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ECONOMIC AND SOCIO-LOGICAL APPROACHES TO UNEMPLOYMENT

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Rural Urban Studies Unit

The Rural Urban Studies Unit was founded in 1983 by the Human Sciences Research Council for the purpose of studying the dynamics of the links between the rural and urban areas of South Africa. It is situated at the University of Natal, Durban and works in close co-operation with the Centre for Social and Development Studies.

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ECONOMIC AND SOCIOLOGICAL APPROACHES TO UNEMPLOYMENT

A Conceptual Analysis with Reference to South Africa in general and the Durban Metropolitan Region in particular

Introduction

Any attempt at analysing the social and structural dimensions of unemployment inevitably crosses the boundaries of economic and sociological discourse. While inter-disciplinary analysis is potentially very fruitful, it also presents methodological problems. Concepts are often understood very differently by academics in different disciplines, and the resulting mis-communications can be extremely destructive. The concept of unemployment is a classic of this kind. In order to go some of the way toward providing conceptual clarity, this paper examines various meanings of, and explanations for, unemployment which hold sway in Economics and Sociology. The distinction between the sociological concept of "joblessness" and the economic definition of "unemployment" as arising out of distortions in the labour market, receives the most attention. Part One reviews some major conflicting theoretical understandings, and explanations of, unemployment and locates certain South African analyses within the discussion. Part Two narrows the focus down to the Durban Metropolitan Region where the issues of how to measure unemployment are dealt with in more detail. A socio-economic profile of the unemployed is painted from data drawn from several studies of the Region.

PART ONE: UNEMPLOYMENT - A CONCEPTUAL OVERVIEW WITH REFERENCE TO SOUTH AFRICA

The Sociological Concept of Unemployment as Joblessness

To the sociologist, unemployment is practically synonymous with the concept of joblessness. This is because important sociological issues around unemployment include the effects of financial deprivation on the household, delinquency, loss of self-worth, depression and other socially harmful consequences. All people without jobs are therefore of interest to the sociologist. Given this focus, an appropriate measure of unemployment might be one which compares the socially accepted norms relating to the level and composition of employment with the actual state of employment. Thus, if it is for example, considered socially desirable for the entire male and half the female population between the ages of 15

and 65[1] (bar students and the disabled) to be working, then a sociologist could estimate unemployment by subtracting actual employment from the population falling within the above categories. This is a similar methodology to the way Sarakinsky and Keenen (1986) converted Simkins' estimates of unemployment to arrive at a figure of 6 million for South Africa.

The Conventional Economic Concept of Unemployment

To the conventional (as opposed to radical) economist, unemployment is a narrower and more technically defined concept which relates to the state of the labour market - itself a function of economic conditions such as the business cycle, level of development, factor substitutability etc. Full employment exists when there is no excess demand or supply in the labour market - and in principle this has no necessary connection with the level of joblessness in the economy. This is the first conceptual pitfall sociologists delving into economics must be aware of.

Full employment is defined as existing when the labour market 'clears' at a wage which equates the marginal revenue product of firms (i.e. that additional revenue generated by an addition of one worker) with the marginal rate of substitution between work and leisure for workers. All those workers who would only be prepared to work at a wage higher than the going wage, are deemed to have made a rational choice to be jobless and are thus not counted as unemployed. Only those workers who are looking for but cannot find employment and are prepared to work at the going wage are counted as unemployed. Such a situation can logically only arise when the market 'fails', i.e. if supply exceeds demand on the labour market and the wage is somehow prevented from falling in order to choke off excess supply and 'clear' the market by driving people out of it.

Extreme free-marketeer type economists tend to see the economic world as comprising of a series of smoothly functioning (always clearing) markets. Hence Kantor's analysis of South Africa's unemployment as being a 'mythical problem' (1980, 144) and Gerson's slightly more sophisticated argument that the long run rate of employment is the 'natural rate'[2] -

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1 This is Roukens de Lange and Eegher's definition of the 'Latent Labour Force' (1984, p.45)

2 The natural rate of unemployment can also be thought of as the rate of unemployment that would occur in the absence of cyclical fluctuations. It would thus become the sum of 'frictional unemployment' (that which occurs as the result of lags between job switches) and 'structural unemployment' (that caused by structural imbalances in the economy preventing the full employment of certain types of labour).

i.e. that which is distinguished by its attribute of being consistent with any fully anticipated rate of inflation (1981). Economists in this tradition have little time for discussions concerning the measurement of unemployment, as for them there is no need. In their eyes, joblessness is a rationally chosen state, and thus by implication, nothing to shout or be concerned about.

