in this manner will be referred to as that deriving from the 'life history sample'.

TABLE 4: THE DISTRIBUTION OF INFORMANTS IN THE LIFE HISTORY SAMPLE ACCORDING TO SEX AND CURRENT ECONOMIC STATUS (1984/85).

Current economic status	Male	Female	Persons
Not 'economically active'	5	10	15
Unemployed	13	6	19
Employed : inside Qwaqwa	13	12	25
in Harrismith	16	9	25
as migrants	6	0	6
Total	53	37	90

Note: I use the term 'not economically active' in inverted commas as it implies a distinction between housework and 'real economically productive' work. This view ignores the contribution of housework to the physical maintenance and replacement of workers.

I had originally aimed to interview a greater number of people currently employed as migrant labourers, but was unable to do so because migrants were seldom home for visits during my research period. Most interviews were conducted over repeated visits and

sessions which varied from approximately one and a half to two hours in duration. Although I asked standard questions about where and when informants had worked since they had become Diappolo residents and why they changed jobs, interviews were mainly non-directed. Sometimes, however, I found it necessary to ask more questions of informants who did not speak as freely as others. This primary open-ended approach was adopted to ascertain what people themselves thought was important or at least important enough to tell me. 74 interviews (four in Zulu and 70 in Sesotho) [4] were conducted with the assistance of an interpreter; and 16 (six in Afrikaans and ten in English) without such aid.

Some informants who were capable of speaking Afrikaans indicated to me that they preferred to relate through an interpreter. Dislike of Afrikaans, due probably to its use by farm owners and local industrialists as a language of command, is evident in the refusal of many inhabitants of Qwaqwa to buy products with Afrikaans brand names [5]. In 1976, at the time of similar complaints in Soweto which broke out into the 1976 uprisings, there were attempts by the then Qwaqwa Minister of Education to abolish Afrikaans as a medium of instruction in local schools. He said that the enforcement of Afrikaans upon Black school-children was politically motivated and that it was imposed on the "voiceless people" who have made their rejection of it perfectly clear" (The Argus 11/6/1976). During interviews, as generally, my interpreters and I communicated in English. Some informants interpreted this as a factor which somehow distinguished me from "other Free State Whites" although one informant expressed surprise that I spoke English when I have an Afrikaans name and

surname.

Other methods of data collection

Apart from interviews I learnt a great deal from merely "being around" and from casual discussions which my interpreters and I had with groups of Diappolo residents. We often lapsed into lengthy discourses about diverse topics and issues, such as unemployment, supervisors, wages, the bus service, police, pass arrests, racism, itsotsi (thugs), marriage and childcare. These discussions normally took place in the yards of residents, in their lounges or kitchens. On a few occasions I recorded, on cassette, songs which residents sang at work or in buses and shebeens.

I attended, at the invitation of an elderly resident, a phabadimo (giving to the ancestors) which he was holding to give thanks to his ancestors for enabling his recovery from a bout of illness. In addition I was invited, by a teacher living in the Diappolo, to attend a matric farewell function at a school in 42nd Hill, Harrismith.

To complement information obtained from Diappolo residents I also spoke to or conducted interviews with various other personages in Phuthaditjhaba. These included journalists as well as officials of the TEBA and district labour bureau, the housing office, the QDC and Setsokotsane Bus Service.

Controlling for the validity of data

Langness (1965 :38) has suggested that anthropologists should

take greater cognisance of the fact that information elicited during the course of interviews could well be distorted, untrue and therefore invalid. He relates this problem to the tendency on the part of people to supply strangers with information which they believe they would like to hear, and the difficulty of supplying detailed and accurate accounts from memory. A number of measures were applied in an attempt to control and identify such inaccuracies. Firstly, the same question was repeated with each informant during different interviews. Secondly, information supplied by an informant was checked against information supplied by others, and validated or invalidated by making enquiries about the informant of people who knew him or her. Many informants assisted in checking the reliability of information by producing reference books or unemployment insurance cards to establish the exact dates that they were employed in various jobs. I furthermore took extensive notes during all interviews to eliminate decreased validity which may result from long intervals between interviews and the recording of data. The question of reliability is further discussed in the latter part of this chapter in reference to job terminations and the stigma associated with the loss of one's job.

A PROFILE OF BASIC QUANTITATIVE DATA

Having outlined how fieldwork was conducted, I now turn to presenting and analysing some basic quantifiable data derived from my interviews. It is necessary to distinguish between data pertaining to the house population sample, which is synchronic, survey-type data presenting demographic and economic indicators during 1984/85; and data pertaining to the life history sample,

which is diachronic and depicts patterns in labour force participation from 1971 to 1984/85.

THE HOUSE POPULATION SAMPLE

Where possible data from the house population sample are compared and contrasted to those derived from interviews conducted with members of 38 randomly selected site populations in the Tseki closer settlement during 1983. Tseki is situated 15 kms. from Phuthaditjhaba and was opened as a relocation site for people from OFS farms and Thaba Nchu in 1974 [6]. Despite the difference in times research was undertaken in the Diappolo and closer settlement, such comparisons can highlight some important contrasts between conditions of life in these two areas.

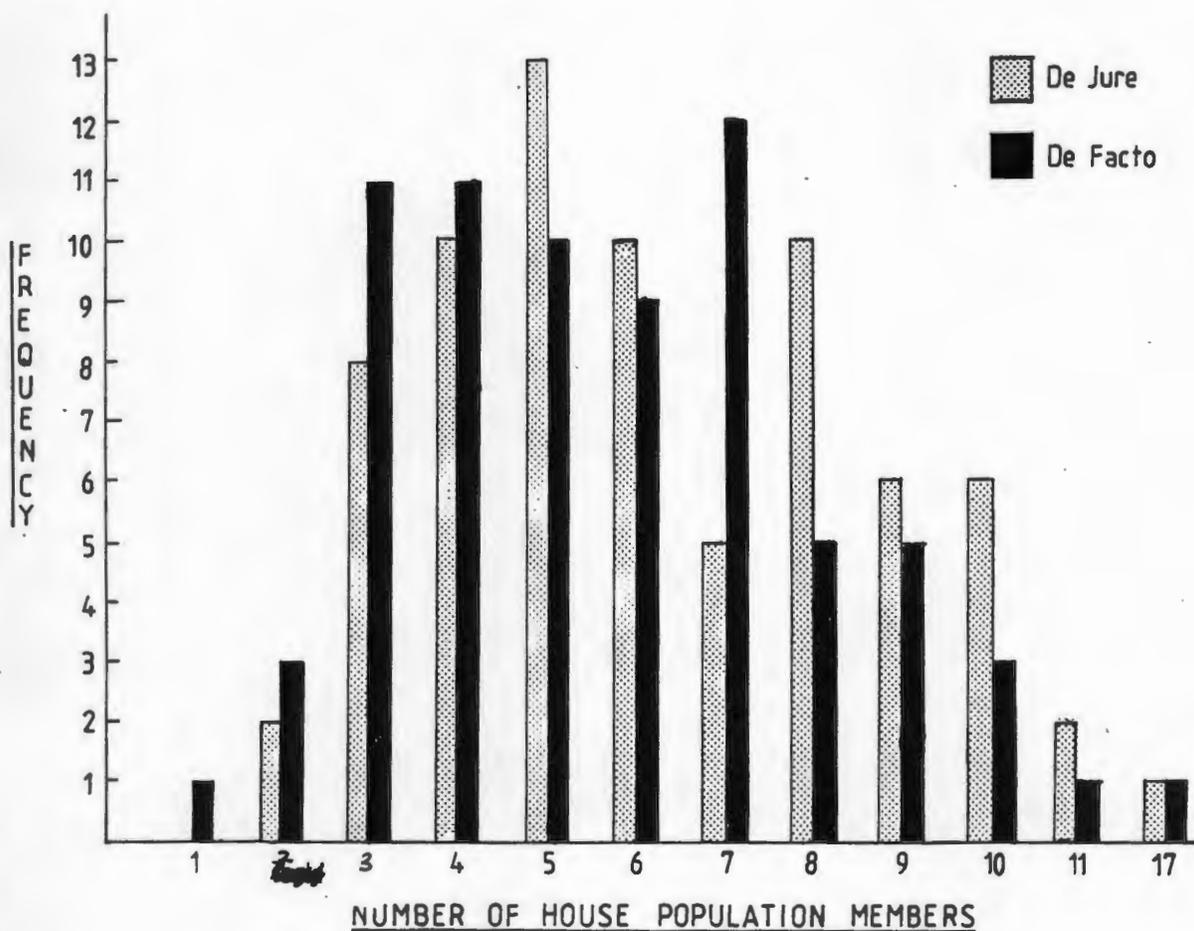
House populations

The average de jure house population in the Diappolo (those associated with a house including absent wage earners and scholars) was 6.3 and the average de facto house population (those resident in a house during the week in which interviews were conducted) 5.8 people. Most Diappolo houses were, however, less densely populated than sites in Tseki, which had an average de jure population of 7.1 people in 1983. The discrepancy between these figures reflect differences between the concepts house and site: a site could accommodate larger numbers of people as it often comprised more than one self-built residential structure.

Figure 1 below, nonetheless, displays a considerable range in the sizes of Diappolo house populations and shows that several houses were severely overcrowded. Indeed, one house was inhabited by 17

members. The sleeping space in the two bedrooms was shared by eight adults, the dining room/lounge by six children and the kitchen by three. In other instances residents responded to overcrowded conditions by erecting shanties from corrugated iron, mud bricks, empty beer cans and wood in their backyards.

FIGURE 1: HOUSE OCCUPANCY RATES IN THE DIAPPOLO SAMPLE (1984/85)



Note: No data - 2.

The dense occupation of certain Appolo homes is a consequence of both the shortage of available urban housing, and high rents relative to wages earned. This is manifested in three different ways. The first is the formation of large households: couples often reside with the husband's parents in accordance with patrilocal residence rules, delaying establishment of independent

households. This arrangement spreads the cost of housing rents and allows for the collective consumption of domestic goods and for children to be looked after by their grandparents while their parents are at work. Other houses were shared by siblings, their spouses and children.

Secondly, there was a wide prevalence of lodging. Three houses were shared by more than one household, and a further nine included lodgers: they were either from townships in common South Africa and waiting to be allocated housing in Phuthaditjhaba; or workers from Qwaqwa's closer settlements who lodged in the Diappolo so they could be within walking distance of Qwaqwa's industrial parks. Poorer household often took in lodgers who contributed money for rent and other domestic expenses.

Thirdly, there were 11 house populations which included children sent to Phuthaditjhaba from common South Africa for schooling purposes. They were often accommodated in households headed by pensioners to whom they were related by ties of kinship.

Access to wage earnings

Though most Diappolo houses were occupied by fewer people than sites in Tseki, they generally had greater access to wage earnings. Table 5 below shows that in contrast to 31% of Tseki site populations, 52% of Diappolo house populations had access to the earnings of two or more wage workers. 8% of Diappolo house populations and 13% of Tseki site populations were without any access to wage earnings. This difference reflects the favourable location of Phuthaditjhaba in relation to existing employment opportunities and the movement of households, unable to afford

housing rents, from Phuthaditjhaba to the closer settlement villages (cf. chapter seven). In both the Phuthaditjhaba and closer settlement samples there is an uneven tendency for greater access to wage earnings to correspond to larger house and site population sizes (cf. Sharp and Spiegel 1985: 142).

TABLE 5: NUMBER OF WAGE EARNERS PER HOUSE AND SITE POPULATIONS IN THE DIAPPOLO AND TSEKI SAMPLES, BY SIZE OF SUCH POPULATIONS.

Number of wage earners	DIAPPOLO (1984/85)				TSEKI (1983)	
	Number of houses	House pop. sizes		Number of sites	Site pop. sizes	
		Range	Mean		Range	Mean
0	6 (8%)	2- 7	4.6	5 (13%)	1-11	6.2
1	29 (40%)	3- 9	5.3	21 (55%)	3-11	7.1
2	19 (26%)	2-10	5.2	8 (21%)	3-11	7.3
3	13 (18%)	3-11	8.0	2 (5%)	6-13	9.5
4	5 (7%)	7-11	9.2	2 (5%)	9-15	12.0
7	1 (1%)	17	17	0 (0%)	0	0
Totals	73 (100%)			38 (99%)		

Notes: (a) All figures given are based on de jure residents of the sampled houses/sites in the two areas.

(b) Inadequate data - 2 Diappolo house populations

Data from both samples show that the numbers of wage earners per domestic unit is the major determinant of economic differentiation. Sharp (1986: 8) reports that Tseki's wage workers were employed in a limited range of jobs and that their earnings and remittances did not vary greatly from one worker to the next. Table 6 shows that the correlation between wage earnings and monthly income was, however, more uneven in the Diappolo. Here wage workers were employed in a broader range of jobs and their monthly earnings and remittances varied considerably: from less than R80 per month among domestic and unskilled workers to more than R600 among salespeople paid on a commission basis, high school teachers and senior bus drivers.

The different jobs held by Diappolo wage workers are described in greater depth in chapter three of the dissertation.

TABLE 6: MONTHLY INCOME PER DE FACTO HOUSE POPULATION BY NO. OF WAGE EARNERS AND HOUSE POP. SIZES IN THE DIAPPOLO SAMPLE (1984/85).

Income in rands per month	Frequency	No. of wage earners		House pop. sizes	
		Range	Mean	Range	Mean
" R100	11 (15%)	0 - 2	0.6	2 - 8	4.9
R101 - R200	14 (19%)	1 - 2	1.1	1 - 9	4.4
R201 - R300	19 (26%)	1 - 4	1.7	2 - 9	5.1
R301 - R400	8 (10%)	1 - 4	2.6	3 - 10	6.0
R401 - R500	7 (10%)	2 - 4	3.3	5 - 11	7.9
R501 - R600	5 (7%)	2 - 3	2.6	4 - 9	5.6
R601 - R700	3 (4%)	2 - 4	3.3	3 - 7	5.0
R701 - R800	3 (4%)	1 - 1	1.0	4 - 6	5.0
R901 - R1200	3 (4%)	3 - 7	4.3	3 - 17	9.3
Totals	73 (100%)				

Note: Inadequate data - 2.

Earnings were augmented by pensions (from R80 to R110 every second month), casual work and informal income earning. These sources of income were often of great significance. One house population of four members, for instance, derived R160 from casual work (i.e. watch repairs). They were better off than another of five members relying on the earnings of two migrants who each remitted only R40 per month.

Labour force participation.

Table 7 below shows that Diappolo residents had more favourable access to existing employment opportunities than informants in the closer settlement sample. Tseki had a larger proportion of unemployed people, with closer settlement women being particularly disadvantaged: 69% were unemployed in contrast to

25% in the Diappolo. Diappolo wage workers were more evenly distributed between different places of employment. According to calculations based on Table 7, 42% of employed Diappolo residents worked locally, 39% in Harrismith, and 19% as migrants. By contrast, only 10% of employed Tseki residents worked in Qwaqwa, 12% in Harrismith and as many as 78% as migrants.

TABLE 7: LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION AMONG WORKING AGE INFORMANTS IN THE DIAPPOLO AND TSEKI SAMPLES (a)

EMPLOYMENT STATUS	DIAPPOLO (1984/85)			TSEKI (1983)		
	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL %	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL %
NOT EMPLOYED						
Attending school	16	17	33 (14%)	12	16	28 (22%)
Health reasons	10	5	15 (6%)	2	4	6 (5%)
Domestic reasons	0	15	15 (6%)	0	10	10 (8%)
Unemployed (b)	22	20	42 (18%)	12	18	30 (24%)
Total	48	57	105 (44%)	26	48	74 (59%)
EMPLOYED						
Inside Qwaqwa	28	28	56 (24%)	2	3	5 (4%)
In Harrismith	25	27	52 (22%)	5	1	6 (5%)
As migrants	20	5	25 (11%)	36	4	40 (32%)
Total	73	60	133 (56%)	43	8	51 (41%)
TOTAL	121	117	238 (100%)	69	56	125 (100%)

Notes: (a) Informants of working age are regarded as older than 15 years but younger than 66 years in the case of males or 61 in the case of females. Excluded from calculations were: 188 people in the Diappolo sample (36 retired and 152 too young to work) and 142 people in the Tseki sample (14 retired and 128 too young to work).

(b) I utilize the International Labour Office's definition of unemployment. By this definition an unemployed person is "any member of the economically active population who was not working and wanted to work...excluded from the category economically active are full time students, those medically unfit to work, those voluntarily retired and housewives not desiring to work" (Blau et al 1983: 13).

(c) All figures given are based on data about de jure residents of sampled houses/sites in the two areas.

This difference is due to a number of factors. Because workseekers are hired at factory gates in the industrial parks Diappolo women have easier access to recruitment to these jobs.

Secondly, the Diappolo sample comprises many former residents of Harrismith. Their knowledge of the town's labour market, and their ties of kinship and acquaintance with the inhabitants of 42nd Hill, thus place them in a favourable position in competing for Harrismith jobs.

Diappolo residents furthermore come from urban areas with better schooling facilities than the countryside and have had long experience of the urban work setting prior to relocation (cf. Bank 1984 b). Skills acquired in this context thus enables them to compete favourably for relatively skilled jobs as bus drivers, teachers and clerks in Qwaqwa's public service.

The reason for the discrepancy in rates of migrant employment between these samples is not as evident. It is noteworthy, however, that as residents in the OFS countryside many workers from Tseki had experienced farm-based labour migration. Here relatively high levels of remuneration gave migrant labour a positive image among farmworkers and established a precedent which attracted many individuals to Qwaqwa in the hope of obtaining contracts. By contrast, Diappolo wage workers often regarded migration as an unfavourable option due to spartan conditions of life in single sex migrant hostels and the inability of migrants to participate in family life.

THE LIFE HISTORY SAMPLE

Due to their static nature, data pertaining to the house population sample reveal nothing of the fluid nature of income levels and the composition of domestic groups (cf. Spiegel 1986

a). This shortcoming does not apply to data derived from the life history sample which show that neither unemployment nor employment are unchanging conditions, but merely present different phases or periods in employment histories.

Job stability

Two different indices of job stability among Diappolo residents can be drawn from data deriving from the life history sample. These are the number of jobs held by informants since arrival, and the times spent in present and previous jobs.

TABLE 8: STATED NUMBER OF JOBS HELD SINCE ARRIVAL IN THE DIAPPOLO: THE LIFE HISTORY SAMPLE (1971-1985).

Number of jobs held	Frequency			Percentages	
	Male	Female	Total	Proportional	Cumulative
7	1	0	1	1.3	1.3
5	7	0	7	9.0	10.3
4	6	2	8	10.3	20.5
3	8	4	12	15.4	35.9
2	13	13	26	33.3	69.2
1	15	9	24	30.8	100.0
Totals	50	28	78	100.1	100.0

Note: I have excluded from these calculations ^{twelve} ~~three~~ individuals (~~one~~ ^{nine} females and ~~two~~ ^{three} males), who had never held a job.

The former measure, as depicted in Table 8 above, shows that 69% of all informants have held more than one, 36% more than two and 21% more than three jobs since arrival in the Diappolo. These figures are likely to be underestimates because of a lack of consensus among informants over what constitutes a "job", as distinct from "piece-job" (see chapter seven). After an informant told me of all the jobs that he had done, he commented about the

casual work he was offered at a construction site but did for only two days: "They never even paid me because I was injured and did not return...I slipped and fell down on the stairs of the Appolo one evening after work".

The possibility that informants did not recall certain jobs can also not be excluded. In one house I collected labour histories from both a father and son. The father mentioned that he had worked only at a butchery and transport company. His son recalled, however, that his father had also worked with a construction company: "My father worked there as a concrete mixer and informed me of a vacancy, but he left soon thereafter because he was dissatisfied with the supervisor".

A third limitation using the number of jobs held since arrival in the Diappolo as a measure of job stability is that it does not take the ages of workers, when they entered the labour market, nor their dates of arrival in the Diappolo into account. Many informants in the sample arrived in Phuthaditjhaba after 1971, some as recently as 1983 [7].

The times informants spent in present and previous jobs is thus a more appropriate measure of job stability. As shown in table 9 below, informants spent a mean time of 4.37 years in their present jobs and only 2.95 years in previous jobs held.

These figures are generally lower than those revealed by other studies of African employment in South Africa during the 1980s. In a survey of 633 workers in Alexandra township, Pillay (1984: 17) found that workers had spent an average of 5.7 years in

**TABLE 9: STATED TIME PERIODS SPENT IN PRESENT AND PREVIOUS JOBS:
LIFE HISTORY SAMPLE (1971-1985)**

	Number of jobs	Time periods in jobs			
		Range	Median	Mode	Mean
Present jobs	53	1m - 14y	6.95y	4y	4.37y
Previous jobs	116	7d - 13y	6.50y	3y	2.95y

Notes: (a) All figures exclude periods in jobs prior to arrival in the Diappolo.

(b) Inadequate data - 17 previous jobs

(c) d - days, m - months, y - years

present, and 4.1 years in previous, jobs. In his study of 264 workers in a peri-urban area near Pietermaritzburg, Hofmeyr (1984: 44) found that the mean job length of employed respondents was just over seven years. Moll's (1984: 7) research in the Qumbu district of the Transkei showed that workers there enjoyed a high degree of job stability: among 291 workers interviewed he found that the "average worker" held his or her job for six years and that 26% of all respondents held their jobs for over eight years.

My findings are similar to Ehler's (1982: 25) whose sample of 198 Kwandebele commuters working in Pretoria, included only 39% who had been employed by their current employer for more than three years. Ehlers (1985: 2) points out, however, that 85% of respondents sampled were resident in Kwandebele for less than three years and that many were forced to change jobs as a result of relocation.

When stated time periods in jobs are correlated with gender (see Appendix 2) a rather small difference in the modal times that men and women were employed is evident. Although men spent an average of six months longer in previous jobs, women were employed for an

average of five months longer in present jobs. A greater discrepancy exists between places of employment. Informants spent the shortest time periods in jobs inside Qwaqwa (1.5 years in present, and 1.9 years in previous jobs). Migrant labourers managed to retain employment for slightly longer (4.3 years in present and 3 years in previous jobs), whereas informants employed in Harrismith displayed the greatest stability of employment (7 years in present and 3.5 years in previous jobs). From these figures it is notable that informants spent almost twice as long in present, than in previous, Harrismith jobs. Such increased job stability can be seen as a result of improved transport facilities between this town and Qwaqwa since 1979 (cf. chapter five).

Unemployment

Table 10 below depicts the periods of unemployment experienced by all informants in the life history sample. It shows that the mean time period of unemployment was 1.4 years. This was slightly longer than the mean time of 1.3 years in past periods of

TABLE 10: STATED TIME PERIODS SPENT UNEMPLOYED: LIFE HISTORY SAMPLE (1971-1985)

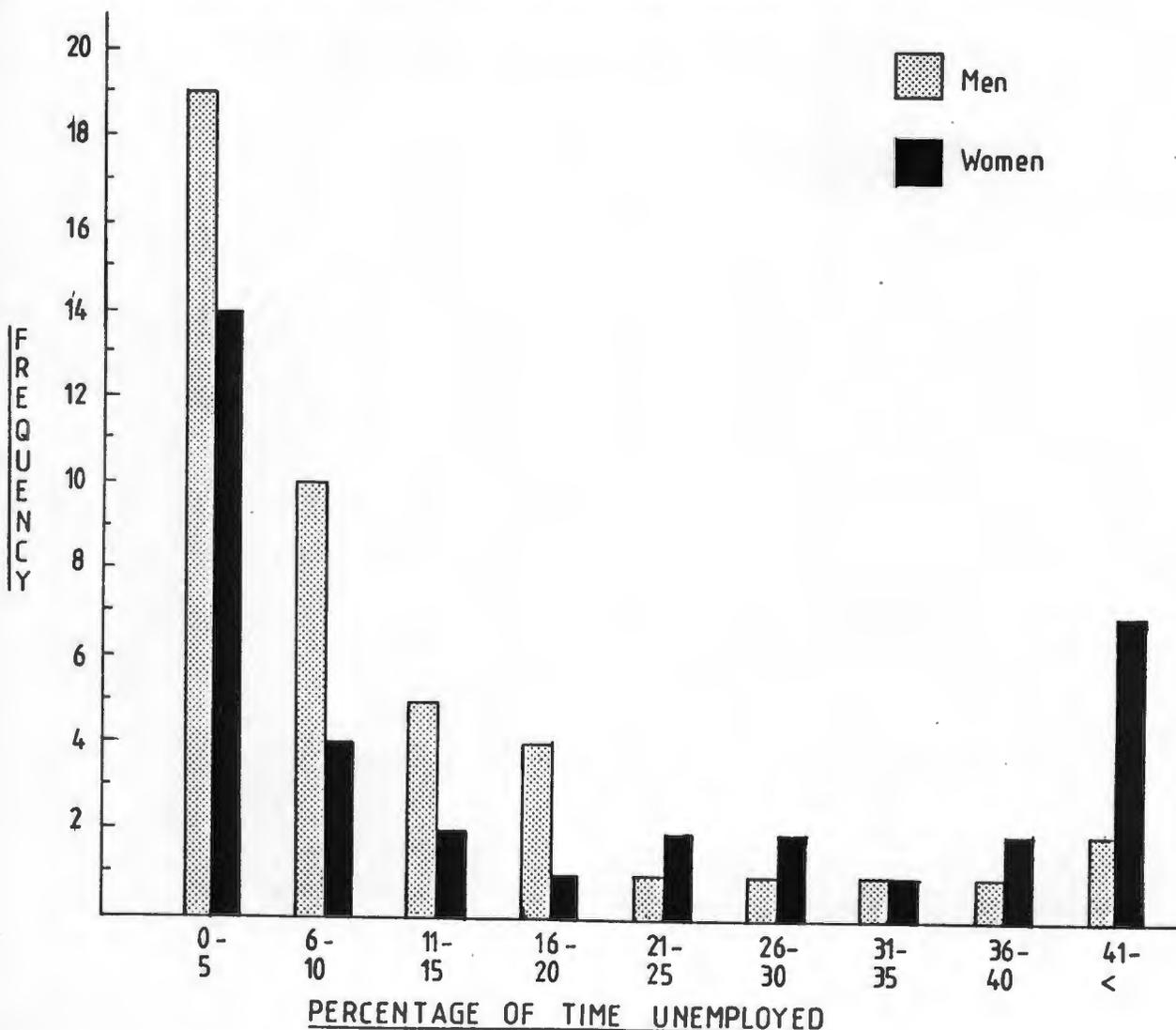
	Number of periods unemployed	Times spent unemployed			
		Range	Median	Mode	Mean
Current periods of unemployment	19	2d - 6y	3y	4m	1.4y
Past periods of unemployment	81	7d - 8y	4y	1m	1.3y

Notes: (a) All figures exclude times unemployed prior to relocation.
 (b) Inadequate data - nine past periods of unemployment.
 (c) d - days, m - months, y - years

unemployment. Women generally spent longer times unemployed than men: 2.6 years in current and 2.9 years in past periods of unemployment.

Another index of the extent of unemployment is the percentage of time that informants spent seeking work and thus out of full time employment. In this regard, informants were unemployed for an average of 17% (men 14.5% and women 21%) of the time that they were 'economically active' whilst resident in the Diapolo. The distribution of these percentages are displayed in Figure 2.

FIGURE 2: THE DISTRIBUTION OF WAGE WORKERS ACCORDING TO PERCENTAGES OF TIME UNEMPLOYED WHILST 'ECONOMICALLY ACTIVE' IN THE DIAPOLO: LIFE HISTORY SAMPLE (1971-1985)



Notes: (a) N = 79

- (b) ^{Nine} ~~Seven~~ informants, who had not been 'economically active' since relocation, have been excluded from these calculations.
- (c) Inadequate data : 2

Job terminations

Tables 8, 9 and 10 show an erraticism in employment histories marked by frequent changes in jobs and employment status. An analysis of the reasons for job terminations is thus of crucial importance. I find it useful to divide job terminations into three types: retrenchments, dismissals and desertions.

Retrenchments occur when jobs are terminated at the sole initiative of the employer without reference to the actions of the employee. This includes the termination of employment due to the closure of enterprises as a result of bankruptcy and to financially determined staff reductions. In such instances workers are commonly given a positive letter of reference by the employer in which it is stated that employment was not terminated due to any default of the employee.

Dismissals also occur on the initiative of the employer, but in response to specific alleged acts of employee misconduct such as inadequate work performance, being drunk, arriving late at work or quarrelling with co-workers or supervisors. Dismissals may, however, also reflect a lack of commitment to work tasks because many dismissals were the result of actions which employees could seemingly have avoided.

Desertions are employee instigated. They can be sub-divided into two categories: work-related and nonwork-related. Work-related desertions occur when employees respond to specific conditions of

employment such as problems with supervisors, dissatisfaction with wages or when tasks were considered as "too dangerous". Their response is to abandon their jobs. Nonwork-related desertions, on the other hand, occurred in response to factors outside the employment situation. Such factors include domestic considerations, pregnancy, ill health and transport problems. Although some employees formally resigned, many did not, choosing to terminate their employment without notice.

Table 11 below shows that 19% of jobs held by informants in the life history sample were terminated by retrenchment, 21% by dismissal, and 60% by desertion (35% work-related and 25% nonwork-related). These figures are ^{comparable} ~~comparable~~ to those of Hofmeyr (1984: 39) who found that in 170 instances of job terminations among male workers in a peri-urban area near Pietermaritzburg 56% were employee instigated and 44% employer instigated (27% retrenched and 17% dismissed). Table 11 also reveals a clear difference in types of job terminations by places of employment.

TABLE 11: STATED TYPES OF JOB TERMINATIONS ACCORDING TO PLACES OF EMPLOYMENT: LIFE HISTORY SAMPLE (1971-1985)

TYPE OF TERMINATION	PLACES OF EMPLOYMENT			TOTAL
	Qwaqwa	Harrismith	Migrants	
	No. (%)	No. (%)	No. (%)	No. (%)
Retrenchments	6 (16%)	9 (16%)	10 (28%)	25 (19%)
Dismissals	8 (22%)	17 (29%)	3 (8%)	28 (21%)
Desertions:				
Work-related	20 (54%)	20 (34%)	6 (17%)	46 (35%)
Nonwork-related	3 (8%)	12 (21%)	17 (47%)	32 (24%)
TOTAL	37 (100%)	58 (100%)	36 (100%)	131 (100%)

Table 11 shows that local employees were most prone to loose

their jobs through work-related desertions, people employed in Harrismith were most prone to dismissals, and migrants to retrenchments and nonwork-related desertions.

But how valid are informants' statements on types of job terminations? Williams (1967 :27-8) argues that the responses of informants in an interview situation may be distorted by what he calls "mechanisms for the defence of the ego". Gordon (1977 :232-236), who examined the reasons supplied by workers on a Namibian mine for leaving their jobs, argues that these were situationally appropriate rather than real because the statement of real reasons could have had unpleasant repercussions. He notes that most migrants said that they broke their contracts in order to fulfil some kinship or social obligation at home. Migrants perceive this reason as acceptable to both White management and other workers. Management may find the dislike of a supervisor unacceptable as a reason for leaving. The worker who said that he was leaving because he had earned enough money, on the other hand, risked being accused of hoarding by workmates. Despite feelings of suspicion shown towards me by some people, I believe that by interviewing informants at their places of residence, rather than of employment, these were minimized. In many cases a long timespan had elapsed between terminations and the interview. Both these factors removed feelings of discomfort and the potentially hazardous position in which the verbalization of real reasons could place workers. Unlike researchers working at the workplace, I was furthermore able to contrast the stated reasons of informants for leaving against evidence of domestic arrangements and the opinions of other members of the house population in question.

Another potential problem is that certain individuals, for example those constantly dismissed from work, could be stigmatized and certain answers could thus be avoided. This argument seems to be of limited plausibility, for many workers were not reluctant to state potentially degrading reasons for being fired such as theft, imprisonment, being drunk or "making mistakes" at work. In these cases dismissals were blamed on unsympathetic and uncaring employers. One informant said that he was dismissed for arriving drunk at work, but rationalized "I always performed well at work". An equal measure of stigma was possibly attached to employee-instigated terminations, because deserters were sometimes labeled as "lazy" or as "weaklings" who are unwilling or unable to maintain their jobs by other Diappolo residents. It should also be noted that the potentially least stigmatized reason for leaving, namely retrenchments, was least often supplied as a reason for job terminations.

CONCLUSIONS

The limitations of the quantitative data presented in this chapter should be fully recognized. Anthropologists seem unanimous in their agreement that quantitative data presents no substitute for qualitative data obtained by in-depth ethnographic research methods. Alverson (1970: 49) has criticized survey-type studies for dehumanizing the subjects of research by treating them "as little more than bundles of factual grist for a series of aggregative statistics, indices and actuarial tables." In addition Spiegel (1986 b) warns against the static nature of surveys and notes that they can only capture demographic and employment patterns at a specific point in time. He argues that,

at most, quantitative data can depict demographic and employment trends which can serve as a superficial basis for comparison but that they cannot accurately account for, nor explain, such trends.

Whilst these comments certainly highlight shortcomings of many quantitative analyses, I feel that anthropologists have often been over-zealous in their criticisms of such work. Apart from its usefulness in establishing the relationships between social variables and defining the typicality of subjective evidence, quantitative data can usefully serve for the identification of problems to be dealt with qualitatively. In this regard data from the house population sample show generally low average monthly household incomes along with relatively densely populated houses and a relatively equitable distribution of wage earners between different places of employment. Three striking features to emerge from the analysis of quantifiable data from the life history sample are: the general instability and insecurity of employment as evident in frequent job changes; that residents spend a large part of their "economically active" lives unemployed; and that in the majority of cases jobs were terminated by employees themselves. It is against the background of such information that in-depth ethnographic data is presented in the next chapters of this study to account for and to explain why Diappolo workers lose their jobs or terminate their employment.

NOTES TO CHAPTER TWO

[1] Evans Pritchard (1971) underlines the importance of co-residence with one's subjects of research. He argues that the anthropologist must, as far as possible, morally and physically be part of the "community" in order to establish ties of intimacy and observe daily activities from "within". "This is not merely a matter of physical proximity. There is a psychological side to it. By living among the natives [sic]...the anthropologist puts himself [sic] on a level with them. Unlike the administrator and missionary he has no authority and status to maintain, and unlike them he is in a neutral position. He is not there to change their lives but as a humble learner of it" (p.78-9).

[2] Stellenbosch is a scenic Western Cape town in which is situated an Afrikaans medium university. The university has long been closely associated with Afrikaner Nationalism. The South African Prime Ministers J.C. Smuts, D.F. Malan, J.G. Strijdom, H.F. Verwoerd and B.J. Voster were graduates of the university, whilst the current State President P.W. Botha is its Chancellor.

[3] I have distinguished between a household and a house population. The former concept refers to a domestic group to which membership is expressed in a continuing responsibility towards its maintenance. Murray (1981: 47-8) explains a household in terms of the Sesotho concepts ba jang potong e le 'ngoe (those who eat from one pot) and ba re phelisang (those who make us live). I use the term 'house population', on the other hand, to refer to people resident in a particular residential or dwelling unit, loosely referred to as ba re lulang le bona (those we live with) and absent wage earners. My usage of the term house population bears no relation to the term house which is used in Southern African anthropological literature to describe people associated with one wife in a polygynous family, as in discussions of the house property complex (cf. Murray 1981: 116-118 and Schapera 1947: 185). Although a household and house population may be synonymous in certain instances, this is not necessarily so. A household may for instance be spread over two homes and a house population may include more than one household (cf. Sharp and Spiegel 1985 who discuss the problem of choosing a sample of households rather than residential sites in betterment and closer settlement areas).

[4] The SADB (1985: 1) estimates that 20.4% of Qwaqwa's population are not Basotho. This mainly comprises Zulu speakers. Language was of little significance in social interaction in the Diappolo. In everyday speech Sesotho speakers commonly used words of Nguni origin such as: tsotsi, induna, sangoma and moqomboti. Official 'ethnic' classification was also of little significance in marriage and identification. One informant, who regarded himself as a Mosotho, said that his surname, Tjhabalala, is Zulu and that he was classified as a Swazi in his reference book.

[5] Oral information from a sales manager of a large Phuthaditjhaba supermarket.

[6] Fieldwork was conducted in Tseki by John Sharp, Elaine Salo and myself during April June and December 1983 as part of the Conditions Of Life In Rural Areas Project (COLINRAP) funded by the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR). Data collected in Tseki has been extensively used in studies by Salo (1984), Niehaus (1984a and 1984b), Sharp (1986), as well as Sharp and Spiegel (1985 and 1986). Tseki has previously been referred to by a pseudonym, Kgano.

[7] The dates that informants in the life history sample arrived in the Diappolo can be summarized as follows:

Year of arrival	Number of informants
1971	54
1972	3
1973	1
1974	1
1975	4
1976	2
1977	2
1978	6
1979	3
1980	5
1981	4
1982	3
1983	1
1984	1

CHAPTER THREE

PERCEPTIONS OF WAGES AND WORK

In considering job instability and the proclivity of Diappolo workers to terminate their employment one must examine both how they perceive their conditions of employment and how they respond to these conditions. This chapter is concerned with the former. In particular, it seeks to identify the circumstances which workers perceived as repulsive about their jobs.

