The psychological effects of unemployment - an exploratory study

by

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INTRODUCTION

Although unemployment is becoming a problem which affects all sectors of South African society, it is the working class, which bears the brunt of the problem. Over the last few months the commercial press has carried quite a few articles on unemployment. These articles have often stressed how workers have changed during periods of unemployment. It has been said that unemployed workers become depressed, apathetic, frustrated. These feelings are often being translated into aggression and hostility. The general observation has been that the unemployed's mental health has deteriorated.

Hayes in his article 'Work and Madness' has noted that "... while more specific mental health problems arise in work situations, the problems associated with unemployment are far less specific."

Hayes (1983: 24)

He suggests that this madness manifests itself as "... general mental confusion - those affected will be unclear about where they are and what they have been doing recently, and will give a poor account of themselves and their family and community relations."

Hayes (1983: 24)
Obviously one needs to look further than the fact that a person is unemployed. The material social conditions of unemployment are equally important in the contribution they make to the position of the unemployed person.

The South African government in its inability to confront the problems of unemployment faces a grave crisis. It maintains that it is doing everything in its power to solve the problem. Instead of getting better it is getting worse. Many organisations working for change in our country are asking a fundamental question. Is it possible to organise the unemployed to combat their situation? Some organisations have attempted to take up this challenge, often with limited results. What has become clear is that there exists a grave lack of understanding of the effect which being unemployed has on people. Questions like how do people cope with being unemployed? what techniques do they use to cope with being unemployed? and what can be done to encourage appropriate coping techniques? are being asked.

METHOD AND APPROACH

Unemployment and its effects is an area where very little work has been done. This lack is pointed to by Jahoda (1979), Hartley (1980), Shepherd(1981), Gurney and Taylor (1981). This paper attempts to review some of the available material in the area as a starting point for developing a greater understanding of the unemployed in general and
and the unemployed in South Africa in particular.

This review of literature has led to the acceptance of a particular model - the three phase approach to understanding the effects of unemployment as outlined in the work of Harrison and Hill cited in Hayes and Nutman (1981).

The phasal approach identifies the importance of work for the individual. Discussion is extended with the work of Jahoda (1979) where she examines the functions of work in an effort to establish what has in fact been lost. Related to this discussion is the understanding of the attitudes which people have to work and to unemployment.

Through the discussion of the various theoretical models and ideas which surround the problem of unemployment, various psychological problems are pointed to and linked to their possible causes.

The penultimate section of the discussion draws together in a broad sense specific consequences of unemployment to health. This looks at consequences to both physical and mental health. Attention is paid to the work conducted by French and Khan and Kasel and Cobb.
which are cited in Hayes and Nutman (1981). The research of Eisenberg and Lazarfeld (1938) gives added insight.

Finally the discussion turns to looking at how we can look at coping with the problem of the effects of unemployment. This section falls into two parts, the first looking at ways in which this has been tackled in Britain, in particular in the work of Winfield (1981), Stirling (1982), Beatty (1974). The second part is a look at potential ways of finding solutions to these problems in South Africa. This centers on the community strategies which are being employed and makes tentative suggestions as to the appropriate role of psychology within these approaches.

In conclusion it is necessary to examine some of the problems in a piece of work of this nature and give ideas for possible improvements in future research.

Throughout the discussion issues raised are clarified and supported by extracts from interviews conducted with unemployed people in Cape Town.

Thirteen interviews were conducted after a thorough knowledge and understanding was gained of the major areas which confront people involved in understanding
the unemployed and were used to test these models and approaches. The interviews were largely unstructured and concentrated on establishing a good relationship with the subject. Subjects were encouraged to tell their stories with the minimum intervention of the interviewer.

The subjects, eight men and five women, between the ages of twenty two and forty five were all so-called Coloured people living on the Cape Flats. Time of unemployment, level of ex-employment as well as economic position varied. Subjects were found with the help of various individuals connected with civic, church and youth groups.

Each interview lasted between one hour and one and a half hours.

Excerpts of these interviews appear as an annexure to this paper.

For the purpose of this discussion unemployed people have been defined as those people who see themselves and are seen by others as potential members of the workforce.

In more specific terms I will be applying the International Labour Organisation definition of unemployment.
"Any member of the economically active population who is not working and wants to work, regardless of whether they are looking for work or not". Blau and Thomas et al (1982: 12)

Full time students, people permanently medically unfit for work, voluntarily retired and housewives who do not want to work are the only people excluded from the classification 'economically active'.

Jobs loss is defined as an interruption and premature termination of employment.

Work loss has an unfortunate stigma attached to it. Unemployed people in our work orientated society are seen as lazy, idle, good for nothing etc. This impression is perpetuated by the media. Unemployment, a necessary consequence of capitalism, (structural employment / reserve army of labour) and more recently, as unemployment soars, a reflection of the crisis which capitalism faces and which needs to be demystified. This of course makes unemployment just as unacceptable but more easily understood.
OVERVIEW OF UNEMPLOYMENT IN SOUTH AFRICA

"Without a job it is like you have nothing. I have gone out almost every day to look for work, now I don't know where to look. My children are hungry. I can't feed them no more."

(Subject A)

"The number of unemployed people in South Africa has topped the three million mark and poverty among blacks is increasing at an alarming rate". (Cape Times, 3 November 1982).

These were the findings of Professor Jeremy Keenan of the Department of Social Anthropology at the University of the Witwatersrand.

The last fifteen years have seen South African unemployment figures increase dramatically.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>No. of unemployed workers</th>
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<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>838 000</td>
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<td>1976</td>
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<td>1981</td>
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<td>1983</td>
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(extract table 5. Fact Sheet No.1, 1982)

(J Keenan : C.T. 3/11/82.)

Unemployment is by no means a problem which South Africa alone faces. Unemployment is a worldwide phenomenon.
Capitalism is facing one of its largest crises. Unemployment has increased to well over the acceptable level. Currently western capitalistic countries are faced with unemployment of at least 10% of the work force. (Social Review, 21 page 17)

Closer to home, unemployment figures for the Cape Peninsula have doubled since July 1982.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unemployed Whites, Coloured and Asians</th>
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<tr>
<td>July 1982</td>
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<th>Unemployed Africans</th>
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<tr>
<td>July 1982</td>
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Argus August 2 1983

These are the official figures given by the Department of Manpower. The figure is probably much higher. The figures for Africans are estimates on the part of the Department of Manpower as Africans have not had to register as job seekers since 1980.

The causes of unemployment in South Africa are many and varied. The economic depression which South Africa
finds itself in at present has led to large scale retrenchments in all sectors. A conservative estimate of the number of retrenchments on the Reef during 1982 was placed at ten thousand. (Star 22/10/82) Increased use of capital intensive techniques by South African companies has significantly contributed to unemployment. (Social Review No 21 1983)

The real extent of the unemployment problem in South Africa is concealed by the Bantustan policy.

Unemployed people are shunted back to their respective homelands.

Through the vicious implementation of the harsh influx laws the vast majority of the unemployed are confined to the Bantustans.

(IBID)
TOWARDS A MODEL FOR UNDERSTANDING THE UNEMPLOYED

In a paper entitled "The Demoralizing Experience of Prolonged Unemployment" cited in Hayes and Nutman (1981) R. Harrison outlines a specific framework which attempts to describe the process which the unemployed are likely to go through. This framework - the transitional cycle - is based on the findings of five studies conducted in Britain in the early 70's, Sinfield (1970); Jones (1972); Gouerd and Kenyon (1972); Herron (1975) and Marsden and Duff (1975) - all cited in Hayes and Nutman (1981).

