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**AFRICAN WOMEN IN A  
WESTERN WORKPLACE:  
AN ETHNOGRAPHIC CASE STUDY**

by

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**submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree**

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## SUMMARY

### **AFRICAN WOMEN IN A WESTERN WORKPLACE: AN ETHNOGRAPHIC CASE STUDY**

by

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**DEPARTMENT** : Anthropology and Archaeology, University of Pretoria  
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This study contributes to the limited academic knowledge (particularly anthropological knowledge) available on the working behaviour of black women workers. The study focuses on how black women workers perceive and experience certain western work values within a western workplace. A problem that constantly arises in South African industry is the correlation between work values and working behaviour. Hence, the study focuses on the African-oriented value judgements and life- and world-views of black women workers manifested in a South African factory and the perceptions of these women regarding selected western work values. The working behaviour of the black women workers, as employed at Automotive Mouldings cc (AMM) and their culturally determined value judgements and life- and world-views concerning certain requirements and elements within the western labour system in general, and specifically at AMM, are examined.

The empirical study provides an ethnographic description of the perceptions of black women workers at AMM of western work values and their working behaviour in the workplace. The culturally determined attitudes of these black women towards “work” are discussed. These selected western work values include career awareness, individualism, thoroughness and alertness, time concepts, discipline, communication, motivation to achieve, diligence, responsibility and accountability as well as work status. These western-oriented characteristics (criteria), however, are not necessarily present in the work value systems of black women workers. This creates conflict and reduces productivity within the workplace, as

the working behaviour of the black women workers, in many instances, contrasts with western-oriented organisational values in general. Thus, it is difficult to predict the working behaviour of black women workers or to judge it from within western employers' own cultural frameworks. In order to prevent or reduce conflict in the workplace, and to enhance productivity, it is essential that employers are aware of the perceptions of western work values and working behaviour of traditional Africans in general, but specifically the working behaviour of black women workers.

**KEY WORDS:** Black women workers, working behaviour, culturally determined value judgements and life- and world-view, culture, western work values, western workplace, career awareness, individualism, thoroughness and alertness, African time concept, work-discipline, communication, motivation to achieve, diligence, responsibility and accountability, work status, gender equality.



## **SAMEVATTING**

### **AFRIKA-VROUE BINNE 'N WESTERSE WERKPLEK: 'N ETNOGRAFIESE GEVALLESTUDIE.**

**deur**

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Hierdie studie lewer 'n bydrae tot die beperkte kennis in akademiese kringe (veral antropologiese kennis), betreffende die werksgedrag van swart vroue. Die studie fokus op hoe swart vroue werkers binne 'n westerse werksplek sekere westerse werkswaardes begryp en ervaar. 'n Vraagstuk wat voortdurend in die Suid-Afrikaanse industrie voorkom, is dié van ooreenkomste en verbande tussen werkswaardes en werksgedrag. Die klem van die studie is gevolglik op die Afrika-georiënteerde waarde-oordele en lewens- en wêreldbeskouings van swart vroue werkers soos dit voorkom binne 'n Suid-Afrikaanse fabriek en die persepsies van hierdie vroue aangaande geselekteerde westerse werkswaardes. Die werksgedrag van die swart vroue werksaam by Automotive Mouldings cc (AMM), en hul kultuurbepaalde waarde-oordele en lewens- en wêreldbeskouings aangaande bepaalde vereistes en elemente binne die westerse arbeidsstelsel in die algemeen, en spesifiek binne AMM, word bespreek.

Die feitebeeld wat uit die studie na vore tree, verskaf 'n etnografiese beskrywing van die persepsies van die swart vroue werkers by AMM aangaande westerse werkswaardes en die werksgedrag van die vroue binne die werkplek. Die kultuurbepaalde houdings jeens die konsep "werk" word bespreek. Hierdie geselekteerde westerse werkswaardes sluit die volgende in: roepingsbewustheid, individualisme, deeglikheid en oplettendheid, tydskonsepte, dissipline, kommunikasie, prestasie-motivering, hardwerkendheid, verantwoordelikheid en verantwoordbaarheid, en werkstatus. Hierdie westerse-georiënteerde werkswaardes (kriteria) is egter nie noodwendig teenwoordig in die werkswaarde-sisteme van swart vroue werkers nie.



Dit veroorsaak konflik binne die werkplek en verminderde produktiwiteit, aangesien die werksgedrag van swart vroue werkers oor die algemeen die teenoorgestelde is van westers-geïntereerde organisatoriese waardes. Gevolglik is dit moeilik vir werkgewers om van binne hul eie kulturele raamwerke die werksgedrag van swart vroue werkers te voorspel of oordeel. Dit is dus van uiterste belang dat werkgewers bewus is van die perspies aangaande westerse werkswaardes sowel as die werksgedrag van Afrika-geïntereerde swart werkers in die algemeen, en spesifiek die werksgedrag van swart vroue werkers, om sodoende konflik in die werkplek te voorkom of verminder en produktiwiteit te bevorder.

**SLEUTELWOORDE:** Swart vroue werkers, werksgedrag, kultuurbepaalde waardeoordele en lewens- en wêreldbeskouings, kultuur, westerse werkswaardes, westerse werkplek, roepingsbewustheid, individualisme, deeglikheid en oplettendheid, Afrika tydskonsep, werksdissipline, kommunikasie, prestasie-motivering, hardwerkendheid, verantwoordelikheid en verantwoordbaarheid, werkstatus, geslagsgelykheid.



## CONTENTS

<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</b> .....	i
<b>SUMMARY</b> .....	ii
<b>SAMEVATTING</b> .....	iv

## CHAPTER 1

### OBJECTIVES, THEORETICAL DELINEATION OF THE RESEARCH DOMAIN AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

<b>1.1 INTRODUCTION</b> .....	1
<b>1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT</b> .....	2
<b>1.3 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES</b> .....	4
<b>1.4 RESEARCH FOCUS</b> .....	6
<b>1.5 THEORETICAL DELINEATION OF THE RESEARCH DOMAIN</b> .....	6
<b>1.5.1 Culture, acculturation and urbanisation</b> .....	7
1.5.1.1 <i>Culture</i> .....	7
1.5.1.2 <i>Culture change</i> .....	11
1.5.1.3 <i>Urbanisation</i> .....	12
<b>1.5.2 Values</b> .....	13
<b>1.5.3 Models of values</b> .....	15
1.5.3.1 <i>A philosopher's model</i> .....	15
1.5.3.2 <i>An anthropological model</i> .....	16
1.5.3.3 <i>Psychological models</i> .....	17
1.5.3.4 <i>Concluding remarks</i> .....	18
<b>1.5.4 World-view and value judgements</b> .....	19
1.5.4.1 <i>Human free will and value systems</i> .....	19
1.5.4.2 <i>Truth-values or logical values</i> .....	20



1.5.4.3	<i>Moral values or ethical values</i>	21
1.5.4.4	<i>Aesthetic values</i>	22
1.5.4.5	<i>Utility values or pragmatic values</i>	22
1.5.4.6	<i>Concluding remarks</i>	23
1.5.5	<b>Work values</b>	24
1.5.6	<b>The ideology of work</b>	26
1.5.6.1	<i>The classical work ideology</i>	26
1.5.6.2	<i>The Hebrew work ideology</i>	27
1.5.6.3	<i>The medieval work ideology</i>	27
1.5.7	<b>The Protestant ethic</b>	28
1.5.7.1	<i>The origin of the Protestant ethic</i>	28
1.5.7.2	<i>The Protestant ethic and capitalism</i>	29
1.5.7.3	<i>Critical evaluation of Weber's theory</i>	29
1.5.7.4	<i>Value of Weber's study</i>	30
1.6	<b>COMPARATIVE CRITERIA</b>	31
1.6.1	<b>Selected western work values</b>	36
1.6.1.1	<i>Career awareness</i>	37
1.6.1.2	<i>Capacity to be industrious</i>	37
1.6.1.3	<i>Discipline</i>	38
1.6.1.4	<i>Concept of time</i>	38
1.6.1.5	<i>Thoroughness</i>	38
1.6.1.6	<i>Responsibility</i>	38
1.6.1.7	<i>Work status</i>	39
1.6.1.8	<i>Individualism</i>	39
1.6.1.9	<i>Communication</i>	39
1.6.1.10	<i>Motivation to achieve</i>	40
1.6.1.11	<i>Conclusion</i>	41
1.7	<b>WESTERN WORK-RELATED CONCEPTS IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN WORKPLACE</b>	41
1.7.1	<b>Employer</b>	42
1.7.2	<b>Employee</b>	42
1.7.3	<b>Service contract</b>	42
1.7.4	<b>Trade unions</b>	42
1.7.5	<b>Equity</b>	43
1.7.6	<b>Equality</b>	43





1.7.7 Equal opportunities .....	43
1.7.8 Summary .....	43
<b>1.8 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY .....</b>	<b>44</b>
1.8.1 Literature study .....	47
1.8.2 Data gathering .....	49
1.8.2.1 Qualitative research .....	49
1.8.2.2 Quantitative research .....	55
<b>1.9 SUMMARY .....</b>	<b>57</b>

## CHAPTER 2

### BLACK WOMEN IN THE WORKPLACE: SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL INFLUENCES

<b>2.1 INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>59</b>
<b>2.2 SEX AND GENDER .....</b>	<b>62</b>
<b>2.3 FEMINISM .....</b>	<b>63</b>
<b>2.4 SOUTH AFRICAN BLACK WOMEN: A CULTURAL PROFILE .....</b>	<b>65</b>
2.4.1 Social organisation .....	67
2.4.2 Cycle of life .....	67
2.4.3 Age-grading and sex differentiation .....	69
2.4.4 Economic profile and role ascription .....	70
2.4.5 Introduction to western economy .....	72
<b>2.5 THE ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL POSITION OF BLACK WOMEN IN      SOUTH AFRICA BEFORE 1990 .....</b>	<b>74</b>
2.5.1 Job reservation: black women workers .....	75
2.5.2 The education of black women .....	77
2.5.3 The position of black women in the “Struggle” against apartheid .....	78
<b>2.6 THE POSITION OF BLACK WOMEN AFTER THE ABOLITION OF      APARTHEID .....</b>	<b>79</b>
2.6.1 Gender equality and the constitution .....	80
2.6.1.1 The preamble .....	80



2.6.1.2	<i>Founding provisions</i>	81
2.6.1.3	<i>The Bill of Rights</i>	81
2.6.1.4	<i>The election of officials and gender equality</i>	83
2.6.1.5	<i>International law</i>	83
2.6.2	<b>Support for constitutional democracy</b>	84
2.6.2.1	<i>Commission on Gender Equality (CGE)</i>	84
2.6.2.2	<i>Mechanisms for equity</i>	85
2.6.3	<b>The combining of civil and customary law</b>	86
2.7	<b>ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN IN SOUTH AFRICA</b>	88
2.7.1	<b>Women and poverty</b>	88
2.7.2	<b>Income levels per household in South Africa</b>	89
2.7.3	<b>Unemployment among black women in South Africa</b>	90
2.7.4	<b>Economically active population</b>	92
2.7.5	<b>Distribution of males and females in certain occupations</b>	92
2.7.6	<b>The employment of women in the Public Service</b>	94
2.7.7	<b>The employment of black women in the informal sector</b>	94
2.7.8	<b>The unionisation of black women workers</b>	96
2.7.9	<b>Affirmative action and job advancement</b>	97
2.7.10	<b>South African women and economic policy</b>	100
2.7.10.1	<i>Legislation for domestic workers</i>	100
2.7.10.2	<i>Legislation for farm labourers</i>	101
2.7.10.3	<i>The Women's Budget Initiative</i>	101
2.7.10.4	<i>The Employment Standards Bill</i>	102
2.7.10.5	<i>The Employment and Occupational Equity Green Paper</i>	102
2.7.10.6	<i>The Employment Equity Bill</i>	103
2.7.10.7	<i>The Skills Development Bill</i>	104
2.7.10.8	<i>The protection of employees during pregnancy and after the birth of a child</i>	105
2.7.10.9	<i>Health and safety</i>	106
2.7.10.10	<i>Concluding remarks</i>	106
2.8	<b>THE POLITICAL EMPOWERMENT OF BLACK WOMEN</b>	107
2.9	<b>SUMMARY</b>	109



## CHAPTER 3

### BLACK WOMEN AND THE WORK MILIEU: THE AMM CASE STUDY

3.1 INTRODUCTION .....	113
3.2 THE WORK MILIEU .....	113
3.3 AGE OF THE BLACK WOMEN WORKERS .....	115
3.4 ETHNIC AFFILIATION .....	117
3.5 LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY OF THE BLACK WOMEN WORKERS AT AMM .....	118
3.6 RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY .....	119
3.7 DEPENDANTS AND CHILDREN WITHIN THE HOUSEHOLDS OF THE BLACK WOMEN WORKERS .....	121
3.8 EDUCATION AND PERCEPTIONS OF EDUCATION .....	123
3.9 RESIDENCE AND TRANSPORT .....	126
3.10 CHILDCARE FACILITIES AT THE WORKPLACE AND AT HOME .....	127
3.11 THE FINANCIAL STANDING OF BLACK WOMEN WORKERS .....	128
3.11.1 Monthly income and expenditure .....	128
3.11.2 Additional income .....	131
3.11.3 Housing .....	131
3.11.4 Electricity and water .....	132
3.11.5 Loans and debt .....	132
3.11.6 Savings accounts and societies .....	133
3.12 POLITICAL ORIENTATION OF THE BLACK WOMEN WORKERS AT AMM .....	134
3.12.1 Perceptions of the political situation in South Africa .....	135
3.12.2 The unionisation of the black women workers .....	136
3.13 CAREER AWARENESS .....	137
3.14 INDIVIDUALISM .....	140
3.15 THOROUGHNESS AND ALERTNESS .....	143
3.16 MOTIVATION TO ACHIEVE .....	146
3.17 CAPACITY TO BE INDUSTRIOUS .....	149
3.18 TIME CONCEPTS .....	152



3.18.1	<b>Tardiness</b>	153
3.18.2	<b>Absenteeism</b>	154
3.18.3	<b>Time management and thoroughness</b>	155
3.18.4	<b>Perception of the future</b>	157
3.18.5	<b>Summary</b>	157
3.19	<b>COMMUNICATION</b>	158
3.19.1	<b>Languages diversity</b>	158
3.19.2	<b>Communication with management</b>	159
3.19.2.1	<i>The employer</i>	159
3.19.2.2	<i>The production manager</i>	160
3.19.2.3	<i>The quality control officer</i>	161
3.19.3	<b>Relations with co-workers</b>	161
3.19.4	<b>Summary</b>	163
3.20	<b>RESPONSIBILITY AND DISCIPLINE</b>	163
3.20.1	<b>Proportional remuneration</b>	163
3.20.2	<b>Thoroughness and alertness</b>	164
3.20.3	<b>Time management</b>	164
3.20.4	<b>Rules and regulations at the workplace</b>	165
3.20.5	<b>Summary</b>	165
3.21	<b>WORK STATUS</b>	166
3.22	<b>GENDER AND WORK</b>	168
3.22.1	<b>The household</b>	168
3.22.2	<b>Decision-making</b>	169
3.22.3	<b>Marriage goods</b>	170
3.22.4	<b>Concluding remarks</b>	170
3.23	<b>PHYSICAL WORK ENVIRONMENT</b>	171
3.24	<b>JOB SECURITY</b>	172
3.25	<b>IMPORTANT WORK-RELATED AFRICAN LANGUAGE CONCEPTS</b>	173
3.26	<b>SUMMARY</b>	177



## CHAPTER 4

### EVALUATION OF THE RESEARCH RESULTS

<b>4.1 CONCLUSION</b> .....	182
<b>4.1.1 Guidelines and conclusions</b> .....	183
<b>4.1.2 Limitations of the research</b> .....	189
<b>4.1.3 Further research</b> .....	190
<b>4.1.4 Concluding remarks</b> .....	190
<b>SOURCES</b> .....	191

## LIST OF TABLES

<b>Table 1.1:</b>	World view universals .....	32
<b>Table 1.2:</b>	A comparison of quantitative and qualitative research .....	46
<b>Table 2.1:</b>	Income distribution of the South African population by gender and race .....	90
<b>Table 2.2:</b>	Economically active population (EAP) in South Africa by race and gender: October 1995 .....	92
<b>Table 2.3:</b>	Occupational distribution of males and females in South Africa .....	93
<b>Table 2.4:</b>	Self-employed persons in the informal sector .....	95
<b>Table 2.5:</b>	Unionisation in South Africa by race and gender: 1994 .....	96
<b>Table 3.1:</b>	Age differentiation of the black women workers at AMM .....	116
<b>Table 3.2:</b>	Ethnic affiliation of the black women workers at AMM .....	117
<b>Table 3.3:</b>	Language proficiency of the black women workers at AMM .....	119
<b>Table 3.4:</b>	Religious affiliation of the black women workers at AMM .....	120
<b>Table 3.5:</b>	Children per household of the black women workers at AMM .....	122
<b>Table 3.6:</b>	Levels of education of the black women workers at AMM .....	124
<b>Table 3.7:</b>	Places of residence of the black women workers at AMM .....	126
<b>Table 3.8:</b>	Monthly income and expenditure per black woman worker at AMM .....	130
<b>Table 3.9:</b>	Hypothetical occupational ambitions of the black women workers at AMM.....	140
<b>Table 3.10:</b>	Period of employment of the black women workers at AMM .....	172
<b>Table 3.11:</b>	Important work-related African language concepts: black women workers at AMM .....	174
<b>Table 4.1:</b>	A comparison of western work values and those perceived by the black women workers at AMM .....	184

## LIST OF FIGURES

<b>Figure 1.1:</b>	Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs .....	34
<b>Figure 2.1:</b>	1996 unemployment rate in South Africa by race and gender .....	91
<b>Figure 3.1:</b>	The horizontal organisational structure at AMM .....	114
<b>Figure 3.2:</b>	Percentages of the monthly expenses of the black women workers at AMM (according to Table 3.8) .....	129



## LIST OF APPENDICES

**APPENDIX A:** EXAMPLES OF GENEALOGICAL DIAGRAMMS

**APPENDIX B:** QUESTIONNAIRE

## LIST OF MAPS

**MAP 1:** THE MARBLE HALL-DISTRICT: PLACES OF RESIDENCE OF THE BLACK WOMEN WORKERS AT AMM

## CHAPTER 1

# OBJECTIVES, THEORETICAL DELINEATION OF THE RESEARCH DOMAIN AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

South African society consists of a heterogeneous cultural and ethnic compilation (Van Vuuren 1988:7). This ethnic diversity can give rise to a conflict of values, especially in the western-oriented South African labour system, because the labour force consists of members of different cultural groups. The diversity of cultural orientations implies that workers apply different value systems in the workplace. Differences in cultural orientation and value systems are emphasised by differences in education, class and socio-economic circumstances between members of the South African workforce (Godsell 1983:56).

In many instances, the work values of indigenous African labourers come into conflict with western-oriented organisational values in South Africa. These different value systems, especially differences between the work values of western- and African-oriented labourers, can result in financial and productivity loss for employers and organisations. It is thus important that areas of value conflict and value differences should be defined. According to Godsell (1983:56), to solve this problem, concessions and compromises are required from individuals and organisations, within the contexts of both economic and cultural principles.

The western labour system that operates in South Africa cannot be examined without taking into account the work values of a large proportion of the South African labour force, namely black women workers. The study attempts to establish to what extent the working behaviour of black women workers in the western workplace is influenced by their sub-Saharan African culture. The study investigates whether, in most instances, the values held by these women contrast and even clash with accepted western work values so that they are not necessarily consistent with the working behaviour expected within a workplace with a western orientation.



The study attempts to demonstrate that the western system of work values is still largely alien to black women workers. Although such an assumption may be open to criticism, it is a reality that in South African business there is a perception that western values must be “adopted” by black women workers through a process of acculturation (see Section 1.5.1.2), so that such values can operate through the South African labour system. Such a process cannot happen overnight. Because the process is, at present, far from complete, the working behaviour of black women cannot be predicted and is not fully understood within the present labour set-up in South Africa. If the current situation is to be understood and the process is to be made possible, it is imperative that the western-oriented South African labour system and employers acknowledge disparities between the work values of western- and African-oriented labourers. Only when differences are understood can a compromise between these two value systems be effected in order to improve productivity and to establish peaceful labour relations among the majority of the South African workforce. To enhance such an understanding, knowledge of the work values of black women workers within a broad sub-Saharan African cultural orientation is essential.

This study therefore focuses on how black women from indigenous Southern African cultural groups perceive and experience selected western work values in the South African workplace. The study attempts to establish how the work values and working behaviour of black women workers differ from those of westerners, using the western work value criteria of Raubenheimer and Kotze (1984), as well as those of Van Vuuren (1988) (see Section 1.6).

The anthropological value of the study lies in a cross-cultural approach to the situation of black women in a western workplace and the performance of these black women workers within this system. The topic is not approached from an exclusively western point of view, and selected elements of the western work ethic as perceived by the black women workers employed at Automotive Mouldings cc (AMM) were researched quantitatively and qualitatively, after the completion of the main literature research phase.

## **1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT**

Koopman (1994:53-54) states:

We can see that, by and large, our black workers cannot fulfil their social purpose and thus will never realise their work ethic, not that they do not have it, but that our



organisations restrict them from doing so. We can, thus, witness that if an organisation 'liberates' the work ethic [or enhances the work process], it [the process] has to be designed to accommodate the social purpose of the majority of its workforce. It simply is not good enough to declare equal employment opportunities, because one cannot make equal that which is intrinsically not equal.

In the past in the South African labour system, black women were discriminated against on the grounds of gender and race (Albertyn 1994:42; Du Plessis 1987:171). South African black women's right to work and thereby improve their quality of life was impeded by law. Since the abolition of apartheid in 1990 (Kemp *et al.* 1995:131), the working rights of black women in the labour market have been addressed through affirmative action in the South African labour system. Black women workers are now a large part of the labour force. Because of the focus of the study, the term black woman workers is used throughout. The term refers to Bantu-speaking black women in the South African labour system, as employees in service. The term does not include Indian or Coloured women.

The South African labour system and the labour relations resulting from its policies are founded on western value systems and on capitalist economic principles. Hence, a western capitalist working environment exists in South Africa (Raubenheimer & Kotze 1984:10). However, the largest proportion of the labour force employed within this western work environment is of traditional African origin. Black women are a part of the black workforce and they are therefore expected to function optimally and to express their full potential within a western labour set-up.

Black women workers bring to the workplace a, broadly speaking, sub-Saharan African-oriented culture. As Els (1993:51) points out:

It is common knowledge that, in the different large geographical areas across the world, more or less similar cultural traits are apparent in the peoples which live there. So one may speak of ... a more or less similar African way of life. To attempt to absolutise these similarities would be scientific suicide and one can only refer to them in the broadest sense. However, it is true that bearers of the so-called African culture, for example, share a more or less similar world-view, and share a more or less similar value system.

Collectively, black women workers share a more or less similar sub-Saharan African-oriented lifestyle. This lifestyle has its own unique value system and forms a system which contrasts

with a western lifestyle in general. In the study, references to African women imply women who share basic cultural similarities in terms of a broad sub-Saharan African cultural pattern, specifically related to the broader South African Bantu cultural pattern. Coertze (1980:44-45), Goodenough (1963:52), Macnamara (1980:20) and Landro (1989:136-137) also refer to the principle of the basic cultural similarity of broad cultural groups within specific geographical areas.

Black women do not isolate specific elements of their culturally determined value system in different situations, but approach every situation in a culturally holistic manner. Value judgements, beliefs and traditions are carried over into the work environment and it is against this background that black women workers function (Raubenheimer & Kotze 1984:34). Personal behaviour, goals, expectations and ideals within the work situation are also judged according to this value background. These cultural and value differences must be taken into account in the workplace, but this can only be done if the employer is aware of the values of indigenous Africans in general with regard to work, and the work values of indigenous African women in particular.

### **1.3 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

Within academia, very little attention has been given to the working behaviour and work values black women workers. However, as Chapple (1953:830) says, it “is perhaps worthwhile to stress the potentialities for research by anthropologists in industry. This is particularly true for those persons who are interested in the specific impact of culture through its techniques, processes, and the like on human relations”. The aim of the study is to give an ethnographic explanation of how black women workers in one particular South African factory, Automotive Mouldings cc (AMM) in Marble Hall, experience and perceive selected western work values. The attitudes of black women workers towards work are determined. The influence of culturally determined value judgements, as well as the life- and world-views of the black women workers at AMM with regard to selected western values assigned to work, are explained.

It is against the above background that the research into aspects relating to the black women workers at AMM was done. The following information was gathered on the black women workers at AMM:

- biographical data and life histories;
- domestic circumstances;
- family structure (genealogical diagrams) and dependants within households;
- primary and secondary education;
- household activities and duties;
- transport used as a means of commuting;
- circumstances within the workplace as perceived and experienced by black women workers;
- the nature of the relationships of black women workers with other employees in the workplace;
- monthly income and the utilisation thereof;
- perceptions of the current political situation in South Africa;
- perceptions of the purpose and function of trade unions;
- affiliation with organisations outside the workplace;
- perceptions of the purpose and function of “work”;
- perceptions of the families of black women workers of the purpose and function of “work”; and
- perceptions and value judgements of selected western work values and the influence of these value judgements on the working behaviour of these black women workers in the workplace.

The criteria set by Raubenheimer and Kotze (1984) and by Van Vuuren (1988) select certain elements of a western system of values related to work, also called the Protestant work ethic. These elements play a central part in the kind of work that is valued and required of workers in a western labour system. These criteria include the following aspects (Raubenheimer & Kotze 1984:8-15; Van Vuuren 1988:10-18):

- career awareness;
- individualism;
- thoroughness;
- concept of time;
- discipline;
- communication;
- motivation to achieve;
- responsibility; and
- work status.

## **1.4 RESEARCH FOCUS**

To focus the research, it was decided to conduct the research at Automotive Mouldings cc (AMM) in Marble Hall. This factory was chosen, firstly, due to the relatively small number of black women workers employed at AMM (nineteen), secondly, due to the mixture of western and traditional elements or “rurban” orientation (Section 1.5.1.3 explains this term in more detail) of the black women workers and, finally, the accessibility of the research area and the consent of both the employer and the employees to do fieldwork at the factory. The nineteen black women workers employed at AMM are largely unschooled and semi-schooled (as discussed in Section 3.8). The choice of research focus was influenced by the organisational structure of the workplace concerned (see Section 3.2 for a detailed discussion on the work milieu of these black women workers). The black women workers at AMM are not formally subordinated to one another within the organisational structure. Each black woman worker has specific and delineated duties to perform and is individually responsible for work that she performs, as well as for the quality of this work.

Work at AMM functions on the principle of proportional remuneration. In other words, the more work is done, the greater the remuneration (remuneration is determined in terms of productivity). The black women workers are individually responsible for recording how much work has been done. They receive remuneration commensurate with the day’s work (see Section 3.2). The informal organisational structure, where the black women workers have to take individual responsibility for their monthly income, thus makes AMM an ideal data source for assessing how the black women workers employed there experience and perceive selected western work values in the workplace.

## **1.5 THEORETICAL DELINEATION OF THE RESEARCH DOMAIN**

The theoretical delineation of the research domain establishes a framework according to which the perceptions of and value judgements on selected western work values by the black women workers and the influence of these values on the working behaviour of the black women workers at AMM can be compared and described. The study asserts that working behaviour and work values are largely culturally determined and influenced by the life- and world-views of workers. For this study, the life- and world-views of black women workers

are particularly relevant. Thus, culture, acculturation and life- and world-views are defined as the study's focus.

The concept "values" as influenced by culture and general and personal life- and world-views, is defined and discussed in order to establish a basis for the discussion of "work values". The discussion attempts to determine how people with a western orientation view and perceive the concept of "work" and other work-related concepts. It also demonstrates how workers in the west are normally expected to behave and act within the work situation. The origins of the Protestant work ethic is explained. Raubenheimer and Kotze (1984) as well as Van Vuuren (1988) emphasise certain elements of the Protestant work ethic as criteria which dictate western working behaviour (see Section 1.6). These elements are expected to be present in western labourers.

The South African labour system consists of various relations and institutions influenced by the current political climate (see Section 1.7) These relations and institutions are central to the functioning of the South African labour system and thus the daily life of members of the South African labour force, including black women workers. Hence, certain related concepts are defined against the background of the western work ethic.

## **1.5.1 Culture, acculturation and urbanisation**

### *1.5.1.1 Culture*

Academics have formulated various definitions for culture (for example, Kroeber & Kluckhohn 1952). Smith (1973:25) summarises this diversity as follows: "Culture, like communication, has fallen heir to a lifetime of definition and redefinition by anthropologists, sociologists and psychologists." Rollwagen (1986:102) states that the definition of culture or the approach to cultural studies

should incorporate explanations for the differences in ideas and behaviour between individuals in any particular social formation as well as explanations for the similarities in ideas and behaviour between those individuals. It should account for the differences between choices that members of a single formation might make. It should facilitate the understanding of geographically and historically diverse sets of human beings in different kinds of social formations and between human beings in

social formations with differential access to power, however defined and however based. It should also facilitate to a greater extent ... the interdisciplinary integration between anthropology and the other disciplines which focus their attention upon human beings (such as, for example, history and economics).

According to Malinowski (1944:1), culture is

that integral whole consisting of implements and consumer goods, of constitutional charters, of human ideas and crafts, beliefs and customs, a vast apparatus, partly material and partly spiritual, by which man is able to cope with concrete problems that face him.

According to Harris (1968:16), the culture concept comes down to behaviour patterns associated with particular groups of people, that is, to “customs”, or to a people’s “way of life”. Spradley (1979:5) defines culture as “the acquired knowledge that people use to interpret experience and generate social behaviour”. Hofstede (1980:14) argues that culture is a “mental programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one human group from another”.

Raubenheimer and Kotze (1984:12) define culture as the collective ideas of a group of people around the concepts of authority, order, competition and relationships between the members of that specific group. Culture, according to these authors, includes collective ideas about ways of life, the supernatural, communication and the aesthetic, relaxation and escaping from the routine of daily existence – about every aspect and facet of life.

Another definition of culture within Anthropology was offered by Coertze and Coertze (1996:164-165), who state that culture is all the creations of humans as complex living beings within cultural groups, in a process of self-maintenance in their adaptation to a complex environment. This includes the cultivation of the humans themselves and their environment, as well as the creation of apparatus, methods and techniques, with which the cultivation process takes place. Culture is thus the stereotyped, coherent way of life of a cultural group and is transferred from one generation to the next by means of a process of enculturation.

On the other hand, Goodenough (1963:258-259) describes culture as “the shared products of human learning”. According to Goodenough (1963:258), culture may be said to consist of

- the ways in which people have organised their experience of the real world so as to give it a structure as a phenomenal world of forms, that is, their precepts and concepts;
- the ways in which people have organised their experience of their phenomenal world so as to give it structure as a system of cause and effect relationships, that is, the propositions and beliefs by which they explain events and design tactics for accomplishing their purposes;
- the ways in which people have organised their experience of their phenomenal world so as to structure its various arrangements in hierarchies of preferences, that is, their value or sentiment systems. These provide the principles for selecting and establishing purposes and for keeping oneself purposefully oriented in a changing phenomenal world; and
- the ways in which people have organised their experience of their past efforts to accomplish recurring purposes into operational procedures for accomplishing these purposes in the future, that is, a set of ‘grammatical’ principles of action and a series of recipes for accomplishing particular ends. They include operational procedures for dealing with people as well as for dealing with material things.

Goodenough (1963:258-259) states:

...culture consists of standards deciding what is, standards for deciding what can be, standards for deciding how one feels about it, standards for deciding what to do about it, and standards for deciding how to go about doing it.

It is, however, important to understand that individuals still maintain an own identity although they are part of a larger cultural whole. Harris and Moran (1987:190-195) have identified certain characteristics of culture that provide each person with a unique identity:

- sense of self and space (people of different cultures experience various degrees of conflict with themselves; some cultures are very structured and formal, whilst others are flexible and informal);
- communication and language (verbal and non-verbal communication systems distinguish cultural groups from one another; not only spoken language, but also gestures, facial expressions and body language differ);
- dress and appearance (outward garments, adornments and body decorations tend to be distinctive for each culture);
- food and feeding habits (the manner in which food is selected, prepared, presented and eaten often differs between cultures);





- time and time consciousness (some cultures' sense of time is exact, whereas other cultures consider time to be relative; some cultures determine promptness by age or status, and some have their own time system in terms of the seasons of the year);
- relationships (cultures fix human and organisational relationships by age, sex, status, power, wealth and wisdom);
- values and norms (the needs systems of cultures vary, as do priorities attached to behaviour; culture furthermore sets norms of behaviour for society through which conventions are learnt);
- beliefs and attitudes (culture influences beliefs, which, in turn influence attitudes toward the self, others and the environment);
- mental process and learning (culture has an effect on how people organise and process information – all cultures have a reasoning process of some kind, but this reasoning process is uniquely manifested); and
- work habits and practices (different cultural groups have different attitudes towards types of work, the division of work and work habits, including rewards and recognition; some cultures espouse a work ethic in which all members are expected to engage in worthwhile activity, whilst others define this concept broadly to include cultural pursuits and sports).

Employees belonging to different cultural groups have different attitudes, beliefs, norms, values, philosophies and behavioural patterns, due to the fact that culture reflects a group's knowledge, customs, morals, language(s), perceptions and values. Consequently, different cultural groups also differ in their perceptions of work (Nel 1997:53). Wallman (1979:11), who wrote extensively on the above argument, states:

...the tradition of a particular culture will lead its members to select certain forms of work out of the options open to them; will allow or require them to carry rights and obligations over from the non-work to the work sphere where the structure of the job permits; and will provide them with idioms, symbolic structures and modes of organisation which may, if they are suitable to it, be adapted to the needs or the opportunities of a particular environment.

Rollwagen (1986:105) defines cultural systems as

the products of human interaction within whatever size demographic framework there is communication, maintained over any significant length of time and by whatever means of communication ... Cultural systems can thus be as small as between two individuals, and as large as those which unite billions of individuals throughout the

world in shared values through music, religion, science, commerce, and other shared cultural systems... every human being is incorporated into numerous sets of relationships with other specific individuals who participate in the process of creating and sharing ideas. In this perspective, individuals who maintain communication with one another over time create shared systems of ideas and behaviours that are meaningful to themselves. The complex of their understandings and behaviours differentiates them from other sets of individuals bound to a variety of cultural systems in other ways. Every human being is thus a participant in numerous culture-in-process systems.

Rollwagen (1986:117) adds:

Individuals do have choices in their behaviour. No anthropologist is a cultural determinist to the extent that they deny individuals choice. A cultural systems perspective on human behaviour suggests that individuals have a far greater range of choices in their individual behaviour all of which are related to cultural explanations.

To summarise: one could say that the term “culture” denotes the similarity in values, behaviour and ideas shared by individuals as members of specific cultural groups and that the values, behaviour and ideas of these different cultural groups differ from one another in many instances. Thus, the behaviour of members of different cultural groups will be diverse.

#### *1.5.1.2 Culture change*

Rollwagen (1986:125) describes cultural change as a process that takes place as the needs of a cultural group changes. Rollwagen (1986:125) adds:

If culture is a process in which individuals participate in and create their own cultural systems, then cultural systems designed to meet the needs of their participants will always be emerging to meet the needs of their members. By contrast, however, it is also important to remember that cultural systems always exist in the presence of other cultural systems with different perspectives, goals and power .

According to Goodenough (1963:258),

A great deal of what is called ‘cultural’ change in social scientific literature ... amounts to no more than change in a community’s real or phenomenal conditions,

only incidentally including changes in the criteria by which people discern things, their belief about things, their purpose in relation to them, or their principles of dealing with them.

By contrast, Coertze (1968:1) defines acculturation as the process according to which the cultural patterns of cultural groups or segments of cultural groups are subjected to a process of change resulting from the systematic and continual influence of another different culture and which, under certain circumstances, can grow into a new cultural unit.

Wallman (1979:10) suggests:

Traditional cultural resources of obligation, filiation, status, organisation, value and so on are adapted to non-traditional spheres of work, often with the effect of enhancing work-defined objectives; patterns and structures and technologies of work feed back upon traditional culture, affecting, offering –sometimes even enhancing – aboriginal forms and meanings.

In South Africa the inclusion of labourers from indigenous cultural groups in a western labour system implies both the adjustment of these labourers to a western labour set-up and the working behaviour expected within this working environment and the adjustment of the western-oriented labour system to the culturally influenced work values and working behaviour of African workers. This study includes the influence of the work values of workers from an indigenous African origin on the western-oriented labour system in South Africa and the changes in behaviour expected by employers from indigenous African-oriented labourers.

### *1.5.1.3 Urbanisation*

According to Mayer (1962:4), urbanisation can be defined “as a form of social mobility; as the movement of individuals between rural and urban ... society [remembering that] we are entitled to call urbanised only those who have moved in some profounder sense than the mere physical change of abode”. Dubb (1974:448) argues that urbanisation is “a sociological

concept and refers to changes in behaviour consequent upon coming to town". According to Mayer (1962:6), a "truly" urbanised person

would be one who is fully confirmed in 'urban' modes of behaviour – private life included – and (above all) in valuing these positively. The question of values is important, for in many situations people might conform outwardly, but still remain inwardly determined to revert to pre-urban patterns when opportunity arises.

Pauw (1986:xvii) holds a similar view and says that "the main social ties and cultural interests of a fully urban person are contained within the town".

The research group for this study does not live within their original traditional culture and its social ties and their way of life has changed through a process of acculturation and urbanisation as well as their engagement in the western-oriented labour market. However, the black women workers at AMM are neither fully urbanised, nor is their way of life completely rural. The research group can be said to live in what is called the "rural-urban fringe". According to Fairhurst and Moate (1993:34), the distinction between rural and urban is, in reality, artificial, as the two are inextricably linked "at all resolution levels, the micro, meso and macro, the local, the regional, national and global scales". The categories "urban" and "rural" each has its own particular characteristics and identity and each is generally readily distinguishable as a clear-cut research area (Fairhurst & Moate 1993:34). However, Fairhurst and Moate (1993:34) also state that "the phenomenon of the rural-urban settlement, which has developed and is continuing to do so with great alacrity in response to the effect of the urbanisation process and its concomitant economic impact, also warrants investigation". The term "rural-urban settlement" or "rural-urban fringe" is used to describe "a phenomenon that reflects a mix of recognised rural and urban features with a spatial location in proximity to an urban area with which it has close social and economic associations" (Fairhurst and Moate 1993:34). The subjects of this study all live within a "rural-urban" setting.

### **1.5.2 Values**

According to Koopman (1994:43) everybody has a value system

which shapes [his/her] world-view. It is based on a system of beliefs and human experiences within a framework of background education, environmental interaction, upbringing and culture. Language also will determine the way [people] respond to central stimuli.

Values refer to orientations towards what is considered desirable or preferable in society or culture. Values thus express the relationship between environmental pressure and human desire (Zavolloni 1980:74). Zavolloni (1980:75) insists that “values are distinctive of an individual or characteristic of a group”. The individual is the “culture carrier” of the group, and can provide information about values in a society. According to Goodenough (1963:87), for any community or social class

there will be some value orientations that are common to the personal sentiments of virtually everyone within it. They allow for the development of recreational, aesthetic, and ethical traditions that have wide appeal. These traditions [value orientations] help to promote awareness of common sentiments, which in turn help to give people that sense of mutual identity without which there is no social group.

Rokeach (1973:2) defines values as “core conceptions of the desirable within every individual and society”. He adds that values serve as standards or criteria to guide action, judgement, choice, attitude, evaluation, argument and rationalisation.

It is clear that values are the basis of each individual’s behaviour within the context of a culturally determined way of life. Changes in culturally determined values represent central rather than peripheral changes, and thus have important consequences for the cognition and social behaviour of individuals and the group (Nel 1997:26).

Godsell (1983:6) argues:

It is difficult to conceive of a human problem that would not be better illuminated if reliable value data concerning it [the problem], were available. Differences between cultures, social classes, occupations, religions, or political orientations are all translatable into questions concerning differences in underlying values and value systems.

The above definitions of “values” are summarised by Coertze and Coertze (1996:336). Value systems are coherent structures of tradition-determined judgements and guidelines ruling and dictating behaviour within a specific environment. Values are judged positively or negatively according to ruling cultural trends within a cultural group.

To summarise: every culture has a value system, and value systems are distinctive of different groups of people. Value systems symbolise that which is desirable and preferable within the

daily lives of different groups of people. There have been several attempts by various authors and researchers to “measure” the value systems of specific groups of people, and this has led to the compilation of different models of values in which “a value system” is described.

### 1.5.3 Models of values

#### 1.5.3.1 *A philosopher’s model*

Morris (1956:1) developed a comprehensive model of human values based on religious and ethical views of the world. This model has not been widely used in research, partly, as Tylor (1978:136) suggests, because the model was the creation of a philosopher, not a psychologist, and was thus not the main channel through which psychological information flows. Morris’s model originally included “13 Ways to Live”, based on “values advocated and defended in the several ethical and religious systems of mankind” (Morris 1956:1). The “13 Ways to Live” were compressed into five value dimensions (Godsell 1983:10; Nel 1997:27):

- social restraint and self-control;
- enjoyment and progress in action;
- withdrawal and self-sufficiency;
- receptivity and sympathetic concern; and
- self-indulgence or sensuous enjoyment.

Morris distinguished between three value elements, namely, dependence, dominance and detachment (Godsell 1983:11; Nel 1997:27). Morris (1956:10-12) also distinguishes between three types of values: operative values, conceived values and object values. Morris (1956:12) described operative values as “the tendencies of living beings to prefer one kind of an object rather than another”. Conceived values refer to a “preference for a symbolic indicated object ... directed by an anticipation or foresight of the outcome”. With object values, the emphasis is placed on the properties of the object, in other words, the benefits or disadvantages accruing from the object rather than the value of the object *per se*. This concept refers to what is desirable, and whether or not it is preferred (Godsell 1983:11; Nel 1997:28).

The idea of conceived values, relating to anticipated outcomes, is the most relevant to this study. It is worth noting the factors which Morris believed to influence this type of value: “...the conceived values of individuals take account of both the individual’s own personal

characteristics and the requirements of organised society” (Morris 1956:188). Morris maintained that particular societies or cultures are characterised not so much by one typical value dimension as by particular combinations of dimensions which produced value profiles characteristic of those cultures (Godsell 1983:12; Nel 1997:28).