However, these jobless (but not unemployed) utility maximising rational economic agents expressing their subjective preferences for leisure, are still a problem for sociologists. Sociologists see these people as being often resentful, marginalised individuals at the root of, and subject to a variety of social evils. Economists tend to be unsympathetic to these sorts of questions because the concept of an irrational, or rational but also discontented individual, has no place in conventional economic theory.

As pointed out earlier, in so far as unemployment is deemed to exist at all, it is due to some sort of market failure. The villains thus become the 'imperfections' which prevent the wage from falling in order to clear the market. The focus is expressly impersonal and questions concerning a 'just' or 'living' wage are out of place, as the answer to unemployment is simply to allow the wage rate to drop. Interesting questions to economists thus become those pertaining to why wages are 'artificially' high.

The answers economists give to this question include institutional arguments such as minimum wage legislation and trade union power, and hypotheses relating to turnover and 'efficiency wages' (e.g. Stiglitz, 1974 and 1976 respectively). Wages are hypothesised to be set above the market clearing level in order to reduce turnover (which is costly to the firm because of recuiting and training costs) and in so far as there is a link between productivity and wages, to increase the productivity of labour. For these reasons, certain economists believe that wages are set at a rate higher than would be needed to 'clear' the market, thus 'causing' unemployment.

Job search behaviour has also been posited by economists as an explanation for unemployment. Because information about jobs is imperfectly known and costly to obtain, it is hypothesised that the rational workseeker will not accept the first few jobs offered, but will use the job search process which keeps him or her unemployed, as an information gathering exercise. Search will continue until the cost of search becomes greater than the expected gains.

When markets are segmented in so far as different markets exist for different jobs at varying wage levels, then workers may rationally turn down jobs in the low paying

competitive sectors in favour of queuing for jobs in the high paying sectors.[1] For this reason, workers are argued to 'voluntarily' limit themselves (Berry and Sabot, 1978, p.1217) and disequilibrium is thus built into the labour market in so far as there is a shortage of jobs of the preferred type. Hofmeyr's work on unemployment in South Africa falls within this perspective. According to him, labour market segmentation and imperfect information are the main distortions which prevent South Africa's labour market from clearing (1988).

Once the possibility of wages not falling to clear the market is accepted, then the question economists tend to raise when dealing with unemployment is whether the workseeker is 'voluntarily' or 'involuntarily' unemployed, i.e. whether he or she has an unrealistically high reservation wage or not (see Hofmeyr, 1984). The issue then becomes whether a persons's expectations and preferences are realistic (as measured by the objective yardstick of what the economy can offer) or not.

Neo-Keynesian and Radical Analyses of Unemployment

So far, the above discussion of the way economists deal with unemployment has been limited to the neo-classical paradigm which analyses the problem in terms of rational choice and market distortions. In contradistinction to this, neo-Keynesian and radical economists see the problem as lying more with the economic system itself. Writers in the Keynesian tradition focus on business cycle conditions (primarily the state of aggregate demand) which allow for general economic equilibrium at a less than full capacity level of output and employment. Unemployed workers from this perspective are seen as being more victims of economic cyclical exigencies than rational choice makers. Broadly speaking, a Keynesian measure of unemployment could be gained by subtracting the number of existing jobs from those the economy would be capable of producing if it was boosted into operating at full capacity.

Although this is closer to the sociologist's vision than that of the neo-classical school, it is still constrained by the full capacity level of employment limit. To the sociologist, even if the economy was running at full capacity, joblessness would be a problem. Nevertheless, Neo-Keynesian approaches to unemployment are useful in so far as they direct attention to

1 Harris and Todaro (1970) extended the queuing idea to explain why rural-urban migration in developing countries persists in the face of high urban unemployment. Migration, they argue, will continue until the 'expected' urban wage (i.e. the average urban wage multiplied by one minus the rate of urban unemployment) equals the actual rural wage. Economic equilibrium thus occurs with a certain built-in level of unemployment. This model has been expanded to include the possibility of the workseeker being productively employed in the informal sector while waiting for work in the modern sector (Collier, 1979).

the economic dynamics which shape the environment within which individuals are forced to make the decisions so carefully (but tritely and superficially) theorised about by neo-classical analysts. In South Africa, the work of Bell and Padayachee (1984) (who explain unemployment in terms of the falling rate of capital accumulation; itself a function of world trade and the fluctuating gold price) and Simkins (1978, 1982) falls broadly within this perspective. These analysts estimate South Africa's unemployment to be in the region of 2,5 million people.