Fox (1980) argues that the meaning of work depends on its context and character. He notes that in industrial society work is designed exclusively and "instrumentally" by dominant groups. By this he means that there is an emphasis on the practical outcome of work in terms of criteria such as profits, output, and effective performance, as against the value of the work experience itself for those who do it. He adds that dominant groups and classes are in a position to influence people's conceptions of work and what they aspire to get from it:

Many, perhaps most, accept the message in the further sense in that they themselves take an instrumental view of work. They value it largely for its practical outcome in terms of the weekly pay packet or monthly salary cheque, and see it as having no central significance of their personal life, development and growth (Fox 1980: 144, author's emphasis).

The view that wage workers perceive work instrumentally is widely substantiated in sociological literature. Marx (1962: 97) writes, of alienation under capitalism, that labour "satisfies no spontaneous creative urge, but is only a means for the satisfaction of wants which have nothing to do with (the) work". Similarly, Lockwood (1975) describes the modern "privatized" worker as characterized by an attitude to work which sees it as a

necessary evil to be undertaken solely for its extrinsic value in maximizing earnings. Weber (1930) argues that for Protestants the virtues of hard work lie in the pursuit of religious salvation, rather than its intrinsic meaning.

In their analysis of the repulsive aspects of employment, "organizational" theorists also attach great importance to the extrinsic meaning of work. According to Maslow (1970) the extent to which employment enables most workers to meet their physiological need (i.e. for food, clothing and shelter) is the major source of satisfaction and dissatisfaction. Herzberg (1968) postulates that job dissatisfaction is related to the surroundings of the job rather than the work tasks themselves. In his comprehensive review of literature on labour turnover, Mobley (1982: 96) writes: "The only strong generalization regarding aggregate analysis of organizational variables is that turnover rates are higher in low-paying industries".

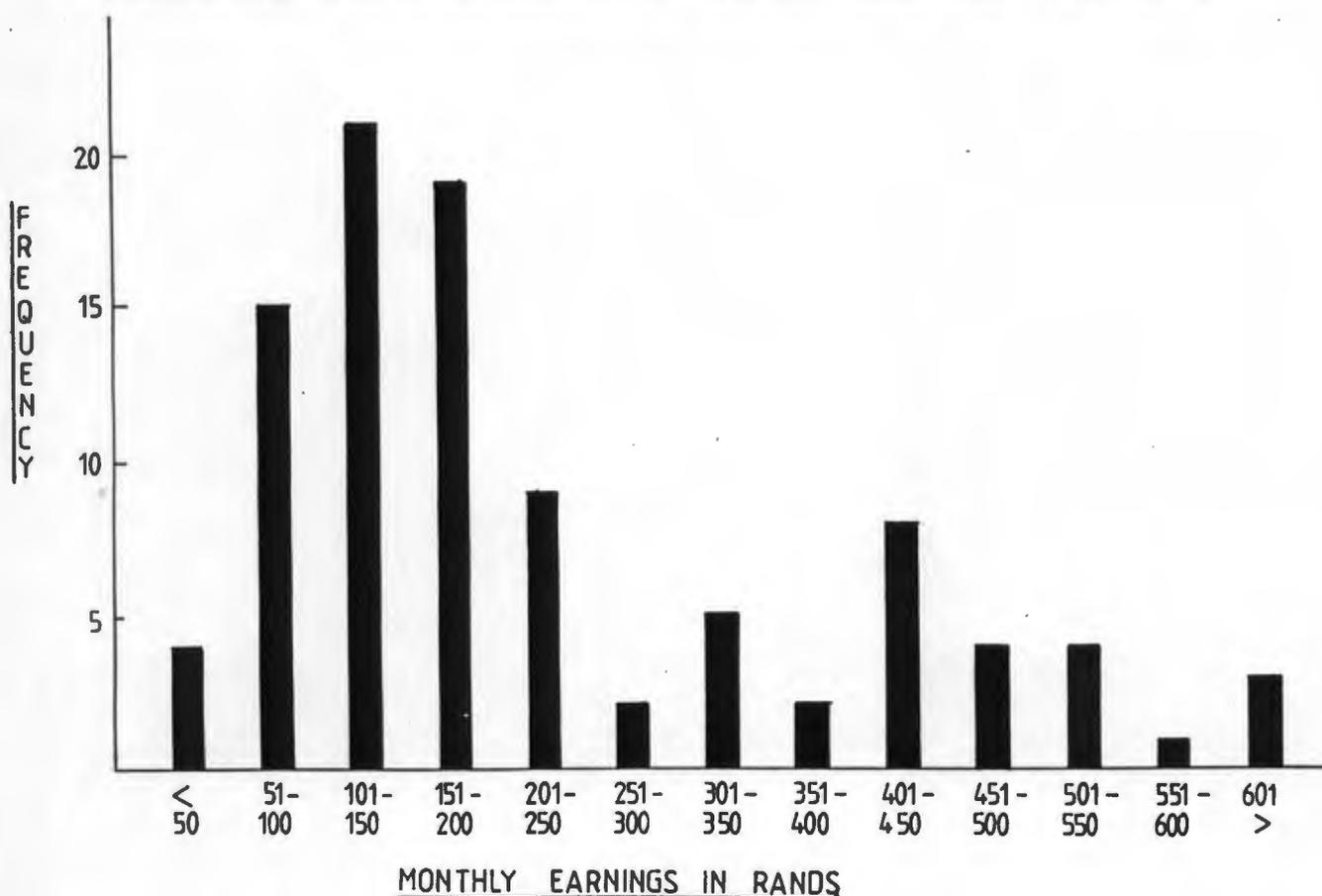
In this chapter I argue that it would be erroneous to overestimate the degree to which Diappolo wage workers perceived their jobs in purely "instrumental" terms. From interviews it became clear that informants were greatly concerned with the totality of their work experiences, including not only the outcome of their work (such as wages), but also the nature of their work tasks and the circumstances of their work situations. The extent to which these factors were viewed as repulsive are most apparent in the major reasons informants supplied for work-related desertions. Out of 46 instances of work-related desertion only 17 (37%) were primarily due to "problems with wages". Six (13%) were because of the nature of their work tasks; 11 (28%)

supervisory practices; and 10 (22%) due to work safety and vulnerability to injuries. In the remainder of this chapter each of these aspects of employment ~~is~~^{are} explored. I specifically aim to show their uneven distribution between different categories of employment.

PERCEPTIONS OF WAGES

Wages was one of the most common topics of discussion in the Diappolo. Comment often took the form of complaints, as most informants were poorly remunerated. Figure 3 below shows that 20% of the wage workers in the house population sample earned less than R101 per month, 42% less than R151, and 62% less than R201.

FIGURE 3: THE DISTRIBUTION OF WAGE WORKERS IN THE HOUSE POPULATION SAMPLE ACCORDING TO MONTHLY EARNINGS (1984/85).



Notes: (a) N = 103
 (b) No data - 30

These low wage rates have important implications both materially [1], and socially, as earning-levels constitute a measure of respect and self-worth. Household items such as expensive lounge suites, and fashionable dress, which were admired and envied by the poor, publicly demonstrated the earning capacity of wealthier residents.

Very low wage rates are often said to be exploitative. During interviews, however, informants, evaluated wages in terms of a variety of criteria of fairness making it important to transcend an analysis of wage rates per se and to explore workers' emic assessment of remuneration. Scott (1975: 490-492) identifies three major advantages of a subjectivist approach over "objective" or deductive concepts of exploitation which take an abstract normative standard as their point of departure [2]. Firstly, the degree of acceptance of moral principles on which criteria of justice are based presupposes a normative tradition, with those outside the tradition applying different standards. Disputes over what is exploitation are thus appeals to a normative tradition rather than matters of empirical inquiry. Secondly, "objective" theories rarely provide conceptual links between a priori notions of exploitation and the subjective feelings of the exploited. Thirdly, emic definitions, and not etic theories of exploitation, serve as guides for social action. Scott (1975: 489) notes, however, that "at the core of exploitation is the idea that some individuals, groups or classes benefit unjustly from the labour of, or at the expense of others". In this regard it should be emphasized that workers were generally more concerned about feeling done down or cheated than about the benefits which employers and managers derived from

paying low wages.

The criteria most often used by informants to evaluate the fairness of remuneration are discussed below. These criteria are presented sequentially, but it should be noted that they were not so neatly compartmentalized by informants: often wages considered unfair by a single criterion were adjudged, on balance to be fair, because they passed the test of other criteria appropriate to a particular employment situation.

1. The relative needs of workers. Poorer workers commonly judged the fairness of remuneration by comparing earnings with their personal needs. Thus, wages which barely provided for basic needs were perceived as wholly inadequate. Complaints were: "R20 cannot feed you", "What can you do with R30 [weekly in 1981]? How much does a trouser and a shoe cost?"; and "I'm really dissatisfied. I'm the only breadwinner in the house and I have to look after the rent, pay accounts and send my kids to school". The relative need criterion is also epitomized by the following statement, from a migrant who was earning R250 per month at a factory on the Witwatersrand during 1982: "At Isando my problem was wages. The bosses seemed to think that here in Qwaqwa we have lots of fields and cattle because they paid us so little [3]". By contrast, an informant who worked as a domestic in Bergville during the same year, and earned R60 per month, said: "It was all right because I did not have to pay for food".

According to this criterion, workers expected a constant increase in wages to accommodate rising costs of living. Older workers expected substantially higher wages as their domestic responsibilities became progressively more demanding over time:

informants who had previously been content to work for low wages, often terminated their employment to look for new jobs after they were married and had to support dependants. Likewise, migrants and commuters were less content with low wages than local employees as they had to meet transport and accommodation costs. It is notable that Diappolo residents who worked in Qwaqwa's industrial parks described themselves as less satisfied with their remuneration than had employees resident in the Tseki closer settlement. This can be ascribed to the fact that the latter had worked for extremely low wages on farms prior to relocation and that only Phuthaditjhaba residents had to pay monthly housing rents. For this reason, too, Phuthaditjhaba workers were often the most visible and reactionary participants in episodes of collective protest (see case 4 on pages 128-¹²⁹~~126~~, of unrest at a glassware factory).

2. The efforts of workers. A second means of evaluating fairness was the comparison of wages with workers' productive efforts, the energy they expended, and their other contributions during employment. Benefits derived were frequently judged to be less than workers deserved for their efforts. Common remarks were: "I was dissatisfied with the money because I worked very hard" and "the paint that I work with has its own type of illness. They don't take infection of the eyes and the lungs into account when they pay us". Some informants terminated employment after their workloads were increased without corresponding rises in wages. A man, who had worked as a blanket packer explained:

At first the wages were not so bad. The problem only arose when a man in my department was fired and I had to do the work of two people. I eventually decided to leave because I did two jobs and was only paid for one. I was so tired that whenever I came home from work I just used to sleep. This can cause your wife to run

away because you cannot satisfy her.

A woman who, during 1975, left her job in the spinning department of the same textile factory for a similar reason, said:

When I started, we were two workers who had to load the wool into 150 spinning machines. When they increased the [number of] machines to 250 I left. We were still only two and we had to load all those machines. It was much more work than previously, but they still paid us the same. I gave notice and told them to get more workers or to pay us more.

Many better paid employees also regarded themselves as underpaid in relation to their efforts. A teacher, who had moved to Qwaqwa from Soweto, was employed on the same salary scale as he had been in the Transvaal. Nonetheless he felt more exploited. "In Soweto I only taught 21 periods per week, but here it is more than 40". A telephone technician, who earned more than R500 per month, felt cheated because he was able to contrast the monetary income of his employers via his work, with his own remuneration:

In a day I install about six telephones and it is R75 per 'phone; so the post office will make a lot in a day. To transfer a telephone from one room to another is R45, but I don't get any of that money. They don't care how many 'phones you install, you will only earn your monthly wage.

3. Wage equity. Wages were also deemed unfair if they compared unfavourably with those of other employees engaged in similar capacities. Informants were aggrieved that Whites, irrespective of employment experience and the quality of work performed, invariably earned more than they did. The following remark is illustrative of a commonly shared sentiment: "We never earn as much as the Whites. A white man can arrive and you as a Black man can instruct him, but he will always earn much more than you". A man who worked as an "oil-boy" at a Harrismith carpet factory from 1975 to 1977 and was paid R30 weekly, said: "Whites actually

have to oil the machines, and if a white was employed to do it he would get much more".

Informants did not only view themselves as exploited in relation to Whites. A construction worker, who had been employed installing sewerage piping, discontinued working in 1982 because he objected to wage inequities among semi-skilled workers. "Other people such as painters and carpenters made much more. They got R70 per week, but I only got R50 although I worked very hard with those pipes". Security guards felt unjustly remunerated in relation to people employed inside the factory gates. One informant complained that although factory employees worked five days per week, he worked over weekends also and yet received similar wages. Another resigned his job because he "hated factory workers getting increments, but not those outside the fence". An informant who had worked for the S.A. Railways for 20 years felt cheated because new workers were paid the same as he was. Although, since 1964, his monthly wage had been increased from R20 to R307, he complained that: "I am still not satisfied. I already have 20 years of service, but the other day they employed another man and we are on the same scale. I should be getting much more because of long service".

4. The ability of employers to pay. A fourth criterion taken into account in assessing wages was the ability of employers to pay. Informants felt cheated when their meagre earnings were contrasted to the wealth of managers and employers. A meat-cutter remarked: "It was a very rich factory. The owner once said that with only one rheeback he can pay all the workers because they send the meat overseas...That is a great robbing business. He [the owner] only wants to bank for himself." Similarly a machine

operator at a textile factory saw management as benefiting from paying meagre wages. "The manager paid low wages so that the profits of the factory would be high and so that he could get promotion from the people above him".

The 'ability to pay' criterion is best depicted in the case of a domestic worker who had worked for two White households in Harrismith during the early 1970s. At the first home she was paid only R30 per month, but refrained from expressing any dissatisfaction as she did not regard her employer as wealthy. "He was only a railway worker and from just looking around in the house you could see that he did not have much money. At the second home she was employed for R40 per month, but complained: "He [the employer] owned his own garage and he really could have paid me more."

5. Clarity and consistency. Workers expected consistency of payments in terms of comprehensible standards. Yet most workers did not fully understand the complexities of salary scale increments, overtime and bonus payments, as well as deductions from wages for unemployment insurance and pension funds. During interviews they often showed me their payslips and asked if I knew what various deductions were for. These inconsistencies were perceived as evidence that employers tried to cheat them out of whatever lowly wages they managed to earn [4]. Confusion over wages was widespread. A Phuthaditjhaba security guard said: "My starting salary was R166, but instead they paid me R150. This month they had to pay me R250, but I was only paid R180. This we can't understand, but maybe this is how they have arranged things". One teacher felt intentionally cheated. "This month I

was not even paid. They said the computer made the mistake, but computers don't think. People programme these computers". Pension payments were a source of much discontent to a former railway worker:

If the treatment at the railways was fair I would still be working there. The railways are extremely skelm (devious). After a man retires he must get R4 000 in pension, but if the husband passes away the wife is only given a pension for two months. The workers are never given a straightforward explanation about this.

Likewise a truck driver remarked that, when he retired,:

The boss deducted R17.50 from my pension and never gave it to me. I complained to the boss, but he said: 'No! That is money you can't get'. The reason why they are robbing me is because I have never been to school.

6. Other criteria. The above-mentioned set of criteria are not exhaustive as a list of yardsticks used to assess the fairness of wages. Other factors taken into account were the time spent in current jobs, educational qualifications, and wages earned in previous jobs (i.e. individuals who were better paid in previous jobs were more likely to express dissatisfaction over wages).

From the evidence presented above it is clear that wages were often perceived as a source of great dissatisfaction and repulsion among Diappolo workers. In the discussion I have, however, attempted to underline the importance of perceptions of exploitation and unfair remuneration, rather than wage rates per se. Indeed a few non-manual workers felt more exploited than some domestic employees. Factors taken into account by them were: greater personal needs (i.e. transport costs and dependants to support), longer working hours, prior job experiences, inequity with Whites employed in similar positions, and a suddenly increased workload without a salary adjustment.

I have also aimed to demonstrate that the criteria used to assess wages were not merely based on the extrinsic meaning of work in meeting the personal needs of workers. Principles of fairness such as the work effort, equity with fellow workers, and the ability of employers to pay were derived from experiences intrinsic to the work situation itself.

PERCEPTIONS OF WORK TASKS

Having considered the perceptions of wages among Diappolo workers, I now turn to focus more explicitly on the factors within their work situations which frustrated them and which they regarded as repulsive. From interviews, five dimensions of work experiences emerged as important in this regard. These were the extent to which workers were able, or unable, to: (i) control their time, physical movement and the immediate work process; (ii) view their work tasks as purposeful and become involved in work as a means of personal self-expression; (iii) sustain favourable social relationships at work; (iv) experience freedom from hierarchical authority; and (v) experience safe and healthy working conditions.

These factors leading to workers experiencing a sense of frustration in their work situations may be understood in terms of the sociological concept of alienation as explicated by Blauner (1964). Developing the ideas of Marx, Fromm and Seeman, he writes that alienation occurs:

when workers are unable to control their immediate work process, to develop a sense of purpose and function which connects their jobs to the overall organization of production, to belong to

integrated industrial communities, and when they fail to become involved in the activity of work as a mode of personal self-expression (Blauner 1964: 74).

Conceptualizing these factors in such terms helps to relate them the kinds of pressures experienced by workers in other, very different situations; and it links the kinds of data presented to broader sociological concerns. But, as was pointed out above with regard to the concept of exploitation, over-emphasizing deductive conceptualizations diverts attention from the specific concerns and perceptions of Diappolo wage workers. It is for these reasons that I do not pursue an analysis using the concept of alienation, and rather concentrate on the perspectives of informants and on their perception that certain aspects of their work situations are repulsive.

In the section below the first three of these factors are correlated to different categories of jobs held by, and the formal work tasks of, informants. Supervisory practices and safety at work are discussed at greater length under separate headings.

Although I recognize that social categories and boundaries more closely reflect the thoughts of categorizers than the categorized (vide Kotze 1982), I have decided to distinguish between three categories of jobs on the basis of skill, wage levels and employment stability to systematically highlight diversities of experience. These are: self-employment; primary labour market jobs, and secondary labour market jobs (cf. chapter one). As a further aid to description, analysis and comparison, these categories are sub-divided according to occupations and sectors of employment listed by Simkins and Hindson (1979).

Self-employment

Of all categories of work, self-employment was perceived as least repulsive. This was primarily because self-employed workers directed their own work activity, controlled the distribution of the products of their labour and viewed their work tasks as purposeful.

There were, however, only two self-employed informants in the life history sample: a daily commuter who painted the houses of Harrismith Whites on the basis of informal contracts, and an informant who owned her own knitting enterprise at the Iponeng (looking after ourselves) Complex in Qwaqwa's industrial park. The painter owned his own tools, seldom employed labourers to assist him and required customers to supply their own paint. Although he can be described as isolated at work, he highlighted the more admirable aspects of his work task by saying: "This job is the best because I can work according to my own strength. I always work carefully because I want to do the homes nicely". The knitter had bought her own knitting machine in 1979, after she had been employed as a weaver in two textile factories. At Iponeng she, together with other knitters, a potter and a signwriter, hired a room for R38 per month. To ensure that the jerseys she sold to scholars and pensioners were always of high quality, and because it was cheaper there, she the normally bought her own yarn in Durban.

Remaining self-employed was difficult, however. For instance, a builder and grocer had both been bankrupted after working for themselves for less than a year due to a lack of financial

resources and ill health respectively.

Primary labour market jobs.

On the basis of skills utilized, jobs on the primary labour market can be sub-divided into non-manual and manual occupations.

1. Non-manual work. Workers who held non-manual jobs were: an Apostolic priest (professional); teachers (semi-professional), personnel clerks and an indoor salesperson (clerical and sales); a bank teller, policemen and furniture salespeople (routine non-manual occupations). Their work tasks included some autonomy and enabled them to exercise various degrees of control over their activities. As a result, many of these informants were highly committed to their work tasks. The policeman, for instance, boasted at length about the cases which he had successfully investigated. He delighted in describing the way in which he had apprehended people who stole roofing from the Harrismith station:

I was given R50 to investigate the case on my own. What I did was to go to a shebeen in the Magalaneng village and to buy whiskey for all the people there. I told them that the roof of my house was damaged and asked them if they knew where I could get roofing. When they told me, I left and reported it at the police station.

Despite such attitudes the economically deprived and sometimes racist environment in which people in this category worked constrained the extent to which they could become involved in their work as a mode of self-expression. Teachers faced a serious shortage of facilities for woodwork, housecraft, libraries and science laboratories. Overcrowded schools had resulted in heavy workloads. They often taught more than 40 periods per week to

classes of more than 70 pupils, few of whom could afford the prescribed books. "We want to give our best, but how can one under these conditions?", one teacher asked [5]. Furniture salespeople complained that many customers were too poor to afford monthly instalments, and stories of the repossession of furniture were common. Non-manual work was no insurance against hurtful discriminatory practices. This is demonstrated in case 2 of an informant who was employed as a bank teller in Harrismith from December 1980 to August 1982.

Case No.2: Working behind a hardboard wall.

Employment at a Harrismith bank was Mr. Dube's first job after he matriculated in 1979 and had unsuccessfully applied for work at the QDC. Of the 28 staff members at the bank only three were Africans: the other two were employed as messenger/cleaners.

From the start, he experienced problematic relations with White tellers. "My books always balanced, but the other tellers always told me that I made mistakes with the additions...I just said that my work was not rubbish, but they went on and on until they hated me. Eventually the manager had to hold a meeting about this matter...The Whites also discriminated against Black people in the bank. There was a wall dividing Black and White customers and I was only allowed to serve the Black customers. Whenever a White customer arrived on my side of the wall they told me: 'Would you mind if we help him?'. I felt that it was wrong, but there was not much that one could do. I just had to smile...This hardboard wall caused a lot of problems among the tellers. At the end of the day I would only have R2 000 to report and because of this the other tellers said that I was lazy. To this I replied: 'If you take down that wall people would also come to me. In the other banks they don't have such a wall'. The Whites were also paid more for doing the same kind of work as I did. I saw their payslips and it exceeded me by R50 or R100. This really hurt and I even approached the manager, but he just said: 'I can't do otherwise. Don't make your problem my problem. We're paying you a high salary'". Mr. Dube terminated employment when he found work as a sales representative where he did not feel discriminated against and could earn a higher wage (cf. chapter two) [6].

Mr. Dube, along with other non-manual workers, enjoyed high status at home, and among Diappolo residents. At work, however, he was an isolated individual who was unable to engage in favourable social relationships.

2. Manual work. Few interviewees held skilled manual labour jobs. Exceptions were a carpenter who had qualified at a vocational training centre in Johannesburg, a telephone technician who had obtained a diploma at a Pretoria Technicon (blue collar technical); and drivers of all types: bus drivers employed by Setsokotsane, taxi and truck drivers (semi-skilled).

Manual workers said that their tasks often required considerable initiative and accorded them some degree of autonomy. Drivers often spoke of the techniques they used when driving on muddy roads and were keen participants in driving competitions organized by the National Road Safety Council. Skilled manual workers also derived security from knowing that their skills were as easily marketable in common South Africa as in Qwaqwa. Drivers regarded the fact that they exercised no control over their unpleasant working hours as repulsive, however. Bus drivers frequently started working at 04h00 to transport commuters to Harrismith and Bethlehem. A truck driver employed at a milk processing factory in Harrismith started work there before 05h00.

The extent to which manual workers sustained favourable social relationships at work varied considerably. Although drivers employed by Setsokotsane were sometimes despised by commuters (cf. chapter five) they displayed a great deal of solidarity. After completing journeys they usually relaxed in a hall at the central bus depot in Phuthaditjhaba. This hall was also the venue for monthly meetings of the Ha re thusaneng (Let's help each other) bus driver's association [7]. Unity among Setsokotsane employees is evident in the following description: while on duty, policemen are allowed to travel free of charge.

One policeman who travelled with his girlfriend, refused to pay for her. After a quarrel between the policeman and the driver, which resulted in a fist fight, other drivers arrived on the scene to assist their workmate. They threw the policeman in the back of a bus, transported him to the bus depot and beat him there. By contrast, a technician felt completely isolated while installing telephones in the north eastern OFS. He explained:

Some of those farmers near the Van Reenen's pass, for whom I installed telephones, were really nice. They even gave me food. In the Harrismith town it was also fine, but not on the farms. Some of those Whites are so bloody stupid that they don't want a Black man to fix their telephones. Sometimes they would call you a kaffir and won't let you in. They would ask: 'Where is your boss?'. I would tell the farm owner that I am a boss myself, but he would just say: 'What?'

Secondary labour market jobs.

The only secondary labour market jobs held by informants which fell into categories other than those identified by Simkins and Hindson (1979) as semi-skilled or unskilled were those of waitresses, watchmen, storemen, iinduna and shop assistants (routine non-manual). In the context of such limited variation in skill levels it seems more appropriate to sub-divide secondary labour market jobs according to sectors of employment. My categorization of different sectors of employment follows an adaptation of those appearing in the South African Manpower Surveys (vide Simkins and Hindson 1979: 9, 66-67) [8].

1. Manufacturing. Workers in the manufacturing sector held jobs in textile, food, wood, glassware and metal factories. In textile factories, informants were operators of spinning, weaving, dyeing, combing, sewing and stitching machines as well as machines to bind cotton. Others worked as carpet cutters. Food

manufacturing workers were employed at meat and milk processing factories in Harrismith and at a dairy in Qwaqwa. Jobs in the meat processing factory comprised cutting meat and biltong, spicing and cleaning meat products. A more exciting job for some men was hunting game in areas such as the northern Transvaal and the Kalahari. Hunters were employed only during winter months, however. At the milk products factory and the dairy, workers cleaned milk containers and mixed powdered milk. Employees at Qwaqwa's furniture factories cut and measured planks. Other factory jobs comprised cutting and cleaning drinking glasses and making suitcase frames. All factories also employed: packers; watchmen; people who fired boilers; delivery workers; and workers who merely cleaned the offices of White managers, made tea for them, and fetched post.

According to Blauner (1964) workers employed in the manufacturing sector (particularly in textile industries) are unable to exercise any control over the work process and perceive their work tasks as purposeless. This, he argues, is because machines dictate the rhythm and pace of their work, and because job fragmentation renders the contributions which workers make to finished products small and insignificant. My enquiries substantiate his findings. Work tasks were fragmented by specialization of factory departments according to products and phases in the production process. Workers in the manufacturing sector described their tasks as extremely repetitive, routine, and as requiring little judgement and initiative. A former operator who was tied to his machine, with little freedom of movement, summarized the situation by saying: "the machine was my boss". Another remarked: "There was not much that I can tell you

about the job, only that it was very boring".

The shift system was another disorientating aspect of working as weavers and packers or with boilers (cf. Adler 1986). Alternating weekly shifts were usually from 06h00 to 14h00, 14h00 to 22h00 and from 22h00 to 06h00. Night workers often found it impossible to sleep during the day as: "it was too hot and the children made too much noise in the streets". A man commented:

While working at night I always felt tired. My eyes never wanted to give me a chance of working...Another problem is that you cannot sleep with your wife. Whenever I arrived in the mornings she was already awake.

Evidence suggests low levels of solidarity among employees in the manufacturing sector. Jealousy and suspicion were most prevalent in Harrismith's textile factories. Workers there spoke of several episodes of sejeso (poisoning). A man who fired boilers at the factory said that workers were poisoned during one lunch break:

We always grilled meat for lunch, with hot coals from the boiler, but once someone poisoned our salt. Two workers were taken to hospital because of pains in the stomach. We tried to find out who did it, but were unable to do so. Thereafter we never grilled meat again and asked the factory to provide us with lockers for our lunch.

When I suggested that rotten meat might have been the reason for poisoning, he replied: "Definitely not! That was other people because we won't poison ourselves".

The experiences of watchmen differed from the general pattern. Although they experienced a great sense of control over their activities, of autonomy and of freedom of movement they felt their work was purposeless. Informants said that at certain

factories the services of nightwatchmen had been dispensed with and that dogs were used instead to guard the factory gates. Moreover, they felt isolated in their work as they 'worked' alone, often at night, and were despised for having to search factory employees for stolen goods when they left the factory premises. Sleeping at work was very common and resulted into the dismissal of three nightwatchmen. A former nightwatchmen described his employment experiences as follows:

It was very lonely, but I managed to make friends with other nightwatchmen and we sometimes sat and talked. Sometimes I also had a nice sleep at the garage...I had no weapon and the only thing that I could do when the tsotsis came was to run away.

At this point his brother, who was present at the interview, interrupted and asked: "What about the stones?". To this he replied: "No. I won't bother. I'd just open the gate and run." It is noteworthy, however, that no security guard interviewed could recall any attempted theft while they were on duty.

2. Construction. Construction workers were men who built and repaired roads, dams, rail lines, houses, schools, factories, and sewerage systems. They also included men who attested two-year contracts for the construction of the SASOL oil from coal plants (cf. chapter one).

Construction work was perceived as repulsive with respect to control and, to a lesser extent, purpose. Most work tasks were described as drudgerous and beyond the physical capabilities of older and "weaker" men. The two accounts below are those of men who had left construction jobs for less strenuous work.

After loading poles onto lorries for two years I started suffering from pains in my kidneys. I had to lean against a chair when walking because it was so painful. I decided that I could

not go on any longer. Those poles were much too heavy for me.

I had to load those lorries with spades and had to make furrows along the way, but I was already old. I decided to leave because it was too hard for me loading the bigger stones onto the lorry.

Construction workers sustained very favourable social relationships at work, however. They always worked in teams which were marked by a great sense of solidarity. Informants said that they were always assisted in strenuous tasks and mentioned that teams sang whilst working with spades, picks, or lifting heavy objects. A member of a work team, who installed rail lines, remarked: "The relations between Black workers were always good. In times of crisis we always helped each other by lending and borrowing money".

3. Commerce. Jobs in the commercial sector were held at garages, shops and hotels in Harrismith and Phuthaditjhaba. Garage jobs were as petrol pump attendants, greasers and assistants to mechanics ("spannerboys"). Shops, supermarkets and hardware stores employed packers, and hotel employees cleaned rooms, washed linen or dishes, or worked as waitresses and assistants to chefs.

These jobs were generally described as menial. Due to the routine nature of their formal work tasks, and the strict supervision over their work, workers in commerce exercised minimal control over their time and physical movement. Most informants were not committed to their jobs. Garage workers were an exception. They mentioned that they learnt a great deal about motor vehicles and were assisted in obtaining driving licences.

Most workers in the commercial sector ~~participated~~ spoke

unfavourably of social relations at work. The entire work environment of garage workers was permeated by racism. They mentioned the use of segregated toilets and said that, unlike white mechanics, they were sometimes forced to work during lunch times and were not always entitled to coffee and tea breaks. Relations with customers were described as tense. A former petrol pump attendant also recalled: "Sometimes, when I took a long time, the customers would shout at me saying words like: 'You kaffir', 'You shit', and 'Your mother's arse'". On other occasions informants managed to win the favour of customers and in this way derived an additional source of income from tips. Some commented: "If you treat customers well you always have cents" and "tipping can be as good as the wage".

4. Government. Government employees worked at schools and teacher's colleges (gardeners, cleaners, and assistants to chefs), at hospitals (cleaners and a man who worked with boilers), for the municipality in Harrismith (a cattle driver, manual labourer, gardener, and sanitation workers), at an old age home (a watchman), and in Qwaqwa's Department of Works (construction workers).

As most other secondary labour market jobs, workers in the public sector exercised little control over their work and often viewed their tasks as purposeless. These jobs were often perceived as of lower status than those in the private sector. In fact, some workers perceived their tasks not merely as uninteresting (cf. cases 6 and 7), but also as dirty, demeaning and morally offensive to the individuals who held them (vide Woollacott 1980). The work of a former employee at the Harrismith hospital

was to fire the boilers. He said that this task was extremely unpleasant because the boiler fire was also used as an incinerator:

When someone in the hospital had his leg cut off we had to put the leg in the fire and burn it. We even had to burn the stillborn children of six months and they used to move in the fire. It was really not good to see how these children were killed...If there were children with deformed heads we used to burn them. I really don't want to talk about that...I left the work because when it was time for me to rest at night the people that I used to put in the fire used to come to me as ghosts.

This theme is also reflected in the experiences of two sanitation workers who were employed by the Harrismith municipality. One described his work as the follows:

I work at the big station of shit, operating the electric machine pumping the shit so that the compressor can help it to the other side where they make fertilizer from it...If you say that it doesn't smell good the Whites would take the fertilizer with their hands and say that it is not shit and that it is for the food we eat, but it smells so badly.

5. Domestic employment. Domestic workers and gardeners were employed by white households in Harrismith and elsewhere in common South Africa.

Domestic employment was perceived as less strenuous than most other jobs. One informant commented: "to work in the kitchens of Whites is just like working around here at home". The work load of domestics was lessened by the fact that white households often employed more than one worker. This was said to be particularly common in the OFS during the early 1970s when a domestic workforce commonly comprised four workers: a cook, a cleaner, a launderer and a gardener. Most domestic workers also worked fairly short hours: from 07h00 or 08h00 until 14h00 or 15h00. There were important exceptions to this trend, however. One

"live-in" domestic worker said that the only free time she had was on Sunday mornings when her employer's family attended church. The performance of repetitive tasks such as cleaning, washing, ironing, cooking, childcare, weeding, cutting grass, watering gardens and polishing shoes can hardly be described as self-fulfilling. Many women said that they held onto their domestic jobs primary because of the lack of alternative employment opportunities prior to industrial decentralization in Qwaqwa.

Domestic employees only occasionally sustained favourable social contact at work. This occurred when mothers and daughters worked for the same white household. The quality of relations with their employers varied widely. Some domestics enjoyed working with children. One informant recalled: "When I left they were very sad and cried a lot because they loved me." Others regarded children as a nuisance and described them as misbehaving and disrespectful (cf. Berharhien et al 1984: 16). Comments included:

While I worked in the garden they threw stones at me and kicked me on the buttocks. I wanted to beat them, but I was afraid to do so because I could lose the work.

When they were born I was already there...But sometimes they are so naughty to me. They would call me a kaffir, dirty the carpets with their feet and when they want to undress they would unpack all the wardrobes...I have to clean the house twice a day and wash the carpets every day. I have told them not to do it, but they don't understand.

In the preceding discussion I have attempted to show that workers were deeply concerned about the nature of their employment experiences; in reference to control over tasks, the purpose of their activity, and the nature of social relationships; and that these dimensions often generated dissatisfaction and were often viewed as repulsive. I have also

aimed to convey the important differences between various categories of employment in this regard. From evidence presented above it is clear that informants who were self-employed or worked on the primary labour market were relatively more content with conditions of employment than those on the secondary labour market. They were often frustrated by being unable to sustain favourable social relationships at work, but were far more likely to experience work as purposeful and offering scope for initiative and self-expression.

SUPERVISION AND RELATIONS WITH EMPLOYERS

Supervisory practices are a crucial aspect of employment as they constantly reinforce existent power and status inequalities. Experiences of manipulation and control by hierarchical authority at work were also an important reason for feeling dissatisfied and repelled.

Self-employed informants, who directed their own work activity, were relatively advantaged in this regard. The painter whom we met earlier, highlighted his freedom from domination by boasting that he refused to work any further whenever whites who contracted him to paint their homes complained about the quality of his work or "pointed fingers" at him.

The work tasks of drivers, "delivery boys", watchmen, and non-manual workers (particularly furniture salespeople) required minimal supervision and they reported only occasionally to white managers. A teacher was the only non-manual who had resigned because

of problems with his superiors. He was constantly at loggerheads with the school principal. The principal was allegedly jealous of his success as the school's soccer-coach and spread rumours about him among other teachers and scholars. He also claimed that the principal overworked him and made his classroom unbearable by intruding on his lessons.

Informants in all other categories of employment were subject to various degrees of supervisory control. These include direct supervision by employers or managers, by white foremen, and by African iinduna.

1. Supervision by employers and Whites. No specific supervisors were assigned to workers employed in smaller commercial enterprises and government departments, and in domestic service. Instead their work tasks were monitored either directly by employers, or by Whites in their departments. This situation generated confusion as different Whites sometimes gave the same worker different instructions (cf. Gordon 1977: 229). An employee at a Harrismith supermarket explained the difficult position in which she was placed:

The general manager told me to do packing, but then the till controller came along and instructed me to work at the tills. I decided to help out at the tills, but only for a short while, and went back to do packing. The till controller then went to complain to the manager who insulted me because he forgot that he told me to pack. Other times the manager scolded me for being behind with the packing, without taking into account how many times I had helped out at the till.

Domestic workers also complained that they were given contradictory instructions by the "boss" and "madam".

Another source of frustration to these workers was that white

overseers were overtly racist. A 42 year old "spanner-boy" said: "They [White mechanics] look down on us and call us kaffirs. They always say we think so short because our hair is so short." The arrival of an Afrikaans-speaking manager at a Harrismith supermarket also caused much concern. It was said: "He really oppressed us. If Black and White staff members made the same mistake the Black would be treated as if he made a bigger mistake". A female packer elaborated:

Last week we were so insulted by the White staff. If you were just sitting there and eating they would say 'Jou moerskont. Ek sal jou bliksem' [You cunt. I'll hit you]. We then asked the manager why they did not speak to us politely, but he said they were rightfully angry...The manager also insults us. He once said to me: 'Close that fucking door you kaffir! Can't you understand? Is your mother's arse just as open as that door?...There is nothing that we can do about this. There is a senior manager, but if we told him about this we would be sacked.