### *1.5.3.2 An anthropological model*

Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck (1961:11) set out “five crucial problems in value orientation”:

- human nature orientation (the choice here is whether human nature is perceived as “good”, “good-and-evil”, “neutral” or “evil”. In any one of these orientations, human nature may be regarded also as either mutable or immutable);
- man-nature orientation (humans may be seen as being in harmony with nature, as being in subjugated by nature, or as having achieved mastery over nature);
- time orientation (individuals may have a past, present, or future orientation);
- activity orientation (the choice here is between “being”, “doing”, and “being-in-becoming”); and
- relation orientation (possible relations are individualism, lineality and collaterality).

Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck (1961:4) divided the behavioural sphere further into the following dominant patterns:

- economic-technological;
- religious;
- intellectual-aesthetic, and
- recreational.

Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck (1961:4) provided the following definition of value orientations:

Value orientations are complex but definitely patterned (rank-ordered) principles, resulting from the transactional interplay of three analytically distinguishable elements of the evaluation process – the cognitive, the affective and the directive elements – which give order and direction to the ever-flowing stream of human acts and thoughts as these relate to the solution of common human problems.

One of the most important conclusions Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck (1961:341) reached in their study is that the “conceptualisation of the variation in value orientations of a culture is an

interlocking network of dominant (most preferred) value orientations and variant value orientations which are both required and permitted”.

This would seem to echo Morris’s (1956:198) conclusion that the “common values” which distinguish culture are primarily the common acceptance of a certain distribution of values in various segments of the social system rather than the same operative values in all members of a culture.

### *1.5.3.3 Psychological models*

Allport (1970:454) identified six important values, namely:

- theoretical values;
- economic values;
- aesthetic values;
- social values;
- political values; and
- religious values.

In the Allport-Vernon-Lindsey value scale (Godsell 1983:15), each of the six values is paired an equal number of times with each of the other five values, and each subject to whom the scale is administered must make a forced choice between pairs of values to produce an individual value hierarchy. With this method, the relative prominence of values within a given context is measured (Godsell 1983:15).

Another important psychologically oriented value scale is that of Rokeach (1968). Rokeach (1968:159) defines a value as “an enduring belief that a specific mode of conduct or end-state of existence is personally and socially preferable to alternate modes of conduct or end-states of existence”. He further classifies values as being either instrumental or terminal. Instrumental values refer to desirable modes of conduct, while terminal values are related to desirable end-states of existence. Terminal values may be either personal (for example, salvation) or social (for example, world peace). Instrumental values are divided into moral values (for example, behaving honestly) and competence or self-actualisation values (for example, behaving imaginatively).



Rokeach (1968) did not start with a model of human values, ideal or otherwise. Instead, he recorded people's perceptions and expressions of their own and other's values, and organised them into categories and scales (Feather 1975:22; Rokeach 1968:29).

Rokeach's "Value Survey" consists of lists of 18 instrumental and 18 terminal values, which the subject must prioritise or rank in order of preference. The following measures can be obtained from one or more rankings (Godsell 1983:16-17):

- value system stability, obtained by correlating rankings made on one occasion with those made on another occasion;
- value system similarity in two or more persons, obtained by correlating rank orderings produced by different people;
- similarity of perceived value systems of reference persons or groups, obtained by comparing one's own values with the values attributed to other persons or groups; and
- reliability or stability of single values, obtained by comparing positions of single values on test and retest.

The Rokeach Scale of Values is probably one of the most widely used instruments in the study of values; however, Rokeach's "Value Survey" is western-oriented and not really appropriate for application in studies which include comparisons of multicultural value surveys (Godsell 1983:16-17).

#### *1.5.3.4 Concluding remarks*

The above models all have in common a concern with values. All the above authors define values as culturally determined, although several factors and variables influence values. According to the three above models of values, values centre around the preferences and principles that dictate individual behaviour and action according to the requirements of society (a cultural group). According to the definition of "values" by Coertze and Coertze (1996:336), a value system is a cultural aspect. Values are thus a product of a specific cultural group's life- and world-views and are judged accordingly.

#### 1.5.4 World-view and value judgements

According to Kearney (1984:41-42),

The world-view of a people is their way of looking at reality. It consists of basic assumptions and images that provide a more or less coherent, though not necessarily accurate, way of thinking about the world. A world-view comprises images of Self and all that is recognised as not-Self, plus ideas about relationships between them, as well as other ideas ... each society is a particular arrangement of these ideas and behaviour. The overall cognitive framework of these ideas and behaviour is that society's world-view. Another way of stating that is that a world-view is the collection of basic assumptions that an individual or society has about reality.

A world-view is thus the integrated combination of “concepts, typical of a particular society, having to do with the nature of things human beings need to know to behave successfully ... human beings tend to regard their world-view ... as absolute and true knowledge of reality” (Kearney 1984:46). Els (1996:8) holds a similar view and argues that a world-view that is shared by bearers of the same culture constitutes the broader background against and within which value judgements about reality are defined.

##### *1.5.4.1 Human free will and value systems*

Both Goodenough (1963:258-259) and Rollwagen (1986:117) imply in their definitions of culture that humans have choices and that culture and values should not be viewed separately from human choice and behaviour (see Section 1.5.1). Coertze (1980:45) states that these choices and human actions in general are limited due to the need to combine freedom with responsibility. If humans have free will, they must take responsibility for their actions to prevent chaos and anarchy within the community in which humans co-exist with other humans (Coertze 1980:45). According to Goodenough (1963:96), “every community has a set of rules by which people are required to conduct their affairs and interact with one another. The rules specify various rights, privileges, and duties, and indicate the combinations in which they can properly occur”.

Human nature implies the evaluation of actions, objects and thoughts. Humans do not evaluate at random, but use criteria and norms (Coertze 1980:45). It appears to be natural for

humans to use their own interests as norms and criteria for the evaluation of actions, objects and thoughts. However, humans cannot live in harmony with other humans if each individual uses his/her own norms and criteria in the evaluation of actions, objects and thoughts. Hence, when humans choose criteria and norms for evaluation, they must do so bearing in mind the interests and needs of their fellow human beings and the demands of a “higher power” (Coertze 1980:45).

For humans to co-exist in harmony and peace with other human beings, they must establish a communal set of norms and criteria to evaluate actions, objects and thoughts. This is why humans who live together in a specific geographical area and members of the same culture share a more or less communal set of norms and criteria which they use to evaluate and judge their world and experiences (Coertze 1980:44-45) (see Section 1.2; Els 1993:51).

Humans do not live in arbitrary groups, but in established units (Coertze 1980:45). These units or groups of humans evolve by means of a specific growth process, and are referred to as cultural groupings or groups. Each cultural group has its own set of values, which directs its way of life. Goodenough (1963:52) states that people who “grow up and live together in the same community will normally share a larger number of experiences and a larger number of associations than any of them is likely to share with an outsider...” (see Section 1.2) Although such value systems, experiences and associations are specific to each cultural group, the adoption of such value systems is characteristic of human existence across the world. Value systems are found in all cultural groups and have been found throughout the ages. These value systems are expressed in the way humans live, and are classified in four categories by Coertze (1980:45):

- truth-values or logical values;
- moral values or ethical values;
- aesthetic values; and
- utility values or pragmatic values.

These four groups of values are discussed in greater detail below.

#### *1.5.4.2 Truth-values or logical values*

Truth-values refer to human logical insight and the human ability to judge the truth of factual “truths” within their particular cultural context, and to know and understand them. These

truth-values apply to everything that can be factually evaluated. These are truths that the human mind acknowledges and can express in words (Coertze 1980:45-46). According to Coertze (1980:45), every cultural group has its own category of truth-values, based on its own culturally determined knowledge and insight. Each cultural group attempts to live according to its unique category of truth-values. The behaviour and actions of the individual in a particular culture are therefore measured according to the truth-values of that particular cultural group (Coertze 1980:45-46).

A set of truth-values held by a specific cultural group is called logical values (*logos*: insight, knowledge and understanding) (Coertze 1980:46-47). Goodenough (1963:153) states that logic and rationalisation are “a normal consequence of the fact that human beings are impelled to relate their various percepts and concepts to one another in a systematic and orderly way”. According to Goodenough (1963:150),

logic is in a formal sense a codification of the reasoning process, a set of rules of inference ... Logic, in other words, is a set of propositions about the manipulation of propositions ... In all societies, people not only reason, they judge one another’s reasoning as correct or incorrect. This means that in all societies there are generally accepted propositions about the manipulation of propositions. There is no society without logic.

The following phenomena are subject to judgement and evaluation by humans and are categorised according to the logical truth-values of cultural groups (Coertze 1980:46-47):

- persons;
- institutions;
- occasions;
- places;
- objects; and
- a “higher power” (the unseen world)

#### *1.5.4.3 Moral values or ethical values*

Moral values refer to human judgements of what constitutes correct behaviour (including thought) as an expression of the will. What humans consider good and right depends on human judgement and insight and is closely related to existing culturally determined truth-

values. If a person ignores the accepted and internalised truth and acts in a way that clashes with this truth (the relations between humans and animals, between humans and other humans, and between humans and a “higher power”), such behaviour is regarded as wrong, as immoral, as clashing with norms and customs, and as clashing with the *ethos* of a cultural group (Coertze 1980:50-51). Goodenough (1963:97) states

People violate the rules or seek to subvert them often enough. Where personal values are at odds with the public ones, moreover, there is a need of some inducements to persuade people to obey the rules. Where inducements are insufficient and the personal sentiments of enough people differ from public values in similar ways, a community will seek to modify its rules accordingly.

Thus, a cultural group’s values pertaining to its *ethos* and its *logos* are closely interrelated. The most important aspect of moral values is the norm; the attitude toward the truth as manifested in actions of the will (Coertze 1980:50-51). Just as every cultural group has its own unique *logos*, so every cultural group has its own unique *ethos*, which governs the behaviour of individuals within that cultural group (Coertze 1980:51).

#### *1.5.4.4 Aesthetic values*

Concerning the aesthetic, it is safe to say that humans enjoy expressions of beauty – beauty of shape, sound, colour, line and movement. The aesthetic appeals to human emotion and evokes emotional responses such as appreciation or admiration. That which humans experience and perceive gives them pleasure and happiness. The fact that humans create beauty and find pleasure in doing so is due to the essence of humanity (Coertze 1980:51-52).

#### *1.5.4.5 Utility values or pragmatic values*

These values concern human judgement of the extent to which phenomena promote human survival. This value category is derived from the truth-values about certain phenomena which may promote prosperous survival. “Truths” about the usefulness or uselessness of phenomena are examined. Pragmatic values are therefore related to the focus on the utility value of real phenomena, for example, objects, people and a “higher power” (Coertze 1980:52-53).

#### *1.5.4.6 Concluding remarks*

There is a link between truth-values, moral values, aesthetic and pragmatic values. If the link between these value categories is removed, there may be a resulting loss of values, some blunting of the sense of responsibility and even dissociation of personality. Humans are and will remain simultaneously, and at all levels, discerning beings that evaluate their world and their options within a culturally determined context. If humans ignore or neglect this essential human function, they contribute to their own cultural decline (Coertze 1980:55). No single category of values can be separated from others. So, for example, an action which is wrong according to the specific set of value categories of a specific cultural group cannot be approved of simply because the action is beautifully executed. If the distinct components of the human value system are separated from one another, the unity of the human spirit is lost. The prominence of one category of values at the cost of others implies an arbitrary or deliberate rejection of one or more human attributes. By choosing such a path, humans choose to be less than they can be and fail to meet their potential. In the western context, to be human implies to evaluate, to discern, to judge, and to be responsible for whatever choices are made (Coertze 1980:55).

Cultures vary strongly in terms of what is meaningful to their members and what they value (Rose 1985:23). According to Coertze (1980:56), the uniqueness of value systems gives each cultural group a discernible and distinct character. A value system is therefore inherently part of the culture of a cultural group. The value system of each cultural group forms the personality traits of its individual members and each individual becomes the expression of the values of his/her cultural group. Because the value systems of different cultural groups are usually very different, the values of individuals can differ radically too (Coertze 1980:56). Thus, differences in the work values of different cultural groups and individuals are to be expected. To summarise: central to human culture, there are sets of meaning which are ordered by different categories of values (truth-values, moral values, aesthetic values and pragmatic values). It can be said that black women workers evaluate their surroundings and working environment according to their own unique African-oriented value systems and distinguish between

- true or false (truth- values);
- right or wrong (moral values);
- beautiful or not beautiful (aesthetic values); and
- useful or useless (pragmatic values).

It is against this background of evaluations or value judgements that black women workers operate within the western workplace and experience and perceive western work values.

### **1.5.5 Work values**

In everyday life, “work” refers to a miscellaneous set of things: effort, labour, toil, occupation, a profession, a career, a place, a condition, a skill, a product, a feat, a set of achievements, etc. However, in contemporary modern life (in a western context), the meaning of the term “work” as referring to paid employment has become the most current. Working entitles a person to provide for himself/herself and for that person’s family, and to fulfil the needs of that person’s dependants. Work is rewarded by success. Success implies self-respect and a sense of having value. Each working person has his/her own particular aims and ambitions; the person also has specific motivation(s) to reach those particular aims (Rose 1985:22).

The meaning(s) attributed to work, the relationships between them, the associations they evoke, and the feeling of approval, enthusiasm, obligation, disdain, detestation or even sheer indifference that they may evoke, are all created by the human mind. Such cultural products are subject to gradual historic change and, depending on circumstances, susceptible to deliberate alteration. The work domain has played an important role in the evolution of human social and cultural life. Any adjustment to what society believes work means and to work-related values modifies the nature of the basic economic system of a given society (Rose 1985:22).

According to Bezuidenhout (1989:1), the most basic aim in modern, western-oriented industry is to earn enough money to survive and lead a happy and comfortable life. However, any notion that work is simply a means towards earning a living is a serious error. In this regard, Gartner and Riesman (1974:563) state that “work should be more than a means of acquiring expendable income – it should enhance the quality of life”. Within a western context, work gives meaning to one’s life, providing opportunities for social contact and promoting personal fulfilment (Vecchio 1980:361). Schwartz (1974:35) argues: “...work as an activity is an end in itself. Work carries with it a certain moral flavour which is reflected in attitudes toward the work of others.”

The reasons why people work are closely related to their work values. Elizur *et al.* (1991:22) define the “value” of a given social group as “any entity (object, behaviour, situation) on which that group places a high worth or importance”. Cherrington (1980:19) states that the “work ethic ... [is] a positive attitude about work – a belief that work itself is important and that doing a good job is essential”. Wollack (in Theron 1989:13) defines work values as

an index of a person’s attitudes towards work in general as contrasted with attitudes towards a specific job. It differs from job satisfaction in so far as job satisfaction refers to an employee’s attitude towards his job.

Another definition of work values is based on the value definition of Kluckhohn (1967:395), which reads that

a value is a conception, explicit or implicit, distinctive of an individual or characteristic of a group, of the desirable which influences the selection of available modes, means and ends of action.

Work values can thus be defined as a conception of what is desirable within the organisational or work context (Godsell 1983:57). Godsell (1983:58) notes that the measurement of work values presents severe problems, “because most existing work value scales have a strong cultural bias and because these implicit values must be clarified before they can be studied”. In the context of this study, this statement is particularly valuable.

Life values have a significant and positive correlation with work values (Kinnane & Gaubinger 1963:365-366). For example, westerners value advances in scientific knowledge in everyday life as well as consequent advances in their working life. A high premium is placed on the conditions in which work is done and what accrues from it. Economic, political and religious values are usually reflected in the everyday working life of westerners (Kinnane & Gaubinger 1963:365-366). In the work environment, religious values may take the form of social welfare, reflected by a humanitarian approach to social problems by management. The social dimension of life values may be translated into a sense of responsibility for social problems in the work situation (Kinnane & Gaubinger 1963:366).

Van Pletzen (1986:253) defines work values as the orientation of an individual towards work in general. This orientation contains a strong affective component and is an evaluation of whether work is considered “good” or “bad” by the individual. This orientation is not necessarily connected to the type of work the individual currently does. Nor is this orientation dependent on the particular tasks the individual is engaged in. This orientation towards work



reflects what the individual thinks of idleness or inactivity. This statement is also of particular value in the context of this study (see Section 3.16 and Section 3.25).

From a western perspective, “work” can be regarded as central to human life. The purpose of work is to enhance quality of life. In a western cultural context, “work” plays an important part in human social and cultural life and, to a large extent, determines a person’s worth in society (Raubenheimer & Kotze 1984:10).

### **1.5.6 The ideology of work**

There is no agreement on a definition of the term “ideology”. An ideology can be seen as a rather loosely organised philosophy encompassing the totality of the ideals and aspirations of a people. An ideology has more in common with a philosophy than with a theory. An ideology attempts a meaningful analysis of the existing environment to discover truths concerning humanity. Ideologies attempt to make verifiable statements about reality by focusing specifically on human beings, and their relationships to other humans, as well as to the past and future world (Ingersoll & Matthews 1991:4-5).

An ideology of work is, primarily, a schedule of meanings and values associated with work and the division of labour. But it goes beyond that and provides explanations for the phenomenon of work itself and shows how work is linked with other “departments” of human life (Rose 1985:25). A number of ideologies concerning work are discussed below, because they have created traditions with an enduring impact on the conceptions of work in western industrial society (Rose 1985:27).

#### *1.5.6.1 The classical work ideology*

For both the Greeks and the Roman élite who imitated Greek attitudes, inventions and philosophy, work was clearly divided into certain élitist categories. According to the Greeks and the Romans, nobility was proven by success in warfare. Some distinction could be gained through success in organising large-scale commerce. In the arts, it was especially architecture or sculpture that were honoured occupations. Skilled crafts were recognised as having broad social value. But ordinary work, hard labour, and subordination to raw economic need or to a

master's orders, was inherently degrading, a curse. The only persuasive reason to work at despised occupations was, for slaves, fear of physical punishment, and for commoners, to avoid starvation (Rose 1985:28).

#### *1.5.6.2 The Hebrew work ideology*

Work, for the Jews, was a curse explicitly devised by God to punish the disobedience and ingratitude of Adam and Eve. The Genesis myth begins with an account of God's own toil. After work, moreover, He required a period of recovery, to be ritually commemorated on the Sabbath. Humans could eventually find redemption after transgression had been expiated by long-suffering toleration of human toil. Later rabbinical interpretations of this doctrine came to suggest that the heavenly kingdom might arrive in response to growing virtue amongst humanity, which included diligence in work. Hard work was thus conceived as a step in the process of securing redemption (Rose 1985:28).

#### *1.5.6.3 The medieval work ideology*

Christian religion adopted from the Jews an emphasis on the Word of God and its interpretation. However, two developments modified its practical application to secular life and the promulgation of a medieval Christian morality of work. First, the Church was organised along bureaucratic lines and the interpretation of texts was placed under watchful administrative control; priests were strictly forbidden to deviate from authorised doctrine, and congregations discouraged from close consideration of biblical messages (Rose 1985:28).

Then, when learning was revived in the western world after AD 1000, an attempt was made to incorporate in the Church's teaching many surviving fragments of classical philosophy, especially the rather disciplinarian social doctrines of Aristotle. This had a direct impact on medieval western economic systems (Rose 1985:28).

As far as the work domain is concerned, the results of this integration are apparent in the theology of St Thomas Aquinas. Aquinas constructed a hierarchy of occupations, after a philosophical exploration of their inherent value to society. Merchants and shopkeepers were rated not only lower than farmers and peasants, but also lower than artisans. The priesthood

and other sacred callings were ranked the highest. Aquinas developed an argument to demonstrate that this ordering was not only naturally just, but also reflected divine will (Rose 1985:28).

An effort was made to impose this doctrine of work on medieval society. The portrayal of production for use as inherently noble was apparent in the Church's ban on interest payments for debt and its suspicious response to profit-making in general. This principle was promoted at a time when commercial life in northern Europe was reviving, and the growth of cities began to alter the socio-economic and political arrangements of feudal society. Sentimental support for this type of conception of work (production as inherently noble) and economic life has survived for centuries. Traces of this ideology can be detected in some modern idealist schools of thought (Rose 1985:29).

The influence of these ideologies is visible in the work values of the modern western world: work is considered to be inherently noble and to be an act of redemption to regain the goodwill of a "higher power", work is considered a religious duty. The discussion below explains the Protestant work ethic on which the modern European labour system is founded.

### **1.5.7 The Protestant ethic**

#### *1.5.7.1 The origin of the Protestant ethic*

The classic study on work ethic is that of Max Weber (1958). He used the term "Protestant Ethic" to describe the attitude of the early seventeenth century Puritans in New England to work and money. Instead of perceiving work as an activity necessary to maintain a particular standard of living, the Puritans saw hard work as a religious duty (Godsell 1983:18; Nel 1997:31; Van Pletzen 1986:252). In this regard Weber (1958:85) argued:

In the concrete calling an individual pursued, he saw more and more a special command of God to fulfil those particular duties which the Divine Will had imposed upon him.

Individuals had a duty to increase their capital, which was assumed to be an end in itself. These religious views naturally had a profound impact on the society in which they occurred. Tawney (in Nel 1997:31) writes that the Protestant ethic "welded into a disciplined force the

still feeble bourgeoisie, heightened its energies, and cast a halo of sanctification round its convenient vices”.

#### *1.5.7.2 The Protestant ethic and capitalism*

Although the Protestant ethic is popularly regarded as an important motivating factor in western society today, Weber (1958) himself related this ethic to the inception rather than the maintenance of modern capitalism. The Protestant work value system was important at the inception of capitalism because a change in values was required before capitalism could work properly (Godsell 1983:19; Van Pletzen 1986:78). Weber (1958:72) argued: “The conception of money-making as an end in itself to which people were bound as a calling was contrary to the ethical feeling of whole epochs.” According to Weber (1958), capitalism could destroy the old forms of medieval regulation of economic life only in alliance with religious forces; “the life of business, once regarded as perilous to the soul, acquired a new sanctity ... as money making and piety became natural allies” (Godsell 1983:19).

Weber (1958), however, argued that modern capitalism has become emancipated from its old supports. “There can no longer be any question of a necessary connection of that acquisitive manner of life with any single *Weltanschauung*” (Weber 1958:72). The distance between the situation analysed by Weber (1958) and contemporary modern life is further emphasised by his description of the ideal type of capitalist entrepreneur as someone “who avoids ostentation and unnecessary expenditure, as well as conscious enjoyment of his power, and is embarrassed by the outward signs of the social recognition which he receives” (Weber 1958:71).

#### *1.5.7.3 Critical evaluation of Weber’s theory*

Not only is the appropriateness of Weber’s theory to modern society questionable, but several critics claim that it is not even an accurate analysis of the factors leading to the rise of capitalism. Tawney (in Weber 1958:10) states that Weber’s conclusions are illuminating,

but they are susceptible of more than one interpretation. There was action and reaction, and while Puritanism helped to mould the social order, it [the social order] was, in its turn, moulded by it [Puritanism].

Robertson (1933:16) holds a view similar to Tawney's: "The spirit of capitalism has arisen rather from the material conditions of civilisation than from some religious impulse." Robertson (1933:16) argues that rather than the Protestant Church supporting the development of capitalism, the Church was forced to compromise with an unstoppable secular force. Samuelson (1964:152-153) also supports this view and argues that "under the environmental influence of wealth, enterprise and speculation, priests and preachers began to hail capitalists, entrepreneurs and speculators as the elect of God." Samuelson (1964:152) further indicates the lack of acceptable proof of any correlation between Protestantism and capitalism. This is partly due to the impossibility of correlating two concepts so broad and vague (Nel 1997:32).

Juzanek (1978:668) also doubts that it is possible to generalise about the Protestant work ethic. Juzanek (1978:668) suggests that the Protestant work ethic can in fact be applied only to a limited number of people, and that the desire to work may never have been shared by the majority of the population. The concept of the centrality of work to human life probably applied to select occupational groups (proprietors in the past; professionals and managers today) rather than the total population.

#### *1.5.7.4 Value of Weber's study*

Doubts about how applicable the Protestant work ethic is today does not diminish the value of Weber's (1958) study. He was the first to articulate the idea of a work ethic that directly affected an individual's working behaviour. For this reason, the discussion of a Protestant work ethic is important in studies of working behaviour and work values in contemporary western-oriented labour organisations and workplaces (Van Pletzen 1986:253).

An equally important concept which is only implied in Weber's study, but has been more fully articulated by other writers, is that of the complex relationship between societal needs and value structures (Godsell 1983:22; Nel 1997:33). Juzanek (1978:668) points out that the importance of societal acceptance of a work ethic does not lie in the satisfaction such an ethic brought to individuals, but in its social purpose. A society which is either not able to satisfy everybody's needs adequately (due to a scarcity of resources), or not willing to do so (due to the class struggle) thus needs a strong positive impelling force – a concept, a duty or a work ethic – which would motivate people to work.

## 1.6 COMPARATIVE CRITERIA

The criteria set by Raubenheimer and Kotze (1984) and those of Van Vuuren (1988) were selected as the criteria to be used for comparison in this study, as they were the easiest to quantify within the context of cultural Anthropology. The criteria of Raubenheimer and Kotze (1984) include the following elements of western work values:

- career awareness (see Section 1.6.1.1);
- capacity to be industrious (see Section 1.6.1.2);
- discipline (see Section 1.6.1.3);
- concept of time (see Section 1.6.1.4);
- thoroughness (see Section 1.6.1.5);
- responsibility (see Section 1.6.1.6);
- work status (see Section 1.6.1.7); and
- individualism (see Section 1.6.1.8).

The criteria set by Raubenheimer and Kotze (1984) were used by Van Vuuren (1988) in a cross-cultural study on the influence of culture on the training and development of black apprentices. Van Vuuren expanded on the criteria of Raubenheimer and Kotze (1984) and added elements to these criteria, including

- communication (see Section 1.6.1.9.); and
- motivation to achieve (see Section 1.6.1.10).

It is not the purpose of this study to test various theories regarding subjects such as a cross-cultural world-view, value-judgements, needs and motivation. The purpose of this study is to describe how black women workers perceive and experience selected values about work within the western workplace. The study also attempts to determine whether indigenous value-judgements are preserved within a western-oriented workplace as well as the influence of such value-judgements on the functioning of the worker in the western workplace. However, models of criteria that could also be used for comparison in work-related studies are discussed in order to establish a theoretical base for the researcher's choice of criteria. These models or criteria include the world-view universals by Kearney (1984), Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (Straub & Attner 1994:268; Uris 1986:42), and Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory (Straub & Attner 1994:271; Uris 1986:26), although these models and criteria are by no means the only ones used by academics in the measurement of work ethic, work values, working behaviour and work satisfaction. Godsell (1983:23-40), for example, identifies a number of work ethic scales and criteria, including the Protestant Ethic Scale of Mirels and

Garrett (1971) and Buchholz's (1978) "five systems of belief related to work" (see Section 1.5.3).

Kearney (1984:65-107) identifies certain world-view universals. Kearney (1984:65) states that the "basic requirement of this framework is that it be applicable to any human world view without greatly distorting it". Kearney's (1984:66) approach to the issue of world-view universals and their respective assumptions presupposes that "more than anything else they serve the pragmatic necessity of communication, and that accordingly world view is pre-eminently a practical and social phenomenon". Kearney (1984:68-107) then identifies the conditions, characteristics and prerequisites set out as world-view universals in Table 1.1.

Kearney (1984:65-107) attempted to indicate in what way the world-view universals are interdependent, in different ways and to varying degrees. According to Kearney (1984:106), the most important elements of any world-view are the integration of the "Self" and "Other". From this primary structure, other universals are identified as necessarily deriving from the presence of a "Self" and an "Other".

**Table 1.1: World-view universals**

<b>World-view universals</b>	<b>Conditions, characteristics and prerequisites</b>
<b>A sense of Self versus the Other</b>	
Some form of relationship between the Self and the Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ecological relationship</li> <li>• Individualism</li> </ul>
A structure of classification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The origins of classification</li> <li>• World-view categories</li> </ul>
The cognition of causality	Psychological sources of idealism
A sense of space and time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Perception of space</li> <li>• Perception of time</li> <li>• Past, present and future</li> <li>• Images of time</li> </ul>

Source: Adapted from Kearney (1984:65-107)

The first universal deriving from the “Self” and the “Other” is “Relationship”. The existence of a “Self” and an “Other” as well as further necessary major discriminations within the “Other” are tantamount to the origin and structure of the “Classification” dimension. “Classification” is a static structure while the “Relationship” dimension is dynamic in nature, this deals with the interaction between the “Self” and “Other”. It is from the dynamic aspect of the “Relationship” universal that the category of “Causality” is derived. The cognition of “Causality” is dependent upon “Relationship” as well as upon the cognition of space and time.

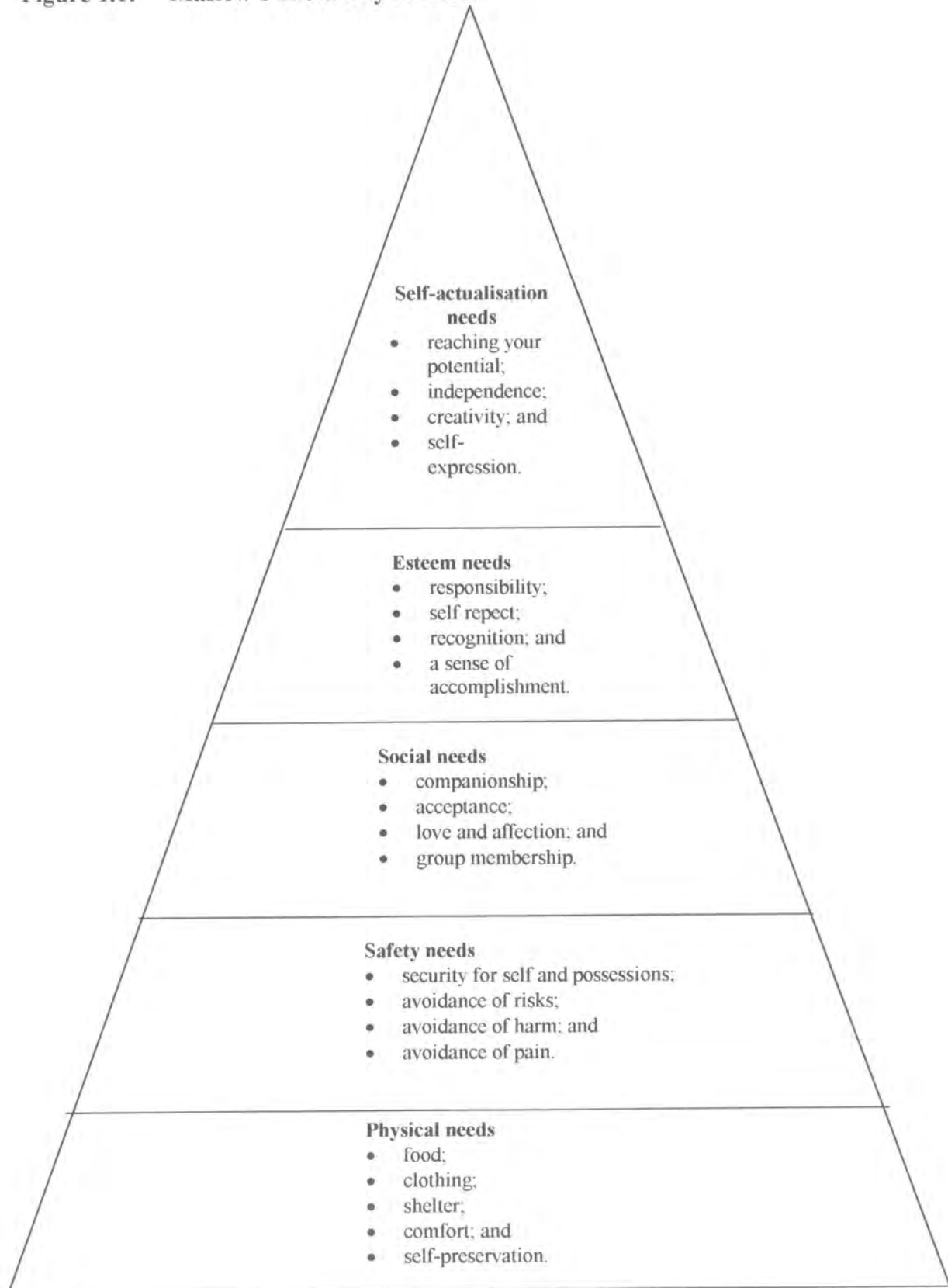
These criteria by Kearney (1984) of universal world-view can be used in cross-cultural studies as “world view shapes more or less regularly patterned socio-cultural behaviour ... it [social behaviour] becomes embodied in social structure, customs, and institutions and thus becomes part of the total environment” (Kearney 1984:120). Although Kearney’s (1984) theories of world-view are valuable in the theoretical delineation of this study, his criteria for a universal world-view is not applicable in the ethnographic description of the culturally oriented experiences and working behaviour of black women workers within a western working environment, nor is it applicable in determining how black women workers experience western work values within the western work-place.

A second set of criteria often used in cross-cultural studies is “Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs” (see Figure 1.1). This tool was developed by Abraham H. Maslow and can be applied by managers to understand human needs within the workplace (Straub & Attner 1994:268; Uris 1986:42). According to Uris (1986:42-43), Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs contributes considerably to motivation theory, but it fails to specify adequately to which category salary and wages belong. His theory is based on four premises (Straub & Attner 1994:268):

- A person’s needs are arranged in a priority order of importance. This hierarchy goes from the most basic needs (the first priority) to the most complex ones (see Figure 1.1).
- Only an unsatisfied need can influence behaviour; a satisfied need is not a motivating factor.
- A person will at least minimally satisfy each level of need before feeling a need at the next level.
- If satisfaction is not maintained for a need, it will become a priority need again.



**Figure 1.1: Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs**



Source: Adapted from Straub and Attner (1994:269)



Another theory was developed by a psychologist, Frederick Herzberg, to try to clarify what makes an employee feel satisfied or dissatisfied (Uris 1986:26). Herzberg's theory is called the "Two Factor Theory" or the maintenance motivator theory (Straub & Attner 1994:271; Uris 1986:26). This theory focuses on two sets of factors, namely (Straub & Attner 1994:271):

- job satisfaction and achievement motivation factors (motivators); and
- maintenance or hygiene factors.

Motivation factors are aspects of a job that relate directly to the real nature of the work performed and that are necessary for job satisfaction (Straub & Attner 1994:272). These factors include (Straub & Attner 1994:272-273):

- achievement;
- recognition;
- responsibility;
- advancement;
- the work itself; and
- the possibility of growth.

Maintenance factors (or hygiene factors) are aspects of the job environment that must be sufficient both in quality and quantity so as to prevent employee dissatisfaction (Straub & Attner 1994:271). These factors include (Straub & Attner 1994:272):

- salary;
- job security;
- working conditions;
- status;
- company policy;
- quality of technical supervision; and
- quality of interpersonal relation among peers, supervisors, and subordinates.

Herzberg's theory has a number of implications for managers. The theory should be used to help focus an attempt to ensure the presence and adequate quality of maintenance factors as a foundation on which to build motivation (Straub & Attner 1994:273). Both Maslow and Herzberg accept that work can be a motivational force in itself. According to Godsell (1983:25), however, "the concept of the intrinsic value of work as a motivating force has limitations related to culture as well as class". Kanungo (1982:6) states that the "exclusive

emphasis on intrinsic need satisfaction as a precondition for worker involvement ... reflects a strong cultural bias in western models”.

Although the discussion on black women and the work-milieu in this study as well as the criteria of Raubenheimer and Kotze (1984) and those of Van Vuuren (1988) contain some of the factors mentioned by Maslow and Herzberg, the emphasis of this study is not on work motivation and work satisfaction, but on the working behaviour of black women workers within a western working environment and how these black women workers perceive and experience western work values within the western workplace. Thus, the criteria of Raubenheimer and Kotze (1984) and those of Van Vuuren (1988) are the most suitable for the purposes of this study and these criteria are discussed in more detail below.

### **1.6.1 Selected western work values**

According to Raubenheimer and Kotze (1984:8), a Protestant ethic has been integrated into the modern western labour system and work environment. The term “Protestant work ethic” refers, broadly, to the work values established after the Protestant Reform. These work values have had a fundamental influence on the working behaviour of people in general. Work came to be viewed as an action performed in the honour of and to glorification of God and as an act of atonement and redemption. Work was invested with a religious purpose. Through these actions of atonement and redemption, work values developed (see Section 1.5.7). These work values have, probably subconsciously, been integrated into western educational, religious and labour systems and are seen as the principles of correct and acceptable working behaviour (Raubenheimer & Kotze 1984:8). The term “westerner” in this context denotes a broad cultural orientation, as described in Section 1.2 (Els 1993:51).

Nel (1997:33) argues that a western-oriented worker does not regard or experience work as the mere collection of capital and income or as only a means of survival within a capitalist system. Nel (1997:33) suggests that work gives meaning to the life of members of a western society and that it provides social contact and personal fulfilment. Work values provide the motivation to work for many westerners. Kidron (1978:240) states that the

holder of the Protestant Ethic is committed to the values of hard work, to the work itself as an objective, and the work organisation as the inevitable structure within which those internalised values can be satisfied.

According to Van Vuuren (1988:15), work values are culturally bound. Within the Protestant- or western-oriented labour system, certain human traits represent status and these characteristics have some cultural importance to westerners.

It should be noted that in this study work and cultural values are discussed in a general and in a more or less ideal sense. This implies that there are individuals (significantly large numbers of individuals and even groups of people) within broader western culture that do not apply these cultural traits and work values in their daily existence or in the workplace (Juzanek 1978:668; Raubenheimer & Kotze 1984:8). It is against this background that the criteria of western work values by Raubenheimer and Kotze (1984) and those of Van Vuuren (1988) are discussed to establish a basis for comparison as well as the basis for an ethnographic case study on African women in the workplace.

#### *1.6.1.1 Career awareness*

A sense that each person is called upon to fulfil a specific role in life is an important factor in the choice of a career and perseverance within the labour market. Most westerners continually search for sense and meaning in the actions they perform on a daily basis. There is thus a strong sense of pursuing a career among westerners; objectives are set and pursued. Achievement, purposefulness and the pursuit of objectives play an essential role in a western value system. These cultural aims and values directly influence the behaviour of westerners within their work environment and they are consistent with a western work concept (Raubenheimer and Kotze 1984:9; Van Vuuren 1988:15).

#### *1.6.1.2 Capacity to be industrious*

Dedication to work and the capacity to be industrious go hand in hand with a western culturally determined value system. Dedication to work and the capacity to be industrious are viewed as distinguished and sought-after characteristics in a person, and enjoy high status within the workplace and within the broad western-oriented cultural pattern (Raubenheimer & Kotze 1984:9).

### *1.6.1.3 Discipline*

Discipline as a life value is held in high regard within the modern labour system. There is a strong emphasis on personal discipline and order, rather than on social discipline. The ability to perform tasks systematically, with reliable regularity, is viewed as a special characteristic in the western labour system, and is rewarded as such (Raubenheimer & Kotze 1984:9).

### *1.6.1.4 Concept of time*

Time management is one of the most important culturally determined values within the broad western value system and in the modern labour system in particular. Time is held to be important in the planning, organising and scheduling of any event in western daily life. Economic activities are evaluated in terms of the availability and management of time. Time orientation and management are therefore inherent cultural values and are taught to all westerners from an early age at home, at school and eventually in the workplace. The management of time is culturally determined. However, it is not held in the same esteem in all cultures of the world (see Section 3.18) (Raubenheimer & Kotze 1984:9).

### *1.6.1.5 Thoroughness*

Thoroughness is an important requirement in the modern business world. It is closely related to precision, and implies attention to detail and an organised and ordered approach to any task. Thoroughness requires a certain standard of work performance. The standard of work performance determines the quality of the product. Standards and quality are established to ensure that the results of activities do not fall below a stipulated minimum requirement. Thoroughness is thus essential for the delivery of quality products and service within the western labour system (Raubenheimer & Kotze 1984:10; Van Vuuren 1988:16).

### *1.6.1.6 Responsibility*

Responsibility enjoys high status within the western labour system. Personal involvement, and personal liability and reliability, as part of the work situation, are linked to a person's

sense of responsibility. A worker's readiness and ability to accept responsibility and accountability are all part of the western work value system (Raubenheimer & Kotze 1984:10).

#### *1.6.1.7 Work status*

Work as such has a special value to most westerners. Western life revolves around work. Work values are instilled from a very early age and are subconsciously regarded as a moral and religious obligation. More than that – work is rewarded financially. In the western world, it is important to have a job and to do work which expresses personal values. The work a member of western society does, determines his/her status and position in society beyond the workplace (Raubenheimer & Kotze 1984:10).

#### *1.6.1.8 Individualism*

The capacity to be industrious, thorough and dedicated and to express all the above culturally determined values, requires individuality. This is the ability of an individual to do work effectively and self-sufficiently. Individualism is rewarded within the workplace and by the working community and is held in high esteem within western society. Compared to the members of other broad cultural systems, westerners are particularly individualistic (Raubenheimer & Kotze 1984:10; Van Vuuren 1988:15).

#### *1.6.1.9 Communication*

The purpose of efficacious communication in the western labour system and the western social system has been thoroughly researched and the value of effective communication cannot be over-emphasised (Van Vuuren 1988:17). Methods and guidelines to improve communication in relation to communication as a medium, the message, the receiver and the sender, and external factors influencing communication, have been studied (Van Vuuren 1988:17). Western labour systems strive to develop effective internal and external communication systems. Western cultural values require communication to be brief and

precise. The term “businesslike” encapsulates these notions of conciseness and accuracy. Communication should always be time-effective (Van Vuuren 1988:17).

#### *1.6.1.10 Motivation to achieve*

Goodenough (1963:168) describes achievement as follows:

Each society ... offers a set of approved life goals to the individual. Their achievement provides the basis for prestige ratings and the measure by which people judge one another and themselves as successes or failures. Achievement is rationalised as due to the presence of various personal virtues, being those attributes that the society’s members most value in their fellows.

Achievement motivation refers to the individual’s need to achieve the best possible results, given the individual’s ability in accordance with existing skills and capacity structures (Van Vuuren 1988:18). Erwee (1982:32) argues that achievement motivation as a broad western work value includes objective orientation and a subjective aspect, which involves personal fulfilment and accomplishment.

#### ***Objective orientation***

The objective orientation of achievement motivation has three dimensions, as discussed below:

- Perseverance: People persist in attempting to solve problems in spite of restraining factors that slow the process of problem-solving.
- Concept of time: People work according to a time schedule. Actions are determined beforehand, and people feel guilty when time is wasted or when time is not utilised fully.
- Orientation of actions: It is believed that people should be active and energetic. Idleness is not acceptable within western society.

