

# **The Spatial Mismatch Hypothesis and the use of social networks for job search in Cape Town**

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A minor dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy in Development Studies

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2015

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# Declaration

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## Acknowledgements

This dissertation would not have been possible without the help of a number of individuals. I would first like to express my utmost gratitude to my supervisor, Professor Owen Crankshaw, for his extraordinary patience, insight, and encouragement. I am also indebted to the many people who were kind enough to offer up their time to let me interview them. A special thank you goes out to Naadir Hodgson, whose efforts to provide me with access to participants was absolutely vital for the completion of this research.

## Abstract

This dissertation explores the spatial mismatch hypothesis in Cape Town; in particular its mechanisms, how they interact with lower-skilled workers in the labour market, and what role social networks play. The spatial mismatch hypothesis suggests that a significant distance between residential areas and centres of employment (1) leads to a lengthy and expensive commute which makes the job search in economic centres more difficult, (2) reduces the amount of information about job opportunities that is available to lower-skilled workers, and (3) reduces the effectiveness of using one's social network as a means to find out about work opportunities.

Through semi-structured, in-depth interviews with lower-skilled workers and employers, this research attempts to offer insights into the mechanisms of the spatial mismatch hypothesis and challenge the assumption that a causal relationship exists between spatial mismatch and the suggested consequences put forward by a literature that is dominated by quantitative studies. Rather than measuring the spatial mismatch, this research is intended to provide possible ways in which the spatial mismatch functions. It does not set out to prove anything in either a qualitative or quantitative way, but rather highlight the gaps in the current interpretation of the spatial mismatch hypothesis in order to gain a better understanding of its mechanisms.

This dissertation reaches a number of tentative conclusions that may be worth exploring further. The first is that social networks are used extensively by employers, lower-skilled workers, as well as job seekers. A contributing factor to this seems to be spatial mismatch, which can make one's job search time-consuming and expensive as well as make it unclear for job seekers where the best locations are to look for work.

A second conclusion is that the difficulty and cost of commuting can depend significantly on the specific location of home and work rather than simply the distance between the two, especially in cases where workers depend heavily on public transport. This idea clashes with the argument that a spatial mismatch will lead to a lengthy and expensive commute that can deter job seekers from successfully finding employment.

Lastly, reducing spatial mismatch appears to be entirely unrealistic for lower-skilled workers living on the Cape Flats. Very few jobs are available near their homes and moving closer to centres of employment is far too expensive. The only viable option for them is to overcome some of the issues associated with spatial mismatch, most notably by using private transport for their commute to reduce their reliance on the public transport system.

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# 1 Introduction

This dissertation explores the spatial mismatch hypothesis in Cape Town; in particular its mechanisms, how they interact with lower-skilled workers in the labour market, and what role social networks play. Rather than measuring spatial mismatch using popular quantitative proxies such as measuring cost and duration of commute, residential segregation or proximity of jobs, this research is qualitative of nature. It has been carried out not to measure spatial mismatch, but to gain a deeper understanding of the ways in which a spatial mismatch can affect the behaviour of job seekers and employers as well as vice versa.

The spatial mismatch hypothesis suggests that a significant distance between residential areas and centres of employment has three main effects on how successful lower-skilled workers can be on the labour market. Firstly, a spatial mismatch leads to a lengthy and expensive commute. This, in turn, makes the job search in economic centres more difficult, if not impossible. Moreover, it results in a reduction of disposable income as a large portion of a worker's salary is spent on travelling to and from work. Secondly, a large distance between home and work reduces the amount of information about job opportunities that is available to lower-skilled workers. With employers recruiting and advertising locally and workers unable to travel frequently to centres of employment, not much information reaches the residential areas where many potential employees live. Lastly, a spatial mismatch reduces the effectiveness of using one's social network as a means to find out about work. In a segregated city in which there is a spatial mismatch there are areas of high unemployment and areas where jobs are plentiful. Because most lower-skilled job seekers tend to live in areas with high unemployment far away from centres of employment, they almost exclusively come in contact with people in their immediate surroundings who have the same socioeconomic status and cannot adequately help them find a job.

This dissertation takes the ideas behind the spatial mismatch as a starting point but challenges the assumption that a causal relationship exists between a spatial mismatch and the suggested consequences. The literature on spatial mismatch puts too much faith in the deductive-nomological model and thereby skips the critical step of fully understanding how the proposed mechanisms of a spatial mismatch work. Without the full knowledge of

*how* spatial mismatch and its effects work it is virtually impossible to suggest ways in which problems due to a large distance between home and work can be solved or overcome.

Through in-depth, semi-structured interviews with lower-skilled workers and employers in Wynberg, Kenilworth, Claremont, and Mitchell's Plain, this research explores the ways in which lower-skilled workers approach the procedure of getting a job, from their search for work to successfully getting and doing a job. The questions this research aims to answer deal with how this approach is influenced by a spatial mismatch; if and how the consequences a spatial mismatch are said to evoke are relevant. Moreover, this dissertation tries to discover how spatial mismatch and employers' recruitment methods interact and how this can affect a worker's job search.

The specific mechanisms of spatial mismatch the literature puts forth that are explored in this dissertation are the effects it has on workers' commutes and how it influences the use of their social networks. The spatial mismatch hypothesis suggests workers' social networks become less useful if there is a significant distance between their home and centres of employment. This research tries to examine how social networks are used to find work and get a job. Not in order to quantifiably verify or refute this element of the spatial mismatch hypothesis, but to explore the *ways* in which spatial mismatch plays a role. The same applies to workers' commutes. I have tried to gain an understanding into the ways in which a long and expensive commute hampers workers' jobs search; the ways in which it has altered their job search strategies, and how commuting issues from the literature are different from those in Cape Town. Furthermore, I have interviewed employers in order to better understand how their hiring practices are influenced by spatial mismatch and how their considerations affect job seekers.

The dissertation starts with the background and suggested mechanisms of the spatial mismatch hypothesis in order to put the research into context. This process is continued in the next chapter which covers Cape Town as well as the literature that has been written on the spatial mismatch of the city. This is followed by chapter 4, which deals with social networks and their importance on the labour market; how they are used to find out about available work and what role they play in supporting a job seeker find employment. It then moves to methods, which overviews the problems with the ways in which much of the literature on the spatial mismatch hypothesis has approached the topic as well. It also

provides my own research methods and the reasons for using them. The findings are found in chapter 6, split up into four parts. It firstly covers my findings on the distance between home and work and its interaction with workers' commute and job search. The second part deals with how the spatial mismatch interacts with how the participants use public transport as well as how employers recruit. Part 3 of the findings chapter covers the importance of social networks; how they are used, what they are used for, and which types of connections are used for what purpose. The last part examines the ways in which participants may be able to overcome the spatial mismatch as well as the issues related to it. The findings chapter is followed by the limitations of this research and the conclusion. Lastly, you will find the references and the appendix with the interview schedule as well as the transcripts of the interviews I have conducted.

## 2 The spatial mismatch hypothesis

### 2.1 Background

The spatial mismatch hypothesis (SMH) as proposed by John Kain (1968) suggests the availability of jobs and information thereof is limited to lower-skilled workers due to the physical distance between their place of residence and centres of employment. His research focused on black inner-city residents in American cities living a great distance from new economic centres. A key factor in the creation of the distance between centres of employment and the place of residence of African Americans has been the high level of suburbanization since the end of World War II. American cities in the 19th century most often had small, dense central business districts and residents tended to live close by due to high travel costs of people and goods. This changed in the 20th century when the emergence of new modes of transportation (trams, trains and most notably cars) significantly reduced commuting costs which allowed people to live in the suburbs while retaining their job in city centres (Mieszkowski and Mills, 1993; Gobillon *et al.*, 2007). The new residents of the suburbs were almost exclusively white, many of whom left the city centres. Between 1950 and 1960 the biggest 24 American cities centres lost around 1.5 million white residents to the suburbs while gaining 2 million black inhabitants (Kain, 1968). Cities centres grew, but not nearly at the same rate as the peripheries. Suburbanization continued throughout the 20th century; the proportion of central-city residents has decreased from 53% in 1970 to only 42% in 2000 (Gobillon *et al.*, 2007) and it estimated that the median resident of an American city lives over 14.5 km away from the

city centre (Glaeser and Kahn, 2001). Besides the suburbanization of the labour force, there has also been a suburbanization of employment. The wealth that the White population took with them to the suburbs increased the need for businesses, especially in retail and the service industry, which provide many jobs for lower-skilled workers (Gobillon *et al.*, 2007). There were more reasons, however, for the suburbanization of businesses and employment. These include rising land prices, congestion and crime (Gobillon *et al.*, 2007). Suburbanization was further intensified because proximity to similar businesses can reduce costs and foster innovation, encouraging businesses in the CBD to also move to the periphery of the city (Anas *et al.*, 1998). Statistics confirm the suburbanization of jobs. In 1950, the central cities contained around 70% of jobs in American metropolitan areas and was reduced to 50% in 1980 (Mills and Lubuele, 1997). Gobillon *et al.* (2007) calculated that among the ten largest American metropolitan areas, jobs located in the city centre went down from 57% in 1980 to 51% in 1990 and 47% in 2000. Excluding New York, the big exception in terms of density and centralization of jobs, the proportion of jobs in the nine biggest metropolitan areas goes down to only 40% in 2000.

## **2.2 Mechanisms**

The central claim of the spatial mismatch hypothesis is that where there is a spatial disconnect between workers' residential areas and centres of employment, the result is high unemployment, low net wages and limited knowledge about job opportunities for the residents of these areas. A number of mechanisms through which spatial mismatch can have these effects have been identified (see Gobillon *et al.*, 2007; Rospabe and Selod, 2006). They can be categorized into the following main points:

### *2.2.1 Commute*

A significant distance between home and work will almost always result in a costly as well as lengthy commute. This can be a deterrent for workers to accept jobs and result in higher levels of unemployment in particular areas. It is especially relevant for lower-skilled workers with low salaries as a relatively high proportion of their income will need to go towards getting to and from work. The potential wages would simply be too low for it to be worth the commute. The lack of private transport adds to both the cost and the duration of their commute. Gobillon *et al.* (2007) refer to Coulson *et al.* (2001), who looked at patterns in two economic zones, a central (CBD) and suburban business district (SBD). Wages in the SBD were higher, unemployment lower, and jobs were found to be attractive by people

living in the suburbs or those who incur (relatively) low commuting costs. The workers for whom commuting to the suburbs is expensive preferred to look for work in the CBD, close to where they resided, despite a smaller chance of success and lower wages. Besides the cost, the long duration of a commute may also be a deterrent to accept work as it will take up a significant amount of time. Time that might be needed to do domestic duties, such as cleaning the household or taking care of children, but also sleeping and relaxing.

### *2.2.2 Job search*

Even before the problem of an expensive and lengthy commute arises, there are the job search difficulties created by a spatial mismatch. Firstly there is job search efficiency. The literature suggests workers who live far away from economic centres have less information about available jobs than workers who live closer to areas with job opportunities (see Gobillon *et al.*, 2007; Ihlanfeldt and Sjoquist, 1990; Ihlanfeldt, 1997). Two reasons for this are suggested. The first is that residents of areas far away from job opportunities do not know the areas where work is available. Since, especially in the US, these areas are most often distant suburbs, there are few reasons for people to go there. Carrying out a job search in an unknown area is naturally less efficient than doing so in a familiar area. The second reason for a lack of information has to do with job recruitment. It is argued that certain firms, especially those looking for low-skilled workers, tend to recruit locally (Turner, 1997). Methods include flyers, ads in local newspapers and simple "help wanted" signs. These methods of information distribution tends to limit the flow of information and it is often missed by those who do not live in, or frequently travel to, the area. A number of empirical studies (such as Rogers, 1997; Immergluk, 1998) argue workers who live far away are unemployed longer and attribute this to a lack of information about available jobs. In their study on urban labour market policy and lower educated Black males, Holzer and Reaser (2000) found that this subgroup is less likely to search for work in the suburbs and less likely to be hired there. They claim these findings are accounted for by a low information flow as well as higher costs of applying.

The cost of the job search is often mentioned as a further obstacle for workers to find work. A high search cost may deter people from searching far away from where they live and as such restrict their search to their own neighbourhood. A study done by Ortega (2000) explored this mechanism by comparing workers who searched in their own area and those who went further away to look for jobs. With jobs more plentiful in the suburbs

(the area far away from lower-skilled workers), job seekers face a trade-off: either remain in the vicinity around their place of residence, or spend more time and resources on a likely more efficient job search further away from home. The author found a correlation between search cost and willingness to travel; if the search cost became too high, travelling to the suburbs was no longer worth it for central-city residents. Though not explicitly stated in the literature, another factor that may affect workers' willingness to travel far to look for work is the amount of savings of the household. It would not be unreasonable to expect those who have little money left to be less willing to spend a proportionally large amount of money on travel in order to look for job opportunities, especially in times of high unemployment and relatively low rates of success.

A third mechanism is job search intensity, variations of which can be found depending on distance between workers' home and centres of employment. A model for this was proposed by Smith and Zenou (2003). They proposed a relationship between the places where workers decided to reside and the intensity of their job search. The authors argue a worker has a choice to make between the short and long term. Living far away from centres of employment will be beneficial in the short term as rent costs are low. However, the distance also means fewer trips to areas with job opportunities are possible, decreasing the chances of obtaining a job and extending the duration of being unemployed. Conversely, living closer to economic centres means higher rental costs, but at the same time a more intensive job search process as it is easier, faster, and less costly to find out about job opportunities. At least one study (Patacchini and Zenou, 2006) argues that workers who live in areas with higher rental costs search more intensively for work than those that reside in cheaper housing.

### *2.2.3 Employer's considerations*

Another set of mechanisms comes from the perspective of the employer, argued for by Gobillon *et al.* (2007), among others. The first of these mechanisms is discrimination based on residential location. The argument is that employers are influenced by the stereotypes of the residents of certain areas in a city. In the US, for example, employers might associate inner-city residents with crime, dishonesty and poor work habits due to the higher levels of crime and poverty in that area. This discrimination transcends race, though race can certainly be a contributing factor. A second, and similar, mechanism from the point of view of the employer is customer discrimination. Firms might be less willing to

employ workers of certain ethnic backgrounds because their local customers do not wish to engage with them. In an American context, with a high rate of segregation, this may affect black inner-city workers significantly as there is a significant white majority in the suburbs. Thirdly, employers may find the productivity of distant workers to be too low. Due to the long commutes, workers who live far away may be less well rested as well as more likely to be late or absent, especially in areas with an unreliable public transport system.

#### 2.2.4 *Social networks*

The existence of a spatial mismatch between where low-skilled workers live and the places they can find work is widely supported. The mechanisms so far can certainly be relevant, but may only tell part of the story. While having little information about job opportunities can certainly limit one's chances of being successful on the labour market, it is erroneous to assume the flow of information is limited by mere distance from centres of employment. It should come as no surprise that the literature is far from unanimous in its full agreement with some of the mechanisms behind the spatial mismatch hypothesis. Social networks in particular are often mentioned as an important factor in finding work and one that can negate some of the negative effects of living far away from areas where work can be found. Wilson (1987) stresses the significance of social interactions with others who have jobs and lead stable lives. He argues that in areas of high unemployment, people may experience a social isolation due to a lack of interaction with the working world, or what he calls "mainstream patterns of behaviour" (Wilson, 1987). This prevents people from being tied into the job network. They won't find out about available jobs because they are not informed about it by people who currently work there. The spatial mismatch hypothesis argues that in areas of high unemployment, fewer people travel daily to centres of employment and fewer have the social connections needed to find out about available jobs. This, in turn, hurts the flow of information about potential job opportunities to poorer neighbourhoods (Gobillon *et al.*, 2007: 2412). While there may certainly be truth to this thought, a flaw in the reasoning behind it is the idea that social networks are geographically bound and that spatially close relationships are the ones that provide information about available work. Moreover, the extent to which distance has a negative effect on information flow depends significantly on employers' methods of recruitment. A situation in which employers extensively use a referral system may make a spatial mismatch far less relevant. The issue then switches from where you live to whom you know. High levels of unemployment may remain a factor, but for different reasons than the

spatial mismatch hypothesis suggests. Rather than being an issue because it limits the total amount of information, it may be a problem of having relatively little valuable information per person (because there are many people for whom this information is useful) and high levels of competition for available jobs.

Besides using social networks for information, Wilson (1987) has elaborated further on how social networks contribute to the success on the labour market. He argues that joblessness, poor schooling, high rates of crime and great dependence on welfare are contributors of a destructive cycle of unemployment. As a consequence of these elements becoming the norm in certain urban ghettos, many of its young residents lack role models who can teach them important work skills that are needed to get jobs and show them the correlation between obtaining an education and the ability to find work. This, in turn, increases the reliance on crime and welfare as a way of getting by. This cycle of unemployment exacerbates the problem of poor social networks which makes obtaining a job increasingly difficult.

## 3 Cape Town

### 3.1 Background

In many ways the geography of the city of Cape Town is similar to that of the American cities in which initial evidence for the spatial mismatch hypothesis was gathered. Cape Town, as is common in South Africa, is a highly polarized city; the rich suburbs and economic centres offering employment opportunities form a stark contrast with the largely informal settlements on the edges of the cities - overcrowded areas with extremely high rates of poverty, crime, and unemployment (Turok, 2001). During the 1960s, around 150,000 people were forcibly moved from their well-established communities near the city centre to the townships on the Cape Flats (Wilkinson, 2000: 197). The black and coloured residents of these areas were given significantly fewer rights and liberties than white South Africans. Laws existed preventing non-whites from owning property, starting a business, obtaining many government jobs and restricted their freedom of movement. Moreover, the townships barely experienced any industrial, commercial and retail development, limiting the number of jobs and forcing people to find work and even shop in white areas. The areas suffered from poor infrastructure and lacked a number of essential services (Turok, 2001: 2350).

Although apartheid ended twenty years ago, its legacy is still very apparent today. Most of the townships created under apartheid continue to exist today and many are growing in size (Ndegwa *et al.*, 2007). The social segregation and physical fragmentation intentionally created by the apartheid government have largely remained in South African cities, and especially so in Cape Town. Lower income groups, on average, live farther away from work than high income workers (CMC, 1998: 49), take more time on their commute and spend relatively more money to do so, with many of the poor spending around 10% of their income on transport (Turok, 2001).

In the years following the end of apartheid, private investments in Cape Town started to increasingly move away from the central business district (CBD). Office development outside the CBD was five times higher than in it between 1994 and 2000 (Rode, 2000: 59). The townships, however, missed out on most of these investments and still lag behind other parts of Cape Town. The bulk of major private investments were made in the relatively affluent Northern and Southern suburbs, a significant distance away from the townships located in the south east of the metropolitan area (Turok, 2001). In 2000, rental rates in CBD were 30% lower than at its peak in 1982. The areas of Tyger Valley (northeast) and Claremont (Southern Suburbs), on the other hand, saw a rise in rental rates and were about 25% higher than in the city centre in the early 2000s. The same story was seen in office use, with the vacancy rates in the CBD (8.6%) being more than double than in the economic nodes outside the CBD (3.2%) (Rode, 2000: 61). This decentralization skipped the townships in the southeast and the transfer of economic activity into suburban areas also made low-skilled workers' commute more difficult as the rail and bus networks between the townships and the suburbs aren't as well established as between the townships and the CBD (CMC, 1998).

More recent studies suggest some of these trends are being reversed, in particular the economic move away from the CBD. Pirie (2007) gives a number of examples of investments in the Northern and Southern Suburbs, for example R4.3 billion in investments in Century City as well as R1.8 billion in Claremont. He also notes, however, that between 1999 and 2007, R14 billion of private investments have been made in the CBD and that there has been significant increases in rental rates of residential, office, as well as commercial space; prime retail rental was only R70/m<sup>2</sup> in 1999 but rose to R250/m<sup>2</sup> in 2007 (Pirie, 2007: 129-130). Moreover, he points out that at the time of his study,

"polarisation of shopping opportunity as between the old CBD and the southeastern Cape Flats townships is less than it was five years ago" (Pirie, 2007: 127) in part due to projects such as the Vangate Mall in Athlone and the Khayelitsha Retail Centre which both opened in 2005.

A reduction or even reversal of the flow of investments from the CBD towards the Northern and Southern Suburbs has helped the centre of Cape Town in its economic growth and has made it more appealing for the city's residents to look for work in what remains the largest economic node of the city. This can benefit the residents of the Cape Flats, for most of whom it is easier to access the CBD than the suburbs. Spatially, however, it is merely the lesser of two evils as the CBD, too, is a significant distance from the homes of most lower-skilled workers who live in the southeast. The City of Cape Town's statistics on its economic nodes show a huge disparity still remains and emphasise the extent of which the southeast of the city is still struggling economically. Its own analysis speaks volumes:

"nearly 25% of turnover was most concentrated in the City Bowl and a further 43% was generated in the area roughly stretching from Salt River to Bellville. The West Coast and Southern Suburbs each accounted for a further 10%. Very little turnover (0.5%) was recorded for the south east which accommodates at least a third of the city's population" (City of Cape Town, 2010: 5).

### **3.2 Application of the spatial mismatch hypothesis**

Like many of the cities studied to formulate the spatial mismatch hypothesis, Cape Town has high rates of disparity and clear areas in which there are high growth rates and areas that have missed out on development. Like in the American cities, Cape Town has many predominantly white suburbs towards which much private investment has flowed. The many shared characteristics between Cape Town and these cities suggests it would be a prime example of a place in which the SMH is significantly applicable. There are, however, two main differences with Cape Town and the American cities Kain and other researchers have investigated. The first being the fact that most poor, low-skilled workers live on the outskirts of the city rather than the city centre due to a combination of forced removal and low-income housing provided by the post-apartheid government. The second difference is the duration and severity of apartheid and the direct impact it has had on the non-white population. In the American cities white residents left the inner city and were voluntarily

(though perhaps out of necessity) replaced by predominantly African Americans. In South African cities, including Cape Town, the forced removals carried out under the Group Areas Act brought about a far more drastic switch. The pure necessity of commuting to white-dominated areas and the utter lack of government support may very well have influenced the job search methods of low-skilled workers living in the townships and resulted in different approaches from their American counterparts.

### *3.2.1 Apartheid and post-apartheid city planning*

The city's disparity started in the apartheid era and, to a degree, has continued even since. As mentioned previously, the townships located in the southeast, far from the city centre, were purposely created impoverished areas designated for non-white South Africans. Its black and coloured residents had unusually long commutes using an expensive and inefficient public transport system even though it was subsidized heavily by the government (Clark and Crous, 2002). One of the few exceptions was District Six, a central area near the CBD. In 1966, however, this area was demolished and reserved for white South Africans (Wilkinson, 2000: 197). Privately run, non-subsidized taxis were introduced in the 1970s in order to provide transport for the commute of the many new residents of these poorer areas. We still clearly see the results of these apartheid policies; the distance between home and work continues to be a massive burden on the residents of the townships located in the southeast of the city, especially because there is no access to what Turok (1994: 251) calls a "safe, integrated mass transit system". The city planning of the apartheid government made commuting a major hassle for the non-white residents of Cape Town.

The post-apartheid government needed to address some of these issues. It attempted to do so firstly through the so-called Urban Strategy, in which the government stated it principally sought "the physical, social, and economic integration of [South African] cities and towns" (Turok, 2001: 2354). It took two years, however, to move from what Huchzermeyer (2003: 118) argues was a vision to actual policy. This came in 1996 with the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP), followed by the 1997 Urban Development Framework. A year later, in line with the previously initiated policies, the Ministry for Provincial Affairs and Constitutional Development stated:

"Apartheid planning has left deep scars on the spatial structure of our cities, towns and rural areas, and the lives of millions of individuals and households. The spatial integration of our settlements is critical. It will enhance economic efficiency, facilitate the provision of affordable services, reduce the costs households incur through commuting, and enable social development." (Turok, 2001).

This was followed up by the Metropolitan Spatial Development Framework (MSDF), a city-wide plan to restructure the spatially fragmented city, created by a group of representatives from local and regional authorities, community organisations and consultants (Watson, 1998). The plans laid out in the MSDF were vastly different from previous policies; they included using vacant land near the city to house poorer people (rather than putting them on the edges), linking neighbourhoods through nodes and corridors (rather than separating them with highways), as well as promote mixed-use and high density developments of areas with places to live, work, shop, as well as spend leisure time (rather than the low-density, single function suburbs and townships) (Turok, 2001: 2354).

However, despite the many good intentions Cape Town, as well as many other South African cities, remains significantly segregated (Pieterse, 2009). Cape Town continues to have a "dispersed and segmented structure that is believed to exacerbate unemployment and social exclusion". Many of the good ideas of the MDSF have not been implemented and other policies have in fact had an adverse effect. A 2011 document from the National Planning Commission states:

"Spatial challenges continue to marginalize the poor...In general, the poorest people live in remote rural areas. In the cities the poorest live far from places of work...the situation has probably been aggravated since 1994, with many more people now living in poorly located settlements" (Turok, 2011: 13).

A similar statement as made in a Organisation for Economic Development and Cooperation report:

"The evolution of the spatial structure of Cape Town has also resulted in several obstacles...The functional area...has evolved into a sprawling and low-density multi-nodal city region characterised by strong spatial fragmentation. This trend...generates a spatial

mismatch between employment and housing locations" (Sinclair-Smith and Turok, 2012: 396).

The South African National Development Plan 2030 from August 2012 emphasizes the importance of the location of people's homes and work. As a result of apartheid, the majority of South Africans live in areas with few services and with poor access to areas of society in which they could participate in the economy (National Planning Commission, 2012: 260). The provision of housing was seen as a key tool to address some of the spatial issues created under apartheid; to reduce the distance between people's homes and work in order to provide for them better access to participate in the economy. As such, local governments began providing free housing to the poor and promoting rental agreements (Pieterse, 2009: 7). Though both admirable and necessary, the execution has received valid criticism. Huchzermeyer (2003: 115), Lemanski (2007: 465), Watson (2003: 151) and Clark and Crous (2002: 78) all contend that the approach of the government's housing policy has continued if not worsened the problems that existed under apartheid. Rather than finding the most suitable area, the government decided to look for the cheapest land available to materialize its housing projects. Unsurprisingly, the cheapest land was located far from the city's economic centres. As such, since 1994 the vast majority of low cost housing has been built on peripheral land in places like Philippi and Delft (Turok and Watson, 2001). These areas are far away from the city centre and at a clear economic and spatial disadvantage (Huchzermeyer, 2003: 122).

There are, however, exceptions. One of these is Joe Slovo Park, an informal settlement in Milnerton formerly known as Marconi Beam. It is located only five kilometres from the city centre and closer still to Montague Gardens, a large industrial area. It was mostly demolished and then upgraded in order to provide low cost government subsidized housing close to economic centres (Robins, 2002: 511-513). A second example is Westlake, an area reserved for whites under apartheid, located close to Constantia in Cape Town's Southern Suburbs, an area with a high rate of economic and commercial activity. Here, too, low cost housing was built with the right idea of placing residential areas near commercial ones so that lower-skilled workers could find work closer to home and minimize their commuting time and costs (Lemanski, 2005: 419).

Unfortunately these examples seem to be the exceptions rather than the norm. Despite projects as those in Joe Slovo Park and Westlake, about a third of Cape Town's population

still resides on the Cape Flats, in areas such Khayelitsha, Gugulethu, Mitchell's Plain, Philippi and Langa, far away from major centres of employment (Rospabe and Selod, 2006; City of Cape Town, 2010: 5). Turok and Watson (2001: 121) found that large parts of these areas have an extremely weak or even non-existent housing market due to low disposable incomes, uncertainty over property rights, social instability and lending restrictions by financial institutions. Furthermore, upward mobility is made extraordinarily difficult by Cape Town's unusually steep house price gradient as well as a shortage of rented accommodation (Turok and Watson, 2001: 121). Those people living in the southeast of the city whose income has increased slightly over the years still face problems moving to better located neighbourhoods because the difference in living expenses is so big. Meanwhile, the people who have decided to buy a house far from centres of employment find themselves stuck in residential areas with relatively few facilities and poor access to economic opportunities.

## 4 The role of social networks in finding employment

### 4.1 Background

The literature on social networks distinguishes between three types: bonding, bridging, and linking networks (Ziersch and Arthurson, 2005; Szreter, 2002; de Souza Briggs, 1998). The first, bonding networks, refer to relationships between people who are in a similar socioeconomic position such as family, friends, and neighbours. These relationships tend to be close and local, occur between people who see each other as like-minded and provide practical and emotional forms of support.

Bridging networks are characterized by weaker ties between people from more diverse backgrounds. Compared to bonding networks they tend to be less local, with less frequent contact, and are more likely to have originated from a shared activity, ranging from sports clubs to the workplace. Though relationships are not as close in bridging networks, they provide more diverse resources and opportunities due to greater diversity in background and less local nature of the network.

Lastly there are linking networks in which there is a clear difference in power between agents. Szreter (2002) argues the state, through social workers, providing infrastructure, as well as planning activities to stimulate economic activity, can provide a linking relationships

with citizens. A more obvious, informal, example would be the relationship between employer and employee, in which the employer can provide information and opportunities the employee otherwise does not have access to.

There are naturally also differences in the strength of networks. Strong connections are characterized by frequent interaction and a high degree of closeness. The opposite is true of weak connections. It is these weak connections, however, which correspond mostly with the aforementioned bridging and linking networks. Granovetter (1973) highlights the importance of the so-called 'weak ties' for finding out about work opportunities. These weak connections provide people with a more diverse set of opportunities in different socioeconomic spheres. Strong connections are characterized by frequent contact, but also by similar backgrounds, wealth, and education. As such they not often provide different opportunities from the ones a person already has. Weak ties, however, tend to be made between people of different socioeconomic backgrounds such as between an employee and their employer or client. These provide information about jobs that would otherwise be inaccessible.

Albert Rees' *Information Networks in labour Markets* was one of the first pieces of literature that explored the importance of social networks in finding employment. He firstly identified two types of information networks: the formal and the informal. The formal covers public employment services, private employment agencies, advertisements, etc. In this study the interest goes to informal networks, which include referrals from employees and other employers (Rees, 1966: 559). These informal connections are found to be important for most workers, but particularly for blue-collar workers, over 80% of which got their job through their informal social networks in Rees' study. More recently, Munshi and Rosenzweig (2003) took data from a 4,900 household survey and concluded that around 70% of unskilled and blue-collar workers found their job through a referral. This figure was about 44% for white-collar workers (Iversen *et al.*, 2009: 524).

Providing access to information about job vacancies is said to be the most important role that social networks play in terms of employment (Ziersch and Arthurson, 2005: 431). This idea is shared by job search counsellors and popular job search books, which often give job seekers the advice to use their social networks to get information about jobs (Bolles, 2006). Besides getting information about the vacancies, using social networks also gives applicants a bigger chance of getting the job. Firstly, because finding out about job

opportunities through other people rather than from other sources has a positive impact on applicant attractions and employee attitudes (Van Hoyer *et al.*, 2009). Secondly, because more intensive networking is likely to result in more diverse, detailed, and realistic information about potential jobs. This enables job seekers to submit more informed applications and prepare themselves better for job interviews. It allows them to apply for available work that suits their interests and previous work experience (Van Hoyer *et al.*, 2009).

## **4.2 Mechanisms**

### *4.2.1 For job seekers*

The literature on social networks and the role it plays in finding work stresses it is highly important to know someone (a friend, family member, ex-colleague, etc.) who can share information about job opportunities. The focus is not so much on the distance between home and centres of employment, but rather on having connections that can provide information about and access to work. One way of showing the relevance of social networks compared to physical distance is by finding residential areas that are close to economic centres yet have high rates of unemployment. The argument is that though jobs may be plentiful in a given area, its residents may still lack the information, motivation as well as the skills to find out about, and successfully obtain a job, because they don't have the social network needed to do so. A spatial mismatch may be irrelevant, or at least not as relevant as some of its proponents might argue.

One such study has been carried out in Red Hook, Brooklyn by Kasinitz and Rosenberg (1996). Red Hook is an area with high levels of unemployment and poverty, yet it is very close to the Brooklyn harbour which provides many jobs for lower-skilled workers. It is located near a number of middle class neighbourhoods as well as the financial district of lower Manhattan. One of the aims of the study was to identify reasons why the spatial mismatch hypothesis did not seem to apply to this area. Following the logic of the hypothesis, it does not make sense that an area in close proximity of a large number of lower-skilled jobs and economic centres would have such high rates of unemployment.

An initial conclusion was that poor neighbourhoods located very close to more affluent ones does not guarantee any positive or negative spillover effects. Contact between the residents of the two areas may still be very limited despite physical proximity. One of the

reasons there is little spillover effect in Red Hook is because the area is surrounded by water on three sides and crossing highways on the fourth, behind which is the rest of Brooklyn. Although Red Hook is near wealthier areas, access is limited. Walking or driving between neighbourhoods is made extremely difficult by the crossing highways. Furthermore, Red Hook is a "two-fare zone", meaning a bus ride is required to reach the subway. The alternative for getting to the subway is sprinting across a six-lane highway and walking three blocks through an Italian neighbourhood, which the predominantly Black and Hispanic residents of Red Hook see as a rather hostile area.

Besides poor links with other neighbourhoods, Kasinitz and Rosenberg also found that chances for local residents to obtain a job were diminished due to various forms of discrimination. Employers had racial, class, and locational preferences, as well as a fear of crime and general hostility towards the local environment due to the high rates of crime, in particular shootings. Red Hook residents were associated with the conditions of the neighbourhood, making outsiders seem more appealing. The difficulties for locals are exacerbated by the lack of the aforementioned "weak social ties"; many local residents are not part of the social networks through which many of the jobs in Red Hook are filled. A significant portion of these social networks had been established in the past, before many blacks and Hispanics moved to the area. The previous residents of Red Hook had maintained their connections with the local business owners and were still part of their social network, despite not living in close proximity anymore. This meant they could still hear about available jobs in the area and enjoyed the other advantages of finding work through their social network which many current residents of Red Hook missed out on.

Obtaining information about available jobs is the most commonly noted advantage of using social networks, but it is only part of the process of finding work. Social networks perform two more functions in the labour market through role modelling and support as well as sponsorship (see Ziersch and Arthurson 2005: 436; Kasinitz and Rosenberg, 1996: 189). Role models and support units are seen as an important part of a social network, especially those of young people. The former can give information and share a number of skills. This ranges from general things about obtaining a job such as interview skills and writing a CV as well as functioning successfully and appropriately in a work environment and to more specific knowledge about performing certain jobs. Role models are often people with whom there is close and frequent contact, such as family members. A supportive social network can offer even more help and encouragement. This can be

done in a number of ways; for the unemployed, family members can help by taking over domestic duties to provide time to go to job interviews. For a young person who just started working relatives can provide feedback and answers to questions and doubts about the job. Areas far from economic centres, those with high rates of unemployment and/or high rates of crime lack suitable role models and support units. Ziersch and Arthurson (2005: 442) highlight the importance of intergenerational unemployment as well as the presence of inappropriate role models, with both potentially reducing employability.

Sponsorship is the third way in which social networks function in the labour market. The support comes at the workplace, where a sponsor can 'vouch' for a new employee (Kasinitz and Rosenberg, 1996: 189). Like role models, these are often people with whom there is close and frequent contact since the performance of the new employee will reflect on the sponsor. Some degree of certainty of knowledge about the person a person is vouching for will be needed, as a poor performance by the new employee will reflect badly on the sponsor and could possibly reduce the chances to sponsor workers in the future.

#### *4.2.2 For employers*

The degree of success in finding a job of course depends highly on the employers, especially their way of recruitment. As mentioned before, a popular method of recruiting potential employees, particularly lower-skilled workers, is a referral system. Kasinitz and Rosenberg (1996) observed that many business owners in Red Hook used a referral system to fill their jobs, in that case to the detriment of local residents. Positions were rarely advertised and businesses relied on word of mouth to spread the information about available jobs. As such, many positions were filled by outsiders who found out about the jobs from past co-workers. Residents of Red Hook missed out on a lot of information because of their limited social networks. The research found that in Red Hook, asking current employees to refer them to suitable candidates is seen as the best strategy to find reliable workers. This recruitment method, however, excludes many Red Hook residents who do not have this sponsor who can relay this information or vouch for their work ethic. The only option local residents are left with is to walk in off the street to apply. However, a number of business owners stated they rarely, if not never, accept walk-ins.

Research on hiring practices suggests many employers, especially those at smaller businesses, rely heavily on referrals. It is a popular method because it is inexpensive and

fast, which is especially appealing to smaller firms (Neckerman and Kirschenman, 1991: 434). It is also used because it attracts suitable applicants similar to those working for a company already (Montgomery, 1991: 1409) and because employers think it reduces turnover, a belief supported by empirical research (O'Regan, 1993: 328). Most of the ads in newspapers are placed as a last resort after using employees' social networks had been unsuccessful according to Neckerman and Kirschenman (1991: 434). They go on to quote Coverdill (1990), who claims that for higher-risk applicants (in his study black males) recommendations and information provided by sponsors was especially important. Such a sentiment was shared with some of the business owners interviewed by Kasinitz and Rosenberg (1996: 188) who believed that the local Black residents of Red Hook were probably "casing" the business for a robbery when they came in to apply for work.

