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Fruit of the Vine, Work of Human Hands:

**Farm Workers and Alcohol on a Farm in Stellenbosch, South
Africa**

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Declaration:

This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. It is my own work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this dissertation from the work, or works, of other people has been attributed, and has been cited and referenced.

Signature:

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Date: 1 April 2002

Abstract

I argue that alcohol is embedded in forces of structural violence that create circumstances of social suffering amongst farm workers in the Western Cape. I argue that the labour relations on the research farm are shot through with violence and I trace the use of paternalism as a means to control the work force. I argue that the principles of paternalism have been internalised by the majority of the workers. I further explore the current changes in labour relations as they are played out the field work farm and demonstrate that exploitation and oppression continue to be features of structural violence exercised today.

In order to understand alcohol consumption amongst farm workers in the light of structural violence, I argue that farm workers who drink heavily in the mode of the weekend binge do so in an attempt to ameliorate the conditions of their existence. I argue that alcohol consumption is ritualised and that ritual serves to provide a space outside the everyday that facilitates escape from suffering and legitimates drinking. It is my contention that the ritual fails to provide real escape and instead serves to further immiserate farm workers.

In an attempt to escape the negative consequences of alcohol consumption those who are able to abstain from drinking alcohol do so largely by converting to a form of Christianity that prohibits alcohol use. I employ the notion of unlearning drinking behaviour to understand the creation of a new person within a support system that enables new ways of being in the world. I contend though, that this new identity is fragile and the potential to revert to previous identities is always present.

In addressing the phenomena of alcohol consumption and abstinence, I argue that the social suffering caused by structural violence and the perceived negative effects of alcohol use must not be conflated.

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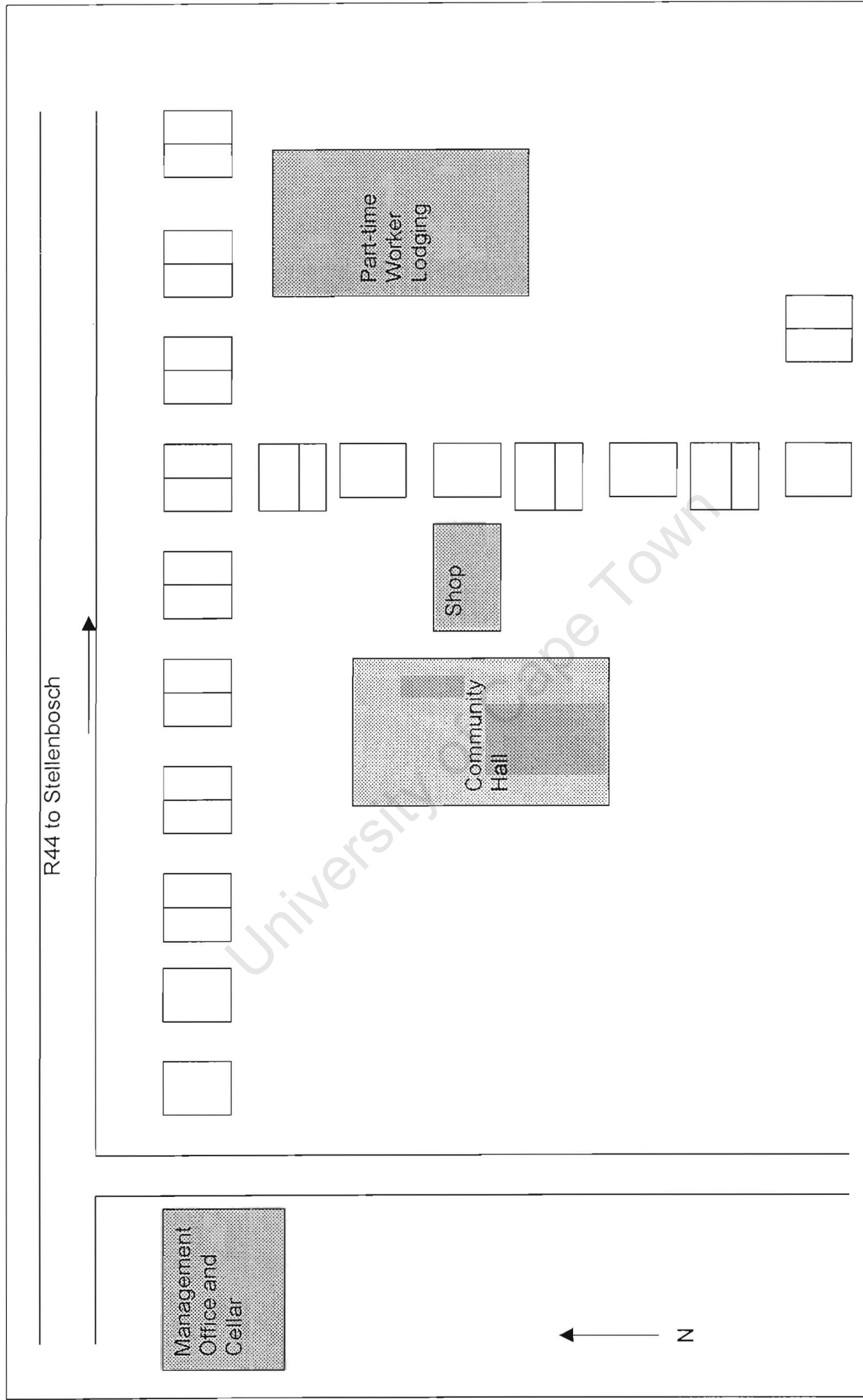
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Map 1: Stellenbosch, South Africa



<http://encarta.msn.com/maps/mapview.asp?mi=T630685A&ms=0>



Chapter 1:Introduction

In its disruptiveness, problem drinking in any type of society or social system, brings to light the dynamic tensions between structure and agency, society and the individual, general processes and particular human responses.

Merrill Singer et al 1992:101

Alcohol is the most commonly used psychotropic drug throughout the world (Singer 1986). The search for understanding of what causes people to use alcohol has led to the formal study of alcohol consumption and its consequences. Psychology, biomedicine, sociology and anthropology have contributed to current knowledge and understandings in the field of alcohol studies.

The subject of my research is alcohol use amongst those who live and work on a farm in Stellenbosch in the Western Cape Province of South Africa. Alcohol consumption amongst farm workers has become the focus of attention amongst health care professionals in the province. Farm workers' conditions are generally poor throughout South Africa characterised by poverty, ill health, poor living and working conditions, and low levels of education. In the Western Cape the legacy of the *dop* (tot) system adds a further dimension to the conditions of farm workers. The *dop* system is "... characterised as the institutionalisation of alcohol as a medium of remuneration of, and control over employees " (London et al 1998:1093).

In my dissertation, I argue that alcohol use amongst farm workers is embedded in processes of labour control that have their origins in the European colonisation of the Cape. These processes of labour control have manifested themselves in the creation of a rural workforce that has been suitable to the agricultural needs of the area. The use of alcohol amongst farm workers in the Western Cape agricultural industry has a history that stretches back to the arrival of the Dutch at the Cape in 1652. In the last two decades farm labour practice has moved away from oppressive practices on some farms. The data I gathered indicates, however, that an impoverished and exploitable workforce remains the result of labour practice on many farms in the Western Cape.

I argue that the creation of persons for labour power has been and continues to be both a subtle and overt process. Historically, alcohol was used deliberately as a means to create a suitable workforce and alcohol continues to be a feature in the creation of persons within the rural labour force of Western Cape farms.

Central to the creation of labour power is the exertion of structural violence on farm workers as a group. Alcohol has been a feature of that violence. My dissertation explores the ways in which farm workers are still subject to violence in the current changing structures of labour practice.

Literature Review

A review of the literature reveals that attitudes and knowledge about alcohol have changed over the centuries. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, alcohol was generally considered in a positive light amongst Europeans (Ambler and Crush 1992). By the nineteenth century, chemical knowledge was advancing and new ideas about alcohol began to emerge. The positive attitude towards alcohol that had previously been the norm was eroded by the rise of the Temperance Movement (Ambler and Crush 1992). Alcohol came to be viewed as having negative effects on health and to be dangerous because its use was perceived to result in anomie (Ambler and Crush 1992).

At the end of the nineteenth century, a scientific explanation for the problem of habitual drunkenness began to develop (Heather et al 1985). The notion of addiction became associated with alcohol and what characterised addiction was a loss of control by the individual over the ability to successfully regulate alcohol consumption (Heather et al 1985). An important aspect of this concept of problematic alcohol consumption stems from the post enlightenment idea that the individual's self-control was what contributed to the control of a community or society. Addiction to alcohol was the result of a loss of self-control on the part of the individual, and the individual was the locus of blame for any negative effects brought about by the addiction. The addicted individual could no longer be trusted with the surveillance of the self and posed a threat to the order of society (Room 1984).

These early ideas about addiction reflected the close association between medicine and religion, specifically Christianity in the Western world. Moral and medical views were bound up in ideas about health, which were closely connected with ideas about Christian well-being (Turner 1987). The disease model of alcohol addiction has undergone modification in the twentieth century. By 1948, the idea that the inability of an individual to self regulate alcohol intake was a physical disease, was accepted by the World Health Organisation and alcoholism was included in the International Classification of Diseases. Jellinek (in Heather et al 1985) in the 1960s expanded the disease model of alcohol addiction by including physical dependence. Physical dependence involved, "increased tissue tolerance, adaptive cell metabolism, withdrawal symptoms and craving...(Heather et al 7:1985)". Jellinek also presented the idea of psychological dependence. This differed from the disease model of the time because the individual relied on the effects of alcohol to help cope with psychological pain and trauma (Heather et al 1985). At the same time as these modifications were taking place in the definition of alcoholism, the term dependence replaced that of addiction, and encompassed both the physical and psychological aspects of the disease model (Heather et al 1985). The individual was thus no longer the locus of blame as had been the case with the previous model but rather the victim of a disease that was characterised by dependence on alcohol.

The disease model of alcohol dependence is still very much in favour but is challenged. Different schools of thought attempt to explain why some people struggle either to abstain from drinking alcohol or to moderate their intake. Current ideas about alcohol dependence are summarised into three categories, the moralistic, disease and free will models (Schaler 1994). The moralistic models have their roots in the Temperance Movement's Christian notions of well-being while the disease models stem from the medical interpretations of problematic use of alcohol. The free will model explains the excessive use of alcohol as a behavioural choice that enables drinkers to modulate their experiences of the world. Psychological and environmental factors in the drinkers' lives are recognised as the forces behind the need to drink excessively (Schaler 1994).

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, gene therapy and brain imaging research added to the current understandings and theories about alcohol dependence. Brain imaging enables researchers to better understand the effects of alcohol on the brain's structure and function. It is hoped that further research will enhance the understanding of how the effects of alcohol on the brain, affect behaviour (NIAAA 2000). Gene research has advanced a great deal in the last decade and researchers have recently begun using gene therapy to find ways to reduce levels of alcohol consumption (NIH News Release 2001). In addition, researchers are currently investigating the roles that genes play in alcohol dependency (NIAAA 2000).

The approaches to alcohol dependency reviewed here are concerned with the problem from the point of view of the individual. The moralistic model for thinking about alcohol use has influenced the ways in which colonisers have represented and attempted to control drinking in other non-western cultures. The result was a largely negative representation of the ways in which people used alcohol. Ambler and Crush (1992) cite a good example of this negative attitude towards alcohol use amongst non-Westerners:

The difference between the Europeans and natives as regards the use of intoxicants seems to consist mainly in this: that amongst the former a certain proportion is undoubtedly addicted to intemperance, which is found to some extent in all classes, but with the tribes on the frontier, the whole population from the chiefs and headmen down to the lowest of the common people, succumb to the temptation of strong drink when it comes within their reach. (Report of Liquor Laws Commission in Ambler and Crush 1992:7.)

Anthropologists have studied the use of alcohol amongst groups and societies to better understand its function. Anthropological literature typically included descriptions of alcohol use in ethnographic accounts of non-western societies. Anthropologists argued that alcohol was known to most pre-colonial societies and that it was used within the bounds of the social controls and rituals of those societies. Alcohol consumption did not have pathological consequences or result in anomie (Singer et al 1986). Initially anthropologists were reluctant to apply western notions of alcohol use and particularly abuse to the people they studied (Room 1984).

The focus rather was on the role of alcohol in societies and communities (Heath in Room 1984). The reason for the positive slant on alcohol use was as Room puts it, a case of 'problem deflation' (Room 1984), caused by over emphasis and negativity in other alcohol related literature (Room 1984).

Despite the emphasis on the positive aspects of alcohol consumption, the anthropological approach problematises western notions of alcoholism and alcohol abuse (Douglas 1987, Gefou-Madianou 1992). During the 1980s work on alcoholism as learned behaviour was conducted and ethnographic data from European countries was published documenting histories of alcohol use, the importance of public drinking facilities and alcohol treatment systems (Gefou-Madianou 1992). Anthropologists had by this time begun working in the field of alcohol studies within western societies.

The relationship between anthropology and biomedicine is not an easy one. What may appear to an anthropologist to be socially affirming drinking behaviour, may, however, be damaging to the health of the individual drinker. There may also be damaging consequences to those with whom the drinker associates, for example the use of alcohol may result in aggressive behaviour towards a spouse or child (See Waldman 1993, Levine 2000).

Alcohol consumption is a complex and contested issue. Anthropology has tended to focus on the social and cultural dimensions of alcohol use in opposition to biomedicine's focus on the individual's physiological or psychological functioning. It is without question that individuals suffer health consequences because of excessive alcohol consumption. That alcohol has become part of the social fabric of people's lives and that its use is culturally situated is equally without question. The early anthropological studies of alcohol consumption within communities sought to address practices in cultural terms that reflected positively on the communities. The biomedical field has made advances in understanding the physiological effects of alcohol consumption on the human body. The human was thus seen as a body or as a member of a cultural collective. Early anthropological work neglected to take into account the political, economic and historical dimensions of alcohol use within the societies studied.

A movement in the 1980s in the field of medical anthropology that has become known as critical medical anthropology has sought to extend the reaches of anthropological enquiry. Individual and social experience of suffering is addressed by developing an understanding of the political and economic forces that shape the contexts of the lives of the sufferers. Merrill Singer describes the sub-discipline as follows:

Critical medical anthropology understands health issues within the context of encompassing political and economic forces that pattern human relationships, shape social behaviours, condition collective experiences, re-order local ecology and situate cultural meanings, including forces of institutional, national and global scale (Singer 1992:78-79).

It is not the individual, or the culture of a group that is only of importance here, but also the broader socio-economic framework in which people find themselves. The individualistic models used to address alcohol use do not account for or address the phenomenon fully. As London et al (1998) points out farm workers have a particular history that involves the use of alcohol to secure their labour power. The broader context of alcohol consumption amongst farm workers is clearly important. The conditions of farm workers need to be understood in terms of the political and economic forces that have shaped them.

Practitioners in the field of critical medical anthropology were not the first to recognise the importance of the socio-political influences on the behaviour of people. In the nineteenth century, Frederick Engels argued that the problems relating to alcohol consumption did not arise from dependency, moral weakness, the family or the culture of working class people but rather from the economic and social consequences of their position in a capitalist system (Singer 1986). Capitalist production in the earliest years of the Colony at the Cape was agriculturally based but the labour power that was required to work the farms did not exist (Shell 1994). A labour force was created by violence, initially through the introduction of slavery and later through the perpetuation of slave like relations (Shell 1994).

Alcohol was provided to slaves and continued to be part of the payment of workers after the formal emancipation of slaves at the Cape in 1838 (Shell 1994, Scully 1992). Throughout the centuries to the present, alcohol has been part of labour relations and the experience of farm workers. Problematic alcohol consumption amongst farm workers cannot be reduced, as the disease model of alcohol consumption does, to "...a malfunction of the individual be it at the chemical, genetic, biological or psychological level" (Singer et al 1992:83). Engels postulated the following points as being important when trying to understand the destructive drinking behaviour of a particular group of people:

Abusive drinking develops under identifiable social conditions that are the product of class relations.

Given class conflict, heavy drinking may serve as a mechanism of in-group social solidarity.

The extent of drinking and alcohol related problems, however, is tied to the availability of alcohol.

A key role in the promotion or at least facilitation of availability is played by the state.

The other major role is played by the social class that controls and profits from alcohol production and distribution (In Singer 1986:117).

The creation of a rural labour force in the Western Cape has included all the points indicated by Engels as being factors in the development of alcohol related problems in a class of people.

Alcohol and Suffering

Fanon, writing about the effects of colonisation said, "All forms of exploitation resemble one another" (1967:88). The economic and political conditions that shape the lives of farm workers in the Western Cape Province of South Africa are different to those that shaped the industrial working class in nineteenth century England. Just as capitalist development at the Cape brought inequality and exploitation in the past, so too do the prevailing capitalist market forces. To understand the predicament of farm workers it is thus necessary to understand the political and economic forces that exploit them.

Alcohol is present in many of the negative experiences of farm workers including; economic insecurity, violence, ill health, abusive relationships, and loss of homes. Alcohol is not, however, the sole determining factor. Rather the experiences are the result of the interactions between the farm workers and the political economy of market capitalism as it is embodied in the farmer and farm management systems, and the broader society. These socio-economic forces can be understood in terms of structural violence.

The historical and current experiences of farm workers are characterised by exploitation and oppression. My informants are subject to crippling poverty, difficult working conditions, ill health and lack of education and other opportunities. Their circumstances are the result of human actions that were and still are violent. The violence is present in the means of control that is exercised over the workers and extends to all facets of their lives. The overarching feature of farm worker life is suffering.

The suffering is experienced at the individual level and at the group level amongst farm workers and constitutes social suffering (Kleinman et al 1997). Alcohol formed part of the creation of the rural labour force and the use of alcohol amongst farm workers is now a feature of farm worker life. Alcohol consumption is part of the farm workers' response to the suffering that permeates their lives. This is so because "(s)ocial suffering results from what political, economic and institutional power does to people and, reciprocally, from how these forms of power themselves influence responses to social problems (Kleinman et al 1997:iv).

Farm worker life exists on political, economic and social margins. The working week and the farmers' power circumscribe the practice of drinking alcohol. The farm workers on the research farm typically drank alcohol in large quantities over the weekend, but seldom during the week. The power of the forces that have shaped the rural labour force of the Western Cape is inherent in the drinking practices of farm workers. Farmers consider farm workers incapable of controlling their drinking over weekends.

Farmers justify continuing to supply workers with alcohol because, they argue, that farm workers will drink regardless. A farmer told me that if he did not sell his workers wine they would just go elsewhere for it. The reality that farm workers drink heavily is largely a normalised picture of who farm workers are. The irony of alcohol use and suffering amongst farm workers is revealed in the reasons they give for drinking. Farm workers consciously drink alcohol in an attempt to ameliorate their conditions.

Drinking amongst the farm workers on the Vine and Grove, is a practice that in Marx's definition is characterised by the unity of consciousness and being with the possibility of transforming existence (Bell 1992). And existence is transformed, but it is a fleeting moment that is regularly replaced with inter-personal violence. The survival strategy turns in on itself to create conditions requiring further endurance. The violence inherent in farm worker life is played out in the drinking ritual and serves to further entrench social suffering.

Amongst my informants there was a small number of farm workers that drank moderate amounts of alcohol and there were those that did not drink at all, who have actively chosen an alternate identity that eschews drinking. At first glance, it is an attempt to turn away from the drinking practice, and that is how it is explained by the workers who *bekeer* (convert). Conversion entails commitment to a particular form of Christianity that disallows alcohol consumption. The new identity, however, is unstable and the suffering experienced in farm worker life constantly threatens its existence. Farm workers live in a complex web of powerful forces that shape their lives, as individuals and as a community. The identities that emerge and strategies employed by farm workers are reflections of attempts to resist the power of the farmer and create spaces of self-determination. It is, however, ironic that the drinker and *bekeer* identities continue to serve the needs of the agricultural sector in different ways.

The nature of the violence that farm workers endure is thus easily obscured by the consequences of their use of alcohol. The challenge of this dissertation is to reveal the structural nature of the violence endured by farm workers even when it would appear that their conditions are improved by the cessation of alcohol use.

Doing Fieldwork

In order to conduct research on farms it is necessary to enter the web of power relations that is farm life. Farm workers live on farmer owned land and thus the rights of property ownership apply. Anthropologists have had to seek permission from the farmer and abide by his rules in order to access farm workers (Waldman 1993, Levine 2000). The negotiation of the power relations and the position of the researcher are crucial to achieving any fieldwork.

My fieldwork lasted from January until October 1999. To find a farm on which to work in the area I approached an NGO that worked with farm workers in Stellenbosch for advice on how to go about gaining access to a farm. I was supplied with a list of farms where the NGO had operated and I was told that the best course of action would be to approach the owner of the farm directly for permission, to work on his private property.

The first farmer I approached was pleased to hear that I wanted to study alcohol consumption amongst the workers on his farm. He said that the workers on his farm drank large amounts of alcohol and that each weekend there were problems of violence and destruction of property. The farmer also told me that his father had bought the farm in the 1960s and that the *dop* system had been in place on the farm at the time. The farmer said that as soon as his father took over the farm he stopped the *dop* system but the workers had continued to drink alcohol. The farmer gave me permission to spend time on the farm and with the workers, as long as I did not interfere with their work. The farmer also introduced me to one of his farm managers who took me out to the vineyards and introduced me to some of the women working there.

The workers residents on "The Vine and Grove" were classified Coloured under the Population Registration Act effective during the Apartheid era. The farmer and all the farm managers were classified White. The farm workers all speak Afrikaans as do the farm managers, but the Afrikaans dialect spoken amongst the farm workers is different to the standard Afrikaans spoken by the white management.

I speak Afrikaans fluently and am able to speak in the Western Cape dialect spoken by the farm workers, but initially this was not any help. The workers on the farm were polite when I met them in the vineyard, and in the first week that I was in the *blok*¹ on the farm, I was treated politely and with distance. On the Saturday at the end of the first week I attended a workshop for women that was being held by an NGO called Women on Farms, that had helped me gain access to the farm. The workshop facilitator had agreed to give me a few moments to address the group and try to explain my work to them. The response of one of the women in the group summed up their impression of me.

“We are not going to be open with a white woman because she is going to gossip with the farmer about us.”

I entered the field as a white woman carrying with me the associations of the apartheid era. I was aligned with the farmer and the farm management due to the colour of my skin. When I explained that I was interested in all aspects of people’s lives in the *blok* including whether or not they drank alcohol, the angry response was that there were no drinking problems on the farm. One of the women in the group though, was clearly inebriated, and was not able to follow the discussions going on around her. I realised that if I were to make any progress at all I would need to gain the trust of the people in the *blok*. I made a conscious decision not to speak to the farmer and to limit my interactions with the managers. I took a stance that was on the side of the worker, I helped them to understand what was necessary to access disability and child welfare grants, assisted them with transport to the relevant state services and to the district surgeon and clinic. I also helped people to understand legal documents that the farmer gave them, such as eviction notices.