#### ***Personal fulfilment and accomplishment***

The need for personal fulfilment and accomplishment is connected to two aspects:

- Levels of aspiration: People with high levels of achievement motivation have the ability to complete taxing and challenging assignments.
- Personal convictions: People with personal persuasion skills and self-confidence are normally convinced that they can control their lives and environment. Such individuals try to control all aspects of their lives.

The establishment of personal objectives and the achievement of these objectives are held in high esteem in western culture and are rewarded with status within western society (Van Vuuren 1988:18).

#### *1.6.1.11 Conclusion*

Work values are culturally determined (Van Vuuren 1988:15). Within the Protestant or western-oriented labour system, some human traits enjoy high status and these characteristics are of cultural importance in the west. The criteria of Raubenheimer and Kotze (1984) and those of Van Vuuren (1988) select elements of the Protestant or western work ethic or work values. In the above discussion, a number characteristics valued within the broad western work value system were discussed according to the criteria set by Raubenheimer and Kotze (1984) and by Van Vuuren (1988). These criteria are not necessarily culturally relevant to the African-oriented culturally determined work values of black women workers. However, the South African labour system as well as the relations which are the consequence of this system's policies are founded on broad western value systems and economic principles. The elements of western work values identified by Raubenheimer and Kotze (1984) and by Van Vuuren (1988) thus play a central part in the working behaviour required from workers in and valued by a western labour system.

## **1.7 WESTERN WORK-RELATED CONCEPTS IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN WORKPLACE**

The South African labour system is based on various relations and institutions influenced by the present South African political climate, emphasising non-racism and non-sexism (see Section 2.6 for a detailed discussion on the Constitution of South Africa). These relations and institutions are central to the functioning of the South African labour system and the functioning and performance of the South African labour force, a labour force which includes black women workers, within this labour system. Hence, certain relevant work-related concepts which define relations and institutions within the South African labour set-up are discussed against the background of a western work ethic.



### **1.7.1 Employer**

An employer is a person or institution that, in consequence of a service contract, has authority over an employee who places his/her services at the disposal of the employer, for a certain period of time and for remuneration (Van Jaarsveld & Van Eck 1996:54).

### **1.7.2 Employee**

An employee is a person who, in consequence of a service contract, places his/her services at the disposal and under the authority of an employer, for a certain period of time and in exchange for remuneration for those services (Van Jaarsveld & Van Eck 1996:54).

### **1.7.3 Service contract**

A service contract is a reciprocal contract in which an employee places his/her services at the disposal of an employer, under the authority of the employer, for a certain period of time and for remuneration for services delivered (Van Jaarsveld & Van Eck 1996:54).

### **1.7.4 Trade unions**

Bosch (1983:35) defines a trade union as

a continuing permanent organisation, created by workers to safe-guard the standard of their trade, to improve the conditions of their employment through collective bargaining, whether through their workers or with the government, to work to better conditions of their lives and to provide a means of expression for the workers' view on problems of society.

A more recent definition of trade unions is that of Van Jaarsveld and Van Eck (1996:197), as "a union of employees of which the key objective is the regulation of relations between employees and employers, inclusive of employers' organisations".

### **1.7.5 Equity**

Equity refers to a desirable state in which citizens are treated in a fair and just manner and receive a fair share of national resources in accordance with their needs and responsibilities (Ramphela 1995:34).

### **1.7.6 Equality**

Equality refers to sameness in defined measurable terms. Thus, equality of all citizens before the law is regarded as non-negotiable. However, equal treatment of different categories of people may not always be equitable (Ramphela 1995:33-34).

Equality is not always achievable or desirable (see Section 3.22.1). For example, treating men and women employees equally, without accommodating and making provisions for the biological demands society makes on women as bearers of children, may effectively disadvantage women workers (Ramphela 1995:3).

### **1.7.7 Equal opportunities**

Equal opportunities refer to the provision of an environment which enables all individuals to realise their full potential. The underlying principle is that, all things being equal, individuals have different talents and should be allowed to apply themselves in a manner that brings out the best in themselves. Provided that the assumption that talent is randomly distributed in any society is valid, those societies which give equal opportunities to all their citizens would benefit from the diversity of talent that is utilised (Ramphela 1995:34).

### **1.7.8 Summary**

The above concepts are especially relevant in the current political and economic climate in South Africa, and thus the workplace. The South African economy currently emphasises the importance of equality and equity between all races and gender, thus equal opportunities. The rights of workers, inclusive of the fair treatment of all workers in South Africa, are

emphasised. It is important to differentiate between an employer and an employee, as this study concentrates mainly on the rights of black female **employees**. The current emphasis in the South African labour system on equal opportunities and affirmative action requires the definition of equality to be well understood, as well as the differences between equality, equity and equal opportunities, as perceived within the western-oriented South African labour system.

## 1.8 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

There are various descriptions of the social and anthropological research process. However, it is not the purpose of this study to argue the advantages and shortcomings of different methods of interviewing and data gathering, thus only the methodology used by the researcher within this particular study and the interview situations encountered are discussed.

Bernard (1988:110) describes the research process in an “ideal world” as follows:

- A theoretical problem is formulated.
- An appropriate site and method are selected.
- Data are collected and analysed.
- The theoretical proposition with which the research was launched is either challenged or supported.

Viljoen (1996:289-300) outlines the steps of qualitative research as follows:

(a) A preliminary phase of a more exploratory nature:

- in-depth interviews;
- the selection of respondents;
- access to target population; and
- group discussions in the preliminary phase.

(b) A principle phase:

- group discussions and depth interviews in the principle phase;
- the recruitment of respondents;
- organisation of group discussions;
- structuring discussion groups;
- organising the group session; and

- terminating the principle phase.
- (c) The validation phase.

According to Spradley (1979:93-94), five tasks can be identified within ethnographic research. These tasks include:

- selecting a problem;
- collecting cultural data;
- analysing cultural data;
- formulating ethnographic hypotheses; and
- writing the ethnography.

Morison (1986:83) states that

research methods cannot be viewed as 'so many tools in a box'. The choice of a particular research strategy is therefore not arbitrary, nor is it made in some conceptual vacuum, but it reflects the relationship between theory and methodology.

Coertze (1978:10) summarised the research process as

- problem formulation and statement;
- design of a research methodology; and
- practising and execution of the designated research techniques (thus qualitative and/or quantitative).

Mouton and Marais (1989:157) clarify the distinction between qualitative and quantitative research. They state that the quantitative research approach can be described as that approach in research in the human sciences which is more formalised and controlled with a reach that is explicitly defined. The quantitative research methodology is closely associated with the physical sciences. The reach and procedures of qualitative research are not formalised, controlled or explicitly defined to the same extent as those of quantitative research. This qualitative research methodology can be used, for example, in philosophical research. According to Walker (1985:19),

qualitative research can offer the policy maker ... a theory of social action grounded on the experiences – the world view – of those likely to be affected by a policy decision or thought to be part of the problem.

The difference in key aspects of qualitative and quantitative research is summarised by Mouton (1983:128) as set out in Table 1.2.

**Table 1.2: A comparison of quantitative and qualitative research**

<b>Quantitative research</b>	<b>Qualitative research</b>
Research objectives: describing-interpretative based on universal statements	Research objectives: reconnoitring-descriptive based on the best possible understanding of context
Conceptualising: concepts should be as exact as possible and quantified by scales, indexes, etc.	Conceptualising: concepts of research objects are favoured, the researcher aims to sensitise and empathise
Data capturing should occur through quantitative methods	Data capturing occurs through qualitative methods
Analysis of data occurs through descriptive and inferential techniques	Analysis of data occurs through qualitative, interpretative frames, models, schemes, etc.

Source: Adapted from Mouton (1983:128)

According to Mouton and Marais (1989:196), the quality of research findings is the direct result of the justifiability of the research methodology that has been utilised in the study. Hence, the researcher in this study aimed to convey the culturally determined work values of the black women workers at Automotive Mouldings cc (AMM), as these work values were viewed and perceived by the research group within their unique way of life, and their culturally determined world-view and value judgements.

The research was done over a period of one year and included a study of contemporary literature on the topic and related themes, as well as qualitative research conducted via the ethnographic method against the background of acknowledged themes of culture-change and acculturation. This research methodology was used because, according to Buroway (1979: 249-250),

anthropology of work emphasises the importance of using ethnography and also ethnohistory to develop new frameworks, which incorporate as central features the political and ideological dimensions of industrial concerns in order to make it easier to distinguish the 'mists' of managerial rationalisation and organisation theory from the realities of corporate life.

The qualitative research was conducted over a period of four months for one to four weeks per session. Altogether, twelve weeks were spent on qualitative research at AMM in Marble



Hall. The study included quantitative research, which refers to the completion of questionnaires at AMM in Marble Hall.

### 1.8.1 Literature study

Bernard (1988:126) states that a “thorough literature search is vital to the success of any research project”. Coertze (1978:17) holds a similar view. Thus, available printed and electronic sources with specific reference to sub-Saharan Africa related to the topic of the study were studied to form a basis for the research. The emphasis was, however, primarily on Southern Africa.

This study required research about values, value systems and value judgements. Thus, various studies on this topic were consulted and discussed, such as Coertze (1980), Goodenough (1963) and Godsell (1983). Coertze’s *Filosofiese en metodologiese grondslae van die Volkekunde* (1980) was used to establish the basis of the study concerning various categories of values and the unique and differentiating utilisation of values. This work by Coertze (1980) was supplemented and supported by theories proposed by Goodenough (1963). Goodenough’s *Cooperation in change: an anthropological approach to community development* (1963) provides relevant theories on culture, the dynamics of culture and culture change. Godsell’s *The work values of black and white South African employees* (1983) presents different models of value systems and thus the historic relevance of values and value systems, and differing views on factors affecting values as a background to a focused discussion of work values.

A classic study on work values and a western work ethic is that by Max Weber, entitled *The Protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism* (1958). He was the first to articulate the idea that work values directly affect an individual’s working behaviour. For this reason, the discussion of a Protestant work ethic is important in studies of working behaviour in contemporary western-oriented labour organisations and workplaces.

Raubenheimer and Kotze’s *Personeelbestuur en die swart werker* (1984) and Van Vuuren’s thesis, *Die invloed van kultuur op die opleiding en ontwikkeling van die swart vakleerling* (1988) established the basis for an ethnographic case study on the working behaviour of African women in a western workplace and how black women workers experience western

work values within this western working environment. This enabled the researcher to describe and compare the working behaviour of the 19 black women workers employed at AMM against defined criteria.

The work values of black women workers in South Africa cannot be examined in a vacuum, as the current conditions and attitudes within the South African labour force and labour situation are the result of historical developments. Several socio-economic and political factors have influenced and continue to influence work values and the judgement of these values by black women workers in the workplace and also the working behaviour of South African black women workers. Such influences include the traditional roles ascribed to and the division of labour of black women within traditional indigenous cultural groups in South Africa. In this regard, the study focused on the North Sotho culture and, more specifically, the Pedi, because of the ethnic affiliation of most of the research group. Mönning's *The Pedi* (1967) was used in order to establish a relevant cultural profile on traditional Pedi women. This work by Mönning (1967) was supplemented and supported by various studies, including Kriel's study entitled *Die siektebegrip van die Noord-Sotho* (1992). Kriel (1992) supplies valuable information on the life- and world-view of the North Sotho as well as insight into the religion of this cultural group. Older work by Schapera, *The Bantu-speaking tribes of South Africa: an ethnographical survey* (1962), Bruwer, *Die Bantoe van Suid-Afrika* (1963) and Hammond-Tooke, *The Bantu-speaking peoples of Southern Africa* (1974 a&b), refers loosely to the indigenous cultural groups of Southern Africa. The latter three works were used to support references made by other exponents. These sources are regarded as relevant to the study in that they help to establish a cultural profile of indigenous South African black women in general, although references were not always directly related to the North Sotho.

Other influences on the working behaviour and work values of black women workers within the workplace include the position of black women in the South African labour system before the abolition of apartheid. The studies by Bernstein (1985), *For their triumphs and for their tears. Women in apartheid South Africa*, and Friguglietti (1989), *Domestic workers: dependency vs. self-assertiveness in the workplace*, were helpful in establishing the historical position of black women within a political system discriminating on ethnic grounds.

The current South African labour situation has a definite and direct influence on the working behaviour of black women workers in the workplace. Hence, the position of black women in the South African labour force and the political and legal position of black women in South



Africa after 1990 are discussed in detail, as this situation shapes the future working behaviour of black women workers in this country. Electronic sources were consulted, such as the IDASA and Labournet websites. Printed recent sources such as *The Annual Report of the Commission on Gender Equality* (1998) and *South African Survey 1997/98* by Sidiropoulos *et al.* (1998), were used. Articles from various journals and magazines were used to ensure a topical and hands-on approach to the current socio-economic and political position of black women workers in South Africa. The *Government Gazette* and current South African labour laws were utilised as sources in an attempt to obtain the most accurate literature in this regard.

The Harvard method of reference was used throughout the study and the list of literature cited and references was compiled according to the guidelines of Marlene Burger (1992), as presented in *Verwysingstegnieke* published by the University of South Africa.

## 1.8.2 Data gathering

### 1.8.2.1 Qualitative research

The ethnographic research method was used, because, according to Schwartzman (1993:2-3), more and more researchers within and outside the discipline of anthropology have begun to recognise that ethnography is a particularly valuable method of research because it problematizes the ways that individuals and groups constitute and interpret organisations and societies on a daily interactional basis.

Bernard (1988:169-170) explains that ethnography relies on a few key informants rather than on a representative sample. An important question for ethnography then, is: Are a few informants really capable of providing adequate information about a culture? The answer is yes ...

For the purposes of this study, in-depth interviews were thus conducted with the following spokespersons:

- the employer;
- the production manager;
- the supervisor;
- the quality control officer;





- the nineteen black women workers who were divided into groups so that interviews could be conducted with two groups of black women workers per day over a period of four months; and
- specialists in the labour industry (academia, employers and trade union representatives).

The qualitative research commenced with a meeting at AMM, Marble Hall, between the researcher, the nineteen black women workers, the employer, production manager, supervisor and quality control officer. The purpose of the meeting was to obtain permission from all the parties involved, especially the black women workers and the employer, to proceed with research at the factory. The meeting also served as an opportunity to explain and discuss the purpose of the research and the different activities the research would entail. The employer spoke on behalf of the researcher at this first meeting. The meeting included the assigning of interpreters. This particular arrangement changed to suit the needs of the research group as the research process progressed and the researcher did not rely on the assigned interpreters but on any member of the research group who were willing and able to interpret at the time of the interviews.

In-depth interviews commenced on 7 July 1998. Walker (1985:4) defines an in-depth interview as “a conversation in which the researcher encourages the informant to relate, in [his/her] own terms, experiences and attitudes that are relevant to the research problem”. The researcher arrived at the factory at 8 a.m. and realised that informal working hours meant that workers arrive at the factory at any time between 8 a.m. and 9 a.m. Thus, interviews could only start after teatime, in other words, at 9:30 a.m.

On the first day of in-depth interviews, the quality control officer divided the 19 black women workers into five groups. These groups were not divided according to any specific criteria or status within the workplace. Each group consisted simply of women or groups of women that were not working at the time when the researcher requested a group of women to be interviewed. As a result, not all the groups were the same size. One group had seven members and another group had two members. Whichever group was not busy or “swamped” with work could be interviewed. The spokespersons did not always remain in the same group, as some women sometimes disliked each other, and on other occasions some were absent from work or were too busy to be interviewed. This made the task of the researcher more difficult. The research group originally consisted of 20 women workers. During the interviews, one

woman worker stated her ethnic affiliation as “Coloured”. The data obtained from this woman was hence excluded, as this study concentrates on black women workers only.

The researcher initially planned to interview at least three groups per day. The idea was to prevent any one group from being kept busy for too long and to prevent a loss of too many working hours. This meant that one group would be interviewed before teatime, one group after teatime and one to two groups after lunch. It was soon found that this plan was not realistic, as the interviews took at least an hour and a half each. As already mentioned, interviews could only start after teatime and no interviews could be done during teatime or lunch, as the women considered that to be personal and leisure time, a time to rest and talk to friends, and not to the researcher. This attitude in itself already indicated a particular perception and attitude towards work (the black women workers’ perceptions towards work are discussed in more detail in Chapter 3). Thus, the researcher interviewed one group before lunch and one group after lunch. It was not possible to interview more than one group after lunch. By late afternoon, the researcher was exhausted and the women insisted that they wanted to finish their work before 5 p.m.

During the interviews conducted with the spokespersons, the researcher had to rely on any person who was not busy and who was able to interpret. This created problems at the start of the in-depth interviews, as the spokespersons did not fully trust the motives of the researcher. There was a general perception that the researcher would inform against them to the employer and thus nobody wanted to translate what was said or participate in the interviews. Viljoen (1996:297) explains that in a situation such as the above “the facilitator [or researcher] should take enough time to explain the nature and aim of the research. It is of the utmost importance ... not to arouse false expectations in the community”. Another general meeting was therefore arranged to allow the researcher to explain her motives and exactly what the research entailed. The employer did not speak on behalf of the researcher on this occasion and the supervisor explained to the women that they would still be remunerated as normal at the end of the month, losing no wages for the time spent with the researcher.

As soon as the spokespersons became used to the presence of the researcher (after more or less three interviews per group over a period of three weeks), the interviews and interpreting proceeded more smoothly and a relationship of trust evolved between the researcher and the spokespersons. Such a relationship is important and helpful; as Schlemmer (1996:196) states: “A ... major issue relating to black fieldwork is that of trust ... a perfectly understandable veil

of mistrust must be penetrated before valid replies to interview questions can be expected.” Although the researcher did not spend a lot of time during the first three weeks interviewing groups of spokespersons, the researcher was more or less permanently present in the workplace during those three weeks so that the spokespersons could get to know and trust the researcher. According to Spradley (1979:78), a relationship of trust or rapport refers to “a harmonious relationship between ethnographer and informant. It means that a basic sense of trust has developed that allows for the free flow of information”. Coertze (1978:17) also clearly states the importance of trust in the relationship between researcher and spokespersons. This relationship of trust implied that the researcher could ask rather sensitive questions and that the spokespersons answered these questions truthfully, as long as they felt comfortable.

Interviews were organised in the morning after teatime by the researcher and the quality control officer. The quality control officer was in control of all the female workers at the factory and told the women concerned when and where to congregate for an interview. This process was considered to be the correct etiquette within the organisational structure of the factory and permission to proceed had to be asked from the quality control officer by the researcher before each interview.

The in-depth interviews were conducted outside the factory in the sun. The noise-levels were high and the researcher could not use a dictaphone or tape recorder. This meant that all interviews had to be written down. Observations and the results of interviews were recorded in notebooks which serve as a chronological record of research. This made interviews increasingly difficult, but the frantic writing became a joke for the women and they either gave one word answers or competed to see who could give the researcher the answer that kept her writing for the longest possible time. The researcher explained that everything had to be written down to prevent the truth from being forgotten. The women seemed satisfied with this explanation and were patient with the researcher.

During the first interviews conducted, the researcher collected biographical data and life histories, and got to know the black women workers. Coertze (1978:17) explains the value of life histories in more detail. During these interviews, genealogical diagrams were created and the researcher got a reasonably accurate impression of the family structures and dependants in each household and the domestic circumstances of these women (see Appendix A).



Thereafter, the interviews were conducted thematically. Subsequent interviews included topics such as, for example,

- a discussion of the primary and secondary education of the women;
- transport used by the women for commuting; and
- the daily household activities and duties of these black women workers.

This gave the researcher an idea of the time management of the women and their available leisure time.

Once translation and interpretation problems had been sorted out and a relationship of trust had been established between the researcher and the black women workers, interviews about work values commenced. These interviews included questions such as

- circumstances within the workplace as perceived and experienced by the black women workers;
- the nature of the relationship of the women with other employees in the workplace; and
- monthly income and expenditure.

The monthly income and expenditures of the black women workers were perceived as a very sensitive and personal issue and it took the researcher weeks to obtain a truthful exposition of this issue.

Subsequent interviews included questions such as

- the women's affiliation with organisations outside the workplace;
- the black women workers' perception of the use and function of trade unions; and
- the women's perceptions of the current political situation in South Africa. These were also determined as the politicisation of black women workers has a direct influence on their perception of work and thus on their work values and working behaviour.

Finally, the women were interviewed about their perceptions of the use and function of "work" and the perceptions of their families on the use and function of "work". The spokespersons had to assign different meanings to the word "work" and other work-related concepts.

The employer, production manager, supervisor and quality control officer were interviewed in-depth about the

- organisational structure of the factory;
- work performance;

- motivation to achieve;
- responsibility;
- management of time;
- work satisfaction;
- problems with employees;
- conflict within the workplace;
- remuneration of workers; and
- the quality of work of the black women workers.

These interviews were conducted after the interviews with the black women workers to verify information revealed by the black women workers and to make the research more objective in that two points of view are presented.

The interviews with spokespersons emphasised the perception and judgement of selected western work values by black women workers in a western-oriented workplace using the criteria set out by Raubenheimer and Kotze (1984) and Van Vuuren (1988). No rigid form of interviewing was used and interviews were mainly unstructured in nature. Bernard (1988:203-224) explains the method of unstructured interviewing in more detail. Although a written list of topics or a interview schedule, as proposed by Coertze (1978:19), was used during interviews, discussions were allowed to develop freely, spokespersons were given room to define the content of the discussion and spokespersons were allowed to assist and support one another during the interviews. This freedom allowed the researcher to obtain valuable information that had previously not even been thought about or considered to be of any importance. According to Schwartzman (1993:54), one of the differences between ethnography and other forms of research is that “ethnographers do not automatically assume that they know the right questions to ask in a setting”. Spradley (1979:32) suggests that in ethnographic fieldwork, “both questions and answers must be discovered in the social situation being studied”. The researcher interviewed each group more or less ten times over a period of four months and a growing pattern of repetition of information was established, indicating that as much data had been gathered as possible. The researcher followed the example of Viljoen (1996:298), who says: “When I realise that group discussions are no longer producing new data but are beginning to be repetitious, I know it is time to conclude this phase.”

The technique of falsification was used to test the truthfulness of the information gained during the interviews with spokespersons. The researcher asked questions whilst deliberately

twisting the “truth” or falsifying the responses of spokespersons. For example, the researcher would ask whether all the spokespersons arrived at work at eleven o’clock in the morning. The spokespersons would then tell the researcher that she was either deaf or stupid as they had all told her already that they arrived at AMM between 8 a.m. and 9 a.m. This process frustrated and irritated the spokespersons greatly, because the researcher was asking the wrong questions and the statements of the researcher were wrong and untruthful. This process, however, confirmed the validity of previous answers. Thereafter, the qualitative research was considered complete.

#### *1.8.2.2 Quantitative research*

It was decided to combine quantitative research in the form of a structured questionnaire with the qualitative work (such as the in-depth interviews discussed above), because, as Bernard (1988:270) argues, the “combination of ethnography and survey research seems hard to beat when it comes to improving the description of complex human behaviour patterns and unravelling important questions about how variables interact to produce those patterns”.

After the interviews had ended, the research was quantified via structured interviews which entailed the completion of questionnaires. Bernard (1988:241) provides a complete explanation of structured interviewing and the completion of questionnaires. The quantification of the research was imperative in order to verify inferences made by the researcher, based on the qualitative data of the findings in the field. The questionnaire was compiled with the aid of the knowledge gained from the preceding qualitative research and was based on the criteria of western work values set by Raubenheimer and Kotze (1984) and by Van Vuuren (1988), to describe how these black women workers experience and perceive selected western work values within a western working environment. Bernard (1988:146) states that “when questionnaire research is based on a solid ethnographic foundation it can be a effective component of an overall field research program. Surveys add breadth to deep ethnographic description, and they permit the testing of hypotheses about relationships among variables”. Coertze (1978:15-16) holds a similar view.

The black women workers at AMM were divided into five groups and the questionnaires were completed in the presence of the researcher, so that she could assist where necessary, due to the number of these black women workers who were semi-literate and illiterate. The

questionnaires contained 77 questions and were 10 pages long. The questionnaires were compiled in English and interpreters were used during the sessions in which the questionnaires were completed. The oral response of each respondent was written down on a separate questionnaire and consensus-answers were noted.

The questionnaires could normally be completed within 50 minutes as most questions were closed in nature and could be answered with either a “yes” or a “no”, or short answers. Other questions included a fixed choice of answers based on the results of the qualitative research. These questions could be marked with either a cross or a tick for a correct point (see Appendix B). The questionnaires were divided into four sections to include (see Appendix B):

- biographical information;
- information about the employer, production manager, supervisor, quality control officer and fellow employees;
- physical circumstances within the workplace; and
- perceptions about the use and function of “work”.

The processing of the completed questionnaires was made easy by the preceding qualitative research and the criteria of Raubenheimer and Kotze (1984) and Van Vuuren (1988). The questions in the questionnaires were divided into categories based on the above mentioned criteria (see Section 1.6.1).

The questionnaire included questions related to each of the selected broad western work values as identified by Raubenheimer and Kotze (1984) and Van Vuuren (1988). The data gathered in the questionnaires were quantified by converting the responses and the number of respondents per response to percentages. Then the data were integrated in the discussion on the work-milieu of the black women workers employed at AMM (see Chapter 3). The data were further evaluated, judged and statistically modelled into tables which include the responses by the respondents as well as the number of respondents for each given response. This statistical modelling of data gathered through quantitative research confirmed the data gathered through in-depth interviews concerning the working behaviour of the black women workers within a western working environment at AMM.

After the completion and processing of the questionnaires, qualitative and quantitative research on the culturally determined work values and value judgements of the black women workers at AMM was considered complete, reliable, consistent, practical and valid.



## 1.9 SUMMARY

Most of the labour force operating in the western work environment in South Africa is of African origin (Sidiropoulos *et al.* 1998:230). Black women are part of the black work force and they are therefore expected to function optimally and to operate at their full potential within a western labour set-up. Into the workplace, black women workers bring with them a largely African-orientated “culture” (see Section 1.2). Black women do not isolate certain elements of their value systems and life- and world-view in different situations but approach each and every situation as holistic cultural beings. Value judgements, beliefs and tradition are carried over into the work environment and it is against this background that black women workers function. These women also judge personal behaviour, goals, expectations and ideals within the work situation according to this background of values (Raubenheimer and Kotze 1984:34). The African-oriented value systems of black women workers are brought into a western-oriented workplace, thereby influencing labour relations and productivity. However, this cultural diversity can give rise to a conflict of values in the workplace.

The aim of the study is to give an ethnographic explanation of how black women workers at AMM, experience and perceive selected western work values. To narrow the research focus, it was decided to conduct the research for this study at Automotive Mouldings cc (AMM) in Marble Hall. The attitudes of the black women workers at AMM towards “work” were determined. The influence of value judgements, life- and world-view on the working behaviour of black women workers and their perceptions of western work values in the workplace, was explained.

It is against this background that the theories of culture, values and work values are explained on the basis of the relevant literature. The theoretical demarcation of the research domain establishes a framework against which the working behaviour of these black women workers at AMM can be compared and described. The study proposes that the working behaviour expected within a western workplace is influenced by the life- and world-view of the workers. The life- and world-view of black women workers is the most relevant here. The study tried to establish, through qualitative and quantitative research, how the working behaviour of the black women workers at AMM differs from that of westerners in general, by using the western work value criteria of Raubenheimer and Kotze (1984) and Van Vuuren (1988).





From a western perspective, “work” can be regarded as central to human life. The purpose of work is to enhance the quality of a person’s life. “Work” thus plays an important part in human social and cultural life from a western point of view. The reasons why people work are closely related to their work values. “Work values” can be defined as a person’s attitude towards work in general, according to the cultural principles and preferences of the cultural group of which the person is a member. It is assumed that the attitudes towards work and the work ethic of members of different cultural groups vary.

The South African labour system is inherently western in nature (Raubenheimer & Kotze 1984:10). The European or western labour system is founded on the Protestant work ethic as explained by Max Weber (1958). Max Weber first articulated the idea that work values directly affect an individual’s working behaviour. For this reason, a discussion of Protestant work values is important in studies on working behaviour in contemporary western-oriented labour organisations and workplaces. Also, the concept of Protestant work values has been integrated into the modern labour system and work environment (Raubenheimer and Kotze 1984:8). Western culture is only one of a great variety of cultures within South African society, all of which influence the South African labour situation (Raubenheimer & Kotze 1984:10; Van Vuuren 1988:7). It is very important that the culture of black workers in general, and the culture and work values of black women workers in particular, within the western workplace should be studied and understood, before the behaviour of black women workers within the workplace can be judged or predicted, or compared with a broad western-oriented work value system.

## CHAPTER 2

### BLACK WOMEN IN THE WORKPLACE: SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL INFLUENCES

#### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

The working behaviour of black women workers cannot be examined in a vacuum, as the current conditions and attitudes within the South African labour situation are the result of historical developments. This study assumes that, as Orpen (1976:4) argues, it is “difficult, if not impossible, to obtain a full understanding of the current labour situation without an examination of the historical forces and circumstances which led up to it”. Kearney (1984:5) makes the point that history and culture are linked when he argues that

Cultures and societies exist in history, through time, and are constantly self-creating by responding to historically given conditions. Idea systems and culture in general, while having certain autonomy, are primarily responses – continuities – of that which has gone before.

Goodenough (1963:252) maintains that the historical and cultural community is

part of the real world ... and this real world is presumably infinitely variable and continuously changing. Nor can any part of it change without some other part being affected.

Rollwagen (1986:102) argues that one should not underestimate “the value of economic history and political economy in complementing anthropological research”. It is in the light of statements such as these that the literature study was undertaken.

Rollwagen (1986:112) adds that the behaviour of an individual can be more adequately explained by reference to the

choices that individual makes with respect to the values of the various cultural systems in which he/she participates, and also by the lack of choice that particular individual may have because of the manipulation of cultural systems affecting the individual in

question by other individuals with the power to do so (and who are operating out of their own framework of values).

The “choices” of black women workers were, in the past, limited by a political system discriminating on ethnic grounds. The position of black women workers within the South African labour market in the past was influenced by apartheid and a reservation of employment opportunities. After apartheid was abolished in 1990, they were affected by affirmative action. Outside the workplace, black women workers have certain obligations and a particular status within the traditional African hierarchy and customary law. These factors and experiences are carried over into the workplace, because black women workers function as complete cultural beings, within and outside the workplace. Wallman (1979:14) summarises the above-mentioned situation as follows: “Their performance at work is therefore similarly dependent on the resources and abilities inherent in their ethnic system.”

Kearney (1984:5) states: “Perception and world-view are thus products of reality, mind, action, and history.” Thus, black women workers cannot be viewed as separate from the historical and current economic, legal, political and social factors that influence their daily lives, entrance to, and position within the workplace, because

the present conditions and attitudes in labour relations, are not exclusively the products of current relationships in society. These conditions and attitudes are rather the result of historical developments evolved over years. Social attitudes handed down by previous generations also have an influence on current events (Orpen 1976:4).

Human (1994:205-206) holds a similar view, and argues that South African labour organisations

will not allow us to forget the past, however, since they carry the marks of the past within them. Organisations are the products of historical struggles. It is a prerequisite for any organisation attempting to adapt to a rapidly transforming environment to understand itself as a product of the past. The reason for this is that the possibilities for change and the constraints to change are defined by the historically shaped characteristics of the organisation. To deny the importance of the past is to impair the organisation’s ability to cope with the future.



According to Orpen (1976:4), attitudes do not exist in a void but are intrinsically social phenomena. If attitudes are not biological in origin, they can only be of social origin. This means that attitudes must be the product, not only of existing circumstances, but also of the kind of contact, negative or positive, which the groups concerned have had with each other in the past. It is thus important to view black women workers against the background of South African history and the daily life of these black women workers, in order to comprehend the present situation of these women in the South African labour system and to appreciate their unique culturally determined working behaviour and performance within the western labour system.

Marcus and Fisher (1986:77) indicate that there is some “tension” between local cultural worlds and their relationship to larger systems of political economy. This study does not discuss these “tensions” and disparities between cultures and politics in detail. The decision to exclude such a discussion was informed by Schwartzman’s (1993:67) view that “the goal of ethnography is not to resolve these tensions but to recognise and creatively exploit them”.

The position of black women workers in the South African labour system and the historical factors that influence the work values and, thus, the working behaviour of black women workers are discussed in three categories, namely:

- the traditional role ascription and the division of labour of black women within indigenous African cultural groups in South Africa;
- the position of black women in the South African labour system within an ethnically discriminatory political order before 1990; and
- the position of black women in the South African labour force and the economic and political empowerment of black women in South Africa after the abolition of apartheid in 1990.

Since apartheid was abolished, black women in South Africa have in many ways begun to establish themselves in the new political and economic climate, but within a clearly western-oriented labour system. Black women are now placing their rights on the national agenda. An emphasis on the rights of black people as a majority group in general and black women in particular, raises the need to define two important terms, namely “gender” as a relationship, and “feminism” as a western-oriented ideology. It is not the purpose of this study to discuss the

philosophy of feminist ideology or the concept of “gender” in detail, nor to judge or promote feminist ideology, nor does this discussion imply that the research group was or is discriminated against on a gender basis within or outside the workplace. The discussion below on feminism and “gender” should be viewed only as background knowledge to enhance an understanding of the present political climate in South Africa.

## 2.2 SEX AND GENDER

Gender is defined as the socially constructed and culturally variable roles of men and women as these roles occur in their daily lives and activities. Gender refers to a constructed relationship of inequality between men and women, where this relationship occurs in the labour market, political structures and common households. Tradition, law and specifically discriminatory legislation influence this relationship. Thus, gender cannot be viewed as a biological phenomenon, but must rather be seen as a relationship of equality or inequality between men and women, including the culturally determined attitudes of specific groups towards men and women respectively. Gender is constructed and institutionalised by cultural groups and societies wherever men and women have to function (Meena 1992:1).

According to the Commission on Gender Equality (1998:13),

Gender refers to the economic, social and cultural attributes and opportunities associated with being male or female. Relations between men and women in the family, the workplace or in the public sphere reflect society’s understanding of what are appropriate behaviour and characteristics of women and men. Gender therefore differs from sex in that it is social and cultural rather than biological. Gender attributes differ from society to society, and change with time. Some of the attributes are shaped by the economy, religion, culture and traditional attitudes.

Buswell (1989:5-20) states that the term “sex” is applied to

biological differences between men and women, yet *gender* on the other hand is applied to cultural aspects of male and female roles such as masculinity and femininity. In other words, the behaviour, personality and social attributes that are expected of males and females.

The Commission on Gender Equality (1998:13) defines the concept of “gender equality” as equality between men and women: “Gender equality means the equal employment by men and women of socially valued goods, opportunities, resources and rewards.” Because what is valued differs between cultural groups, a crucial aspect of equality is the empowerment of women so that they can influence what is valued within their cultural group and share in the decision-making about societal priorities. Equality does not mean that men and women are the same, but that opportunities and life chances, for both men and women, do not depend on their biological sex (Commission on Gender Equality 1998:13).

The Commission on Gender Equality (1998:13) states that the promotion of gender equality focuses on women, because it is women who are “mostly excluded or disadvantaged in relation to social and economic resources and decision-making”. Achieving gender equality implies changes for both women and men, however. It requires equal relationships based on the definition of the rights and responsibilities of women and men in all spheres, including the family, workplace, society and everyday life.

Gender equality is a political and socio-economic issue in South Africa, because the restriction of women’s access to socio-economic resources and social and political decision-making inhibits their ability to develop and exercise their full capabilities for their own benefit and for that of society. It has been argued that political and economic development cannot take place if it excludes the majority (or at least half) of the South African population (Commission on Gender Equality 1998:13).

### **2.3 FEMINISM**

Feminism as an ideology acknowledges that the oppression of women exists, and that women have been and often still are discriminated against at a social, political and economic level. Feminism proposes to establish at least a relationship of equality between men and women (Meena 1992:2). Feminism developed from women’s opposition to oppression and discrimination on the grounds of gender, as well as opposition to the relationships and attitudes associated with gender discrimination, at the international and national level. Feminist ideology is not opposed to men as such, but regards male oppression of women within the household and

institutions such as the workplace and political organisations as unacceptable. Feminism can be viewed as women's opposition against gender discrimination and sexism. Sexism, in this context, refers to the belief that women are inferior to men or that men are superior to women. The roles can be reversed where women are regarded as superior to men (Bryson 1993:200; Sargent 1996:123-124).

A variety of explanations can be used to attempt to describe feminist ideology. Offen (1992:82) explains feminism in terms of the historical development of the ideology:

feminism emerges as a concept that can encompass both an ideology and a movement for socio-political change based on a critical analysis of male privilege and women's subordination within a given society.

Amadiume (1987:10) regards feminism as a

political consciousness by women which leads to a strong sense of self-awareness, self-esteem, female solidarity and consequently, the questioning and challenging of gender inequalities in social systems and institutions.

According to Ashworth (1995:1), feminism is a proposal for

social transformation as well as a movement that strives to end the oppression of women. In this double aspect, feminism has always existed as part of the historical societies in which it has developed: it has been influenced by the specific social, economic and political traits of its society.

Feminism can thus be summarised as an ideology of a political, social and economic nature in which institutionalised gender inequalities are questioned. Feminism is, consequently, an awareness of women's oppression and a struggle for the achievement of women's equality. Feminism demands the transformation of society and discriminating cultural attitudes towards women.

Within some of the indigenous cultural groups of sub-Saharan Africa, African economic, social and political institutions were (and some still are) to varying degrees, patriarchal, and promote(d) male-dominated societies (Sargent 1996:136). Although women often held considerable influence and status within their communities, cultural norms typically accorded

more authority, status and control of wealth, land tenure systems, formal political institutions and other resources to men (Sargent 1996:136).

The above discussion on gender and feminism does not necessarily have a direct impact on the daily lives of the 19 black women workers in the research group (the perceptions of the research group on “gender” is discussed more fully in Section 3.22). However, these issues are raised to illuminate realities in the South African economy and political realm, where the emphasis today is on equality, non-racism and non-sexism. Feminism and gender issues have an indirect influence on the working behaviour of black women workers, as black women are a part of the South African work force and are expected to function to their full potential within the South African labour system. The performance of women in the workplace in South Africa should thus be interpreted against the background of these factors.

## **2.4 SOUTH AFRICAN BLACK WOMEN: A CULTURAL PROFILE**

Black women workers enter the workplace as complete cultural beings (Raubenheimer & Kotze 1984:62). Their tradition and cultural orientation have a direct influence on their working behaviour and their perceptions of western work values within the workplace (as was discussed in Section 1.5 on culture and work values). It is thus imperative to provide a “cultural profile” of black women in order to understand and predict the working behaviour of black women workers as well as perceptions and value judgements concerning these western work values in the workplace by black women. It should, however, be noted that the discussion below is an ideal “traditional” cultural situation as the black women workers at AMM live in an environment that is neither “traditional” nor completely “western” in nature. These women thus live in a more or less “rurban” environment and varying degrees of acculturation have taken place (as discussed in Section 1.5.1.2 and Section 1.5.1.3). Also, all the black women workers at AMM participate in the modern South African labour market, and do not follow a traditional North Sotho economic life style. The majority of the black women workers at AMM are single mothers and also the breadwinners in the family. For these reasons, the discussion of the cultural profile on the black women workers should be seen as necessary knowledge in order to understand the traditional African-oriented cultural background against which these women, as complete cultural beings, evaluate and interpret western work values and also operate within



the western workplace. It is in the light of this background that the cultural profile of South African black women is discussed, with specific reference to the North Sotho, and in particular the Pedi.

According to Kriel (1992:25-33), the North Sotho include the Ndebele, Kolobe, Pedi of Mafefe, Kgaga, Koni, Tlou and Tau of Selwana. Bruwer (1963:21-22) does not include the Ndebele or Kolobe, but he also includes among the North Sotho the Pedi or Maroteng, Kgaga, Tau and Koni. In addition, he includes the Roka, Kwena, Mphathele, Tshwene, Mathabatha, Matlala, Dikgale, Masisimala, Mamidja, Sekoro, Letswalo, Lobedu, Kutswe, Pai and Pulani. These tribes can be divided into five representative groups, namely the Pedi, the Koni and the Phalaborwa tribes, and the Lobedu and the Kutswe (Bruwer 1963:27). The current study focuses on the North Sotho in general and on the Pedi in particular, because of the ethnic affiliation of most of the research group (see Section 3.4).

AMM is situated in Marble Hall (see Map 1) and, although the research group was ethnically diverse, 14 (73,6%) of the 19 black women workers at AMM indicated their ethnic affiliation to be North Sotho (Table 3.2, Chapter 3). Six women identified themselves as Pedi in origin and eight women of North Sotho origin considered themselves merely as Sotho (Table 3.2). These women are not of Pedi origin, nor did they identify themselves as South Sotho or Tswana in origin. The women did not expand on this ethnic identification. (Section 3.4 provides a more detailed discussion on the ethnic affiliation of the research group). For this reason the emphasis of the discussion on the traditional social and economic role ascription of black women focuses on North Sotho views. The discussion of the cultural profile on South African black women is divided into five categories:

- social organisation;
- cycle of life;
- age-grading and sex differentiation;
- economic profile and economic role ascription; and
- the introduction and integration of indigenous African cultural groups into the western economy.

#### 2.4.1 Social organisation

Particularly relevant to the study is the social organisation of indigenous African cultural groups and the “group solidarity” within these cultural groups as this influences individuality within the workplace and thus the working behaviour of the black women workers. Kriel (1992:23) describes the life- and world-view of the North Sotho as communal in nature. This implies that, in most instances, the group is regarded as more important than the individual (see Section 3.14 for a more detailed discussion on group solidarity in the workplace). The largest social unit within the social organisation of the North Sotho is the tribe (Mönnig 1967:243; Hoemlé 1962:68). Mönnig (1967:243) describes this social unit as follows:

The tribe comprises a community of people who are united into a single group by their common allegiance to a single, independent chief whose position is hereditary.

The tribe can thus be described as a political unit as well as a social group, unifying its members and controlling the social life and activities of the members (Mönnig 1967:143).

Kriel (1992:89) indicates that the North Sotho are patrilineally oriented. This view is also found in the work of Bruwer (1963:41) and Hammond-Tooke (1974b:360). Women and daughters are always regarded as belonging to a lower class than the men and sons within the social organisation of the North Sotho (Kriel 1992:89). A woman belongs to the lineage of her birth, but to the dwelling of the husband (Mönnig 1967:233). The man is head of the household and thus responsible for the conduct of its members, including that of his wife (Mönnig 1967:237; Hoemlé 1962:71,87) (see Section 3.22 for more detail on the status of men and women within the households of the research group).

