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'Unions are for Older People'[1]: A Case Study of Young People in the South African Commercial, Catering and Allied Workers Union (SACCAWU)

A research report submitted to the Faculty of Humanities, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Industrial Sociology-Labour Policies and Globalisation (by course work)

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[1] Said by one non-unionised young worker interviewed, 14/8/2009, Soweto

Abstract

Evidence from literature on youth and trade unions suggests mixed perception of the youth towards trade unions. On one hand, the youth is said to perceive unions positively, thus see unions as relevant in improving their employment conditions. On the other hand, the youth is said to have negative perception towards trade unions. Consequently, it has been argued that there is apathy among young workers in terms of identification with unions. This study thus aimed at contributing to this discourse by exploring the attitudes and perceptions of young people (between the ages of 18 to 35 years) towards trade unionism. Qualitative technique was used to collect data through in-depth interviews and Focused Group Discussions with 28 young workers working at where the South African Commercial Catering and Allied Workers Union (SACCAWU) organises**.**

The findings of this study indicate that the issue of young workersô apathy towards trade unionism is complex. Majority of the participants had positive perceptions toward the union and saw the union as useful in addressing their workplace issues. Hence, the generally held view that the youth predominantly have negative perceptions toward trade unions is exaggerated. This is because young workers are also mindful of workplace protection and believe that trade unions can offer them protection**.** This notwithstanding, the findings also shows some frustration and apathy among young workers, generated by ignorance of unionism due to lack of information and unfavourable working hours.

Declaration

I declare that this research report is my own unaided work. It is submitted for the degree of Master of Arts in Industrial Sociology-Labour Policies and Globalisation at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any other degree or examination in any other University.

_____ this day of ____ 20____ Freda S. Frimpong _____

Dedication

To God Almighty who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us.

This work is also dedicated to my wonderful and special family, most especially my father, Mr. J. O. Frimpong who through thick and thin supported me to make this dream a reality.

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

ACIRRT: Australian Centre for Industrial Relations Research and Training

ANC: African National Congress

ANCYL: African National Congress Youth League

BCEA: Basic Conditions of Employment Act

BWI: Building and Woodworkers International

CCAWUSA: Commercial, Catering and Allied Workers Union of South Africa

CBD: Central Business District

CEC: Central Executive Committee

CONSAWU: Congress of South African Workers Union

COSATU: Congress of South African Trade Unions

CWU: Communication Workers Union

DFLC: Decisions for Life Campaign

FGDs: Focus Group Discussions

FEDUSA: Federation of Unions of South Africa

FIET: Federation of Commercial, Clerical Professional and Technical Employees

FES: Friederich Ebert Stiftung

GEAR: Growth, Employment and Redistribution Strategy

GLU: Global Labour University

ICFTU: International Confederation of Free Trade Union

IFPYB: Inkatha Freedom Partyôs Youth Brigade

ILO: International Labour Organisation

ITF: International Transport Federation

ITUC:	International Trade Union Confederation
LA:	Los Angeles
LRA:	Labour Regulations Act
PUWU:	Public Utility Workers Union
NACTU:	National Council of Trade Unions
NEDLAC:	National Economic Development and Labour Council
NGOs:	Non Governmental Organisations
OHS:	October Household Survey
PSI:	Public Services International
RDP:	Reconstruction and Development Programme
SA:	Republic of South Africa
SACCAWU:	South African Commercial, Catering and Allied Workers Union
SABSO:	South African Society of Bank Officials
SACP:	South African Communist Party
SAMWU:	South African Municipal Workers Union
SD:	Sectoral Determination
SMU:	Social Movement Unionism
TUC:	Trades Union Congress
UK:	United Kingdom
UNI:	Union Network International
UYF:	Umsobomvu Youth Fund
UN:	United Nations
US:	United States

CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

In recent times there has been the assertion within trade unions that young people perceive unions as too ótraditional, bureaucratic and hierarchicalô and an institution for older people that does not respond to the culture or the needs of the youth (Natacha, 1998:02). Similarly, a Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) report by Roberts and Letsoalo**,** (2009) indicates that it is often argued that the youth of South Africa today are ñdisconnected from conventional politics, apathetic, individualistic and disinterested**"** (2009:01). Matopo, cited in Forrest (2005:152), lays emphasis on this to say that the youth in SACCAWU do not participate in the activities of the union because they are only interested in themselves.

There may be several factors leading to the above mentioned assertions. Perhaps young people may not have a sense of belonging within the political structures of the unions, such as helping and participating in conferences and congresses and in various strata of the executive committees of the unions. As Banks et al argue: ñyoung people are socialised by a particular set of local agencies in relation to a particular set of local opportunities; how significant these local agencies affect young people will depend on where they are located

in the social structureò (1992:19). Additionally, unemployment or precarious working conditions may affect young peopleôs participation in unions and politics.

The International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU, 2000)[2] also poses an argument that it could be that trade unions have not changed with regard to their óimageôand their mode of operations. The ICFTU further argues that young people who enter the labour market are possibly not joining unions because they do not have any knowledge about the relevance of unions or perhaps due to unemployment problems they face. The ICFTU states: ñYoung men and women globally make up the most vulnerable segment of the labour market, trapped in low paid, precarious and even dangerous work, face growing inequality, insecurity and exclusionò (2005:1).

An ILO article on youth unemployment[3] also points out that young people are more likely to be engaged in non-regular and insecure work that may have limited labour protection in industrialised and developing countries. The ILO indicates that youth unemployment leads to ñdiscouragementò or ñunderemploymentò that have rippling effects on a countryôs economy, society

[2] ICFTU statement on youth (http://www.icftu.org/focus.asp?Issue=youth&Language=EN accessed 24/6/09

[3] **www.ilo.org/communication**:accessed on 28/3/09

and or the individual and their family as a whole. It indicates that, if the youth experience unemployment or lack decent work at an early age it can lead to a sense of ñvulnerability, uselessness and idlenessò (2006:1-2). OõDonnell (1985:115) also argues that unemployment affects the thinking and attitudes of the young generation.

It could then be argued, that the youth who are unemployed will settle for any menial job without trade union rights and may have negative perceptions about the relevance of trade unions or have little choice in deciding whether or not to join a union. Perhaps, it could also be argued that the challenge of youth employment may inform the negative perception about the unions and may have serious implications for the active participation of young people. This may also have implications for organised labourós strength. As indicated by the ICFTU (2000:2), labour market flexibility is a ñthreat and undermines the strength and future of trade unions because small numbers of young people join unions, resulting in decline in membership ratesò.

This situation has become a source of worry to SACCAWU which states in its 2002 congress report that ócasualisation and bad working conditionsô are prominent in most of the sectors it organises, especially in the shopping malls with some having up to 60% casuals who are mostly young people (SACCAWU,

2002:38). The peculiar problem young people face in the job market could be a reason why young workers are perceived as being ôapatheticôto trade unionism. The labour market is changing globally and is producing a younger workforce who show little or no interest in trade unionism or perceive trade unions as irrelevant, bearing in mind the many challenges they face at the workplace (Johansson, 1999:01).

These challenges have prompted the calls by some global unions such as the Public Services International (PSI), Building and Woodworkers International (BWI), Union Network International (UNI), International Transport Federation (ITF) and International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) now International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC). All these federations are advocating that affiliate unions should address young workersô issues with different attitudes. For instance in 1999 ICFTU launched a campaign called the ñThe Future Starts Now, Join a Unionòaimed at targeting young people between the ages of 19-35 years (ICFTU, 1999). Similarly, in 2008 PSI and BWI, launched a campaign and passed related resolutions at their congress (PSI,2008;BWI, 2008). Accordingly, SACCAWU has recognised the need to implement this global agenda and has passed its resolution to have a special focus on the youth, (Appolis interview, 24/4/09; SACCAWU, 2008:24).

This study was undertaken with the shared concern by unions to incorporate young peopleôs workplace problems into the activities of unions. The research explores how young people perceive trade unions in order to strategise to actively involve young people in unions as well as to make union leaders more responsive to the needs of young people. Additionally, this thesis explores the attitudes of young people and the responses of the union, as well as the contradictions in the existing literature. Although there appears to be widespread agreement in the literature of the low participation of young people in trade unions as a result of disinterest in unionism, this study argues that this perception is perhaps exaggerated because young people are also concerned about their protection and welfare at the workplace; issues that unions are supposed to be adept at.

1.2 Aim of the Study

This research aimed broadly at exploring the attitudes of young workers and perceptions regarding trade unions and their implications for participation in activities of unions. Given the above background, this study investigated the argument that young workers perceive unions as irrelevant to their needs, asking whether unions may not have been strategising well enough to make themselves more accessible to young workers. One may argue that this problem may be as a result of how unions understand young peopleôs workplace issues and the kind of strategies that unions need to adopt to effectively address

such problems and organise young workers; hence, the aim to focus on the attitudes and perceptions of young workers towards unions.

Considering the resolutions and calls from global unions for affiliate unions to encourage participation of young workers, and to increase activities and policies directed at young workers, this research aimed to assess how (and whether) SACCAWU has adhered to such calls. In addition, the study looked into SACCAWUôs programmes to explore its strategies and commitment to incorporate young workers issues into its activities.

1.2.1 Specific Objectives

The study was conducted with the following objectives:

1. To examine how young workers perceive trade unions and politics today
2. To explore the concerns of young workers in the sectors in which SACCAWU currently operates
3. To find out what motivates and/or de-motivates young workers in terms of involvement in unions
4. To explore how trade unionsôoperations and procedures influence young peopleôs perceptions and attitudes towards unionisation today

5. To analyse SACCAWUôs approaches to youth organising in the context of flexible labour
6. To explore possible strategies for the effective organisation of young workers

1.3 Relevance of the Study

This research question is timely for SACCAWU because a substantial number of its members are young and non-regular workers. Indeed a report by SACCAWU Secretariat to its 9th National Congress indicates: ñshopping mall sector has experienced a massive increase in the number of young workers who are not instilled in its traditions of struggle and a significant number of these young workers often do not have the intention of staying for a reasonable period within the sector.ò This, SACCAWU indicates, has a negative impact on the unionôs ability to recruit young workers (SACCAWU, 2009:16). Additionally in the book titled ñASIJIKI, A History of SACCAWUò by Kally Forrest, Matopo, the president of SACCAWU, points out one of the difficulties facing SACCAWU in organising a new kind of workforce in the late 1990s and 21st century:

> *"The youth who are coming into the union were born after the struggle therefore the union must have meeting strategy to engage the youth and that the union's culture has to change because the young want things in a different way. The union has an old leadership mind-set but on the ground has sophisticated memberships who are not interested in coming to workshops or even joint stewardship councils to strategise" (Matopo quoted in Forrest, 2005:152).*

Researching into SACCAWU sectors thus gave a deeper understanding of what young people think of unions today**.** As revealed by this study, it is not as if young people do not want to be part of unions; rather it is a question of work process and trade union activities. In other words, it is the flexible work techniques that prevent the young people from being actively involved in unions. The argument that young people are apathetic is a simplistic reading of the situation. The main issue appears to be the incongruence of trade unions operations. In other words the labour process and organisation of work underline most jobs associated with young people. The findings of this study are a useful contribution for trade unions to reconsider their operational methods and strategies to be more accessible to young workers, in order to tap their potentials to help sustain the future of trade unions**.**

1.4 Justification of the study

The changing nature of work, in particular the introduction of flexible forms of labour, provides the context in which this research was conducted. Its particular effects on young workers and their related consequences for unionising were explored.

The study argues that for young workers to have confidence in trade unions, their employment challenges should be a concern for trade unions; hence the rationale to focus on what young people think and expect from trade unions. Perhaps it could be argued that young peopleôs issues make it imperative for trade unions to take interest in issues that do not directly fall within their traditional mandate.

For instance in Ghana in November 2008, the researcher facilitated a workshop organised for young workers by the Friederich Ebert Stiftung (FES) and the Ghana TUC on ñTrade Union Responses to Globalisationò. Participantsôviews, which are also reflected in the workshop report, indicated that unions are unable to attract young people because they focus too much on traditional trade union ôbread and butter issuesô. That is, negotiations were focused only on wage increases without giving thought to the changing nature of young working class, their needs, their tastes and what they identify with, thus making unions unappealing to the youth.

The participants indicated that unless the unions were able to strategise to meet the challenges posed by globalisation, which manifest in labour flexibility, and result in labour insecurity, sooner than later they would lose their relevance. Participants suggested that one way to do this would be to embark on an aggressive membership drive that would target the youth to revitalise the unions.

Participants also suggested that young workers who are already in the unions should be offered training to enable them to acquire the needed capabilities to provide future leadership for the unions and above all, look at new strategies to adopt to organise young workers (Ghana TUC and FES, 2008:05).

Perhaps trade unions have not thought of specific needs such as education, decent work and job security of young people and what will also attract them to unions or perhaps have relaxed in promoting membership drives that target the youth. It could be argued also that trade unions feel that young workersô workplace needs are not different from older members in general terms. Young workers may also feel that trade unionsô structures do not encourage their participation.

SACCAWU was chosen for this study purposely due to the fact that flexibility is highly emphasised in the sectors it covers especially in the retail sector. A substantial segment of the members of SACCAWU are young people. The research takes place in the context where SACCAWU has in several meetings and in its recent congress discussed the need to treat young workersôissues differently but has not made significant headway (Appolis interview, 24/4/09; SACCAWU, 2008**:**17). The timing for the research makes this project very relevant based on the arguments discussed.

This study has therefore attempted to contribute to the debate on the need for trade unions to have a special focus on young workers. It also focused on the areas of policy choices and programme implementation for young workers. Additionally, the study significantly brings to the fore critical issues such as rigid working hours and poor working conditions faced by the younger working class and how trade unions can address such concerns. This study thus recommends that SACCAWU expands its horizon in terms of activities and operations to focus more on workplace problems of young people.

This research report comprises seven chapters. As outlined above, chapter one gives a background to the study, describing the problem statement with the aims as well as the rationale and relevance to the study. Chapter two reviews the relevant literature and the theoretical framework to the study while chapter three outlines the methods employed in this study. Chapter four describes the demographics and wages and conditions of employment of the participants in this study. Presenting the findings of this study, chapter five gives a description of the experiences of the young working class and their perceptions and attitudes towards trade unionism. Chapter six talks about the unionôs efforts and responses with regard to its strategies in tackling the above issues to making the union more appealing to young workers. Based on the findings of the study, chapter seven concludes with some recommendations.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

The available body of literature relevant to this research touches on six broad issues. This review firstly looks at the definition and concept of young worker and youth identity in South Africa. Secondly, it discusses the conditions of young workers in the shop and grocery sectors, where most of SACCAWUôs young members work. These have been described by Allan et al, (2005 & 2006:29) as ñfound along the ólow roadô, implying low-skill, low-paying, insecure and are usually weakly protected by unionsò. The fourth issue touches on the regulatory framework of the South African Retail Sector. The fifth issue examines the perceptions and levels of unionisation amongst young workers and whether young people feel marginalised in unions. Lastly, the sixth issue looks at possible strategies for unions to adopt in organising young workers.

2.1.1 Definitions of Youth and Young Workers

The United Nations (UN, 1992) offers a ówidely acceptedôdefinition of youth as a person between the ages of 15 to 24years. However, according to the ILO

(2006:1) this definition is relative in the sense that country specific definitions depend on the context within which it is being measured.

In the South African context, youth is defined as those in the ages of 14-35 years. 40 percent of the population is composed of this group according to the 2001 census report and the South African National Youth Act, 1996. According to this same census report, South African youth may be grouped into two age categories, the early stage, 14ï 24 years, and the later stage or early adulthood, 25ï 34 years. The broad definition of youth in South Africa is the result of impact of apartheid, which delayed transition from youth to adulthood (Mathoho and Ranchod (2006:13). The October Household Survey (OHS, 1999), indicate that about 40 percent of the youth from the ages of 15-30 years are in the economically active population.

Statistically, youth unemployment in South Africa rose from 45 to 56 percent between 1995 and 2000[4]. Mlatsheni and Rospabé (2002:3-4) also found in South Africa that 58 percent of the jobless are 15 to 30 years old. They found out that the youth unemployment rate was as high as 50 percent compared to 26 percent for adults. Significantly the young are disproportionately hit by unemployment. Again they found in their study an unequal distribution of

[4] ILO youth employment statistics (www.ilo.org/trends accessed on 22/3/09).

unemployment among the different races and between males and females in South Africa.

Mlatsheni and Rospabé (2002), say that young economically active Africans have limited access to the labour market because 60 percent of them are unemployed. This is twice the unemployment rate of Coloureds and Indians. They indicate that young whites appear to be less affected by unemployment as opposed to the other Africans because only less than 10 percent of whites are jobless. Mlatsheni and Rospabé (2002) believe that young females appeared to be affected more than males because 57 percent of young females and 44 percent of young males are unemployed. However, in more recent literature, it is argued that the differentials may be under or overestimated especially with regard to ñunderreporting of informal sector or agricultural activities or to other issues of undercounting employment or overstating unemploymentò (Klasena, and Woolard, 1999; 2008:1-2). However, this still points to the fact that young people are in low-wage and precarious jobs.

The Growth, Employment and Redistribution Strategy (GEAR), a neoliberal macro-economic policy document published by the South African Department of Finance in 1996, indicated that the labour market is highly uneven and stagnant in growth of formal employment over the past decade. This, according to GEAR, is resulting in an increase in unregulated low wage employment. Preferably to employers, labour market flexibility is being adopted by many

employers in recent times, leading to an increased casualisation of the labour force, and growing wage inequalities (GEAR, 1996; Kenny, 2001). GEAR indicates: ñEmployers easily resort to unregulated forms of employment as well as weakening employment opportunities, impacting heavily on the unemployed young and those without education or skills among other groupsò (GEAR, 1996, 17-18).

As an answer to this problem, the GEAR seeks to create low-paying jobs through infrastructural development and entrepreneurship programmes for the youth in South Africa. It also focuses on enhancing productivity and skills through training (GEAR, 1996:19-20). However, it is doubtful if such jobs can make any significant impact on the lives of the youth without addressing structural problems that will enhance job creation in the country.

In most studies of youth workers, countries like US and Canada for instance define this category based on their educational level, which is from high school graduate or those who could not finish school up to those who are still in school and working as part timers (Tannock 2001:17).

For the purpose of this research, the focus was on the ages between 19-35 years. This is because people within this age group are more likely to be in the labour market even though they are the ones in precarious employment in South Africa due to high unemployment (GEAR, 1996; Makiwane and Kwizera,

2008:231). Curtain (2002 and 2004) suggests a similar trend globally. Global unions also target the same age group.

