

**AN ANALYSIS OF SOME ASPECTS OF EMPLOYMENT AND UNEMPLOYMENT
IN THE AFRICAN TOWNSHIPS OF UMLAZI AND LAMONTVILLE -
A PRELIMINARY INVESTIGATION**

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1. INTRODUCTION

This occasional paper is part of a continuing project concerned with the theme of unemployment, poverty and employment creation in South Africa, with special emphasis on Natal and Durban. This project is in itself an extension of the research undertaken by Trevor Bell in 1983 on the growth and structure of manufacturing employment in Natal.¹ The latter study revealed, as Bell points out (1984, p. iii), a declining rate of growth of manufacturing employment in the country as a whole and in particular in the major industrial areas, including the Durban-Pinetown region. It was decided at the completion of that study to focus directly on the problem of unemployment, initially dealing with the question of scale and definition, causes and certain other conceptual issues and remedies in relation to the country as a whole with a view to using it as a background to subsequent analysis focussing more narrowly on the problem of unemployment in the Durban/Natal region. This stage of the project is now complete.²

The second stage of the project focusses on the problem of unemployment and other aspects of the labour market and job structures in the Greater Durban area itself. To this end it was decided to first undertake a relatively small problem-oriented study of some aspects of African³ employment and unemployment in Durban. With unemployment currently estimated at around the 3 million mark for the country as a whole⁴ - the greatest proportion being African unemployment - it was decided that little will be gained by attempting to measure its extent in this or any other area, i.e. quantify it. Hence the decision to concentrate in this study on a smaller sample with the aim of understanding more about the problem of unemployment, and the continuum between employment and unemployment. Hence both employed and unemployed persons were interviewed in this study. More particularly, this stage of the project aims to examine:

1. The nature and structure of employment and unemployment among African urban residents in Umlazi and Lamontville.

- ii. the problems experienced by both employed and unemployed persons living in these areas.

- iii. The mechanisms employed by these individuals in attempting to cope with their problems in the current recession - i.e. their strategies of survival.

Subsequent stages of this project will depend to some extent upon the results of this study which may provide the researcher with much valuable information as to what particular direction any future research into unemployment, poverty and employment creation should take. It is for this reason that this paper occasionally examines conceptual issues and problems which cannot be unambiguously settled - if such a thing is at all possible in discussions and debate on South African unemployment - on the basis of this sample. The idea is simply to clarify some of these issues which it may be necessary to examine again in a more extensive study of unemployment and employment in this region. It is for this reason too that this essentially descriptive paper must be regarded as no more than a preliminary investigation.

2. SAMPLING AND FIELDWORK

The sample for this problem-oriented study of employment and unemployment was drawn from sub-economic households in Lamontville and Umlazi. The main African townships in Greater Durban are KwaMashu, Umlazi, Clairmont, Chesterville and Lamontville. Given the small total sample size and the nature of the study, it was decided to select just two of these townships. For reasons of minimizing research costs and administration the two contiguous townships on the southern side of Durban - Umlazi and Lamontville - were chosen. A total sample of 70 households was decided upon - 15 from Lamontville and 55 from Umlazi. A cluster sampling technique was used in which 11 clusters of 5 households each were drawn from Umlazi and 5 clusters of 3 households each were drawn from Lamontville.⁵ The questionnaire which was completed in April was translated into Zulu and the fieldwork was conducted by two experienced fieldworkers in May and June 1985. Because of the 'unrest' which began in June/July 1985, three household questionnaires in Lamontville (all from one cluster) which were not completed at that stage had to be scrapped, as fieldworkers were understandably unwilling to enter the area thereafter.⁶ This will not affect the findings of this type of study. It does, however, dramatically illustrate the problems experienced in doing fieldwork in the townships of South Africa at this juncture.

The rest of the paper is organised into 4 parts. In the first some general data on household structures are examined. This is followed by an analysis of the nature and structure of employment derived from information obtained from the earners in the sample. A profile of the unemployed, the problem they experience and the ways in which they attempt to cope with these difficulties is given and discussed in the next section. The paper ends with a brief summary and concluding comments.

3. GENERAL HOUSEHOLD DATA

The composition of the 67 households drawn from Lamontville and Umlazi is set out in Table 1.

<u>TABLE 1</u> <u>GENERAL HOUSEHOLD COMPOSITION</u>	
CATEGORY	NUMBER
1. Number employed (earners)	⑨1 = earners
2. Housewives not desiring to work	36
3. Children under 15 who are not at school	65
4. Full-time students	142
5. Permanently unfit for medical reasons	11
6. Retired (over 65M/60F) and wanting to work	②
7. Retired (over 65M/60F) and not wanting to work	8 + = unemployed
8. Unemployed and not wanting to work	7
9. Unemployed and wanting to work	⑥3
10. Other	1
TOTAL	<u>426</u>

As Table 1 shows, 91 earners were located in the households - an average of 1.36 earners/employed persons per household. The average number of 6.36 persons per household is indicative of a high rate of overcrowding - which is not atypical of economically depressed areas. More startling, however, is the fact that the sample, which was not limited to households with unemployed residents but which was drawn in the manner already indicated, included a total of 65 unemployed persons i.e. almost one unemployed person per household on average. The definition of an unemployed person used in this study includes those who were not working and wanted to work, whether they were actively looking for work or not. It also includes those who were over 65 (male) and 60 (female) who wanted to work. This definition of unemployment,

which is discussed more fully in Section 5.1, is a much broader and in our view more realistic and sensitive definition than that used in official government sponsored studies such as the Current Population Survey (CPS).

Table 2 shows the income structure in the 67 households surveyed. In none of the households did the total income exceed R1 499. And in 64 percent of the households the total income was under R700 per month - this in an area with an average of 6,36 persons per household. The data obtained also revealed that the total number of persons dependent upon this total household income (in aggregate) exceeded the number actually living in these households, indicating that some of this income was also being used to support people living elsewhere - usually (it seemed from discussion) family members in rural areas.

<u>TABLE 2 HOUSEHOLD INCOME STRUCTURE AND DISTRIBUTION</u>				
	<u>INCOME RANGE</u>	<u>NUMBER</u>	<u>PERCENT</u>	<u>CUMULATIVE PERCENT</u>
1.	under 100	-	-	-
2.	100 - 199	1	1,5	1,5
3.	200 - 299	2	3,0	4,5
4.	300 - 399	5	7,5	11,9
5.	400 - 499	12	17,9	29,9
6.	500 - 599	12	17,9	47,8
7.	600 - 699	11	16,4	64,2
8.	700 - 799	6	9,0	73,1
9.	800 - 899	7	10,4	83,6
10.	900 - 999	2	3,0	86,6
11.	1000 - 1499	9	13,4	100,0
12.	1500 - 1999	-	-	-
13.	2000+	-	-	-
		<u>67</u>	<u>100</u>	

Some indication of the economic welfare of these households and the extent of the relative poverty prevailing may be obtained by comparing these household income data with the Minimum Living Level (MLL) income calculated by the Bureau for Market Research (BMR) at the University of South Africa. The Bureau calculates a MLL twice a year in February and August for so-called non-white households in the main urban areas of South Africa. Many difficulties arise in using a MLL or any equivalent as an indicator of economic well-being.⁷ It is overly conservative in its estimation of human needs, based on an "unfounded belief that needs vary significantly by race group" (Prinsloo, 1984, p.11), and so on. There are therefore good reasons to believe that the MLL figures are too low. If, however, it is understood that they indicate no more than the absolute minimum household income necessary to maintain the most basic standards of health and hygiene, they can be used to determine at least those households subsisting at 'indisputable poverty'.