Domestic employees explained that their employers too showed a racist attitude but that it was manifested more implicitly. One woman commented: "The madam would never call you a kaffir, but I really don't know which names she used when I was not there". They complained that although they were supposed to look after "naughty" children they had no authority to guide or to discipline them. In this regard a gardener remarked: "I did not tell the parents when the children were naughty because they would have done nothing. I only waited for them to see the children being naughty".

2. Supervision by White foremen. Construction workers and certain government employees were assigned to specific White foremen who directly monitored their work performance. Many informants felt that such close surveillance of their work demonstrated a paternalistic and racist attitude that Africans were incapable of doing anything themselves.

Workers nonetheless drew an important distinction between "cruel" and "kind" foremen and often exaggerated the personality characteristics of Whites who supervised them. "Cruel" supervisors were regarded as "men for the fists" who were racialistic, beat and scolded workers, dismissed them for the slightest mistakes, and "always ran around after people to see if they did this or that". "Kind" supervisors, on the other hand, were not too demanding, "made jokes", and carefully explained to workers what had to be done. One informant enjoyed the social distance between his work team and their supervisor resulting from linguistic incompatibility. "He was German and we never heard what he wanted to say. Because we couldn't understand him, he only showed us. When people were lazy he didn't even get angry and when the machines broke, he fixed them on his own".

Several construction workers deserted, or were dismissed, after quarrels with White foremen. One man said that he lost his job "only because of the boss".

He told me that I did not service the machine properly and said that I broke it. I argued and asked him: 'Do you know how it starts? How can you fire me?'... If it was not for that Afrikaner I would have been okay.

Another recalled that his supervisor "always chased me around, saying do this and do that...When I complained, he just said: 'If you don't want to do the work you must go'. So I left". Similarly a painter remarked that: "The new boss gave us a limit of three rooms to finish in a day and this I could not manage. I left because I saw that he was going to beat me".

3. Supervision by African foremen. Workers in the manufacturing

sector and construction workers employed by the S.A. Railways were seldom subject to racism because their work performance was monitored by African foremen (known as iinduna; sing. - induna) appointed from the ranks of the workforce. A consequence of this was that they knew little of the organizational structure in terms of which decisions affecting their work were made. Apart from their iinduna, they could identify only the makholo baas (big boss) from among other Whites.

Iinduna were virtually as unpopular as White foremen. Even though iinduna earned relatively high wages, informants unanimously agreed that they did not want to be appointed to this position, typically because: "the people would hate me and say that I must not tell them what to do". Iinduna allegedly insulted workers, discriminated in allocating unwanted work tasks, and constantly reported workers to management without prior consultation with them. An informant reported: "They only appoint people who talk badly about others in their absence as iinduna. You always have to distance yourself from them". This appears to be a widely held view. According to a biltong cutter, the male induna in her department made sexual advances to his female subordinates and threatened to have them dismissed if they refused him. At the meat processing factory, iinduna were furthermore said to lash workers for standing in the wrong queue when collecting their wages. Another factory employee described iinduna as:

...troublesome and very rude. They shout all the time and sometimes report you to the Whites, saying that you won't listen to them. Sometimes they blame you for a mistake when you did not make one...Nowadays I am no longer instructed by an induna, but by a white manager. It is better to be instructed by and shouted at by him. The induna must not do this because he is a worker just like me.

The dislike for African iinduna can be accounted for in terms of what Hammond-Tooke (1981: 141) calls "paradoxical ambiguity". Iinduna exhibit such ambiguity in that the status they occupy transgresses and threatens the boundaries associated with the roles of White management and African workers. On the one hand they share a similar 'racial' classification as workers and sometimes also perform productive activities, and on the other their job entails supervision and control of the labour process. This ambivalence is highlighted by Alverson (1970: 54) who argues: "Being a sycophant for the Europeans and largely alienated from Black workers he [the African induna] becomes a spokesman for none" (cf. Sarakinsky and Crankshaw 1985).

Informants favoured iinduna who did "not to give workers any trouble" and had the courage to defend the interests of workers before those of management. They viewed other iinduna as mere agents of White management who had, in fact, no real power. Workers sometimes exploited this situation by refusing to obey their instructions, claiming that "the boss is the one to instruct us". A meat packer explained:

People give the iinduna too much trouble. After the induna has gone they speak to the others and won't work, but when he comes back they make as if they are working. If people weigh meat and it is late they put too little meat in those packets and the managers go straight to the induna to ask why those things are wrong...The people also insult the induna. They are so bad that even a child is better than they are. At least a child respects you for showing him his mistakes.

These accounts demonstrate that for many Diappolo wage workers perceived supervisory practices as repulsive. The manner in which tasks were supervised enhanced feelings of powerlessness and, in conjunction with racism, enforced a sense of pariah status upon

African workers.

INDUSTRIAL INJURIES, ACCIDENTS AND DISEASES

A third dimension of employment conditions which workers regarded as important was safety at work and vulnerability to injuries and industrial diseases. Like exposure to hierarchical forms of authority, accidents and diseases were unevenly distributed between different categories of employment.

No informants who were, or had been, self-employed or employed as watchmen, in domestic service or non-manual jobs said that they were injured in such work. Watchmen nonetheless perceived working conditions as dangerous, and fears of injury contributed to the scant regard given these jobs. The death of a nightwatchman at a Phuthaditjhaba shopping centre early in 1984 evoked much discussion during fieldwork. Referring to the event, one informant asked: "What can you do with a fucking knobkerrie if the tsotsis point a gun at you?"

Injuries were also uncommon among informants employed in skilled manual jobs and in commerce. A former driver and a garage worker were exceptions to this trend: the driver said that he had been forced to retire prematurely because: "from all the driving that I did I developed rheumatism of the hip, and kidney trouble. I stayed in hospital for nearly six months and never worked again because the doctor told me to quit driving". The garage worker was injured when an engine fell on his leg whilst he assisted others in lifting it onto a truck.

Job-related injuries and diseases were concentrated among construction and factory workers. Construction work was commonly perceived as dangerous. Some informants recalled episodes in which railway sleepers had fallen on workers' feet and where repairmen had fallen from scaffolding. By various accounts, numerous injuries occurred at construction sites. A former SASOL welder said that, in the two years that he had worked there, four people had died in his department.

The one worked on top of a huge building and fell because he was not bound with a safety cord. His spine broke. Two others fell while we were building the elevators and they passed away. Another man was knocked against the head by a crane.

Injuries and subsequent job terminations were often related to strenuous and dangerous work tasks. Informants explained, for instance, that by working with a pick "the skin of your hands could peel off". One man complained that, whilst pushing a wheelbarrow, he slipped and fell against the handles. "The bars hit me near the heart and I was in great pain. Because I could not work so hard thereafter they expelled me, saying that I was lazy." Other men bluntly refused to continue working when allocated dangerous work tasks. Comments in this regard were: "I left because I was afraid of working so high where I could fall from." and "They told me to push wheelbarrows, but I refused because I feared those ramps". Some construction workers thought their employers did not take necessary safety precautions. A painter, employed by a construction company in Qwaqwa, argued:

We use universal undercoat paint and when we knock off from work we are as drunk as someone who drank half a bottle of brandy. The paint can result in eye and lung infection...I am sometimes ill in the chest and cough a lot...The law says that if you work with paint you must drink a bottle of milk every day...The company has to supply it, but they never do because they think that we don't know the law. People from SASOL and Johannesburg tell us that this is what happens at their job. Even the Black magistrates drink with us and they tell us what the law says [9].

Workers in the manufacturing sector were also extremely vulnerable to work-related diseases and injuries. Many textile workers spoke about the death of a labourer who was employed at the dye house at a Harrismith factory during 1983. One informant recalled:

The dyed wool would come to a one-roomed-house through pipes. This man had to level the incoming wool, but he was too slow. He fell and the wool pumped over him. Because of the heat of the wool and the smell of the dye he could not escape. He worked alone and nobody could hear his screams.

Another accident mentioned was when a worker lost his arm after it was caught in a spinning machine. Some textile workers terminated their employment due to dangerous working conditions. One of these, a former dyeing machine operator, recalled:

One day something like a piston came out of the machine and hit me in the mouth. There were other people standing in front of me, but that iron hit me on the collar bone next to the adam's apple and also on the shoulder...There was so much blood. I was taken to the Bloemfontein hospital by ambulance and stayed there for four weeks. My teeth were out and they tied my jaws with wires...Things were bad...They installed new machines, but those machines were just as dangerous...Some people tried to complain, but others left like I did.

A few informants associated textile work with tuberculosis. "A problem is the wool, because the machine that mixes it creates dust and when it get's into your throat you can get TB. Some people have even died from it in Harrismith and in Qwaqwa". A woman, who contracted TB shortly after arriving in the Diappolo in 1971, said that the disease recurred after she began work in a blanket factory during 1980. This she attributed to "the smell of the dyed wool". Three years later her brother, who was employed in the dyeing department of a carpet factory, developed the same disease [10].

Biltong and meat cutters also experienced unsafe working conditions. "Most people who work with knives and cutting machines don't have enough fingers." Of eight meat cutters that I interviewed, five had cut their hands: three once, two twice. In a particularly bad accident a woman lost three fingers. The wide prevalence of these injuries was attributed to the speed at which meat was cut and the dangers of working with frozen meat. "When you work with meat and there is another person to take a delivery you have to work very fast, so your finger can easily slip." "The meat is very icy and those knives are sharp. Every morning we have to take the meat out of the fridges and our hands can get cold. Then you cannot feel with your hands and you would cut them with the sharp knives." Like work in textile factories meat and dairy work was associated with tuberculosis. Two informants, who often checked stock in the fridges, claimed that they developed TB from being exposed to extreme variations in temperature.

The preceding discussion shows that the fear of accidents, injuries and diseases was a common theme among workers who held secondary labour market jobs, particularly in the construction and manufacturing sectors. In a sense their situation is comparable to those of workers on the South African gold mines, whom Moodie (1983: 180-181) describes as working under constant tensions "stemming from the need to watch constantly for signs of potential hazard" [11]. He notes, however, that "miners' fear is seldom unmixed with pride that they are able to hold down such a tough job". This assertion cannot be generalized to the perceptions of Diappolo wage workers who held hard and dangerous jobs.

CONCLUSIONS

Three assertions are made in the sociological literature cited in the introduction to this chapter: (i) That in industrial society work tasks are exclusively designed in an instrumental manner; (ii) that workers, themselves, hold an instrumental view of their work; and (iii) that factors pertinent to the outcome of work are most likely to generate feelings of discontent and repulsion.

Evidence from Diappolo workers provides strong support for the first assertion. By and large workers were explicit that they perceived their formal work tasks as incompatible with their personal needs and aspirations. This was most evident in the accounts, by workers who held jobs on the secondary labour market, of their inability to exercise control over their work processes, demeaning work tasks, and unfavourable and dangerous work environments. They seldom perceived their jobs as worth doing and maintaining. In this regard definite parallels can be drawn with Liebow's (1967) ethnographic descriptions of Washington streetcorner men's view of their jobs. He writes:

The rest of society (whatever its ideal values regarding the dignity of labour) holds the job of a dishwasher or janitor or unskilled manual labourer in low self-esteem if not in outright contempt. So does the streetcorner man. He cannot draw from the job the social value which other people do not put into it.

In fact workers who were self-employed were most likely to feel that their work accorded them with a means of self-expression. The autonomy and purpose which workers who held jobs on the primary labour market derived from their work does not contradict this assertion. Fox (1980: 153-154) notes: "even a wholly instrumental approach to the design of work results in upper-level jobs being shaped in ways which incidentally afford their

occupants some intrinsic meaning".

The accounts of informants do not support the second and third assertions, however. Workers did not regard the mere outcome of work as important. They expected and aspired to certain standards at work which included a certain degree of autonomy and purpose, a safe working environment, equal treatment, and a meaningful social contact. Although there is a strong correlation between wage levels and times spent in different categories of employment (vide appendix 3), poorly remunerated jobs were generally marked by greater workplace adversities. In fact, proportionately fewer work-related desertions were also related to "problems with wages" than other conditions of employment.

My findings have another important implication on the proclivity of Diappolo workers to terminate employment. It is that there were significant differences in job contents and wages between different categories of employment, even among those on the secondary labour market. In this context, given that most jobs offered few prospects of career advancement, at least some of the personal aspirations of wage workers could be realized by securing alternative jobs.

NOTES TO CHAPTER THREE

[1] The example of an employee at a Harrismith meat processing factory who earned R122 per month illustrates the limited buying power of a Diappolo worker. The following basic costs were immediately subtracted from her salary: rent R16.60, transport R17, wood and coal R20, life insurance premium R5. The remaining R63.40 barely covered her other subsistence expenses and she was often forced to approach her brother for financial assistance. It is noteworthy that she lived alone and had no dependants to support.

[2] Objective or deductive definitions of exploitation include those in the laissez-faire and Marxist traditions. The former definition equates the normative value of labour with whatever price it could fetch on the market. From this perspective only relationships founded on fraud or naked coercion - as distinct from market forces - could presumably be considered exploitative. In the Marxist tradition, on the other hand, the labour theory of value supplies the conceptual basis for evaluating exploitation. In as much as all values ultimately flow from labour, the surplus value appropriated in the form of profit, through ownership of the means of production, provides the measure of exploitation.

[3] A close parallel can be drawn between this informant's observation and Wolpe's (1972) well-known argument that access to agricultural production in the reserves facilitate high levels of exploitation.

[4] My findings concur with those of Gordon (1977: 91-92) for workers on a Namibian mine.

[5] See Robinson (1984) for an analysis of schooling problems in Qwaqwa.

[6] Diappolo people regarded racism as least pronounced in Durban and on the Witwatersrand and most accentuated in the northern Transvaal and OFS. Harrismith is perceived as "worse" than OFS towns such as Ficksburg and Bethlehem, but "better" than Winburg and Kestell. The extent of racism in Harrismith is illustrated by white voting patterns in a Provincial Council by-election on 2 May 1985: in the election, Mr. C. Pienaar, a candidate of the overtly racist Conservative Party almost scored an upset victory over Mr. D. Odendal of the National Party, although this was the first time that the Conservative Party had participated in elections in that constituency (Die Burger 3/5/1985).

[7] Bus drivers pay monthly membership fees of R2 to the Ha re thusaneng association in return for financial assistance in cases of accidents or the transgression of traffic regulations. One driver said that the association also "has to listen to the complaints of drivers and discipline those who do funny (sic) things like stealing transport fares".

[8] Other sectors of employment listed by Simkins and Hindson (1979: 66-67) are fishing; mining; electricity, gas and water; finance; and transport, storage and communication. With the exception of railway workers, who fall under the latter category, no informants in the Diappolo worked in these categories of employment. Railway workers in my sample were almost exclusively

employed in the construction department. They are thus discussed along with workers employed in the construction sector. I have also adapted their categorization by discussing domestic employees under a separate heading. Simkins and Hindson (1979) make no provision for these workers.

[9] The Erasmus commission of enquiry into industrial health in South Africa during 1976 found that many painters were exposed to dangerous toxic substances such as ammonia, benzene and lead. Ammonia gas irritates the eyes and skin. Exposure to high concentrations of benzene can result into headaches, dizziness and convulsions. Lead poisoning affects the central nervous system and its symptoms include gastrodynia, muscular fatigue, vomiting, anaemia, and myodonia (vide Green and Miller 1980: 145-168).

[10] Two factors are essential for the development of TB: (a) infection by the bacteria mycobacterium tuberculosis; and (b) a receptive individual whose bodily defences have been worn down by physical and mental stresses. These stresses are related to basic living and working conditions such as poor nutrition and long hours of hard labour. The transmission of the disease is facilitated by crowded conditions and work in dusty humid environments (Olver 1984: 28-29).

[11] The recent concern of the National Union of Mineworkers with safety precautions on the mines reflects this general trend where employers are seen as paying insufficient attention to workers' safety (cf. 'A Thousand Ways to Die: the struggle for safety in the gold mines' 1986. Johannesburg: Learn and Teach Publications for the National Union of Mineworkers).

CHAPTER FOUR

WORKER ACTIONS AND STRATEGIES

We have considered the unfavourable perceptions Diappolo workers had of the jobs they performed and the remuneration they received. This chapter examines their responses to these conditions. Specific questions posed are: what is the nature of worker actions and strategies?; how do these effect job stability?; and why do desertions constitute a common response to conditions of employment?

In their innovative studies of African workers, Van Onselen (1976), Phimister and Van Onselen (1978), and Cohen (1979) have devoted considerable attention to mundane, everyday responses. They correctly argue that an exclusive focus on "high marks of protest" such as formal ideologies, trade unions and political organizations actually obscure an understanding of worker responses. Rather inappropriately, however, they discuss, under the vague label "resistance", such diverse actions as target working, time bargaining, drug use, a belief in other worldly futures, the creation of a work culture, industrial sabotage, desertions and theft. Such a unitary classification conceals a variety of meanings and intentions that workers ascribe to their own actions [1]. With Beinart and Bundy (1980: 272) I believe that the concept should be used more restrictively to mean:

...instances of overt political action that protest against or attempt to end political and economic pressures, such action(s) assuming forms not recognized by the state as legal or permissible.

Although instances of overt protest action did occur among Diappolo workers, there were also other means by which they

sought improvements in existing conditions of employment. In addition workers attempted to accommodate themselves to, or merely to find a means of escape from, these conditions. From my interpretation of oral testimony and documentary evidence I have isolated five types of actions and strategies which are commonly adopted. These are: accommodative, defiant, overt protest, desertions and retreatist actions; they are discussed sequentially in the remainder of this chapter.

ACCOMMODATIVE ACTIONS

1. Passive avoidance. Most informants felt it important to earn a wage, maintain their jobs in the context of great unemployment and avoid trouble. They therefore found it appropriate not to challenge the status quo at work. Informants said that one should always try to look busy, and never to argue with managers, be stubborn or complain. A construction worker remarked: "Our manager can get very angry, so whenever he is near we always stand. If a person sat he might chase you away."

Informants feared being dismissed if they complained about wages or asked "unnecessary questions". One man who was "totally dissatisfied" with his wage reported: "I had to look happy because I did not have a pass book". Another did not even complain among workmates. "If I talked to a friend he could tell the manager and I could be discharged". An informant, who worked in a Harrismith hardware store during 1983, recalled that although he was meant to earn R25 weekly, he received only R24.83 and did not know what the 17c deduction was for. "I'm afraid to ask the boss because he would only say that if you are

dissatisfied you can go to Qwaqwa where they earn only R15 per month". Attempts to avoid trouble by limiting interaction with management was illustrated by a 62 year old railway worker. Upon being asked when he would retire, he replied: "I shall only wait until they tell me and I won't bother about it until then".

Workers were aware that, by presenting an image of passive agreement, they kept White employers ignorant of their true feelings. A live-in domestic worker consciously avoided interaction with her employers and withheld information from them. Although she disliked conditions in Qwaqwa and had been robbed twice and raped once during journeys home, she said: "I hardly ever speak to my employer. They would only ask me about the style of life in Qwaqwa and I would say that it is very well". Similarly a "spanner-boy" at a Harrismith garage mentioned that though he felt degraded by racial discrimination at work:

The best is to keep quiet and never to show the Whites that you are unhappy. If you keep on complaining they will say that you want to take a strike to the other workers. The Whites really don't know that we dislike apartheid.

The acceptance of an inferior social status involved serious moral compromises. A construction worker who derived great pride from his nine-wins-one-draw record as a welterweight boxer while resident in Schoonplaas recalled:

The son of the boss, who was just from the army, was really not good to us Black people. He would grab and kick people if they only made a slight mistake. Many of us could have had the best of him in a fight, but we never fought back. We just shouted "No! No! Boss!" because he was our supervisor. Other times the man would stand in front of me holding his fists, but I just left him alone.

2. Positive impression management. Another strategy was to strive to be labelled a "good worker" by a White overseer and to try to

establish ties of patronage on this basis. In reference to Namibian contract workers, Gordon (1978) has argued that patrons make life more bearable by according workers better treatment, granting small favours, overlooking certain irregularities, and by interceding on their behalf whenever they are in trouble. Individuals used such ties in attempting to "get ahead" of others in a similar situation because of his or her patron's concern.

To foster such relationships informants volunteered to perform favours for white overseers such as running small errands and supplying them with information about other managers and workers. In one instance, a machine operator in a textile factory said that his white foreman "loved Black women" and that he "used to propose for him to Black women" so as to gain his favour. A man who worked at a Harrismith clothing store assisted his employer in lashing customers deemed guilty of shoplifting. "The boss decided that he did not want to waste time by going to court every morning so he punished them himself...If the customers were busy in the shop and I saw one of them stealing something I would just hit him." As a result of such unscrupulous behaviour he gained the trust of his employer: "I worked harmoniously with the manager. He made me the boss in the store room and even allowed me to keep some of the clothes". Other favours granted by patrons included providing loans to workers, supplying them with old shoes, replacing wages lost as a result of theft, paying fines for pass law contraventions, and overlooking late arrivals at work.

Involvement in patron-client relationships relates to job terminations and changes in two different ways. Some informants

said that they "worked for the boss" rather than "for the company", and promptly resigned when their patrons left. A former salesman explained: "I left the work because my boss went to Cape Town and this was too far for me. I didn't like the new boss". Another informant changed jobs thrice to follow his employer. In 1973, whilst resident in 42nd Hill, he was employed as a "tea-boy" at a Harrismith shop. Three months later he accompanied his patron to start working at another the store. In 1982 he again followed his patron who was transferred to a branch of the store in Qwaqwa. He still resided in 42nd Hill and every day the manager fetched him from his doorstep by car at 07h00 and took him back at 17h45. Subsequently he obtained an Appolo house through his White patron's intervention. When in 1983 the White manager retired, the informant also resigned. "I left", he explained, "because the new supervisor did not want to give me a single day off when I was ill". On the other hand there were informants who failed to sustain these relationships: patronage is always balanced in favour of those who control the situation, in this case White overseers, and workers were sensitive to such inequalities. In this context patron-client relationships were broken by patrons when workers were too demanding, or by workers when patrons failed to respond to requests for assistance. A man who was employed at a factory in Springs explained:

I worked at the factory for 13 months, but then I got beaten by a White man. We always worked well together and every Friday I washed his car for 50c, but that day he did not pay. When I complained the White man said that he did not have any money and slapped me. He then told the other managers that I did not want my job any longer.

Similarly, a former textile worker, with seven years service, resigned when his manager refused to advance him his R200 monthly salary two weeks earlier than it was due.

My brother died and I desperately needed R600 to pay for his corpse to be fetched from Odendaalsrus for the funeral. When I asked my boss to advance me R200, he refused. He said that he did not have it and that I could only borrow R20...I complained and asked him how it could be possible for the company to say that they don't have any money. He does not care for funerals and told me that there were many others who would like to have my job. This really hurt. I gave a week's notice and left because I could no longer work for him.

From the preceding discussion it is evident that accommodative actions are of a completely different nature than "resistance" as they are explicitly aimed at avoiding confrontation. Whilst such a strategy often accomplishes this aim, and can potentially effect minor improvements in conditions of service, it does not address the major repulsive experiences at work such as unfair wages, boring work tasks, low supervisory considerations and dangerous working conditions.

DEFIANT ACTIONS

This type of action refers to attempts by workers to effect an improvement in conditions of employment by defying and challenging the authority of management. Such action is usually consciously hidden and unarticulated to avoid its detection and suppression. This is most evident in "dodging" and illicit appropriations.

1. "Dodging" A common way of breaking the monotony of strenuous work tasks was by what informants termed "dodging" and "loafing". Informants said that employees at a Harrismith meat processing factory regularly went home whenever there were no security guards at the factory gates. Another means of escape was by extended visits to the latrines. A construction worker complained

that he had to work at mixing concrete from 07h00 until 17h00 every working day, with insufficient rest breaks.

Whenever I was hungry I had to stop and eat right there. Other times when I was tired or wanted to smoke I had to hide myself in the toilet. I often went there for long times, even if I had no need, to rest and to smoke.

Extended visits to the latrines were very common among factory workers. Cases were often cited of workers who sat for longer than an hour and of tired commuters and night shift workers who slept in the toilets. In many factories, security guards were responsible for seeing that workers did not use the toilets for longer than required: sometimes this task included recording the names of employees and the length of their absences for management.

2. Illicit appropriations. Illicit appropriations constituted the most pervasive type of defiant action among Diappolo workers. Taking from Whites was regarded as a form of redistribution and was sharply distinguished from thefts from fellow workers [2]. Industrial thieves often boasted in the shebeens about their takings; unlike itsotsim, who were greatly despised, their stories evoked cautious admiration from listeners. Informants justified their conduct with remarks like: "If you are not paid enough there is nothing that you can do about it. The best is to steal"; or "I tried to improve my wage by stealing". Such appropriations occurred most often in larger industries, where workers were not under constant surveillance, and the risks were negligible. To curb such activities, security guards were placed at factory gates to search workers as they left the premises.

Using ingenious and well planned methods, however, workers were

often able to get by without being caught. A former clerk at a Phuthaditjhaba dairy described the manner in which he took milk:

The big problem was that of money. They only paid me R20 per week and because that could not feed me, I decided to steal their milk. I pinched the milk that had to be delivered to the boarding school twice: 20 litres at a time. I then gave the milk to one of the drivers to sell here in Qwaqwa. He sold it for 50c per litre and when he came with the money I gave him half of it. The security guard only once caught me stealing a litre, but then I gave him a bottle of guava juice to let me go...

Employees at a meat processing factory had no need to transport stolen goods through factory gates - they simply ate biltong and dried sausage at work. An informant told me:

It is better to eat at work because it is not easy to pass the securities at the gate...Many times we eat biltong at work when the iinduna are not watching. The biltong is not as nice as the dried sausage. You just put it in hot water to soften it and enjoy it.

Other workers wrapped boerewors around their waists, hid biltong in their socks and dried sausage in their sleeves to pass the guards. One said: "because we are women the securities won't search everywhere and we easily pass". Effective methods were also utilized in textile industries. Workers sometimes put wash-rags in their shoes or tied sheets or blankets around their waists. Cotton wool, glue, and thread were thrown through windows or placed in garbage bins and collected after working hours. An elderly informant mentioned that while he worked at a textile factory during the early 1970s:

We sometimes cut a good blanket into two pieces so that it could be a reject. Then we took it home and mend it with a machine...We cut so many blankets that when the boss parked the lorry there would almost be as many reject boxes as those to be delivered.

A lucrative market existed in the Diappolo for the sale of stolen goods. According to a satisfied customer:

Our neighbour used to steal boerewors nearly every day. She then came around to the houses and charged R1.20 per roll. I always bought from her because this was much cheaper than at the shops and butcheries.

Another resident commented:

I do not know how they [the workers] managed, but you would find them selling sheets, pillow cases and towels here in Phuthas...They ask R2 for a pillow case and from R15 to R18 for a sheet - depending on the size. These people can make lots of money.

It was also rumoured that security guards at a local sawmill sold benches and chairs, manufactured from stolen wood.

Penalties imposed on those caught stealing at work were severe. Two informants were dismissed from work as a result of theft: a petrol pump attendant for stealing money, and a worker at an Agricultural Co-operative for stealing hessian bags. In a third instance a man who worked in his brother-in-law's shop quit for fear of being accused of stealing: "My brother-in-law was always so busy that it was easy for the ladies working for him to steal. Every day they took sugar, cigarettes and maize so I thought it was best for me to leave before he accused me". Other penalties were the docking of wages and legal prosecution.

3. Assaulting supervisors Assaults on supervisors are a direct reaction to authoritarian power structures at work. Most attacks were directed against iinduna and foremen who occupied supervisory positions in the lowest levels of the organizational hierarchy and interacted most closely with workers. A textile worker highlighted the prevalence of such assaults, when she said:

Many supervisors were stabbed with knives and were beaten after work. We always heard about it. First they reported to work and then to the hospital. Jacob [her supervisor] was also stabbed, but we never heard who did it. I think the culprit worked in the same department.

The following two episodes illustrate how workers sought to conceal assaults from management. The first occurred when a few women, employed to process rheeback horns on a farm in the Harrismith district, conspired to beat up a male induna. An observer commented:

This would never happen inside the factory because they fear the Whites, but when going out things are bad. The induna was angry because of the manager and shouted at the women, so about five of them combined to beat him. When we arrived back at the factory he complained to the manager and these women were fined by having to stay at home for two weeks without pay.

In the second episode, an induna was assaulted outside the factory gates by workers under her supervision.

That lady was really not kind. Whenever she gave us instructions we refused to do it. The manager then came to us and said that the induna told him we did not want to do it. After that some of the ladies beat her when we knocked off from work. Some people tried to protect her, but there were so many of them who wanted to fight with her because she was so cruel that they ultimately managed to hit her in the face.

Assaults on white supervisors were less common. A former truck driver at an engineering firm in Welkom was dismissed and taken to court after retaliating when a white foreman assaulted his brother. Unlike assaults on African iinduna, those on white supervisors seldom involved collective action. This is evident in the account of a fist fight at an installation site for telephone lines in the northern Transvaal.

Boss Frank MacDonald who supervised us there was a man for the fists. He did not care whether you were big or not. But in all the time that I worked there there was only one bloke who hit

back. It happened when the chain of a concrete mixer broke and that bloke crept under the machine to fix it. It was already knock off time, but he did not want to come out from under the machine. The boss then pulled him out by the leg... There was no question about it. He hit back... But the boss was bigger. When I arrived on the scene that man was already lying down. The other workers just stood there laughing... Whenever boss MacDonald hit the other workers they just looked him in the eyes. How can you bite the hand that feeds you?

Nonetheless, workers found other means to discredit white supervisors. A "delivery-boy" at a Harrismith butchery said that he contributed to the dismissal of a white foreman in the following manner:

Because the manager once gave me a loan another white called Koos Jansen was very jealous of me. He always said that I only did simple work. When a truck with the meat arrived he told me to unlock the doors, but I replied: "You said that I only do simple work. I'm not hired for that. I am only hired for the tea and the post... God then helped me to catch Koos Jansen. That day we all went to have lunch from one o'clock, but Koos Jansen arrived earlier and went to the till to look for money. I saw him take the money and reported it to the manager and that is why the manager fired him.

The preceding discussion shows that defiance addresses the major repulsive experiences at work: "dodging" is an attempt to deal with boring and strenuous work tasks, illicit appropriations with unfair remuneration and assaults with disliked supervisory practices. These actions do not, however, articulate discontent effectively. They seldom involve collective action and, whenever possible, are consciously hidden from employers. Moreover defiant actions often lead to dismissal and thus do not necessarily achieve successful long term changes.

OVERT PROTEST ACTIONS

Graffiti on the walls of a local shop displayed the words: ANC, UDF, OAU and BLACK POWER. A migrant also spoke of his involvement

in the Sasol episode of November 1984 (see chapter one). These examples seemed to imply involvement by Diappolo wage workers in collective protest action in the wider South African political arena. The results of my research showed, however, that their grievances were seldom expressed through union and party structures. The vast majority of informants claimed that they did not know what trade unions were, and they cannot be described as highly politically articulate. A teacher, who moved from Soweto into the housing section in 1981, was keenly interested in South African politics. He commented:

Most people in the Diappolo don't know much about politics. They might know the name Nelson Mandela, but they don't know what he stands for. There are even others who don't know who he is. They never speak about people such as Mandela and Tutu in the shebeens. Maybe this is because they are from small towns in the Free State where there are no political organizations...They also don't read newspapers and only listen to Radio Sesotho.

Moreover, concern with local 'homeland' politics was not characterized by a lack of knowlege, but rather by disinterest and rejection. Few residents voted in elections for the Legislative Assembly and Town Council. This was often due to feelings of powerlessness: informants did not believe that politicians acted in their interest. One informant said that he did not vote in the Town Council elections because: "He [the mayor] does not live in an Appolo and is a wealthy shop owner. He does not know our problems. So how can he help us?" Some clerks and teachers, on the other hand, saw voting as an endorsement of apartheid (cf. Bank 1984: 50-5). Those who did vote supported the Dikwankwetla Party which they saw as responsible for the provision of schooling, infrastructural improvements, shopping facilities and improvements in Qwaqwa's bus service [3].

Despite this seeming apathy, there have been several episodes of collective protest action in Qwaqwa. These were partly due to the fact that local industrial employees earn lower wages than commuters and migrants. Other issues of concern have been inadequate compensation in cases of industrial accidents, retrenchments, and wage reductions by employers in response to stock wastage. Two kinds of protest can be identified. Firstly, workers have on occasion, registered their discontent with local power-holders such as the Chief Minister, members of the Qwaqwa legislature, and the Phuthaditjhaba magistrate. Secondly, workers have gone on work stoppages or "wild-cat" strikes, some of which have involved actions of violence.

1. Using local power-holders Appeals to the local political authorities have been numerous. During May 1984, 18 employees at a local supermarket were dismissed on allegations of stealing, management claiming that losses incurred by theft during the previous two months amounted to R102 000. The workers then marched to the offices of the Chief Minister where they denied having taken any goods. They claimed victimization, arguing that normal company policy was to dismiss employees immediately if found stealing. The Chief Minister, displeased by the incident, called the supermarket's public relations officer to a meeting after which some dismissed employees were reinstated (The Pinnacle 11/5/1984).

Two weeks later, 40 workers dismissed from a television- and display-cabinet factory complained to the Chief Minister. Workers told a journalist that they had followed this course because they were earning ridiculously low wages, sometimes between R17 and

R22 fortnightly, and working in choking dust.

The manager is a White man who doesn't want to pay us. We don't even know our straight pay...Sometimes we get less than what is written on our envelopes...He always pelts down curses upon us. He says we are baboons and donkeys that follow each other. Sometimes he closes the women's toilets and tells us to wet our panties... When work is completed during work hours he scolds us saying : "Why are you standing?" (The Pinnacle 25/5/1984).

The manager, however, denied having sacked any employees and said he was suprised when people did not come to work. He said that the company paid between R40 and R100 per week to its staff and also covered some workers' accommodation expenses. He claimed that "every worker in the company is treated like a friend" (The Pinnacle 25/5/1984). This episode of protest also led to the reinstatement of dismissed employees.

The fact that appeals to the Chief Minister has been seen as successful led 30 construction workers to try the same route in August 1984. They complained that the sub-contractor by whom they were employed was unable to pay them (The Pinnacle 3/8/1984). Their appeal was unsuccessful, however.

In other instances workers have voiced discontent to the local magistrate over conditions of employment. The following account of unrest at a Phuthaditjhaba dairy was provided by an informant who had worked there as a clerk for two years during the early 1980s. It shows that more individualistic acts of defiance lie at one end of a continuum, the opposite end being represented by collective protest.

Case No.3: Unrest at a Phuthaditjhaba dairy (1980)

According to my informant illicit appropriations were a common response to low wages (from R12 to R20 weekly) at the dairy. Existing tensions between workers and White management increased

considerably after a manager discovered some appropriations and refused to pay some workers. "They were crying about the money to him, but he just shouted 'Fuck you, you bitches' and chased them away...They then went to the magistrate to complain and the magistrate came with them to see the manager. The manager told the magistrate that he had not paid the women because they drank milk and guava juice on the job without paying for it...The magistrate then asked them about this in front of the manager and they said: 'Yes we did, but he could have told us that it was our money that we were drinking'...From that day we started to buy milk and guava juice"

"Two weeks later the manager again refused to pay them because things disappeared at work. Then they just stopped the machines at 12 o'clock and went to stand outside. When the manager came out he asked them: "What is your problem?" They said: "We want to beat you because you refused to give us money." The manager then ran away, got into his car and called the police. They just left the milk and ran after him, throwing stones at the car...Later he came back with two policemen. The women explained to the police about the hard job and that the manager refused to give them money, but they took six women to the police station. There they were busy until four o'clock and then came back to take their things...From that day he [the manager] gave us money. He increased their salaries to R20 and mine to R40 per week" [4].

Such protests have generated concern about employment conditions in Qwaqwa among local power holders. This is evident in tensions between the Dikwankwetla Party and local industrialists (cf. chapter one). There were, however, clear limits to the extent that the local authorities were able, or willing, to intercede on the behalf of workers, as shown in case 1.

2. 'Wild-cat' strikes. Cases 4 and 5 below demonstrate this second type of protest. Case 4 presents an informant's account of conditions at a glassware factory in Qwaqwa's industrial park which employed 130 workers and of a work stoppage there in 1982. Case 5 is based on information obtained during discussions with a number of drivers and describes a series of strikes at the Setsokotsane Bus Service.

Case No.4: Unrest at a Phuthaditjhaba glassware factory, 1982

Upon hearing that a glassware factory was to be established in Qwaqwa, Mrs. Vilikazi, and 30 other workseekers, sat waiting for a job in front of the factory gates for two weeks. "The owner took all of us. He just told us that we were going to work with glasses, would be paid R12 per week and that if we had any problems we had to tell him before we started working." As a glass cutter and washer she soon experienced problems with her health. "It was dangerous cutting the glass because the particles always fell into my eyes. The manager even took me to the hospital and bought me a pair of sunglasses...Because of my eyesight they transferred me to a new job, where I had to wash the glasses with acid so that they could shine...But this job was also not good for me. I would cough from the acid when sleeping at night. The other people also suffered from the acid. Their hands were bleeding and changed colour. When they arrived home at night their clothes were full of holes because of the acid. They took me to the doctor and he said that the acid was getting into my finger tips...When other people got ill the manager just gave them ointment which they had to rub on their hands. He never bothered about the acid eating the people."