2.1.2 Youth Identity and Culture in South Africa

Youth is one of the stages in life when critical choices are made (Makiwane & Kwizera, 2008:225). According to Banks et al (1992:01) certain influences from the socio-cultural groups dictate to which group a young person belongs. They further indicate that young peopleôs identity has influence from their family background and their peersôway of life (Ibid). The challenges of youth on how they evolve through life stages thus cannot be overemphasised. Banks et al point out: ñpolitics of youth primarily become known through attitudes they espouse towards social issues of immediate concern such as sexual and racial equality and adult institutions and authority, and later through their allegiances to political partiesò(1992:18).

Mathoho & Ranchod (2006:5) point out that the new South Africa after 1994 has two different youth identities, the privileged on one hand, and the poor and marginalised on the other. Many of the marginalised youth have now resorted to crime in an attempt to enjoy the ñconsumerist lifestyleòof their peers in order to have a livelihood (Saphetha, 2004; Mathoho & Ranchod, 2006:5).

South African youth face immense challenges because of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, poverty and unemployment (Mathoho & Ranchod, 2006:01; Makiwane & Kwizera, 2008). Other challenges, such as inadequate social services, especially education and health care, affect the youthôs behaviour and attitudes (Mathoho & Ranchod, 2006). Banks et al (1992:13) argue that such challenges impact on how the youth identify themselves and how they interact within society, particularly how they assimilate into society.

In the 1970s, more especially the 1976 uprising, the youth, predominantly the black youth, played a critical role in the struggle for social change in South Africa. Mathoho & Ranchod (2006:5) point out that many young people during that time ñassumed the identity of freedom fighters in the fight for liberationò However, according to Mathoho & Ranchod (2006) after 1994 the youth were left out completely off the political ladder. Mathoho & Ranchod (2006) indicate however that this does not imply that the government and other political bodies are unconcerned about the youth (ibid). Consequently, Mathoho & Ranchod (2006) indicate that just at the beginning of the transition to democracy in SA, the need to develop the youth informed the governmentôs development agenda which resulted in the provision for a youth ministry and the creation of youth structures such as the Umsobomvu Youth Fund (UYF) in 2001. The Umsobomvu Youth Fund was tasked by the government in January 2001, to encourage entrepreneurship, job creation, skills development and skills transfer among the youth of South Africa (Mathoho & Ranchod, 2006).

The National Youth Service was also created to develop the potential of the youth and to serve their interest at the time (Mathoho & Ranchod, 2006:5, 11). The creation of these structures was to some extent informed by the failed National Youth Commission (NYC) in 1996 according to (Mathoho & Ranchod, 2006). However, due to an alleged failure of the UYF and the NYC with subsequent complaints from some quarters of the ANC Youth League (ANCYL) and Inkatha Freedom Partyøs Youth Brigade (IFPYB), the government in 2005 resolved to merge the two youth structures for effective functioning and implementation of the youth development agenda (Ibid: 2006:16-17).

The argument, then, perhaps, is not that the youth were left out as Mathoho & Ranchod (2006) argue. Perhaps it could be that the transition from the struggle against apartheid to living in an electoral democracy has ushered in a new context and new roles for young people.

Another argument is that youth culture is influenced by the media responses to young people as consumers (Banks et al: 1992:131). Mathoho & Ranchod laid emphasis to this argument to say that the South African youth today are seen as ñapathetic in politics, materialistic and consumer orientedò(2006:2). Perhaps to re-echo this with an interview response of a young South African in øThe Zoneø, a shopping complex in Rosebank, Johannesburg (2003:28) quoted in Nuttall (2008) as: ñwe understand where we come from, but I am not interested in politics and about what happened in the 80s because I wasnøt there. And even if

I was, I live for the futureò(2008:103). Nuttall (2008:99) also states: ñnew youth culture is overriding the resistance politics of an earlier generation, while still jamming, remixing, and remaking cultural codes and signifiers from the apartheid past.ò Nuttall (2008:92) further argues that there is the rise of a youth cultural form which she refers to as ó Y Cultureô, also known as ótoxion kulchaô

According to Nuttall:

> *"there is an evolving youth culture in Johannesburg that moves across media forms and which generates a compositional remixing that signals the supersession of an earlier era's resistance politics by an alternative politics of style and accessorisation, while simultaneously gesturing, in various ways, toward the past, a culture of the hip bucolic that works across a series of surfaces" (2008:92-93).*

To some extent this argument holds merit but as argues in the subsequent sections in this study, it is only the privileged youth who may have changed into this new kind of culture since the underprivilegedôs key focus or priority is jobs for survival.

Drawing from David Everatt, Mathoho & Ranchod (2006:2) quote: ñyouth have been transformed into the new consumption pattern that spend only on hip, big names, and expensive brands driven by capitalists of South Africaò However, it could be argued that not all the youth are influenced as portrayed. For instance Roberts & Letsoaloôs study on political apathy and the youth disproves this assertion that portrays youth as ódisengaged and lostô, which according to them is óstereotype representationsô(2009:05). They indicate however that there are:

ñsignificant racial differences in attitudes with the younger generation, with blacks expressing democratic enthusiasm more than other groups towards voting, which according to them is a reflection of the diversity in the historical background and contemporary situation of young peopleò (2009:05). Roberts & Letsoaloôs challenge to this assertion was also based on another survey they conducted on how young people are interested in politics which actually indicates that ñyoung people in the ages of 16-29 show equal interest levels in politics, though men in the ages of 30 and above are significantly more politically interested than their female counterpartsò (2009:3). Consequently, they argue: ñwithout considering non-electoral forms of participation, young South Africans emerge as interesting, aware and engaged in political matters to the same extent as their eldersò (2009:5).

Banks et al (1992:128) also point to the fact that many have observed that party politics in the conventional adult sense is of small interest to most young people, though they may have reached the eligible stage of voting. They indicate that elections obviously stir interest, because of the media exposure they receive as a general election concentrates attention on political matters. Banks et al (1992) argue again that the institutions of government and the political parties attract limited interest from young people, who saw these as having little direct relevance to their lives. However, they were also of the view that it would be wrong to conclude that young people are completely apolitical. Considering the

role played by the youth as indicated by president of the ANC Youth League, Julius Malema[5], it could be argued that the youth especially the underprivileged have been actively involved in social and political issues.

In recent times youth are still involved in activism in most community struggles for social services such as in the Soweto Electricity Crisis Committee and housing movements, among others. It would therefore be wrong to classify all the youth as apolitical as portrayed in some of the literature above.

2.1.3 Working Conditions of Young People and Marginalisation by Trade Unions

Studies that have been done on youth employment by some labour organisations such as the ILO and the ITUC suggest that poor working conditions are predominant among young people. The ITUC reinforces this argument to indicate: ñyoung women and men are the most severely affected by unemployment and precarious employment, exploitation and discrimination at workò[6]. These young workers are usually ignored, especially by trade unions.

[5] Message by the President of the ANC Youth League, Julius Malema on the South African youth month June, 2009 on the role played by the South African youth in the apartheid era (http://www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/anctoday/2009/at23.htm#art1 accessed 14/6/09)

[6] ITUC article on employment conditions of the youth (http://www.ituccsi.org/spip.php?rubrique94: accessed 22/3/2009*).*

The ILO indicates that recruitment of new labour market entrants is the main focus for labour movements globally; however, it has slammed unions for not paying attention to the needs of young people in their membership drive agendas (ILO 1997; 1993:39 cited in Lowe and Rastin, 2000:204).

Studies conducted elsewhere on young unionised fast-food and grocery workers at Box Hill and Glenwood, in US and Canada respectively, by Tannock (2001) found out that in the North American service economy, young workers are commonly overlooked or ignored by policymakers, workplace activists, researchers and trade unions despite their economic marginalisation (Tannock 2001:11). Tannock points out: ñbecause young workers have lower wages, fewer benefits, less job security in dead end jobs, they will be less likely to be unionised than any other age group in the workforceò (Tannock 2001:11). Kenny (2001) also finds a similar trend in her study on the retail sector in South Africa.

In the South African context, Kenny (2001) found out that because these cohorts of workers are in the flexibilised retail sector, they are less likely to be unionised and generally marginalised in unions (2001:96). Tannock (2001) argues that the lack of attention by unions on young workers in the fast-food and grocery sectors in the US and Canada emanates from the fact that most young workers are regarded as temporary workers, which he refers to as ósstopgap workersôor

not ótrue workersô who are in transition between school and permanent employment (Tannock 2001:10-11). Tannock points out that these workers are the ones faced with all manner of occupational hazards from managements, including consumersôpoor attitudes, which are usually ignored by stakeholders and trade unions focusing mainly on their older members. The literature also shows that the unionisation prospects of young people need to be considered in the context of the difficult labour market conditions that young workers are facing (Lowe and Rastin 2000:218). In recognising how the youth are being exploited, the scholars argue that unionsôroles should focus on how to better the working conditions of their younger members (Kenny, 2001; Tannock, 2001).

In explaining the underlining factors to changes in attitudes among young people and, hence their tendency not to join unions, Mannheim (1928), cited in Waddington and Kerr (2002) posits that socio-political atmosphere informs or affects the attitudes, beliefs and ideology of young people during their upbringing stages thus influenced by the economic situation pertaining. Agreeably this is the stage that most young people may not have had enough education on trade unions. Brown (1992) and Park (1999), cited in Waddington and Kerr (2002:303), also mention the UK as an example to argue that ñafter 1979 conservative governments have been regarded as having produced ó Thatcherôs childrenô who have divergent views to trade unionismò. In other words the children under Thatcherôs regime were influenced by certain consumption patterns and who would least think of workplace protection.

Additionally one of the causes to union membership decline is young peopleôs apathy towards unionism according to Bentley et al: (1999) also cited in Waddington et al: (2002).

Family background was identified as one of the elements that runs through some of the literature in relation to this research question. It is a factor that can influence young peopleôs perceptions positively or negatively. For instance there could be positive perceptions where parents have an interest in unionisation, and have educated children on the benefits of unionisation. On the other hand, young people could have negative perceptions about unions where parents lack information about unions or have wrong perceptions about unions and advise children on that basis.

When the young also lack parental guidance, it could lead to misconceptions about trade unionism. Consequently, Waddington and Kerr argue: ñthe disintegration of many traditional social networks, especially within the family, had controlled the transfer of pro-union attitudes to young people (2002:300). Allan et al: (2006:30) also laid emphasis on this argument to say that ñstructural analyses of industry such as workplace size, union presence and activity are not the only causes of the órepresentational gapô (i.e. low unionisation), but also workersô individual characteristics, such as family background and knowledge and attitudesò. Bryson et al: (2005) cited in Allan et al: (2006:30) emphasised that one has to be aware of the prospects of being a union member and thus

must have a taste of the benefit themselves, ñor have close experience of the benefits through relatives, or colleagues at the workplaceò

Allan et al: (2005) argue that the level of unionisation and the órepresentational gapô among young people may depend on where young people work or the nature of their work. For instance in South Africa, the majority of young workers are casualised in the labour market which leads to their greater exposure to marginalisation (Kenny, 2001).

Serrano and Waddington (2000:32) indicate that young workers in bad jobs have high rates of dismissals and therefore feel trade unions cannot help them with their workplace problems; thus young people are more likely to adopt the óexitô approach than the óvoiceô in the course of problems (Cregan and Stewart, 1990). In other words the young people will prefer to leave for another job than to confront their employers. According to Serrano and Waddington, the main concerns usually raised by young people at the workplace are ñlow pay, bad treatment from employers and intense workloads, however, there is very little consistent evidence that suggests any widespread opposition in principle to trade unions among young peopleò (2002:33). Ebbinghaus (2002) equally argues:

> *"The ageing of union membership is not merely the result of demographic shifts, it also results from the failure of unions to mobilise young people, thus will have consequences for decades to come, especially since the well organised cohort will soon retire. Today youth*

> *face joblessness, more problems to finding an apprenticeship, engage more frequently and longer in tertiary education obtain more part-time and atypical contracts and increasingly work in white collar and service sector jobs" (2002:472-473).*

Another reason given by young workers, according to Serrano and Waddington (2000:32) is that young workers, (especially those who work at small workplaces) have difficulty with their employers especially for fear of victimisation if seen associated with a union. Young workers feel it is easier to resolve their grievances with their employer directly than through a trade union. More so many young workers associate trade unions with strikes, picketing and occupational hazards (Ibid).

Elements of experience and access to information for unionisation can also be a contributing factor for negative perceptions on trade unions by young people**.** It is argued by Bryson et al: (2005) that older workers often have more experience in the labour market; greater access to information about the purpose of unions and are more likely to work in unionised places than younger workers. They have more experience to weigh the benefits in unionism (Ibid). They point out that young people often do not have knowledge about trade unions and what they stand for. Young workers may not have been approached by unions to be union members (Freeman & Diamond, 2003). This indicates that unionsôtarget groups are limited to mostly older workers (Cregan and Stewart, 1990).

It is found out that young workers see trade unions as belonging to older people or members who are 40 years and above. According to the young people they interviewed, unions are found to be out of touch with members and that the problem of young workers thus, is not mainly with the trade union agenda, but with the people that lead the unions (Waddington & Kerr, 2002; Ebbinghaus, 2002).

This study agrees with Ebbinghaus (2002) who argues that many young people seem to perceive unions to be ñrather old-fashioned movements that are certainly less appealing as opposed to new social movements and fun leisure activitiesò (Ibid: 2002:473). Additionally, Cregan and Stewart (1990:85) point out that trade unions may not appeal to some óschool-leaversôbecause they may feel that unions are there for the older workers whose only focus is on issues such as pensions or seniority by tenure.

According to Serrano & Waddington (2000:32): ñevidence from most countries in Europe showed that large numbers of young workers particularly in the private sector service industries where union traditions are not ôembeddedôhave slim chances of meeting trade unionistsò. However, in establishing the reasons for young workers not joining unions, Serrano and Waddington (2000:32) indicate that the reasons are not the same even in the European context, which this study also found similar in the South African context.

2.1.4 Legal Framework Governing South African Retail Workers

The South African Labour Relations Act (LRA) 66 of 1995 and the Basic Conditions of Employment Act (BCEA) 1997, (Act 75 of 1997, Section 30), particularly the Sectoral Determination 9 (SD9) cover workers in the retail and wholesale sectors.

These regulations make provision for the protection of the retail and wholesale workers with regard to hours of work, wages and general conditions of work. SD9 defines that any employee who works for more than 27 hours per week must be paid ñat least the weekly or monthly wage set out in the Sectoral Determination 9 or must be paid based on negotiated agreement within the hourly rate set out by the regulation. Prior to the SD9 in 2003, the Wage Determination 478 described the non regular employees as ôcasual labourô Kenny (2007) explains casual labour: ñas per unionsôflexible agreements, flexi-time employees are employees who work part time hours and could be assigned to any shift, these employees may work for 19 to 45 hours or more in a weekò(2007:486).

Currently the amended Sectoral Determination in 2003 makes provision for the convertibility of ócasualô employees into part-time permanent employees (Kenny, 2007:485). Accordingly in one of the companiesô agreements with

SACCAWU, it is clearly stated in the Bargaining Agreement, Article 1.5.2 that there should be no subsequent employment of part-time employees with reference to the SD9 Supplementary Agreement. However, this particular issue seems to be a thorny issue between the employees, the union and management. For instance in this particular company coded as ôDô in the subsequent sections, there is still the status termed ôvariableô employees. In actual fact it could be argued that it is still ôcasualô status because the conditions are the same as those in the other non-regular employees.

Makgetla (1995) points out that irrespective of the fact that ôcentralised bargainingôbrought some gains to the working class, employers found ways to change or evade the rules, such as subcontracting in their favour (1995:80). For instance Naidoo and Veriava (2005) emphasise this by pointing out that the LRA facilitates the implementation of neo-liberal policies to the detriment of the working class. They argue: ñthe Basic Conditions of Employment Act (BCEA) represents even bigger concessions, with employers being permitted to vary basic standards of employment downwards based on individual agreements with employeesò (2005:8-10). Additionally, during the drafting stage of the law (1995:47) John Appolis referred to it as the ôlaw of the jungleô that weakens workers power the more because it lacks state intervention and commitment.

Among other negatives in the LRA, Lehulere (1995:42) also argued that ñco-determination leads to the co-option of the working classò. Kenny (2005) reinforces the above arguments and points out that although the Sectoral Determination ensures casual labourôs rights; management in most instances do not go by the law. She points out that this gives ógreater powers to managements to recruit contingent labour, thus thwarting the unionôs effort to achieve better working conditions (Kenny, 2005:235). This could give the young people the impression that the union is doing nothing to change their situation.

Furthermore, in the literature, it is being argued that employers reasons for flexibilising the workforce is basically to cut down the high cost of labour and to change the órigidô regulations of the 1990s. This is to meet consumersô expectation for constant service which thus has resulted in more employees and more trading hours (Kenny, 2007:485; Allan et al, 2006:29). Rees (1998:23) in a similar vein indicates that flexibility is an international phenomenon which South African employers are emulating. Elliot and Atkinson (1998) also argue that in recent times because of globalisation there are no more life time jobs.

From the literature, this study illuminates how the global restructuring of work leading to more flexible labour market has contributed to the many challenges faced by young people in the job market today (Kenny, 2001;2003; 2005; 2007; Michie and Wilkinson 1994:20; Waddington & Kerr, 2002). Michie and Wilkinson

indicate: ñthe world recession brings supply more into line with demand by destroying alternative job opportunities, thus instead of low pay being an answer to unemployment, high levels of unemployment are necessitating for many young people opting for low paid jobsò (1994:20). Many companies have also taken advantage of the high unemployment rate to casualise jobs, with less attractive conditions of service or work according to Michie and Wilkinson, 1994; GEAR, 1996; Kenny, 2001 & 2007).

As Schultz and Germano (1998:681) point out, there was high ówage inequalityô in South Africa than many countries in the world. This perhaps is the cause of the socio-economic situation and wage inequalities that do not allow many black South African youth to realise their dreams of going back to school. Thus the ôbad jobsô have become their life time jobs (Kenny, 2001:99; 2003 & 2007; Makiwane & Kwizera, 2008).

2.1.5 Unionisation among young workers in the Retail/Fast Food Sector

In looking at unionisation among young people in different countries, this project looked specifically at studies done on the low levels of union membership among young workers in the retail and recreation industries as well as the fast

food industry in Europe, US and Canada, and the reasons given by young people for this.

According to Tannock (2001:11), there are low levels of unionisation among the ósstopgapôyouth workers in the service sector. Another study of retailing and fast food in Australia throws light on the work situation of students in relation to their attitudes towards unionism (Allan et al: 2005). These studies in the northern countries indicate that young workers participation in unions is low and that the organising efforts by unions around this cohort of workers are ineffective. This affects an adequate articulation and communication of the problems young people face, a situation technically referred to as órepresentational gapô(Haynes et al: 2005).