The people in the *blok* watched my comings and goings and more and more of them spoke to me easily and with more familiarity. My willingness to help people where I could, particularly those most in need and the fact that I did not speak to the farmer at all won almost everyone’s trust.

¹ *Blok* literally means block and is the term referred to the area on the farm where the workers live.

One day, about a month after I had been in the *blok* the first woman I had met in the vineyard said to me that the people were very glad I had come to the *blok* because I helped them and I did not run with tales to the farmer.

The farm managers were ambivalent about my presence. I was summoned to the farm office because the manager in charge of the farm wanted me to report to the farm office each time I visited the *blok*. I explained that I had permission from the farm owner to visit the *blok* at will, and made no commitment to informing management of my movements. On two occasions, the managers wanted me to divulge information about my informants. On both occasions I refused, stating that all information shared with me was strictly confidential. The managers perceived me as an outsider in the *blok* who was both a potential ally and a threat. I did not allow myself to be aligned with farm management in any way, and made sure that my key informants knew when I had been summoned to the office and what had transpired.

I conducted my research amongst the full-time farm workers on the farm. My research data were derived from, informal conversations, focus groups with the children and teenagers, taking drinking histories from the adults, and conducting an alcohol consumption survey. I also attended meetings that took place on the farm. I attended two meetings held by the farmer and the farm managers and attended meetings between the farm workers and the trade union representatives.

As I spent more time in the *blok* people spoke more freely about themselves. One aspect of information that changed greatly was what people were prepared to say about their alcohol consumption. From the beginning those who did not drink alcohol, mainly women, were the most willing to talk about alcohol consumption. They would talk about how they used to drink alcohol, what made them stop drinking and how much the people in their family or others in the *blok* drank. Those who did drink alcohol went from avoiding the subject to talking about their alcohol consumption freely. I seldom observed any drinking because most people only drank from after work on Fridays. I did observe teenagers drinking on Friday afternoons, but only on a couple of occasions.

The information gathered on the drinking habits of the people in the *blok* on The Vine and Grove comes from a number of different sources. Self-reported drinking habits was the most common form of information and was collected through a drinking survey that I administered over six weeks, and through the recording of people's personal and life histories. People in the *blok* also spoke to me about the drinking habits of others, including family members and neighbours. I also observed drinking and the smoking of cannabis amongst the young people, and occasionally interacted with people in the *blok* who were intoxicated.

The alcohol consumption survey also presented difficulties. I approached people in the *blok* who drank alcohol and explained to them that each Monday I would like to come and ask them questions about their alcohol consumption over the weekend. There were two reasons for conducting the survey in this way. Largely the farm workers only drank alcohol over the weekend, beginning on a Friday evening and ending on Sunday afternoons. I also did not go to the *blok* on the weekends because my informants had advised against it. Early on, I was told that it was not safe for me to be in the *blok* because people who were usually pleasant often became aggressive when they had been drinking. One inhabitant described the men in the *blok* as being quiet and tame during the week but said they become like lions on the weekend. The farm workers' association of drinkers' behaviour with that of lions is cultural rather than based on an understanding of their behaviour. Lions are perceived as being ferocious and aggressive. During the course of the alcohol consumption survey, some of the participants who had originally agreed to participate pulled out, but without actually telling me that they no longer wanted to participate. Instead, they insisted that they had stopped drinking alcohol or they were never available to tell me about their consumption.

Another methodological problem arose with focus groups. I had hoped to have group discussions with the adults in the *blok* about alcohol consumption, but they did not want to. The workers said that they did not want to participate in focus group discussions because things said while sober during the group discussions may become the cause of arguments and fighting when people drank over the weekends.

It was easiest communicating with the children. They chatted freely, answering my questions and volunteering information. The teenagers and young adults were also accessible and I was able to organise a session where they put collages together using magazines and crayons that I provided. I asked them to create collages that would describe them. They then explained their collages to one another and the exercise revealed teenagers who desired access to the wider world around them of sport, music, commodities and work. Many insights into the early effects of poverty and lack of hope were gained by talking to the children and the teenagers.

During the fieldwork period, I was witness to the effects of the farmer's power over the workers. People were dismissed and evicted apparently without due process and others were instructed as to how to conduct their private lives with threats of dismissal and eviction. I did not consider myself to be in a position to take up the causes of the affected workers, but I did visit the Centre for Rural Legal Studies, an NGO that deals with rural legal matters to inform them of events on the farm. I was in telephonic contact with the union representatives to report events on the farm that were part of their jurisdiction. In addition, I was in close contact with members of Dopstop, an NGO established in response to the perceived problems associated with alcohol use amongst farm workers by nurses serving the farms in the Stellenbosch area. The NGO was officially launched in June 1997. The work of the NGO is to eradicate the *dop* system and to address the problems of alcohol abuse in the area

My decision to actively align with the farm workers was not just an expedient way of gaining the farm workers trust, but also an ethical decision. Farm workers are an integral part of the South African economy and society. They are not an exotic other that exists in a remote and inaccessible space. The farm workers on the farm where I worked are easily accessible by well-maintained tarred roads, within an hour's drive of a bustling modern city. Yet their conditions of existence and lack of access to resources place them on the margins of society, they are an internal other. The theoretical foundation of my work is based on the notions of structural violence and social suffering that I consider contain ethical standpoints.

I did not merely observe, but where and when I could took steps to act on what unfolded around me. The notion of the observing but uninvolved anthropologist would have been neither practical nor ethical to employ. I do not think that a detached observance of events is possible and to attempt it is dangerous. Nancy Scheper-Hughes points out that:

“Cultural relativism, read as moral relativism is no longer appropriate in the world in which we live, and anthropology, if it is to be worth anything at all, must be ethically grounded” (Scheper-Hughes 1995:409)

It was the extent of my involvement that enabled me to learn the farm workers' perspective on why they drink, and to understand that the practice, as it exists in the weekend binge, is destructive. The understanding that I developed of the destructiveness of alcohol consumption amongst farm workers encapsulates both the individual suffering and the continued oppression of farm workers as a group.

Involvement and taking sides does not guarantee automatic entry into people's lives. There were people in the *blok* who systematically avoided me, whether I tried visiting them unannounced or making appointments to talk to them, they always managed to escape my casual conversation and my questions. Women who did not work and were at home all day would say that they were busy and did not have time to talk to me. Others would put me off and say that they would talk to me the next day. Although I entered every house in the *blok*, I did not interview all the adult residents during the fieldwork period.

I write the case material in this dissertation in the present tense. The events during the time in which the fieldwork occurred are representative of the conditions of farm workers. My presence in the field as chronicler of events provided an opportunity for the world of the farm workers to be made explicit. The events recorded by the anthropologist in this space do not belong to history texts but do reflect the ongoing experiences of those who live in the 'field' (Hastrup 1995). Therefore, the present tense is the only way to convey the information gathered in the 'field' on the page.

One of the aspects of farm worker life that I documented was interpersonal violence. I did not witness this violence first hand except amongst children, and the violent behaviour of adults toward children. Violence is a common form of discipline for children. I witnessed a toddler receive a hard slapping because she wanted to take her jersey off. Parents often speak of hitting their children as discipline and children often run away from their parents to avoid beatings. Most often, inter-personal violence amongst adults occurs as a result of alcohol consumption. Arguments and violence often occur over the weekends. The violence occurs between family members, between friends and strangers visiting the *blok*. This was borne out by the fact that the only weekend that I visited the *blok* a teenage girl of nineteen was raped by two young men in their twenties. All of them lived in the *blok*.

I saw the results of violence amongst adults. All the adults that I interviewed had experienced physical trauma. Husbands and wives fought with one another. During the time that I spent in the *blok*, six women that I knew about were assaulted by their husbands. Another woman told me of how when she and her husband argued she had become swift enough to hit him first and on two occasions during the field work period she assaulted him with a screw driver.

The nature of the violence that occurs amongst fieldworkers is brutal. The work I present here contains accounts of the violence. The violence is not exceptional, rather an ordinary component of farm workers' lives. I consider it important to present interpersonal violence in the raw because it is a graphic portrayal of the structural violence that has created the person of the farm worker over centuries. The violence portrayed in the case material must be examined on two levels, the individual and the social. Farm workers do not condone their violent behaviour. Farm workers show remorse at violent behaviour and because of the endemic nature of violence in their lives, violence associated with alcohol use is largely excused. It is my contention that if farm workers did not have coping mechanisms for the violence that permeates their lives, their social relations would collapse. Interpersonal violence amongst farm workers "...in this instance is social, and cannot be reduced to individual neuroses (Bourgeois 1998:332 in Levine 2000).

Inter-personal violence is embedded in the structural violence that encircles farm worker life. I attempt to elucidate the structural violence to demonstrate that the suffering that farm workers endure is embedded in “the larger matrix of culture history and political economy” (Farmer 1997:272). Although the representation of violence runs the risk of voyeurism, I think that the use of case material uncovers suffering and makes known “...victims who have little voice, let alone rights, in history” (Farmer 1997:272).

Chapter Outline

In the chapters that follow, I will demonstrate that alcohol use is part of the structural violence that characterises farm worker life.

In Chapter 2 I set the scene providing a description of the agricultural industry in the Western Cape, the research farm and the conditions of farm workers. The current conditions of farm workers are presented both generally for the Western Cape Province and particularly for the field work farm.

In Chapter 3, I explore alcohol as one of the means to create a subjugated workforce on farms in the Western Cape. I argue that the labour relations on the research farm are shot through with violence. The chapter traces the use of paternalism as a means to control the work force. I argue that the principles of paternalism have been internalised by the majority of the workers. The current economic climate and its changing paradigms for labour relations have resulted in the juxtaposition of old and new forms of labour exploitation. I explore the changes in labour relations as they are played out on the research farm and demonstrate that despite the change in political and economic climate of the late twentieth century in South Africa exploitation and oppression continue to be features of structural violence exercised today.

In Chapter 4, the drinking practices of the farm workers are explored. I argue that farm workers who drink heavily in the mode of the weekend binge do so in an attempt to ameliorate the conditions of their existence.

I argue that alcohol consumption, through the repetitive and stylised structure of the drinking occasions, is ritualised. The ritual serves to provide a space outside the everyday that facilitates escape from suffering. It is my contention that the ritual fails in its aim and instead serves to further immiserate farm workers. The ritual, however, remains necessary to justify the continuation of the practice of alcohol consumption.

In Chapter 5, I explore the phenomenon of becoming *bekeer*. The farm workers conceive of the act of converting and eschewing alcohol consumption as turning away from the devil. I employ the notion of unlearning drinking behaviour to understand the creation of a new person within a support system that enable new ways of being in the world. I contend though that this new identity is fragile and the potential to revert to previous identities is always present. In addition, although the person that is *bekeer* does experience some relief from the negative consequences of alcohol consumption, I hold that the *bekeer* identity creates a worker that fits the new paradigms of labour relations without necessarily providing relief from the oppressive conditions of service.

In Chapter 6, I conclude the dissertation by summarising the arguments I have postulated. The themes of structural violence and social suffering serve as a backdrop to the chapter. I argue that the interventions provided for workers to either relearn their drinking or to unlearn their drinking, must be mindful of the social context of farm worker suffering.

Chapter Two:

The Setting

In this chapter, I present the current conditions of farm workers within the flourishing agricultural sector of the Western Cape.

The Western Cape is one of nine provinces in South Africa. There are about four million people living in the province, more than eighty-eight percent of which are urbanised. Second only to Gauteng, it is the most urbanised province in the country. In addition to being highly urbanised, the Western Cape has a strong agricultural sector employing the most farm workers in the country. In the agricultural sector 625 451 workers are employed full time in South Africa, with 126 355 (20,2%) of them employed in the Western Cape Province (National Census: 1996). The Western Cape is home to South Africa's wine industry. There is also fruit, vegetable and stock farming in the province.

The province and in particular the region of Stellenbosch has an international reputation for producing fine wines. The production of wine in the Western Cape began with the colonisation of the area by the Dutch in the 17th century. Today South Africa is the seventh largest producer of wine on the world market and is an important part of the economy of both the country and the Western Cape (Turner 1999, CIIR 1989). The Western Cape produces over 90% of South Africa's wine production (Turner 1999).

Stellenbosch founded in 1679 is the second oldest town in South Africa, and is approximately 50 kilometres inland from Cape Town, the provincial capital. The wine farms in the area form part of the Wine Route that attracts tourists from throughout South Africa and the world. When touring the wine route the visitor is presented with rolling vineyards backed by majestic mountains. The homesteads, cellars and restaurants are historic and pristine, surrounded by carefully manicured gardens.

The beauty that greets the visitor to the Winelands belies the conditions under which farm workers labour. The following excerpt from an article by London et al (1998) illustrates the abject conditions of farm workers in South Africa:

...A 1996 survey of farms in Mpumalanga and Northern Province found that only 34% of farm workers had running water in their homes, 27% had no access to toilet facilities of any kind, and less than 50% had access to electricity. Farm workers' incomes are consistently lower than the incomes of urban unskilled workers and a 1995 household health survey found that more than two thirds of farm worker families in the Western Cape generated a total income of less than R900 (\$82)¹ per month. Education levels of farm workers have been shown to be low in a number of studies, suggesting that they have about five years of schooling. Illiteracy is common, particularly among older workers...(London et al 1998:1092)

It is within this context that the consumption of alcohol by farm workers in the Western Cape is cause for concern. Health workers, farm owners, managers and farm workers consider the way in which farm workers use alcohol to be problematic. Health professionals regard workers' alcohol consumption to be excessive and as responsible for exacerbating their already poor health. Violence commonly results from alcohol consumption amongst farm workers and in the Western Cape the trauma rates at rural hospitals are 15% higher than in the urban hospitals, and 30% of injuries are alcohol related (London et al 1998).

Farm owners consider alcohol consumption to be the factor responsible for violent and destructive behaviour, and absenteeism amongst their labour force. Farm workers themselves consider alcohol consumption to be the cause of interpersonal violence, ill health and increased poverty. The majority of farm workers who consider alcohol consumption problematic are those who have stopped drinking. There are those farm workers who, while they continue to drink alcohol, do admit to it having negative consequences. They do not, however, all deem these consequences of sufficient import to stop drinking.

¹ The dollar equivalent is calculated at ZAR 11 to US\$ 1, the approximate rate of exchange in late 2001, early 2002.

The Vine and Grove

The farm where I conducted my research is situated outside Stellenbosch and will be referred to as The Vine and Grove in order to hide the identity of the farm. In addition, the names of the workers in the text have also been changed. I use pseudonyms to protect the workers from possible recriminations.

The fruit and wine farms of Stellenbosch utilise two forms of labour, seasonal and permanent. My research focused mainly on the permanent workers. For the most part permanent workers live on the farms. On the Vine and Grove, the permanent workers live in a housing compound known as the *blok* (literally, the block). They speak Afrikaans, one of the eleven official languages of South Africa. Permanent farm workers have family members living with them who may or may not be working on the farm. I shall refer to the adults with whom I worked as farm workers. Although many of them do not work for much of the year and some do not work at all due to disability, all the adults on the farm had at some point in their lives worked on a farm.

The Vine and Grove has grapevines and orchards of nectarines, *naartjies* (tangerines) and olives. The farm offices and cellars are situated on a hill that overlooks the *blok*. The farmer's house is situated on a hill about a kilometre away from the *blok*, along the road on which the *blok* is situated. The farmer provides housing for the workers in the *blok* and this is considered part of their wage. The workers do not pay rent for their housing and the houses remain the property of the farmer. The farmer requires that the person working on the farm to be responsible for the house and if a couple is working on the farm then they have equal responsibility for the house. The person or people responsible for the house are required to sign a housing contract that details the rules associated with occupying a house on the farm. The issues of security of tenure will be addressed further in Chapter 3.

The farm's worker cohort consists of resident permanent workers and *uitwerkers* (literally, out workers, workers who do not have residence rights on the farm). *Uitwerkers* are non-permanent workers from other farms and in the case of The Vine and Grove they came from other rural towns in the Western Province such as Ceres, Tulbagh, Somerset West and Grabouw. Self-appointed managers who negotiate directly with the farm owner and the general manager hire them. The managers transport the workers to Stellenbosch where they are put to work on farms and are accommodated in a purpose built hall in the *blok* free of charge during the week. The building is divided into men's and women's quarters and has ablution facilities. The hall can accommodate approximately one hundred workers. When there are too many 'uitwerkers' for the hall, the farmer allows the overflow to stay in the empty houses in the *blok*. The 'uitwerkers' do not bring their children with them, and although men and women are accommodated separately in the hall, men and women live together in the houses.

The farmer hires *uitwerkers* at harvest time when there is a need for intensive labour on the farm. The intensive labour period begins in the late spring, early summer (October/November) and lasts all through the grape harvesting and the nectarine-picking season in the summer and into the winter (May/June) when the *naartjies* are picked. The olive groves do not need additional labour because they are not as big as the other plantations. The need for additional labour comes to an end in the heart of winter (July, August, September) and permanent workers are expected to take their annual leave then.

The Blok

The *blok* faces a main road that links Stellenbosch and Paarl. The houses facing the main road appear at first glance to be comfortable workers' cottages. It is only when they are seen at close quarters that the reality of the poor housing is revealed. The walls both inside and out are dirty, there are broken windowpanes and the gardens are choked with weeds and grass. There is an occasional attempt to cultivate vegetables, but without much success.

At the beginning of the fieldwork period in February 1999, there were twenty-nine houses in the *blok*, six of which were not occupied. There were seventy-nine adults resident in the houses and forty-six children. The Child Care Act 74 of 1983 and the Basic Conditions of Employment Act 75 of 1997 made 15 years the legal age of employment. Young people fifteen and older living in the *blok* in February of 1999 were counted as adults. The number of people in the *blok* was never stable, and there was a lot of movement of people in and out of the *blok*. In early February when I took a general census, two families had already moved out without my having had an opportunity to meet them or collect information.

The household density in the *blok* is 5.5 persons. The majority of houses (13) are 4 roomed (kitchen, sitting room and two bedrooms). The two and three roomed houses have one bedroom each. All of the houses in the *blok* are semi-detached save four. Two of the four are the newest in the *blok* and have bathrooms and running water in the houses. The other two freestanding houses are old two roomed cottages with no plumbing. The houses facing the main road all have bathrooms added onto the back. The bathrooms consist of flush toilets, a basin and a shower. There is only cold running water in the bathrooms and there is no running water in the houses. In the older houses that run down the middle of the *blok* and are not visible from the main road, there are no bathrooms or running water. The occupants of these houses access water from two outside taps. The older houses also have no toilet facilities. The occupants have made makeshift toilets either by digging holes in the ground, or by using drums that are emptied when full, both types of toilet facilities have had shelters built around them.

The area around the houses is dry and dusty in the summer and wet and muddy in the winter. Some of the houses have front and backyards sectioned off. Also, some houses have the remnants of flower and vegetable gardens. There is a great deal of refuse in the *blok*. Each house has a drum to store refuse but they are not emptied regularly and the wind blows the refuse around the *blok*. There are clumps of weeds and long grass everywhere. The air is filled with a clinging odour of stale water from the outside taps that leak and from the septic tank that seeps.

The farmer is the owner of the houses and as such is responsible for the general maintenance of the houses. The residents of the houses are only responsible for the repairs to the houses if they damage them. The houses have not been painted within the last five years. The last time the farm owner provided paint for the houses, the occupants say that it was poor quality paint. Washing the walls is not possible because according to the occupants, the paint comes off the walls like wet chalk. Many of the occupants said that they were ashamed of their houses but when the farmer was approached about the matter, he told them that they could have paint for their houses but the cost would be deducted from their wages each week. The farm workers turned that offer down.

Apart from housing there are two other facilities in the *blok*. The community hall is used for meetings with the farm owner or the managers, the union and for dances to raise money for the local school. During the fieldwork period, only one dance was held in the hall. The workers told me that there had been a crèche in the *blok* at one time but the farmer had closed down the crèche in order to use the house to accommodate *uitwerkers*.

The other facility is a shop that stocks necessities like bread, milk, eggs, coffee, tea, vegetables, some meat and sweets and crisps. It is not owned by the farmer but by a private individual. It is run from a shipping container that was modified and placed in the *blok*. A resident of the *blok* is hired to run the shop. The shop's prices are generally higher than those of the supermarkets in the town. It is easier for the workers to buy at the shop as it is convenient and it extends them credit.

The Residents

During the week, the *blok* is quiet, people are at work and those who are unemployed, largely the women and older men, spend their time in their homes. There is some movement in the *blok* when women and young people visit one another during the day. After school, the children play in the *blok*. People generally keep the front doors of their homes closed and people enter through the back door after knocking.

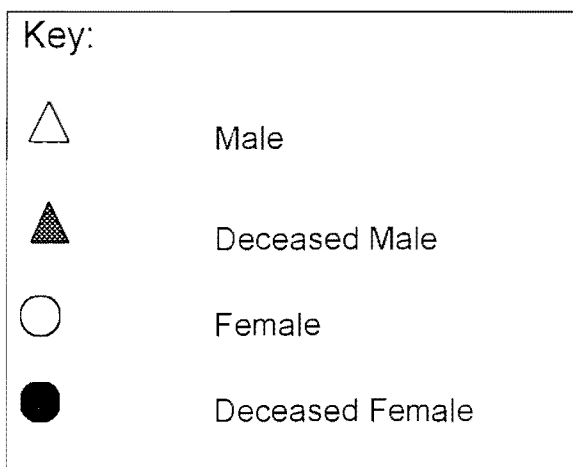
Some houses have fenced yards that make them less accessible and two of the houses had vicious dogs that would bite intruders making it necessary to shout a greeting so that the dogs could be tied up or controlled before it was possible to enter.

During lunch time the men sit together outside one another's houses and chat after eating, while the women who work make use of the time to do house work. In the evenings the women prepare supper and bring in the laundry from the makeshift washlines, while the men either work in their yards or chat with their friends and family members outside their homes. In the winter, it is common for the people to sit around fires, built in their yards, before and after supper to chat.

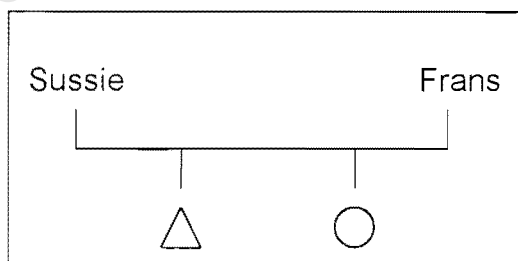
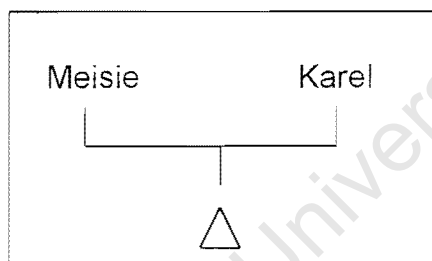
There are residents in the *blok* who do not live in the houses, but in makeshift homes in the veld (uncultivated fields) surrounding the houses. During the fieldwork period, three teenagers between the ages of fourteen and sixteen lived in the veld. Their circumstances resulted from mothers who were unable to care for them due to old age or lack of resources. One of the boy's mothers lived periodically in the *blok* in the homes of family and friends. The third boy was banished to the veld by his stepfather after an argument had erupted while the two had been drinking alcohol. The phenomenon of people living in the veld is the result of a combination of poverty and violence associated with alcohol consumption.