The August 1985 BMR calculation of the Minimum Living Level for Africans in Durban for a household of 6 persons was R375,06 per month.⁸ On the basis of this figure roughly 10 percent of the households surveyed in Umlazi/Lamontville fell below the MLL, or were in other words living in conditions of indisputable and absolute poverty. The slightly more 'generous' Supplementary Living Level (SLL) - which the Bureau itself describes as an "attempt at determining a modest low level standard of living" (1985, p.1) - for a household of 6 persons in Durban for August 1985 was R478,07. In terms of this index just under 30 percent of these households experienced a low level standard of living. Both these estimates are, however, on the low side and do not adequately capture the depth of poverty and despair prevailing in these townships.

4. PROFILE OF EARNERS: DEMOGRAPHIC, EMPLOYMENT AND INCOME STRUCTURE

4.1 Introduction

In this section we shall examine the employment and income structure of the 91 earners for whom data were obtained. We begin, however, with a brief overall picture of the earners, including some demographic information.

Of the 91 earners 65 percent were male. Nearly 63 percent fell in the age bracket 35-54 and interestingly there were no employed persons in the 15-19 age group. Of the earners 63 percent were married, 17 percent were matriculated and 12 percent of the earners had a matric plus a diploma, the latter being mainly teachers and nurses. The remainder had either a junior certificate (30 percent) or less by way of educational achievement. Of the earners 91 percent were full-time employees as against part-time and casual workers and 95 percent were salary/wage earners as against self-employed or propertied individuals. The dominant occupational category was that of semi-skilled and unskilled factory/production workers (42 percent). The major sectors of employment were in manufacturing (34 percent) and services (33 percent). Of the earners 87 percent were permanent residents (with Section 10(1) rights); 91 percent had lived in Umlazi/Lamontville for over 10 years.

4.2 Employment Structure and Related Aspects

4.2.1 Occupation and Industry Structure

Table 3 shows the occupational distribution of the 91 earners in this sample. This distribution is not dissimilar to that of the occupational structure of Africans for South Africa as a whole. The dominant occupational categories, semi- and unskilled production workers (42 percent) and service occupations (31 percent) are also those in which African workers in South Africa as a whole are concentrated.⁹

the services category (which includes policemen, traffic inspectors, barmen and waiters), were more evenly distributed among the different educational categories. In addition earners in the services sector were older on average than those in the other major occupational groups i.e. unskilled and semi-skilled production workers. There were also proportionally more women than men earners in 'sales' and 'services' than in factory employment.

Again, even though this was a relatively small sample, it nonetheless appears to mirror the industry distribution of African workers in South Africa as a whole fairly accurately,¹⁰ with the major sectors being manufacturing (34 percent) and the services sector (33 percent). In manufacturing the main sub-sector employers were in 'food, beverages and tobacco', 'textiles', 'clothing', and 'chemicals' - the traditionally dominant sectors in Durban.

We turn now to examine certain important aspects of the employment structure of the earners identified in this study. These include in the main their job search methods and techniques, their job stability, the training received and the extent of unionism.

4.2.2 Job Search

The question of how those in employment found their jobs - what methods they used and what problems they encountered in their search is an important one in that it tells us something about the efficiency of the information and job placement network which is so vital to match job vacancies and work seekers.

The most important job search methods used by the 91 earners in this sample in finding their jobs - as revealed by their answers to the question, 'how did you find your present job?' - appears to have been through 'application by letter' (30 percent), 'door-to-door' search (29 percent) and 'family and friends' (24 percent). A very low percentage of earners (6 percent) were placed in their present

employment via the labour bureaux. This may be attributed to various factors including the cost of travel to such bureaux and, as others have shown also, to an understandable fear of harrassment by officials.¹¹ And as Keenan points out work seekers are often told

not to keep on coming back and registering at the bureau each month as there is no work and the bureau will inform people when work is available. Just how it will inform people never seems to have been made clear. (1984, p. 136)

The effect of this factor is to discourage many work-seekers from going to the labour bureau in order to register and to become eligible for placement, thus forcing them to rely on their own initiative in locating jobs. But where there impediments to such activity?

As 87 percent of the earners were permanent residents (having Section 10 rights) most of whom (91 percent) lived in Lamontville/Umlazi for 10 years or more it was not surprising that job search for a very large proportion of these "urban insiders"¹² (90 percent) was not seriously affected by legislative controls, barriers and obstacles to their job search activity. Keenan explains the "relatively privileged" position of such urban insiders, which flowed from the recommendations of the Riekert and Wiehahn Commission, as follows:

They (the two commissions) attempted to establish a more 'stable' population in the urban areas of the Republic of South Africa. This more 'stable' population was to be created by granting it preference on the labour market, protecting it to some extent from the ravages of increasing unemployment, and providing it with improved living conditions. (1984, p. 134)

This strategy, which was pursued by the tightening up of influx control practice, has already resulted in rigorously dividing the country's African population into 'insiders' and 'outsiders', the latter, who are in the majority, being restricted to the impoverishment of the bantustans.

It is to be expected therefore that the 'urban insiders' of our sample would, in this respect, have less difficulty in their job search activities.

4.2.3 Job Stability

There is a high degree of job stability among the earners in this sample, as indicated by Table 4.

<u>TABLE 4</u> <u>LENGTH OF PRESENT EMPLOYMENT (IN YEARS)</u>			
<u>YEARS</u>	<u>NUMBER</u>	<u>PERCENT</u> (adj)	<u>CUMULATIVE PERCENT</u>
Less than 1 year	9	10,2	10,2
1 - 5 years	27	30,7	40,9
6 - 10 years	22	25,0	65,9
10+ years	30	34,1	100,0
No response	<u>3</u>	<u>-</u>	<u> </u>
	91	100,0	

Nearly 60 percent of the earners had been in their present job for 6 years or more, 34 percent for over 10 years. In addition it was discovered that 82 percent of the earners held no more than 2 jobs in the last 5 years, and 54 percent had not lost a job in this time.

This record of relative job stability was not, however, matched by any significant evidence of vertical or upward job mobility within firms. Nearly 80 percent of the earners had never been promoted. Of those who were promoted most were teachers, nurses or policemen. There is no evidence of any upward mobility for factory workers here - which is indicative of the extent to which these jobs form part of what has been

termed the secondary labour market - relatively low skill, low-paying and "dead-end jobs". The fact that virtually no factory workers were promoted may also be related to their levels of education and training - for as far as employers are concerned these are important criteria in this regard. Most of these workers, as we have noted already, had no more than a primary school education, and few, as we shall see shortly, had any other special training that would improve their promotion chances. While education by itself cannot even guarantee one a job any longer - as we shall see in the next section - not having a suitable level of education may certainly work against one.

4.2.4 Training

Just over 50 percent of the earners in this sample received no job skill training of any kind. Of those who did the largest proportion (nearly 30 percent) received some training on the job. This training was of a very short duration. For most of these workers, mainly factory workers and some in the services sector the training 'programme' did not exceed one week. The majority of those who received other than on-the-job training were teachers, nurses and policemen and they made up the bulk of those who received longer training.