#### 2.4.2 Cycle of life

According to Mönnig (1967:98), the birth of a child is an event of great importance among the Pedi (as a representative North Sotho group). Another member is added to the group and the mother receives the status of parenthood. These notions were confirmed by the research group (see Section 3.7 for more detail). This event also “concludes the obligations of the mother’s group to the father and his group, proves the manhood of the father and perpetuates his line” (Mönnig 1967:98). Kriel (1992:93) and Krige (1962:95) describe similar findings. The child



remains, for the first years of its life, within the family circle and spends most of its time with its mother (Mönnig 1967:104; Van der Vliet 1974:217). The mother carries the child on her back wherever she goes (Mönnig 1967:104). This statement is particularly relevant to the study as the black women workers at AMM often carry their children in this fashion even at work (see Section 3.10 for a more detailed discussion of childcare in the workplace). Later, the child is left in the care of an older sister or another girl in the family (Mönnig 1967:104; Krige 1962:96). This statement is also relevant to the study (see Section 3.10), as the black women workers at AMM often leave their children in the care of female family members.

When the child is old enough, certain tasks are assigned to him/her, according to sex and age differentiation (Bruwer 1963:89; Krige 1962:96-97; Shaw 1974:124; Van der Vliet 1974:220). Boys tend to the livestock of the family, herding sheep, goats and cattle (Mönnig 1967:108; Krige 1962:96-97; Schapera & Goodwin 1962:151). The education of the boy is left largely to his friends, and his activities are controlled by boys often only just older than the boy himself (Mönnig 1967:108, Bruwer 1963:55).

Girls start at an early age to help their mothers to grind corn and fetch water and kindling wood (Bruwer 1963:108; Krige 1962:96; Mönnig 1967:108; Schapera & Goodwin 1962:150-151; Shaw 1974:124). The older girls guide and control the activities of the younger ones (Bruwer 1963:108; Mönnig 1967:108). Mönnig (1967:108) suggests that a large part of the enculturation of children occurs during these youthful activities. The education of children within indigenous African cultural groups in Southern Africa differs from that of western children. Krige (1962:98) explains that in

Bantu education, the preparation of the child for the work of life, differs from that of the European, not only because the life led by adults in these two societies is so different, but also because their theory of the sort of preparation that is necessary is not the same ... In Bantu society success and welfare are not bound up with knowledge alone, and difficulties are overcome not so much by the application of science, as by the use of magic and appeal to ancestors.

Marriage among the North Sotho (including the Pedi) is not an individual affair, but a matter that concerns the group as a whole (Kriel 1992:90; Mönnig 1967:129). Marriage is not only the legitimisation of the relationship between a man and a woman, but also the legalising of the

relationship between two groups of relatives (Kriel 1992:90; Mönnig 1967:129; Bruwer 1963:41,47; Hoernlé 1962:73; Krige 1962:111): “marriage is a legal act in which the relatives of the groom publicly transfer certain marriage goods (*magadi*) to the relatives of the bride” (Mönnig 1967:129). In Section 3.22, the attitudes of the research group towards “bride wealth” are discussed in more detail.

However, the wedding is not the final step in marriage – only after the birth of the first child does the bride receive the full status of a woman (Mönnig 1967:137; Van der Vliet 1974:212). It should be noted, however, that these attitudes towards marriage do not necessarily exist within the research group, as the majority of these women are unmarried and single mothers and they do not see themselves as subordinate to married women (see Appendix A for examples of the family structures of the research group).

### 2.4.3 Age-grading and sex differentiation

Southern African cultural groups such as the North Sotho have a specific social structure, in which a proper attitude of deference and respect to elders is essential. Children should respect their parents and every individual should respect his/her elders (Bruwer 1963:46,55; Hammond-Tooke 1974b:360; Kriel 1992:198; Mönnig 1967:268). Age-grading is important in this study, as an informal system of age seniority exists at AMM (see Section 3.3).

In terms of status, sexual differentiation, however, is even more important than differences in age (Kriel 1992:89-90; Mönnig 1967:268). According to Mönnig (1967:268), Kriel (1992:198) and Bruwer (1963:46), the status of women is always inferior to that of men (see Section 2.2.4 for a more detailed discussion on the black women workers’ perceptions on “gender”). Women are expected to respect all men that are the same age or older than they. Women have to respect their husbands and their parents-in-law (Mönnig 1967:63). Mönnig (1967:63) states that these attitudes of respect are

characterised by constraint, deference and shyness. A lack of these attitudes in a person is not regarded as a case of bad manners only, it may also entail supernatural sanctions.

#### 2.4.4 Economic profile and role ascription

Mönnig (1967:143) and Bruwer (1963:107) describe the North Sotho (including the Pedi) economic system as a highly co-operative one where each family operates as a unit. The economic system of black Southern African cultural groups, including the North Sotho, is not individualist (Bruwer 1963:107, Mönnig 1967:143) (see Section 3.14 for a discussion on individualism at AMM). Mönnig (1967:143) and Bruwer (1963:107) state that individual families function not only for their own benefit, but also for the benefit of the whole community. It can be said that the North Sotho (also the Pedi) economic system, like the social system, is communal in nature. The individual is expected to work hard to produce products for his/her own and the community's needs, and in assisting other families in their duties (Mönnig 1967:144). Mönnig (1967:143) explains:

The Pedi take great pride in their work. To the untrained eye they may sometimes appear to be idle, but this is not so. It is the great joy of women to work on their lands, and even the very old will go to the lands as often as their strength permits, even though they are no longer able to do much more than pull out an occasional weed, or merely enjoy watching the growth of the crops.

Mönnig (1967:143) also remarks on one incentive to work among the Pedi people which is to "shine in the eyes of the community. The Pedi work with enthusiasm because diligence is valued, and a good worker praised by his fellows". This statement is relevant to the study as the black women workers enjoy particular work status within their communities (see Section 3.21 for a detailed discussion on work status). Wealth is fairly evenly distributed within the Pedi community, as the Pedi economy is not adapted to the amassing of surplus and wealth and riches are not usually desired for their own sake (Mönnig 1967:143-144):

Although it [wealth] does enhance prestige, it does not alter the prestige of the individual, and the person who is unduly successful in his economic productivity runs the danger of being accused of witchcraft.

This phenomena was confirmed during qualitative research where the statement was made by spokespersons that it is unfair that some people are rich while others are poor (Section 3.14).

The economies of indigenous African cultural groups are based mainly on agriculture, pastoralism, hunting and gathering (Bruwer 1963:107; Mönnig 1967:144). According to

Mönnig (1967:145) and also Bruwer (1963:107), Schapera & Goodwin (1962:149-150) and Shaw (1974:123), labour is divided between the sexes, and the most formalised labour division is connected with livestock. Men undertake all the work connected with cattle, sheep and goats, mostly because of the ritual significance of these animals (Bruwer 1963:108), while the women tend to the pigs and fowls (Mönnig 1967:145; Schapera & Goodwin 1962:149; Shaw 1974:123). Livestock is not valued for its economic value, but mainly for its social and religious value (Mönnig 1967:163).

All the housework is done by women, according to Mönnig (1967:145) and Bruwer (1963:108). Women are responsible for collecting firewood and edible plants, fetching water, grinding corn, preparing food and brewing beer, and washing up cooking and eating utensils. Women also have to keep the courtyards and huts clean and in good repair (Mönnig 1967:145; Bruwer 1963:107; Shaw 1974:123-124). It is also women's duty to look after the children and to educate them according to the traditions of the cultural group concerned (Bruwer 1963:108) (see Section 3.22.1 for a discussion of the perceptions of the research group concerning the division of labour between the sexes).

Both men and women share in agricultural activities, but the sexes are traditionally assigned different duties (Mönnig 1967:145). Mönnig (1967:145) and Shaw (1974:90-91) indicate that men clear the fields and plough the fields. Women normally perform the rest of the agricultural activities. These duties include planting, weeding and reaping (Mönnig 1967:145; Bruwer 1963:107). Bruwer (1963:107) and Shaw (1974:90-91) suggest that the most important economic contribution of the women lies in their agricultural duties. Mönnig (1967:145) goes so far as to state that "women ... are therefore the main providers of food in the Pedi household. The position of a woman as the economic mainstay of her household is clearly recognised by the Pedi". With regard to this study, this statement is of particular value as the black women in the research group are in most instances the main breadwinners in their households (see Section 3.7).

Within the North Sotho economic system, labour is rarely divided along the lines of specialisation and there is practically no division of labour according to rank (Mönnig 1967:146): "On the whole, all Pedi men and women perform the tasks of their sex, irrespective of rank or status."

#### 2.4.5 Introduction to western economy

Western economies rely on money as a form of currency, which has a number of implications for communities that used to operate on a different system: “The introduction of money into the economy has brought with it some changes, and differences in monetary wealth have led to differences in standards of living in some aspects” (Mönnig 1967:192). Sansom (1974:135) believes that the economy of indigenous black Southern African cultural groups has changed because of western capitalist influences:

The era of the dual economy began with effective economic contact between black and white. As soon as money began to feature regularly in transactions to which tribesmen were party, they employed a new standard which could be set against traditional standards and compared with them. They [members of African-oriented cultural groups] were faced, too, with the problems of bridging the gulf that separated one mode of economic thinking and action from another.

Schapera and Goodwin (1962:170-171) had expressed a similar view twelve years earlier.

Mönnig (1967:184-185) and Bruwer (1963:116) maintain that within a North Sotho (including Pedi) economy, internal and external trade of goods was minimal and that for this reason an extensive monetary system never developed within this economy. The introduction of migratory labour and the European economic and monetary system, however, changed this situation of internal subsistence (Bruwer 1963:116,185; Mönnig 1967:185). External trade was introduced to the Pedi economy and it became a fixed pattern of the economic system (Mönnig 1967:185). Mönnig (1967:185) does, however, argue that the family

still remains the basic unit for the production of its own needs, and [the] wage earnings has only been added as a new venture in its productive activities. But a new range of commodities which are eagerly sought has resulted in external trade through shops and stores which has become part of the economic system.

Some families want to convert their money into new commodities, while others still buy cattle (Mönnig 1967:192): “This tendency has influenced communal outlook, and an increasing awareness of individual possession is becoming noticeable among the Pedi.” According to Bruwer (1963:187), the most noticeable feature of these western economic influences has been

the introduction of general user commodities and the acceptance and internalisation of these commodities by African-oriented cultural groups. Schapera (1962:363) noted a similar trend. The concepts of usury prevalent in the western banking sector can be problematic in this context: “The Pedi know the principle of credit, but not of interest. Lending is frequent, as is deferred payment” (Mönnig 1967:186). Within the Pedi economy, an object or money owed to another party does not increase the value of the object and does not increase the obligation, “no matter for how long it is held” (Mönnig 1967:186). This causes problems for these people within a modern western economy where people from a traditional background run into debt and fall into the cycle of lending and repayment (see Section 3.11.4 for a more detailed discussion of this problem in the research group). Bruwer (1963:189) explains that these western influences and economic changes have not only influenced traditional role ascription and economic practices among black Southern African cultural groups, but have also altered their life- and world-view.

The spread of western culture and value systems throughout South Africa has affected the life of black indigenous cultural groups in many ways (Bruwer 1963:184). Among the most readily observable effects is the differentiation of communities into new social classes. Some of these are economic, others religious and political. Economic life, social organisation and other aspects of culture have been affected and altered by the western influence (Junod 1927:628; Schapera 1962:357). A process of acculturation has taken place and African-oriented cultural groups have accepted and internalised certain elements of European culture (Bruwer 1963:184-193). In South Africa, members of indigenous African-oriented cultural groups are now expected to function to their full potential in a western-oriented way of life. It is particularly the labour system in South Africa that is grounded in western economic and capitalist principles and value systems (see Section 1.6.1 for a detailed discussion of western work values), although the workforce, today, consists largely of people of indigenous African-oriented cultural groups (Sidiropoulos *et al.* 1998:230).

However, before 1990, the economic and political position of black people in general, but particularly that of black women, was limited by discriminatory political and economic practices. The employment opportunities of black women were limited by law and, although black women had already been introduced to the western economy, these discriminatory





practices and laws prevented the full integration of black women within the South African labour force.

## **2.5 THE ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL POSITION OF BLACK WOMEN IN SOUTH AFRICA BEFORE 1990**

The discovery of diamonds, primarily at Kimberley (Orpen 1976:6), was followed in 1886 by the discovery of gold in the Witwatersrand, South Africa, and large growth in the mining industry took place. Labour demands in newly established mining towns grew apace. As job opportunities arose in the mines, large-scale urbanisation of black male workers was inevitable, but black women were largely excluded from this urbanisation process. At that stage, most black women remained in the rural areas and continued to practice subsistence agriculture (Barret 1985:68; Friguglietti 1989:32).

Black women, excluded from the urbanisation process, found it difficult to make a living by means of subsistence agriculture. The Black Land Act (Act 27 of 1913) decreased the usable agricultural surface allocated to black agricultural activities (Smit & Booysen 1981:16). Over time, and due to an increase in the population, coupled with the so-called “cleaning-up” of “black spots”, more and more people had to rely on the small pieces of land allocated to black people in terms of the 1913 and 1936 Land Acts (Friguglietti 1989:26-34).

A number of black women moved to the urban areas to earn wages to ensure the survival of their families. Employment opportunities for black women in the urban areas were limited and a large proportion of these urbanised black women made a living by brewing beer, prostitution and domestic work (Barret 1985:68; Friguglietti 1989:32; Van Aardt 1994:129).

From as early as 1760, laws such as the “Slave Pass Law” limited the geographic mobility of black South Africans. Such laws forced black people to carry passes and thus controlled the free movement of black people between Cape Town and the rural areas. In 1923, the Black Urban Areas Act (Act 21 of 1923) was implemented (Smit & Booysen 1981:11). This act effectively ensured the residential segregation of white and non-white in South Africa along

racial lines, and limited the movement to or influx of black people into white suburban areas (Friguglietti 1989:27).

Black women remained outside the pass law framework until 1952 (Bernstein 1985:18). In 1952, the whole system of influx control was reviewed and purportedly “streamlined” by the Pass Book Laws under the Natives Act of 1952 (Friguglietti 1989:27). These changes included a change which extended the requirement to carry passes to black women. Consequently, black women could only move to the towns and cities to seek work with the permission of rural labour bureaus. Black women could, however, still move to urban areas as the dependants of men who were resident in a particular town or city. In 1964, this right was withdrawn (Bernstein 1985:18). Black women could not be employed in urban areas unless they had been born in the particular city or town concerned, or they were married to men who were permitted to live and work in the urban areas. Black women could lose their working permits, should they be so lucky as to obtain one, if they divorced their husbands or if they were widowed. If a black woman lost her working permit, she was not allowed to reside in an urban area. This legislation largely limited the employment opportunities available to black women, because potential employers could not easily create job opportunities for black women, given that their tenure was so uncertain (Meer 1984:12-13; Prekel 1986:41).

In April 1986, all legislation concerning influx control was abolished by the Black Abolition of Passes and Co-ordination of Documents Act (Act 67 of 1952) as amended by Act 72 of 1986 (Friguglietti 1989:28). The Black Urban Areas Consolidation Act (Act 25 of 1945) as amended by Act 34 of 1986, consolidated the laws relating to the control of black people and the provision for residence of black people in urban areas (Prekel 1986:43). The Abolition of Influx Control Act (Act 68 of 1986) was also promulgated in 1986. The geographic mobility of black South Africans was no longer limited (Friguglietti 1989:28). Black women were now free to move and seek employment in urban areas.

### **2.5.1 Job reservation: black women workers**

Through the Colour Bar Laws, such as the Apprenticeship Act of 1922 and the Urban Areas Act of 1930, the government at that time controlled the mobility of black South Africans in

urban areas. These laws prohibited black men and women from being employed in any other position but as unschooled labour. In 1953 the Native Labour Act was implemented, and consequently, strikes and lockouts by black workers were prohibited. The Industrial Consolidation Act of 1956 reserved certain positions in the labour market and employment opportunities exclusively for white workers (Orpen 1976:10-12; Smit & Booysen 1981:17). Despite all the above restrictions, the extent to which black women were drawn into employment was one of the most conspicuous features of the 1980's and the composition of the workforce has undergone continuous and steady change (Prekel 1986:31). In 1946, black women constituted only 1% of the total labour force in manufacturing. By 1950, black women made up 2,5% of the total labour force, and 7% by 1970. By 1979, when women as a group constituted over 40% of the economically active population of South Africa, black women workers made up over 20% of this economically active population. Between 1973 and 1981, the percentage of black women in the total labour force increased from 7,8% to 22,3% (Bernstein 1985:68-69).

Since 1986, black women workers have begun to play an even more prominent role in South African industry. In the clothing, textile and cleaning industries, 34% of all workers were black women by 1986. Black women have also strengthened their position in several other industries since 1986, such as mining, transportation and communication, furniture and timber, food, liquor and tobacco, and leather and shoes. Within all these, black women have steadily increased their participation in, and contribution to the South African economy since 1986. However, roughly 50% of economically active black women in domestic and agricultural employment, and even more in subsistence level agriculture, are not included in these industries, and were excluded from all the statistics and Manpower Surveys of 1986 (Prekel 1986:33-37).

Although by 1986 black women workers participated in the South African industry in various ways, this participation was still largely based on unschooled labour. One reason for this was the legacy of so-called "Bantu Education" in accordance to the principles of separate development. The employment opportunities for black women as schooled labour have been severely limited by their lack of education (Malveaux 1986:9).

## 2.5.2 The education of black women

Previously in South Africa, governments made provision for the separate education of the many ethnic groups in South Africa via a system of so-called “Bantu Education”. This educational system was considered to be of substandard quality and school attendance was not compulsory (Bernstein 1985:76-78; Friguglietti 1989:29; Kane-Berman 1978:22).

Black women were severely handicapped by insufficient education and lack of training. Malveaux (1986:9) describes this hindrance to the advancement of black women:

black South African women complete school less frequently than men do. Although school attendance is poor among blacks, it is higher among African girls than among boys. More boys however graduate and are better prepared to enter the workplace. The limited educational opportunities available to black South African women as well as obstacles to training mean that black South African women have limited employment opportunities. Most black women are denied the opportunity to rise above menial and/or manual labour.

Black women were impeded in seeking education in many ways. Black parents tend(ed) to have higher educational expectations for their male children than for their female children (Section 3.8 describes this trend within the research group). One reason for this attitude, which seems to indicate gender discrimination, is the female children’s lack of access to birth control (see Section 3.8) and the high rate of teenage pre-marital pregnancies among black schoolgirls, with a resulting high dropout rate (Bernstein 1985:77).

In the past, black women also had less access to vocational and other institutions of training. In 1977, there were only 22 schools in the country which offered post-primary vocational training for black women. The training at these vocational centres was limited to dressmaking, domestic science and home management (Bernstein 1985:77).

The place assigned to black women in the social division of labour determined their access to education, and the lack of access prevented these black women from obtaining the most rudimentary skills. Illiteracy and an inability to speak English or Afrikaans also hindered rural

women in their attempt to obtain work. This meant that in 1980, 49,5% of South African black women had no educational qualifications at all (Bernstein 1985:77).

Black women were not only discriminated against within the labour and education systems, but also within the political “Struggle” against apartheid. The following discussion explains the role of black women in the “Struggle” and the position of black women within the political movements that they supported.

### **2.5.3 The position of black women in the “Struggle” against apartheid**

Until quite recently, a perception that was generally held in South Africa was that black women were dependent minors ignorant about politics (Venter 1995:i-vi). Until the 1940’s, black women played a largely supporting role in the anti-apartheid resistance movement. Black women, however, became politically active during the 1940’s in an attempt to improve their living and economic conditions. Black women took part spontaneously in resistance against the rising costs of living and against food shortages, transport prices, the prohibition on the brewing of home-made beer, in school boycotts and in squatter movements (Venter 1995:i-vi). This resistance was not primarily political in origin, but was motivated by socio-economic factors and the need for a better life in general (Venter 1995:14).

The involvement of black women in anti-apartheid campaigns has led to growing political awareness among women, and black women became intensely involved in the “Struggle” against apartheid (Venter 1995:i-vi). Although active involvement in anti-apartheid campaigns by black women only became widespread during the 1940’s, organised resistance had already taken place since 1908 when black women in East London protested against high increases in rent rates and the unfair imprisonment of black citizens. Further examples of protest actions by black women are the following (Du Plessis 1987:177; Kemp *et al.* 1995:135-137; Venter 1995:1-13):

- 1913 – A campaign against the carrying of passes
- 1943 – The Alexandra bus boycotts
- 1944-1945 – School boycotts in the Brakpan and Boksburg locations
- 1944-1945 – Resistance against the laws prohibiting the brewing of beer

- 1944-1947 – Resistance against forced relocation
- 1945-1949 – Anti-pass resistance campaigns
- 1950 – Resistance against the proposed Black Laws Amendment Act 56 of 1949
- 1950 – Resistance against the Population Registration Act 30 of 1950
- 1952 – Defiance Campaign
- 1956 – Petitions and demonstrations by black women in protest against the pass laws
- 1957 – The burning of passbooks, an action which continued until 1958
- 1986 – Peaceful march in Alexandra
- 1989 – Defiance Campaign during which shelter was given to fleeing black men and women

Despite the above-mentioned protest actions by women, black women were not appointed in positions of leadership within the political parties to which they belonged, such as the African National Congress (ANC) and the South African Communist Party (SACP) until after 1994. The status and position of black women within the political structure of the political parties did not change until 1994 (Kemp *et al.* 1995:139).

## **2.6 THE POSITION OF BLACK WOMEN AFTER THE ABOLITION OF APARTHEID**

The history of the struggle for women's rights in South Africa is one of a struggle against both gender inequality and racial oppression (Albertyn 1994:42). However, the dominance of race in the political and legal ordering of the broader South African society has meant that struggles for gender equality have been divided along racial lines, and have been subordinated to the struggle against racial oppression. Race and class divisions have shaped the political consciousness of black women. The political struggle of black women has involved claims for political and economic equality within the transformation of the South African state (Albertyn 1994:42).

In February 1990, the South African government of that time unbanned the previously banned black political movements. These changes in the political climate were to alter the previous subordination of gender struggles to the national liberation struggle (Albertyn 1994:47).

## 2.6.1 Gender equality and the constitution

Since 1993 South Africa has had one of the most progressive Constitutions in the world for gender equality and the advancement of black women (Kemp *et al.* 1995:154). The emphasis on equality is evidence of a shift in the law's approach to women, at least as far as the enhancement of their legal status is concerned. However, even when liberation seems secured in political manifestos or legislation such as the 1996 Constitution, that does not necessarily mean liberation in practice. It is the way in which legal rights are translated into reality and are supplemented by social change that determine whether they change women's lives (Kaganas & Murray 1994:1). Cathy Albertyn as quoted by Kemp *et al.* (1995:157) warns that women will have to "engage in political legal struggle to give meaning to the Constitution in ways that will further their interests and rights".

### 2.6.1.1 *The preamble*

The Preamble of the South African Constitution of 1996 establishes three principles for gender equality and the rights of women in general, and black women in particular. The preamble promises South African citizens a society based on democratic values, social justice and fundamental human rights. The preamble states that the law protects every South African citizen equally. According to the introductory paragraph of the Constitution, the government should do everything in its power and take every action to improve the quality of life of all citizens and free the potential of each person (Republic of South Africa 1996:3).

### 2.6.1.2 *Founding provisions*

Chapters One and Two of the Constitution establish a variety of principles regarding the establishment and protection of women's rights such as Section 1 (a) and (b). The Constitution states in these sections that the Republic of South Africa is founded on the values of human dignity, the achievement of equality and the advancement of human rights and freedoms. The Constitution also pledges a society based on non-racism and non-sexism (Republic of South Africa 1996:5). Section 74 establishes a special procedure for amendments to Section 1 requiring a 75% majority in the National Assembly. In this way, the Constitution proclaims non-sexism to be a founding principle of the South African state (Murray *et al.* 1998:296).

### 2.6.1.3 *The Bill of Rights*

Sections 9 and 12 in the Bill of Rights also provide most striking examples concerning women's rights in the final Constitution. Section 9 states that everyone is equal before the law and has the right to equal protection and benefit of law. The state may not discriminate unfairly directly or indirectly against anyone on one or more grounds, including race, gender, sex, pregnancy, marital status, ethnic or social origin, colour, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture, language or birth (Republic of South Africa 1996:8).

The most obvious way in which Section 9, the equality provision, guards women's interests is by listing gender, sex, pregnancy and marital status as prohibiting grounds for discrimination. However, the protection of "equal benefit of the law" in Section 9(1), the guarantee that "equality includes the full and equal enjoyment of rights and freedoms" in Section 9(2), and the prohibition of indirect discrimination in Section 9(3) are equally important (Murray *et al.* 1998:296).

Section 12 concerns freedom and security of the person and bodily and psychological integrity. Subsection 1(c) and Subsections 2(a) and (b) spell out aspects of the notion of freedom and security of the person that particularly concern women. Subsection 1(c) enshrines the right "to be free from all forms of violence from either public or private sources". Subsection 2(a) guarantees "the right to make decisions concerning reproduction" and Subsection 2(b)



guarantees “everyone ... the right to security in and control over their body” (Republic of South Africa 1996:8).

These rights make it clear that the state’s responsibility for preventing violence against women and men extends into the home. Domestic violence is now unconstitutional and it is therefore possible to challenge state inaction on domestic violence (Murray *et al.* 1998:297).

The right to “make decisions concerning reproduction” and “security in and control over [one’s] body” have obvious implications for abortion questions (Republic of South Africa 1996:8). While neither right enshrines a constitutional right to abortion on demand, the articulation of these rights ensures that courts will consider women’s interests as well as those traditionally accepted as important – such as the right to life (Section 11) (Republic of South Africa 1996:7).

The inclusion of social and economic rights represents another important gain for women in the Bill of Rights. The following are rights that advance gender equality and improves the quality of life for women in South Africa (Republic of South Africa 1996:10-13):

- housing (Section 26);
- health care, food, water and social security (Section 27); and
- education (Section 29).

The economic rights of women are protected by Section 22, which states that all South African citizens have the right to choose their trade, occupation or profession freely (Republic of South Africa 1996:10). This section is extended by Section 23, Subsection (1) that declares that “everyone has the right to fair labour practices” (Republic of South Africa 1996:10). Section 23 includes the right of every worker to a trade union. Section 23, Subsection (2)(b) includes the right of workers to strike (Republic of South Africa 1996:10). Thus, women are protected from unfair labour practices, unfair dismissal and discrimination within the workplace. In all the above-mentioned articles, it is the obligation of the state to make these rights progressively available and thus, accessible to all women.

Another constitutional victory for women is Section 30 of the Constitution (Republic of South Africa 1996:13). The provisions protecting language and cultural rights and the provision



entitling people “belonging to a cultural, religious or linguistic community” to exercise their constitutional rights within that community, are limited by a statement that these rights may not be exercised in a manner “inconsistent with any provision of the Bill of Rights” (Republic of South Africa 1996:13). Thus, cultural practices may not be exercised to the disadvantage of women, and individuals have the right to decide whether cultural practices are disadvantageous to them, or not.

#### *2.6.1.4 The election of officials and gender equality*

However, it is not only in the Bill of Rights that provisions particularly important to women are to be found. Women are expressly mentioned whenever provision is made for the election of officials. The provision for the election of the President provides an example: “At its first sitting after its election, and whenever necessary to fill a vacancy, the National Assembly must elect a woman or a man from among its members to be the President” (Republic of South Africa 1996:41).

#### *2.6.1.5 International law*

Finally, the emphasis placed on international law is an important tool for women seeking to realise their rights in the future. Although the Constitution does not make all international law binding on South Africa as part of domestic legislature, it does stipulate that “self-executing” provisions of treaties approved by Parliament automatically become part of the law. Many provisions in international human rights conventions, including women’s rights conventions, fit the label of “self-executing”. Even more important is the stipulation in Section 39 (Republic of South Africa 1996:23). This section states that courts must consider international law when interpreting the Bill of Rights. As the international articulation of women’s rights becomes more sophisticated, this provision will enrich the constitutional protection of women’s rights (Murray *et al.* 1998:299).

## 2.6.2 Support for constitutional democracy

The state is required to “progressively realise” a number of socio-economic rights such as housing, health care, food, water, social security and education (Section 184[3]) (Republic of South Africa 1996:78). All these rights are manifested in the Bill of Rights and are fundamental to gender equality and the advancement of black women. Thus, in terms of Chapter 9 of the South African Constitution, the following commissions were created:

- the Human Rights Commission;
- the Commission for the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Cultural, Religious and Linguistic Communities; and
- The Commission on Gender Equality (CGE).

The commissions were created in order to support and promote democracy and to regulate and realise the above-mentioned obligations of the state (Republic of South Africa 1996:78). In the discussion below, the role and function of the CGE are illustrated.

### 2.6.2.1 *Commission on Gender Equality (CGE)*

The CGE is an independent, statutory body created in terms of the Constitution, and the CGE should promote respect for gender equality and the protection, development and attainment of gender equality (Republic of South Africa 1996:80).

The CGE is committed to creating a society free from gender discrimination and all other forms of oppression, in which all people will have the opportunity and means to realise their full potential, regardless of race, gender, class, religion, sexual orientation, disability or geographic location (Commission on Gender Equality 1998:3). To achieve the above-mentioned vision, the CGE strives for the transformation of society exposing gender discrimination in laws, policies and practices, advocating changes in sexist attitudes and gender stereotypes, and instilling respect for women’s rights as human rights (Commission on Gender Equality 1998:3).

Despite the principles of the CGE, the progress and function of the Commission has been hampered by financial problems. The Commission has actually only functioned to full capacity

since 1998. The CGE focuses largely on workshops and recommendations on governmental and non-governmental policies, and not on the needs of women or the improvement of the daily life and decreasing the poverty in which many black women are trapped (Commission on Gender Equality 1998:7-9).

#### 2.6.2.2 *Mechanisms for equity*

The following movements, papers, conventions, charters and units have been established by the South African government, political parties and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to promote the rights of women in general, and black women in particular (Commission on Gender Equality 1998:16; Department of Justice 1997:6-7; Hale, Miller & Murray 1996:309-311; Mokotedi 1998:1; Van Aardt 1994:2-3):

- the Women's Movement;
- the "Beijing Platform for Action";
- the Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW);
- a Draft Discussion Paper on Gender Policy Considerations;
- institutional structures for advancing gender equality such as the Office on the Status of Women (OSW);
- the Women's Charter for Effective Equality; and
- the Women's Empowerment Unit.

All these movements, papers, conventions, charters and units aim to establish a non-sexist society in South Africa. Conventions such as the Beijing Convention and the resulting "Beijing Platform for Action" play an important role in the establishment of gender equality within South Africa, especially since the government is obligated by the 1996 Constitution to take international law and principles into consideration when interpreting the Bill of Rights (as was explained in Section 2.6.1.5 of this study).

However, the results of these movements, papers, conventions, commissions, charters and units have yet to be seen. Despite the establishment of institutions and structures, for example, the Women's Movement, CEDAW and OSW, little has as yet been done to improve the legal,

social or economic position of women. It must be asked whether these structures are political window-dressing for a government which has committed itself to a non-sexist state; or whether these institutions really wish to seek culturally relevant solutions to meet the unique needs of black women. In most instances, the above-mentioned movements, papers, conventions, commissions, charters and units do not consider the needs of black women. Also, the aims and objectives of these movements are not planned in cultural context or culturally relevant to the situation of South African black women. Such institutions should concentrate on the specific needs of women in South Africa, especially those of black women, and should take into account that the South African needs would differ from those set out in international and European models of gender equality.

### **2.6.3 The combining of civil and customary law**

Since 1990, in South Africa there has been an increasing focus on the predicament of black women, particularly in the context of their position according to customary law (Kaganas & Murray 1994:19). Research done in the area of the combination of the civil and customary law makes it clear that the shift in civil law towards formal equality is unlikely to be echoed in a transformation of the customary law system. Such a shift requires a direct confrontation with and rejection of two broad cultural systems, the western and sub-Saharan African systems. A long report emanating from the “Women and Law in Southern Africa Research Project” discusses these issues (Kaganas & Murray 1994:18).

In dealing with problems which affect black women in the sphere of marriage and family relationships within the framework of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, the report (Women and Law in Southern Africa Research Project) repeatedly reminds readers that traditional arguments and legal concepts taken from Western Family Law may not be an appropriate approach to seek understanding of the position of black women in the context of customary law. Similarly, the report shows that because of the ethnic diversity in South Africa and the culturally diverse economic and social systems and conditions that exist, solutions taken from civil systems may be unable to assist in establishing a culturally relevant legal system within South Africa without intruding on the rights of any

person (Kaganas & Murray 1994:18). The diversity between the civil and the customary law thus constitutes a clash between two systems of life- and world-view.

In the past, a husband's marital power placed a wife in a civil marriage in the position of a minor under her husband's guardianship. The last barriers to formal equality within the family according to civil law seem to have tumbled down with the abolition of apartheid: with racial equality came gender equality in civil law (Kaganas & Murray 1994:13).

The General Law Fourth Amendment Act, which came into force on 1 December 1993, abolished the husband's marital power in respect of all civil marriages entered into in community of property before November 1984 (Christie, Clark & Murray 1995:299). Thus, women are no longer considered minors. The statute was designed to achieve formal equality between men and women. Similarly, in legislation designed to promote gender equality and the abolition of discrimination against women, mothers were accorded equal status in relation to guardianship over their children. Thus, according to civil law, men and women now have equal status before the law (Kaganas & Murray 1994:13).

One irregularity in the General Law Fourth Amendment Act of 1993 is the fact that the position of black women as wives in customary unions remains unchanged. In terms of the Black Administration Act (Act 38 of 1927), a black woman as a wife in a customary union, and who is living with her husband, is deemed to be a minor under the guardianship of her husband (Christie *et al.* 1995:300).

Changes in customary law are inhibited by the strong allegiance to tradition still prevalent among black South Africans, particularly in rural areas. In addition, South Africa's history renders attempts at reforming customary law open to charges of cultural imperialism. The prospect of change is made even less attractive to traditionalists by the fear that reforms to benefit women will undermine the very foundations of black South African cultural groups (Kaganas & Murray 1994:19).

No overall policy framework for combining customary and civil law exists in South Africa as yet. Consequently, there is no clarity with regard to the meaning of combining the laws or the process by which this will take place. Clarity in this area is urgently required to guide the entire

government policy and process to eradicate gender inequality in customary and civil law. In particular, clarity is required from government on its interpretation of the relationship between culture, custom and equality rights in the Constitution (Commission on Gender Equality 1998:55).

## **2.7 ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN IN SOUTH AFRICA**

South Africa's ongoing transition to a non-racial and non-sexist democracy has so far been astonishingly peaceful. A negotiated settlement between all political parties has ensured that there has been no dramatic rupture in the workings of the machinery of power (Business Monitor International 1995:13). This transition to a non-racial and non-sexist democracy has resulted in certain changes within the South African labour system. Legislation and affirmative action have been implemented to improve the position of black women within the South African labour system. This includes laws such as the Employment Equity Bill and legislation protecting pregnant women. However, despite legislation and affirmative action, a large proportion of black women are still unemployed. The most pressing tasks facing the policy makers of the new government in South Africa are (Business Monitor International 1995:20):

- to increase employment and reduce poverty;
- to stimulate economic expansion after a prolonged recession;
- to reduce inequalities, such as the "wage gap" and the absence of a strong middle class in South Africa, that threaten to undermine political stability;
- to manage constitutional change;
- to improve the social and economic infrastructure, for example, to enable faster growth of labour productivity through better training; and
- to hold together the wide array of often conflicting interests and identity groups within a redefined nation-state

### **2.7.1 Women and poverty**

In 1991 it was estimated that 56.4% of women aged 15 years and older were without an income of any sort and thus constitute the most deprived sector of the South African

population. It is also important that there is an unequal pattern of income distribution. At least 23.7% of the South African population, especially black women in rural areas, are said to live below the poverty line. That means that they have to live on an income of less than US\$1 per day (Commission on Gender Equality 1998:63).

Recent poverty surveys indicate that this situation is worsening (Commission on Gender Equality 1998:63). It is essential to analyse both the conditions under which the market fails to distribute income and the nature of the state and government interventions that are required to promote economic efficiency as well as the critical aspect of income distribution (Commission on Gender Equality 1998:63).

### **2.7.2 Income levels per household in South Africa**

In 1997, the South African Central Statistical Service (CSS) published findings of an income and expenditure survey conducted in 1995. The overall trends in the report were indicative of the general income and expenditure patterns of South African households in 1995. According to the CSS, in October 1995 the average annual income per household in South Africa was R41 000. The average income of black households was R23 000, compared with R32 000 for coloured households, R71 000 for Asian households and R103 000 for white households (Sidiropoulos *et al.* 1998:260).

The survey found that 23% of all black households were in the lowest annual income category (R400 to R6 868), while only 11% of all coloured, and 1% of all Indian and 1% white households were in the lowest annual income category (Sidiropoulos *et al.* 1998:260).

Some 65% of white households were in the highest annual income category, compared with 45% of Indian, 17% of coloured and 10% of all African households. Irrespective of race, households headed by women were in general significantly poorer than those headed by men. The single largest proportion of female-headed households (26%), irrespective of race, were in the lowest annual income group (R400 to R6 868). The single largest proportion of households headed by men (27%), irrespective of race, were in the highest income group (Sidiropoulos *et al.* 1998:260).



Table 2.1 shows the proportional breakdown of income of the South African population by households headed by males and females according to certain broad racial groups.

**Table 2.1: Income distribution of the South African population by gender and race**

	<b>R400 – R6 868</b>	<b>R6 869 – R12 660</b>	<b>R12 661 – R23 940</b>	<b>R23 941 – R52 800</b>	<b>R52 801 – +</b>
<b>Black</b>					
Male	19%	24%	25%	20%	12%
Female	31%	25%	21%	17%	6%
Average	23%	24%	24%	19%	10%
<b>Coloured</b>					
Male	9%	19%	23%	30%	19%
Female	16%	20%	27%	26%	11%
Average	11%	19%	25%	29%	17%
<b>Indian</b>					
Male	1%	3%	12%	36%	48%
Female	4%	13%	20%	31%	32%
Average	1%	5%	13%	35%	45%
<b>White</b>					
Male	0%	2%	6%	19%	73%
Female	5%	7%	17%	32%	40%
Average	1%	4%	8%	8%	65%

Source: Sidiropoulos *et al.* (1998:260).

### 2.7.3 Unemployment among black women in South Africa

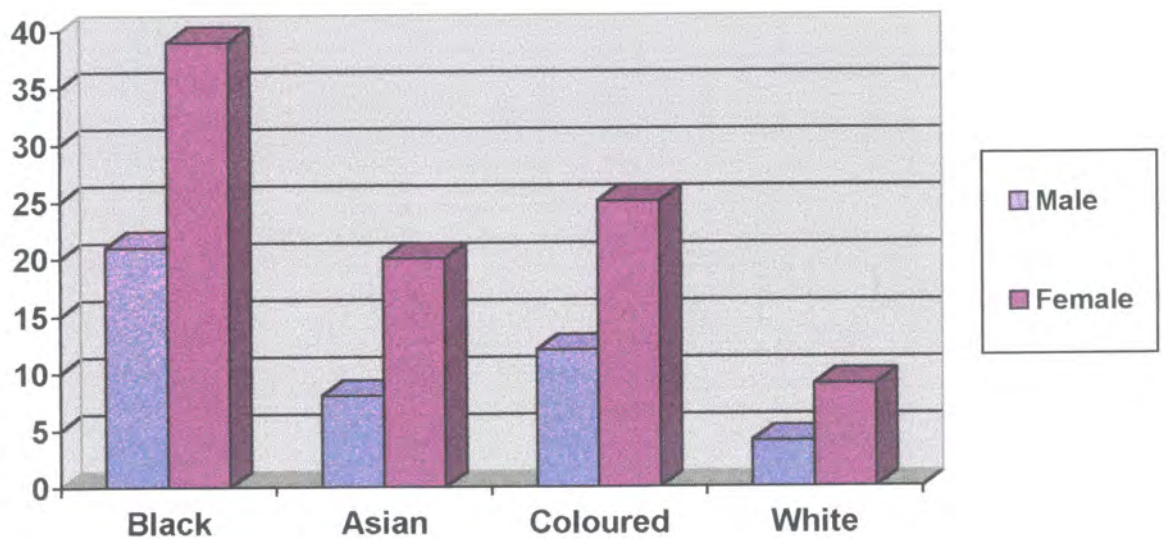
As a legacy of apartheid, most black women in South Africa today remain marginalised in geographic areas which are isolated from economic, social, educational and training resources. Approximately 52% of black women in general and 65% of all rural black women remain illiterate. Thus, the employment opportunities of black women are severely limited whilst the

high unemployment of black women persists (Kemp *et al.* 1995:134-136). Unemployment figures (see Figure 2.1) reveal that black women form the majority of the unemployed section of the South African population.

Figure 2.1 shows the estimated unemployment rate by race and gender in South Africa in 1996. These figures are taken from a study done by the South African Institute of Race Relations (SAIRR) (Sidiropoulos *et al.* 1998:259).

According to the SAIRR, the unemployment rate among women was generally double that of men. The unemployment rate among black women was the highest (39%) in the economically active age group of persons aged 15 years old or older (Sidiropoulos *et al.* 1998:260,367).

**Figure 2.1: 1996 unemployment rate in South Africa by race and gender**



#### 2.7.4 Economically active population

According to the 1995 October Household Survey by the Central Statistic Service (CSS), there were 14.4 million economically active people in South Africa in 1995. The CSS defined the economically active population (EAP) as all people aged 15 and older who were working or were available for work (Sidiropoulos *et al.* 1998:346).

Table 2.2 provides a breakdown of the economically active population in South Africa by race and gender in 1995, as calculated by the CSS (Sidiropoulos *et al.* 1998:230).

**Table 2.2: Economically active population (EAP) in South Africa by race and gender: October 1995**

	Male	Percentage male	Female	Percentage female	Total	Proportion of total EAP
Black	5 506 000	68 %	4 419 000	70 %	9 925 000	69.1%
Asian	278 000	3 %	148 000	2 %	426 000	3%
Coloured	849 000	10 %	703 000	11 %	1 551 000	10.8%
White	1 464 000	18 %	990 000	16 %	2 453 000	17.1%
<b>Total</b>	8 096 000	100 %	6 259 000	100 %	14 356 000	100%

Of the total female economically active population, 70% are black women, 2% of the total female workforce are Asian, 11% are coloured and 16% are white women. Table 2.2 shows that 69% of the total economic workforce in South Africa are black workers (Sidiropoulos *et al.* 1998:230).