The transitional cycle put forward by Harrison involves a sequence of experiences. This sequence being shock - optimism - pessimism - fatalism. On the basis of this research and with an independent study of unemployed people in London, J Hill developed a three stage phase theory for understanding the process undergone by unemployed people. Hayes and Nutman (1981). Hill calls these three phases, (a) the initial response (b) intermediate phase and (c) settling down to unemployment. This framework most accurately describes the findings of this investigation.

In the initial response Hill feels that the response can be traumatic. This response tended to be recorded
less often and largely the unemployed 'tended to deny that anything had happened and reacted with a level of optimism to their new found freedom.' Hayes and Nutman (1981).

In the interviews conducted it seemed that the former rather than the latter was true.

"When the foreman told me I had been sacked I felt as if I was going to faint. I then got so angry I screamed at her and walked out." (Subject C)

"When I read the letter I started to cry. I knew a lot of people who had done the same kind of work and couldn't get new jobs. Where was I going to get money?" (Subject E)

In the second phase, the intermediate phase, Hill suggests that the person starts accepting the fact of unemployment and initially feels optimistic about the future. This he says changes as time proceeds to the point whereby he or she develops a kind of inertia that is psychologically debilitating. They feel insufficiently stimulated and undervalued! Ibid (1981)
"I have looked every day for a month. It's no good. There are no jobs."
(Subject B)

"My husband is unemployed as well as me. We take turns to look for work because the children can't get to the creche - there is no money. I feel like feeding them Ratex. When your children cry hungry crying your heart wants to break."
(Subject G)

The last phase, settling down to unemployment - is the stage where Hill suggests people adjust to their unemployment. A certain degree of fatalism begins to become apparent as the individuals resign themselves to the reality of unemployment.

"My wife tells me to go and look for work. I don't listen any more. I don't feel like it. There are no jobs so why look?"
(Subject A)

Putting together the work conducted by Hill, Harrison as well as similar work by Briar, Hayes and Nutman summarise as follows:

"It appears that transition can be viewed in terms of three broad stages. Within the first there is an
initial phase of shock and immobilization, followed by a phase of renewed hope. The second stage there is the idea that things will turn out alright. This is shaken as the individual's identity comes under pressure and often appears to be associated with depression and withdrawal. If unemployment is prolonged then the individual must adjust to the situation - a new identity be found and internalized. This process of adjustment characterizes the final phase." Hayes and Nutman (1982 : 19)
THE FUNCTION OF WORK

"The position people hold in society and the jobs they perform play an important role in the conception they form of themselves. Being a father or mother, daughter or son, manager or worker, engineer or painter carries with it codified forms of behaviour, fixed tasks and a daily, monthly and annual routine."

Stanton (1983: 1)

On the most basic level work is a necessity and has been so for time immemorial. Marie Jahoda in an article entitled 'The Impact of Unemployment in the 1930's and the 1970's' examines some literature on work in an effort to establish why people work. Alienation at the workplace is strongly identified and the relationship between alienation and work are seen as casually related.

Jahoda maintains that even though this seems to be the case studies have shown that the majority of workers, when asked, would not give up work even if they had the opportunity to do so without loss of pay. Jahoda (1979)
This leads her to say that "alienation is a response to the organization of work, not to work per se."

Ibid (1979: 321)
The quote above from the introduction to 'Outside the Dream - Lacan and the French Style of Psychoanalysis' illustrates that there is more to work than merely earning money.

When one looks at the effects of job loss on people, it is clear that there are elements within work besides the material benefits, which compel people to work and from which they suffer a loss, on becoming unemployed. Work has social and psychological implications which need to be analysed. Jahoda believes that 'it is possible to spell out in somewhat more detail the psychological meaning of this situation by making explicit what is implicit in employment, that is by distinguishing its latent from its manifest functions.'

Ibid (1977: 312)

She suggests that the manifest functions, which are identified as pay and conditions more often account for the negative feelings about employment. It is her hypothesis that the latent functions account for positive motivation in employment.

The latent functions which are identified are firstly that employment imposes a time structure on the working day, secondly provides regularly shared experiences and contacts with people, thirdly that it links people to
goals and purposes which transcends their own, fourthly it defines aspects of personal status and identity and finally that employment enforces activity. Ibid (1977 : 313)

"It is these latent objective consequences of work in complex industrial societies which help me to understand the motivation to work beyond earning a living, to understand why work is psychologically supportive even when conditions are bad and by the same token, why unemployment is psychologically destructive."
Ibid (1979 : 313)

Similar functions of work have been identified by Hayes and Nutman (1981), Hartley (1980) and to a lesser extent Shepherd (1981). In expanding on these various functions it will be necessary to draw on these various studies and appropriate to illustrate from the local interviews conducted.

1. Employment imposes a time structure on the working day.
The quote by Stanton (1983) above, illustrates this function of work. Work provides the reason for getting up in the morning. Differentiation between rest and work periods takes place. Social time is defined in terms of work and the demands of work.
1. cont...
"The time structure imposed by work as a social institution ties up to the 'here and now' and prevents one from being swamped by the past or dreams of the future."
Jahoda (1979: 313)

Most people interviewed found the loss of work was disorientating and had difficulty structuring their day.
"For a while I got up from bed at the same time as when I worked, but then I had nothing to do."
(Subject I)

2. **Employment implies regularly shared experiences and contact with people outside of the nuclear family.**

Through interaction with people outside of the family a process plays itself out. The individual becomes tied to social reality (Jahoda 1979), an understanding of the differences among people leads to the internalization of certain norms and rules which determine how society operates. Hartley (1980). Work in urban societies is an important source of social contact and often provides the framework for the development of lasting relationships. Hayes and Nutman (1981). Work also provides a release from the family, a place where problems are not so pressing and one can temporarily forget the home situation.
2. cont ...

"I miss my connections (friends) from work. They live in other areas and it's too expensive to go visit."

(Subject C)

"It was a relief to go to work. There was no noise of kids fighting, ouma screaming at them and the old man getting gesuip (drunk). Now it gets on my nerves. They will drive me mad."

(Subject D)

"At lunchtime we used to go sit at the parade and talk to our friends. It was a nice hour to forget about bad things. Now I never see them. I think they have forgotten about me."

(Subject J)

3. Employment links an individual to goals and purposes which transcends their own.

Hayes and Nutman see work and a person's contribution to producing goods etc. as forging the link between the person and the rest of society. Participation in production "roots firmly within the individuals, the inter dependence of human beings."

Jahoda (1979)
3. cont...

It is Jahoda's opinion that removing this daily experience, that efforts must be combined, leaves the unemployed with a source of uselessness. Shepherd (1981) sees the loss of contact with this function of work leading to "the risk of becoming desocialized and institutionalized at home". Shepherd (1981: 346) The loss of this function was difficult to identify with the people interviewed. Feelings of uselessness were identified but tended to relate far more to uselessness to their family - not being able to provide support etc - than purpose in the work situation.

"Any real man can support his family. I used to be a real man now I am worth less than a loaf of bread. Bread is more use to them than me."

