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UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND

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AFRICANS IN SOUTH AFRICAN INDUSTRY:

THE HUMAN DIMENSION

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A general, ethnographic account of African participation in South African secondary industry has yet to be written. In most previous research on Africans in South African industry, no effort has been made to present them as persons who lead human lives and work in quite human ways. The aridity of many published accounts;(Natal University, 1950; Glass, 1960; van der Horst, 1964) in portraying Africans' involvement in factory work is testimony to the pervasiveness of the ideology of separation and social distance so firmly entrenched in South Africa. In these studies, black men have appeared as little more than bundles of factual grist for a series of aggregative statistics, indices, and actuarial tables.

Methods

The data on which this report is based was gleaned from over 1500 detailed interviews with over 300 different African industrial workers in five South African industries located on the Witwatersrand; from observations, structured and unstructured, of over 1000 Africans at work in these same firms; from extensive discussions with all levels of supervision and management in a total of ten South African enterprises; from intimate personal association with my African research associates whose ideas as well as their field work contributed enormously to my own insights into "African" industrial life.

The larger study from which this essay is abstracted concerned the investigation of the "social and organizational antecedents of job

satisfaction among black South African industrial workers." In this investigation 10% stratified-random samples of the black labor force of five Witwatersrand industries were studied in detail. A combination of open and structured interviews - a total of six with each subject - were conducted. The topics of these interviews were: (1) the nature of job satisfactions and dissatisfactions, (2) self-analysis of the nature of the jobs performed, (3) participation and involvement in the social and cultural life of the urban centers, and (4), the rural "homelands," (5) ascertainment of the salience of selected value orientations relating to work and economic activity, (6) estimates of perceived tension in the job.

In addition to these interviews, observations structured and unstructured, participant and non-participant, were carried out by myself and four African research associates within these five factories. These observations enabled the collection of data on the structure and articulation of work roles, the informal association of workers, and the discovery of attributes of industrial jobs about which workers reported in interview sessions.

Personnel Folk Psychology

South Africans in general including many South African personnel psychologists hold that any individual African is more or less a microcosm of his "African" culture. Africans, unlike Europeans, are said to be in their natural state, pretty much homogeneous replications of one another. The questions many Europeans ask about Africans often indicate this stereotype. An eminent South African psychologist (Biescheuvel, 1952, p 5) asks "Do Africans possess the basic potentialities to enable them to respond adequately to the vast changes occurring

in their environment and upbringing...? Are their intellectual capacities, manipulative dexterities, and temperament make-up suitable for the demands which would eventually be made on them?" Not only are Africans regarded as psychologically homogeneous, they are also made to be near prisoners of the culture which gives rise to this invariant personality type.

> "Drive and capacity for sustained effort are virtues typical of Western Civilization. Does the African possess them to a sufficient degree? When allowance is made for these (cultural deprivation and social-legal disabilities) there remains nevertheless some doubt about the African's ability to maintain a high level of endeavor in his work. This doubt is based mainly on the apparent failure on the part of the African elite to make forceful use of the opportunities that have come their way, and of the indifferent progress of their communities where they have played a dominant part." (Biescheuvel, n.d., p 3-4)

In other words, I presume Africans are believed to recapitulate in the process of individual growth or in the process of learning behavior, which is in some sense Western, the processes of cultural change which led from the Neolithic Cultures of Europe to the industrial world of today. Most white South Africans, especially the industrialists and their psychological minions, conveniently forget about the nature of the social disabilities borne by Africans when making judgments about African ability. A society in which any person solely because he is black is systematically barred from all but the lowest of the lower level industrial positions, is a peculiar laboratory in which to test black men's initiative, energy level, and capacity for sustained effort. To assume that one can measure or determine the heights and slope of a man's ambitions in a context where all but the most lowly of ambitions are illegal, is curious, indeed. Moreover, to assume that a black man's

performance in his place of work is typical of what he is capable, in a context where the conditions of performance are surrounded by insult, ridicule, mistrust, distrust, sub-subsistence monetary rewards, and incredible insecurity, would seem to be a most unusual setting in which to measure achievement motivation.

To assess the validity of popular notions concerning the "ineffectiveness" of African labor and those rationalizations forwarded to account for it, we must undertake a closer examination of Africans' participation and involvement in South African industry. While European intellectual mythology concerning Africans constitutes an aspect of the industrial milieu, it is the activity on the factory floor that comprises the conditions of work for Africans; and 'tis thither we will now repair.