4.2.5 Trades Unionism

A very high proportion (71 percent) of earners were not members of a trade union. There were, for example, no unionised workers in the professional and clerical occupational categories and an insignificant number in the services category. Most of those who were unionised were unskilled and semi-skilled factory workers organized by FOSATU and TUCSA affiliated unions.¹³

The small percentage of unionised workers makes it difficult to place too much weight on their responses to questions regarding unionism, but these responses may nevertheless be looked at briefly. Of the unionised

workers, most attended union meetings only occasionally; none held any official position in the union (e.g. shop steward) and none assisted in the formation or establishment of the union. All of these workers, however, (bar one) indicated that membership of the union was beneficial to them and their fellow workers, assisting people in times of unemployment, in bargaining for higher wages, by helping workers in cases of unfair dismissals and by assisting in other matters such as redundancy pay, taxes and pensions. With one exception these unionised workers saw unions playing an important role in the current recession through helping workers who were unemployed or being threatened by the possibility of retrenchment. This could be done, it was stated, by negotiating with management, by helping unemployed workers financially and by helping to find such persons alternative employment. There was, however, less certainty as far as the effect of the current recession (unemployment) on the growth and role of unions. At least half of this small group of unionised workers believed that the current recession would lead to an escalation in the level of frustration which would (it was felt) have implications for socio-political stability in this country. (Most of these interviews were conducted two months before the dramatic escalation in township unrest around Durban).

4.3 Are The Employed Fully Employed?

One further aspect to any consideration of the nature and structure of employment is that of 'underemployment'. In this sample population of earners 91 percent indicated, for instance, that they were in full-time employment. The rest were part-time and casual workers. This latter group who are clearly not in full-time employment - as they themselves understand the term - form an obvious element of the so-called underemployed i.e. those working less than normal hours per day and/or less than the normal days per week. Definitions of employment/unemployment that count such persons as being 'employed' would be ignoring an important qualitative element in the measurement of employment and unemployment.

Besides this group of part-time and casual workers, however, others who indicated that they were in full-time employment may also be underemployed in terms of some definitions of the term. Blau and Thomas (1982) have adopted what they term a fully developed poverty approach to the definition of underemployment to include:

- i. people who have been less than fully employed based on the number of hours worked in the past week;
- ii. those who have been economically active over the past year but who were unemployed for some of the time;
- iii. those who wish to work for more hours for more pay whether they are actively looking for more work or not;
- iv. people whose present job is below their level of qualification;
- v. the so-called working poor - people who work full-time but at extremely low wages.

Using this conceptualization, we may now examine the extent, if any, of underemployment in this sample population of earners. To do this one would first have to exclude the seven part-time and casual workers from the earners. These small numbers are easily manageable, however, and these workers will be excluded in the course of the subsequent analysis

rather than at the outset. Each of the elements in the poverty orientated definition of underemployment listed above will now be examined in turn.

4.3.1 Hours Worked in the Past Week

<u>TABLE 5 HOURS WORKED BY THE EMPLOYED IN THE PAST WEEK</u>			
<u>NUMBER OF HOURS</u>	<u>NUMBER</u>	<u>PERCENT</u>	<u>CUMULATIVE PERCENT</u>
		(adj)	
under 18 hours	0	0	0
18 - 24	3	3,6	3,6
25 - 34	3	3,6	7,2
35 - 39	3	3,6	10,8
40 - 48	67	78,8	89,6
49+	9	10,4	100,0
on leave	<u>6</u>	<u>-</u>	
	91	100,0	

As can be seen from Table 5, 9 of the earners worked under 40 hours a week (normal hours) - 7 of these were, however, the part-time and casual workers already accounted for as part of the underemployed. These figures suggest that the employed in this sample were almost all fully employed, by this measure at least, with 90 percent of the total number of earners working more than 40 hours per week. Therefore no more than 2 of the earners at most - after excluding the 7 part-time and casual workers - were underemployed by this criterion.

Only a very small percentage of those working more than 35 hours per week stated that they wanted to work for even more hours per week for more pay. And not all of these workers actually looked for more work.

The explanation for this is not readily apparent. In the Blau and Thomas (1982) study among Coloureds in Bishop Lavis, for example, it was found that even though the labour force worked a median value of 47 hours per week, 68 percent of the workers were prepared to work longer hours for more pay - a measure of underemployment in terms of the definition given above. This factor was not at all significant in this sample of earners. Whether it indicates a 'rising preference for leisure', or the fact that there was no pressing need to supplement income (an unlikely possibility) or what is unclear. This is one aspect of the nature and structure of employment which needs to be looked at more closely in future studies.

4.3.2 Number of Months Worked in the Past Year

Table 6 shows the work status, over the past year (from the date of the interview), of the earners in this sample. This so-called flow variable contrasts with the stock variable, "work status over the past week", just discussed. This flow measure enables one to examine the extent to which earners were employed/unemployed over an entire year and is in many ways a much more meaningful and sensitive gauge of the experience of unemployment. Official data on unemployment are usually just averages and in reality it is often the case that the total number of people who experience unemployment in a given period is far larger than the average unemployment (rate or number) for that year - especially, for example, where a mid-year figure serves as the rate for that year. By defining those who experience some unemployment during, say, a year as "underemployed" one obtains a better understanding of the continuum between the pole of "fully employed" on one end and "unemployed" on the other.

TABLE 6 NUMBER OF MONTHS WORKED IN THE PAST YEAR
(INCLUDING OFFICIAL LEAVE)

NUMBER OF MONTHS	NUMBER	PERCENT
0 = less than 1	3	
1	-	
2	1	
3	1	
4	-	
5	-	
6	-	15,4
7	2	
8	2	
9	2	
10	2	
11	1	
12	<u>77</u>	<u>84,6</u>
	<u>91</u>	<u>100,0</u>

From Table 6 it can be seen that 14 of the earners worked less than the full reference period of 12 months. (This includes official leave which is counted as being part of a normal working year). Seven of these earners were, however, part time and casual workers - who have been accounted for already. The remaining 7, however, who were employed at the time of the survey (and who would as a result normally be classified as being fully employed) did experience some amount of unemployment in the previous 12 months. In terms of our fully developed poverty approach to the measurement of employment/ unemployment these remaining 7 workers would be defined as underemployed - which (as this analysis shows) is a superior qualitative description of their labour market status.

4.3.3 Other Measures of Underemployment

Another element in the poverty based approach to underemployment is that of the extent to which workers skills/qualifications are being utilized in their jobs. In a household survey this can only be 'tested' by respondents' self-assessment to a question such as "to what extent do you believe your training skills are being used in your present job?" (The question is overly subjective and responses to it should be used carefully). Of the 62 earners in this sample who had received some training 64 percent indicated unambiguously that their skills were being fully utilised. The remainder stated that they 'did not know', felt that their skills were being only 'partially utilised' or refused to answer the question. Those workers whose skills are not fully utilized in their jobs are not being as productive as their skills/qualifications allow, and are underemployed in terms of the poverty-based approach to underemployment. However, this sample of earners does not include a significant number of workers in this category.

The final element in this approach to underemployment is that of the 'working poor', (i.e. those who are employed at very low wages) or what is sometimes referred to as the sub-employed.¹⁴ These workers are employed in the sense that they receive wages, produce value and constitute a permanent part of the labour force. They are in many ways important to the functioning of a capitalist economy - for example, by acting as a drag on the bargaining power of the better-paid workers they function as part of the reserve army or relative surplus population without actually ceasing to be part of the active labour force. This important role that they play can in no way, however, be measured by their own income.