The residents of the *blok* live in close proximity to one another. Many of the residents also work together in the vineyards and orchards during the week. Residents' social interactions are based on ties of friendship and kinship. There are inter-related extended families living in the *blok*. Households consist of both nuclear and extended families. The presence of extended families within households is a contradiction of the farmer's ideal of only nuclear families occupying houses (Waldman 1993, Levine 2000). The housing contract on the Vine and Grove allows for only a couple and their dependent children to occupy a house. The occupation of houses by extended families is in contravention of the housing rules. The housing rules and the economic implications for extended families will be further discussed in Chapter 3.

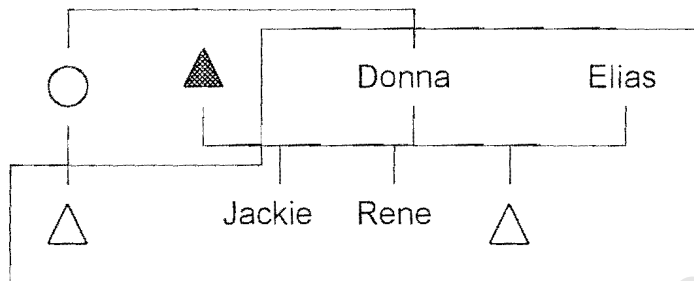
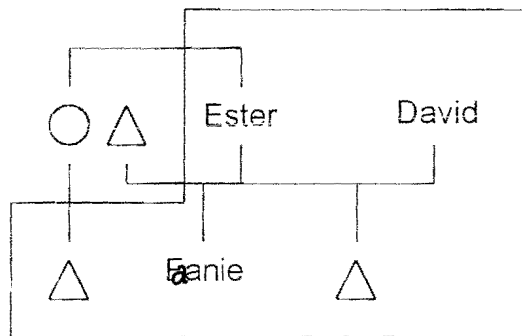
Here I present kin diagrams to illustrate the different family structures that compose the households in the *blok*. Members of families who have been named will appear later in the text. In the diagrams, names of family members are contained within blocked off areas. Where this occurs it indicates that the people concerned share the same household.



The following are examples of nuclear families living in the *blok* :



The families consist of two parents and dependant children. These are also examples of families that are not related to any one else in the *blok*. The majority of people in the *blok* are related. Below are two examples of what I call 'extended' nuclear families:

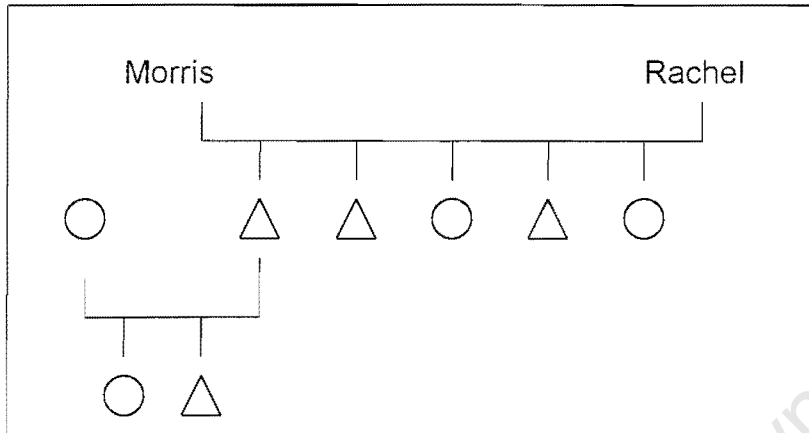


In both families, one of the dependant children is a foster child for whom Donna and Ester each receive a child welfare grant. In both cases the foster children are those of relatives who do not live on the farm. Both Donna and Ester have also had previous relationships. The children Donna had with her late husband all live with her. Her eldest daughter is Jackie; she is nineteen and works occasionally. Ester's eldest son Faanie is a *voorkind* (lit.: before child), a term used to denote a child born out of official wedlock.

For the purposes of describing the relationships of people living in the *blok* couples who share houses are referred to as married. The relationships may or may not have been formalised by means of church or state, but they are stable in the sense that the couples share and run households together.

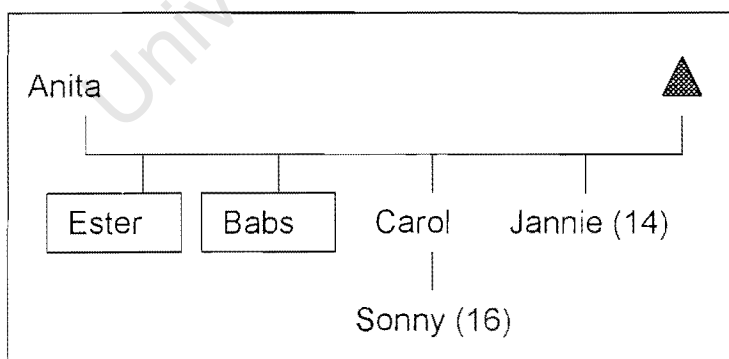
By virtue of her relationship with David, Ester is Donna's sister-in-law, because David and Donna are brother and sister. Ester's son Martin and all of Donna's children are thus cousins. Donna helps look after Martin when his mother is at work.

The kin diagram below represents an extended family occupying one two-bedroomed house:



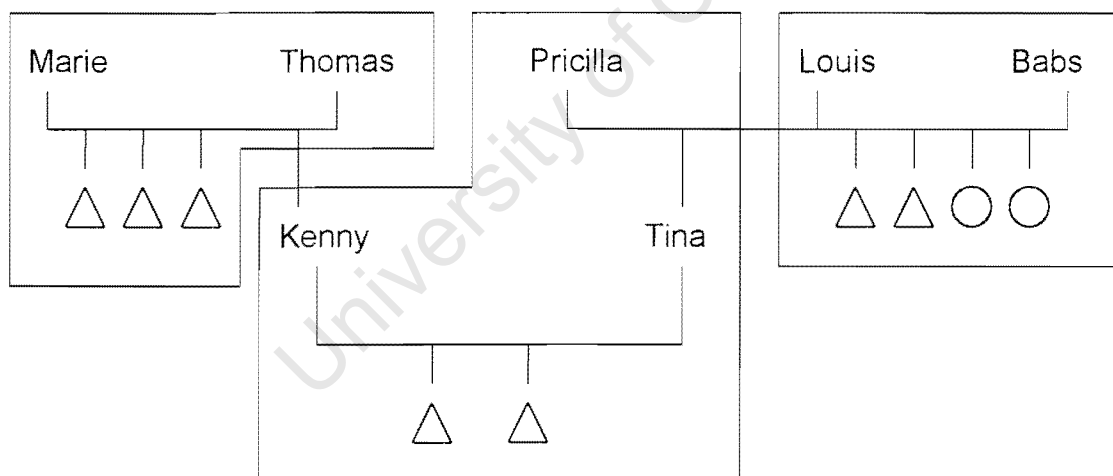
Morris and Rachel have five children. Their two eldest sons are employed on other farms and the eldest is married with two children. The other three children are still at school. The family is not related to anyone else in the *blok*.

The following is a kin diagram that represents an extended family in the *blok* that lives in more than one household:

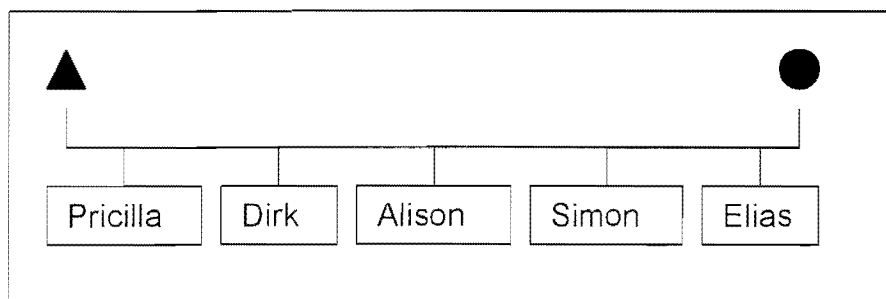


Ester and Babs both have houses with their husbands in the *blok*; Anita their mother periodically lives with them or with a family on a nearby farm where she was placed by the social worker. Carol comes and goes from the *blok*; she has no fixed place of abode. Sometimes she stays with one of her sisters, at other times she stays with friends in the *blok*.

Anita's youngest child Jannie and Carol's son Sonny lives in the veld surrounding the *blok*. Anita has no parental control over Jannie who chose to stop living with her, moved into a makeshift shelter in the *blok*. Sonny went to live with his uncle Jannie because Carol has no fixed place of abode and he wanted to stay in the *blok* with his uncle and other extended family. The teenagers are helped by their aunts/sisters living in the *blok*. Babs' husband Louis was previously married to Pricilla who is also part of an extended family in the *blok*. The following kin diagram represents these relationships.



Pricilla's daughter Tina lives with her in a house in the *blok*. Pricilla is married to Kenny and the couple and their two children share Pricilla's house. Pricilla and Tina both work on the farm, while Kenny works elsewhere. Kenny is the son of Marie and Thomas who have a house in the *blok*. Kenny's brothers all still live at home, one works elsewhere full-time, another is disabled and the youngest works occasionally.



Pricilla is one of five siblings living on the farm. Dirk, Alison, Simon and Elias are all married and occupy houses in the *blok* with their families. Pricilla's brothers all work full-time on the farm. Her sister works part-time during the harvesting season. Pricilla's daughter has married into another family that lives and works on the farm. Pricilla's ex-husband married into an extended family of sisters when he married Babs. Many of the members of these extended families work on the farm, both parents and adult children. The farm is the milieu, in which people work and create new social bonds.

Labour and Remuneration

The majority of people of working age in the *blok* on The Vine and Grove are employed as is illustrated in the table below. The majority of those employed are men. Thirty-seven people are employed on the farm while twenty people are employed off the farm. Those people who find employment off the farm do so in direct contravention of the housing rules.

Table 1: Employment status of Men and Women on the Vine and Grove

	EMPLOYED ON THE VINE AND GROVE	EMPLOYED ELSEWHERE	UNEMPLOYED
Men	24	14	5
Women	13	6	20
Total	37	20	25

It is important to note that not all of the people employed are full-time workers. Of the 37 people working on The Vine and Grove, two are casual workers. Of those working elsewhere, six people are casual workers. All the casual workers are women except one. Casual workers are employed during periods of intense labour on farms. They have no access to housing, nor do they belong to a trade union nor have payments made into the state administered Unemployment Insurance Fund.

The majority of those who are unemployed are women. Three of these women could not work because of their poor health. However, only one of them had secured a disability grant. One woman was disabled in 1997 and had applied for a disability grant but at the time of the fieldwork, she had not yet received any money. The other woman was fifty-eight years old, and had not considered a disability grant, but instead was waiting until she was old enough to qualify for a state pension.

Of the men in the *blok* who were unemployed, three were pensioners and one was disabled as a result of an accident in 1999. At the time of the fieldwork, the disabled man did not have a disability grant but his family had made application for one.

The situation on the fieldwork farm where more men than women were employed full time is a reflection of the situation in the country. The census data for 1996 indicates that nationally there are only 46 women employed for every 100 men. In 1998, Dopstop conducted a base line survey of health and social indicators with the aim of providing information that would assist in the creation of interventions for improving the health of farm workers (te Water Naude 2000). The Survey showed that 87% of men were working as opposed to 60% of the women.

Figures indicating how many people on a farm are working are not useful without knowing what people earn. The following table shows that full time workers are hard pressed to survive on their weekly wages. Those who work part-time on a seasonal basis may earn more in cash wages but their income is not regular and those not in full-time employ can go for months without earning.

The following table provides detailed information of a man and a woman's weekly wage. The figures are actual examples of the workers' wages:

Table 2: Examples of Remuneration on The Vine and Grove.

	Men	Women
Wages	R120.52 per week	R85.00 per week
Deductions:		
➤ Life insurance policy	R15.00	R12.50
➤ UIF	R 1.31	R 0.85
➤ Trade union fees	R 2.50	R 2.50
➤ Electricity	R12.00	R12.00
Total Deductions	R30.81 per week	R27.85 per week
Net Pay	R89.71 per week	R57.15 per week

On The Vine and Grove the workers had wages deducted each week for the state run Unemployment Fund, for instalments on a life insurance policy and Trade Union fees. The result was that workers had on average less than R100 per week for basic living expenses. The real cash wage received by workers is very low and to afford necessities workers go into debt at the shop in the *blok* and with the local illegal liquor outlets on and around the farms known as *smokkelhuise* or *smokkies* (lit. smuggle houses)

The workers on The Vine and Grove do not understand the variations each month in their real cash wages. Their payslips reflect deductions that the farm workers do not know about, making it very difficult for them to budget. Management determines salaries and increases. The workers all earn different amounts, there is no transparency on the part of management and people do not know why some earn more or less than others. Women earn substantially less than men do. Women who work in the vineyards and orchards report that they do the same work as the men.

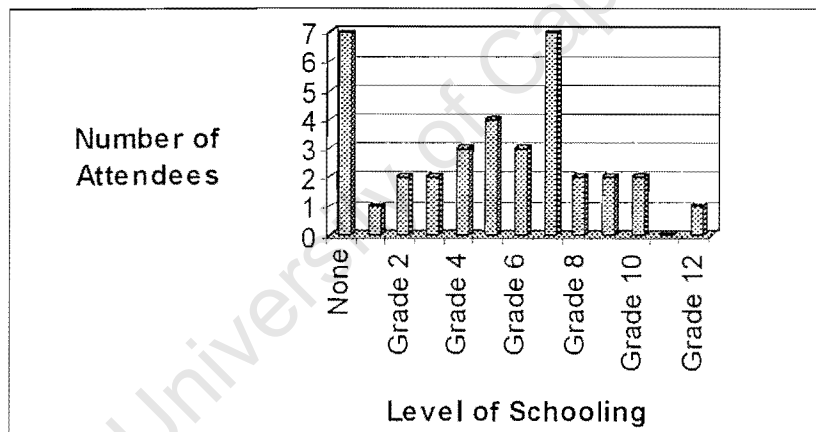
According to the data for the 1996 Census, remuneration for full-time workers is less than R500 per month for more than fifty percent of farm workers in the Western Cape with about twenty percent of the workers earning up to R1000 per month. Part-time workers earn substantially less at about R200 per month.

The Dopstop Survey recorded that median income for workers in the farms surveyed was R640 per month (R160 per week) for men and R440 per month (R110 per week) for women. The figures quoted in the 1996 Census data and those of the Dopstop Survey reflect the gross earnings of farm workers. The survey findings are representative of the income of the workers on The Vine and Grove.

Education

Table 3: Adult Education Levels on the Vine and Grove

N = 36²



Education levels amongst farm workers range from no schooling at all to completing Grade 12, the highest in the South African school system. It is not common for farm workers to complete their schooling or even attend high school. The majority of workers on the Vine and Grove has either completed or are in Grade 7, the highest level of primary school. Half the workers in the sample have between nought and five years schooling.

² Due to the difficulties with collecting data described in Chapter 1, the education levels of 36 of the residents were collected.

The education levels amongst the adults are generally low with the majority having senior primary education. The average age of the adults that received no schooling is forty-seven years. On The Vine and Grove, only one adult had completed high school and among the children aged sixteen and younger only three attended high school. It was most common for people to drop out of school after completing only the fifth or seventh year of primary school. Young people most commonly drop out of school because it is no longer something the family can afford or because the family needs extra income. Teenage pregnancy also accounts for why young women do not complete their schooling.

Seventeen percent of farm workers have no schooling at all. According to the Dopstop Survey, seventy-nine percent of adults younger than sixty are literate while forty-two percent of adults over sixty are literate. The measure for literacy was that individuals could write their own name.

On The Vine and Grove, lack of education was a severe disadvantage for the workers because they were unable to understand documentation received from the farmer and his lawyers. The documents were always written in Afrikaans but the farm workers were unable to make sense of them. Workers spoke of incidents when they were called to the where office they were given papers from the computer. They said that the general manager would do things on the computer and then hand them a piece of paper that they did not understand. I was often called upon to explain the contents of letters and other documents. The workers were disempowered and unable to engage with the farm management on the same terms, leaving them frustrated and confused. In Chapter 3, I further discuss the interaction between farm workers and management.

Health

Farm workers carry a high burden of disease (London et al 1998). TB rates for example are higher in the farming areas of the Western Cape than what they are in the urban areas (London et al 1998). The Dopstop Survey indicated that of the 3 014 individuals interviewed, 1% had TB and 9% percent had had TB in the past. On The Vine and Grove, two adults and one of the children had TB during the fieldwork period.

There are high rates of tobacco use among farm workers. Sixty four percent of the individuals in the Dopstop Survey smoked. Amongst the workers on The Vine and Grove, tobacco and cannabis were used. Young people smoked cannabis rather than drank alcohol.

Fifty five percent of the Dopstop Survey population indicated that they drank alcohol. On The Vine and Grove, only two of the men did not drink alcohol. According to the Dopstop Survey the majority of alcohol and tobacco users were men, 76% drank alcohol while 72% used tobacco. Although fewer women drink, the rate of Foetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS) is particularly high. In 1998, the Dopstop Survey put the prevalence at two and a half percent. The FAS rate in the Western Cape currently rates among the highest in the world (Viljoen cited in London et al 1998:1093).

A health hazard that workers are exposed to in the course of their work is pesticide poisoning. On The Vine and Grove, one man had almost died of pesticide poisoning in 1998. He was hospitalised and recovered. The farmer did not take any responsibility for the poisoning, and not pay the hospital bill but instead forwarded it to the worker concerned. The man who was working with pesticides while I was in the *blok* came home from the fields in the same overall that he wore while working with pesticides. He would remove them and leave them in the bathroom. The whole house smelled of the pesticide and his wife would wash his overalls along with the family's laundry.

Alcohol Consumption

Alcohol consumption is prevalent throughout the *blok*. Adults, teenagers and children all drink alcohol. Alcohol consumption does not occur in a uniform fashion. How and when people drink and the ways in which people begin to consume alcohol differ. Not everyone living in the *blok* drinks alcohol but those who do are represented in all but one household.

The people that do not consume alcohol are called *bekeer*, meaning that they have changed their lives and taken on Evangelical Christian beliefs and practices which exclude the consumption of alcohol, the use of drugs such as cannabis and the smoking of tobacco. Not all people are *bekeer*, and there are those who profess Christianity but who also drink. Two women on the farm indicated that they did not drink a lot because they were religious and one said that she could not drink a lot because her husband was an elder in the church and she had to set a good example.

Those who are *bekeer* are part of family and friendship networks that include those who consume alcohol. All but one of the households in the *blok* contain both those who are *bekeer* and people who drink alcohol. More women than men are *bekeer*. There is no household in the *blok* where only the man as head of household is *bekeer*. Three men on The Vine and Grove and fifteen women claimed to be *bekeer* at the start of the fieldwork period. It became clear though during the course of fieldwork that one of the women that claimed to be *bekeer* did not display the behaviour required of converted people. She drank heavily each weekend. A husband and wife couple that claimed to be *bekeer* smoked cannabis and were not considered part of the *bekeer* community by other converts in the *blok*. The conversion of farm workers and the consequential cessation of alcohol consumption will be further explored in Chapter 5.

Farm workers on The Vine and Grove drink mainly wine and beer. A discussion concerning the different ways in which wine and beer can be purchased, their cost and definitions of terms used in Table 4 will follow.

Table 4: Volumes and Costs of Alcohol Purchased

Alcohol Volume	Place of Purchase	Cost per unit
Wine: <i>Papsak</i> (5 litres)	Bottle stores in town	R14-R18
	<i>Bakkie</i> at the farm	R20-R27
	<i>Smokkelhuis</i> (lit. smuggle houses)	R30-R35
<i>Kan</i> : (2 litres)	Bottle stores in town	R4
	<i>Bakkie</i> at the farm	R10
	<i>smokkelhuis</i>	R10
Bottles: (1 litre) (750 millilitres)	<i>bakkie</i>	R5 R5
Beer: (750 millilitre bottles)	bottle stores in town	R3-R5
	<i>bakkie</i> at the farm	R5
	<i>Smokkelhuis</i>	R5
(340 millilitre cans)	bottle stores in town	R2.50

The wine consumed is of the most inexpensive variety and is purchased in different quantities. The five-litre *papsak* is a foil bag with a tap attached, packaged in a box, the *kan* is a glass jug with a capacity of two litres, and bottles of wine have a capacity of either one-litre or 750 millilitres. Beer is most commonly purchased in 750 millilitre bottles, and occasionally in 340 millilitre cans. The cans are only bought in town from the bottle stores. The consumption of spirits such as brandy and whiskey is very rare. Workers report drinking it when friends bring it to the *blok* or when they attend gatherings such as weddings or parties off the farm. Brandy consumption was reported most often amongst the young adults who drank with friends on other farms. Consumption of brandy is, however, much lower than that of beer and wine.

Some people either drink wine or beer, the reasons put forward have either to do with taste preference, or are health related. Workers report avoiding beer because it causes stomach bloating and worsens ulcer symptoms. Wine is reportedly avoided because it makes people very aggressive.

The avoidance of particular types of alcohol appears to be a strategy amongst workers that enables them to avoid some of the negative effects of alcohol without giving up drinking entirely.

Alcohol is purchased from three different places; in town from bottle stores, outside the *blok* from the *bakkie* that stops each Friday afternoon to sell vegetables and alcohol, and from the *smokkelhuis* situated on a nearby farm. Despite the prices at the *smokkelhuis* being substantially higher than those at the bottle stores in town, workers still bought there. The convenience of being able to walk to the *smokkelhuis* and the saving of R7 return taxi fare made purchases there a cheaper alternative. The farmer does not provide the workers with any transport and those who buy alcohol in town do so in the course of buying groceries and other household necessities at the end of each week.

A further attraction of buying alcohol from the *bakkie* and the *smokkelhuis* is the facility to buy on credit that is not available at the bottle stores in town. Workers will spend money *op die boek* (on credit) for alcohol, when they have run out of money during the course of the weekend, or when paying their debts for food and alcohol from the previous week has depleted their cash. Friends often pool their cash in order to buy alcohol.