Personnel Management for Africans

If an African requires a job and may legally hold one, he approaches a firm, often on the advice of friends or relatives who also work or have worked there. He is escorted or sent from the back gate to an office where certain information is required of him: legal documents and personal biography including employment history. With the labor shortage so acute in South Africa, if an applicant has a modicum of ability, can speak Afrikaans or perhaps English, and appears docile and submissive, he will be hired.

If the individual has no previous work history which would indicate his aptitudes, has no education, or is illiterate, he will be assigned to a general labor gang. Here, while drawing minimum pay, he will do odd jobs or any manual unskilled work anywhere in the factory. When an opening occurs in some "regular," permanent job, those who have been in the general gang the longest or who have most favorably impressed the

supervisors will be transferred to the permanent post. Such a permanent job is typically unskilled manual work.

In a growing number of firms an additional step has been added in the procedure of hiring and placement. By means of a series of "tests" the various aptitudes of an individual are determined. This is done either prior to or in the course of his first job assignment. Of course an individual's past work and objectively demonstrable talents are the overriding criteria for placing him in a job, but this information is not always available. Curious aptitude testing batteries have been developed to assist the African "clerks" in obtaining aptitude data. Psychometrics, like most things South African, comes in two parts - one for the Europeans and one for the"Bantu."

In nearly all of the administrative divisions of South African factories there are two aspects: the European "side" and the Bantu "side". The personnel departments are naturally examples of this. The Europeans who hold down the "Bantu side" possess credentials as overlords of the Bantu Proletariat. The compound manager or personnel manager (always a European) typically speaks one or more African languages or pidgin dialects. They are self-made men who have come to industry very often from either mine or farm work. They have worked and lived with Africans all of their lives (or so they readily claim) and "really know the 'Bantu'." These men usually lack any professional training or education. Most have never graduated from high school. Their "knowledge" of the "Bantu" is amazingly uniform from one personnel manager or compound manager to another across firms. And it is predictably consonant with the domineering, austere, paternalistic role played by the manager vis a vis the African worker. The requirements of the office of personnel manager, the rather low status it has, and conse-

quently low pay it provides, select for the most conservative and traditionalistic of the salt-of-the-earth white South Africans. Typically, they have been schooled as task masters over the raw mine recruit, the serf in the Natal cane fields, the Cape vineyard, or the Orange Free State and Transvaal farms. These men from their own experience have developed an "ethnology" of the African which is a charter for their role as captains of the fate of African industrial workers.

Below are an assortment of comments made to me by five personnel and compound officers in five firms. While these cliches mean little in isolation, they are a representative sampling from a rather small population of stereotyped myths which "rationalize" the role of white non-European personnel manager.

(1) "The Bantu come from a simple background; their needs are simple; they want someone to tell them what to do, how to do it, and make sure they do it right." "The Bantu are bewildered ("verbysterd") by the White Man's world. They need someone, who will show them what they need to know, and protect them; keep them from going wrong." "The Bantu are tied to the soil - all these men you see here would be much happier if they could be back at their kraal, donned in their skins, tending cattle."

(2) "The Bantu have never had a chance to learn responsibility. That's why we don't give them none. They need someone like me, who will make sure that no harm comes their way, and that they'll do what's right."

(3) "The Bantu are always getting "hung up" (verwikkel in) in witchcraft and superstition. I spend a lot of my time just sorting out these men's problems with the witch doctor (toordokter). They're always trying to get someone killed, or someone's trying to kill them. They know they can come to me for protection."

(4) "My job is to keep down tension, and make the Bantu feel at home here." "They got nowhere to turn if they can't turn to me. Yeah, my workers really like me - mind you, they aren't cheeky; they really respect me....it's like a kid and his old man."

(5) "No one pushes my Bantu around. I really look out for my Natives. They know they got someone here'll get in their licks for 'em."

These few statements reveal the paternalism of the Compound Manager.

He protects the African from the "evils" in the modern world, and he helps insure that they will remain subdued, simple, subject people, protected from all the forces of change, especially those dangerous ones - enlightenment and political consciousness.

The breadth of activity permitted the Non-European personnel department or personnel manager varies among firms. In some organizations personnel work is little more than house and record keeping, - on the "Bantu side". In others, the personnel functions are quite elaborate. Here personnel activities range from the usual record keeping to employee evaluation and testing, job placement, coordination of TWI (training within industry) programs, and administration of recreation and welfare programs. Yet, in all of the firms studied it was clear that an overriding purpose of non-European personnel policy is the maintenance of the satisfaction and contentment of Europeans. "We have good labor relations" means "we engage in no programs of African uplift which might arouse the ire of European labor unions." * An African doing unauthorized skilled work, an African unabailable to bring tea, an African being "cheeky" to a European or even dealing with the European as an equal are all events which can cause labor unrest. Hence a major task of the non-European personnel department is to reconcile the contradictory demands for "rational" use of African labor on the one hand with the demand of large segments of the European labor force that Africans remain helots.