The fact that apartheid structures have placed South Africa's labour markets in a state of 'administratively imposed disequilibrium' (Simkins, 1981, p.21) where markets are administered within a geographically segmented economy such that massive African income differences are created between commercial agriculture, mining and manufacturing, has been stressed by radical and conservative explanations of unemployment alike. Rather than seeing such structures as distortions, however, radicals see them as being beneficial to capital accumulation. Hindson and Lacy (1983) for example, argue that the Riekert reforms and influx control segmented rural labour as a cheap as super-exploitable source of labour. The idea that uneven and incomplete proletarianisation was fostered, preserved and then enforced by generations of apartheid policies in order to reduce labour costs, is a central and recurrent theme in marxist analyses of South Africa.

Radical analyses tend to be structured around the critique of capitalism and of specific forms it may take. Consequently, any investigation of unemployment is contextualised within an explanation of the level of employment in terms of the dynamics of (international and national) capital accumulation, class struggle and the exploitation of labour power (see for example Erwin, 1978). The agenda of the radical economist is not to unpackage who is 'voluntarily' unemployed, or whether the labour market clears or not, but rather to pass judgement on a system which either exploits, or does not provide sufficient employment opportunities, for the masses.

It is thus not surprising that radical economists and sociologists tend to have similar visions as to what is meant by the concept of unemployment. The fact that a person is without work, is what is perceived to be important. For example, the South African Labour Bulletin in the introduction to an issue focus on unemployment, writes: "tremendous hardships and profound humiliation are undoubtedly being experienced by people without jobs" (1978, p.10). Likewise, Maree defines the unemployed as people who are "definitely not working at a particular point in time" (1978, p.16). Whether a person is looking for a job, has unrealistically high expectations, or is a victim of a temporary downswing, is all

irrelevant to a radical economist. The interesting questions are seen as those explaining how and why the capitalist system cannot provide anough work for all.

The above conceptual analysis of unemployment argues that academic discipline and ideological paradigm interact to shape the sorts of questions which are regarded as central and implicitly also the way in which one estimates the extent of unemployment. This rather obvious observation is worth stressing, given that a lot of the heat in the debate about the nature and extent of unemployment in South Africa is actually about the questions we should be addressing and the way in which they should be posed and answered, rather than the statistics themselves. Any attempt to quantitatively estimate or analyse unemployment should specify precisely the definition used. Furthermore, the perspectives that economists have on unemployment can be of use to sociologists despite the focus being narrower. Sociological analyses of joblessness could be greatly enhanced by more detailed information on the labour market and on whether people without jobs wish to work or are actively seeking it.

Let us now turn to the more concrete issue of how to measure unemployment. Part Two overviews existing estimates of unemployment in the Durban Metropolitan Region and discusses the underlying methodological concepts of labour force and participation rate. The work of the current population survey is paid particular attention.

PART TWO: MEASURING UNEMPLOYMENT: A CASE STUDY OF THE DURBAN-METROPOLITAN REGION

The above issues are pertinent in the following overview of unemployment in the Durban Metropolitan Region (DMR). If we were interested in a crude estimate of joblessness defined as all those of working age without employment, then one would simply subtract employment from the population age group 15-64 (i.e. the potential labour supply). This would tell you how much human potential was being wasted if everybody wanted to work. Table One gives the age breakdown of the African population in the Durban-Pinetown-Inanda (DPI) area in 1980.

As can be seen from Table 1, 79 percent of the total African population in the DPI area, and 81 percent of the male African population in the area falls between the ages of 15 and 64. This constitutes 121 097 people of which 71 118 are males.

If we then estimate African employment in the area as being in the region of 89 22 jobs[1] then 31 870 people can be deemed to be jobless. This implies a joblessness rate of 35 percent.