"We first told the Whites that we did dangerous work and that our wages were low. The owner said he would improve our wages, but he never did so...Then we decided at one of our lunch meetings, that we would strike the next day. The ladies from the villages [closer settlements] did not want to strike. When we talked at lunch we said that those who did not want to take part in what we were going to do must run away. Some of the village ladies ran away just there, leaving their shoes, blankets and food...Maybe they did not want to participate because they were afraid of the police or because they did not have to pay rent (cf. chapter three). They were also dissatisfied, but they were cowards. But we were not afraid of being arrested because we were fighting for our rights".

"The next morning we went to the factory, but did not work. Because those Whites don't know our languages they were just shaking their heads. The other one was standing in front of the door with a big knife. The next day we still refused to work and the Whites locked themselves in their offices. We then started throwing glasses at them...The village ladies did not want to strike and they hid in the toilets so we also threw glasses at them. The other women grabbed one of the village ladies and swept her with her head upside down, like a broom, all the way from the toilets. This could have resulted in her death...The police arrived later that afternoon, but just stood outside the gates. The owner also came down from Pretoria. We told him that we were doing this for our wages. He then asked: "But what about all those glasses of mine?" He also said that he would try to increase our wages, but said "I don't know when". He then left, but never increased them."

The following week a supervisor was assaulted at the glassware factory. "While we discussed the strike at our lunchtime meetings this induna took everything we said to the Whites and told them what was going on with us ladies...He never wanted to listen to our complaints...That day he swept the floor while we were

working. The lady told him "Don't sweep over here. You have to sweep after the work is done." But the induna just slapped the lady. Then all the workers threw glasses at him. We threw the glasses until his face bled."

Upon inquiring as to whether any workers had lost their jobs as a result of the incident Mrs. Vilikazi replied: "No! He lost the work. Not us. We explained everything". It subsequently transpired that the induna had not been dismissed as a result of the incident, but due to the theft of glasses.

Case No.5: The Setsokotsane bus drivers' strikes, 1982 and 1983

Bus drivers are among the highest paid workers in Qwaqwa. Yet, they too experienced a sharp decline in wages as a result of relocation. Informants who had earned more than R200 per month as truck drivers in common South Africa during the 1970s, drove buses for approximately R30 per week in Qwaqwa in 1980.

In 1982 a work stoppage by bus drivers was sparked by a quarrel between a manager and a bus driver who reportedly failed to dim his lights when the manager drove past the bus in his car. Informants alleged that the manager wanted to beat up the driver at the bus depot, but was held off by a traffic superintendent. The driver was dismissed, and his fellow workers stopped work, demanding his reinstatement. They also demanded a 15% wage increase. By all accounts the work stoppage was extremely short-lived, lasting only from early in the morning until noon. Police soon appeared on the scene and fired teargas at drivers after they had stoned buses in an attempt to prevent scabs from working. It was said: "The police asked us why we were striking and said 'leave the strike'. When we refused they brought the teargas and shot it at us. The teargas even got into the eyes of the passengers". The strike ended abruptly with management conceding to the demands of drivers.

In 1983 a second work stoppage arose after discontent about wages was expressed at a Ha re thusaneng meeting (cf. chapter three). A senior bus driver said: "I was one of three men the company appointed to report the problems of workers to the manager. After a meeting of our association he wanted to know why the workers were dissatisfied. We explained that we were in need of money, but he said that there was no money. To this we replied: 'We know exactly how much money we make for the company because we sell the tickets so you can't tell a lie'...He then called a meeting after work and told all of the workers that there was not enough money for an increase because the company was going bankrupt. But the drivers replied: 'If there is no money and the company is going bankrupt as you say then we won't work'. That is how the strike started...The next morning we first took all the people to work and when we returned at ten o'clock we all sat down. We thought it was better to take the workers to work, because if we did not they would also strike and be against us [5]...We all went to sit in the hall and told the manager that we did not want him anymore because we had been discussing the problem of money with him for a long time and there had been no increase. We said that we did not want to strike so they should better find a manager who would listen to our problems...The police again came

to prevent the drivers from stoning the buses, but this time they did not shoot teargas at us. The strike ended because the manager promised us that he would increase our wages by 35% in April, but when the time came we did not get so much".

With management conceding to the demands of strikers, the wages of bus drivers increased dramatically. In 1984 their average weekly wage of R100 far exceeded those of other local workers and were comparable with those of some drivers in South Africa's industrial centres.

These case studies show that overt protest action was the most direct and visible means by which workers aimed to redress repulsive conditions at work. Case 5 also illustrates the potential of such actions to effect improvements in conditions of employment. It should, however, be noted that bus drivers were aided by the relative indispensability of their services at short notice, and a measure of worker organization and solidarity (cf. chapter three). These conditions were largely absent among workers in Qwaqwa's industrial parks. Their protests were spontaneous and were impeded by internal divisions (notably those between workers from Phuthaditjhaba and those from the closer settlements). As unskilled workers their services were also dispensable as the unemployed literally waited for vacancies at factory gates. Furthermore, the Phuthaditjhaba police station was located adjacent to Qwaqwa's industrial parks and protests were readily suppressed.

DESERTIONS

35% of all job terminations in the life history sample resulted from work-related desertions. It is thus clear that many wage workers were not hesitant to quit jobs which dissatisfied them. Desertions constituted a multi-faceted phenomenon. In some instances they can be seen as a form of escape or "protest", in

others a form of income maximization.

1. Desertion as a form of escape and protest. Most deserters in the life history sample (i.e. 31, 67%) said that they had left their jobs without having secured "better" jobs or having a promise of finding employment on more favourable terms. Instead, they emphasized that they had left as a direct response to specific repulsive conditions.

Many deserters disappeared from work without giving notice. A former employee at a textile factory reported that after being hospitalized as a result of an injury at work, he returned to his job for one day, and only did so to collect his compensation money. "Thereafter I just ran away without saying anything". Similarly, an informant said that after she and a workmate had been insulted by a supervisor "for putting rotten threads into a machine" at a carpet factory, they deserted during lunch break. "We just disappeared and they never came looking for us because they didn't actually know where we stayed". These comments substantiate Gordon's (1977: 137) argument, with reference to a Namibian mine that, from the workers perspective, desertions without prior notice neutralize potential repercussions which could arise in situations where they have to work with white supervisors who know that they have resigned.

In other instances workers confronted management prior to leaving, in order to register their discontent. This is most evident in the case of an informant who worked as a "delivery-boy" at a hardware store in Harrismith. He recalled:

One Friday, when I came back to the store from delivering parcels, all the other workers had already been paid. I then

asked the madam about my payments, but she said : "No! You are boring me. Come back on Monday". But I still complained. She then threw a tin of Cobra polish at me, but I ducked. She also threw a measuring spoon at me, but I blocked it with my hands. That Monday I just went to the manager to get my money and to explain that I was leaving the job because of his wife.

An induna, who had been employed at the S.A. Railways since 1952 and supervised loading operations at a goods shed, resigned in 1984 to protest against his not being consulted about the dismissal of a worker whom he supervised. He explained:

I had to stand up for him... The man always performed well at work. If he did poor work I would have known about it...I asked the assistant manager why he was chased away from work, but he told me to watch my step...That really hurt...Thirty-two years at the railways is not 32 days.

Thereafter he wrote to the National Railway Workers' Association about the matter, but resigned after receiving the following rather meaningless letter from its secretary in Bloemfontein.

All the contents of your letter are understood. I understand that you inquire why Mr. Modise was expelled. Me and the chairman at Harrismith understood each other about the matter of expulsion. Is he going on pension or being discharged? Is the trouble that you spoke about caused by the workers or the authorities?

Discontent was sometimes expressed through collective desertion. In 1978 several workers left a weaving enterprise in Qwaqwa after they had threatened to resign if wages were not increased. Similarly, many railway workers left their jobs in Kroonstad after a workmate was seriously injured by a falling rail. Such collective action is also demonstrated in the following account of a confrontation between workers and management at a textile factory in Phuthaditjhaba's industrial park during 1984.

One day we just stopped our machines and took our complaints to the manager. We said that we were not satisfied with our wages and had not found the promised increment to our salaries in our weekly packages. Another complaint was that the women were working night shifts, and had to go home in the night when there

were lots of tsotsis who could steal our money...The manager said that he would increase the money especially for those working night shifts and told us not to go to the Chief Minister because he would increase the money by himself...Up to now there has only been this promise and no increment. The manager also sacked some of the workers, but many people who were not sacked left, especially those who knew how to do the job. They all decided not to return to the factory.

2. Desertion as a form of income maximization. The evidence presented above contradict Goldberg's (1980: 33,42) and Kapferer's (1972) view that desertion is merely a form of income maximization and pursuit of economic self-interest. Desertions with the expressed intention of obtaining a "better" job occurred relatively infrequently in the cases recorded in my life history sample. In only 14 (30%) of 46 cases of desertion did informants terminate employment after obtaining "better" jobs or identifying a potentially more favourable alternative.

Van Onselen's (1976: 227-233) analysis of labour mobility from Southern Rhodesia during the first three decades of this century illustrates how workers can achieve improvements in conditions of employment through desertion. Here, he maintains, workers sought to make their way as far south as possible through successive acts of desertion with the eventual goal of securing employment in the richer South African mines and industries. In this manner workers reached markets which on each occasion offered them slightly higher wages.

From examining the intentions which lie behind job changes a consensus of opinion over where it is "best" to work, as assumed by Van Onselen, was not found among workers in the Diappolo. Of the 44 informants whom I asked to rank places of employment according to personal preference: 17 said they preferred to be

employed in Harrismith, 14 in Qwaqwa and 13 as migrants in South Africa's industrial centres. This does not, however, imply a lack of consensus as regards the characteristics of the labour market. There was almost unanimous agreement that one had to work far from home in order to earn a decent wage, but that the most important negative aspect of migrancy was the inability of migrants to participate in family life. In direct contrast, employment inside Qwaqwa was seen as marked by low wages, but infinitely more favourable in terms of meaningful participation in domestic life. "In Qwaqwa there are a lot of money problems, but you can walk to work and live with your wife and children". In the eyes of most informants, employment in Harrismith was a compromise between these two ideals. Wages earned by commuters were lower than those of migrants but higher than those of local employees. Though long arduous journeys to work were disliked, people said commuters could at least sleep at home, and they could be contacted in cases of emergency.

To secure higher incomes, men often changed employment either from inside Qwaqwa to Harrismith or from both these places to South Africa's industrial centres. A furniture salesman, who changed employment from a store in Qwaqwa to one in Harrismith during 1979, explained:

I met somebody who had once worked with me and he said that he now worked at a store in Harrismith. He said that there they had a better wage (R150 per month in basic salary plus 10% commission on all goods sold compared to only a 10% commission in Qwaqwa) so that if you did not sell anything you would still get a basic salary. He said that he could get a job for me if I wanted to work there. I gave one month notice in Qwaqwa, but they did not want to let me go. When I explained why I was resigning the manager said that they could also give me a basic salary, but it was less. He asked the managing director and they could only give me R 100 per month. So I left.

Another man, who earned R359 per month as a teller at a

Harrismith bank (cf. Case 2) deserted without notice in 1982 to work as a sales representative for a tobacco company in Bloemfontein which promised to pay him R570:

Somebody told me about a job at the tobacco company, where they paid satisfactorily, and arranged an interview for me in Bethlehem. I approached the manager at the bank telling him that my father was ill and that I wanted to take him to the nearest hospital. He asked "Who will then do your work?" and I said "The other tellers can do it. I can't just leave my father dying there. If you don't ~~want~~^{want} to give me off I'll just go on my own". To this the manager just replied: "Be in time tomorrow"... Of the five applicants only two arrived and after the interview they told me to tell the other applicant that I was appointed...I never returned to the bank thereafter.

Although it was generally more dangerous for unskilled people to gamble on job changes, a "delivery-boy" for a Harrismith florist quit his job to seek a contract through the Phuthaditjhaba labour bureau, after hearing that SASOL "were running short of workers". Informants also found it impossible to seek employment in Qwaqwa and in Harrismith whilst holding migrant jobs. Wage workers thus often sought to improve their labour careers by changing to better paid occupations within the same employment centre. This includes changes from domestic, garden and construction work to factory work and from factory work to occupations within the transport industry.

RETREATIST ACTIONS

In addition to protesting against or accommodating themselves to existing conditions of employment, some workers also sought to find means of escape from these conditions through retreatist action. Merton (1967 :153-156) sees retreatism as a type of individual adaptation in situations where valued goals are not

renounced, but where individuals are shut off from the means to attain these. Common responses to such denial was the concentration of interests in leisure and in religious ideas which emphasized a relief from suffering in the next world.

The relationship between work and leisure in the Diappolo confirms the "oppositional pattern" Parker (1980) associates with non-autonomous, unskilled, manual labour occupations. In this pattern, leisure is sharply distinguished from work, and constitutes the central life interest of the worker. It is largely a mechanism used to recuperate from and compensate for unrewarding job experiences. For Diappolo workers, this manifested itself as a distinction between interaction with whites, according to formal hierarchical norms at work, and interaction with kin, neighbours and friends at home, according to informal egalitarian norms. At home, workers could relax and be masters of their own actions.

Leisure-time activities included a keen interest in soccer [6] and the popular music broadcast on Radio Sesotho. There were also younger workers who found solace in smoking dagga (cannabis). Matchboxes filled with dagga were sold in the Diappolo for one rand. Agents reportedly obtained dagga from suppliers at a cost of R20 per canned fruit jar. One older informant, along with many other older residents, was deeply concerned about its widespread usage among youngsters:

In some of these houses they smoke dagga like we smoke cigarettes...Just the other day a youngster told me that when he smokes dagga he sees the world in technicolour and he only wants to see this grey world in technicolour...Some young women have taken to drinking, but the young men all smoke dagga because they want something stronger.

Drinking was, however, the most widespread form of relaxation among Diappolo workers. Many workers started drinking after knock off time on Fridays and continued until Sunday afternoons [8]. An elderly woman said: "When they arrive here, most of the workers are already drunk and they stay drunk for the whole weekend". Her views were substantiated by the remarks of a bus driver:

On Fridays most people are drunk. Even in the buses they drink beers and Big S cartons. When they're drunk they'd say: "Stop the bus we want to pass some water" and you just have to stop. Many times they vomit in the bus and then we have to clean it in the workshops...There are never such problems during weekdays.

Workers patronized the numerous working class shebeens which were run from the homes of Diappolo residents (see Bank forthcoming for an interesting typology of liquor outlets in Qwaqwa). These shebeens sold either commercially bottled beer at R1.50 per quart (750 ml.) or tins of home-brewed beer (500-750 ml.) at prices ranging from 30c to 80c each [9].

The extensive consumption of alcohol is attributable to three factors. Firstly it constitutes a form of psychological escape and a "means of ironing out emotional peaks and troughs" (Cohen 1979: 19). This is reflected in statements such as: "The home-brew must come first. I don't want to think about all my problems". Secondly, drinking is often perceived to be a demonstration of one's masculinity. Drinkers commonly referred to men who could hold their liquor as "strong", and viewed those who could not as "weaklings". A poster, entitled 'The new Ten Commandments, which was in circulation among drinkers, provides an indication of the status of 'serious' drinking.

The new Ten Commandments

1. Being found drinking water while liquor is available - 15 years.
2. Diluting liquor with water - 2 to 4 years, no fine.
3. Vomiting after drinking - life sentence.
4. Drinking at home while shebeens are available - 180 days.
5. Refusing to smoke after drinking - 2 years suspension.
6. Being found in the company of non-drinkers - 5 years.
7. Refusing to buy liquor while money is in your pocket - 3 years 5 months.
8. Sleeping at a table with a glass full of liquor - 10 years, no fine.
9. Getting drunk before drinking at least 7 cases - 14 to 18 months in gaol, hard labour.
10. Talking too much and drinking less in the company of drinkers - 7 years and whipping without bread and water.

Thirdly, drinking is an important ritual of friendship. Workers were seldom seen drinking alone and usually drank with friends from a common container which was passed around between them (cf. McNamara 1980).

Drinking of this order had a detrimental effect on job stability, however, and workers sometimes arrived drunk at factory gates on Monday mornings. A security guard said that it was common practice to send home workers, who arrived drunk at factory gates, and to deduct the day's wages. Five informants in the life history sample were dismissed for being drunk at work. One of these had been a bus driver who was dismissed because he used a company bus to visit a shebeen after work and, as a result had, arrived at the depot after its gates had been locked. In another instance a cleaner at a railway station was dismissed after he had fought with a drunk gardener. "My job was only to clean the office, but the boss told me to work in the garden because the gardener was sleeping. I then punched him and was sacked". This theme is elaborated upon in my discussion of migrant hostels in chapter five.

Although religious adherence often forbade drinking and smoking, these beliefs can also be classed as a form of retreatism insofar as they orientate attention from existing conditions [10]. Believers emphasized divine intervention and put their vested hopes in the next world for relief from problems and suffering. This is evident in statements such as: "This world is not our world", and "We are living in problems. Only the Lord will help us. He is the big one who knows everything". It is also echoed in the words of the songs Mohlang tsho ya befu (The day of resurrection), and O se Nka Kae Sebete? (Why are you so brave?), two of the numerous songs sung by workers on buses.

Mohlang tsho ya befu

Mohlang tsho ya befu
ha re binelang Jesu
ka mantswe le ka thapo
Re teng re bang dipaki
tsa ba koilaleng Jesu.

The day of Resurrection

At the day of resurrection
let us sing to Jesus
with words of joy
so that we can be witnesses
for those who killed Jesus.

O se nka kae sebete?

O se nka kae sebete
sa ho araba Mmao ha
o bua le wena?
Ngwaneso ithute hlompho,
o ha ekeletswa matsatsi mo
lefatseng koafela diposhwa ha re
kguma.
Meng ka mangwele re rapele
Modimo ke yena ya
tsebang.

Why are you so brave?

Why are you so brave
to answer your mother when
she speaks to you?
Dear brother let us learn
to have respect so that
our days on earth can be
increased.
All prisoners kneel and
pray to God because he
knows everything.

Christianity was not the only religious paradigm which offered a means of 'other worldly' escape. Recourse to the ancestors (badimo) also provided such relief. Intervention by the ancestors was commonly sought in diphabadimo. At these ceremonies, attended by up to 40 relatives and friends, those seeking help thanked the ancestors for aid in the past and requested luck for the future. Thanks were often made for good health and for the successful

return of migrant labourers. Requests were made for luck at work and that the ancestors should accompany migrants on their journeys and protect them from misfortune (cf. McAllister 1980). At these feasts, hosts commonly served snuff, tobacco [10], mogomboti and a meal of hard porridge and mutton. One informant stated: "If people bother me at work or if the induna is rude to me I just walk to the graveyard and ask my grandfather for help".

Diviners, who were regularly consulted about physical, psychological and social problems (misfortune at work, low wages, unemployment etc.) furthermore ascribed problems to a neglect of the ancestors and prescribed sacrifices to appease them. In this regard a local sangoma mentioned: "People often come to me for help if they are unlucky at work. Then I speak to the badimo for them. If one of them receives an increase they will have to hold a phabadimo to praise the badimo."

CONCLUSIONS

In this chapter I have shown that discussions of diverse worker actions and strategies cannot be subsumed under the rather vague label "resistance". I have distinguished between actions in terms of which workers attempt to accommodate themselves to existing conditions of employment; to seek improvement in such conditions by unauthorized means or through overt protest; and/or to find escape from the demands of unfulfilling jobs in leisure. Desertions, considered in this context of reactive strategic action, constitute both an attempt by workers to seek an improvement in their jobs and wages by finding alternative jobs, a form of escape from, and protest against adverse conditions of

employment.

There are various ways in which these responses have contributed to job instability. Relations of patronage are hard to sustain for any length of time due to their inherent inequality. Many workers have furthermore been dismissed due to illicit appropriations, assaults on supervisors, complaints over conditions at work, for smoking dagga, and being drunk at work.

But why do desertions constitute such a common response to conditions of employment? This, I would argue, is due to the powerlessness of workers, the minimal effective channels to express their discontent, and the limited efficacy of the various other actions and strategies adopted. Both accommodative and retreatist actions do not address repulsive working conditions. Efforts invested in defiant and protest actions have seldom paid dividends. Episodes of collective protest action which have been successful in generating an improvement in conditions of employment have required a considerable degree of worker solidarity, and have been few and far between. By contrast, desertions required little effort and offered a complete escape from particular adverse working conditions. They were also frequently effective in affecting improvements for the individuals concerned in wages earned and conditions of employment experienced. This was possible because of the important differences in remuneration and working conditions which existed between different jobs and places of employment and which were detailed in chapter three.

NOTES TO CHAPTER FOUR

[1] Goldberg (1980) criticizes these authors from a structural Marxist perspective for: (i) utilizing too broad a concept of "worker consciousness"; (ii) failing to distinguish between individual behaviour, group behaviour and "worker consciousness"; and (iii) not specifying the ideology governing specific actions. Although Goldberg adequately recognizes the dangers in utilizing too broad a concept of "resistance" or "worker consciousness", his preoccupation with the orthodox dichotomy of true/false consciousness (which these authors reject) renders him unable to deal with worker actions not classifiable as "proper resistance". This dilemma is not solved by merely questioning why workers do not behave in accordance with social analysts' theoretical models of how they ought to, but rather by taking full cognizance of their own understanding of their actions.

[2] A distinction between stealing and taking among dominated social categories has been noted by numerous authors. Writing on slavery Genovese (1972 :602) reports: "The slaves made a distinction: They stole from each other, but merely took from their masters..." Similarly, Gordon (1976: 183) argues that Namibian contract workers widely used taking as a means to make money and saw takings as redistributing money in a more equitable way. Theft, on the other hand, only occurs when a Black steals from a fellow Black.

[3] "Apathy" about Qwaqwa's Legislative Assembly is not a recent phenomenon. The Argus (9/11/1974), for instance, reported that the official ceremony held to celebrate the granting of self-government to the Qwaqwa Legislative Assembly was attended by only 30 people - mostly White officials. It noted: "The large crowd of Basotho who were expected to gather outside the hall to listen to the ceremony, which was relayed over a loudspeaker system, failed to appear. A group of about 20 Basotho arrived towards the end of the ceremony, but apart from them the ceremony in its entirety was only heard by sheep and cattle grazing a few metres away."

[4] This description of working conditions at the dairy is radically contrasted by those of management. In a letter to The Pinnacle (14/9/1984), in which public attention is drawn to the need to buy pasteurized milk, a company representative writes: "It can be seen that the National Co-operative Dairies, of which Qwaqwa is a part, look after their staff...All staff receive

rations every day, and in a recent wage survey carried out in Qwaqwa our company was in the top three in salaries. All our staff join a pension fund after one year, we have a medical aid scheme, 26 days leave is given every year to our staff, also they receive a thirteenth pay cheque after one year service, every year. Our staff are given refreshments throughout the day, and in winter we have hot soup at the start of the day".

[5] An informant adequately summarized the feelings of commuters by commenting: "Many travellers were angry because we knew that our wages would be deducted at the factories for arriving late, but at the same time we sympathized with the drivers because they wanted their wages increased." Such sympathies were encouraged by an increase in the price of bus tickets not long prior to the work stoppage.

[6] A few informants in the sample were members of the Orlando Pirates and Kaizer Chiefs supporters' clubs in Qwaqwa.

[7] Drinking constituted a great problem in the research, as workers that I would be interviewing were sometimes too inebriated to respond to questions; see Alverson (1970) for a description of a similar experience in the context of problematic drinking in South African industries.

[8] Popular brews were moqomboti made from soft porridge, and magasemane made from brown bread. Other brews include "hops" as well as various fruit brews made from grapes, pineapples, oranges, peaches and apricots. Brown sugar, yeast and Mtombo meal were usually added to all brews which were then diluted with water and left to ferment for a period of approximately two days.

[9] Phuthaditjhaba is well known for the tolerance of different religious ideas, practices and denominations. It has no less than 20 churches belonging to formally recognized Christian denominations. In addition there are numerous small religious groupings centred around charismatic priests and/or healers. In the Diappolo there were four such religious leaders whose followings ranged from as few as 25 to over 200 people. As in Soweto, Christian beliefs were often integrated with beliefs about the power of ancestors (cf. West 1975 :180-190). These ideas were, however, regarded as private and separate from church matters.

[10] See Murray (1975) for an analysis of the symbolic resonance of tobacco and snuff, also known as tobacco of the shades, among the inhabitants of rural Lesotho.

CHAPTER FIVE

TRANSPORT AND WORKPLACE ACCOMMODATION

The instability of Diappolo wage workers' jobs cannot be understood without considering the influence of transport facilities and workplace accommodation on employment. Although these factors were of little significance to employees in Qwaqwa's industrial parks, they were central elements in the employment experiences of commuters and migrants.

In the broader South African context, as a result of Group Areas legislation and the 'homelands' policy, workers have to travel vast distances between their places of work and family residence. Theoretically, cheap and efficient transport, and adequate workplace accommodation (especially for migrant workers) are thus vital for the effective utilization of African labour. The few systematic studies on the subject point out, however, that public transport for Africans has proven expensive and inefficient, and has constantly given rise to political conflict. The current fiscal crisis faced by the South African state with regard to bus transport is highlighted by Perlman (1984) and by Swilling and McCarthy (1984: 28) who note that in 1983 subsidization costs reached the R162 million mark [1]. A survey by the Human Awareness Programme (1982) described overcrowding, a lack of punctuality, and inadequate amenities as characteristic of Black urban road transport. There has also been a growing volume of literature on bus boycotts (cf. Lodge 1983, Pirie 1984, Perlman 1984 and Swilling 1984).

Discussions of workplace accommodation have largely been confined to the analysis of migrant hostels and compounds. Although

studies have often highlighted the spartan conditions of life in these institutions (vide Wilson 1972, Peskin and Spiegel 1976, McNamara 1980, Reynolds 1984) there has been a tendency to view hostels and compounds as convenient to employers in the sphere of labour control (vide Rex 1974, Van Onselen 1980, Turrel 1982).

By emphasizing the everyday experiences of 'homeland' workers, this chapter aims to redress some of the crucial shortcomings of the above-mentioned studies which are biased towards urban areas in common South Africa, sensationalism, and macro-level analysis. The chapter's central theme is the contention that inconveniences of transport and workplace accommodation have had a detrimental effect on the ability of informants to maintain commuter and migrant jobs. It is argued that, among commuters to Harrismith, terminations of employment are related to inefficient transport facilities and an unfavourable time structure of the working day, both of which undermine their regular attendance at jobs and constitute an additional source of repulsion. For migrants, I argue that unfavourable conditions of accommodation at work were more likely to contribute to the employment instability than transport problems. In this regard a comparative analysis shows that desertions and dismissals occurred more frequently among migrants accommodated within hostels than among those who stayed outside these institutions. I therefore question the notion that hostels are necessarily effective mechanisms for worker control.

EMPLOYMENT IN HARRISMITH

Job instability, transport and accommodation 1971-1979

With the demolition of Schoonplaas, and the relocation of its

inhabitants to the Diappolo (see chapter one), existent transport facilities were inadequate for the large numbers of workers who remained employed in Harrismith. The Setsokotsane Bus Company had been established in 1969, but possessed only one bus (Informa 1982:50). In response to employer demands, the Orange Vaal Administration Board constructed a hostel accommodating 50 men in 42nd Hill and negotiated the subsidisation of bus fares (The Friend 20/3/1971). The Bantu Investment Corporation (BIC) also donated four new Leyland buses to Setsokotsane. These minor developments generated no significant improvement, and during the early 1970s only three buses operated on the Qwaqwa-Harrismith route.

The poor condition of the untarred Harrismith road frequently led to break downs, and buses were in constant need of repair. Furthermore, buses were overcrowded and slow. It is thus not surprising that commuters found it difficult to retain their jobs during this period. Of 21 informants who were employed in Harrismith whilst resident in Schoonplaas, five lost their jobs immediately after relocation. One of these, a domestic worker, explained: "I could not return to the kitchen where I worked after we were moved because the buses were always too full. When I went back a month later I found that another woman was employed in my place." Another, a former employee of the Department of Prisons, could not afford the price of transport and had therefore been forced to give up his job. Six workers who did manage to retain employment in Harrismith had secured accommodation in the town: with relatives in 42nd Hill, at their places of employment (a "live-in" domestic worker and hotel employee) and in the new municipal hostel. In this manner they

avoided commuting on a daily basis and travelled to Phuthaditjhaba only over weekends.

Although a bus ticket for daily commuting cost only 90c per week in 1971, the conditions of transport were extremely poor. Prior to 1979, six daily commuters in the life history sample had been dismissed for constantly arriving late at work. One of these, a former Harrismith shop assistant, recalled:

One day we had a breakdown along the way to Harrismith and I was sacked for arriving two hours late. The manager himself recognized that it was because of a breakdown because when I arrived I was very dirty from all the dust. But he did not want to listen because he was fed up with all the breakdowns. He just said 'Hier kom julle weer met die ou storie' [I don't want to hear the same old story again] and fired us all. He decided to hire new workers, who were mostly from 42nd Hill.

Moreover when commuters worked overtime, they were unable to take buses home as the service did not extend into the late night hours. A transport worker who delivered parcels in Natal, quit his job in 1972:

After I delivered the parcels it would be ten o'clock and there were no buses so we just parked the truck in the factory yard and slept in it. Sometimes this would happen for the whole week and I only went home on Saturdays. It was really not nice sleeping in the truck because it was cold at night and you could not stretch you legs. I used to buy a weekly ticket for the bus, but only wasted it...Things were so bad that I decided to leave the job.

Some of the problems experienced by commuters prior to 1979 are elaborated in the following stories about a shift worker and a cattle herdsman. Due to difficulties stemming from inefficient transport, low wages and adverse working hours, both informants found it impossible to commute to work on a daily basis. These accounts also point to the absence of legitimate sleeping places in Harrismith.

Case No.6: The dilemma of a shift worker, 1971-1975

From 1971 to 1975 Edward Modise worked as a manual labourer at the Harrismith Agricultural Co-operative. "My job was to put sacks under machines which filled them with mealie meal... Luckily there was not a lot of work to do, but they only paid me R10 per week and this was not enough." Edward's dilemma was that he had to work alternate shifts weekly: from 06h00 to 14h00, and from 14h00 until 22h00. When working the morning shift he usually woke at 03h00, took the 04h30 bus to Harrismith and the 15h00 bus home. Whenever he worked the evening shift he could not, however, find a bus to Qwaqwa until 04h00. "I'd first sleep at work and then take the bus. At home there would be no time for sleep... I would just look for food, buy wood and coal for my family to make a fire and then work in the garden before taking the eight o'clock bus back to Harrismith... At work we slept on empty mealie bags. But the manager did not want us to sleep there and we sometimes also hid ourselves in the waiting room at the railway station. But the station master told us that the waiting room was only for people waiting for the trains. Then we again went back to hide ourselves at the Co-operative and to sleep on those empty bags. When the manager found us he scolded us. We tried to explain the transport problem, but he just said: 'You must make use of your own means of transport to go to Qwaqwa if you want to work here'... I spent all those nights without sleep... Without sleep your eyes would be tired and you would just keep on looking in front of you." For these reasons Mr. Modise eventually decided to terminate employment in 1975 when he heard that a Phuthaditjhaba builder was offering employment.

Case No 7: The problems of an old cattle herder, 1972-1978 .

Mr. Motlana was 55 years old when he found a job at the cattle auction market in Harrismith during 1972. "Our work was to drive cattle from Harrismith to Kestell, Bethlehem and Vrede... We had to stop the cattle with red flags so that they did not walk onto the tarred road. At night we also had to use a torch so that the cars could see that there was something in the road. When we walked from Harrismith to Bethlehem we ~~walked~~ ^{slept} first ~~at~~ ^{slept} at the auction in Kestell and from there on we ~~walked~~ ^{slept} in the veld. It was only nine o'clock on the third day that we ~~walked~~ arrived in Bethlehem. From there we would be given a train ticket to go to Harrismith".

Mr. Motlana was often unable to take a bus to Phuthaditjhaba even when he was not driving cattle and sometimes only managed to visit home once a month. "In those days it was 60c for a single ticket, but when it rained on the old road the buses would slip. They deducted a lot of money from me and the other workers for arriving late. Because of low wages [R6 per month plus, 20c for every mile walked] we sometimes had to walk all the way from Harrismith. Other times I ~~walked~~ ^{paid} 60c to other people from Qwaqwa for a lift... In Harrismith we stayed at the auction, sleeping with the cattle and putting a canvas over us whenever the rain came. We looked after the cattle and the pigs for the whole night." He recalled that he once slept with relatives at

42nd Hill, but was arrested as he was preparing to go to work in the morning: "The policeman just said: You can't complain because you are from Qwaqwa and not Harrismith". In 1978 Mr. Motlana was forced to resign from work due to ill health. He explained: "From all the sleeping outside I developed a bad kind of cough".

The cases above clearly show that transport and accommodation problems cannot be seen in isolation from other experiences at work. Edward Modise did not desert solely because of transport and accommodation problems, but also due to low wages and monotonous work tasks. Mr. Motlana developed ill health because he was forced to sleep in the velt and in a cattle kraal. This was due to inadequate workplace accommodation; and he resigned because, in addition, his formal work tasks, his low wages, and the poor conditions of transport rendered him unable to commute home on a daily basis.

Towards a stable workforce? 1979 - 1985

Since the mid-1970s there have been earnest attempts by the authorities to improve conditions of transport between Qwaqwa and Harrismith. In 1975 the BIC loaned half a million rand to Setsokotsane. This was utilized to increase the scale of the company's operations by the purchase of new vehicles and the employment of additional managerial staff. With the completion of a new tarred road in 1979 the journey between Phuthaditjhaba and Harrismith was shortened and became less taxing on the buses. By 1984 Setsokotsane operated a fleet of approximately 90 buses and transported more than ten million passengers yearly between Kestell, 42nd Hill, Harrismith, and Bethlehem, and various areas inside Qwaqwa (SADB 1985: 9).

These improvements have facilitated the creation of a more reliable and stable commuter workforce. This is reflected in a general increase in lengths of service among Harrismith employees: from a mean time of 3.5 years in previous jobs to 7 years in present jobs (cf. p. 66). Commuters that I spoke to agreed that conditions had improved, but insisted that transport to and from work remained problematic and still contributed to job instability. They pointed to transport expenses, unfavourable conditions on buses, constant disruptions in the time structure of the working day and their vulnerability to pass arrests and theft. In some instances these factors led directly to job losses. In other instances they did so indirectly by enhancing negative perceptions of the work situation and by fuelling the desire of commuters to find employment elsewhere.

1. Transport costs. Despite subsidies, transport constituted an enormous expense for daily commuters [2]. After increases in bus fares during January 1985, a single bus ticket to Harrismith cost R1.90, a return ticket R2.80, a five day return ticket R4.25, and a six day return ticket R5.00. These prices compared favourably with taxi fares of R2.00 per single on weekdays and R2.50 on weekends. Commuters in the life history sample spent an average of R23.18 (11%) of their monthly earnings on transport, and they complained that their wages were not adjusted to meet increases in fares. When taxis were used (if buses were full or late, or if commuters failed to arrive at bus stops in time) these costs amounted to considerably more. A teller at a Harrismith bank, who used taxis exclusively, spent R108 on transport per month. "I always wake up after half past six and I have to use taxis because the buses are too slow...Yes it is bloody expensive, but I would never arrive at work in time if I was to use the buses".

2. Conditions on buses. During fieldwork, informants complained that journeys to and from work still involved much discomfort. Setsokotsane was recently the target of strongly-worded criticism in The Pinnacle (25/5/1984):

We as people are subject to one of the most incompetent and inconsiderate bus services in the country. There are no regular times for buses and if there are, there is possibly no one to see that buses are on schedule...We are packed in these buses like sardines...because there are just too few buses for a population of nearly half a million... We are exposed as people to rude drivers and inspectors... They have no regard for the people. For them the people are just a means to an end. The end being profit...Our patience is not endless. If things continue in this way we shall be left with no alternative, but to organize ourselves.

Overcrowding was the most common complaint about the bus service [3]. Commuters said that they regularly stood in the aisle for the entire journey. In 1983 a commuter died as a result of overcrowding: during a scramble for a place on a moving bus, she slipped and fell under its front wheel. Informants complained about Qwaqwa's dusty roads and of uncontrolled littering. Commuters, who had to clean the seats themselves, said that after the rains they were unable to see through the buses' mud-stained windows.

There have been many episodes of exploded tension between bus drivers and commuters. A man remarked that before becoming a driver he "was scared of the job. I always heard that people insulted the drivers and thought that they would beat a driver if they saw him walking in the streets". Drivers were scolded and told to drive faster; they were assaulted for delaying the departure of buses, and, in a few instances, buses were stoned in the villages. The stoning of four buses at the Tseki bus stop on

24 September 1984 was widely discussed by informants. It occurred in response to the injury of a commuter who alighted from a moving bus and, in the words of one informant, "rolled like a stone."

3. The time structure of the working day. Table 12 shows the rigid time structure commuting imposed upon the working day. In

TABLE 12: THE TIME STRUCTURE OF THE "NORMAL" WORKING DAY AMONG DAILY COMMUTERS IN THE LIFE HISTORY SAMPLE (1984/85).