Another major task of personnel officials is the increasing of individual productivity in particular and the increasing of labor "effectiveness" in general. In two of the five firms studied, major efforts were being directed at the reduction of labor turnover,

*It is interesting that in the past year some European labor unions have adopted the viewpoint that Africans should be permitted union representation and receive equal pay with whites for equal work. The implications of this recent shift in attitudes by white union officials are not fully clear.

absenteeism, and tardiness.

Although Glass (1960, pp.16-17) reports that labor turnover in southern Africa amongst Africans is roughly comparable to that in other developed countries: 4.4% per annum, I suspect that this figure may be misleading. It is not clear what formula was used in its computation, nor what variation about that mean exists. 'In the ten firms I observed or studied, the annual African labor turnover rate for the fiscal year 1965-1966 ranged from 28 to 72 percent per annum. The formulae used in these firms is based on the ratio of the total number of exits or entrances (but not both) over the average total black labor force strength for the year. This is not the best of all indices, but it was widely used. The variation in turnover rates is traceable to a multiplicity of factors, both within and without the factory: retrenchment policies, criteria for forced dismissal for delinquency, voluntary migration of workers to rural areas, arrests and endorsements of workers out of urban areas by municipal authorities, and movement of workers to better jobs. This variety of contributory conditions and their differential importance from firm to firm makes it impossible either to compare one turnover rate with another or to assign a meaning to a given turnover rate in terms of organizational effectiveness. For example, in two of the firms total turnover attributable to voluntary resignations was 25% of the number of jobs in existence for that year. Yet the total turnover for that year was 35% in one firm and 65% in the other. In short, resignations due to voluntary withdrawal were of the same relative magnitude; the difference in the total turnover was attributable to the quite different seasonal retrenchment policies of the two firms.

Despite the lack of meaning of a labor turnover rate, it may be profitable to reduce it. In South Africa this is not generally accomplished by increasing the attractiveness of the jobs a firm offers

relative to the attractiveness of the jobs offered by firms competing for the same labor. The personnel people have utilized two techniques for reducing turnover: (1) lowering the standards of minimal acceptable performance, particularly as regards "delinquent," non-task relevant behavior, and (2) shifting personnel around within the firm as a means of removing an individual from a job which he is not doing well, rather than firing him outright. While neither of these techniques increases individual productivity, it creates the illusion of lower employee turnover, and may reduce costs in so far as hiring, firing, and retraining with attendant paper work are wasteful expenses.

Another important activity of the personnel departments and their officers, black and white, is the "settlement" of disputes and grievances arising between workers who are black, or among parties one of whom must be black. In practice, where disputes arise among Africans they are settled informally outside the purview of any formal organizational structure. Where the disputes involve members of both racial groups, the Non-European personnel department strives to settle the matter in such a way that all the Europeans involved will be content with the outcome. In other words, in practice, the personnel department strives to assure all Europeans that Africans will act "appropriately." In reality, the personnel department mediates in only a small percentage of disputes which arise. The mechanisms of redress and settlement are largely informal.

The final important explicitly delegated activity in which the personnel department is engaged is "facilitating communication between the racial groups and up and down the line." Orders from management are given in English and/or Afrikaans. As is the case in most bureaucratic structures, communications from top and middle management are

generally unintelligible to the subordinates who receive them. Hence, these directives must be translated for each of the many echelons of the factory organization, including the mass of Africans. To the African clerks and "indunas" (also called "boss boys") falls the charge of making the organization and its policy and directives intelligible to Africans who work on the line. These African clerks play particularly important roles in transmitting inter-departmental directives, formal and informal. Whether it is a requisition for paper clips, which must be made informally to be accomplished at all, or a major statement about changes in the conditions of work, African emissaries mediate the transmission of the information. As a result of this, a relatively <u>few</u> literate, educated Africans dominate the communication channels which connect low, middle, and top management with the mass of African production workers. Communication across racial lines is, of course, fraught with misunderstanding, mistrust, deception, and purposive withholding of information. Moreover, the structural position of the clerks and many indunas in the factory social systems is one of extreme marginality vis a vis both black and white social groupings (see Sherwood, 1958). Although the African production workers have some limited working arrangements with the black clerks and boss-boys, the social distance between these two aggregates, with its accompanying suspicion, distrust, and rejection, is quite profound. Thus, while blacks are rigidly separated from whites with the flow of communication between blacks and whites almost nil; so <u>too</u>, the flow of information between black line workers and black clerks and boss-boys is often equally as cramped and constricted. This situation not only precludes obtaining of "feedback" from African workers about the effects of one's directives, it also makes nearly impossible the flow of information down the line between white supervisors and