#### 2.7.5 Distribution of males and females in certain occupations

The discussion below illustrates the employment of women in general in certain occupations and the various sectors of the South African economy. Table 2.3 (Sidiropoulos *et al.* 1998:246) provides a breakdown of the male/female distribution of people working by occupation in October 1995, according to the CSS. This table includes formal and informal employment (Sidiropoulos *et al.* 1998:246).

**Table 2.3: Occupational distribution of males and females in South Africa**

Occupational group	Male	% of males	Female	% of females	Total	Proportion of people working
Legislators, senior officials and managers	462 000	7 %	124 000	3 %	586 000	5.8%
Professionals	226 000	3 %	139 000	4 %	364 000	3.6%
Technicians and professionals in related professions	553 000	8 %	602 000	15 %	1155 000	11.4%
Clerks	438 000	7 %	782 000	20 %	1220 000	12%
Service workers and shop and market sales workers	678 000	10 %	457 000	12 %	1134 000	11.2%
Skilled agricultural and fishery workers	120 000	2 %	18 000	0.5 %	138 000	1.4%
Craft and related trade workers	1084 000	17 %	134 000	3 %	1219 000	12%
Plant/machine operators and assemblers	1002 000	16 %	160 000	4 %	1162 000	11.4%
Elementary occupations (unskilled workers)	1620 000	26 %	1416 000	37 %	3037 000	29.9%
Armed forces	17 000	0.27 %	1 000	0.02 %	19 000	0.2%
Occupation unspecified	71 000	1.1 %	48 000	1 %	118 000	1.2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>6272 000</b>	<b>100 %</b>	<b>3879 000</b>	<b>100 %</b>	<b>10 152 000</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Sidiropoulos *et al.* (1998:246).

However, women in South Africa contribute significantly to certain sectors of the South African economy. Some 20% of clerks are women, as are 15% of technicians and professionals in related professions. Women are the majority (37%) in elementary occupations (unskilled workers), including the clothing and textile industries, as well as the domestic arena where wages are among the lowest (Commission on Gender Equality 1998:66).

### **2.7.6 The employment of women in the Public Service**

Although women occupy 48.8% of Public Service jobs, the majority of these women are found in the “skilled production work category”, which includes nurses and teachers. The White Paper on the Transformation of the Public Service (November 1995) states that its key objective is to create a genuinely representative Public Service which reflects South African demography, without eroding efficiency and competence. To this end, the White Paper set the target as 50% representation of black people at management level. Its target is also to add at least 30% of new recruits to the middle and senior management echelons, and these recruits should preferably be women (Commission on Gender Equality 1998:66).

Since the elections in 1994, the proportion of women in senior positions in the Public Service has increased from 4% to 10%. Nevertheless, according to the Commission on Gender Equality (1998:66), the 30% target is unsatisfactory, as it refers only to new recruits, instead of also including change to the gender composition of existing senior management.

### **2.7.7 The employment of black women in the informal sector**

According to the CSS, in 1995 some 1.74 million, or 17% of the total number of people working, were employed in some way in the informal sector. The informal sector is defined by the CSS as consisting of all people or businesses that are not registered and/or defined themselves as being in the informal sector at the time of the October 1995 Household Survey (Sidiropoulos *et al.* 1998:245).

Of the total number of people working in the informal sector, 1.33 million (76%) were self-employed. The CSS estimated that the monthly contribution of the self-employed in the informal sector to the GDP in 1995 was approximately R2.7 billion. The self-employed contribute significantly to the South African economy, but their contribution remains largely unacknowledged. Black women employed in the informal sector do not enjoy the same financial benefits as those employed in the formal sector. The informal sector should be financially supported and developed by the government and financial institutions (Sidiropoulos *et al.* 1998:245).

According to the SAIRR, in 1995 as many as 77% of the entrepreneurs in the informal sector were women. In micro-enterprises with no paid employees, the proportion of women dropped to just under 40%. It was even lower in micro-enterprises with between one and four paid employees, where the proportion of women was lower than 20%. Of the enterprises run by women, 50% were in the trade sector, that is, the women run spaza shops and shebeens. This is followed by clothing manufacture, where the proportion of self-employed women was 14%, and community, social and personal services, where 13% of the total number of self-employed persons were women (Sidiropoulos *et al.* 1998:367).

Table 2.4 provides a breakdown of the number of self-employed people in the informal sector in South Africa by race and sex in 1995, according to the CSS (Sidiropoulos *et al.* 1998:245).

**Table 2.4: Self-employed persons in the informal sector**

	Male	% of males	Female	% of females	Total	Proportion of self-employed persons
<b>Black</b>	264 000	67 %	772 000	82 %	1 036 000	78.1%
<b>Asian</b>	22 000	6 %	7 000	0.7 %	29 000	2.2%
<b>Coloured</b>	32 000	8 %	95 000	10 %	127 000	9.6%
<b>White</b>	76 000	19 %	59 000	6 %	136 000	10.2%
<b>Total</b>	394 000	100 %	934 000	100 %	1 327 000	100%

Source: Sidiropoulos *et al.* (1998:245).

Women made up the majority of people employed in the informal sector, but they are unable to move out of the poverty trap because they cannot get micro-credit through banks and financial institutions. Financial allocations by banks and financial institutions have been made to small and medium businesses, but the needs of the informal sector, where women predominate, have not been addressed. If women's contribution in the informal sector is valued in the same way as in the market sector, and their contribution is given the same weight, then financial and other arrangements to support their development should also be incorporated into economic policy decisions (Commission on Gender Equality 1998:68).

### 2.7.8 The unionisation of black women workers

In the 1995 October Household Survey, the CSS found that approximately one third of the 10.2 million people working in South Africa belonged to trade unions. Table 2.5 provides a proportional breakdown of the level of unionisation in South Africa by race and gender in 1994 (Sidiropoulos *et al.* 1998:5).

**Table 2.5: Unionisation in South Africa by race and gender: 1994**

Race	Total unionised males	Total unionised females	Total unionised workers in South Africa
Black	33 %	25 %	30 %
Asian	30,04 %	32 %	30,9 %
Coloured	28,4 %	27,8 %	28,1 %
White	25,4 %	15,7 %	21,5 %
<b>Total</b>	<b>30,6 %</b>	<b>23,3 %</b>	<b>27,7%</b>

Source: Sidiropoulos *et al.* (1998:5).

Table 2.5 shows that only 25% of black women workers in South Africa are members of trade unions. By contrast, 32% of Asian women workers, 27,8% of coloured women workers and a mere 15,7% of white women workers are unionised. This implies that the majority of women workers in South Africa are not unionised (Sidiropoulos *et al.* 1998:5). Trade unions in South Africa are still dominated by male workers, which suggests that male trade union officials might compromise the rights of women workers (Horn 1991:30).

The government is trying to change the levels of unemployment, lack of unionisation and poverty within a majority group of the South African population, namely black women, through a process of affirmative action (see Section 2.7.9). This includes the equal employment of women within the South African labour system (see Section 2.7.10.6 for more detail), as well as equal participation in economically related activities, such as the right to be a member of a trade union (Govender 1998:82; Lolwana 1993:51).

### 2.7.9 Affirmative action and job advancement

The “new” South Africa, “emerging” from four decades of apartheid, is now confronted with the problem of inequalities between black and white, male and female, created by race and gender discrimination (Sadie 1995:180). Affirmative action is not simply about removing discrimination; it demands the redress of gender inequalities and discrimination in order to achieve normalisation of the economic system and equal employment (see Section 1.7.6) (Antsey 1997:6). According to Sadie (1995:184), affirmative action goals in South Africa should be the planning and implementation, as a broad strategy, of appropriate and practical development policies in human capacity development as a central focus, and should be aimed at those groups which are the most disadvantaged. In these development policies, specific attention should be given to a gender approach to development by which women, through the process of empowerment, can emancipate themselves.

Generally speaking, affirmative action refers to selective policies and programmes by governmental and non-governmental institutions. These policies and programmes are designed to provide special opportunities for certain people, on the basis of their belonging to certain groups, in order to redress inequalities suffered as a result of racial, ethnic, gender or caste affiliations (Sadie 1995:180).

Sachs (1991:14-15), also quoted by Human (1995:52), defines affirmative action as follows:

Affirmative action in the South African context ... covers all purposive activity designed to eliminate the effects of apartheid and to create a society where everyone has the same chance to get on in life. In terms of the ANC draft Bill of Rights, all anti-discrimination measures, as well as anti-poverty ones, may be regarded as constituting a form of affirmative action.

Similarly, Thomas (1992:3) argues that affirmative action can be regarded as a “pro-active development tool to overcome ... constraints and more effectively mobilise latent resources in order to stimulate overall development.” Thomas (1992:3) presents many different dimensions of affirmative action, including

- the political sphere and decision-making process;
- education and culture;





- breakdown of segregation in social life;
- sport, entertainment and recreation;
- housing and residential infrastructure;
- welfare services;
- black business advancement;
- job/employee advancement and training; and
- symbolism and the historical perspective.

The Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) (African National Congress 1994:16-17) states that affirmative action should address a variety of issues, including the marginalisation of black people, women, rural communities, farm labourers, the elderly and the youth from economic, political and social power. Affirmative action must be used to end discrimination practised on the grounds of race and gender, and to address the disparity of power between workers and management. Affirmative action should provide job security for pregnant women and promote the provision of childcare, as well as further women's equality in employment (African National Congress 1994:115).

Nigro and Nigro (1986:160) regard affirmative action as “those actions appropriate to overcome the effects of the past and present practices, policies, or other barriers to equal employment opportunity”.

In the South African context, affirmative action can be summarised as the actions and legislation designed by government and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), to provide and promote employment opportunities for people, especially black women, who in the past suffered under a system of discrimination and inequalities. After years of repressive legislation and race- and gender-based job reservation, black women have a legitimate expectation that political liberation will mean accelerated opportunities for their own development, education, careers and jobs. The experience of poverty is most immediate within the female sector of the population (see Section 2.7.1) and the sense of injustice as a consequence of the apartheid era is most salient (Antsey 1997:18).

Discrimination in the past was not simply about protecting jobs for whites – it was experienced as demeaning to African culture and values (Nkhulu 1993:3). In short, it was an experience of

the subjugation of a people's identity. The current drive is not simply to remove discrimination or to integrate black people into new ways of doing things, it is about a search for identity and a desire to stamp an African profile on organisations (Antsey 1997:18). As Sonn (1993:4) observes,

Affirmative action must reform institutions which are largely bastions of maleness, whiteness and cultural supremacy with women and blacks playing peripheral roles ... Advancement programmes cannot have as their goal the mere integration of blacks with the understanding in return that blacks will internalise the values, premises and customs of the institution. Blacks should become part of what is good, but in addition they should be bold and skilful enough to help transform the institutions for the sake of the institutions themselves.

Black women workers should thus be integrated into the western labour system as complete cultural beings and their unique African-oriented cultural and value systems should be acknowledged in the workplace.

Although black women have the right to equal employment opportunities and equal income (see Section 1.7), employment opportunities available to black women are still limited by several factors. One fundamental problem faced by the majority of black women is a lack of adequate skills (see Section 2.5.2). The provision of training therefore meets an important practical gender need, that of access to employment. Current stereotypes of what types of work are proper for women or men limit women's employment opportunities. It is therefore essential that women be trained in areas which are traditionally seen as "men's work". A further point of concern in the employment of women is the availability of childcare facilities in the community and at the workplace (see Section 3.10). Such facilities assist women in both their productive and reproductive roles. All these issues should be addressed by affirmative action, followed by the necessary legislation (Sadie 1995:183).

Affirmative action cannot be viewed in isolation. It must be seen in relation to emerging laws on discrimination and labour policy, advancing the employment opportunities of women in general and black women in particular. The network of new legislation emerging to govern employment and labour relations in South Africa seeks to promote new standards for equity. The laws on discrimination and affirmative action are clearly redress-oriented rather than

simply equal opportunity directed. The intention that active efforts be made to protect and advance those disadvantaged by unfair discrimination, is readily apparent (Antsey 1997:17).

### **2.7.10 South African women and economic policy**

The “opening up” of South Africa’s markets to international competition has meant an influx of more goods aimed at middle- and high-income earners and fewer goods provided for basic consumption within and from outside the country. This has resulted in higher prices for basic foodstuffs for people at the lower end of the income scale and competitive prices for non-essentials (Commission on Gender Equality 1998:64).

Inequality is thus increased and the gap between wealthy and poor people widens steadily as additional burdens are placed on the poor in the South African population, and on women in particular. These people do not have the economic or other resources to engage in the market, and there is no other alternative for them to produce services except via the state. The key policy question that needs to be asked is what arrangements the state will make to ensure that conditions are created for the economic advancement of the poor, and, in particular, of black women (Commission on Gender Equality 1998:64).

The following legislation and initiatives are examples of efforts made by the state to develop previously disadvantaged groups, in particular black women, and to ensure job advancement for them. The legislation and initiatives are discussed in a more or less chronological order from 1993 to 1998.

#### *2.7.10.1 Legislation for domestic workers*

One of the most significant changes in labour legislation for women was the amendment of the Basic Conditions of Employment Act (BCEA), (Act 137 of 1993). Act 137 of 1993 came into effect on 1 January 1994. The stipulations of the act extend to include domestic workers. The minimum conditions of employment that apply to the private sector are now also applicable to one of the most marginalised groups of women workers in South Africa, namely domestic

workers – 89% of all workers employed in domestic service are women, of which the majority are black women (Hale *et al.* 1996:323).

#### 2.7.10.2 *Legislation for farm labourers*

The Agricultural Labour Act (Act 147 of 1993) took effect on 17 January 1994. Some of the provisions of the Labour Relations Act (Act 28 of 1956) were extended to farming activities and adapted some provisions of the BCEA applying to farm labourers. Of workers employed in farming and related activities, 24% are women, of whom 26,6% are black women. These figures do not include casual and seasonal workers, which means that the figures might be much higher, as many women employed in agriculture are employed on a casual, seasonal or domestic basis (Hale *et al.* 1996:324).

#### 2.7.10.3 *The Women's Budget Initiative*

The Women's Budget Initiative was developed in 1995 to track and advance the interests of women in the South African political and economic transition (Krafchik 1998:1). The background to the South African Women's Budget is the commitment to gender equity – including entrenchment in the Constitution and elsewhere. This initiative tries to address the challenges of the widespread poverty and inequality in the country and the inordinate concentration of this poverty in South African women, particularly black women. The Budget Initiative was undertaken with the aim of examining the issues related to gender relations in government budgeting as a means to argue effectively for expenditure reprioritisation towards poor women's needs within the budget (IDASA 1998a:1). The project tracks expenditure on women through budget allocations and seeks to find creative and rigorous ways to show appreciation for women's economic and social contributions and to examine alternative patterns of expenditure. The government has committed itself to a broad programme of budget reform to monitor women's development systematically (IDASA 1998a:1).

The primary outcome of the Women's Budget is the publication of an annual volume – the South African Women's Budget – that monitors the link between government policies on

women and government expenditure and taxation in selected departments (IDASA 1998a:1). The first Women's Budget was produced in March 1996, the second in the second half of 1997, the third Women's Budget was published in August 1998 (IDASA 1998b:2).

The Women's Budget is not a separate budget. The basis of the approach is that woman-friendly programmes should be integrated into the core activities of all government departments. In this respect, the economic rationale for monitoring individual departments is supported by gender theory, which demands that the needs of female employees should be taken into account during departmental budgeting (Krafchik 1998:6), not marginalised or dealt with separately.

#### *2.7.10.4 The Employment Standards Bill*

The Green Paper on Employment Standards was released in February 1996 for public comment and for negotiation at the National Economic Development and Labour Council (NEDLAC). It set out policy proposals for a new piece of legislation, the Employment Standard Statute, which would replace the Basic Conditions of Employment Act of 1994 (Dobson 1997:14).

The Employment Standards Bill sets out to establish basic workplace rights. It will establish basic rights, such as working hours, sick leave and annual leave, for different categories of workers, full-time, part-time, etc. One of the objectives of the Employment Standards Green Paper (1996) is to address gender discrimination (Samson 1997:16). Male and female workers occupy different positions in the South African economy. Consequently, they will be affected differently by any provisions which allow standards to be changed, and which are geared at making the labour market even more flexible than it already is (Samson 1997:16).

#### *2.7.10.5 The Employment and Occupational Equity Green Paper*

The Employment and Occupational Equity Green Paper was released for public comment and discussion at the National Economic Development and Labour Council (NEDLAC) on 1 July

1996. The Green Paper contains policy proposals for a new employment and equity statute, which has as one of its fundamental objectives the eradication of all discrimination in the labour market. The issues of race, gender and disability are addressed as a unit in this paper (Murray *et al.* 1998: 353).

This Green Paper contains some important proposals for women in the workplace. It is proposed that maternity leave be extended to four months. Another proposal is that pregnant and nursing women engaged in night work, or work which may be harmful to them or their children, should be entitled to suitable alternative work without the loss of benefits during pregnancy and for one year after the birth of the child (Murray *et al.* 1998:354). However, concepts such as discrimination and equity are used very loosely in the Green Paper and it fails to distinguish clearly between direct and indirect discrimination (Murray *et al.* 1998:354).

#### 2.7.10.6 *The Employment Equity Bill*

The Employment Equity Bill seeks to eliminate unfair discrimination in employment, and to provide for affirmative action to redress the imbalances of the past, and to create equality in employment. This legislation was drafted to advance those groups which have been disadvantaged as a result of discrimination caused by laws and social practices, and not to seek retribution for past injustices (Labourmet 1998:1). The Bill makes provision for positive measures to promote a diverse and representative workforce. It stresses, however, the need for this to be done in ways which do not put in place absolute barriers to the employment or advancement prospects of any individual (Labourmet 1998:4).

The approach taken by those who drafted the Bill is that employment equity encompasses both the elimination of discrimination and the establishment of specific measures to accelerate the advancement of designated groups, such as black women workers and the physically handicapped. One of the measures to accelerate the advancement of certain groups is affirmative action. There is more to equity than affirmative action and there are many other measures that organisations can take which do not necessarily fall under more traditional ideas of “affirmative action”, but which can in effect help people to attain equality. These measures should be included in the employment equity plans (Labourmet 1998:6).

All employers must take steps to promote equal opportunities in the workplace, and to this end, to eliminate unfair discrimination in any employment policy or practice (Labourmet 1998:11). Every designated employer, essentially employers employing more than 49 employees, is required to take five steps towards employment equity (Labourmet 1998:6):

- prepare a profile of its workforce;
- review its employment policies and practices;
- prepare and implement an employment equity plan;
- lodge a summary of its employment equity plan with the Department of Labour; and
- report annually to the Department of Labour on progress in the implementation of its plan.

The Bill does not, however, impose quotas for the representation of members of designated groups, such as black women and physically handicapped persons, in the workplace (Labourmet 1998:6).

#### *2.7.10.7 The Skills Development Bill*

The object of the Skills Development Bill of 1997 is to provide for a skills development strategy that is flexible, accessible, decentralised, demand-led and based on a partnership between the public and private sectors. The Bill aims to improve the competency levels of the workforce in order to promote the levels of responsibility of employees and to enable employers to achieve rising levels of productivity and competitiveness. The Bill is designed to enable persons of working age who are unemployed to obtain nationally recognised qualifications indicating work readiness and to enable such persons to enter and remain in employment or become self-employed and enjoy a rising standard of living. Provisions are made for special assistance to target groups so that they can enter and remain in employment or become self-employed (Department of Labour 1997:2).

#### *2.7.10.8.1.1.1 The protection of employees during pregnancy and after the birth of a child*

A Code of Good Practice on the protection of employees during pregnancy and after the birth of a child has been included under Section 87(1)(b) of the Basic Conditions Employment Act (BCEA), (Act 75 of 1997) (Republic of South Africa 1998:1).

The reason for the inclusion of the Code is that many women work during pregnancy and return to work while they are still breast-feeding. The objective of the Code is to provide guidelines for employers and employees concerning the protection of the health of women against potential hazards in their work environment during pregnancy, after the birth of a child and while breast-feeding (Republic of South Africa 1998:1).

The following are examples of legal requirements relevant to the protection of the health and safety of pregnant and breast-feeding employees (Republic of South Africa 1998:2):

- No person may be discriminated against or dismissed on account of pregnancy.
- Employers are required to provide and maintain a work environment that is safe and without risk to the health of the employees. This includes risks to the reproductive health of employees.
- Employers must supply employees with information about and train them in the risk to their health and safety and the measures taken to eliminate or minimise them.

The Code states that employers and employees should be aware of the following common aspects of pregnancy that may affect work (Republic of South Africa 1998:6-7):

- Because of morning sickness, employees may be unable to perform early shift work. Exposure to nauseating smells may aggravate morning sickness.
- More frequent visits to the toilet will require reasonable access to toilet facilities and consideration of the employee's position if leaving the work she performs unattended poses difficulties.
- The employee's increasing size and discomfort may require changes of protective clothing, changes to work in confined spaces and changes to her work where manual handling is involved. Her increasing size may also impair dexterity, agility, co-ordination, and speed of movement and reach.



#### 2.7.10.9 *Health and safety*

The various kinds of work that women do can result in physical and psychosocial health problems not traditionally recognised as work-related. Women's occupational health and safety problems are both under-reported and under-compensated. Women are inadequately represented in health and safety structures and opportunities for education and training on these issues are limited. Women still carry the main responsibility for childcare and for unpaid household duties which leave little time for adequate rest or leisure. These mainly invisible tasks contribute towards both mental and physical ill-health among women (Kisting 1997:20).

Occupational health legislation is intended to protect workers from physical, chemical, biological and ergonomic hazards in the workplace. There have been important positive changes in occupational health legislation in recent years. The following legislation is important in this regard (Kisting 1997:20):

- the Basic Conditions of Employment Act (BCEA) of 1994;
- the Unemployment Insurance Fund (UIF);
- the Compensation for Occupational Injuries and Diseases Act of 1994 (COIDA);
- the Occupational Health and Safety Act of 1994 (OHSA);
- the Hazardous Chemical Substances Regulations (HCS) of 1995; and
- lead regulations.

While there have been improvements in health and safety arrangements in many places of work, employers are not keen to budget for these, as there is no demonstrable link to immediate profit returns. All these factors play a pivotal role in determining women's active and sustained participation in health and safety concerns (Kisting 1997:23).

#### 2.7.10.10 *Concluding remarks*

While the above legislation and initiatives are meant to help women, the danger of the initiatives and legislation discussed above is that they make certain demands on the employer. This places employers in a difficult position, as they might be unable to comply with some of these requirements and thus simply refuse to employ women. This kind of legislation might be

to the detriment of women, as it limits the employment opportunities for women in virtually all industries where manual labour is performed and all industries that require certain periods of standing and sitting. The legislation and initiatives might have the effect that women are again discriminated against, because it is just not profitable to employ pregnant women or women in general.

## **2.8 THE POLITICAL EMPOWERMENT OF BLACK WOMEN**

Women and issues that concern women received more attention at the time of the 1994 elections than they had ever before in South African politics. A third of the ANC's candidates were women and other parties included unexpectedly high numbers of women on their lists of candidates. In addition, there were two women's parties involved in the elections: the Women's Rights Peace Party and the South African Women's Party. Although neither of these parties returned any members to Parliament or provincial legislatures, their participation in the election helped to emphasise women's concerns. It helped to ensure that it was impossible for politicians to ignore issues raised by women (Hale *et al.* 1996:306).

Because of the African National Congress's one-third quota for women in the 1994 elections, women constitute 24% of all parliamentarians, the seventh highest percentage of women in parliament anywhere in the world. Women also comprise one quarter of the members of the nine provincial legislatures (Commission on Gender Equality 1998:73).

However, in the local government elections, the proportion of elected women was only 19%. This figure is still one of the highest in Africa and compares favourably with percentages of women in local government internationally. Honouring a pledge made just before the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, President Nelson Mandela used cabinet reshuffles to increase the proportion of women ministers from 15% to 29% of the total. In 1998, four out of 25 cabinet ministers, and eight out of 13 deputy ministers, were women. Women in Parliament have formed a portfolio Committee on the Quality of Life and the Status of Women and a multiparty Parliamentary Women's Group (Commission on Gender Equality 1998:73).

Twenty-five portfolio committees shadow the various national ministries. Each selected committee has between 19 and 25 members. However, women are poorly represented (less than six female members) on the committees for (Hale *et al.* 1996:307):

- Foreign Affairs (5 female members);
- Justice (5 female members);
- Labour (4 female members);
- Mineral and Energy Affairs (2 female members);
- Safety and Security (4 female members);
- Sport and Recreation (4 female members);
- Trade and Industry (5 female members); and
- Transport (2 female members).

Women are well represented (12 or more female members) on the committees for (Hale *et al.* 1996:307):

- Arts, Culture, Science and Technology (12 female members);
- Health (14 female members); and
- Welfare (18 female members).

Women are largely left out of committees on national level, such as foreign affairs, justice and safety and security. On the other hand, women are well represented on committees handling domestic issues such as art and health. These committees are not seen as subordinate to committees dealing with international political issues or the protection of the state, but women are not represented to full capacity on the first set of committees. The fact that women are only well represented on three committees and poorly represented on eight committees is a cause for concern. One can conclude that women are not fully politically empowered or liberated yet.

Although women are well represented in provincial legislatures, they are largely absent from the regional executive committees. In 1999, before the national elections, all nine provincial premiers were men (Hale *et al.* 1996:308).

Women do not always find public office a comfortable, affirming place, nor is it relevant to their interests. Despite the high number of women representatives, the voices of women in Parliament are still conspicuously absent from the structure and procedures of Parliament



(Carter 1998:1). Many women parliamentarians have found Parliament to be hostile and alienating. One realises that, although women, and black women in particular, were granted political rights, they are still not fully liberated or represented to full capacity within government or related institutions (Commission on Gender Equality 1998:73).

## 2.9 SUMMARY

According to Fairhurst and Moate (1993:34),

Throughout the world, since the 1970's, we have witnessed a growing concern and a spectacular rise in the number of initiatives that promote the status of women. This has stimulated the growth of women's movements and various studies which seek to expose and address existing gender inequalities and acceptance of women concerns as legitimate issues. As a result, the focus on gender is becoming increasingly evident in recent research endeavours. South Africa is no exception in the continued struggle by women for change.

In the past, the position of black women workers within the labour market was influenced by apartheid and the reservation of employment opportunities, and, after the abolition of apartheid, by affirmative action. The position and working behaviour of women within the South African labour system is influenced directly and indirectly by political and social ideologies such as feminism, and issues such as the emphasis by the South African government on equality, non-racism and non-sexism. This should be taken into account when studying the work performance, achievement motivation and work values of black women workers.

Outside the workplace, black women workers have a range of obligations and must face role ascription within the traditional hierarchy as well as customary law. These factors and experiences are carried over into the workplace because black women workers function as complete cultural beings within and outside the workplace. Thus, black women workers cannot be viewed separately from the historical and current economic, legal, political and social factors that have influenced and continue to influence their daily lives, access to, and position within the workplace.



Historically, employment opportunities for black women in South Africa were limited by an ethnically discriminatory political system. Black women have only been officially included within the South African labour system since 1986. Thus, black women did not have opportunities to develop managerial skills or to adapt to the western labour system until late in the 1980's. This influences the work values and thus the working behaviour of black women workers in the present labour system in South Africa.

In many instances, black women were negatively influenced by a lack of access to education. This limits the employment opportunities of black women in the present labour system and a large proportion of black women are therefore restricted to unskilled labour. However, since the abolition of apartheid, black women in South Africa have in many ways begun to establish themselves in the new political and economic climate within a western-oriented labour system. Black women have placed the rights of black women workers on the national agenda. "Gender" has become an important factor in South African politics and economics. It must be remembered that political freedom after 1994 did not entail economic and social freedom for most black women.

At present, South Africa has one of the most progressive Constitutions for gender equality and the advancement of black women in the world. The Constitution contains a firm commitment to ensuring equality between men and women. The principle of gender equality is enshrined in the Preamble to the Constitution, the Bill of Rights and in other essential provisions. The emphasis on equality is evidence of a shift in the lawmakers' approach to women, at least as far as the enhancement of their legal status is concerned. However, the nature of oppression invariably means that liberation secured in political manifestos or legislation such as the 1996 Constitution does not necessarily mean liberation in practice. Constitutional rights and legal reforms are important to open doors for women, but abstract rights without action will not make much difference to women's lives (McLachlan 1993:60). It is the way in which legal rights are translated into reality and are supplemented by social change that determine whether they change women's lives.

The transition to a non-racial and non-sexist democracy in 1994 has resulted in several changes in the South African labour system. Legislation and affirmative action have been applied to improve the position of black women within the South African labour system. However,



despite legislation and affirmative action, a large proportion of black women remains unemployed. Due to the legacies of apartheid, most black women in South Africa today remain marginalised in geographic areas which are isolated from economic, social, educational and training resources (Kemp *et al.* 1995:134-136). Thus, the employment opportunities of black women are severely limited, and high unemployment among black women persists.

Although 39% of all black women in South Africa are unemployed, 70% of the total economically active female population are black women. Women in South Africa contribute significantly to a number of sectors of the South African economy. Women are in the majority in the clothing and textile industries and the domestic arena.

The new South Africa, “emerging” from four decades of apartheid, is now confronted with the major problem of inequalities between black and white and male and female, created by race and gender discrimination. One of the strategies to address the problem is affirmative action, but affirmative action is not simply about removing discrimination; it demands the redress of gender inequalities and discrimination for the normalisation of the economic system and equal employment to be achieved. After years of repressive legislation and job reservation through race and gender, black women have a legitimate expectation that political liberation will mean accelerated opportunities for their own development, education, careers and jobs. Black women should be integrated into the western labour system as complete cultural beings and their African-oriented cultural and value systems should be acknowledged within the workplace.

Despite the economic and political empowerment of women in general, and black women in particular, as well as advances that have been made towards gender equality within government since 1994, one realises that women are still not fully liberated or represented within government or related institutions. On their own, law and legal institutions cannot secure equality for women. Although placing equality on the statute book does serve a normative function, it does not inevitably lead to change in women’s lived experience. To ensure that formal legal changes lead to material change for women, legal and social institutions must be transformed. Wallman (1979:14) summarises the above-mentioned situation as follows:

Whatever the readiness of members of an ethnic category or group to pursue particular forms of work; they can only respond to opportunity when it is there. The effect of their ethnicity is therefore dependent upon the state of the economic system and on



their bargaining strength within it. Conversely, they will not see, will not accept, will not succeed in the opportunity offered if it is not appropriate to their choice of work and their cultural experience.

According to Farrel (1978:13), the South African labour system is sensitive to changes in the political climate and should not be examined without considering political, social and economic trends. The most important and far-reaching debate in South African politics right now is about how best to achieve two goals: redressing the inequalities of the past, and ensuring sustainable growth and development in the future. One of the challenges is to ensure that black women workers are included in the development process as cultural beings with an African-oriented culture which they bring with them to the workplace.

It is against this background of social, political and economic influences that black women workers operate within the workplace. Although these factors might not have a direct or prominent influence on the working behaviour of the research group, they do influence the working environment and the political climate in which black women operate as complete cultural beings and are thus worth taking note of. It is against this historical and current social, political and economic background that the work milieu of the black women workers employed at AMM is discussed.



## CHAPTER 3

### BLACK WOMEN AND THE WORK MILIEU: THE AMM CASE STUDY

#### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter contains the data gathered on the attitudes of the black women workers employed at AMM towards “work”. The influence of value judgements and the life- and world-views held by these women on their working behaviour within a western-oriented South African factory are examined. This study focuses on how black women workers perceive and experience certain western work values. This working behaviour and the women’s value judgements are described according to and compared with the criteria set by Raubenheimer and Kotze (1984) and Van Vuuren (1988).

The majority of the members of the labour force operating within a western work environment in South Africa come from a traditional African background (see Table 2.2). Black women are part of the black workforce, thus, western work values (described in detail in Section 1.6.1) are relevant to their work situation, as these criteria imply that these workers are expected to behave in a certain way and, hence, that their working behaviour is predictable, regardless of the culture of employees. In addition, the labour laws and the challenge to achieve gender equality also plays a part in determining the position of black women workers within the South African labour system (see Chapter 2).

#### 3.2 THE WORK MILIEU

The research group for both the qualitative and quantitative research was 19 black women workers. These black women workers are employed at Automotive Mouldings cc (AMM) in Marble Hall. Their workload is comprised mainly of unskilled labour, including the making of automobile components such as car door frames, vehicle carpeting and car door boards.

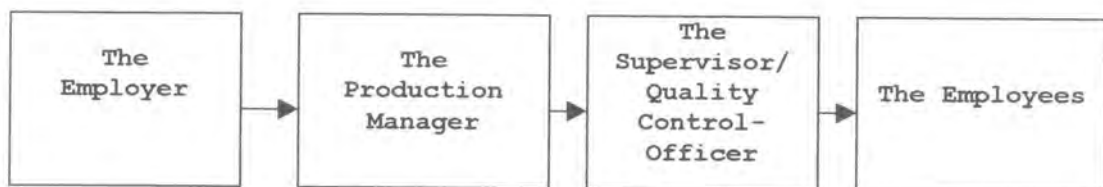


They make other items such as sleeping couches and plastic bottles and they produce juice and bottle the juice.

The women who make the automobile parts and the women who make bottles and juice do not work together. The factory is thus effectively divided into two parts, and the juice department is much smaller than the automobile component production department.

The factory operates on a horizontal organisational structure. Thus, the employer is in control, and the production manager is second in command. The production manager is in charge of the supervisor and the quality control officer. The supervisor is in charge of the male employees, while the quality control officer supervises the female employees. There is no complicated or intricate structure of command in the workplace. The workers are employed in an informal fashion as contractors. There are no formal service contracts (see Section 1.7.3) and there is no formal or contractual differentiation in status between employees. All employees are considered equal in the formal organisational structure of the factory and thus the black women workers are not formally subordinate to one another.

**Figure 3.1: The horizontal organisational structure at AMM**



The working circumstances are informal and workers can come and go at the workplace as they wish. There are no formal working hours, as there are no formal service contracts, but the workers are normally expected to be at the factory by eight or half past eight in the morning, and to work until five in the afternoon, if possible. There are regular breaks for the workers: there is a tea break of half an hour at half past nine in the morning and a lunch hour from one to two o'clock in the afternoon.

The factory functions on the principle of direct proportional remuneration, in other words, the more work is done, the greater the remuneration (production equals remuneration). Each of the women receives R360 as the minimum wage per month and the rest of their monthly wages are subject to proportional remuneration. Each black woman worker has specific and



delineated duties to perform and the women are individually responsible for the work that they perform as well as the quality of the work. Each black woman worker is individually responsible for recording how much work she has done and completed, and thus receives remuneration commensurate with the day's work.

As the factory functions on a contract basis, there are deadlines and time limits. This means that a certain amount of work must be completed before a certain date. Mondays are normally loading or freight days, thus all the components that have been made for clients of AMM, such as automobile manufacturers, are loaded onto trucks and transported to the different manufacturers and clients of AMM. The women receive the order for the parts and products required by the manufacturers and are expected to complete the required number of automobile components within the time limit. The women are expected to work overtime, if necessary, to fulfil the contract. Therefore, the black women workers are individually responsible for their monthly income and collectively responsible for the fulfilment of the contracts with manufacturers and other clients of AMM.

The black women workers employed at AMM are diverse in terms of their ages, ethnic affiliations, languages, religions and education. The biographical data of the 19 respondents to the questionnaires are illustrated and discussed in the sections below. Aspects such as the age and education of the black women workers, as will be statistically illustrated, have a direct and real influence on productivity.

### **3.3 AGE OF THE BLACK WOMEN WORKERS**

The 19 black women workers are between 27 and 56 years old. Although there is no formal distinction in the official status of the employees at AMM, age is considered very important within the workplace, as it creates an informal system of seniority and importance among the black women workers, and within the factory. The older the worker and the longer the worker has been employed at AMM, the higher her status, and the more respect she enjoys within the workplace. According to respondents, junior employees are expected to respect the older workers and to listen to their advice. If an older woman is newly employed, she should listen to the advice of the younger women with more experience in the workplace, but she should still be afforded the respect due to her age and her seniority. This behaviour is in line with the principles of the culture of the black women workers (see Section 2.3.4), where seniority and

respect play an important role in the daily interaction between members of these cultural groups (Bruwer 1963:46,55; Hammond-Tooke 1974b:360; Kriel 1992:198; Mönnig 1967:268). Table 3.1 illustrates the difference in age in the workplace.

Ten of the respondents (52,6%) fall in the age category of 27 to 40 years. The other nine (47,3%) of the respondents are more than 40 years old and indicated that they find it difficult to perform their tasks, as the assignments often require manual labour. Nine (47,3%) of the women over the age of 40 also stated that they feel old and tired and cannot work continuously for long hours. These women complained that, although they are old, they could not retire, because they need to work in order to survive and to feed their families. This aspect has a direct and negative influence on productivity within AMM, as most of the labour is unskilled and manual in nature (see Section 3.2).

**Table 3.1: Age differentiation of the black women workers at AMM**

Age categories	Number of Respondents
27 – 30 years old	2
31 – 35 years old	5
36 – 40 years old	3
41 – 45 years old	5
46 – 50 years old	3
51 – 55 years old	0
56 – 60 years old	1

According to the older women, the age of many of the black women workers at AMM (between 41 and 60 years old), limits their employment opportunities outside AMM and confines them to the unskilled labour sector, as no employer will employ an old woman to do manual labour. This last statement is particularly relevant to the black women workers with limited school education (see Section 3.8).

### 3.4 ETHNIC AFFILIATION

According to Schlemmer (1996:179),

Some academics and politicians maintain that ethnicity is very salient and that those that would deny its importance reflect nothing more than the view of a tiny minority of middle-class black urban people. Others argue that black people experience their problems as blacks, not as Zulus, Xhosas, Sothos, and so on ... [this]... divergence of views is in part due to the fact that some observers see ethnicity as a fairly invariable cultural absolute while others see it as a variable, dynamic phenomenon reflecting the degree of mobilisation or articulation of power around ethnic symbols. Whatever it is, however, the absence of any consensus would indicate that empirical studies among blacks have certain insights to offer.

As the research group is ethnically diverse, it is important, for the sake of the completeness of this research, to state the ethnic affiliation of the black women. In the completion of the questionnaires, the black women workers stated their ethnic affiliation as set out in Table 3.2:

**Table 3.2: Ethnic affiliation of the black women workers at AMM**

Categories of ethnic identity	Number of respondents per category
Ndebele	2
Pedi	6
Sotho (North Sotho)	8
Swazi	1
Zulu	2

One woman identified herself as Moslem, although this is a religious association more than an ethnic identity. When asked about this association, the spokesperson indicated that she was of Pedi origin but had converted to Islam and thus regards herself as ethnically Moslem.

Two of the women identified themselves as Ndebele, while another two spokespersons considered themselves to be Zulu. Although the Zulu and the Ndebele are both part of the

Nguni cluster, the Zulu women were adamant that they could not be associated with the Ndebele. They were very proud of their Zulu roots.

In the survey, 14 (73.68%) of the black women workers employed at AMM are of North Sotho origin. The Pedi and North Sotho women identified themselves according to certain criteria. Six women identified themselves as Pedi in origin. Although the Pedi are part of the North Sotho cluster (Bruwer 1963:21-22; Kriel 1992:25-33) (see Section 2.4), these women did not experience their ethnic affiliation as merely North Sotho. Eight women of North Sotho origin considered themselves merely as Sotho (see Table 3.2). These women are not Pedi in origin, nor did they identify themselves as South-Sotho or Tswana in origin. The women did not expand on this ethnic identification and merely stated that “that is what we are”. Schlemmer (1996:184-185) states that

ethnic identity and cultural observance are not absolute social differentiators or invariable primordial features of consciousness. These phenomena rise and fall in salience depending on the degree to which the surrounding circumstances and interests support them and on the extent to which they have become mobilised by or incorporated into other aspects of social action.

A direct result of ethnic diversity, however, is a diversity of languages within the factory, as is discussed in the next section.

### **3.5 LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY OF THE BLACK WOMEN WORKERS AT AMM**

A logical consequence of the ethnic diversity is a diversity of languages within the workplace. This can cause problems within the workplace as the black women workers do not always understand one another clearly. Although the majority of the black women workers at AMM are able to speak and understand Sotho, this is not necessarily their language of choice, and when they socialise with other workers in their place of work, the women tend to stick to their own language group and prefer not to mingle with the women with whom they cannot communicate clearly. Meer *et al.* (1990:143) had similar results in their study.

Despite the fact that 17 of the women are able to speak and understand Sotho, they did not distinguish between the languages South Sotho and Sepedi, and merely stated their language

proficiency as SeSotho. Table 3.3 illustrates the language proficiency of the black women workers as indicated by their completion of questionnaires.

**Table 3.3 : Language proficiency of the black women workers at AMM**

Languages in the workplace	Number of respondents per language
Afrikaans	4
English	3
IsiNdebele	5
SeSotho	17
Siswati	1
IsiXhosa	1
IsiZulu	6

Because of the language proficiency of both the research group and the researcher, an interpreter had to be used during the interviews. The researcher were not able to speak Sotho and very few of the black women workers understood Afrikaans or English (see Table 3.3). Thus, the researcher spoke a mixture of Afrikaans and English during the interviews. An interpreter translated the questions and the black women workers answered in the language of their choice (see Section 1.8.2.1). Their answers were then interpreted back to the researcher.

In addition to the communication problems during interviews, this difference in language capabilities also presents an obstacle to effective communication within the workplace. The situation requires an interpreter to be used during meetings between members of the management team and the workers. This issue is discussed in more detail in Section 3.19.2.

### 3.6 RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY

The above-mentioned diversities imply the possibility of religious diversity in the workplace. Note that the woman worker who identified herself as Moslem in terms of her “ethnic

affiliation” did not state her religion as Islam but merely claimed that she had no church or religious affiliation at all.

**Table 3.4: Religious affiliation of the black women workers at AMM**

Categories of church affiliation	Number of women per affiliation
Anglican	1
Apostolic	3
Church without a name	1
Dutch Reformed	1
No church affiliation	5
Reformed	2
Roman Catholic	3
St John	1
ZCC	2

Five of the respondents (26,3%) to the questionnaires claimed to have no church affiliation at all, whilst 14 (73,6%) of the respondents identified their specific church affiliation (see Table 3.4). Six (31,5%) of the black women workers take part in religious activities such as prayer meetings and choir practices during the week and on weekends. Fairhurst and Moate (1993:42-43) reported similar results in their study on the daily lives of women in Nooitgedacht. During these prayer meetings, they ask for a better life, an end to their suffering and a “sacred heart”, in other words to be a better person. Others state that they do not have the time to take part in such activities. Some of the women claimed to have received financial assistance from the church in times of need, others have received assistance during sickness or when there was a death in the family. This assistance normally includes food, care for the ailing and prayer meetings at the home of the sick or deceased.