This spatial discrimination is one of the causes behind the low number of successful walk-in applicants. Business owners tend to associate those who walk in to try and get a job with the high rates of crime, illiteracy, drug use and poor work ethic (Neckerman and Kirschenman, 1991: 434). Other employers might be wary of hiring local residents due to a number of bad experiences in the past, after which they decided to focus more on candidates who are referred to them by current employees (Kasinitz and Rosenberg, 1996: 188). Racial and ethnic discrimination are two other causes behind the lack of success for walk-in applicants, especially the races and ethnicities associated with poorer areas. Conversely, there is positive discrimination in which employers are more likely to hire someone who is of a certain ethnicity or race because of good experiences in the past. A big extent of these types of discrimination, however, is negated if the applicant has a sponsor; someone to vouch for their character and work ethic (Kasinitz and Rosenberg, 1996: 188), which emphasizes the importance of social networks not only in finding out about available work but also successfully obtaining a job.

Lastly, employers may be limited as to whom they can hire due to unions. Kasinitz and Rosenberg (1996: 188-189) mention a number of available jobs at a local shipyard for which many Red Hook residents applied. Most of the positions, however, were filled by unionised workers laid off from previous work elsewhere. These workers are generally given priority and take jobs Red Hook residents could have had. More generally speaking, Kasinitz and Rosenberg found craft unions were often informed about available jobs before they were advertised anywhere else.

## 5 Methods

### 5.1 Issues

The spatial mismatch hypothesis has been tested using a wide range of approaches. Since the theory is based on distance between workers' home and centres of employment, the most obvious method to test the hypothesis is to measure this distance. However, although distance may seem like a relatively straight forward concept, its measurement is not necessarily simple. For example, distance does not have to be a problem as long as there is a well established and cheap public transport connection between poor neighbourhoods and centres of employment. For this reason, proxies have been used to try and convey the issue of distance. Houston (2005) has identified four such methods of testing the SMH:

1. Analysis of residential segregation

Spatial mismatch is sometimes tested by measuring residential segregation. The logic is that this segregation prevents certain groups from moving close to centres of employment and thus miss out on job opportunities. The main issue with this method, however, is that it does not accurately measure spatial mismatch as it does not take into consideration the location of jobs. A particular ethnic group could be highly segregated from the rest but live close to many employment opportunities.

2. Comparison of commuting times

A second method is to compare commuting times. The logic is that residents living in areas with few job opportunities will travel farther than residents of areas where jobs are plentiful. The first problem with this approach is that long commutes can not only show a spatial mismatch but also high mobility. A highly paid worker might live far from work but also own a car. This can make commuting time relatively high (increasingly so due to traffic), but the distance does not form much of a burden in terms of finding work and being able to get there. Similarly, a person living very close by might walk or bike to work. This may increase commuting time compared to using a car or public transport, but cannot adequately be used as an indicator of a spatial mismatch, and certainly not of the suggested problems associated with it. Another issue with measuring commuting times is the fact that a significant level of spatial mismatch may force residents of poor neighbourhoods to limit their job search to the area in which they live. If commuting costs become too high finding a job far away from home is not worth it anymore. This makes it possible spatial mismatch can actually *decrease* commuting times. As Ihlanfeldt and

Sjoquist (1998: 853) argued, "the failure to find differences in commuting times ... does not necessarily mean that spatial mismatch does not exist".

### 3. Comparison of earning

Like the comparison of commuting times, this method does not measure spatial mismatch but rather one of the potential outcomes of the existence of a spatial mismatch. The assumption is made that a relative abundance of local jobs will result in a spatial variation of wages, though this can very well be attributed to other factors or simply be statistically untrue. Kain has called this method of comparing wages of people living in different areas "the most common error" (Kain, 1992: 405) in the study of spatial mismatch.

### 4. Measures of job proximity

Studies that look into job proximity do so by measuring the number of jobs available within a certain commuting time. While this is a fairly direct way of testing spatial mismatch, there are three main ways in which this method has been applied improperly. Firstly, it is often tested without taking into account competition. Inner city residents might have a high number of jobs available to them close by, but since population density and, possibly, unemployment are much higher the competition for available jobs is far more intense than in the suburbs. A second issue with measuring job proximity is the need for a cut-off point in order to compare residential areas. The cut-off point is often rather arbitrary and in some cases may exclude a large number of jobs that lies outside the radius. If this job-rich area is well linked and located on a key transport corridor, getting there might not be much of an issue yet it will be excluded in the results. A third problem is one of information. Because data on the location and characteristics of job vacancies is often limited, jobs are used as a proxy for job vacancies. This poses a problem as job seekers do not apply for job vacancies rather than jobs. A high number of jobs in a given area does not equal a high number of job vacancies. This is especially the case in a declining economy when businesses are more likely to fire employees than to hire new ones.

Houston identifies a further issue with many studies of the spatial mismatch hypothesis: the focus on race. The initial hypothesis put forth by Kain argues racial segregation plays a significant role in explaining the differences in labour market outcomes between different racial groups within a context of the decentralization of jobs. Studies in cities with relatively few ethnic minorities yet stark spatial inequalities in labour market outcomes between inner and outer areas have shown race is not at the core of the spatial mismatch

hypothesis. This point is elaborated on by Gobillon and Selod (2014), who argue the mechanisms of the spatial mismatch hypothesis do not directly involve the ethnicity. Rather, it is the residential location of workers many ethnic minorities in a given metropolitan area. Though there may be a correlation between the ethnic makeup of an area and the distance from centres of employment, it is incorrect to assume a person's race is a contributing factor in labour market outcomes. The mechanisms of the spatial mismatch may apply to anyone living far from their work, regardless of their ethnicity (Gobillon and Selod, 2014: 100).

A last consideration in terms of methodology has been the prevalence of quantitative research when it comes to the spatial mismatch hypothesis (see Cohn and Fossett, 1996; Selod and Zenou, 2006; Montgomery, 1991; Rospabe and Selod, 2006; Naudé 2008; Ihlanfeldt, 1997 and many more). A number of these studies use questionnaires and other surveys in order to draw conclusions; for example how far away people are living, how much time and money they spend on travelling, and what the unemployment rate in their residential area is. These studies tend to use a deductive-nomological model, a method than can be summarised as follows: "if *a* exists, then *b* results". This model uses statistics to observe *a* and *b*, 'causes' and 'effects', in order to claim there is a causal relationships between the two rather than researching the qualitative evidence that supports the causal mechanism (Crankshaw, 2014). A study might statistically show an area from where it is time consuming and expensive to reach neighbourhoods of employment and where there is a high rate of unemployment. Such research, however, falls short on proving there is a causal relationship between the two. It may certainly be that a high rate of unemployment is caused by a lengthy and expensive commute, which exists because of a spatial mismatch. It it also plausible unemployment in this area is caused by a combination of poor education, a decrease in demand for the skills of its residents, as well as a spatial mismatch. Knowing the true relationship between objects of study is imperative to make any causal claims about them (Sayer, 1992).

## **5.2 Purpose of study**

Taking these points of criticism as well as the discussion regarding social networks into consideration, this study aims to offer insight into the spatial mismatch hypothesis in Cape Town, and in particular the importance of social network in finding out about available work. Rather than the often used quantitative approach, this research is far more

qualitative in nature. In order to fully understand whether or not spatial mismatch is an issue we must not only look at whether the mismatch exists, if it increases travel time, or if a city is segregated. While important, quantitative research tends to offer little insight into the reasons *how* and *why* a mismatch is problematic. Is distance really an issue if the public transport system is quick and efficient? What if it's a fast connection but entirely unreliable and expensive? These are difficult questions to ask in a quantitative study and data collected from large surveys cannot convincingly be used to reach conclusions about the functions and mechanisms of a spatial mismatch issue.

The relevance of social networks was looked into because of the extensive literature on the importance of it in finding out about available work and obtaining a job. Less, however, has been done on it in Cape Town, where the city's structure may offer different dynamics than the average American city. The spatial mismatch hypothesis suggests social networks in areas of high unemployment become less useful because so many of people's peers do not have a job and can offer little information. Due to South Africa's history and extreme disparity, however, lower-skilled workers residing far away from centres of employment may have far less competition from the residents of the affluent areas in which they work than in other countries. Though unemployment is high, information about available jobs is still available and social networks may be used extensively to obtain this knowledge about job opportunities. The amount of information that is available to lower-skilled workers residing in distant areas also depends on the methods of recruitment used by employers. Advertising jobs locally may attract applicants from nearby and restrict the flow of information to distant localities, whereas using a referral system in which new employees are recruited through current ones may negate the issue of a spatial mismatch in terms of information about available jobs entirely. Again, questions about both the use of social networks as well as the recruitment methods of employers are difficult to ask using a quantitative approach. If social networks are indeed used: how so? What are the relationships between those who ask and those with the information? And if social networks are not used: why not? What are the alternative ways of finding out about potential jobs? In the case of recruitment, qualitative research allows for more in depth questions about the ways of sharing the information about vacancies; what media, what location, what language? In case a referral system is used, which employees are asked, what are they told, and how important is it to have been referred by someone?

Of course we must also consider why a study into spatial mismatch is relevant in the first place. What we can safely say is that the unemployment rate in Cape Town is significant and hugely varied. While the unemployment rate of the City of Cape Town is 23%, there are significant differences between areas within the city, ranging from 4% in Camps Bay to 38% in Khayelitsha (City of Cape Town, 2013). A high level of perpetual unemployment is well documented to be a contributor to poor economic growth, civil unrest, and inequality. Unemployment is virtually always the results of a multitude of problems. Rospabe and Selod (2006: 279) state the lack of formal education or the skill mismatch between labour supply and labour demand are frequently used determinants to explain unemployment, but note that alternative theories, such as the spatial mismatch hypothesis, suggest the spatial organization of cities have a role to play as well. Understanding both the extent as well the ways in which spatial organization contributes to unemployment may offer insights into what kinds of policies the (local) government can implement to curb unemployment, what kinds of recruitment methods employers can use to maximize the number of suitable applicants, and which ways job seekers can improve their chances to find out about available work.

### **5.3 Research method**

The aim of this research is to discover some of the details about how a spatial mismatch, the use of public transport, social networks, as well as hiring practices and job search methods interact with one another. I opted for in-depth interviews with low-skilled workers in order to find out about the ways in which employees look for work, deal with their commute, and specifically how they use their social network to be successful on the labour market. Further interviews were done with managers to gain insights into their recruitment methods, considerations they take when employing someone and in general how their actions influence the ways in which potential employees can successfully get a job. The research is explanatory in nature, "concerned with why phenomena occur and the forces and influences that drive their occurrence" (Ritchie, 2003: 28). The strength of this type of research lies in its ability to examine the reasons behind decisions, attitudes, behaviours or other phenomena rather than merely observing these. As such, unlike quantitative research, exploratory qualitative research allowed me to identify "associations that occur in people's thinking or acting...[which] in turn may indicate some explanatory - even causal - link" (Ritchie, 2003: 28).

Sayer (1992) adds to the discussion by pointing out causal relationships might exist, but that this does not mean they are exercised. In other words, A may lead to B, but sometimes A may not lead to B. This is an important distinction to make, not least in the case of the spatial mismatch hypothesis and the context of this research. This way of thinking supports a more nuanced form of reasoning. Quantitative studies of spatial mismatch may 'disprove' part of the hypothesis by providing evidence that, for example, unemployment rates do not drop the close one moves to economic centres. While interesting, this type of observation cannot be used to reach dramatic conclusions as there could be a host of other factors besides distance from economic centres that *also* influence unemployment rates. To build on this, Sayer states that "counteracting forces can override and conceal the effects of the operation of a particular mechanism" (Sayer, 1992: 110). As such, it is important to go further than merely observing: "we try to get beyond the recognition that something produces some change to an understanding of what it is about the object that enables it to do this" (Sayer, 1992: 106). This must be done so that it becomes clear what the causal mechanisms truly are and that suggestions aren't pushed aside simply because isolated quantitative evidence does not support it.

Taking into consideration limitations in terms of time and scope, it seemed most appropriate to conduct semi-structured, in-depth interviews with both employees and employers in order to get a full understanding of how spatial mismatch is experienced and how it interacts with the decision making process of job seekers' search for employment, employees' considerations at work, and employers' methods of recruiting workers.

Fifteen people, ten lower-skilled workers and five managers, were interviewed over a time period of about ten weeks. The first round of semi-structured interviews were conducted at the participants' place of work and took between 30 and 80 minutes. All interviews were conducted in English. After transcribing and analysing the responses from these participants, a second round of interviews was done over the phone with three of the participants in order to fill in some specific gaps in their answers, mainly about how a vouching system is used by both employees and employers. The interview schedule for the lower-skilled workers dealt firstly with the background of the participants in terms of their places of residence and education in order to better understand the context of their employment. The rest of the interviews covered topics regarding the specific mechanisms of spatial mismatch that have been suggested by the literature, such as the specifics of their job search methods, details about their commute, as well as how they used their

social networks in relation to their work. The managers were asked about their recruitment methods and hiring practices, as well as the ways in which they did or did not make the social networks of their (prospective) employees an important asset to become employed. I used this semi-structured approach with an interview schedule and probes in order to make sure I covered all necessary areas but also allow me to follow up on relevant topics and get in-depth information about it. For example, the interview schedule listed a general question about a participant's job search methods, but also specific probes within certain tactics such what an informant might have told them about a potential job if they had used their social networks to look for work. On the other hand, there were fewer pre-written questions about the specifics of a participant's commute as that was very different for each participant and questions about small details could not all be thought of before the interview.

Interviews were conducted in four areas: Kenilworth, Wynberg, Claremont, and Mitchell's Plain. These areas are significantly different in terms of unemployment rates, average income, ethnic makeup, poverty rates (City of Cape Town, 2013) as well as how far they are from where I expected most lower-skilled employees to live - in the southeast of the city. This was done in order to examine the differences in how a spatial mismatch, and the problems associated with it, were experienced by employees who lived far away and close by their work. This, I expected, would allow me to provide more details on, for example, the relationship between a spatial mismatch and the difficulty and cost worker's commute or the job search methods they have used.

Another reason these locations were chosen was a combination between access and convenience. I had intended to interview workers with similar low-skilled jobs and was looking at businesses that employed a large number of them. This led me to a supermarket chain at which it was necessary to get permission to do research from the head office. While I was waiting for the permission to come through I went to three smaller businesses in the Kenilworth/Claremont area and conducted interviews there. When the permission from the supermarket chain was granted I went to four of their branches. With the permission from the head office I had access to as well as support from the managers of four branches. Through them I got access to their lower-skilled employees who were asked to participate by the managers.

## 6 Findings

### 6.1 Distance between home and work

#### 6.1.1 Commute

In terms of commute, the main issue the literature on spatial mismatch identifies is that the distance between workers' homes and centres of employment may deter them from accepting or keeping jobs. The idea is that the money left after paying for public transport is not enough to make the job worth it. Besides the monetary cost, a significant commute also takes its toll on the amount of time than can be spent at home; a place to relax but also to take care of the household and potential children. These are all issues that will be taken into consideration when a person is deciding whether or not to accept a job that has been offered to them.

The interviews carried out for this research involved solely employed participants. As such, they had obviously all accepted their current job despite, for the majority of them, a rather substantial distance between their home and place of employment. For the participants who use public transport to get to work, a one way commute takes 25 minutes (Faghrie) to, at most, around two hours (Florence). For most, getting to work as well as back home takes, in total, about two hours on an average day. The school holidays that were going on while some of the interviews were carried out made the roads slightly less busy than normal and reduced travel time, though not by a significant amount. Travel time and cost does not seem to be a major inhibitor to the participants' willingness to accept and continue a job. In terms of travel time, participants for the most part simply accept that a lengthy commute is part of their life and more than one downplayed their commute because a friend or relative has to undertake a much more significant journey to work. That is not to say these participants thought they had a short commute, but merely that it could be worse. Julia, who has a commute between 45 minutes and an hour, stated her commute is "not so bad" and doesn't think she lives very far (around 17 km) as she knows people who live much further. At the same time, however, she thought her commute is "long enough" and though relaxing, it still tires her out. Interestingly, when asked what their maximum travel time to work would be, a number of participants gave an answer that was near or exactly their current commute. This could perhaps indicate a degree of acceptance of the current situation and ability to adapt to changing commuting times.

Besides travel time there is also the issue of travel cost. For most of the participants, a rather large proportion of their salary goes towards travelling to work and back home. Phumla, who has to take two taxis despite a short commute, spends the first 40 minutes of every morning at work earning back the money she spent on the taxis she needed to take to get there. Of course regardless of this, the question remains: are the lengthy and expensive commutes a deterrent for people to accept and keep a job? For the most part, participants seemed pleased that they have a job in the first place. Especially those who were unemployed for significant stretches before getting the job they have now are simply happy to have found work. Though their commute is a nuisance and costs them a significant amount of money, it is much preferred over being unemployed. This sentiment was expressed by Azeem, who said the company where he started working after he finished school "offered [him] like 40 rand a day but the 40 rand a day was worth [his] while cause [he] was doing nothing". A similar idea was expressed by Omar who, after being without a formal job for three years, accepted the job at his current employer immediately and declined a potentially better job but with less certainty about the duration of his employment there simply because he was more concerned with job security than working conditions.

Two participants stood out in this regard. The first, Vusi, had quit a previous job because he felt the money he was left with after paying for this commute wasn't worth the effort. At this particular job, he worked in Observatory and had to travel there from Delft. As he was working for commission at a job he himself felt he wasn't particularly good at he decided to quit. The decision was made not only because of the low amount of money he had left after a day's work, but also the lack of security in terms of salary. His earning dependent entirely on the sales he made, meaning he never knew how much money he would earn on a given day. The second exception was Phumla, who plans on quitting her current job this year in order to go to school so that she can work as a teacher closer to home. The commuting costs are significant for her, though this is not the only reason for her intention to quit. Because she often works night shifts it happens frequently she only sees her son in the morning before he goes to school. Moreover, she is unhappy with the fact she has worked at the same company for about a decade and has few reasons to believe she is going to be promoted and earn more salary anytime soon. Her reasons for wishing to quit relatively soon are only partially affected by her commuting costs and are more concerned with her situation at home in combination with her perspectives at work.

### *6.1.2 Job search*

A spatial mismatch is said to cause a decrease in job search efficiency. Lower-skilled workers living far from centres of employment do not know where jobs are available as the information does not reach the neighbourhoods in which they live. This problem can be exacerbated depending on how firms recruit; the more local the approach is the harder it becomes for information to reach the people who can fill the available positions. Another factor through which a spatial mismatch may impact job search efficiency is that job seekers are not familiar with the areas in which jobs are available. This, combined with the cost of travelling to these areas, may decrease the job search efficiency as well as the intensity. The job search intensity may be further decreased by the relatively low rent in distant neighbourhoods. Living close by centres of employment, where rental rates are generally higher, may put more pressure on a job seeker to find a job and as such increase her/his job search intensity.

It is unfair to say job search intensity was low among the participants during the time they were unemployed. Aviwe, during the three months he was unemployed after moving to Khayelitsha from Eastern Cape, dropped off his CV at multiple businesses in Bellville, Epping, town, as well as near his home in Khayelitsha. Omar pointed out that "when you're desperate for work you look at any option that's available". Despite their efforts, however, both Aviwe and Omar only managed to get a few callbacks and interviews. The low rate of success in combination with travel costs made job searches in relatively unknown areas unpopular among participants. Vusi, living in Delft and searching mostly in town mentioned that he was "unemployed so everything [was] expensive". He only went to the CBD a handful of times as he was not able to secure a job and was therefore just losing money on transport.

Not a single participant had travelled to centres of employment without any sort of information about where to go or what to do. Steven, working at a large supermarket chain, got his job after dropping off his CV at the company's head office. Though he did not know anyone working at the company or if they were specifically looking for an employee before applying, he did call them beforehand in order to find out what he had to do and where to go. A few years before getting his current job, Vusi was able to get a job at a large fast food chain simply by walking in and talking to the manager. However, he already worked in the area and was able to walk, so there were no extra costs that might have deterred him from applying there. Aviwe, when searching for work, was new in Cape Town

and did not know the city well. He was told by his uncle and cousin to look for work in Bellville and Epping as they thought he could be successful in finding a job there. All in all, however, by far the most significant reason why participants went where they did was because they had specific information about vacancies. A number of participants had used the classifieds to look for jobs. More frequently, participants had heard about available positions from someone else and most had gotten their current job after being told about the vacancy from a friend, relative, or acquaintance. A specific search decreases travel costs and most likely yields better results in terms of the number of job interviews gotten per spent Rand.

## **6.2 Mechanisms of a spatial mismatch**

Though a spatial mismatch may exist, its effects are not solely influenced by mere distance. The accessibility of centres of employment from areas in which lower-skilled workers live is an important factor. A convenient, fast, and cheap connection with public transport may largely negate the problems associated with a significant geographical distance between home and work, while a cumbersome and expensive commute may do the opposite and exacerbate these issues. The same applies for the ways in which jobs are obtained. For this, both the recruitment methods of the employers as well as the job search methods of the employees are relevant. Recruitment methods affect the flow of information about available jobs as well as impact which search job strategies are most effective. Heavy use of a referral system in order to bring in new workers may increase the amount of information available about jobs within a residential area where many lower-skilled workers live as well as highlight the importance of using one's social network to find out about work. Conversely, there can be a situation where employers exclusively recruit locally through, for example, a help wanted sign on the door. In this case, more information is staying within the centre of employment and as a job seeker it becomes more important to travel to these areas in order to find out about vacancies.

### *6.2.1 Public transport*

All lower-skilled participants were heavily dependent on public transport for their commute. The most frequently used modes of transport among them are taxis and buses. Trains, despite their relatively low cost, are not used by any of the participants, though some had in the past. Due to the variations in modes of travel as well as the locations of the participants' homes and work it is difficult to draw conclusions about the popularity

and convenience of the different options in public transport. A few general points, however, can certainly be made.

Firstly, since responses about the preferred mode of travel as well as pros and cons of others were so varied, we can see that context and location is everything. Vusi, commuting between Delft and Claremont, considers the bus to be rather slow and much prefers taking a taxi due to its greater flexibility in terms of schedule. Phumla, on the other hand, desperately wants a bus route from near her house in Site C, Khayelitsha to her job in Mitchell's Plain. Instead, she is forced to spend a relatively large amount of money to take two taxis. Her only alternative is to walk through a dangerous area. The variety in answers shows there is not one mode of transport that stands out above the rest and is always preferred over the others. The interviews even showed different experiences on the same mode of transport but on different routes. Steven attributed much of his tardiness to the unreliability of his bus route, claiming he often has to wait significant amounts of time as buses inexplicably do not show up. Julia, who also takes the bus every day though a different route, told a completely different story; she considered the bus service to be very reliable and experiences none of the problems Steven described.

One point virtually all participants did agree on was that the train was the least preferred mode of travel, for multiple reasons. Firstly, because the train is considered unsafe. Both Julia and Phumla have been robbed on the train and many others said they felt uncomfortable taking it to work, especially the Central Line (going from town to Mitchell's Plain and Khayelitsha) during rush hour due to the high perceived risk of crime. A second reason the train is considered undesirable is because of the inefficient routes; while most parts of the city are well served from the CBD, moving from one suburb to another often takes considerable time. This is particularly the case between the Cape Flats and the Southern Suburbs. In order to get from one place to the other, a commuter would first have to take the train to Salt River (the second the last stop before Cape Town) and then switch to the other line. Steven, who lives near the Lentegeur station in Mitchell's Plain, travels about 20 kilometres by bus to get to his work in Claremont. With a train this would be nearly double that distance. Another inefficient train connection is that between Khayelitsha and Mitchell's Plain, where commuters need to travel to Philippi station first before switching to another line to reach their destination. The map shown below demonstrates just how inefficient the train lines are. The necessity to switch trains adds extra waiting time to the commute. Trains are also considered fairly unreliable since they

are often late, increasing the chance of missing a connection. This, in turn, requires commuters to leave extra early from their home to avoid arriving late to work. One advantage of the train is its cost. Of the participants who could take the train, many noted it would be the cheapest option. However, this small difference in price does not weigh up against the participants' issues of safety and time.

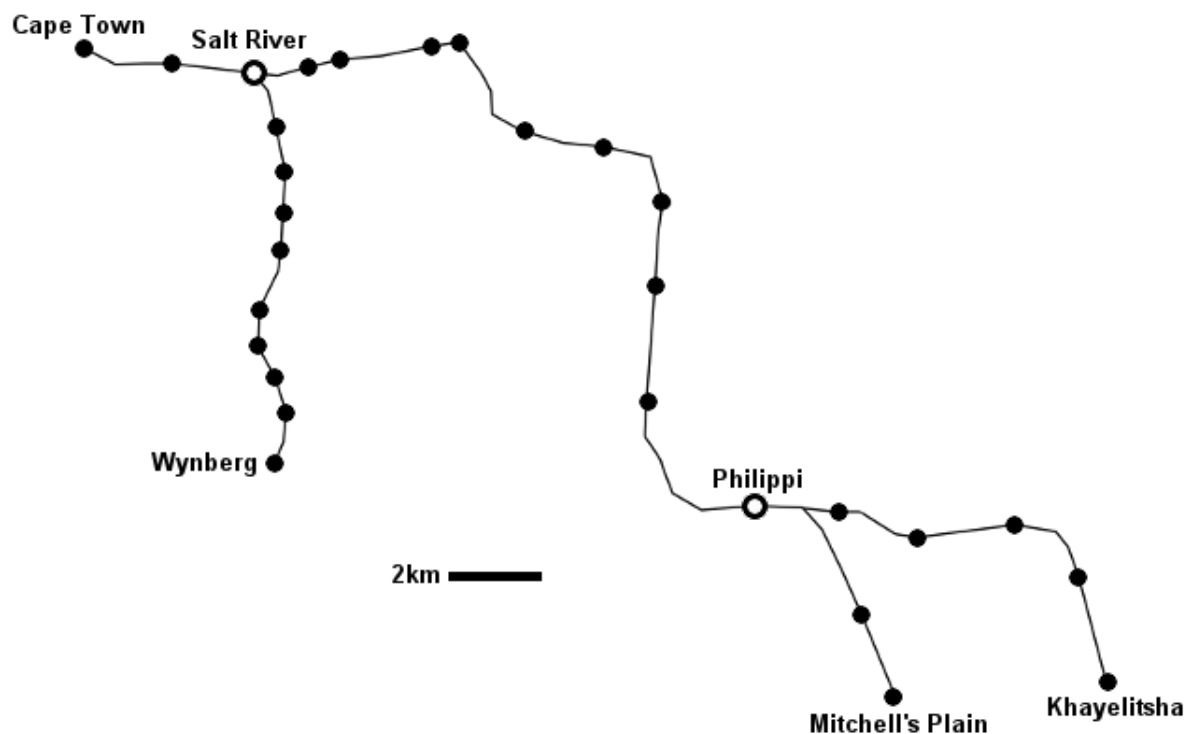


Figure 1: Part of the Southern and Central train lines (map to scale)

A last pattern that was noticeable among participants has to do with what they consider as important and use in order to determine which mode of transport to use. The three most important issues that participants brought up were cost, speed, and safety. For all participants who have more than one option, safety seems to be the most important and it is the main reason no participant takes the train. The trade off between speed and time seemed to depend on the person's age, home situation, and possibly income. Vusi, who lives with friends and has no dependencies, takes a taxi to get to work. He could also take a bus, which would be a bit cheaper but slightly slower. Steven, who lives with his grandmother but wishes to find his own place, takes the bus because it is cheaper than a taxi, despite the fact he has received a warning for repeated tardiness due to the unreliability of his bus.

A number of participants, despite living far away, could in normal circumstances get to work relatively quickly for a reasonable amount of money (Steven, Julia, Vusi) and are not particularly affected by the spatial mismatch between their home and work. A number of factors seem important when it comes to the speed and cost of the public transport these participants use. Firstly, none of them have to switch to another bus or taxi. A significant contributor to commuting time among almost all participants is waiting. The more switches to make the more waiting time needed. Moreover, a switch often brings with it extra costs, especially in taxis where commuters need to pay every taxi they take. The CBD and a number of places in the Southern Suburbs like Observatory, Claremont, and Kenilworth can generally be reached from the Cape Flats without switching. Ironically it is Phumla, who has one of the shortest commutes out of all the participants, who has to switch taxis to get to work. The distance from her home in Site C, Khayelitsha to her work in Mitchell's Plain is around 7 kilometres, about a third of the commute of some other participants. But despite the short distance, there is no taxi available for her that leaves from near her house and goes to Mitchell's Plain. Frustratingly, she can take a single taxi to town and Claremont, but instead needs to first spend R8 to get to the edge of Khayelitsha and then take another taxi to go from there to her work. Her commute is an excellent example of where not a spatial mismatch but poor public transport connections forms the major obstacle. The cost per kilometre of Phumla is by far the highest of all participants. Lauren, who also works in Mitchell's Plain, only needs five minutes to walk to work as she lives in Beacon Valley, a residential area near the store. For Phumla there is no such option; It is too far to walk the entire distance to work and although the distance to the where she gets her second taxi is walkable, she fears for her safety when she does so. The only time she walks is if she does not have an early shift and can walk with a friend. Otherwise, she is stuck with taking two expensive taxis from her home to her work between which there is barely a spatial mismatch. Phumla is the only participant to travel within the Cape Flats using public transport. Many others have a longer but more straight forward commute as they work in the wealthier Southern Suburbs; a bigger economic centre with a higher demand for public transport. The public transport connections between the Cape Flats and Cape Town's economic centres in which the participants work now or have done so in the past seem adequate. This is not at all the case, however, between poorer areas in the southeast of the city, especially when it comes to taxis. Taxi companies operate per area and have divided up their own "turf" in order to prevent violent escalations like those in the past. This is not a major issue when travelling to affluent or central areas such as the Southern Suburbs or the CBD, but definitely so when travelling between the areas the taxi

companies have divided up, such as Nyanga, Mitchell's Plain and Khayelitsha. There, commuters are forced to use taxis from Codeta and Cata, rivalling taxi cartels that use price-fixing to maximize profits and other mafia style tactics to ensure another taxi war is prevented. It seems that those who both live and work in the poorest areas in the southeast of Cape Town but cannot walk to work still face problems related to commuting cost and convenience despite the absence of a spatial mismatch. Poor public transport connections and the functionings of the taxi services are a far greater obstacle to a smooth and inexpensive commute than distance is.

What must be noted is that many participants' commutes are different going to work than returning home. Occasionally transport schedules and routes are different, leading to slight changes in price and duration of the journey. More significant, however, is that many companies provide transport for employees who work late shifts. Cape Town's public transport system is designed for commuters rather than infrequent users, meaning there are few off-peak options available. Trains, buses as well as taxis stop running early at night, meaning those who work late shift have no public means of getting home (Clark and Crous, 2002: 78). In order to accommodate for these workers, many companies arrange taxis to take home their employees free of charge. This services relieves workers of some of the problems of having to travel long distances and poor public transport services. The policy also has an effect on hiring practices, which will be discussed later.

### 6.2.2 *Recruitment methods*

The literature identifies a number of mechanisms through which the employers' recruitment methods could change due to a spatial mismatch. The argument is that a spatially mismatched city is a relatively divided city in which there are clear distinctions in terms of wealth, education, and race between residential and economic areas. As discussed previously, this is most definitely the case in Cape Town. Gobillon *et al.* (2007) argue a spatial mismatch can contribute to two types of discrimination by employers: discrimination based on the employee's residential location as well as customer discrimination, where firms might be less willing to employ workers of certain ethnic backgrounds because their local customers do not wish to engage with them. Employers may also be less likely to hire employees who live far away from work if they believe they are late and absent more often than their peers who live close by.

The responses from the interviewed managers were fairly unambiguous; they first and foremost look at the actions of the individual and do not take their place of residence into consideration when judging a job seeker's work ethic, trustworthiness or reliability. Moreover, none of the managers have noticed any correlation between the place of residence of their employees and rates of tardiness or absenteeism. Adrian, store manager of a supermarket in Claremont, stated he does "have issues of absenteeism but [he] wouldn't put it down to where [employees] live". The manager of a tool and builders equipment hire company in Kenilworth, Azeem, remarked he does not care about where his employees live and that the distance from work was not an issue at all: "If you're here and you're willing to work ... just see that you get here. We leave here at 17:30. If you're happy with that we take you on". The interviewed managers also made no real changes to their decision on whom to hire because of any customer discrimination. The previously mentioned Adrian did say occasionally (and only at certain branches) customers ask why there weren't any white lower-level employees. The supermarket chain he works for had tried to recruit white employees, but that it was a difficult task. Though not explicitly stated, this is most likely due to the fact that the starting salary at his company is relatively low and therefore unappealing for the average white Capetonian. Lastly, at the participants' place of employment there seems to be no influence from either unions or national laws on who is hired. Though South African unions are relatively influential and the South African government has put in place programs such as Black Economic Empowerment and policies on affirmative action, these seem to have made few changes in the way that participants got their job or recruit lower-skilled employees. The main reason for this is that a main outcome of union involvement and programs such as BEE is that relatively more previously disadvantaged groups are offered work. Because, for a number of reasons, white South Africans are proportionally underrepresented among lower-skilled workers already, there is no need for any other outside push to raise the number of non-white employees.

These forms of discrimination as well as union involvement and legal restrictions have seemingly had little to no effect on who was hired and for what reason. The literature put forward a number of examples from the United States in which it *does* occur, but this research as well as common logic would suggest it need not be taken into much consideration in Cape Town (and perhaps South Africa as a whole). Firstly, as mentioned previously the quotas for non-whites among lower-skilled employees have long been reached. Secondly, there is virtually no competition from local residents at businesses in

wealthy centres of employment. Cape Town's severe disparity results in a situation in which a lower-skilled worker's salary will almost never be sufficient to pay the rent or buy a house close to these areas. The argument can be made that employers in poorer areas with high rates of crime might still discriminate against local residents. One issue that an employer might run into then is that most areas in which she or he can find lower-skilled employees have high rates of poverty and crime, making any degree discrimination fairly irrelevant.

Some other considerations *did* seem to be of importance in terms of the distance between work and those who were hired. The policy of the supermarket chain at which I interviewed managers is to put new employees at the branch where staff is needed that is closest to their home. There are two main reasons behind this policy: the first is to reduce the travel time and cost of the employees. There are no obvious benefits to putting employees at branches far from their home while it most likely makes the commute a little easier for them if they are close. The second reason behind the policy is that the company provides free transport back home for those who work a night shift. Multiple managers (Adrian, Jenny) stated this service is a significant expense to the individual branches and costs drop if employees live close to work. It must be noted, however, it is not merely living employees living closer to the store that makes this service less expensive for the company, but also if employees live closer to one another. A single individual for whom transport must be arranged from Wynberg to Mitchell's Plain will be almost equally as expensive as five employees going the same way. The claim that it was their intention to employ workers who live relatively close by in order to reduce cost might be true, but noticeable savings can only be made if a significant portion of their staff live close by. It may be possible they are satisfied with employees who live close to one another if finding mostly local staff proves difficult.

These points have covered what may influence hiring practices and therefore have an effect on the distance between workers and their job. Another side of recruitment is how it can affect the extent to which spatial mismatch is important. These are the actual recruitment methods used; the central question here is not how much they change the distances between where employees live and work, but how they influence the issues associated with a spatial mismatch. The literature suggests the use of a referral system is the principal way in which some of the effects of a spatial mismatch can be reduced, mainly the lack of information about available jobs. This, too, seems to be the case among

the respondents in this research. Placing a job advertisement near the business or in newspapers is an unpopular approach. Rather, new employees are mostly recruited through word of mouth, either by request of the employer or done so without any encouragement. Azeem, manager of the equipment and building tools hire company, explained that employees at his business are recruited in two ways. The first is by approaching someone who is waiting for work close to the business. It is possible for him to "just stop at the corner cause a lot of the times there's guys standing outside looking for work". He is unsure where they live or how they get to work and Azeem only hires them for simple, temporary jobs when one of his permanent employees will be unexpectedly gone for longer than a week. New employees for permanent jobs are mostly found through current ones and are either friends or relatives of someone who already works there at the company. Azeem and Aviwe, the second in charge, are the ones to decide if someone new is needed. Then they will ask around their social networks to see if anyone is interested in the job and tell the employees to do the same. Besides actively looking for new employees, Azeem also explained potential employees walk by to ask if there is a job available and to drop off their CV. At the time of the interview there was one employee (out of about a dozen) who had gotten his job that way. No lower-skilled job is advertised and no formal approaches are used to attract workers. As Azeem put it: "We don't really advertise work... if we need help, we look for help. If help comes along, we take on the help".

Relevant to note is that Azeem requires virtually nothing from new employees in terms of education, previous employment or any other formal qualifications. Most important to him are how quickly new employees can learn and how willing they are to work. This might increase the effectiveness of a referral system; it is not illogical to think people are more likely to know which of their friends or relatives is hard working and a good learner as opposed to, for example, which can operate certain machinery best or who will get the most positive feedback from previous employers.

The recruitment methods of the managers at the supermarket chain are fairly straight forward. Similar to the previous example no advertisements are placed at all, neither on the store nor in any newspaper or elsewhere. There is no need for his company to get actively involvement with recruitment. Firstly, because it is a big company that people know about and attracts applicants regardless of placing and job advertisements. Secondly, because the current employees do most of the recruiting for them. Almost every participant interviewed stated they have encouraged someone to drop of their CV at the

company, even if they did not know there whether or not there were any jobs available at the time. Adrian also mentioned he occasionally encourages his staff to ask around if they are looking for new employees: "We have a meeting once every two months. And we will tell the guys, we're employing people, can you ask around and hand in some CVs. Let us know. Before you know it we're sorted, the word spreads so quickly...what we tell them is like, in a month's time we need people, if you've got family or friends that are close by please bring their CV".