(Subject K)


Employment provides some definition of one's position in society, the status and identity. This identity may be resented and often this identity will be modified by the person's development within society. The unemployed suffer from an absence of status as well as experiencing a loss of personal identity.
5. **Employment enforces activity.**

In a study conducted by Weiss cited by Hayes and Nutman (1981) there is indication that without work people interviewed would feel bored and would not know what to do with themselves. Work and working was explained as fulfilling the need to be active.

Ibid (1981: 40)

It seems as if no matter how much people hated their jobs what was identified as a loss was the process of creating and performing tasks.

"A person can’t tidy a house all day. Cutting wasn’t interesting but you could see a whole pile at the end of a day". (Subject H)

Hayes and Nutman identify one further function of work. This they call work as a source of creativity and mastery.

6. **Work as a source of creativity and mastery.**

The suggestion is that through the process of work people attempt to satisfy the creative urge which is unique and different for each individual, providing
a way of enabling the individual to create or explore something new or to master some part of
the environment. Hayes and Nutman (1981:41)
Clearly it would be gratifying for the individual
if their work did provide a sense of creating
and mastering of a part of the environment. This
of course is seldom the case for the majority of
the workforce. Hayes (1983) points to the fact
that this is certainly not the case for the majority
of the South African workforce. In factories workers
seldom if ever create a complete object. Advanced
capitalistic production is orientated away from
creativity and mastery for the individual towards
greater efficiency and production for management.

A sign at a motor assembly plant "Be proud of the
cars you produce" is in Hayes' opinion reflective of
"... the irony of capitalist production and an insult
to the worker."
Ibid (1983:22)
ATTITUDES TO WORK AND UNEMPLOYMENT

Clearly not only the various functions which a job has for the individual are important. Related to this is the attitude which people have toward work which in turn affects their attitude to unemployment.

The individual's attitude to work has been termed by Hayes and Nutman as 'the individual's 'effective response to work.' Some will find that work provides them with precisely, the identity, income, opportunity to associate with others, sense of purpose and so forth which they desire. Others will feel that their job offers them little over and above an inadequate source of income. The meaning of work is the effective response, or the feelings attributed to work as opposed to the functions that work can serve for the individual.'

Ibid (1981 : 44)

In general it would seem that for middle class people working would be associated with some interest in the particular kind of work, a sense of purpose as well as direction and a positive identity status. On the other hand working class activity would seem to be more activity orientated, less positive an effect on identity status and often viewed as an end in itself.

Hayes and Nutman (1981)
This would support the experiment conducted by Morgan and Weiss cited in Hayes and Nutman that when asked whether they would remain in a similar job if they had the opportunity to change jobs most middle class people felt that they would, while most working class people indicated that they would prefer to change. When asked whether they would continue working if they didn't have to, the response was the same. What this seemed to indicate was that for working class people the attachment seemed to be working rather than the particular kind of job. Hayes and Nutman (1981) This was born out in the interviews conducted.

"I don't care what kind of job I get as long as I can get something. If I stay here (home) any longer I will die."

(Subject F)

Work has different meanings for different people. What is important is that it was a shared meaning for all people. This meaning is different for different classes. Hayes and Nutman see being a member of the workforce, enjoying the status of worker as leading to considerate positive reinforcement and satisfaction irrespective of the nature of the job, or the immediate satisfactions that can be derived from the performance of the job.

(Ibid : 45)
In the same way as work has different meanings to different people so too loss of work - unemployment - has different meanings for different people.

Whether loss of work has positive or negative feelings is largely due to the preparedness of the individual for unemployment. By preparedness I don't mean in terms of length of time before becoming unemployed or for that matter, the strength of the particular psyche but the material position which the person is in which enables them to cope with the situation. Related to this is the foreseeable extent of the period of unemployment. Where there is a reasonable chance of regaining employment there seem to be more favourable reactions to the loss of work.

Hayes and Nutman (1981); Hartley (1980) Eisenberg and Lazafeld (1938)

For most people interviewed loss of work was a great shock. This was sometimes in the form of embarrassment as a feeling of not wanting to tell people in case they thought the unemployed person was not any good.

"I didn't want my family to know. Every day for a week I left home as usual and tried to find another job. I couldn't find one. I was paid weekly so had to tell them at the end of the week when I had no pay to bring home. I cried when I told them."

(Subject D)
"My father-in-law was very angry. He said in times like these I would never get another job. He said I must be a fool to loose my job. Luckily he gave my wife some money for rent".

(Subject K)

Hayes and Nutman describe in vivid detail the excitement with which some middle class people respond to being unemployed. Unemployment means a chance to catch up on the good things in life, spending time with ones family etc.,

Hayes and Nutman (1981)

For people interviewed this abundance of time was more demobilizing. It gave more time for worrying about the particular situation which they found themselves in.

"The day is so long. I feel tired at night but for no reason. I don't even want to go to the bar anymore. I don't have the money but my pals buy me the odd drink. Once a week I must go to the UIF office. I have been going for two months. I still don't have any money from them. They always say next week. I think whether it's even worth trying there again. When I go to bed I wish I wouldn't wake up again because then it would be over. I never was a lazy man now I think there is something wrong. I don't want to do even the little things."

(Subject M)
HEALTH CONSEQUENCES OF UNEMPLOYMENT

Hayes (1983) after giving his accounts of the mental health problems of workers in South Africa feels that they show
"that the working class experience more (quality) and more (quantity) mental health problems than any other social class."
Ibid (1981: 23)
He continues maintaining that "it is not only work which results in mental health problems in capitalist South Africa, but also and rather unexpectedly the lack of work which seems to give rise to some of the more serious mental health problems and madness".

There is very little concrete evidence to suggest that work has a detrimental effect on the health of workers. What is clear and supported by a number of people is that the incidence of health problems related to the work situation suggests a correlation. Hayes (1983), Margolis and Croes, French and Khan cited in Hayes and Nutman (1981).

When turning to unemployment there is a slightly greater degree of clarity. What is clear is that there is a direct relationship between physical and mental effects of unemployment. Throughout this discussion the emphasis has been on the psychological effects. At this point a brief review of some findings should be conducted.
The most comprehensive study undertaken on this point was conducted by Kasel and Cobb cited in Hayes and Nutman (1981). Their study was a longitudinal investigation of the effects of job loss and ensuing unemployment. The subjects had been made unemployed as a result of plant closure. The method was to conduct tests and collect information from the subjects over a two year period. The data collected was of a physiological kind e.g., blood pressure, urine samples etc., as well as health data in the form of questionnaire measure of how well the person felt.

Briefly the results showed an increase in blood pressure as joblessness approached and the blood pressure remained high during the period of unemployment. The same results were found for uric acid. The unemployed also registered a higher number of days when they 'didn't feel well' than did a control group of employed people. Hayes and Nutman (1981: 73 - 77)

Eisenberg and Lazarsfeld (1938) in a discussion of the psychological effects of unemployment during the depression, identify most of the effects used in other studies.