Religion is viewed as separately from work performance by the black women workers. When asked about the Divine and work motivation, spokespersons responded that God obviously wanted people to work because He does not like it when people are poor and starving. It was also said that if a person did not work, he/she would be forced to commit sins, such as

stealing in order to survive. According to the black women workers, God does not like stealing; therefore, He would prefer it if everybody had a job.

After long discussions and questioning it became clear that the work values of the black women workers are not founded in religion. Nor is idleness in itself perceived as a sin, as is the case in the puritan work ethic. Although these puritan views of work are idealistic (see Section 1.5.7), this aspect can be seen as the main contrast between the culturally determined work value systems of westerners and those of these black women workers. It also means that work is not perceived as a virtue, but merely as a means to an end, namely to be able to feed one's family. This contrast between the broad western work value system and the work values of the black women workers at AMM was established in qualitative research.

### **3.6 DEPENDANTS AND CHILDREN WITHIN THE HOUSEHOLDS OF THE BLACK WOMEN WORKERS**

According to Van Vuuren (1988:19), black people work mainly to ensure the survival of the group, meaning the survival of the family. The welfare of any one individual is not so important, the group is more important than the individual. This is a strong, traditionally held value (Kriel 1992:21-22). In the case of the black women workers at AMM, motivation to work is directly related to the survival of the children and dependants of these black women. All the black women workers stated that they worked in order to earn money so that their children would not starve. Meer (1984:29) obtained similar results during interviews with 992 women workers, of whom the majority were black women: "The children come first. No matter how much we need the money, the children come first. After all, we are working for the children. When they fall ill, we stay at home and lose the pay."

The composition of genealogical diagrams (see Appendix A) gave the researcher some indication of the number of dependants in each of the households from which these black women workers came. Dependants in this case can be defined as unemployed persons living in the same house as the black women workers, including children, family members or friends without a regular income. By all spokespersons' own admissions, these people all depend on that particular woman for housing, food, clothing, and support.



Black women workers at AMM have an average of 3.7 dependants each, which means that they have to feed, clothe and house these dependants on their monthly wages. Thirteen (68,4%) of the black women workers at AMM are single mothers and have to work in order to provide for their families and children.

The black women workers at AMM have an average of 2.5 children per person. The respondents have 1 to 6 children per household between the ages of 10 months and 27 years old. Four (21%) of the women have one child, whilst only one woman has six children. It is important to note that 11 (57,8%) of respondents have two or fewer children. Table 3.5 provides a breakdown of the number of children compared to the number of respondents, as established through quantitative research. So, for example, four of the respondents have only one child each, whilst seven of the women have two children each.

**Table 3.5: Children per household of the black women workers at AMM**

Number of children per household	Number of households per category of children
1 child per household	4
2 children per household	7
3 children per household	3
4 children per household	4
5 children per household	0
6 children per household	1

Children are very important in the lives of the black women workers (see Section 2.4.2). The welfare of their children forced the black women into formal employment. According to these spokespersons, they have to work in order to send their children to school. The black women workers stated that their children have to attend school to obtain a good education to secure satisfactory employment. This education and chance of employment are important, because the children have to earn sufficient salaries to be able to provide their parent or parents with a comfortable retirement and old age.

### 3.8 EDUCATION AND PERCEPTIONS OF EDUCATION

The black women workers at AMM are largely semi-schooled, meaning they obtained a basic primary education. Although a large proportion of the black women workers at AMM had some secondary education, they are not highly literate and their language proficiency is mainly limited to their home language and, in some instances, an additional African language (see Section 3.6). Only four of the black women workers could speak Afrikaans and three of the black women workers have mastered some rudimentary English (see Table 3.3). This causes communication problems in the workplace, as the employer and the production manager use Afrikaans or English to communicate with the black women workers. Thus, in most instances, an interpreter needs to be used in the communication process between employees and management (see Section 3.19.2).

The black women workers perform mainly unskilled labour, therefore the lack of education and literacy in the workplace does not cause any critical problems and does not necessarily influence production in this case study. Nevertheless, it diminishes the chances of the black women workers to find employment outside the unskilled labour market and possibly to earn higher wages than they do at present. Fairhurst and Moate (1993:38) found the following in their study on the daily lives of women in Nooitgedacht in the former Bophuthatswana:

Since the majority [of the black women] have never been exposed to any form of formal education, their chances of enjoying improved employment opportunities and earning better income to the betterment of their lives, are greatly reduced.

Meer *et al.* (1990:89) had similar findings in interviews conducted with 988 women in the Durban-Pinetown region.

Table 3.6 provides a breakdown of the levels of school education per number of respondents.

Six (31,5%) of the black women workers had matriculated, while another six (31,5%) of the respondents were illiterate. Eleven (57,8%) of the respondents who had not matriculated stated that they had dropped out of school for financial reasons. Two of the respondents indicated that they could not finish school because they had fallen pregnant and had had to look after their children. One respondent stated that her husband told her that “enough is enough” and that she did not need any further education. Meer’s (1984:26) study produced similar results.

**Table 3.6: Levels of education of the black women workers at AMM**

Categories of grades according to the present SA education system	Number of women attaining certain grades
No school education	6
Grade 1 – 2	1
Grade 3 – 7	3
Grade 8 – 10	3
Grade 11 – 12	6

Only one woman revealed an interest in adult education programmes, although she did not have a very clear idea of what adult education entails, how or where to enrol for courses, or what she would gain from it. At the end of the discussion, she stated that adult education would be impossible because she and the other women have to look after their children in the evenings and at night. There would thus be no opportunity for them to attend adult education classes if these were presented after hours.

Tertiary education was out of the question, according to the black women workers. Not one of the women who had matriculated could afford further education. One spokesperson expressed an ambition to become a nurse and would study nursing if she could save enough money to pay for the course. The other black women workers stated that they were not satisfied with their current educational situation, but had accepted it as inevitable.

Because of their own lack of education, and because they value education very highly, the black women workers' children of school-going age, attend school. Some of these children have already matriculated, or are matriculating through correspondence courses. Of all the black women workers' children, only one child had dropped out of school in Grade 10, in order to get married. Some of the children at 23 years of age still attend school. This enhances the employment opportunities of these children, according to the spokespersons, but it also places an additional financial burden on the parent(s) and especially on the black women workers. School fees vary between R2 and R450 per month (see Table 3.8).

All the black women workers at AMM regard school education and literacy as essential in order to acquire good employment, to earn a good salary and to enjoy a good life. When

asked about the importance of education for both sexes, the general answer was that education is important for both sexes. However, if for some reason only one child could be sent to school (for instance, for financial reasons), some spokespersons stated that they would rather send a boy than a girl to school (see Section 2.5.2). The spokespersons stated that the reason for this is that a girl will get married or could fall pregnant at an early age and thus drop out of school. It would be a waste of money, in this instance, to send the girl to school. The researcher questioned the black women workers about birth control and the use of contraceptives by their daughters. The spokespersons responded that they could not give their daughters contraceptives, which would make the girls ill, as the girls were not used to them and had never used them before.

According to the black women workers at AMM, it is the duty of sons to look after their parents in their old age. If a son receives a good education, he will be able to secure a satisfactory job and will be able to look after his parents and provide them with a comfortable old age and retirement.

Other spokespersons argued that they would rather send their daughters to acquire a decent education, as the daughter would look after her parents in their old age. If they send their son, he could start drinking, walk about and forget about his parents, because he would be able to secure a good salary with which he would buy various items.

The spokespersons generally reached consensus during the interviews and stated that it would be best to send the child that is most interested in studying or that both sexes should be sent to school because there are no employment opportunities for people who cannot “write and read”.

The black women workers have high occupational ambitions for their children. Sixteen (84,2%) of the black women workers want their children to become medical doctors, teachers or banking clerks. One of the spokespersons stated that her children should do any work that they can find because employment opportunities are scarce. A further viewpoint, expressed by two of the women, was that their children should be employed in the sector of their choice, depending on their predisposition and talent. Maja (1972:103-107,114) had similar results in her research on the personality ideals which govern child-rearing practices among the North Sotho.

### 3.9 RESIDENCE AND TRANSPORT

All the black women workers' homes or places of residence are more or less 15 to 50 kilometres from the workplace, except for those women who live in Marble Hall (see Map 1 and Table 3.7). The majority of the women use buses as transport, although one or two women do occasionally use a mini-bus taxi as transport. The various buses depart from the areas where they live between 6 a.m. and 6:30 a.m. This means that the women are on the road for the greater part of two hours per trip (4 hours per day), as the buses make many stops along the way and they have to wait for people to arrive at the various bus stops. The women do not express many complaints about their mode of transport. The bus might be late on occasion, but that is accepted as inevitable and does not worry the women. The spokespersons did not mind being on the road for two hours at a time. It seems that the journey is quite a social occasion, an opportunity to visit with friends. Table 3.7 illustrates the places where the black women workers reside as well as the distances from these places to the workplace.

**Table 3.7: Places of residence of the black women workers at AMM**

Places of residence	Number of women living in the towns	Distance from these places to Marble Hall
Brakfontein	1	± 15 km
Dennilton	1	± 36 km
Elandskraal	2	± 32 km
Leeufontein	8	± 17 km
Mapoch	1	± 35 km
Marble Hall	1	± 3 km
Rietvlei	3	± 25 km
Vaalbank	1	± 50 km
Van der Merweskraal	1	± 40 km

Four (21%) of the black women workers' families do not live in the same town as the women. Some family members live quite close by in towns such as Elandskraal, while the spokespersons reside in Leeufontein, for example (see Map 1). Other spokespersons' families live in Potgietersrus, Pietersburg and Bloemfontein. These black women workers can only

afford to visit their families once a month and on public holidays, as transport fares and bus tickets to these distant places are very expensive (see Table 3.8).

Two of the black women workers' children live with members of their family in the above far-away towns and cities such as Potgietersrus. This implies that the black women workers only see their children once a month or occasionally during the weekend. Seventeen (89,4%) of the spokespersons' children stay at home and are looked after by family members or friends.

### **3.10 CHILDCARE FACILITIES AT THE WORKPLACE AND AT HOME**

There are no childcare facilities available at the workplace (AMM). The majority of these black women workers have infants, toddlers and school-going children that need to be taken care of during working hours. In most instances, older children, mainly older daughters, or female family members, such as the mother or mother-in-law of the black women workers, take care of the children (see Section 2.4.2). This is largely in accordance with the traditional African-oriented culture of the black women. In that tradition, female children are expected to look after younger family members (Bruwer 1963:108; Krige 1962:96; Mönnig 1967:108). Viljoen (1996:292) found in her research on the family life of black South Africans that "it was a general phenomenon in both urban and rural areas for grandparents to 'act as parents', for various reasons, in the upbringing of their grandchildren or the children of relations". In two of the cases in the AMM study, the father or the eldest son looked after the children during working hours. In both cases, these male family members were unemployed and depend on the particular spokesperson's wage to survive.

However, not all the women have daughters old enough to look after the younger children, or family living nearby to perform this chore. In these cases, the children stay at home alone after school or they live with the spokespersons' parents or family in another place. This means that the black women workers only see their children on weekends, or in some instances, only once a month.

When children are ill, the black women workers normally stay at home and thus leave work for an indefinite period. Consequently, the black women workers lose a part of their monthly income, as the factory functions on a system of proportional remuneration (see Section 3.2).



In some instances, the black women workers bring their children to the workplace. In one such instance, the researcher observed that the black women workers take turns to take care of the child in the workplace, but when work must be done urgently, the child is ultimately the mother's responsibility. Small children are, in most cases, tied to the back of the mother and are carried on the back of the mother as she continues with her work. Within traditional African-oriented cultural groups, such as the Pedi, this is a common practice (Mönnig 1967:104).

However, this practice hampers the woman's ability to work effectively, as she has to concentrate on her work and use both hands to do the work, pick up and carry heavy objects, use knives and sharp objects and work with heavy machinery. This environment is hazardous to children and they can get hurt easily if they are not watched constantly. The attention the mother has to bestow on the child reduces her productivity rate and, consequently, reduces the monthly income of the black woman worker concerned.

### **3.11 THE FINANCIAL STANDING OF BLACK WOMEN WORKERS**

#### **3.11.1 Monthly income and expenditure**

The black women workers at AMM view work exclusively as a means to an end. They work to earn wages to buy food in order to survive. It should be noted that this attitude towards work is not necessarily a cultural phenomenon, but is largely due to the socio-economic position of the black women workers. The reality of their daily lives is not always so simple. Each of the black women workers has dependants and a household to support (see Section 3.7). They have to send their children to school as well as clothe, feed, house and transport themselves and their dependants. The black women workers are, in most instances, caught in what is often called a "cycle of poverty", and live using a process of loans and repayment of debt.

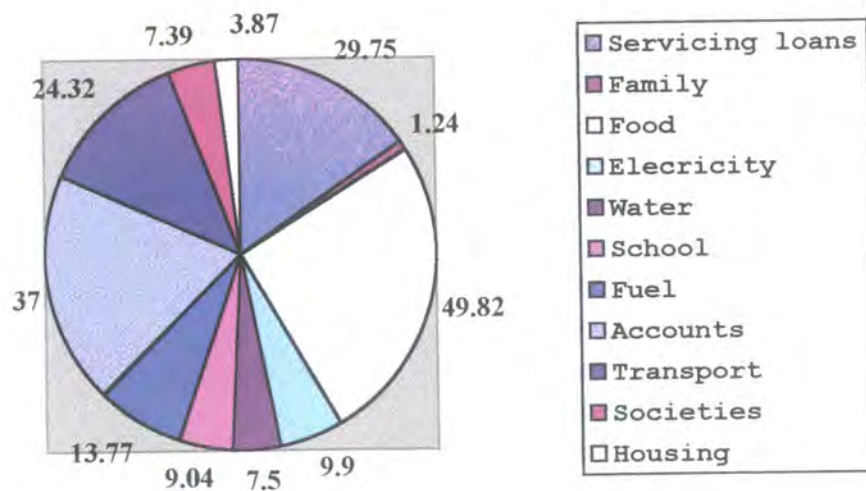
The nineteen black women workers have a collective gross monthly income of more or less R10 930. The black women workers have collective monthly expenditures of R21 065.55 (see Table 3.8). These monthly expenses include the servicing of loans, money given to family, food, electricity, water, school fees, housing, accounts at clothing and furniture stores,

transport and grocery or funeral societies otherwise known as “stokvels”. Table 3.8 gives a complete breakdown of the monthly income and expenditures of black women workers at AMM.

The names of the black women workers are omitted to ensure confidentiality. The first column provides the monthly income of each woman; the total hence equals the entire monthly income of the twenty black women workers at AMM. The other columns illustrate the monthly expenditures of the black women workers, whilst the last column represents the total monthly expenditure of each black woman worker.

Figure 3.2 sets out the monthly expenses of the black women workers at AMM in relation to their income. Their income totals R10 930 and their total expenses are R21 065.25. This implies that, should the black women workers earn the same wage each month and spend more or less the same amounts per month, they will collectively be R121 623.00 in debt within twelve months. This places the black women workers in severe debt, which means they are caught in a “poverty trap”.

**Figure 3.2: Percentages of the monthly expenses of the black women workers at AMM (according to table 3.8)**





**Table 3.7: Monthly income and expenditure per black woman worker at AMM**

<b>INCOME</b>	<b>SERVICING LOANS</b>	<b>FAMILY</b>	<b>FOOD</b>	<b>ELECTRICITY</b>	<b>WATER</b>	<b>SCHOOL FEES</b>	<b>FUEL</b>	<b>ACCOUNTS</b>	<b>TRANSPORT</b>	<b>SOCIETIES</b>	<b>HOUSING</b>	<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURE PER BLACK WOMAN WORKER</b>	
420	200	0	150	0	20	8	22	150	92	60	0	702	
490	200	0	700	150	5	450	0	810	150	70	0	2535	
700	200	0	400	20	75	3	180	0	97,70	100	0	1075.70	
800	600	0	400	0	30	34	118	750	102,50	50	0	2084.50	
490	100	0	150	50	0	68	0	200	90,60	20	0	678.60	
800	0	0	400	200	50	25	0	100	640	0	80	1495	
400	100	0	300	70	30	10	88	100	90,60	120	0	908.60	
800	100	20	100	170	70	2,50	37	230	105,60	120	80	1035.10	
580	100	0	300	50	27	2	155	100	107,60	10	80	931.60	
670	200	0	200	70	30	12,50	30	320	90,80	80	80	1113.30	
450	120	70	300	80	20	2,50	25	50	90,60	30	0	788.10	
750	200	0	150	0	50	12,50	7	120	102,50	20	0	662	
600	150	0	300	0	60	12,50	20	120	102,50	25	0	790	
360	525	0	125	50	0	5	55	465	194	35	0	1454	
600	50	0	200	0	0	3	150	0	141,20	10	0	554.20	
700	100	50	400	0	72	25	150	100	102,50	18	0	1017.50	
360	100	0	300	0	150	3,30	300	250	150	20	24	1297.30	
360	120	0	200	50	30	305	6,75	130	120	20	0	981.75	
600	100	0	360	10	106	5	162	50	88	0	80	961	
<b>Total</b>	<b>10931</b>	<b>3265</b>	<b>140</b>	<b>5435</b>	<b>970</b>	<b>825</b>	<b>988.8</b>	<b>1505.75</b>	<b>4045</b>	<b>2658.7</b>	<b>808</b>	<b>424</b>	<b>20165.25</b>
<b>Percentage</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>29,87%</b>	<b>1,28%</b>	<b>49,72%</b>	<b>8,8%</b>	<b>7,5%</b>	<b>9,04%</b>	<b>13,77%</b>	<b>37%</b>	<b>24,32%</b>	<b>7,39%</b>	<b>3,87%</b>	<b>192.72 %</b>



According to Mönnig (1967:186), this cycle of debt and repayment is largely due to the influence of western and capitalist economic principles on traditional African economies. Mönnig (1967:186) argues that people from African-oriented cultures, such as the Pedi, understand the principle of credit but not of interest, which is a western phenomenon, and this traps people in a dangerous cycle of debt and repayment. Thus, work is a matter of survival for these black women workers. Money is used to repay debts and this means there is very little of the black women workers' monthly income left for necessities and products such as food and water (see Section 3.11.5).

### **3.11.2 Additional income**

Six (31.5%) of the black women workers had an additional income from subsistence agriculture, including vegetable gardens, fruit orchards and animal husbandry (cattle, sheep, pigs and poultry). In traditional African-oriented cultural groups, farming activities are largely the duty of women (Bruwer 1963:107; Mönnig 1967:145; Shaw 1974:90-91) (see Section 2.4.4). These farming activities normally mainly supply food for household use, but, in some instances, vegetables and cattle are sold to obtain additional income in times of financial need. None of the black women workers sell such goods on a regular basis and thus this type of additional income cannot be regarded as part of their regular gross monthly income.

None of the black women workers received money from their husbands, children or family on a monthly basis. Thus, in most instances, the monthly wages of the black women workers support the entire household and all the persons that are dependent on them (see Section 3.7).

### **3.11.3 Housing**

Only six of the black women workers have housing expenses (see Table 3.8). Five of the women spend a monthly sum of R80 on rent. This type of expenditure normally arises when the black women workers' parents or family members live in another town or city while the women themselves rent a room or a house in the vicinity of their workplace. Most of these black women workers live with family members or they possess their own houses. Some of the spokespersons claimed to have built their own homes, but none of the homes of the black

women workers are informal in nature. The total housing expenditure of the twenty black women workers at AMM amounts to R424 per month.

#### **3.11.4 Electricity and water**

Eleven (57,8%) of the black women workers have electricity and water in their homes. Water supply is often free of charge, but some women pay between R20 to R75 per month (see Table 3.8). Eight (42%) of the women have to fetch water from a central water point as far as 2 kilometres from their homes, or from a communal tap in the street. These women often hire somebody to fetch water during the day, or they buy water from a vendor at more or less R12 per 25-litre drum of water. More or less five drums of water are bought per month, according to the spokespersons.

A certain “supply” of electricity is bought per month based on a “ticket” system. Most of the women buy R100 worth of electricity per month and when that supply is finished, they might buy an additional R50 electricity ticket to supply them with electricity to last until the end of the month. This electricity supply is used for lighting purposes only, and does not include stoves. The women prepare their food on paraffin- or coal-powered stoves.

#### **3.11.5 Loans and debt**

The majority of the black women workers are in debt with various financial institutions (see Table 3.8). Seventeen (89,4%) of the black women workers at AMM have applied for monthly advances on their salaries from the employer. This sum is then subtracted from the workers’ wages at the end of the month. This practice places the women in a vicious cycle of debt and repayment. According to Bruwer (1963:187), one of the most noticeable features of the influence of the western capitalist economy on the economies of traditional African-oriented cultural groups is the popularity of western consumer commodities. This effect is visible in the description of the expenditure of the black women workers at AMM. Seventeen (89,4%) of the black women workers have accounts at various clothing and furniture retailers, and thus have to make monthly payments for these purchases (see Table 3.8). In some instances (10,5%), the repayments of these debts account for more than the individual monthly wages of the workers concerned.

All the black women workers indicated that they realise that it is an encumbrance to borrow money or to request an advance on their wages. However, the spokespersons stated that they do not want to live in poverty or “suffer like the poor”. Hence, they borrow money. Occasionally they purchase articles that they cannot afford and then they have to borrow money in order to repay their debt. The women thus settle debt with newly acquired debt. The spokespersons stated that once people run into debt or fall into arrears on payments, they are caught in a cycle of repayment, which affects their monthly expendable income negatively.

The spokespersons said that everybody has their pride and nobody likes a deprived and impoverished appearance, thus, when they lack money, they (the spokespersons) borrow it or obtain an advance on their wages from the employer. One spokesperson declared that life is a process of debt and repayment, and that people should handle their finances in this fashion. People are supposed to borrow money because this way “nobody will starve”. The spokespersons stated that “maybe the institutions and the retailers would overlook their debt and they would never have to repay it”. Otherwise, they will repay some of their debt the next month. The black women workers handle their finances according to the notion that “tomorrow is another day to do what could not be done today” (see Section 3.18.4).

### **3.11.6 Savings accounts and societies**

Only six (31,5%) of the black women workers have savings accounts. However, none of these accounts is used, in other words, none of the women saves any money in a banking institution.

Spokespersons argued that they do not receive enough remuneration per month to save for the future or to utilise their saving accounts. Their monthly expenditure and the repayment of debts deplete their monthly financial reserves. According to spokespersons, there is no need to save money. They will always be employed at AMM and when they retire their children will take care of them (see Section 3.8).

None of the black women workers are members of a medical fund or have access to pension benefits. This worries the spokespersons, but they stated that it is not their responsibility to establish these funds. It is the responsibility of the employer, according to the spokespersons.

According to these workers, there is nothing that they can do without the assistance of the employer to establish medical or pension funds for the workers at AMM.

Seventeen (89,4%) of the black women workers at AMM are members of “stokvels” or societies. Fairhurst and Moate (1993:49) also found such societies to be popular. All of the women in the stokvels are members of funeral societies. Each member contributes between R10 and R30 per month to these societies (see Table 3.8). When a family member dies, the society pays for the funeral. Three women are members of grocery societies. These societies function on the same principle as the funeral societies. When one of the society’s members wants to entertain guests, for example, for a wedding, birthday or on any other occasion, the society carries the costs of the groceries. The spokespersons stated that they are members of these societies in order to be able to bury their deceased in a fashion that is respectful and appropriate. They also need to be able to feed their family and friends on important occasions such as birthdays.

The financial priorities of the black women workers at AMM differ from those of westerners. Westerners are normally future-oriented. The black women workers at AMM, on the other hand, are oriented to the past and the present. According to Van Vuuren (1988:27), the time concept of traditional South African cultural groups in general, emphasises the past, and the future is not planned for, as it does not influence the existence of humans in the present. The financial standing of the black women workers, especially the process of debt and repayment and the membership to societies, is to a large extent culturally determined, and is the result of their culturally determined values and their pragmatic view of these values. Coertze (1980:52-54) provides a detailed description of pragmatic values (see Section 1.5.4.5). For the black women workers, a suitable burial appropriate to the status of a family member is more important than a medical fund or a savings account. These priorities should not be judged from a western point of view – the African orientation of these black women should be taken into account.

### **3.12 POLITICAL ORIENTATION OF THE BLACK WOMEN WORKERS AT AMM**

Political orientations, such as capitalism (see Section 1.5.7.2), socialism or communism have a direct influence on the work performance of employees, as these ideologies dictate



behaviour within the workplace (Femina 1993:122; Weber 1958:72). For example, socialist ideology implies a classless society where the state controls workers and industries. Communism dictates the employment of all citizens of the specific state. Capitalists view work as a commodity and believe it is a person's right to sell his/her labour to an employer for remuneration (Van Aardt 1994:63-67). The South African labour system is based on capitalist economic principles and it is within this capitalist system that the research group operate as employees at AMM.

All the above economic and political ideologies imply certain behavioural patterns from the various workforces. Trade unions are engaged to control and direct the working behaviour of employees. It is thus important to determine the political orientations and perceptions of the black women workers at AMM of the political situation in South Africa. The black women workers were questioned about unionisation as well as their perceptions of the function and worth (value) of trade unions.

### **3.12.1 Perceptions of the political situation in South Africa**

Six (31,5%) of the respondents to the questionnaires are members of political parties; nevertheless, they are not highly politicised, nor are the black women workers at AMM "up to date" with current political trends and events. The members of the political parties said that their membership might improve their current living conditions and alleviate their poverty. According to the black women workers, being members of a political party will improve the lives of all black people and "they will not live like blacks anymore". According to spokespersons, political parties will "hear the cries" of their members and these parties will see to it that they (the members) are rewarded for their membership by establishing a good life for these members. This concept parallels the "ubuntu"-principle of caring for members of a group and supporting one another. It is an important concept within the sub-Saharan African life- and world-view. Jabavu (1966:4) describes "ubuntu" as "human feeling" and Murray (1967:88) describes it as "the link that binds man and man together because they are men." Manganyi (1981:9) refers to the same phenomenon when he quotes the South African writer, Ezekiel Mphahlele, describing "ubuntu" as a

humanistic experience, where people treat each other as human beings, and not simply as instruments or tools; where people become committed to one another as

human beings without necessarily declaring commitment; if one of their kind is in difficulties, the others immediately rise to the occasion and do something about it.

Nevertheless, these women regard politics as an abstract force that will improve the daily circumstances and toils of those that pledge their membership and loyalty to a party, some time in the future. However, politics as such were not brought into the workplace and thus a political ideology or the ideology of a politically-oriented trade union did not dictate the working behaviour of the black women workers at AMM.

### **3.12.2 The unionisation of the black women workers**

None of the workers at AMM or the respondents to the questionnaires are unionised, nor do they have a clear idea of the functions and objectives of trade unions within the workplace (see Section 1.7.4). They regard trade unions in a very negative light, stating that trade unions are bad for the workers and that trade unionists and officials are dishonest and rogues. The employer stated that there had been an unfortunate incident with a trade union a few years ago. The workers took part in a strike without being members of the trade union, and without bargaining with the employer or consulting with the employer in any way. This led to lost working hours and thus reduced wages, as the factory functions on the principle of proportional remuneration.

The results of this experience have led these workers to believe that all trade unionists are opportunists and that the unions do not benefit the workforce in general. This incident was not mentioned by any of the black women workers and, when asked about it, they said that they did not know anything. The topic was dropped, as discussing it led to strained relations between the researcher and the spokespersons.

Membership of trade unions in the future was discussed in detail, although the black women workers at AMM had no clear perception of what membership entails. One spokesperson stated that unions are only for registered workers, and they are not formally registered. Another spokesperson said that she would become a member of a trade union if she were certain that the union would improve her daily living conditions and see to it that the workers at AMM received higher wages each month. According to that spokesperson, it would be a good thing to be a member of a trade union if the union would negotiate with the government

and employers for good pension benefits. Other spokespersons agreed that under these conditions, they would become members of a trade union too, but they do not know any trade unions, so they cannot be members of a union.

A question was asked about the value of trade unions for the black women workers in South Africa. The spokespersons stated that trade unions should improve the conditions in which women live and end their suffering. The spokespersons' perception of trade unions is similar to their perception of the use and purpose of political parties, and the "ubuntu" principle and group solidarity, as discussed previously, is present in these perceptions. However, it is possible to deduce that unionisation has no direct political influence on the working behaviour of the black women workers at AMM. The work values of the black women workers at AMM are largely unaffected by political ideology or trade union policy.

### **3.13 CAREER AWARENESS**

In the following discussion, the perceptions of the black women workers at AMM regarding selected western work values, as identified by Raubenheimer and Kotze (1984) as well as Van Vuuren (1988), are described. The following discussions should be read against the background of the work milieu, the above biographical statistics as well as the socio-economic position of the black women workers employed at AMM. One should also bear in mind the political and socio-economic circumstances prevailing in South Africa and the influence of these conditions on the employment opportunities available to black women workers in general, but specifically to the black women workers at AMM.

The black women workers have no illusions that their current employment is a "calling to fulfil a specific role in life" (see Section 1.6.1.1). There is very little or no "career awareness" as a concept and almost no objectives are set and pursued by these black women workers, other than to obtain financial remuneration in order to survive (see Section 1.6.1.1). According to the black women workers at AMM, they work because they have no other choice. This "lack of calling" is not necessarily a cultural phenomenon, and it must be borne in mind that the socio-economic position of the black women plays an important role in the perceptions regarding western work values within AMM by these workers.





The majority of the black women workers at AMM regard work in a negative light. They do not enjoy working and they would prefer to be at home with their children. They work to survive, to earn money to buy food, for housing and electricity, for school fees and to clothe their children and dependants. This attitude towards work was confirmed by both the qualitative and the quantitative research.

Four (21%) of the respondents to the questionnaires had heard about employment opportunities at AMM from family members or friends. Fifteen (78,9%) of the respondents had walked from factory to factory seeking employment. Meer (1984:21) had similar research results. Some obtained employment immediately, other women had to wait a week or two before there were positions available on the factory floor. Thus, any employment opportunity would have been acceptable; seeking employment at AMM had nothing to do with a choice of career or an awareness of career options.

Most of the respondents had previously been employed at other factories, shops, restaurants or farms before they took employment at AMM. They left their previous employment for a variety of reasons, including pregnancy, marriage, bankruptcy of the employer, urbanisation and cuts in wages at the previous place of employment. The black women workers stated that they had sought employment at AMM to end the poverty and suffering at their homes and of their families.

The black women workers at AMM were questioned in detail about their occupational ambitions, choice of career and career objectives. The women were asked whether they would prefer alternative employment, in other words, whether they want to be employed at another factory, or whether they want to do another type of work. Most of the spokespersons answered that they were satisfied with their jobs at AMM and that one job is as good as another. The majority of the spokespersons stated that they would not seek other employment because they find the work at AMM "easy". They are used to the routine of the work day and they know how to do the work at AMM. If the black women workers were newly employed at another workplace, they would have to learn new techniques and routines. The spokespersons stated that they are comfortable where they are.

A few spokespersons stated that they would like to work at another place, such as a supermarket or at a textile factory, but they do not know how to find employment at such a place, because employment opportunities are not readily available. Thus, they would rather

stay where they are, because now they do not have to worry about not getting wages at the end of the month and they know how to do the work.

During interviews, the women were asked whether they would seek other employment if the work at AMM should end, or if their employment at the factory should be terminated in the future. Respondents indicated that they did not worry about this, as there has always been work at AMM and there always will be. Nevertheless, if AMM were bankrupt or laid off its workers, they would be forced to seek other employment, otherwise they will starve. When asked what kind of employment they would seek, spokespersons remarked that one job is just as good as another. They will work at the first place that employs them, but it is not necessary to worry about this, as it will never happen.

The black women workers at AMM were questioned during interviews about their childhood employment dreams; in other words, when they were small, what occupations did they want to have? The majority of the women had childhood dreams of becoming teachers and nurses (see Table 3.9). The spokespersons would have chosen these careers because they wanted to help people who cannot help themselves. Most of the women wanted to work with children, either to heal them or to teach them values and morals. One woman wanted to be a social worker to ease the suffering of the black population in South Africa and another wanted to be a lawyer in order to be “a voice for the black people” that had been wronged in some way. One spokesperson wanted to become a tailor in order to start her own business if she did not find employment at a textile factory. One spokesperson declared that she had not had any childhood ambitions. She always knew that she would be a factory worker. That is just the way life went in her community and it was no use thinking otherwise.

The majority of the spokespersons said that they had not pursued these “dream” careers because of financial problems and a lack of education. None of the black women workers thinks it essential to pursue these ambitions at this time of her life. According to spokespersons, they do not have the time or the money to study in order to pursue such careers and they are satisfied with their jobs at AMM. The same logic applies here as seen earlier in the discussion on alternative employment (see Section 3.13): they are used to the routine at AMM and they know the work. If the black women workers should start to work at another place or pursue their childhood ambitions, they would have to learn new routines and skills.

**Table 3.9: Hypothetical occupational ambitions of the black women workers at AMM**

Occupational ambitions	Number of women per occupation
Factory worker	1
Lawyer	2
Nurse	7
Social worker	1
Tailor	1
Teacher	7

Thus, the choice of career of the black women workers depended on circumstances and their socio-economic position and, in most instances, a random search for employment without any specific requirements and objectives. Realities related to the conditions in which the black women workers grew up plus the lack of appropriate education have, to a large extent, moulded their present situation.

### 3.14 INDIVIDUALISM

According to Kearney (1984:75-76), individualism is prevalent in modern western industrial society and it is

permissible to say that individualism arises with the transition from tribal to class society. In the Western world it becomes even more prevalent with the decline of kin-based agrarian communities that occurred during the gradual transition from feudalism to capitalism.

Kearney (1984:76-77) also describes the enforcement of individualism within the capitalist system:

Whereas the individualism among the propertied classes was re-enforced by the struggle for private profit, among the propertyless it was re-enforced by having to enter the labour market as a lone person. In a communal classless society one's well-

being is dependent on the well-being of the group ... Relationships in a market economy are completely different.

AMM demands a measure of individualism from its black women workers (see Section 3.2). As discussed earlier, these women are individually responsible for the amount of work that they perform, as well as for the quality of this work. The factory functions on the principle of direct proportional remuneration. The black women workers are individually responsible to record how much work is done and thus receive remuneration commensurate with the day's work.

The 19 women were questioned, during interviews as well as in questionnaires, about the fairness of the system of proportional remuneration and the advantages and disadvantages of working alone and working in a group. In most instances, the nature of the work determined whether the black women workers would work individually or as part of a group. However, according to the black women workers at AMM, they prefer working within groups. Spokespersons said that this way they could help one another with the work and they can share the work. Otherwise, one person would have to do it all alone and the amount of work is too much for just one person. The black women workers indicated that working in groups is better than working alone, because if workers do not know exactly how to do the work, or find the work difficult, there is always somebody else to help them.

The black women workers at AMM do not help other workers with their monthly income, in the sense of doing work and transferring the amount of work completed to another person in order to increase that person's income. As indicated already, workers are individually responsible for their monthly income. Spokespersons stated that the more money they want at the end of the month, the harder they had to work. Thus, although the African-oriented culture of the black women workers dictates group solidarity, the economic position of the spokespersons as well as the principle of individual possession do not allow them to assist one another financially. However, on a social level, the black women workers at AMM regard group solidarity as extremely important.

The nature of the work at the factory does not require individual initiative, as each of the black women workers at AMM has specific and clearly delineated duties to perform. Parts and goods must be made according to specific and regulated measurements. If these explicit measurements and guidelines are not followed, the quality control officer or the production

manager rejects the component or object, and the woman who made the item is not paid for it. There is no margin for error and it is the responsibility of each individual to control the quality and quantity of her work.

The black women workers at AMM viewed proportional remuneration as unfair. They declared that they cannot always complete the same amount of work each day; sometimes they are tired and they cannot work hard. On other occasions, their children are sick and they have to stay at home. This means that the black women workers do not receive the same wage each month. According to spokespersons, this causes them to be poor because they do not know how much money they will have at the end of the month and they buy items which they cannot afford. The black women workers stated that they would rather have a fixed wage so that they can plan each month financially. However, this fixed wage should not be lower than the wage they receive in a “good” month based on proportional remuneration.

The black women workers were divided on the issue of whether everybody should receive the same fixed wage. Some spokespersons suggested that this could be unfair as some workers worked longer hours than others did and some workers did more work than others did, so not all workers could receive the same wage. However, the majority of the black women workers stated that it is not good to be rich when other people are poor. This view accords with the traditional African-oriented culture of the black women workers. According to Mönning (1967:143-144), the accumulation of wealth by an individual is frowned upon within the Pedi community, as wealth should be distributed evenly throughout the community. Everybody should receive the same wage because everybody at the factory is human and thus equal. The black women workers argued that if people work together in one place they should receive the same wage.

The majority of the black women workers at AMM did not value individuality highly; the welfare of the group is always more important than the welfare and advancement of the individual. This accords with the traditional African values of the black women workers, for, according to those values, individuality is not a necessity and the welfare of the group should be promoted at all times (Oosthuizen 1977:37; Silberbauer 1968:19; Van Niekerk 1983:61). Mbiti (1969:108) describes this phenomenon as follows:

Whatever happens to the individual happens to the whole group, and whatever happens to the whole group happens to the individual. The individual can only say: ‘I am, because we are; and since we are, therefore I am.’



According to the spokespersons, there are different types of groups within the workplace. The group may consist of the black women workers at AMM working together in a certain part of the factory or a particular department, or all the black women workers within the workplace (AMM). In some instances, the group includes the male workers employed at AMM as well. The size and type of the group varies according to the issue at hand and the demands or problems experienced by the workers. Within the group (whichever group definition is appropriate), everybody is considered equal. Favouritism of any kind is frowned upon. Spokespersons stated that co-workers should not act or behave in such a way that the welfare of the group is jeopardised. Nzimande (1983:52-53) obtained similar results in a study on the work values of black male industrial workers.

A worker with a grudge against another worker should not complain to the employer, the production manager, supervisor or quality control officer, but the problem should be handled at grassroots level. The black women workers argued that problems between workers should be sorted out within the group and not in an office. The group should work together in harmony and there should be no tension between the members of the group. Proportional remuneration causes tension within the group, because all workers are not "treated equally", one person receives a higher wage than another does, and this is regarded as unfair.

It is particularly the capacity to be industrious, thorough and dedicated to the work and the workplace that emphasises individuality (see Section 1.6.1.8). Within a western-oriented labour system, individuals should be able to do work effectively and be self-sufficient. Consequently, individualism cannot be examined in isolation but can only be fully understood against the background of the elements of western work values, namely the capacity to be industrious and thorough, and the individual's ability to accept personal or individual responsibility and accountability.

### **3.15 THOROUGHNESS AND ALERTNESS**

Thoroughness implies exactness and attentiveness or alertness, and implies attention to detail in an organised and ordered way of behaving. Thus, thoroughness requires a certain standard of work performance. The standard of work performance determines the quality of the product (see Section 1.6.1.5).

Thoroughness goes hand in hand with the level of training of employees (Farrel 1978:91). Workers cannot possibly produce a product of high standard if they do not know how to do the work in the first instance. The black women workers receive training from the production manager and the quality control officer. The black women workers at AMM stated that they had received sufficient training from these persons (this statement was confirmed by the qualitative and the quantitative research). They are especially satisfied with the training presented by the production manager.

The black women workers stated that the production manager had showed them exactly how to do the work and had explained to them how everything in the factory worked. The production manager showed them how to operate the machinery and the workers could ask her questions if they did not completely understand the training. The spokespersons said that if they did the work incorrectly, then the production manager would show them how to do the work correctly. If the black women workers had a problem in completing work, or if they were not certain about how to do the work, they could ask either the production manager or the quality control officer for help. The production manager or the quality control officer then helped them with the problem or showed them how to do the work correctly.

According to the black women workers at AMM, the new employees receive their training from the quality control officer. They seemed satisfied that this training is sufficient and that employees are able to deliver products of a good quality after having received the training.

Although the black women workers at AMM claimed to be satisfied with their training, the production manager and the quality control officer complained that work was sometimes not done thoroughly. The black women workers at AMM admitted that a large number of the products are rejects and thus below the stipulated minimum quality requirements. Nevertheless, this substandard work performance was not blamed on the training that the spokespersons had received, but rather on the system of proportional remuneration, a lack of time and tiredness (see Section 3.20.5).

The black women workers at AMM declared during interviews as well as in the completion of questionnaires that they always do their work thoroughly and correctly. Nevertheless, the women workers admitted that they often rushed in order to produce as many parts or products as possible in order to receive a higher wage at the end of the month. Thus, they do not always perform work thoroughly and, consequently, produce rejects. The black women



workers also alleged that they do not always have sufficient time to produce the amount of parts required by the manufacturer. In these circumstances, the black women workers asserted, it could not be expected of them to produce high quality work all the time. Nzimande (1983:57) found the same argument among his research subjects. According to Nzimande (1983:57), the thoroughness of a black worker is closely linked to the worker's perception of time. This is in turn related to the traditional African-oriented concept of time and the management of time. This issue is discussed later in the chapter (see Section 3.18).

The black women workers indicated in interviews and during the completion of questionnaires that they get tired if they have to work hard the whole day long. When they get tired, they cannot be thorough. The black women workers get especially tired on loading days (the days when the trucks are loaded and products are transported to the manufacturers). On these days, they have to complete all the work required by a manufacturer or client of AMM, and any work which has not been completed during the week. On these days the black women workers hurry and thus produce many products of substandard quality.

The black women workers at AMM expressed the opinion that it is important to do the work thoroughly. If they did not deliver high quality products and produced too many rejects, their employment at AMM would be terminated. Spokespersons stated that if they produced too many rejects, the costs of these rejects might be subtracted from their monthly wages and they would receive less money than ever before. In some instances, the machinery was faulty and it was impossible to do the work correctly and thoroughly, but in these cases, that was not the fault of the workers.

Hence, according to the black women workers at AMM, it is a good thing to do work thoroughly, but time and circumstances do not allow workers to deliver products of sufficient quality all the time. Thoroughness in the workplace is closely related to an acceptance of personal responsibility and accountability. The black women workers at AMM never see themselves to be at fault. Spokespersons remarked that they always do their work thoroughly and exactly. Rejects are not the result of human error, but occur accidentally without the workers' noticing these errors. Thus, the workers are doing their work thoroughly and precisely, "we just do not always keep our eyes open enough". This way, a mistake might slip in without the knowledge of the worker.



A definite distinction is drawn between thoroughness and alertness. The black women workers indicated in the course of the qualitative and quantitative research that they are always thorough in doing their work, but they argued that it is humanly impossible to be alert at all times because they get tired and their eyes get tired as well. This way attention is not always given to detail and the result is reject products.