The literature suggests a referral system is an often used recruitment method because it is inexpensive and fast, because it attracts suitable applicants similar to those working for a company already, (Montgomery, 1991: 1409) and because it reduces turnover rates (O'Regan, 1993: 328). This last point is certainly not the reason Azeem relies heavily on a referral system. He stated many new employees leave when they get into the stride of working and find out how demanding the job is. Rather, Azeem uses a referral system because it is a cheap way to bring in applicants, especially since many of those who leave send a friend or relative to the business because they know a job is available. Although he has noticed some new employees enjoy working with someone they know, he does not use the referral system in order to reward loyal or hardworking employees, it's just a method that has worked well for him to bring in new workers. Bringing in good or bad employees does not lead to any direct reward or punishment, but Azeem does think it influences how much he trusts someone's judgement. For example, he fully trusts the judgement of Aviwe, his second in command, and will almost blindly take on anyone he suggests because his recommendations so far have been excellent and he has worked with Azeem longer than any other employee. On the other hand he would never ignore anyone's suggestion because the people they have brought in haven't worked out. This attitude is made easier by the fact Azeem uses a trial period during which new employees are tested before working for him on a permanent basis. That allows him to give many employees a chance before deciding whether or not their work ethic and ability to quickly learn new skills is good enough to hire them.

Adrian, the store manager in Claremont, does not use ads because of the number of applicants: "The reason we don't want to advertise is that...you need 20 people, but then 200 people show up. You're wasting your time and their time as well". He further stated "it's all about word of mouth". This approach makes it unnecessary to actively recruit workers; having the employees willingly do part of the recruitment saves the company

money. Like Azeem, Adrian does not hire anyone just to reward one of his current employees, but rather because he expects them to be a good worker. However, the supermarket chain at which Adrian works does much of the recruitment at the head office. New employees are sent to him and though he can decide on who to fire, he has no direct choice about who is brought in.

Employers making extensive use of a referral system to fill vacant positions reduces the relevance of a spatial mismatch as there will be few problems about the information about vacancies from centres of employment to the neighbourhoods where lower-skilled workers live. Among the managers interviewed for this research local ads for paid positions weren't used at all. Reign, who manages an internet café in Kenilworth, was the only one to make use of any advertisement. He either did so online, on social media, or through ads he makes himself and posts at schools nearby. He has no staff and as such cannot ask for a referral from someone easily. Since he can only offer short term, unpaid positions he mostly targets young people who want to add something to their CV. With small ads and posts on social media he can list some of the requirements necessary. Though people do come by his business to drop their CV he cannot help them as he cannot offer anyone any salary. Other than that the *active* recruitment methods used by the interviewed managers reduce the importance of a spatial mismatch. By asking current employees for suitable applicants the information about the vacancies effectively flows from areas of employment to residential areas of lower-skilled workers. Applicants are not restricted by where they live but by whom they know. The managers did mention that from time to time job seekers walk in to drop off their CV. Although managers are not actively trying to attract walk-ins it is still a relevant recruitment method and certainly one where spatial mismatch plays a role. However, as mentioned before, it is not nearly as popular and successful of an approach as using one's social network. Moreover, most participants who used this approach had overcome the obstacles caused by the distance either by using the adequate public transport that was available or by obtaining information from sources other than one's social network to reduce the cost of the job search (such as calling the company for information Steven or looking up information online Vusi). As such it seems that the recruitment methods used by employers do not seem to exacerbate problems that the literature associates with a spatial mismatch. Rather, it reduces the importance of distance between home and work.

At the same time it stresses the importance of social networks in finding out about vacancies. A consequence of employers making heavy use of a referral system is that job seekers who do not have an extensive social network may miss out on job opportunities because they do not hear about them. This may especially be the case for those who have recently moved to Cape Town and do not know anyone yet. Building up a social network can be made even more difficult due to potential language barriers. Afrikaans and Xhosa are spoken far more in certain parts of Cape Town than in many other parts of South Africa and nearby countries. The lack of a social network may prevent a person from finding out about vacancies. On top of that, not having close friends, relatives, or old colleagues may further prevent someone from obtaining work because they do not have anyone to vouch for them. As such, though employers using a referral system may reduce the importance of distance between home and work, it can still exclude segments of the workforce from the economy and lead to chronic unemployment for those who lack a social network.

### **6.3 The importance of social networks**

The literature identifies a number of ways in which social networks are used to find out about available work but also help in successfully obtaining jobs. Relatives, friends, acquaintances as well as former co workers can all be used to obtain information about vacancies. Family members, especially parents, can be important role models for young people and pass on important skills as well as provide support during the job search process. Lastly, members of a prospective employee's social network may fill the role of sponsor and vouch for them; giving positive feedback to the employer in order to increase the chances they will get the job. The many important functions social networks can have conflict with the suggestion of the spatial mismatch hypothesis, that social networks in job-poor areas far from economic centres are not as useful for finding out about job opportunities in areas where jobs are plentiful. Within the ideas of the spatial mismatch hypothesis, social networks are local as well as geographically bound. Though the heavy use of a referral system that has been observed among participating employers may spread information about job opportunities out of economic centres, geographically limited social networks may lead to a limited flow of information to areas where residents are not connected to the right people.

### 6.3.1 Finding out about vacancies

With a referral system being so widely used among managers it isn't surprising that every single participant has either given or received information about job opportunities to or from someone in their social network, and most often both. Phumla, Vusi, Faghrie, and Azeem were all encouraged to apply at the company they currently work for by a relative or friend because they knew of a vacancy. These four cases have two main similarities. Firstly, the four informants of these participants were working at the company where a job was available. Secondly, none of the informants were particularly close to the participants. For Phumla it was her niece, who she at least knows a bit. For the others, however, the relationship was very weak: For Azeem it was the mother's cousin's husband who he reluctantly called a relative. In Faghrie's case it was his mother-in-law's acquaintance whom he had never met and for Vusi a friend of a friend who he had only met once at a party. For most of these four participants their informants' involvement ended with giving the information. Phumla's niece told her nothing else besides the fact there was a job available and that the company was nice to work at. The job Phumla ended up getting, however, was at another branch. Though not explicitly stated, it is possible her niece also told her about the salary. The main reason Phumla applied for the job was because it paid much better than the job she had at the time. Vusi's friend of a friend could tell him a little more. Initially he was only told about a vacancy and little about what the job involved. Vusi had inquired at the company what the job entailed and gotten somewhat worried he would not have enough experience. After sharing this with the friend of a friend who provided him the initial information, Vusi was reassured that he would be given time to get used to the job and familiarize himself at the company, which encouraged him to apply. Faghrie was told about the job by his mother-in-law who had an acquaintance who worked there. She also passed on the suggestion that Faghrie drop off his CV at the store. Other than that there was no involvement from the informant.

Azeem stands out in this regard. His distant relative, the husband of his mother's cousin, did not tell him specifically there was a job available at the place he worked at. Although not certain, Azeem thinks there *was* a vacancy but that the manager wanted an interview with him before hiring him. Regardless, Azeem could go with him to the business and get an interview with the manager.

The fact that many participants did not know the person who told them about available work well seems to suggest social networks are not as static as the spatial mismatch

hypothesis suggests. Since the participants did not know their informant well it was not possible to discover to know where they live, if they are of the same socioeconomic status or how exactly that person has entered the participants' social network. Despite not knowing this, however, we *do* know that these informants have brought in new information about job opportunities that was previously unavailable to the participants and thus their original social network.

### *6.3.2 Sponsorship, vouching and role modelling*

Besides providing information about job vacancies, the participants also extensively used their social networks for both sponsorship and vouching. While I have just mentioned four participants who got information about the vacancy they ended up filling, there were also a number of participants who got help directly from someone in their social network to get a job. Kim, Florence, Omar, and Aviwe all either got their current job or one in the past thanks to someone from their social network. For Kim and Florence this had happened around twenty years ago when their aunt and mother respectively had talked to the managers of a supermarket directly. Neither had to go through any interview. Kim said she started off when she was around 15 years old, folding plastic bags and later taking stock, working there when they needed someone. She does not remember the details of it, but she was eventually offered a formal job and has worked for the supermarket chain ever since. Her aunt, who worked there, had initially intended to bring along her daughter but, in Kim's words, she was "too lazy" and so she brought along her niece instead. The situation for Florence was slightly different. She was 19 years old and just had a child. Her mother knew the manager of a supermarket in Sea Point close to where she worked herself. Unfortunately she does not remember the details too well as it was about 25 years ago, but she did say her mother talked to the supervisor and he gave her the job. Unlike today, supervisors at branches of the supermarket chain used to have the authority to hire employees themselves. Since then it has become a far more formal process that involves an exam at the head office, reducing the influence of a voucher almost entirely. Instead, someone can only share the information about vacancies and what the job will entail. Other than that, an applicant is mostly on their own as the hiring power now lies mostly with at the head office rather than the branches themselves. That is not to say the relevance of vouching and sponsorship has disappeared completely there. Adrian, who is the manager of a store in Claremont, said that when he instructs his employees to bring in CVs to the head office when there are vacancies at his branch he tells them to be selective

and only bring in the CVs of people they think would be well suited for the job. He explained this is because a poor new worker would reflect badly on the employee that brought in the CV of that person: "If I know you brought in somebody...it would be embarrassing if that person does something wrong and it's a reflection on you because you're the one who recommended them and they're related to you".

Aviwe and Omar were relatively recently helped with getting a job. In Omar's case it involved a part-time job at a factory where cupboards are produced. A friend of his who lived near him in Langa first told him about the job and, after Omar expressed interest, went to the manager to secure the job. It was a part-time cleaning job, filling in for someone who was away in December. No interview was necessary and Omar could start working there immediately after his friend had told his boss Omar was available. Phumla got one of her previous jobs through one of her best friends she knew from school. The two had stayed in contact since then, even when Phumla moved to Eastern Cape. Her friend told Phumla to let her know when she would move back to Cape Town so that she could get Phumla a job since she had become the manager of a petrol station. When Phumla did move back to Cape Town she told her friend and started working as a cashier at the petrol station her friend was managing. She did not have to do any interview or test; she simply had to show up, get told how things like the register worked, and start working. Aviwe got a job as a cleaner at the place he still works at with the help of his uncle who worked at the business when Aviwe started. There was also no interview needed; Aviwe was simply told by his uncle the place he worked at needed someone and Aviwe presumed they trusted his uncle enough to give him the job. After getting the job, he did not get a clear indication that Aviwe's job performance would reflect either positively or negatively on his uncle. Though he remembers working extra hard during the trial period when he just started out his job, he stated this was not in order to impress his uncle or make him look good, but rather because Aviwe wanted to make sure he would be hired on a permanent basis.

Aviwe's comments about his experience getting a job with the help from his uncle and Azeem's remarks about the use of a referral system and his hiring practices suggest having someone to vouch for you becomes less important if a company has a trial period in place before a worker is hired on a permanent basis. This is similar in the case of Adrian. His company has a trial period during which new employees are part-time workers. He stated that new employees' performance during this period is far more important than

who someone might know. In fact, he leaves little room for vouching. The only case he will ask one of his current employees about a new worker is when the employment of the new employee doesn't seem to be working out. Adrian can use that person to understand better why this new worker might not be cut out for the job or if there are temporary problems in his or her personal life that are the issue. In the case of Adrian the employees are brought in by the head office. Since there is also a trial period there is little room for vouching that is possible.

Vouching at the participants' place of work is limited, though far from entirely absent. In the same trend as other uses of social networks, it seems that the use of vouching conflicts with some of the elements of the spatial mismatch hypothesis. In particular that social networks are less useful in areas far from economic centres than they are in job-rich areas and that social networks are geographically bound. The example of Phumla is probably best, who remained in contact with a school friend and was able to secure a job when she essentially still lived in another province. Aviwe got vouching as well as other support from his uncle after he moved from to Cape Town from the Eastern Cape. What Aviwe and Phumla have in common is that the person who vouched for them was close to them. In Phumla's case one of her best friends she had known since childhood and for Aviwe it was his uncle who he was also living with at the time. This may suggest vouching is only possible if a job seeker has someone in their social network who is close to them and knows them all. This rather unsurprising conclusion conflicts with the idea of the spatial mismatch hypothesis that geographically bound social networks become less useful if they are far away from economic centres. A first possibility, as is the case with Phumla and Aviwe, is that social networks aren't geographically bound at all. Secondly, even if they are spatially bound, vouching requires close contacts who know you well. The literature on social networks suggests a person's closest contacts come from people who are related, live close by, and/or are in a similar socioeconomic situations. As such, a greater reliance on vouchers by employers could mean workers may in fact benefit from a spatially bound social network.

The literature also sees social networks as a way someone can become more employable by helping those who don't have work experience and by helping with duties outside of work. Close family and friends in particular are said to be able to help out in a number of ways. Firstly by helping out with writing one's CV or how to do well in job interviews. Secondly by providing financial or practical support to help out with the job search or work

schedules. Many participants, including Azeem, Steven and Faghrie, Vusi, and Aviwe did not live with (both) their parents when growing up. There were a number of reasons for this; for a few a parent had passed away or was in jail. For others the parents had split up or were too young to raise a child and so lived with their grandparents. This, however, did not seem to have set them back in terms of not knowing how to do an interview or write a CV as none of the participants who had talked about their CV had gotten any help from their family. Rather, it was mostly taught to them at school. Lauren was the only person to have gotten help with writing a CV, and that help came from a school friend who had started working before she had. Faghrie had written his at the local library but without anyone's direct help. The suggestion from the literature that family members can help with writing a CV when one is starting a career seems not to apply to these participants. There could be a number of reasons behind this. It could be that CVs aren't seen as an overly important part of getting hired and so little focus is put on it. It's also possible that schools give enough guidance to their students so that they're able to do this without the help of family members. Of course there is also the possibility that these participants all lacked the family unit that would help with with these kinds of skills and were fortunate to get a job despite having a mediocre CV.

More concrete examples can be given about other types of support that a social network, and especially relatives, can give. A few examples of this came out when interviewing participants. Vusi and Aviwe, for example, lived with their uncles when moving to Cape Town from Johannesburg and Queenstown, Eastern Cape respectively. Kim is still living with her aunt and Steven with his grandmother. This saves them a considerable amount of money and Steven expressed his worry that when living alone he couldn't get home too late as he would still have to cook and do other domestic chores. Phumla, who is raising her child by herself, said that her son is able to stay at her sister's when she has to work a late shift. For these participants the family unit seems relatively important for providing assistance outside of work so that they can either find work or continue doing their job. Though not asked extensively, the participants' families were less important in terms of providing knowledge about how to get a job. At least when it came to writing their CV, the participants had received no help from them.

### 6.3.3 Types of connections

The literature suggested different types of connections are used for different purposes. One of the claims was that financial and domestic support is provided by close friends and relatives. This is a rather obvious claim and corresponds with this research inasmuch as it was asked about. A more contentious point that Granovetter (1973) has made is that information about job opportunities can often come from so-called 'weak ties'; relationships with people a person does not see very often, sometimes from different socioeconomic backgrounds as well as a different place of residence. The argument is that these relationships provide new information that the person in question could otherwise not get.

From what the respondents have said it seems there is definitely an element of truth in this idea. As stated earlier, a number of participants (Phumla, Vusi, Faghrie, and Azeem) got information about their current or previous job from people they did not know well at all rather than from close friends or relatives. This stands in contrast to the connections other participants Kim, Florence, Omar, and Aviwe had who could not just provide information about a vacancy but also vouch for them. These were far closer relationships; a parent, close uncle, or good friend. This is especially true in the case of Phumla, whose good friend was the manager who could give her a job without any sort of interview or formal hiring process. We can see a degree of correspondence between the participants' answers and the literature about the new opportunities that 'weak ties' with people from different backgrounds give. Likewise, the literature suggests vouching and helping out with actually *getting* the job rather than just *finding* it is something that comes from people a person is close with.

## 6.4 Overcoming (issues of) spatial mismatch

The participants in this research have experienced relatively few negative effects from spatial mismatch when it comes to their job search. The long and expensive commute, however, is for at least a few a very unwanted result of living far away from their work. There are, of course, ways to overcome this issue. Two main ways have come up during the interviews. The first is reducing the distance itself. Getting rid of the spatial mismatch will, to a large extent, also take away the issues that are caused by it. The second option is to tackle the issue that is caused by a spatial mismatch. Rather than eliminating the spatial mismatch, one can become less dependent on public transport and thereby cope easily

with the large distance between home and work. Unfortunately, neither are a realistic option for any of the lower-skilled participants.

#### *6.4.1 Reducing the distance between home and work*

A number of participants expressed their desire to move close to their place of work, thereby eliminating their long and expensive commute. Steven, Kim, Vusi, Aviwe and Phumla have all thought about moving. For all of them, being closer to work is a major reason. All of them acknowledged their commute would be shorter and cheaper if they lived closer to where they currently work. Vusi, who lives in Delft and works in Claremont, also pointed out public transport connections in the Southern Suburbs are better than where he currently resides. This would allow him to, for example, live in Observatory and work in Claremont. This eliminates much of the distance and would also allow him to take the train to work, an option he does not have now.

Unfortunately none of the participants can, with their current salary, afford to rent or buy a house closer to their work. Kim, who has looked into renting an apartment near her job in Kenilworth, commented that it was far too expensive for her: "It's like R3000 [per month]! You get paid R5000 and pay R3000 for a place...it's stupid to do that. Now at my aunt I'm paying less than a R1000". The difference in cost between their desired place of residence and their current one was a recurring thought for many participants. Vusi said he would "pay at least 1000 Rand [per month] more" to live near his work in Claremont. An estimate that is probably on the low side considering he predicted the monthly rental rate near or in Claremont to be between 1500 and 2000 Rand. Phumla, who lives in Khayelitsha, expressed the wish to buy a house for her and her son, preferably close to her work. However, the chances that this house will be close to her current job in Mitchell's Plain are slim as there is no RDP (Reconstruction and Development Programme) housing available there. Without the government subsidies through the RDP Phumla cannot afford to buy a house in Mitchell's Plain. Such houses *are* available in Khayelitsha. The extra costs for housing far outweigh the savings that will be made on transport. Florence, who lives in RDP housing in Philippi East and works in Claremont, stated it's not just the rent that is higher closer to work, but that she would have to pay more for electricity and local taxes as well. For many participants moving closer to work is something they could potentially do in the future, but for now is entirely unrealistic due to a lack of funds.

For various reasons, other participants preferred to stay in the area they live in now despite living far away from their work. Julia finds Mitchell's Plain a good place to live and she has a relatively short and comfortable commute. Moreover, she has bought a house in Mitchell's Plain which is paid for fully. Her husband has stopped working and she is nearing retirement age as well; there are few reasons why they would want to sell their current house to move closer to her job in Kenilworth. This is a similar situation to that of Florence, who lives in Philippi East and works in Claremont. She, too, has bought a house and is reaching an age where it is unlikely her salary will increase in the future. Unlike Julia, however, Florence did show some desire to move but is simply unable to do so because she has invested money in the house she currently lives in. As it is RDP housing she would not get enough money for it to be able to afford a house in the Southern Suburbs.

Another way of reducing the spatial mismatch is to find work closer to home. The suggestion of this to participants was sometimes met with a degree of cynicism as few thought it was realistic to get a job close to home. A number of participants said there are very few jobs available near their house. After asking her if she had thought about getting a job near her home in Philippi East, Florence told me: "I'll never find a job. I wish I could get a job that was near" and "Where can I get a job? I'm an old lady I'm not going to find anything...I'll be able to work as a cleaning lady, nothing else.". Vusi, who has to travel from Delft to Claremont to get to work, stated: "the thing is in Delft in terms of jobs... there's nothing". He further stated it's only the lack of jobs that is the problem, but also the extreme competition. "As soon as the job post comes out, everyone goes for it...when you get there, there's a 99.99% chance you won't get the job. [In Claremont] you have a bigger opportunity".

A number of participants have had part-time jobs near their home. Before starting his current job in Wynberg, Faghrie worked at a tiling company near his home in Grassy Park. Though very close by, he did not continue there because there was not enough work for him to do and he could only work a few days in the week. As such he was not earning enough money to get by and decided to look for something else. He then ended up working for a boat company but was fired because he did not have the required expertise. The company was looking for carpenters and plumbers, skills Faghrie lacks. Though given time to learn he was ultimately let go and unemployed until he got his current job in Wynberg. Vusi had a similar remark about job requirements when he talked about the jobs available near his home in Delft. There, he said, the posted jobs he saw came with certain

requirements such as a number of years of work experience and a driver's license. Due to the intense competition in poorer residential areas it is possible businesses there have higher requirements for available jobs and give new employees less time to learn the job than businesses in wealthier areas, where suitable employees are slightly harder to come by.

One participant, Phumla, is serious about looking for work closer to home. It is her intention to quit her current job this year, work weekends and train to become a primary school teacher. It does not matter to her so much which school, as long as it is close to her home. It is unclear if she knows how big the chances of finding a job as a teacher close to her home is, though she seemed quite determined to try. Lauren, who works in lower-management at a supermarket in Mitchell's Plain, is the only participant who lives close to her work already. This only happened, however, after being transferred there from another branch. She had previously worked in town, Kenilworth, Claremont, and Tyger Valley before starting her work in Mitchell's Plain. The move was facilitated by the fact the supermarket chain she works for has an internal classifieds system that every employee can use to apply for other jobs within the company. Jenny, acting manager in Wynberg, explained this classifieds system is available for all employees but not to outsiders. Every branch has a notice board that is accessible to all employees where vacancies within the company are posted. It was put in place to encourage employees to move up in the company as well as allow them to find a preferable location to work. As Jenny stated, this internal classifieds system is "very much used to get jobs closer [to home]".

Reducing the distance between home and work, either by moving closer to work or finding a job closer to home, was not seen as realistic option for most participants. The massive difference between renting or buying a house in the Cape Flats and town or the Southern Suburbs is a major obstacle. Residents in areas such as Philippi East and Khayelitsha are inclined to stay because there is RDP housing available there, which significantly reduces the cost of living but also means they will remain far away from centres of employment. Finding permanent work close to home is also not seen as feasible. Not only are there very few jobs available, the vacancies that *are* there are very highly contested for.

#### *6.4.2 Becoming less dependent on public transport*

Instead of reducing the distance between home and work, one can also reduce the negative effects of a spatial mismatch, such as that of a long and expensive commute with public transport. One way to overcome these problems is to arrange private transport, though of course for many this is easier said than done. When asked if getting a car to get to work would be desirable every participant who used public transport agreed, though none could afford a car and its added costs. A few of the lower-skilled participants do own a car, but none use it regularly to get to work. This is entirely attributed to cost as many stated they would much prefer using a car if they had the money for it. Getting a driver's license, buying the car, purchasing petrol, and insuring the vehicle are all significant costs that none of the lower-skilled workers could all afford. Julia and her husband own a car but she still takes the bus to work and only use the car for groceries. They save money on transport to the supermarket near their home and can buy much more in one trip than if they would take public transport there. Travelling by car to work, however, would require Julia's husband to drop her off and pick her up. The four trips daily (twice between work) would be too costly. Faghrie owns a car as well and him and his wife also use it primarily for groceries. He occasionally uses it to get to work on the weekends to save time as there are fewer taxis on the road. Taking it to work every day, however, is financially impossible. He has calculated that he would spend about R30 on petrol every day if he takes his car. So long as public transport is cheaper (currently R14) it is not an option for him as his relatively short commute is only a few minutes faster by car compared to the taxi he currently takes. An interesting comment was made by an employee in lower management living in Langa and working in Mitchell's Plain Omar. As a holder of the store's keys he is required to have access to private transport in order to get to work in case of emergency. He owns a car and uses it to go to work every day; his commute is about 17 kilometres and takes 20 to 25 minutes. Though he mostly likely has the money to move closer to work he has no intention of doing so, partially because the distance between his home and work is no longer an issue now that he takes a car. While every participant dependent on public transport expressed her or his desire to live closer to work to make the commute easier, Omar remarked that the distance between his home and work was not an issue at all now that he had his own car. Again, we can see an important factor of how employees experience a spatial mismatch is mode of travel. Having access to private transport can significantly reduce the relevance of a spatial mismatch. If Omar's remarks are any indication, having access to private transport may even take away the need to reduce the distance between home and work even if there is a possibility to do so.

## 7 Conclusion

The spatial mismatch hypothesis states that a significant distance between residential areas and centres of employment (1) leads to a lengthy and expensive commute which makes the job search in economic centres more difficult if not impossible and results in a reduction of disposable income as a large portion of a worker's salary is spent on travelling to and from work, (2) reduces the amount of information about job opportunities that is available to lower-skilled workers as jobs are advertised locally and workers are unable to travel frequently to centres of employment, and (3) reduces the effectiveness of using one's social network as a means to find out about work because lower-skilled job seekers almost exclusively come in contact with people in their immediate surroundings who have the same socioeconomic status and cannot adequately help them find a job. With this as a starting point, this dissertation explored the ways in which lower-skilled workers approach the procedure of getting a job and aimed to provide insights about how this approach is influenced by a spatial mismatch; if and how the consequences a spatial mismatch are said to evoke are relevant and how spatial mismatch and employers' recruitment methods interact and how this can affect a worker's job search.

A first observation from this research is that social networks are used extensively by job seekers and that the spatial mismatch is a contributing factor. The dependency on public transport makes a job search time-consuming and expensive. Moreover, it can be unclear for job seekers where the best locations are to look for work. As such, travelling to centres of employment in order to look for work there without any leads was an unpopular search method. Rather, job seekers tried to gather information about vacancies or at least about the areas where they could be successful. The participants widely used their social networks to get this information. Furthermore, those who are employed seem more than willing to share information about job opportunities even if their employers haven't asked them to. This extensive use of social networks extends to employers, though not necessarily in a direct way. With the knowledge that employees contribute greatly to the spread of information about job opportunities, employers do not need to put a great focus on advertising jobs through other methods such as listing jobs in newspapers' classifieds section or through a 'help wanted' sign on the door. In doing so they make social networks even more important as they can become the main, if not sole, source of information about available work. This trend contradicts the suggestion that information flow about job

opportunities is reduced if there is a spatial mismatch. Rather, it highlights the importance of workers' social networks and the job search becomes more about the people you know rather than where you live.

A second observation that can be made is that the difficulty of commute depends significantly on the specific location of home and work rather than simply the distance between the two. While a quantitative study might very well show that in general a bigger distance leads to a longer and more expensive commute, even a small study such as this one has shown there are many exceptions. The first reason why mere distance between home and work is not enough to understand someone's commute is because there are big difference between how well-connected areas of the city are. Travelling to areas of employment that are far away can be easier and cheaper than travelling between impoverished areas where few jobs are available. Secondly, each mode of transport has its advantages and disadvantages. Besides speed and cost, safety is also a big consideration for commuters and can be an important factor when workers look for work. These two points complicate the simple suggestion that distance between home and economic centres complicates the job search and leads to a reduction of disposable income which deters job seekers from looking for and getting employment. Rather than distance the issue that prevents someone from looking for work are the limited options in terms of public transport. Though nearby, an available job may be expensive, cumbersome, or relatively dangerous to get to. A third noteworthy finding was how accepting the participants were about the need to travel long and far to get to work and that it was seen less as a burden and rather simply as a requirement.

A last observation is that overcoming spatial mismatch itself seems entirely unrealistic for most lower-skilled workers in Cape Town. As Turok and Watson (2001: 121) suggested, moving closer to economic centres seems far too expensive for any of the participants due to a combination of low salaries and a massive difference in living costs, an issue that seems to be exacerbated by government policy. The only progress that can be made in the foreseeable future is that some of the residents of the poorest areas in Cape Town, in the southeast of the city, reduce their reliance on public transport by purchasing a car. It seems unrealistic, however, that the spatial mismatch itself can be significantly diminished.

The aim of this research was to offer some insights into the ways in which the mechanisms of the spatial mismatch hypothesis interact with lower-skilled workers on the labour

market of Cape Town in order to challenge some of the suggestions made by the hypothesis. Despite its limited scope, at the very least this research has shown alternative theories about how spatial mismatch functions in Cape Town must be considered. There is ample space for further qualitative studies that question the nature and functionings of the mechanisms of spatial mismatch in order to provide alternative ideas about how distance between home and work can affect lower-skilled workers.

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# Appendix

## Interview schedule

### *For managers*

- What kind of employees do you look for? Key characteristics?
- What are the ways you attract applicants?
  - if advertisement
    - Where? Which neighbourhoods? Outside the shop?
    - In newspapers? Which? Which language?
      - For all this: why? Specific target audience?
  - Does it depend on which job you're advertising for?
    - if referral
      - Which current employees do you ask?
        - Doing same job there's an opening for?
        - Best / most hard working / most trustworthy employees?
        - Well liked person among other employees?
      - Preference for family members? Friends?
      - What do you ask your employee you're looking for?
        - What types of skills, personal characteristics?
        - Age? Gender? Language?
    - If walk-ins without job being advertised
      - Chance of getting an interview?
      - How do you check their credentials?
      - Automatically at disadvantage compared to referral?
    - What are the advantages of the method you use?
    - Does the head office have any influence in how you recruit, who you hire?
      - Any other influences? Unions? BEE?
- Job interview
  - Done for every job? Regardless of duration, type of job?
  - Important criteria during interview?
    - Skills test?
  - How long is the process?

- Place of residence important?
- What are important characteristics you look at during interview? How did the people you hired stand out?
- General characteristics of employees
  - Place of residence
  - Length of commute
  - Gender, race, age, language?
  - Education, skill levels?
  - Type of contract? Full-time, part-time, casually, temporarily, sub-contracted
- Average duration of employment?
- Reimbursement for commute?

*For employees*

- Residential history
  - Type: House, apartment, RDP housing (material)
  - Place name
  - Urban / rural
  - Location; previously far away from work? Why there?
- Household history
  - Moved to Cape Town?
  - Children? How do you deal with kids' school and work?
- Educational history
  - Level of education?
    - If not matric: for what reasons?
  - What type of school? Where?
  - Did distance limit options for school?
- Current job: how did you find out about opening?
  - if from advertisement
    - Where? What language?
    - Did you see it yourself? If someone else, who?
    - What did you know about the job requirements, salary, etc?
    - Did you have to think about applying?

- Investment of time, money to get there / chances
- if through referral
  - Who told you? Friend, family, (ex)-coworker?
  - What did this person tell you about the job?
    - Wage, working conditions
    - Expectations
  - Valuable information?
    - Did you see this referral as a person favor?
    - Did the person tell any other people you know of?
  - Has your boss asked you to refer him/her to a suitable candidate?
- if walk-in
  - Why did you decide to go there?
  - How often are you in this area?
  - How much time, money do you spend getting here?
- Social networks
  - Which people do you see on a regular basis?
    - How do you know them?
    - What social activities do you share?
      - Church, sport, family gatherings
    - Where do you see them?
- Job search
  - How long did it take you to find this job?
  - Were you unemployed before this?
    - How long?
    - Were you actively looking for work? How?
- Job interview
  - How did you prepare for the job interview?
  - Did you get advice from anyone? If so, who?
    - What was the advice?
  - How did you 'sell' yourself? What about you was better than other applicants?
- Current job: commute info
  - Time (door to door)
  - Mode of transport

- Switching?
- Relative cost
- Is the distance an obstacle?
  - Safety? Cost? Time?
- Any reimbursement for travel costs?
- Previous job
  - How does commute compare?
  - Reasons for quitting?

## Transcripts

Interviewer: Guus Hoekman  
 Participant: Julia  
 Date: 14-Jan-2015

At [redacted] in Kenilworth, around 11:00 in the morning on a Wednesday. In a very small office with many people walking in and out. The office was shared between security (who were there as well, only separated by a makeshift curtain) and two people in sub-management. Many interruptions by people coming in and out; colleagues dropping off and picking up various documents, bosses coming in with general questions, and a customer looking for his wallet. In the middle of the interview the door and to be pried open with a screwdriver because the handle didn't work and someone close the door (which, the women made clear, should never be closed). Participant was a Coloured woman, probably in her late 50s. Spoke excellent English but speaks Afrikaans at home. She seemed fairly busy but happy to help out. Only towards the end did she get a bit impatient and it seemed like she felt like it was taking too long. A security person was always in the room and could hear everything. Sometimes a colleague who also works in that office was there as well. Many interruptions in this interview, including a very long one during which I interviewed someone else. I later came back to finish this interview.

[Explanation of the research and getting consent]

Can I first ask you what you do?

I'm the frontline manager. I manage staff and the department, make sure that everyone is happy. The checkout is running, the department is running. Professionally... and everything that is involved in that.

Alright. Are you involved in the hiring process at all?

No, I'm not.

You don't do any interviews at all here?

No they do that at the office here and at the head office.

Alright. Then I'll ask you more about how you found your job.

Oh OK that's quite a long time ago. I went for an interview, the office was on Main Road in Claremont. There was a lady there, she said to me with a surname like yours ([redacted]), the same as the owner of ([redacted]) how can I refuse you a job. It was very easy to get the job. I feel like it very much depends on you as a person. I got

the job, at the time I was working for [redacted]. At [redacted] in Wynberg, it paid R26 per week. I went for the interview and I started in Pinelands and I earned R52 so I got double the pay. That was 1981 that I started working at [redacted]. It's always been good. But I would always say it would depend on you as a person.

Can you tell me a bit about the process of finding out about the jobs?

At [redacted] I can't remember. They had a clothing, linen haberdash kind of thing. They had a show room. But I loved it. I love working with people, it was a big store in Wynberg Main Road.

OK. And how did you find out about the position at [redacted]?

Actually I heard somebody saying that, like today when people hear [redacted] are employing people they would go. So I took that chance.

How did you go about that? Did you drop off your CV?

No you didn't need a CV then. There was no such thing. You just had to go and they would say to you go and see the manager and the manager would sit and talk to you and that was it. It was very informal. It was at Pinelands. It's more difficult today because they want more qualifications and all that. Those years I had grade 10. That's what it was. Today they take people with varsity degrees and all that but they don't have the on hand experience, they don't have the people skills. I think it's different. You can see today ... they don't the passion for the job. And this is working with people... staff or customers, it's working with people all the way. They're not easy people. Difficult people.

Alright. So part of my research also has to do with the distance between home and work.

I go by bus. Fortunately for me I don't live far from a bus stop where I live in Portland in Mitchell's Plain. I'm a five minute walk from the road where the bus comes. I must just always be on time for my bus. I get off... I take one bus and I get right here at Kenilworth. I take the Claremont bus. I'm fortunate because many people need to travel, exchange, must go via another place. They must take a train or two taxis. I'm very fortunate that I only travel on one route.

I see. So you have a five minute walk, and how long does the bus take?

Depending on the peak hour... it can take an hour believe me. But normally it takes about 30 to 45 minutes.

Do you have to walk at all here to the store?

No not at all it's right here on the road (road right next to the store, maybe a two minute walk).

OK. Is it the same on the way back?

Yes it's the same.

How reliable are the buses? Are they often late?

No the bus service is good. I can't complain about the bus service.

Have you lived there for a long time?

Yes. 30... 30 odd years.

Have you noticed a change in the public transport connection?

I would say so. They have better buses now, newer buses. I love travelling with the bus now.

Do you remember what it was like before when you were younger?

Uhm...

Maybe when you were working in Wynberg?

I lived in a different area then. I travelled with a train from Retreat to Wynberg. It probably wasn't so good, it was with a train and it was those years. I can't even recall that.

But you find the train worse than the bus?

Yes. Also... actually I also took a train when I was working at [redacted] and I was robbed on two occasions on the train. That really put me off, it instilled within me a fear.

[Boss comes in and needs a few things, interruption for about 5 minutes. Talking about someone who needs to be fired for absenteeism]

Sorry about that, what's the next question?

Right... uhm, yeah so I just wanted to get clear where you've lived and worked. You said you lived in Retreat?

Yes. I worked at [redacted]... but I already worked in Pinelands, then I was living in Mitchell's Plain and I had to travel by train. From Mutual Station to Lentegeur Station. That was hectic because you must remember the train, like a tin of sardines all squashed in one compartment. And most of the time you had to hang, you had to stand and that's when you get robbed. It's terrible on the train. I don't like the trains anymore, I don't travel by train.

So you were robbed twice?

Yes on two occasions. Not long after 1989.

Alright. Can I ask you where you were born?

In Piketberg. Towards Malmesbury.

And you moved from there to?

I lived there and then I moved to Genadendal, near Caledon. And from there I came to town. I came to work in town, in Retreat. And I lived in Eastfields. I walked then, from work to home, from home to

work. I walked a long distance from Eastfields, Alphendale to Retreat. It was an hour walk every day, and then an hour back. There was no other transport. The only thing was to walk to the station to take the train and then walk all the way down, so it made more sense for me to walk.

Were there no taxis?

No there were no taxis. I walked from Alphendale to Retreat Main Road. I think that was around the 1976 riots. I don't know how old you are but it was around that time and there were no taxis those times.

After that where did you move to?

I think I got married. I moved to 4th avenue in Retreat. From there I went to Grassy Park, and from there to Muizenberg. From there we bought our own house in Mitchell's Plain.

How come you moved so often?

Because we lived in separate entrances. It's apartments owned by somebody else. So you got a room or two to rent. That's where we lived.

And that wasn't practical?

No we had to get our own house, we were married. We had kids, our twins were just born then. They're 37 years old now. We had to had our own house. It was the right thing to buy the house. In a different part where we are now. We bought the house in Lentegeur and now in Portland.