For instance according to Allan et al: (2005:413), union membership in Australia amongst workers between 20-24 years declined from 30 percent in 1993 to 16.6 percent in 1999. Additionally, Allan et al (2006:30) found out that in Australia, only 16 per cent of young workers are trade union members out of the total union membership, but indicated that 51 percent of non-unionised workers desire to be in a union. However, the majority of young workers are as likely to desire to be unionised, as is also the case for their older people (Bryson et al: 2005 cited in Allan et al, 2006). Another example is Sweden which for instance has a high union rate of over 80 percent, but only about 40 percent of young

workers are unionised according to the ILO (1993:38-9) cited in Lowe and Rastin (2000:204).

The findings of Lowe and Rastin (2000:204) on Canada interestingly contradict some claims by the above literature. Their findings indicate that while the number of young workers in the union grew slightly during the mid-1990s; it remained constant throughout the decade until it declined by about 3 percent among those in the 15-24 year age group. Again, as informed by their sample, the youth have greater desire to want to be unionised as opposed to older workers. According to them, most of the greater demand interprets the stronger willingness of youth to have unions protect them (2000:204). Gomez et al: (2002:539-541) also reveal similar findings on Canada which indicate that young people are more ñsupportive and positive about unionisationò.

These two findings indicate that research findings may differ from what one perceives to be the problem and in different contexts. As opposed to the findings of the above literature on unionisation among young people in northern countries, Canadaôs situation rather indicates a unique case that suggests a possibility for recruiting and retaining young workers in the unions. Though the reasons the literature outlines are not ñinstrumentalò; it still reflects some influences from young peopleôs relatives (Gomez et al: 2002:539-541). The above findings inspired the researcher to conduct further investigations on

young workers to have a deeper understanding of their attitudes, concerns and experiences in the South African context.

2.1.6 Organising Strategies for Unions

Over the last two decades, unions have been poorly affected by the effects of globalisation, especially from casualisation (Levesque & Murray, 2006). For example according to Allan et al (2006), it has become a global phenomenon where many human resource managers or employers generally draw up difficult policies to bash unions which usually discriminate against workers who join unions (2006:31). COSATU (2003) indicates that this situation has affected SACCAWUsôtraditional membership base.

In this vein Naidoo and Veriava (2005) point out that the new wave of work conditions has affected the ñorganisational culture and forms of trade unionsò. In an interview conducted by Naidoo and Veriava (2005), John Appolis indicates that in recent times flexibilisation has been predominant in the South African labour market. According to Appolis, this has affected the base of the labour movement, in the sense that it has been surrounded by casuals, contract workers who are also family members, thus making it difficult to mobilise workers for action (Appolis, quoted in Naidoo and Veriava, 2005:12).

Consequently, unions have recognised the need to strategise in organising for union revitalisation of the labour movement. Organising basically refers to the mobilisation and recruitment of members otherwise known in the unions as ñmembership driveò Organising can take several forms; however, what unions are confronted with is the kind of strategies to be adopted in each context. Several scholars suggest some organising and recruitment strategies (Frege & Kelly, 2003; Webster et al, 2008; Bronfenbrenner and Hickey, 2004). Some of these strategies have been drawn from the experiences of the US Labour movements which foreground social movement unionism (extensively discussed in the next section of this study) and aggressive membership drives that focus on previously marginalised groups (Voss & Sherman 2000; Milkman, 2006).

Perhaps SACCAWU could draw on Silver (2003), Milkman (2006) and Voss and Shermanôs (2000) models for organising. These scholars talk about the use of symbolic power and community orientation into actions such as consumer boycotts to win publicôs favour. Frege & Kelly (2003) describe organising as the mobilisation of members to strengthen workplace representation; this thus could be geared towards young people in the union.

Before unions were affected by global neoliberal effects such as flexibility leading to membership decline, unions used to rely on automatic membership in the civil service that appeared to lack focus on aggressive recruitment of new members. A study by Voss and Sherman (2000:304-305,309-311) indicates that the US labour movement in the 1970s exercised "bureaucratic conservatism" and had become more of an "institutionalised interest group than a social movement".

The literature discusses how the labour movements changed from oligarchic tendencies and moved into revitalisation. Piven and Cloward (1977) cited in Voss & Sherman (2000:305) argue: "social movements became less contentious once they built formalised organisations". Voss and Sherman (2000) outline the strategies by the unions that included recruitment of new members and the development of strategic methods to counteract strong employer opposition. Voss and Sherman (2000:311) indicate that the unions focused on members "who had traditionally been excluded from unions organising efforts". Milkman's 2006 "LA Story" also discusses the strategies adopted by the labour movement in Los Angeles to organise janitors from Latin America. She points out: "the LA unionists launched a series of immigrant organising initiatives in a direct response to the devastating effects of casualisation and restructuring" (2006:126-139).

Milkman points out that in spite of some myths and difficulties that surrounded organising and reinvigoration of the unions, unions were able to organise. Although this set of literature does not mention specifically the age categories of the migrant workers, the literature describes certain initiatives such as the use of ñstrong social networks, and the use of stigmatisation as a point of unity that broke language barriersò (Milkman, 2006:139). Perhaps SACCAWU and the unions could emulate the case of the American labour movements to launch an aggressive organising drive on young people in the retail sector in South Africa by focusing on young workers workplace problems.

Furthermore, Waddington & Kerr (2002:299) cite examples of unions in Europe who have now adopted a strategy of reducing unionsôdues for young members which, SACCAWU can also look at the possibility in this regard. Waddington & Kerr (2002) indicate among others that the European unions have established youth or student sections to encourage the young people to contribute to policy development to encourage effective participation of the youth in the unions. Again campaigns have been focusing on university campuses to attract young people who go into the precarious employment. SACCAWU could additionally start a similar campaign to educate students on the ideals of trade unionism before they enter the job market.

Waddington and Kerr (2002) indicate that UNISON as one of the global unions and Students unions through their newly developed website is exposing working students to ideals of trade unionism and is also using this to bridge the generational gap. According to them, many trade unions in Europe have adopted innovative strategies such as the use of musical festivals relevant to the culture of young people and through informal meeting procedures focusing on the concerns of young people in their bargaining efforts (Waddington and Kerr, 2002:299).

Unions may face difficulties in trying to organise young workers, as the studies in Canada's fast-food sector bring to the fore (Lorinc 1994, cited in Lowe and Rastin 2000:218). However, Lowe and Rastin suggest:

> *"Unions need to make themselves more relevant to the young working class. Issues concerning young workers must be incorporated jointly in industrial relations and school work transitions research, and unions need to target their educational campaigns at young people before they make the transition into the labour market" (2000:216).*

Another example of union organising strategy is how unions have tried to get women to be actively involved in unions. Some studies and campaigns, however, negate that women are being actively involved in unions especially in the decision-making process (e.g. Yates 2000a cited in Yates, 2006; Baker, & Robeson, 1981). It is therefore not an attempt to ignore how women have been superficially drawn into the unions, without necessarily addressing the issue of

men hijacking the leadership and decision-making positions as argued by (Yates, 2006:572). On the other hand, the situation of women involvement in unions is not as bad as some literature put it.

Previously in South Africa, the commitment of unions to gender issues, and thus gender structures was marginalised from ñthe core work of unions and from decision-making policies and processesò (Orr, 1999). Today it can be argued that unions in South Africa and globally have made some inroads by incorporating women issues in their core activities and also achieving their full integration in the unions though there is still room for improvement (Forest, 2005:81). Numerous examples of this achievement can be talked of in COSATU, SACCAWU, and Ghana TUC among others. For example, in SACCAWU women now hold positions from the local to the national levels (Forrest, 2005:81).

Additionally, Ghana TUC women in recent times are represented in the national executive committees of the federation from the level of 2nd vice chairperson and are free to contest the secretary-general and chairmanship positions. SACCAWU has also had women leaders starting from Emma Mashininiôs regime in the 1970s to women such as Edna Sithema, Alina Rantsolase and Luise Thipe in sensitive positions in the union (Forrest, 2005:81-83). Perhaps the education, specific constitutional amendments and empowerment strategies

targeted at women at encouraging women participation in unions that SACCAWU, Ghana TUC and other countriesôfederations adopted for organising women can also be brought to bear on the issue of young workers, particularly, the constitutional provision for quota representation. In other words the union needs to ensure that an allocation of young workers representatives in the unionôs structures is considered as in the case of women. Unionsôstructures are open for all categories of ages as it is in the SACCAWU constitution. However, young people are less likely to be union leaders because perhaps unconsciously trade union politics to a large extent considers long service, leadership experience and adept to union matters. Most young people may not be privy to these opportunities and information because majority are less active in unions at early stages of their working lives. With three days notice for election, SACCAWU constitution (see www.saccawu.org.za) makes provision for shop steward position who are made the first point of contact at the shop floor level. Perhaps this could have encouraged more young people but only a hand full of shop stewards are young people as indicated by one respondent (Participant No. 6, 15/8/2009, CBD). Creating quotas in the constitution for their representation in this regard could be a starting point in ensuring their full involvement with unions at an early stage of their working life and can build their political consciousness and increase their trade union knowledge which would positively reflect on their perception.

2.1.7 Conclusion

Whereas the working conditions of young people have been reviewed in both the northern countries and in the South African context (Kenny, 2001; 2007; Tannock, 2001), reviewing of unionisation and attitudes among young people has relied more on the experiences and writings in the northern countries.

As this study argues in the subsequent chapters, the standard of living and other conditions of service in the southern countries as well as the different historical and political events and cultures may not be the same in South Africa (which appear to have some impact on attitudes of young people and unionsôability to organise them). However, it could also be argued that labour in recent times has become more mobile and the nature of work is increasingly similar all over the world, particularly with regard to flexibilisation. As South Africa increasingly adopts flexible labour policies (Kenny, 2007; GEAR, 1996), it is imperative that unions draw from the experiences of some industrialised countries which have pioneered changes in the field of young workersôunionisation.

In the light of the above arguments in the literature about South African youth, this study will argue that the underprivileged youth may have little choice with regard to the type of employment to go for, accepting just any kind of job in order to survive. This indicates their vulnerability on the job market and the

likelihood that unions could help to keep their jobs or fight for better working conditions for them even beyond their workplaces to their communities. Young peopleôs workplace problems have a rippling effect on their families and communities, hence what affects young people in their communities could affect their work performance, thus their concerns could be sent to communities to mobilise for support or sympathy for actions such as consumer boycotts.

Additionally**,** in looking at the shaping of youth identity in the literature review and the role played in the anti-apartheid campaigns by the youth, this study will argue that their activism was as a result of commitment in organising and the diverse nature of organisation in offering the impetus for change in spite of repression. Organisation was a fundamental component that remained with some of the social movements for which Biko's Black Consciousness Movement and Black People's Convention inspired the Soweto StudentsôRepresentative Councilôs (SSRC) Action Committee to organise for action (excerpts from an email conversation with, Ayelaboye, 17/6/09). Barchiesi and Kenny (2008:4) also remark that in the 1970s student activists were among the supporters of the emergence of trade unionism (2008:4). Barrett (2006:27) also indicates that black South African youth proved people wrong about any false impression that they never played part in the apartheid struggles.

The body of literature reviewed indicates that organised labour globally recognises the need to understand the changing perceptions and attitudes of young people towards unionism and now focusing on youth organising. In the same vein COSATU, FEDUSA, NACTU and their service sector unions such as CONSAWU and SACCAWU are also embarking on a global trade union campaign: "Decisions for Life"[7] that targets young women in the service industry to help them take control of their lives as mentioned in chapter four of this study. The ITUC recognises the fact that it is important for unions to address young peopleôs concerns and expectations to achieve their full integration into trade unions because that is key to the "strengthening, revitalisation, creativity and future of the trade union movement"[8]. This study is relevant because it is contributing towards unionsô rethinking of their organising strategies towards young workers.

2.2 Conceptual Framework

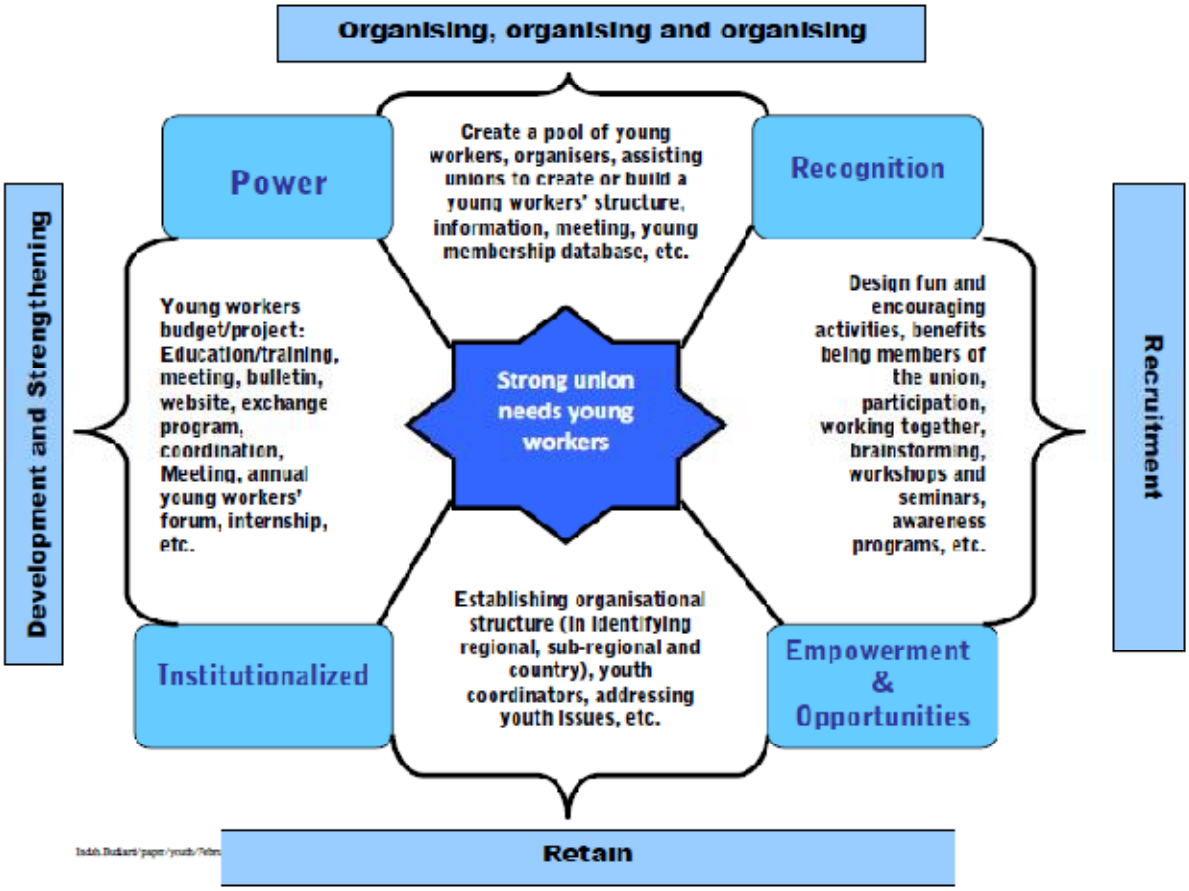
The conceptual framework that would be tested on the phenomenon under investigation is an adapted model developed by the ITUC below. The organising and campaigning concepts in the model guided this study because they provide

[7] "Decisions for Life" is an international trade union campaign by ITUC/UNI which aims to create awareness among young women in the service sector from the ages of 15-29 to empower them to make meaningful decisions for their work and family life. 14 developing countries including SA are involved in the campaign. In SA four federations (COSATU, CONSAWU, NACTU and FEDUSA) and three service sector trade unions (SASBO, SACCAWU and CWU) that are affiliated to ITUC and UNI launched this campaign on the 29th of August, 2009 at the City Hall, Johannesburg.

[8] ITUC Campaign on youth http://www.ituc-csi.org/spip.php?rubrique94: accessed on 22/3/2009*).*

a possible framework for unions to deal with organising through recruitment and aggressive membership drive campaigns. The interplay of four key factors (Organising & Recruitment, Power & Recognition, Empowerment & Opportunities and Institutionalised) in this model can affect youth perception and participation in unions. Improving the perception of young people and increasing their participation in the unions would, to a large extent depend on the right application of these factors together. These can create positive or negative perception by the youth.

Figure 1: An adaption from the ITUC organising model on young people



Source: *http://youth.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/chart.pdf* ***accessed 11/11/09***

The above model shows the combination of the various practical steps such as power & recognition, institutionalised (commitment through policies and constitutions), empowerment and opportunities are what unions could adopt to inspire young workers to be in the unions. These measures as elaborated below in effect should help retain young people in the unions.

2.2.1 Power & Recognition

The perception of young people can be built positively when young people are fairly represented and given voices in the union structures. It is more critical on the type of leaders unions would produce to become agent of changes. To do this, unions need to turn the current perception about unions being too traditional, hierarchical, and bureaucratic. This would inspire activism and develop leaders to change whatever negative mind set young people have on unions. For instance, within the local levels unions could initiate youth representatives or co-ordinators and develop it further to create youth committees. This, when effectively undertaken, can empower the young people to see themselves as part of the unions and also build their confidence at the workplace as well as drawing their potentials to support the unions.

2.2.2 Organising

Organising has been of great concern to trade unions over two decades now reflecting in their ósstrategy discussionsô (Hurd, 2004:5). Hence, framing a conceptual perspective to understand the implications and the effects of young workersô apathy towards unions has been the main concern for many trade unions and therefore analysing the issue of organising young workers can be seen as a rather critical concern for trade unions. Since organising young workers has become a crucial issue for trade unions which is informed by

membership decline, a recently developing body of literature has started to deal with the trade unionsô stances towards young workers by mainly standing on empirical research (see Waddington & Kerr, 2000; Lowe & Rastin, 2000; Serrano & Waddington, 2000). Among these studies some issues brought in the fore are of importance to understand trade union strategies concerning organising young workers. The researcher would like to touch on these discussions which are pivotal for trade union revitalization. The density of young workforce is critical in influencing the upshot of an organising drive in the unions. The young workers composition of the workplace is highly critical in determining the outcome of organising campaigns strategies in the service sector workplaces, for that matter the retail sector. Young workers are so important in explaining the certainty of the future of trade unions. Unions need to change their ócconservative inertiaô (Hayman, 2002:01) and rather start vigorous organising of young workers through different approaches.

New forms of organisational models such as the use of symbolic power (Silver, 2003) to win sympathy in communities could be considered by SACCAWU to send young peopleôs workplace concerns to communities. Scholars (Milkman, 2006; Silver, 2003; Voss and Sherman, 2000; Frege and Kelly, 2003) outline several strategies which when tailored towards youth organising could yield tremendous results for unions and for young workers. This research has explored whether such approaches have been adopted by SACCAWU, and

whether they could hold any benefit for young workers and/or trade unions in South Africa.