black production workers. Europeans are generally abrupt and often unclear in giving directions to their African boss-boys. The boss-boys, however, usually know from experience what the European is trying to imply.* Yet in giving orders to the black production workers, the boss-boys typically use the same curt and abrupt manner and ambiguous phraseology of their European superordinates. Explanation is seldom offered and complaints are never listened to. The boss-boy prefaces and closes his directive with "the white man says."

Should a manager wish information from the Africans in, for example, planning a change or instituting a new program, the information he is likely to get will be largely useless. As in any bureaucracy, but in particular one where the cleavage between the strata of whites and blacks are so great, it behooves one to appear competent in the eyes of one's superiors. The African clerks and indunas (boss-boys), who are held nominally responsible for the actions of the African workers, are only too ready to report that whatever the White Man wants, the Africans will accept with equanimity if not enthusiasm. As the unending tales of woe given by South African managers testify, many seemingly sure-fire plans failed because the African workers had completely rejected them.

In one firm, the enlightened management had decided that the only way to circumvent the numerous barriers to communication was to create a post of "African Personnel Officer,"** which would be filled by an African. The man filling the post at the time of my study was a

*This "experience" is typically acquired through negative reinforcement (punishment) of the boss-boys' initially random responses. Extinction of these random responses by reprimands for "failure" to act appropriately usually leaves what the Europeans consider the desired response extant. Thus, the vaguely barked order becomes for the African a simple cue triggering the proper (i.e., non-punishable) reaction.

**Not to be confused with "Personnel Manager" who is always a European.

college graduate in psychology, a very sensitive and sophisticated individual, who had succeeded in obtaining the acceptance and confidence of the black factory workers. By the time he was beginning to discover "what the men were really thinking," he became aware of numerous European abuses of the African laborers, heretofore hidden from management's view. The European shop personnel, quite predictably, felt that the less information that escaped the bounds of the shop about how Africans were treated, the better off things would be. Hence, the European operatives and foremen were intimidating the Africans into silence about their grievances and desires for change in company policy and operation. Numerous informal pressures were being exerted by the Europeans (including physical beatings) to discourage Africans from having any but the absolutely necessary dealings with the African Personnel Officer. By the time of my study, this officer reported to me that the Europeans had succeeded in squashing any desire on the part of African workers to veridically report to management their grievances, or other ideas which might be threatening to the status quo for Europeans.

An Outline of Role Conflict

The networks of social relationships which link African workers to one another and to the European dominated organizational structure are a key to understanding much of the work behavior and work attitudes of individual African employees. Recently Kahn, et al (1964) have explored some of the associations between "role conflict and ambiguity" and presumably resultant personal adjustment to work and performance effectiveness. The success of their enterprise led me to investigate this issue amongst African workers. In the resume to be given below,

I shall explain any technical jargon as it appears rather than review Kahn's concepts *in toto* at this point.

The offices which Africans occupy in South African secondary industries can be subsumed under the rubrics: (1) manual work: unskilled, and skilled; (2) line supervision; (3) clerical; and (4) "technical." This review will touch upon role conflict in each of these categories of African employment.

Informal delegation of work by Europeans to Africans is commonplace. In the 96 departments studied (in five firms) much of the co-ordination and supervision of production formally assigned to European personnel had been in turn *informally* delegated to Africans. In twelve of the departments, the European foremen and superintendents had delegated almost the total range of work contained in their formal job descriptions to Africans and spent their day literally sipping tea. In shops where European artisans performed skilled operations, such as welding, tool making, and other manual craft work, they are assisted by one or more African helpers. I observed that during the course of the day, many African helpers would frequently perform every operation which the European performed. In some cases this performance of the same task by Africans and Europeans occupied up to 50% of the total work cycle. In brief, the nominal apprenticeship relation was often, in reality, more of a communal work setup where the African and European did the same work side by side. In one shop, I observed that on several occasions the European operator would leave the floor, allowing the African to carry on the entire operation alone.

A common sentiment expressed to me by Africans to whom much informal delegation of work fell was resentment that they did in fact do the White Man's work. They believed themselves competent to do it,

yet resented receiving no reward: neither extra pay, recognition, nor even a thank-you. In fact, they were never even allowed to opt out of the extra work. There was clear dissonance here over inequity of inputs and outcomes. This feeling of inequity resulted from this special case of "role-overload" - a daily expectation that the individual would do far more than what is "justifiably" expected of him.