### **3.16 MOTIVATION TO ACHIEVE**

According to western values (Raubenheimer & Kotze 1984; Van Vuuren 1988), achievement motivation refers to the individual need to achieve the best possible results, given the ability of the individual (see Section 1.6.1.10). Interviews with the black women workers at AMM revealed an apparent absence of this important element of western work values (see Section 1.6.1.10). As already mentioned in previous discussions, the black women workers view “work” exclusively as a means to an end and they work to earn wages to buy food in order to survive (see Section 1.13). None of the black women workers claimed that she enjoyed working, although all of the black women workers stated that it is necessary to work in order to live. This attitude towards work was confirmed in the quantitative research.

There is a clear distinction between whether it is good or beneficial to work and whether the black women workers enjoy working. According to black women workers at AMM, it is good and beneficial to work. If they work, then they earn money and they will not starve. Nevertheless, work is not enjoyable. The spokespersons stated that they have to work long hours, they have to pick up heavy objects, and hence they get dirty and tired. According to spokespersons, it is not beneficial or pleasant to be dirty and exhausted, but everybody has to work in order to eat and to survive. All the black women workers at AMM stated that they did not enjoy working, but at least they received a wage at the end of the month. If they did not work they would receive nothing and they would suffer even more than they already do.

The spokespersons stated that work at AMM is bearable because of the work security the factory provides. According to the black women workers at AMM, the work is tolerable, because the workers know that they will be remunerated at the end of the month and they believe that there will always be work and employment opportunities at AMM.

The black women workers were asked during interviews, as well as in the completion of questionnaires, whether they would prefer to perform a variety of tasks or whether they prefer to do the same work each day. The women stated that they do not always perform the same work each day, as the orders from the manufacturers differ and they have to make different items to meet the orders. The type and varieties of tasks that they perform are thus out of their control. On the other hand, black women workers stated, on occasion they perform the same tasks for long periods. They grow weary of the repetition, but they prefer this situation to performing a variety of tasks. The black women workers stated that they know the tasks at hand, and they do not have to learn new skills and techniques in order to perform the work. Hence, it is more comfortable to do the same work every day.

The black women workers indicated that they do not find their work interesting, but it is not boring either. The work “is just work”, tasks that have to be completed in order for the workers to receive monthly remuneration. The black women workers at AMM indicated that they might be more productive if they received higher wages. Spokespersons stated that they enjoy difficult tasks much less than performing easy tasks. They said that it took a long time to perform challenging work and it exhausts them. Hence, it is preferable and less tiring to perform easy tasks. In this way more work is done, and the workers receive higher wages.

The black women workers at AMM do not persist in problem-solving (see Section 3.15). If a problem exists, it is in most instances reported to the quality control officer, the supervisor or the production manager. If the workers have trouble with certain tasks, another worker is assigned to the same tasks. The spokespersons stated that if they experience problems with work, they ask for help. The spokespersons stated that it is no use to do work if they do not know how to do it or if it is progressing too slowly. Spokespersons said that it is not their job to solve problems, because problem-solving is the responsibility of management.

The black women workers at AMM were asked in interviews and questionnaires if they ever felt proud of the amount of work they are doing and whether they feel satisfied if their work is done well (see Section 1.6.1.10). The women answered that they feel “proud” of the amount of work they have done because they know they will be remunerated accordingly. However, the black women workers stated, they do not feel proud of or good about the work itself, they are just exhausted at the end of the day.



The black women workers at AMM, with exception of the quality control officer and the black women workers working in the juice department, did not know what the items they are making are used for at the end of the manufacturing process. They did, however, know that these products are sent to certain manufacturers such as Nissan and Land Rover. The black women workers indicated during the completion of questionnaires that they would like to know what the components they produce are used for. The quality control officer responded that the employer should show the workers drawings of the completed and assembled automobiles and show the workers where their parts and products fit into the picture. The black women workers remarked that they might be satisfied if they knew what the products they are making are used for, and they would not be so unhappy about working. The employer should consider this proposal seriously in order to improve job satisfaction among the black women workers at AMM.

The black women workers were asked in the questionnaires whether they would still work if they won money at a game of chance such as *Ithuba* or if they married a rich husband. Eleven (57,8%) of the respondents indicated that they would not work if they were rich, as they only work to earn money in the first instance. If they had rich husbands or won money, they could buy anything they wanted to and they would not have to work. Three of the respondents stated that if they had rich husbands they would continue working in order to earn their own money. They do not want to be dependent on a husband for handouts. However, if these black women workers won a large amount of money, they would not continue working. Meer (1984:19) had similar results in her sample, where workers said: "Most of us would leave work this minute if our husbands earned enough money to manage all the expenses. We don't like the work. It is boring and tiring."

Four of the respondents indicated that they would continue working because "money does not last forever". This way they can save some of the money for their old age. The black women workers stated that even a little money each month would help them and prevent starvation, so they would continue working even if they were rich. One respondent indicated that she would continue working no matter how rich she was, because she would be bored at home and would not be able to sit around and do nothing. Other black women workers in the group responded to this comment by telling that particular respondent that she was mad. Again, Meer's (1984:19) results were similar.

The black women workers at AMM stated that if they had rich husbands or won money, they would buy groceries or send their children to university. The women stated that they would build large houses, get telephones and buy cars and they might even save some of their money. All the black women workers wanted new furniture and one spokesperson would start an upholstery business. The black women workers stated that they would financially support their families, especially their parents. The black women workers at AMM thus have certain levels of personal aspirations, but these aspirations are not applied at the workplace, mainly because the black women workers perceive work as a means to an end and not as an end in itself.

The black women workers indicated during interviews and in completing questionnaires that they do not want to change any aspects about the work they are performing, except for improved financial remuneration. They do not enjoy working and nothing will change this. The only motivational factor for the black women workers is the monthly remuneration. The black women workers at AMM exhibit low levels of personal aspirations according to western criteria and prefer easy and effortless tasks to taxing and challenging assignments.

The black women workers at AMM do not have confidence in their abilities and skills. The black women workers view skills as something one must necessarily acquire in order to perform work and complete tasks. The black women workers do not try to control their environment or their lives but leave their lives and environment to destiny. The black women workers at AMM have a very fatalistic approach towards “work” itself.

### **3.17 CAPACITY TO BE INDUSTRIOUS**

The capacity to be industrious includes dedication to work and goes hand in hand with a western work value system (see Section 1.6.1.2). The capacity to be industrious implies the capacity to be productive and is closely associated with other elements of western work values, such as thoroughness and time management.

There was general confusion during interviews between the researcher and the black women workers about whether the capacity to be industrious or “hard working” implied the amount of work or the nature of work (see Table 3.11). The concept “hard working” was ambiguous, because the researcher assumed the concept to mean the capacity to be industrious. The black

women workers interpreted the concept to mean working with heavy objects and performing difficult manual labour. The researcher thus had to make a clear distinction between “hard work” (manual labour) and “hard working” (the capacity to be industrious).

According to spokespersons, it is beneficial to do a lot of work, in other words to be “hard working”, because then the workers receive high wages at the end of the month. On the other hand, it is not good to “work hard”, meaning to perform difficult work or to work with heavy objects, because then they get tired and dirty (see Section 3.16). The black women workers at AMM made a definite distinction between work as enjoyable and work as advantageous because of monthly remuneration (see Section 3.13).

All the black women workers at AMM indicated during interviews and the completion of questionnaires that work is definitely a good thing, because by working, people can earn money and do not starve. However, nobody claimed to enjoy performing work in any way. This has a definite negative influence on productivity, as workers are largely unmotivated and the welfare of the factory, exclusive of the continued employment of the black women workers at AMM, is not a priority.

The black women workers were asked about the amount of work that they complete per day. They responded that they complete as much work as they are capable of doing, and that it is very exhausting to work vigorously all day long. Spokespersons stated that they do not work speedily, but they do not work at a leisurely pace either. They work at a speed in the “middle of fast and slow” and the required amount of work is always completed on time.

Van Vuuren (1988:21) called phenomena of this nature the “work performance-ceiling”. According to Van Vuuren (1988:21), black workers measure remuneration in relation to physical exertion and needs. Within traditional African-oriented cultures, the concept of surplus production does not exist. Thus, the black workers only deem it necessary to complete a certain amount of work. This aspect is culturally determined (Van Vuuren 1988:21), but is not productive within a western labour system.

The black women workers at AMM were asked if it would not be to their advantage to work fast every day, in other words to be productive to full potential on a daily basis. This way they would receive more remuneration per month. The spokespersons stated that one could not work arduously every day. People are more exhausted and overworked on some days than on

others, and it is impossible to work hard and vigorously on a daily basis. Sometimes, according to the spokespersons, people might talk too much and are not fully productive, but this is inevitable and should be accepted as such.

The black women workers at AMM stated that they do not work during teatime and lunch, because they are tired and they have to rest. Most of the spokespersons claim that they leave the workplace at 5:30 in the afternoon and do not work overtime. Occasionally the workers are expected to work overtime, and the spokespersons complained about this (see Section 3.18.4). The spokespersons stated that it is impossible for women workers to work overtime each evening and on weekends, as the women have families and children to take care of and households to maintain.

The black women workers were asked what would happen if the required amount of work was not completed in time to be transported to the manufacturers. According to the women, it has never happened that the required amount of work was not completed at the end of loading days. Spokespersons said that they work vigorously on loading days to complete all the work that had not been done during the week, in time to be loaded on the trucks and transported to the manufacturers. However, they do not enjoy loading days because they get very fatigued. Loading days are the days that the black women workers at AMM are forced to be most productive and industrious.

Interviews revealed that the black women workers at AMM do not enjoy being industrious. The black women workers stated that they do not feel exalted or proud about the amount of work they perform and complete. Van Vuuren (1988:21) reported similar findings. In other words, they are not elated about the fact that they have worked hard or feel proud about the visible results of their labour. Spokespersons remarked that they only feel proud about the amount of work they have done because they know they will be remunerated accordingly. Moreover, spokespersons stated that they do not feel proud or good about the work itself, they are just exhausted at the end of the day.

Spokespersons claimed that they might be motivated to be more productive if they received improved financial remuneration. However, it would not be possible to maintain this productiveness in the long term. The black women workers at AMM stated that, in the long term, they might attain new financial troubles and then the whole cycle of poverty would

continue. Thus, they would worry and grow tired again, and they would not be able to be industrious or productive to full capacity.

The black women workers at AMM are motivated to work solely by financial remuneration. Dedication to the work or the factory itself has nothing to do with the black women workers' ability to be industrious or productive. Improved financial remuneration might improve productivity in the short term, but is clearly not a long-term solution. The employer might consider increasing the minimum number of parts to be completed by each worker on a monthly basis, in addition to improved remuneration per part. Currently R360 is a minimal wage for parts completed (see Section 3.2). If the changes suggested were implemented, the workers would be forced to be more productive while receiving improved monthly wages.

### **3.18 TIME CONCEPTS**

Time management is one of the most important elements within a western work value system and western labour system. All economic activities are evaluated in terms of the availability and management of time. Within a western-oriented labour system, time is regarded as a financial commodity and the effective management of time is stressed at all levels of economic activity within the labour system (see Section 1.6.1.4). However, time is regarded differently by each unique culture. According to Van Vuuren (1988:27), persons of traditional African origin view time in a much less rigid way than westerners do. Time is not divided into seconds and minutes, but rather into days and seasons. Oosthuizen (1977:67) had similar results.

Because of this importance of time management within a western-oriented workplace, the black women workers at AMM were questioned thoroughly during the course of the qualitative and quantitative research about their concepts of time and perceptions of time management within the workplace.

#### **3.18.1 Tardiness**

Interviews with spokespersons revealed that time management started at home. The black women workers stated that if they do not finish their chores at home in time, they are late for

work. Most of the black women workers' living quarters are quite far from the workplace (see Table 3.7). The majority of the women use a bus as transport.

The various buses depart from the places of residence between 6 a.m. and 6:30 a.m. This implies that housework must be done before 6 a.m. or in the evenings. Most of the spokespersons stated that they arrive at their homes at about 8 p.m. at night and go to bed at 10 p.m. to 11 p.m. In most instances, they cook and clean their homes in the evenings. Washing, ironing and thorough housecleaning are done on weekends. According to Fairhurst and Moate (1993:39),

Early departure times and arriving home late in the evenings have a detrimental effect on the execution of domestic chores and over a period culminate in creating a state of physical exhaustion.

Spokespersons indicated that in the mornings before work, they have to wash themselves, get dressed, prepare breakfast and get their children ready for school. This causes them to be late for work on occasion, especially if their children are ill or if the children do not want to go to school.

The black women workers said that they might sleep too late and miss the bus and thus arrive late at the workplace. The bus might be late on occasion and cause them to be late for work. This is viewed as inevitable and as just one of those things that happen in life and do not worry the spokespersons too much, as this inevitability is perceived as a legitimate reason to be late for work.

The black women workers realised that it is important to be at the workplace at the designated time (between 8:00 and 8:30). They do not fully understand the financial implications of time management, but the black women workers did declare that being late for work is wrong. The spokespersons differed in their opinions about why arriving late at work is wrong.

Some of the black women workers at AMM declared that it is wrong to be late for work, because tardiness means that the work will not be done in time to be transported to the various manufacturers on loading days. Spokespersons argued that if they were late for work, they would not finish the minimum amount of work each worker is required to do per day (see Section 3.2). Spokespersons said that workers that are late on a regular basis do not complete enough parts and receive inadequate wages. According to spokespersons, they suffer



financially for the rest of the month if they are late for work regularly. The black women workers at AMM perceive personal financial remuneration as motivation for time management.

The black women workers disapprove of tardiness because all the workers are part of a group. Consequently everybody should start working at the same time and all the workers should go home at the same time. According to spokespersons, everybody should work together and it is not good to arrive at the workplace when all the other workers have already started their work. Therefore, spokespersons stated, it is better to arrive on time for work, because latecomers are behind with their work. According to the black women workers, some workers are late for work often, but they receive the same wage as the others. In other words, those workers that have worked nine hours per day receive the same wages as the latecomers who only work eight hours per day. The black women workers regard this as very unfair and said that this shows favouritism and is to the disadvantage of the group in general (see Section 3.14).

The black women workers said that the supervisor or the employer scolds them if they come late for work too often. However, it was also said that being scolded is a good thing. If workers are scolded for tardiness, they will not be late for work again the following day, according to the black women workers. The women, however, found it embarrassing to be scolded. The supervisor greets them and says “good afternoon” instead of “good morning” and everybody laughs at them. Spokespersons said that they would be teased the rest of the day because they were late. Hence, it is better to arrive at the workplace on time.

### **3.18.2 Absenteeism**

During interviews and the completion of questionnaires, the black women workers at AMM were questioned about their perceptions of absenteeism. The women responded that absenteeism is not allowed and is only justifiable if the absentee has a good reason for not arriving at work. According to the black women workers everybody is absent from work some or the other time. The women indicated that they are absent from work when their children or family members are ill and they have to take care of them. The black women workers are also absent from work when they do not feel well or are ill and are not able to

work. Family celebrations and funerals are justifiable reasons to be absent from work, according to these women.

The black women workers at AMM normally do not notify the supervisor or the production manager when they will be absent or for how long they will be absent from work. If a co-worker lives nearby, the workers might send a message to the quality control officer or the supervisor via the co-worker, telling them that they will be absent from work that day. Accordingly, there are no formal requests for leave by the black women workers. This is a predicament for the employer and the production manager, as the women work in teams or individually and each worker has specific tasks to perform before a certain deadline. Absenteeism implies that another worker will have to do the absentee's tasks and effective time management is impossible, causing entire production lines to be delayed.

The black women workers declared that they do not consider it necessary to notify anybody of their absenteeism. Spokespersons stated that if they are not at work, they are absent and they always had a good reason for being absent. Therefore, why should they notify anybody about it? According to the black women workers, it is only necessary to notify the quality control officer or the supervisor of absenteeism if a person will be absent for a long period. If they do not inform the quality control officer or the supervisor, the supervisor might give the person's job to somebody else.

Spokespersons said that it is not beneficial to be absent too often, because then you lose the day's wages and proportional remuneration. Spokespersons stated that if they were absent too often, they would receive meagre wages at the end of the month and they would suffer financially and physically. If they do not go to work, they will have no food to eat.

### **3.18.3 Time management and thoroughness**

The black women workers at AMM claimed that there is not enough time available to do their jobs thoroughly (see Section 3.15). They alleged that they did not always have sufficient time to produce the number of parts required by the manufacturer. In these circumstances, the black women workers asserted, it could not be expected from them to produce high quality work all the time.

The production manager responded to these statements by saying that in some instances, the factory does receive large orders from manufacturers and the amount of work and the workers available to perform the work are not balanced. However, it is not possible to employ more workers, as the next order might be for a much smaller quantity of parts and items and then there would not be enough work for all the additional employees. The workers are consequently expected, on these occasions, to work overtime in order to complete the required amount of components and items, as they are in any case financially rewarded for doing so.

According to the black women workers, such additional demands are only made occasionally, but it is not an ideal situation. Spokespersons said that they do not choose to work speedily, because then many errors occur and the parts are rejected. However, one should not work at a leisurely pace, because then one does not receive sufficient wages at the end of the month. Spokespersons remarked that it is better to work slowly than to work rapidly. When one works unhurriedly, the “eyes can see all the mistakes and the hands would not make any rejects”, but then the work may not be completed before loading day.

There are regular breaks for the workers: teatime of half an hour at half past nine in the morning and a lunch hour from one to two o'clock in the afternoon. Spokespersons stated that they finish more work before lunch than after lunch, because there are more working hours before lunch than afterwards. After lunch, they might be tired and spokespersons stated that they could not work hard or swiftly when they are weary.

There were complaints from the management team that the workers are extremely unproductive the day directly after pay-day. Some of the black women workers responded that this is not true, as they treat the day after pay-day exactly the same as all other days. Other spokespersons stated that they do not work the day after pay-day because they are angry about their meagre wages. These spokespersons claim that they have to repay loans and debts, but they do not receive enough money. The spokespersons stated that they work very hard during the month and the employer just does not pay them enough. The researcher asked about the proportional remuneration system and said that if they do not work the day after pay-day, the workers would lose a day's remuneration. The black women workers responded by claiming that the proportional remuneration system is unfair (see Section 3.14). Therefore, productivity in general is very low on these days and time-management by the black women workers at AMM in general does not even enter the equation.

#### **3.18.4 Perception of the future**

The black women workers do not seem to be distressed about their future at AMM or about the future in general. Oosthuizen (1977:67) had similar results regarding such a perception of the future within African-oriented cultural groups. When asked whether they are concerned about the possibility that they might be unemployed in the future, their response was troubling from a western point of view. The black women workers responded that they would never be unemployed because there will always be work available at AMM and commensurate remuneration.

Only six of the black women workers have savings accounts, and none of these accounts is used. According to the black women workers, there is no need to save money, as they will always be employed at AMM and, when they retire, their children will take care of them. Some of the spokespersons are worried about the future of their children, as employment opportunities in South Africa, outside AMM, are limited. The black women workers at AMM were positive that the government and unknown forces would rectify this situation and they would live a comfortable old age. This issue is closely related to individual responsibility and accountability within and outside the workplace (see Section 3.20).

#### **3.18.5 Summary**

The black women workers at AMM perceived time management to be equal to financial remuneration. The more work they do, the higher their wages at the end of the month. As long as they receive the wages they expect and do not produce too many reject products, time management does not trouble them. The black women workers start to work when they arrive at the workplace, they rest when they are granted breaks and they normally leave the workplace at 5 p.m. Time is only of the essence on loading day, according to the black women workers, because then the work that has been neglected during the rest of the week has to be completed in a hurry.

The black women workers at AMM perform their tasks on the assumption that there is always a tomorrow to complete the work, except on loading days. The black women workers lack the western perception that time itself is a financial commodity and the women at AMM do not perceive or comprehend time beyond the present.



It can be concluded that the black women workers at AMM do not work according to a personal time schedule and their actions are not planned beforehand. Silberbauer (1968:17) obtained similar results. The black women workers at AMM feel no guilt when time is wasted or when time is not utilised to full capacity, as would be expected in accordance with western work values (see Section 1.6.1.4). According to Mbiti (1969:19), black people do not view themselves as slaves of time, but believe instead that time should be used to the advantage of humans. One should wait for the right time to perform tasks and one should make time to rest and talk. This leads to frustration in a western labour system. Employers should consider this culturally determined value of the indigenous cultural groups of South Africa. When workers are sitting around seemingly doing nothing, they are in fact “creating” time for selected actions.

### **3.19 COMMUNICATION**

Within the western labour system, the value of effective communication is frequently emphasised (see Section 1.6.1.9). However, interviews with the black women workers and responses given to the questionnaire revealed a lack of communication within the workplace. The black women workers at AMM are particularly dissatisfied with the nature of communication between management, including the employer, the production manager, the quality control officer and the factory workers. Note that only communication with these particular members of the management team was discussed, because they are directly involved with the supervision and control of the black women workers at AMM.

#### **3.19.1 Language diversity**

Language diversity can hamper communication between management and the black women workers. When a meeting is held between the management and the workers, an interpreter must be used. In most instances, the quality control officer or the supervisor acts as interpreter. The meetings are time-consuming and there is no certainty about whether the workers involved have understood the translation of the interpreters, or whether the interpreters have translated correctly. Verster (1976:32) had similar results regarding

translation and interpretation in her research. Communication at AMM is strained and is not effective (see Section 3.5).

### **3.19.2 Communication with management**

#### *3.19.2.1 The employer*

The black women workers at AMM seemed generally satisfied with the employer and the women were all grateful to him for employing them. Some women remarked that the employer is always friendly and willing to help. According to the black women workers at AMM, the employer is prepared to give them advances on their monthly wages if they need money and he is prepared to employ people who are in financial trouble and urgently need employment. However, all the spokespersons complained that it is the fault of the employer that they receive such meagre wages each month. The spokespersons requested the researcher to talk to the employer and negotiate higher wages. The researcher had to explain that it is not her place to be involved in wage negotiations and that the researcher is only an observer. The spokespersons eventually accepted that the wage issue is something that they had to negotiate for themselves.

Some black women workers stated that they are dissatisfied in their work, and that there are problems in the workplace that need to be solved, but that there is nobody to talk to about these problems. The spokespersons said that this situation is just as well because nobody would listen to what they say anyway. Spokespersons felt that production is the only important issue at AMM. Some spokespersons said that the employer did not care about the welfare of his workers. Other spokespersons said that they did not know whether the employer cares about their well-being or not, because they (the employer and the black women workers) never communicate with one another.

The black women workers at AMM confirmed that communication between the employer and the workers is extremely important. People should talk to one another in order to find out what others are thinking, according to spokespersons. The black women workers stated that if people do not talk to one another, problems will never be solved and the employer and the workers would not be able to work together in harmony. Spokespersons declared that they

would be much more satisfied with their situation at the workplace if they could tell the employer about the problems that they are experiencing, such as the wage issue.

Three spokespersons stated that the employer should not talk to the workers directly. It is just not the way things are done, communication should proceed systematically according to the specific hierarchy of the factory. The employer should talk to the production manager and the production manager should talk to the workers. If the workers have a problem, they should talk to the production manager and this person would relay the message to the employer. According to these spokespersons, everybody has a place in the structure of AMM and every worker should stay in his/her place in order to promote stability and harmony in the workplace. If everybody stayed in his/her designated position, there would be no conflict in the workplace, according to these spokespersons.

The black women workers' perceptions of communication and the proper channels of communication differ. However, all the black women workers at AMM regard communication between the employer and the workers, directly or through specific channels, as necessary for the preservation of harmony and the prevention of conflict in the workplace.

### *3.19.2.2 The production manager*

The black women workers at AMM complained that the production manager does not speak to the workers when a problem arises, but consults the employer directly. The black women workers view the production manager with mistrust and thus do not tell the production manager about potential crises or dilemmas present in the workplace. Spokespersons stated that they would prefer it if the production manager consulted the workers instead of the employer when a problem concerning the workers arises or one of the workers is at fault. Another complaint from the black women workers was that the production manager is always negative towards them and they are unable to do anything right in the eyes of the production manager. These misgivings hamper effective communication within the factory and consequently hinder production because many problems and errors are unreported and unresolved. A study by Verster (1976:27) had similar results. The production manager should communicate more effectively with the workers and implement motivation techniques to promote work satisfaction and consequently productivity.

All the black women workers noted that the production manager is a good teacher, and that she shows everybody how to do their work. If they had difficulty in performing their tasks, the production manager would show them how to do it correctly (see Section 3.15)

### 3.19.2.3 *The quality control officer*

The black women workers at AMM indicated that there is a communication gap between the women workers and the quality control officer. The quality control officer does not communicate the daily workload or the specific orders for the day effectively. The black women workers stated that they only find out what they were supposed to do during the day just before it is time to leave the workplace. Thus, they cannot complete the work on time.

The quality control officer reacted to this comment by saying that everybody knows what she is supposed to do and the black women workers only blame her because they cannot complete the work on their own. The quality control officer declared that this accusation is an evasion of responsibility on the part of the workers. This potential conflict situation will have to be urgently addressed by the employer or the production manager. However, these members of management were not aware of this particularly volatile source of conflict.

### 3.19.3 **Relations with co-workers**

The black women workers at AMM stated that they do not experience problems with their co-workers and they all communicate well with each other. If problems arise that are work-related, such as broken machinery or flawed materials, these problems are reported to the supervisor or the quality control officer. The black women workers claimed that they all work well together. If a personal problem presents itself, the workers involved solve it.

The black women workers indicated that they could not work together effectively if relations between the workers are strained. Godsell (1983:81) obtained similar results in her sample. The black women workers at AMM stated that they should all “work in the truth”. People should not lie and they should not be angry with one another. If the workers could not solve problems and talk to one another, they would argue all the time and the work would not be





completed. The welfare of the group (see Section 3.14) is at stake and it is important that the group works together in harmony.

The black women workers indicated that all the women workers work together well and they do not have serious problems with one another. According to the black women workers, they are not all necessarily friends and they only work together. If somebody has a problem with the work or difficulties in performing certain tasks, another worker will be assigned to the same tasks and they help one another and share the work. If a person was performing tasks incorrectly, the other workers would talk to the person and show her how the work should be done. The spokespersons argued that they do not normally comment on one another's work, they only expressed a view if the work was done incorrectly. This tactfulness protects the harmony in the group.

The black women workers at AMM stated that each of them has her special friends in the workplace with whom she shares her problems. The women stated that all the workers do not necessarily like one another, but nobody argues with the others. Thus, personal conflict does exist, but it is suppressed or solved by the group. The black women workers talk to one another during working hours. The women said that they talk about the work most of the time, but during and after lunch hour, they discuss problems they are experiencing at home.

Spokespersons working in the juice department of the factory claimed that their relations with the other black women workers are strained. According to these spokespersons, they do not work together with the other black women workers, and they are therefore not part of the group. The spokespersons stated that they felt left out. However, these spokespersons claimed, they are all (the women workers in the juice department) very good friends and they would like to visit each other outside the workplace. Unfortunately, they live too far from one another for visiting after working hours and on weekends. It seems that the black women working in the juice department have developed friendships, whereas the other women working in the automobile component production department have remained merely co-workers.

#### **3.19.4 Summary**

Communication and relations with co-workers are particularly peaceful within the workplace, with the exception of occasional personal conflict, which is solved within the group. On the other hand, communication with the management of AMM, including the employer, the production manager and the quality control officer, is strained and reflects potential conflict. In order to prevent conflict, it is the duty of the employer to improve communication within the factory, especially between management and the workers, and to educate the workers in the proper channels of communication. The employer and production manager should convey methods and guidelines to improve communication in relation to communication as a medium and external factors influencing communication to the workers and members of management. After all, it will benefit the factory as a whole.

### **3.20 RESPONSIBILITY AND DISCIPLINE**

Responsibility and discipline are included in each element of western work values. Responsibility includes personal involvement and personal liability (see Section 1.6.1.6). This western work value implies a readiness and ability to accept responsibility and to act in all circumstances in an orderly way that is to the advantage of the industry and improves productivity.

Within a modern western-oriented labour system, the main emphasis is on personal discipline and order, rather than on social discipline. Discipline implies the ability to perform tasks systematically and with reliable regularity (see Section 1.6.1.3). It also implies obeying certain rules and regulations within the workplace in order to enhance productivity. Discipline is closely linked to an ability to accept responsibility for individual behaviour and work performance.

#### **3.20.1 Proportional remuneration**

The functioning of the factory forces the black women workers to accept individual and collective responsibility for their proportional remuneration and the fulfilment of contracts

(see Section 3.2). According to the black women workers at AMM, there have been complaints that women workers have cheated on the invoices, in other words, that they are recording more work than they have actually done in order to receive more remuneration. It is the job of the quality control officer to verify the recorded work and the amount of work that is completed as well as the quality of this work. The quality control officer (a black woman) then changes the invoices according to the amount of completed and the number of components accepted. This causes tension in the workplace as the black women workers blame the quality control officer for reducing their monthly income and accuse her of unwillingness to help them when they experience financial trouble. The quality control officer, on the other hand, stated that she could not allow these “lies” on the invoices and that she is only doing her job.

The black women workers at AMM were unwilling to accept individual responsibility and accountability for these incorrect invoices and chose to blame the quality control officer and the employer for their financial predicament. The spokespersons stated that if the employer paid them more, it would not be necessary to cheat on their invoices. Also, if the quality control officer was less strict and rigid, they would receive higher remuneration and their lives would be easier.

### **3.20.2 Thoroughness and alertness**

Thoroughness in the workplace is closely related to the acceptance of personal responsibility and accountability. The black women workers at AMM claim that they are never at fault. These workers stated that they always do their work thoroughly and faultlessly (see Section 3.15). Rejects are not the result of human error, but occur accidentally without the workers’ noticing these errors. There is a definite distinction between thoroughness and alertness. Thoroughness is subject to personal responsibility, but alertness is not a matter within human control and, for this reason, the black women workers say they cannot be held responsible.

### **3.20.3 Time management**

The black women workers at AMM do not accept responsibility for personal time management, as was seen in the discussions on tardiness and absenteeism (see Section

3.18.1). The black women workers regard tardiness and absenteeism as inevitable. According to the black women workers, there is no need to notify the quality control officer or supervisor of absenteeism. If one is not at work, one is obviously absent. This type of behaviour is regarded as unacceptable within a western labour system (see Section 1.6.1.4). Tardiness and absenteeism are perceived by westerners as irresponsible and as being to the disadvantage of the industry, as it makes a factory unprofitable and unproductive.

#### **3.20.4 Rules and regulations at the workplace**

The black women workers at AMM were questioned during interviews and while completing the questionnaire about the necessity of rules and regulations at the workplace. All these workers agreed that it is necessary to have rules and regulations in the workplace. According to the black women workers, if there were no rules, all the workers would just stand around all day and do nothing. Everybody would just do what he/she wanted and the workers would all arrive late for work every day. The spokespersons stated that, without rules and regulations, everybody would just take what they needed and they could not be paid at the end of the month because all the money would have been stolen. Nobody would come to work, the factory would have to be closed, and everybody would starve.

The black women workers said that it is wrong to steal, but sometimes people are hungry and they have to steal in order to eat. Thus, they believe that theft is morally justifiable in some instances. The spokespersons claimed that there are no thieves at AMM, because everybody is remunerated at the end of the month. Maybe missing items, such as tools and materials, have just been misplaced or might have “disappeared”. According to members of the management of the factory, there is a substantial theft problem at AMM, although the workers at AMM were not accused in any way of the crimes committed.

#### **3.20.5 Summary**

According to the production manager, the workers refuse to accept personal responsibility and accountability for any errors or mistakes in their work or problems within the workplace. Elements in the workplace are blamed for rejected or flawed parts and products. According to the black women workers, the materials with which the parts are made are flawed (too soft or too hard), the machinery is faulty or the ovens and presses are overheated or too cold.

Sometimes some things are simply beyond human control and mistakes just happen, because of destiny or supernatural forces such as heat or sudden tiredness. These views are closely linked to the traditional religion of the North Sotho where heat is associated with evil and badness, while coolness, on the other hand, is seen as a condition of well-being and goodness (Kriel 1992:173-179; Mönning 1967:67). Within traditional North Sotho religion, supernatural forces can cause either prosperity, health and happiness (Kriel 1992:173-179; Mönning 1967:67), or, in some instances, unfortunate events (Kriel 1992:226, Mönning 1967:44,78; Eiselen & Schapera 1962:254; Hammond-Tooke 1974b:331). Sometimes these forces cause workers' eyes to miss a mistake the workers' hands have made and a product is rejected. According to the black women workers, a worker can hardly be blamed for these rejects, as it is the result of forces beyond human control. The result, however, is that products are rejected on a regular basis whilst workers refuse to accept accountability. This is not financially profitable and has a negative influence on productivity. The continued theft at the factory causes immense financial losses and is a problem that will have to be addressed aggressively.

### **3.21 WORK STATUS**

Work holds a special value in the lives of most westerners. Western life revolves around work, and work values are imprinted from a very early age and are subconsciously viewed as a moral (and sometimes religious) obligation. The work westerners do determines the status a person enjoys and the position the person occupies in society outside the workplace (see Section 1.6.1.7). The black women workers at AMM do not necessarily regard work as a religious or moral obligation (see Section 3.6), but the qualitative and quantitative research has confirmed that the black women workers do enjoy status and respect within their particular societies because they are employed.

Kriel (1992:21-22) comments on the world-view of the North Sotho and states that the North Sotho see reality intuitively and subjectively. The world, life, humans and other phenomena in reality are not categorised, abstracted or reflected as an object of thought, but are seen and experienced as one coherent whole. There is no clear distinction between reality and appearances within the world-view of the North Sotho. According to Kriel (1992:22), the meaning of human existence for the North Sotho lies in the present and not in the future or in a continuous struggle for improvement or "progress" as in the case of westerners. This is particularly relevant to the 19 black women workers at AMM, where the work status they

enjoy does not revolve around the accumulation of wealth, but rather around the social purpose of their employment, namely their ability to provide for their families.

The black women workers at AMM indicated that they especially enjoy work status within their families and households. They are respected because they support their households financially and because they can afford to send their children to school. Their families respect them, because they can afford to buy food and nobody in the household goes hungry. The spokespersons said that in some instances their children were not happy about their parents' working hours. The children stay at home alone and they miss their parents. However, according to the black women workers, the children do not complain too much because they all receive something at the end of the month and they can all go to school.

The black women workers stated that they also enjoy work status within their communities, because unemployed people suffer financially and they are hungry. However, spokespersons asserted, one should not look down upon unemployed people. One should respect them and help them. "Something" can happen and then all the people at AMM would be unemployed. The spokespersons stated they would not like to be treated disrespectfully or differently just because they were unemployed. Hence, one should treat all persons with respect and not only employed people.

However, the black women workers indicated during the completion of questionnaires, that one should not be unemployed because of laziness. If a person is lazy, such a person will die of hunger. According to the black women workers, people should always be "willing to work". If people are willing to work, they will never go hungry. The black women workers declared that lazy people are despicable, they are always asking for money and they cannot do anything for themselves. Hence, lazy people do not deserve respect, nor do they enjoy status within the community. The respondents regard laziness as a sin, as lazy people are mostly thieves. Thievery because of laziness is not morally justifiable in the eyes of the black women workers at AMM. These women said that unemployed people that are willing to work deserve respect because they are trying to do things for themselves. These unemployed people do not sit at home and do nothing all day long, according to the black women workers.

Work status as perceived by the black women workers at AMM differs from the western interpretation of the term. The black women workers argued that work status is not based on the position the worker occupies within the workplace, but merely on the fact that a person is

employed and is able to support his/her family and dependants. Thus, work status is based on the single most important motivational element within the work values of the black women workers at AMM, namely financial reward and the ability to care for one's family and dependants.

### **3.22 GENDER AND WORK**

During the interviews, the black women workers were asked about their perceptions of feminism (see Section 2.3), gender (see Section 2.2), gender equality and equal employment opportunities (see Section 1.7). The black women workers stated that there is a definite role differentiation between males and females, at home and at work (see Section 2.4.4). The majority of the spokespersons stated that it is a woman's duty to maintain the household. The traditional role differentiation as well as the division of labour within African-oriented cultures underpin this perception, because traditionally all housework is the responsibility of women (Bruwer 1963:108; Mönnig 1967:145). According to spokespersons, women should preferably not be formally employed, but their husbands or male family members should support them. Thus, women should be the housekeepers and the men should be the breadwinners, according to the black women workers at AMM. However, spokespersons said, circumstances had forced them into employment. The spokespersons indicated that they had started working because of economic pressure. According to them, they just could not afford to be unemployed, because everything is so expensive these days.

#### **3.22.1 The household**

According to the black women workers at AMM, men should normally not be involved in housekeeping (see Section 2.4.4). Meer *et al.*'s (1990:151) findings were similar. Nevertheless, circumstances and the employment of these women require men to assist in raising the children and even occasionally to cook in the evenings. Spokespersons asserted that washing and ironing are women's work. The black women workers perform these chores during weekends. Some spokespersons argued that, no matter what the circumstances, men should help women with the household chores. Men should not sit around and do nothing, especially if the men are unemployed. Some of the black women workers indicated that they

would appreciate it if their husbands or sons would assist them with household chores on a regular basis.

Other spokespersons were adamant that men should not take part in housekeeping. These spokespersons viewed household chores as an exclusively female domain and are content to perform these tasks in addition to their formal working hours. This is a strongly held traditional value in the sub-Saharan African-oriented cultures of the black women workers (Bruwer 1963:108; Mönning 1967:145). The spokespersons stated that they would only make an exception to this rule if they are ill and are not able to perform the chores themselves. These black women workers stated that they are respected because of their ability to maintain the household and are judged to be worthy wives and/or mothers.

### **3.22.2 Decision-making**

According to the black women workers, the men, husbands and other male family members, are the decision-makers in the household (see Section 2.4). Kriel (1992:89) states that the North Sotho are normally patrilineally oriented, and thus it can be concluded that men are normally the heads of the household within this cultural group (Mönning 1967:237; Hoernlé 1962:71,87). Spokespersons stated that women should obey their husbands. Nevertheless, the spokespersons argued, men should listen to the opinions of their wives before making a decision. The black women workers declared that women are not subordinate to men, but somebody has to make the decisions. If both parties were involved in decision-making, they would argue all the time. Spokespersons said that they do not always agree with these decisions, but this is just the way arguments are resolved and decisions are made.

The black women workers indicated that they do not discuss their problems with their husbands, sons or male family members. If the black women workers experience a personal or family-related problem, they prefer to discuss it with a female family member such as their own mother or a sister. These confidantes are on the spokespersons' side of the family; problems are not discussed with in-laws, mostly because the women trust their own family and receive sympathy and support from these female family members. According to spokespersons, "one should not complain about a husband in his mother's ears".



### **3.22.3 Marriage goods**

All the black women workers at AMM maintained that marriage goods should be given if a man wants to marry a woman (see Section 2.3.4). Bride wealth should be delivered in the form of cash, and, if this is not possible, in the form of cattle. All the married spokespersons claimed that their fathers had received marriage goods in order for these women to get married. They were very proud of the amounts their husbands had “paid” for them. The black women workers stated that their husbands could not just marry them “for free”, that is just not the way things are done. According to these spokespersons, the presentation of marriage goods is traditional. The spokespersons said that marriage goods show commitment and bind a man to a woman. A man cannot leave a woman if he has presented marriage goods and he is obliged to look after his wife and his children (see Section 2.4.1). The black women workers said that if a man did not deliver marriage goods, he would be able to leave his wife whenever he wanted, and marry another woman, because it is easy and inexpensive. No negative perceptions about the custom of marriage goods was expressed by these women and the spokespersons regarded it as part of the wedding ceremony and as a sign of a permanent commitment by the husband. Marriage goods are not regarded by these women as a discriminatory instrument of the patriarchy or as a sign of the subordination of women. According to the black women workers at AMM, it is a tradition which benefits women because it symbolises the commitment of the husband to his wife.

### **3.22.4 Concluding remarks**

The black women workers at AMM make a definite distinction between the labour and role divisions of men and women. This particular role division is very traditional in nature and in accordance with the indigenous African cultural orientation of the black women workers. They are satisfied with their choices and do not view them as a form of feminist ideology or gender discrimination. The black women workers do not want to be treated as equals to men, because of the difference in role ascription between the sexes. Nor do the black women workers want to be equally employed, they would prefer to be housekeepers while their husbands and male family members are the breadwinners. These women do not regard themselves as subordinate to men in any way; they are equals within specific culturally determined role and labour divisions (see Section 2.4.2).

The feminist and gender agendas in South Africa (see Section 2.2) need to be seriously re-evaluated and the voices of women in general and black women workers in particular need to be heard. Interviews with the black women workers at AMM revealed that the unique needs of black women are often taken for granted in discussions on gender equality, and are frequently looked at totally out of context (see Section 2.6.2.1).

### **3.23 PHYSICAL WORK ENVIRONMENT**

The black women workers at AMM were asked questions in the questionnaire about the physical circumstances of the workplace and whether they would want to change anything in the factory. At first, the black women workers responded that the factory was like somebody else's house. They do not necessarily like it but they cannot change anything because they do not own it. The researcher rephrased the question and asked, what, if the respondents were the owners of the factory, they would change. All the respondents indicated that they would pay themselves more.

The women stated that the factory is cleaned regularly and is not too dirty: they enjoy the clean working environment. The black women workers also stated that they are satisfied with the working environment in summer, but that the factory is cold in winter and that they would like to install heaters. Five of the respondents would like a tea room where they can prepare tea for teatime and a kitchen where they can prepare food for lunch.

The black women workers indicated that machinery breaks down frequently but is normally fixed within a short period. If a machine breaks, the workers report it to the production manager, the quality control officer or the supervisor. The black women workers stated that they are satisfied with the equipment that they have to use in order to perform their tasks. The respondents argued that the working environment is satisfactory because it is not dirty, extremely hot or extremely cold. These workers said that they are satisfied with the physical working environment and would not want to change anything, except for the above proposals.

### 3.24 JOB SECURITY

The black women workers at AMM are convinced that employment at AMM is limitless. This notion of job security is one of the few aspects that motivate workers to be productive and to complete the required amount of work within the specified time limit. Spokespersons declared that they have job security at AMM and that it is important for the workers to know that there will always be wages or a salary at the end of the month. According to the black women workers, they have work from January to January at AMM, and they do not have to worry about the next month's income, as there will always be work at the factory.

The black women workers are not worried about their future at AMM. The spokespersons were asked whether they ever worry about the possibility that they might be unemployed in the future. The black women workers once again responded that they will not be unemployed because there will always be work at AMM.