2.2.3. Empowerment & Opportunities

There are several ways by which trade unions can empower young people. One of which could be through education, which is important because it emphases the core values of trade unionism and has a long way of influencing young peopleôs perception towards unions. Young workers can be educated functionally through collaborated efforts by trade unions and academic institutions to help young people build their career. Again, the unions can tailor some training programmes such as public speaking which SACCAWU identified and agreed on in its 2005 congress resolution to be carried out for the leadership and shop stewards (SACCAWU, 2005:01) on young people as well as trade union education and politics through workshops, seminars on labour studies and industrial relations.

2.2.4 Institutionalised

Giving young workers the empowerment and opportunities, power and recognition in the unions should not just be superficial but should be óinstitutionalisedôthrough policy framework to ensure proper implementation and leadership backing. From the model above, budgetary allocation for youth

activities would be one of the effective ways of institutionalising young workers programmes in the union activities.

2.2.5. Conclusion

The need for unions to focus more on revitalising and building the union movement should be seen as critical in dealing with issues at the workplace and union politics. The motivation in joining unions should reflect in favourable working conditions achieved by the unions. Unions need to take seriously young workersô workplace issues to be able to reinvigorate union power and also to change the current decline in union membership, hence, union power and relevance threatened. The above measures in effect should help retain young people in the unions. These when effectively undertaken, can empower the young people to see themselves as part of the unions and also build their confidence at the workplace as well as drawing their potentials to support the unions.

As contribution from global unions, unions such as ITUC, UNI, PSI and BWI as well as the ILO are incorporating young workers activities into their mainstream programmes such as conferences, and other capacity building workshops for young people. For instance the GLU programme has been designed to build the capacity of young trade unionists on globalisation and economic issues. For

those in the retail sector, the 'Decision for Life Campaign' being carried out is mainly targeted at them by ITUC and UNI.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the methods adopted to explore the research question in addition to the limitations of the study and the ethical aspects.

3.2 Study Design

The study was purposive and purely qualitative and relied on both primary and secondary sources of information. Such sources included textbooks, published and unpublished reports, journals, unionsô policies and resolutions as well as interviews. The study adopted a descriptive approach which was ñto collect, organise and summarise the information about the matter under investigationò (Punch, 2000:38).

3.3 Qualitative Research Methods

A qualitative design was chosen because qualitative research helps one to understand and to be able to describe human behaviours in detail (Neuman,

2000). Additionally there is some flexibility in qualitative research (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:270). By qualitative research methods, "findings are not arrived at by means of statistical procedures or other means of quantification" (Strauss and Corbin 1990:17; Bryman, 2004). This approach enabled the researcher to obtain detailed and sensitive information rather than what a quantitative research approach would have given (Greenstein 2003:49-52). According to the literature it is suitable for studies about social issues such as perceptions and behaviours of people. The above definitions thus emphasise the framework within which this research was carried out which was to understand how young people perceive trade unionism.

3.4 Case Study Method

This research adopted a case study method, focusing on SACCAWU and the sectors in which it organises. The purpose of the case study was to draw on SACCAWU's experiences in a more in-depth manner than would have been possible with a larger selection of unions (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:281). This approach helped the researcher to get a deeper understanding of workplace concerns of young people and their perceptions and attitudes towards unionism in the sectors in which SACCAWU organises.

3.5 Background of SACCAWU

SACCAWU is an affiliate of COSATU. It organises sectors in the service industry such as, Commercial (wholesale, distributive, and retail), Catering, Tourism, Hospitality and Finance Sectors. SACCAWU has a membership of about 107,553[9]. Forrest (2005) accounts that the union was established in 1975, which gained 30 years in 2005 and to commemorate its 30th anniversary, it launched a book titled: ñASIJIKI, A History of SACCAWUò by Kally Forrest at its congress in September, 2005.

According to Forrest (2005) SACCAWU was formerly called the Commercial Catering and Allied Workers union of South Africa (CCAWUSA), comprising workers in service sectors until it merged with other unions to become SACCAWU in 1989. She points out that SACCAWU has been actively involved in the struggles of the unions in South Africa in the apartheid era and made vital contributions to the history of the struggles for freedom in South Africa. Naidoo also describes SACCAWU as one of the most dynamic, strong and democratic trade union movements in South Africa in recent times (quoted in Forrest, 2005:07).

[9]Description of Affiliate Unions by COSATU (www.cosatu.org.za accessed: 24/2/09).

SACCAWU organises workers in the retail companies which include Pick n Pay, Clicks, Edgars, Foschini, Woolworths, Game, and Shoprite/Checkers among others. At the international level, SACCAWU is affiliated to UNI, which used to be called Federation of Commercial, Clerical Professional and Technical Employees (FIET) (Jennings quoted in Forrest, 2005). Among other global unions, SACCAWU is also a member of ITUC through COSATUøs affiliation to ITUC. According to Jennings in Forrest (2005), many of the activists who were young at the time suffered repression including, leaders such as Emma Mashinini and Jayendra Naidoo who until recently became a businessman and used to be one of the labour relations leaders in the country (Jennings quoted in Forrest, 2005:8-9). It is worth noting that, young people played instrumental roles in the midst of all the struggles. According to Forrest (2005), people like Jayendra Naidoo, Amos Motapo, Bones Skulu and Patricia Nyman-Appolis, among others, most of who are now leaders of the union, became active when they were very young.

The union has faced many challenges, and continues to face challenges in the post apartheid era. The major challenge faced by the union in the current era of globalisation is the casualisation of most of its members, predominantly young people (Kenny, 2001:90; 2004 & 2007:481).

3.6 Data Collection Method

Methods adopted to garner data for this study included in-depth interviews, focus group discussions and participant observation.

3.6.1 In-depth Interviews

The in-depth interviews consisted of open ended questions which were designed to get detailed information from respondents about their experiences and perceptions of trade unions, work and organising, and politics (Babbie and Mouton, 2001:291). The in-depth interview method is also explained by Boyce and Neale (2006) as a ñresearch technique that involves conducting intensive individual interviews with a small number of respondents to explore their perspectives on a particular idea, program, or situationò (2006:3). What was expected specifically from these interviews was to understand and make judgments about what perceptions young workers have about trade unions, the kind of problems they are facing in the workplace and what kind of organising strategies and efforts the union is or is not adopting to resolve their workplace problems.

Nineteen (19) workers were interviewed, including both unionised and non-unionised young workers working at the Maponya Mall (eight (8) unionised young members of SACCAWU and seven (7) non-unionised young workers).

Four (4) union officials were also interviewed (two shop stewards, one organiser and the National Gender Co-ordinator).

3.6.2 Focus Group Discussions

Two focus group discussions (FGDs) were also conducted with unionised and non-unionised workers who were different from the in-depth interview participants. These comprised seven and three participants in each group respectively. This adds up to the above 19 participants to make it 28 participants in all in this study. The FGDs enabled the researcher to have direct interaction with participants to develop deeper insights and obtain confirmations and rich data as well as ñshaping and reshaping of opinionsò (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:292). Semi-structured questions (see Appendix Dô) were designed to guide all the discussions.

3.6.3 Observation

Prior to the field work and in addition to the above method of collecting the data, the researcher adopted an observation technique which according to Neuman (2000:361) involves ñpaying attention, watching and listening carefully to every detail in each setting since the researcher becomes an instrument that absorbs all sources of informationò. According to Babbie & Mouton (2001:293), participant observation ñinvolves observation and participation by the researcher in the current social setting of the subject which the researcher wants to

investigated. In this sense it was a simple observation approach the researcher adopted because according to Babbie & Mouton, the researcher remains an outside observer (2001:293).

As an observer, the researcher was invited to participate in activities that involve young people in the union and in relation to organising young people. These included young focal personsô meetings and various companiesô general meetings held at the SACCAWU regional office.

The researcher also participated in the preparatory meetings towards the ôDecisions for Lifeô(DFL) campaign, organised by the co-ordinating team at the COSATU House between the months of May, 2009 to July, 2009. This also granted the researcher an opportunity to attend the launch of the Decision for Life Campaign held at the City Hall on the 29th of August, 2009 where most of the interviews were carried out. This was seen as an opportunity to cease because getting them away from their work schedule was very difficult. Few visitations were also made to SACCAWU House for discussions with the National Gender Co-ordinator on the unionsô efforts in addressing young peopleôs workplace problems and in organising young people into the union. The researcherôs participation in all the events was co-ordinated by the National Gender Co-ordinator of SACCAWU with permission from the General Secretary.

These activities enabled the researcher to strike acquaintance with various young people in the various companies SACCAWU organises, most especially the shop stewards, which also facilitated accessibility to the people. This enriched the interview process and the discussions and assisted with obtaining vital information. During the interviews some of the participants had confidence in pouring out their grievances because of the relationship already established in the meetings. The discussions in the meetings gave the researcher a better understanding of the problems most of the young people face at the workplace and also the understanding of the feeling of alienation in the unionôs structures. This technique further helped the researcher to take notes in the meetings and discussions in the course (Neuman, 2000:361).

3.7 Sampling

Purposive sampling technique was adopted to select participants who were relevant to this study. Neuman (2000:198) indicates that purposive sampling ñuses the judgment of an expert in selecting cases or it selects cases with a specific purpose in mind.ò It was necessary to use purposive sampling in order to select exceptional participants who in this case were useful (ibid). Participantsôwere, however, selected based on their availability and readiness to participate in the study taking into consideration the age and time constraints as a whole.

For the non-unionised category, it was difficult to identify who might fall within that category; a snowball sampling method was therefore adopted to select the eight (8) participants within the sectors where SACCAWU has organised. By snowball sampling method, Mills and Huberman (1994:28 cited in Punch 2000) explain that it is a method which identifies cases of interest from ñpeople who know people who know what cases are information-richò. Neuman (2000:196) also refers to it as ñchain referral or network samplingò. The shop stewards facilitated in identifying a few young people who were not unionised, who were consequently approached by the researcher, who also helped in reaching out to their other non-unionised colleagues.

Considering the workersô rigid work schedule and their job security, the research was carried out mainly on weekends with the workers working in the Maponya Shopping Mall outside the work site. Some participants were also targeted from one grocery and cosmetic company where SACCAWU organises in the Johannesburg Central Business District (JCBD). The researcher had the opportunity through the union to interview these workers at the grocery store thus the additional workers outside Maponya Mall. More so, getting access to this group was easier than those in the Maponya Mall. Consequently, the union through the shop stewards facilitated gaining access to all the categories of the participants mentioned in this study. A consent letter to that effect was submitted by the union to the universityôs Ethics Committee. More so

acquaintance had been established with some of the workers during the observation meetings by the researcher.

3.8 Data Management and Analysis

The in-depth interviews as well as the focus group discussions were recorded with consent. To make sure all information necessary for this were collected, the researcher took notes on the proceedings during the interviews and the meetings. These recordings were transcribed once because the interviews were conducted in English language and by the researcher. As described by Neuman (2000) an ñexplicit and simplistic step-by-step approachò was adopted. According to this approach, the raw data was organised into ñconceptual groupingsò in which themes were created to analyse the data (Neuman, 2000:421-422). Based on Neumanôs process, the researcher imported the transcriptions of the data into MAXqda2 (a qualitative data analysis software) and coded to identify broader themes and sub-themes. The essence of using the software was to ensure comprehensive coding and time management. It was easier and less time consuming to code with the software. The themes and sub-themes were formulated based on the frequently mentioned issues and concerns. These were then sorted in relation to the literature that also addressed this research question about what young people think of trade unions today in the context of labour flexibility (Neuman, 2000:421-422).

3.9 Limitations of the Study

There are, of course, several limitations to this study. Due to the busy working schedule of participants, it took the researcher over two months to get the people to interview**.** The researcher also encountered difficulty in gaining access to the non-unionised young workers, most especially for the focus group discussions. The time constraints affected the total number planned for the FGDs that would have allowed for more opinions to be canvassed. The target of six discussants in the focus group discussion with the non-unionised participants was reduced to three as compared to the unionised group. The in-depth interviews also had to be conducted on weekends during company unionsô general meetings at the SACCAWU regional office and on the Decision for Life campaign day at the City Hall though with the same target group from the Maponya Mall who had been released to take part in these programmes**.** This is because permission from the Maponya Mall management was not sought by the researcher to conduct the interviews at the mall considering the limited time frame that was available for the research and the bureaucratic process for such approvals; hence the above sites were chosen for the interviews. The researcher therefore utilised the invitation by the union to the launch of the õDecisions for Life Campaignô though the researcher anticipated a bias in selecting through the union structures and also the tendency of participants saying what union leaders may want them to say. Additionally**,** understanding the operations and procedures of unions in South Africa presented some

difficulties due to the fact that the researcher is not familiar with the terrain of unionsôoperations in South Africa. The position of the researcher as a trade unionist and a youth desk officer also raised some biases. This is in the sense that the researcher had the tendency of prioritising young peoplesôfeelings and responses above every other opinion. However, this position also provided a better understanding of the situation of young workers, thus increasing the chances of getting access to and being able to get information from these young workers. Furthermore, the interview responses may reflect some gender biases because majority of the participants interviewed were women, though this reflect a general situation in the union membership (COSATU, 2003). In spite of the above limitations, the findings were not affected in any major way. However, it is strongly recommended that in subsequent studies, a survey method or multiple focus group discussions be adopted in order to obtain variety of opinions.

3.10 Ethical Considerations

Firstly, the researcher ensured that the confidentiality of respondents was protected throughout and after the study to prevent victimisation, bearing in mind the insecure nature of employment in most SACCAWU branches. For this reason the interviews were conducted mainly on weekends in order not to jeopardize participantsô work and did not involve employers. Secondly, the

identity of the researcher and the purpose of the research were made known to the interviewees. Participants were assured that their names would not be used in this study and that participation was voluntary. On the issue of confidentiality and voluntary participation, participants consented to the interview and recordings (See appendix ñCò). Accordingly pseudonyms were used for the respondents in this report. Permission was also sought from the union to gain access to the workers interviewed and documentary sources reviewed.

Last but not least, ethical approval with certificate reference number H090711 for the study was received from the University of the Witwatersrandôs Human Research Ethics Committee (Appendix ñBò).

CHAPTER FOUR

DEMOGRAPHICS AND WAGES AND CONDITIONS OF EMPLOYMENT

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a description of participants interviewed in this study. The chapter specifically presents the demographic profile of the participants interviewed and further describes their socioeconomic conditions, education and skills as well as their working conditions, which comprise the employment status, wages and working hours.

Participants were selected from five different companies in which SACCAWU organises in the Maponya Mall. These companies were coded in the report as follows (see Tables 1-3 below): Two clothing stores ï A and B respectively, one grocery store - C, one hypermarket ï D and one cosmetics and pharmaceutical store ï F. In addition, two participants were interviewed from one grocery store coded ï E which is located outside Maponya mall in Johannesburg Central Business District. The occupations of the participants include sales and shop assistants, supervisor, cleaners, till packers and cashiers.

The participants in this study are workers in the retail sector and the majority of them are women and single parents. Most of them live in rented rooms with their partners and few others on their own with little or without family support, who have high responsibilities of catering for their families and children. The average age of the participants is 25 years and the level of qualification of these participants is predominantly up to the Matric level.

4.2 Gender

The gender column in Tables 1-3 below reflects the number of women and men interviewed. Out of the total number of twenty-eight (28) participants interviewed, twenty-one (21) were females as against seven males. It must be noted, however, that only one participant is an adult who is a union official. Generally the sector does have majority of women employed in it (Kenny, 2001:90;COSATU, 2003), and according to COSATU (2003) the women are about 65% of SACCAWU membership. In this study, the majority of participants interviewed being women is also partly due to accessibility at the time due to their tight work schedules thus, focused on those that had been released by the union for the ôDecisions for Life Campaignô explained in the methodology section.

4.3 Age and Race

From tables 1-3, the majority of young people interviewed fall within the ages of 18-28 years. From the in-depth interviews, out of the fifteen young people interviewed across the six companies, only three participants are in their early 30s**.** However, out of the four union officials, two shop stewards, one union organiser and the national gender co-ordinator who is around 50 years, two are in their 30s and one in her mid 20. For the unionised FGD, two are in their 30s whereas the rest are in their 20s. The three non-unionised FGD participants are all in their 20s.. Additionally, in relation to race, all the participants interviewed in the six companies were black South Africans. Only the National Gender Co-ordinator in the union officials group is coloured.

Table1: PROFILE OF UNIONISED PARTICIPANTS

Participants[10]	Sex	Age	Marital status	Have at least a child	Education	Work Status	Company	Job Title	Basic Benefits	Hrs of Work Hours per week/day	Wages per Hour	Wages per day/month	Residence
In-depth P 1	F	23	Single	No	Matric	Perma-nent	A	shop assistant	Cloth discount	8	R 17	Rand 2,500 a month	Soweto
In-depth P 2	M	25	Single	Yes	Matric	Perma-nent	A	sales assistant	Cloth discount	8	17	2,500 a month	Orlando
In-depth P 3	F	32	Married	Yes	primary	C7	B	Fitting room attendant	Only salary	4	13.55	54.2 a day	Soweto
In-depth P 4	F	24	Single	Yes	Matric	Flexi timer	**C**	Sales Asst	Only salary	6	17	102 a day	Pen vale
In-depth P 5	F	23	Single	Yes	Matric	Casual	E	shop asst	Cloth Discount	6	12	151.81 a day	Vaal
In-depth P 6	F	21	Single	Yes	Matric/ Call Center	Casual	E	shop asst	Cloth Discount	6	12	151.81 a day	Jeepi
In-depth P 7	M	30	Single	Yes	Matric	Variabl e timer	D	Sales asst	Yes	5	14.50	72.5 a day	Jabulani
In-depth P 8	F	25	Single	Yes	Matric/ short course	Perma-nent	F	Cosmetic consultant	Yes	8	21.60	172.8 a day	Orlando
FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION													
FGD P1	F	26	Married	Yes	Matric	PP[11]	B	sales asst	Nil	5	17	85 a day	Soweto
FGD P2	F	24	Single	Yes	Matric	PP	B	sales asst	Nil	5	17	85 a day	South Gate
FGD P3	M	28	Single	Yes	Matric/ trainings	PP	B	Cosmetic Consultant	Nil	4- 5	17	68 a day	Soweto
FGD P4	F	23	Single	Yes	Matric	PP	B	sales asst	No	4-5	17	68 a day	Soweto
FGD P5	F	25	Single	Yes	Matric	Perm a-nent	A	shop asst	Cloth Discoun t	8	17	2,500 a month	Soweto
FGD P6	F	23	Single	No	Matric	Perm a-nent	A	Shop asst	Cloth Discoun t	8	17	2,500 a month	Soweto

[10] 'P' denotes participant with the attached numbers for all the participants in the in-depth interviews and the FGDs.