It is this kind of conflict that most Africans accepted with seemingly the greatest degree of equanimity. So long as other aspects of work conditions remained congenial, the delegation of extra duties per se was considered a relatively minor irritation.

A particularly resented form of "inter-sender" * conflict arises from the simultaneous delegation of work by several Europeans to a single African. This usually entails delegation of work which no one in the firm may "legitimately" ask any subordinate to do. An African has, in effect, as many supervisors or superiors as there are physically contiguous Europeans. It is customary in South Africa that any African must do any European's bidding. The exploitation of Africans by Europeans in this connection is widespread. Every day one sees numerous examples of Africans at all organizational levels approached by two or more Europeans who will demand services of him, none of which is legitimate in terms of company policy, and none of which the African is willing to do. Yet obey he must. In one extreme case of inter-sender conflict I observed, an African induna was approached by four Europeans in the space of ten minutes and asked: to fetch European A a spanner; to fetch European B tea; to take a message from European C to a foreman in another

* "Inter-sender" conflict indicates a situation where two or more members of ego's role set make conflicting or incompatible demands on ego.

shop; and to arrange for an African woman to meet European D outside the gate at noon. A check showed that none of the Europeans (save one) had any formally instituted authority relation directly over the African. It is not surprising that most Africans express the desire to work in shops which have a minimum of Europeans present!

Another less flagrant inter-sender conflict occurs when an African is required to perform "legitimate" services for two Europeans simultaneously. The Europeans often interpret an African's failure to perform for them expeditiously as laziness, where, in reality, it is often simple "role overload" resulting from conflicting simultaneous demands. This propensity of Europeans to blame Africans uncritically for their failings has an even less excusable corollary in the general unfounded scapegoating of Africans by Europeans. Africans as an aggregate are regularly blamed for all manner of organizational mal-functioning. Machine breakdowns, failure to meet production quotas, lapses in quality control are often blamed on Africans although no evidence may exist that any African worker has in any way performed improperly in role.

A rather diffuse "intra-sender" * conflict (which is particularly inimical to organizational effectiveness and maintenance of morale) stems from many Europeans' expecting Africans to behave at work as mature, critical, intelligent human beings, yet simultaneously expecting them to remain at all times docile and submissive to Europeans. Africans are continually remonstrated with for not taking initiative or showing imagination and intelligence. Yet in practice, for Africans to engage in "unsolicited" behavior is usually soundly condemned. One African informant told me that when he saw his boss about to make a

* conflict where a single "sender" gives conflicting orders or has conflicting expectations.

serious mistake, he yelled at him to stop. He was then belted across the face by the European. The African now knows he must wait until the error has been committed; he then approaches the European concerned and informs him that "we", the European and the African, have made an error.

The Africans who receive the brunt of European anti-African sentiment, and who are most aware of the prejudicial origins of much aggression and hostility directed against them are those who deal most intimately with Europeans. In secondary industry this means: clerks, supervisors, and artisans' assistants. The particular case of role conflict in which the African supervisors are enmeshed deserves particular attention, for a line supervisor's "dilemma" seems to arise in all industrial societies. Their dilemma is aggrevated in South Africa because the racial cleavage coincides with the cleavage in the interests of the two echelons (line workers and bottom management) in industry between which they are a crucial intermediary.

The conflicts experienced by African line supervisors are somewhat different from those faced by the "Bantu" clerks who deal with the public. Basically, the difference is that the clerks' conflicts are realized as an ideological contradiction between simultaneous loyalties to two opposing reference groups: the African "community" and the government agency, their employer; the supervisors' conflicts are realized within the context of social relations within the organization. In South Africa the boundary dividing worker from management coincides with the boundary dividing two antagonistic racial groups. The opposition between the two groups between which the supervisor mediates is doubly intense.

While many of the African supervisors whom I observed and interviewed were clearly performing many of their tasks well and, indeed, beyond the call of duty, many other of these personnel were failing as "effective" task leaders of African workers. Why are the majority of African supervisors (e.g. boss-boys) unable to be effective group leaders? Conversely, under what conditions are some Africans capable of exercising effective task or work group leadership?