Although drinking behaviour varies a great deal among the people in the *blok* on The Vine and Grove, there are patterns of behaviour that can be described generally amongst the workers, including age related patterns. Amongst the adults, men and women indicated in discussions and interviews about their drinking behaviour that they drink in separate groups. The drinking survey indicated otherwise. Men and women were found to have shared alcohol in group gatherings and as couples. The notion that women and men should not drink together is related to violence that occurs when drinking, and to the arguments about the purchasing of alcohol. Husbands and wives share alcohol when at home. Adults drink in their homes or in the homes of their friends. When alcohol is consumed outdoors amongst adults, it occurs within close proximity to a home, either on the *stoep* (verandah) or around a fire in the yard. Adult men also drink alone in their homes, but are not habitually lone drinkers.

Those who drink alcohol consider it acceptable behaviour for adults. Drinking at home or in the homes of friends or relatives is considered correct behaviour. An informant expressed the converse behaviour to me in the following terms; "you do not see people lying around the *blok* drunk". The idea being that alcohol consumption in the *blok* is not out of control, and people behave in an orderly fashion. As will be shown, the emphasis placed on the idea that people go home when they are drunk hides the high volume of alcohol consumed and the violent behaviour that often results.

Generally, people drink in groups that consist of friends and relatives. The group will often drink all the available alcohol in one sitting, and buy more again the next day. The groupings of people that drink alcohol vary and not all the people that were part of a drinking group on one occasion will necessarily always be part of the same group.

Alcohol is not the only addictive substance used by people in the *blok*. The use of cannabis and Mandrax was also reported and observed. The majority of people in the *blok* was opposed to the use of these substances and considered them unacceptable. Only two adults in the *blok* were reported to smoke cannabis. The tendency to smoke cannabis was strongest among the young people, and on one occasion, I discovered a group of young men smoking cannabis mixed with Mandrax in the *veld* (uncultivated ground) behind the *uitwerker* hall. A man who said he was from Cape Town accompanied them; he had provided the Mandrax. Also during the first quarter of 1999 a resident in the *blok* was selling cannabis. His girlfriend told me that selling cannabis was a good source of revenue. The young men that I had observed smoking cannabis also all reported smoking it to me. They all smoked whenever they could afford to buy it. Two of the young men said that they did not drink alcohol anymore and preferred to smoke cannabis while the other two in the group smoked and drank.

When people drink alone or with one or two other people, they are better able to report the quantity of alcohol they consumed. When people drink in large groups, they are less aware of the quantity of alcohol they consume, but do have a sense of the quantity of alcohol consumed by the whole group.

When people drink alcohol, they use glasses, but unless they had very little to drink they are unable to remember how many glasses of alcohol they have consumed. Instead, people are only able to remember the total quantities of alcohol consumed by the group with whom they were drinking.

Table 5: Individual Weekend Alcohol Consumption

Individual	Date	Alcohol consumption	Cost
<u>Dirk</u>	Fri 9 April	1 bottle of wine consumed alone at home	About R5
	Sat 10 April	1 glass of wine at next-door neighbour's home	Free
<u>Frans</u>	Friday 9 April and Saturday 10 April	Reported no drinking	N/A
<u>Klaas</u>	Friday 9 April and Saturday 10 April	Reported no drinking	N/A
<u>Simon</u>	Fri 9 April	1 bottle of wine with his adult son and Fran, who lives in a house nearby.	About R5
	Sat 10 April	Wine with friends from outside the <i>blok</i> (did not know how much)	N/A

Table 6: Group Weekend Alcohol Consumption

The Group	Date	Contribution	Cost
Dirk	Sun 11 April	2 bottles of wine, 2 bottles of beer	About R20
Frans		1 bottle of beer, 1 bottle of wine	About R10
Klaas		none	
Simon		none	

The tables above represent individuals that drank both in a group and with others over the course of a weekend. The men all live in the *blok*, Simon and Dirk are brothers and Frans and Klaas are friends.

Drinking tables 5 and 6 demonstrate the different levels of alcohol consumption amongst a selection of the survey participants. They drank together on Sunday afternoon and could only provide information about what was contributed, but not about what each of them had consumed as individuals. On Friday and Saturday, those who reported drinking alone or with only one or two other people had a clearer sense of how much alcohol they had consumed. Those who drink alone consume as much as one to two litres of alcohol at a time. As one woman reported of her previous drinking:

“I would drink a *kan* on my own. When I drank I couldn’t see clearly, and it made me confused and I fought with people.”

The number of people in a drinking group varies considerably from two people to upwards of ten people. Larger groups result in more alcohol being available as people bring their supplies to the group. Each person joining the group may bring as much as five litres of wine to the proceedings. People who do not bring supplies are tolerated in the group if they are contributors at other times.

Drinking among women in the *blok* also occurs in groups. Veronica and Maggie drank wine with Fran on the Friday night of the same weekend of the tables above representing the men. On the Saturday night, Veronica drank wine and beer with two other women from the *blok* while Fran drank wine at home with her husband and Maggie drank with whom ever would share with her. Maggie reported of that evening; “*Ek loop en snuffel by die mense,*” (I go around and ferret it out from the people). Only Fran reported drinking on the Sunday, she drank the last of the wine that was in the house with her husband.

Those who drink together on the weekends also socialise during the week. When conducting the drinking survey, I would often approach a group of men about their alcohol consumption over the weekend and find that the group socialising after work on a Monday held many of the same people that drank together on the weekend. Women also socialised with the same people that they shared alcohol with on the weekends. Because more women in the *blok* than men do not drink, social networks amongst the women extended across drinking partners and non-drinkers.

Although members of drinking groups continue their contact during the week without drinking, these groups are not often a source of resource sharing in times of need. Women were observed to negotiate resource sharing, and the trend was for women who drank to turn to their female friends and relatives who did not drink for assistance. Those who did not drink alcohol tended to have more resources available than those who did. Households where women are *bekeer* tend to have food and household necessities, although limited in supply, for the duration of the week.

The sharing of resources ranges from household amenities, such as toilets, to food, washing powder and other household items. Women who have resources indicate that they feel that they have to share food particularly because otherwise the children in the household concerned will go hungry. Sharing resources is considered burdensome when the person making the request is seen to make a nuisance of herself or when she oversteps the accepted limits of making a request. The following is an example of a description by one woman of how another overstepped the accepted boundaries of assistance:

Sussie drinks every weekend. She is married to Frans and they have two children, Frans is employed full time on the farm but Sussie does not work. She often asks friends in the *blok* for food. She and her husband do not have any relatives on the farm. She regularly goes to Ester for help. Ester does not drink and has a household of four people to feed on her income. Although her husband also works on the farm, he is not currently working because he has a broken leg.

This is what Ester has to say about Sussie:

Sussie never has food in her house, she often comes to borrow things and it's always more than one thing at a time. She also helps herself to vegetables if people have any growing in their yards.

Young people's drinking habits are similar but not always identical to those of adult farm workers. Teenagers and young adults tend to drink in secret, although this is not always the case. There were times during my fieldwork when on a Friday afternoon I would see a group of teenagers drinking in plain sight of the adults in the *blok*.

Adults and young people agree that it is unacceptable for young people to consume alcohol, especially in the presence of their older relatives or other adults as once under the influence of alcohol, the younger person's behaviour may be unacceptable and cause offence to the adults.

Teenagers and young adults always drink with at least one other person. Young men and women tend to drink separately but they do sometimes drink together. The availability of alcohol often over-rides the tendency to drink separately. Particularly when young men have alcohol, they will invite young women to join them. Those who are working and can afford to buy alcohol share with their friends and relatives who cannot. Young people also visit friends on other farms to drink alcohol. If young people have friends from town with cars, they drink in the car on the side of the road. If young people drink in the *blok*, they tend to stay out of sight of their parents. The bushes next to the river at one end of the *blok*, behind the community hall and behind the hostel for the *uitwerkers* are places of choice for groups of young people to meet for a drinking session.

Although drinking amongst young people is often secretive, they do not always sober up in secret. Young people regularly return home to eat and sleep off the effects of their alcohol consumption. It is at this point that antagonism between adults and young people arises over their alcohol consumption. Jackie, a nineteen year old woman who lives in the *blok* with her mother, step-father, sister, cousin and half-brother reports the following scenario when she returns home after a drinking session:

“I go home and walk straight through the front room and into the bedroom, slamming the door, where I collapse onto the bed drunk and fall asleep. The next morning my mother nags me over it. But I don’t take much notice of it.”

Young people and those not working full time do drink alcohol on Sunday nights and have reported waking up with a *babbelas* (slang term for a hang-over) on Monday mornings. Jackie reports the following about her drinking habits: “I am not sober until Monday morning. Yesterday [Monday] I looked like a *pap snoek*” (soggy fish, indicating that her appearance was sickly).

Parents and other adults monitor children more closely than young people and opportunities for drinking arise less often. Children are able to help themselves to alcohol at celebrations and occasions like Christmas and New Year or birthdays when the adults have become inebriated. It was on Christmas Day when Jackie was about ten years old that she had her first taste of alcohol:

“My cousin and I stole my grandmother’s brandy, a *nippie* (half-jack). We also stole wine and we drank it all. We were very sick. We brushed our teeth, splashed our faces and said we didn’t know why we were sick. A few months after that we started drinking regularly with older kids. We went to the bush with the wine that we stole here and there and stayed there until we were sober and then went home. Once my grandmother caught me and *sy het my geskel*³ (she scolded me harshly) but I had a headache and wasn’t up to her was not able to listen to her grandmother). But if my grandfather caught me drinking, I stayed at my cousin’s for a week, I was afraid he’d hit me.”

In households where both parents drink children have easy access to any left over alcohol. The children are able to take it from their parents once they have fallen asleep from the effects of the alcohol. Children have also told me how they make their own alcohol in December during the long summer holiday. At this time, the grapes are ripe and ready for harvesting. The children steal grapes from the vines, and sugar and yeast from their mothers’ kitchens. The grapes are crushed and placed in a plastic bag along with the other ingredients, buried and left for a couple of weeks. When the mixture has fermented the grape skins are strained off and the children have their *mos* (lit.: new wine), ready to drink.

³ The word *(ge)skel* translates into English as scold: the scolding conveyed by the word is particularly harsh including shouting, admonishing and even abusive language.

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Chapter Three:

The Changing Nature of Structural Violence

In this chapter, I argue that historical processes have created a rural labour force in the Western Cape that is impoverished and immiserated that continues to be ensnared by exploitative labour practices. The strategies employed by farmers to ensure a constant and compliant labour force have over time become internalised by workers. Alcohol has been integral to the dominance of farm workers. On the Vine and Grove, alcohol continues to be used as a means within exploitative labour relations to control and maintain a low cost labour force. The changing milieu of production in the agricultural industry of the Western Cape has brought alternative paradigms for labour practice. I explore the interactions of the old and new paradigms as played out on the fieldwork farm and demonstrate that these workers continue to be subjected to structural violence.

I will use case material to demonstrate the extent of the control that the farmer attempts to exercise over the workers in the present. The case material is representative rather than exceptional, and reflects the tenuous position of all the workers in the *blok*. The material also demonstrates the different responses to the violence perpetrated by the farmer through his management staff and lawyers.

Historical Context of Alcohol in the Western Cape

The current mode of alcohol consumption amongst farm workers is rooted in a long history of oppression and exploitation. The origins of farm workers in the Western Cape can be traced to the indigenous inhabitants of the South Western Cape; the slaves brought to the area by colonisers, the Bantu-speaking people of Southern Africa and the European settlers. The history of farm workers, like their current situation, was characterised by institutionalised violence and social suffering.

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The arrival of the Dutch at the Cape in 1652 heralded a permanent change in the social and political relations of the indigenous inhabitants, the Khoisan and further to the East, the Xhosa. The Dutch brought with them guns and horses endowing them with ease of movement and firepower. They were in a position to travel into the interior easily and take land by force. The local inhabitants could not oppose Dutch aggression and lost their rights to the land at the Cape (Shell 1994).

Until 1657, Dutch East India Company employees worked the land, growing vegetables and planting vineyards. After 1657 when Company employees became free *burghers* (citizens) at the Cape and acquired land, a shortage of wage labour developed (Shell 1994). It was difficult to attract the indigenous inhabitants to wage labour and farms were not productive enough to generate the cash necessary for attractive wages. Khoisan and Xhosa people did work the land but only seasonally, and after the smallpox epidemic of 1713 many were killed and the survivors mostly left the colony in an effort to escape the disease (Shell 1994).

Slavery was introduced at the Cape in 1652 and free *burghers* and the Company bought them. Between 1652 and 1808, 63 000 slaves were imported from Africa, India, Madagascar and Indonesia. Local inhabitants were also enslaved and slaves came to constitute the majority of labourers on farms (Shell 1994). During the early period of colonisation at the Cape, alcohol was considered in a positive light. Slaves were given brandy and tobacco to enable the process of making them what the Dutch considered civilised (Shell 1994). The following quote from the diary of the first governor at the Cape, van Riebeeck, illustrates how alcohol was part of a strategy employed to mould the recently acquired slaves into a desirable work force:

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17 April [1658] This morning beautiful, clear weather. We have begun to make preparations for the establishment of a school for the Company's Angolan slave children from the *Amersvoort*...which school will be held in the morning and the afternoon by the sick comforter and sick visitors teaching them the correct Dutch language. To animate their lessons and to make them really hear the Christian prayers each slave should be given a small glass of brandy and two inches of tobacco, etc. A register must be established and names should be given to those who do not have any names. All slaves, couples or singletons, young or old, will be under the personal aegis of the Commander. Within a few days these slaves will be brought under a proper sense of discipline and become decent people (in Shell 1994:79).

During the period of slavery, farmers provided slaves with wine during working hours and with a ration at the end of the day. Slaves were provided with wine daily from the age of twelve. Alcohol was integrated into and structured the working day and the leisure time of slaves (Scully 1992).

From 1838, slaves were formally emancipated and alcohol was employed as a means of controlling the emerging rural labour force (Scully 1992). It was during this time that farmers replaced their slave holdings with a permanent labour force. The farmer provided housing for permanent workers and paid them with wine, food, clothing and a wage (Scully 1992, Waldman 1996). Alcohol was also used to attract newly emancipated slaves to farms during labour intensive periods like harvesting as seasonal workers. The provision of wine rations ensured a reliable and compliant pool of labour on the farms. Workers became reliant on the farmer for provision of alcohol and the farmer could dispense of poor quality wine. The high consumption of alcohol amongst farm workers created a labour force less able to negotiate or demand wage increases or improved living conditions (Scully 1992).

The provision of alcohol to farm labour did not go unopposed. In the nineteenth century, the influence of the temperance movement reached the Cape and an "anti tot lobby" arose in Stellenbosch (Ambler and Crush 1992, Scully 1992). The *dop* system and liquor outlets were considered detrimental to the workers because they fostered anomie (Scully 1992). Farmers, however, considered alcohol a crucial element in maintaining a dependent rural labour force.

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The purchase of alcohol often resulted in debt being owed to the canteen owner, this ensured that the labourer would return to work for the farmer. As J Molteno in his report to the Church Temperance Society, Cape Town in 1893 stated, "...many farmers hold that canteens do good; they make labourers work for drink, they absorb their wages rapidly, and compel them to work for more to supply the craving" (cited in Scully 1992:63).

The notion that alcohol consumption could result in dependence and anomie had reached the colony from Europe. It was an idea that was broadly accepted and farmers knowingly exploited the effects of alcohol to create a dependent work force. The temperance movement called for the closure of drinking establishments, but the producers of wine and other alcoholic beverages at the Cape had few opportunities for export and the local market was extremely important to the continuation of their livelihood. Until the nineteenth century, the colonial powers at the Cape made no real attempt to control the availability of liquor outlets or stop the *dop* system (Ambler and Crush 1992).

The discovery of diamonds in the nineteenth century and the advent of public works programmes provided farm workers with alternate forms of employment (Scully 1992) at the same time the temperance movement was gaining ground (Ambler and Crush 1992). Steps were taken to prevent indigenous labourers and ex-slaves from accessing alcohol. This met with favour where alcohol was considered to have a negative impact on the production of labourers, as on the diamond mines in Kimberley (Ambler and Crush 1992). In the Western Cape, however, those associated with the wine industry opposed all forms of legislation that would prevent their labourers from accessing alcohol, "fearing a reduction in the market for wine as well as disruption of established forms of labour control" (Ambler and Crush 1992:14). The power of the wine industry that succeeded in preventing laws that would seriously impact on their ability to employ the *dop* system, extended well into the twentieth century (Ambler and Crush 1992).

Alcohol has remained a feature of farm worker life through the centuries. The practice of the *dop* system was only made illegal in 1961. The liquor Act of 1989 specifically prohibits the supply of liquor as part of a wage. However, the receipt of wine as part of employment on a wine farm remained legal. Farmers can still give their workers wine as a 'perk' over and above their wages (London et al 1998). The cessation of the *dop* system has meant that the farm workers have begun to purchase their own alcohol. On some farms, it is bought from the farmer, otherwise alcohol is purchased from liquor outlets in town and from *smokkelhuise* on and around the farms that have proliferated since the cessation of the *dop* system.

Health care professionals argue that although the *dop* system is illegal and the incidence of its practice has declined, the problem of alcohol abuse and farm worker dependence remains (London et al 1998). The Catholic Institute for International Relations (CIIR 1989) documented the conditions of farm workers on wine farms in the Western Cape and provided evidence of the continuing existence of the *dop* system. The extent to which the *dop* system is still employed by farmers is, however, difficult to gauge. This is due to the different definitions of the system employed by researchers, and the difficulty of accessing information on this illegal practice (See summary in London et al 1998).

Dominance and Control

The form of dominance that has been practised in the agricultural industry of the Western Cape is paternalism. The practice is currently undergoing change and is in some instances being replaced by other forms of labour relations (du Toit 2001). The landscape in the Western Cape comprises varying forms of labour relations and there are vast differences between farming areas.

Paternalism as it has been practised in South Africa has its origins in the slave holding practices of the colonists at the Cape (Shell 1994). It is characterised by the maintenance of a relationship of subordination and control.

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Paternalism uses the metaphor of family to conceptualise the relationship between the farm management and the workers thus extending the influence of the farmer into the private lives of the workers. The head of the family is the farmer, and the mother is the farmer's wife. The workers are the children and it is the farmer's responsibility to take care of his children (du Toit 1993).

Within the framework of paternalism, farmers consider the people who work on their farms to be incapable of independent thought and untrustworthy of organising their own affairs. Farmers and their wives see fit to involve themselves in all aspects of worker's lives, from attempting to prevent alcohol consumption to controlling family size (Waldman 1993, 1996). The following remarks made by a farmer concerning the people who work on his farm illustrate the nature of control exercised within paternalism:

... you have the coloured workers living on the farms... So you are the first person to whom he complains. You are the policeman, you are a magistrate, if he gets hurt you must nurse him yourself, or you drive him to the clinic. And sometimes you must play the role of a father punishing his children. If there are mischievous boys who transgress then you must punish them yourself. You don't run to the courts for every little complaint (du Toit 1992:11).

Susan Levine conducted fieldwork in the Worcester area in the late 1990s and found that there, farmers still think in paternalistic terms about their workers. They emphasise the reciprocal and familial relationships that they believe exist with their workers (Levine 2000). In reality, paternalist practice is far from an innocuous family affair. The practice is manifested structurally in a relationship of power that does not allow the worker rights, either as a labourer or as an adult.

The power exercised by the farmer can be brutal and obvious, as in the case recounted by Levine (2000). In the Worcester area, teenage boys had been employed, not paid as had been promised and beaten by a farmer. The power still enjoyed by farmers was exposed by the response of the local authorities. To requests for assistance for the boys, social services responded that they do not deal with cases that originate on farms. The argument was that farms have their own jurisdiction and farmers deal with their own domestic matters (Levine 2000).

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Paternalism has thus also enjoyed the support of the state and continues to do so in some areas at local level. The violence inherent in paternalism is not always as graphic as in the case of the young boys in Worcester. Another aspect to the maintenance of subordination within paternalism is gift giving. This is a subtler means of control but its result is also disempowering and oppressive. Farm workers accept with gratitude the “gifts” given to them by the farmer, and such a farmer is held in high esteem. On the Vine and Grove, the residents often spoke with longing for the time when the current owner’s brother had run the farm. They said that he had been a good boss who helped the workers with loans and transport when they needed it. They recounted how their previous boss had given all the children in the *blok* toys one Christmas after his brother had taken over the farm because his brother had given them nothing. Workers regularly wished that the current owner’s brother would take over the farm again. The workers essentially wanted a good father figure that would help them in times of need and provide for them. As one worker put it, “You (the farmer) work with your workers like you do with your own children. Your workers keep you alive.”

Farm workers understand that within the paternalist model, with its emphasis on family and responsibility, that the farmer should take care of them and that they should work hard for the farmer. Farm workers and others have been subjected to paternalism have come to accept it as the *status quo*. As Janet Sandell’s informant told her “*Ek was nie groot gemaak om teen blankes se wil te gaan nie*. I was not brought up to go against the will of white people” (Sandell 1997:85). The success of paternalism then rests on those being controlled feeling unable to take control of and to make decisions about their own situations (Sandell 1997).

Farmers have traditionally provided housing, transport, access to medical care and entertainment for their workers. These services are provided as privileges by the farmer and not as rights. Behaviour unacceptable to the farmer can mean the arbitrary removal of such services (du Toit 1993, Waldman 1996). Thus, what should be aspects of an employment package are instead provided as gifts. Consequently workers are robbed of recourse if what are essentially employment benefits are denied them.

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Providing workers with alcohol as part of their wage historically and still recently (see Levine 2000) further illustrates the childlike image farmers have had of their workers. Workers are still paid with wine in some areas because the farmers believe that the workers cannot be trusted with money because they do not know how to use it (Levine 2000). The failure to provide a living wage and the provision of alcohol as reward to labourers has and continues to not only exploit but also create dependency amongst farm workers.

Currently, thinking amongst farmers about the provision of alcohol to workers is changing. Since 1994, the political and economic climate of the country and the Western Cape has changed. The opening of the economy to the international community and the concerns at state level about the conditions of farm workers have increased pressure on farmers to take responsibility for the improvement of working conditions and be competitive in a global market. Farmers have responded in different ways to the new climate and some attempts at the improvement of workers' conditions have been made. As Levine (2000) notes and I observed on the Vine and Grove, these efforts are often only extended to the appearance of the workers' homes in order to satisfy the tourist gaze, and "(i)nterior compounds remain run down, and without electricity or running water" (Levine 2000:75).

There are farms in the Western Cape where development is taken very seriously, from the point of view of the farmer investing in new technology and exploring new ways of managing labour. The work of the Rural Foundation since the 1980s has also influenced farmers to consider management structures that were more participatory and provided opportunities for workers to learn new skills. (Du Toit 1993) Some farmers have attempted to change management practices through developing workers' skills and attempting participatory decision making¹. Other farms while not providing independent business opportunities do ensure that workers receive training and that there are amenities such as crèches and primary health care available for workers (Turner 1999).

¹ The farm Nelson's Creek is one such example. Workers have created a co-operative and produce their own wine from grapes grown on the land provided by the farmer. The co-operative is using income from its wine sales to consolidate and expand its business.