Activity	Range in times	Mode
Waking	02h00- 06h20	04h00
Departure from home	02h25- 06h40	04h30
Boarding bus/taxi	03h00- 07h15	05h30
Arrival in Harrismith	03h45- 07h50	06h15
Start of work	04h00- 08h00	07h00
Knock off from work	11h00- 18h00	17h00
Board bus/taxi	12h00- 20h30	17h15
Arrival back home	13h00- 22h00	18h15
Sleeping	19h15- 23h00	21h00

Note: N = 28

anticipation of potential delays during journeys to work most informants awoke early. Many did not have breakfast before departing. A female informant who started work at 07h00 regularly awoke at 02h00 and took the 04h00 bus. She explained: "During that time [before work commences] we would just wait at the bus stop in Harrismith. Just sitting there relaxing ... I would just talk with friends waiting for the time". Most workers started working relatively early: 6% at 04h30, 6% at 06h30, 65% at 07h00 and only 10% at 08h00. Two workers started at 04h00: a truck driver who fetched milk from outlying farms and a machine operator at the municipality's sewerage department who knocked off at 11h00. Teachers and domestics usually worked until 15h00, whereas most factory workers knocked off at 17h00. Unlike factory

workers, who were able to board buses at factory gates, many commuters experienced great problems in boarding buses. A teacher who worked until 14h20 complained: "Sometimes I only board a bus at five o'clock or later and this ~~happens~~ happens nearly every week".

Daily commuters spend an average of 14 hours away from home per working day. This comprised 9.7 hours at work, 2 hours travelling, and 2.3 hours waiting and walking between bus stops, work and home. Of the 10 hours at home 7.5 hours were spend sleeping [4]. Women felt particularly disadvantaged as hardly any time remained for housework they were expected to do (cf. chapter six).

4. Disruptions in the time schedule of commuters. The figures in table ¹² ~~11~~ refer to a "normal" working day. This schedule is often disrupted by a host of unanticipated factors. All informants said that they had been on at least one bus which had broken down during the journey. Answers to questions about the frequency of breakdowns varied from "only six times since 1974" or "about 20 times this year" to "uncountable times" [5]. Bus breakdowns often caused delays of longer than two hours. Then passengers were forced to wait for the next bus, to wait for their bus to be repaired, or ^{to} ~~to~~ hitch-hike into town [6]. Delays also occurred when buses had to stop along the route to pick up workers and shoppers from white-owned farms who usually had to buy their tickets as they boarded, from drivers who did not always have the correct change.

Only two commuters had never arrived late at work. Most said that

they arrived late too often to recall the exact number of times. An informant who had to start work at 07h00 remarked: "Last week I arrived late nearly every day. Sometimes it would be eight o'clock and other times eight-thirty or nine o'clock." Various punitive measures were adopted by employers in response to late arrivals. In most cases deductions (ranging 20c to R2 per hour late) were made from wages. One informant said that he regularly lost "about one week's salary every month":

Employers never understand our problems because they have their own cars...We sometimes try and inform the managers, but they would just subtract money...Whenever the manager arrives late we would just laugh at him. There is nothing else that we can do because he is the boss.

Other penalties included scoldings from employers, being forced to return home and to forfeit the day's wage, and having one's name blacklisted. Domestic workers were an exception to this and said that their employers usually understood and took no punitive action. Similarly, factory workers were not penalized when large groups arrived late simultaneously. In some instances commuters were dismissed from work.

Disruptions of regular time patterns were most severe for those who did overtime or shift work. In a recent article Adler (1986) argues that shift work in itself undermines regular work attendance. For commuters who worked night shifts (i.e. certain hotel and textile factory employees) commuting exacerbated the problem. They found it virtually impossible to commute to work on a daily basis. Instead they secured accommodation at the municipal hostel, in the homes of relatives and in the servant's quarters of hotels.

Workers who were unable to anticipate overtime work also

experienced great difficulties with disruptions. A furniture salesperson said that he slept with friends in 42nd Hill whenever he returned late from sales trips in the district, but had to buy supper in exchange. "You had to take R5 to buy meat and on those nights that you slept at their homes they were not shy of eating meat and vegetables". A garage worker who lost his job in 1983 recalled:

One Wednesday before Easter we had to work until very late. I managed to get the bus home, but the next day I woke up so late that I decided not to go to work. When I went back the following day I tried to explain, but the manager told me that if I could not work until midnight I should leave the work.

5. Pass arrests. Commuting frequently exposed workers to pass arrests [7]. After 1983 the OVAB and SAP (South African Police) began conducting regular pass checks at bus shelters and road blocks. 30% of all commuters interviewed reported that they had, at some stage, been arrested for failing to produce a pass book: two had been arrested twice, and a railway worker claimed to have been arrested on four different occasions. For this "offence", admission of quit fines of R10 had to be paid within a month following the arrest. Failing this workers were summonsed to court where they could contest the fine or, if found guilty, be fined or imprisoned. A man who was arrested near Kestell while returning from work, recalled his experience as follows:

It was the SAPs that stopped the buses at a roadblock between seven and eight that evening. We were then taken to the police station in Kestell and were fined R10 each. From there we had to foot it all the way to Qwaqwa and only arrived here in the morning at five. I could not sleep and just had to go to work again...The owner said if we did not arrive at work we would be fired, so I had to return. But the next day I was so tired that I found it difficult to work.

Policemen responsible for these arrests were much despised. In

the Diappolo they were called dinotsi (bees). When I inquired about this name I was told that this was "because they sting". According to local gossip, Harrismith's police gave commuters insufficient time to display their passes, never arrested people with whom they were well acquainted, accepted bribes to release those arrested, and were not always sober. A worker who had left his pass in his jacket pocket at work was arrested while buying bread in town during lunch break. A teacher who was arrested in July 1984, remarked:

The police definitely smelt of liquor...After a drinking spree down at the river they just collect people from the bus rank to show that they have been working...With these arrests you are also late for work because they first take you to the offices in the back of a van.

Wage workers from Qwaqwa who slept in 42nd Hill were subject to pass raids in the homes of their hosts in the early morning hours. Although they could obtain special visitors permits at the OVAB offices in the township these offices were closed before knock off time and over weekends. A former 42nd Hill resident highlighted the common occurrence of such raids by saying: "One could hardly sleep there because they came twice in a week and woke up everybody in the house". People who were arrested on account of being in Harrismith without permits were subject to more severe fines (from R20 upwards), and were more likely to be imprisoned. A "live-in" domestic worker, whose reference book had been damaged in the rain was imprisoned for two nights after she was arrested in a Harrismith shop. When I interviewed her she had been waiting in Phuthaditjhaba for nearly a month to be issued with a new book. She was uncertain if she could maintain her employment: "I really don't know if my madam is aware that I am still waiting".

6. Vulnerability to theft. Commuters were particularly vulnerable to theft. Of 25 interviewees, 12 (48%) had either been attacked or pickpocketed on journeys to and from work. Three were attacked but had nothing stolen from them either because they were not ~~carrying~~ ^{carrying} any money, or because they managed to defend themselves and make an escape. Four had been robbed once, four twice, and one on three different occasions. Goods stolen included an overall plus a nip of brandy, food parcels valued at R40, an expensive watch, and the full monthly wage (R 80) of a domestic worker [8].

On the buses, overcrowding provided ideal conditions for pickpocketing and the theft of shopping parcels. One woman's strategy, whenever she boarded a bus, was to: "put the parcels on my back like a baby. These people will force each other and you won't have a chance". Another commuter said that at a bus stop: "I once gave my parcels to a lady because I had to go to the toilets, but when I returned the lady was gone". Drunk passengers on Friday journeys home were most vulnerable. A woman said: "Whenever they black out in the bus they always complain that their goods are stolen". A bus driver substantiated this:

When people get paid and they put their money in their pockets it is often stolen just as they get into the bus... I have even had an incident of stabbing on my bus in Harrismith. I locked the door [from the driver's seat] so that they could not open it, stopped the bus and phoned the police. The one passenger was arrested and the other one was so badly injured that he was taken to hospital.

Informants also feared being mugged by itsotsi on the short route home from the bus shelter at night. Unlike the social bandits whom Hobsbawm (1972) describes as redressing the balance between

the powerful and the powerless, itsotsi are plunderers who prey, by violent means, upon hardworking travellers (Kiernan 1977: 34). Tsotsi gangs usually comprised between two and six young adults. They normally mugged victims by a sudden attack from behind to knock them down, thereby avoiding retaliation. Weapons used in these attacks included knives, sjamboks, axes, and screwdrivers. To conceal their identities itsotsi wore balaclavas, poured pepper in the eyes of their victims, or wrapped jackets around their faces. Two women in the sample were raped by their attackers. Shortly after the opening of the new Phuthaditjhaba bus rank in 1983, two drunks were knifed to death in the toilets after being pickpocketed. Early in 1984 a female commuter was also knifed to death near the Diappolo. An informant who saw her mutilated corpse remarked: "They slaughtered her like cattle are slaughtered". One informant terminated her employment due to fear of attacks by itsotsi. She explained that after one of her workmates had been raped on a Friday evening: "My husband told me to leave my job in Harrismith and search for work in Qwaqwa".

Thefts were seldom reported at the police station as police action was considered ineffective unless victims were able to identify their attackers. Instead, commuters armed themselves with a variety of homemade weapons for protection. A truck driver, who carried an iron rod he had made from a socket spanner, boasted: "Once those itsotsi tried to attack me near the bus, but I chased them away with the iron rod. I hit the one very hard against his head and when it started bleeding they all fled". Workers unanimously agreed that, since their installation, the new mast lights in Phuthaditjhaba had served to reduce the number of muggings. Some feared, however, that killings could

well increase. "With these new lights the itsotsi will kill you if they think you can identify them."

Sometimes terminations of employment were not due to any single one of the above-mentioned factors, but rather to an accumulation of diverse factors. This is demonstrated in the case of an informant who was employed at a Harrismith hardware store. When I spoke to him on a Monday morning during August 1984, he explained that he did not go to work because he had woken up too late to take the 03h00 bus. "If you are late at the store they ~~don't~~ ^{don't} pay you for the hours that you work. It is therefore better to stay at home". When I subsequently met him in February 1985, he was employed as a painter in Phuthaditjhaba. In response to my question as to why he changed jobs, he said: "There were many things. The wages was one thing that made me leave, the problem with the pass another, and also the money that I wasted on bus tickets and all those times of waking up so early".

Collectively these factors have also enhanced negative perceptions of working in Harrismith. Commuting, unlike migrancy, enabled informants to sleep at home and to earn substantially higher wages than workers employed in Qwaqwa. During 1984/85 women in the house population sample who were employed in Harrismith earned a mean monthly wage of R172.15 in comparison to women employed in Qwaqwa who earned only R129.20. Yet, many informants said that they would rather work as migrants or locally. They gave transport problems as the major reason for their choice (cf p. 126).

From the foregoing discussion it can be concluded that commuters have experienced vastly improved conditions of transport and

accommodation since 1979. The discussion also show that there are many factors which have, nonetheless, remained significant deterrents to job stability. In this context there are thus clear limits to the emergence of a stable commuter workforce.

EMPLOYMENT AS LABOUR MIGRANTS

Transport and workplace accommodation were also related to job terminations among informants who were employed as migrants in the industrial centres of common South Africa. Migrants worked vast distances from home. Of the 25 migrants in the house population sample, 14 were employed in the Transvaal (11 in Johannesburg and one each in Vereeniging, Germiston and Vanderbijlpark), six in the Orange Free State (three in Sasolburg, two in Welkom and one in Bloemfontein), four in Natal, and one in Kimberley.

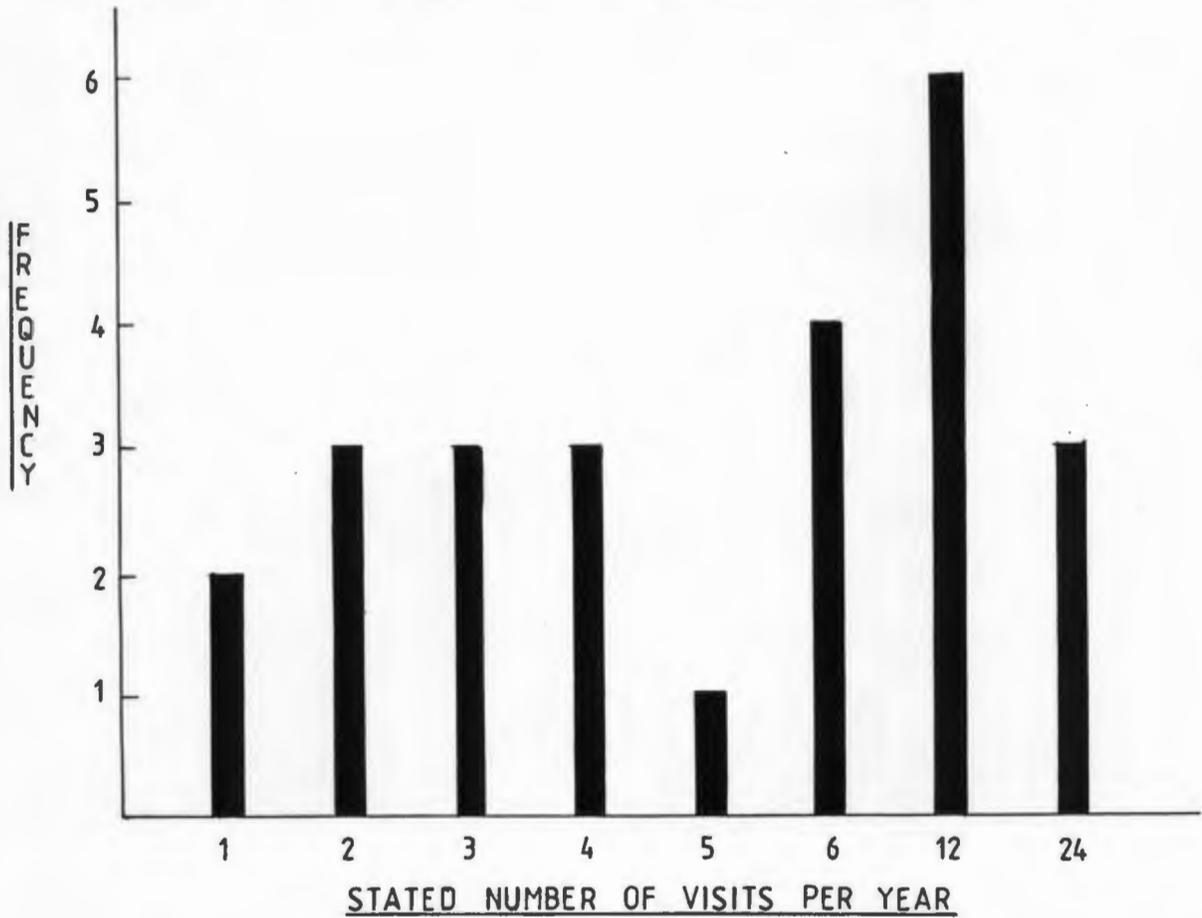
Employment in these centres resulted in long periods of separation from dependants in Qwaqwa. Figure 4 below shows that only 48% of these migrants returned home for more than six brief visits per year and that 52% returned home less frequently than this.

Migrant transport

The availability and accessibility of transport between places of employment and Qwaqwa is a significant factor for the frequency of visits home. Migrants who returned most often were employed predominantly in Johannesburg (337 km from Qwaqwa), Sasolburg (239 km), Bloemfontein (317 km), and Welkom (247 km). Transport

to and from these places by taxi, bus, or rail was relatively easily obtained. In 1984, migrants employed in these centres paid

FIGURE 4: NUMBER OF VISITS BY MIGRANTS IN THE HOUSE POPULATION SAMPLE TO THEIR DEPENDANTS IN QWAQWA PER YEAR (1984/85)



Note: N = 25

between R15 and R22 per single journey to Qwaqwa by combi taxi and between R13 and R20 per single journey by bus with the S.A. Railways or Vaal Transport Corporation. A few workers employed by construction companies were transported to and from Qwaqwa, over Easter weekends and Christmas holidays, on the back of lorries belonging to the companies for which they worked.

Most migrants utilized taxi transport which they considered faster and more comfortable. Others preferred to travel by bus as it was argued that: "These taxis always travel at a very high

speed and this could result in accidents. In 1981 a taxi somersaulted on the Sasolburg road and more than 10 passengers died". Although migrants generally spend less on transport than did commuters, migrant workers who returned home fortnightly could spend up to R60 per month on transport.

Migrants who returned less frequently were mainly those employed in Natal, outlying areas of the Transvaal such as Rustenburg, or on "travelling contracts" from which taxi and bus transport was difficult to obtain. Although Durban is located only 50 km further from Qwaqwa than is Bloemfontein, the sole means of transport from this city were time-consuming train journeys over the Van Reenen's pass to Harrismith, and thereafter a bus to Phuthaditjhaba. A former migrant from Umlazi found it virtually impossible to visit his household in Qwaqwa over weekends. If he boarded a train in Durban at 19h00 on a Friday it would arrive in Harrismith at 17h30 the following day. From there it took three or more hours to get to Qwaqwa and he would arrive home not before 21h00 on Saturday evening. Another migrant was employed in Ulundi. His first brief visit to his wife and children after starting work there during July 1984 took place in September and cost him R60. He explained:

It is too difficult to come home because I have to pay R60 return for taxi fares...It is a private bloke who takes four people in his Chev. In this way he makes R200 because he only uses about R40 for petrol. I arrived here this morning [Saturday] at one o'clock and tomorrow at ten o'clock I would already be leaving.

He argued that although he earned approximately R300 more per month in Ulundi than in the job he had previously held in Qwaqwa, "I'd prefer to work here even with low wages...The contract is worst because it is so difficult to come home".

The costs and inconvenience of transport enhanced negative perceptions of migrancy, thereby indirectly contributing to the decisions of workers not to renew contracts (see chapter six). There were, however, fewer instances among migrants than among commuters, in which employment termination took place as a direct result of transport problems. A former railway worker who worked on the Pretoria to Durban line during the early 1970s recalled that after the December holidays he did not have enough money for transport to return to work. "When I eventually got some money from my relatives to return to Durban I found that those Whites had already left for Pretoria and that is how I lost my work." Thefts during the long trip were also a problem. A woman who worked as a domestic in Sasolburg decided not to return to work after losing R80 and R100 on the buses on two different occasions. In each case the money had been the total amount she had managed to save after a period of two or three months employment. The second of these incidents occurred in December 1982.

It happened on a railway bus from Johannesburg. The bus stopped to take petrol in Bethlehem and the driver told us to leave our bags while we went to the toilet. But when we returned he had driven away with the bus. Everybody lost their belongings. The only ones not to lose anything were those who did not get out of the bus. Oh! I cried a lot. My dress was gone, my money gone and all the things that I bought for my children. Gone...In Bethlehem I wanted to take another bus, but all the buses were so full that I had to walk...The cars would not even pick us up. Oh! my children cried such a lot... many of us who were left behind went to complain at the ticket office [in Bethlehem] and they told us that everything was in Witziesshoek. Here in Witziesshoek they told me to go to the railway office in Johannesburg to complain there, or to leave it. But I never went there because I did not know who drove the bus.

Migrant Accommodation

The workplace accommodation of migrants had a greater influence upon their stability of employment than transport facilities. Migrant accommodation fall into two categories. 23 of the 43 migrant jobs held by life history sample informants involved accommodation in formal migrant hostels; in the 20 remaining jobs workers were informally accommodated outside such institutions. Whereas migrants in the former category maintained their jobs for a mean length of two years and six months (mode = two years), those in the latter category had a mean length of service of four years and nine months (mode = five years).

1. Hostel accommodation. Rex (1974: 8) describes a hostel as: "a kind of bachelor barracks in which workers retire when off shifts to bunk beds in communal dormitories and receive their food in specially provided communal kitchens". Sociologically, hostels belong to a distinctive set of institutions with a "total" or "encompassing" character. Their encompassing character is evident in the maintenance of barriers to social intercourse with the outside world; the breakdown of barriers separating places of sleep, leisure and work within the institution; and the tendency for all these aspects of life to be placed under surveillance of the same authority (Goffman 1982) [9].

Rex (1974), Van Onselen (1980) and Turrel (1982) attribute the widespread use of compounds by employers to their convenience in the sphere of labour control. They argue that because migrants are separated from their dependants, their constant attention can be focussed on their work. The absence of immediate domestic

concerns also allows for little interference in overtime work. Hostels furthermore lower the cost of maintaining a workforce by enabling enormous economies of scale to be made in what would otherwise be worker's spending pattern. It is also argued that, politically, hostels isolate workers from "community organizations", hamper the establishment of worker organizations by a lack of privacy, and can be effectively sealed off in episodes of industrial unrest.

Some of these arguments were substantiated by experiential evidence from workers. Unlike commuters, migrants expressed an eagerness to work overtime. A worker at SASOL who was assigned to the 07h00 to 18h00 shift regularly worked until 21h00, and worked seven days a week once every fortnight. A construction company employee chose to work overtime during weekends, sometimes as late as 22h00. It can also be argued that the relative ease with which 6000 workers were dismissed from the SASOL plants and repatriated to the 'homelands' demonstrates the efficacy of the hostel system as a mechanism for political control over labour (cf chapter one) [10].

There is clear evidence, however, that repulsive living conditions in the hostels were a major contributing factor to the instability of employment. In all hostels the complete lack of privacy was a major complaint: single dormitories accommodated between seven and 16 men from different parts of the South African periphery. A host of rules regulated the lives of migrants. These included the prohibition of noise and liquor in dormitories, and women in hostel premises. Regulations required migrants to be in their allotted rooms before 21h00. For failure to abide by these rules fines were commonly imposed upon migrants

by iinduna and hostel managers.

Migrants, nonetheless, distinguished between "company" and municipal hostels. They preferred to be accommodated in company hostels where they were provided with food, and did not directly pay for accommodation. Here facilities also sometimes included hot water and film shows. Municipal hostels were despised. Here migrants usually paid for their own accommodation (from R15 to R20 in 1984/85) and had to cook for themselves [11]. These expenses often constitute a large proportion of migrant spending. An informant who was employed as a gardener by the Welkom municipality from October 1982 to October 1983, did not renew his contract due to these expenses. From his monthly salary of R80, R12.10 was paid for hostel rent. The remaining R67.90 was divided between housing rents in the Diappolo (R16.60 per month), transport (R25 per visit), food, and remittances to his dependants. He explained:

I left the job because it did not help me pay my rent in Qwaqwa. If I paid rent twice there would be nothing left for me to eat. It was so bad that they forced me to steal to make a living... When I arrived in Phuthas I found that my [housing rent] balance was R100...They locked my house and took my furniture to the municipality..

By all accounts, facilities in municipal hostels left much to be desired. An man described life in a Welkom hostel as: "Really rude. Just like that of a pig". Another said that in the Virginia hostel: "The door of our room was never closed and it was very cold. Sometimes the lice would also bite". It was also noted that in the Heilbron hostel "They don't even have securities".

In practice the hostel system seldom ensured total control over the lives of workers. Van Onselen (1980: 158) reminds us that, in

common with the rest of humanity, contract workers have "needs, aspirations, traditions and a cultural life which distinguishes them from mere automations that are either worked, rested or being repaired". Because hostels tend to make workers "invisible men by inter alia isolating them and treating them as batches of numbers" (Gordon 1978: 118), migrants were actually able to attain some degree of independence from managerial demands. In several instances employment terminations were related to hostel underlife [12] - centering around 'serious' drinking, the smoking of dagga, prostitution, fighting and theft.

Hostel beer halls, selling malt and brandy exclusively to migrants (location dwellers were denied entrance), were officially sanctioned. The extent of such consumption in an all-male environment often had adverse effects upon production, however. A man described drinking in a hostel beer hall near Pretoria as follows:

Everybody always went to drink in the hostel shebeen and in the mornings many workers ~~were~~ woke up with hangovers and decided not to go to work for that day. These people would be punished by not being allowed to work for a month. To you this fine would be a discharge because nobody can stay at the hostel for a month without any money so they just went home. This happened to about two or three people per week. But sometimes workers did not even get fined because they managed to arrive at work at nine o'clock when the managers were not there.

Dagga was often smoked in hostels. Unlike at home, smokers were not, however, provided with any privacy. One informant held a migrant job for 14 years, but lost it after he was arrested for smoking dagga in the hostel and imprisoned for three months. "This was all because of a man who came up to me in the hostel and said 'Hey just take a puff'". Another man, a Jehovah's witness who does not drink nor smoke, attributed his sacking from

a job as a construction worker to a fight with a fellow worker about dagga. He explained:

The argument started in the hostel, but the fight only broke out at work. It was all because of a conversation about dagga... The chap did not like it that I did not understand anything about dagga... While I was packing the irons he just kicked me in the face and that is why I lost the fight. After I fell he hit me with the fist so I lift an iron and hit him with it... The manager did not want to listen to any of us and ~~he~~ sacked us both.

Contacts with difebe (prostitutes or adultresses) were established both in the locations and certain beer halls where, according to one informant, : "they go around in their see-through dresses and the men just crumble". Prices for sex reportedly varied from R5 to R20. The following recollections of an informant who resided in the municipal hostel in Virginia during the 1970s highlights the conflict among sexually deprived males:

Some workers were so madly in love with these women that they spent their whole salaries on them and would suffer for the whole month thereafter... There is a forest near the Virginia hostel and after the men have been paid they would take a girl into the bush. These men would sometimes stand in a queue of four or eight waiting to taste the girl and there would always be fights about who would stand first. The result is death... Other times they ~~would bring~~ ^{brought} the women into their rooms and with all the fighting you would not know if your property was safe. When they took the women into the shebeen and they blacked out, then the business of raping would start... Many corpses have been found in the hostel because of the happenings at night. Sometimes it would be the body of a woman with wounds..

Difebe hamper effective savings and spread venereal diseases among workers. An informant who worked in Bethlehem as a painter and who reportedly never "gave the boss any trouble", was forced to quit work for this reason after being employed for only one year and three months. "I had to come home to see the doctor for an injection and pills. Now I am feeling better, but I don't know if the boss would take me back." By a month later he had left

Qwaqwa to seek employment in Natal. Of equal importance are conflicts between hostel dwellers and location residents due to sexual relations between migrants and location women. An informant who resided in a Welkom municipal hostel said that after he was fined R60 for having sexual intercourse in the hostel, he decided to bring the girl home during a visit to his family in Qwaqwa. "I planned to marry her, but I never negotiated bohadi (bridewealth)". Soon after her arrival she allegedly stole R80 from his household and returned to Welkom.

In Welkom my sister told me that I had to watch out because the relatives of that woman threatened to kill me. I then decided to run away from Welkom and walked all the way to Bethlehem [77 km] from where I got a lift to Qwaqwa. It took me three days and in the nights I just slept in the grass. There were taxis going to Qwaqwa, but I did not have enough money. I even left my pass book and had a new one made.

Many hostel dwellers furthermore complained about theft. One man who had been robbed on five different occasions in a Welkom municipal hostel complained: "In December the itsotsi even put up a placard at the hostel saying 'We're going to share your bonus'.

2. Accommodation outside the hostels Migrants accommodated outside hostels were: "live-in" domestic workers, people staying in the homes of relatives, construction workers employed on "travelling contracts" who lived in tents or shanties at their workplaces, and workers in the transport industry who slept in lorries or in the backyards of their employers.

Informants generally preferred such accommodation to living in hostels. A migrant who stayed in the home of his father's brother (rangwane) whilst working in Durban said: "My rangwane did not want me to stay in the hostel and I did not either because there were too many people in one room". Migrants who stayed with

relatives often contributed money for rent and other domestic expenses.

Migrants who worked on "travelling contracts" were mainly employed in road construction or the installation of rail lines. Others worked in various parts of South Africa installing telephone lines, erecting windmills, or drilling for water. When I asked one informant where he worked he recalled the names of 19 towns in all four provinces and then said "there were also other places, but I cannot remember them all". These workers normally slept in tents or in corrugated-iron shanties and were provided with some food by their employers. A common complaint was that food rations were insufficient, and that it was sometimes impossible to buy more food where they worked. It was also mentioned that the shelters provided were subject to extreme variations in temperature. Another worker complained that he was not provided with any bedding. "You had to see to it that you had your own bed. I got a few planks from the local people and also paid them for a sponge [mattress]. Then the old men showed me how to make a bed". Despite these physically rigorous conditions many workers preferred to live in tents or shanties because these were seldom shared with more than five people and close friendships were often formed. Comments such as: "we really lived well together" and "there was never any kind of fighting", indicate a more favourable social situation than those in migrant hostels.

The experiences of transportation workers were similar. A former employee, from 1969 to 1979, at a furniture removal company based in King William's Town, recalled that he was one of seven workers who loaded furniture from as far afield as Cape Town, Transkei,

Windhoek and "Lourenco Marques" (now Maputo).

We even had to use passports. Sometimes we slept in the back of the truck every night for four months and we did our own cooking. It was really not good because we were not allowed to drive at night nor to sleep in the towns so we always had to park the truck along the road outside the towns. But this was the best job that I ever did. With all the money that they paid us for food and for accommodation I could even bring home R400 per month.

Another informant delivered metal lockers from a company based in Phuthaditjhaba to the OFS goldfields, Welkom, Johannesburg, and Cape Town. A trip to Johannesburg via Welkom usually took two days. At night he and his fellow workers slept in an outside room on the factory owner's farm. During a trip to Cape Town, one which took about two weeks, they usually slept next to the road and in a room in an Elsie's River factory.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have argued that transport and workplace accommodation should not be considered as isolated sociological variables, but as factors inextricably linked to working conditions, domestic considerations and other variables which are in some way associated with workers' perceptions of the nature of their employment.

These factors are conditioned by employment and, in turn, exert important influences upon employment experiences and job stability. The employment of Diappolo wage workers in Harrismith and in the industrial centres of common South Africa implies vast distances of travel as commuters and migrants. In certain instances it also necessitates special arrangements with regard to accommodation.

The inadequacy and unfavourable conditions of transport and workplace accommodation has both direct and indirect consequences upon job stability. Due to disruptions in the time schedule of commuters, many have been dismissed for absenteeism or for constantly failing to arrive at work in time. Among migrants transport problems and hostel "underlife" have also resulted in dismissals, for absenteeism, being drunk, fighting, and smoking dagga. Workers have also deserted as a direct response to repulsive conditions of transport and accommodation. These include arduous and dangerous journeys; transport and accommodation expenses; and venereal diseases, fighting, theft and the absence of any privacy in migrant hostels.

Indirectly these repulsive conditions have contributed to job terminations by enhanced negative perceptions of the work situation which fuel a desire in workers to quit employment. This was most evident among migrants. They were generally better remunerated than other workers. During 1984/85 male migrants in the house population sample earned a mean monthly wage of R433.93 in contrast to the mean monthly wage of R250.62 among men employed in Harrismith and R277.54 among men working in Qwaqwa. Yet only 13 out of 44 informants (29.5%) whom I asked about employment preferences, said they preferred migrancy. The cost thereof, long periods of separation from their dependants and life in the hostels were supplied as reasons for its low estimation. As a result many migrants chose not to return to work after Christmas holidays.

These examples highlight the pertinence of factors such as transport and workplace accommodation to the analysis of labour

situations.

NOTES TO CHAPTER FIVE

[1] This crisis is unlikely to be resolved if the recommendations of the Welgemoed Commission are implemented. The commission declared itself against the use of transport subsidies as a means of redistributing wealth and recommended that each passenger should pay the full economic fare for him/herself (vide Swilling and McCarthy 1984: 33).

[2] Weekly bus tickets costing less than the full fare levied by Setsokotsane are made available to commuters. On average, weekly tickets attract a 64% subsidy from the Department of Transport. Employers in Harrismith are obliged to pay R1 per month for every worker in their employ towards these subsidization costs (SADB 1985: 18).

[3] In contrast to Durban (with a population of 1 million), where 200 bus operators owned a total of 1 600 buses in 1983 (McCarthy and Swilling 1984: 35), Qwaqwa's population (4-500 000) was served by only 65 buses.

[4] Daily commuters in Qwaqwa are relatively advantaged in comparison to other 'homeland' commuters. Ehlers (1982: 13-15) notes that commuters in KwaNdebele who worked in Pretoria frequently travelled a distance of more than 130 kms to work in more than two hours. 29% of Ehlers' informants were absent from home for longer than 16 hours and 4% for 18 hours or longer. In his recent book *Leyleveld* (1986) presents an excellent description of bus journeys among commuters from KwaNdebele.

[5] A high incidence of bus breakdowns is not unexpected. Upon his retirement, a former managing director of Setsokotsane is quoted as saying that continuous analysis had shown that it had been more economical to keep buses going than to replace them. Two buses were "retired" only after both had travelled more than one million kilometres. One bus was sold for a handsome amount to a building contractor who now used it as a mobile site office (STK Chronicles Autumn 1986: 11).

[6] Inspectors from Setsokotsane patrolled the Harrismith road daily to report bus break-downs and to arrange for mechanics to fix buses.

[7] See Hutchings (1986) for an analysis of changes in South African influx control legislation.

[8] Qwaqwa's commuters are not unique in experiencing theft. In

1979 the Natal Commuter's Association transport survey found that 57% of Chatsworth bus commuters have been subjected to acts of violence on buses (Human Awareness Programme 1982: 8).

[9] Other examples of total institutions are army barracks, boarding schools, mental hospitals and prisons.

[10] In his recent book Webster (1986) presents an alternative viewpoint. He argues that hostels are good sites for union organisation precisely because: (a) workers are concentrated without outsiders around; and (b) workers of the same industry, and sometimes the same factory, are congregated in one place without having to be called together.

[11] It has been noted that malnutrition and hostel cooking are closely related. Wilson (1972: 185) writes: "when men are away at work all day and return at work late at night, tired, to their barracks, they will not take as much trouble to cook food for themselves as would their wives were they there to look after them".

[12] I use the concept "hostel underlife" rather than "culture" as used by Moodie (1983: 179) to denote the "interactional reality" of public institutions. My use of the concept is synonymous to that of Goffman (1982: 172, 180) who defined institutional underlife as a set of arrangements by which individuals "employ unauthorized means, to obtain unauthorized ends, or both, thus getting around the organization's assumption as to what he should do and get and hence what he should be".

CHAPTER SIX

EMPLOYMENT, GENDER AND DOMESTIC CONSIDERATIONS

The domestic considerations of workers comprised a crucial factor external to the employment situation that contributed to job terminations. Women often left work because they encountered increasing responsibilities at home or became pregnant. Male migrants left their jobs in order to search for work nearer to their homes and thereby to sustain a more favourable domestic life.

This chapter investigates the impact of the domestic arrangements of workers upon their stability of employment. I emphasize this question rather than the effect of employment upon domestic life - a topic which has recently received some attention in the anthropological literature, especially as regards the impact of migrant labour (cf Schapera 1947, Solien de Gonzalez 1962, Manona 1980, Murray 1980 a and 1981). The chapter is divided into three sections. The first examines the nature of domestic relations and gender roles as social constructs among Diappolo residents. Against this background the second and third sections focus on the relationship between domestic concerns on the one hand, and respectively, female and male wage labour on the other. The data are presented in this order to highlight the different ways in which socially constructed gender roles, and their maintenance, influence labour force participation and domestic considerations among women and men.

HOUSEHOLDS DIVIDED

Evidence collected in the Diappolo supports Sharp and Spiegel's

argument (1986: 2) that households in the South African 'homelands' "do not constitute natural units for micro-level research within which there is a single community of interests". This assumption ignores the often significant conflicts over access and control of income and resources within households. Indeed Kotze' has suggested that his fieldwork in Dixie, Gazankulu, revealed greater differentiation within than between households [1]. Kotze' (1986) isolates two levels of domination within households: that of men over women and of adults over children.

Men and Women

In Diappolo households the prevailing pattern was also one of patriarchal dominance. This is evident in an inequitable division of domestic tasks between women and their husbands. Men's work was largely confined to the sphere of remunerative employment, and they were accorded the prestigious "provider" or "breadwinner" roles. Married men did only gardening and repair work at home and were hardly ever seen doing housework such as cooking, washing clothes, cleaning, feeding and caring for children. Indeed a man who worked as a hotel chef insisted that his wife did all the cooking at home. For most Diappolo women, on the other hand, the housewife-mother role, characterized by unremunerative work such as childrearing and housekeeping, was normative. Ideally, remunerative employment was perceived as of secondary importance.

Men feared that the employment of women threatened their predominant position as "providers". Many men were extremely

hostile to women employed in "unfeminine" jobs and blamed industrialists for creating unemployment among men by employing women at low wage rates. A painter at a construction company in Qwaqwa's industrial park epitomized this view, when he said:

In Qwaqwa we don't have male work anymore. At the company where I work there are eight women and they do any work that men do...They work for cheaper, but these companies are stupid because a man can work much better and quicker than a woman. In a day a man can do as much work as five women. The women would always tell you that they are on the period and they will go to the toilet every five minutes and then stay for ten.

A male workseeker also complained: "These women are much better off than we are because they work and their R10 is better than nothing. They always swear at you and say 'I work and you don't'".

Such widespread feelings of discontent were articulated during the riot by 400 unemployed men in October 1984 (discussed in Case No.1). In the wake of this episode an outspoken journalist on The Pinnacle (11/1/1985) wrote:

The only remedy for ill treatment and exploitation of deprived blacks by well off employers is none other than trade unions...Only trade unions will be in a position to educate women, forming [sic] the workforce in Qwaqwa that their place, under these conditions, is their kitchen. It is only through trade unions that women will comprehend the supportive role that they play...[2]

There was clear evidence of marital violence in the Diappolo. Stories were told of men who beat their wives and of wives who poured boiling water and benzine on their husbands. In one instance a man was imprisoned for three months after he assaulted his wife and she reported him to the police. A male informant related such violence to attempts by men to maintain dominance, and to tensions over the control of income:

Among us Blacks a man is the boss of the house, but these women who have factory jobs want to be like White women and also want to be the boss. Their husbands don't like that and beat them. But men are also to blame. Three of them will go on a drinking spree for the whole weekend and will spend R100 without giving their wives any of their wages. Migration makes men wild.