In all five of the plants studied, it was common practice, although not official policy, to place those individuals in supervisory positions who have learned to "get along" with the Europeans under whom they must work. This was the principal "practical" consideration for selecting supervisors. The recommendation of the European on the spot has paramount influence on the decision of whom to promote. A second major criterion in selection is length of service in the production job. The longer one has held a job with the firm, the better chance one has of promotion to supervisor, other factors being "equal." A third criterion for promotion is one's demonstrated skill and success in one's production job. It is apparent that none of these criteria for selection of supervisors bears any significant relationship at all with what we now believe contributes to supervisory success. In fact, it would appear that at least the first criterion of selection would recruit individuals predisposed to failure as supervisors.

Two examples of the "boomerang" effects of selecting would- be "good" supervisors in this fashion can be given. One firm decided to implement a policy, where those individuals with the highest level of education, and greatest knowledge about the factory would be employed as production supervisors: namely, the clerical staff. Within a week after introducing clerks as production supervisors, they had literally

been driven from the factory floor. Other failures were recorded in cases where the firm attempted to place individuals in supervisory posts, who had the same ethnic origin as that of the majority of the workers. In general, appeals to tribal or ethnic symbolism and loyalty have no influence on industrial workers whatsoever, irrespective of the degree of "detribalization" of the members of the work force.

After considerable random search for the key to the creation of effective task leaders, a few managers have come to realize that if a person is to be an effective supervisor, he must in fact be allowed to supervise. Now it is not per se difficult for a firm to vest a black supervisor with nominal authority. This can be done virtually by fiat. However, giving that black supervisor real power to act reduces proportionately the control Europeans may exert over African workers. By definition, giving an African rights and privileges of control over the behavior of workmen imposes duties on Europeans not to interfere with an African's organizationally sanctioned behavior. The informal dominance of all Europeans over all Africans is inimical to the establishment of formally authorized African leadership of Africans. In practice, only in those departments where Europeans are almost entirely absent are African supervisors ever able to exercise effective leadership.

We may view this same problem in a slightly different way. In those departments where Europeans have uncontested informal dominance over all phases of the organization, the black supervisor is viewed by African line workers to be little more than the White Man's mouthpiece. He thus loses the respect of his subordinates. Being a sycophant for the Europeans and largely alienated from the Africans, he becomes a spokesman for no one. Since he is totally dependent upon Europeans for the legitimation of his position, he tends to acquire

their norms of conduct. As the Europeans are curt and abrupt towards him so he is curt and abrupt to his black subordinates. His major concern becomes one of ingratiating himself with the White Men and jealously guarding the social distance which lies between him and his African "underlings."

On the other hand, four conditions inevitably typify those contexts in which we find Africans acting as effective task leaders. They are in brief: (1) low European density, particularly of European line workers; (2) total organizational support for the decisions made and actions undertaken by the black leader; (3) management's willingness to listen to and - after consideration - act upon recommendations of African supervisors for the improvement of worker satisfaction and productivity; (4) selection procedures which recruit individuals with technical competence in the work, demonstrated skill in co-ordinating human activity, maturity, and insight into the problems faced by a task leader in eliciting acceptable group effort from the workers.

A fifth condition was revealed in a study of supervisor practices carried out in one firm. There was complete consensus among all 76 Africans surveyed that willingness and ability to stand up for the interests of the workers before management is the most important attribute an African supervisor could have. In this inventory of supervisor's "qualities," all other items showed much less rank stability and probably varied as a function of immediate grievances with present supervisors rather than as a function of long range, deep-seated priorities in the mind of the individual. From the perspective of the workers, then, willingness and ability to go to bat for the men is at least a <u>necessary</u> condition for supervisory effectiveness.

Informal Organization Among African Workers

"Informal organization....is composed of the animosities and friendships among the people who work together....(their)...primary groups, cliques, and congeniality groups that develop in shop or office. It consists of the folkways, mores, norms and values which guide the behavior of workers, sometimes in fulfillment and sometimes in blockage of the goals of the formal organization." (Miller and Form, 1964: 119).

Glass (1967), taking a lead from Crozier's findings (Crozier, 1964) for French factories, suggests that there is little evidence for the existence of informal factory based cliques and associations among Africans. This is, of course, in sharp contrast to findings for North American industrial organizations.

One of the African's secrets of survival in South Africa is to keep the White Man as ignorant of his as possible. The White Man's ignorance enhances the Black Man's chances of realizing at least a small percentage of his aspirations. There is a constant guard against devulging what is perceived to be information which the White Man will use against him. This, of course, makes social research very difficult. Through considerable snooping and development of close association with key factory personnel my research associates unearthed some spotty but nonetheless valuable data on the informal organization of African workers - data which would never have come to light through routine interviewing procedures. I will discuss briefly the least equivocal aspects of this data - that relating to informal patterns of "leadership" or interpersonal influence.