[11] 'PP' denotes permanent part-time

Table 2: PROFILE OF NON-UNIONISED PARTICIPANTS

Participants	Sex	Age	Marital status	Have at least a child	Education	Employment Status	Company	Job Title	Basic Benefits	Hrs of work per week/day	Wages per Hour	Wages per day/month	Residence
IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS													
In-depth P 1	F	27	Married	Yes	Matric/ Training	Permanent	A	Supervisor	Cloth Discount	8	R 17	R 2,500 a month	Soweto
In-depth P 2	M	21	Single	Yes	Matric	Permanent	A	Shop Asst	Cloth Discount	8	17	2,500 a month	Soweto
In-depth P 3	M	25	Single	Yes	Matric	Permanent	A	Shop Asst	Cloth Discount	8	17	2,500 a month	Soweto
In-depth P 4	F	21	Single	Yes	Matric	Casuals	B	sales asst	Nil	4-5 hrs a day	13.55	54.2 a day	Soweto
In-depth P 5	F	34	Married	Yes	Primary	C casual	B	Cleaner	Cloth Discount	8	13.55	54.2 a day	Soweto
In-depth P 6	M	26	Single	Yes	Matric	Flexi timer	C	Sales Asst	Nil	8	17	85 a day	Soweto
In-depth P 7	F	21	Single	No	Matric/ short course	100%	F	Cosmetic Consultant	Nil	8	Nil	Nil	Soweto
FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION													
P1	F	23	Single	No	Matric	Casual	C	Till parker	No benefits	27 hrs per week	17	1,836 a month	South Gate
P2	F	26	Single	Yes	Matric	Variable	D	Till parker	No benefits	5 hrs a day	14.50	72.5 a day	Soweto
P3	F	22	Single	Yes	Matric	Casual	F	sales asst	No benefits	6 hrs a day	12	72 a day	Soweto

Table3: PROFILE OF UNION OFFICIALS

Participants	Sex	Age	Marital status	Have at least a child	Qualification	Employment Status	Company	Job Title	Basic Benefits	Hrs of Work per wk/ day	Wages per Hour	Residence
Official 1	F	32	Single	Yes	Matric/other trainings	Permanent	D	shop steward	Basic Benefits	8	N/A	Soweto
Official 2	M	31	Single	Yes	Matric/other trainings	Permanent	Union	Organiser	Basic Benefits	8	N/A	Naturena
Official 3	F	23	Single	Yes	Matric/ Trainings	Permanent	A	shop steward	Cloth Discount	8	N/A	Joburg
Official 4	F	51	Married	Yes	Masters	Permanent	Union	Gender Coordinator	N/A	8	N/A	Kensington

4.4. Responsibilities and Socio-economic Conditions of Participants

Tables 1-3 demonstrate that out of the 21 women interviewed, excluding the national gender co-ordinator and four participants who are married with children, 15 women were found to be single parents. Additionally, with the exception of the four married participants and the gender co-ordinator who live with their spouses, majority live on their own and a few live with their friends, partners and family members in rented rooms in Soweto and its environs. Although this was not probed in details, the tables demonstrate that the majority of the participants live closer to the workplace, in the various suburbs of Soweto. According to some of the participants, they are living in Soweto and its environs in order to be closer to the workplace. However, a few participants interviewed from the CBD live very far from their workplace which they indicated compounds their problem of late closure and transportation costs. For instance, one unionised participant

though works at the CBD who was trying to indicate the closing hours from work; also showed how far she lives:

> *..."I live very far – the Vaal and as a woman sometimes I get scared, which I think the union should talk about it so that at least we can close around 6 pm" (Participant No 6, 15/8/2009, CBD)*

With regard to the socio-economic level of participants, it appears that the conditions of life among them are generally of poor quality. The majority of the participants have high responsibilities to cater for their families especially their younger siblings and their unemployed parents as well as their own children. This is peculiar with the women who are not married and their parents are not in any gainful employment. At the same time most of these young women are confronted with low incomes without basic benefits and other employment challenges. The meagre income these retail workers are getting cannot give them a better life than to take care of their children and family members. One non-unionised lady expressed: ñeish! It is very difficult because I have one baby I have to take care of and this salary is just too smallò (FGD No 2, 5/9/2009, Soweto). This corresponds with Kennyôs (2001 & 2003) studies.

This also confirms claims by the ICFTU: ñYoung women generally, and in particular those with children, are more prone to unemployment, discrimination,

sexual harassment, underemployment and poor working conditionsö[12]. Perhaps in the South African context it can be ñtraced to its historical events and partly because of the HIV/AIDS epidemic in the countryò (Makiwane and Kwizera, 2008:223).

Other participants also have the responsibility of providing for their families at home. This came up during the focus group discussion:

> *"The thing is that I am still maintaining my parents so I have to focus on my job because I never thought I would work at this early age of 23. I thought maybe I will still be in school and start working at the age of 25 but because of the situation at home I had to get a job" (FGD participant No.2, 22/8/2009, Soweto).*

The unfortunate aspect according to most of them is that they wish to go back to school to further their education but there seems to be no support; thus the choice to stay on the ôbad jobsô Kenny (2001 & 2007) reveal how the flexibilisation of work has caused household inequalities since the households rely on little income for survival. These difficulties expressed by the participants in this study confirm Kennyôs study on ñhousehold economic vulnerability of retail workersò (2001:102). Her study concurs with these participantsôsituation that the meagre incomes cannot maintain households and at the same time the current employment situation cannot ñeradicate the racially stratified extremes of inequality in South Africaò(Ibid: 2001:101-102).

[12] Article by the ILO on commitment on youth employment and rights posted on 17/6/2005 on ICFTU website: **www.icftu.org/displaydocument.asp?Index=991221919&Language=EN (accessed 1/9/2009)**

Apart from the fact that most of them are unhappy at the workplace, the majority of the participants, especially the young women, are faced with emotional problems at home. One union official (see table 3) described what some of them go through: ò most of the young women, they are facing a lot of challenges outside there from home, being abused, and come to work you see the person may be so down all the timeò (29/8/2009, City Hall). Though this was not followed up with the participants since it is also a sensitive area, the researcher believes that this is an area that needs a possible further study with different methodology that should go beyond the workplace, which the union can undertake.

4.5 Education and skills

As outlined in the tables above, the level of education of the people spanned from primary school to the Matric level and few learner-ship skills development courses. Out of the 28 respondents only seven respondents including one non-unionised participant posses more than the Matric certificate and only one participant from company ôFô is currently undertaking a course in cosmetology. All the union officials have had additional training to the Matric and tertiary levels. From the findings on educational levels, it appears that a substantial number of the participants do not possess adequate skills for the job market. The level of Matric education seems not to be the best in the current labour

market situation, where people are competing for the limited job opportunities. Makiwane & Kwizeraôs (2008:227) study on the well-being of the South African youth corroborates the situation of the above participants. Makiwane & Kwizera (2008:230) indicate that Matric qualification ultimately can only feature in low skilled employment such as retail and other private sectors.

4.6 Wages

The last but one column of Tables 1-3 show the wages the participants receive per hour and per week as well as per month. As reflected in the tables, the participants interviewed receive wages that range from R12 to R21.60 per hour and R85 to R151.81 per day. Most of the casuals only work on weekends for 27 hours in a week and earn between R12 and R17 per hour. The permanent workers obviously receive higher wages than the casual employees. In company óFô, the employees in the cosmetic section are rated per oneôs image, or physical appearance though declined to mention the specific figures. It is to be noted however, that these rates are higher than the national daily minimum wage according to the national gender co-ordinator of the union. Additionally, in company óFô, while permanent employees receive R21.60 per hour, casuals receive R17.00 per hour, so is company óAô While the permanent employees receive R2,500 a month, casuals receive R680 a month. These variances run through all the companies. From the tables above, it appears that company óEô

pays the highest wages followed by company ôAõ while companies ôCõ & Dô pay the lowest rates. Union Officialsô remuneration was not investigated. Generally the participants indicated that the salary cannot fully take care of their needs and poses a problem for them to progress. As is shown in the tables, among all the companies, participants in companies ôCõ & Dô are not happy because of the lower salary they receive as one unionised participant in company ôCõ expressed dejectedly: ònow even if I work for 15 years in this company, maybe I will end up earning R4000 a month, which is not right, it is way too small, [and] is limiting [me] myselfò (Participant No.4, 29/8/2009, City Hall).

From the in-depth interviews of the non-unionised group, one participant who coincidentally works in the same company (C) expressed: ñwe used to work on the holidays but they donôt pay double paymentò (non-unionised FGD, P No.1, 22/8/2009, Soweto). Interestingly one participant in the unionised in-depth interview sympathised with the casuals in company ôAõ that only work on weekends and are paid so little. She expressed:

> *"....the flexi types, they come on weekends, maybe when the permanents have days off, they only work on Saturdays and Sundays so they don't get much money, like they are paid 54 hours a month and that's too little, like 54 hours is R680 a month (participant No. 5//2009, Soweto).*

It appears that most of these young people in the shops are being exploited in the labour market. They work for long hours including weekends yet their remuneration is too low. In addition, they are vulnerable as a result of the challenges contingent labour brings (Kenny, 2001). Some participants are not

paid overtime even though they close late. One unionised participant expressed dejectedly when asked about the specific problems they encounter: ñmy specific problem is that (company óEô) does not pay us overtime and we close from work very lateò (Participant No. 6, 15/8/2009, CBD). No wonder in recent times most global unions are calling on unions to adopt new ways of attracting young people into the union to ensure their protection at the job market and their active involvement in the union (Waddington & Kerr (2002).

4.7 Young and Casualised Workforce

A substantial number of the participants in the five stores in the Maponya Mall are young people. It is estimated that 85.5% of the total workforce in these stores is young people (union official No.4, 5/10/2009). Tables 1-3 above demonstrate that it is mainly young people between the ages of 19-28 that were interviewed.

When asked about the population of the young working force in her company, one shop steward working in store óDôindicated: ñat my hypermarket in Soweto, a lot of the people there are young and because it is a new place and black environment and also because is the first time for black community to have store óDôõat Maponya. Another participant working in store óCôalso indicated that in her store the young workers are the majority because that is what employers are looking for: ñabout 95% of us are young people; the manager wants to hire

young people**".** Even though a follow up on why the manager wants to hire young people was not made; it appears that the labour costs employers anticipate influence them to hire such calibre of young people than to hire older people who have had exposure with unionisation and rights at work. Such calibres of employees are likely to accept any conditions in order to keep their jobs or easily move to other similar jobs when things get worse. From the responses, it also appears that most of the young people in the community are low skilled who are in this kind of employment as stepping stones in order to further their education or for better job opportunities in future.

As is also shown in the tables above, the companies have different titles for the non regular or non permanent employees, which some refer to as flexi timers, variable employees, C7, permanent part-time and casuals. It appears these different types of employment status more or less mean the same thing which is commonly known as casual employees. The majority of participants interviewed are in these categories of employment. Out of the eight participants in the in-depth interviews of the unionised group, five are casual employees. In the FGDs, out of the six participants, only two are permanent employees. With the in-depth interviews of the non-unionised, out of the seven participants, only three are permanent employees and for the non-unionised FGDs, all three participants are casual employees. All the union officials are also permanent workers.

This supports the argument that the ócontingent form of labourô is becoming predominant in the retail sector as indicated by Kenny (2007). She indicated that the retail industry has been more and more adopting ócontingent forms of labourôfrom the early 1990s. According to Kenny, this has changed the South African labour market and indicates that it has weakened the once powerful and óunifiedô black union but unfortunately SACCAWUôs effort to stop the divisions has proved futile (Kenny 2004; cited in Kenny 2007:481-2).

This also confirms SACCAWUôs 2002 congress report that recognised that most of the shopping malls have up to 60% casuals who are mostly youth (SACCAWU, 2002:38). Apparently most of the young people interviewed are flexible employees. According to Kenny (2003) these types of employees are the ones in low job security who work for longer hours and are in poor working conditions, at the same time they lack health and welfare benefits that are typically enjoyed by public servants.

The participants feel they are being denied promotion or being converted to permanent status due to lack of implementation of the bargaining agreements since 2003 when the regulation was set. The problems of progression and employment status appear to be one of the major concerns of participants. In some of the companies where SACCAWU organises, the participants

interviewed have worked for a number of years as casual employees and have still not been converted.

For instance a substantial number of the respondents in the unionised interviews indicated that though the union and managements have signed agreements to consider casual employees for vacant positions; those agreements are not being implemented. Two unionised participants indicated:

> *"...yes, even there are people who have been casuals for 27 years and that is why the young people are losing hope in the union because of lack of progression, you won't have a house, you won't buy a car, which means there is no hope. My peculiar problem is the lack of promotion and internal recruitment... permanent recruitment is given to outsiders when one has been [in the company] for a long time (unionised participant No, 7, 15/8/2009, JCBD).*

> *….."and I thought going into (company 'C') is easier to get to the top. I applied for positions in the head office but I was never called for interview not even once. So I feel that it is considering outside people than their people. I think if you go in there and work as sales assistant, they want you to stay in that position, because you are filling that gap" (unionised participant No. 5, 14/8/2009, City Hall)*

This was actually confirmed by one union official interviewed at Ghandi Sq who indicated:

> *"I think the most progressive will be agreements that are signed in the companies. Companies are made to convert these part times into full time but obviously that needs to be monitored very closely because companies tend not to implement these agreements" (Union Official No. 2, 14/8/2009, Ghandi Sq)*

The serious problem is that the young people feel insecure because their jobs are not permanent. One non-unionised participant when asked about their conditions expressed: ñno your job is not guaranteed as a casualò (Participant No.4 24/8/2009).

Job insecurity is a burning issue which is confirmed in almost all the literatures reviewed (e.g. Serrano et al; 2000;Kenny, 2001 & 2005; Allan et al, 2006). Many of the participants are called as and when they are needed and do not have any binding agreement. At the same time they have the fear of joining unions. One non-unionised participant for example, when asked if she would be interested in joining a union expressed: ñno am a casual, if they dismiss me what must I do? I donôt even sign a paper that says am working there so you canôt be in the union because I have tried to be in the union but I donôt have a pay slipò (29.8/09, City Hall). When asked, one unionised permanent worker whether she will work in company ó Cô which has refused unionisation as compared to the job security she enjoys at her company (F) she had this expression: ñNo! No! They get so little and they are never made full time. They are always temporary workers and they donôt renew their contracts and [rather] hire new onesé .ò(Non-unionised in-depth No. 8, 5/9/2009, Soweto)

This indicates that being ópermanentôdoes not mean that one is well secured in his/her job, the fact that there is permanent flexible labour. As Kenny (2001:90) argues: ñflexibilityô erodes workersô position in the workplace and the labour

marketò This makes even permanent employees feel insecure about the future of their jobs, because there is high competition for the same job. It appears also that the labour regulation makes it easier for employers to casualise jobs which, is also not in favour of casual employees as has been argued in the literature review section (Makgetla, 1995; Naidoo & Veriava, 2005; Kenny, 2007). This perhaps could also be the reason for tight working hours of the casualised employees.

4.8 Working Hours of Participants

Tables 1-3 above, show participantsô working hours which range from 4 to 8 hours in a day or 45 hours in a week. The majority of participants who are casuals work for 4 to 6 hours a day, 19 hours a week and a few permanent participants are the ones who work for 8 hours a day or 40 to 45 hours a week. The casuals usually work on weekends when the permanent workers have their days off. According to the participants they enjoy between one and two days off in every week which depends on oneôs hours of work and shifts. This is also determined by the needs of the employers (COSATU, 2003).

From the data collected, participants raised several grievances they face at the workplace and in the union especially concerning closing time. Although the employeeôs working hours are structured per the Sectoral Determination 9, the

bone of contention is their closing time which they indicate is very late. Participantsô main concern is the knock off time which is usually after 6 pm. The majority of the participants interviewed indicated that they close late and expressed how scared they are to go home after close of work for fear of being mugged. In such a situation, it is the women who may suffer most, because they are more vulnerable to rape and abuses when they close from work at such odd hours. In store óAô for instance, one unionised permanent worker complained bitterly that the knock off time of 9 pm is too late for them (Participant No.1 5/9/2009, Soweto). He indicated that most of the employees are agitating about the knock off time. Additionally, relative to the older employees who knock off early, the majority of young people in the stores are flexible employees. One unionised participant who works in store óEô and feels that the older employees are mostly the permanent employees who also close early, indicated: õmost of the young people in my store are the casuals and usually the older people knock off early between 1 and 4 oô clock but we knock off after 7 pmö (In-depth participant No. 6, 15/8/2009, CBD).

The question then is what kind of agreement does the union endorse for its members? Is it in their best interest and how does it conform to the countryôs regulations? How does the work schedule affect the young peopleôs involvement in union activities? Could it be that there is still more room for improvement for SACCAWU as other studies (Lowe & Rastin, 2000; Tannock,

2001, Waddington & Kerr, 2002; Allan et al 2006,) argue that inefficiencies of the unions could be one of the causes pushing young workers away from unions and affecting their participation in the unionsô activities? Perhaps the late working hours could be an issue around which the union can organise or campaign for young people.

4.9 Working Conditions

The flexible employees lack basic benefits, with the exception of those employed in two companies (A & D). Although annual leave is a Basic Conditions of Employment, some of the casual employees do not enjoy annual leave as indicated by the participants. More so, with the exception of company Dô which provides basic benefits to its variable employees, such as, annual leave, loans, (though does not also provide housing allowance to the variable employees, who have worked for less than three years), there are no benefits such as medical aid, housing and car allowances for most of the casual employees. Some of the companies do not also give paid maternity leave as indicated by one unionised participant in store Eô (In-depth No. 6, 7/12/2009, SACCAWU Regional Office) Furthermore, it was found out, for instance, that

one company[13] (company ôCô) does not provide basic benefits to its flexi-timers. Another unionised worker from the in-depth interviews lamented:

> *"We don't have benefits like other people, like medical aid, housing allowance etc. The basic benefits, you don't get those, like car allowances and the rest. we have complained saying that medical aid is an essential thing such that you need to be well to be able to work so if I am going to be paid money that's so less that I can't afford to go to a doctor, I have to have a medical aid. Management told us, they are acknowledging that we are earning less not to be able to take care of our health but they can't do anything about it" (Participant No 4, 29/8/2009, City Hall).*

However, the permanent participants in company ôAô receive some few benefits such as scholarship for further studies, clothes discounts and death benefits but the company does not extend the death benefit to employeesô family members. Generally, except for job security, many of the non-unionised participants indicated that they enjoy the same conditions in relation to hours of work, benefits, leave and salaries as those in the union. This study did not specifically look into issues of HIV/AIDS related cases because the researcher found it to be a highly sensitive issue. However, one unionised participant indicated that in her company, while it does not provide other basic benefits, such as medical aid; it does provide medical facilities for its HIV positive employees. This she indicated is the only thing her company is doing that gives her some confidence in the company. She expressed:

[13] Company and store are used interchangeably.