In general workers who are employed at wages below the poverty datum line (or any equivalent) i.e. whose wages are in Marxian terms less than the value of their labour power constitute the 'underemployed' in terms of the definition of underemployment adopted in this study. Therefore, some measure of what is the poverty datum line is called for; but as we have noted already such cut-off lines of poverty or

minimum living levels or whatever they may be called are difficult to establish unambiguously and are often arbitrary and subjective. We shall not attempt to set such a level here - in the next section the gross income of earners is compared to what is referred to as a 'living wage'. One general point may however be made here. Table 7 below shows the gross income per month of the earners in the sample. Whether one sets the cut-off point at R200 or R300 or R400 or more per month it is clear that there are workers who would form part of the 'working poor', and who would in terms of this approach be defined as part of the underemployed. If, for instance, one accepts that anything under R300 per month is a poverty wage - which by no means can be regarded as an over-estimate¹⁵ - then as much as 19 percent of earners in this sample were part of the 'working poor'.

This underemployment section may be drawn together as follows: Seven earners in this sample were part-time and casual workers who by most accounts would be defined as underemployed at the very least. For the rest, while it appears that the use of a stock variable, such as hours worked in the past week suggests that there was little underemployment, there is some evidence from flow measures such as months worked in the past year and others such as the working poor and to a lesser extent underutilization of skills, that there was indeed some amount of underemployment. Greater clarity on these issues will necessitate a much more extensive and intensive study.

4.4 The Income Structure of Earners

The distribution of income among earners in this sample is given in Table 7.

TABLE 7 <u>DISTRIBUTION OF INCOME AMONG EARNERS</u>			
(GROSS INCOME, R PER MONTH)			
INCOME GROUP	NUMBER	PERCENT (adj)	CUMULATIVE PERCENT
under 100	1	1,1	1,1
100 - 199	3	3,3	4,4
200 - 299	13	14,4	18,9
300 - 399	16	17,8	36,7
400 - 499	22	24,4	61,1
500 - 599	20	22,2	83,3
600 - 699	10	11,1	94,4
700 - 799	4	4,4	98,9
800 - 899	1	1,1	100,0
no response	<u>1</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>
	91	100,0	-

The average gross income among this sample of earners is +R450 per month. This may be compared with a minimum wage for unskilled workers of R677,25 per month¹⁶ demanded by the International Metal Workers' Federation South African Council on March 8 of 1985.¹⁷ A figure of R3,00 - R3,50 per hour is now about the standard minimum being demanded by most of the unions in FOSATU - the independent Federation of South African Trade Unions - in terms of its commitment to a living wage policy.¹⁸ If one accepts and works with this minimum wage measure (which is greater than poverty datum estimates) then it appears that at least 83 percent of the earners in this sample earned less than the minimum now being demanded by workers themselves.

If one examines the distribution of income by occupation one finds that nearly 44 percent of those earning between R300-R399 per month were in the sales and service occupations, 64 percent of those in the R400-R499 category were production/factory workers, 35 percent of those in the R500-R599 and 60 percent of those in the R600-R699 range were in service occupations. This last occupational category included policemen, traffic inspectors, barmen and waiters among others.

Although those with low levels of education (under 4-6 years at school) were in the lower income ranges (under R200 per month), and most of those with a matriculation qualification earned over R600, there is no clear correlation between education and earnings over the entire range. Thus, for instance, of the 13 persons earning between R200-R299 5 had matriculated. One person self-employed in the informal sector interestingly earned over R800 per month but had no more than 3 years at school. Neither were there any significant correlations between age and income, or job stability and income. Thus it did not appear clearly that say older workers or those with more stable employment patterns earned higher wages as a result.

There is, however, a somewhat clearer distinction when the distribution of income by sex is considered - most women workers earned under R400 per month and nearly all earners with an income in excess of this figure were male.

In short, it therefore appears that apart from the sharp differences in income distribution by sex, no clear picture emerges when income is related to the other variables which are 'traditionally' regarded as determinants of income differentials.¹⁹ This 'tentative' finding would tend to support the view which emphasizes the importance of extra-individual factors such as social institutions and structural forces in the explanation of income differentials, low pay and poverty. The validity of this tentative conclusion will obviously have to be tested among a larger sample before any judgement can be passed on its significance in studies conducted in low income urban areas in South Africa.

4.5 Second Jobs

Finally in this section, we examine the extent to which earners had taken on 'second jobs' in order to supplement their income. A very small percentage of earners admitted to having second jobs. This somewhat small number may have arisen partly out of fears/uncertainty as to the consequences of admitting to having second jobs, especially if such jobs were being performed say without a licence, or without their employers' knowledge. The phenomenon of second jobs may also just not be of any importance in these urban townships.

The 6 earners who had second jobs were all engaged in informal private selling - 5 for their account. The hours worked per week on this second job varied widely. On average such jobs brought in an income of R180 per month.

5. A PROFILE OF THE UNEMPLOYED

5.1 On the Definition of Unemployment

This study of employment and unemployment has utilized a much broader definition of unemployment than that which is currently used in official (government) measures such as the Current Population Survey (CPS). These latter measures are based on an extremely narrow definition of the unemployed i.e. those who desire to work and

- i. do not work i.e. worked less than 5 hours during the previous 7 days;
- ii. attempted to find work during the previous month;
- iii. are able to accept a position within one week; and
- iv. are between the ages of 15-65 (male) and 15-60 (female).

All the above conditions have to be satisfied for a person to be defined as unemployed.

Bromberger (1978), Blau and Thomas (1982) and Keenan (1984) have pointed to some of the implications of this narrow definition. Thus, for example, a person who has worked say just 6 hours during the previous week is classified as a worker (employed); those chronically unemployed (or discouraged) who have given up looking for work and have therefore not actively sought work in the last month as well as those (e.g. migrants) who cannot easily accept a job within one week are not counted as unemployed but as being "not economically active". Finally, the possibility that some people over 60(F)/65(M), may need to work is not recognized in terms of this definition. South Africa does not have a comprehensive social security system covering African workers (especially) in their retirement, and such a Western oriented standard on the question of age, is inappropriate in our circumstances. As Blau and Thomas comment

although a number of First World countries (e.g. USA) adopt the same definitions of unemployment (as South Africa) we contend that merely superimposing this definition onto an underdeveloped Third World labour

market such as that in South Africa is unsuitable. Contextual criteria such as job availability, labour mobility, the state of economic development and the overall skill of the labour force have to be taken into account for any completely satisfactory measure of employment. (1982, p. 1).

For these reasons this study, following the International Labour Organisation (ILO) definition also adopted by Blau and Thomas, has used the following operational definition of unemployment: any member of the economically active population who was not working and wanted to work regardless of whether they were looking for work or not.²⁰ Excluded from the definition of economically active were

- i. full-time students
- ii. housewives not desiring to work
- iii. those permanently unfit for medical reasons
- iv. those voluntarily retired and not wanting to work
- v. those who were not working and indicated that they definitely did not want to work
- vi. children under 15 who were not at school.

In terms of the above definitions 65 persons were classified as unemployed. This definition included:

- i. those over 60(F)/65(M) who wanted to work,
- ii. those who did not look for work in the last month but who wanted to work,
- iii. those who could not accept a job within 1 week but who wanted to work,
- iv. those who worked say 6 hours or so in the last week. We have already dealt with this underemployment aspect for earners in Section 4. It is also possible however that some persons who are unemployed by our definition may have worked a few hours in the past week. If they worked any more than just 5 hours they would be classified in official studies such as the CPS - as employed. We would define them as being underemployed at the very least. In this sample there were however no such cases. Sixty two of the 65 unemployed persons did not work for any length of time in last week and the remaining 3 worked 5 hours or less.