During interviews, women complained that men were constantly drunk, were jealous of any income that they earned, and failed to provide adequately for their dependants. One informant said of her husband: "If at all he is at home for the weekend he would only give me R10". Another remarked, of the discontent expressed towards women employed in jobs which "should be done by men", that: "There is nothing that we [women] can do. We have to work so that there can at least be an income in the house" [3].

Figures of divorce and marriage bear out conflicts along the lines of gender. Of 101 marriages recorded among members of the house population sample 22 had ended in divorce [4]. Residents used three different emic theories to account for this phenomenon. Each theory can be seen as illuminating different aspects of marital instability. Firstly, divorced men said that their wives left them because they were jobless and consequently failed to live up to their role as "providers". Comments included:

My wife was taken by another man while I was unemployed because women are only interested in men with money;

She returned to her father in Newcastle because I could not afford bohali (bridewealth); and

When I returned from hospital I found that she was gone.

Secondly, divorced women said that their husbands absconded whilst employed in Harrismith or as migrants. "My husband just decided leave and until now he has never been back". According to

the third emic theory, which both men and women used, divorces were due to quarrels within households over the control of resources and income. A woman explained the events which culminated in her divorce as follows:

Our problems started in Schoonplaas because my mother-in-law did not want me to live in their house. She always said that a husband must not work for his wife, but for his mother and my husband usually gave his whole salary to her. She was also jealous of my children and did not want to give them anything to eat. After we were moved to Qwaqwa he left. I have searched for him and talked with him many times, but he refuses to return. He is now living with his parents in 42nd Hill and maybe he has found someone younger than me.

Data on the numbers of single women and men above the age of 20 years show a widespread reluctance to marry. Of the 123 women in the house population sample 57 (46%) were single: 31 had never been married, 18 were widows, and 8 divorcees who had not remarried. Of 101 men above the age of 20 years 47 were single: 39 had never married, seven were divorcees, and one a widower who had not remarried (see Appendix 4 for the distribution of single adults according to age).

Different sociological explanations have been provided for the avoidance of marriage. Van der Vliet (1984: 4) accounts for the tendency among African women in Grahamstown to remain single in terms of "the negative aspects of marriage and the positive aspects of staying single in their own particular situations". She points to the unwillingness of men to pull their weight financially, women's intolerance of the submissive roles assigned to them, ~~and~~ their greater independence, and the desire to control their own fertility. This explanation is substantiated by the comments of some single Diappolo women that they intended never to marry or remarry "because men are too troublesome". My

findings also support van der Vliet's observation that remaining single is no corollary to remaining childless (p. 6). Fourteen women who had never been married had had children, as had all the widows and divorcees in the sample.

The reasons given as to why men should avoid marriage are more complex, particularly in the light of Bernard's (1976) view that men derive far greater benefits from marriage than women [5]. In his study of streetcorner men in Washington, Liebow (1976: 103 - 133) has argued that although men regard a conventional family as ideal, poverty often renders them unable to fulfill the roles of father and breadwinner. In this context, remaining single can be seen as a result of insufficient income and the real and perceived inability to support a wife and a family. Reasons men give for their having remained single may thus be post-hoc rationalizations.

Adults and children.

Kotze' (1986: 33) argues that children present the final point where different levels of domination converge as they have no social category to effectively dominate in sake of their own security. He notes that, as a result, social cooperation was more prevalent among the children than among adults in Dixie and that children often formed an alignment among themselves viz-a-viz adults.

These points are borne out most clearly by the fact that many of Phuthaditjhaba's children are effectively homeless. Isolated groups of children seemed to survive, independently of the family environment, by means of activities such as begging, thieving,

scratching for food in dustbins, and washing cars, for customers at Phuthaditjhaba's two shopping centres, and combis at the taxi rank. A small group of these children slept in railway buses stationed on the outskirts of the Diappolo. The drivers agreed to their doing this if they washed and cleaned the buses during the day. An informant furthermore remarked: "Around here every old empty car is the home of a child".

Adults commonly blamed "naughty kids" for theft. On numerous occasions I was warned to keep the doors of my car locked "because these kids are more dangerous than they seem". A former student at a Phuthaditjhaba teacher's college recalled that a child who slept in one of the railway buses had stolen a pair of boots from a fellow student in 1982. Students caught the thief and recovered the boots at the railway bus. They beat him, took him to the college and forced him to scrub and polish floors, rooms and corridors, wash clothes, clean toilets and pick up papers. After two days had elapsed, some teachers saw the child and took him to the principal's office. From here the boy was released after being lashed while the students concerned were threatened with expulsion. During the course of field work this boy, now approximately 15 years old, was still not at school and could still be seen at the railway bus yard. Children were also accused of stealing crockery from the kitchens of Appolo homes whilst their inhabitants rested in their first-storey bedrooms. And a man complained: "We only have two peach trees, but we hardly get any peaches from them. At first those kids only stole a few peaches each, but now they are so hungry that they would break off whole branches". Another informant removed the grape vines from her garden for this reason. Adults were, however, more

sympathetic towards begging and the search for left-over food. A cook at a teacher's training college said:

After the students have breakfast at the college the staff would take the leftovers for their children and the rest would be thrown into the dustbins. Then these children would come because their parents don't send them anything to live on. At three o'clock in the morning they would already be there. They would always arrive after breakfast, supper and lunch.

Homelessness may be indicative of significant conflicts on lines of age within households. It is also related to the inability of parents to support their children financially, the absence of fathers as migrants, and to mothers who are unable to provide adequate care for their children whilst at work [6].

The above discussion of the relationships of conflict between men and women and of the insecurity of children in the Diappolo provide a backdrop against which I shall now examine the relationship between job stability and worker's domestic concerns. From the preceding discussion two factors are particularly significant. Firstly, it appears that women have far greater domestic responsibilities than men. The result is that domestic considerations have a more profound effect upon women's security of employment. Secondly, there were large numbers of single men and women, and their attitudes towards employment are not as overtly affected by domestic concerns as were those of married workers and they deserve special mention below.

WOMEN, WAGE WORK AND DOMESTIC CONCERNS

Before analysing the experiences of women who withdrew from the labour market, it is essential to consider the domestic circumstances under which women took up employment. Despite male

resistance to labour force participation by women, as many as 60 (51%) out of 117 women of working age in the house population sample were employed. Another 20 said that they were desperately searching for jobs.

An analysis of fieldwork data shows that most women were employed due to economic necessity. 32 wage earning women were single (seven separated and three widowed) and worked in order to support themselves and their dependants in the absence of husbands as "providers". Many women started searching for jobs only after being separated. Others engaged in wage labour because their husbands were unable to fulfil the obligations of the "provider" role adequately. Most of the 28 married woman wage earners' husbands were migrants who sent only irregular remittances. Other husbands held relatively poorly remunerated jobs in factories and the retail sector; and eight were jobless.

Some women had explicitly rejected the ideological prescription that a woman should devote her energies to children and the home. One informant took up employment as a saleslady because her husband failed to provide adequately for her and their three children. "He works in Durban and hardly ever comes home. He doesn't have fixed jobs and never sends money regularly. The last time that he was here was five months ago and then he only gave me R80". She said that feelings of animosity often resulted from the fact that her monthly earnings of R350, plus commission on goods sold, exceeded those of her husband. "There is an inborn jealousy about him. He doesn't even like to see me buy goods for the house although I told him that he cannot afford it."

Other women said that their husbands showed greater understanding. An informant, who had worked at the Elizabeth Ross hospital in Namahadi as a cleaner since 1975, remarked:

I always see my husband bringing money home. Sometimes I feel sorry for him because his boss maltreats him, but at the end of the month he ~~brings~~ brings money. Therefore I have to help him because both of us have to feed the children... If God takes my husband how else will I survive? How will I let my children grow? The yoke is put on both the father and the mother. You must not withdraw yourself."

Childcare and the wage earning mother

The responsibility of supporting children amplifies the need to seek employment. 39 (65%) female wage earners were mothers: 24 with pre-school children. In Qwaqwa, however, no provision had been made for their childcare needs. As elsewhere among the South African poor, childminding constitutes "a widely unknown and obscured, self-help, working class pattern" (Cock et al 1984: 27). Of the 39 wage earning mothers four sent their children to creches whilst they were at work; 16 left their children with other adult members of their household; three with kin or neighbours who were not part of their household, five sent their children to live with kin in common South Africa; and ten left their children at home without adult care.

1. Creches. During 1984/85 there were just two creches in Phuthaditjhaba, run by the Roman Catholic and the Dutch Reformed churches. The former was established by the church council in response to the demands of congregation members. 140 children attended the creche for a monthly fee of R6 each. Members of the church council said that there was a long waiting list of parents who wished to send their children to the creche. They also

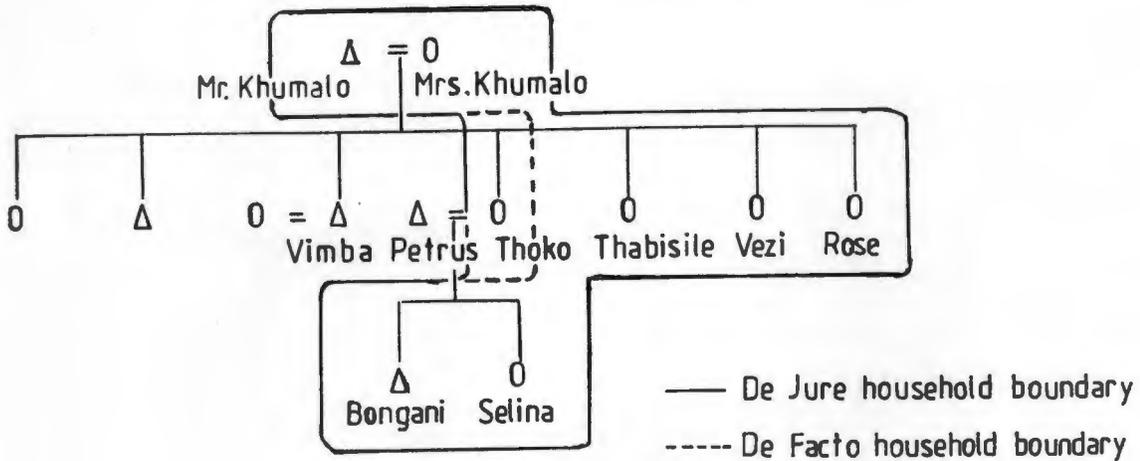
mentioned that they were considering implementing pre-school educational programmes. A shortage of funds and facilities meant, however, that only children above the age of three years were admitted. Women who worked long and irregular hours could also not utilize this facility because creche hours were from 05h00 to 18h00. Although fees at the Dutch Reformed creche were slightly lower and they could accommodate more children, similar problems were experienced there.

2. Care by other adult household members. Mothers who relied upon other adult household members to care for their children were often part of three-generational households. Married mothers shared houses with their husbands and in-laws, whilst unmarried mothers and divorcees lived with their parents: in both instances, children could be looked after by their grandparents. Some households comprised a number of siblings of the parents' generation, and in such cases mothers left their children with uncles and aunts who were not employed. These arrangements were often unstable because the employment status of adults constantly changed and they often spent long hours away from home seeking work. The two cases below show variations upon these themes. In the first case children were looked after by their maternal grandparents, and in the latter case children were left with fellow adult household members to whom they were unrelated by ties of kinship.

Case No.8: Returning to the parental household

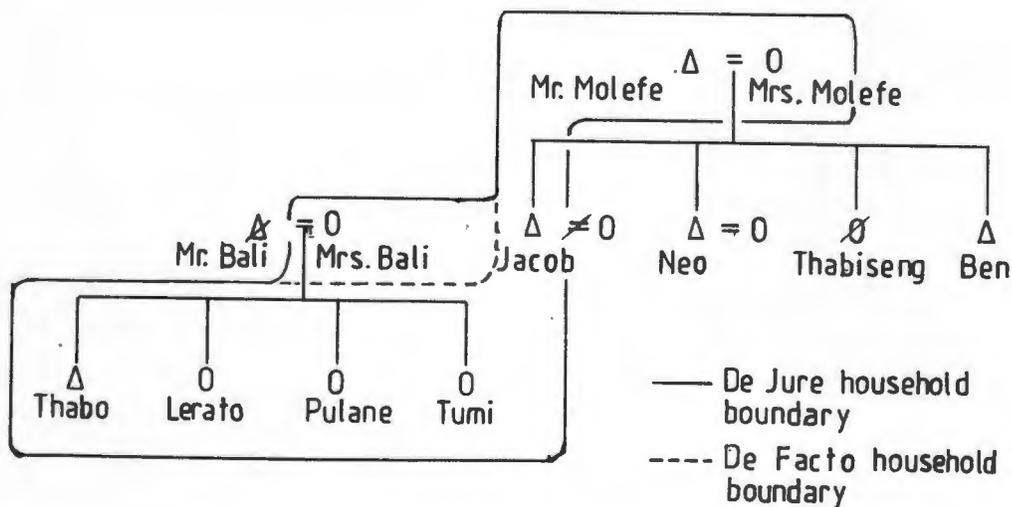
After the marriage of Thoko Khumalo to Petrus in 1974 they established themselves as an independent household in the Diappolo with financial assistance from Mr. Khumalo and Petrus' father. Initially they experienced few problems in meeting their financial needs, as Petrus had found a job at a plumbing concern in Welkom and sent regular remittances. This period of financial security was short lived, however, because Petrus soon lost his

job, turned to crime and was imprisoned on various occasions. Mr.



Khumalo commented: "One day he told me 'Look at my hands. I can't work so hard anymore'...Later I heard that he had become a thief...I helped him set up a house, but he broke into cars and houses and stole car batteries and bicycles. He was eventually put in jail for breaking into a shop, but just two weeks after his release he broke into a bank at Odendaalsrus". Since 1981 Petrus has been serving a 15 year sentence in a Kroonstad prison. Shortly after his imprisonment Thoko returned with her two children to her parents' home. In 1982 she gained employment at a hotel in Durban. Since then she had come home about five times per year and remitted between R40 and R80 monthly. For Thoko the pressure of childcare had been relieved as Bongani and Selina were daily looked after by Mr. and Mrs. Khumalo. Thabisile and Vezi (Thoko's two unmarried sisters) were both employed and assisted in paying their school fees and for uniforms.

Case No.9: Household amalgamation and childcare.



After the death of her husband in 1980, Mrs. Bali could no longer afford the rent of her Appolo house. She therefore arranged with her neighbours, Mr. and Mrs. Molefe, to move into their home with her four children. Mr. and Mrs. Molefe were willing to share

their home as, apart from their eldest son Jacob, they lived alone. Jacob had divorced in 1969 and he constantly suffered from high blood pressure which prevented him from taking up employment. Thabiseng, their only daughter, died in Boksburg, whereas both Ben and Neo, their other sons, were married and had left home. After becoming part of the Molefe household Mrs. Bali obtained employment as a domestic in Kimberley. According to Mr. Molefe she "comes home unexpectedly about once a month. Then she stays only for a day and would be leaving again the next morning". At the time of fieldwork the household survived on money that she brought home as well as on the pensions of Mr. and Mrs. Molefe. From this money Mr. Molefe sent Thabo, Lerato and Pulane to primary school and cared for Tumi, who was only two years old. "I look after them as if they were my own grandchildren", he explained.

Sometimes childcare by other adult household members was inadequate. I became aware of this while visiting the Roman Catholic Church one Sunday evening. A nine-year-old-boy, seeking shelter from the rain, knocked on the mission door and asked resident students for a place to sleep. I later accompanied a priest who took the child to his grandmother's home, in the Diappolo. She had been left to care for him in the absence of both his parents who were migrant workers on the Witwatersrand and was disturbed that he had not slept at home for several weeks. She remarked: "He lives by running around in Phuthaditjhaba, scratching for food in the dustbins and stealing from the gardens". Neighbours regarded the grandmother as too old and ill to care for her grandchildren in the absence of regular remittances.

3. Childcare by kin and neighbours. A few informants also left their children with kin and neighbours who were not part of their household. Unlike in Soweto (cf. Cock et al 1984: 21) limited use was made of professional childminders. Only one informant paid a female pensioner R20 per month to wash, look after and feed her child whilst she worked in Harrismith. Most arrangements did not involve cash payments, but were motivated by norms of kinship and

neighbourliness. They were also informal with respect to hours and accessibility. An unemployed man, who cared for two of his neighbour's children whilst she was at work, explained: "Their mother sometimes sends me food for them, but I never worry about it because they don't eat so much". Mothers nonetheless felt that they were unable to exercise any control over these arrangements. An informant said that although the "lady next door" was supposed to care for her two daughters "one could never know what happened to them while you are gone".

4. Dispersing dependants. With reference, respectively, to Gazankulu and the Matatiele district of the Transkei, Kotze° (1986) and Spiegel (1986b and 1986c) have observed that children are frequently placed and raised in households other than those of their parents. This occurred in the Diappolo also. Children of parents living in the Diappolo may reside with relatives elsewhere in Qwaqwa and in common South Africa. In addition, many children from elsewhere were placed in the care of adult Diappolo residents. Informants often answered my questions as to why dependants were dispersed by saying that it was their Sesotho, Zulu or African "custom". A female pensioner, to whom three grandchildren were sent, argued: "In our nation the children of my sons are my children. After they are breast fed by their mothers I would fetch them...That is how we natives live".

A sufficient account for the dispersal of dependants should also, however, take cognisance of the economic circumstances under which children are fostered outside the households of their parents. In this regard four of the five sampled households from which children were dispersed were severely economically disadvantaged. In three households both parents were unemployed,

whereas the father in the fourth household was hospitalized for TB treatment at that time. In these cases the dispersal of dependants is "the only means available to ensure those individuals access to the necessities of life" (Spiegel 1986b: 16). A father, who had been unemployed for nine months, explained: "Because I suffered, the only way to escape the problem of educating my children was to send them to stay with my mother in Lesotho". Children of the fifth household were sent to live with their grandparents in Harrismith once they reached schoolgoing age because they were unable to speak Sesotho and there were no Zulu-medium schools in Qwaqwa. Although economic necessity may be the prime motive for dispersing dependants, these arrangements facilitate the employment of mothers: for instance, after two mothers had sent their children to their grandparents elsewhere they were able to take up factory work.

5. Leaving children without adult care. In the absence of alternative arrangements a large proportion of wage earning mothers (i.e. 26%) left their children at home without any adult care. A domestic with three children (aged nine, seven and two respectively), whose husband was an unemployed workseeker, said:

Because of the money problem I cannot afford to send the little one to the creche. She would always stay here alone and play outside with the neighbour's children until her brothers come home from school.

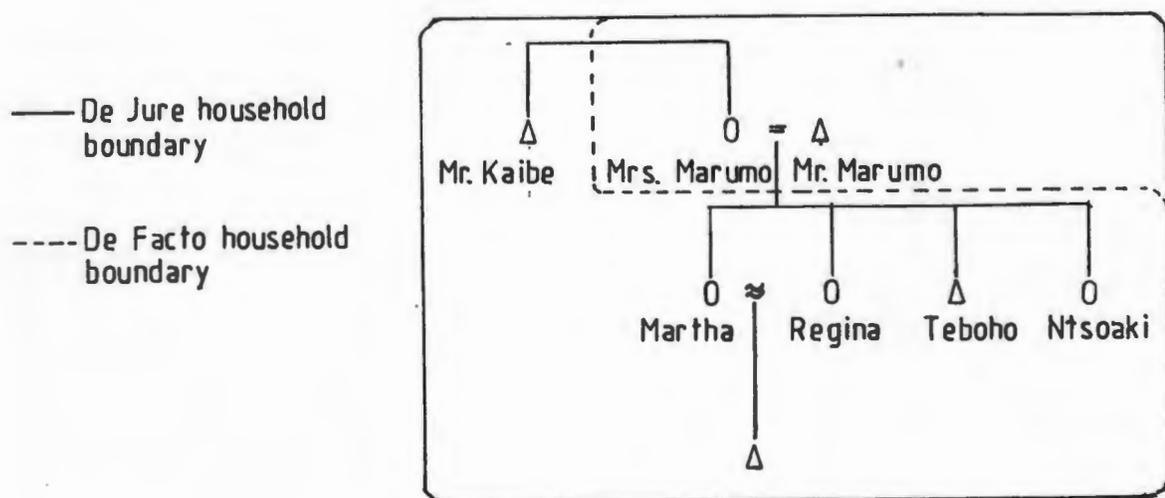
Similarly an informant, who had worked at a Harrismith boarding school from 1975 to 1980, had been unable to make any childcare arrangements.

If I [had] stayed here I could have looked after my children, you are right, but how can you care for them without any money? My husband only came home from Bethlehem on some weekends and then he would not even give me R10...When I worked at the boarding

school I could only come home every second weekend. At six o'clock in the morning I had to start serving breakfast and at seven o'clock in the evening I would still be washing dishes. It was impossible to travel every day so I had to stay in the servants' quarters...When I worked in Harrismith my children were at home alone. Then my oldest daughter was still attending school [15 years in 1980] and she cooked for them and looked after the young ones...I don't think they were naughty, but once my friends at work warned me that a man from Johannesburg bothered my biggest daughters so I chased him away...If they only knew how to lock the door it could be best.

Children's deprivation of socialization by adults, and in a supportive domestic environment was even more acute where both parents were employed as migrants.

Case No.10: Being left alone



Since 1980 Mr. and Mrs. Marumo had both worked in Johannesburg as a factory and domestic employee respectively. During this period their four children (Martha turned 18 in 1984, Regina was 14, Teboho 12, and Ntsoaki 11) were left in the Diappolo. They saw their parents only during their parents' brief visits every month. Then Mr. Marumo usually paid rent and left R80 with Martha.

Mr. and Mrs. Marumo had transferred the domestic and childcare responsibilities, which husbands normally expect their wives to bear, to their oldest child. With the money that her parents gave her, Martha was expected to meet the household's domestic and schooling expenses. She was also expected to do the cooking, perform other household chores, and to care for her siblings and Mr. Kaibe. Mr. Kaibe, her malome (mother's brother), was 57 years old in 1984 and suffered from asthma and severe mental retardation.

Teboho once remarked: "When our parents are away, Martha is our

mother". These expectations were unrealistic, however. In 1983 Martha became the mistress of a man from a nearby closer settlement village and left home. After staying with him for two months she had become pregnant, he terminated the relationship, and she returned home. When I visited the house it was untidy and the beds were unmade. During fieldwork the garden was unkept and the clothes of Regina, Teboho, Ntsoaki and Mr. Kaibe were filthy.

The evidence presented above points to the limitations and inadequacies of existing childcare arrangements, particularly since fathers were unwilling to assist, and opportunities to send children to creches were few and far between. Not all households included other adult members capable of looking after children, nor did everyone have relatives to whom they could be sent for fostering. Many mothers were also unable to find neighbours and kin to look after children whilst they were at work. Phuthaditjhaba's numerous streetchildren serve as a grim reminder of the failure of childcare facilities. In this context it is not surprising that many mothers chose to devote attention to their children on a fulltime basis, whenever it was financially possible to do so.

Housework and wage earning

Employment did not diminish the household tasks of women. Instead they were subjected to what Cock et al (1984: 18) term a "dual shift" i.e. a double load of work, one at the workplace, the other at home. Women still felt that they were housewives even when they were at work (cf. Pollert 1981: 111). Particularly commuters, who spent long hours away from home, experienced great strain in combining their roles as housewives and as employees because they were not assisted by their husbands in housework. A few said that they woke up approximately an hour earlier than leaving for the bus stop in order to prepare food for

themselves, their husbands and children, and to see that the school uniforms of their children were clean. Others cooked, cleaned the home and washed their children after work as they feared missing the bus in the mornings. Another informant's load was increased every Friday morning before work when she brewed beer to sell over the weekend in order to earn some additional income. For most, however, tasks such as cleaning, washing, and ironing were done mainly over weekends. One woman explained:

I never have time to clean the house during the week and it always gets very dirty. I can also never visit my family and friends because sometimes I also work on Saturdays. Then I have to clean my house on Sundays and it can get very dirty.

The fact that employment does not reduce the domestic tasks assigned to women can thus also be seen as conducive to job terminations. Having considered the domestic arrangements of wage earning women, attention is now focused upon women who have withdrawn from the labour market.

Terminating employment

In contrast to the wage earning women, all of the 28 fulltime housewives in the sample were married to men employed in more secure and better remunerated jobs, such as drivers, teachers, railway, government and garage workers. Because their husbands were able to fulfil the demands of the "provider role" there was no perceived need for them to support themselves and their dependants. They were thus exclusively occupied with domestic tasks. A senior railway worker boasted that he did not allow his wife to work, even though their children had left home and were securely employed. "If she works and I come home in the evenings

there would be no food in the house and everything would be behind schedule."

In this context, job terminations by women were often related to changes in their marital status and in the employment status of their husbands. Some recalled that their husbands disallowed them to remain employed after marriage. A woman who had been a domestic in Durban until she was married in 1979 said: "I could have continued working if my husband [had] agreed, but he did not because he did not want me to live so far away from home." A former saleswoman reluctantly quit her job at a shop in Winburg in 1975: "My husband never gave me a reason, but he did not want me to work anymore. I wanted to work, but I had to obey my husband".

There was an even more widespread tendency for women to leave their jobs after the employment status of their husbands improved. When itsotsi assaulted and raped one of her colleagues, an informant's husband told her to discontinue working in Harrismith "because of troubles on the late buses". This was possible, however, only after he had found a job in Sasolburg which offered a monthly wage of R400 excluding overtime. Likewise, two other informants quit their respective jobs as a domestic and salesperson after their husbands were employed as bus drivers in Qwaqwa. The former did so in order to devote attention to her pre-school child, the latter because she suffered from high blood pressure.

Not all female employees passively complied to the demands of their husbands, however. A senior railways worker, who worked as a migrant in Bloemfontein and regularly sent remittances,

complained that, contrary to his wishes, his wife had continued working at Qwaqwa's industrial park.

It is really not good for a woman to work at the plank factory. The problem is that the workers there can get TB from the sawdust. She does not have it yet, but I am worried that she could get it in years to come.

I have shown that being employed, while often related to the need to support children, does not diminish the domestic responsibilities of women. Generally, however, non-wage earning housewives ~~was/were~~ had greater responsibilities at home than wage-earning women. There were only 39 mothers among the 60 wage-earning women in the house population sample, while only two of the 28 non-wage earning housewives were not yet mothers although both were pregnant. Table 13 depicts the ages of the youngest children of fulltime housewives.

TABLE 13: THE DISTRIBUTION OF NON-WAGE EARNING HOUSEWIVES AND MOTHERS IN THE HOUSE POPULATION SAMPLE ACCORDING TO THE AGE COHORTS OF THEIR YOUNGEST CHILD, 1984/85

Age cohorts of youngest child	Frequency
pre-school	16
schoolgoing	6
past schoolgoing age	5

Note: N = 27

It is significant that the five non wage-earning housewives and mothers, whose children were all were past schoolgoing age, looked after the pre-school children of their wage-earning daughters. In this context increased childcare and domestic responsibilities often led to job terminations among women.

With pregnancy some women decided not to continue working on a

fulltime basis. South African women have no legal protection from dismissals during pregnancy, and maternity benefits are available to only a select few of the working population (vide Cock et al 1984: 9). The labour histories collected revealed few cases where informants were dismissed on direct grounds of pregnancy. The most common trend was for women to be granted unpaid maternity leave for an unspecified period. A personnel clerk at a construction company was granted three months maternity leave, but complained that she had been told to start working before this period had elapsed: "Maybe they came to fetch me because they were struggling at work, but just two months for maternity leave is not right." An employee at a meat processing factory, on the other hand, was granted unpaid maternity leave for a year. "We have no limitation on the number of months and it was easy for me to get my work back. The same day that I returned the manager told me 'there is your work waiting for you'." Only two informants, one who worked for a local brickmaker, the other a teacher, lost their jobs when they took maternity leave because their positions were filled by others.

Most said that although they were not dismissed on grounds of pregnancy they had decided to terminate their employment as a result. A worker at a glassware factory left: "Because I worked with acid and glass dust and it would not have been good for my own and my baby's health to continue working." Others left because they would have been unable to see their children regularly or because they could not arrange for them to be cared for by adults in their absence. An informant explained: "If I did not stay at home to look after my child she would not know who her mother or father is even if she is grown up."

In addition to pregnancy, various other factors brought about increased responsibilities at home which rendered women unable to combine their roles as housewives and as workers. A commuter who worked at the Harrismith Holiday Inn deserted from work when her father asked her to care for her mother after she was crippled. Another commuter labourer, who normally started work at 07h00, was dismissed from work in 1976 after her 15-year old school-going daughter had a baby: "Every morning I had to help her with the child because she was too young. I thus arrived late at work almost every day and many days I did not even go to work".

From the preceding discussion it is evident that the childcare and domestic responsibilities assigned specifically to women have enormous effects upon their stability of employment. Normative gender roles were a powerful conditioning force to women's ease of entry into the labour market. In this regard most women held jobs due to economic necessity: they were single or were forced to support themselves and their children due to the failure of their husbands to fulfil adequately the demands of the "provider" role. Normative gender roles also conditioned women's likely exit from the labour market. Wage-earning women experienced role conflict and overload: childcare arrangements were often inadequate and employment did not diminish their domestic workload. In this context jobs were often terminated upon changes in their marital status, on improvements in the economic status of their husbands, and upon their being faced by increased domestic responsibilities.

MEN, DOMESTIC CONSIDERATIONS, AND EMPLOYMENT

Domestic considerations were of less importance to male wage workers as they had fewer responsibilities at home. There was, however, a tendency among men also to consider the financial situation at home before leaving their jobs. This tendency is demonstrated by the following two contrasting experiences. One man who was dismissed from work was a member of a household of eight people when only his mother, who worked as a domestic, was employed. "My old lady is the only person in the house that is working and I really feel angry because I cannot help her". Another man was happy to desert from a job which he had held for fifteen years, once his three children had left home, were married and securely employed.

Men who lost their jobs as a result of retrenchments and dismissals (where they have no control over the time of termination) were often disadvantaged in relation to men who deserted. In the 16 cases of retrenchment among men in the sample (for which I have accurate information on domestic circumstances) six (38%) lost their jobs when no other members of their household were securely employed. In the 19 instances of dismissals nine (47%) lost their jobs when no other members of their household were engaged in full time employment. These figures are high by comparison with those in the case of desertion: seven (22%) in the 31 cases of work-related, and five (29%) in 17 instances of nonwork-related desertions. It is also significant to note that in three cases of desertion, informants had obtained what they considered as "better jobs" before terminating their employment. This correlation seems significant despite a rather small sample size. It suggests that the greater

the control of workers over terminations of employment, the less drastic the consequences thereof. It should, however, be emphasized that this did not emerge as an important factor during the interviews I conducted, but was only discovered from a subsequent analysis of field notes.

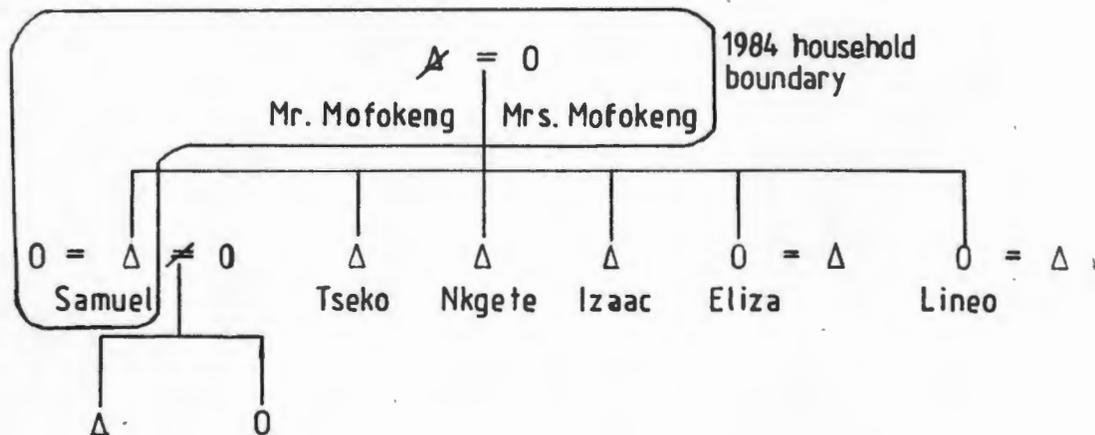
At a more particularist level, domestic concerns most profoundly affected the decisions of migrant labourers to terminate employment, or to change jobs. To them, long periods of absence from home was, with the exception of wages, the most crucial factor in their evaluation of employment experiences. There was a discernible difference, however, between the perceptions of informants who were single and those who had wives and children to support. This difference was not, however, reflected in the frequency of visits home. These corresponded more closely to the accessibility and efficiency of transport from places of employment than to the marital status and domestic circumstances of migrants (cf. chapter five).

Single migrants

A large number of male migrants in the house population sample (i.e. 12 out of 25) were single and did not have any children to support. Men in this category seldom quit their jobs for domestic reasons. Unmarried migrants generally remitted far less than married migrants. Only two single men brought or sent home more than R80 per month. Most did not remit, or remitted infrequently in irregular amounts. One mother complained that although her son earned a "good wage" at SASOL, and regularly visited home, "he never gives us anything". In this context ties

with households in Qwaqwa often weakened, as membership of these households often offered migrants little economic reward, culminating in the decisions of single migrants not to return. This theme is clearly illustrated in incidents of absconding in Case 11.

Case No.11: Absconding in the Mofokeng household.



When the Mofokeng household was relocated to Phuthaditjhaba from Schoonplaas in 1971, Mr. and Mrs. Mofokeng were both pensioners. Two years after their arrival Mr. Mofokeng died. Samuel, the oldest of their six children, lost his job as a result of relocation. As he was unable to fulfil bohali obligations his wife returned to her parents in Newcastle with their two children (cf. p. 170). After subsequently obtaining employment in Qwaqwa, Samuel remarried. At the time of the interview his second wife worked at a local furniture factory. Her four children from a previous marriage were being looked after by their maternal grandmother in Bethlehem. Tseko, Mr. and Mrs. Mofokeng's second son, obtained a migrant labour contract in Durban soon after arrival, but was never seen again. Samuel explained: "I once heard that he was imprisoned in Pietermaritzburg, but I really don't know why. Perhaps it is the pass laws or perhaps he had stolen something." Likewise Nkgete absconded after the death of his father in 1973, whereas Izaac "Just disappeared when the old location was being demolished." At the time of the interview Eliza and Lineo, the two Mofokeng daughters, were both married and had left home.

There was nonetheless considerable variety in the intensity of ties between unmarried male migrants and their households in Qwaqwa. As a result of increased domestic responsibilities a man lost his job at a pet food factory in Johannesburg. He explained the course of events which led to the termination of his

employment, as follows:

When I returned from my contract in Johannesburg during the December holidays of 1978 I found that my father was ill and was dying. I stayed at home for three months to look after him and had nobody to send a message with to the managers. After my father's funeral I returned to Epol, but the managers said that they had employed someone else in my place and no longer had work for me.

Married migrants

Domestic considerations were of far greater importance among men who worked as migrants to support their wives and children. As a result, only five of the 13 married migrants in the house population sample remitted less than R80 per month. One migrant, who worked on a contract at SASOL II from 1981 to 1982 and earned R80 per fortnight when the contract expired, said that in order to support his wife and seven children he had always brought his entire wage home after being paid. "I'd pay R14 for transport and if I only kept R2 for myself for tobacco it was all right. When it comes to home-brew your workmates would always give you something." Another married migrant, who stayed at a municipal hostel where he had to buy his own food recalled: "I tried to economize and bought only half a loaf of brown bread and a pint of milk every day".

Long periods of separation from wives and dependants often resulted in feelings of discontent, however, as men felt that they were unable to sustain any meaningful relations with them. These concerns are discussed in the sub-sections which follow.

1. Migrants as husbands. The words of the song Ke Bohloko Ba Phelo (The Pain of the Heart), which I recorded in a Diappolo shebeen,

describes the loneliness of the wives of migrants who are left behind. An informant, who worked in Johannesburg, said that migrants: "Sing this song when we are sad and think of our women at home", and continued: "In Johannesburg we always think of our wives and where they are. You wish that you could only open your eyes and see her".

Ke Bohloko Ba Phelo

Ha letsatsi le dikela
ke helwa ke bohloko ba
phelo.
Ke nahana (3x) wena feela.
Ho Bohloko jwang (2x)
ho ntshea ke le mong.
Ho re ke ipolaye
kapa ke nwe tjefu
ke ikele hae.
Empa ke dule ke ntse ke tonne maho.
Ke letile (3x) wena.

The Pain of the Heart

When the sun sets
I am cut down by the pain in
the heart.
I only think about you.
How painful it is
to be left on my own.
I feel that I can commit suicide
or drink poison
so I can go home [to heaven].
But I shall keep on looking.
I shall be waiting for you.

Married migrants, like soldiers, constantly feared that they were cheated by their wives whilst away from home. According to a story related to me, a migrant returned from a nine month contract with SASOL, killed both his wife and her lover after he found that he was being cheated [7]:

When he knocked on the door it was the man that stayed with his wife who answered and said kena (enter). Because he had been away for so long he was wild, did not want to listen, and killed them both with a bread-knife. There was blood all over his Appolo home.