> *"People who are HIV positive they are provided medical treatment for free. The company has an organisation that provides that for them. That's the only thing that I have realised is good about the company because is not easy to go and pay for your ARVs" (Unionised participant No 4, 29/8/2009, City Hall)*

From this participant, the union did not play any role in achieving this facility even though this particular company is not a union friendly but, offers this facility as part of its social responsibility.

One other major problem according to the majority of both unionised and non-unionised is the work intensification they are confronted with considering the low wages they receive. A substantial number of participants complained that they do multiple tasks which according to them it is exploitation because all the menial tasks are performed by them. A unionised participant in Company ôFô expressed:

> *"We know the company is making a whole lot of money but they do not see us, they make us work extra hours, they make us do more jobs. They are not hiring enough staff. There is this new policy they made, a blueprint kind of do [ing] three people's job. They give 15 minutes to do one thing and give 10 minutes to do another, is kind of stressful" (unionised worker No.8, 5/9/2009, Soweto)*

Two focus group members from company óAô when asked about their work conditions and what they receive indicated:

> *"(Participant No. 5): we are struggling because at the same time I am working at the till point, I have to mop the floor, I have to clear up my department, clean the windows, we can't be cleaners and sales assistants at the same time, meanwhile we don't get any benefits (Participant No 6): even the toilet! And the canteen we clean...is serious" (unionised FG participants, 5/9/2009, Soweto).*

The majority of participants from both unionised and non-unionised interviewed expressed that the number of hours they work should have fetched them better conditions. Perhaps this situation is informed by the emergent flexibilised labour market; and high rate of unemployment and poverty thus many young people are in precarious working conditions at the same time lack sustainable jobs. This could be a contributing factor for choice of their current jobs. Two unionised participants indicated in the in-depth interviews:

> ***....*** *"Am not really happy working in this company but because there are no jobs especially not getting the jobs that we want. But if I get a good job I think am going to leave this company" (unionised participant from company 'E', interviewed at the CBD)*
>
> *"I have no choice, that's why am working there and normally the requisite work experience, educational qualification all make it difficult getting a job, so is a matter of no choice, is difficult getting better jobs"(unionised worker No.7, 15/8/2009, CBD)*

Considering the working conditions of the participants, one would argue that the conditions are not attractive enough for the workers because of the low skills levels (Makiwane and Kwizera, 2008) and the fact that contingent labour is becoming more common (SACCAWU, 1999; Kenny, 2001 & 2007).

4.10 Different Treatment among the Casuals and the Permanent Employees

Different treatment and the conditions of work for both casuals and permanents was not looked at in detail in this study; however, it came up in some responses

which show that there is lack of working class consciousness and power among the casualised employees.

This is partly for the fact that each category of employees has their own concerns with regard to their job security. Even though permanent workers might be slightly better off than the casual workers, in an age of flexibility, even permanent workers suffer from low wages, poor working conditions and so on. A union official and a unionised participant indicated:

> *"look, I think the union has tried but, the problem is that even in the companies where the unions have bargaining rights, sign different agreements for certain types of agreements [status], so getting a part time employee increment of say, R100 and full time employee R200, obviously the part timer feels that the union is not doing enough so negotiating is a very difficult situation" (interviewed at SACCAWU regional office, 14/8/09)*

> *"At the general meetings is all about issues concerning the permanent workers and don't really attach seriousness to the concerns of the casual workers. Sometimes they don't care about the casuals" (unionised participant No. 6, CBD, 15/8/2009).*

Kenny (2001:91) finds a similar situation in her study and argues: ñthe increasing casualisation and subcontracting of work in retail has divided workers on the shop floorò The permanent employees feel insecure about their job security (Kenny, 2005a:234;235), whiles the casuals feel ignored and treated unequally even by the union. The feeling of unequal treatment by casuals and the permanent does not come up in any of the literature reviewed above except in Kennyôs (2001 & 2007) findings, which in itself does not specifically talk about

young people. However, it is imperative to address the issues around it because the casualised employees are mostly young people, thus the need to find out about their feelings.

Further investigation was done based on the initial responses and some of the respondents indicated:

> *"because I am a casual even if they treat me badly I had to keep quite most at times in order to keep my job but with the older women and men who work in the stores close to ten years, they can't treat them like they do with us, yeah the permanent workers know their rights so they voice out when they have problems in the workplace. For me it is difficult, the treatment between a casual and a permanent is very different because as casuals even if they do bad thing you have to sacrifice and say well is ok but a permanent person, they can't do that because they know their rights and all that" (non-unionised worker No 3, 25/8/2009, Soweto).*

> *..."the difference between us and the permanent is that the company does not recognise the casuals especially the young people. They just think we are here to work and go. We don't have benefits, just the salary. No medicals and conditions of service and the salary is not good" (unionised worker, 16/8/2009, CBD)*

This study identifies similar conditions in Kenny's (2005b:234) findings on the tension among permanent and casual employees in the retail sector which affects worker consciousness and solidarity**.**

4.11 Is There any Hope for the Retail Workers?

The retail sector may not be the best of sectors in the current labour market for sustainable employment due to labour flexibility (Kenny, 2001:102). However, it

could be argued that working in the shop is not as bad as people think depending on the kind of management that one has to deal with. For instance, some participants indicated that even though their conditions may not be attractive enough, they still feel secured in their current companies because their managements support and understand unionism. Some participants expressed that they will not in any way change their jobs to work in other similar companies where SACCAWU organises. From a sample of the responses, one unionised participant from the focus group discussion, when asked about whether they will prefer working at company ôBô or ôDô expressed:

> *"yeah, if they would treat me like my company because our manager treats us well and if like you have a problem he would like you to face him and not like you to do anything behind him. In my shop there is only one who is irritating, but so far is fine, even our manager, actually he understands, he even teaches us about the union...." (FGD participant No 5, 5/9/2009, Soweto)*

This unionised participantôs response perhaps suggests that working in the retail shops is not a hopeless situation as some may view it. In spite of the above poor working conditions raised by the participants, the unionised participantsô situation appears to be better from their responses which, perhaps suggest that there is some benefits or value in a union.

CHAPTER FIVE

WORKER ATTITUDES AND EXPERIENCES

5.1 Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine how young people perceive trade unionism, what problems they face at the workplace and what kind of organising efforts are being adopted by SACCAWU to attract young people into the union**.** Relative to the literature surveyed, it is to be noted that the findings of the study are in part not so different from a review of the existing literature, but in the majority, the findings are based on the data collected from the field.

5.2 What Motivates or De-motivates Young People from Joining the Union?

5.2.1 Victimisation and Discrimination

One major finding in this regard is that even though there are unions in most of the companies, the young workers are scared of joining unions due to warnings from managements. Most of the reasons given as the cause to their negative perceptions about unions are that managements put fear in the new workers not to join unions. One non unionised worker said:

"yeah, I like to join it but you see, sometimes if you are in the union you find out that the company doesn't want to open up everything to you, they don't trust you, they don't want to promote you" (Non-unionised participant No.1 22/8/2009, Soweto).

This has partly informed the negative perceptions of most young people on unions thereby discouraging them to join. Many studies have found similar attitudes of managements to unionisation (e.g. Allan et al: 2006:31). One South African worker said:

"My company does not acknowledge SACCAWU as a union at the moment. The management they give you information during induction that there is no union and you don't even talk about it if you are found talking about it, you are going to be in trouble, you are not allowed. So when I go and tell you, a new person about union you don't even want to listen, you don't even want to talk about it because now they are [can] fire you. They told you that you don't have to talk about it so that is one of the reasons why we don't talk about unions. Even though am risking of being fired for being active in the union, striking and picketing. Well I know my rights but sometimes I fear being fired even though you knew that they couldn't fire you because you have the right but you always have that fear you know" (unionised participant No. 3,29/8/2009 City Hall).

A union official also confirmed this incidence as a hindrance to unionisation:

"Looking at the young people that get work now will obviously be flexi type so they aren't getting any benefit, [job] is not quality. I will say for unions is very, very difficult because these people feel they are threatened, more than anyone so they are trying to hold on to whatever stars of breath they get whereas the unions are meant to promising a loaf but obviously with capital threatening their work, if they get involved or join unions. I tend to believe that seriously young people feel threatened; they are quite scared to join unions because their contract could be terminated if management finds out. It is a very big challenge (14/8/2009, Ghandi sq)

In order to get the feeling of the workers, further investigations were conducted. Some of the participants admitted that at times managements put fear in them and indicated that in spite of the reprisals from management, they defied and join the union. One shop steward indicated: ñyes fears, but I didnôt care whether they hate me or not but even if they hate me, they donôt give me money, so I didnôt care about thatò(29/8/2009, City Hall). Perhaps this participant envisaged the advantages that could be derived from unions. From her experiences in company (C) this unionised participant also passionately expressed in the in-depth interview:

> *"You know it is important that we have unions. Even when I start my business I want my workers to have a union. Yes I don't want them to feel like they are being oppressed. Well I am not going to treat them bad, but I am saying I want them to know their rights and exercise them" (Participant No. 3, 29/8/200, City Hall)*

5.2.2 Lack of information

In addition to the above reasons given as causes to young workers apathy towards union, the issue about how young people get to know unions was also looked at**.** It was found out that information was one of the keys with regard to their participation in the unions. Almost all the participants interviewed including the non-unionised indicated that they lack information about what the union can do for them and how to even join. One unionised member in Soweto indicated

from company ÓAôthat until she started working she did not know the value of unions and said: ñI didnôt know anything about unions because they did not matter to meò A substantial number of participants indicated that no one is giving them the information and therefore they can only rely on what managements tell them.

> *"It is not that young people are not interested in the union, no one is giving us the information. Young people know nothing about unions (laughs) yes, ok they know that aa they only see it on TV when they want their salary increase, that's what we see most of the time. If members of SACCAWU employees....we only know, ooo! there are SACCAWU people working in retail, Ooo! they want 10%, oo! Is SAMWU, Oo SAMWU is for municipal people, ooo now they want 15% (laughs) so that's how we learn from the TV. So it is not like they don't like joining unions. They don't know anything about unions because in most cases we have that mentality that, unions are for older people so no one is giving us information....why should you take a union if you don't know anything about it?" (*Non-unionised participant No.4, 24/8/2009, Soweto)

This shows that the unions in South Africa are largely known by young people through their struggles such as strikes and picketing. Due to a lack of information, some casual employees do not even know that they can join unions. For example, one non-unionised worker in company ÓCô said: ñOnly permanent staff can join a union. As casual I cannot, for my experience, because as a casual is only your salary, you know and union too you pay for itò *(FGD No. 1, 22/8/2009, Soweto).*

From this quote, it would seem that this participant envisages a fear that payment of union dues would disadvantage her since her income is not much to afford union dues. This may be an area SACCAWU could look at to see if union dues could be reduced for young workers, especially the casuals. This could be a promising organising strategy to attract young people into the union, hence the need for SACCAWU to change its organising practices, since this may also pose difficulties for the union to collect union dues from casuals, which may indirectly affect the unionôs attitude to casuals.

5.2.3 Unions' Operations and the Alienation of Youth

The mode of unionsô operations and culture is one of the key issues this research is investigating to know its implication for young peopleôs perceptions towards unionism. This study found this as a contributing factor for discouraging most young people to join the union. One union official who happens to be a young person indicated:

> *"as youth we feel left out [in the union] especially if you were not born in the 60s, you wouldn't be old enough to have witnessed the struggles and the Soweto June 1976 uprisings in SA, the state of emergencies in the 80s and actually the struggles songs that were sung in the union activities [are not known by young people]. Also the older generation in the union don't make it easier because is very easy even jokingly to brand somebody as a sell out. For me it is just the language of the union for correspondence, the legal jargons and a whole lot, which the young can't learn, and makes the young people feel alienated. The union is very traditional group and male dominated.*

The above response from the union official indicates the differences in generational thinking in the union which, if not checked, can also cause alienation of the youth. A clear example of how the youth at times is alienated by the actions of some members of the union is the contention by some union leaders that young people are apolitical. Language, for instance, is a powerful tool, especially when one considers where he/she is coming from. The union should attempt to communicate issues clearly for the understanding of the young people without passing judgement. The unionsô operations and culture will have a great deal of impact on attracting youth in terms of the kind of image that the union builds for itself. For example, an image of good interactions between the older members and the younger members that would make the young people feel belong and part of the union.

Unions often time give an excuse that ñwomen are less likely to support unions than menò, accounting for the óold dominationô (Yates, 2006:568). These biases against women in the unions organising activities should also be changed.

5.2.4 Union Structures

The union structure, being one of the key factors determining the culture and operations of the unions, was investigated. Most of the participants indicated that it is very difficult for young people to be part of the leadership structure in the union. Undeniably the union recognises the need to attract more young people into its activities. However, it is also a fact that the union is not doing much or not engaging young people effectively, as some participants, including some union officials, indicated:

> *"There are no youth structures in the union; it is only the shop stewards who have the opportunity to attend the union conferences. There are no young people, only a few, most of them are the older people and that is why young people's concerns are not featured well in the union. You see the shop stewards are elected at the general meetings but, unfortunately young people usually do not get the opportunity to be there to get elected. I am not happy because the union is not recognising the young people. Young people are not being featured in the union structures" (in-depth participant No. 6, 29/8/2009, City Hall)*

> *"I just think there shouldn't be people leading the organisation since time immemorial. We should pass on to the next generation, so we must have succession plan. I think if you are an office bearer you [have to] nurture somebody to take over on your way out. I would say, there should be policies that promote quota representation, 50% in every election must be a young person. I think there should be an initiative to create a platform for the youth in the union. The union should try and create 2nd layers and 3rd layers of leadership and secondly, whether we like it or not, we must remember that SACCAWU is a brand and we need to position the brand to attract young people (Official 2. 14/8/2009, Ghandi sq).*

These responses indicate that the long tenure of office for some union leaders to some extent discourages succession plan and leadership skills development.

Training young members to become leaders can thus also be useful as an organising strategy to attract many young people. This can also be used to clear some negative perceptions about leadership prospects in the union.

Another point about the conditions of flexible labour is the fact that they have so many disadvantages even within the union structures. Much as SACCAWU wants to embrace its casual members (SACCAWU, 1999) into the union leadership from the shop steward level, what is pertaining on the ground is diverse. This category of employees feel marginalised both at the workplace and in the union. A response from a shop steward actually indicates that casuals are not even recognised for leadership in the union. In principle the unionôs constitution allows for the election of casuals and part-timers to be shop stewards. It is doubtful however, whether the union is aware that members still have the notion that a flexible employee cannot become a shop steward.

> *ñYes it is not easy being a young person, under this conditions, many of our young people they are casuals and so is so fortunate whereby you become a permanent employee and a shop steward because you cannot be a shop steward without being permanent*ò (shop steward, interviewed at the city hall)

5.3 Perceptions and Attitudes of Young People

5.3.1 'Apathy' of Young Workers

Firstly, in the unionised focus group discussions and in-depth interviews with the union organisers, some of them asserted that young people do not show interest in unionism. Some of the union officials interviewed pointed out that some young people tend to be materialistic and apolitical because of certain influences, more especially by the fact that their thoughts are shaped by the media and the culture of the western world (union official 2, 14/8/2009, Ghandi Sq). This official further indicated: *"young people are materialistic and they have to live up to certain standard, so to maintain that is quite difficult* ***(14****/8/2009 , Ghandi sq).*

Regarding the issue of apathy and materialistic tendencies, the researcher made an observation at one of the general meetings of the companies (company ôBô) at SACCAWU regional office on the 30th of August, 2009, no young person below 35 years was seen in that meeting**.** Responses from the older members at the meeting were that, the young people are not interested in union activities so one would hardly see them at such meetings and that they see unions as boring.

"ee you know what at company 'D' especially the youngsters, [the]18s and 19s, those are given us hectic time because they see no need of joining the union" (Shop steward No1, 29/8/200, City Hall).

Based on the above assertions, a follow-up investigation was made from both unionised and non-unionised participants. Conversely, most of the young workers interviewed do not deny the fact that fashion and certain youth culture influence their way of life. They believe, however, that this has nothing to do with workplace protection. A substantial number of the participants interviewed, including the non-unionised, have positive attitudes towards unions and they believe that the union protects them in fighting for their rights. All the unionised participants in both FGD and in-depth discussions response do not portray such tendencies as reasons for not joining unions. One participant in the unionised FGD indicated:

"It is not most of the youth, I think now most of the youth are working and now for you to be secured on your job, you have to join a union. Things like fashion are out of the question they are secondary matter. Like you can't be working for cloths because may be you are the only bread winner in the family, you can't be on fashion all the time….." (FGD No. 2, 5/9/2009, Soweto)

The majority of the non-unionised participants also denied the above assertions. Their responses in the subsequent section reflect a positive impression, which, indicate that workplace protection has no bearing with oneôs taste and attitude. However, the data indicates that there are some variations which indicated that

this perception cannot be entirely discarded, as is reflected in this non-unionised participant expression:

> *"the thing is that, most of us young people are too much into worldly things, yeah, parties, alcohol, substance abuse, not on things that will help us in the near future but, we are busy following things that will destroy us in the near future. What basically my church is doing is that we are bringing the party to the church but not alcohol to the church yeah, not drug, substance abuse, yeah something that will help us in the future as young people, we should start to learn more" (non (No. 2, 5/9/2009, Soweto).*

To a large extent the data does not confirm that young people are materialistic and apolitical because the majority of the participants do not have that mentality or attitude as is being perceived. This study, thus, argues that young people have positive attitudes and perceptions towards trade unionism except for a lack of information about unions that has contributed in their apathy. Waddington & Kerr (2002) reveal a similar finding in their study in which they indicate: ñthere is little evidence of a õThatcherõs childrenõs effect in which principled opposition to trade unionism is widespreadò.

However, they point out something with which this study agrees that, ñshifts in the labour market, the effects of employer resistance to trade unionism and union inefficiencies have a marked effect on the unionisation of young workersò (2002:298). The Australian Centre for Industrial Relations Research and Training (ACIRRT, 1999), cited in Allan et al (2006:35), also questions this kind

of perception about young people, indicating that it is just a ñtraditional assumption that young workers are more individualistic and anti-unionò.