Because of the size of this sample it is not possible to claim - in terms of statistical tests, for instance, that the unemployment rate calculated below is representative of the area. It will, however, be useful just to compare the ILO based definition of unemployment and its effect on the determination of the unemployment rate with that used in the CPS. In the figure below each of the conditions that would exclude a person from being classified as unemployed in official estimates is considered in turn.²¹ The effect on the number and rate of unemployment is noted.

	<u>Number</u>	<u>Unemployment Rate</u>
Number unemployed by ILO based definition	65	41,6 p.c.
- (1) those over 60F/65M who desire to work	-2	
	63	40,9 p.c.
- (2) those who did not look for work in the last month ²²	-22	
	41	31,0 p.c.
- (3) those who could not accept a job within 1 week	-6	
	35	27,7 p.c.
- (4) those who worked say 6 hours (less than normal hours) who were otherwise unemployed and wanted to work ²³	-0	
	35	27,7 p.c.

In terms of this exercise it is easy to see how nearly 50 percent of those who would by our wider ILO/poverty-based definition be regarded as unemployed can be 'definitionally' rationalized out of the calculation of unemployment. (We are of course not suggesting that this figure is a minimum or maximum or that it always applies. It simply indicates what is possible, given alternative approaches to the measurement of unemployment). This can be done by adopting different

criteria in the definition of both unemployment and those who constitute the economically active population. Studies conducted in other areas have come to similar conclusions.²⁴ And Prinsloo in her 1984 study of African and Coloured households in Durban and Cape Town conducted a similar exercise to that made here. Isolating her results for Lamontville (15 households) and Umlazi (54 households) one finds that whereas the application of the strict official definition of unemployment came up with a total of 36 unemployed persons (for the two townships combined), a more sensitive and wider definition - not dissimilar to that used here - revealed a total of 71 unemployed persons, nearly double that which would have emerged from official estimates. These findings are remarkably similar to those of the present study. Given these sort of results it is not difficult to appreciate why so little store is currently placed in official estimates of (African) unemployment such as those of the CPS.

Thus while it may at first appear that statistical measures such as the determination of the economically active population, of the number unemployed etc. would have independent and objective validity it must be realised that these are statistical constructs into which as the editors of the Monthly Review point out

enter many subjective elements and value judgements in the various stages of construction. And here the narrow and timid outlook of the specialists blends with the practical politics of the policy-makers who fear the implications of a true measure of the volume of unemployment. (1975, p. 7).

5.2 The Unemployed: A Demographic Profile

National data on unemployment show clearly that there is a much higher chance of being unemployed if one is female than male. For April 1985, for example, the African female unemployed rate was 13,5 percent as against 5,5 percent for males.²⁵ This has been the trend for some years now. Data for April 1985 also reveal that nearly 63 percent of unemployed African workers were under 30 years of age.²⁶

The demographic data presented in Tables 8, 9, and 10 below for unemployed persons in Lamontville and Umlazi confirms this national pattern. A disproportionately high proportion (40 percent) of unemployed persons were female - this in relation to a much smaller economically active female population. 55 percent of the unemployed were under 25 years old and 80 percent, under 35 years. This coupled with the fact that 75 percent of the unemployed were never married - suggestive of a fairly young group - show clearly that the problem of youth unemployment in these African townships around Durban is in fact an extremely serious one. The social and political implications of this reality - which it has been argued elsewhere is a direct consequence of misconceived economic policy²⁷ - are currently being played out in the townships of South Africa. For we would argue that the so-called unrest in South African townships in which a very high proportion of very young people are directly and tragically involved - is as much a consequence of the short-sighted 'monetarist' economic policy in vogue in recent years as it is of a crisis of (political) legitimacy.

TABLE 8 DISTRIBUTION BY SEX OF THE UNEMPLOYED

SEX	NUMBER	PERCENT
Male	39	60
Female	<u>26</u>	<u>40</u>
Total	65	100

<u>TABLE 9</u> <u>AGE DISTRIBUTION OF THE UNEMPLOYED</u>			
<u>AGE GROUP</u>	<u>NUMBER</u>	<u>PERCENT</u>	<u>CUMULATIVE PERCENT</u>
15 - 19	7	10,8	10,8
20 - 24	29	44,6	55,4
25 - 34	16	24,6	80,0
35 - 44	7	10,8	90,8
45 - 54	4	6,2	96,9
55+	<u>2</u>	<u>3,1</u>	<u>100,0</u>
	65	100,0	

<u>TABLE 10</u> <u>MARITAL STATUS OF THE UNEMPLOYED</u>		
<u>STATUS</u>	<u>NUMBER</u>	<u>PERCENT</u>
Married	15	23,1
Never married	49	75,4
Divorced, etc.	<u>1</u>	<u>1,5</u>
	65	100,0

Table 11 shows the educational levels of the unemployed in this sample. The mean standard of education was a Junior Certificate (Std. 8). What emerges from the table is that whereas 37 percent of the unemployed had less than 9 years of schooling (Std. 7), a startlingly high 46 percent had at least a matriculation qualification - the majority of these being young. Thus while it is true that many less qualified workers were unemployed - being less sought after by prospective employers - it does not follow that higher education can enhance one's chances of securing employment in the current recession. A large proportion of the

young, matriculated unemployed had never had a job before and fieldworkers reported from spontaneous comments made by some of these interviewees that they saw little chance of obtaining a job in the short to medium term. There was, it seems, no significant difference in education by sex.

EDUCATION LEVEL	NUMBER	PERCENT	CUMULATIVE PERCENT
0 - 3 year schooling	3	4,6	4,6
Std 2, 3, 4	6	9,2	13,8
Std 5, 6, 7	15	23,1	36,9
Std 8, 9	11	16,9	53,8
Matriculation	29	44,6	46,1 98,5
Matriculation+	<u>1</u>	<u>1,5</u>	100,0
	65	100,0	

Finally in this section we should note that the majority of the unemployed in this sample (75 percent) reported that they possessed permanent urban status (Section 10.1). Nearly 50 percent of respondents (the unemployed) had lived in this area (Lamontville/ Umlazi) for between 10 and 19 years and a further 35 percent had lived in the area for over 20 years. 68 percent were born in Durban or the periphery of the city. In Section 4 we noted that 87 percent of the earners had permanent urban status. All these factors imply that we are clearly dealing with the more 'stable' urban African population - the so-called urban insiders who have a relatively "privileged" status in some respects vis-à-vis migrants, for example. In Durban the process of exclusion and stratification of Africans into a hierarchy of increasingly less privileged groups in relation to residence rights and employment is clearly marked. Of the two townships considered in this study for example, Lamontville residents are more "privileged" than

those in Umlazi, who in turn have greater mobility and rights than those in, say the informal settlements and so on.²⁸

In theory such a more stable population has preference on the labour market, more relaxed regulations over their job search activity and is supposed to be protected to some extent from the "ravages of unemployment."²⁹ Whilst this study cannot comment on the unemployment situation among urban "outsiders" such as those in squatter settlements which may be infinitely worse, it is clear and obvious to anyone doing fieldwork in Lamontville/Umlazi that even these relatively "privileged" areas have not been spared from the "ravages of unemployment". The welfare officer in Lamontville was not being flippant when he commented that we were (in terms of our sample method) more likely to experience problems locating employed persons rather than unemployed ones in Lamontville. And he was largely correct - an average of one unemployed person per household in both Umlazi and Lamontville testifies to that.

5.3 The Nature and Structure of Unemployment

In this section we shall examine some aspects of the nature and structure of unemployment - including such issues as the reasons for being unemployed, the duration of unemployment, job preference, etc. The section is concluded by a brief examination of the previous employment record of currently unemployed persons, and the "strategies of survival" used by unemployed people.