The general conclusion to which they come is "that unemployment tends to make people more emotionally unstable than they were previous to unemployment."
"Unemployment represents a personal threat to individuals' economic security, fear is increased, sense of proportion is shattered and the individuals loose their common sense of values, the individuals' prestige is lost in their own eyes and as imagined in the eyes of their fellow men. The individual develops feelings of inferiority, loses his self confidence and morale."
Ibid (1938 : 359)

It was established that the interests and habits of the unemployed changed which was seen in terms of lack of interest in daily activity, loss of time structure, and morale.
Ibid (1938 : 364 – 365)

Eisenberg and Lazarsfeld conclude that although there are a large number of studies which attempt to draw the links between psychological problems and unemployment, there is a lack of systematic research which will enable a clearer picture of the situation of the unemployed to be formed.
Ibid (1938 : 385)

It still remains a problem. No study conducted has managed to look completely at the problem. They nevertheless provide useful insights into the problem.
"We need to develop research in this area. We must be specific about what people in our society need: to demonstrate the terrible human damage that ensues when such needs are not met, and to urge that if the current institutions no longer meet them, new institutions must be operated."

Jahoda (1979: 314)
Hayes and Nutman (1981) suggest that there are two options open to us when concluding how we 'help the unemployed.' These options are either through measures designed to change the individual or measures designed to change the employing organization and the society.

It is my firm belief that under capitalism there can never be a situation where unemployment is not a problem. Capitalist production is so structured that unemployment is a necessary concomitant. Whether this figure is 1% of the workforce or 10% the effects are the same and need to be combated.

A debate on an appropriate economic system which rids society of unemployment is not appropriate here, suffice to say that this debate needs to take place in the interests of a long term solution to the numerous problems which confront us under our present social, political and economic mode.

It would also be inappropriate to enter a discussion on which of the options Hayes and Nutman offer, as this is not where the solution lies. Certainly changes need to be encouraged in the way unemployed people view themselves. Certainly too the society and employing organizations need to respond to the problems, but as already stated, this would not solve the problem.
Bearing in mind the above let's look briefly at some of the options which are being considered as possible ways of helping the unemployed cope better with their unemployment. Initially ideas emerging from the British experience will be examined.

The welfare system which operates in Britain, far from being completely adequate, is a starting point. Social Security has removed the problems relating to economic survival. The relatively speedy economic compensation removes the life and death element to job loss.

In response to the unemployment problems unemployment centers have been established in many areas in Britain. Winfield (1981) examines the role and the possibilities of such a project. He describes unemployment centers as "the premises where people can go and obtain information about all aspects of unemployment, meet other unemployed and engage in a variety of social, cultural or learning experiences".

Ibid (1981: 353)

Often general direction and activity offered at the centers was designed with little or no consultation with the unemployed. At one particular center the unemployed were surveyed and asked questions under five main headings. These were related to facilities, talks and discussions, advice on money matters, help with getting jobs, and contact with other unemployed.
Two strong demands were for the facility of developing a support network among unemployed people, as well as facilities for bettering the transfer of skills between unemployed as well as instruction in various other skills.

Winfield (1981: 353 - 354)

Another area, in a different vein, for combating the effects of unemployment is outlined by Stirling (1982). Stirling outlines ideas for 'Preparing School Leavers for Unemployment.' Citing the work of Kelvin (1981) Stirling argues that "the next generation, whose numbers currently populate secondary schools, will be of an age of widespread structurally unemployed."

Stirling (1982: 421)

What is suggested is the development of a changed attitude to unemployment. School children need to become adapted to the probability of unemployment. Kelvin (1981) suggests, as described by Stirling, that "the term unemployed will become an accepted term of reference for these young people in their own self perception. In addition, many of those viewed as 'significant others' will themselves be unemployed and this will further shape the persons perception of themselves and their position in society."

Ibid. (1982: 421)
Richard Beatty (1974) in a study conducted among hardcore unemployed in America attempted to look at the restructuring and re-entry of unemployed into industry, facilitated by supervision. It concluded that

"success with the hardcore unemployed should encourage supervisory structures which are supportive of job efforts."

Ibid (1974 : 41)

What then for South Africa? Unlike Britain the Social Security system for the unemployed is completely unsatisfactory. On countless occasions the unemployed wait months for a pittance. Many unemployed do not benefit from UIF by virtue of either the definition of their particular kind of job - domestic labour, farm workers and contract workers. Endless mix-ups, inefficiency and 'red tape' further slow things down. (Argus 8 September 1983)

The government has made very little attempt to counter the present situation. Vain promises have been made about speeding up the UIF payments. This is probably the most that can be expected. (Argus 8 September 1983)

The government have not hesitated to use the harsh legislation to move the unemployed swiftly from the urban areas and relocate them in the homelands.
Trade Unions have responded to the problem of unemployment in various ways. The South African Allied Workers Union, (SAAWU) has set up a union for unemployed workers.

In the words of Sam Kikine it will be a body designed to "Keep the flame of unionism burning among the unemployed."

The Unemployed Workers Union aims to

1. Highlight the plight of South Africans unemployed, who are estimated to number 20% of the workforce.
2. Collect money for the unemployed and provide a relief fund for unemployed workers.
3. Discourage its members from scabbing.

(Daily Despatch 9/12/80; Star 24/12/80)

Any chance of success for this venture has been severely curtailed by the harsh and brutal repression which SAAWU has suffered at the hands of both the Ciskei and South African security forces. SAAWU was banned in the Ciskei four weeks ago.

Other unions for e.g., General Workers Union (GWU) have approached the issue of job loss from the perspective of protecting their membership. GWU has attempted to negotiate retrenchment agreements with the bosses in industry in which they organise. The basic formula adopted is

a) last in ... first out - a principle which avoids victimisation and the use of retrenchment as a disciplinary measure.
b) Job loss pay - workers must be compensated for the companies' inability to keep them at work.

c) In factories where workers have been retrenched the first available jobs should go to the retrenched workers.

As unemployment queues grow longer and the recession gets worse, workers and their unions are trying very hard to protect themselves from retrenchments.

(Grassroots November 1982)

In the communities in Cape Town, particularly on the Cape Flats, the problem of unemployment has been dealt with vicariously.

Many civic and youth organizations have established advice offices which provide resources and advise on how people in a particular community can deal with their day to day problems. These problems initially were seen to be house maintenance, electricity problems etc. What has been seen is that vast numbers of the unemployed are coming to these centers for help, initially for help in finding jobs.

Advice offices have not been able to provide this kind of service but what they can feasibly do is provide advice on the various intricacies of claims from the UIF.
In speaking to one individual who assists at an advice office, it became clear that more is necessary. The majority of people in South Africa have little control over any aspect of their lives. The unemployed feel this more acutely. This individual noted that the people were desperate and yet didn't have anywhere to turn to. People don't understand why they are unemployed let alone how to cope with the situation. Organizations feel unequipped to deal with the situation.

This need has been responded to by the Education Resource and Information Center (ERIC) who are in the process of putting together an information/education package on Unemployment in South Africa. This package will include an historic look at unemployment in South Africa, who are the unemployed, why are they unemployed, what is UIF and how does it work, unemployment and the Bantustans, the psychological effects of unemployment, and points to suggestions as to how the problem organizing the unemployed can be tackled.

Drawing on the discussions we have had in preparing this package I would like to outline a possible strategy for coping with the problem. This is a strategy which is in the process of construction and takes into consideration the objective conditions which are faced by organizations at present.
Part of the process of coping with unemployment is an understanding of why a person is unemployed. Groups feel that an understanding of unemployment enables the individual to overcome some of the sense of uselessness. They have lost their jobs not necessarily because they as individuals are lazy and because they are useless.