Table One: African Population in the DPI Area in 1980

	Age Groups							
	Total	-15	15-19	20-24	25-34	35-44	45-64	65+
Urban Males	77514	12088	8147	13674	18455	1157	1211	1464
(Percent)	100	15	10	18	24	15	16	2
Urban Pop	137136	24454	12482	20577	31830	22044	22971	2778
(Percent)	100	18	9	15	23	16	17	2
Urban/Rural Males	87346	14590	8968	14796	20667	13166	13521	1638
(Percent)	100	17	10	17	24	15	15	2
Urban/Rural Population	153415	29241	14033	22506	35180	24384	24994	3077
(Percent)	100	19	9	15	23	16	16	2

Source: 1980 Population Census

Now, while this measure of joblessness is of interest to sociologists or economists concerned with the measurement of wasted human potential, it does not comply with a concept central to conventional economic analyses of the labour supply, i.e. the labour force.

The Labour Force

One of the first assumptions a conventional economist makes is that not all people between 15-64 should be classified as 'economically active' i.e. as part of the labour force. The

1 In 1980, 92 000 Africans were regarded as economically active in the DPI area. As this figure includes those people who fall into the census definition of being unemployed, we need to subtract them. In 1980, the Current Population Survey (CPS) estimated that 456 000 Africans were unemployed (NMC, 1984, p.362). According to the National Manpower Commission, 19 percent were located in Natal and KwaZulu. As the African population in the DPI is 3,2 percent of that in Natal and KwaZulu, we can estimate the number of unemployed (as defined by the census and the CPS) to be 2 773 people. If we subtract this from the economically active population, we get an estimate of 89 227 jobs in the area.

economically active are those people engaged in the production of marketable goods and services either in a self-employed or employed capacity.[1] Included also are those jobless people who have been actively looking for employment in the recent past (usually a week). Domestic labour, certain subsistence and criminal activities are excluded, as are those 'discouraged' workseekers who have not been actively looking for employment in the recent past. Clearly, a lot of people who should be counted as either jobless or productively active, are not included in the labour force by this strict and narrow definition.

For example, the ILO has found that there are as many 'unemployed' in the narrow sense as there are workers who are discouraged by labour market characteristics such as limited demand for their skills, perceived high levels of joblessness etc, and thus are not wasting resources by looking for work (ILO, 1972 p.150). Likewise, Sabot has shown for the Tanzanian case, that the rate of unemployment was raised by 50 percent once discouraged workseekers were included in the calculation (1977 p.18).

The ILO thus recommends that an 'extended' definition of unemployment be constructed to compliment the normal one which includes people currently available for work, but not actively seeking it for reasons such as the belief that work is unavailable, a lack of knowledge of where to find work, illness or short-term lay-off (ILO 1982 p.48). To its credit, the South African Current Population Survey (CPS) has recently introduced an extended definition of unemployment along these lines. This shall be discussed later.

A further, often highlighted inadequacy of the labour force concept, is that it ignores a central problem of developing countries, i.e. the extensive under-utilisation of labour. 'Visible under-employment', i.e. people working short hours who wish to work more, and 'invisible under-employment', i.e. people working full hours, but whose skills and capabilities are not being fully utilised, does not feature within the strict labour force definition. The substantial statistical difficulties inherent in estimating under-employment

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1 Another, less extensively used method of measuring economic activity is that which looks at time spent, resources used and incomes earned in activities. While this method exposes the indirect contributions by women and children, and allows for the better measurement of productivity in subsistence and informal activities, the survey research is expensive and marred by the fact that peoples' effective recall of time spent is very short (White, 1984,p.20). Also, the more urbanised the population under study, the less time is spent on non-monetised activities and the less advantageous becomes this type of methodology.

also add to the general unwillingness to measure this aspect of unemployment.[1]

Bromberger, in what he calls a 'fully developed poverty approach', has used the under-employment concept in the South African context to describe low-wage, low productivity employment (1978, p.15). In terms of this approach, people are regarded as being under-employed if they do not earn an income sufficient to meet the basic needs of themselves and their dependents. This approach is normative in nature and tends towards the sociological vision discussed earlier, as the measure is totally unrelated to the market for wage labour.