5.3.1 Reasons for Unemployment

One of the major reasons advanced by unemployed persons for their state of unemployment was "redundancy/retrenchment" (29 percent). More important, however, was the finding that 25 of the unemployed persons had never worked before. The full list of reasons given for not being employed is given in Table 12 below.

<u>TABLE 12 REASONS FOR UNEMPLOYMENT</u>		
<u>REASON</u>	<u>NUMBER</u>	<u>PERCENT</u>
Redundant/retrrenched	19	29,2
Voluntarily resigned	3	4,6
Duties at home	7	10,8
Temporary illness	2	3,1
Cannot find suitable work	3	4,6
Cannot find any work	16	24,6
Found job but will start later	2	3,1
Resting and will find job later	3	4,6
Retired but want to work	2	3,0
Other	<u>8</u>	<u>12,3</u>
	65	100,0
Number never employed before	25	38,5

This paper has not set out to examine whether unemployment in this sample area is voluntary ("chosen" by workers in a rational manner) or involuntary (beyond the control of workers). At a very general level however, it would seem to be the case that the major proportion of those unemployed in this population were involuntarily unemployed. Certainly those who were retrrenched or made redundant and who cannot find any work at this time would, in our view, be included in the category of involuntary unemployed. All of those who indicated that they had "duties at home", and "were resting and will find work later", were women. All but one of those retrrenched/made redundant were men. The only significant factor to emerge in correlating the reasons for unemployment with age was that 75 percent of those who indicated that they "could not find any work" and who had not worked before were under 24 years of age. Retrrenchment/redundancies affected workers in all age groups and educational levels without notable differences - both young and old, highly and lowly educated appeared to be affected more or less equally.

5.3.2 Duration of Unemployment

Two related issues should be noted before we proceed to examine directly the duration of unemployment experienced by the unemployed in this sample. First, 95 percent of these persons had not worked for any length of time (however short) in the previous week. The remainder had worked 5 hours or less in that time. Secondly, at least 57 percent of those unemployed persons had not worked at all in the previous year. Both these factors -- one stock (the measure over one week) and the other flow (the measure over a year) -- already suggest that the average duration of unemployment among this sample of unemployed persons will be relatively long - in years and months rather than weeks.

Responses to the questions how long have you been unemployed are given in Table 13 below.

<u>TABLE 12 DURATION OF UNEMPLOYMENT</u>		
<u>MONTHS</u>	<u>NUMBER</u>	<u>PERCENT</u>
		(adj)
0 - 3	4	6,2
4 - 6	21	32,8
7 - 9	4	6,2
10 - 12	2	3,1
13 - 24	11	17,2
24+	22	34,4
no response	<u>1</u>	<u>-</u>
	65	100,0

An unconscionably high proportion of the unemployed (34 per cent) have been unemployed for over two years, and altogether over half have been unemployed for over a year. Given the depressed state of the economy,

the fact that many of these unemployed persons were young school-leavers who have never been previously employed (and therefore do not qualify for unemployment benefits) and that unemployment benefit payments normally extend to a maximum period of six months,³⁰ it is not difficult to understand and conceptualize the effect of long periods of unemployment on the daily lives of these people. In any case 43 of the 65 persons (66 percent) stated that they did not qualify, for unemployment insurance benefits - the majority of those being persons who, not having worked before, automatically fall outside the provisions of the scheme. Neither, as Keenan, (1984, p. 136) and others point out, do all unemployed workers who are entitled to UIF benefits actually receive such benefits. Many do not know about their rights, others consider claiming such benefits to be a waste of time for one or other reasons.³¹ In this study 22 unemployed persons had qualified for UIF benefits, of which number six indicated that they experienced some difficulty in actually claiming these benefits - mainly as a result of bureaucratic obstacles and the time and costs involved in the process.

5.3.3 Job Preference and Job Search Activity

Fifty-four (83 percent) of the unemployed indicated that if offered a job they could and would accept the offer immediately. Of the remainder six could not accept a job within one week. 57 percent responded that they would accept any job offered to them and 36 percent stated that they would prefer certain occupations but would settle for any other job if that was offered. Only 8 percent were adamant about the kind of job they would accept and had already turned down other job offers. These factors taken together are a clear indication of the extent of desperation that currently characterises employee labour market behaviour and choice. The extent and severity of the present recession has largely eliminated whatever limited choice workers can normally exercise in labour markets within capitalist society. And the stunning reality of these current conditions make academic debate about whether unemployment is voluntary or involuntary both insignificant and bizarre.

We now turn to examine the job search activities of unemployed persons. It should be noted at the outset that only 66 percent of the unemployed actively looked for a job in the last month. It is the policy of official government agencies which measure unemployment in South Africa that those persons who have not actively sought employment in the previous month are not classified as "unemployed", but as "not economically active". Only those who rise to the surface in an active search for jobs i.e. who beat the bush of the labour market are (providing they comply with all other conditions) counted among the unemployed. Thus work-seekers who may have searched unsuccessfully for many months but who have been discouraged from continuing their increasingly futile search would be defined as "not economically active", rather than "unemployed". The longer the recession, the greater is the likelihood of an increasing number of discouraged workers. Paradoxically therefore official statistics may show a decline in the unemployment rate. Thus the fact that many unemployed persons did not actively look for a job in the last month is more likely to be a reflection of the adverse labour market conditions than of any "laziness" on their part. In fact despite the understandable frustration of fruitless job hunting in the present economic climate nearly 28 percent of the unemployed had been actively looking for a job for the last 2 years.

Those who indicated that they could accept a job immediately were then asked what they did in the last month to find work. Each respondent could indicate all the methods used - if such was the case. Their responses are given in Table 14. Although nearly all the unemployed who had been actively looking for a job in the last month were registered as work-seekers at the labour bureau - an examination of these responses clearly indicates a high reliance on job search methods outside the labour bureau placement method. There was a high reliance especially on family and friends and on personal enquiries at potential employers. These results are very similar to those found by Mpanza (1984) among registered unemployed Africans in the Durban area. Mpanza explains the phenomenon as follows:

The role of family and friends in helping the unemployed find work is highly regarded. Those who are employed and therefore in a position to monitor changes in the economic sector, usually know when vacancies occur in various departments, neighbouring companies or other sectors. This information is then passed on to work-seekers through cross referencing of attractions and faults of each.

(1984, pp. 26/27).

TABLE 14 METHODS OF JOB SEARCH ACTIVITY

METHOD	NO. OF RESPONDENTS
	PER METHOD*
Did nothing	1
Enquired at labour bureau	18
Enquired at private employment agency	3
Called on possible employers	14
Read/followed up on adverts	12
Placed adverts	3
Asked Family and friends	37
Not applicable/no response	12

* More than one method may have been marked

Thus despite the (apparent) importance of labour bureaux the tendency discussed here may also be reinforced by the experience of work-seekers at the labour bureaux. As Keenan notes

workers are often told not to keep on coming back and registering at the bureau each month as there is not work and the bureau will inform people when work is available. Just how it will inform people never seems to have been made clear. (1984, p. 136).