Through the advice offices this process could be set in motion. This process could also take place within organizations not only among the unemployed but more generally among membership.

An understanding of one's unemployment in South Africa is a politicizing experience; an understanding of the intricacies involved in the why and how of unemployment necessitates a look at broader issues, issues like apartheid in general, but also legislation, influx control, etc.

Through this process individuals should be encouraged to become involved in organizations which are taking up issues which affect them like high rates, electricity due date, health, housing maintenance, gutter education etc. This involvement would be a means of taking control over some aspects of one's destiny, giving a sense of purpose and a form of activity.
The coming together of the unemployed also provides the forum for discussion of particular problems which they face—the realization that they are not the only ones depressed etc is a potentially useful one.

Self help projects designed by the unemployed for themselves may go some way toward addressing the problems of economic survival. Some of these are already in existence and should be encouraged.

Clearly unemployment has grave social, economical political and psychological implications. Psychologists have a definite role to play in combating the problem, by providing the much needed resources, research, skills etc. needed to devise appropriate coping techniques.

More substantial research is urgently required for any programme of this nature to be successful. The supportive role of the psychologist in slotting into the strategies devised by communities on the basis of a true understanding of the issues is a vital one.

To summarise the role of the psychologist includes

1. Research into the role of unemployment
2. Devising programmes to educate the unemployed about their problems
3. Strategies for the rehabilitation of unemployed people.
It is through working together with the community that the role of the psychologist can become more defined and he or she can respond to the real needs of that community.
CONCLUSION

In conclusion what I have attempted to do is provide some insight into the various problems associated with unemployment in particular the psychological effects. This discussion is far from adequate. For this paper to even approach adequacy a far more extensive research project needed to have been undertaken.

Various issues not covered in this study need to be looked at in more detail. The theoretical model for understanding unemployment needs to be developed within the context of extensive research among South Africa's unemployed. Through this process we could hope to develop an approach which more thoroughly describes the various intricacies of apartheid in South Africa and one which is appropriate to the South African reality.

Secondly, a more rigorous analysis of the specific psychological problems needs to take place. The problems of varying personalities, levels and kinds of depression experienced, etc., need to be examined in the context of unemployment.

Thirdly structured research / interviews need to be devised to successfully evaluate the experience of the unemployed. The interviews conducted, although
giving some clarity and insight, are far from adequate.

Finally this study should be seen in terms of 'testing the ground'. It will have been useful if it has highlighted some of the problems and raised some of the areas for future work. It is also hopefully useful in addressing some of the initial questions which are being asked about unemployment and its efforts. May it also have been useful in contributing and extending to some degree understanding of the unemployed.
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January 1980 - February 1983

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"Unemployment in South Africa"

Social Review Issue 21
Interviews conducted with unemployed people.

The following are extracts from interviews conducted with thirteen unemployed people in Cape Town. They have been edited and appear as the story of each person. In some cases they have been translated from Afrikaans to English. These translations were done as accurately as possible but unfortunately some of the colour expressed in the interviews has been reduced.
SUBJECT A.

Subject A is a man of thirty five years old. He lives in Grassy Park in the Cape Flats. He has been unemployed for four months. His last job was as an unskilled worker in the Cape Town electricity department.

"Without a job it is like you have nothing. I've gone out almost every day to look for work, now I don't know where to look. My children are hungry, I can't feed them no more. I have been without work for the past four months. I have been finding it very difficult to cope. There are always continual demands on me to provide money for my family. The rent still has to be paid, the electricity still has to be paid, food still has to be bought. I don't know where to get money anymore. I have been going to the UIF office once a week for the last three months. But I don't seem to get any money from them. It is hard being unemployed in Cape Town at the moment. People look at you as if you are a little bit crazy. They think you must be lazy or that you haven't got any job that you can do. I know it sounds strange, but I am finding it very difficult to find work. I keep going to different companies, and getting the same reply, there are no jobs. At first I thought it would be easy to get another job. I was glad of the chance to change the job that I had been doing. When I told my wife she was very shocked her first thought was "Where are we going to get the money to support the children?"
"Now the situation is getting worse. She tells me to go and look for work. I don't listen any more. I don't feel like it. There are no jobs so why look? The worst part about not having a job is not having anything to do during the day. I just sit around the house waiting for something to do. My wife does not work either. She has been looking after the children. But it looks as if she is going to have to find a job now. How can we continue like this? The highlight of my day is when my friend comes round to play cards. We used to play for money but now we play for matches. It gives me something to do something to look forward to. I am thinking of going away from Cape Town to look for a job somewhere else but that costs money. I don't even know if it's worth it. I heard from my brother in Johannesburg that unemployment is just as big a problem there than it is here. Maybe I'll be lucky and get a job at the Jo-burg City Council. I don't know whether they employ Coloureds there but I think I might try."
SUBJECT B.

Subject B is a male of twenty two years old. He has been unemployed for one month. He lives in a house with his parents in Hanover Park.

"I was really angry when they told me that I'd lost my job. I'd only been working at the firm for five months and there hadn't been any problems up until that point. They wanted someone with sober habits. I had sober habits and there was nothing that I had done wrong. I think the foreman at work didn't like me very much. He always tried to make me do things that he knew would get me into trouble, but I was a good worker. The pay there was not so bad. And we were living quite well. My father and mother both work and now without my salary there's not much money around. My father says in the old days it was easy for a man who was strong and willing to work to get a job. Things seem to have changed now. I have looked every day for a month it's no good. There are no jobs. Some of my friends also haven't got jobs. I'm a little bit better off than them because at least my parents still work. Sometimes we get together in the morning and go together to look for jobs. It doesn't work. Other times we just sit around talking and smoking. It's nice
to be able to talk to other people who also haven't got jobs. It makes you feel better somehow. Otherwise people just think that you're lazy and there's nothing that can be done. People look at you funny when you're unemployed. They think that you've stolen or that you've been sacked for some other reason."

"It's difficult to tell them the reason you haven't got a job, you just don't know. Someone didn't like you. Someone tried to get you out. I've heard there are places where they've got unions where the situation's a little better for people. I never ever bothered to join a union. I don't think there was a union where I worked. My girlfriend she doesn't want to know me any more. I haven't got the money to take her out. We haven't got the money to go out for a drink, to go to the flicks, to just go for a drive in the old man's car. I think she only loved me for my money. It's okay though because I don't really want to see her. She makes me feel miserable. She makes me feel as if I am not worth anything. I'm sure things will get better though. I've heard they need people at Koeberg. I'm going there next week to try and have a look. Maybe I'll be lucky. Maybe I will then I'll try something else."
SUBJECT C.

Subject C is a woman of thirty one years old. She has two children and is divorced. She lives with her mother and sister in a flat in Hanover Park. She worked as a cutter in a garment factory.