You sold the old house and bought the current one?

Yes that's right.

And why did you choose to buy the house there?

Now you're going back to Apartheid and all that. We people could only get houses in Mitchell's Plain. On the scale of income and all that. Certain people could only get certain houses so we had to get a house in Mitchell's Plain. We had to get a house there. Nowadays you can move where you want to, but I'm not sorry we moved to Mitchell's Plain. It's actually a good place to live.

You have no intention of moving?

No not at all the place is paid for why would I move?

Yeah of course. And your husband, does he work as well?

No he retired. We paid for the house before he retired, about five years ago.

OK. And it's not a problem that you live quite far away from work?

No I don't think it's far. Some people live much farther.

So an hour for you isn't so bad for you?

No it's not bad. Sometimes it's 45 minutes. When school starts again it's an hour again, but now it's school holidays and it's a breather.

OK. So an hour is fine. What's the maximum amount of time you would spend?

I think that... you know it tires you out to travel so long. You sometimes forget you must get off. Half an hour to 45 minutes is long enough. It makes you tired. If you travel so long... I enjoy it

because I unwind after the day, you get your mind back. You can think about what happened during the day. It's good to travel. You can read, knit, you can chat on your phone. You can do all those things it's quite relaxing. Now you don't have to stand.

You never stand?

I don't take the buses I don't have to stand in.

You avoid those, or?

No I just get on early enough. I'm the fourth stop so I don't have to stand. There are lots of people that stand on the bus in the morning and at night, every day. But I can always sit.

What time do you start work?

Between 7:00 and 9:00 depending on the day.

OK. So if you start at 7:00, what time do you wake up?

I get up 5:00 every morning. My alarm goes off that time every day whether I start early or late.

Ah I see. Has it happened that you suggested or if someone told you about available job? Have you told a friend or family about a potential job at [redacted]?

I've told people yes.

What did you tell them?

That there's vacancies at [redacted] and they can apply.

Did you help them out?

No they just go for the interview. They must send their CV and do the test. You must remember you must do a test. If they do make it the job is theirs, if they pass the interview. They do things so differently now.

Did you tell them anything else, maybe what it's like to work here?

No I wouldn't do that. I tell you what I do. Yesterday I went somewhere, I walked into this place. I didn't say nothing and I didn't know the person that was sitting there. And the person said to me, "oh my word Mrs. Ackerman, how are you?" and she looked at the judge and she said to the judge "this was my frontline manager when I was a casual". I met so many of my staff at high profile jobs as judges, lawyers, doctors, who were casuals at [redacted]. They all started with a casual job. And I always tell people don't take this job for granted because it can take you far. It's a food in the door to the future.

What kind of people have you told?

Lots of people. If you're listening to the radio and you hear them talking about the guy, the fire master... Theo Layne. You always hear them talking about Theo Layne on the radio. He was also one of my casuals and now he's the top guy at the fire department. It's so nice to see them and so nice to know they started as a casual here.

Is that an example you use when you tell people about a job opportunity here?

Yes, yes it is. It works. It depends on you the person, everything depends on you as a person.

So the people you've told, is it family or friends?

No... sometimes it's people I don't really know. Just acquaintances or someone looking for a job. People who are desperate and looking for a job.

In what situation would you encounter these people? Where would you be when you tell them? As a bus stop... or?

Anywhere, anywhere people ask me. I talk to people everywhere...

OK... what about friends and family?

My daughter has worked for [redacted] many years ago. Today they're somewhere else.

They got the job through your advice?

I suppose so, yes. My influence... haha!

Did you do anything directly?

Not really, I wouldn't say that. Indirectly. I said the same as to other people, go for the interview, drop your CV. But you must remember in those years a department head could do their own interviews. They could recruit their own people. It's different from now (all recruitment and interviews are done at HR in the head office). Actually I would say lots of those people still work for [redacted] today.

Has the culture here changed now it's a lot more formal?

Yes it has. I remember they had to employ a lot more different people because the numbers in the company wasn't right. The numbers have to be right according to the BEE laws. But this is more of a question for our HR department.

OK I see. I wanted to ask as well: has there been a period where you were unemployed?

Yes. I finished at [redacted] in 2009 for two years I was unemployed.

Did you apply for many jobs at the time?

I did... I didn't... it was very easy to get jobs. But not too... not for long. I worked at [redacted]. I worked at the family store ([redacted] franchise). It was ...

[interruption for a few minutes]

So about the time you were unemployed... When you applied for other jobs, how did you go about doing that?

I went for an interview, I sent around my CV. I went that route.

At what kind of places did you look?

I worked for [redacted]. And for the family store.

Where?

In Observatory. Which was one bus route. And [redacted] was a taxi or car, it was in Mitchell's Plain.

Did you ask any of your friends or family if anyone knew about job opportunities?

[interruption again, interview continued after interview with another employee]

So we were talking about the jobs you had at [redacted] and the franchise store in Observatory. How did you go around looking for those jobs?

The [redacted] store was in Mitchell's Plain so it was close by. I went there and dropped my CV and I got an interview and then I got the job.

How did you go there when you dropped off your CV and had the interview?

I think I went with a car. Or maybe with a taxi I don't really remember.

Oh you own a car?

Yes I do.

Do you use it often?

No I don't drive but my husband does. We use it for shopping when we have a lot of stuff. It's much easier than taking a taxi with all the bags.

And for anything else?

Not really. Mostly for the shopping.

Not to go to work or something?

No because then my husband has to drop me and fetch me. And petrol is expensive so it's cheaper to take public transport.

I see. So you only bought the car mainly to do groceries?

No we didn't buy the car. It was the car of my husband's brother but he passed away and we got it.

Ah alright. And otherwise you wouldn't have bought the car?

No I don't think so. We don't use it very often. It's convenient for the shopping but petrol is very expensive.

Since when do you have it?

2007 I think.

Alright. But so you never used it to go to work?

No.

And when you were looking for work did you use it more then?

Maybe once but I don't think so.

But you knew where to go? You didn't drive around with your car to drop off your CV at many places?

No no.

Alright. So you only went to [redacted] and the [redacted] on Observatory? Did you know they were hiring?

Not really. I called the family store and they said they needed someone.

Did you call any other family stores?

Yes I called Rondebosch. And Plumstead I think. But they just told me to drop my CV.

Did you?

No because I already got the job in Observatory.

What did you do there?

I was a cashier.

And at the [redacted]?

Cashier as well.

Where did you work first?

First in Observatory. But because it's a family store they don't pay very much so I got the job at [redacted].

Ah alright. And how did you find out about the job at [redacted]?

Well supermarkets always need people around the holiday period so I dropped my CV off around that time. Then I went for the interview and got the job.

What was the interview like?

It was good. I have quite a lot of experience and it was only temporary so it was easy.

Oh but was it OK to quit your job in Observatory for a temporary one?

No I didn't quit. At the family store it was temporary as well the year before.

So you were unemployed between those jobs?

Yes I was.

Wasn't that a problem, to be unemployed for so long?

Not really. My husband is already retired and we have no kids to take care off anymore so it's OK. And the other jobs didn't pay so much so anyway. It was only around the holidays that it was easy to get a job. But otherwise it was fine. I'm too old to go around dropping my CV and trying to look for a job.

And did you ask any of your friends or relatives if they knew anything about available jobs?

No I didn't have to. I knew about those other places already and I could just go there. I had the number of all the [redacted] branches so I could just call.

And the [redacted]?

That was near my home.

So you didn't know anyone who worked there or something?

No. I knew someone who worked at the family store but she didn't help me or anything. I only found out she worked there after I got the job.

OK. And now you're back at [redacted]?

Yes I always wanted to come back to [redacted].

Did you have to go for an interview?

Not really, because I was here before but then I left.

OK... why did you quit in the first place?

That was personal.

[She seemed to want to end the interview and did not really want to talk about her process of quitting (getting fired?) and getting hired again by [redacted]. A colleague came in the room as well so I ended the interview].

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Interviewer: Guus Hoekman  
Participant: Omar  
Date: 09-Jan-2015

At [redacted] Mitchell's Plain. The store is located in a, for me, unexpectedly fancy shopping mall in Mitchell's Plain called [redacted]. In the office of the participant, one of the assistant managers. The store is enormous and besides the store manager there are, I believe, three assistant managers. I had initially not intended to speak with him because I wanted to talk to someone who took public transport to work. Participant from Port Elizabeth, probably in his mid 40s. Seemed extremely neutral; though he didn't seem to mind participating, it was obvious this wasn't his favorite activity. Not a criticism by any means, he gave very thorough answers. Rather busy office with multiple people coming in and out, talking quite loudly. Slightly distracting but not too bad.

[Explanation of the research and getting consent]

First I'd like to ask you if you use public transport to work?

No I have my own car. I'm part of management so I'm required to have my own transport as I carry keys to lock and open the store.

Ah I see. Are you involved in the hiring process at all?

The hiring process is... we only do interviews in the stores. But the hiring is done at the head office. Whoever wants to apply, for example how I got into [redacted] I took my CV to our head office and I got a phone call, I went in for an interview and after the interview I went for an induction. Then they looked at the store that was closest to where I was staying at the time. So I was sent to that store. From then on I worked my way up. I came in as a VTE, which is a variable time employee... so a casual employee.

Alright. Can I ask you where you live?

I live in Langa. It's about 15 kilometers from this area.

Did you start working here as well?

No I was working in Pinelands which is much closer to where I was staying. For transport it was easy to go with a taxi or a train. When you get employed by [redacted] they look mostly where you stay and where there are vacancies closest to your area.

When you started in Pinelands how did you get to work?

A train. Because a train was convenient and it was cheaper and affordable at the time for me. I was earning... the salary that I was earning I had to look at the kind of transport that would be affordable for me. And the train was convenient and affordable

And the alternative was ...

A taxi. But it was more expensive and not really quicker.

Do you remember much about your commute at the time?

I'd say it was about 5 kilometers or even less than 5. If I would not be able to take transport I could walk and it took me about 30 minutes to walk to work.

So you always had the alternative to walk?

Yeah. There were days we felt like not waiting for a train. There's different times for trains. Especially weekends. You only get the train hourly. So if you miss one you could be sitting at the station for an hour. You could be at home if you had walked so we then just walked so we could get home early.

And did you ever walk to work?

Yes on the weekends. Or when there's no trains. Sometimes these guys would steal the cables. So if the cables get stolen the trains can't go. My area was always affected because I lived in Langa and it's... an area where crime is very high. Then walking would be an option that way. If there's no train everyone wants to go with a taxi and there's long queues at the taxi rank and it would take long. Rather than being late I'd walk. It was safe to walk. It wasn't only me, a couple of guys who stayed in my area we'd walk together.

-- asked later but fits better here

Did you never take a taxi when you missed a train or something?

If we were otherwise going to be late. But not often because we got to the train on time also to walk. It took maybe ten minutes by train and thirty to walk. And taxis were more expensive.

How much did it cost?

I don't remember exactly but the taxis were maybe 2 rand more expensive per trip. On such a short distance and with my salary at the time that was quite a lot.

--

Did you ever work a night shift?

No only when we did stocktake. Then we worked late, around 1:00 or 2:00. That's the only time I worked late shift.

How did you go home then?

The company provides transport. If you work until later than 19:00 the company provides transport because it's dark and it's dangerous. So every staff member who works a late shift there is transport provided at all the stores.

Also at the time you started working?

Even at the time. When I came at [redacted] it was 13 years back, there was transport available for staff that worked late. And also when you started late they picked you up. For example the bakery, they start at 3:00 in the morning. There's no transport at that time so they pick you up. They work until maybe 11:00 and then there's transport available.

Right. When you first starting working at [redacted], do you remember how you found out about the job?

I didn't know there were vacancies at [redacted]. I was looking for work. I knew [redacted] because it's such a big company. So I approached... I was going around, handing out my CV and all that. I got a call from [redacted] and that's how I got to [redacted]. I was looking for work so I was handing my CV at different companies.

Without knowing if they had vacancies?

Without really knowing. If you're looking for work you can't be looking ... you can't be picky, you just go to different companies handing out your CV. And then you wait for the call. So [redacted] was the company that phoned me and gave me the opportunity. By

the time the others phoned I was already working for [redacted]. I was happy there and I decided I'd rather be loyal to the first company who gave me a chance... first job out of school, I stayed where they gave me an opportunity.

Was this straight out of matric?

From matric I went to a technical college. After that... in fact most of ... I'm one of the guys that comes from another province. Some come from different provinces... I'm from Port Elizabeth in Eastern Cape. It's one of the poorest provinces. For me to be able to have a better chance of getting a job I had to move out and I moved to Cape Town. For example where I come from there's only four [redacted]s but here in Cape Town more than 40. So getting a job that side was worse.

But you grew up PE?

I grew up in PE, I've been here for 13 years.

Alright. So you finished your technical degree in PE?

In PE yes. Then I moved to Cape Town looking for a job.

Where did you stay when you moved here?

I stayed with my mother, also in Langa. She got remarried and was living in Cape Town. So it was an option for me to move to this side and get a job this side.

When you were looking for a job, handing out CVs at different companies, did you go to specific places?

I went around the city. At the time when you're desperate for work you look at any option that's available. So I was... going around the city and handing it wherever... I hear from a guy about a place in town where there's vacancies so I quickly go there and hand in my CV. And maybe another guy saying something about a job in Mitchell's Plain and I go there. Or I look in newspaper and look for vacancies. Whatever I see in the newspaper, I'd go to those companies and hand in my CV. I was looking everywhere I could get a job.

Did you get any interviews at other places?

By the time I got called I was already at [redacted]. Then I decided that no. The other option was [redacted]. But I decided ... I was happy at [redacted]. The reason I didn't even go for an interview was because I asked people who worked at [redacted]. And they said they were offering short contracts, not permanent positions. So I wasn't gonna leave a permanent position for a contract. It's not a guarantee after that specific time... six months I think. And at [redacted] I already got a permanent position as a VTE and I needed to work myself up to a permanent position. I mean it wasn't permanent (while VTE) but it was in the contract.

Alright... So essentially you thought you had a better chance of getting a permanent position at [redacted] than at [redacted]?

Yes.

OK. And when you talked to the people you knew at [redacted] did you ask them what the job was like, what it was like working there?

Yes... I did, but for me at the time I was unemployed for quite some time. So for me it was more about job security than being... I might have been able to go to [redacted] and be happy. But I was at [redacted] and this job now... if I go to [redacted] I work there for six months and after that there's no more work. So what's gonna happen then?

So you were more concerned with having a job than what the job was like?

Yes.

How long at you been looking for work?

It was three years at the time. I only had odd jobs here and there like... you know... December when the guys goes on leave and they need packers. So I'd go for December and in January there's no more jobs cause the guys came back from leave.

Alright. So you only did temporary work at various places?

I even at some stage did gardening work. My aunt saw I was at home for like two years. And she said OK, you're coming to work, I'm gonna ask my boss if you can do gardening work. So I ended up doing that for some time. And he was also helping me to look for a job.

During those years you were unemployed, the temporary jobs you found then, how did you find them?

Through other people and ... what happened was that my aunt recommended me ... the households in town they have gardeners and ladies working for them. Sometimes that guy (the gardener) is not available or sick, then my aunt's boss would then recommend me to cover for them.

Recommend you to the people her boss knows?

Yes so I worked a few days or weeks for some other people that he knew, when their gardener was gone.

And what did you aunt do?

She was a domestic worker for that guy's in town.

Ah alright. Did you work anywhere else?

I worked in a factory where they build cupboards and all that. I was cleaning... odd jobs. I wasn't there to make the cupboards. But I was helping there to clean the place, clean the equipment and all that.

How did you get that job?

Through a friend of mine who worked in that company. I heard from him they were looking for someone in December, to cover for someone.

[participant needs to take a phone call]

So this friend who got you the job at the factory, how did you know him?

He lived near me in Langa and he knew I was looking for work so he told me that they were looking for someone.

And did you have to go for an interview or something?

No it was cleaning so I could just start there. My friend told them he knew someone and that was enough.

I see. You mentioned earlier you started working for [redacted] in Pinelands. When did you make the switch?

As part of management we have to move. You have to move from different places depending on which place needs you. I've been here for three months now. The permanent staff who aren't management aren't required to move unless they want to. If [redacted] hires you but not at a store close to you then later you

can apply and get a transfer from that store to a store that's closer to you. For me moving out of that store... I got the management position so I was required to move to another store.

It wasn't voluntary?

No.

Do you know why they have the rule that you have to move?

The rule is because what happens is when we get to a store we get comfortable and ... to get experience you go to different areas, deal with different customers, different staff members so you become a better manager. For example this store would be very different from a store at Waterfront... the clientèle and the staff members will be different. So you get exposed to that atmosphere and then you learn how to manage that store. Then you move to another and you get a different experience from another store. So for us to get well experienced, you will be able to adjust to new environments and deal with anything.

Right. Also you said that as management with keys you have private transport now?

Yes. It is a requirement when you apply for the position. The company states you must have a driver's license and preferably your own private transport. It's not a requirement but you must have access to private transport. Because if I'm carrying keys I must be the first person, but I don't have private transport... I'm carrying the store keys. There's a huge risk... if you use trains there are a lot of robberies on trains. If someone has access to the [redacted]... that would be bad.

Alright. So is it mostly about safety?

Mostly about safety.

And does it have to do with time?

It's safety and time. If you have your own transport. Sometimes at night you get an alarm call. For example if there's a break in one of the fridges an alarm goes off and the system will let me know. Or if there's a fire, you get an alarm at 3:00 in the morning... you have to be there and come and check. If you don't have private transport you won't be able to get there and there could be huge damage.

And are there any such requirements for people outside of management... without keys?

No.

Alright. And your other staff, in terms of getting to work to work and being on time... I interviewed someone at another branch. He works in Claremont and lives in Mitchell's Plain. He was saying often the bus doesn't show and he has problem with transport. He got a warning for being late. Are you involved with things like that at all?

OK there is a disciplinary procedure, a company procedure that has to be followed. If two people live in Mitchell's Plain working in the same store and she's on time but he's late, then maybe the one person is not trying hard enough to get to work. There is cases where the bus can be late. Management is aware. But if there is a pattern of me coming late, I have to be disciplined. We won't discipline you if you're late once a month. But if you're late almost every week there is a pattern. It doesn't happen every week that there's a transport problem.

I see. And do you have more leeway for people who live further away? If someone walks to work and comes in late and someone who lives far away and is dependent on a bus...

That's up to the manager's discretion. What we do in stores... we have different shifts. If you have a problem with transport, you come to me and say "listen, I have this situation with transport". Then we sort it out and maybe change shifts to make sure you're on time. I might not be always able to shift you permanently. But I can change your shift for a month or so in order for you to sort out your transport issues. We do that. We try to solve it. But we need you ... we need to work together to resolve it. I can't book you at the latest hour and you still come in late. But I don't know if that guy got a warning for being late once a month...

I think it was a bit more often than that.

Right. You must remember there's a lot of stuff that's done. We have audits and there's... we have departments... if in my department someone is late, I have four people, if one person is late that means one person isn't there and it's an inconvenience to the other three as well as the customers. If I'm gonna say when the person comes in "it's fine", they're gonna think it's OK to be late. But if they're late once then I understand, there can always be a situation. But the first thing that we do when you're late is ask you the reason why you're late. There is communication that needs to be done. If you're running a bit late you need to phone and say... you need to notify the manager and say "I'm running late". If you don't do that then you're not following the company procedures. So either he's not doing that, not phoning in. And if you come in and you go to the manager and say "sorry for being late, this is the reason why I'm late", so you and your manager can then work out a solution and try to find what it is that the manager can do to assist you get good transport. Maybe the person works in Claremont because... Claremont is one of the old stores. So maybe they've been working there for quite some time or when they applied Claremont was the only one that had vacancies. When you go for an interview, one of the questions they ask is "if you get the job do you have a problem traveling to Claremont?". He said yes (every "yes" from now on should be "no") because ... in all our interviews, when I went for an interview I was asked "if we can't place you to a store closest to you, would you have a problem...". But because you need a job and you're desperate you then say yes (no) because you want the job. Now when you get the job it becomes a totally different thing. You're struggling to get transport and you knew when you said yes, because you wanted the job. And now you're looking for someone to blame because I was lucky enough to work close to my house. But my first job as a manager at [redacted] I had to move to Mitchell's Plain. When I went for the interview they asked me if I had a problem traveling here. Because I wanted the job I knew I had to make some sacrifice. And it's gonna be in my contract ... they have confirmation that "yes (no), I don't have a problem". And there's a disciplinary procedure, because essentially you have said I don't have a problem being disciplined if I'm late because I said I have no problem with traveling to work.

One last thing I forgot to ask earlier. When you came to Cape Town you lived with your mother right?

Yes.

Did you live with her for a long time?

I lived with her until I could afford my own place. I was VTE first but when I became permanent I moved out.

How long did that take?

It was about 5 months after I started at [redacted].

Where did you go?

I stayed in Langa but I got my own place.

And do you still live there?

No I moved when I got married.

Oh OK. Do you have kids as well?

Yes I have two kids and we want to move again so they don't have to share a bedroom.

Ah alright. Where are you thinking of going?

I think we will stay in Langa.

You don't want to move closer to Mitchell's Plain?

No for me it's not necessary because with a car it's not far to Mitchell's Plain. It's maybe 20, 25 minutes to get to work. And if I move to Mitchell's Plain and then I get moved to a store in town then I am very far from there, so Langa is quite a good place. And the kids go to school there and they probably want to stay.

And if you get moved to Southern Suburbs for example?

I will see. But Langa is quite a good place and for now it's fine.

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Interviewer: Guus Hoekman  
Participant: Awiwe  
Date 02-Dec-2014

[Explanation of the research and getting consent]

Are you an employee or do you manage people as well?

I'm an employee, but I can say I'm the floor manager here. Everything we do around here I must overlook. The thing is, I'm working on these machines. I must check the generators and the wires, if there's a fault in the generator, all that. I'm one of the six on the machines. I'm above the guys working here in the shop.

Alright. Did you ever hire people? Did you ever interview anyone who came in?

Yes. There were two guys. One of them left, maybe he was unhappy about the job. To me he was quite fine. He knows the job, I get him in and then he left. But he didn't come back to me to say why he left. The other one is still working here.

So these are the guys under you?

Yes.

And so you got a job here yourself through an interview?

No we don't do that. We get the guy straight. A guy comes in saying he's looking for a job, we get his CV.

Ah OK, alright. Sorry let me do this a bit more systematically. So firstly, what you are saying is that you get people off the street? They come in?

Yeah they come in. We don't go look for them.

No? You don't advertize? No flyers, nothing in a newspaper, nothing at all?

No, no.

Do you know how they found out about their job?

No not really I never really asked anyone.

Ah alright. And do you ever ask a current employee: we need someone to work here, do you know a friend.

Yes we do.

And how does that work exactly?

Look, we're always busy. Now there's not enough, there are maybe two guys in the yard, two there (point at the shop) and there's no one here (in the cleaning area). Now we have to run around. So we ask people, like our colleagues. We have somebody that at least can know how to work in this place.

So you ask your current employees?

Yes.

And what do you tell them?

Yeah. I tell him exactly what kind of guy I'm looking for. One of the things I say to him: get me somebody that he knows, someone that comes out of school and at least did matric. So at least we can teach him. So he can understand what we're doing here. Not somebody who doesn't know what's going on here. You need somebody that is ... like me. You know when I walked in this place I didn't know what was that and what was that (points at various tools and machinery). But today I can tell you exactly what's going on there.

So you want to make sure they can learn quickly?

Yes.

And who are the people that you asked; do you ask specific employees? Ones that you think work best or ones you like the most?

Those that come can work here the best. They can do the job here. He won't just bring somebody that is gonna be lazy. Somebody that is gonna really work. Cause that's what I need. I don't want somebody that is just gonna stand around. I'm not interested in people like that. Those that can put in the most I want. I ask: can you just bring somebody for me?

And do you ask anything about speaking English for example, or any language?

Any language. I don't care.

As long as they're hardworking and do their job?

Yes that's all.

And are there any women?

No we don't women. It's heavy stuff.

Ah alright because it's physical work.

Yeah the physical work. Most of the work here is physical.

OK. And do you care at all about their age?

Yeah age is very important. This job is tough. We need youngsters. Not the old people.

And that's because they can't handle it physically?

Well, to work on the machine we do need people who've done this before. But to lift we don't need any qualifications. Anyone can just lift a machine.

Alright. And you were saying sometimes you have people walking in dropping off their CV. Have you hired any of those people?

One. One guy.

Out of how many?

Five. There's one guy who is now a driver. But obviously he's intelligent, he knows about the machines. He did work in a place like this. He is doing some of the repairs as well. He's one who was walked in here. Early morning, he dropped his CV. Then he came back on a Monday. I can't remember exactly but it was about five months ago.

OK. And do you interview everyone who comes in?

Uhm..

So, for that particular job. Did he apply to be a driver?

No I'm not on that side I don't know, I'm just on this side (of the building).

Oh alright. So you mostly handle the referrals. What's the job interview process like?

It's about the machines. The guys must know at least some of the machines we have in this place. But obviously we don't base it on that. We have somebody who didn't work in this place before but we tried to see if he's intelligent. You get those guys who want work but after they get in here they don't want to work. You get most people like that, they say they want to work. As soon as you give the guy a job you try to understand if he's interested about the job. In this place, it's not easy if you're gonna take a job. It's not easy. It's really difficult because you must be everywhere. You must have a passion and you must want to learn. We don't hold that ... if somebody wants to learn then we keep that guy. We give the guy the information because that's what we want. We want people who can grow. So when we interview, we need to know how people are interested about the job. And if they're interested to learn, we're looking at a youngster. They can learn more and grow.

So you look at potential more than ...

Yeah, yeah.

And do you care at all about where they live?

No. If the guy is happy to work in this place we give the guy the job. We don't ask where are you living.

OK. Some other places I went to, one guy said they bring their employees back home at night. So he was saying he likes to hire people who live close by. And some other guy was saying, the further people live, the longer it takes them ... He tended to see the farther they lived the more likely they were late. Do you notice that at all?

No we didn't get that. Our guys, like me, I live in Khayelitsha. The other guys they live on this side or Cape Town. Maybe Retreat or Grassy Park. The others live close by in Lansdowne.

Oh OK so you live quite far, the furthest?

Yeah yeah.

So for you it doesn't matter at all where they live?

For me it doesn't matter. You mustn't be late and just wake up. You can ask my boss, when I was late this year. Cause I don't like to be late. I don't like it, I don't want to come in and apologize cause then I disturb him. When I come to work I always have a plan, like what I'm gonna do today. So the minute they open the door I must be ready. Like here in this place we work with customers. Now, look I'm late, who's gonna do my job? That's why I don't like to be late. Once they open the door I must be ready to help the customer. To me the distance doesn't matter. I must just be willing to wake up every morning.

So as long as they're on time it doesn't matter?

Doesn't matter.

OK. Do you know the average time people have worked here? The guys under you, have they worked here for a long time?

I think like ... I can't say. Most of the guys that work under me it's not quite a lot. One guy, as I said, he left. And the other guys still works for me. I'm happy with the one who's with me. He's doing a good job.

Alright. Can I now ask you how you got your job? Did you walk in, did someone tell you about it?

Someone told me about it. I started there outside, I was cleaning the machines. Like I said to you I didn't know what was that. And sometimes I didn't want to come stand here cause of the petrol. Then I get used to it working outside and my boss he said to me ... [inaudible].

Yeah alright. And you said someone told you about it, who was it?

My uncle.

And how did he know?

He was working here.

Oh alright. Does he still work here?

No.

OK. So what did he tell you about the job?

I was coming from Eastern Cape and I became a cleaner here outside.

So it was your first job?

Yeah my first job here.

OK. So he was working here, and then he said: "the place where I work, they need someone. Come on in."?

Yes.

OK. And did he help you at all? Did you have to do an interview or something like that?

No, no no.

So they trusted your uncle?

I think so! Haha!

Haha! That's good.

So you're saying you're from Eastern Cape? Where in EC?

Yes. Queenstown.

And when did you move to Cape Town?

In 2008.

OK. And where you're from was it a city or a rural area?

It was a rural area.

And so you moved to Khayelitsha in 2008 and lived there since then?

Yes.

Have you thought about moving closer to work?

Yeah... but it's quite difficult for me. I always think about that. It would be great for me. Money wise... not now.

Ah yeah OK. So how do you get to work now?

Bus. I travel with the bus.

And do you have to walk at all?

Yeah I walk from here to the bus stop. It's not so far. Maybe five minutes.

OK. And then you get on the bus. How many buses is it?

Only one. From here straight to Khayelitsha.

And then you get off there, how long does it take you to walk back home?

Same distance from here.

Oh OK. So in total how long does it take?

From here to there it takes five minutes and from there home also five minutes.

Right. And the bus itself?

The bus maybe... 30 minutes.

So about 40 minutes door-to-door?

Uhm.

In total? I mean from your house to work is about 40 minutes in total?

All together? Yeah it's about 40 minutes.

Alright.

Can I ask you how much education you did? Did you finish matric?

Yes. But I didn't go any further.

Alright, so you just started working right after?

Ya.

And was that for money reasons?

Ya money reasons.

What type of school did you go to?

It's a public school.

Oh and I forgot to ask this earlier. Do you remember what your uncle told you when he told you about this job? Did he say anything about the work, if he liked it, any requirements?

He told me I would have to make sure to work hard in this place. Picking up heavy machines. I told him that's fine.

Right. So when you got the job ... Did you have to think at all about taking the job because it's quite expensive to take the bus every day? Was it feasible to find a job in Khayelitsha instead?

I was thinking about that but there was no job for me. I went in many places there. The first place I went to was the hospital there. They told me to drop my CV so I dropped my CV. Then I went to another place there, it was like a mall. So I dropped my CV there. I tried but I couldn't get the job. From there I got this one and after that I didn't go around and go look.

So when you dropped off your CV, that didn't work out?

No that didn't work out.

Did you have an interview anywhere?

Ya one. But I lost my phone I don't know if it's that or whatever, but they didn't call me back

Ah OK.

So you think it helped knowing about the job through your uncle?

It helped, ya.

Did you have anyone else tell you about any other job?

No he was the first.

And did he give you any tips? Did anyone teach you about job interviews?

No, no...

OK. Before you got this job, how long had you been looking for a job?

About three months.

So for three months were you only looking in Khayelitsha?

Not just there. I was in Cape Town, in Bellville, Epping ... where else... ya I think that's it.

OK. But not here in Southern Suburbs?

No not here.

How come?

I didn't know this place.

And what did you do at the other places?

Just dropped of my CV.

You just went door to door to see if they were hiring?

Ya.

Any success? Interviews?

No, no interviews.

Any idea why?

I had call-back one but after that I got this job and I didn't go back to them. I carried on this side.

OK. So to get here with the bus, do you find it an obstacle at all in terms of money or safety? If you work late, if it's dark?

Let's say I work late, I'm not gonna take the bus. Because the bus is gonna take me 30 minutes. Then from the bus stop to there. I'd rather take the taxi. As soon as I take the taxi it doesn't stop, it just goes straight to Khayelitsha. And the taxis put me close by. I think it's only one minute to walk down the road to get home.

Is a taxi a lot more expensive?

It's quite a lot of money. It's 14 rand.

And a bus?

I just use a clipcard. It's 109 a week.

And you get take it as many times?

No it depends. They clip, as soon as you walk in they clip. It depends how many clips you've used. If you walk in in the morning with a new card they clip number 1.

Ah OK, so one clip per trip.

Ya.

So per week you use ten clips?

Ya that's right.

OK and that's 109?

109.

And does it take longer with the taxis?

The taxis it doesn't take long. Not like the bus. The buses take so long. They must stop for all the bus stops. But the taxis they just go straight.

And you do that just because it's not safe?

Ya because it's not safe.

And do you ever do it just because you want to go home quickly?

I want to go home quickly because I stay alone. I must do my own cooking. And the thing is this, if I take a bus it's too far. I get dropped on the other side. I cross and it's not safe. But the taxis will put me inside. It takes me two minutes.

And do you do that when it's dark, at a certain time?

In winter. In summer I don't worry.

Because it's light?

Mmm. I don't worry in summer.

Alright nice. Do you have anything else you want to add, you remember?

No, no.

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Second interview over the phone. Difficult to get audible recording and hear respondent properly over the phone at the same time, so no recording/transcript was made.

- Job search: went to Bellville, town, Epping
  - how did you get around when looking for a job?
  - how much did it cost, where did you get the money?
  - you said you didn't know southern suburbs and so didn't look there. how did you know bellville, epping or where in town to look?
- How was your social network at the time? Any more direct searches from people who told you about vacancies?
- Vouching from his uncle
  - Did he say anything to the employer? Anything you remember from it?
- Work ethic when his uncle was there
  - Work harder to impress uncle?
  - Did his uncle say anything to you; that your performance would reflect on your uncle?

Used a bus to get around looking for work, from what he remembers no taxi or train. Does not remember how much it cost. Got the money from savings he had. When he moved from Eastern Cape to Cape Town (Khayelitsha) initially lived with his uncle. He didn't have to pay rent, electricity. Everything communal was paid for by his uncle so he saved money on that.

Knew to go to Bellville, Epping, and town because people around him told him. His cousin (not his uncle's son) used to have a job in Bellville. Uncle knew Epping, not sure from what. He was new so didn't know Cape Town, was dependent on other people for information. Didn't know many people. Mostly relatives at first. When he got a job he could get his own place, meet people at work and in the area he live in. Did not get any other direct leads from anyone. Only took three months to get a job. Didn't know that many people and many out of work.

Remembers he worked harder when he started. Uncle didn't say anything about having to impress him, he worked harder because he was desperate to keep his job. Does not know what/if his uncle told the boss about him. Uncle didn't say he did but maybe.

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Interviewer: Guus Hoekman  
Participant: Azeem  
Date: 02-Dec-2014

[Explanation of the research and getting consent]

So you manage this place?

Yes I do

Do you own it as well?

No I don't. We work for a boss.

OK so it's kinda similar, you have some people under you but you have another boss as well?

Exactly.

Cool. So can I ask you first about if you do any interviews? Do you hire people?

I do do some of the interviews depending on what the position is.

Alright. So do you mind if I ask you first a little bit about that, about the hiring process and then about how you got your job?

That's fine.

Cool. So you were saying before for certain positions you conduct interviews?

[inaudible] ... yeah for certain positions. It's not a formal interview. It's just to see if you don't have a criminal record, I upload your ID into the database just to see what is happening on your name. If it's all good there it's fine, because basically we do hands on work. If you don't know something we teach you. You don't need to have much of a qualification unless you're applying for a position as a driver or mechanic. Then we're asking different questions, but as I said most of the staff are helpers. If there's a position available we just need more help. That can be anybody. If the person is willing to do the work. You come in, you come in if there's a job. If there's a position we give you a job. If we need help we go look, but we don't look within an area to find a person or post an ad to find a person because we get a lot of guys standing on the street looking, and we give them an opportunity. We see they're kind of struggling, we got work, why not work for us? We need help so why not help others, that's basically how we do it.

Alright. So of the guys who work under you, do you remember how they all came to find out about their job?

Most of them was overhearing people or people telling them about the job. So most of the guys came in that way. There was one guy that was a walk-in, now recently. Most of the other guys were either transferred in or they were walk-ins, or we went out looking for something cause we needed help. Very close by, we either just stop at the corner cause a lot of the times there's guys standing outside looking for work. Or they will come in with a contractor, or a subcontractor to see if there's jobs available. We don't really advertise work. It's more, if we need help, we look for help. If help comes along, we take on the help.

I see. So what's your reasons for doing it. For the referral system for example?

The referral system. We don't tell the guys that there is a position available. Aviwe and I we have been working together ... so for example he sees there's someone looking after the machines but there's no one cleaning the machines. So he approaches me and tells me we need someone. Then either he will look for one of his friends, or I will look for one of my friends, or we will tell the guys we need someone. If you hear of somebody or somebody passes by, if you see somebody on the road, whatever, we need somebody to help clean machines. That's basically how our referral system works. He tells me because he's my second on charge. We then look to see if there's a friend, relative sitting at home doing nothing if he can come in and work. But he must obviously be of age. So you must come in with an ID. As long as you have an ID and you're willing to work we have a position for you. Because we train you to go to the higher position. So basically most of the time we don't look outside for mechanics or drivers or counter staff. Those people, they basically we transfer between branches. If there's somebody there too many people working the counters they will then transfer one of them. And then if somebody then applies for a job as a counter if there's an opening we will then check. For higher positions we don't do referrals. It's just a matter of somebody applying for a job, we have their CVs lying around. If we're looking for a counter head position, we go through the CVs looking for someone with the proper credentials, we give you a call. Basically when those guys come in and we do an interview with them, they obviously will have to do the interview with the boss. Because the boss will then check if they are reliable enough. But then he will

lead them off to me so that I can train them for the work that they have to do.

Alright. So this is for the more difficult jobs?

This is for the more difficult jobs, where you obviously need training first, where you can't just fall in.

OK. And with the referral system, that's worked out fine so far?

It works a lot. A lot of guys leave very quickly because they hear about the work so now they're willing to work. But when get into the stride of working they see how much effort has to be put in for the amount money that they're gonna get paid. They tend to want to leave very quickly. So they're not really, how can I say this, they're not really hard working and just looking to work for the money. So the referral system works to get people in, but once they're in they're not willing to stay. Then you can really see who is willing to work cause they got difficulties at home, they don't have money. Where other guys they're willing to sit without nothing but they're not willing to work for little. So they would rather opt for nothing. A lot of guys have left us before. I've worked for the company for 12 years, I've seen so many guys come in and out. But sometimes the same guy that walks out will send somebody to come in. That's part of the referral system, he knows I'm leaving so there's a job available.