Just one final point needs to be made on the effect of discriminatory or differential legislation on the job search activities of African workers. The majority of work-seekers in this sample (68 percent) indicated that their job search was not affected by barriers to mobility, such as those imposed by influx control and other laws governing the freedom of movement of Africans within cities and between the city and countryside. This is possibly a consequence of the urban status of this sample population of work-seekers. As noted already the majority of these persons were permanent residents or "urban insiders" possessing prized Section 10(1) rights. Despite the "protection" that such laws have conferred upon these residents, nearly 80 percent of unemployed and 70 percent of earners were in favour of the total and unconditional abolition of influx control legislation. These persons, both unemployed and employed, gave as (unsolicited) reasons for their views that "freedom of movement of people/workers is a right"; that it would help "rural people find jobs in the cities more easily", that "such regulations were no longer necessary"; and that such laws are "responsible for the breakdown of family bonds". The few who were opposed to the abolition of such measures cited as reasons "overcrowding" and the possibility that "crime and vandalism will increase".

5.3.4 Record of Previous Employment

Information on the previous economic/job status of the unemployed may give us more insight into the nature and structure of unemployment in this area.

The first point to note is that 25 out of the 65 unemployed persons (39 percent) had never worked before - something we have commented upon already and that 19 of those who had worked before were retrenched or made redundant - circumstances clearly beyond their control. The following is a brief picture of the occupational, employment and other job-related characteristics of those unemployed persons who were previously employed. These individuals were mainly employed as

unskilled factory workers (21), sales persons (4) or in service-related occupations (8). Most were employed in the manufacturing sector (24), especially textiles. All but three were weekly paid (wage) earners. There was a surprisingly high degree of job stability among the unemployed who had worked previously: 25 out of these 40 persons held just one job in the 5 years preceding their becoming unemployed; 23 had been employed in that job for between 1-5 years, 12 of whom had worked for over 5 years. In general, there is little or no evidence that these individuals had an erratic work history. If this pattern is more prevalent among unemployed persons both regionally and nationally, it suggests that as the recession deepens and firms take to retrenching more workers, even those with relatively long-service and stable work histories will no longer be "protected" by virtue of these characteristics. Normally in the early phase of a recession those with poor work histories, high job turnover and little experience and skill are the first to be retrenched. Mpanza, for example, in the study of registered unemployed in Durban conducted as late in the recession as January 1984 still found that the unemployed generally had poor work histories. They were, from the employers perspective, virtually unemployable. This preliminary study suggests that this pattern may be changing.

Almost three-quarters of the previously employed individuals received no training of any kind for their particular job. Of those who did all but one was of the on-the-job type of training. Training courses were on average of a very short duration. All in all it would appear that employers had little or no "investment" embodied in those workers - a factor which would have facilitated their decision to dismiss such workers. Over 80 percent of those previously employed persons were not unionised - a further reflection of their weak bargaining position. The few previously unionised workers felt that unions had to play a stronger role in negotiating with management for the reinstatement of employed persons.

This section may be summed up as follows. A large proportion of unemployed people in this sample had never previously been employed. Those who had been employed, were mainly weekly paid unskilled production workers in the manufacturing sector, having relatively

stable jobs. Few, however, had the benefit of any rigorous training for their jobs and even fewer were unionised. Thus except for the question of job stability -- which may represent a structural change arising out of the ever deepening economic recession -- the previous work record of the unemployed still reflected a fairly high degree of vulnerability to management prerogatives. But the job-stability index does suggest that few workers -- whatever their individual or job character -- are any longer 'immune' to the ravages of unemployment.

5.4 Strategies of Survival

The current recession in South Africa has led to an increase in the number of jobless to the order of upwards of 3 million according to careful though unofficial estimates, and to an increase in the average duration of unemployment. This, together with persistently high inflation, high interest rates and wage rates that adjust slowly if at all to rising prices, has contributed to a dramatic deterioration in living standards. The burden on those fortunate enough to have retained their jobs has increased and desperate measures are likely to have been forced upon people in order to survive. The heavy dependence by the unemployed upon other members of the household is clearly evident from Table 15.

<u>STRATEGY</u>	<u>NUMBER</u>	<u>PERCENT</u>
Support of persons in household	46	70,8
Support of relatives not in household	6	
Support of friends not in household	1	
Charity, church	-	
Unemployment benefits	3	29,2
Odd jobs	4	
Savings	3	
Old age/disability pension	2	
	65	100,0

Although 22 unemployed persons had qualified for unemployment benefits at some stage it appeared that most people had already exhausted their claims. Thus, unemployment benefits - given the long average duration of unemployment and the short period over which UIF payments extend - did not figure prominently as an income source for unemployed persons at the time of the survey. Neither did savings, which in any case can hardly be expected to amount to much or to last over long periods.

Just about half of the unemployed had to manage or survive for over a year without any income from whatever source. Five revealed that they have had to live under these conditions for over 8 years. Food and accommodation provided mainly by other members of the family in the households were obviously all they have depended upon to survive. Most respondents were completely lost when asked for how long they could continue managing in this way. Eighteen (28 percent) indicated that they could not manage any longer and 15 (23 percent) just 'didn't know' how they were going to survive. There appeared to be precious few viable options open to unemployed persons after their increasingly strained means of survival were exhausted. Some, especially the younger ones (13) stated that they would return to school, others (4) said they would return to their rural home and 26 individuals just 'didn't know' - a sign of the extent of helplessness. Other responses included "committing suicide", "taking up an informal sector job"; and "moving up another town". Many were resigned to their state of unemployment and poverty.

6. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This study was conducted against a background of rapidly increasing unemployment among all so-called race groups in South Africa. The problem of African employment, in particular, is acute, and this essentially descriptive paper has set out to examine briefly some aspects of the nature and structure of employment and unemployment among Africans living in sub-economic households in Lamontville and Umlazi - contiguous townships on the southern side of municipal Durban.

An analysis of household data revealed that 10 percent of the 67 households surveyed had income below even the minimum levels determined by the Bureau for Market Research. There was an average of 1,36 earners and almost one unemployed person per household. Households were crowded, 6,36 persons on average, and dependency burdens high.

The majority of earners were full-time wage workers employed in unskilled and semi-skilled positions mainly in the manufacturing and service sector of the local economy. An analysis of their work history reveals a high degree of job stability, low levels of skill-oriented training and equally low levels of unionism. The majority of earners had relied heavily on their own initiative in finding employment, rather than on the labour bureau system. In all these respects there was no great disparity between the job history of the employed and those of the unemployed who had worked before.

In examining the continuum between employment and unemployment it became clear that although some element of underemployment was present, most persons were either fully employed or (for want of a better word) fully unemployed. Income data for earners showed that as much as 83 percent of workers earned less than the minimum currently regarded by the independent trades union as constituting a living wage. Women workers clearly earned less on average than male workers but this aside, there was little significant correlation between income and other variables such as age and job stability. Very few workers took on second jobs as a means of supplementing incomes.

In short, despite the fact that we are dealing mainly with urban insiders, there is little evidence from the analysis of the employment structure of earners (as compared to the unemployed who had worked previously) that these workers are, by virtue of their work status, urban rights and job characteristics, any less vulnerable to the contingencies of a declining economy such as ours at this juncture.

Different definitions and approaches to unemployment clearly have a marked effect on the determination of the numbers of the unemployed, the numbers economically active and hence on the unemployment rate itself. The definitions and approaches in themselves are not value free or politically neutral. In our view, if the measurement of unemployment is to be used to obtain a better picture of the extent and nature of unemployment (and of the real state of the economy) and if such an exercise is to serve as a basis for policy measures designed to address the problem of unemployment then much more realistic criteria should be incorporated into the definition and determination of unemployment in South Africa.