"When the foreman told me I had been sacked I thought I was going to faint. I then got so angry I screamed at her and walked out. I went straight to the place where I leave my bag and coat. I just wanted to get out of there as soon as possible. I was crying as I walked out the gates. The guard tried to stop me. Because you weren't allowed to leave at that time of the day but I just rushed past him. I think now that that was a stupid thing to do. If I'd stayed maybe I could've got my job back. Now they don't want to know me they don't want to see me. I'm still trying to get my leave pay out of them. They've also got my UIF card. I've been trying to get it for the past two weeks. Because without it I can't claim benefits. It's also difficult to find another job without your UIF card. I've been to a couple of places not very many. I feel that I need a break. I need a little bit of a holiday. It can't be for too long though because I need the money. A friend of mine she does washing at home for some of the Whites in Claremont. She collects the washing washes it at home and takes it back afterwards. Her husband's got a car you see. She
thinks that I'll be able to find enough work sewing other peoples' clothes. I learnt a lot at the factory and I think maybe I should try something like that. She says that she'll help me and recommend me to people because she knows a lot of people who might need that kind of work done".

"If I can't find anything else I think that's what I'll do. It's nice being at home in the morning. I used to leave so early in the morning and get home so late at night that I hardly saw them. They're still small, six and seven and will be starting school soon. It's so nice to be with them a little bit of the time. It just makes me sad that I can't buy them sweets anymore, can't buy them a little treat now and again because there's just no money. I suppose I'm better than a lot of people. I've got a job which I can do and can do well. I've got a mother and sister who are helping me at the moment. But I think things can only get better if I get a job. I sometimes lie and cry about not having a job. Sometimes the worry just takes over. When I wake up in the morning things always look a little bit better. I think I'll be able to get through another day. My mother, she has been very kind. She says that I mustn't worry that God will give me a job. I don't know if God will give me a job but I'm sure I'll find a job. There's a lot at home to keep me busy. For a change there's someone there to clean up during the day there's someone to look after the children, there's someone to
make sure they don't get into trouble. I also look after some children for another woman, she's still got a job, when she heard that I'd lost mine she was worried herself because she's also a cutter but in a different place. She's looking out for me. As soon as something comes up there she's going to tell them that she know a good cutter who also needs a job."
SUBJECT D.

Subject D is a man of forty. He has been unemployed for five months. He lives with his wife, four children, his mother and father-in-law. Neither his wife's mother or father-in-law works. He previously worked as a packer.

"I'd been sick for a long time. I had to have an operation to my leg. I'd fallen when I was a child. And suddenly I couldn't walk properly anymore. I was in hospital for about three weeks. And then I went back to work. When I got back to work they told me that someone else had taken my place, I was so upset I didn't want my family to know. Every day for a week I left home as usual trying to find another job. I couldn't find one. I was paid weekly so I had to tell them at the end of the week when I had no pay to bring home. I cried when I told them. The biggest worry is that there's not enough money. At the moment it's alright. I got my UIF payment quite quickly. But I don't know how long it'll last. There are not many jobs for people like me. I left school when I was in standard six. My parents didn't have any money for me to stay at school and I sold newspapers for three years. I've go no education. I want my children to have the best education as is possible. I know what it's like not to have education, not to be able to get work which pays well, not to be able to work when you loose work.
It's a terrible situation when an honest man needs to feed his family and can't get work. I'm going to have to apply to the social welfare to do something about the old people. It was a relief to go to work. There were no kids fighting and ouna screaming at them and the old man getting gesuip. Now they all get on my nerves, they will drive me mad if I have to stay here much longer."

"Sometimes I get up in the morning and just go out, I just walk around all day long. I pretend that I'm looking for work. But I don't even want to go and ask 'cos I know what the answer will be. I feel very useless. I sometimes wish that I was dead. But I know this is not the answer. What would my family do then? They'd have to pay for a funeral. No really they are somehow better off with me like this. At least there's a chance that I'll get a job. This can't go on for ever. I'll get one one day."
SUBJECT E.

Subject E is a woman of thirty who has two illegitimate children. She lives with her mother, a widow, and they live in Mitchells Plain. They used to live in Claremont but were moved to Mitchells Plain under Group Areas.

"When I read the letter telling me that I had lost my job I started to cry. I knew a lot of people who'd done the same kind of work and couldn't get new jobs. Where was I going to get the money? My mother hasn't got enough money for me and my two kids. She just gets a widow's pension. She's a pensioner. She's getting old and can't find work. Things used to be better when we lived in Claremont. It wasn't so far to go to work. And it wasn't so expensive. Now to look for work costs a fortune. I have to pay a lot of train fare and bus fare to go to the factories to look for work. I went to speak to the father of the children. They've got the same father but I didn't want to marry him because he's a drunk. He just drinks all his money away. I asked him if he would give me some money so that I could feed the children. He said that I was a fool. He said I shouldn't have lost my job. He's still working and getting quite a lot of money. He said he wasn't prepared to give any money to a woman who was such a fool that
she could lose her job when she had children to look after. He hit me. I just decided I wasn't going to speak to him again. It was no good, he wasn't going to give me any money. Life is very very hard. You try and do things but everything works against you. You get moved from here to there to here to there just because the Whites want to live in Claremont."

"We used to love living in Claremont but now ag what's the use even talking about it. I don't feel like getting up in the mornings. There doesn't seem to be much point. All I know is that I've got another day where I haven't got a job. I miss going to work, because at the end of the day you felt like you'd done something. You knew that it wasn't a very good job. But at least it was something, it kept you busy, you saw your friends, you could talk, you could sing and you had a little bit of money for some of the good things. That's all over now. I look in the paper every week to try and see if there's another job. But it seems as if they're getting more and more machines to stop to make things quicker. I don't think they want to employ us girls anymore. They think we cause too much troubles. Yesterday my friend came to visit me. She's also lost her job. In exactly the same way. She wasn't told she just got a letter. She thinks that there's a chance of getting a job in Durban. But I can't go to Durban I've got children to look after. I don't think there's jobs in Durban either. I think she's just hoping. She talks about getting a job which is better, where she gets more money.
I also used to think that. But now you realise that you'll be lucky to get a job today. You'll be lucky if you just get something that keeps you going for a few weeks. My little girl is sick. And now I've got to find the money to buy her medicine. I hope she gets better soon because I can't afford this sickness. I used to be very healthy. I was never sick. But since I lost my job I've been feeling much worse. I often get headaches. I just feel sick, I feel as if I'm going to get sick. I don't know why this is. I really hope I find something."
SUBJECT F.

Subject F is a man of twenty eight years old. He is unmarried and lives with his parents. Also living at his parents' home are his seven brothers. Six of them are still at school. One of them is working. His father works. His mother is sick.

"I don't care what kind of job I get as long as I can get something. If I stay here any longer I will die. I'm sick and tired of having nothing to do. I used to be a bricklayer. I used to get a lot of work, but now they don't seem to be building many new houses anymore. It was always difficult because you never knew when you were going to get a job and when you weren't going to get a job. But you usually made enough money when you did have a job so that bad times weren't too hard. But when you're unemployed for as long as I've been unemployed then you start to lose money, you don't have anything to rely on anymore. I've been looking for bricklaying work for six months now. They just tell you that there's no work, that there's no work. They always ask you where was the last place you worked and how long ago did you work there. It seems as if the longer you haven't been working the less chance you've got of getting a job. And they want to know why you haven't been working.
Why no-one has given you a job. I think they start believing that you're no good. I think they start thinking that you're drunk or you're not going to work hard. It's a terrible situation. It just seems to get worse. I used to like working 'cos I was outside, it was pleasant. You were working with people who you enjoyed working with."