A more far reaching critique of the labour force concept is the charge that the employment concept should relate to the family rather than the individual, in so far as employment decisions within the family are affected by the overall work and income position of the household. However, even if this is accepted, one still has to make certain assumptions as to how decision making within the family takes place. If, for example, one assumes, as does the ILO (1972), that the family is a decision making centre maximising collective advantage and interests, then one is unable to take into account that income distribution within the household is a function of conflict and power (Harris, 1981). For instance, women appear to redistribute their income towards family needs and priorities more than men do (Nelson, 1979) and men tend to benefit from inequality within the family via the control they exercise over female labour (Folbre, 1982). Women, for these reasons and because their position in the labour force is variable and fluctuating - leading them to being secondary earners for whom questions of underemployment are difficult to assess - are dealt with very inadequately by the labour force concept.

All these problems with the definition of the labour force must be borne in mind when evaluating any economic analysis of unemployment. Clearly, there is vast under-counting in the areas of 'discouraged' workseekers, under-employment and women. Furthermore, when it comes to projecting unemployment rates into the future, this undercounting

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1 As it is almost always impossible to decide when jobs do not permit the full use of capabilities, invisible under-employment is usually mentioned where appropriate, rather than measured. On the assumption that either earnings or output per person should equalise over the economy (but do not), under-employment is estimated as the economy-wide 'norm' in one or both of the above, minus the average actual measure divided by the norm. This estimate of under-employment is then added to unemployment. As one would expect, the statistical problems associated with this procedure are great (Moll, 1986 pp.69-71). Other measures of under-employment include the 'labour efficiency' approach (see Standing, 1978) and the 'under-utilised time' measure (Moll, 1986, p.73). both try to see by how much the economy is failing to produce efficiently in terms of (rather arbitrarily determined) expected norms of output and time respectively.

characteristic becomes even more pronounced. This is because of the conservative bias within the concept of a 'participation rate'.

The Participation Rate

The 'participation rate' (i.e. the labour force divided by the 15-65 age group)[1] measures how much of the economically active age group 'chooses' to participate in the economy by either being employed or actively seeking work. This technical measure begs important sociological questions as to what social, economic and political forces shape the contexts within which individuals find themselves either neatly defined as economically inactive (e.g. housewives) or being driven into 'choosing' to be inactive such as discouraged workseekers or workers debarred from certain jobs and certain areas in South Africa.

When projections are made about the size of labour supply in the future, they are made on the assumption that participation rates will remain constant (see for example, Nattrass, 1987,p.15). Consequently all the initial absurdities embodied in the original calculation of who 'chooses' to participate economically or not, are built into, and exacerbated by, the projection. Sociologists concerned with the broader concept of joblessness, must be aware of the narrow and limited definitions of labour supply, participation rate etc, and must be highly sceptical of any projections of unemployment done by economists.

An interesting attempt to bypass some of these difficulties associated with the conventional narrow methods of estimating unemployment, is the 'difference' method used by statisticians such as Simkins and made vogue by the President's Council. Their unemployment estimate is a summary statistic which combines unemployment, underemployment and informal sector activities by means of a crude estimation technique of a genre similar to our earlier estimation of unemployment in the DPI area. In the case of the difference method, instead of employment being subtracted from the potential labour supply, (i.e. all people between 15-64) it is subtracted from the labour supply estimated from the census data on the economically active. This leads to a high estimate of 3,3 Million unemployed in South Africa (defined as people in the work force without formal employment opportunities) which gives a rate of of 30 percent in 1980 (President's Council, 1987, p.11).

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1 The participation rate differs from the 'activity rate' (another piece of jargon popular amongst economists) in so far as the latter is the labour force divided by the entire population rather than the 15-65 age group.

The President's Council notwithstanding, the most influential source of statistics on unemployment in South Africa is the Current Population Survey (CPS). As such, they are worth dealing with in a little more depth.

The Current Population Survey.

In response to the clear need for improved figures relating to the Black labour force, the CPS was set up in 1977. In addition to the household questionnaire, an employment questionnaire is administered containing questions relating to employment, hours of work, when people last worked, how they are looking for work, when they last looked for work, why they lost their previous jobs etc. This coverage excludes the "Independent National States", thus biasing the estimates of unemployment downwards.

Following the strict international definitions critiqued above, the CPS defines unemployed persons as those:

> "15 years and older who
>
> a) were not in paid employment or self employment ...
>
> b) were available for paid employment or self employment during the reference week (the seven days preceding the interview)
>
> c) took specific steps during the 4 weeks preceding the interview to find paid employment or self employment or
>
> d) had the desire to work and to take up employment or self employment" (CPS, p0343 6/1/88, p.6-7).