The analysis of the unemployed in this sample which proceeds on the basis of a poverty-orientated approach reveals that women were disproportionately represented among the unemployed, as were the youth, many of whom were well educated. The overwhelming majority of respondents both employed and unemployed were permanent urban residents who experienced relatively few problems in their job search activity as a result of legislative barriers to their mobility. Their relatively "privileged" urban status did not, however, appear to protect them from the 'ravages of unemployment'. A large proportion of the unemployed had never worked before and of those who did work previously, nearly half had been retrenched or made redundant within the last 5 years. Nearly 50 percent of the unemployed had been without work for a whole year. Unemployed work-seekers relied heavily on their own initiative and on the network of family and friends in informing them of job vacancies. More than 65 percent of the unemployed did not qualify for unemployment benefits - these were mainly the young who had not worked previously. This coupled with an ever increasing duration of unemployment placed

severe burdens on earners and other members of the households who had to come to the support of the unemployed. A distinctive feeling of desperation is evident in the responses of these unemployed persons to questions regarding their options for survival in the future.

The fact that registered non-African unemployment (White, Coloured and Indian) which has historically been low, has doubled in the last few years, suggests strongly that unemployment in South Africa has moved into an indisputably new phase. Seasonally adjusted the number of registered unemployed Whites, Coloureds and Indians rose from 29 350 in July 1984 to 40 570 in December and to 65 080 in June, 1985³² This may be compared with post World War II peaks of 31 610 in 1961 and 31 731 in 1978. Thus recent evidence appears to strengthen Bell's earlier contention that "the problem of rising unemployment in South Africa today is perhaps not as exclusively a 'Black picture' as it at one time seemed." (1984, p. 15).

Though this study is based on a relatively small sample of African households in the townships around Durban, it does show up certain important trends in the nature and structure of African unemployment which are more than likely to be widespread and which support the view that unemployment in South Africa is no longer confined to the most marginalized and vulnerable elements in this society. These are:

- i. the fact that the majority of respondents were permanent urban residents and hence more privileged in terms of their legal rights of movement and job search did not appear to protect or insulate them from the experience of unemployment. The numbers employed, the long average duration of unemployment and the obvious frustration and helplessness and struggle to survive all point to this.

- ii. unemployment is increasingly affecting young, educated persons as much as those who are older, less well qualified and less skilled who are traditionally the first to be 'released' by companies in times of economic difficulties.

It does not appear that educational qualifications mean much in the present economic crisis - a factor that is already having serious consequences in the socio-political front.

- iii. many of the unemployed (who have worked before) have reasonably stable work histories, with relatively long periods of service and low job turnover and are clearly not unemployable. There are, it would appear, just no more jobs or demand for their services. The spectre of unemployment having ravaged the more marginalized segment of the work force has moved, it seems, to threaten even the previously stable and relatively 'secure' section of the working population.

At the same time these factors suggest that measures to address the problem of unemployment in South Africa which concentrate on the individual and his relative 'employability' such as education and training, employer loyalty etc. are, whatever their merit, simply not going to have much effect in the face of what are clearly more deep-rooted structural causes.³³ Neither it seems to us can policies designed to encourage the growth of the informal sector seem to be appropriate in the long term. As Bell points out

while a growing proportion of jobs in these sectors may turn out to be necessary, such a trend would simply be indicative of the severity of the unemployment problem which besets us rather than a satisfactory answer to it. (1984, p. 46).

Furthermore policies which focus on deregulation of markets and a restrictive, deflationary monetary and fiscal policy have, far from being an answer to the unemployment problem actually worsened the situation quite considerably. As Innes points out in commenting on the government's attempt to use deflationary policy to produce a healthier economy

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with rising inflation which shows no sign of easing, a high foreign debt which is consuming most of our foreign trade surplus, a currency that is in tatters and interest rates still too high, there can be little doubt that the South African economy today is considerably worse off than it was in August 1984 when the government set out to save it. (Weekly Mail, Nov. 8/14, 1985).

This paper raises questions relevant both to the economy and to broader issues of social well-being. Answers, on the other hand, are not easily forthcoming and lie, indeed, beyond the scope of this paper. However, we can do worse than argue that what is urgently needed today is a serious discussion and debate over the implementation of an economic development strategy which fundamentally alters the structure and motivation of production throughout this economy.

FOOTNOTES

*All percentages in the text, arising out of this study, have been rounded to whole numbers.

1. Bell, RT (1983).
2. The results have been published in Bell (1984) and Bell and Padayachee (1984).
3. Racially based descriptive nomenclature such as African, Indian and Coloured are used in this paper only because they are largely unavoidable in the present South African context, e.g. in referring to legislation, when quoting from other sources, or as in this paper where it is necessary for the purpose of clarity of meaning to distinguish between such "groups". The term 'Black' will be used to describe Africans, Indians and Coloureds collectively. This usage in no way implies that the author or the Institute for Social and Economic Research accept the racist connotations of such terms.
4. Technically, as Keenan points out:
the best data on unemployment is produced by Charles Simkins of the University of Cape Town. If his figures are combined with the government's own estimates of the number of new work seekers coming into the labour market each year and the Central Statistical Services (CSS) measurement of unemployment, then the number of unemployed (mostly African) is between three and four million. (Weekly Mail, October 11/17, 1985).
5. More details on the sampling method used as well as instructions given to guide fieldworkers in the selection of households within each randomly determined cluster may be obtained from the researcher.
6. A brother of one of the fieldworkers was killed in Lamontville in June. The escalation of violence in these townships around Durban thereafter made it impossible to find anyone willing enough to complete these three questionnaires at that time.
7. See e.g. Prinsloo (1984, pp. 10/11); Erwin (1983).

8. Greater refinement can be introduced into these calculations by stratifying households by size and then comparing these with the MLL for each household size but it is not necessary or critical to make such detailed calculations in terms of the aims of this study.
9. See e.g. Statistical News Release, CPS 27.3, June 1985, Central Statistical Services.
10. See e.g. Statistical News Release, CPS 27.3, June 1985, Central Statistical Services.
11. See e.g. Keenan (1984, p. 136).
12. See Section 5 for an explanation of the different types of urban status strata.
13. Federation of South African Trade Unions (FOSATU); Trades Union Council of South Africa (TUCSA).
14. See e.g. (eds.), Monthly Review, June 1975, p. 6.
15. See Section 3 of this paper.
16. Calculated as follows: R3,50 per hour x 45 hours per week x 4.3 weeks per month. The minimum wage for artisans was R6,53 per hour.
17. Fosatu Worker News, No. 35/36, March 1985.
18. See e.g. Erwin (1983) for an explanation of the 'living wage' principle.
19. See e.g. Padayachee (1983), Cassim (1982).
20. For criticisms of this definition of unemployment as used even in the United States of America see e.g. Monthly Review, June 1975; Monthly Review, June 1983.
21. Overlaps (double counting) between conditions have been considered and accounted for.
22. Includes those who have not looked for work at all but who wanted to work.
23. Excludes the three who indicated that they 'didn't know' when they could accept a job.

24. See e.g. Blau and Thomas (1982); Prinsloo (1984).
25. CPS, P27.3, September 1985. The relative and not absolute rates concern us here.
26. CPS, P27.3, September 1985.
27. See e.g. Gelb and Innes (1985); Bell and Padayachee (1984).
28. See e.g. Surplus Peoples Project, Vol. 4, 1983.
29. Keenan (1984, p. 134).
30. On special application UIF payments could be extended beyond six months. This is, however, the exception to the general case.
31. See e.g. Mpanza (1984, p. 22).
32. South African Reserve Bank, Annual Economic Report 1985, p. 13.
33. See e.g. Bell (1984); Gelb and Innes (1985).

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- (11) Piets R600m drop in the jobless ocean, (Jeremy Keenan), October 11/17.