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On the Vine and Grove, advantage is taken of the exploitative and controlling aspects of paternalism while the aspects of responsibility for workers are ignored. When I first met with the farmer to ask permission to work on the farm, he told me that he was a capitalist and that he ran his farm as a business. The farmer said that *uitwerkers* are more economical to employ and he does not have any long-term obligations to them such as housing. He told me that it was his plan to eventually only use *uitwerker* labour on his farm. Not only does the farmer not hire the unemployed residents in the farm *blok* but he has also made it illegal in terms of the farm rules for unemployed members of households to work elsewhere.

There is much antagonism between resident workers and the *uitwerkers*. Residents in the *blok* say that *uitwerkers* earn R40 a day amounting to R200 a week, more than any of the permanent workers on the farm earn. The permanent workers feel that the farmer should be hiring the unemployed men and women in the *blok* during peak labour season instead of bringing in the *uitwerkers*. During the fieldwork period there was a growing sense amongst the farm workers that the farmer was trying to get rid of them so that they could be replaced with *uitwerkers*. Open hostility towards the *uitwerkers* was often displayed as the following case portrays:

I was sitting outside Elias's house in the *blok* interviewing him one afternoon in late autumn. While we were talking, an *uitwerker* took some wood away from a pile that was near Elias's house. Elias shouted at the man and said that it was his wood and he must ask before he takes any away. The *uitwerker* ignored Elias and continued taking the wood. Elias became angry, stood up and grabbed a brick that was lying nearby and threatened the *uitwerker* demanding that he leave the wood alone. Elias threatened to *moer* (beat) the man and when the *uitwerker* finally left the wood alone Elias returned to me saying:

"These *uitwerkers* are *gemors* (rubbish). That is my wood, Janboer (lit.: John farmer, one of the farm managers) offloaded the wood yesterday. The *uitwerkers* just waste it by making fires all day".

The farm owner considers farming to be a business yet the farmer also seeks to control all aspects of the workers lives and considers paying for their labour power his only responsibility.

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As has been shown in Chapter 2, wages on the Vine and Grove are extremely low and do not provide the means to repay debt and accumulate any wealth either through the purchase of material goods or the creation of savings.

The control over the workers is maintained through a system of farm managers. The management of the farm is hierarchical, following a corporate structure, with one overall manager to whom the others are responsible. At the start of the fieldwork period, there were three managers responsible to the general manager. During the period of the fieldwork all of these managers left the farm and were replaced. Their reasons for leaving included ongoing conflict with the farm owner and the general manager, regarding their conditions of service and the management of the farm workers. The managers do not always agree with the farmer's treatment of the workers. One manager who left at the end of the fieldwork period went so far as to seek assistance for one of the workers because he disagreed with the farmer's decisions regarding the worker.

The farm owner's interactions with the workers on the farm are limited to occasional visits to the *blok* for meetings with the workers and managing disciplinary hearings of farm workers. The managers are responsible for ensuring that the farm is run smoothly and that the workers adhere to the rules of the farm. The managers are also responsible for exercising control over the workers.

The farm management employs several strategies that effectively create an environment reminiscent of what Erving Goffman calls a total institution. Goffman (1961) states that the environment of farm workers does not qualify them as members of a total institution because they "...are not collectively regimented and do not march through the day's activities in the immediate company of a batch of similar others (Goffman 1961:6)." I argue that the practice of paternalism on farms in the Western Cape and the particular style of paternalism and capitalism employed on the Vine and Grove has many elements of a total institution and enables dominance over the workers.

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Farm workers and their families live on the farm and there is no division between their professional and private spheres of life, a hallmark of a total institution according to Goffman. The housing contract on the Vine and Grove covers all aspects of the workers' lives and that of their families and friends. The rules associated with occupying a house on the farm are very restrictive and they regulate who may live in the house and what activities are acceptable in the house.

House occupancy in the *blok* is tenuous and the residents are liable to lose their houses for any infringements of the rules of the contract. The contract explicitly states that the occupancy of a house is a privilege and not a right.

Examples of rules found in the housing contract (Taken from a copy of the housing contract shown to me by a worker on the Vine and Grove.):

- Workers and their direct families may stay in the house
- Children under the age of 21 are considered direct family.
- Children that find work elsewhere must vacate the house.
- The person responsible for the house is responsible for the behaviour of everyone and any one in the house at any given time.
- Unacceptable behaviour includes but is not limited to:
 - Fighting
 - Any attack on fellow workers
 - Deliberate damage to property
 - Unacceptable noise
- **Any unacceptable behaviour made worse by the use of alcohol or drugs.**
[Original emphasis]
- All unacceptable behaviour by anyone in the house must be reported to the management within 24 hours.
- If an illegal person stays in the house for more than three days, it must be reported.
- Management must give permission for any friends or family to stay over in the house. The maximum period allowed is three weeks.

A rule that does not appear in the housing contract, but was brought to my attention by my informants, prohibits the spouses of people employed on the farm from working elsewhere, and should they do so they are liable for eviction. The farm rules are designed to exert maximum control over the lives of farm workers whether at work or at home.

Farm workers on the Vine and Grove do not comply with these rules. Many of the workers have children older than twenty-one and extended family living with them. Children over fifteen also work off the farm, as do some of the spouses of the farm workers. Whenever possible those who are unemployed find seasonal work on other farms. The lack of alternate housing and the poverty experienced by the farm workers necessitates running the risk of eviction to subsist.

Housing off the farms in Stellenbosch is scarce due to housing shortages in the municipal areas. Farm workers are not given priority for municipal housing and because of the implementation of the Extension of Security of Tenure Act 62 of 1997 and the protection it affords workers, less housing is available on farms.

The democratic election in 1994 and the institution of the constitution have changed the political landscape of farmer worker relations. No longer in terms of the law, are workers dependent on the favour of the farmer. Instead, their rights are enshrined in the constitution and laws have been implemented to protect those rights. The Extension of Security of Tenure Act 67 of 1997 is one such law. In terms of the act the most important rights of the occupiers of farm housing are:

- The right to family life in terms of their own culture
- The right to receive visitors
- The right to receive post or other communication

The farmer has the right:

- To set reasonable conditions with regard to visitors on the farm
- To hold occupiers liable for any damage caused by their visitors if they could reasonably have prevented such damage.
- To terminate an occupier's right to live on land provided there is a valid reason for doing so, and fair procedures have been followed (Taylor 1998:2).

The rules of the housing contract are in contravention of the act concerning the rules about children of farm workers. The definition of family is also narrow and does not take into account the extended kin networks of the farm workers and their reliance on those networks for survival. The rules regarding visitors are extremely stringent and infringe upon the private lives of farm workers.

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When I first arrived in the *blok* the residents complained about the rules in the housing contract. They told me how the farmer had even gone so far as to demand that residents in the *blok* get off the trucks from other farms that stopped outside the *blok* looking for people wanting work. The farmer also demanded that trucks no longer stop outside the *blok* to hire unemployed residents.

The workers were then told that if their children or spouses worked elsewhere they could no longer live on the farm. The residents also said that the farmer did not really know who lived in the houses because he seldom came to the *blok*. Within two months of beginning fieldwork, the farmer had numbers painted on the front doors of each of the houses in the *blok*. The residents felt that the numbers were there to identify the houses more clearly for the purposes of detecting "illegal" residents.

The farmer also makes use of a private security company to patrol the farm and control the workers. The company is responsible for the security of the farm, but this does not include the safety of farm workers. During the fieldwork period the security company arrested people living in the *blok* and took part in a *klopjag* (lit.: knock hunt). A *klopjag* involves knocking on the doors of worker's houses in the early hours of the morning, demanding to be let in and searching the house for "illegal" occupants and arresting them.

In early March, the farmer called a meeting in the *blok*, which he attended along with one of the managers. The meeting was called to address the issue of what are referred to as *inwooners*, people who according to the farmer and his rules are living "illegally" in the *blok*. The following is an excerpt from that meeting:

Manager: Now if you signed a contract you stick to it don't you? Now why are there problems? If someone is in your house that shouldn't be there then get rid of them, otherwise there are problems.

Shop Steward: We were forced to sign those contracts.

Farmer: No one can tell me they don't understand those contracts. You have a union to protect you so no one can tell me they don't understand the contract. If there are those who didn't sign there is such a thing as a verbal contract, it is still a contract, that is how it worked in the old days. Unfortunately, because of the unions who sue us, we now write everything down.

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We want to treat you as adults not as children, we have contracts and people will be held responsible. I have had enough of *inwooners*; I will recover my costs [for evictions] from those who allow *inwooners*. We have been talking about it for two years, you know the people are not allowed. I will recover my costs, believe me!

Worker: What about me, my girls and son are at home. How can I continue to cope, I need them to work for me.

Farmer: Then the four of you can put your money together and buy a house.

Worker: I had to sign [the contract], to get my money.

Manager: This meeting is not for complaints, only for working together, for co-operation. Take your complaints to the office.

The farmer and manager expect unquestioning acceptance of farm rules. They do not answer the workers' questions or take seriously the impact of poverty on their lives. The behaviour expected of the workers is that of compliance. The housing contracts are a point in case. The workers claim that they were forced to sign the contracts:

When we had to sign the housing contracts, everyone had to go personally and collect their pay. When you went to collect your pay, you were forced to sign the housing contract. If you did not want to sign, they refused to give you your pay. We were not allowed to read what we were signing and we did not know the contents of the contracts.

The workers were forced to sign the housing contracts after they had joined the union. The workers felt it necessary to join the union because the farmer had refused to give them an increase. There was a sense of despondency amongst the residents in the *blok*. Should the members of their extended families be forced to move out, the household incomes would be lower and elderly people would be left on their own. The following case illustrates the extent of the oppression felt by the farm workers:

Tony has pretty daisies growing around his house, when I admired them he told me that he got them from his neighbour. Each year they thinned out the flowers so that they could plant them in other places around their houses. Then Tony began to talk about the conditions in the *blok*.

"The '*blok*' is really dirty and the *baas* (the boss, referring to the farm owner) does nothing about it. I don't feel like working on my house or yard because you never know when you will be chased away and then you leave behind the work and money you put into the house."

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Tony went on to say that it was since the workers had joined the trade union that the *baas* had stopped taking care of the *blok*. He said though that the workers did not have an option because they had to have some way of fighting back and protecting themselves.

The idea that the farm represents a form of total institution is further supported by the experiences of the farm workers. The workers have little sense of ownership or belonging in their homes and their life circumstances can be changed by the decisions of farm management. This situation is not uncommon on farms. People who have worked on farms as *uitwerkers* report that conditions are reminiscent of prisons. Children working on farms in Worcester observed that "...they would far rather commute to work than remain on a farm, which in their estimation is more a labour prison than a place to contemplate as home (Levine 2000:120)."

The unions have attempted to develop an understanding among workers that the hardship they experience is not inevitable, but is part of a political and economic context and can be changed. The following excerpt from a union meeting on the Vine and Grove illustrates the attempts of the union to empower. It also indicates that the practice of favouring *uitwerker* labour over that of permanent workers is widespread.

Union representative: The housing issue [dismissals and evictions] will be taken to the union's lawyers because the CCMA (Commission for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration) doesn't have jurisdiction over it. The law will not allow it! The farmers are trying to get rid of their permanent workers. Do not allow them to intimidate you. We will take the children's case and those of chasing people away to the lawyers. The only reason you haven't all been chased away is because you belong to the union.

On the Vine and Grove, the union assists workers and attempts to protect them from the acts of farm management. Unlike the farmer in the paternalist model, the assistance and protection provided by the union is not based on goodwill but rather the protection of workers' rights. Unfortunately, the activity of the union is hampered by lack of resources. The union urges the farm workers to be independent and attempts to provide workers with the means to defend their rights. Cases often take a long time to resolve leaving workers without income. The story of Sarel and his brother Donnie illustrates the ways in which the power of the farmer is used to dismiss and evict workers:

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On a Saturday Donnie was drinking alcohol. He was in the *blok* shouting abuse about his dead mother. [To insult one's own or another's mother is considered an outrage amongst farm workers.] His brother Sarel wanted him to stop but Donnie did not. The things Donnie was saying about their dead mother made Sarel more and more angry. He punched Donnie in an effort to make him keep quiet. Donnie fell against a wall and cracked his skull.

Sarel organised for his brother to go to hospital. On the Monday morning the farm management after learning about what had happened to Donnie, told Sarel to clock out and go home. Two weeks later, Sarel's wife and father who live in the house with him received letters by management informing them that Sarel had been dismissed and that they had thirty days to vacate the house. Sarel did not have a disciplinary hearing, nor was he directly informed that he was no longer employed. He was called to the office once where he was informed that management was still waiting for Donnie's medical reports. Sarel was given two weeks pay and he did not know if the money was for the time he had been suspended or if it was a final pay out.

A farm manager also forced Donnie to sign a document. One of the managers brought him the letter while he was in hospital. Donnie did not read the letter; he was not told what the contents were. Sarel was under the impression that management had made him sign a document that gave them access to his medical records.

Sarel took his case to the union and was advised not to move out until the matter had been decided in court. Sarel felt that he could not live with the uncertainty and without an income, particularly since his wife was pregnant with their second child. Sarel sought work elsewhere and was able to secure a full time job with a house on another farm. He moved there with his wife and children. When the time came for the court case, Sarel did not attend. The case was dismissed. Sarel's wife told me that he had not gone to court because he did not want to ask for time off because he did not want to risk losing his new job.

There are also procedures employed on the Vine and Grove for the dismissal and eviction of workers. The procedures stated in the housing contract for eviction are, according to the owner, the same for dismissal. The first offence results in a written warning that is valid for six months. A final warning is given for a second offence, valid for nine months and a third offence results in *die uitsetting van die hele familie* (eviction of the entire family).

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In the incident involving Sarel and his brother Donnie, farm management did not follow due procedure in terms of the farm contracts. The union took up the case because the dismissal and evictions were considered illegal. According to the law Sarel was in the wrong for assaulting his brother and could be evicted, but only after due process of the law (Taylor 1998). Sarel and his brother saw the incident as being a personal matter between two brothers. Despite urgings from management, Donnie refused to press charges against Sarel. Donnie felt that he was in the wrong because of the things he had said and Sarel had apologised for hitting him and Donnie was satisfied with that.

Sarel's dismissal is outside the bounds of the law because his actions did not have anything to do with his work. At the very least, Sarel should have remained employed on the farm and evicted only after a decision by a magistrate. Sarel's need to provide for his family overrode the need for justice and the matter was never decided in court.

Another aspect of worker control on the Vine and Grove is the use of alcohol. The consequences of alcohol use and the mere consumption of alcohol are reasons for the dismissal of workers and the evictions of *blok* residents. An informant in the *blok* told me that the farmer had refused to give an increase because he said that he people were drunk on the weekends. A consistent complaint amongst the workers on the Vine and Grove was that the farmer used drunkenness over the weekends as an excuse to dismiss people. The workers consider this unreasonable because they do not consider that their drinking habits on the weekend to have anything to do with the farmer. As one worker said:

“The farmer uses drunkenness on the weekend as a reason to dismiss. But drinking on the weekend doesn't interfere with work. If we were drunk at work and we had to go, that would be okay.”

Workers are aware of the rules surrounding alcohol use and work and are careful to end their weekend drinking timeously in order to be sober for work. The workers say that they would accept dismissal if they were drunk at work. The workers resent the interference of the farmer in a practice they consider their right. The trend amongst permanent workers is to stop drinking alcohol on Saturday nights or on Sunday afternoons to sober up in time for work on Monday mornings.

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This is of particular importance on The Vine and Grove because the managers make anyone who looks as though they are still *babbelas* (hung-over) blow into a breathalyser. The breathalyser is used to obtain objective evidence that a worker is intoxicated on the job. The workers refer to this practise as *pypie blaas* (blowing the little pipe) and they are afraid of being caught with alcohol still in their systems because they are forced to clock out and go home. At the least, they lose a day's pay and the worst consequence is that they are called for a disciplinary hearing and ultimately dismissed.

People have reported drinking during the week if alcohol is available but it is a rare occurrence. Alcohol consumption occurs during the week when friends from other farms or from town bring alcohol into the *blok*. One account related to me by one of the men tells of a group of men drinking alcohol during the week and arriving at work the next morning hungover. The manager was sympathetic because the men were good workers and he did not want to lose them so they were sent home to sleep off the effects of the alcohol until after the lunch break. They lost half a day's pay but the manager did not bring it to the attention of anyone else.

This case demonstrates that although there is a rule on the farm that prohibits alcohol consumption and inebriation at work, managers are willing to overlook the rule. In this instance more than one worker was hungover, this would have meant a considerable loss of labour for the day, and possibly from the farm, if the manager had fully enforced the rules regarding drinking. Rather than lose labour that the manager considered reliable, he bent the farm rule. That workers went to work still drunk was a very rare occurrence indicates that the leniency of the manager concerned in the case discussed here was not the norm. Workers were genuinely concerned that they be sober for work and related stories of colleagues that had been dismissed prior to the fieldwork period for drinking on the job.

Farm worker drinking is a contested practise that the farmer tries to use as a means of control over the workers. Historically the consumption of alcohol was encouraged to promote dependence and compliance amongst workers.

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Presently the use of alcohol is discouraged and its consumption is used as a means to control the workforce through threats of loss of employment and evictions. Acts of violence associated with alcohol consumption are used to control and dismiss workers as the following case demonstrates:

Karel beat Meisie over the head on Saturday night. Meisie and Karel were both drinking and Karel became aggressive and hit her, injuring her ear and eye.

Meisie is the shop steward on The Vine and Grove and is married to Karel; they have a son who lives with them. Meisie says that Karel is usually docile and pleasant but when he drinks he becomes aggressive and short-tempered and he easily resorts to violence. Karel says that he was drunk when he hit Meisie and he does not remember how much he drank before it happened. He says though that it was poor quality wine and it put him in a *swart bui* (Lit.: black mood).

Karel has a history of becoming violent when drunk, and of assaulting Meisie. The last time he assaulted her, Meisie laid a charge against Karel. He was arrested and imprisoned for a month. Upon his release he was placed under house arrest and was required to attend classes for alcohol abusers run by the Department of Correctional Services in Stellenbosch. Karel was also required to do community service at the Fire Department in Stellenbosch every second Saturday where he did odd jobs. These measures were all in place when Karel hit Meisie again.

Karel worked on the Vine and Grove, but lost his job because of assaults on Meisie. He is allowed to live in the house with Meisie because they are married, and Meisie is responsible for the house in terms of the housing contract. Karel found other work on a neighbouring farm. The farm management now demands that Karel vacate the house because of the most recent assault on Meisie. Meisie says that her plan is for Karel to go and live with his mother until he can find different accommodation for them both. Meisie plans to continue working on the farm but to go and live with Karel.

Meisie also told me that Karel had been very upset by how he had hurt her and he needed help to overcome his need to drink alcohol and asked for my assistance. I approached the social worker assigned to The Vine and Grove. She told me that she would need to see Karel so that she could refer him to psychological services. I explained this to Meisie and she made an appointment with the social worker to coincide with their lunch break and I gave them a lift to town.

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Meisie says that the social worker had not referred Karel to a psychologist but instead, had given Karel a lecture about his behaviour. She told him not to be jealous and to drink less. She also gave Meisie a sealed letter to give the farmer, and Meisie did not know what was in it.

The farm manager called Meisie to the office and demanded to know why she had not been to the police over the latest assault, why Karel had not yet moved out and why she was not co-operating with them. Meisie says she told them that they could not force her to put her husband out and that she was going to stand by him. The farmer then told Meisie that he was going to get an interdict against Karel so that he could not come onto the farm and she would have to pay for the legal expenses.

The following weekend Karel assaulted Meisie's cousin. He was drinking and lost his temper. One of the farm managers was in the *blok* at the time. Meisie tried to see the social worker on the Monday but it was not possible because the social worker only sees people by appointment. The social worker also sees people at the school near the farm on Tuesday mornings from 9 am. Meisie went to see her there but was unable to do so because the social worker only arrived after 11:30 am, and Meisie needed to go to work so that she did not lose too much pay.

Meisie was called to a hearing by the farm manager after the incident with her cousin. She was given a written warning and told that if Karel assaulted anyone in the *blok* within the next 90 days she would lose her house. Meisie was very angry because she says that it is *huisbesigheid* (house business) and has nothing to do with the farmer, especially since no property belonging to the farmer has been damaged.

Meisie gave up her job and left the farm a short while later, she and Karel went to stay with his relatives in Cloetesville².

Violence between adult partners is common on The Vine and Grove. Meisie and Karel are but one example. The theme of interpersonal violence will be further explored in the next chapter.

The farm management's intervention in Meisie's personal problem was without regard for her rights as an adult. Management expects their dictates to be followed without question, regardless of the consequences for the workers and their relationships. The need to maintain her marriage was important to Meisie. She left the farm without being paid out for her house and without prospects for employment.

² Cloetesville is a previously "coloured" suburb in Stellenbosch.

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The farm management was not called to account for their actions because the strain of being on the farm had become too great for Meisie, she left before the union was able to do anything about her case. The result for the farm was that there were less permanent workers.

Although Meisie's actions were detrimental to her in some ways, they did represent a form of resistance to the oppression experienced on the farm. Meisie had moved outside the paternalist paradigm in her dealings with the farm management, she did not accept interference in her personal affairs, and attempted to address the issue through accessing assistance off the farm. Unfortunately, the social work services that were approached for assistance did not provide enabling support. The social worker's lack of accessibility to farm workers made it difficult for Meisie to approach her, causing Meisie to lose pay because of time taken off work. The attitude of the social worker towards Karel and Meisie after they had asked for specific assistance for Karel's problem with alcohol indicates a lack of acceptance of the couple as adults. The social worker maintained the paternalist stereotype of farm workers as children by lecturing Karel rather than acting on his articulated need for psychological support. The consequences of the farm management's actions and the lack of support and availability of social and psychological services for Meisie and Karel were that the couple suffered greatly.

Farmer control over the private lives of the workers extended as far as dictating where workers should take their sick leave. Fran's case demonstrates the extent that the farmer was prepared to go to to find ways to disrriss workers.

It was during the week before the Easter weekend, and Frans was walking to the station. One of the farm managers drove past Frans and they waved to each other. Frans was not well so he had taken sick leave and was going to his parent's home. Frans's wife and children were there because his wife had gone to look after his father while Frans's mother is in hospital. Frans was going to his father's house to be with his family and to recuperate.

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After the Easter weekend, Frans returned to work. The next day he was called to the office and dismissed. The reason for Frans's dismissal was that he was seen walking along the road when he was supposed to be ill. Management would not accept that he had gone to his father's home to recuperate, nor would they accept the doctor's certificate that he gave them.

Frans took his case to the union and his eviction was blocked. Frans and his family stayed on in the house, Frans and his wife found work occasionally but there were times that the family had no food.

The union addressed Frans's case as one of unfair dismissal. Frans, with the help of the union, stayed on in the house. The union was under resourced and the process of the law was slow. The results were one less permanent worker on the farm's payroll, and hardship for Frans and his family. At the end of the fieldwork period in October 1999, Frans's case had still not been settled.