**Table 3.10: Period of employment of the black women workers at AMM**

Period of employment	Number of women
1 month – 1 year	3
2 – 5 years	5
6 – 10 years	7
11 – 15 years	2
16 – 20 years	-
21 – 25 years	2

Eleven of the black women workers have been employed at AMM for six years and more. All the respondents stated that they are comfortable with the work and the daily routine at AMM and that they do not need or wish to seek alternative employment (see Section 3.16).

### 3.25 IMPORTANT WORK-RELATED AFRICAN LANGUAGE CONCEPTS

According to Kellerman (1979:1), black workers, in many respects, lack precise and scientific terms for many industrially relevant concepts, especially in their active vocabulary. This means that a black worker entering the western labour system may be less familiar or even unfamiliar with concepts relevant to western industry. The question therefore arises whether the black women workers at AMM attach the same meaning(s) to certain work-related concepts as the researcher does.

Consequently, the black women workers at AMM were asked to translate different work-related concepts into Sotho (see Table 3.11). This particular language was chosen because most of the black women workers at AMM were able to understand and speak Sotho (see Section 3.5). However, not all the answers given by the black women workers were in Sotho. This is largely so because of a lack of language proficiency and because Sotho is not the language of choice of many of these women.

The black women workers gave different translations for different work-related concepts (see Table 3.11). These concepts as translated by the women were written down, and with the help of Mr Ben Goslin of the African Languages Department (UP), transcribed and checked for correct spelling as well as correct interpretation. In this way, the researcher was able to analyse the perceptions of the black women workers about “work” itself and work-related concepts.

The researcher was able to review the interviews in the light of semantic translations of the work-related concepts, and could thus understand the answers of the black women workers more clearly. This was necessary as the black women workers might have interpreted certain work-related concepts differently from the way the researcher did. With the direct translation of these work-related concepts, the researcher was able to transcribe the interviews from the point of view of the black women workers and largely eliminate western-oriented bias in the researcher’s interpretations of answers.

**Table 3.11: Important work-related African language concepts: black women workers at AMM**

Important work-related concepts	Translation of concepts in Sotho by the black women workers	Meaning of work-related Sotho concepts as given by the black women workers
<b>Work</b>	Mmereko	Work. A job.
	Mošomong	At work, on the job, to work, from work, in the workshop.
	Mošomo	Work, a job. Task, assignment.
<b>I am now going to work</b>	Ke ya mošomong.	I am going to work. I am on my way to work.
	Šala gabotse, ke ya mošomong.	Good-bye, I am off to work now.
<b>Workplace</b>	Ke kae mo o berekang?	Where do you work? Where are you employed at present?
	AMM	Automotive Mouldings.
<b>Factory</b>	Mašemong	In the fields, in the gardens, in the agricultural fields.
	Ifabriki (Zulu) Faporiki (Sotho)	A factory.
<b>Good work</b>	Go siama (Sepedi)	It is good, all right, it is okay.
	Go botse (Setswana)	It is right.
	Mošomo o mobotse.	The work is good. The job is nice.
<b>Bad work</b>	Go se šome gabotse.	Not to work well.
	Mošomong umubi.	The workplace is bad, unpleasant.
<b>Hard work</b>	Go šoma boima.	To work hard. To do difficult work.
	Mošomo o boima.	The work is difficult.

Continued overleaf



Table 3.11, continued

<b>Work that is enjoyable</b>	Go šoma gabotse.	To work well.
	Mošomo o o kgamišago.	A backbreaking job.
<b>The people working at the factory</b>	Babereki	The workers, employees, the labourers.
	Bašomi	Employees, workers.
<b>The person that employed you</b>	Ke molebeledi.	I am a foreman, I am a controller, I am an overseer.
	Mong mošomo (Setswana)	Another job, other work.
<b>The employer</b>	Kgoši	Chief, sir, king, God, Head.
	Matsogo a mong mošomo.	Talent for another job/work. To have an aptitude for other kinds of work.
<b>Quality control officer</b>	Molebeledi	Overseer, foreman, monitor.
	Molekodi	Inspector, controller, quality controller.
<b>A worker</b>	Mmerekki	A worker, a labourer, an employee.
	Mašomi	A group of workers, employees.
<b>A good worker</b>	O šoma mošomo wo mokaone.	You are doing a better job. You are working better.
	Seroto	A diligent person. A hard-working person.
<b>A bad worker</b>	Mošomo o mobe.	Bad job, unpleasant work, bad work.
	Sebodu (Sepedi)	A lazy person.

Continued overleaf

Table 3.11, continued

<b>Lazy people</b>	Go namešša.	To raise, to give a lift.
	Sebudu	A sluggard, a lazy person. Lazy-bones.
<b>Spry people/hard-working people</b>	O bereka gabotse.	You work well. You are doing a good job.
	Seroto	A diligent, hard-working person.

The work values of the black women workers at AMM are evident in the meanings and interpretations attached to the western work-related concepts in Table 3.11. The black women workers' attitude towards "work" as a means towards an end is apparent from Table 3.11. "Work" is regarded as a job or an assignment and not, as in western culture, as an essential way of life. For the black women workers at AMM, work is thus only a series of assignments to be completed in order to earn a monthly wage. Note that there is no clear translation for "enjoyable work" and that this concept was translated as work that has been done well. It was also stated that to do a job well is "backbreaking work" and thus definitely not enjoyable. The black women workers at AMM do not enjoy working and this confirms that these women regard work as a means to an end and not as an end in itself, as perceived by many westerners.

It is evident from Table 3.11 that the black women workers at AMM perceive certain concepts within the work situation, such as "hard work", differently from the way westerners do. Ideally, westerners regard work, especially hard work, as a (religious) duty and inherently noble way of life, whilst the black women workers at AMM regard work as assignments that must be completed in order to earn wages. "Hard work" is interpreted as difficult assignments and is viewed in a negative light by the black women workers at AMM.

The black women workers at AMM interpreted the concept "a bad worker" as a person who is lazy. The concept also led to a response by the black women workers at AMM that there is no such thing as "a bad worker" and that it is the work itself that is bad. This confirms the reluctance of the black women workers at AMM, as was discussed earlier in the chapter (see Section 3.20), to accept responsibility and accountability within the workplace.



The difference in attitudes towards work and the different meanings assigned to western work-related concepts by the black women workers at AMM influence communication and relations within the workplace. The employer might give certain orders, but receive unexpected results as the workers interpret certain western work-related terms differently from the interpretation given to the concepts by the employer, and thus the black women workers may appear not to follow orders. The employer should take this into account during meetings and when work orders are explained. The working behaviour of black women workers, are in many ways, quite opposite to that of westerners. This should be taken into account by the employer in order to predict the working behaviour of his employees and to enhance productivity.

### 3.26 SUMMARY

The aim of this chapter was to provide an ethnographic description of how black women workers experience and perceive selected western work values within a particular South African factory, namely Automotive Mouldings cc (AMM) in Marble Hall. The culturally determined attitudes of the black women workers towards “work” were determined. The influence of their culture(s), value judgements and life- and world-views on the working behaviour of these black women workers within this western labour set-up were discussed. Thus, the culturally determined attitudes of these black women workers towards “work” were described.

Raubenheimer and Kotze (1984) as well as Van Vuuren (1988) commented on a number of western work values. It is described how these black women workers experience and perceive these western work values. The criteria by Raubenheimer and Kotze (1984) and by Van Vuuren (1988) are not necessarily culturally relevant to the African-oriented and culturally determined work values of the black women workers at AMM. However, both the South African labour system and the relations which are the consequence of its policies, as a whole, are founded on western value systems and capitalist economic principles. Hence, a western work environment exists in South Africa (Raubenheimer & Kotze 1984:10). The criteria of Raubenheimer and Kotze (1984) and those of Van Vuuren (1988) select certain elements of a western culturally determined work ethic. These elements play a central part in the working behaviour valued in and required of workers in this western labour system. The above-



mentioned work values are relevant to the work situation of black women workers, as these criteria imply expected and, hence, predictable working behaviour.

Black women workers bring with them to the workplace an African-oriented “culture”. Collectively, black women workers share a more or less similar African-oriented lifestyle (Els 1993:51). This more or less similar lifestyle with its own value system forms a system different to the overall western work value system. The African-oriented value system of black women workers is brought into a western-oriented workplace, thereby influencing labour relations and productivity. It is thus important that the perceptions of black women workers regarding western work values are researched so that employers can understand and predict the working behaviour of black women workers. Employers should be aware of the working behaviour of traditional Africans in general, but specifically the working behaviour of black women workers in their areas in order to prevent conflict in the workplace and to enhance productivity.

The research group was comprised of 19 black women workers employed at AMM. The factory functions on a principle of direct proportional remuneration, in other words, the more work is completed, the greater the remuneration. Each black woman worker at AMM has specific and defined duties to perform and the women are individually responsible for the work that they perform as well as for the quality of the work.

The spokespersons/respondents represented considerable diversity in age, ethnicity, language, religion and education. This biographical background has a definite and direct influence on the black women workers’ employment opportunities and their performance and behaviour within the workplace. Aspects such as the age and levels of education of the black women workers at AMM have a direct influence on productivity.

A western perception of work as a (religious) obligation is not present in the work values of the black women workers at AMM. The work values of the black women workers are not founded in religion and this aspect can be regarded as the paramount difference between the culturally determined work value systems of westerners and of the African-oriented black women workers at AMM.

The working behaviour of the black women workers at AMM is largely unaffected by political ideology or trade union policy. The black women workers view work exclusively as

a means to an end. They work to earn wages to buy food in order to survive. According to the black women workers at AMM, they work because they have no other choice. The majority of the black women workers at AMM regard “work” in a negative light.

The culturally determined work values of the black women workers at AMM are, in most instances, the exact opposite to western work values. A definite distinction is drawn between thoroughness and alertness. The black women workers are, according to their own perceptions, always thorough in doing their work, but they argued that it is humanly impossible to be alert at all times, because they get tired and their eyes get tired as well. This attention is not always given to detail and that results in rejected products as well as low productivity.

Another contrast between the culturally determined work value systems of westerners and those of the research group is dedication to work and motivational aspects in employment. Job satisfaction is not a priority in the work values of the black women workers. The black women workers at AMM stated that they do not want to change any aspects about the work they are performing, except for improved financial remuneration. They do not enjoy working and nothing will change this. The only motivational factor is the monthly remuneration.

The black women workers at AMM exhibit low levels of personal aspirations and prefer easy and effortless tasks to taxing and challenging assignments. These women do not have much confidence in their abilities and skills. The black women workers at AMM view skills as something one must of necessity acquire in order to complete assignments. The black women workers do not try to control their environment or their lives, but leave it to destiny or supernatural forces.

The black women workers at AMM perceive time management as equal to financial remuneration. The more work they do (in terms of longer hours of work), the higher their wages at the end of the month. As long as they receive the wages they expect and do not produce too many rejected products, time management does not trouble them.

Communication and relations with co-workers are particularly important to the black women workers at AMM and are largely relaxed within the workplace, with the exception of occasional personal conflict, which is solved within the group. Communication with the

management of AMM, including the employer, the production manager and the quality control officer, is strained and reflects potential conflict situations.

The black women workers do not accept personal responsibility and accountability for any errors or mistakes in their work or problems within the workplace. Every element in the workplace other than themselves is blamed for rejected or flawed parts and products. The result is that products are frequently rejected whilst workers refuse to accept responsibility. This is not financially profitable and has a negative influence on productivity in the factory.

The black women workers do enjoy status and respect within their particular communities because they are employed. The black women workers stated that they particularly enjoy work status within their families and households. They are respected because they support the households financially and because they can afford to send their children to school. Their families respect them because they can afford to buy food and nobody in the household goes hungry.

Work status as perceived by the black women workers at AMM differs from the western interpretation. The black women workers argued that work status is not based on the position the worker occupies within the workplace, but merely on the fact that a person is employed and is able to support his/her family. Thus, work status is based on the single most important motivational element within the work values of the black women workers at AMM, namely financial reward.

The black women workers at AMM are not worried about their future at AMM. The women were asked whether they ever worry about the possibility that they might be unemployed in the future. The black women workers responded that they will not be unemployed, because there will always be work at AMM. According to these women at AMM, they do not have to be concerned about next month's income; there will always be work and commensurate remuneration.

The gender issue in South Africa needs serious re-evaluation – the voices of women in South Africa in general and those of black women workers in particular need to be heard. Interviews with the black women workers at AMM revealed that the unique needs of black women are often taken for granted in the discussions on gender equality and seen out of context. The traditional division of labour and gender role division as found in the cultures of African



origin should be studied by employers and exponents of gender equality. The culturally determined value systems and needs of black women should be taken into consideration at all times. The leaders in gender equality should not concentrate on the issues that are considered “politically correct”, but the real needs of women in general and black women in particular, must be addressed.

According to Kellerman (1979:1), black workers, in many respects, lack precise and scientific terms for many industrially relevant concepts, especially in their active vocabulary. The question therefore arose whether the black women workers at AMM attached the same meaning to certain work-related concepts as the researcher. Consequently, the black women workers were asked to translate different western work-related concepts into Sotho. The black women workers gave different translations to different work-related concepts. In this way, the researcher was able to analyse the perceptions of the black women workers at AMM about “work” itself and work-related concepts.

The difference in attitudes towards work and different meanings assigned to western work-related concepts by the black women workers influence communication and relations within the workplace. The employer should take this into account during meetings and when work orders are explained. The working behaviour of the black women workers is, in many ways, different to that of westerners. This should be taken into account by the employer in order to predict the working behaviour of his employees and to enhance productivity at AMM.

## CHAPTER 4

### EVALUATION OF THE RESEARCH RESULTS

#### 4.1 CONCLUSION

According to Maja (1972:115), it should **not** be assumed that

western influences have completely destroyed all rudiments of traditional values and practices. The fact of the matter is that they have had such a profound impact on these traditional North Sotho values that it is becoming increasingly difficult to come across North Sotho values in their unadulterated form.

The emphasis of this study falls on how black women workers experience and perceive selected western work values within a particular South African workplace, namely AMM. As mentioned in the introductory chapter, a problem that constantly arises within South African industries is that there is a discrepancy between work values and the working behaviour of the workforce. Hence, the study emphasises the largely African- and culturally oriented value judgements and life- and world-view of the research group, 19 black women workers employed at AMM. Specific reference is made to the working behaviour of the 19 black women workers employed at AMM and their culturally determined value judgements and life- and world-views concerning certain requirements and elements within the western labour system.

From the qualitative and quantitative research findings, it would appear that one could hardly speak of any attitude as typically traditional or typically western, nor of any attitude as typically rural or urban. Rather, one observes shifts to and fro in terms of attitude between traditional and western practices. The work values and thus the working behaviour of the 19 black women workers appear to be an amalgamation of traditional and western patterns. As Rollwagen (1986:108) points out,

corporations [in this case labour corporations], being composed of a number of individuals linked together in various ways through time, create a variety of formal and informal understandings which define the nature of the thoughts and behaviours of members of that population while at work and which affects their behaviour at



other times as well. Individuals who join such corporations learn that corporate culture and add it to the cultural frameworks already in their minds from people in other specific cultural systems.

Despite this amalgamation of traditional and western patterns in the work values and working behaviour of the 19 black women workers at AMM, their working behaviour was and is in some instances opposite to accepted and expected working behaviour within the western labour set-up in South Africa. These disparities between accepted western work values and the culturally determined work values of the 19 black women workers from various black South African cultural groups employed at AMM are summarised in Table 4.1.

#### **4.1.1. Guidelines and conclusions**

Through extensive research, including literature research as well as quantitative and qualitative research discussed in the previous chapters, the researcher reached the following primary conclusions. These conclusions can be used as guidelines by the employer and management team at AMM in order to judge and predict the working behaviour of the black women workers employed at the factory and also to understand the culturally determined value judgements and life- and world-views of black women workers concerning certain elements within a western work ethic and a western work milieu.

These guidelines and conclusions concerning western work values and how the black women workers at AMM perceive and experience these western work values within a western work-milieu are presented in random order. The guidelines and conclusions could not be prioritised, as aspects of working behaviour and work values are closely related to one another. The value judgements and perceptions of the 19 black women workers on elements within their western-oriented workplace cannot be categorised or prioritised, and this is consistent with the holism of the life- and world-view of the black women workers. The value judgements and perceptions of the 19 black women workers concerning these selected western work values are thus evaluated with the emphasis on the criteria of Raubenheimer and Kotze (1984) and of Van Vuuren (1988).

**Table 4.1: A comparison of western work values and those perceived by the black women workers at AMM**

<b>Elements of work values</b>	<b>Westerners</b>	<b>Black women workers at AMM</b>
<b>Career awareness</b>	Religiously grounded (Section 1.6.1.1)	Extension of culture (Section 3.13)
<b>Motivation to achieve</b>	Religious duty (Section 1.6.1.10)	Survival of the group; financial remuneration (Section 3.16)
<b>Discipline</b>	Personal (Section 1.6.1.3)	Welfare of the group (Section 3.20)
<b>Responsibility</b>	Involvement and liability (Section 1.6.1.6 )	Role of the supernatural (Section 3.20)
<b>Work status</b>	Work as a status symbol (Section 1.6.1.7)	The survival and welfare of the group (Section 3.21)
<b>Individualism</b>	Individual competition and achievement (Section 1.6.1.8)	Affiliation and group solidarity (Section 3.14)
<b>Gender and work</b>	Gender equality (Section 2.2)	Gender-oriented role differentiation (Section 3.22)
<b>Communication</b>	Time effectiveness and clarity (Section 1.6.1.4)	Method of peacekeeping and group affiliation (Section 3.19)
<b>Thoroughness and alertness</b>	Implies the quality of work (Section 1.6.1.5)	Thoroughness probable, alertness impossible (Section 3.15)
<b>Perception of the future</b>	Time as a commodity and provision for the future (Section 1.6.1.4)	Subsistence way of life and past and present orientation (Section 3.18.4)

- (1) One should bear in mind that the work values as well as the working behaviour of black women workers are culturally determined and that these culturally determined work values of black women workers dictate their working behaviour within the western-oriented South African labour system (see Section 1.5.2 and Section 1.5.7.4). According to a definition of “values” by Coertze and Coertze (1996:336), a value system is a cultural aspect. Values are a product of a specific cultural group’s life- and world-view and are judged and lived accordingly (see Section 1.5.2). Thus, employers should bear in mind that the working behaviour of black women workers from indigenous African-oriented cultural groups in South Africa is often very different to the working behaviour of westerners and, hence, contrasts with working behaviour expected in the western labour system.
- (2) Black women workers do not live in a vacuum – historical experiences and attitudes influence the working behaviour and perceptions by black women workers (see Section 2.1). The position of black women workers within the labour market was manipulated under a system of apartheid and the reservation of employment opportunities, and, after the abolition of apartheid, by affirmative action (see Section 2.5.1 and Section 2.7.9). Beyond the workplace, black women workers have certain obligations and a certain status within the traditional hierarchy (see Section 2.4 and Section 2.6.3). These factors and experiences are carried over into the workplace, because black women workers function as holistic cultural beings within and outside the workplace. Thus, black women workers cannot be looked at separately from historical and current economic, legal, political and social factors that influence their daily lives, entrance to, and position within the workplace.
- (3) The black women workers at AMM have a specific system of seniority which is consistent with their traditional African-oriented culture (see Section 2.4.3 and Section 3.3). Thus, age is important in the workplace (AMM) as a system of seniority is established and, accordingly, workers treat one another with due respect (see Section 3.3).
- (4) Although the research group is ethnically diverse (see Section 3.4), ethnic affiliation did not influence the perceptions on western work values or the work performance of the black women workers at AMM directly, as all of the women share a more or less similar sub-Saharan African-oriented lifestyle (Els 1993:51). However, ethnic



affiliation does influence social relationships and social interaction within the workplace. Diverse ethnic affiliation, however, implies a diversity of languages and this aspect definitely influences communication and group solidarity at AMM (see Section 3.5 and Section 3.19). Communication is very important to the black women workers at AMM. Ineffective communication is viewed as a breach in the solidarity of the group (see Section 3.19.3). Problems between co-workers should be solved within the group, without arbitrary involvement of members of the management team at AMM (see Section 3.19.3).

- (5) The work values and working behaviour of the black women workers at AMM are not founded on religion (see Section 3.6). The idealistic western perception of work as a (religious) obligation (see Section 1.5.7), is not present in the work values and working behaviour of the black women workers. The work values and working behaviour of the women workers at AMM are not founded on religion and this can be regarded as the most important difference between the culturally determined work value systems of westerners and those of these African-oriented black women workers.
- (6) “Work” is viewed exclusively as a means to an end, meaning that the black women workers work in order to feed themselves and their children and dependants (see Section 3.7 and Section 3.13). Work is a means of survival and not a moral obligation, as is the case within the puritan western work ethic (see Section 1.5.7). This perception of “work” is largely due to the socio-economic position of the black women workers: many of them are caught in a cycle of debt and repayment (see Section 3.11.5). It can thus be concluded that poverty plays an important role in the perceptions of the black women workers on the concept “work”. Poverty also has a negative influence on the productivity of the black women workers, as they suffer from “tiredness” and work in order to repay their debts (see Section 3.17).
- (7) The black women workers perceive education to be very important for their children (see Section 3.8). The black women workers perceive education as a necessity and prerequisite for their children to enjoy wealth and white collar employment (see Section 3.8). However, for themselves, they only regard the acquisition of skills as a necessity to complete assignments and not as a means to better employment

opportunities (see Section 3.16). The lack of education of many of the black women workers limits their employment opportunities to unskilled labour (see Section 3.8).

- (8) The single most important motivational aspect in the working life of the black women workers at AMM is financial remuneration (see Section 3.16). The black women workers at AMM do not enjoy working and virtually no improvement in the workplace will motivate them to be more productive. The black women workers indicated that they might be more productive in the short term if they received improved financial remuneration (see Section 3.17). The black women workers do not experience work as a calling and regard their employment merely as a means to an end. Job satisfaction is not a priority in the work values of the black women workers at AMM (see Section 3.24). Adequate financial remuneration is viewed as the only satisfaction a worker needs within the work situation.
- (9) Within the workplace, the black women workers regard group solidarity and cohesion as very important. Individualism is not a valued characteristic within the group (see Section 3.14). The group requires black women workers to function individually through and in harmony with the group. This view accords with the traditional African values of the black women workers, where individuality is not a necessity and the welfare of the group should be promoted at all times (Oosthuizen 1977:37; Silberbauer 1968:19; Van Niekerk 1983:61).
- (10) The black women workers at AMM distinguish clearly between thoroughness and alertness (see Section 3.15). Work is always perceived to be done thoroughly, but permanent alertness is impossible and beyond human control; consequently, errors are made. Therefore, thoroughness cannot be achieved as an ultimate goal (see Section 3.15).
- (11) The black women workers are not equally productive or industrious at all times (see Section 3.17). They are more productive on some days than on others and do not function to full capacity and potential within the workplace, mainly because they have culturally determined perceptions about the amount of work that needs to be completed within a certain time limit (see Section 3.17). The black women workers are not slaves of time. Time management is not a priority and time is “made” to rest, talk and work (see Section 3.18). Time is perceived in the terms of the recent past and

the present. The future and the advance planning of time schedules are not priorities (see Section 3.18).

- (12) The black women workers do not accept responsibility or accountability for errors or mishaps in the workplace (see Section 3.20). Problems and mistakes are blamed on the machinery, materials and forces beyond human control, such as the supernatural (see Section 3.20.5). This attitude influences productivity in the factory as the black women workers do not accept responsibility for rejected components. The black women workers at AMM have a very fatalistic approach towards “work” (see Section 3.17).
- (13) Work status as perceived by the black women workers at AMM differs from that of westerners (see Section 3.21). The black women workers enjoy status within their communities and families because they are employed. It is not their position within the workplace that is important, but the fact that they provide for their families and dependants that earns respect (see Section 3.21). Work status is based on the single most important motivational element within the work values of the black women workers, namely financial reward (see Section 3.21).
- (14) The black women workers at AMM value job security (see Section 3.24). All the black women workers stated that work at AMM is tolerable because of job security (see Section 3.16). The black women workers are reassured by their perception that there will be continued monthly remuneration and employment at AMM for an unlimited period of time (see Section 3.24).
- (15) The physical work environment is not important to the black women workers at AMM (see Section 3.23). The black women workers regard the factory as a place where they work, and that cannot be changed (see Section 3.23). The spokespersons regard the factory as equal to “somebody else’s house”: they do not necessarily like the appearance of the factory, but they do not have any power to change anything within it (see Section 3.23). If possible, the black women workers would like to have heaters and an equipped kitchen installed (see Section 3.23). The black women also stated that they are satisfied with their work environment, as it is not too hot or too dirty (see Section 3.23).

- (16) Gender and the position of black women within the labour situation are perceived according to an African-oriented cultural point of view (see Section 3.22). The black women workers perceive the roles of men and women according to traditional guidelines of sub-Saharan African origin (see Section 3.22.1). The black women workers at AMM do not regard themselves as the equals of men nor do they want to be treated as such; a definite distinction between the roles of men and women is made (see Section 3.22).
- (17) The work values of the black women workers at AMM are largely unaffected by political ideology and trade union policy (see Section 3.12). Although some of the black women workers at AMM are members of political parties, these parties have no direct influence within the workplace and the working behaviour of the black women workers is not directly influenced or dictated by political guidelines (see Section 3.12).
- (18) Black workers often lack precise and scientific terms for industrially relevant concepts (see Section 3.25). Translations into Sotho of work-related concepts supplied by the black women workers at AMM revealed that they perceive “work” in itself not as a way of life, but as a means towards an end (see Section 3.25). It is indisputable that the black women workers at AMM perceive certain work-related concepts differently from the way westerners do (see Table 3.11). This has a negative effect on communications and relations within the workplace. It is especially relations between management and the employees at AMM that have to be reviewed (see Section 3.25).

#### **4.1.2 Limitations of the research**

The research was limited to an exclusively female research group within a single factory, namely AMM. The reason for this was that very limited research (particularly anthropological research) has been done, within academia, on the working behaviour of black women workers in a western working environment. The research was further limited by the size of the research group, and this research sample cannot be seen as representative of the entire South African population. For this reason, the recommendations, guidelines and conclusions in this study are mainly relevant to the factory, the management team and the

employees at AMM. The value of this study lies in demonstrating that a cross-cultural approach can be applied to the situation of **black women workers** in a western workplace and the performance of these women within this particular working environment.

#### **4.1.3 Further research**

Very limited anthropological research has been done on the situation of women from indigenous South African culture groups within the western working environment. It is essential that more cross-cultural research is done in this area so that the South African labour system can better accommodate the work values, perceptions of work values and the working expectations of a large proportion of the South African labour force, namely black women workers.

#### **4.1.4 Concluding remarks**

Black women workers at AMM regard and perceive “work” as well as elements within the western work ethic in a different way from the way westerners would. It is imperative that the employer at AMM in particular and employers within the South African labour system in general acknowledge the disparities between the culturally determined perceptions of “work” and the work values of westerners and the African-oriented black women workers. Employers and South African industries should try to effect a compromise between these two value systems (western and African-oriented) in order to improve labour relations and productivity and to be able to predict and judge the working behaviour of black women workers. This is not possible without knowledge of the work values, perceptions of western work values and the working behaviour of black women workers with a sub-Saharan African orientation.

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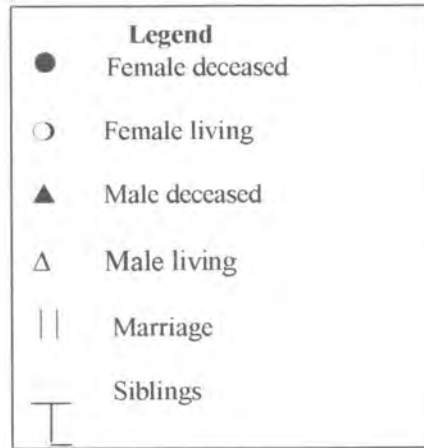
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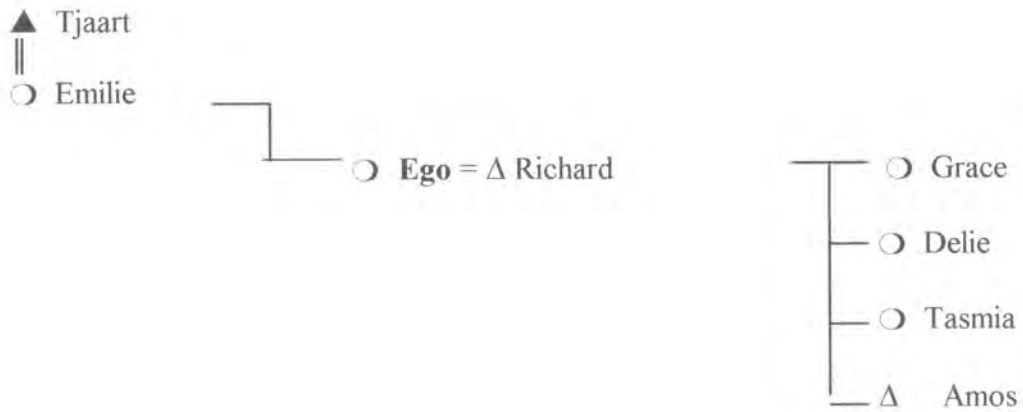


## APPENDIX A

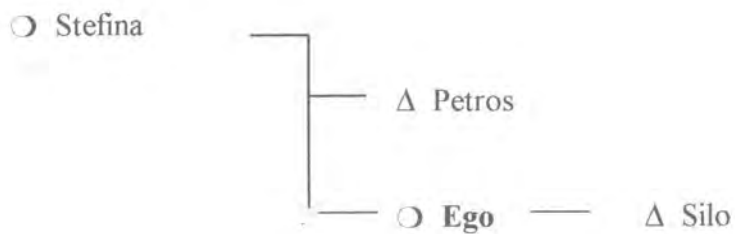
### EXAMPLES OF GENEALOGICAL DIAGRAMMS



#### SPOKESPERSON A



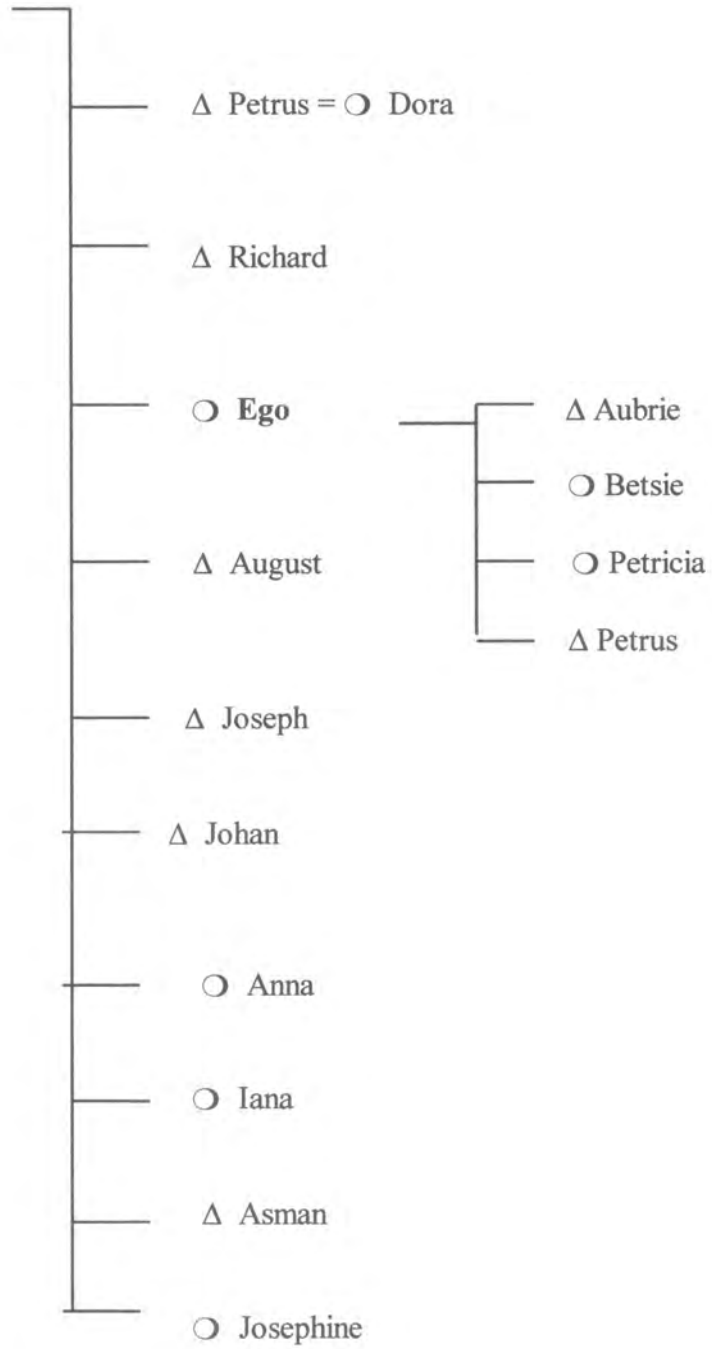
#### SPOKESPERSON B





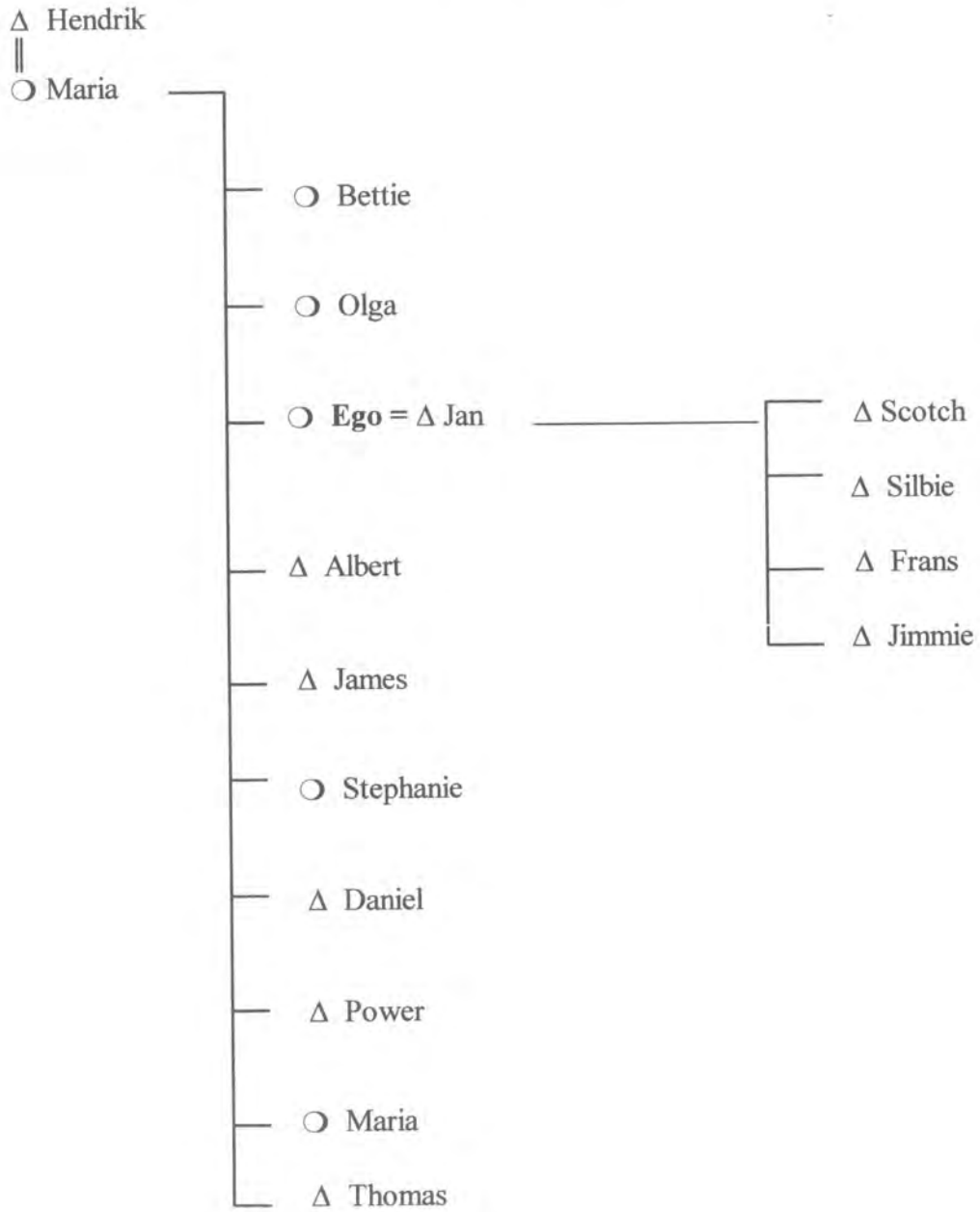
### SPOKESPERSON C

▲ Amos  
||  
○ Bettie





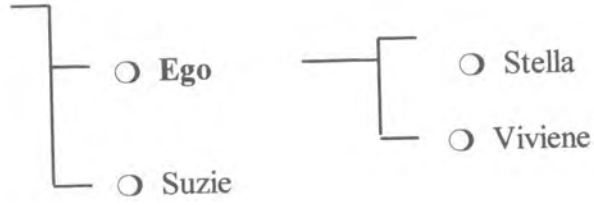
### SPOKESPERSON D





### SPOKESPERSON E

▲ Petrus  
||  
● Liesbeth







## APPENDIX B

### QUESTIONNAIRE

(Complete the questionnaire by supplying answers to the questions and mark relevant answers in the tables with a ✓ or ✗)

**Name**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Surname**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Age**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Marital status (mark correct answer with ✓ or ✗)**

Married	
Single	

**How many children do you have?**

1 child	
2 children	
3 children	
4 children	
5 children	
6 children	
7 children	
8 children	
9 children	
10 children	
More than 10 children	



**How old are your children?**

1 month – 1 year old	
2 – 5 years old	
6 – 10 years old	
11 – 15 years old	
16 – 20 years old	
21 – 25 years old	
26 – 30 years old	
More than 30 years old	

**Of which ethnic group do you regard yourself to be a member?**

Coloured	
Ndebele	
Pedi	
Sotho	
Swazi	
Tsonga	
Tswana	
Venda	
Xhosa	
Zulu	
Other	

**If you do not regard yourself as a member of any of the above-mentioned ethnic groupings, to which other ethnic group do you belong?**

---

**Which languages can you speak and/or understand?**

Afrikaans	
English	
IsiNdebele	
Sepedi	
SeSotho	
Siswati	
IsiXhosa	
IsiZulu	
Other	

**Do you belong to a church?**

Yes	
No	



If yes, to which church do you go?

Anglican	
Apostolic	
Church without a name	
Dutch Reformed	
Reformed	
Roman Catholic	
St John	
ZCC	
Other	

If you are not a member of any of the above mentioned church affiliations, please state to which other church or religious affiliation you belong.

---

Did you attend school?

Yes	
No	

If no, why did you not attend school?

---

If yes, up to which level did you attend school?

Grade 1 – 2 (Class 1 – 2)	
Grade 3 – 7 (Std 1 – 5)	
Grade 8 – 10 (Std 6 – 8)	
Grade 11 – 12 (Std 9 – 10)	

Did you matriculate?

Yes	
No	

If not, why did you not complete your education?

Financial reasons	
I fell pregnant	
I got married	
Other reasons	



**Where do you live during the week?**

Brakfontein	
Dennilton	
Elandskraal	
Leeufontein	
Mapoch	
Marble Hall	
Rietvlei	
Vaalbank	
Van der Merweskraal	
Other	

**Where do you live during weekends?**

The same place as during the week	
At my parents' house	
At the house of family	
At the house of my children	
At the house of friends	
Other	

**In which town do you live during weekends?**

---

**Are you a member of a political party?**

Yes	
No	

**Why are you or are you not a member of a political party?**

---

**Are you a member of a trade union?**

Yes	
No	

**Why are you or are you not a member of trade union?**

---



**How did you get a job at AMM?**

---

**What kind of work are you doing?**

---

**How long have you worked at AMM?**

1 - 6 months	
7 - 11 months	
1 - 2 years	
3 - 5 years	
6 - 10 years	
11 - 15 years	
16 - 20 years	
21 - 25 years	
26 - years	
Other	

**Why do you work?**

---

**Where did you work before being employed at AMM?**

---

**Do you want to work?**

---

**If you lost your job at AMM, would you look for another job?**

---

**Do you enjoy working alone or in a group?**

---



**Do you enjoy working?**

---

**Should everybody receive the same salary?**

---

**Did you receive sufficient training to do your job thoroughly (good/well)?**

---

**Is there enough time to do your job thoroughly (good/well)?**

---

**Do you know what the parts you are making are used for?**

---

**Would you be motivated to work more thoroughly (good/well) if you knew what the parts/items that you are making are used for?**

---

**Do you always do your work correctly?**

---

**Is it important to be in time for work every morning?**

---

**What happens if you are late for work?**

---



**Are you sometimes absent from work?**

---

**Do you tell somebody at work that you will be absent?**

---

**What happens if your work is not finished?**

---

**Does the employer speak to the workers?**

---

**Do the employer and the workers understand one another?**

---

**Do you like the employer?**

---

**Do you like the production manager?**

---

**Do you like the quality control officer?**

---

**Do you have a problem with another worker?**

---

**What do you do when you have a problem with another worker?**

---



**Do you have friends at AMM?**

---

**Do the workers argue with one another?**

---

**Should the young workers listen to the older workers?**

---

**Is it important that all the workers work well together?**

---

**Would you still work if you had a rich husband?**

---

**Would you still work if you won a lot of money in a competition or game (such as Ithuba or ZamaZama)?**

---

**Do you want to change any aspect of your job?**

---

**Do you want to do the same work every day?**

---

**Do you find your job boring?**

---





**Are you satisfied with your job?**

---

**If you completed a lot of work in a day, do you feel good about yourself?**

---

**Are you proud of the work that you have done?**

---

**Do you think that God wants people to work?**

---

**Is it good to work hard all day long?**

---

**Do you get tired at work?**

---

**When do you get tired?**

---

**Is it good to have rules at AMM?**

---

**Does your family respect you because you are working?**

---



**Is it good to be lazy?**

---

**Would it be better not to do any work?**

---

**Do you make a lot of rejects?**

---

**Why do you make rejects?**

---

**Do you want to change anything at the factory?**

---

**Are you satisfied with the equipment you use at the factory?**

---

**Are you afraid of losing your job at AMM?**

---

**Who will look after you when you retire?**

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## **MAP 1: THE MARBLE HALL-DISTRICT**

### **PLACES OF RESIDENCE OF THE BLACK WOMEN WORKERS AT AMM**