It is impossible to discuss "leaders" independently of the total context in which this leadership is exercised. Leadership is, after

all, but one way of talking about followership, and vice versa. For our purposes here and for lack of data I will simply assume that where certain individuals influence the system-relevant behavior of others, outside the structure of the formal organization, informal leadership is extant.

I have documented three kinds or positions of informal influence. (1) the "cultural broker" or "old hand"; (2) the leaders of work groups; (3) the racketeers.

Anyone who has information about the factory which clearly exceeds "common knowledge" is to some extent an expert. Through time many individuals who remain with a firm acquire a fund of specialized knowledge, exceeding that of the newer arrivals. Some of these experts on the factory organization: formal and informal, are mere repositories of data; others use this data for purposes of personal aggrandisement.

The majority of African workers have very little usable knowledge- primarily because they are given none - of the intricacies of the formal and informal hierarchic structure of authority and division of labor in the total organization. This ignorance is manifest in the inability of most Africans to make distinctions among the relationships of Europeans to one another. Most Africans interviewed could only distinguish between immediate boss(es), the "big" boss, and other Whites. To do one's job this is about all one needs to know, if one is an unskilled African laborer. There arise occasions, however, when particular, more detailed information about given authority figures is required. Such is often obtainable from one or more of the "old hands." Two cases illustrative of the roles of the old hands are given.

Case I: In a welding shop in one factory an African was fired by the superintendent for a series of breaches of inter-racial etiquette-

not an uncommon occurrence in this shop. This African liked the work he was doing and wanted to get his job back. His supplication to the superintendent to recommend his being rehired was to no avail. He was approached by one of the shop's old hands who advised the dismissed African to go to the home of the superintendent and without any formalities simply begin doing work in the man's garden: weeding, turning soil, cutting grass, etc. Also he might nightly wash the superintendent's car. After one week he would return and ask the superintendent for his job back. The African did as he was advised and was reinstated in his job.

Not all or even many Europeans would have responded to this particular brand of ingratiation. One African in the shop knew this particular shop superintendent well and could advise an African in trouble how he might redeem himself in the eyes of this boss.

Case II: In all of the firms studied it was customary that a new recruit for a position be sent with an African clerk and/or "boss-boy" supervising the job to the work site where he would be introduced to this work and the immediate surroundings. This introduction entails far more than explanation of the task requirements. The new recruit will be clearly told how to get along on the job. This means above all how to please the Europeans who will be working in the same area. The new employee will be informed of the peculiar or idiosyncratic prejudices of the Europeans working there; how to please them; what extra work demands they will make; and how to fulfill these demands. The patterns of surveillance will be described and also described will be the techniques which can be used to make oneself unavailable when the strawboss comes around. The amenities will be introduced. These include not only the bathroom and cafeteria, but also the local

shebeen (illegal brewery or bar), the local dagga (marijuana) pusher, and undoubtedly the plant fah-fee agent (bookie). If it is germane he will also be informed within a few days either by the boss-boy or more likely by one of the old hands on the line, how to steal materials from the factory.

This last case introduces the topic of extra-legal but factory based activities, which form an important part of many aspects of the informal organization of African workingmen's activities on the job. Directing or facilitating many of these extra-legal activities are the "racketeers." The most striking pastime of Africans at work, which comes to the attention of the careful participant observer, is the astonishing amount of drinking that occurs on the job, unbeknownst to most of the Europeans in the factory. To be sure, any European will be aware that certain Africans have been seen drunk on the job. But this is simply a superficial indicator of a rather complex network of leisure time social activities bolstered via the vehicle of drinking. On given days as many as 30% of the workmen who we would be interviewing would be too inebriated to respond to our questions - although in this state they often volunteered interesting, unsolicited information. (During a typical day, four of us would interview 20 individuals, and as many as 6 or 7 would be intoxicated.) This fact led us to look into the drinking more closely, particularly, in one of the factories where this pattern was well developed.

In the particular plant where drinking patterns were investigated, there was a liquor distributor operating within the factory. He worked in co-operation with several women who distilled the liquor outside and brought it to him on a daily basis. He sold the liquor to African factory personnel. We could never ascertain how the profits were

distributed among the various functionaries in the bootlegging operation. Regularly, at lunch and tea time, Africans in considerable number would discretely appear at the "bar" and have their tea cannisters filled with beer or some home brewed hard liquor, usually a whiskey made from fermented brown bread. The patrons would consume part of the liquor there or, more likely, return to the work site where they would drink with their African friends what appeared to be tea. There is apparently an elaborate communications system which is used to inform workers when the liquor is available and when it is safe to come for a drink. We were unable to document the communications system, although its operation was indubitable.