People engaged in production of goods and services for their own or household consumption are classified as employed "if such production comprises an important contribution to the total production of the household" (ibid, p.6). In addition to the difficulties obviously inherent in the above vague definition, Moll, in his comprehensive overview of the CPS questionnaire, argues that ambiguities concerning the relationship between 'work' and 'jobs' are also likely to result in inaccuracies which inter-alia under estimate the economic contribution of women (Moll, 1986).

Despite the many difficulties with the CPS survey, efforts have been made to upgrade it. In response to criticism that their definition of unemployment was too narrow in that 'discouraged' workseekers were excluded from the labour force, an 'expanded' definition was introduced to supplement the 'strict' one. The 'expanded' definition drops requirement (c) (above) resulting in people simply having to have the desire to work rather than actually

taking concrete action to obtain employment, to qualify as unemployed. This is a welcome improvement, as in situations of high levels of joblessness, market segmentation and imperfect information, the desire for work is a more appropriate criterion than active job search.

However, when it comes to comparing unemployment rates determined by the strict and expanded definitions, one finds that the 'expanded' rate is only about 14 percent higher. For example, in November 1987, the strict definition rates of unemployment for males and females was 10,4 and 20,7 respectively, whereas the expanded definition rates were only 11,9 and 24,3 percent respectively (CPS, p0344). This is surprisingly low. Moll, for instance, when testing CPS definitions empirically in Transkei, found that an expanded definition ought to include twice as many people as the strict one (1986, p.264).

Another problem with the CPS figures is that they only ever give breakdowns (e.g. by region, age etc) of unemployment strictly defined. Table Two which compares Natal's unemployment rates with those in South Africa at large, gives these strict CPS unemployment rates for November 1987.

Table Two: CPS Unemployment Rates by Region

	Males	Females	Total
South Africa			
Cities	11,5	23,9	15,9
Towns	11,2	20,7	15,4
Non-urban	9,0	18,3	13,0
Natal and KwaZulu			
Cities	24,9	6,7	14,8
Towns	4,4	7,4	6,0
Non-urban	8,1	17,8	12,1
Self Governing States			
Towns	9,6	21,5	15,1
Non-urban	17,5	27,4	22,1

Source CPS p0344 24/2/88

According to Meth, the trend picked up by the CPS, and which is also reflected in the most recent data shown in Table 2 showing women taking the greater share of the unemployment burden, is probably a reasonably accurate picture (1987, p.6).

Table Three compares the CPS data on unemployment with studies done by other sources in the Greater Durban Metropolitan Region (GDMR). As can clearly be seen from the table, estimates of unemployment vary between surveys and between regions within the GDMR. This is a function of different methodologies, different sampling frames and genuine variations in income opportunities between residential areas.

Table Three: Estimates of Unemployment in the GDMR

Source	Males	Females	Total
CPS 1985	4,3	11,1	7,0
CPS 1986	6,7	16,8	10,4
CPS 1987	10,4	25,4	15,5
Sanlam 1986	-	-	-
SA Labour Statistics 1985	13,1	18,9	15,5
SA Labour Statistics 1986	12,7	16,4	14,3

Source: May and Stavrou, 1988

Table Four gives a breakdown of unemployment rates in three regions in the GDMR surveyed by the Development Studies Unit in 1985, Metropolitan Umlazi, Mgaga and Mfolweni. Metropolitan Umlazi is a formal African township, whereas Mgaga and Mfolweni are informal settlements on the periphery of the GDMR. In these surveys, an individual was regarded as actively unemployed (in the sense of being a workseeker), if they were looking for work, either formally or informally, or if they were prepared to take up work at short notice.

Table Four: Unemployment in Three GDMR Regions (1985)

Area	Male	Female
Metropolitan Umlazi	12,8	18,8
Mgaga	15,9	20,9
Mfolweni	12,7	28,3

Source: May and Stavrou, 1988

It thus co-incides broadly with the CPS expanded definition of unemployment.

Table Four shows quite clearly that women are bearing the brunt of unemployment and that gender, rather than settlement area, determines access to employment. In order to gain some insight into the differential labour market position of men and women, Table 5 gives a breakdown of the occupational distribution of men and women in the labour force in these three regions.