Although there is every chance that this story is apocryphal, it serves as a myth which highlights migrant fears and suspicions. These fears were accentuated by the belief that many women in Phuthaditjhaba were difebe. This belief is substantiated by a number of observations. A divorced man told me: "After I stayed in Phuthaditjhaba for only one month and I already had VD".

Another man asked my advise on what to do because he thought his wife was a sefebe. I myself was propositioned by a pimp near a Phuthaditjhaba shopping centre [8].

One informant in the life history sample, a man who had worked as a ticket controller for the S.A. Railways during 1976 and 1977, left his migrant job explicitly because he had felt cheated by his wife. He was satisfied with his wages (R480 per month) and conditions of employment, but described the events which led him to quit as follows:

...My wife was very beautiful. When I met her at school she was an orphan and I educated her. But when I once returned to Qwaqwa there was a policeman sleeping with her on my pillow. After all that I had done for her she found that I was useless because I was not working at home and fell in love with another bloke...I decided to start a new life, took my clothes and left her and my three children.

When he remarried in 1977, he resigned from the S.A. Railways and started working at the Harrismith post office.

Other migrants claimed to have left their jobs soon after being married, because they feared being cheated by their wives. One informant started working as a "store man" at a Durban cement factory in 1971 when he was unmarried. Whilst thus employed he found it possible to visit home only during December holidays. In 1981, a year after his marriage and the birth of his first child, he terminated his employment. "I found it impossible to continue working there any longer and left because I got home sickness and became nostalgic." Similarly a man who was employed for a "good wage" as a lorry driver in the Transvaal chose not to renew his contract. "I got married and it was too far away from home to work in Pretoria."

2. Migrants as fathers. Male migrants were not only concerned with their relationship with their wives. Reynolds (1984), in a study of migrants in Cape Town's municipal hostels, shows the concerns which migrants as fathers had for their children in the 'homelands'. She argues that almost all cherished and clung to the ideal of fatherhood, despite conditions which rendered it impossible to realize (p.15). Migrants expected their children to regard them as strangers and intruders during their visits home, and they feared that their children would grow up as vagabonds and hooligans unless firmly disciplined. They furthermore believed that their children were unruly and had no respect for their mothers who were unable to control them.

My study supports these observations. Although migrants from the Diappolo agreed that "no migrant can give his children proper parental care" they believed that, as fathers, it was their responsibility to discipline their children. An informant explained:

Whenever my children misbehave I'd talk to them as a father, but if they don't obey I'd lash them so that they could see that what they are doing is nonsense and won't do it again...As a migrant it was really very hard for me to keep an eye over the children although I tried to come home nearly every month end. Sometimes, when I came home after a long time, they'd be scared of me.

A few migrants said that childcare was an important consideration in their decisions to quit their jobs. This was most evident in the case of a former railway policeman who became a police constable in Qwaqwa in June 1984 although this meant working for lower wages. He changed jobs because he had worked the route between Harrismith, Bethlehem and Bloemfontein and had managed to visit home only twice per week. A major consideration was the

well-being of his 12-year-old son, one of seven children left at home while his wife worked at a local factory. In her absence, the grandparents, who also lived in the Diappolo, were asked to "keep an eye over the children." These arrangements were, however, regarded as inadequate:

My 12-year-old son became a thug and did not want to attend school. Once I even caught him smoking dagga with some other kids. I used to lash him, but it i not help. I want him to become a policemen like me, but he refused to attend school.

By working closer to home he aimed to discipline his son more effectively. Another migrant, who visited his wife and children twice a year from Johannesburg, said: "I left the job because I wanted to be near my home. It is really bad to work so far away from home and your children and not to receive a letter when your child is ill." He later found work in Kroonstad from where could visit more frequently.

It is essentially due to such domestic considerations that men terminated employment after being transferred to places considered as too far for regular visits. This was a common response among men who worked on "travelling contracts". A migrant employed by a construction company in Florida said: "They wanted to transfer me to Cape Town, and Cape Town was too far". Similarly, another migrant, with four children, resigned after being transferred from Vereeniging to the Northern Cape by a transport company:

When working in Vereeniging I came home once every second month, but I saw that they were going to work far away from Qwaqwa - in the Kalahari - so I left. To work so far away is bad. If the children need something I would be too far from home to send it to them.

From the discussions above it is thus evident that domestic

concerns had a dual impact on male migrants. Firstly, men often took up employment as migrants to fulfil the demands of their designated role as "providers" effectively. Secondly, I have shown that male migrants sometimes terminated employment as a result of the conflicting demands of their role as "providers" with those of husbands and fathers.

CONCLUSIONS

In a thought-provoking article Bozzoli (1983 b) criticizes studies which merely aim to reveal the 'functionality' of gender relations for the capitalist system [9]. These studies go little further than to suggest that whilst 'homeland' men are drawn into capitalist production, women perform unpaid labour which lowers the costs of reproducing labour power. Bozzoli (1983 b: 141-3) argues that such an approach fails to explain the points at which male domination and capitalist production do not suit each other, and omits to recognise the existence of unequal relations between men and women, by exclusively focussing relations between women and capitalism. She furthermore asserts that the fact that women perform certain functions for capitalism does not mean that patriarchy was a pure creation of capitalism. As an alternative Bozzoli introduces the concept of a 'domestic struggle' and suggests: "The outcome of...domestic struggles may in fact condition and shape the very form taken by capitalism in that society" (p. 147).

Along with Sharp and Spiegel (1986), I find that Bozzoli presents a more appropriate conceptual framework for the analysis of domestic relations in the 'homelands'. Without overlooking the

significant impact of labour force participation on domestic life, this chapter has pointed to a number of ways in which domestic concerns have influenced employment stability among Diappolo wage workers.

Of central importance in this regard is the maintenance of gender roles as social constructs among Diappolo residents. I have shown that male dominance and the normative confinement of women to the housewife-mother role conditioned both women's ease of entry into, and likely exit from, the labour market. In the light of men's resistance to labour force participation by women, employment was most compatible with remaining single. Married women had to contend with resistance to their participation on the labour market by husbands, found it difficult to ensure that their children were properly cared for, and faced an undiminished domestic workload. In this context women either chose to remain single, thereby ensuring a degree of financial independence, or to terminate employment, thereby diminishing the role conflict and overload which they experienced as wage earners.

Although men are normatively regarded as "providers" rather than the performers of domestic tasks, their employment stability was also affected by domestic concerns. This was most evident in my descriptions of migrant labour. I have aimed to show that the role of men as providers via migrant labour is often contradictory to the ideal of being a husband and father. Migrants often terminated their jobs, and chose to work nearer home, because they feared that they could be cheated by their wives or because they felt unable to discipline their children adequately. In addition, they tended to consider the financial situation at home before terminating or changing jobs.

NOTES TO CHAPTER SIX

[1] Personal communication, October 1986.

[2] Such opinions were not unique to Diappollo men. After visiting Qwaqwa a Soweto-based journalist wrote: "Things are not as they should be down in mountainous Qwaqwa's capital Phuthaditjhaba, jobwise, that is...it is not unusual to see elderly mothers toiling with men building houses. Yet despite their ages and weight, these mammas can be seen pushing fully laden wheel-barrows..."(The Voice 10/2/1979)

My research evidence contradicts the findings of anthropological studies in Europe which show an equitable division of domestic tasks between women and their husbands among working class households (cf. Willmott and Young 1975).

[3] Women's opinions about men could be much more critical than they appear here and should be viewed in the context that my research assistants and I were male. Different results could possibly have been obtained had the interviewers been female.

[4] In Qwaqwa the terms divorce and separation denote differences in legal rather than in social status. Many residents were voluntarily separated with no intention of being reunited, avoiding expensive legal divorce procedures. A man, who had been separated from his wife for more than three years, explained: "We are not divorced, but there is apartheid between us. I will never see her again."

My figures on separations are comparable to those recorded by Manona (1980: 196) in Burnshill, Ciskei. Of 109 marriages he investigated during the late 1970s 24 (22%) ended in separation. Manona relates marital instability to the vagaries of labour migration and "the new attitude of women who revolt against established norms". By contrast, Kotze (1986: 10) notes that the 41 men in Dixie, Gazankulu, have married 70 times (of whom half had married more than once, and some up to four or five times); and the 69 women 70 times. These figures are seen as a consequence of conflict within households and of male dominance. Kotze (1986: 9) writes: "The men of Dixie fear to be single...the women fear marriage - at least once they've had the experience of marriage".

[5] "There is", Bernard (1976: 15) writes, "no greater guarantor of long life, health and happiness for men than a wife well socialized to perform the 'duties of a wife', willing to devote her life to taking care of him, providing, even enforcing, the regularity and security of a well ordered home".

[6] These stories bear striking resemblances with Turnbull's (1984) disturbing ethnography of Ik life in the barren mountains separating Uganda, Sudan and Kenya where conditions of extreme deprivation forced children older than three years to care for themselves in "age bands" independent of any supportive family environment.

[7] Gordon (1977: 244) describes migrancy as a vicious circle. "The husband suspects his wife of being unfaithful and therefore does not send remittances, while the wife justifies acts of unfaithfulness precisely because she does not receive remittances from her husband". Women are similarly aware of stories of difebe in migrant compounds and hostels.

[8] Spiegel (1980: 152-153) observes that the phenomenon of concubinage (bonyatsi) is quite universal in rural Lesotho. He defines bonyatsi as "relationships ranging from one in which a couple is living together but where no bridewealth has been paid, to brief liasons with passers-by, as long as these are neither too regular nor involve any direct and explicit transaction. In that event the relationship is one of botekatse (prostitution).

[9] See Yawitch (1978).

CHAPTER SEVEN

BEYOND EMPLOYMENT

This chapter builds upon the argument that a full understanding of job terminations needs to consider factors outside employment. It focuses upon the experiences of informants who were not employed at the time of research, had been unemployed at various times in the past, and/or had not been engaged in wage work ever since arriving in the Diappòlo.

Industrial psychologists such as March and Simon (1958) and Price (1977), have argued that the availability of jobs is, under nearly all conditions, the single most accurate predictor of labour turnover. They show that there is an inverse relationship between unemployment and the quit rate: as unemployment increases the quit rate decreases and vice versa.

African labour studies have, however, highlighted the need to consider not merely the availability of alternative jobs, but also other resources which sustain those not engaged in wage labour. Perrings' (1978) study of mineworkers concludes that, for most African workers on the Copperbelt during the period 1911-1941, access to non-capitalist forms of agricultural production was the ultimate determinant of labour mobility. Such access, more than any other factor, determined the frequency and duration of periods spent in wage labour. Monthly recruitment rates varied according to stages in the agricultural cycle.

Regional and temporal differences in agricultural production, and ease of access to produce markets, were also deemed to account for differential patterns of labour mobility. In Northern

Rhodesia, during times of drought or plagues which caused drastic loss of livestock, or during times of economic recession, the flow of workers to the mines was stimulated; conversely, the pressure to enter the labour market was reduced by increases in the prices of agricultural products (Perrings 1978: 105-155) [1].

This situation is unparalleled in the South African 'homelands' today. Referring specifically to the closer settlement areas of Qwaqwa, Sharp (1986: 3) notes that "the material means (chiefly agricultural land) do not exist to enable the diffusion of returns from wage labour to provide maintenance during periods of unemployment" [2]. He argues that the returns of local income-generating activities such as hawking fruit and vegetables are largely insignificant and that there are few resources upon which petty production can be based. He also points to the erosion of kinship and neighbourliness as resources for social support. This is attributed to the fact that these relations cannot be realized through agricultural co-operation, and to widespread poverty. "Even if one's father, brother or sister lives on the very next site there can be no assurance, given the conditions people face, that long-term material assistance will be forthcoming from them if it is needed" (Sharp and Spiegel 1985: 146). Similarly, people were unable to borrow from impoverished neighbours if they were unable to reciprocate. In a sample of 38 site populations in Tseki, Sharp found that 12 had members diagnosed as suffering from malnutrition-related diseases during 1983 (1986: 14). In this context the nature of unemployment can be expected to constitute a powerful deterrent to job terminations.

This expectation is, however, not realized in the findings of

Hofmeyr's (1984) study of unemployed men in a peri-urban area near Pietermaritzburg. He argues that most men were "engaged in a search of a job meeting their aspirations, rather than simply being unfortunates who have been unable to find work primarily because of an inadequate total number of jobs" (p. 57). He presents survey-type data which indicates that 75% of his respondents aspired to more than unskilled work and were not prepared to accept jobs with low wages, dangerous working conditions, or which were too great a distance from home. This, he argues, is because they derived some means of support other than a regular wage paying job. A small number were engaged in casual work or received unemployment insurance payments. Others were supported by fellow household members who were employed.

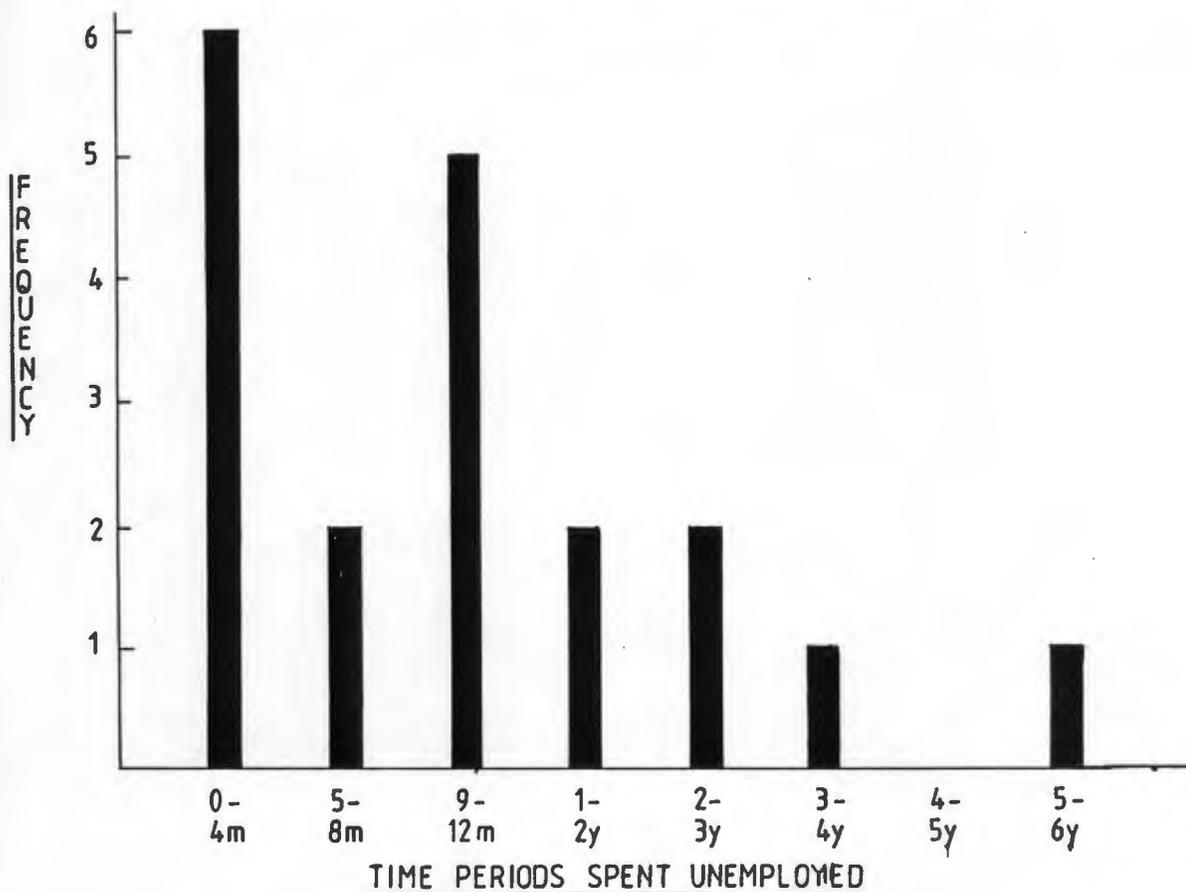
Bearing these considerations in mind I shall proceed to outline some quantitative dimensions of joblessness among Diappolo residents as a backdrop to looking more closely at the nature of their unemployment. Central questions posed are: to what extent were informants able to maintain themselves during periods of unemployment? how did they subjectively perceive their situation? what were their aspirations and strategies in workseeking? and how were these constrained?

JOBLESSNESS: SOME QUANTITATIVE DIMENSIONS

34

Out of the ~~20~~ informants in the life history sample who were jobless during 1984/85 19 (13 men and six women) were unemployed in the sense that they were not formally employed, but wanted, and were able to take up employment. Their mean period of unemployment was 1.4 years (cf. Table 10). Figure 5 gives indication of the distribution of the times that they spent

FIGURE 5: THE DISTRIBUTION OF UNEMPLOYED INFORMANTS IN THE LIFE HISTORY SAMPLE ACCORDING TO TIMES SPENT UNEMPLOYED (1984/85)



Notes: (a) N = 19
 (b) m - months, y - years

unemployed. A further ¹⁵ ~~15~~ informants (^{ten} ~~ten~~ women and ^{five} ~~five~~ men) were not employed, but indicated that they were either unwilling or unable to accept employment: ^{eight} ~~five~~ for domestic and ^{seven} ~~seven~~ for health reasons. These informants were jobless for considerably longer than those in the former category, only three for less than ten years, and five had never been formally employed whilst resident in the Diappolo.

MAINTENANCE DURING UNEMPLOYMENT

A sampling bias?

In assessing the means of maintenance of Diappolo residents

during unemployment it should be noted that my results are distorted by a sampling bias. A large number of Diappolo houses had seen changes in tenants between 1971 and 1984 (see chapter one). Some tenants had been unable to afford housing rentals and had secured cheaper closer settlement accommodation. It is the policy of the Phuthaditjhaba housing office that for rent arrears exceeding three months, tenants are sent letters of reminder; for six months, clients are handed over to attorneys for the collection of arrears; and after 12 months repossession is sought (Lentswe La Basotho March 1982). According to one informant, his household was evicted for failing to pay rent for more than a year: "They locked my house and took all my furniture to the housing office where it was sold by public auction. I took some money that I borrowed from relatives down to the office, but it did not help". His household subsequently took up residence in the home of his sister in the Diappolo. By limiting my interviews to people who had been able to remain resident in the Diappolo I thus excluded people for whom the consequences of unemployment was eviction from the estate [3].

From my field notes it is clear that unemployment implied a substantial loss of income. Common remarks were: "You don't feel well if you don't work. Even my body is losing weight"; "Sometimes I see a piece of furniture in the shop and it is so cheap. Then my heart aches because I cannot afford it. Most of the time I'm just thinking about the work"; "You feel bad and sad and look ill when you are jobless"; and "My stomach tells me that I have to work each and every day. If you don't work it will tell you: 'I am hungry'. My heart always says 'Krommel, Krommel' [Grumble, Grumble]...There is nothing here. They have even

repossessed my furniture".

Jobless informants of working age, and who maintained residence in the Diappolo, could, nonetheless, derive an income from two potential sources: social support in the form of social welfare payments such as unemployment insurance and disability pensions, and financial assistance from fellow household members and kin; and income derived from casual labour.

Sources of support

1. Social welfare: (a) Unemployment insurance. A pamphlet given to me at the Phuthaditjhaba labour bureau lays out the following cumbersome procedures necessary for obtaining unemployment insurance benefits. Whilst employed workers are required to contribute 5c for every R10 of their monthly earnings and employers 3c for every R10 they pay to an Unemployment Insurance Fund (UIF). Upon termination of employment a contributor's record card, stipulating details of service, must be handed to the employee. Workers who do not receive these cards are expected to report this to the Department of Manpower office in Bloemfontein. Thereafter they have to hand in their contributor's cards at the Phuthaditjhaba labour bureau and obtain a form certifying that they are looking for work. Before they can get this form, they are required to prove that they have unsuccessfully applied for a number of jobs.

Then only are applications for benefits sent to Bloemfontein. A prerequisite for eligibility is that applicants must have been in employment for at least 13 weeks during the year preceding unemployment. Benefits are calculated at a rate of 45% of normal

weekly earnings. One week's benefits are payable to contributors for every six weeks worked and may be received for a maximum period of 26 weeks after the first receipt. Various penalties are instituted. Workers who resigned from work are not entitled to UIF money for at least six weeks following their resignation. Failure to apply for or accept work deemed suitable by the claims officer also leads to a 13 - week penalty (vide Department of Manpower: 1983, Cooper: 1984).

Only one of the 19 unemployed informants whom I interviewed received such payments. Others did not receive benefits for a variety of reasons: domestic, public service and South African Transport Service employees were excluded from UIF membership, some deserted from places of employment without collecting contributor's cards; whereas others reported that their cards had been lost or cancelled [4].

(b) Compensation for industrial accidents Financial compensation for industrial injuries was more common. Three of the six jobless informants who had withdrawn from the labour market on account of ill health were receiving compensation. These included two TB sufferers: one man received R65 per month from SANTA (the South African National Tuberculosis Association), the other was paid two weeks wages and thereafter derived support from a commercial insurance policy to which he had contributed R3.45 weekly whilst employed. The third informant was a railway worker with more than 15 years unbroken service. He was forced to stop working after rheumatism crippled his legs. "Last month people from the railways were here. They gave me R70 and said that they were trying to arrange for a pension, but I really don't know what

this will be."

There were other informants who said they were still awaiting such payments. A ex-worker at a Phuthaditjhaba metal factory, who had been hospitalized and had had three toes amputated after a steel bar fell on his foot at work, had waited for six months for compensation, but to no avail: "Last week I went to the factory to see if the forms that the doctor filled in were there, but they said the forms had not arrived and told me to come back later".

2. Assistance by kin. Reynolds (1984: 23) endorses the argument that kinship networks cannot be relied upon for support and sustenance in conditions of extreme poverty (cf. Sharp 1986, Sharp and Spiegel 1985), but adds: "The point is not to say that kin no longer support and sustain one another. They do...The point is only that no longer is the safety net of kinship dependable."

Evidence from the Diappolo shows both the failure and success of kinship as a means of social support. The failure of kinship is evident in conflict over resources within households, absconding, divorce, irregular remittances, and incidents of child neglect as described in chapter six. Yet assistance from fellow household members and kin was of greater significance than most other mechanisms for maintaining informants during periods of unemployment. In chapter six I pointed out that some women withdrew from the labour market once the employment circumstances of their husbands had improved, and that men tended to consider the financial situation at home before terminating employment. In

this regard table 16 below shows that 14 of the 19 unemployed interviewees were members of households with access to wage earnings.

TABLE 16: THE DISTRIBUTION OF UNEMPLOYED INFORMANTS IN THE LIFE HISTORY SAMPLE ACCORDING TO NUMBER OF WAGE EARNERS IN HOUSEHOLD (1984/85)

Number of wage earners in household	Frequency
0	5
1	7
2	4
3	1
4	2

Note: N - 19

Unemployed people were also supported by pensioners and by relatives in common South Africa. In one instance a man and his wife who were both unemployed responded to their financial predicament by sending their children to be fostered by his pensioner parents who resided in a 'single' near the Diappolo. They regularly borrowed money from his parents and often ate meals at their home. The couple were, furthermore, able to meet housing expenses by sub-letting two rooms in their Appolo home to teachers. Another informant who was unemployed from 1981 to 1983, had lost his job because he developed TB and was hospitalized for three months. Although his medical expenses were paid by SANTA, he said that his parents frequently send money to him, his wife and three children. "During those harsh times we only survived because my parents fed us". A third unemployed informant incurred a year's arrears in housing rents, but was able to maintain occupancy of his home after his brother sent money from Nigel.

Casual work

1. Piece-jobs. The term "piece-job" is an emic construct used by informants to denote part-time and temporary work, which they contrast to full-time and relatively stable employment. It should, however, be noted that the criterion on which this distinction is based (i.e. security of employment) is a relative concept and that we find considerable variation within this category [5].

The most common form of piece-work in the Diappolo was caring for neighbours' gardens. Unemployed men were sometimes called upon to paint rooms, fix fences, and clean blocked drain-pipes. A market for such jobs exists because commuter and migrant labourers are unable to perform these domestic chores adequately. My interpreters often joked that they were able to tell which houses were home to people who worked as commuters and migrants by merely observing their poorly kept gardens. Informants said they sometimes earned up to R10 for a "piece-job" which involved digging up an entire garden or for painting a room. For smaller tasks, such as fixing fences, they were paid as little as 60c or were merely given a plate of food or tin of home-brewed beer. One informant who often worked in the yards of commuters and migrants, described the informality of these arrangements by saying: "My wage only depends on the richness of my neighbours and on whether they have money in their pocket or not".

Shop owners and builders were further sources of "piece-jobs". Phuthaditjhaba shop owners often called upon otherwise unemployed women to clean their stores or to fry vetkoek (a form of doughnut). For this they were paid up to R10 per day. Unemployed

men sometimes congregated around bottle stores or at the market in the hope of being asked to unload beer or fruit and vegetables from trucks. A shop owner employed one informant as a driver for a brief three weeks spell while the regular driver was ill. With the renovation of the local Elizabeth Ross Hospital and of local schools, there was a short-term demand for the services of men: some were paid for loading sand and bricks on a daily basis; one man earned R60 for painting classrooms for a fortnight; and an unemployed carpenter was paid R100 for working at the hospital for a month.

"Piece-jobs" comprised an extremely irregular source of income, however. Out of 21 jobless informants ten had never done any piece-work, whereas nine only occasionally engaged in such activity. An informant complained: "I can only get work in the gardens of people whom I know, and sometimes I wait for almost a month without doing any piece-jobs." Others said that they were unable to engage in such work because they were too busy seeking more permanent employment. Only two informants were known in Phuthaditjhaba as regular piece-workers. A middle aged man who had been otherwise unemployed for approximately five years said he found piece-work so regularly that "People say I only want to help the Blacks and not the Whites." Another who, since first suffering from high blood pressure in 1964 had been constantly unemployed, had seldom been without piece-work for longer than a few days. His skills as a gardener and bicycle repairman often earned him more than R25 per week. He complained, however, that people sometimes refused to pay him and said that women working in Qwaqwa's factories "earn more because my money does not come regularly enough".

2. 'Informal' income earning. Other possible sources of income were various 'informal' income earning activities. These included: repair work (shoes, furniture, radios, watches and motor cars); selling various goods (bottled beer, fruit and vegetables, wood, coal, and dagga); petty commodity production (knitting, baking, beer-brewing and the manufacture of ashtrays and portrait frames from matchsticks); and the provision of a variety of other services ranging from prostitution to divination. These activities can be distinguished from "piece-jobs" because those who were involved in them were not reliant upon being employed by someone else.

In the light of fieldwork data, current optimism concerning the potential of these activities as a buffer against unemployment seems misplaced. It shows that the establishment and perpetuation of most informal income-generating activities is directly dependent upon income derived from wage labour and social welfare schemes [6]. In other words, these activities mainly constitute an additional rather than alternative means of income generation. Of the 16 informants in the life history sample who engaged in informal income earning, ten simultaneously engaged in wage labour. Informants commonly used the Sesotho idiom O ja ka mehlahare e mmedi (lit. he eats with two jaws) in reference to these individuals. Viewed alternatively, only six (20%) of 30 jobless informants derived an income from such activities.

Beer sales provide an apt illustration of the investment of wage payments in informal income earning. Women who sold bottled beer were usually those with a source of wage income. With this money they bought crates of a dozen quarts for R12.50, each quart then

being retailed for R1.50. This generated a profit of R5.50 per case. They seldom sold more than two crates per weekend, except during Christmas and Easter when sales of up to five crates per day were reported. This type of investment was, however, beyond the financial means of unemployed people.

Similarly, the production and sale of home brewed beer and the seemingly cheap activity of repairing shoes also required investments which the jobless could not afford. Although brewers generated a nett income of up to R7 on a 10 litre drum of beer, substantial investments were needed. To brew a 10 litre drum of magasemane, the cheapest beer, required the purchase of: two loaves of brown bread, two packets of brown sugar, Mtombo meal, and four packets of yeast at a cost of R6. Likewise a wage labourer who repaired shoes over weekends said that he weekly bought thread for 60c, glue for R1.30 and rubber from which he made soles for R5.45 [7].

There are, however, two important exceptions to this general trend; and these enabled jobless people to engage in informal income earning. Firstly, there were individuals who had accumulated sufficient resources and skills during periods of employment to invest in such activities. Secondly, certain activities, notably theft, prostitution and divination, required little or no financial investment. Three informants in the former category included a motor mechanic, a man who repaired watches, and a metal worker. The motor mechanic had resigned from a Harrismith textile factory once he had enough money to enrol for a three-year technical diploma at a college in Germiston. As part of his studies he did practical training with an auto-electrician

in Phuthaditjhaba. After completing the course in November 1984 he was unable to find suitable employment and began fixing cars at home. He was, however, constrained by a lack of finances to acquire spare parts and equipment.

At the moment I'm only looking for a vacancy as a motor mechanic at the labour bureau. Meanwhile I fix cars at home to pass the time...Last week someone approached me to fix his car, but the spare parts were unavailable so I will fix it this week if there are no obstacles...It is an engine overhaul and I have quoted him R150 for the job. The rings and the bearings need fixing and the car also needs a new crankshaft. He is going to buy his own parts in Johannesburg and this will cost him about R100...The profit that I will make depends on how fast I can work. The problem is that I have to hire some tools from another bloke and he charges R40 per day for these. Maybe the job will take one or two days.

The watch repairman had begun by fixing the watches of workmates at a Harrismith carpet factory. When he became unemployed this activity assumed greater importance. He had previously repaired a weekly average of two watches, but this figure rose to between four and eight watches after he lost his job. He charged a flat-rate of R10 per watch and said that if he was able to increase his clientele he would no longer seek formal employment.

Another three informants worked as folk healers (ngaka) and/or diviners. There were two kinds of folk healers in the Diappolo: iisangoma who claimed to derive their healing powers from special relationships with the badimo, and profete wa metsi (literally: prophets of water) who attributed their gifts to God and the Holy Spirit [8]. These informants had become healers after they had experienced severe impoverishment and illness, and they had invested little or no money to enter the profession. Although a sangoma recalled giving a live cow and R20 to the man who trained her, this was paid only after she was established as a successful healer. Their ability to maintain themselves without access to wage earnings depended upon two factors: their willingness to

treat diseases not recognized by biomedical practitioners, and their ability to convince potential clients of their sacred powers. Case 11 provides an illustration of these themes.

Case No.11: Practising as a Profete wa Metsi

Mr. Modise, moved to Qwaqwa from Ladybrand in 1968 to obtain a business licence for selling groceries, wood and coal. As an independent retailer he often made up to R400 per month. Later he also became a show promoter, sponsored a jive band and organized beauty contests in Bethlehem. In 1973, however, illness ended his career as a small businessman. "I became very ill from a big wound in my foot. If you looked at it you could see worms crawling out...At the hospital the doctors told me that they would have to amputate my leg. I also went to a specialist in Bloemfontein who said that there was nothing that he could do about it. I went to White and Black doctors, but nothing helped. The pains just got worse. Meanwile no more customers came to my shop and the bread on the shelves became rotten. The women around here thought that I was going mad. "

"One night while I was sleeping a light appeared in my room and I heard a shivering voice. Until today I don't know whose voice it was. It gave instructions in a commanding manner. It said 'If you have your leg amputated the wound will appear on your thigh and if you have your thigh amputated it will appear on your stomach'. The next night the voice said that it would help me, and instructed me to sell all my stock and place 10 lighted candles around my bed. I was also told never to wear shoes again...On the third night it told me to go to the Lesotho mountains and said that if I disobeyed I would go mad and start walking around the streets naked. In the mountains I found a cave in which I sat for two days. On the second night a horse-rider stopped at the cave to give me instructions. He told me to obey and to work for the Lord and then took me for training in a mountain village. Thereafter he showed me a patient whose penis was swollen and who was unable to urinate. He then told me to treat him. I prayed for him, told him to sleep on the floor, not to eat and only to drink blessed water. After three days he was healed."

Upon returning to the Diappolo Mr. Modise began working as a ngaka and a profete wa metsi. In his home Mr. Modise had a special room, decorated with biblical symbols, candles, and different coloured woollen thread, in which patients consult him with various ailments. "The people bring any kind of problem to me like kidneys, madness and problems in their families and at work. I first tell them to open the Bible and read them a chapter. Then I pray for them and give them a mug of blessed water to drink. I can also interpret dreams. I can help anyone. Not because of my own power, but because of the power of God."

He normally charges R2 per consultation. During February 1984 he was elected as chairman of the Sesotho Dingaka Association which has its headquarters in Onverwacht, near Bloemfontein. "We formed the association because the doctors opposed the dingaka. With certificates from the association we are, however, allowed to

pray for patients in hospital". In addition to these healing activities Mr. Modise leads a congregation of 23 members who meet at his home on Saturdays. Mr. Modise outlined his future prospects as follows: "I am praying to go to Israel so that I can learn more, but before I can go I am going to erect a tent in my yard so that all the people that I have healed can be there to praise the Lord. God told me to slaughter 15 sheep, three cows 10 chickens and two doves.."

Mr. Modise was financially more successful as a healer than any of the iisangoma I spoke to. A sangoma who had been formally unemployed since 1971 asked only R1 per consultation and was seldom consulted by more than ten clients per week. Although her earnings were augmented by those of her son whose wage at a local factory was R26 per week, she said they experienced great difficulties in making ends meet. "Some weeks we only have enough money to buy cabbages."

In summary, it is evident that jobless informants had limited access to sources of income. At a general level, social welfare payments were seldom obtainable, while kinship did not present a dependable support network. Similarly, "piece jobs" were difficult to come by and not all informants were able to invest in informal income-generating activities. Yet, at least in the Diappolo, there were important exceptions which Sharp (1986) would appear not to have found amongst closer settlement residents. A few jobless informants did derive their income from disability pensions or were supported by fellow household members and kin. In addition, commuting and migrancy created a market for piece-work as it rendered many Diappolo wage workers unable to perform domestic chores. There were also informants who had accumulated sufficient resources during periods of employment to invest in informal income earning activities. Other activities, notably healing and divination, required religious claims to legitimacy rather than financial investment. Access to these

sources did not guarantee a regular and reliable income, however. These sources of income thus constitute no alternative to formal wage earnings, but at least provide informants with a precarious source of sustenance during periods of joblessness.

SUBJECTIVE PERCEPTIONS OF UNEMPLOYMENT

Besides wages, Johada (1977) identifies four social and psychological advantages of employment from which loss is suffered upon becoming unemployed. She argues that employment imposes a time structure and activity upon the working day, provides regularly shared experiences and contacts with people, links people to goals and purposes which transcend their own, and defines aspects of personal identity and status (1977: 313).

Informants ~~considered~~^{considered} the loss of three of these aspects of employment as important. Although some informants in the Diappolo felt frustrated by the adverse time-structure imposed by commuting (see chapter five), they complained that, upon losing their jobs, they had soon been overcome by feelings of disorientation and boredom: "It is too boring here. I just relax and work in the garden to keep myself busy"; "to be without a job is boring, very boring. All you do is sleep at home to pass the time".

Secondly, informants said that they lost contact with people outside the household. This was exemplified by one unemployed person's comment: "While I worked I had many friends, but here I have no friends. I am just sitting here at home. When I go

outside the house I can visit only my sister".

Thirdly, Diappolo men perceived the loss of "provider" status as threatening to their masculinity and as extremely destructive. Such feelings were most acute if their wives were employed. An informant asked me: "How would you like it if your wife has work and you don't?" Many men related separations, divorces and marital conflict to their unemployment (see chapter six). Four of the eight divorced or separated men in the house population sample saw their marriages break up while they were jobless. Another unemployed man reported:

I have not spoken to my wife for three months. We are living in the same house, but in different rooms...This is all because I'm jobless. In one of our fights she hit me and broke the window. I asked the police to arrest her, but they refused because they know her too well.

Unemployed people also complained that they were stigmatized in the eyes of kin, friends and neighbours: "You have no real friends if you are without a job because people always look down upon you. They regard you as lazy, mad and as a fool"; "Even my friends think that I'm a fool. They always say: 'Here he is sitting without anything: no money and no work'. Then I will look at them without any answers"; "People will always insult you. They ~~will~~ ask among themselves 'How does this man live if he does not work?' and they ~~will~~ think that I am a tsotsi, whereas I don't steal". The last comment illustrates the widespread perception that unemployment implies illegal behaviour such as theft. This association is also depicted in the Zulu song Tsotsi umtha cheleni?, which warns women against being affectionate towards itsotsi. The song was often sung in Diappolo shebeens.

Tsotsi umtha cheleni?

Why do you love the tsotsi?

Tsotsi umtha cheleni?

Why do you love the tsotsi?

Ngoba aka sebenzi

He does not work

O hlala e khaya

He stays in a shanty

O dlala madaisa

He plays dice

O bhema ne nsanga

He smokes dagga

People's testimony thus contradicts the notion that they enter a state of unemployment 'voluntarily'; i.e. that they prefer such a situation to wage work. It implies boredom and disorientation, as well as a loss of friends and status. The conversation recorded earlier (see chapter one p. 31) between an unemployed man from a closer settlement and a Diappolo woman clearly exemplifies the status of the unemployed in everyday social interaction. In this context unemployment was perceived as more devastating than even the most frustrating job experiences.