"They were nice okes those people at work. I miss them. It'd be nice to see them again. The work was interesting man. It was nice to look at a whole wall that you'd built. You could think to yourself I made that. I've done something today. But what can I say now. All I think is huh, I'm just sitting here. I'm just sitting doing nothing. There is a limit to the amount of places you can go for work. I don't qualify for UIF, so there's no chance of that. I've registered as a work seeker, but haven't found anything yet. My father keeps nagging me to go look for work. I can't get him to understand that I have tried to find something to do. He thinks I'm lazy."
SUBJECT G.

Subject G is a married woman of thirty three years old. She has four children. Two are of school going age. Her husband is also unemployed.

"My husband lost his job about five months ago. It was a big shock but we thought we would cope. I was working and I was earning a reasonably good wage. We had to cut a few corners though. We had to eat less meat. We had to save on all kinds of things. I had to now catch the train to work, 'cos it was cheaper than the bus even though it took a lot longer. I also took in other peoples' washing. There are a few people here who pay you a little bit to wash their clothes. I used to wash clothes every Sunday. Then two months ago I lost my job. We were desperate. There was no money coming in now. We had spent everything we had in the time that my husband was without a job. Now they've cut off the electricity and we're two months in arrears with rent. They're going to evict us I'm sure, we just can't pay though. My husband decided to go to Jo-burg. He went a month ago. He said he would get a job there. He sent some money the first week. But I haven't had any more money since. I don't know where he is. I haven't been able to get hold of him. I would like to go to Jo-burg to look for him but what can I do with the children?"
Before he left we used to take turns to look for work because the children can't go to creche because there's no money. Sometimes they lie awake at night crying."

"I know they are crying because they are hungry. I feel like feeding them Ratex. When your children cry hunger crying your heart wants to break. It will be better if they were dead. When I think things like that, I feel worse. It's terrible when a mother wants to kill her own children. But what can I do, I'm not a mother worth having. I worry about my husband I think he might have run away with someone else. Maybe he's got a job and just doesn't want to come home. But why isn't he sending any money? I'm sick. I'm sick because of the cold. I can't take my children to the doctor when they're sick because there's just no money. My mother and father said that they would try and help. But they've got very little money and my brother and sister to support. It's a hard time for all of us. We're just not cared to find jobs. What can one do? You must start looking. You can also pray to God that he will keep you from killing your children."
SUBJECT H.

Subject H is a woman of thirty five. She has no children. She lives with a man who is also unemployed. She is not married to him and does not support him either.

"I used to work as a cutter at Rex Trueform. It was not very interesting work but at least it was something. We used to get paid a good wage and we had Saturdays off. Now that I've lost my job I don't know why I lost it. I think it was because they were reducing their staff. I can't find anything else. Once you get into a factory it's usually quite easy to stay there. I'd worked at Rex Trueform for ten years. But now I don't know what to do. I can't find jobs anywhere. A person can't tidy a house all day. Cutting wasn't interesting but you could see a whole pile at the end of the day. You could see that you'd done something. Somehow a house never seems to look the same. You can't put the same amount of energy into something like this. My boyfriend he doesn't work either. He just sits around all day. I managed to save some money. Because I didn't have any children. And now I'm having to use that money. I was hoping to buy a motor car. But now my motor car is being used to feed me. There is very little that a woman can do. No-one wants to employ you. It feels like you're never ever going to
get another job, it feels as if you're never ever going to feel again. I was thinking about taking children in to look after them. I saw an advert in The Argus two days ago which said that I would look after your children at home. It looks as if that's quite a nice thing to do. I love children I can't have any of my own. That might be what I am looking for. At least it will help in the meantime. I think that's what I'll do. 'Do you know how you can go about that?'

"Do you think people will want that? I'm worried about my boyfriend. He says he doesn't want me to do that. But he can't complain. He hasn't got work either. If he doesn't like it he must go. I think that's what I will do. At least it will give me something to do. At least it will make me feel useful. I can't take this doing nothing anymore. I think it will make me go mad."
SUBJECT I.

Subject I is a man of forty six. He is recently divorced. He has been unemployed for one month.

"Ever since I was divorced things seem to have gone bad. My wife left me to go with some other man. She took the children with her. It was nice having the children at home they seemed to make things a lot better. We always used to fight. At first I thought it would be the best. But now I don't know what to do. During the divorce I had to miss work. I had to go to court. And after a while they started getting tired of me at work. They told me that there wasn't a job for me anymore. At least I don't have to support the children. I would like to give them money. But I haven't got any to give them. For a while I got up from bed at the same time as when I worked. But then I had nothing to do. Now I just sleep for most of the morning. When I get up I just walk around. There isn't anything that I want to do. I thought of trying to get another job. But it just doesn't seem to be worthwhile. I haven't even tried. I hear that people can't get jobs so what's the good. I've got to go back to the UIF office next week. Maybe there'll be some money there for me. I hope so because I haven't got very much left. It's expensive to go there, you just sit around all day, just wait in a long queue,
everybody else is sitting there around waiting as well, what is the good you ask yourself, then they call your name and say no money this week, you just think to yourself well what's the use. The nice thing about the UIF is being able to talk to people because when you sit at home all day you don't see very many people at all. Somehow its encouraging to see other people in the same situation. You know that they're also having a hard time and that you're not the only one but what good does that do."

"It's not that you want everybody to be in the same position as you it's just that it makes you feel better to know that you aren't the only one. I've made a few friends at the unemployment office. But it would be nice to meet other people. You want people who are happy. It's not nice being with people who are always sad. Maybe I should look for another job. It just makes me so tired. They're just going to tell me they don't want me. I don't have a good reference from my last job. I don't have experience. I don't have education. What is there for me?"
Subject J is a woman of twenty-five years old. She has one child. She is not married. She used to work as a Salesgirl at the O.K. Bazaars. She left because they accused her of stealing.

"I used to enjoy my work at the O.K. Bazaars. It was hard work though it was unpacking boxes and packing on the shelves, and putting on the prices and it was standing at the till ringing everything up. Over a few months money was disappearing out of the till. They said that it was me. But they couldn't catch the person who it was. They eventually sacked me. I wasn't stealing the money. I don't know who was though. I think there was something going on which I didn't know about. What was nice about working there was all the other girls that worked there too. You had a lot of friends. At lunch time we used to go sit on the parade and talk to our friends. It was a nice hour to forget about bad things. Now I never see them. I think they've forgotten about me. I haven't got the money to go in from Mitchells Plain to town every day to go and see them anymore. I haven't been back to another shop to look for a job because I want a different kind of job. It was tiring work standing on your feet every day but somehow it was nice. They said when I left they would make sure that I would never get another job."
They put in my UIF card that I had been sacked because of stealing. Now when you apply for a job people look at that and they don't want to employ you. It is as if a curse has been put on you. There is no way you're going to get another job with that number C there.