For instance, most of the participants interviewed believe that the unfavourable working hours rather do not allow them to participate effectively in union activities especially the general meetings since they are at work during these union meetings. This is not to say the union is doing nothing but, the majority of young people lack information and blame it on the union for not giving them information about the activities of the union.

Levels of family influence on young people towards unionism are possible factors. Consequently, this study was guided by one of the approaches of Waddington & Kerr (2002) on family influence on unionisation with regard **to** how they can influence young people to be anti-union or otherwise. When investigated, about half of the respondents indicated that at some point their parents, especially their mothers and spouses talked to them about unions even though unions did not matter to them then, because they had not started working. One view from the in-depth interviews:

> *"My mother was a shop steward who is in SAMWU, so I know of unions. I know a lot of unions because of where I am coming from" (non-unionised No. 2, 14/8/2009, Soweto).*

Even though this participant has a lot of information from home, she still thinks that because she is a casual she cannot join a union. It appears that there is a lack of information from the shop stewards, because casuals are also allowed to join unions. Another respondent said:

> *....."Family background, I would say has a part. My mother worked in [the] textile industry [and] she unionised me. We look at certain sectors and say I don't want my children to be working in those sectors, so I think the influence they get is high" (union official, 14/8/2009, Ghandi Sq)*

Comparably, the above responses indicate that to a greater extent young peopleôs interest to join unions may stem from their family background. This study supports a similar opinion raised by Waddington & Kerr (2002:302) which indicate that young people are more likely to be influenced by parents who have once joined a union and can also influence their voting in electoral matters. The findings in the South African context suggest that family influence is even stronger because of the struggles parents and unions went through during the apartheid era. It is not surprising that young people may be influenced by their parents to or not to join unions.

5.3.2 Levels of Unionisation among Young People

In addition to the perceptions discussed above, levels of unionisation were investigated. Even though this study did not specifically look into details of the percentage or level of unionisation statistically among young people in the retail sector (as was done by Allan et al, (2005; 2006) in Australia), this study briefly

looked at what is pertaining in SACCAWUôs jurisdiction. Responses from the shop stewards showed that the majority of people are unionised, which shows that there is a less significant variation on the level of unionisation in the retail sector in South Africa as compared to the Australian studies reviewed in the literature (Allan et al: 2005 & 2006). A substantial number of participants interviewed believe that the union protects them and have thus joined the union as similar to what Tannock (2001:153,156) finds in US and Canada.

5.3.3 Higher Education

Some people believe that higher education is a cause to young peopleôs apathy. This had mixed responses when investigated from both unionised and non-unionised participants. Some non-unionised persons denied the assertion that because they have higher qualifications they do not want to join unions. For the non-unionised their only reason is that they just have not thought of joining a union but not necessarily because of higher educational qualifications. According to the majority of the non-unionised participants it is either that they do not have the opportunity to join because of the inadequate education on the union and not because of qualification. One non-unionised participant indicated in the FGD: ñno it is not because of our qualification, because it doesnôt have anything to do with protection, is just that my workplace is not secured when one joins a unionò(FGD, participant 2, 22/8/2009, Soweto).

The responses from the unionised members were at variance with the non-unionised participants. The unionised respondents indicated that most of the young people feel that they have good certificates and therefore do not need unions for anything. Unionised participants view from the focus group discussion indicated that those who do not want to be in the union believe they can talk for themselves whenever the need arises because they hold high qualifications. Similarly in the in-depth interviews some unionised members also indicated that most of the youth today have acquired higher education with higher skills, thus feel that they can talk for themselves, so they do not need unions. One of the participants from the unionised FGD said: ñthey feel they know much, they have high qualification so they think they donôt need anybody to talk for themò (FGD Participant No.2, 5/9/2009, Soweto)

A union official also said:

> *"One simple reason, young people tend to think they are more educated and they are able to articulate their problems and therefore they don't need anyone to articulate their views, no need of anyone to represent them." (Union official 2, 14/2009, Ghandi Sq)*

Paradoxically**,** majority of the non-unionised participants did not admit the above assertion when asked about their opinion. Their response rather indicated that they believe that for one to have workplace power, one needs to be in a union

irrespective of oneôs educational qualification. It is still strange however, that they have not made efforts to join the union.

While the researcher feels that there is some merit in some of the responses from the unionised participants, these responses to a large extent are prejudiced in the sense that most young shop workers in the retail sector do not even hold tertiary or higher qualifications to fetch them better jobs. Perhaps their perceptions are being informed by the attitudes of other sets of young workers, such as those in the financial sectors who hold university degrees and are enjoying better conditions of service. This study thus finds that the unionised and some officialsôstatements hold some prejudiced views about young people in the retail sector.

Additionally, as it has just been argued above, to some extent, some of the above perceptions have merit because when asked the non-unionised why they are not in the union, some of them could not give any tangible reason, they are just not ready or they rather are just okay with their contracts. This was portrayed by o*ne non-unionised participant response:*

> *ñto be honest, I have no expectations from the union, I donôt know much about the unions so I canôt expect anything from them, all the contracts that I sign are really straightforward, it is either I accept or not so I am ok without a unionò (non unionised participant No. 8, 5/9/2009, Soweto)*

Perhaps this speaks to a perception that the union does not offer any value or benefit to the young casual workers.

5.3.4 Young People and Politics

The issue of politics, with regard to governance, economic issues, partisanship politics and the traditional ways of politics in unions was also looked at and there were variations in responses. It appears that the majority of participants had observations about politics though indicated that they exercise their franchise. According to most of them, voting is the level they are exposed to without having the deeper understanding of politics hence could not comment on it. However, one young union official indicated that the union has nurtured her interest in politics. She expressed:

> *"yeah I do love politics, at first as a young person, I was so ignorant, I didn't know one would know by reading things in the papers, watching TV, but when I grew up and started working with company 'D' and became a shop steward, that's when my eyes opened and said to myself there is a need for me to be empowered because there are always men upfront, they are the ones who follow political issues, but I said I must learn …." (29/8/2009, City Hall)*

Conversely, apart from one non-unionised participant, the rest did not give a positive response to their interest in politics. Some of them indicated that union issues rather do not come up in their conversations as indicated by one non-unionised participant:

"We hardly talk about unions at home. We don't talk about them. All we talk about is family issues, general things not unions, we talk about parties especially when Zuma was campaigning. Unless may be I come up with the topic and ask my dad how do you find unions that's when we talk about them" (Participant No.6, 22/8/2009, Soweto)

Another non-unionised participant indicated: "am not interested in politics, because I don't see the point of me being interested but I do exercise my vote" (No 2, 14/8/2009, Soweto).

The above responses suggest a notion of what unions and politics mean to young people. Perhaps the young people feel their workplace needs are more pressing than party and union politics. However, it appears those who have been closed to the union like the shop stewards embrace politics than the non-unionised.

In summary, issues of politics among young people need to be researched further since this study could not establish the reality on the ground because there were divided opinions. However, one could argue that most of the young workers have little interest in politics relative to job and better conditions of service.

5.4 How is the Union Faring among the Young People?

5.4.1 Union Services

In addition to offering some insights into how young people perceive the union with regard to the unionôs services to them, this study yielded some specific insights. There exist clear variations on satisfaction of the union services among young people in the union. The union is working well as far as the level of unionisation among the young people are concerned, because many of the young people are unionised as confirmed by one union official, that unionised young people are about 60 percent.(No.1, 14/12/2009, SACCAWU, Regional Office). However, majority of the participants contended that the unionôs services to them still leave much to be desired. One could perhaps argue that even though the young people are unionised; the union to some extent is not meeting the expectations of most of these young people, especially the shop workers who are not enthused about the unionôs services. In particular, regarding agreements on work schedule and wages they receive as reported on in chapter four of this study. They feel that the dues they are paying are not yielding many results for them. For instance one unionised participant expressed her frustration:

> *"...my colleagues feel the union is in a business making money out of our 1% dues. You know if they are getting 1% from every member is a lot of money. It is more than a million, you know there are a lot of us now and I am getting questions why are they are deducting this money if we are not getting anything. There are people who asked that the money being deducted from their salaries they don't know where they are going. What for? They knew when they join the union what it was for but now if the*

> *money is going to be deducted and not getting anything. Is not an investment, I am not going to get it someday then it is a waste."* (Unionised worker No 4, 29/8/2009, City Hall)

Others complained generally about their disappointment in the union, especially concerning the lack of progress at the workplace which is one of the thorny issues that have informed their negative perceptions. Among some of the general complaints, are the unfavourable working hours, late knock off, as well as the lack of focus to the needs of the casuals who are mostly young people. A unionised participant in the in-depth interviews complained dejectedly:

> *"well for me it's been fine but not too fine because it seems the union meetings are not yielding enough results when we attend and am losing hope, because if the people who have been in the industry for 30 years are complaining about the same things we are complaining about, it tells you that the union can't help resolve them. Those meetings have not resolved the problems, so we go to the union meetings but there is no inspiration. If some young people have been casuals for about 27 years that tells you they are about 35-40 years obviously. For me the union hasn't fought that much may be with this youth forum they are starting I believe this may work, may be. For me the union is not because if I go to the meetings, is like a waste of time. The union should work harder considering our sentiments" (unionised worker No.7, CBD*).

Some participants in company ÓAÔwere also agitated during one of the in-depth interviews concerning a delayed negotiation; they expressed dissatisfaction about how the union was delaying the negotiations for this year when asked about the unionôs service to them. Participantsôgeneral impression is that they expect the union to do more than it is doing now else they would resign from the union.

5.4.2 Unions Give Us a Voice

General impressions about the union were probed further and strangely the majority of responses were positive as against the negative responses above and in this section. These perceptions are informed by various experiences the participants have had at the workplace and with the union, thus the variations. Some participants believe that the union gives them a voice and protects them, as one unionised respondent from the CBD indicated: *"...not bad being a union member because it is still a safe place to hide if I have a problem, there are people who talk for me*ò(15/8/2009, CBD).

Some non-unionised participants also indicated that they do not support unionsô strike actions. For instance one non-unionised respondent felt the strikes do not help some flexible employees:

> *"for me I think when the unions go on strikes it affects some workers, may be someone who is under me and is a casual will lose the job because the company will say no we don't have money to pay those people" (non-unionised respondent, 5/9/2009, Soweto)*

This can even affect the solidarity among casuals and permanent employees.

Other respondents, however, gave different views, which appeared to come from the good experiences they have had with the union, especially some shop stewards. Two shop stewards who are young people indicated:

> *"a trade union is a very wonderful thing because to be on the trade union, you know your rights you cannot just go wrong, that's why in company 'D'*

we are always having the shop stewards meetings. You cannot go wrong and even the management, is not easy for them to let's say may be sexual harassed their employees because we are dealing with rules, dealing with policies, there are agreements, because you cannot do anything that you like because the union is upfront" (Official No. 1, 29/8/2009, City Hall)

"I have enjoyed being in the union in such a way that I have developed interest and learn more about law because they teach us law everyday because am a shop steward. Actually every Thursday we go and have a meeting and after the meeting they teach us and I am enjoying besides even face [ing] our management. It's given me that confidence" (Unionised In-depth Participant No. 3, 29/8/2009, City Hall)

These participants believe that the union gives them a voice through protection and builds their capacity. A unionised FGD participant expressed what she gets from the union:

"even if I was working in a bank and there was a union, I would join, because you feel secured in the union, if there is something wrong, you know you have someone to stand for you, you know we don't have lawyers. The union, they will be representing us like a lawyer. Before I joined the union I never had rights, because everything they say I had to do it but since I joined the union like whatever they say, I could even say no because I now know, but before you had no choice" (unionised FGD participant No 6, 22/8/2009, Soweto)

Surprisingly this is coming from a non-unionised participant when asked about why some young people do not want to join unions:

"Yeah, because if you don't have a union, you don't have a say in the company, if something goes wrong you don't have a say because no one represent you and you don't know the things about labour, but if there is someone who is going to represent you and gives the things you don't know about, then you see, you can fight for yourself" (non unionised participant No.2, 5/9/2009, Soweto)

When asked why he had not joined the union with all the information he has, he expressed: ñI also tried to go into a union but they didnôt process my things [and] because of time and strikes I didnôt go back to do it againò (5/9/2009, Soweto).

Additionally, when this participant (who also happened to be a supervisor) was asked whether he will not be affected for not being in the union he indicated: ...ñyeah, it doesnôt affect me a lot, but well I know those who have joined fight for their rights and I donôt have a problem (Non-unionised No 1, 15/8/2009, Soweto).

Even though this non-unionised worker had not joined the union at the time of the interviews, his opinion is not in support of those who do not want to join unions because he believes it is the best to be in a union and indicated:

> *"I don't think it is right [not to join a union] because there must be someone who stands for your rights, so those who are not [joining] I think they are just being ignorant. They just don't care, they are satisfied with whatever they have, but simple, if I want a union I would just join it" (Non-unionised Participant No1. 5/9/2009, Soweto).*

Perhaps it could still be argued that the right attitude towards the union will depend on oneôs position in the company and the type of contract they sign giving them some kind of illusion that they can do without unions**.** Usually it is

only when they encounter problems that they realise the importance of the unions. One unionised participant indicated:

> *"like others if you ask them they can't give a valid reason why they are not joining the union, so you can't question them just not interested but the thing is when they are in crisis they look for the union but then is too late because you can't join the union when in crisis. Like this year we had young people who were dismissed and they were not in the union" (FGD No 5, 5/9/2009, Soweto)*

5.5 Conclusion

Reflecting on the experiences of the workers and their attitudes towards the union in this chapter, it appears that, young people in the retail sectorôs perceptions and attitudes towards unions are very positive in spite of the general findings (e.g. complaints about the poor service of the union and poor working conditions). For instance upon some observations on reactions by young people toward unionism, both unionised and non-unionised participants support unionisation and underscored the importance of being a union member.

This study therefore speculates that the impression being portrayed in some of the literature (e.g. Mathoho and Ranchod, 2006:2) and also by the unions is exaggerated because there are a lot of variant views on the ground. While a minority believe in the negative assertions about young workers, a majority of

participants believe otherwise. This study thus concludes that the issue appears to be complex, because, whereas the participants have problems at the workplace, they still feel there is something positive about unions.

CHAPTER SIX

UNION EFFORTS AND RESPONSES

6.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the efforts SACCAWU is making to encourage the effective participation of young people in the union as well as reviewing its mode of operations.

6.2 Challenges of SACCAWU and Organising Efforts

During the Golden Age in the 1960s and 1970s, workers had power to bargain with capital, thus labour movements did not need much effort to organise/mobilise for better working conditions. Conversely, in recent times after the end of the Golden Age, labour is facing more challenges with the emergence of Neoliberalism, compounding the already unequal power relations between capital and labour which, has resulted in more exploitation of workers across the globe, and causing labour insecurity (Webster et al: 2008). Barrett (2006:61) also indicates that the majority of South Africaôs poor are black people who provide cheap labour to investors as sources of profit.

This therefore poses a challenge for unions such as SACCAWU to organise. According to COSATU (2003), SACCAWU is now putting together some strategies to address the fast growing casualisation emerging in the retail sector.

Additionally, from SACCAWUós young workersôfounding meetings at its regional office, in some of which the researcher was present , it appears that SACCAWU is now setting up a youth forum in order to establish a youth desk. It has also identified certain concerns as the basic challenges facing most of its young people. Among some of the challenges it identified are sexual harassment, disability, lack of access to ICT, Accommodation, HIV/AIDS, flexibilisation, poverty, quality of employment and parenting (SACCAWU, 8/8/09 and 16/8/09).

The union has also identified some possible organising activities that will appeal to young people to become more active in the union. This is to have a serious look at how to resolve workplace peculiar problems effectively, to teach struggle songs, organise sports, arts and cultural programmes, to give financial guidance and organise more training programmes for its young members.

The above meetings happened to be the third and the fourth meetings of the young membersôforum usually convened by one young union organiser who is a former shop steward. The meetings included two young union workers, worker delegates from Clear Water, CBD, and Maponya Mall. The meetings were all facilitated by SACCAWU national gender co-ordinator who was present. Participants at the meetings were from the ages of 23-31 years.

The researcher attended two meetings out of the four. Minutes were taken and read in each of the meetings. The main focus of the meetings was plans to establish a youth desk office as per the congress resolution. The meeting then decided to start with a young workers forum that will eventually attract more young people to buy into the youth desk office agenda. Additionally, the meetings had to use the pending õDecisions for Life Campaignô (DFLC) as a strategy to draw many young members into the young workers forum. From what the researcher gathered in the meetings, it appears it is not going to be easy to establish the youth desk straight away because of uncertainty of leadership backing, hence the idea to start on a gradual process.

According to some of the members of the young workers forum, the leadership has asked the young workers focal persons meetings to be put on hold until the leadership meets them, but as at early part of December, 2009, the leadership had not met the group and was yet to give the young people the go ahead to start a youth forum that will spearhead the establishment of the youth desk.

Consequently, SACCAWUôs organising strategies have been informed by the ôDecisions for Life Campaignô(DFLC), which focused on young women in the service sectors. It also hoped to target some focal persons to raise awareness of the youth forum according to one union official (Official No.4, 16/8/2009, SACCAWU regional office). Through the DFLC, SACCAWU is also adopting some strategies to mobilise young women in churches and in the communities in the Northern part of South Africa, although one would expect that SACCAWU should have started long before now. However, SACCAWUôs strategies of talking to young women in churches in some communities now perhaps can be looked at as a mark of ósocial movement unionismôbecause of the fact that it is going beyond workplace to the communities (Webster 2004).

Conversely to the unionôs efforts in organising its young members recently, some of the unionised respondents have some misgivings about the level of the unionôs engagement with the young members. One unionised participant expressed: ñé .to be honest with you, I donôt think the union is engaging young people muchò(No.5, 29/8/2009, City Hall).

> *"No there are no activities for young people; even SACCAWU does not recognise the young people. They think may be young people cannot be the leaders of SACCAWU. I don't know what to say"…I want the union to involve more young people to be able to be involved in politics" (unionised worker, No 6, 15/8/2009, CDB)*
>
> *"I would say, I don't know of any specific programmes because remember it is always the feeling that young people are a threat to the old. Old*

> *people will say there is nothing that the young person can teach them so it is a very big challenge, it's do it yourself and there isn't any mentorship unless you force your way through. We are still in transition and I think it is going to be a while before young people take up such influential positions"* (organiser, 14/8/2009, Ghandi Sq)

Consequently, some respondents suggested some strategies for organising the young people. One unionised participant from the focus group discussion had this to say:

> *"I think they must go around schools, advise them about how to get a job, how one can register and may be help people, like girls who are experiencing problems in schools and churches" (FGD participant No 3, 5/9/2009, Soweto)*

An equally important issue is the difficult situation facing the union now regarding time and also the lack of working class consciousness due to the generational gap between the older and the younger members. The union is faced with a big challenge to mobilise these young workers for working class power or for any meaningful activity due to tight working schedules of the shop workers as opposed to the apartheid era where social movement unionism was at its peak. Kennyôs (2005b) study reveals a similar situation the union finds itself in today. Most of the workers attend work even on weekends, which even affects unionôs general meetings which are mostly held on weekends. In the focus group discussion it came out clearly:

> *" it is not true that young people are not interested in the union, it is just that we are restricted to participate effectively in the union due to tight working schedule" (unionised FGD participant No.4, 5/9/2009, Soweto).*

This study argues that even though global unions have been organising young people over the years (e.g. ICFTU, 1999), most local unions are doing little or are just at the beginning process of focusing its organising efforts on young people. For example, whereas some unions have established youth desk offices and youth committees (e.g. in Ghana TUC) to facilitate their efforts in organising young people, other unions believe it is not necessary and that will only have implications for the leadership.