EMPLOYMENT ASPIRATIONS AND WORKSEEKING

Job aspirations

Hofmeyr (1984) turns to the idea of a dual labour market to account for his findings that most unemployed men in a peri-urban area near Pietermaritzburg preferred to search for a job meeting their aspirations rather than taking "just any kind of job". He postulates that his informants could obtain jobs "relatively quickly" in the low wage sector (where enterprises set wages on a competitive basis), but that, instead, they held out for jobs in the high wage sector offering only a limited number of employment opportunities. (p.38)

Evidence from the Diappolo provides qualified support for Hofmeyr's observations as regards employment aspirations. It does

not, however, endorse his explanation thereof. Though most of the 19 workseekers interviewed had some reservations about accepting particular types of employment, only three were highly specific in their aspirations in that, being skilled workers, they were prepared to accept jobs in the primary labour market only: as a driver, carpenter and auto-electrician respectively. Two of these men had further reservations in that they were only prepared to work as migrants.

Workseekers' selectivity in their employment aspirations were directly related to their ability to sustain themselves during periods of unemployment. Thus 12 workseekers had only minor reservations about accepting employment. People who had recently been ill were loathe to engage in strenuous work. Others found certain types of work unacceptable because it offered extremely low wages (less than R30 per week), or due to dangerous working conditions. Inadequate information about wages and conditions was another reason for turning down a job: one informant, who applied for work at a local factory was told to return the following day, but did not do so. He was highly suspicious: "They usually tell you about the wages and working conditions, but when I asked the foreman at the factory about this he refused to tell me anything".

Job aspirations were more frequently phrased in terms of the acceptability of particular centres of employment. Many informants who had lost or terminated their jobs because of transport and accommodation problems said that they preferred working closer to home. "I don't want to work in Harrismith again. Not all those early hours of waking". "As a migrant the

problem is transport and the fact that you have to pay rent twice"... "I'll prefer to work in Qwaqwa where I can use my feet". Other informants found migrancy unacceptable for domestic reasons: "I have to sleep at home"; "I'm the only one left with my mother and I really don't want to go out". Mothers with young children were willing to consider only local employment so they could continue to provide their children with some parental care. In contrast, four men were interested in specifically migrant contracts as this was seen as guaranteeing better conditions of employment.

As a result of prolonged unemployment, four workseekers with limited sources of support said that they were desperate enough to take any kind of job and did not care where employment was offered. One informant commented: "I'll do anything. Because I cannot afford my rent they are still going to kick me out of my house". Another said that originally:

I was very glad when I finally quit my job as a nightwatchman because I thought that I would easily get a better job. But now, after I have been unemployed for such a long time [10 months], I will take anything. I'm even willing to return to my old job.

Workseeking constraints and strategies

It is not merely the ability of informants to maintain themselves during unemployment which accounts for limited employment aspirations. There were also important bureaucratic and structural constraints on people seeking work at labour bureaux and in common South Africa. At the Phuthaditjhaba labour bureau, contract attestation facilities were denied to workseekers who were unable to produce Development Tax receipts [9]. As a result, this workseeking option was closed to people who could not afford

these taxes (see Case 1). Labour bureaux were also avoided due to overcrowding. "You won't get work at the bureau because there are too many people. Those who go there are wasting their time." Secondly, informants were constrained from seeking work in Harrismith for prolonged periods because they were unable to afford expensive bus tickets. In reference to these constraints a disillusioned workseeker exclaimed: "I don't have money to get a contract and I also have no money for a bus ticket so I cannot search for work in Harrismith."

In addition some workseekers had improper documentation to obtain employment. A young man who had lost his reference book in a Welkom municipal hostel was unable to take up a job when it was offered to him in Harrismith. Another informant who had not registered as a Qwaqwa citizen faced similar difficulties:

I once found a job at a Bethlehem garage. There the employer gave me a form to fill in to take to the authorities in Qwaqwa [to have his contract regularized by specific requisition], but the man at the magistrate's office said that he could not give me a stamp...He sent my book to Pretoria and I am still waiting. It has been four months now.

For reasons of this kind, some informants had become totally disillusioned about their prospects of finding formal employment at all. They no longer actively searched for formal employment because financial pressures required them to devote their time to piece-work and informal income earning.

The kinds of workseeking strategies adopted make greater sense if one considers them in the light of the past recruitment of workers to migrant, commuter and local jobs as depicted in Table 15 below.

TABLE 15: THE DISTRIBUTION OF JOBS HELD BY INFORMANTS IN THE LIFE HISTORY SAMPLE ACCORDING TO METHODS OF RECRUITMENT AND PLACES OF EMPLOYMENT (1971-1984/85)

Places of employment	Methods of recruitment				Totals
	from factory gates or doorsteps	by kin and friends	through labour bureaux	through formal letters of application	
As migrants	6 (19)	8 (26)	17 (55)	0 (0)	31 (100)
Harrismith	19 (40)	27 (56)	1 (2)	1 (2)	48 (100)
Qwaqwa	24 (77)	5 (16)	N/A	3 (7)	31 (100)
Totals	49 (45)	40 (36)	18 (16)	3 (3)	110

Notes: (a) Figures in brackets denote percentages
 (b) Inadequate data - 27

Table 15 shows that 45% of workers who obtained work as migrants bypassed the labour bureau system and found work in common South Africa by themselves. Ties of kin and friendship with people outside the 'homeland' were crucially important in this context. A migrant who embarked upon this strategy explained: "To get work I went to the house of my cousin who was a clerk at a construction company in Secunda. They hired me as a driver and sent me back to Qwaqwa with forms to fill in". Another migrant recalled: "Three of my brothers worked at a firm in Bergville. When the firm reopened after the December vacation I accompanied them without going to the labour office".

Contacts were of even greater importance in finding Harrismith jobs: 56% of workers who obtained employment in this town were recruited by friends or kin [10]. The experiences of a personnel clerk at a Harrismith construction company illustrates the significance of such networks in finding wage work. She recalled: I looked for work for two years, but couldn't even find a piece-

job. From the beginning of 1981 I decided to stay at home and not to look for work anymore. But in May [1981] a lady friend who lives down the street told me that there were Whites looking for workers. When I arrived in Harrismith they gave me work.

People often derived benefit from finding work for unemployed friends: they were often rewarded with tokens of appreciation such as money, liquor, food and various items of clothing.

Active workseeking proved relatively effective as a means of finding work in Qwaqwa: 77% of all informants who found employment in the 'homeland' were recruited directly at factory gates. During fieldwork I frequently observed small groups of women sitting in front of the gates of many factories in Qwaqwa's industrial parks during working hours. Even to them, effective workseeking was facilitated by exact information about where and when employment would be offered. In this regard iinduna and security guards were important sources of information and allegations of bribery were not uncommon. A factory worker recalled:

I waited in front of the gate for only one day. We were about ten ladies sitting there and the induna called only four of us. Some people gave him a bribe of R10 and others R5. It was a lot, but we could do nothing else because the work was so scarce.

In the light of these constraints on workseeking, Hofmeyr's (1984) suggestion that unemployed people held out for jobs on the primary labour market does not hold true for Diappolo workseekers. Many unemployed informants could not afford to be selective when offered employment and accepted jobs which did not meet even their most basic aspirations [11]. An informant who earned R67 weekly when he worked as a storeman at a construction company in Durban, terminated employment in December 1981 because he was unable to visit his household in Phuthaditjhaba more than

once per year. Thereafter he was unemployed for two years and eventually forced to accept work at a local textile factory for only R40 per week in 1984. He recalled, of his search for employment:

I thought that it would be easy to get a good job in Qwaqwa, but I was wrong. It was a big mistake to leave my job in Durban. I woke up every morning at sunrise and searched until sunset, but there was nothing. I sat at the labour bureau until my pants were worn out, but there were only building contractors who wanted people with experience. I looked at the local industries and in Harrismith, but there was no work: not even piece-jobs. It was really painful to be unemployed for such a long time because you cannot do anything without money. Our only income in the house was my mother's pension. My wife also looked for work, but never found it...I eventually got work at a textile factory here in the industrial park. When the factory opened there were many people sitting in front of the gates: about 50 or more. It was only two months later that they hired me and four other men to dry the blankets after the women had washed them.

He was dissatisfied with the wage he earned in his new job and with the fact that: "It does not cater for the family, for rent, and for the school fees of my three children". Another source of frustration was that he regularly worked night shifts. Such experiences were by no means isolated.

CONCLUSIONS

In the introduction to this chapter I argued that, in assessing job terminations, cognizance should be taken not merely of the availability of alternative jobs, but also of the nature and experience of unemployment. In this regard there appears to be considerable differentiation between particular labour exporting areas in South Africa. Evidence presented on the nature of unemployment in the Diappolo does not conform to either Sharp's (1986) or Hofmeyr's (1984) descriptions of unemployment in Qwaqwa's closer settlement and a peri-urban area near

Pietermaritzburg respectively.

The notion that workers do not have any resources to sustain themselves during periods of unemployment, and are therefore unable to terminate employment in order to search for more suitable jobs, is certainly more applicable to Qwaqwa's closer settlements (as described by Sharp 1986) than in Phuthaditjhaba. In the Diappolo several jobless informants had access to limited sources of income: social security payments, the support of kin, engagement in piece-work and informal income earning.

Hofmeyr's (1984) description of unemployed people who were seemingly able to hold out for jobs meeting their aspirations for indefinite periods also contradicts evidence from the Diappolo. This view does not accord with accounts of: (i) the limited capacity of these sources of income and networks of support to sustain workseekers; (ii) the destructive social effects of prolonged unemployment; and (iii) bureaucratic and structural constraints on workseekers. These factors often force workseekers to accept jobs which do not comply with their most basic employment aspirations. Wage workers are therefore re-exposed to frustrating conditions of employment similar to those which had led to their terminating their previous jobs and which would be most likely to lead to further such job terminations.

NOTES TO CHAPTER SEVEN

[1] The relationship between non-capitalist forms of agricultural production and wage labour is obvious in the rinderpest epidemic, the virulent cattle disease of 1896 and 1897, which decimated herds through much of sub-Saharan Africa. Beinart (1982: 48) reports that "many men had to migrate out of Pondoland to work, often for the first time, in order to restore the herds..." By contrast the epidemic wiped out up to 90 per cent of cattle in Lesotho, but also caused a falling off in the number of Basotho migrants because of quarantine regulations in the OFS (Murray 1981: 13).

[2] The little agricultural land left in Qwaqwa has been placed under the control of AGRIQWA - a part subsidiary of the QDC. The company has sole access to the 13 000 hectares of consolidated land added to Qwaqwa in 1979 and uses this to train prospective full time farmers (three by 1982) and to cultivate asparagus and rainbow trout for export to the Witwatersrand and Europe (Growth June 1981; February 1982).

[3] By assuming that residents who could not afford rents were evicted on the turn of 12 months arrears, one would be overestimating the efficiency of Qwaqwa's bureaucracy. At the closure of the 1982/83 year the Qwaqwa Minister of the Interior reported that Phuthaditjhaba had outstanding township rent revenues of R300 000. He attributed this to the shortage of police as only one of the nine posts in the establishment was filled. "Presently we have to depend on borrowing two policemen from the magistrate's office and we use them during the month in which they are not out on pension payments to follow up outstanding revenue" (Qwaqwa Legislative Assembly 30/3/1983 p. 371)

[4] These research findings are not surprising. Cooper (1984: 11) points out that in 1982 only 152 978 of the estimated 2 million unemployed people in South Africa applied for, and only 138 160 received, UIF benefits. She argues that this is as a result of the limited scope and inefficient administration of the fund, negligence and ignorance of employers, and ignorance of workers regarding their UIF rights.

[5] The term "piece-job", as used by informants, is comparable to the concept biscate (Portuguese for odd-jobbing) as used by slum dwellers in Rio de Janeiro. According to Perlman (1982: 24, 30) biscate denotes unstable service, repair and construction work which are always precarious and demeaning. There are three important differences between piece-work in the Diappolo and biscate in Rio: (i) Women and children were more frequently

engaged in biscate than men; (ii) these services were usually performed for affluent residents; and (iii) "a person will say he is working biscate rather than unemployed even if he is only fixing a few appliances here and there or washing or watching cars from time to time" (p. 30).

[6] Since studies of employment problems in Kenya (International Labour Organization 1972) and in Ghana by Hart (1973) discussed these activities under the label "the informal sector", they have been conceived as a potential buffer against the worst aspects of unemployment by academics and development planners. Leys (1975), Wilkinson and Webster (1982), and Matsetela et al (1980) all regard such optimism as misplaced. They argue that by treating the "informal sector" as the polar opposite of the "formal sector" these studies fail to recognize the linkages between the two.

Although informal activities are not characterized by capitalist relations of production, they are fully located in the nexus of capitalist economic relations, particularly in the sphere of circulation. In this regard a definite parallel can be drawn between informal income earning activities in Qwaqwa and agricultural production in Lesotho during the 1970s. Murray (1981) and Spiegel (1980) show that a household's rural wealth derives from its continuous access to wage labour income and that agricultural activity is often merely the channel through which remittances are diffused. "Without access to these remittances", Spiegel (1980: 112) writes: "these rural communities would not be able to reproduce themselves, nor would those 'non-capitalist' social relationships, which are the framework for the provision of social security, be able to continue functioning any longer".

[7] It may be argued that it is possible for an unemployed person to borrow money to set her or himself up in informal income earning activity. This seldom occurred, however, as profits were usually too small to be reinvested in these activities. For example, a profit of R10.50, derived from the sale of two beer crates, was insufficient even to buy one further crate for resale. The necessity of spending profits on essential household goods further hampered effective savings. Poorer people furthermore have difficulty borrowing (even to invest) because they are unable to reciprocate (cf. p.203).

[8] See West (1975: 91-124) for an excellent discussion on healers and healing in the independent churches of Soweto.

[9] This development tax, primarily intended to provide funds for a university complex in Qwaqwa, was imposed by the local authorities in 1981 on each male citizen over the age of 18. The tax was for a sum of R50 to be paid over a period of five years (Sharp 1984: 15-16). Such measures are not unique to Qwaqwa. Hofmeyer (1984: 22) note that in Kwazulu contract attestation facilities are being denied to workseekers as authorities use control over the reference book system to enforce tax payments.

[10] McCartan (1984: 5-8), in his study of 43 manufacturing firms in the Eastern Cape, suggests that informal methods of recruitment (i.e. notice boards, word-of-mouth recommendations and casual calling) account for between 60% and 80% of the placement of unskilled workers in firms he investigated and between 41% and 69% of the semi-skilled positions. MacCartan

suggests that employers favour informal methods because: (i) they attract workers with "acceptable" personal characteristics such as reliability and stability; and (ii) they partially transfer the responsibility for discipline and control from the line management onto the workers themselves.

[11] It should be noted that Hofmeyer's findings are constrained by the static nature of his research data. The more diachronic life history method, as used in this study, is far more likely to show how the aspirations of workseekers are frustrated and how they are forced to accept unfavourable terms of employment.

CONCLUSION

In this dissertation we have seen that, despite high unemployment rates, Diappolo workers tended to stay in their jobs for only short periods, and that 60% of all job terminations were employee-instigated. During a graduate seminar at UCT, these facts led a participant to ask: "Surely workers are rational! Why would they just leave their jobs with little prospect of finding alternative employment?", while another, who had herself witnessed labour queues in Qwaqwa, added: "I find it hard to believe that Qwaqwa's workers maintain their jobs for such short times".

Throughout this dissertation I have approached this question in two ways, both primarily ethnographic. Firstly, I have aimed to treat as central the experiences of Diappolo workers and their own perspectives of their situation. This concern is by no means novel. At an earlier time, when anthropology still was conceptualized as the study of 'primitive' or 'savage' society, Malinowski wrote:

...the final goal, of which the Ethnographer should never lose sight...is, briefly, to grasp the native's point of view, his [sic] relations to life, to realize his vision of his world. We have to study man, and we must study what concerns him most intimately, that is the hold which life has on him (1972:25).

It ^{has} ~~was~~ ~~adopted~~ ~~the~~ ~~position~~ been contended that emic perceptions of reality, rather than etic theories thereof, serve as reliable guides to workers' actions.

Secondly, I have tried to present as complete an ethnographic description, interpretation and analysis as possible. It was found necessary to recognize the full range of

informants' employment and employment-related experiences. These included contextualizing Diappolo residents' experiences in relation to Qwaqwa's broader labour market; analysing workers' perceptions of the different jobs which they held and the remuneration they received; recording the different responses adopted by them to these conditions; and assessing the significance of factors outside the workplace (i.e. transport, accommodation, domestic arrangements and considerations, as well as the nature and experience of unemployment).

In the sections below I present a review of the major findings of this dissertation and comment on these in the light of other researches on employment instability. It is argued that job losses are not reduceable to single causal relationships, and can be better understood as the product of a web of interrelated experiences.

EMPLOYMENT INSTABILITY: A REVIEW OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

1. Political economic conditions. Since the 1970s various authors (i.e. Innes and O'Meara 1976, Legassick and Wolpe 1976, Mare 1979 and Southall 1982) have applied Marxist analyses to the South African 'homelands'. They suggest that, since the 1960s, mechanization in agriculture, mining and industry has accentuated the creation of a surplus population. As distinct from the usual pattern in capitalist economies, the industrial reserve army has largely been located in the 'homelands' - remote from politically volatile urban areas in common South Africa. From here workers have been brought into centres of production primarily under contract and according to the specific needs of particular

economic sectors. In chapter one I discussed the forms in which these processes manifested themselves in Qwaqwa, resulting in population relocations, the constitution of 'homeland' political authorities, and the enforcement of labour migration.

The nature of the 'homeland' surplus population has, however, been diversely conceptualized. According to Innes and O'Meara (1976), Mare (1979) and Southall (1982), large sectors of the surplus population have become effectively marginalized and permanently excluded from the labour market. With reference to the Transkei, Innes and O' Meara (1976: 75-76) write:

Marginalization occurs as a by product of the process of proletarianization...These agents are not incorporated in capitalist production relations (not even part of the reserve army of labour - those on stand by for capital). They exist as a type of rural lumpenproletariat on th margins of capitalism, close to starvation and dependent for subsistence on handouts, scrounging, theft, prostitution etc.

Likewise, Southall (1982: 29) sees 'homelands' as "dumping grounds for discarded people". He notes that there is a surplus of African labour throughout the South African economy and that sufficient surplus is located within white areas to meet the central economy's needs.

Legassick and Wolpe (1976) contest the notion of a large permanently marginalized labour force. They note that the mere size of the 'homeland' surplus population creates favourable conditions for investment in certain forms of secondary industry. For them a static differentiation of the surplus population into a marginalized and unmarginalized sector also fails to reflect its dynamic nature. Instead they conceptualize the 'homeland' labour force as a "relative surplus population" which is not identical with actual unemployment, but implies an increasing

intensity of repulsion and attraction from capitalist industries. Nonetheless, they see unemployment as a structural phenomenon: that is to say, the rise and fall of levels of African unemployment are likely to take place around a high absolute percentage of unemployment.

The concept of a relative surplus population is more appropriate than that of a permanently marginalized labour force to my fieldwork data, even though it is not particularly illuminating. Evidence of industrial decentralization in Harrismith and Qwaqwa bears out Leggassick and Wolpe's (1976) suggestion of investment in certain forms of secondary industry (cf. chapter one). Labour histories showed, furthermore, that continuous oscillations between phases of employment, unemployment, and informal income earning are a characteristic of Diappolo workers' lives; and they provided little evidence of permanent exclusion from the labour market. The few informants who had never held a job were predominantly those unable to work due to injury or domestic obligations (cf. chapter two).

Conceptualizing Diappolo workers as part of the relative surplus population implies accepting a structuralist category which directs attention away from subjective evidence (cf. introduction) and thus fails to help explain why 60% of job terminations were employee-instigated. As a direct explanation of job losses it provides a basis for understanding only the propensity for retrenchments: 19% of all job terminations. It is also useful for understanding dismissals (the surplus population facilitates the immediate replacement of unskilled labourers) and unfavourable conditions of employment (by exerting intense

competition for available employment opportunities). These are necessary concerns to understanding the context in which employment decisions are made.

2. Employment conditions and responses. In the light of these limitations of structural political economic explanations it has been necessary to focus on workers' perceptions of their employment conditions and their responses to these conditions. It has been shown that workers were greatly concerned about the totality of their work experiences: they often regarded unfair wages, the minimal control exercised over work tasks, purposeless activities, unfavourable social relations at work, low supervisory considerations, and their vulnerability to injuries and diseases at work as repulsive aspects of employment (chapter three). These data thus contradict some sociological literature which suggest that, due to the instrumental design of work, workers are more concerned with the outcome of work than the actual experience of employment.

Enormous differences between the experiences of workers in different categories of employment were revealed. Self-employed informants tended to be highly committed to their jobs. Some employees who held primary labour market jobs were accorded autonomy in the performance of their work tasks. They were, nonetheless, restrained from becoming involved in work as a means of self expression by inequities in employment practices, by unfavourable working hours, and by having to work in an economically deprived and racist environment. Employees in menial occupations on the secondary labour market were most likely to be exposed to extremely poor conditions of employment which they considered to be repulsive. As a result they often viewed their

jobs as not worth doing and maintaining.

Clear parallels can be drawn between the situation of people who held jobs on the secondary labour market and those of streetcorner men in Washington as portrayed by Liebnow (1967), who writes:

Getting a job, keeping it and doing well at it is clearly of low priority...Getting a job may be subordinate to relations with women or to other non-job considerations; the commitment to a job one already has is frequently shallow and tentative (p. 35)

These attitudes were seen as a direct response to the situational constraints of lower class life. According to Liebnow (1967) streetcorner men perceive middle class occupations as a primary source of pride and self-respect. "The streetcorner man wants to be...noticed, to be taken account of, but in this respect as well as in his money needs his job fails him" (1967: 82). The jobs held by his informants (drudgerous manual and construction work, and menial jobs in service and retail) were at the bottom of the employment ladder in every respect and did not lead to any improvement. Streetcorner men thus valued their jobs no more than the wider society around them. "To talk about his job can trigger a flush of shame and a deep, almost physical ache to change places with someone, almost anyone else" (1967: 84).

It cannot be argued that most Diappolo workers have an acute sense of middle-class values. Yet, the status of their jobs was evident to them in the amounts employers were prepared to pay, and in the supervisory practices which constantly reinforced status inequalities. In this sense they perceived their jobs as socially of little value and not in any way a means to gain the respect of their neighbours or, indeed, a sense of self-respect.

Various responses were adopted to conditions of employment regarded as repulsive. These included attempts by workers to accommodate themselves to existent conditions, defiant and protest action to seek improvements in these conditions, and retreatist action in terms of which an escape from the demands of work was sought in leisure. Viewed in the context of these strategies desertion constituted a multi-dimensional type of response. In some instances it was an attempt by informants to seek more favourable conditions of employment and can thus be seen as a form of maximization. Often, however, desertions resulted in the loss of money to workers, confirming Gordon's (1977: 231) argument that "rational maximization is impossible because people lack a complete knowledge of the situation, and preferences and obligations vary". Gordon (1977) tends to see desertion as a form of protest: an ultimate way of dealing with a dehumanizing work situation. Protest, however, implies making grievances explicit. Because this seldom occurred among deserters in the Diappolo, however, it may be more appropriate to see desertions as a form of escape rather than of protest.

But why did desertions constitute a commonly adopted strategy? Firstly, it can be argued that the uneven distribution of wage rates and adverse conditions of employment between different job categories made desertion an attractive option. Secondly, evidence from the Diappolo has shown the limited capacity of other strategies to achieve their goals as a further reason for the wide prevalence of desertions. Both accommodative and retreatist actions do not address repulsive aspects of employment. Defiant actions seldom articulate discontent effectively. It hardly ever involved collective action and were

often consciously hidden from employers. Where protests were effective, as in the Setsokotsane bus driver's strikes in Qwaqwa through which drivers were able to bargain for improved conditions of service, workers tended to display greater stability of employment (cf. case 5, p. 128).

In some senses, dismissals must also be considered in a discussion of unpleasant conditions at work. The kinds of strategies often led to dismissals in the long run. Dismissals occurred in response to the breakdown of patron-client relations, retreatist actions (particularly drunkenness and the smoking of dagga) and punishment for defiant and protest actions (illicit appropriations, assaults, and "dodging" work assignments).

My findings thus corroborate those of Gordon (1977: 247) who writes, of Namibian miners' coping mechanisms (he discusses symbolic defences, brotherhood solidarity, and a central life interest outside the job),:

While these strategies are consciously aimed at overcoming the problems of cooperation with the white supervisors and with the job and thus, by implication making life more predictable, they also by the same token increase uncertainty and stress, and hence further stimulate labour turnover or return migration. These coping strategies do not solve the problem; at best they are a local anaesthetic since the problems are clearly located in the wider parameters of Namibian society.

It can be argued that the types of worker strategies among Diappolo workers also had a palliative effect, rather than offering a means to overcome their problems.

3. The importance of nonwork variables. It has been evident throughout the dissertation, that nonwork variables had an enormous impact on employment stability among Diappolo wage

workers: 24% of job terminations were nonwork-related desertions. Their importance is partially due to the geo-political factors which prevent 'homeland' workers from taking up permanent residence in common South Africa's industrial centres. This has meant vast distances between places of work and residence which have accentuated problems pertaining to transport, accommodation and domestic life as factors which greatly undermine employment stability. Employees who commuted to Harrismith on a daily basis were exposed to relatively expensive and poor conditions of transport, an adverse time structure of the working day, and harrassment along the route in the form of pass arrests and attacks by itsotsi. Overtime and shift work disrupted the time schedule of many commuters. Whereas some commuters deserted in response to these oppressive conditions, others were dismissed due to irregular work attendance.

Labour migrants employed elsewhere in common South Africa were also subject to arduous and expensive journeys to work which rendered them unable to come home regularly. As a result, married men frequently chose not to renew their contracts because they perceived migration as incompatible with their domestic roles as husbands and fathers. Informants perceived unpleasant conditions of residence in single-sex hostels as the most repulsive aspect of labour migration (cf. chapter five). Municipal hostels, in particular were expensive, overcrowded and marked by a complete lack of privacy. They were the scene of an underlife in which prostitution, heavy drinking, theft, and conflict were predominant. Far greater lengths of service were recorded among migrants who secured accommodation outside these institutions.

Many labour studies are male-centred and ignorant of the undermining effect of domestic arrangements on employment stability among women. In situations of patriarchal dominance the wishes and demands of their husbands often defined the scope of women's participation on the labour market. Wage earning did not diminish their socially ascribed childcare and domestic tasks, and this generated severe role overload and conflict. The impact of domestic concerns upon employment were minimized when women had chosen to remain single. Similarly, single male migrants were not subject to the conflicting demands of labour migration and their domestic roles (cf. chapter six).

These findings show the inadequacy of studies conducted elsewhere to illuminate the relationship between transport, domestic concerns and employment among 'homeland' workers. In his analysis of transactions in a Zambian clothing factory, Kapferer (1972: 112-118) sees employment stability as compatible with increased concerns outside the workplace. He notes that older and more skilled workers were more likely to maintain employment due to their greater commitment to the urban environment and investments in sets of town-rooted social relationships. Other reviewers, such as Mobley (1982: 108-109), suggest that nonwork concerns may be conducive to job terminations. He argues that there is a positive relationship between the decisions of secondary wage earners to terminate employment and family responsibilities, and notes that work roles may conflict with other social roles and values. Evidence from the Diappolo shows that Mobley's (1982) suggestions underestimate the importance of these concerns.

4. Unemployment and employment. Many studies preclude the possibility of a high incidence of desertions in the face of

widespread unemployment. March and Simon (1958: 94-95) and Price (1977) assert that as the unemployment rate goes up the quit rate goes down. They argue that dissatisfied employees, to whom no suitable jobs are visible through personal contacts and job searches, are unlikely to terminate employment. In chapter seven it is shown that these supply and demand based theories are inadequate because they take cognizance merely of gross unemployment rates without investigating the nature and experience of unemployment. In this regard unemployed Diappolo residents derived a source of income from social welfare payments, the support of kin, casual work in the form of piece-work and informal income earning. In this context it was indeed possible to remain unemployed for short periods whilst searching for alternative jobs. Therefore unemployment does not constitute an ultimate deterrent to job terminations. Unemployed informants were unable, however, to hold out indefinitely for jobs meeting their aspirations. Support networks were predominantly of a limited capacity. The destructive social effects of unemployment, and the domestic and other pressures on potential breadwinners often forced them to seek work and accept jobs with conditions of employment as undesirable as those which had led to their previously terminating their jobs. This was shown to initiate a vicious cycle of employment instability, which constituted a central characteristic of Diappolo workers' lives.

6. Interrelatedness. It should by now be clear that job losses among wage workers in the Diappolo housing section of Phuthaditjhaba cannot be accounted for in terms of any single causal relationship. The proclivity of workers to terminate employment can be understood best as the consequence of a whole

web of interrelated circumstances. Workers do not experience different repulsive aspects of employment and employment-related phenomena as isolates (as some sociological theorists sometimes seem to perceive them). They are exposed to all these aspects in the course of a normal working day. Although particular aspects of employment are often the direct cause of job terminations, more commonly the relationship is rather more indirect. In combination with other repulsive aspects of employment they, indirectly, enhance adverse perceptions of work situations and fuel the desire of workers to leave.

To present a sufficient account of employment instability it is thus necessary to understand the totality of individuals' employment and employment-related experiences and to identify the context of these experiences. It is unlikely that job stability would be generated by changes in any single aspect of employment such as wages or transportation. It is much more appropriate, as this dissertation has shown for people of the Diappolo, to look towards improvements in a whole constellation of circumstances and conditions both inside and outside the workplace in order to find ways of increasing job stability and security of employment.



REPUBLIEK VAN SUID-AFRIKA - REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

TOEGANGSPERMIT

ENTRANCE PERMIT

PERMIT N^o

PERMIT

PERMIT

KLAARTENA ARTIKEL 24(1) VAN WET NR. 18 VAN 1938

IN TERMS OF SECTION 24(1) OF ACT NO. 18 OF 1938

Volle naam / Full name: NIEHUIS, Isak Arnold

Adres/Address: 12 CAHOENS AVE
MONTE VISTA
CAPL TOWN

Doel van besoek / Purpose of visit

STUDY PURPOSES

Toestemming word hiermee verleen aan die houër en/of groep persone van hierdie permit om die gebied van Qwaqwa nêremlik die distrik Witwatershoek, te betree onderhawig aan die volgende voorwaardes:

Permission is hereby granted to the holder and/or group of persons of this permit, to enter the area of Qwaqwa subject to the following conditions:

- (a) Die permitthouër(s) moet self reëlings tref vir huisvesting. Inwoning by Swartes word nie toegelaat nie. Kampering by die slindpunt van die bergpad word nie toegelaat nie.
- (b) Onder geen omstandighede mag die houër(s) hom/hulle inmeng met die huishoudelike sake van die Swartes nie.
- (c) In sy/hulle onderhandelinge, indien enige, met die Swartes moet die houër(s) se gedrag waardig wees en geen kritiek mag gelever word aangaande die administrasie van die tuislandregering of van sy amptenare nie.
- (d) Die houër(s) moet ten alle tye tydens besoek aan die tuisland hierdie permit in sy/haar/hulle besit hê en dit aan enige gemaagtigde beampte op aanvraag toon. (Indien die houers in 'n groep is moet dit in die besit van een van die groep wese wie dit moet toon namens die groep)
- (e) Geen persoon mag — (i) 'n inheemse plant uithaal, pluk, afny of beskadig of in besit wese van enige plant wat in die gebied voorkom nie; (ii) 'n naam, letter, syfer, simbool, merk of tekening op enige rots, klip of boom aanbring in die gebied nie; (iii) 'n brandende voorwerp weggooi op 'n plek waar dit brand kan veroorsaak of opsetlik brandstig nie; (iv) valke weggooi behalwe in 'n vergaardrom of op 'n plek wat daarvoor bestem is nie.

- (a) The permit holder(s) must make his/her/their own arrangements for board and lodging. Lodging with Blacks is not permitted. No camping is permitted at the terminus of the mountain road.
- (b) Under no circumstances may the holder(s) hereof interfere with the domestic affairs of the Blacks.
- (c) In his/her/their dealings, if any, with the Blacks the holder(s) hereof must behave in a dignified manner and refrain from criticism of the administration of the homeland Government or any of its officials.
- (d) The holder(s) must have this permit in his/her/their possession whenever he/she/they visit the homeland and must produce it upon demand by any authorised official. (If the holders are in a group, it must be in possession of one of the members of such group who will have to produce it on behalf of the group).
- (e) No person may — (i) uproot, pick, cut or damage any plant or be in possession of any part of a plant indigenous to the area; (ii) place any name, letter, figure, symbol, mark or drawing on any rock, stone or tree in the area; (iii) discard a burning object in such a manner or place where a fire is likely to be caused or to cause a fire intentionally; (iv) discard any refuse otherwise than by placing it in a receptacle or place intended therefore.

Mugby 9/7/23
 gedat 3 Mei 1923

Datum/Date					
Van/From			Tot/To		
7	1	85	31	12	85

Signed

MAGISTRATE
 MAGISTRAAT
 MONTE VISTA
 WITWATERSHOEK

QWAQWA
 INHLENKATHU
 GOVERNMENT
 PLACE
 DATE
 DATUM
 1985-01-07
 Magistrate/Magistraat
 Private Bag 831, Witwatershoek 2170

APPENDIX 2: STATED TIME PERIODS SPENT IN PRESENT AND PREVIOUS JOBS ACCORDING TO GENDER AND PLACES OF EMPLOYMENT: THE LIFE HISTORY SAMPLE

2. 1. Previous jobs (1971- 1985)

	No. of jobs	Stated time periods		
		Range	Mode	Mean
Inside Qwaqwa				
Men	28	1m - 6y	2.0y	2.1y
Women	10	3m - 3y	1.5y	1.4y
Total	38	1m - 6y	3.0y	1.9y
In Harrismith				
Men	31	2m -13y	3.0y	4.1y
Women	16	3m - 9y	2.5y	2.9y
Total	47	2m -13y	3.0y	3.5y
As Migrants				
Men	27	7d -10y	2.0y	3.2y
Women	4	2y -10y	2.5y	4.0y
Total	31	2y -10y	2.0y	3.0y

2. 2. Present jobs (1971- 1985)

	No. of jobs	Stated time periods		
		Range	Mode	Means
Inside Qwaqwa				
Men	15	2m - 6y	2.0y	2.3y
Women	9	1m - 5y	1.0y	1.0y
Total	24	2m - 6y	2.0y	1.8y
In Harrismith				
Men	11	2y -14y	4.0y	6.7y
Women	12	3y -14y	5.0y	7.4y
Total	23	2y -14y	5.0y	7.0y
As migrants				
Men	6	1y -14y	3.0y	4.2y
Total	6	1y -14y	3.0y	4.2y

Notes: (a) All figures exclude periods in jobs prior to arrival in the Diappolo
 (b) Inadequate data - 17 previous jobs
 (c) d - days, m - months, y - years

APPENDIX 3: THE DISTRIBUTION OF WAGES AND LENGTHS OF SERVICE
ACCORDING TO CATEGORIES OF EMPLOYMENT: THE LIFE HISTORY SAMPLE

3. 1. Wages earned (1984/85)

Category of employment	Frequency	Monthly wages in rands		
		Range	Mean	Mode
1. self-employed	2	R380 - R780	R580	-
2. primary labour market jobs				
a. non-manual	8	R250 - R800	R406	R420
b. manual	6	R190 - R500	R271	R380
3. secondary labour market jobs				
a. manufacturing	20	R96 - R320	R139	R120
b. construction	5	R200 - R250	R220	R220
c. commerce	7	R80 - R304	R195	R200
d. government	3	R105 - R260	R200	-
e. domestic employment	5	R25 - R120	R75	R85

Notes (a) N = 56

(b) Data included in calculations only pertain to jobs held at the times interviews were conducted.

3. 2. Lengths of service (1971 - 1985)

Category of employment	Frequency	Lengths of service		
		Range	Mean	Mode
1. Self-employed	4	6m - 7y	3.4y	-
2. primary labour market jobs				
a. non-manual	14	3m - 10y	3.4y	2y
b. manual	15	6m - 9y	3.9y	2y
3. secondary labour market jobs				
a. manufacturing	67	2y - 10y	2.9y	6m
b. construction	30	1m - 14y	3.0y	1y
c. commerce	16	7d - 14y	3.2y	2y
d. government	6	3m - 12y	2.7y	2y
e. domestic employment	17	6m - 11y	3.8y	2y

Notes: (a) N = 169

(b) Inadequate data - 17 jobs

(c) Calculations in the table do not distinguish between previous and present jobs held.

APPENDIX 4: THE DISTRIBUTION OF SINGLE ADULTS IN THE HOUSE POPULATION SAMPLE ACCORDING TO AGE, GENDER AND MARITAL STATUS (1984/85)

Women

Age categories	Never married	Divorced	Widowed	Total
20 - 24	6	0	0	6
25 - 29	10	1	0	10
30 - 34	9	2	1	12
35 - 39	3	2	1	6
40 - 44	1	0	1	2
45 - 49	0	2	2	4
50 - 54	2	0	3	5
55 - 59	0	1	1	2
60 -	1	0	9	10
Totals	31	8	18	57

Men

Age categories	Never married	Divorced	Widowed	Total
20 - 24	11	0	0	11
25 - 29	8	0	0	8
30 - 34	10	1	0	11
35 - 39	4	1	0	5
40 - 44	3	2	0	5
45 - 49	0	0	1	1
50 - 54	2	2	0	4
55 - 59	0	0	0	0
60 -	1	1	0	2
Totals	39	7	1	47

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