The structural violence perpetrated on the farm finds expression in the dismissal and eviction of workers. Non-compliance with housing regulations stipulated by the farm worker, the use of alcohol, the refusal to accept interference in personal affairs and in Frans's case, the whim of the farmer, are all grounds for the suffering experienced amongst farm workers on the Vine and Grove. The structural violence on the Vine and Grove also manifests itself physically in the actions of the farmer and the fears of the workers. The interaction between the farmer and Klaas, one of the workers is an example of the threat of physical violence within the farm environment.

Klaas normally works in the orchards or vineyards but one day he was told to work in the farmer's garden. The man that normally works in the farmer's garden was fired. The farmer's dogs attacked Klaas and he ran away. He went to the office and explained that he could not work because of the dogs. The farmer took him back to the garden put his dogs on leads and told Klaas to approach the dogs so that they could become used to him. Klaas explained that he was afraid and although he was not refusing to work, he was afraid that when he was in the garden alone the dogs would attack and kill him. The farmer then shouted at him and told him that if he did not want to work he should go. The farmer told him to clock out and go home. Klaas had to attend a hearing at the office regarding the incident.

The Changing Nature of Structural Violence

Klaas was not dismissed as a result of the incident but he was warned. He was also subject to conditions at work that made him fear for his personal safety. The man who had previously worked in the farmer's garden had known the dogs since they were puppies and had no fear of them; Klaas was a complete stranger to the dogs. The actions of the farmer did not take into cognisance the real possibility that Klaas could be attacked and severely injured or killed by the dogs. Instead, the farmer heightened the violence of the situation by expecting Klaas to confront the dogs.

Despite the constitutional rights of farm workers and the laws that have been put into place to protect their rights, the power of farm management to interfere in the personal matters between workers has not been removed. On the Vine and Grove, all incidents are seized upon as an opportunity to evict and dismiss workers. Farmers in the Western Cape are involved in a "...systematic shift towards third-party labour contracting and labour brokering agencies" (du Toit 2001:3). According to du Toit, a recent survey indicated that nearly 60% of farms surveyed had reduced their permanent workforces and intended to reduce them further. In addition, almost one third of farmers surveyed indicated their intention of abandoning the paternalist obligations to provide housing (du Toit 2001:3). The law designed to afford protection against unfair dismissal does not take into account the particular circumstances of the farm worker. The low incomes of farm workers inhibit them from proceeding with their cases independently. Lawyers and attorneys are unaffordable and farm workers are reliant on the assistance of organisations like trade unions.

The context of control and dependence on the Vine and Grove is not classic paternalism. The owner through his management team exerts control over the workers to facilitate dismissals and evictions on any pretext. The dependence of the workers results from a lack of resources to sustain resistance to the exploitation and oppression perpetrated by the farmer and his managers. The workers are also, in part, in crisis; interaction with farm management is different now to what it has been in their lifetimes. The paternalist system of farm management was understood, workers knew how to behave and interact with the farmer to avoid trouble and gain favours (du Toit 1993).

Working with the union is a new experience and because the union cannot work quickly, many workers on the Vine and Grove grow despondent. These remarks by a worker who was also unfairly dismissed and evicted illustrate the lack of alternatives available to farm workers and the hopelessness that they experience:

“I worked faithfully for this farmer. I have been working here since the farmer was still at school. I looked after his house and his dogs even when he was overseas. If I wanted to I could get what I need and kill the farmer. I have heard on the radio what is happening to farmers, and there is nothing to stop me from doing the same. There is no where for me to go and if I have to go to a squatter camp I will become very rough because they are rough places. If I end up there who knows what I will do to the farmer.”

The only alternative open to the workers as they see it is to move to another farm where perhaps conditions will be better, as Sarel did, or to move to an informal settlement where they believe conditions will be worse. The constitutional ideal that farm workers should be able to act as independent adults with the same rights as other citizens is far from real.

Conclusion

Despite the law, the management on the Vine and Grove exercises control over the workers through dismissals and evictions. The concept of a total institution is useful because it puts into perspective the conditions under which farm workers live and labour. On the Vine and Grove, there is no division between the private and professional lives of the workers. The controlling aspect of labour relations intrudes violently into the lives of the farm workers at all levels. Relationships within families, children's futures, traditional coping mechanisms and personal, work and housing security are all adversely affected by the style of labour control exercised on the Vine and Grove. The absence of traditional paternalism on the farm leaves a vacuum in which the farm workers are uncertain how to function. The workers' response is varied; some of them think that the farmer is not a good boss in terms of the paternalist framework, while others are resentful of his interference in their private affairs.

The Changing Nature of Structural Violence

Generally, farm workers have a sense of what should be considered private and what should be considered work related business. This is in direct contrast with the management practice on the farm. According to the farmer's actions, however, all aspects of farm worker life are considered part of the farm management's domain.

In what follows I will explore alcohol consumption as a component of the structural violence experienced by farm workers.

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Chapter Four:

The Drinking Ritual

In this chapter, I argue that the consumption of alcohol amongst farm workers is a ritualised practice. This conception is based on the elements necessary for a practice to transcend the mundane. For this to occur the following elements are required, formality, fixity and repetition (Bell 1992). I argue that the nature of farm worker drinking fulfils these requirements.

The conception of drinking as ritual provides a theoretical base from which to understand the tenacity of the practice amongst farm workers. Ritual provides structure and order in social life and presents interpretations of reality in such a way that they are accepted as legitimate (Falke-Moore et al 1977). Alcohol consumption stems from a perception amongst farm workers that its effects ameliorate the suffering that they endure. I argue that although the workers' ritualised drinking is an effort to escape the oppression in their lives, the effort fails. The violence and suffering that is associated with farm worker drinking is testimony to its failure. Although alcohol consumption is detrimental, ritual theory facilitates an understanding of why the practice continues. In this chapter, I discuss the nature of the ritual and the embeddedness of drinking amongst farm workers to show that alcohol consumption is part of the structural violence that circumscribes farm worker life.

The Drinking Context

In Chapter 2, I discussed how the *dop* system was used to secure labour and how, even in the late 1990's, there was still evidence of the system in place in the Western Cape. Although the *dop* system has ceased on many farms, the drinking of alcohol has not and alcohol consumption is part of the social fabric of farm workers lives. In Chapter 3, I explored the ongoing use of alcohol as a means to control workers and how the structure of the farm and its modes of control and exploitation create a space where the experience of farm workers is unstable and insecure in the extreme.

In addition, the circumstances on the farm which allow for the loss of employment and housing, the possibility of injury and illness and the lack of opportunities outside the agricultural sector, contribute to the shifting compositions and circumstances experienced in the households of farm workers.

Workers say that when they drink they do not worry. There is also the sense amongst those who drink that alcohol is the only pleasure or escape available to them. The following are comments that both men and women have made about why they drink:

- Meisie: It is good to have a drink at the end of a long working week.
- Tom: I get so little out (wages) and I just become so despondent that I just take some money to buy wine because we can do nothing with so little money."
- Fran: It's the only pleasure we have; everything else is for food and debt.
- Frans: I need to have my *papsak*. I am so depressed. I tell myself that I do not want to drink but then I think about my situation and I just get myself a *dop*.
- Sakkie: I can't really afford it, but especially if you have friends, then you buy some *dop*. When you've had a drink, you don't worry.
- Suzi: My daughter's father does not give me money to help look after her and he hardly visits anymore. He ignores me and I feel bad about it. When I drink, I feel better about things

Debt, very low incomes, uncertain working conditions and poor living conditions are recognised conditions under which people consume alcohol (Parry et al 1998). The reasons workers on the Vine and Grove give for drinking are related to their low incomes and their need to feel rewarded after a long week's work. From the worker's point of view, alcohol provides an easily accessible form of reward and pleasure in their lives. Also important to the workers is the anaesthetising effect that they say alcohol has, providing an escape from the very circumstances that cause them to drink.

The reasons young people give for drinking alcohol are different from those of the adults. Young people say that they drink alcohol to alleviate boredom and that there is nothing else to do. Young people also say that peer pressure influences them to drink. Teenagers who have not tasted alcohol as children begin drinking because they want to know what alcohol tastes like and what effect it has. A group of young women ranging in age between fifteen and twenty-two made the following comment about their alcohol consumption:

Elke dag is die selfde hier op die plaas. (Every day is the same here on the farm.) We don't really know why we drink. It is boring on the farm and we drink *om dit lekker to maak* (to make it pleasant/enjoyable). People also pressure one another to drink here.

Young people who do not work full time have little to do on the farm and, as discussed in Chapter 2, young people have low levels of education and thus few opportunities for employment off the farms (see Waldman 1993). In addition, lack of resources does not allow young people on farms to access alternate sporting or other extra mural activities. As the above quote indicates, their experience of life is monotonous, and alcohol provides them with relief.

The consumption of alcohol is situated in a need to forget the difficulties of life on the farm. Workers often say that although there may be arguing, drinking makes life enjoyable as, people laugh and tell jokes. The lighter, more pleasant atmosphere associated with drinking is achieved when people drink together. This provides a forum for peer pressure to begin drinking and to drink a lot at a time. Furthermore, the rationale for drinking is directly related to the effects of drinking; effects the farm workers consider worthwhile. The context within which alcohol is consumed provides the necessity for it to be a ritualised act. The enactment of this ritual with others enables a general sense of well-being. It is an integral part of this thesis that farm workers' alcohol consumption and its consequences be understood within this context.

Drinking as a Ritualised Practice

Alcohol consumption is characterised by temporal and regulatory markers. Furthermore, the differentiating feature between the act of drinking alcohol as merely another human action, not clearly distinct from others carried out on any given day, and being a ritualised act, is the nature of its enactment (Bell 1992). The act of drinking alcohol has for centuries been part of the working life of the farm worker. The provision of the tot to workers at regular intervals was a practice that marked relief from labour and simultaneously created dependency on alcohol. The organised and repetitive manner in which alcohol was dispensed to workers ritualised the activity and created a means of social control (Scully 1992). Over time, the tot was no longer dispensed on all farms but drinking alcohol had become an activity on which the workers depended.

The current drinking practice of the residents on the Vine and Grove has roots in the dispensing of the tot in the fields and the extension of the practice of drinking into the home. The histories of the residents in the *blok* that follow demonstrate the transition of alcohol consumption from the fields to the home.

Klaas

Klaas is 57 years old and was born in the Stellenbosch area. He has lived and worked on The Vine and Grove for more years than he could remember. He has worked on the farms in the area since he was a child. He did not go to school and does not know how old he was when he started to work but he explained that when he walked through the long grass in the mornings on the way to work, he was wet up to his shoulders from the dew. When he worked as a child, he was given a tot at the end of the day and as he grew older, he was given wine throughout the day with the other men.

Diana

Diana is forty-four years old and was born in Pikketburg¹; she left school at ten years old because she was unable to read well by then. She started doing housework and when she was older, she went to Stellenbosch to work. It was there that she met her husband. They have lived on the Vine and Grove for more than ten years. Both Diana and her husband are employed full-time on the Vine and Grove. They have two children.

¹ Towns mentioned in the dissertation, unless specified otherwise, are in the Western Cape.

Both Diana's parents drank, she says that the farmer gave her father wine at midday and in the evenings. Diana says that she was about twenty when she had her first drink. She says that she was with a group of friends, they were all working as servants in Stellenbosch, they would go home by train on the weekends and they would buy beer to drink on the train. After they first tried beer they realised that it made them feel good and they kept drinking.

Katie

Katie is 27 years old and was born in Wellington. She left school at fourteen when she was in Std 2 (grade 4), to look after her sick mother. Her father had been murdered when she was five years old. After leaving school, Katie went to work on the farm where she was living. It was when she started working that Katie started drinking alcohol. She says that the farmer gave the men wine but not the women, so they bought their own.

Jacob

Jacob is Simon and Veronica's son; he is nineteen years old. Jacob left school at fifteen, he had only reached Std 1 (grade 3). He started working when he was sixteen. Jacob says that he had his first drink while he was still at school, with a friend that was working. When Jacob started working, he bought wine from the shop on the farm. The manager's friend owned the shop and sold alcohol to everyone, including those under the age of eighteen². He sold the men a *kan* each and the women could only buy one litre of wine each.

The cases above reflect the initiation into drinking of men and women in a range of ages from nineteen to fifty-seven years. All but Jacob lived on farms where the tot was dispensed in some form. Alcohol was given to workers at the end of the day to take home thus the practice of drinking was introduced into the homes of the workers. The home constitutes both the houses in which farm workers live and the *blok* itself. The stories of Klaas, Diana, Katie and Jacob demonstrate that the ritual of drinking alcohol was first experienced in the home through their parents' drinking. Generations of children have been witness to the drinking habits of their elders and the learning of the drinking ritual is located in the home. As Jacob's case demonstrates, the practice of drinking is still associated with working but instead of the *dop* system, earning wages is what enables the practice. The practice of drinking alcohol has over time become part of farm workers' culture.

² Eighteen is the legal age at which one can buy alcohol in South Africa.

On the Vine and Grove the weekends provide occasion for a binge of drinking amongst the employed and the unemployed. The weekend drinking session is circumscribed by the workweek. The end to drinking for labourers is signalled by the approach of Monday the first day of work and the beginning of the session is heralded by the end of working day on Fridays, generally the end of the working week. The drinking sessions are possible because the workers are paid on Fridays on the Vine and Grove. Those who work buy alcohol and often share with those who are unable to buy their own. Friendship ties are cemented amongst drinking partners through the sharing of alcohol. The sharing must, however, be reciprocal, otherwise the sharing of alcohol becomes a cause for argument and violence between drinking partners (recall Chapter 2). The ritual is generally a social affair, especially amongst young people, but this is not necessarily so for adults, who will drink alone.

As was outlined in Chapter 2, workers have rules regarding where and with whom they drink alcohol. These rules and the temporal repetition of the drinking patterns of farm workers set the drinking of alcohol apart from the consumption of any other beverage. The formalised separation of alcohol consumption as a practice is what marks it a ritual. I have elucidated the ritualistic nature of alcohol consumption amongst farm workers to demonstrate that it is an activity that is social and historical and it has become imbued with meanings made by the farm workers.

The need to drink as discussed earlier relates to the need for reward and the need for escape. Catherine Bell argues that ritual activities are not mindless or habitual but are rather "...a practical way of dealing with some specific circumstances" (1992:92). The positive effects of alcohol consumption as sought after by the farm workers provide a space outside the every day. The medium used for the creation of the escape from reality is a drug that has particular pharmacological effects on the body, many of which can be negative. The euphoria then, is always counter-pointed by the return to the mundane. The euphoric feelings associated with alcohol consumption are not only brought to end through sobering up but are also ruptured through violence. The highly complex nature of violence and its management is explored as a component of the drinking ritual.

Farm workers are aware that alcohol has effects on their behaviour and they articulate differing levels of inebriation in terms of the resulting behaviour of the drinker. The following table outlines the different behaviours recognised by the workers on the Vine and Grove:

Table 7: Levels of Inebriation

Category	Description
<i>'n Dop in.</i> (Had a drink)	Describes a person who has had alcohol to drink but is not drunk. The person is still aware of his surroundings.
<i>(Dronk)</i> (Drunk)	Describes a person who is: Falling around Lying around Unconscious or unaware of his surroundings Passed out Dizzy and sleepy Out of control
<i>Slinger dronk</i> Blind drunk	When one has had so much to drink one can hardly walk and has no control over one's body.

There are gradations of consumption, culminating in extreme drunkenness. The gradations are not measured on the basis of the quantity of alcohol consumed but on the resultant public behaviour displayed by the drinker. People who drink alcohol and do not behave badly towards others are not considered drunk or to be problem drinkers. Such drinkers typically go home if they are drinking elsewhere, and go to bed where they sleep off the effects of their alcohol consumption.

Workers who have stopped drinking consider alcohol consumption a detrimental practise, as will be discussed in the next chapter. This is not the case for those who drink, but there are acceptable and unacceptable modes of drinking behaviour.

When people drink alcohol and then pass out without first getting into bed or going home, or when they lose control of their bodies and cannot walk or speak normally, they are considered drunk. People who shout, argue, fight and generally cause a disturbance are considered to be problem drinkers and to be drunk. Farm workers also have terms for those who are considered regular heavy drinkers of alcohol. The terms *drink soos 'n vis* (drinks like a fish) and *wynkop* (wine head) were regularly used on the Vine and Grove, by both those who do not drink alcohol and those who do.

The physical effects that are achieved from drinking alcohol are what are important. The following remarks from men and women reflect the desired effects of drinking alcohol:

I drink until I feel *lekker* (nicely/sweetly) fucked up, until I don't have to worry, then I climb into my bed and rest.

I drink a lot, I go after the sweetness of the wine.

I drink until I am *lekker gepluk*. (Lit. sweetly picked. Slang meaning: drunk in the head but still able to stand.)

I must drink so that I can feel that I have been drinking. I must feel satisfied, relaxed, all right.

I drink until I feel *lekker en ontspanne* (nicely/sweetly relaxed).

I stop drinking when I am drunk. *Ek drink tot ek 'n pluk in is* (I drink until I have Dutch courage).

The agricultural imagery of words like "picked" and "sweet" used to describe the desired state brought about by drinking alcohol conjures images of ripeness and perfection. The qualities required in the fruit the farm workers pick as part of their labours are the same qualities that the farm workers seek to achieve through the consumption of alcohol to replace the perceived barrenness that mars the landscape of their sober lives. It is in the moment of sweet delirium, that the farm worker, be it in a group experience or alone, finds relief.

Drinkers on the Vine and Grove seldom perceived their drinking to be problematic, and even those who did, did not consider the negative effects of their drinking as enough impetus to stop. Drinkers seldom reported regretting drinking. Men who assaulted their wives when drunk reported remorse and shame at their violent actions, but they continued to drink. The other reason for remorse after a drinking session is the experience of ill health. Drinkers report that they feel unwell and experience headaches, dizziness and nausea after drinking. As Maggie put it:

“On Monday mornings you feel terrible, and you have no desire to do anything, and you think, “Now why did I drink?” But if I get offered wine the following weekend I drink.”

Drinkers deal with the negative effects of alcohol consumption on their health in order to continue drinking. Large amounts of strong black coffee are consumed to counteract the symptoms of hangover. Alternatively, during the weekend, more alcohol is consumed, as one worker explains:

“If I wake up feeling bad, and my friend comes to visit me with more *dop*, then my *babbelas* is fixed.”

Younger people recognise that their drinking habits are not healthy. Suzie and Jackie both reported a desire to stop drinking, but that they did not because there was no other social activity to ease the boredom. In addition, they said that drinking just a little at a time was not possible because once one had had a little then one wanted more. Suzie said that she still needed to drink and could not make the decision to stop. Jackie put her case even more strongly: *drank is 'n moet* (Alcohol is a must).

There is a sense then amongst drinkers that alcohol has negative effects, but the positive effects that are experienced through the weekly ritual outweigh them. The fact that workers acknowledge that alcohol consumption is problematic points to the need for the ritualisation of the act of drinking. The repetitive nature of alcohol consumption amongst farm workers indicates dependence on the substance.

The negative consequences associated with the weekend binge are destructive for the individual drinkers and for those with whom they associate. The need to perceive the consumption of alcohol as creating a space that enables relief and escape is necessary in order to offset the damaging consequences of the practice.

Alcohol Consumption and Violence

The negative consequences of alcohol consumption amongst farm workers are usually referred to in terms of interpersonal violence, increased poverty and poor health (London et al 1998, 1999 Waldman 1993). The workers on the Vine and Grove are no exception.

The workers on the Vine and Grove who drink alcohol are dependent on the substance to create moments of relief. The physical toll that alcohol consumption takes on their bodies is seldom considered serious enough to stop drinking. When violence erupts amongst the workers because of alcohol consumption, measures are in place to ameliorate the damage.

Violence is a common feature of life on the Vine and Grove and is a regular consequence of alcohol consumption. Violent behaviour does occur when no alcohol has been consumed, but among adults, this is rare. Children are also disciplined violently, they are screamed at, slapped and beaten from a young age. Children are also the victims of violence when their parents are drunk. As Babs, Ester's sister explains:

My parents drank a lot. There wasn't always food. Over the weekends, we had to get out of the house. We went back at night to get blankets and slept outside. My father would hit you no matter how small. We had to stay away until *die wyn uitgetrek het* (the wine had worked its way out [of the body]).

The events related here indicate the harsh reality of violence associated with drinking for children.. In addition to the violence that children endure, Bab's experiences also indicate that children suffer increased poverty and malnutrition because money that would have been spent on food and other items was spent on alcohol.

Violence resulting from drinking occurs between men, between women, and between men and women. The nature of and reasons for the violence are varied. According to informants, arguments often begin amongst the groups of people sharing alcohol. The arguments arise because someone has taken offence over what has been said or because some members of the group think that others are drinking more than they should. When men and women drink together, arguments often arise because the men think that the women, who may not have contributed, are drinking too much. In addition, men say that when women have been drinking they complain and scold men. It is for these reasons that adult men and women say that they avoid drinking together.

Separate drinking is in some part a socially adaptive measure to prevent violence, but it is not a guarantee. Violent behaviour occurs alongside the practice of drinking alcohol. Violence can erupt amongst those who drink together, while people are returning home intoxicated or when they meet other people in their intoxicated state. With the eruption of violent behaviour, the euphoric effects of the alcohol are disrupted. The violence that results from alcohol consumption is related to the nature of the substance itself, and to the context of farm worker life. If enough alcohol is consumed, it acts on the limbic system and emotions can be exaggerated resulting in loss of judgement and violent behaviour (Blum et al 1994). People also argue and fight when drunk because the effects of alcohol enable them to act on their feelings of anger and frustration. Feelings of frustration and despair arise from the structural violence that surrounds the work and private lives of farm workers. The enactment of violence within the drinking ritual, is integral to the experience of life as a farm worker.

Verbal arguments often lead to physical violence and trauma. Jackie related the following incidents of alcohol related violence:

A woman from another *blok* was spreading bad rumours about me and on the Saturday, I saw her, I had a *dop in* and I fought. We hit each other, my body was sore but that was all. She got hurt, her mouth was bleeding and she left.

Once I went drinking with a guy who had a car in Kraaifontein³. He argued with my mother when we got back. I got involved and he cut my chest with a broken bottle.

³ Kraaifontein is a suburb of Cape Town.

Another time, my mother's brother and I were both drinking. I stabbed him with a knife and he stabbed me with a broken bottle. We stabbed each other so it was quits; my mother could say nothing. *Dronk baklei* (drunken fighting) is when that person was wrong but I was also wrong so we leave it. When you are drunk you get courage and fight about things you normally wouldn't.