Haha yeah that makes sense. So you were saying before, we have guys maintaining it but we need somebody cleaning the machines. What do you tell your employees; what kind of person are you looking for? Do you say anything?

It doesn't really fit a category, the person that we look for. Look you must be of age, show your ID. You must be willing to work.

[steps out to take a call]

So yeah we were talking about what you tell people when you ask for a referral.

Right. I will tell you look, we need somebody. It's very basic. We tell them clean the place, clean the yard. There's not a lot we have to look for. The guys just has to be willing to work, be of age and have an ID. So then we can pay him according to government standards. But otherwise there's no real criteria, you don't need a career or qualifications.

No sure but, I'm sure you like people who work hard and are willing to come in on time.

We don't say that we try to follow the BEE recommendations of how you should look for people that you employ. But basically what they say in the thing is that you need to have one person that has a slight disability [inaudible]. And recently we did have somebody [inaudible]. We took him on because we knew we could train. He's been working for us for quite some time. He's been with us before, left, came back again and been alright. But he had anger issues so he couldn't manage with all the stress that we go through with customers walking in. But that's just an example, we try to employ anyone who is willing to work. The criteria isn't about the person that you are, but your willingness to work. If you have your own type of issues ... racial issues, salary issues, or if you don't like to work with certain types of people, that's your problem. We just need you to work. And if you're willing to do we're gonna take you on. We're gonna give you the opportunity. We're gonna give you a three month trial period on how to do it. If you're not happy with it you can just leave. Then you have another three month period to prove yourself, we're more than happy to give you another three month contract to do that. So if you want to stay and there's a position for you we'll keep you on permanently. But like I said we don't have a special criteria. If you're willing to work, anybody who's

willing to work. So even if the guy stays far away or close by. That doesn't really matter. How you get here or how you leave is your thing. If you do work late we give you transportation home. If you want the transportation. We sometimes tend to work late, but he knows it's gonna be difficult for me to go his way first and then my way. So the distance from work and how you get here is your problem. If you're here and you're willing to work ... just see that you get here. We leave here at 17:30. If you're happy with that we take you on.

Alright great. You read some of the questions beforehand didn't you? Haha, I was thinking of some questions and you already answered them!

Haha, yeah. Anything else you need?

Yeah I just wanted to ask you how you found your job?

My job. I just about finished school. I did some extra classes, I did a computer course which lasted me about four months. And then somebody told me, some guy who was working here. I think at the time he was the manager or second in charge. He and my mother were having a conversation and he told my mother, if your son is looking for work he can try with us. He didn't tell her there was a position. So one morning I just jumped on the train with him. Came down here and the manager at the time asked me if I wanted an interview. So I went along with the interview and he basically liked the person that I was. But back then we had a different style of employing people. It was 12 years ago. We are now franchised, we were bought over like three years ago. So we have a different way of doing things now but back then when I got here I had to do an interview, regardless of the position. Even for just a helper cause that's what I was. 12 years ago they offered me like 40 rand a day but the 40 rand a day was worth my while cause I was doing nothing. It was my first job, just left school, did some tertiary education. My mother lost her job so I came to work. My father was in prison at the time. Got the job and from there I worked my way up. But the interview went so well that I didn't stay in the low position for a long time because he didn't have a position to put me in. But he didn't tell me there was a better position because otherwise I would be hasty for the next step. So he didn't tell me, but just said we want you here. I didn't know why they wanted me here. Obviously he saw some potential that I didn't see. I didn't work before.

This was your first job?

Yeah I never worked before, I didn't know the working industry. They kept me here cause they saw there was place for me to grow. Basically in 12 years I went through all the positions. Faster than everybody else here, haha. I've been through everything so far. Mine was... I'll call it referral cause I was told about by my mother and someone told her. I was referred here but I had to do an interview regardless if I had any tertiary education. I had to do an interview whether it was a helper's job or not. He wanted to do an interview with me, but not for just the position of being a helper but he had intentions for me. Just for a helper's position, I'm sure he wouldn't have done anything and just put me on. But because he saw more potential he interviewed me. I had to move up in positions quickly. But I don't think I would have had to do an interview otherwise.

Do you remember who told your mom about the job? What was the relationship between that person and your mother?

That guy stayed in our area. But also he was married to my mother's cousin. Let's call it a relative.

Did he live close by as well?

Yes he did.

Alright cool. Oh and where do you live?

I live in Grassy Park which is like 12 kilometers from here.

And do you still take the train?

No I go by car now.

Oh alright you've got a car. How long does that take you?

It takes me roughly 18 minutes.

Oh OK and when you started?

When I started I traveled by train which was stupid because the guy didn't tell me there was other means of getting here. But I traveled by train and he made it very difficult for me. I didn't know where the place was and he showed me the way which meant I had to walk for like 5 kilometers, take a taxi to Wynberg which is the closest suburb when I can get more transport, from there I took a train to Hartfield station and from there I had to walk another 5 k's. But when I figured out where the actual place was I found a much easier and much quicker way of getting here. Another way I traveled was with taxi, which was normal but I had to walk 5 k's to travel. I took a taxi to Wynberg and then I walked the last 10 k's (it's actually 2 kilometers). I walked from Wynberg to Kenilworth. It took me roughly 20 minutes.

Haha, yeah?

Haha ya I was quite fit those days!

Haha I was just gonna say it's a pretty quick pace, haha!

All in all it would have taken me 50 minutes.

And now only like 20?

Now it's takes me about 20 ya.

So you were saying it was your first jobs?

Ya it was my first job. I did other work before but that was part-time, helping out family. This was my first real job.

And were you at the time actively looking for work?

I was busy with my computer literacy course was intending on finishing before carrying on. But regardless of that they still gave me my diploma and everything cause I already went before to the examination. I heard about this job and I thought I might not get another opportunity, I'll put this on hold. And rather go work because I knew my mother was struggling. I took the job, but at the time I wasn't looking for work because I was doing part-time work, working for family and so on making some money. But I knew that it wouldn't last, I needed a permanent job. So I took on the opportunity when there was an opportunity for me.

Oh alright, nice. Let's see if there's more I should cover ... uhm.... do you remember much about your job interview?

Uhm ... three children later I can't really remember.

[leaves to take a call]

What I can tell you from experience which might help you. Even while you're not looking for work. In the communities in Cape Town, especially on the Cape Flats. Even when you go to the shop in your community and you meet somebody you have never met before because a friend of yours knows him. They're standing there having

a conversation, I'm standing there having a smoke, he will then mention to his friend and I'll hear by chance. Most of the time you hear things by chance, and it's up to me ... I heard him say they're looking for people, and then I will then ask: where is this place? What do they do there? Is there a position available? So not only are you then referred by somebody that you know, you're referred because you overheard a conversation. And people's willingness to give you information in the Cape Flats. Most of the time you don't hear it from people you know, you hear it by chance. People talking in a taxi, wherever.

Are you close with your uncle, do you see him often?

Ya he stays around me. Now he doesn't work for this company now but the same industry working with the same machines. But he doesn't stay so far with me. It's about 10 minutes.

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Second interview over the phone. Difficult to get audible recording and hear respondent properly over the phone at the same time, so no recording/transcript was made.

- Referral system; why specifically?
  - Cost? Reward current employees?
- Vouching
  - how much value/importance do you hold to what you're told about potential employees by current ones?
  - how much does it reflect on current employees? Are current employees rewarded / punished (in any way; can be simply a verbal kudos or warning)?
- Guys who hang around waiting for work: who are they, where do they live?

Uses a referral system because it doesn't cost him any money and it works. No problems, no reason to switch. Not intentionally rewarding employees, but he has noticed some new employees like to work with people they know which is good for him because he wants his employees to be happy.

Vouching not that important to keep job as there is a testing period. Sees how people do in the first few months, then makes a decision. In order to get the job vouching not super necessary, but it depends on the person. Aviwe (his second in charge) will have preference and he will try out anyone he suggests, no questions asked. He trusts him, he's been at the company for years and knows what is required. Not a favor, just knows he can trust Aviwe's judgement. No other employees he trusts as much as Aviwe.

No direct reward or punishment for bringing in good/bad employees. Rather: building up trust. Aviwe he trusts because his judgement has been good. Brought in three guys, all worked out well, two still work there. Other guys maybe not so reliable, but will never not take someone because of that. Willing to try out anyone. Quite a lot of turnover so many get a chance.

Doesn't know where guys who hang around live. Only gets them for temporary and simple stuff. For example if he knows one of the cleaning guys is going to be gone for a few weeks. Does not care where they live, as long as they show up and are there. No formal contract or anything, just paid at the end of the week. Hasn't hired any of them on a permanent basis.

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Interviewer: Guus Hoekman  
Participant: Kim  
Date: 14-Jan-2015

At [redacted] Kenilworth. In the room between the store and a massive cooler where they store products that need to remain chilled. Stock people occasionally walking by to get things from the freezer but that wasn't distracting. Participant an Afrikaans woman in her late 30s. Very jovial, more than happy to participate. Was asked by her boss to do the interview. I explained it to her and she was absolutely fine with it and said she didn't mind taking a break. First went to another room (it was too noisy there) where there were more people and joked around with some people there. Afrikaans her first language but very comfortable to speak in English. Very talkative (I was not surprised to hear she worked on the phones).

[Explanation of the research and getting consent]

Can I ask you first what you do here?

I'm the switchboard operator. I answer the phones, helping out customers over the phone.

Have you worked here for a long time.

Yeah 18 years.

Did you start off doing this?

No I started in front as a til packer.

How long did it take you to get here?

I'm just a year here on the switchboard. Before that I worked in different places. I worked in the Rondebosch store. From 1993 in the Rondebosch store. They closed, they became a family store. Then I could choose between three stores. I came here. I was casual and still in school.

Alright. One of the things I'm looking at is how important the distance is between home and work. But first can I ask you for some background information? Where were you born?

In Lotus River. Opposite Grassy Park, just on the other side.

Do you still live there now?

Yes on the other side of Lotus River. For the last twelve years. It's just on the other side of Grassy Park, it's about the same area.

Have you lived in any other places?

No.

What kind of house do you live in now?

I'm renting. With my aunty. It's her house and I'm staying there.

Is it just you and her?

And her husband.

And she owns the house?

Yes.

Alright. What school did you go to?

I went to school in Lotus River. It was close by, a few minutes walk.

[answers phone call]

Right. So the school you went to, you finished matric there?

Yes I did... in 1996.

Did you start working straight after?

Yes I was casually working in Rondebosch for two years. Then in 1998 Rondebosch became a family store (franchise) and then they gave us the opportunity to go to another store or stay on. So I came here.

Why did you leave?

Because they pay less for an hour's work. So I came over here.

So you could choose?

Yes, you could say you wanted to go to three stores. They first checked which stores needed packers or cashiers and then you could say which three you wanted to go to. I chose Kenilworth, Tokai and Claremont. At that time the Lotus River wasn't there yet.

Right. Were those three the closest ones to you?

Yes.

So you only chose those three because of distance?

Yes for travelling.

OK. Were there any others that were also close by but with worse public transport access?

No ... the only one that would also be close to Lotus River would be Mitchell's Plain. But there... it's more like a Coloured area. It's very dangerous there. I thought I'm not gonna go there. The travelling is also awful. Sometimes their store closes 19:00 or 18:00. And [redacted] don't provide transport before then. And then you have to take a taxi, in the winter it's dark. The taxi will drop you off a distance from your house and then you have to walk. And the taxi they take their own time. They drive around looking for more people. That's why I didn't want to go that time.

Alright. So it was a combination of safety and the connection?

Yes, yes.

Right. So Tokai, Kenilworth, and Claremont?

They were closest. I would just have to take maybe one or two taxis, or one taxi and one train. Just to make it a bit easier for myself. I mean, if I take a store like Cape Town, like Garden Centre. It would take me like an hour and a half to travel to work from my house. I would go from one taxi to another and for one day it would work out to like R24. What works out to ... R300 or R200 a week. R500 or R600 a month... a lot of taxis then.

Right. So how much do you pay now?

It's 7 and 7... 14... R28 per day.

What, R28 per day? But that's more than to town then?

Maybe it's more expensive to town then I'm not sure. But it's much faster (going to Kenilworth). I have to take two taxis. One to Wynberg and then from there to Kenilworth. And in the afternoon the way back. There are no buses going my way. Maybe there is a bus in Grassy Park but that bus goes to Station Road, a very far distance from here.

Would you have preferred the Claremont branch because there's a bus station right there.

Yes but there is no bus for me. It'd be the same thing, I'd have to take a taxi to Wynberg and maybe a train to Claremont. It's gonna end up being the same thing. And Claremont is further. Now with the train... you don't want to work late. At 18:00... I'm just giving an example, I think a lot about commuter traveling because in winter 18:00 is dark already. And I really don't like travelling in the dark. Especially taxis. You don't know what you can find in the taxis. It's the same as a train. Now they rob you even in the taxis. They rob the drivers and they rob you.

So a bus would be better?

Yes I like the bus would be but it doesn't go my way. There's only one bus going from Strandfontein Road but I would have to walk a far distance to my house. It's about a fifteen minute walk. It's a main road but nobody walks there. I wouldn't take that chance to walk there. You hear a lot of things.

Right. So you want to minimize the amount of walking you do?

Yes.

So how much do you walk, to get to work?

Not much I get out of the taxi here. I only walk from home to the street. And then I get to Wynberg, cross the road to another taxi. And it drops me here in front, by the door and I walk in. But it's because of me being lazy. I can but it's just it's unsafe.

So your house is very close to the taxi rank?

Yes my house is on the main road. I stand on the main road, the taxis come by there.

And on the way back they drop you at your house?

Yes I just have to walk across the street.

Right, OK. Can I ask you how you found out about the job at [redacted] when you were in matric?

Haha, oh no... those years, I'm talking about 18 years ago. Those years you had the aunties and the uncles who could bring in their cousin and whatever. I just came in with my auntie. Then they offered me a job. I sometimes came in to take stock. When they needed some people. They asked their people to bring in some people. I never even brought a CV into [redacted] like it is now. Those years you could just come in with your aunties and uncles to work.

Alright, is this is aunt you live with?

No this is a different one. She used to work for [redacted]. She finished now. My uncle worked also for [redacted], he finished two, three years ago.

So they brought you to their work? How did that go?

I used to come in and used to ... it was easier to come in then. Sometimes I came in and just had to fold bags. They used to have a bag with blue stripes. At night time in my bed I kept seeing those stripes. I used to fold bags all the time when I started there...

OK. So when did your aunt decide to bring you in?

No she didn't decide to bring me. She wanted to take her daughter but she was lazy so I said I was gonna go in to work. I was in grade 7.

How old is that?

14 or 15...

Did you get paid?

Yes, weekly. My first pay was R16. We got paid on a Wednesday. You must go in and you sign your envelope out. I was too young so my aunt signed my envelope out.

And after that you kept on working at [redacted]?

Yes I just kept working here and became a permanent.

Was that a formal transition?

I don't know man it was so long ago, haha! And I wasn't going for it. I could have kept studying but I got the job here and had enough money to get by. My mom told me I could have kept studying, but you know now I can work at the call centre, I can bake the bread, I can cut in the butchery. I can make food in the deli, I can work as a cashier. I can work everywhere now. But I've always told myself I don't want to work for [redacted] for long. I'm gonna work myself to the bone. I'm not that old, I can't work here for another twenty years. But I had the job when I finished matric. I wasn't dumb or anything but I just kept working. And yeah now I'm still here, so ...

Yeah... have you thought about... you're living with your aunt now and relatively far. Have you thought about moving closer so you save money on transport?

I wish I could do that. But every time, like now, I was looking on gumtree and property24 looking for places even just to rent for myself. But it's so expensive! It's like R3000! You get paid R5000 and pay R3000 for a place... it's stupid to do that. Now at my aunt I'm paying less than a R1000.

So it's just not worth it?

No. I mean R3000, R3500 for a place that's closer. It's not gonna save me that much.

Do you have an idea where exactly you would move if you had the chance?

I didn't even look at that. It's all too expensive so I can't afford it.

Right. And have you thought about looking for a job close to home?

I'm actually OK here. It's not too far. And when I think about, I have a friend who works in Canal Walk. They have to work until late. They must take buses they travel late. From Canal Walk to town and from town home. I'm OK with me to travel here and back. It's not so bad.

Right. And are there many jobs in the first place, where you live?

Not really. I don't think I want to work so close to home anyway.

How come?

Well because if I work at the [redacted] close to home... If I would become a supervisor. I'm not at home, I'm a people's person I talk to everyone. I know everybody, even the ones that drink. In any case, those people will come around and bother me for jobs or money. They think you're working and you're loaded. They would expect it. I wouldn't even want to work that close to home because of that. And there would have to be a better job available there as well. I used to work at the fish shop here, but now answering the phones since last year.

How did get that new job?

I applied for it. They had it on job-shop (the internal [redacted] job ad system), on the notice board. A lot of people applied and the manager brought me in at some point, I did an interview and got the job.

What was the interview like?

It was intense. Asking me how I would react to customers, if I had experience, how I handle problems. I had to do a lot of talking but I don't remember too much.

Did you have to write a CV as well?

No just an internal form.

And everyone who applied already worked at [redacted]?

Yes, no one from outside.

Right. So another thing I'm looking into is if people use their social network to find work. You said you got the job through your aunt and uncle. Have you suggested to any friends, family or anyone you know to apply here?

Yes, yes. Our recruitment is through the head office. People drop their CV and they get in touch with them. I put my cousin's in and my neighbor's. She waited long, and they contacted her. But you have to write a numeracy test and she failed it. But I can't understand how she failed because it's not that difficult. If I look around some people... my cousin should have easily passed. My neighbor is still waiting.

What did you tell them about the work?

They were looking for work and I told them to apply here. Not much else. I just said they would start as a packer or something and it's long hours but they were looking for work so that was fine.

So you took the CV from your cousin and dropped it off. Did they know you were related to you?

No it doesn't work like that you just drop it off. They don't know if we're related or whatever, if we're neighbors.

Right. And your cousin, is she still looking for work?

I don't know actually I don't see her that often.

So since matric you've worked at [redacted] the whole time?

Yes.

You haven't been unemployed? Or looked for other work?

No, haha.

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Interviewer: Guus Hoekman  
Participant: Florence  
Date: 06-Jan-2015

At [redacted] Claremont. In a side cafe within the store where people can get coffee, tea and some small dishes. Still within the store and with colleagues around, but no issues about anyone hearing us. Participant a Xhosa woman in her mid 40s but seemed older. Seemed incredibly confused in the beginning, because apparently no one told her what was going on. I interviewed the manager first and asked him if I could interview some of his employees. Two women came up to me holding hands, talking and laughing, and one of them "dropped off" the women I ended up

interviewing. As it turned out the other woman was asked by the manager but didn't feel like participating and lured the other into doing the interview instead. After I explained to her what I was doing she was genuinely fine with participating. Xhosa her first language but her English was quite good. Not shy, had no problem correcting me if I was wrong and never had the feeling I was putting words in her mouth. After the interview she mentioned a few times she was sick of working on Saturdays because she wanted to spend more time with her kids. Also asked me if I knew of any available jobs.

[Explanation of the research and getting consent]

Can I first ask you where you live?

Philippi East.

What kind of housing do you live with?

RDP housing. I bought it from someone in 2003.

Do you live there with your family?

With my kids. I have three boys but I live with two.

OK. What are they doing?

They're at school and the other one is working, he stays on his own.

What material is your house made of?

It's a stone house.

Alright. Where were you born?

Here in Cape Town. But I don't know where exactly. I can't remember only my mother knows.

Ah alright. But not in Philippi?

No.. no. Long time ago.

You don't remember exactly though?

No not really. But it was here in Cape Town.

Right. When did you move into the house you have now?

I bought it in 2003 and I moved there in 2007. I put someone there before. Before that I lived in Khayelitsha. I was married then.

What kind of housing was that?

A brick house.

Was there a big difference between the house there and your current one?

Not really no. We got bought it from some lady. We sold it and then I got the house i have now.

Alright. What is the level of education you have?

I went to school in Athlone. I lived in Gugulethu but I went to school in Athlone.

Right. So about the job you have now. What was the process of getting the job you have?

My mother looked for the job. She was a customer at [redacted] in Sea Point. She used to go there and talked to the supervisor about me and then I went there. I could come in and after that I got work.

When was this?

In 1989.

Wow, you worked for [redacted] since then?

I promise, haha

Haha alright. So your mother went to that store?

Yes she was a customer there.

At Sea Point?

Yes she worked near there. She knew the supervisor there, she used to talk to him. Those days the supervisor could also hire people I think.

Ah alright. So you must have been quite young in '89?

Yes I was 19 years old. But I did have a baby at the time. That's why I needed a job.

Right. Was it very difficult to balance the job and the baby?

... it was not quite easy I don't know why. But life was like that, moving on.

Did you work in Sea Point then in the beginning?

Yes, but I lived in Gugulethu.

What did you do?

I was a cashier. I've only worked as a cashier, I still do that now.

Do you remember how you went to work?

I took taxis.

Any idea how long it took and how much it cost?

Pff no idea, it was so long ago.

Haha alright. So you started at Sea Point. Did you work at other branches?

I went to Nyanga and then here (Claremont).

Alright. How long did you work at each place?

In Nyanga I was there from 1997... 1998. Until last year. Because it was closed and then I went here.

Could you choose?

Yes and I picked Claremont cause I could travel straight.

How long did it take you to Nyanga?

It was near. It was very near. But here is far. It used to only take me 20 minutes or 30 minutes to go there.

And here?

45 minutes... it depends on the driver, sometimes it takes an hour.

So are you spending a lot more money now?

Yes R420 per month now. In Nyanga I bought a monthly ticket for the train. It was only two station. It was R104 per month.

Have you thought about finding a job closer by?

I'll never find a job. I wish I could get a job that was near. I've thought about it but I don't know... I didn't look.

Are you making more money here?

No the same salary. But spending a lot more on transport.

Right. So that hasn't made you look for work closer to home?

Where can I get a job? I'm an old lady I'm not going to find anything.

And what about moving closer to your current job?

I always think about something like that. It's nice to be near your place. Very nice. But now... not realistic.

What makes it difficult?

[probably misunderstood me, continues to answer previous question] I don't think someone who is working permanent there will leave anytime soon. And at my age, I don't think they'll need an old lady like me. Get a job... where? Where? I'll be able to work as a cleaning lady, nothing else.

So if you lived closer to Claremont, that could save you money on transport right?

Right. And the rent? You see, all though things are gonna be high. There you know that you pay for the RDP housing.

Yeah and you bought the house?

Yes.

So you're planning on staying where you are now?

Yes, now I pay the rates only. Now I'm paying R50 per month, for the rate. But here you're gonna pay a lot. Even electricity is gonna be more. And then what's the use of staying near if all that stuff will be more? It's not worth it.

Ah alright. And where does your oldest son live?

He's staying in (can't hear properly). My mother bought a house that side.

Is that RDP housing as well?

It's a government subsidy they get to pay for that place. For the project.

Ah I see. How did you get that subsidy?

I'm not sure my mother got it from the government years ago to buy the house.

Alright. So I was talking to the manager earlier. He was saying every once in a while, when they're looking to hire people, he lets his employees know that they should bring in CVs from family and friends.

I've never heard about that.

Maybe at Nyanga or Sea Point?

They never tell us that.

No? They never said that if you have family or friends you should bring in their CVs?

No... I always bring a lot of them. But they never told me.

OK.. OK. Have you ever seen an advertisement for a job? Do you look for that?

Never. I wish I could get another job. You see to do one thing for the last 25 years... you wish sometimes to change it, do something else. That can give you off on saturday and be with your kids. Every day you're working, even in the evening. You're not at home. You leave in the morning and come back at night.

I see. So you work on Saturdays as well? Six days a week?

Yes, yes.

What are you hours like?

On Saturday I work 5 hours. On weekdays 8 hours.

I was wondering if I could ask you about your commute. What time do you start?

7:45.

And what time do you have to leave your house?

I take the bus of 6:10. That bus takes me where I take the bus to go to Claremont. I take that bus and get off somewhere, and wait for the bus to take me here.

Right. So from your house, do you walk to a bus stop?

I walk to the bus stop. About 10 minutes.

And then you take the first bus? How long does that take?

It depends, 20 to, 25 to... I just wait for the bus that comes through.

Right so you're waiting for a while there?

Yes, yes.

OK. So, ... can you tell me exactly what time you leave and take which bus? What time do you wake up?

I wake up at 5:00. I help the kids and stuff. I leave the house at 6:00. Then I walk about 10 minutes to the first bus stop. I take the bus at 6:10 and go to the place where I take the second bus. And there I must wait, there is no schedule.

Right. So you leave at 6:00, what time are you at work?

I start 7:45. I came here today 7:40.

Alright so it takes about an hour and a half, hour and 45 minutes to get here?

Yes yes, sometimes two hours if I have to wait a lot.

Alright. So the bus ride itself, how long is that and how much do you wait?

Yes I wait for a long time. It depends on the one that comes through.

On average though, any idea?

Between 20 and 30 minutes maybe.

Alright. And on average what time do you get to work?

When the schools start again about 7:45... sometimes 8:00.

Ah alright. So sometimes you're late?

Yes sometimes I'm late.

But you always leave at six?

Yes sometimes it takes two hours to get here.

That's so long! Have you thought about getting a car?

Yes but I can't afford it now. It's not an option. I want a car but it's not possible.

Right. So on the way back home, what's that travel like?

When I go home. My bus is at 16:10 from Claremont. Or 17:15. Sometimes it comes late... 17:20. Then I take the other bus. After that there is no other bus. If I'm working until 18:00, sometimes I work from 9:00 to 18:00. If I'm working until 18:00 I have to take the Harare or another bus, get off somewhere else... Philippi, and wait for that bus.

Right. So let's say you miss the 16:15 bus?

Then I take the other bus. Get off at Crossroads and then take the bus home from there. To Philippi East.

And the 16:15 one?

It goes straight. After that one it doesn't go straight. The 17:20 goes late.

Right. So if you finish at 16:00 you rush out quickly?

Yes I must rush to get that bus.

How long does that 16:15 bus take?

About 45 minutes.

And if you miss that one, how does the other bus go?

I go Claremont... Philippi. Get off there, and then wait for Philippi East.

How long does that take in total?

It takes half an hour to get to Philippi. And then wait there for the next bus. I don't know what time, there's no schedule.

Alright. And in total, about how much time does it take?

About an hour and 20 minutes.

So in the morning it takes you a lot longer?

Yes.

But why is there no bus straight in the morning?

From that side, I don't know why. We don't have that.

Is it the Golden Arrow bus?

Yes. But no bus to Claremont. There is a bus to Rondebosch. But at 6:20 but I can't take it because I start 7:45 and I'll be late because of the traffic. Now I take the earlier one, we only have that bus. At 6:00. But I must walk far.

How far?

Like 20, 25 minutes. Inside in Philippi East. I don't like it it's dangerous. Especially in the dark, people get things stolen and it's not nice to walk there.

Alright I see.

You were saying earlier when you worked in Nyanga you took the train right?

Yes a train or sometimes a taxi.

You never take a taxi or train here?

No never take the train.

How come?

Only the bus. The train... it takes longer, sometimes it doesn't even come. And you have to get off in Salt River.

And the taxis?

There is taxis. But I don't take it because I don't have the money. I have the clip card but I don't want to carry around cash every day.

And your kids, you get up at 5:00 to prepare them for school.

Yes sometimes I leave them. They start 8:00 so they are in the house when I leave. They own that house... me I just sleep there.

Where do they go to school?

In Mitchell's Plain.

How long does that take them?

20 minutes, they can walk there.

Ah alright. The manager was saying earlier if people have a night shift and finish after 19:00 they get free transport back?

Yes but I don't work until after 19:00.

Would you not like that?

No... that means I must come late. They give you transport, but I must think about the kids.

Right. Your two other kids who live with you, if they're a bit older would you get back to get the free transport?

No... my kids are 17 and 14. But you come home late there is always so much housework to do. And I would have to travel in the dark more. It's dangerous.

And in the winter, when you leave your house is it dark still?

It is and I have to walk. It's dangerous. But what can I do? It's the time.. that won't change.

Yeah I understand. So years ago when you got the job, there was no interview right?

No I never had any interview for any job.

They trusted your mother then?

Haha, maybe.

Did you have a test period at all when you worked as a casual?

Yes but I was lucky, it was only 3 months. Now they can take years and years.

OK I see. But do you still tell people to come apply here?

I always tell people to go to the head office. The only thing you can do it to go there and drop your CV.

Alright. Has it worked for anyone that you told?

One guy he did but I don't think he got the job. But people want me to help them, they think it's gonna be easy because I already work at [redacted].

They think you have like an inside... ?

Yeah, yeah.

Have you told your son to apply her?

My son has worked for [redacted]. I told him you must go to head office and drop your CV. But for a while he didn't show up for work and then he went back to work he didn't have his job anymore.

Alright. What did you tell your son exactly?

That he must drop off his CV and that he must work hard because it is long hours.

I see. Did you help write him his CV?

No he did that himself.

Did you tell him things about the job?

I told him things, you must do things like this, like that. Because I've been here for a long time. But you know the children...

How long did he work at [redacted]?

For seven years.

OK that's quite a long time.

Yes he was in Nyanga. And then he moved to Belleville but he was too lazy to go to work.

Ah alright with you? Did people know in Nyanga that he was your son?

They did know, yes. I told him he had to keep working hard, you're mother is working here.

But in Bellville?

I don't know in Belleville he was lazy or the travelling was difficult. I don't know, children never keep their money right. Me you know I must keep the ticket, I buy a weekly ticket or monthly ticket. I don't know why he got lazy. I just heard the story he didn't even tell me. I heard from someone he lost his job. He didn't come to work for some time.

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Interviewer: Guus Hoekman

Participant: Adrian

Date: 06-Jan-2015

At [redacted] Claremont. In a side cafe within the store where people can get coffee, tea and some small dishes. Still within the store and with colleagues/employees around, but no issues about anyone hearing us. Participant a Coloured man, probably in his mid 40s. Extremely friendly and happy to help out. Told me I could order something to drink and that I should offer the employees I was interviewing and that I wouldn't have to pay (I paid myself but I feel the offer was genuine). Afrikaans his first language but spoke perfect English. His answers were thorough, he elaborated willingly. Never had the impression he was lying at all, though his employees later completely contradicted what he said about recruitment through employee referrals. Only worked at the Claremont branch for a few months and before that at other branches, so it could have been his approach there. Honestly have little reason to doubt him and I could see no reason why he would lie about that. He knew I was going to interview some employees later and what I was going to ask them.

[Explanation of the research and getting consent]

So first I'd like to ask what kind of employees you look for. The key characteristics of the people working for you.

Firstly, it's more entry level. Low level. Whatever people we take on, obviously it's not permanent. It's casual and stuff like that. And there onwards, as the people work and as the business grows and requires people, those people get opportunities to apply for permanent positions as time goes on.

Do you always start with a temporary placement?

Correct.

What kind of characteristics do you want your employees to have?

First and foremost it should be friendliness. In the retail environment. You must be able to be friendly, work with people. You must be punctual. You need to be very reliable, put it that way. Those are the key. But also your appearance, how you carry yourself. For me that is they key. You must be able to work with people.

Including the stock people, who shelf?

What we do, once we interview people, we tend to interview for them to start off at the front line as packers. Packing the customers bags and stuff. That is something that new people that come here, they can settle in here on the front line to do the basics. Packing the customers' bags and stuff like that. Get to know what [redacted] is about. And from there onwards, if need be, somewhere else in the store then we will shift them along. Slowly we let them settle in. Let them feel their way and then move them to departments. Shelf packers will be different, once we interview we will specifically ask them we will look for people with maybe an experience of packing groceries... but it's not like if you don't have experience as a packer we will not take you. A lot has got to do how you carry yourself during the interview. If people show the willingness that they want to learn, they ... it depends on the circumstances. You ask them why you want to work for [redacted]. And they will give you the reasons, some will say you know I've got a family to support, I'm the breadwinner in the house. So there's different reasons why people will want to work at [redacted]. Some will say it's a great company, we've heard a lot about the company, we've got family working for the group. They will say it will be nice to work for the company.

There are a lot of things that will make you decide whether or not to employ somebody.

In what ways do you attract your applicants? What methods do you use?

We do it at store level. A lot of things were done differently, a lot of things have changed. The one way that happens is, we will let people know they can hand in their CVs at store level. Why we do it that way is that there might be people within the area over here. They can give in their CV and you avoid the issue of employing someone who lives 30 kilometers from the store. We rather have somebody who lives close by the store. So they hand in their CVs. We take in their CVs and I promise you, if people know that CVs are required you get a line of people here handing them in. That shows you how tough it is and how many people are looking for work. So once we get the CVs we don't go through them, we put it in a box, then we take it to HR. The head office in Kenilworth. And what they do is they will go through them and will say ... this is the box we got from [redacted] Claremont. Now we look at the areas. It doesn't mean that people who drop off their CVs live in the area. Somebody who lives 30 kilometers away can hear about it and they come here. So what they do is sort it out by areas. Those CVs get loaded onto a database. Let's say in a month we need 20 people. Then they will maybe 40 of the people they got in the database and tell them to come to our store. The 40 people come, we set them up, let them write the screening test. It's a very basic test. Out of those 40 people, let's say 25 people pass the test. So I need 20 people. Those 25 people they will notify saying you need to report to the Claremont store in two days time to come for an interview. I get a list of names of the 25 people that pass the test. Each one gets a 20 minute timeslot to come in for an interview. There are about six or seven questions we ask them. So as they come along, you've got your list of people coming and we interview them. From there onwards, out of the 25 people... if I find 10 people successful it will only be the 10. Although I need 20, but I still need to make that decision. Out of the 25 people, 10 I want and the other 15 no. Even if I need 20. So I will send the packs, the interview packs back to the office saying here are the 10 successful and the other 15 unsuccessful. I could say I will take 20 because I need 20, but that will defeat the whole purpose of interviewing. Then I might as well say all the people who pass the test we want all of them in our store. So I send that through to our office. Then the 10 successful people get told they need to be at our head office at a certain time for induction. Induction takes place, all the admin gets done. They get told all the basics of what [redacted] is about and stuff like that. Once that is done they will notify the store and tell me your 10 people are all inducted, admin stuff done... when do you want them to start? I say well today is Tuesday, I want them here by Friday. They will come in a certain time, they come to the office, all 10 together, have a chat with them, make them feel welcome. We'll have someone take them around the whole store to show them around. Sometimes people have heard about the company they want to work for the company, but once they're in the store. I'll tell you, out of that 10... after the first week the following week there might be six or seven. To them it's like "this is not what I thought [redacted] was about", they have to work harder and longer than they thought and they stop showing up. Some stores you're lucky where all 10 will stay.

Right. You mentioned earlier you do a skill test, a screening test. What does that entail?

It's a numeracy test. You know counting... It's very basic math... very, very basic. Sometimes people fail and you think how did they fail this? We take it for granted sometimes, assume that people out there have had basic education.

What level of education do you need to have? You said counting but...

Yeah but when I say count... it's multiply, subtract, division and stuff like that. I promise you it's not complicated. Just basic stuff. Where a lot of them get it wrong, they haven't been in a classroom environment for a few years. All of a sudden you are being put under pressure and it can become overwhelming. You freeze up, not focused and they get it wrong.

Alright I see. You also mentioned that you let people know they can give their CVs. How do you do that?

What will happen is ... we don't advertise. On a daily basis I get people coming in here wanting to hand in their CVs. And I tell them "unfortunately there are no vacancies". But the minute you tell them it's fine to hand in CVs, I promise you, word of mouth spreads. The reason we don't want to advertise is that... you need 20 people, but then 200 people show up. You're wasting your time and their time as well. We rather do it that way. And it's not every time that we do take CVs. We take CVs and we get a box. There might be 100 CVs in that box. That 100 CVs get sorted out per area and maybe for our store there are 80 people in the database. So what happens if we only need 20 people, out of that 80 people we request 40 people to write the test. 15 don't make it, the other 25 come. There will always be people in the database. Until that database is really low, the office will tell us you need to get some CVs. And sometimes we chat to the staff. Or the staff will come to us, you know I've got a brother, I've got a sister, I've got a nephew... "they're finished now at school and stuff like that, they're looking for a job, can I bring in their CV?". So yeah it's all about word of mouth.

Right. But if you don't advertise, do you always let your employees know? Who do you tell?

We would let our employees know. We have a meeting once every two months. And we will tell them guys, we're employing people, can you ask around and hand in some CVs. Let us know. Before you know it we're sorted, the word spreads so quickly.

What do you tell your employees exactly?

What we tell them is like, in a month's time we need people, if you've got family or friends that are close by please bring their CV. What I would do is say, just bring one. Because I wouldn't want one staff member bringing ten and another just one. One each so it's fair for everybody.

Right. And do you have certain staff where you think will probably get a good referral so I will look at their CV more closely?