For instance in SACCAWU, even though in its last Congress Resolution, (SACCAWU, 2009), it was decided to establish a youth desk, this has not materialised up to date due to different ideologies among members and the leadership on this issue. In fact the youth desk position is not an elective position as the general secretaries and the treasurers or trustees or presidency positions in the unions. The youth desk office rather is an additional support staff that solely should serve the interest of young people in the unions. For example, the position the researcher occupies in the Ghana TUC is to design programmes for young people in the union and to research into their workplace concerns. The youth desk is one of the strategies that unions have started adopting with the thinking that a young person holding that position can be a

direct point of contact for the young people and be able to serve them better in the unions.

SACCAWU has thought of emulating this approach but not without difficulties, especially where young people are sometimes seen as threats to leaders and authority. One union official indicated:

> *"The older members at times tend to be hostile to the young people and generally view young people as anarchists. So those are not good for the union and it is unfortunate that, they allow it" (Official No2, 14/8/2009, Ghandi Sq)*

The difficulty has come about partly because among the members, some think the union is for everyone, thus, it is believed that there is no need to have a special focus on young members. One unionised participant in the unionised FGD said: ñthe union is there for everyone, whether you are a young person or older personò (FGD participant 4, 5/9.2009, Soweto). Perhaps this kind of thinking makes the leadership of the union tread cautiously in establishing the youth desk in order not to create divisions in the union.

It could also be that there is a lack of political will on the part of the union leadership to establish a youth desk office to facilitate its organising efforts to attract young people into the union. According to some of the unionised workers interviewed, there are no specific reasons for the inability of the union to establish this office. However one union official explained:

> *"..Apparently there is no youth desk yet because SACCAWU hasn't implemented fully the resolution at the congress. I think SACCAWU wants to deal with this issue strategically. It has however, started in the regions especially the local levels. I think it will come to our level because it has been agreed upon" (Official No. 3, 16/8/2009 City Hall).*

A substantial number of participants are anxiously expecting the youth desk to be established in order to have a channel that will address their concerns effectively. One young unionised participant expressed: ñour union, SACCAWU is planning to have a youth desk whereby we will be discussing issues about young people. I think we will also grow from there if the desk is establishedò (participant No.1, 29/8/2009, City Hall).

One area that has had little focus in this study is the impact of shop stewardsô attitudes in SACCAWUôs effort to be accessible to many young people. Upon some observations, this study argues that the unionôs constitution appears to pose a challenge for SACCAWU with regard to shop stewards structures, which seemingly give more power to shop stewards. Arguably some shop stewards and management relations could compromise the interest of members. This presumably could be to the detriment of the union members.

Some of the shop stewards would rather win managementsô favour for their personal gains by compromising than to largely look at what will benefit the workers (Forrest, 2005:151-154). Some participants interviewed argued that some shop stewards have different agendas, to please management, which

possibly corrupts them. This is confirmed by Mkhize who was quoted in Forrest, (2005) as saying: ñIt is a challenge for the union on how to use trained full-time shop stewards to grow the union. They are paid; they fly all over the place. How could they be used?ò(2005:154). When asked about the mode of selection and as to whether the union gets the right calibre of shop stewards, this was what one union official expressed:

> *"there are people who get into the shop stewardship position so they can advance themselves, get some promotion and all that, is very difficult to pick the right people. Look, to build the union's brand, I think the shop stewards are ambassadors at the workplace to advertise the union so obviously if you get it wrong there it affects the union" (Official No.2, 14/8/2009, Ghandi Sq)*

It is not to say the shop stewards are not working effectively, however, some observations about the work of some shop stewards could be argued can make or unmake the union. In the researcherôs view, in the SACCAWU Constitution, the provision for the selection of shop stewards should have specified certain criteria rather than just ôthe good standingô clause (article 3) for the shop stewardship position to be able to get the right calibre. Additionally, in article 5.2 of the SACCAWU constitution which states that ôthree days prior noticeôwould be given before election is just too short a period to select the right calibre. There should be enough opportunity for workers to assess a prospective shop steward.

This notwithstanding, some participants had different views about the services of the shop stewards. For instance when asked about the services of the shop stewards, one unionised participant from Store ôEôat CBD had this to say: ñthe shop stewards are strong and help us resolve the problems made known to themò(in-depth No. 7, 15/8/2009).

> *"Working at company 'D' is the most fortunate thing because when you come being an outsider, you feel welcome because the welcome is done by the shop stewards first. You feel there at home as a young person to join the union. Because they are working closely with the management, so you can see that even within the union and the management there is also that relationship between the two. All those things the shop stewards are there so you feel like no man this is high time I have to wake up. I have to join the union because most of the shop stewards they are also included" (Official No 1, 29/8/2009, City Hall)*

6.3 Conclusion

The findings of this study provide significant insight on the South African retail sector. This study shows that in the South African context, jobs that are seen as stepping stones or ósstopgapsô are actually permanent jobs for most young people who are mostly black South Africans (Makiwane and Kwizera, 2008). However, elsewhere in the northern countries these ósstopgapôjobs are mostly done by students on a part time basis as well as migrants whose home educational qualifications are usually not recognised in these northern countries (Allan et al, 2005, 2006; Tannock 2001). Students work in such sectors is partly due to their level of education and skills required for work in such sectors.

Additionally in Europe, U.S and Canada, wages may be seen as low by their standard but it is still better relative to South Africa. In South Africa most young people would wish to use these ósstopgapôjobs to further their education as is also the wish by many young people in Europe, US and Canada (Allan et al, 2006 & 2005;Tannock, 2001). Non-unionised participant No.3 interviewed at Soweto on the 25/8/2009 said**:** ñI chose to work in my company because it is part time so I can get time to study**".**

Strangely most of the respondents on this issue are female shop workers who expressed the wish to go back to school. A unionised participant also expressed this sentiment:

> *..."yeah, it will be fine, because right now I am a shop assistant. I won't be a shop assistant forever. I want to do something as much as next year I can get the scholarship from the company and go back to school" (Participant No.2, 22/8/2009, Soweto)*

Unfortunately the dreams of going back to school do not always turn out to be achievable; rather the majority of young people are not able to go back to school because of the economic situation and other factors such as poor grades and early pregnancy

It is the mentality of most of the young people to enter the ósstopgapôjobsôas stepping stone to higher heights as one union organiser indicated: ñmost of the young people do not see themselves in their jobs for a very long time because

some of them are trying to save to upgrade themselves ñtherefore they donôt make unions their home because they wonôt be there for a long timeò (union official No 3, 29/8/2009, City Hall). Unfortunately it appears in South Africa it may not be practical for the young people to progress due to limited job opportunities (Kenny, 2001; Makiwane & Kwizera, 2008; Mlatsheni & Rospabé, 2002). They do not find better jobs as expressed by a unionised worker interviewed at the City Hall: ñwell, I think looking for a job is not easy to get. You know it took me two years to get a job. May be thatôs why I am sticking around until I get a better one someday, you know it is not easy to get a job nowò (in-depth participant 4, 29/8/2009, City Hall).

It would be a great advantage for SACCAWU to follow up with their resolutions to organise a youth desk, because it can yield positive results.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 Conclusion

This study examined the attitudes and perceptions of young workers towards trade unionism, in the context of labour market flexibility. The study focused on the young shop workers in the retail sector where SACCAWU organises.

This study has established that young workersô attitudes and perceptions that ótrade unions are for older peopleôare informed by the unfriendly labour market flexibility and mode of unionsôoperations. The study also infers from similar studies to establish that young people are ôorganisableô and have positive attitudes towards unionism. It therefore behoves unions to adopt new organising strategies to get young people actively involved in unions.

Researching into SACCAWU sectors illuminated the experiences of young people at the job market and what they think of unions today**.** A huge segment of those in precarious and non-regular jobs are young people who are marginalised by the state and even sometimes by trade unions (Tannock, 2001:11), at the same time their well-being has implications for the society. So the young should be recognised as agents of change (Reynolds 1995:219).

This study found out that the assertions of youth apathy towards unionism is a simplistic reading of the situation. This study therefore poses a question to such assertions, as it highlights that the main issue is the nature of young peopleôs job and the mode of unionsôoperations that restrict young people from active participation in unions despite the fact that young people believe that unions can protect them. Additionally, this study found out that in as much as workers may be diverse, unionisation of majority of young people to some extent is influenced by family and friends.

The study also argues that the constitutional provision for shop stewardship structures may frustrate the unionôs organising effort, especially if the right calibres of people are not selected to fight for the course of the union. In the circumstances where unions such as SACCAWU are in a dilemma as to what kind of organising and recruitment strategy should be adopted to make it more accessible to young people, considering the unfavourable working hours of workers today due to labour market flexibility. In spite of SACCAWUôs organising efforts to attract more young people, majority of those young people who are casualised employees are not happy in the union because they do not enjoy progression and job security.

In conclusion, whiles this study confirms that most young people in the retail sector are in unfavourable working conditions, and have at the same time expressed the desire to be protected by unions, they lack information about the relevance and operations of trade unions.

7.2 Recommendations

Ironically, most young people are seen as not being active in the union. These challenges serve as a wakeup call for the union to review the bargaining agreements on the working hours and the need for SACCAWU to allocate resources into organising young people. Additionally, the union should check the modus operandi for recruitment and promotions in the companies as most casuals are being bypassed in place for new employees. This will go a long way to curtail exploitation of casuals.

In the trade union political context, it should make an effort to encourage more young people into its local structures as a layer for leadership and also offer mentorship to potential leaders.

In the view of the researcher, SACCAWU should review its structures and organising efforts to be able to appeal to young people. For instance, the union need to recognise that there is the need to evaluate its structures and its mode of operation to embrace the culture of the youth. It is also imperative that the union improves on its channels for disseminating information as most of the young people are in the dark with regard to unionsôactivities, agreements covering employment conditions and trade unionism as a whole.

In relation to building a brand that will appeal to young people as indicated by one union official:

> *"We can't run away from the fact that youth thought is shaped by the media [and] with strikes coming in we don't help ourselves so the youth will grow up thinking that unions are just anarchists. So I would say these perceptions are created by the media and the fact that unions go hand in hand with politics, we need to tell our own story and not to let the media tell our story for us. We would have to have programmes on TV and promote our image, and should explain our shortcomings because that is the most important thing to change the mentality of most young people" (14/8/2009, Ghandi Sq)*

This study thus wishes to suggest that the union should expand its horizon beyond strike actions. The study also wishes to re-echo the need to utilise the media with programmes that have the face of the young that speaks the same language of the young people to attract them into the union as one of the strategies being adopted by the DFLC. SACCAWU could also emulate what the European trade unions are adopting by collaborating with students leaders from the high school level to educate students about unionism. This can be done through studentsô programmes and websites as outlined by Waddington & Kerr (2002) in the literature review.

The appointment of the youth desk officer should be one of the priorities of the union. A highly enlightened personality and level headed young person with organising skills could be considered by the union in order to effectively organise the youth as in the case of the US labour movement who engaged young organisers to revitalise the US labour movement (Bronfenbrenner & Hickey, 2004). This is not to say the older generation cannot attract young people but it will be imperative that young people are attracted by their own peers and the approaches in doing things that are seen as the culture of the youth are adopted, thus the need for the youth desk officer cannot be over emphasised.

More so the choice of union language, activities and operations should encompass issues of culture and identity of young people. These should be education through entertainment on the ideals of unionism and activities that have the image of young people as well as the review of mode of operations. As some of the unions have initiated TV advertisements especially during the DFLC and also planned to adopt the Facebook communication network as a strategy to connect the young people; it would be an innovation if SACCAWU could continue this way to enhance its organising strategy. It is rather unfortunate that many young people in the retail sector where SACCAWU organises do not have time to explore the internet and may not have access to the internet; this however, would still contribute positively to SACCAWUôs organising efforts.

The above efforts of the union notwithstanding, young people need to open up for training, for information in order to understand better the operations of the union. There is the need for openness by the young people to learn from the older generation in order to develop their leadership skills. The union is a development centre, which can be utilised to develop oneself if one opens up. The best way to develop oneself is through learning from the experienced (Forrest, 2005:162).

In conclusion, this study wishes to emphasise that young people easily exit for other jobs when faced with problems (Cregan and Stewart, 1990), thus the demands and desires of young people need to be taken seriously by the union to strengthen the membership of the union and to build the future of the union.

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SACCAWU Constitution: www.saccawu.org.za, accessed, 16th May, 2010

Youth Unemployment Statisticsòwww.ilo.org/communication accessed on 22/3/09

MEETINGS

Decisions for Life Campaign co-ordinating team meeting at COSATU secretariat, 4/6/09

SACCAWU Young Workers Focal Persons Meeting at SACCAWU Regional Office, 8/8/09 and 16/8/09

LISTS OF INTERVIEWS

Union Officials

Participant No. 1, 29th August, 2009, City Hall (Company D) and 17.10/2009, telephone

Participant No. 2, 14th August, 2009, SACCAWU Regional Office, Ghandi Sq (Union Office) & 17/10/2009, telephone

Participant No. 3, 29th, August, 2009, City Hall, (Company A)

Participant No.4, (Patricia Nyman-Appolis, (Gender Officer, SACCAWU) (4/6/2009, 24/4/09, 5/10/2009) (SACCAWU House)

In-depth Interviews with unionised participants

Participant 1 Store A (29/8/2009)

Participant 2, Store A (29/8/2009)

Participant 3, Store B (29/8/2009)

Participant 4, Store C (22/8/2009)

Participant 5, Store D (16/8/2009)

Participant 6, Store E (15/8/2009 & 8/12/2009)

Participant 7, Store E (15/8/2009)

Participant 8, Store F (5/9/2009)

In-depth interviews with non-unionised participants

Participant 1, Store A, (5/9/2009)

Participant 2, Store A, (5/9/2009)

Participant 3, Store A (24/8/2009)

Participant 4, Store B (24/8/2009)

Participant 5, Store B (24//8/2009)

Participant 6, Store C (24/8/2009)

Participant 7, Store F (22/8/2009)

FGDs Unionised (5/9/2009, held at Soweto)

Participant 1, Store B

Participant 2, Store B

Participant 3, Store B

Participant 4, Store B

Participant 5, Store A

Participant 6, Store A

FGDs Non-unionised (22/8/2009, Soweto)

Participant 1, Company C

Participant 2, Company D

Participant 3, Company F

APPENDICES
APPENDIX 'A': ETHICS CLEARANCE FORM

UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND, JOHANNESBURG

Division of the Deputy Registrar (Research)

HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (NON MEDICAL)
R14/49 Frimpong

CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE — **PROTOCOL NUMBER H0 90711**

PROJECT — Attitudes and perceptions of young workers towards trade unionism in the age of flexibility: A case study of the South African commercial catering and allied workers union

INVESTIGATORS — Ms FS Frimpong

DEPARTMENT — Sociology

DATE CONSIDERED — 10.07.2009

DECISION OF THE COMMITTEE* — Approved Unconditionally

NOTE:

Unless otherwise specified this ethical clearance is valid for 2 years and may be renewed upon application

DATE 11.08.2009 **CHAIRPERSON** (Professor R Thornton)

cc: Supervisor : Ms/Ms B/P Kenny/Naidoo

DECLARATION OF INVESTIGATOR(S)

To be completed in duplicate and **ONE COPY** returned to the Secretary at Room 10005, 10th Floor, Senate House, University.

I/We fully understand the conditions under which I am/we are authorized to carry out the abovementioned research and I/we guarantee to ensure compliance with these conditions. Should any departure to be contemplated from the research procedure as approved I/we undertake to resubmit the protocol to the Committee. **I agree to a completion of a yearly progress report.**

Signature

PLEASE QUOTE THE PROTOCOL NUMBER IN ALL ENQUIRIES

APPENDIX 'B' REGUEST FOR CONSENT AND CONSENT FORM

C/O Faculty of Humanities, Wits,
Private Bag 3, 2050, Johannesburg,
South Africa
Tel: (011) 717-4443
Fax: 086 539 5484

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

REQUEST FOR YOUR CONSENT

I am a Master of Arts student in the Department of Sociology at the University of the Witwatersrand, conducting research on the "Attitudes and Perceptions of Young People towards Trade Unionism in the Age of Labour Flexibility", using SACCAWU as my case study. As this project is for academic purposes, I would like to secure your consent to interview you for 30 minutes to one hour. It is intended that the interview will be tape recorded, with your permission. Please be assured that the tape will only be accessed by me and will be kept in a locked safe to ensure confidentiality. In addition, pseudonyms rather than real names will be used.

Please note that participating in this interview is voluntary and will not attract any charge. You therefore have the right to end the interview at any point if you feel uncomfortable.

Please also be informed that in addition to the University of the Witwatersrand, SACCAWU will also be provided with a copy of the research report to complement its efforts to incorporate young workers' issues into the union's activities. Please be assured, however, that you stand no risk in participating in this research as confidentiality will be protected at all times.

Should you have any questions or queries about this research project, kindly contact my supervisors, my programme co-ordinator or me through the following contacts:

1. Programme coordinator: Zahn.Gowar@wits.ac.za,
2. Supervisors: Prishani Naidoo: Prishani.Naidoo@wits.ac.za and
3. Dr. Bridget Kenny: Bridget.Kenny@wits.ac.za

4. Researcher: Freda S. Frimpong: afiafrimpong@yahoo.com or 0722235978

Please append your signature on the accompanying consent form if you are willing to participate in this research.

Thank you.

FREDA S. FRIMPONG
RESEARCHER

(B) Consent Form

I,……agree on this day ……, 2009 to participate in the interview or discussion for the research project being conducted by a Wits University masters student, Freda S. Frimpong. The purpose of the study has been explained to me, as purely for academic purposes. I accept that my participation is voluntary and I am aware that my responses will be kept confidential and that there will be no payment for my participation in the interview.

Date: …… Sign: ……