Jackie's account of her violent interactions while under the influence of alcohol are representative of the violence that occurs in the *blok* on The Vine and Grove. Women bear the brunt of alcohol related violence. Women are regularly attacked and beaten by their husbands and intoxicated men rape young single women. During the course of my fieldwork, there were three incidents of rape, only one of which was reported to the police. The rape that was reported to the police involved a young woman from a neighbouring farm who claimed to have been raped by one of the young men on The Vine and Grove while she was visiting there. The people on the Vine and Grove say that she had been drinking while in the *blok* and that she was looking for a scapegoat because she did not know who had raped her. The rape itself is not disputed because rape is a common occurrence. The first two incidences of rape that occurred in the *blok* during the fieldwork period was resolved without the police being involved. I was told that the young men concerned had apologised and that it was over. In the instance of rape that was reported to the police by the victim, the people in the *blok* believed in the accused's innocence, and did not sympathise with the young woman concerned. In the first two instances, because the perpetrators apologised and had been drinking, the matter was taken no further.

Violence and Censure

The failure to censure those involved in violence while intoxicated is a phenomenon that is recorded amongst other populations. Perez (2000) has documented the fiesta in Mexico as a space for the consumption of alcohol and the expression of uncensored violence. The violence provides a release from the particular tensions faced by rural Mexicans in a time of change from a relatively isolated rural life to participation in the broader economy of Mexico (Perez 2000).

Women at the fiestas attempted to reduce the impact of the violence by stepping in when fighting became very violent and attempting to end fights and remove the injured. Women consequently, often were attacked and injured by men in the heat of battle (Perez 2000). The violence against the women and amongst the men went uncensured because it acted as a release from the frustration that men felt as a result of having less access to the new rural Mexican economy.

For farm workers on the Vine and Grove, drinking alcohol provides the opportunity to escape from the burdens of their impoverished lives. Part of the escape is the moving not only out of the everyday but also out of the self. As Jackie says of her stepfather: "When he drinks it is as if he is outside himself, he is another person." The ritual that begins each weekend and ends with the start of the working week is the reward that the farm workers do not find for the working week in their remuneration. The workers who drink do not see any point in attempting to live on the wages they earn. The wages are in real terms very low and workers feel defeated by what they earn rather than compensated and so reward is sought elsewhere.

Alcohol provides a vehicle for escape from the hardships faced during the week and to resolve frustrations and resentments that do not find expression during the sober working week. People are no longer themselves and the drinking self can give expression to feelings that the sober self cannot. I would argue though that because violent behaviour occurs regularly within the practise of drinking alcohol, that violence is itself a part of the ritual process. What differs from the Mexican scenario is that the violence associated with drinking in the *blok* does not occur in a physical space separate from the home. The violence surrounding ritualised drinking amongst farm workers reaches into their homes and families.

Women suffer physical and emotional abuse at the hands of their husbands. They rationalise what has happened referring to the fact that alcohol was the cause of the behaviour. During the course of the fieldwork, women suffered cuts, bruises, broken ribs and gashes in their heads at the hands of their husbands. Women did not take action against the men, even at the urging of farm management. Maggie's explanation of why she stays with her husband reflects the rationalisation of violence that women endure:

I don't know why he hit me. I was sitting on the step outside our house, Klaas came back from where he had been drinking with his friends, and he kicked me in the face and in the ribs.

I had been drinking and I did not realise that I was hurt until the next morning when I found my eye swollen and my side was painful. Klaas denies kicking me but a neighbour saw him do it. He is afraid of going to jail, that's why he denies it now and why he told you that he doesn't get involved in violence when he drinks.

Once he hit me across my back so badly that the doctor wanted to put him in prison. I had to beg the doctor not to lay a charge. Now I won't lay a charge because I am too soft hearted. I won't leave him because I have nowhere to go, I have no family and I am too sick to work. Klaas is all right as long as he doesn't drink, but when he drinks, he becomes abusive and violent. I have to listen to the abuse, but I say nothing.

Not all women are the passive recipients of violence. Violence between partners also occurs when either one or both parties have consumed alcohol. The farm management does not intervene if the person affected is not employed on the farm. Meisie's handling of the violence she experienced at the hands of her husband was different to that of the other women on the farm. The other women on the farm that were assaulted by their partners did not go to the police or seek help from the social worker. Instead they nursed their wounds or asked me to take them to the clinic or district surgeon. Of the five women that I knew of who had been assaulted by their partners, Meisie was the only one to take punitive action. Three of the women did not work on the farm and the other woman worked on the farm but refused to seek treatment for the gash in her head because she was afraid she would be hospitalised. Her husband lived in the house with her; he too had lost his job because he had assaulted her. Unlike in Meisie's case though, the farm manager did not demand that he vacate the house after the attack that caused the gash in her head. The farm management intervened only as far as trying to take her to hospital after working hours but she hid from them and eventually they gave up. It would seem that because she continued to work, the farm management did not take the matter further.

Some women reported starting arguments with their husbands when they were both drunk and injuring their husbands. Other women reported attacking their husbands and then running away and not returning to their homes until they and their husbands were sober. Veronica is an example of such a woman. Veronica is 44 years old and has never attended school and is not employed full-time. She has been drinking since she was nineteen. Veronica has this to say about the violence between her and her husband Simon:

When Simon *ske/s* (scolds harshly) then I hit him with something or I throw something at him, or I leave. Simon scolds and insults me. On Friday night I hit him with a screwdriver because he was going on so⁴ and drew blood. Simon used to hit me a lot before, but now I am faster and if I see he is going to hit me, I hit first.

Women who are not employed and who have young children are generally reliant on their husbands for food and shelter. Living with violence is a part of life for such women. When violence against women becomes extreme and they fear for their lives they remove themselves from the proximity of the man by moving away rather than going to the police. One woman on The Vine and Grove had been so badly injured by her husband when she was living in Paarl that she feared he would kill her. She took to living on the road rather than stay with him on the farm and chance further injury or death.

Generally, violent behaviour while intoxicated is uncensured, although not necessarily forgiven, and farm workers as a rule, go out of their way not to involve farm management or the police. Maggie's case reveals how she refused the doctor's urgings to lay charges against her husband. Other workers have told of how they avoided seeking health care for their injuries to avoid being forced to go to the police.

An interesting exception to the norm of uncensured violence was noted during the course of fieldwork. Sussie accused a group of young people that included Jackie of attacking and beating her on a Saturday evening. She went to the police and laid charges against her assailants.

⁴ Refers to his abusive behaviour.

Everyone that she accused denied that the assault had taken place. The consensus amongst the people in the *blok* was that Sussie and Frans had had a fight and they wanted to use the physical evidence to extort money. The full-time workers have small investment policies. Sussie had timed her accusations for the annual pay out that policyholders received. People in the *blok* claimed that Frans had already drawn against his policy and was not going to receive any money. People thought that the couple wanted to use the alleged attack to claim monetary compensation from policyholders. All the young people accused had at least one parent who held a policy. The case did not amount to anything, and Sussie and Frans did not receive any compensation. This was not the first time that they had used violence in such a manner. On the one previous occasion, the mother of the accused youth had paid them R20 in compensation. In a sense, these attempts at extortion still fit the pattern of attempting to create escape through alcohol. Sussie and Frans tried to relieve their poverty using the ritual of alcohol consumption and its accompanying feature-violence.

Farm workers perceive their reasons for drinking as outweighing the negative effects of alcohol. The reasons indicate that even if workers were not to drink alcohol their lives would not improve enough to make it worthwhile. The ritual of alcohol consumption is intimately tied to the fabric of farm worker life. The suffering that characterises the working and personal lives of farm workers is eased through the drinking ritual for a short time. The sense of order that is achieved through the ritual consumption of alcohol is fleeting. Drinking alcohol brings feelings of remorse, ill health and the after effects of violent interactions yet drinkers are not deterred from participating in the ritual each weekend. Violent interactions are ameliorated through the understanding that alcohol removes the identity of the drinker, and the intoxicated person can therefore not be held accountable. The re-enactment of the ritual allows for the drinkers to move outside of themselves and their suffering. However, the transitory nature of the effects of the ritual requires it to be repeated to achieve its effects and to justify the consumption of alcohol.

Conclusion

The context of farm workers on the Vine and Grove is characterised by oppression and exploitation. From the point of view of workers who drink, alcohol provides a means of escape from the suffering that they experience. Amongst young people, the escape is from the boredom and sense of entrapment that they experience on the farm.

Alcohol consumption is largely a social activity amongst farm workers and is a culturally embedded practice. As a medium for escape, alcohol has limited value. The drinker experiences negative consequences for health and well being. The behaviour of inebriated workers also often manifests in violence. Violence traumatises the social ties amongst the residents in the *blok*. The amelioration of violence is necessary to maintain the social ties from those of family to those of friendship.

The drinking ritual is a space where the personal and social fracture of the farm worker's life is escaped. The nature of the wholeness achieved is fragile. The violence that erupts during the ritual of drinking is embedded in the structural violence experienced by farm workers on a daily basis. Alcohol consumption amongst farm workers contributes to their social suffering, necessitating the re-enacting of the ritual week after week to find release.

Amongst farm workers who do not drink alcohol, the experience of social suffering remains a reality. In the following chapter, I examine the efforts that farm workers make to stop drinking alcohol. The choice that farm workers make to convert to Christianity will be explored in terms of the attendant behavioural changes including that of the cessation of alcohol consumption.

Chapter 5:

Being Bekeer

Not all farm workers drink although most will have consumed alcohol at some time in their lives. In this chapter, I explore the circumstances surrounding those who choose not to consume alcohol. The majority of people on the Vine and Grove who do not consume alcohol are also *bekeer*. *Bekeer* is Afrikaans meaning to convert, to be converted, to mend one's ways, to reform (Bosman et al 1984). In English the words convert or conversion have their root in the Latin, *convertere*, to revolve or to turn around. Conversion is a turning around or reforming that includes all aspects of the person including the cognitive, religious, moral and emotional (Flinn 1999). I examine the identity of *bekeer* and the attendant lack of alcohol consumption in an effort to understand how being *bekeer* provides a context for teetotalism.

Australian Aborigines refer to the introduction of new substances as "...learning how to use them" (Brady 1992: 700). Alcohol is one such substance; learning to drink then refers to the individual who comes to know the taste and effects of alcohol and thus becomes a drinker (Brady 1992). Learning is a social process and is a useful concept for thinking about drinking behaviour amongst farm workers. Children learn to drink by emulating their parents when they steal or make their own alcohol. Teenagers emulate their parents and elders by buying and drinking alcohol. Through this process, they come to know alcohol and its effects. The socialisation of drinking teaches young people to follow the drinking patterns of the adults.

Socialisation has a strong bearing on farm workers becoming drinkers. The process of learning to drink begins in the home and although adults give children the verbal message that they may not drink, adult patterns of behaviour provide a template on which young people build their drinking patterns. The process of learning to drink occurs both within the home and in the broader context of farm worker interactions. The pervasive nature of the social practice of alcohol consumption amongst farm workers does not provide an easy context for the learning of its opposite, that of not drinking alcohol. The role of socialisation in preventing people from drinking does not appear to be very successful.

Donna, a worker on the Vine and Grove, was raised by her grandmother who did not drink alcohol and was very strict. Donna still learned to drink alcohol. Donna says that she was already twenty by the time she started going out with friends. This would account for her late introduction to alcohol as compared with other farm workers. Donna's father was murdered when she was very young, and he did not drink alcohol. She says of him: "If my father had lived, I would never have drunk, or been here, he was planning to move us to his family in Graaf Reinett."

Donna connects her late start as a drinker and the possibility of her never having been a drinker with the parenting she received from her grandmother and the idealised parenting that she may have received from her father. Donna's comments about her upbringing highlight the importance that farm workers give to the influence of external factors on their behaviour. Of those on the Vine and Grove who were raised with many controls placed on their behaviour, alcohol consumption began later in life. This is also true of those who were raised by *bekeer* parents. Socialisation in the home orientated away from alcohol use, delays the onset of drinking but does not prevent it entirely, as Lisa's case demonstrates:

Lisa is 46 years old. Her parents did not drink alcohol: her mother was *bekeer*, and Lisa does not know why her father did not drink, but recalls that despite the provision of alcohol to workers, her father refused to accept it.

Lisa began drinking when she was about thirty. She says that her friends influenced her to drink. Her daughter told me that Lisa would become confused when she was drinking and started arguments with her father. Lisa says that she gave up drinking because she fell down and hurt her arm so badly when drunk that she had to have an operation. Lisa says that her husband is glad that she no longer drinks.

An interesting exception to the norm exists in the case of how Rachel became *bekeer*. Rachel was seventeen when her *voorkind*¹ was born and her parents, who both drank alcohol, raised him. When he was twelve years old, he chose to live with his *bekeer* uncle in Ravensmead². He completed his schooling and now works as a medic in a Cape Town prison. Rachel tells of how he influenced her and her husband to become *bekeer*.

¹ *Voorkind* (lit. before child), a child born before the parent was in a formal relationship.

² Ravensmead is a suburb of Cape Town.

“When my son was an adult, he came here to the farm with his cousins who are also *bekeer*. They came to hold a church service and to talk to us. At first, we wouldn't listen. We told them that they knew nothing, that they were younger than us. But then one Saturday I listened, and the next day they came again to hold a church service.

On that Sunday morning, I woke up with a hangover, but I fought off the devil and I didn't go and get a *dop*. I had some tea, but my husband had a *dop*, but by the time the service began, he was sober. Since then neither of us has had any alcohol.

I don't get the urge to drink. If I sit with people who drink the smell makes me nauseous. People tried to make me drink in the beginning but I wouldn't. Once I decided to stop that was it.”

Rachel's son and nephews through their preaching about the evils of alcohol were able to bring her and her husband to the realisation that it was a destructive element in their lives. What is interesting about this case is that it was the younger generation in a family that influenced the older to stop drinking, and that the messages about the detrimental effects of alcohol were accompanied by religious messages.

There are workers on the Vine and Grove who give up drinking for short periods, ranging from a few weeks to a few months. Men most often fit into this category. During the period of the drinking survey, I interviewed a man who initially reported drinking and then indicated that he was no longer drinking because he had new asthma medication and alcohol interfered with it. He said that he did not think he would drink alcohol again. His wife and daughter indicated that this had happened before, and that he would resume drinking again when he was feeling better and did not need the medication. By the end of the fieldwork period, he had indeed resumed drinking alcohol. When health problems become such that a worker is advised to stop drinking, or when a worker finds that alcohol consumption interferes with medication, he will stop drinking either until he is feeling better or until the medication is no longer necessary. Workers resume drinking because their decision to stop was not permanent, but rather temporary, based on their need to recover from illness.

Another phenomenon noted on The Vine and Grove was the attempt to moderate and stop drinking without following the *bekeer* path. In one instance, a man told me that the doctor had told him that he had an ulcer and that he should stop drinking. He decided that he would cut out beer because this made his stomach pain worse and he would moderate his wine intake. This he did with the help of his wife, who was given the task of fetching him from the group with whom he was drinking and taking him home so that he could not drink all night.

Frans and his wife, whom we met in the previous chapter, are the only examples of people in the *blok* trying to stop drinking alcohol altogether without becoming *bekeer*. Frans's parents live in the township that borders Stellenbosch. They are both *bekeer* and no alcohol is allowed in their home. Frans and his wife both hold Christian beliefs, but rather than *bekeer*, they decided at Easter of 1999 to use Frans's parents' home as refuge from alcohol on the weekends. As was described in Chapter 4, alcohol consumption in the *blok* occurs largely over the weekend. The *blok* is a difficult place to be if one is attempting to avoid alcohol, so each Friday, Frans and his wife leave The Vine and Grove and go to spend the weekend with Frans's parents. They return on Sunday nights or on Monday mornings.

The competing cultures of *bekeer* and drinker on the Vine and Grove have different modes of reproduction. Drinking is behaviour learned in the home and on the farm. Unlearning drinking behaviour is a different matter. The decision to no longer drink alcohol amongst farm workers is closely intertwined with the decision to *bekeer*. The explanations surrounding the phenomenon of conversion have two extremes. The one is that conversion is a sudden event that involves an escape from time, or is a climatic event resulting from a life crisis. The explanation claims that conversion is a turning towards the next stage in the cycle of human growth and occurs in a process of ordered stages (Flinn 1999). Current thinking amongst conversion theorists seeks to use aspects of both theories to understand the complexity of conversion. Thus conversion may appear to be a sudden event, but that event is part of a process of change that is ongoing (Flinn 1999:55).

Farm workers are in general, nominally Christian because of the influence of the church since the time of colonisation and slavery at the Cape. Islam was adopted by many slaves in Cape Town, but did not extend its influence to the rural areas of the colony and today there are no Muslim farm workers. The religious aspect of conversion is grounded in a faith community; in the case of the farm workers it is evangelical Christianity. When farm workers convert, they are turning to a particular form of Christianity. One of the aspects of this form of Christianity is that it forbids the consumption of alcohol. All the people in the *blok* that indicated that they were *bekeer* had been drinkers at some time in their lives. The desire to stop drinking appears to lead people to the decision to convert, as the following case illustrates.

Katie was a drinker in January of 1999. Her husband died in the same month and shortly afterwards Katie decided to stop drinking alcohol. She decided to stop drinking because she is alone on the farm with her child. Also, she suffered from tuberculosis and she wanted to preserve her lungs. She does not work on the farm and if she were to be evicted it would be difficult for her because she has no family elsewhere and she has nowhere else to go.

This is how Katie describes becoming *bekeer*:

"I converted and gave myself to the Lord. I put the devil behind me and I am no longer going to drink alcohol."

There are two important components involved in turning away from life as a drinker and becoming *bekeer*. The first is to give the actions of one's life to a being not of the everyday world that is perceived to have the power to intervene and change events and conditions, in this case, the Christian God.

The second is to recognise that alcohol is the devil incarnate and to strive to keep the evil force out of one's life, by not drinking. It would seem from my data that the impetus for conversion comes from the acceptance of the notion that alcohol is representative of the devil and the only way to turn away from the devil is to turn toward evangelical Christian beliefs and practices.

Katie's account links the religious and social aspects of conversion. Through giving her life to a higher power, she is turning away from a previous way of thinking, to a new set of ideas and behavioural norms. Because conversion also includes ideas and behaviour, it must have recognition within a community (Flinn 1999). The framework around the process of unlearning to drink for the majority of people on the Vine and Grove, is a religious one that requires a person to accept the religious message of the evangelists that visit the farm, or of the other *bekeer* people in the *blok*. Becoming *bekeer* provides the drinker with a strategy for new behaviour and recourse for strength to institute the new behaviour. The change in behaviour and the creation of a new person occurs through a religious conversion that results in a reformed person.

Alcohol itself is imbued with religious symbolism, and is personified as the devil incarnate. Alcohol is moved out of the every day realm and into the realm of the sacred where war is waged upon it. The notion that alcohol is evil and an instrument of the devil, or even the devil itself is a recurring theme in the accounts of those on the farm who have converted or those who have attempted to convert. Alcohol as the devil, is a metaphor that directly links the need to stop drinking and the need to convert.

Conversions do not occur in vacuums, people are part of communities and those communities are part of a broader socio-political context. I argue that the context of farm worker life is an important element in the nature of conversion as seen on the Vine and Grove. Lewis Rambo and Charles Farhadian assert that context is an integral aspect of the conversion process because "(c)ontextual infrastructures provide a range of mobility, flexibility, resources and opportunities as well as different powers of access, support, control and repression (1999:25). The context of farm workers on the Vine and Grove has been elaborated in Chapter 2 and 3.

The relevant issues for conversion are that the environment of the farm is oppressive and immiserating. Attempts are made to control all aspects of life, some attempt to escape the mundane through alcohol, regardless of the negative consequences. Others choose a different path, that of conversion. Evangelists visit the farm, and the workers attend church services held in a hall on a nearby farm. Interestingly, the farm owner does not oppose the presence of evangelists in the *blok*. Residents told me that in the year before I came to the farm, he had organised a minister to come and preach to the teenagers and children who were drinking heavily about the evils of drinking alcohol.

The context of the *blok* provides access to religious ministers and those who convert have mobility in the sense that they are part of a broader community that enables them to attend church services on other farms. Being *bekeer* provides workers with resources and support for their new way of life that they would not otherwise have. Jackie who we met in the previous chapter once spoke to me of the difficult life her mother led because of her stepfather's drinking. He treated her badly when he was drunk and he did not give her enough money for food. Jackie said that her mother coped with things because she received a lot of support from her 'sisters'. Her sisters are other *bekeer* women who provide spiritual, emotional and material support.

Becoming *Bekeer*

The process of converting and becoming *bekeer* is complex and theoretical attempts to describe the process have tended to create models that make the process appear rigid and fixed (Flinn 1999). In the field of anthropology, the process of change within primitive societies has been described in terms of stages that are fixed, such as Van Gennep's model of *rites de passage* with its three stages of separation, liminality and integration. The conversion processes involved in initiation rituals for example, do not allow a man to become a boy again. Current ideas about conversion take into account the realities that accompany conversion and although theorists still provide models that have stages, the understanding is that "...converting is frequently characterised by a spiralling effect – a going back and forth between stages – and thus not a unidirectional movement (Rambo and Farhadian 1999:24).

The process of unlearning drinking is an individual choice. Although much encouragement is provided for people who want to stop drinking, it is not a pattern of behaviour that is easily adopted. Often, the decision to convert amongst farm workers is precipitated by a life crisis. The crisis causes the person to call into question their beliefs and behaviour (Rambo and Farhadian 1999). It is at this point that the person begins the conversion process. There is a turning away from ideas and beliefs held and a paradigm shift occurs so that the person becomes open to a new way of being (Flinn 1999).

Amongst the farm workers on the Vine and Grove the process of conversion begins when the person makes the cognitive connection between the negative aspects in her life and the consumption of alcohol. People come to this realisation in a variety of ways. Ester is *bekeer* and her story describes her life crisis and the ensuing paradigm shift:

Ester is in her early thirties and has lived on the Vine and Grove all her life. She is married and has two children, a young son of four years old and an older son of fifteen years old. Her husband is not the father of her older son. She and her husband are both permanent workers on the farm.

Ester used to drink heavily. She and her husband fought with each other when they were drunk. Ester says that she would become very violent. Once she was hitting her husband with an axe and if her son had not grabbed the axe from her hands, she says that she would have killed her husband.

Ester no longer drinks, having decided to stop after a very traumatic event:

One rainy Saturday in the winter of 1995 when Ester was pregnant, she and her husband were drinking and got into a fight. Ester tried to get away from him. He caught up with her as she was climbing through the window of their house. He closed the window across her lower back several times. He then left her alone, went to the bed and passed out.

Ester went to her friend's house to get out of the rain and away from her husband. She felt giddy and experienced terrible pains in her abdomen. Ester rested a while at her friend's house where she had more wine and after a while returned to her house to go to bed. But the pain returned and she was unable to sleep and felt as if she needed to defecate. Her house had no toilet and she went outside. Under a tree in the pouring rain, she miscarried.

Ester and Johnny were not married when this happened. After the miscarriage, apart from deciding that she would no longer drink alcohol Ester also made some other decisions about her life.