A variety of lotteries operate among Africans in industry in South Africa. Formal organizations are very conducive to the support of lotteries. The participants are bound to one another in a variety of ways, making welching or non-payment of debts difficult. The bookie or other agent has easy access to an almost captive audience of potential participants; and the element of craze or fad with attendant social pressures to conform operates to insure maximum participation.

There are, of course, a number of INYANGA or specialists in the practice of a variety of magical or supernatural arts and crafts. "Witchcraft" in many of its forms seems to have useful industrial applications. Many Africans seek supernatural assistance through a diviner, sorcerer, or herbalist for obatining promotions, seeking redress for wrongs committed by fellow workers, settlement of disputes, and even placating angry Europeans. We could collect only spotty data on how extensive was the participation of INYANGA in the informal structure of the factory. But there would appear to be ample

reason to assume that magic and supernatural belief together with the requisite practitioners form an important aspect of the informal organization.

The final category of informal influence to be mentioned includes informal work groups and their leaders, particularly as they affect the realization of organizational goals. The phenomenon of restriction of output by informal work groups is long known and well documented in North American industries. (Roethlisberger and Dixon, 1947; Sayles, 1958). My data suggests that Africans, too, have developed production folkways, couched in informal associations of workers. The importance of this phenomenon is many-faceted. In terms of our interest in labor commitment and socialization of the worker, it is apparent that the social work roles into which the worker is socialized are not those simply defined by the formal organization, but a complex of norms and expectations which are an emergent of both formal organization and a variety of interpersonal relations which exist either in spite of, because of, or independently of the industrial process.

I have recorded 43 instances of workers, whose work is done in isolation or independent of the tasks of other workers (i.e., sweepers, cleaners, batchers, "tea-boys,") who have been able to indicate that at some time during their initial trial period on the job they had been instructed by individuals who hold similar work, or who work in the same area, how much work should be done and what pace it should be performed at. "Rate-busters" are soon brought into line, much as they are in our own industries. Usually, rate busting is unintentional, stemming from the uncritical acceptance by a naive worker of the guidelines for work set down by the European supervisor or African boss-boy.

On the assembly line operation and other systems of interdependent work, pacing is usually accomplished by means of the group following the leads set by an informal group leader. This leader is usually an individual whose structural position in terms of the work flow most logically permits him to determine the speed of work for the group. For example, three assembly line operations were observed where the individual who loaded the conveyer with the objects on which other men worked determined the pace. All of the workmen interviewed in these three situations agreed that one individual paced the others. By this means, they were able to avoid giving the appearance of harboring one or two goldbrickers. The belts were always full and everyone appeared busy, although the pace of work was deemed leisurely, indeed. In two documented cases, a group slowdown accompanied a rather peremptory introduction of an incentive scheme. The workers perceived the scheme as a device to be used to see how fast the men could work. Once this determination was made, the workmen thought the scheme would be withdrawn and new higher minimum standards of acceptable performance would be set. Although this was an incorrect interpretation on their part, their action was rational in light of their misinformation. The fact that three or four men can collude to deceive the organization is indicative of close informal co-operation. This extra-organizational activity forms as important a part of industrial work as does the machine, the assembly line, and the egregious European bureaucratic authority structure.

Conclusions

Earlier I quoted Biesheuvel's lamentation that Africans seem to be deficient as decision makers and to lack energy in "making forceful use of opportunities that have come their way." Hopefully this paper has illustrated the fallacies that lie behind such an assertion. The ecology of work for Africans includes far more than role pressures and role behavior deemed relevant and appropriate by Europeans. Thus, the explicitly stated job requirements are but a small portion of the adaptive problems with which Africans must deal in the industrial setting. Their relative success in maintaining personal integrity, security, and dignity in such a demanding environment, is testimony to Africans' ingenuity, adaptibility and tenacity as industrial workers.

Any adequate study of industrialization in Africa must begin to take account of Africans' own perceptions of industrial work. This implies the necessity of understanding all of the following: (1) The goals Africans seek in and by means of industrial employment, (2) the peculiar hurdles and disabilities industry itself has placed on black men, and (3) the varied but limited solutions Africans can develop to cope with these industry-created problems of adaptation.

The normative order in South African factories is composed of as much of what has been introduced by African laborers as that which has been imposed on them by European entrepeneurs and their industrial technology. This is the basic assumption from which studies of Africans in industry should proceed.

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