Yeah but I always tell them guys, if you feel that the person that you know or who is related to you, is not gonna be good to work here they don't bother. Because if I know you brought in somebody ... it would be embarrassing if that person does something wrong and it's a reflection on you because you're the one who recommended them and they're related to you. So I tell them save yourself the embarrassment and rather bring someone who *is* good enough. There's a lot of amazing staff. I tell them you know, if your cousin is as good as you, I promise you I will employ him or her anytime. They'll sometimes say no, but I promise you, they're very reliable, very this, very that. You tend to go with that. But like I said, the test, no one's gonna get away from writing the test. That's the first point. Somebody can be brilliant but if he or she can't get through the test they're not gonna get through.

Yeah great. When you tell your employees you're looking for people do you tell them about any skills they need to have?

They need to be able to read and write, need to be literate. At the same time we tell them, you know what the responsibilities are, what it's like working for [redacted]. It's more about informing them to inform the person who wants to apply. Mentally prepare the person for what to expect.

You were saying earlier you get the CVs and they're sorted by area. How exactly? Do you just look at if people live close by?

What we look at the stores, where they're situated. The CVs will be laid out according to that area that are close by.

So you have a preference for people who live close by?

Yes.

Does that apply to your employees now? Do many live relatively close?

I would say the current ones that are starting now. But we've got employees that have been at the company for 20, 30 years. Many of them aren't very close by.

I can imagine that here in the southern suburbs, or generally in wealthier areas, the employees you have probably tend not to live here but further.

Correct.

So is that an issue for you?

It depends on the individual. Some people, if there's an issue with transport, certain people every day they're on time. Then you get the people who have a habit of not being on time. It all depends on the individual. Some blame it on the issue of transport. And I can understand, but some of the people, when it's rain or sunshine they're always here. And some are almost never on time whatever the case. Now when we're recruiting we look for people who live close by. Some have been here 20 or 30 years, they have to travel with a taxi, bus, two trains, whatever to get here.

So in what areas to the employees you've recently hired live?

We look at the Athlone area, the Salt River area, the Woodstock area. Wynberg those kinds of places. But we do have people here who live in Mitchell's Plain, in Lentegeur, those areas quite far off.

Do you know the reason why the head office divides up CVs by geographical location?

The policy is that we provide transport for our staff. Once a staff member works until 19:00 or later we provide a meal and transport. So [grouping by location] helps us with arranging transport. The service provider, it helps them as well. For example we have eight vans tonight, so he can sort his vans out per area. Or maybe put areas that are close by each other together. So that the staff also don't get home too late. There's a bigger picture that one has to look at, what time people get home. Our competition they don't really provide transport, it doesn't matter for them. People find their own way home.

Is it a significant cost to bring the staff home?

It is, it is.

So you really make sure the people you hire currently are clustered?

Correct. If you have ten people in a van and they all stay far apart you're not gonna get a good price from the service provider and your staff is not gonna be happy about the time they get home. The store closes at 20:00, they get out at 20:30...

Yeah I see. So one other thing I wanted to ask is if you do a job interview for every job.

No. For till packers here in front, cashiers, packers. But nothing else but that. Just the lower skilled employees. More specialized positions won't be done at store level, they'll be done at our head office.

So the people just below you who work at the office will be interviewed at the head office?

Yeah that's right, the more specialized.

Why is that?

The more specialized jobs you need expertise, you need people to know what is needed. At the interview we have people who specialize in that and might want to ask questions that I wouldn't be able to know what it is. But specialized positions, all done at the head office. Only basic entry level jobs are done at store level.

OK. You mentioned people who start working here are casual workers first. Once you hire, say, those 10 people. How long do they stay on before you give them a more permanent contract?

Depends on the store. If there's growth in your store... once a store grows in turnover then your staff numbers will grow as well. So it depends how good your store is doing what is needed to manage the store in terms of people. It used to happen very quick that you could become permanent. Currently it's not that straight forward.

Have you recently hired people?

Not since I'm here. I've been here four months. We only hired six people but on the night shifts. Filling up shelves and stuff.

Is there a different process between day and night shift?

The same. It's just that you tell the person when they apply it's for the night shift and that they can't come and tell me I want to work the day shift. It's permanently night shift, we make that clear right at the beginning. In the interview you make it aware, we say remember this is night shift and you can't come back and tell us later you can't come in so you have to make that decision now if you're ok with that.

Do you look at where they live more for the night shift because you will always have to bring them home?

Same. Same.

But they will always have to be brought home right?

Correct.

So is where they live more important because of that?

It is important. But for the night shift we will go fetch them at their house, but in the morning there is transport available.

Oh they work through the night?

Yes from 20:00 at night until 7:00-8:00 in the morning. So tomorrow at 7:00 there is public transport available. But in the evening we pick them up from their homes.

Alright I see. Do you give any reimbursements for the commute of people who work during the day?

No.

Do you have any idea about the average cost or duration of their commute?

It alternates. Some will travel by bus, some by train and taxi. It will alternate. I cannot really put an average on that. But if it's early shift they will find their own way home. If you're late shift we will provide it, anything after 19:00 we will.

Right. You said some people were always on time and some who tended to be late. Have you notice any correlation between how far people live and how often they were late or absent?

It plays a role but for me, you get maybe five people who live in the same area. Four can be on town and one can't. It's got a lot to do with the individual. Some will complain, you know, I've got to take a train and a taxi or whatever, or they can just live with it. That's my way of transport and get it over and done with so I can earn my money. We do have issues of absenteeism but I wouldn't put it down to where they live, how far.

Just up to the individual?

The individual, definitely.

Right I see. I forgot to ask this earlier. Are there any influences from either unions or something like BEE to the people you hire?

The influence of the unions is more ... their concern is more about the higher levels, in terms of BEE to get the numbers right. At the bottom we are way short on the bottom. In some stores, some customers ask why we don't have white cashiers or white packers. Certain areas they want to see that. HR, they even went to schools, they went to colleges or campuses where they want to recruit white cashiers... but it's just not. I mean certain stores do have the odd one or two white packers, white cashiers. And they stand out like a sore thumb. You can see them immediately. At the lower level the unions they won't complain, the numbers are way over in terms of the number of tellers and packers. The union might argue about the top level we have less of colour. That ratio we need to get it right on top.

When you interview people, does language play a role?

It does, it does. Maybe once there was an issue, you can an interpreter. But even so, if there's a language issue ... I'm not saying it's discriminating but I can't put somebody next to you all the time interpreting. We have to look at the business.

So you require everyone to speak English?

Correct.

Do you know what most of your employees speak?

English. Obviously I have a lot of African people and they have Xhosa but we would prefer the language that is spoken to be English.

Second interview over the phone. Difficult to get audible recording and hear respondent properly over the phone at the same time, so no recording/transcript was made.

- Mentioned why not advertisement (too many applicants), but why referral system?
  - Cost? Reliable workers? Reward current employees?
- how well a new employee performs reflects on the person who brought him in
  - how do you know who brought in whom?
  - do you somehow (even verbally) reward employees who bring in someone new that is good? or vice versa?

Referral system saves company money. Most just unnecessary to advertise or do anything. The head office does pretty much all the recruiting, he's not going to bother with recruiting too much. He can only make a decision after the head office have sent people to his store. Will ask new employees if they know anyone working at the store and how they know them. Always helps if they know someone, especially employees who have been around for a long time. Closer relationship is "better"; counts for more. Will keep this in mind but not do much with it unless it's not going well. Their work ethic and how well they do their job much more important; while they're VTE he can see how they do. If they're doing badly he can also ask the person that knows them, but that rarely happens.

Won't reward employees. Might say something if new employees gets a permanent job, but otherwise the new employees are all VTE and he can't make any promises so he doesn't want to make it seem like he already made some choice about who will be taken on permanently. The decision of how many new permanent staff there can be is also taken by the head office.

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Interviewer: Guus Hoekman

Participant: Jenny

Date: 13-Jan-2015

At [redacted] Wynberg. In the office of the store manager (who was out during that time. Office was shared between a few people but at the time no one else was around. From time to time someone came in to ask a quick question but it wasn't very distracting. Participant a Coloured woman in her late 30s. The assistant manager at the store, at the moment acting manager because the branch manager was on leave. First language Afrikaans but spoke perfect English. Happy to help out, later asked some of her employees to participate as well. A few questions she kind of ignored and answered as if I asked something else in order to say good thing about [redacted].

[Explanation of the research and getting consent]

So you're the assistant manager, what does that mean exactly?

You have a store manager who is the head of the unit. And the assistant manager helps with the duties.

Do you handle applications as well?

All recruitment happens at our head office. So what will happen is all CVs will go the office, they will determine that the store will need people and they do the recruitment at the head office.

So they're send to the office in Kenilworth?

Yes.

Do you do anything with the applications or applicants here?

All we do is tell the office how many people we need. They do it on their side, check where they live, are they close to the store, those kinds of things.

I see. So in terms of input and decision making, you have...?

Not much.

You basically get told: these people work here now, try to fit them in?

Correct

Do you do any advertising yourself, at the store?

[She misunderstood, thought I was talking about products]

So you have ads only for products, do you have ads to attract applicants?

No.

Not at all?

No.

How do you attract them?

Applicants, from what I understand, your normal staff they all give their CVs in. And then we have a training manager program. That advert gets place by the office, and it goes into the newspapers and they'll set criteria for people to apply.

Alright. But that's only for training managers?

Yes.

So only for the higher level jobs?

Correct. We don't advertise the in store... like the till packers and stuff like that.

Those ads for the managers, where do they get posted?

In the newspaper. In the classifieds.

And they have set criteria?

Yes. It's not official from me, but what I know is tertiary is a very big part. I don't know if they want experience but I know tertiary is one of them... post matric.

And you don't need to do advertisement for lower skilled workers?

No I think we get enough already. What we do have is like internal recruitment. Let's say a store like Glengerry (a [redacted] branch in a mall in Brackenfell/Durbanville) is looking for a supervisor on frontline. What they'll do is send it to the region via email. It's called the jobshop. It's then taken from the system and put on our notice board. So someone in this store who wants to be a frontline supervisor in Glengerry, has that opportunity to apply for that store. They then go via the internal process, they fill in an application form. That application form then goes either to the store manager or to HR or whoever is going to deal with that application. That's how we grow internally. And then also, we have a VTE (variable time employee) base and a permanent base. So let's say Wynberg has a position for a permanent till packer. The jobshop will go up in that store and all other stores. And everybody internally, within [redacted] no matter what store you're in can apply for that position.

And those jobs are only advertised internally? They're not posted anywhere else?

No they are only internally, only on the notice boards through jobshop.

And that's a physical notice board?

Yes within each store, we all have one.

Right. Do you have a lot of people who transfer within [redacted] through those notice boards?

Where there's growth and if they're close to home they will apply. You wouldn't get someone from Retreat applying for Glengerry because of the travelling. It wouldn't be worth their time. But a store like Kenilworth, you got someone who lives in Retreat who could work in Wynberg. So they do apply.

So generally internal switching is used to get jobs closer to home?

Yes. Very much, yes. Many of our staff are dependent on public transport. Very dependent.

Do you know in which areas your employees live?

The employees here in Wynberg live as far as Delft. Khayelitsha, Parkwood, Ottery, Retreat, Steenberg. Many of us know where our staff live because there are taxi services at night. So in all our stores when you work late you get a taxi service. And we'll then obviously see how many taxi we need based on where people live. That's something [redacted] gives.

Right. You have to organize taxis, so people who live close together go in one taxi...

Yes so you have one taxi going to Khayelitsha/Mitchell's Plain one, Retreat/Steenberg travel in one. Hanover Park/Manenberg travel in one. Stuff like that.

Do you have any employees who walk to work who live here in Wynberg.

I do, I have a lady here Sharon, she works in the Fruit and Veg department she lives in Wynberg she lives very close by. I don't have anyone else within walking distance.

Do you know if the head office... they look at where people live and then assign people to the various branches. Do you know if they base it on distance only or also to keep people clustered together so the taxi service can be efficient as possible?

They would because you don't want someone to come to work and have to spend most of salary on traveling. Giving the taxi service is also an expense to us, so you don't want one person living in Table View and another in Wynberg. So location is very important. But the head office arranges that so I don't know what they look at first or which is more important to them.

I see. As a branch do you do any skill test or something to test people out before they start working here?

Yeah. When you come to [redacted] you do a numeracy test at the office. It's a numeracy and lit test to see where you are. Then also for every position up... like a till packer is category 1. So your till packer, fruit and veg, deli, the people who serve. Then you get a numeracy 3 position which in our case is cashier. Then a category 4 test for supervisor. So we do have, before, when an application comes you do a test to see if you're in line for the position.

And that test is done at the head office?

Yes all tests are done there.

So from there you get people assigned to Wynberg for example...

And they will have already done their numeracy test.

I see. Have you ever been assigned people who come here and it turns out they're not really a fit? It doesn't work out, maybe in terms of language or something else?

No... people [redacted] is so diverse... our interaction is in English. But I don't think we have many bad experiences when it comes to that.

That's not an issue you deal with at all here?

No, no.

And the way it works with the head office and you getting assigned people. Are there other branches who have different rules like that?

There are family stores, a franchise. I can't tell you how their recruitment works. They're owned. They pay [redacted] for the name, all those things. They recruit individuals directly I think.

So one thing still about the taxi service. Is that for everyone?

Yes. Just late shift. You have to leave after the store closes. Then you're entitled to go home with the taxi. But it is not a only staff taxi. It's for management as well. Except for us... as in, assistant manager up. We have our own car because of the responsibilities that we have. But the department managers they could also take the taxi.

Is it a significant cost for the branch? Do you pay it as a branch?

Yes every store funds their own taxi costs. Because if you take a store like Wynberg and Promenade. Promenade has a lot more staff. They need a lot more taxis. It all depends on the store.

But it's a significant cost to the branch?

Well... every cost is a significant cost to us! Haha. I can't give you a direct figure but yes it is a cost, yes.

Right. But taking the extra time to figure out where people live is worth it to save the money on taxis?

Yes correct.

Alright. So part of my research has to do with the distance between people's home and their work. I was wondering if you have any experience with lateness or absenteeism, if it differs depending on the distance between their home and Wynberg?

Uhm... for Wynberg itself, it is a very easy place to get to. It is a very central place. If you take public transport you will notice that Wynberg is like a junction. You can come from anywhere to Wynberg. But when you go to a store like Glengarry in Durbanville... I worked there so I kinda know. It doesn't have a direct taxi route. So if there's trouble with the taxis people don't have the option for a train, like Wynberg. If there's ever a strike. I'll give you an example. There was a massive strike last year October. And our staff (in Durbanville) was hugely affected because of the dependency of the taxi. Very, very, very big. And yes you can take a train, but you need to get to the train. And you need to get from the station... in Wynberg the train is right here. But if you're at a place like \_\_\_\_ (16:05) the station is far away, so yeah it affects you there heavily.

Ah so you worked in Durbanville as well? How did you start work at [redacted]?

I was a scholar and I handed in my CV at the head office. And that was... 14 years ago. A long time ago. We just threw our CVs in. They went through it, we went for the test and yeah.

Right. So it was the same process that you have now?

Same process. It hasn't changed at all.

[someone came in, interview interrupted for a few minutes]

When you got the job here...

I wasn't here. I was a casual in the Muizenberg store. I lived in Retreat and they needed people.

How did you find out they needed people?

I didn't. I just handed in my CV.

And at the time were you unemployed?

I was a scholar, I was in matric. I was looking for work.

Dropping off CVs?

Yes.

Do you remember much about the job search?

I applied at [redacted] in June or July. And then I got the phone call in September. So it took about three months.

And were you dropping off your CV at other places?

Not really because I was gonna study the next year. And I knew that at [redacted] I could study and work at the same time. And with other employment I didn't know if they would let me work and study at the same time.

I see. How did you know you could work and study at the same time at [redacted]?

Because my sister had worked for [redacted] when she was a varsity student. She was studying and working and studying at the same time.

Did your sister recommend you to apply at [redacted]?

Yes. She was a cashier in Constantia.

Does she still work for [redacted]?

No she left afterwards.

Alright. Do you remember what she told you about [redacted]? Working conditions, salary, that kind of stuff?

Not really, no. And also we had a massive transition when she worked there. Back then people got paid weekly. When I started working we got paid monthly. They got paid in cash, when I started working everything was electronic, straight into your bank account.

OK. Did she tell you about the people they were looking for? How to write your CV? How to apply for [redacted] specifically?

Not really because you ... the way you apply for a casual job and once you're skilled is completely different. Your CV was your CV. All we learned was who you are, where you come from and what you aspire to be. We were scholars, there wasn't much to put on your CV anyway.

Alright. When you're looking for new staff, do you ever tell your current employees to tell their relatives or friends to apply?

We don't get involved with things like that.

You just leave them to sort it out for themselves?

Yes.

Have you recommended anyone you know to apply at [redacted]?

[participant had to leave the room]

I have... and I haven't... it's very hard. To work for [redacted]. Because of the kind of shifts that you work. You need to be someone very dedicated. When I started working, I wanted to grow working in the company. So my perspective on growth was: put it in, it'll pay off in the end. But there's a lot of sacrifice because retail is open all the time. As a young person, who wants to work New Year's Day, Christmas Eve late, Boxing Day? So it's a very bold decision to come and work for us. But there's so much growth. I come from being a scholar to ...

[someone came in for a question]

... young people aren't as dedicated. To answer your question, if someone asks me "hey I'm looking for a job do you know anything?". I tell him "I'm a manager, I deal with absenteeism. Don't come if you're not gonna have that mindset"... I can't go joll when I want to, I can't phone and say I'm sick today. Because I deal with it from that perspective, I deal with absenteeism all the time. If people ask me "is there jobs available?" I'll be very selective in who I tell because of who you are. When people hand in their CVs I ask them "are you a scholar, are you at tertiary level?". Because again, it has an impact on the business. If you're not willing to work when we need you to work, you're just gonna drop us. So I'm very open about that situation.

So you make sure people know it's a tough job...

Yes. We trade until 20:00 and you get out at 21:00. You can't be a party animal and in town and tomorrow you don't want to work. And I'm very open because many of us come through the ranks. So we were casuals or VTE and we were all till packers or trolley porters. That's why I feel it's my duty to tell you "you're not gonna walk into an 8:00 to 17:00 cushy job..." It's retail. You're not. So to answer your question, yes I tell people, but I tell the reality. "Do you want this?". It's a good company to work for. I got matric, I don't have tertiary. But I'm as assistant manager. I've got a store that has R3 million stock that I'm responsible for. So there is enormous growth possible. Absolutely. And the only thing you need here is not knowledge but dedication. Through that dedication you'll learn and you grow. People will see you work and say hey come do this, come do information work for me, answer the phones when a customer calls. They grow you because of determination. Not because you got a distinction at matric. That's where the company sets you apart from others.

Do you have a lot of people who start out here and quickly leave again?

[at this point someone walks in and waits by the door, participant seems to want to deal with that].

When I was a casual a lot of my friends were studying. I'll be very honest, many of them decided [redacted] was a base. Because it's got fantastic roots. You learn things like customer service, dedication. Working on deadlines, being on time. It's very important for employers. So when you're studying or finishing your studies. When you worked at [redacted], they know that you got that ground. You might not have too much experience but you have that foundation. And many of the guys studied and then leave once they're done.

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Interviewer: Guus Hoekman  
Participant: Faghrie  
Date: 14-Jan-2015

At [redacted] Wynberg. In the branch manager's office. People walking in and out from time to time though no more frequently than at other interviews. Interview started off with someone there, but that person left after a few minutes. Participant seemed to be more relaxed after that, though did not become much more talkative. A fairly young guy, maybe mid to late 20s. Coloured, Afrikaans speaker, his English didn't seem too bad but he barely spoke. Would give very short answers and did not seem very sure of himself, though that improved as the interview went on. Contradicted himself a few times. Also I sometimes had to kind of suggest answers to him because he would otherwise remain quiet. Perhaps he said "yes" to those just to move on, although he did correct some of my suggestions later in the interview. Forgot to ask a few questions in the initial interview and asked those afterwards in the store. He was still friendly but didn't seem too comfortable.

[Explanation of the research and getting consent]

First can I ask you what you do?

I work in the fruit and veg department. I stock and weigh and stuff.

How long have you worked there?

Six months.

Ah OK, you're relatively new?

Yes.

Are you still a casual worker?

Yes, VTE.

VTE... what does that mean?

Various Time Employee.

Ah OK. Where do you live now?

In Grassy Park.

Alright. Where were you born?

In Athlone. I stayed there about 6 years. Then I moved to Grassy Park.

Are those the only two places you lived?

Yes.

Who do you live with?

I live on my own.

Ah alright. So in Athlone for six years and then you moved with your family?

With my grandma. I lived with her for six years. After that I moved in with my mother to Grassy Park. My mother passed away and so I lived by myself.

Is it the same house as before?

No a different one. But quite close.

What kind of house is it?

It's one bedroom. Brick house. Yeah...

Is it RDP housing?

What do you mean?

In certain places there is RDP housing, where it's subsidized by the government...

Oh no no

OK. Where did you go to school?

In Athlone. I went there until grade 10.

You stayed there even after moving to Grassy Park?

Yes it's close by. I walked. It was about 20 minutes.

Alright. And did you start working straight after?

Yeah.

Did you work already when you were in school?

No I finished and then started working.

Did you start at [redacted]?

No. I worked at a tiling company.

Ah alright. How did you find that job?

It was nice. After a while the work gets... more less. So I stayed at home for a week and then worked three days. It wasn't enough work. I got married. And then I had to find something better. At the time I didn't have any responsibilities so it was OK. But when I got married I had to get a better job.

Right. How did you manage to get the job?

My neighbor. It was my neighbor at the time before I got married. So I thought OK...

... right. So the company was next door? You just walked in there?

Mmm...

OK. So I'm looking into the ways in which people find work. Can you tell me the process exactly? You finished grade 10 and then... did you start actively looking for work?

I wasn't actively looking for work. It was... I was talking to my neighbour. I asked him if I could help him out and work there. He said fine. And I worked there for about 5 years.

And he owned the tiling company?

Yes it was from his house.

Ah I see. How well did you know your neighbour?

I knew him very well. We were friends.

Before you got the job as well?

Yeah.

Was it easy to get the job?

Yes very easy...

What did you do?

I was... a labourer. I worked my way up. I became a tiler. Sometimes I didn't have work, I used to do my own work.

Seperately from your neighbour's company?

Yes.

Did he know?

Yes.

He didn't mind?

No no.

Alright.

You worked there for 5 years? After that what did you do?

I worked at a boat company. Also in Grassy Park. I didn't like the work though. After that I came here.

So you quit your job at the tiling company because it wasn't enough work?

Yeah it was only a few days a week.

And you weren't making enough money, or?

Yeah.

And the boat company?

They had a lot of work. I had tiling experience at the time. And they needed plumbers and painters and lots of people.

How did you get that job?

My friend. It was my friend's uncle's company.

So what did you do to get the job?

I went there and took my CV?

Did you friend whose uncle owned the company help you?

Yeah. He talked to his uncle.

Alright... so what did he say?

...

Did he kinda tell his uncle "Mohammed should come work here"?

Yeah.

Did you have an interview there?

Yes.

How did that go, what was the process like?

Painters. They wanted experience with painting. But I don't think I had enough. They gave me a chance to prove myself. Same with some of the carpenters.

What was the reason you quit?

I didn't exactly quit. I was laid off so they could hire more people.

Ah alright. They were looking for more qualified people? People with more specific skills?

Yes.

I see. Were you making more money at the boat company than at the tiling company?

No about the same.

OK. How would you go to the boat company?

I walked. It was five minutes away.

And same with the tiling company right?

Yes it was even closer.

Alright. So after the boat company you started working here?

Yes.

Were you unemployed for a while between jobs?

Yes I was unemployed from December... last year...

2013?

Yeah.

So I didn't work anymore for the boat company, and then I started here in June 2014.

So about half a year?

Yes.

And what did you do during that time, did you apply for many jobs?

I did some tiling in the mean time.

At the same place as before?

No on my own.

Ah I see. How did you attract clients?

What?

How did you let people know you were a tiler?

Oh. Uhm, it was just people that know me, things like that.

How did they know you?

Family and so on.

Ah OK. Did you have any clients from before as well?

Some people from before let others know I could tile, stuff like that.

Did you advertise at all?

No. The people I got just heard from someone else.

Alright. So you got your clients through word of mouth?

Yes.

-- asked later but fits better here

Did you look for any other jobs during that time?

Not really. I heard about something from a friend so I sent my CV but they didn't reply.

Just the one place?

Yeah.

Where was it?

In town. Some shop there.

And your friend worked there?

Yes.

And he told you there was a job available?

Yes.

Did he tell you anything else?

No just to send my CV.

Alright. And you didn't look anywhere else for a job?

Not really...

You didn't go around Kenilworth or something? Or to town?

No.

Why not?

I don't really know that side. I never go there.

You wouldn't know where to look, or?

Yeah.

Alright. But you didn't want to try? Did you go to town to drop your CV?

No my friend brought it with him.

Alright. And was it not a problem you were unemployed for so long?

My wife had a job so it was OK.

And now you both have jobs?

Yes

--

So how did you get the job here at [redacted]?

I know someone here. I sent my CV to the head office. I had to do a test. I passed the test. They said I must come from an interview. I spoke to the manager. He interviewed me. It went well.

The friend who you know here, how did he help you out?

He brought my CV. I had to wait quite a long time to come in.

Did he tell you they needed people?

Yes.

Alright. How do you know him exactly?

Through my mother in law. He knows him.

OK. So she told him you were unemployed... how did you get in contact with each other?

My mother in law knows everything... about me and my wife.

Haha, right. So how did you meet him?

I met him through her.

Alright. Was it her intention to find you a job or something like that? Yes.

No. She told me he worked for [redacted]. So I asked him to see if something was possible. He told me to come the next day. So I came. Brought my CV, gave in my CV. It was a long process.

Did he do anything else for you?

No.

Did he put in a good word for you or anything?

No I don't think so.

Do you have any idea how your mother in law knows him?

No.

Right. So I wanted to ask you about your commute. How you get to work and back home.

I use public transport. Sometimes I take the car.

Oh you have your own car?

Yes.

OK. And for public transport, what do you take, how long does it take?

I take a taxi from Grassy Park. It takes... like today, I started 10:30 today. I walked down the road and a taxi came by. I didn't wait. I left the house 10:15... no, no, no I left the house 10:00. I came to Wynberg 10:15. Came here 10:20.

Oh OK so it's really quick. Is it always that quick?

Not always. It depends on the taxi.

Right. So you left your house at 10:00. Normally would you be on time if you left then?

No. Normally I leave 9:45.

So you need about 45 minutes to be sure you're on time?

Yes.

Is it just the one taxi?

Yes.

How much does it cost?

R7.

Is it the same for the way back?

Yes.

OK. So today you said you walked down the street and immediately there was a taxi. Do you live near the road?

Yes.

And hear you get dropped off by the supermarket?

I get dropped by the taxi rank.

Ah OK and that's what, a 5 minute walk?

Yes.

OK. So you spend R14 every day to get to work and back?

If I'm early shift. If I'm late shift they provide transport the way back.

Right. How long does it take you then, to get home?

15 minutes. 30 minutes the most.

Alright. Who are you in the taxi with? Where do they live?

Also Grassy Park, Parkwood? Upping?

The same area?

Are you one of the first people to be dropped off?

Yes.

OK. So now you pay more for transport than before when you could walk?

Yes.

When you got the job here, was that a consideration whether or not to take the job, since you had to spend money on transport?

Uhm... it's fine for me.

Yeah? Are you making more now than before, does that make it worth it?

Knowing you get work every day. Didn't have that before with the tiling.

OK. You mentioned sometimes you take the car? When do you take the car?

When I don't feel like travelling.

When do you not feel like it?

Mostly on a Sunday. There are very little taxis. I have to wait long. We start at 9:00. Have to stand on the street at 8:00.

Right. But on a normal day you use taxis? Why?

It's a lot cheaper.

Right. And your wife, does she use the car?

No.

So it's not a matter of the car not being available? It's just cost?

Yeah.

OK. In the winter, does it change?

Not really.

I can imagine waiting for a taxi in the cold and the rain... you're more likely to take the car.

I don't have the car for long now. I got it in November.

Ah OK. What made you decide to buy the car?

For shopping. To make it more easier for us, not carry so many heavy things. Don't have to take public transport with all the bags. That's the main reason why I bought the car.

Not to get to work?

Not really.

Where do you do your shopping.

In Ottery.

And before, without a car, at the same place?

Yes. But I had to pay somebody else money to go there.

And in the end, is it cheaper now?

Much cheaper.

How much were you paying before?

About... R60

For each trip?

Yeah.

And now your petrol, is that cheaper?

Yeah.

Was buying the car a big decision for you and your wife?

Yes.

Do you think you'll use it to go to work in the future?

I don't think I will use it every day. Because I'll be picking up a lot of weight.

Right. But now you're just in a taxi. If money weren't an issue would you take the car?

Then I'd take the car.

Does it save time on the weekday?

Yes a lot of time. Quicker with a car than a taxi.

But now it's only a money issue? The main reason you don't take the car every day now...?

Transport is cheaper.

Right. What would be the maximum amount of money on a taxi? What amount would make you switch to taking the car?

More or less the same price as petrol. So like R30.

Ah you calculated how much it is?

Yes.

So R30... is that one way or...?

No up and down.

Alright. Oh I wanted to ask this earlier. When you dropped off your CV, did anyone help you with writing your CV?

No I did it myself. At the library in Grassy Park.

OK. So the guy who worked here already, did he give you any advice on how to do the interview or what to write on your CV.

No. I was very nervous at the time.

Really, how come?

Cause I wanted the job. I needed the work. I think that's why I was nervous.

OK. And now you're VTE. Do you know how long it'll take before you get a contract?

Not sure.

And do you have kids?

I have one.

And the three of you live together, your wife and your kid?

No... the kid is from a previous marriage.

OK. So just you and your wife?

Yeah.

---

Interviewer: Guus Hoekman  
Participant: Lauren  
Date: 09-Jan-2015

At [redacted] Promenade. At a Wimpy within the mall in which the supermarket is located. Relatively quiet place to do the interview, 1 minute walk from the [redacted] itself. Participant a Coloured woman, probably early 40s. Afrikaans her first language but spoke perfect English. Came across as very intelligent and driven. Happy to participate, gave complete answers but rarely elaborated much with things that she didn't feel were relevant. Insisted on paying for the coffee/tea we had, even after I did the same. I thought I had convinced her not to but it turned out she paid as I was writing down these notes.

[Explanation of the research and getting consent]

Can I first ask you where you live?

I live not too far from the store, about a five minute walk. In Beacon Valley.

What kind of house is it, who do you live with?

It's my own house, three bedroom house. Semi-detached. I own the house.

Do you live by yourself?

With my husband and three kids.

Alright. Are you from that areas we well?

I am. I've basically lived there my whole life.

In the same house?

No I lived with my parents before. I got married 11 years ago and I moved into my own place right about that time.

Did you buy it then?

Yes I did.

What does your husband do?

He also works here, in the same store. In the bakery.

I see. Of you two who is the main breadwinner?

I am, I have the higher category job.

Where you grew up is it close to where you live now?

Yeah not too far. In a similar house, basically the same.

And the school you went to?

I went to school, about half an hour from where I lived. Also in Mitchell's Plain. Both my primary and high school was in the same area.

And half an hour by foot?

Yes, I always walked there.

And your kids at the moment?

My kids they drive to school. About a 20 minute drive, also in the area. It's not too far. My husband drops them off there.

OK. Can you tell me about your current job and how you got it?

I'm the fresh foods manager. But I obviously started as a normal, casual worker. I applied for the job cause I saw it in the newspaper. That was 15 years ago. So I applied via the newspaper, I went for the interview at our head office. Then I got the job as a casual in Cape Town, in Garden Centre. I started off there.

What kind of newspaper was it where you saw the ad?

The Cape Argus. It was advertised there.

Do you remember what it said?

Just they were looking for staff. No experience needed. You only had to have matric. That was the criteria.

And what language was it in?

In English.

Alright. Did you know your husband at the time?

No I just finished school basically, still living with my parents.

So you went to the head office?

Yeah I did the interview there. Some test there as well. A numeracy test. About a week later they contacted me again to say I got the job.

Was the head office in Kenilworth?

At that time it was in Claremont. Newlands, basically.

Did you send in your CV?

Yes I did. They contacted me after.

So you sent it in...

Yes and then they called me and I went for an interview.

Do you remember the interview process?

One of the managers at the time I think, the store managers. They did the interview. But it was a whole bunch, a whole batch of people. We were like 50 people. They did interviews at different stores.

And you were already designated to be at the Garden Centre at that point?

No. Once I got the job I went for an induction. They didn't say us specifically which store yet. Only at the induction when they take you through the companies policies and procedures. They try to figure out where you live and which store closest to you need staff. There wasn't a store close to Mitchell's Plain that needed staff. But travelling to Gardens wouldn't be a problem from Mitchell's Plain. So they check your travel requirements as well.

Do they tell you why they do that?

For easy accessibility. Because it would be senseless hiring an employee who lives like two hours away and who would struggle to get to work. I assume it was that.

And for you?

It was perfect. It was just one taxi to work, it was straight travelling. I didn't have to change places or things. One single taxi.

How long did it took?

A longer ride from here to town. About half an hours drive.

Right. Was there any waiting?

No they come by very often.

Did you have to walk to the road first?

From where the taxi dropped you off you in Gardens you had to walk about half an hour. So you had to leave about an hour before.

So the walking was a significant part. What about from your house to the taxi?

No that was basically by my door.

I see. And the way back, did you have to do the same half hour walk again?

Yes but when you started back then you only worked the late shift. And the company's policy is that if you work a late shift you get free transport from the company. So you didn't really have to struggle with transport going home because the company provided transport.

They picked you up from the store and you got dropped off at home? Yes at any given time.

Got dropped off at home. Did they apply for the jobs here?

Was that a taxi as well? Yes most of us. Most of those who lived in Mitchell's Plain wanted to work here, for the same reason.

It was a taxi. But it was for everyone else working late. There were 15 people living in Mitchell's Plain so all 15 of us would go in one taxi and we'd get dropped off at home. Right. So you said you saw the ad in the newspaper. Do you remember if you got any help writing your CV or preparing for a job interview?

Right. What is it like now? You said you live close by. No. I had friends who had CVs. One of my friends did a CV for me. I just left school just finished matric, so I didn't have a lot to put on there. So one of my friends just did it. And then I submitted it.

Yeah, but because I'm a manager, we get moved around. It was about a year back I was at the Claremont store. Then I would travel to work. But now, since October last year, I've been moved to this store [Mitchell's Plain] so I basically don't travel. But I've been to other stores. As a manager you get moved around so I've been to stores where I had to travel. Your friend from matric?

So how did you do that? Yes.

Either my own car or the bus so wouldn't have to spend money on petrol. At the moment do you know the process at [redacted], do they still advertise?

Which stores were you working at? I don't think so like they used to in the past. It's more about word of mouth now. So I would know someone who needs a job, and I would know that are store perhaps needs someone. I tell that person to bring in their CV, or I would bring it for them. I don't think they advertise in the papers as much.

The Kenilworth store, Claremont store and Tyger Valley store. To all of which I would take the bus because it was cheaper. Less traffic as well. So if you know there's a job available here, who do you tell?

Do you remember how long it took you? For me mostly the staff members in my department. Because someone will always know somebody who needs a job. It would be purely word of mouth. I think it was two months ago, we needed someone. I told everyone in my department. One of my staff's daughters needed a job. She brought in her daughter's CV to me, I gave it to the store manager and they set up an interview and she got the job.

To the Claremont store, if I was supposed to start at 7:00 I would take the bus at 6:00. I'd get there around 6:35. So it would be about a 35 minute commute. Did you get dropped off at the station?

Yes. It's close by that store, like a five minute walk. So you did it within the store itself? You didn't contact the head office?

And the Kenilworth store? The store manager contacted the head office, but I did it internally. I left it with him and he did it.

At Kenilworth the bus stop is at the store. That was a 20 minute drive with the bus. What did you tell your employee, what kind of person you needed?

And the third? Not really because we work in the same environment. They know what is needed. When someone needs they know there's a gap to fill. They obviously know what the person who left what their job entailed. It was simple.

At Tyger Valley. That was a longer drive. Nearly an hour. Right. And in terms of cost? Right. Did you tell anyone else, maybe a friend or family?

Depending on the store... the Claremont one cost me about R400 per month. Kenilworth store was a bit less. Tyger Valley was a more. R50 or R100 or so. No I just did it in our monthly meetings. I told them there, everyone. If they know of any people they should let me know.

When you started at Garden Centre, you weren't a manager yet and taking the taxi. Was travel a significant part of your salary? OK. And in the past have you encouraged any of your friends or family?

Yes it was most of my salary. Because as a casual you don't get paid that much. So it took the bulk of my salary. That's why I moved stores. When this store opened, the Promenade store. I applied to come and work here. But I apply internally. Because it was close to home, that was the reason why I applied here. It was close to home and less travel, it was cheaper. Yes they would ask me, especially leaving school they see someone getting a job so quickly. They asked me and I advised them how to go about it... send the CV to the head office, contact the head office, things like that. And we still advise people who come in. There are a lot of people who walk in off the street. We tell them to contact the head office. They would be the people to say: maybe Kenilworth need someone, or another store needs someone. They will know. If our store doesn't need anyone doesn't mean [redacted] doesn't.

Right. So you had more time and money left? Yes.

Yes. OK. So you mentioned there were about 15 people working in Garden Centre who lived in Mitchell's Plain? Yeah I see. So the employee whose daughter works here now, are you close with her outside of work?