Table Five: Occupational distribution of Economically Active Men (M) and Women (F)

Area	Factory		Domestic		Self-Emp		Service		Other		Work-seeker	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Met.Umlazi	56,8	20,7	0,8	15,1	2,1	4,6	21,9	28,8	2,3	1,2	15,9	29,6
Mgaga	45 3	8,8	1,0	25,8	4,0	12,9	27,4	9,5	4,0	3,1	18,4	38,8
Mfolweni	56,4	11,5	1,6	12,8	5,6	5,1	17,7	19,2	4,0	1,3	14,5	50,0

Source: May, 1987

As can be seen from the above table, women tend to occupy the 'domestic service' and 'self-employment' categories, while men clearly have superior access to jobs in the manufacturing sector.

Let us now turn to a more in-depth analysis of the profile of unemployed people in the DMR. We shall use Development Studies Unit data on Metropolitan Umlazi, Mgaga and Mfolweni. The Development Studies Unit collected data on the unemployed in two categories - "unemployed, but seeking work" (which corresponds broadly with the CPS 'strict' definition of unemployment), and "unemployed - not seeking work". Because of the way the category "unemployed - but not seeking work was defined,[1] this profile of the unemployed will refer only to the category "unemployed - but seeking work".

1 This latter category includes not only discouraged work seekers but also pre-school children, pensioners, housewives and "more generally those people who are economically inactive and intend to stay that way" (May, 1986,p22). Consequently, the category, unemployed but not seeking work, is useless for any remotely acceptable definition of unemployment. Pre-school children, pensioners and adamantly economically inactive individuals should never have been included in the category.

The Sex, Age and Education Profile of the Unemployed in Mgaga, Mfolweni and Metropolitan Umlazi

Sex

As one would expect from the higher female rates of unemployment, women dominated the unemployed category. Table Six gives the respective regional breakdowns.

Table Six: The Sex Breakdown of the Unemployed

Region	Sex Percentage	
	Male	Female
Mgaga	40	60
Mfolweni	34	66
Metropolitan Umlazi	38	62

No appreciable differences between the informal settlement areas of Mgaga and Mfolweni and Metropolitan Umlazi exist when it comes to the sex breakdown of the unemployed.

Age

Table Seven gives a breakdown of the unemployed according to age. As one would expect the bulk of the unemployed were under the age of 30. In Mgaga and Mfolweni, 62 percent were under 30 and in Metropolitan Umlazi, 64 percent were under 30. Again, no appreciable differences seem to exist between the informal settlements and Metropolitan Umlazi

Table 7: The Age Profile of the Unemployed

Region	Age Categories Percentage							
	15-19	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-49	50-59	60 +
Mgaga	16	25	21	15	9	11	2	1
Mfolweni	12	31	19	19	5	9	5	0
Metropolitan Umlazi	13	32	19	14	7	8	6	1

This tendency for the unemployed to be concentrated in the youthful categories reflects the increasing tendency for new entrants to the labour market to have great difficulty finding work. This no doubt fuels "unrest" in the township as disgruntled and frustrated unemployed youth vent their anger on the political system.

Education

Table Eight gives the education breakdown of the unemployed.

Table Eight: Education Profile of the Unemployed

	Education						
Region	No Educ.	Less than Std 3	3-5	6-7	8-9	10	Post Matric
Mgaga	13	15	19	22	22	6	3
Mfolweni	0	17	45	24	12	2	0
Metropol.Umlazi	6	10	20	18	23	10	3

What is very interesting about Table Eight is how few of the unemployed had no education at all. Sixty four percent of the unemployed in Metropolitan Umlazi had Standard 6 or above. This percentage was, however, lower for the informal settlement areas - 38 and 53 percent for Mfolweni and Mgaga respectively.

Clearly, it is not a lack of education which hampers the unemployed in their access to employment. Rather it is the growing inability of the economy to create jobs fast enough to absorb increases to the labour force.

CONCLUSION

Two main conclusions can be drawn from this paper. Firstly, before embarking on any discussion or analysis of unemployment, one must have a clear idea of how the concept is to be understood and operationalised. Secondly,if one wishes to understand and explain unemployment, theoretical analysis needs to be supplemented by empirical studies which point out socio-economic dimensions such as gender and age. In both respects, sociologists

and economists can learn from each other. How one in the end defines and measures unemployment, should depend on the nature of the questions being asked.

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