I worry sometimes about when I'm going to be able to work again and when I'm going to have money again but at the moment things are alright but for how long I don't know. You can't claim UIF when you've been sacked for stealing so I don't know what I'm going to do. The O.K. is a bad place to work, the bosses treat you really badly. They think they can mess you around. But it's not true they can't. I feel embarrassed to tell people why I was sacked from the O.K. Bazaars. Even though it's not true. Somehow they make you feel you're not as good as you thought you were. They make me think that I'm a thief. But I know that I'm not, somehow you can't help but think these things. Yesterday I thought I would go and try to get a job. I got as far as the manager of the job section, but as a tea girl, for a big factory. But then she looked at my UIF card and what could I say. I tried to explain that it wasn't me and that I didn't know how it had happened. But she wouldn't listen.
She said that I had a cheek to apply. It was very degrading but it would have been something, something different but also something which I wouldn't have wanted to do for very long. I wish I could meet other women who feel the same way as me. And maybe we could work something out together. You feel really sick when you haven't got a job. It's there in the bottom of your stomach. You think that something's eating you. They have to change sometime. The days are so long. I don't know what to do with myself anymore. I have visited all my aunties. You can't do that for very long. They also want to know why you've been sacked and you feel as if you can't tell them because their hearts will break. My parents aren't alive anymore. At least I haven't broken their hearts. I'm worth nothing.
SUBJECT K.

Subject K is a man of forty three years old. He is married and has three children. His children are sixteen, thirteen and ten. He was employed as a fitter. But now he can't find any jobs.

"I used to be a good fitter but now I think I've forgotten how to do it. I'm sure I would remember but it's been so long since last time I did it. I've been unemployed for seven months. It seems strange that one can't find another job but it's true. At first you think oh well it will be easy I'll just go and speak to so-and-so or to so-and-so or to that factory or to that company. But that's not the case. A lot of people are unemployed at the moment. It's a terrible situation. When you look at people and they look back at you and you think that they know you're unemployed. People think you're worthless. Any real man can support his family. I used to be a real man now I'm worth less than a loaf of bread. Bread is more use to them than me. My children are not being fed properly. There's very little money. My father-in-law was very angry and said in times like these I would never get another job. He said I must be a fool to be out of a job. Luckily he gave my wife some money for rent. Without him we would be dead.
He has been helping ever since I was unemployed. For how long he can do that, I don't know. He doesn't want to talk to me anymore. He says that I should get something at least. But it's difficult. There is just no work. My children look at me and cry. They say they want someone who goes to work. All their friends' fathers are working. They give them presents for their birthdays."

"It's coming up for Christmas and I know it's not going to be a very nice Christmas. Where will we get money to buy them a small present? They know that something is wrong. They know there are problems because I become very cross with them. They make me irritated. All their little games I used to be able to cope with now they just drive me mad they've started avoiding me which is terrible. I really don't care and I don't know what to do. My wife she's just bitter. She takes it out on me and accuses me of not wanting to support her and the children. She says I'm a hopeless person. How can I make her believe that's not true. I think the only way will be to get another job but where, where? Yesterday a friend of mine told me about a job and I went immediately to try and get it. But there was a queue of seven people waiting to speak about the job. The white manager came out and looked up and
down the line. He asked us all questions. How long have you been working? Where did you work before? What do you want? How much money do you want? Five of us had been unemployed for a while. He said that we were lazy. That we should be able to get jobs. He looked at the youngest and strongest man. I think somehow that the only people who will be alright at this stage are young people. They still have a lot of life in them they still want to work hard. It's not that I don't want to work hard. But when people look at me they look at me and think he can't work very hard and it's true I look bad. I look as if nothing goes right for me. When I walk past the shops I just think how nice it would be to buy something. But I've never got any money in my pocket. My wife gives me none of the money that her father gives her. I sometimes think that I'm never ever going to be able to have money again."

"Maybe I should try and get another kind of job. I've been trying to get a job as a fitter maybe I should just try something else. I really think it would be better than nothing."
SUBJECT L.

Subject L is a man of twenty eight. He was a salesman at a furniture shop. He used to work with six other men. They all sold together. But now the company has closed down and they have all lost their jobs.

"When I lost my job I thought, ag this is not too serious I'll be able to find another one. I've always been able to find jobs. I know I can't do very much but I've always been able to talk myself into something. I've been selling for about four years, it's a good life it gives you something to do, it's exciting. You always when someone walks into your shop you think to yourself, will I be able to sell them something? The more I sell them the more I will get for myself and it works. You get excited, you are able to talk, you are able to sell, you are able to convince them that this is what they need. But now my enthusiasm is going. I can't seem to think about what I'm going to do, I miss my connections from work. They live in other areas and it's expensive to go and visit. We were a good team those boys and me, we used to sell a lot. I don't know why the the company was doing so badly, that they had to close. We were told that we'd lost our jobs without any warning. Just one day we were at work and the next day we weren't at work. The
manager seems to be alright though, he's been transferred to another branch but us they could afford to get rid of us. What are we supposed to do now? I've saved a bit of money but how long will it last? That's what I ask myself all the time. I can't afford to spend too much money because I don't know where the next piece of bread is going to come from. My girlfriend, she's still working. She's been giving me a bit of money but I don't like to take from a woman. It makes them think that they're more powerful than they are. It makes them think that they can control you, and I don't want that. I don't want to be in debt to her. Because then she'll make me marry her and I don't want that, I don't want that yet. I'm so young I need to live my life but now I can't. I need to do things that I want to do things but what's the point, there is no way that I can do what I want. I used to be exciting and active but now I find it difficult to do even small things. I don't want to make my bed, I don't want to make food, I don't want to do any of that. I just sit around reading the newspaper pages through but I know things can't go on like this forever. Somehow something has to happen, somehow someone has to give me a job, somehow I'll manage. About two weeks ago there was a big fight outside my house and someone was killed and I thought to myself never, I won't do that, I will survive. I will get
another job and will be able to do something with my life. I don't want to live in that kind of world for the rest of my life. I want to move somewhere else, I want to get a better house, I want to do lots of things and I can only do those things when I find another job. Sometimes I get the enthusiasm to try, sometimes that makes me get out of bed in the morning and go and ask at another shop if they need a salesman, but I don't know how long that'll last. There has to be something. If there is I will find it. I know that well.
SUBJECT M.

Subject M is a married man of thirty six. He has three children. His wife is working at the moment.

"Losing a job is like losing one's breath. You think you're never going to get it back again but of course it comes back again. And then you start to wonder what you're going to do. Things are alright at first. But then they just seem to get worse. It's a tragedy not being able to find work. You just think why can't I get a job? There's very little around. The day's so long. I feel tired at night but for very little reason. I don't even want to go to the bar anymore. I don't have the money, but my pals buy me the odd drink. Twice a week I must go to the UIF office. I've been going for two months. I still don't have any money from them. They always say next week. I wonder whether it's even worth trying there again. When I go to bed I wish I wouldn't wake up again because then it would be over. I never was a lazy man, now I think there's something wrong. I don't even want to do the little things. My wife is very patient. She encourages me and says of course you'll get another job. I sometimes wonder though. She bares the brunt of it at the moment. I stay at home and try and look after the children. But I'm not much good.
They think it's funny to have a father at home. They think there's something wrong with me. I don't think they like it very much. I tend to get cross with them very quickly. This is not good for them. Maybe one day things will get better. I know that they can't get much worse.

"My father-in-law he has a big job. He's got a lot of money. And he always tells me I must be like him. But how can one be like him? He has been lucky. A friend of mine told me that the best place to get work is Johannesburg. I'm thinking about going. But then what will my wife do without me? Somehow she likes having me around even though I haven't got a job. I'm going to find work. I need to find work because I miss going to work. It was funny, I used to hate my job. But now I think if only I had that same job back I would be so happy. It's a funny thing, that you don't like things when you've got them but when you haven't got them you wish that they would come back."