Ester says,

"I told Johnny that I would not be his *houvrou*³, and that he must decide whether he wants to marry me or not. I told him that I was going to leave the drink and that he may not hit me anymore. If he hit me again that would be the last time that he touched me."

Johnny agreed to marry Ester and he has not hit her again, although he still drinks alcohol.

The ongoing violence associated with drinking alcohol in did not deter Ester from drinking. It was the loss of her baby that brought Ester to a point where she decided that it was no longer worth drinking alcohol. Not only did Ester stop drinking alcohol but as in the case of Katie, she also became part of the religious community of *bekeer* people on the farm. Ester is particularly active in the faith community, on Sundays; she attends church in a hall on a nearby farm. She also hosts church meetings in her home and attends meetings in the homes of others in the *blok* and in homes on other farms. Church meetings occur in homes on weekday evenings.

A process of conversion that involves a less dramatic or obvious catalyst, but is rather a process of transition over time (Flinn 1999), is also present amongst the workers on the Vine and Grove. Donna's reasons for becoming converted provides an example of how an accumulation of negative events brings someone to make a decision about alcohol consumption:

Donna is forty-one years old. She has two daughters and one young son. Her son is her current husband's child. She also raises her nephew. Donna works part-time and her husband is a full-time employee on the farm.

Donna started drinking when she was twenty-eight. She tried alcohol at a party; she liked it and continued to drink. Donna says:

"Alcohol isn't right for my life. It made me thin and sickly. I had TB in the eighties and was in hospital for six months. I saw that alcohol was breaking me down."

Donna continued to drink though, until the early nineties. She and her current husband often fought when they had been drinking. During her last pregnancy, he beat her very badly:

³ literally, hold wife, a derogatory term for a woman that lives with a man without legally marrying him

"He hit my eyes closed and I had to go to hospital for a drip because it felt like the baby was coming."

When Donna's baby was born, he was underweight, had club feet and had epileptic fits. He spent eleven months in hospital. The doctor told her that it was because she drank during her pregnancy. After that, Donna stopped drinking alcohol. She has not had a drink in six years.

Donna says of alcohol:

I hate drink; I can't deal with a person who drinks. Many homes are broken by drink. They think drink is a solution but it is not. I never want to drink, I never get the desire, I don't miss it. I'll never drink again; I mistreated my children when I drank. I hurt them too much. If I hadn't drunk and hurt them, they wouldn't be like they are.

Donna's experiences, brought her to the realisation that alcohol was detrimental to herself and others. Donna converted and stopped drinking alcohol.

A recurring theme in women's stories of their rejection of alcohol consumption is the welfare of their children. Both Ester and Donna stopped drinking because of the loss of or the damage caused to their children because of their alcohol consumption. Women also stop drinking alcohol to stop or reduce the violence between themselves and their husbands. Violence is reduced because women who were violent because of alcohol consumption are no longer the catalysts for violent episodes in the home. Donna's husband is still violent towards her since she has stopped drinking, but because she no longer drinks, she says that things are better. She does not become violent with him and he is seldom violent with her.

The Characteristics of *Bekeer*

When workers *bekeer*, their behaviour changes, most notably they no longer drink alcohol. Because alcohol consumption amongst farm workers has negative ramifications for the drinkers and for those with whom they associate, cessation of drinking, can be seen not just as a change in behaviour of a person but also a change in identity.

Taking on a new identity is a feature of the conversion process and may affect the individual's behaviour, attitude, value system and construction of self (Rambo and Farhadian 1999). With regard to the farm workers on the Vine and Grove, the focus of the workers on their conversions and the changes brought about in their lives as a result is on the difference between the way they were before and after they stopped drinking alcohol.

Apart from forswearing alcohol, *bekeer* people also do not smoke or use drugs. One informant told me that he had wanted to *bekeer* but the requirement of having to give up smoking was worse than abstaining from alcohol. He decided to continue smoking rather than be *bekeer*. He also reverted to drinking alcohol.

In addition to the religious aspects of converting, those who *bekeer* define themselves in terms of what they no longer are, in other words, not having the characteristics associated with the unconverted. Rachel's account of what her life was like before she drank provides a good example of what *bekeer* people strive not to be.

Rachel and her husband are *bekeer*. Rachel is 50 years old and it has been five years since she last drank alcohol. She started drinking at the age of 21. Rachel has six children, the oldest of whom is an adult son, her *voorkind* and the youngest is five years old.

Rachel drank both wine and beer, or anything alcoholic as long as it made her drunk. She says that when Fridays came she got an urge to drink. She doesn't know how much she drank, except that it was a lot:

Ek het sommer gesuip. (I just boozed).

Rachel says of the state of her life when she was drinking:

"At night, I would lock the children in the house when I went to the *smokkie* ((lit. smuggle houses). My husband and I used to hit each other. My eyes were black, the children were afraid of us. We didn't hit the children though. The children were underfed and my youngest daughter had TB. I used to sell my clothes and crockery for *dop*. When we lived in Paarl my older sons were embarrassed by us, my eldest told people we weren't his parents. Once I fell while carrying my youngest daughter when I was drunk. If she had died, I would still be in prison. I want to give my children the love now that they should have had when they were younger. I don't want them to speak badly of me when I am older. I want my youngest two to finish school."

Through Rachel's description of what her life was like before she converted and reformed her life, we are given insight into how *bekeer* people are expected to conduct themselves. Responsibility for family, particularly children is a very important aspect of being *bekeer*. It is of great importance that children are well cared for and encouraged to stay at school. Attempts must also be made to right the wrongs perpetrated by the *bekeer* person when still a drinker. Both Rachel and Donna indicated remorse at the way they treated their children while they were drinkers and now both actively endeavour to ensure their children are cared for.

The state of the household is also very important to *bekeer* people. The selling of clothing and kitchenware for alcohol is unacceptable. Rachel is now house-proud and her account of her former life as a drinker was relayed to me in her sitting room, replete with modest furniture, a television, pictures of the children, a decorated passage from the bible and other ornaments. The kitchen had a fridge and stove, and was equipped with cooking and eating utensils.

This scenario is common to households where either the woman is *bekeer* or both the husband and wife are *bekeer*. There are people who drink alcohol and attempt to ensure that their homes are as comfortable as possible within the means available to them. In households where all the adults are drinkers and the trend is towards little or no furniture and appliances, the levels of alcohol consumption are very high. In Simon and Veronica's home for example (recall chapter 4), no money is spent on making the home, and the purchase of alcohol takes precedence over the purchase of electricity for the home.

Another aspect of *bekeer* life is thrift. Spending money on alcohol is considered as a waste of money which would be better spent on food and necessities for the family. It is considered important to save money to buy household items. Ester explained to me that since she had stopped drinking she and her husband had been able to save their money to buy second hand furniture for their home.

The ideal of saving money and creating a home is constantly frustrated for the *bekeer* because of lack of income rather than the squandering of money on alcohol.

Extremely low incomes make saving money difficult, but perseverance in the face of difficulty enables *bekeer* people to achieve their goals.

The new identity of the converted person is not only dependent on the religious act of giving one's life to Jesus, but it is also reliant on outward manifestations. Forswearing alcohol is not the only outward manifestation of the converted. The way in which children are cared for and how the home is kept are also aspects of being *bekeer*. In addition to the behavioural manifestations of the converted, the most notable attitude towards life was that of perseverance.

Religion provides the basis for those who are converted to persevere in the face of the hardships they experience as farm workers. Attending religious services is a vital part of *bekeer* life. Support from the *bekeer* community is crucial for those who choose to unlearn drinking. The religious services provide spaces for people to express their problems and find support in the rites of prayer, preaching, hymn singing and bible reading reinforce their Christian belief system. The conversion process not only involves a change in spiritual direction or conviction, but it also includes the acceptance and recognition of a like minded community (Flinn 1999). In this broad sense, religion provides ideals to strive for and a source of sustenance to face the obstacles and trials of life.

Thrift and hard work do not change the exploitative and oppressive situation in which farm workers find themselves. Nor does conversion change farm worker circumstances; instead, farm workers who are *bekeer* have a different option for coping.

The Dynamics of Conversion

The processes of conversion discussed thus far have included those who have come to a realisation that their behaviour and ideas needed to change. The workers discussed have all started and continued with the conversion process. In the conception of conversion theorists argue that it is not necessarily a linear process and that people may experience it differently. "They [the stages of converting] are marked with advances and declines. Their trajectories are unpredictable and reversals are common (Rambo and Farhadian 1999:33).

Farm workers also experience the spiralling nature of conversion. All those on The Vine and Grove who consider themselves *bekeer* were at one time drinkers, and all drinkers are possible candidates for becoming *bekeer*. Within the *bekeer* life, there is no place for alcohol; its consumption disqualifies one from the *bekeer* community until one again initiates the process of entry. However, becoming *bekeer* is no guarantee of never again drinking alcohol. On the Vine and Grove, some workers who had converted began to drink alcohol again. Meisie, whom we met in chapter three, offers an example:

Meisie sees alcohol as an instrument of the devil. She says that the only way to fend off the devil is to pray and go to church regularly and she has decided once and for all to stop drinking alcohol, even if her husband does not support her by also giving up alcohol. She plans to go back to church and leave the drink alone.

Meisie says that she and Karel gave up drinking alcohol before when they were first married. They attended church regularly but they had both started to drink alcohol again. Meisie says that it is good to have a drink at the end of a long working week.

Meisie's case reveals that drinking alcohol does have its attractions. Even after violence between herself and her husband caused them both to give up alcohol and *bekeer*, they had reverted to drinking alcohol. Further violence between the couple ensued and Meisie again made the decision to *bekeer*.

For others, the reversion to drinking is occasioned by friends or the desire for alcohol. Jacob, a young man who had previously given up drinking for seven months began drinking again because his friends encouraged him. Interestingly he still considers alcohol to be problematic, he summed up his present position as a drinker with the words: *Die Duiwel het my*. (The Devil has me.) As noted previously, alcohol is associated with the devil by farm workers. The association appears to place the need to drink alcohol outside of the self, and in the realm of the supernatural where religion is the mediator. The association with alcohol as the devil, may be the reason for the strong correlation between those who are able to change their drinking behaviour and those who become *bekeer*. Farm workers who had attempted conversion or who were *bekeer* did not discuss the conception of evil and the devil in other terms. Those who were drinkers and did not intend to give up alcohol did not discuss alcohol in terms of the devil at all.

Some who believe that their alcohol consumption is problematic may consider but do not implement the conversion process. Recall Jackie and her cousin from Chapter 4, who both indicated that they would like to stop drinking but that they were not yet ready. In terms of the conversion process, these young women are in a state of suspension where their "...patterns of construing and knowing no longer work but [they] do not yet sense the wider horizon in which the parts hold together again " (Flinn 1999:60).

Drinker versus *Bekeer*: Conflict

Although there is always the possibility of movement between being *bekeer* and not consuming alcohol, and being a drinker, this does not preclude conflict between them. Drinker and *bekeer* share homes and it is here where conflict arises. Alcohol consumption gives rise to contested issues; responsibilities for the household and interpersonal relations are the areas around which conflict is most often centred.

Bekeer women who work tend to carry the financial burden of ensuring that the household needs are met as far as possible. Not drinking appears to provide women with more control over their households. If a woman is working all of her income is spent on the household, and if she is not, being sober enables her to ensure that at least some of her husband's income is not spent on alcohol. Conflict, however, remains a characteristic of life, particularly for women who are not employed full-time. When I first met Donna, she had bruises and scratch marks on her throat. Donna told me that she would not give her husband any food when he came home after a drinking session on the weekend, as he had not given her any money:

Violence that occurs between drinkers in a household also has a negative impact on those who are *bekeer*. Ester is part of a household in which her older son and husband both drink. Her husband and son had a fight when drunk and her husband put her son out of the house. Her husband's leg was broken and he did not work for two months, thus reducing the household income by more than half. Ester is also torn between her allegiance to her husband and her responsibilities for her son. Her husband told her that she may not help her son in any way. She does, however, secretly provide her son with food and she allows him to use the bathroom to wash when her husband is not at home. Ester carries the responsibility for her son's welfare alone and constantly risks further conflict with her husband.

Those who do not drink alcohol face emotional and economic problems that result from their husband's or family member's alcohol consumption. Relationships between *bekeer* parents and children are also fractured. *Bekeer* parents try to influence their children to stop drinking; this is met with resistance and often hostility. Donna and her daughter Jackie⁴ are a good example. Donna tries to convince Jackie to stop drinking, Jackie's response is either to ignore her mother or argue with her. Jackie also will not listen to her mother because she was once a drinker:

⁴ Jackie, referred to in the previous chapter, is Donna's eldest daughter.

Unlearning drinking and becoming *bekeer* does not exempt one from the negative consequences of alcohol consumption. The *bekeer* interact with those who drink alcohol, and suffer the negative consequences associated with drunken behaviour. This behaviour is often exhibited by those close to the *bekeer*, such as spouses and children. The support networks within the *bekeer* community provide one avenue of support. On another level, the conceptualisation of alcohol as the devil also provides for conflict resulting from alcohol consumption to be ameliorated. The idea that alcohol is the devil removes the responsibility for the wrongs associated with the conflict from the perpetrator. Those responsible for conflict and its negative consequences are not themselves, but in the grip of something evil.

Conclusion

Alcohol and being *bekeer* are intimately intertwined amongst farm workers. Learning to drink is a process that workers are part of from childhood. All the workers on the Vine and Grove had tried alcohol at some time in their lives. Within the context of the farms and in the *blok* on The Vine and Grove, there is a continual contest between the desire to drink and not drink. For the *bekeer* person, this battle is perceived as being between God and the Devil. Converting, giving one's life "to the Lord" and reforming one's behaviour makes one a soldier in the battle. The link between the cessation of alcohol consumption and conversion seems to be embedded in the evangelical Christianity that workers accept. The rule of no alcohol consumption and the association of alcohol with the devil provide the converted with a paradigm that enables them to change their behaviour. Within the *bekeer* community workers also receive spiritual, emotional and material support from one another. Apart from the exceptional case of Frans and his wife, workers who want to stop drinking alcohol altogether choose the *bekeer* path.

The processes by which farm workers decide to convert are complex, but they appear from the data collected on the Vine and Grove to always be linked to a need to stop drinking alcohol. When farm workers *bekeer* not only do they stop drinking, but they also actively strive to change their lives so that they become new people, with new behaviours and attitudes.

The complexity of conversion and the difficulty of maintaining the behaviour required of being *bekeer* is revealed by those who attempt the process but revert to drinking behaviour. The opportunity is always there to reinitiate the conversion process, but this is dependent on the decision of the individual.

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Chapter 6:

Conclusion

As the twentieth century draws to a close, the world's poor are the chief victims of structural violence – a violence which has thus far defied the analysis of many seeking to understand the nature and distribution of extreme suffering. Why might this be so? One answer is that the poor are not only more likely to suffer, they are also more likely to have their suffering silenced.

Paul Farmer 1997:280

Alcohol consumption and its consequences amongst farm workers provides a window into the suffering that they endure as a result of structural violence. I have attempted to render the forms that structural violence takes in the lives of farm workers so that the nature of their suffering is made manifest. In so doing, the understandings of alcohol consumption among farm workers are complicated and revealed as complex.

The window that alcohol provides is not necessarily transparent. The moralistic and bio-medical approaches to understanding the suffering caused by excessive alcohol consumption are concerned with the individual distress and efforts to overcome the problems associated with drinking. The window remains opaque concerning the underlying structural reasons for alcohol abuse.

Alcohol in the Western Cape is part of a web of historical processes that have enabled the control and exploitation of human resources. Alcohol was used as a means for Pavlovian conditioning resulting in dependence and compliance amongst farm workers (Shell 1994:280). The political power of the wine industry enabled farmers in the Western Cape to continue the provision of alcohol to workers into the twentieth century, virtually unopposed. The *dop* system is now illegal, but the dependence on, and the demand for alcohol remains amongst farm workers.

Farm worker dependency extends beyond alcohol to include all aspects of their private and work relations. Dependency is a product of structural violence that is manifested in paternalism. The experience of paternalism over generations has resulted in internalised oppression amongst farm workers. On the Vine and Grove workers were distressed because the farmer was not a good boss in paternalist terms, very few of the workers realised that paternalism was in itself problematic. Thus the oppressed do the work of the oppressors and the relationships of power are obscured, making them very difficult to change.

The state, through legal reform, is attempting to address the oppression and exploitation of farm workers. Structural violence, however, still finds expression through local government, as was the case with social services and the workers on the Vine and Grove. NGOs and trade unions working in the agricultural sector are beginning to facilitate change but the process is slow and farmer power, although challenged, remains largely intact. Paternalism should be recognised as a form of structural violence in order to create spaces for the empowerment of agricultural workers in the Western Cape.

Paternalism is not the only form of structural violence experienced by farm workers. New laws and international trading regulations call for farmers to improve the working and living conditions of their workers. Consequently, there is a trend in current labour practice amongst farmers to outsource their labour requirements by employing *uitwerkers*. Thereby reducing the responsibilities of the farmer to his workers, the threat to his profit margins and the number of permanent labourers on his farm. Labourers employed as *uitwerkers*, have less protection because they are without the rights provided under formal labour contracts (Du Toit 2001).

In order to reduce their permanent labour force farmers dismiss and evict workers. On the Vine and Grove, control over workers is exerted through farm rules and regulations, which if broken, result in dismissal and eviction. The majority of the workers break the rules, but no mass eviction takes place. Instead, an ongoing selection of workers is found guilty and dismissed. The workers are in a continual state of anxiety within a context of surveillance and control.

The consequences of this novel form of structural violence are even greater economic marginalisation and reduced access to resources for farm workers. The violence invades workers lives at the most personal level, the family. The extended family arrangements that farm workers have are a means for coping with the poverty that they experience. The process of outsourcing the agricultural labour force disrupts these coping strategies and creates new levels of social suffering amongst farm workers.

Alcohol features large in the methods used to control and rationalise the workforce. On the Vine and Grove, reporting for work inebriated is immediate grounds for dismissal. The drinking of alcohol during a worker's personal time is also under surveillance and inter-personal violence is used as reason to dismiss.

The personal lives of the workers are within the sphere of farmer control but the farmer no longer directly regulates their intake of alcohol. Workers binge on alcohol each weekend, a custom that is entrenched in their social practice and is an integral part of farm worker culture. Understanding drinking practice in cultural terms alone runs the risk of obscuring the forces of structural violence. The exploration of the social aspects of alcohol consumption provide an understanding of the interactions between the forces of structural violence and suffering, as Singer et al explain:

Alcoholism...is a disease of the world economic system, and at the same time, an expression of human suffering and coping, as well as resistance to the forces and pressures of that system (Singer et al 1992:100).

My exploration of the social aspects of farm worker drinking led to its conceptualisation as a ritualised practice. Ritual provides structure and order within society and legitimates practice (Falke-Moore et al 1977). The ritualisation of drinking practice encompasses the physical effects chemical and the cultural norms. The drinking ritual is concerned with the workers' need to escape their reality, and to change their experience of reality, even if only fleetingly. The ritual brings about change at the physiological and social levels. Unfortunately, the change is constituted of largely negative consequences. The chemical euphoria or amnesia induced by alcohol is fleeting and is regularly replaced with violent behaviour.

Alcohol consumption amongst the majority of farm workers serves to further immiserate their circumstances. The drinking ritual then is necessary to facilitate the learning of drinking as a cultural practice so that the euphoric and negative effects of alcohol are experienced within a socially acceptable frame of reference. The ritualisation of drinking alcohol amongst farm workers provides a context for the legitimisation of the practice so that the perceived escape from suffering overshadows the negative consequences experienced.

The ritual also encompasses a belief amongst farm workers that when they are inebriated, they are no longer themselves. The belief provides workers with a different plane on which to experience the suffering associated with alcohol consumption. When drinking, workers are outside the structures and norms of their day to day lives. Violence and abuse associated with alcohol consumption is part of that experience and thus goes largely uncensured amongst farm workers. The reality though, is that the violence and abuse associated with alcohol use is a disruptive and destructive force in the lives of farm workers. As my data demonstrates, the already grim circumstances of farm workers are further immiserated through the negative consequences of alcohol use.

The ritual of drinking alcohol, which results from the experience of suffering, creates further misery. Without understanding that the context of the drinking ritual is rooted in structural violence, alcohol consumption amongst farm workers is reduced to a problem at the individual level. The recognition that structural violence perpetuates drinking amongst farm workers enables the opening of the window on the true nature of farm worker suffering. The need to drink alcohol is interwoven with the circumstances that the farm workers wish to escape.

Despite the perpetuating effects of the drinking ritual on the Vine and Grove, workers do recognise the negative consequences of their drinking on an individual level. The decision to stop drinking alcohol is linked to religious messages that alcohol is inherently evil and the incarnation of the devil. As Levine observed in her work in the Worcester area:

Spiritual redemption, which was historically imposed through the weakening of the worker's spirit with alcohol, is now being reinvented through the lens of abstinence as a virtue (Levine 2000:114).

The blame for the misuse of alcohol is situated with the workers as individuals rather than within the historical context in which social drinking and alcohol dependence is embedded. Farmers, including the owner of the Vine and Grove, recognise that farm worker alcohol use is problematic. A sober work force is reliable and responsible, characteristics that modern farming methods require. On the other hand, farmers are actively seeking to diminish their responsibilities to workers. In the face of ongoing structural violence, workers seeking to alleviate the negative consequences of alcohol consumption turn to religion for support.

The conversion to evangelical Christianity is for farm workers, a way to stop drinking. The choice is made at the individual level and becoming *bekeer* entails accepting that alcohol is evil and being prepared to fight evil by no longer drinking. Becoming *bekeer* provides a worker with a new identity and a community of support. The *bekeer* identity is, however, not very secure and workers do revert to drinking alcohol. There are thus two issues that arise regarding the drinking of, and abstinence from alcohol amongst farm workers. Do people revert to drinking alcohol because they are dependent on its effects or are they dependent on the social experience of the drinking ritual? Any attempts to address problematic alcohol consumption amongst farm workers would require awareness of the phenomenon of the drinking ritual.

Being *bekeer* requires an ongoing commitment to a new way of life. The new mode for living has layers that encompass the social and the religious. The interactions between the social and religious layers of conversion amongst farm workers are highly complex and beg further study. Does faith enable the worker to maintain their *bekeer* identity, do the converted find that their lives are enhanced by abstinence from alcohol or does the support of a new community provide the necessary impetus.

I suggest that there is an interaction of factors for successful maintenance of the *bekeer* identity and that it is likely that it provides a context for an alternative to the drinking ritual. Therefore, the behavioural attributes and religious activities of the *bekeer* life provide an alternative to the drinking ritual within the culture of farm workers.

It is important to note though that those who *bekeer* do not escape the immiserating conditions of farm worker life. If alcohol consumption is to be addressed comprehensively, the forces of structural violence in the lives of farm workers must be recognised and addressed.

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