No not at all. We have just a work relationship.

Is she from here?

Yes she lives in Mitchell's Plain.

Is there any preference at the store in terms of language? Or where people live?

No not really. We try to find people who live close by. For the reason that it's easier to get to work. We don't want to employ people who live in town. We'd advise people to go to Garden Centre because it's closer. Anyone wants to work closer to home. Just because your cost of living... you think of travelling, you think of the money. We try to get people who live close by.

Before you got your job, straight out of matric, were you looking for other work as well?

Actually I was working at [redacted]. On a contract basis. I did two jobs at once. Because [redacted] at the time was a weekend job. I got the job at [redacted] while I was in matric. So I worked two jobs. The bank Monday to Friday and then Saturday and Sunday and [redacted].

But you were at school...?

Yeah, holidays I would work. My training was in the holidays and when I finished matric my contract started there.

Where was this?

At the time it was in St. George's Mall, in town. And then they moved to the Waterfront.

OK. But you had to travel there as well?

Yeah but St. George's Mall, Garden Centre... I could walk to [redacted] on Friday afternoon, finish my shift at the bank and then go to [redacted].

And this was in the summer while you were in matric?

Yes but it continued for about a year and a half after I finished matric, doing both jobs. Just because [redacted] was Friday/Saturday/Sunday.

How did you find out about the [redacted] job?

My cousin. She was at [redacted]. She told me they needed someone who did accounting... they needed someone with that experience.

And you had that?

Yes. I learned that in matric.

I see. And your cousin?

She was manager at the time. She hired me.

Did she live in Mitchell's Plain?

No in the Bellville area.

Did you see her often?

Yeah at family gathering and things.

So you met one time and ...

Well yeah she knew I was in matric and I would need a job after school because I wasn't going to study. When she saw the opportunity she let me know.

Do you remember what she told you?

Just because she needed a clerk. She was in charge of that department. Someone who knew accounting things. Someone basically who was a school leaver, who just finished matric. But because I was still in matric I worked during the holidays to get the experience. When I finished matric I had that and she could employ me, but on a contract basis. I was on a year contract and they extended it with a year and a half. After that they didn't extend anymore because they were retrenching (downsizing). They didn't extend my contract after that. But I had the safety net at [redacted].

Right. So you could start working full time at [redacted]?

Yes.

What was the transition like?

Not that big. They knew my contract at [redacted] was ending. I told them I was available during the week.

They wanted you to work fulltime for a while?

Not really. Earlier they didn't really need people. It was only after that year (after matric) that they started needing people to come in during the week.

I see. Did your cousin tell anyone else?

No she didn't. She knew I could do the job and she could decide.

Do you know if your boss at [redacted] at the time minded you were working two jobs?

No. Because they knew [redacted]'s salary was not that much and you needed to look out for yourself. As long as I could complete my shifts when he needed me it was fine.

Yeah I see. Just want to go back to this: your training period at [redacted]. Do you know what you did to stand out?

I don't even think I stood out. They just needed people. If you were a fast learner that was a plus. And if you spoke English fluently because it was at the Garden Centre, it was prominently English in that store. In Promenade you get a lot of Afrikaans people you get a lot of Xhosa people. So there's a different need for different stores. I think because I was a fast learner and could speak English it made the difference. But other than that nothing special.

Right. It's interesting you live so close by. Most people I've talked to live a lot further away.

We get a couple of those in the store as well, who live outside of this area. The first of September we hired someone who lives in Landsdowne. He has to travel from there to get here. But the majority of the staff, about 80%, 85% lives in the area. And it's not that difficult for them to get to work.

So you have casual workers who are not on a contract?

Their contract stipulates they need to work at least 40 hours a month. So as a manager you cannot have them work less than that. Then you have a casual worker who is entitled to 85 hours a month. So you've got your, I say a part-timer who should work no less than 40 hours a month. And then the casual staff, who work 85 hour a month.

So they come in when they're needed?

They come in when I need them. And the store would require it.

Is that the same time every week?

No it's different. Mondays they would have to come in earlier, but the quieter days they would come in later. So you'd get, for example, would start at 16:00 today. But then next week, the 15th, they would start at 12:00. So you have to check the time of the month, how busy the store is... what you need at that time.

And the 15th?

It's extremely busy. The 15th, end of the month, and the first week.

Because people get paid?

Yes. And we're in an area with social grant service. That happens on the first of every month. And then the store is extremely busy.

So you do know when they should come in?

Yes.

Right. So you have 40, 85 hour workers. And after that?

Permanent employees.

OK. So during the training you were casual?

At 85.

But only on the weekends?

Yes so I would have to make up those 85 hours. So I had long hours on the weekends. I would work from 9:00 in the morning until 21:00.

Does it happen people are permanent straight away?

Not really. It's actually a process to be permanent because your department would need to make a certain amount of money to show the company that you need more people on a permanent basis. That's how they establish the need. Or, in my case now, one of my permanent employees resigned. So there's a gap there. So we would send out a job-shop (the internal system that advertises available jobs) where the casual workers could apply for a permanent job. But it's all done internally.

And is that to test them out?

Yes that's right.

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Interviewer: Guus Hoekman

Participant: Steven

Date: 06-Jan-2015

At [redacted] Claremont. In a side cafe within the store where people can get coffee, tea and some small dishes. Still within the store and with colleagues around, but no issues about anyone hearing us. Participant a Coloured guy in his late 20s. First language Afrikaans but spoke perfect English. Seemed a bit nervous at first, sometimes got the impression he thought he could give the wrong answer. Got better as the interview progressed. Happy to participate and very friendly.

[Explanation of the research and getting consent]

Can I first ask you where you live?

I live in Mitchell's Plain.

OK. Where exactly in Mitchell's Plain?

In Lentegeur.

Alright. What kind of house do you live in? The material, who do you live with?

A brick house. I live with my grandmother. Just us two.

I see. And are you from Mitchell's Plain as well?

I am.

Have you lived there all your life?

Yes.

In the same house?

Yes.

[Seemed very much like he didn't want to talk about his home situation. Did not want to ask about his parents]

Alright. Can I ask you about the education you've had?

I've had basic schooling. I completed high school. That's the only thing I've done.

I see, so you did matric?

Yes I passed everything.

Alright. And what kind of school did you go to?

A technical school. A mixed one.

I see. In Mitchell's Plain?

Yes.

Far from your house?

No it was walking distance. Very close.

Alright great. Now about the job you have here. Can you tell me a bit about how you ended up finding this job?

Sure. So one day I was bored at home, I was unemployed. So I thought I gotta get out, I gotta get a job. I thought that if I contact the head office I can ask them "how can I apply?". So I called in and they told me to drop my CV. Then within a few weeks they called me back, I went for an interview, and I got the job.

OK. So you were unemployed and you thought I gotta get a job? Did you know anyone working at [redacted]?

No I didn't know anyone. I just took the chance and it paid off.

Alright nice. So when you called them, what did you ask them? Did you know anything at all?

I didn't know. They told me I must come to them myself and give it in.

Did you go to the office in...?

Kenilworth.

Oh OK. But they have a [redacted] in Mitchell's Plain as well right?

Yes.

But you had to go here?

Yes they didn't give me an option. They just told me I must come to Kenilworth.

Alright. So now you're working here in Claremont. Did they not offer you a job in Mitchell's Plain or close by?

No.

So they said you can work in Claremont or nothing?

Yes that's right.

Was that OK with you?

It was OK because I still got a job.

Is the distance a problem?

Not at all. Just getting up. It takes about one hour from Mitchell's Plain to Claremont. So as long as I get up early the distance isn't much of a problem.

Right. So what's your commute like?

My what?

Your commute... getting to work. Can you run me through this morning for example, what time you got up, went to work...

Right. So I got up at 8:00. I washed and everything, got the 9:30 bus and got here 10:15.

OK. Did you have to walk to the bus stop?

No it's right on the road, the bus stop.

Ah so you live right by the bus stop? And then it goes straight to Claremont, the station here?

Yes.

Right. So it's fairly quick then? How long does the bus take?

45 minutes to 55 minutes.

OK. So from your front door to work is about an hour, in total? Is that accurate?

Yes about an hour.

Alright. And how much do you pay for the bus?

Monthly or weekly?

Either. Do you buy a clip card?

Yes I buy a clip card. It costs R109. I use about 3 clip cards for a month.

So a clip card is 10 trips?

Yes.

So 3 cards, 30 clips a month. R330 per month. Is that a significant part of your income?

No it's not so bad.

OK. Have you considered looking for work close by?

No cause I enjoy working here.

OK. And travel time and travel cost is not much of an issue?

No it's OK.

Have you thought about moving at all, maybe getting your own place?

Yes I have. I've been looking on gumtree, trying to organize that. Cause I'd like to live on my own.

Right. Where would you like to move?

Any area that I can afford.

Yeah... and Mitchell's Plain would you be able to live there?

Yes I would.

And do you plan on working here for a while?

Yes I am.

So when you're thinking about the place you might move to... I mean you still have to get to work. Is location a big consideration?

Yes it is.

How so?

Because I don't want to live somewhere where it takes even longer to get to work. When I get home I still have to cook and stuff like that.

Right. So what would be your limit for travel cost and travel time?

About R400 per month.

And time?

One hour.

So the place you live, you wouldn't want to move further than where you live now?

No, no.

And now you live quite close to a bus stop, so your own place would you want...

Yes close to a bus stop as well.

And do you use any other types of transportation?

No.

Only the bus? Not the train?

No it takes longer. And I don't like that environment.

Really, how come?

The people... I don't feel that safe.

And taxis?

No, no taxis. The way they drive...

Dangerous?

It is.

Right. So I haven't asked this but what do you do here?

I'm a relieving cashier and a relieving supervisor.

OK. What does that mean exactly?

Sometimes they need me to temporarily supervise, sometimes they need me to work at the till.

When they need extra help?

Yeah that's right.

Does it happen often?

It does, especially the last month. And you know, sometimes the travel is a problem because ... just last week I got a warning for coming in late.

Did you? What happened?

I got a warning after I got here at 11:00. I was waiting for a bus the whole time. And I got a warning for that.

Ah man. So you were waiting in Mitchell's Plain for the bus? It just never showed?

It never showed up. I called, they said it would come but it never came.

Were you waiting there with a lot of people?

Yes. Everyone was late.

Does it happen often?

It does. Probably about four times a month.

Four times a month? Wow so basically once a week you're late.

Yes and that all adds up to a warning.

Yeah sure I can imagine. So you have the same routine but the bus doesn't show and then you're late?

That's right.

And it's not like it's always on a Monday that it's late? Just a random day?

Yes.

Have you thought about leaving earlier to prevent this?

I did but it can still happen. The bus just doesn't show up. The people at the bus offices said it would come at that time but it doesn't come at that time.

Is this the Golden Arrow bus?

Yes.

Are there any other options then at that point?

No I just wait for the bus.

Right. So at the bus stop where you go, are there buses to town and other places?

Yes to Claremont and town, those two.

But you couldn't go to town first and then come here.

No that costs money. And I bought the tickets for Claremont.

*asked later in the interview, fits better here --*

So how did you get to work in the end?

I took a bus a lot later.

You couldn't take a taxi or a train?

The train takes very long because I have to go to Salt River first and then to Claremont.

And a taxi?

No because when I called the bus offices they said it would still come. And I had my clip card for the bus but not money for a taxi.

--

So how does it work with warning here, in terms of being late? You said you got a warning now, is that because you were late the one time?

No cause sometimes it always happens.

What did you boss say? You were late for ... ?

She said that I always come late. According to her I'm always late.

Always? What time are you supposed to start?

At 9. But I got here after 11.

But today were you on time?

Yes I was, I made sure. Because I came late yesterday *and* monday. I was supposed to start 9 o'clock but I came a bit past 12.

Because of the bus?

Yes.

Do your colleagues have the same problem?

Yes the ones who live on that side.

Do your bosses understand at all?

Sometimes they understand but when it's busy and they need us they don't understand.

Right. Do you have any idea what the repercussions would be if this continues? Would you get fired if you're late often?

Yes I know someone who got fired for being late.

What happened exactly?

What happened was, she always came late. Every day. She was supposed to start at 10 o'clock and she came here past 2, past 3 all the time.

Wow, that's extremely late.

Yes. So they fired her.

Right. How long did she work her?

For eight years.

Eight years?! And she suddenly started coming in late?

Yes I don't know why. But they don't care how long you worked here they just want you gone then.

Yeah OK. How long have you worked here?

For only three years now.

And before that?

It's my first job.

OK. And you said you called them up. Was [redacted] the only place you looked?

No I did send my CV to other places. But none of the other places replied.

Right. What did you do for those other places? Did you call them?

No I faxed my CV.

How did you choose those places?

I just looked at places that needed people.

Yeah. Did they have advertisements or something?

Yes in the newspaper.

Ah I see. So was that your strategy?

Yes I looked in the classifieds for work.

Do you remember what places they were?

No I don't really know.

And do you remember something about the ads, what newspaper, what language?

It was in English. The Daily Voice.

Did you buy that specifically for the ads?

Yes I did. I checked the list, called a few and sent my CV but nothing. Then I tried this place.

Right. Do you remember how many places you sent your CV to?

Two.

Only two?

Yes. But neither replied. And quickly afterwards I got the phone call here and I thought I'm not gonna bother again. I'm gonna work for this, I had the feeling this was better.

Right. So you got the job relatively quickly?

Yes only maybe 3 months because I phoned at the right time cause at that moment they were looking for people.

Sure. So you got an interview here? What do you remember about the interview?

I remember I did my best to make the store manager remember me.

OK, what did you do?

Making jokes and stuff and trying to take the spotlight. And it paid off.

Haha right. Where was the interview?

In the admin room.

So you wanted to stand out. Were there more people at the same time?

Yes there were six people. And they took four people.

All here?

Yes, and they still work here.

Right. Oh so I wanted to ask you about your CV. Did you get help from anyone writing it?

No. I did it on my own.

How did you know how to do it?

It was at school. They had examples of how to do it so from then on I could do it on my own.

And your grandmother, is she retired now?

Yes she is.

How old were you when she stopped working?

I was probably around ... 8. Then she stopped working and she could take care of me.

I see. So yesterday, the manager was saying they give people a trial period before a contract. Did you have that as well?

Yes I did.

Can you explain what that period was like?

They gave us three months to prove ourselves. And if you don't then they let you go. If you're not good enough for that position.

Right. So what do you remember from those months? Did you make sure you were on ...

On time. I made sure I did everything right. I didn't do anything wrong.

Right. Did you leave your house earlier during those three months than you do now?

Yes.

Do you remember how early?

Probably at 7 already. I was very anxious to be on time. I left at 7 when I started at 10 o'clock so I had enough time to come down here.

You wanted to make absolutely sure you were on time?

I wanted to get the position at all cost.

Did the other guys do the same thing?

Yes but now we do our own thing because we already have the job.

Right so now you're a bit more relaxed? Did you get the same salary in those three months?

Yes.

What did you start off as?

A checkout assistant. A packer. Packing the stuff in the bag, at the til. Then I became a cashier and a relieving supervisor.

Alright. How long did that take?

From packing to cashier around 6 months. Then to relieving supervisor it took about one more year.

And do you get different salaries?

Yes for each, so each time a bit more.

Right. So now you're a relieving supervisor. What kind of extra responsibilities do you have?

I have to do all the ordering and check all the prices. Get change for the cashiers at the cash office.

OK. And did your bosses tell you that because you have a different job now you have to be an example to others, for example by being on time?

Yes they do.

So they're a bit more strict with you now?

They are. Because now I must set an example because why am I coming late, then people won't look up to me if they see I'm doing the same thing they're doing.

Right. You were saying earlier an hour travel time is the max. But you're dependent on the bus. Have you thought about getting a car or living closer by so you can make sure you're on time every day?

I have but I feel at home there. I feel at home there.

I see. So even if you had the money you wouldn't move closer to work?

No, no I wouldn't. My friends and family live there.

And a car?

A car would be nice, but not for work purposes.

Why not?

Because I'm OK with the bus. I'm comfortable with it.

Right. But if you're late from time to time... you got a warning for being late because the bus didn't show. It would be good to take that away right?

Yes it would.

But still you'd rather ...

Rather take the bus.

And in terms of the cost of a car. Would that be a big factor?

It would be a big factor because I don't have that money so I would have to commit along to uhm.. to buy the car.

Yeah of course. But is it something you might do in the future?

Yes it is something I'm interested in but I will have to save.

Right. So one of the other things I'm looking into is how much people use their social networks, their friends and family, to look for work. But you were saying you've done it completely on your own right?

Yes on my own.

The newspaper, you bought and searched it by yourself. No help from anyone?

No.

OK. So the manager here, yesterday, was saying they sometimes when there's an opening they ask their current employees if they know someone, a friend or family, even just do drop off their CV. Has that happened?

No...

In the years you've worked here that hasn't happened?

No never.

Do you know how they recruit here?

You have to go to the head office. That's the only way, go directly to the head office.

Right. So as far as you know, the manager have never asked the employees: we're looking for people, please tell your friends to drop off their CV.

No... no.

Have you told anyone to do that anyway?

I have yes.

What did you tell them?

I told them that working here is a good opportunity and to drop their CV at the head office.

Just like you did?

Yes.

Right. And have your friends done that?

They have. But they haven't been successful.

Who of your friends and family did you tell?

My nieces.

Do you spend a lot of time with them?

Yes, we're close.

And do they live in Mitchell's Plain as well?

Yes they do. They live very close by.

Did you tell your nieces much about what it's like working here?

Yes I did. I told them that when you work here you must be prepared to work very long hours. And as VTE (temporary employees) you don't work early shifts you only work late shifts. So I told them to consider that before they applied. Because both of them they have kids so they wouldn't be able to spend much time with them because to work here you spend more time with your colleagues than at home.

How long are you days? You start at?

At nine. And then I work until 8 o'clock at night.

Right. So your way back do you get dropped off?

Yes they organize taxis to drop us off at home.

What are those like?

Same as the normal taxis.

It takes about half an hour to get home. Depending on who else is being dropped.

Do you have a standard group of people you go back with?

Yes the also live in Mitchell's Plain.

And do you get dropped off at home?

Yes by the door.

Are you the first to get dropped off?

No the fifth... out of eight.

Alright. But it's quick?

Yes everyone is on the way.

And has it been like that since you started working here?

Yes it has.

Do you have to pay for that?

No.

Right. And they're not bad drivers like other taxis?

No because they just drop us off. They're not in a rush.

So the ride you only get that if you finish work after 7, right?

Yes.

Did you specifically want to work until after 7 to get that?

No. I couldn't choose.

Ah OK. But if you could; if they said instead of working from 9 to 8 you work from 7 to 4. That means you have to get here earlier but you have to pay for the way back. Would you do that?

Yes I would. Just for the opportunity to get home earlier. I can read and do things I can't do when I work late.

And is it already dark when you get home?

Yes it is very dark.

Is safety an issue?

It is an issue. Especially in the winter. But walking isn't much of a problem because I get dropped at home or walk to the bus stop.

I see. Alright great. Is there anything you want to add, anything you might have forgotten earlier?

No not really.

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Interviewer: Guus Hoekman

Participant: Vusi

Date: 11-Dec-2014

At a recently opened bottle store in Claremont, bit hipsterish and seemingly catered to well off young people. Quite small, lot of craft beers from South Africa and relatively unknown imported beers. Two people working there; a white guy who seemed to be in charge and who was ringing up customers and a black guy who was doing everything else. Interview conducted in back room filled with noisy fridges. It was really hot in the room. The interview took longer than I expected but he didn't mind too much, although he mentioned it was really warm after which I didn't want to drag on the interview too much. Participant a young black guy, mid 20s. Talkative, confident. Dressed well (not in a formal way, but rather what you'd expect at a place like that). Slightly hesitant at first but in the end quite keen to share his story. Seemed proud that he got the job and excited to talk about it. Went on some (for me) irrelevant tangents from time to time, which occasionally made it difficult to stay on topic. Quite a bit of confusion arose, in part due to a language barrier. Zulu his first language. His English was pretty good but he gave such elaborate answers and much of it irrelevant which made it hard to keep track of everything he said. Second issue was that we were sitting on barrels with no writing surface, meaning I couldn't take notes and so I repeated some questions.

[Explanation of the research and getting consent]

Can I ask you first where you live?

In Delft.

Where exactly in Delft?

It's actually Delft South. Not far from to the N2.

Have you lived there your whole life?

I would say about 12 years.

And before that?

Before that I lived in Johannesburg. I was born there. I went from Johannesburg to Gugulethu for a couple of years, I finished high school there. And then I went to Delft in 2003.

Did you go with your family?

I moved in with my uncle. My mother already lived here. My father is in Johannesburg. So I came from Johannesburg to Cape Town and lived with my mother's family (her brother).

Right. So you grew up Joburg?

Yes I grew up there, came to this side.

How come you didn't move in with your mother?

Her place was very small. I could stay with my uncle in Gugulethu and then after finishing matric I started living on my own.

In your place in Delft?

Yeah.

Are you renting there?

Yeah.

What kind of place is it?

It's a brick house. I share it with two people. I share a bedroom with someone else and the third sleeps in the other room.

In another bedroom?

No it's like the living room.

Ah alright. So how did you find your first job?

I found my current job (he probably misheard me) through a friend. He works at the cycle store (the cycle store is almost next door and has the same owner has this bottle store). He told me that they were opening up the bottle store. So when I heard that they needed people I decided to come here for an interview. After the interview Chris (the owner) put me at both stores, I switched between the two in the beginning. But mainly, the aim for him was to have someone here at the bottle store doing everything... purchase orders, dealing with suppliers, that kind of stuff.

So you found out about the job, how did you do that exactly?

I was asking a lot, obviously. You're unemployed so you go around asking people. I knew a few people working here... not people I saw day in and day out. But during my search for jobs around Claremont and Wynberg and stuff I found out that the group (the cycle shop "group") was hiring. So I contacted the manager. So I thought a retail store, I don't know, it might be difficult to get it because I don't have much experience with that. But a friend who works in the back of the store said I would be able to familiarize myself, get used to the job. So after hearing that I decided to come. After that I had the interview. It took about an hour, he assessed me. I gave him my resume. He was impressed and was willing to take an inexperienced guy. I think he saw that I could learn quickly. Right now I'm on a three to four month.. kinda, probationary contract. To see how capable I am to work him. If I am capable they will keep me here. I haven't been here for long, so in a few months they'll decide if they will keep me on.

So you found out about this through people you see from time to time?

Yes.

Who were they exactly?

I'm not sure if I should tell you their names...

Oh no no, not their names. But your relationship with them and how you know them?

I knew the person on a first name basis. As I was marketing (looking) for a job I'd ask people "don't you guys know of any posts (jobs) at your workplace?". So he told me, after I heard that I thought I'll come by and see what they have. So they told me they're looking for this and this and this and this, for someone who works here. So then I decided I'm willing to do the job. But all in all, I heard about it and the post was available for anybody. I was the first one to jump at the opportunity I think. There must have been a lot of people wanting the job, from Gugulethu, Khayelitsha and probably also from Delft. So I was lucky or privileged enough to get the job.

I see. So they told you a few things they were looking for in an employee. Do you remember what you were told?

One of the things they said was that, in order for someone to survive here... you have to... in profanity terms... you have to be able to suck dick... in other words you have to work hard. You have to know who your clients are, what's happening, what your products are, why you're here... and you really have to work. I mean, most of the main objectives here is that you have to work, think smart, and be flexible. So you get your job description, so let's say in merchandising. But you have to be able to be flexible so they can call you in from somewhere else and go from merchandising (how he explained it this is buying the products) to being a sales person (selling the products). Really what that's saying is growth is allowed from every employee. But growth is ... you grow by yourself. By you working and making sure you put in your best. So let's say if I was a merchandiser and my work shows I am capable to do more they can decide to move me up somewhere, if they see I have potential. If I survive that they keep on training me. And if I'm struggling, they'll keep me on, and just make sure I will be able to do the job well. So that's sort of what happened to me. When the merchandiser post was open, instead of getting a lot of other people, we use what we have and try to work it out that way.

A lot of my research has to do with where people live and the distance between their home and work. I was wondering what your commute is like from Delft?

I use public transport. Per day close to R25. Without being late. So obviously you have to get up early to get from the station in Delft to Claremont. So close to R25 for coming back and going home.

I see. What time do you start work?

I start at 8:30.

And what time do you leave from Delft?

I normally wake up at 6:00. Latest 6:15. I make sure that by 6:45 I'm out of the house. So by 7:00 I'm at the station, the taxi takes about 45 minutes or so, maybe an hour. And then around 8:00 I'm here.

So it takes 15 minutes to walk to the station, 45-60 minutes with the taxi, and then you're here around 7:45, 8:00ish?

Yeah that's right.

Do you have to walk from where you get dropped off?

No I get dropped here (the shop is on a busy street).

OK. So in total about an hour?

About an hour, yeah.

Is it the same time on the way back?

From here to home I have to walk to the taxi rank. The walk is maybe 10 to 15 minutes to the (Claremont) station. And then from the station it's the same 45 minutes back. But excluding the line for the taxi... the line can take, depending on how many taxis there are that day... so it might, from 18:00, I might get home at 19:30. So all in all, it's an hour (the fixed time), the only difference is how long the line is.

And in the morning do you have to wait in line?

Yeah obviously, but it's a lot faster. A lot faster in the morning. But lines are more. What happens is 100% of the people take the taxi in the morning, but some of the people, because of costs, take the bus back. But you also get less taxis. In the morning they all start there. In the afternoon they maybe go on different routes or there are more hours so it spreads them out.

You never take the bus?

I don't. The thing is if I want to take the bus I have to wake up an hour earlier. The times are like 6:00, 6:45... uhm, 7:15 or something.

Is that the Golden Arrow bus?

Yeah. And the bus stops at the station so I'd have to walk in the morning. So a taxi is more expensive but also faster.

How much is the bus?

Not sure exactly. I think around R18 per day.

So for you it's worth it to pay more so you can wake up later and go to work faster?

Yeah. With the taxis like that... there is still a problem, a huge problem. The lines, the queues. Most of the time it works fine but sometimes the queues are incredibly long. Or there's a strike like last year but that doesn't happen that often. But so there are about 4 of us who live in Delft (who work at the cycling store "group")... the issue that gets us late isn't the traffic, it isn't the police, the traffic department and stuff... it's either the taxi doing their bullshit, or it's us. Our late coming depends on the taxis and how they operate in the morning, but besides that it's only you. Waking up after the required time and you'll be late. But any other thing it's pretty much the same, you can plan. When it comes to transport, yeah you have those days you spend a bit more time travelling or walking. But then you don't get there late because you plan for that. That's just a bit of luck if you go fast.

How come the taxis lines are sometimes so long?

I have no idea. I don't there are more people so there must be less taxis. But I don't know why. But there is no schedule or anything so you can't complain to them. Normally it's OK.

Do you do anything differently when it's dark?

If it's dark... like for example, our taxis this side. I think the latest from Claremont is like 19:30 or 20:00. There's no other option... there's a train but there's no station in Delft. We have to take a train to Khayelitsha but then a taxi to Delft. But in a situation where the train is delayed, there are no buses and taxis to Delft that time and then you have to walk (from Khayelitsha) for maybe an hour. So for us it's important to be at the station and in line. At 20:30 there's a small chance of getting a taxi. And a tiny chance of getting a train. So it's no option for us. And the bus you have to wake up early. I mean it's convenient for me because the bus stop is close by my house. But it takes a lot of time to wait for the schedule. And to go back the bus gets full so there's a line as well. So if I leave at 18:00

here I can be home between 19:45 and 20:00. That's why I say I prefer using the taxis.

Alright. And you said you get dropped by the store in the morning but you have to walk to the taxi rank in the afternoon. Why is that?

Oh because they're all full so they would never stop for me here. I have to wait in the line otherwise I would be waiting on the street for a long time.

Ah yeah OK. Have you thought about moving a bit closer to work?

Yes I do consider that. But looking at the finances... it's not realistic. If I move from Delft to here. I'll have to... yes I'll save on taxis... but I'll pay at least 1000 Rand more. Here it might cost me 1500, 2000 Rand. Where I live now I live with two other people. We share the cost there so I save a lot on that. I can't say that now... maybe in the future if keep working and things pick up. So along the line it might be better for me. Coming this side, coming a bit closer to Claremont it will be a hassle when it comes to the money.

And would you want to live here if you had the money?

Yeah of course. Well, I mean if my job was here then yes. But I don't care if I work in town or anywhere else, it's just good to live close to work.

Right. But if you had the choice to pick any place?

I don't know. Everything this side is better than Delft you know. It doesn't matter to me if I live in Claremont or in Observatory or in town.

How is it better here?

Much less crime. It's a lot cleaner here too and just better organized. Because if you go from... I mean I can't even take a train from Delft, but there's a station here in Claremont. And I worked in Observatory and there's a station there. You can live in so many places this side and get around easily, but from Delft it's much more difficult. But it's just too expensive here for now.

Yeah... So you were saying before (in the store still, before I started recording) you worked at McDonalds?

Yes at McDonalds.

And before that?

Before that I was at Nando's.

Was it here in Claremont as well?

At Cavendish (a shopping mall on main road in Claremont). But it wasn't, you know, a job I really wanted to pursue. It was just something that I was able to find at the time. At McDonalds, I came in, I just asked for the manager. I talked to the manager and he just said: "when are you able to work?". So I started working in the kitchen, behind the grill, grill meat. But then I stopped because of the finances because I wasn't paid well, maybe like R250 per week or some crap. But I'm glad I got the opportunity so quickly because normally you do a test, you first have to pass that and then you can work. But I just came there and could start working straight away.

So you went in cold, you got in and got hired?

Yeah I just walked in, hijacked the manager and got the job. For me it was luck I think, and maybe showing him that I was able to come in and work.

Well yeah I mean you showed you were proactive by just going there and talking to him...

Yeah yeah.

So this was in Cavendish?

At Cavendish yeah.

So you came all the way here without knowing there was a job available?

What happened is... now, the supervisor I had, he moved. From there to another branch. So it was easy there. But now the manager has changed. Here it was a lot harder, with a formal interview. There it was just talking to him and then you got the job.

Right. But you came to Claremont just to walk around and look for work?

No I was working at Nando's and then on some day I went by McDonalds (it's across the street) to ask for a job and then I started there.

So was it just an informal job that you didn't have to do the test?

Yeah. They wanted to hire me, but it was difficult because I think I didn't have my ID when I started there. I got a new ID now, but didn't at the time. So it was difficult for them to hire me because already I worked for them without doing the formal process. And then I don't have an ID... so yeah. But the guy said: "come back if you have your ID. I like the way you work, you work hard. But I can't let you work here now because then we'll have to pay you (formally, on a contract)". I had to wait like two or three months for my ID to get in.

So I wanted to know, before your job at McDonalds and Nando's... what kind of methods did you use to find work? And your job at Nando's, how did you find that?

The job at Nando's I heard about from a friend. He was a waiter there and he said someone quit or got fired or something so they were looking for another waiter. And then I went there, got an interview and they hired me.

How did you know that friend?

From Delft. Actually no he didn't live in Delft. He was the brother of a friend, and my friend told me about the job. I didn't meet the guy before I got the job, but I knew about it because he told my friend.

Ah alright. And how do you know your friend?

I met him in Delft. I think he was a friend of a friend and we met at a party or something, but I'm not sure.

How long have you known him?

I think maybe five years.

Oh OK and is it a close friend?

Yeah. I don't see him every day but he's a good friend.

Alright. So you found out about the Nando's job through this friend, the McDonalds job because you just walked in. Have you used any other methods?

Obviously... the classifieds. Most of the employment... most of the agencies don't use the classifieds, but most of us (I'm assuming him and his friends) do use classifieds. And going through company

websites. That's what I do normally. I don't use agencies because they use a lot of your money, make you give them 20 or 25% some percent of your salary. Most of your salary goes to them. So I go to the website, asking around... one of the things I've seen that helps a lot. If you go out and you ask where people work, you ask them what they do, what the company's like... And yeah I'm doing it the old school way as well, just going around and seeing what's there you know.

Have you used agencies before, do you have a bad experience with them?

No but some of my friends have and they all don't like it so I never even tried.

Alright... but you said you checked the websites, where do you check those?

At an internet cafe. I used to work at... it was not a formal business, just a small thing a guy was starting at the time. It was a small place with computers and printing. If people wanted a copy, whatever. But I was able to look up things. But nothing... nothing was actually posted. It was more to find out where businesses were, what they were doing. I wasn't used to coming to this side (Claremont / Southern Suburbs). But when I was doing the job hunting thing I was able to take a look at what was here. But I never considered coming here until I heard from one of the people working here that there was a post available. Then I took the opportunity and began.

Wait but didn't you come here when you were working at McDonalds at Nando's?

Yeah but that was long before and I was looking more at town.

How come?

I thought there would be more jobs there so I went there a few times and dropped my CV but I didn't find anything in town.

Where did you drop off your CV?

Anywhere, you know. Any place I thought I want to work at.

And how did you get to town?

With a taxi.

Was that expensive?

It was expensive. I mean I was unemployed so everything is expensive. I did that a few times but after a while you spend that money travelling and you don't find a job. Then you're just losing money.

So were you unemployed between the jobs you had?

Yeah a lot. Before I came here (to the job he has now)... I started here in November/October. So from 2013... November till then a year later, I was unemployed. I mean I was doing part time stuff, a few days here and there. But I wouldn't call it "working".

How did you get those jobs?

Those jobs were through people. People around my community. What I do is I ask a lot and make sure every person I meet who works I ask them about it, if they need people. So you go there, inquire information... they tell you and refer you to some person, maybe an HR manager... but you know it depends. It depends on what you do.

So what did you do, those part-time jobs? And where?

They were around Delft mostly. Just small things like if someone is moving or someone needs to paint something. Stuff like that.

And people told you about those jobs?

Yes they told me... if they know someone who needs people to do some simple things... they just ask around you know. There are always people who want to work so it's easy to get people. You just have to be lucky that someone asks you. Pff man it's hot in here...

Yeah sorry we're almost done, sorry. You mentioned you used the classifieds. Did you find any jobs through that?

... one. One yeah. In Observatory. For a catering company as like a sales person. But they wanted a lot of things. They wanted a driver's license which I didn't have. And yeah a lot of things... I was unemployed, obviously I don't have a laptop. So they were for example selling certain cookies. My job was to take samples and sell it to places. I didn't lose that job, I just left because what happened was I got a 10% commission out of every sale that I make. So if I sell R1000 I get R100. Counting the fact I had to take a taxi ... I had to go to Cape Town and then back to Observatory. It was a huge amount of money and I didn't have a big salary, working for commission. And I didn't know what to do, where to go and when. It was hard.

How much did you spend on travel?

I think maybe 25 Rand per day. I mean it's the same as now but working for commission you don't know how much money you will make. I had many days that I lost money. You work a whole day for nothing. So I left that job.

Alright. And the jobs at Nando's and McDonalds, why did you quit there?

Ah it was hard. Well OK at McDonalds as I said I didn't have my ID. But Nando's was hard. I had night shifts from like 16:00 to midnight.

How would you get back?

They supply transport for you. So that was easy, but hard in the sense that... the shifts would be Monday to Sunday.

So the transport wasn't an issue but the times were inconvenient?

Yes the time. I had no free nights anymore. So I saw the opportunity at McDonalds, you had Monday to Friday and you work from 8:30 to 16:00. The times were convenient. You get the weekend off and had those days. Other companies it was hard cause you maybe get Sunday off but Saturday you're working nights. Then Monday morning you have to get to work early. So fatigue... small amount of sleep. But I'm happy here by the way. It's hard getting through everything, getting to know the job, understanding how the system works... it's difficult, being unemployed for a long time and then suddenly having to wake up early in the morning. That's a hard bit.

And you mentioned earlier that the manager at McDonalds said you could go back and work there anytime. How come you didn't do that?

Well it was ... the manager I worked for had left. I did go back one time, but there was a new manager and he told me they weren't hiring. So I just left him my CV but nothing came of that. And to be honest it was not something I really wanted to do.

But didn't you need the money?

Yes but with the travelling I didn't have much left anyway so I was looking at other places more, where my salary would be more.

Right. So, wait, sorry I'm still a bit confused about the way you got your current job. So did you know about this place already?

Yes I knew this place (the cycle store) existed because the taxi to the station goes on this road. But I didn't know they were hiring or anything. And I was asking around and then someone told me that he worked at [redacted] (the cycle store) and that they were opening the bottle store.

And how did you know the guy who told you about the job?

He's a friend of one of the people I live with. I met him a few years ago somewhere. I didn't really know him but I saw him again a few months ago. And I was unemployed for so long so I always asked people where they worked and if they were hiring.

Ah alright that makes a lot of sense, cool. And the last thing, I promise: I was wondering if you had looked for jobs in Delft, near your house?

As I said I did some small jobs. But the thing is in Delft in terms of jobs... there's nothing. You get things like our hardware stores, our garages, police station, clinic, library... what else? You get a lot of stores, but all of them were occupied (I'm assuming fully staffed). The only places they would sometimes be hiring was the library, the police station and the clinic. But... they also wanted their requirements like a driver's license, having this and this work experience. It's not easy in Delft. As soon as the job post comes out, everyone goes for it. Here there isn't that much... there is, but ... you get a much bigger chance if you hear someone talking about it. Someone telling you about it. It's better. Unlike in Delft where you just get a sign or something with all the requirements. When you get there, there's a 99.99% chance you won't get the job. Here you have a bigger opportunity. But to me it's all about luck. I work hard and I want to keep the job. But I needed luck to hear about it first.

So in Delft that would just put up a sign?

They put up a sign sometimes at the library or the clinic. And maybe in the newspaper or something I'm not sure. But there aren't many posts available but many people apply, so you have to be very very lucky.

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Interviewer: Guus Hoekman

Participant: Reign

Date: 11-Dec-2014

At an internet cafe between Kenilworth and Claremont. Interview carried out in the shop itself, at the counter. Was asked by the guy to come in on a Wednesday morning when he said it would be quiet. There was one guy who came in, he only had to quickly use a computer to print something and it was neither distracting nor did the participant's demeanor change when the customer was there. Friendly, talkative guy. Kept referring to his business as "IT", although he was just running a simple internet cafe. Doesn't seem like there was a whole lot to it. Coloured guy, early 20s. First language English. Forgot to ask him about his work experience and how he came to own the business so went back a few weeks later. He remembered me but it was busier then. He had to go back and forth between helping people and answering questions.

[Explanation of the research and getting consent]

I'm interested in finding out the ways you've recruited the people who've worked here.

What I've learned from the work that I do, this kind of work, in an internet cafe, is a service industry with regards to IT. So it's like an

entry level into IT. If you want to learn programming of any kind you either start somewhere small like this ... in any IT business you start out either as a techie, people phone in and say my internet is down and then you explain how to fix it. Or you work in an internet cafe, print shop, DVD or anything to do ... that's in the service industry.

Right. But you were saying yesterday you occasionally employ people here temporarily.

Yes. This is how I normally do it. I normally go on my facebook page and I post it there. A lot of people on my facebook page, like 700 likes, it's not a lot but it's basically the entire area here. So people in the area who are looking for a job, it will be posted on the website, on the facebook page. And the person will see the job, they'll phone me, I tell them what the job entails, they ask me if it pays, I say no. It's a temporary thing. It's just for people who are looking for job shadowing who wish to have experience in an IT field. They come here two weeks, three weeks. Or two months, or whatever how long they wish to job shadow for. And then they get the experience for two months and then they might get a job either in a junior position in order to learn more. So I provide kind of a stepping stone almost for people that want to get into IT or college kids that need the experience. You know what it's like working in an IT environment. It's only if they're studying ... if they're doing something in the service industry. If they want to get a job in graphic design or programming or networking. Those get to apply for jobs at the companies. Those are normally advertised on either gumtree or ... what's the other one ... career 24. Anything like that that's either local or international where they provide the kind of work [inaudible]. It's job shadowing here basically ... cause I can't pay them.

Alright. So you purely advertise on your facebook page?

No no no I advertise on gumtree as well.

Oh ok. But it's only online?

Yes only online. Or I go to the colleges and make little pamphlets and put in on the boards "Looking for job shadowing" or "Looking for" ... you know ... an intern.

What colleges?

Either UCT or Abbott's college down the road here. You know kids there who are doing that... or the college here at the church. I hand flyers out there or I hand out flyers in Claremont see if anyone is looking experience ... for job shadowing, whatever. They can come and I interview them. How long you been studying IT, da da da. And you must have an IT degree though. Or you must be studying IT.

So you need a background in IT?

Ya. You can't just come here and say "I don't know how to use a computer, can I get a job?". You have to know something. I always see someone [referring to the customers], if they're coming in, they don't know how to make a copy. Most people don't even know how to make a copy, surprisingly. So I provide that, you know, so they learn how to make a copy, to set up a network and put all the pieces together. All the facilities to help them understand how to run an IT business. Does that answer your question?

Yeah yeah that's great. But just more on the pamphlet. Basically what I'm looking into is how employers find people. And quite specifically. So for the pamphlet, what language is it in for example?

In English.

And what kind of stuff do you put on there?

Just looking for someone that can run networking maintenance. Can provide protection on PCs. A bit of graphic design and web development. If you're studying any of those four fields I can give you experience. Yeah that's basically what I put on there. Must be able to work under pressure, multi-task, be friendly, polite. Yeah, must be hard working. There's not really that much that I'm asking for.

And is in the same on facebook and gumtree?

Ya it would be the same. I don't require matric, obviously. It's a low end job. I'm not paying you anything so obviously I'm not gonna ask for matric. Sometimes kids from high schools, they haven't finished matric they're in grade 8, grade 10 they want experience. They come here. Their teacher might ask them to get [inaudible].

Alright. and do you mostly get locals?

Yeah mostly local oaks.

Even from gumtree and facebook?

Yeah sometimes from gumtree. Sometimes from gumtree I get really, really desperate professional oaks. They're like "ya, you're running an internet cafe, how much are you paying?". I'm like "sorry bro it's an intern position there's no cash involved". "Ah you know how much I'm looking for a job". I'm like "ya sorry dude I know what you mean I can't even pay myself". That's what I tell them, I tell them all the time "dude I can't pay myself". If you're an "intern" and work somewhere for two years you're supposed to get paid, you know what I mean? Two days, three, days, four days, five days maximum and you're gone. I had a kid here for a week, a week or two from a nearby school. But I don't really hire anybody, but if I was looking for somebody I would either use social networks like facebook or gumtree, career24, careerjet. Or an ad in a pamphlet, you know? Cause not everybody has a computer so you know, maybe I should advertise in a newspaper. All guys can get a newspaper and sometimes they go to the library so I leave some pamphlets there. The closest library that I normally go to is the one in Wynberg. I don't know where the other libraries are in the area...

There's one in Claremont.

Oh yeah. I keep forgetting about that library cause I never go there. I always go to the one in Wynberg. But yeah libraries, sometimes bars as well. Or just when I'm talking to somebody and I tell them I'm in IT, I ask them if they're interested in that at all. And they says "yeah I want to learn Excel, Word, whatever". So yeah if somebody wants that that's fine.

Right. But that sounds a lot like they're not that experienced with computers though. You were saying you advertise in newspapers because they don't have computers. But before you said you do want someone who's studying IT.

Yeah no no no, you don't understand, haha. It's like... if you're at college. If you have access to a computer at school you can do things, but at home you might not have anything. You know what I mean?

Ah alright. So it's for people outside of school?

Outside of school. It doesn't have to be someone whose career it is.

Haha no OK.

No newspapers is you know... if they don't have a PC when they get home. It's just putting your foot in a few places so you can get that one person. Maybe this guy was reading the newspaper because he can't pay his electric bill. The equipment is down, maybe I can intern quickly. It all depends on where you advertise for a job. If you

want to get someone quick, the more you put out the more different interviews you get and the more people you can choose from. Then you can start narrowing it down to a few people. But what I realized, when I'm looking at a CV, I don't want a four page thing, I don't have time to read that dude. I can see you have a lot of experience but you can tell me that in the interview. I just want your name, ID number and maybe one or two places you worked recently and then the matric or certificate of what you've done. One page, two page maximum.

So you get quite a few people from what it sounds like?

Yeah sometimes. Not always. I've gotten maybe 15 CVs for intern positions, but also 3 or 4. People who want to be here a week or a month, whatever. Most of the time I don't have anybody working here.

But when I do get somebody that's how I do it.

Right. Cause it seems like you put a lot of effort into putting it online, handing out flyers, etc.

Yeah but I haven't done it recently. Not in the last year.

Ah alright. Why?

Cause it wasn't necessary. My dad decided he was gonna be the extra person here. So it was only for one year that I was hiring people. The first year I was here. I had a lot to do with regards to accounts. But now I have everything down that needs to be done.

Have you gotten anyone who just came in with their CV asking if there's a job available?

Many times. I still do. People, mostly young generation will come asking. Seeing if there's a job available.

What do you tell them?

I tell them "sorry man, I got nothing. It's only me here". They think I'm the only guy working behind the counter. But I tell them "I'm the boss as well" and it's a lot more work than just standing behind the counter. So they go to the next place to look for a job. But yeah I haven't hired anyone for a year now.

Can I ask you about the interview; what's the process?

What I normally do is, I have two candidates that are eligible for the interview. They'll sit at a terminal and I give them instruction. I say "open up an email address for me" from any provider. They'll both do it and I can check which one is quicker, who looks more comfortable. And I do that during the interview as well. This person looks way more comfortable than the other person. He can come for a second interview. I'll ask them some things first; "how long have you been doing IT for? How long have you been in school for?". But it depends a lot on who looks most comfortable behind a PC at the end of the day. You can have a lot of crap on your CV but I want to see if it's true. So I check who's the quickest. So then I tell them "I want you to search for something on the internet you find interesting". And then maybe as a second interview I sometimes put them behind the counter as a practice, serving a customer. Whoever handles that situation with a customer the best, will get the job.

OK. So you have a very practical interview? You make them do things they'll have to do on the job and see how they handle it?

Yeah, yeah. Sometimes I'll ask them, on a second interview, scan all the PC and check if there's any viruses. And cool if both can do it. If one can't do it it's like OK, you lost a point you know, less chance now. But he can redeem himself by being better behind the counter than the guy who knows more about computers.

Alright. You test different skills, get a score in your head and make a decision?

Yeah. I don't have a clipboard or anything, haha. In my head I'll just be which guy is better, and yeah...

OK. Do you care at all about where they live? If they're from the area?

No. The last kid that worked for me, very cool kid, he came from Mitchell's Plain. He had to do some stuff for school. Before that there was a guy, he was from Hanover Park. I don't really care where they stayed. I wasn't worried they'd steal or anything. There were just youngsters and I interviewed them and gave them a chance. Most who come here to learn Excel and stuff. They get to stand behind the counter as well and get some experience... is there anything else?

----

Second interview a few weeks later; not recorded (there was music playing and there were more customers; I didn't think the recording would be any good so took notes instead).

He was born in Kenilworth and lives there still. Only child, grew up in an apartment with his dad and still lives in it. Mother passed away when he was young. Father lives in town and owns an internet cafe there. Opened up a second one just over two years ago. Had interns first year. His father recently (few months ago) decided he will "help out" at the internet cafe (my guess is that it's not making a profit yet and the father wants to get more involved to make sure it will). Has been in charge of the place since it was opened. Doesn't know too much about how his dad bought or chose the location. Learned about the business side of things through his father. Went to matric but no tertiary education. Pretty much straight after matric started working first at the internet cafe his father has in town. Never applied for any other jobs or did any other work. Could make up interview process himself, but did use some of the same methods as his father (especially testing them out behind the counter). Was more into social media and advertised more online than his father. The other place had two paid employees though, no "interns" like his place does.

---

Interviewer: Guus Hoekman  
Participant: Phumla  
Date: 09-Jan-2015

At [redacted] Promenade (in Mitchell's Plain). At a Wimpy within the mall in which the supermarket is located. Relatively quiet place to do the interview, 1 minute walk from the [redacted]. Participant a black Xhosa woman, maybe early 40s? Xhosa her first language, English quite good. After explaining to her what I was doing she seemed quite keen to participate. Happy to share her story and seemed to appreciate that someone was interested. When I asked her if she wanted something to drink or eat she said no. Then I asked her again, making sure she knew I was going to pay, and she ordered coffee and breakfast. The food got brought to the table near the end of the first part. We kept talking because she was still eating and I still had tea left so I started recording again. Some parts not transcribed because we were just having a conversation. After interview when we were walking back to the [redacted] she thanked me for listening to her and asking so many questions.

[Explanation of the research and getting consent]

Can I first ask you what you do?

I'm a cashier and a relieving supervisor.

Have you been doing that for a long time?

Five years now.

That same job?

Yes.

And you started off as a cashier?

I started at a till packer and then later became a cashier and the also relieving supervisor.

Alright. I will ask a bit more questions about that later. Just want to ask you some background questions first.

You mentioned (before the interview started) you live in Khayelitsha?

Yes.

Have you been living there for a long time?

Yes... since 1985. I moved from Gugulethu in 1985. My parents bought a house in Khayelitsha then.

And you were born in Gugulethu?

Yes.

And in 1985 you parents bought the house in Khayelitsha and you all moved there?

Yes.

Do you still live in that house?

No I live on my own now. I have a house in the back of another house. After my parents house I stayed in someone's backyard.

And that's where you are now still?

Yes.

Also in Khayelitsha?

Yes.

Is it separate from the main house?

Yes.

And do you live there by yourself?

With my child.

And the house you live in, is it RDP housing?

It's not, but it's like a house in the back. Like a backyard house.

Where is it exactly?

In C-section. By the stadium in Khayelitsha.

Ah alright. So sorry can you explain a bit in detail about your house?

It's a bedroom, a kitchen and bathroom. Only those three rooms. And then it's in the back of another house.

So it's in someone's yard?

Yes.

And those people, do you know them?

Yes we grew up together.

So they built another house in the yard?

They got a government house and so my house is just next to that.

And you're renting that now?

Yes for R200 per month. I pay R100 for the rent and R100 for the electricity.

Is it a fixed rate for the electricity?

Yes I pay them that every month.

And is it a brick house?

Yes is it.

Alright. Can I ask you what education you've had?

Matric. I finished matric in 1992.

In Gugulethu?

No in a Khayelitsha high school.

Oh right because you moved there in 1985 right?

Yes.

How old were you at the time?

I was... 15.

OK. And did you start working after matric?

Yes I worked at a garage, [redacted] garage. A friend of mine was manager there at the [redacted] garage and she got me a job there. In 2005 I started the job here at [redacted].

OK so you've worked at those two places?

Yes.

And the [redacted] garage, where was it?

In Lansdowne, near Philippi.

I see. So your friend said "we're looking for someone to work here"?

Yes they were looking for someone to work there. I was working as a domestic worker before for some time. I finished school in 1992. Then I went to Eastern Cape and then I came back. Worked as a domestic worker and then I went to the [redacted] garage. I think that was in 2002... no 2003. And then until 2005 when I started here.

OK. So you moved to Eastern Cape?

Yes because my mother lived there. So here I was living with my grandmother. My mother was working and she didn't have time for me. And then she went back to Eastern Cape and I moved there as well.

Is your mother from Eastern Cape?

Yes.

And at some point your mother moved to Eastern Cape and you moved in with your grandmother?

Yes, I think in 1989 or so.

Where in Eastern Cape did you move to?

Hofmeyr.

Where is that exactly?

It's near Cradock (in the Karoo, about 300 km north of Port Elizabeth).

Alright... How long did you live there?

I came back to Cape Town in 2002.

And there you worked as a domestic worker?

What made you come back?

I was tired of the life there. I wanted to come back. It wasn't my life there, I didn't grow up there so I decided to come back.

And your child...?

I have a daughter and a son. The daughter is 26 years old and staying with the grandparents from the father's side. And then my son is 12 years old. He lives with me.

Where does your son go to school?

York Road Primary School, in Lansdowne.

Oh OK. Why there and not in Khayelitsha?

I wanted to enrol him there to get a better education.

Ah alright. It's a better school than where he could go to in Khayelitsha?

Yes.

How does he get there?

By bus.

On his own?

Yes.

I see. And is that bus expensive?

It's not very expensive. It's only one bus, the one to Claremont. And he has a clip card. It's about R120 per month.

OK. So can I ask you first about your job as a domestic worker, in Eastern Cape. How did you find that job?

My mother was a domestic worker as well so I worked with her. And then after a few years I started working for another family.

The family your mother worked for were fine with you working there as well?

Yes that was fine.

Alright. Do you know if your mother asked them if you could work there as well, or...?

I don't know.

OK. And what about the second family you worked for? How did you get that job?

Through the first family. They asked me if I wanted to work for another family. And that was fine because then I could earn more money.

Alright. Did you approach them at all before that?

No they just asked me. I think the domestic worker they had moved away or something.

And it was fine with your mother, she could do the work on her own?

Yes it was fine.

And was this is the same town?

Yes the same town, also in Hofmeyr.

Alright. Then about the job at [redacted]. You said your friend was the manager? And she told you they needed someone?

Yes.

What kind of job was it?

As a cashier.

OK. Did you have to go for an interview?

No I didn't have to go for an interview I just went for a training. She was the manager there.

And she could decide who to hire?

Yes I just went for a training and from there they saw I could do it. I was hired the same day.

Oh nice. What was the training like?

Just showing me how it worked, with the till and what I had to do, scanning the items and packing. But it was very easy.

I see. And how do you know the manager?

From school.

From matric?

Yes. We went to school together from age 8 until matric.

So you knew her for a long time already?

Yes.

But then you moved to Eastern Cape. Did you stay in touch?

Yes. Because we're not in a... for long in the same area.

Right. You were in Hofmeyer for about ten years.

Yes we used the phone, she used to phone me at night. Or we would write letters. And when I told her that I was gonna come

back, she said "when you come back contact me and I will see if I can get you a job".

Ah OK. And do you still talk to her now?

Yes.

And she's one of your best friends?

Yes.

So you worked there for two years?

Yes and then my niece, who was working for [redacted] at the time in Table View, she told me that they ... they were accepting forms there so I went to Table View and filled in the form. Two weeks after that they phoned me and told me that I could come to write the test. They phoned me to say I passed the test and two weeks after that I came to Promenade (the mall in Mitchell's Plain where the store is) for an interview. Then I took the interview. They phoned me again after a day or two saying I got the job.

So your niece told you about the job?

Yes.

An open vacancy specifically, or just to apply to [redacted]?

For a specific job.

And she already worked here?

For three years already.

What did she tell you about the job?

She just told me they needed people there. Not much else, just that it's a nice company.

OK. But she worked at Table View right? How did she know that they needed people at Promenade?

She told me they needed people at Table View but then they put me here so I don't know.

Ah alright she told you about a job in Table View?

Yes.

OK. But then you were put here instead?

Yes.

Was the salary higher here than at [redacted]?

Yes. At [redacted] they paid me 6 rand. And when I came here it was R12 or R13 per hour.

So it was a lot better here?

Yes.

Was that the main reason you switched jobs?

Yes.

And when did they tell you where you were gonna work? Because you dropped off your CV right?

No I didn't even give them my CV I just filled in a form.

What kind of form was that?

A form with your details. Your age, your ID number, your phone number. That's all.

And then you went for the interview?

Yes... no I first went for a test.

Oh right.

And then interview and then I got the job.

Can you tell me about the test?

It was a simple math test.

Nothing too complicated?

Yes it was easy to do. Some stuff was tricky but simple if you concentrate.

What kinds of questions?

It was math. Things like addition, subtraction, multiplication.

OK. So you had the test and then the interview?

It was here at Promenade.

So at that point you knew they were looking for someone here?

Yes.

But you only found out after the test?

Yes.

So before that you had no idea?

Yes and I was working night shifts at [redacted]. So I had to go home and wash and come back for an interview.

OK. So the interview, do you remember what it was like?

It was simple, about customer service. If the customer says this, what do you say? Customer care... that everyone knows the customer is always right... even if they are not, haha.

Haha alright. And that was quite simple for you?

Yes quite simple.

Alright. So it seems like for the the test and the interview were pretty easy?

Easy yes.

That's good. So you started as a packer first? And then cashier, and now you're relieving supervisor as well? How is that different, what do you have to do exactly?

As a supervisor you have to make sure everything is done, when people go to lunch, that people are at the phones.

I see. And do you get paid more for that?

It's not even that different. Just 50 cent more. I get R28 per hour now and before R27.50.

Ah OK so that's a small difference. Is it a lot more work?

Yes sometimes.

And do you want to become a manager later?

I think I would like to be manager one day. But I would have to be customer service manager first. So you have different categories. Category 1 is cashier, category 3 supervisor and managers category 4.

Ah alright and you're working your way up now?

Yes.

I see. So you said your niece told you about a job here. Have you told anyone about [redacted]?

I've told my friend. But then ... she said no because she had another job offer. But later she said she regretted it because she didn't like her job.

OK. When did you tell her? When you found out they were looking for people?

Yes. But the problem was... someone who was already working for [redacted]... When I came in you told them who you came with. But now you can't do that anymore. You have to drop your CV. That time you could as well but you could also fill in a form. And now you can't do that anymore.

OK. So for the form you needed to know someone?

Yes but you could also still drop your CV like you have to do now. But I knew someone there. So when I came I went with my niece...

And did that help?

Yes I think so.

Did they ask your niece anything about you?

She didn't say.

And do you think she would have told you if they had asked her?

Yes I think so.

Alright. And your friend, was that the only person you told?

Yes.

No one else?

No.

Why not?

Uhm...

Maybe because no had asked? Or because you didn't know anyone who would be interested...?

Because I didn't know anyone who would be interested.

OK I see. Do you remember what you told your friend about the job? What kind of people they were looking for, the working conditions stuff like that?

No I didn't say much. I just told her that if she wanted she could come in with me and drop her CV.

But she didn't want to because she had a job already?

She had a job offer.

Alright. So about your commute to work... getting to work every day. Can you tell me about your ... this morning for example?

This morning I had to take a taxi from where I stay for R8.

OK. So can you start from when you wake up and ... just all the steps.

OK. So I wake up at 6:00, I wash. I already ironed my clothes in the evening. I clothed myself and eat breakfast. Then at 7:15 I have to take a taxi. I start at 8:00. So I take a taxi for R8 from where I'm staying to the place where I get a taxi to Mitchell's Plain for R10. I take two taxis.

So in total it's R18?

18.

OK so you take a taxi...

From where I stay to a taxi rank. And from there I take a taxi to Mitchell's Plain.

OK. So two separate ones. There's not one that goes straight here?

No. Because I'm staying far from taxis. Sometimes when I start late I walk. But in the morning I don't walk because it's dangerous. And when I walk I walk with my friend.

Alright. So the final taxi drops you off here in front?

Yes and then I walk from the street.

Alright. How long does it take you in total?

It depends on the taxis... in the morning normally it takes a while waiting for the taxis. And sometimes they go to another robot, so sometimes it goes straight to Promenade and sometimes it makes a circle and then passes Promenade later.

It takes different routes sometimes?

Yes.

OK. But if you leave at 7:15 are you always on time (to start at 8:00)?

Yes I'm always on time. Normally about 10 to 15 minutes early.

Alright. But then ... it seems so expensive for such a short ride?

Yes! If you knew Khayelitsha... if you see from C-section where I take a taxi from R8. It's not even... it should be maybe R6, R8 to here.

Right because something like a train... I mean from town to Lentegeur (the station by Promenade) is maybe R7 and that's way further.

You see! The taxis are so expensive.

So is that a big part of your salary then?

Yes. Like today, I'm going home at 17:00. I have to go get another R10 to go home and it's R28.

I see. But ... 28? Oh do they charge more after 17:00?

No but I can take a taxi home from R10 because the R8 taxi is not there. The R10 goes to my home straight.

Ah alright. So in the morning you go from your house, take a taxi for R8, then to work for another R10? But in the afternoon you pay R10 and you go back home? It drops you off there?

Yes.

OK. How come it's different in the morning from the afternoon?

I don't know.

OK. But so this part (pointing at diagram in notebook: the part between home and the first taxi she takes in the morning) you don't like to walk?

No I don't want to walk. During the day yes I can walk, there's lots of people. It's still dangerous because people can rob you. But especially now that most of the people are on holiday it's quiet.

And do you ever have a late shift?

Yes and then they drop you at home. The company provides that. So when I have a late shift I start at 10:30, 12:30 or 13:30. And then you're gonna go late. The shop closes at 21:00. It depends on how long you work, the latest you sometimes leave is 22:00. And then you're back at maybe 22:30. But it depends on the route because the taxi that takes me home... there are three areas that it goes to: Site-C, Site-B and Khayelitsha. So sometimes it starts with Site-C or sometimes with Khayelitsha. So it depends on which it starts with.

Alright. Sometimes you're lucky and you get dropped first, and sometimes unlucky when you get dropped later?

Yes it depends on the driver. Sometimes I get dropped last, one of the drivers lives in Nyanga.

Ah OK. So he drops you last so that he can be home quickly from there?

Yes.

I see. Alright. And your son?

My son has the key so he can go in the house. If I know I'm late I leave food so he can warm that in the microwave and eat. And then he knows to lock the door and take out the key so that I can come home and open the door. Or sometimes he can go to my sister. She lives very close to me.

Alright. So since [redacted] pays for transport when you have a night shift but you're home quite late. What's your preference?

I prefer to finish later because then I only pay for one trip.

Ah OK. So you like the night shifts?

Yes but I think 22:30 is very late. If I then still have to go back to my house and cook... but I don't mind the night shift because my son can now go home or stay with my sister in the evening.

Yeah I see. Have you tried looking for work close to your home?

Yes. Yes. But the [redacted] that is there is a franchise one. And it doesn't pay very much. But this one (Promenade) is closer, but if only they could provide a bus that goes from close to me to Mitchell's Plain. The only bus I can take it to Blue Downs. But then I would have to take a taxi to get to that bus. But I saw a MyCiti with "Mitchell's Plain" so I want to check where it goes and then if I can I will take that bus.

Ah OK. So the MyCitiBus goes close to your home?

Yes.

[I'm checking some thing in my notes, she is eating. There is a short pause in the conversation]

You know working for [redacted]... It's normally fine but sometimes there's those... things.

What do you mean by that?

See now I've been working for [redacted], it's gonna be ten years. And you know what, I'm still a cashier. I'm still a cashier. It's a very nice company to work for, but...

So are you thinking about switching jobs? Are you looking for other work?

I'm gonna go to school.

Ah really?

Yes. I'm gonna go to school and work weekends.

What do you want to do?

I'd like to become a primary school teacher. I don't want to work with the older ones.

Ah cool. Any idea what school?

I don't know exactly but one close to my house.

OK. You just want to work close to home?

Yes. It will be better. Sometimes, when I work night. I'm worried... there's a lot of things... my son now is growing up. It's not nice. My friend she's working here. She has a daughter, she only sees her in the morning. By the time she gets home her daughter is already asleep. The daughter got pregnant and the mother didn't even know. When you are home you are cooking and cleaning your house. And then someone else tells you that your daughter is pregnant. That's what you get when you work the hours like here at [redacted]. You are unaware of what's happening at your own house.

Yeah sure. You have such a long day... have you thought about moving to Mitchell's Plain?

I can't afford to move to Mitchell's Plain. That's why I need to go to school this year so I can get a better job. So I can be home more.

Is Mitchell's Plain much more expensive than Khayelitsha?

The houses. Because here you don't get RDP houses. In Khayelitsha there are RDP houses even now. I mean I can't live in someone's backyard forever. I need to have my own house. And a house for my son. So I want to buy a house, which is why I want to get a better education so I can get a better job.

Yeah I see. So, sorry for asking this again, but can you tell me the places where you go in the morning to get to work.

Haha yes. So I go from my house and I take a taxi.

On the street of your house?

Yes right on the street. And from there I go to Lookout Hill. You can check the map later where that is. That's for R8. And then from Lookout Hill to Mitchell's Plain is R10. And you'll see on your map

how close it is. And for them to charge R10... and I think they're gonna raise the money to R11.

That's really expensive. I'm pretty sure you can take a train and go from town to... maybe Muizenberg or something for less than R10. And that's far.

So far. You see the taxis are greedy.

Yeah but even the taxis there. I mean I can go with a taxi from town to maybe Wynberg for R10 as well. Maybe further. But it makes no sense because here it's going between poor areas and there you go from town to Southern Suburbs. It should be the other way around right?

Yes it's supposed to be like that.

And is there no train for you here?

There is a train but it's dangerous to me. And I don't like the changing. I have to go to Philippi first and then go to another train. But when I get to Philippi the train to Mitchell's Plain just left so I have to wait there for another 20 or 30 minutes.

OK. Do you know how much it costs?

I think monthly... it was R270 per month.

Alright so it's cheaper?

It is cheaper but I don't like to take the train.

Have you had bad experiences on the train?

Once I got robbed on the train. It was very full and someone stole my wallet from my bag. And you hear many stories from the trains. It's always full in the mornings and I don't like it.

Alright. It's such a shame because the train... I came here from Rosebank today with the train. And a ticket from Rosebank to Lentegeur was R8. It takes quite a long time because you have to go to Salt River first, but it's far.

Yes it's OK coming from town to Mitchell's Plain. But the Khayelitsha line is worse, especially in the mornings when it's full. But you can imagine how much money I spent per month...

Yeah. Do you know how far it is in kilometers?

From here to the taxi rank in Mitchell's Plain (by the Mitchell's Plain train station) it's not far (2.5 km). It's only R2. But it's the same from where I stay to Lookout Hill and I pay R8.

And to walk it's too far?

I could walk but it's dangerous and sometimes I'm too late to walk.

I see. And maybe a bike?

Haha I can't even ride a bike. Even when you go to Shoprite in Site C it's also R8. It's not far. What I don't understand about the taxis... for us that travel with a taxi to our areas of work. They're not supposed to charge us a second time. Because we take a taxi to the rank where we get another taxi (at Lookout Hill). It's supposed to be cheaper because we take a taxi again. Why must they charge R8 and then R10? How much is it to Claremont, R14? You see how much that is, even though it's much farther. It's very expensive (in Khayelitsha / Mitchell's Plain). They're supposed to charge us maybe R6. Everyone who goes to the rank takes the taxi again.

So how much do the taxis work together?

In Khayelitsha we have Codeta. In Nyanga there's Cata. Even in Nyanga they charge R5 for the people who stay in Gugulethu, Philippi they have to take the taxis to go to Nyanga... they charge R5. And then from there they can go to Cape Town or Claremont or wherever. But here, where I have to take a taxi, if I want to go to Claremont or Cape Town I have to pay R8. And then R14 to go to Claremont, Cape Town, wherever.

OK. So you have different taxi companies?

Yes.

Right... then it would make even more sense, if you know you're gonna take another taxi... it would be nice if in the first taxi you can say where you're going and you can get a ticket. Like on a bus.

You see! It would be easier. And it would be more fair for everyone.

Do you know if there's a government limit to how much they can charge?

I really don't know ... maybe it's up to us to stand up to the government to say "this is too much for us. It takes too much money to travel".

Is there only one company?

Two. Khayelitsha is operating under Codeta. And Nyanga under Cata. So it's two companies.

Right. But do they compete with each other?

If you take a taxi from Nyanga they can only deliver people... they can't take people back to Nyanga.

Because?

They're not operating that side. They drive back empty. They can't bring people back, they must come back empty.

That really makes no sense. They could take people and essentially charge have the price.

That leads to the taxi violence most of the time. You can't even get in a Codeta taxi from Nyanga.

That's strange isn't it?

Very strange. That's how they operate. To avoid war.

Oh yeah... were you here when they had those taxis wars?

Yes. And I think it was last year... there was something like that, there might have been one. Because there were taxis from Delft bringing people to Nyanga and they weren't supposed to.

I see. So they have their own area to operate in?

Yes. And if they go in another area there's a problem. They can't operate if it's not their own area. You can operate in your area only.

... that sounds a bit like the mafia.

Yes! You have this area, you can't go there... yes.

So the people who are in the taxis... they pay all the money. It's such a waste, they're driving back empty.

Yes but they don't mind because that's how it is... to prevent violence and all that.

I see. So would it be nice if you could take a bus? They're fine right?

Yes, very fine. You've got a ticket and everything. It's very safe. And at night you don't need to have cash on you. If you have cash you can use it for something else. The days before people get paid many people ask to borrow money for transport. But if you can buy a monthly ticket you don't need to worry about spending your transport money.

Yes Nikki (the fresh foods manager) was saying it's very busy here on the 1st and the 15th in the store.

Yes on the 1st, 15th, 25th, and 27th. People get their salary or money from the government then.

Right. So for transport you would prefer a bus?

Yes.

Could you move somewhere else in Khayelitsha where there is a bus available?

There are buses in Khayelitsha, but they go to Claremont, Cape Town and the other areas.

But not to Mitchell's Plain?

Not Mitchell's Plain. There's one bus that comes from Blue Downs but it doesn't go into Khayelitsha.

Right. And do people around you have a car?

People do. But it's very expensive. Not only the car but also the petrol. My sister has a car but she still take the bus a lot.

Ah OK. And for you a car is no option?

I can't even drive.

I think in terms of petrol it would be cheaper though right? You probably wouldn't spend R28 in petrol to get to work.

Yes. That's also one of my objectives for next year.

Nice. Yes for me as well, I can't drive either.

Haha really? I thought you had a car here. Yes we must learn how to drive.

Haha yes it's very useful to be able to.

Yes I see now I need to learn to drive. But learning to drive is very expensive. It depends on how many lessons you want. I checked and about R80 per day. And I think you must go for about 10 to 15 lessons.

Yes. So you have looked at this quite a lot already?

My sister told me. But I must first learn and then also get a car. But you know you see young people here driving. I envy them. I would really like to learn but I'm afraid.

Ah yes me too. Cars are just so ... big. What I really don't like is that if I make a mistake I can kill someone. I find that very scary. If I sit on a train I can't do anything wrong.

Yes exactly. Then nothing is gonna be your fault, it's nice like that. But I still really want to learn how to drive. Then maybe I can even get a job being a driver.

Yes that's true as well. Do many people around where you live know how to drive?

Yes. Especially the young ones. Younger than me and they're driving. With their own cars.

Oh yeah? It is safe to park your car there?

Not really. And often people get hijacked. A friend of mine she went to buy some things at the shop. And then he came back and the car was gone. That was today.

Today?

Yes.

Oh no... man.

Yes he doesn't know what happened to the car. He came back out and wondered "where's the car, the car is not there". It was today. And the car was in the wife's name. The wife bought the car. Also the insurance. So maybe they won't pay because she was not in the car.

Ah shit. That's horrible. A friend of mine recently, he lives in Observatory and he came back home at night. And then his car got hijacked. They told him to get out of the car and they just drove off.

Yes it's dangerous. But you must always just give them the car. A life... if they take someone's life, you never get a life again. Maybe tomorrow they get the car back and if not in the future they can get a new one, a better one. That's what I always say, even one day if they rob me at gunpoint and steal my cell phone. As long as it's not my life... when I got my first cell phone. I had it three weeks and then they robbed me. So I said fine, I'll get a better one. Now I don't worry because I got a phone. But you know maybe someone bought that phone from them and with the money they bought tik or whatever. They wanted that already, it's not right. To work for something, they steal it and they go buy something that is destructive, even for them.

Yes that's true. Is that the one time you got robbed?

I got robbed once while working at the garage. I was starting at 7:00 in the morning. I was standing in line waiting for the bus. I saw some guys they had backpacks, I thought they were also going to work. But by the time they got to us they had a gun. They were swearing back and forth, give me your money, your phone. I emptied my bag. They took my phone and money and they walked away. I didn't even say a thing, I was shocked. I didn't scream I didn't do anything, I just froze. When they finished I started crying but I didn't cry aloud. I kept my volume down. I don't know where they went, they went away. But maybe that day they got what they ... you can do bad and then something bad is going to happen to you.

That's really scary... wow. Especially with guns.

You don't know if it's a toy gun, but not knowing...

Was this at the bus stop in Khayelitsha?

Yes. Wow, so scary. I'm so lucky... I've never been robbed.

Really? You've never been to Khayelitsha, you don't have friends in Khayelitsha?

I've been there but always at a friend's work. It was during the day and she had a car. I didn't have to walk around... so that probably helps.

Yes. They don't always rob everyone. Maybe it was your day.

That's true. I mean, I probably stand out a lot because I'm white.

Yes.

But do you think I would instantly be kind of a target then?

Not really. There are a few places where there are plenty of white people. But everyone gets robbed. It's just about luck.

Yeah I see... I was wondering, how much time do you get for lunch here?

An hour.

OK. You know everyone I've interviewed... you all make such long days.

Yes! I started at 8:00, I'm working until 17:00. But this is better because when I start at 10:30 then I work until 21:00.

Yes that's very long.

You get so tired. Most of the time I'm tired. You work long hours. You get an hour for lunch and you sometimes a 15 minute break. But sometimes I'm working and I get so tired... I mean, it's sometimes like I don't even know where I am. It is a nice company to work for but those things... they don't pay overtime anymore. They used to.

Really? How many hours do you get paid for a week?

8 hours (per day). You see they rob you. You work from 10:30... they would just give you one hour or two hours extra of overtime. But not as much as before. And our unions... they agree on things without consulting the members. And then management says "the unions know about this". But they never tell you.

And you pay unions fees?

Yes but we don't even go to meetings.

So what do you get out of it?

Nothing! Nothing. I'm thinking of leaving the union.

Are most people at [redacted] with the union?

No. Many of the permanent staff are, but not the casual staff. Because you don't know what will happen in the next years. But they're supposed to inform us about what they're doing and what's happening but they don't do that.

So you don't bother going to meetings?

We're not even allowed to go to the meetings.

But you're a member!

We are the members but we as casual members are not allowed. They're supposed to listen to the members. They don't fight for us. We're supposed go to the meeting and they should listen to us. But they don't listen and we don't know what they decide.

Was the union better before?

Yes it was better. But not anymore.

What union are you a member of?

It's Cato (?).

Are they aligned with any political party as well?

... I think they are. I think they are aligned. Most of the time they work with Cosatu. When there's a Cosatu meeting they also go.

OK. But what a shame you don't get much out of it.

Yes. They get our money. And then they have meetings in different places, in Cape Town or Durban or Joburg. I think this year in Joburg. They get money from every member and they're all flying there. Where do they get all that money from? It's our money.

How much do you pay?

R86 every month.

Wow that's quite a lot of money!

And they do nothing for me.

I see. And with your friends who are also at the union, have you talked about it with them?

Most of my friends aren't with a union.

How come you are?

Because I thought it would be good, they would do something for me. But I think I'm also going to quit.

If you don't really get much out of it...

Why must I pay?

Yes exactly.

Yes. So, are we done?

Yeah yeah sorry this took so long!