

**From migrating men to moving women: Forgotten Lessons from the
Karks on methodology, migration and disease**

Paper presented to the History and African Studies Seminar,
University of KwaZulu-Natal,
17th November, 2004.

**Mark Hunter
PhD Candidate
Dept. Geography
University of California, Berkeley
hunterm@berkeley.edu**

Work in Progress – comments gratefully received but
please do not quote without permission

From migrating men to moving women: Forgotten Lessons from the Karks on methodology, migration and disease

The problem of syphilis in South Africa is so closely related to the development of the country that a study of the social factors responsible for its spread is likely to assist in its control (Sidney Kark, 1949).

So wrote Sidney Kark in the opening paragraph of his famous 1949 article “The social pathology of syphilis in Africans”. The syphilis epidemic, Kark argued, was rooted not in individual pathology but in the segregationist policies that divided African families and underpinned the circulation of men between rural and urban areas. Published in the conservative *South African Medical Journal*, what makes the article all the more remarkable was its utter contrast to the biomedical rooted research that dominated the journal at the time. This radical perspective was nurtured at Polela, a rural area in the foothills of the Drakensberg mountains in south-west KwaZulu-Natal, where Sidney and his wife, Emily, had pioneered what came to be called Community Orientated Primary Health Care (COPC). Here, in the 1940s, the Karks had witnessed the syphilis epidemic at its peak before penicillin became widely available in the following decade.

Today, KwaZulu Natal’s public health fame rests on its extremely high HIV prevalence rates. Over 37% of KZN women tested in antenatal clinics in 2003 were found to be HIV positive; in the country with the most HIV positive people in the world this is the highest rate of any South African province. Consequently, KwaZulu-Natal is a favourite destination for public health professionals and the region is somewhat awash with money for intervention and research. Among those who study the AIDS pandemic today, Sidney Kark’s 1949 paper has come to symbolise the importance of migrant labour, and more broadly apartheid, to the spread of STDs in South Africa. The journals *Society in Transition* and the *International Journal of Epidemiology* both recently reprinted Kark’s landmark piece.

Yet, the strength of Kark’s paper was not simply to argue that male-migrancy was a vital vector driving the spread of syphilis -- an assertion that I argue later has been unquestionably projected forward to the contemporary period. Even at the time, Kark questioned whether male migration was the *only* mechanism driving STD infection -- his data suggested that many men were actually infected in rural areas and not in towns, a finding largely ignored to this day.¹ But putting these conclusions aside for a minute, I want to dwell on how the Karks social research represented considerable *methodological* advances in the study of health. Like the community health system they championed,

¹ Kark’s data suggested that, although married men generally infected their wives, over half of the infected married men were infected by rural women. We should interpret these figures with some caution because of the small sample size (76), at the same time it is noticeable that there have been few, if any, references to how these important findings complicated the male-migrant-infecter-model even in the 1940s.

these can be of tremendous relevance today.² Living for a long period in rural KwaZulu-Natal, the Karks' arguably blended an historian's sensitivity to social change with an anthropologist's eye for changing household structures.³

It is with some irony then that such a rich heritage of methodological innovations from the KwaZulu-Natal area -- and one must also include in this legacy Max Gluckman's 1940 classic "analysis of a social system" article based on the 1938 opening of a Zululand bridge -- tends to be ignored today by the US-centred public health industry.⁴ By far the most prominent and well funded strand of AIDS research is biomedically based. Social research is dominated by epidemiological approaches and sexuality can easily become a static object of enquiry, decontextualised from wider historical changes. In Africa, the most affected part of the world, the authority of statistics is perhaps magnified because of what David Cohen (2004) has called an "epistemology of certainty" that affects the way that "Africa" is studied. And perhaps this can also shape the somewhat static qualitative approaches towards sexuality found within much of the public health literature. Setting the international tone on research one of the leading journals in the field, *AIDS*, carries around 20-25 mostly biomedical and statistically-driven epidemiological articles per issue with contributions averaging only about 3 or 4 pages each. As anthropologist Schoepf says:

[to be recognized as real] facts must be put about by those who are socially authorized to do so. In the domain of epidemic disease, these persons are epidemiologists and specialists in public health, not social scientists, and above all, not ethnographers who use qualitative methods to examine culture: social relations, meanings, and their contexts (Schoepf, 2004:17).

If the public health industry is now embracing the Karks' model of male migration infection, I want to suggest that it has much to learn by returning to the Karks' *methodological* innovations. And specifically I want to argue that a methodology which combines ethnography, social history, and quantitative analysis would ask important questions about women's migration and STIs and not simply male migration.

² In the recent period of democratisation scholars have revisited Kark's pioneering work on community and social health issues (for instance Yach and Tollman, 1993 and Marks, 1997). The Department of History at the University of KwaZulu-Natal recently organized a conference on the Karks' legacy.

³ On the Karks' methodological innovations see Yach and Tollman (1993) and Trostle (1986). The latter particularly describes their use of anthropological methods. In their student days at Wits they associated with anthropologists such as Hoernlé, Gluckman, Kuper, Krige and historian MacMillan: "It was the influence of these men and women that led to our life long interest in the use of social anthropology and social history as integral parts of our social and epidemiological knowledge." (Kark & Kark, 1999). Myer, Morroni, and Susser (2003) have also recently argued that despite the Karks' pioneering work lessons around mobility and STIs have not been learnt.

⁴ Gluckman rejected the search for static, separate, cultures in favour of analyses that that explored social and historical process within a single social system. His approach later underpinned the work of the Rhodes Livingstone Institute in Zambia which he headed. Gluckman is situated within South Africa's anthropological history by Hammond-Tooke (1997) and Cocks (2001). For examples of the use of Gluckman's methodology today see Burawoy (1991; 2000). Michael Burawoy was first exposed to Gluckman's methodology while studying at the University of Zambia as a Masters student in the 1960s.

The Male-Migrant-Infecter-Model

Why has the male-migrant-infecter-model remained so powerful in AIDS research despite, as I argue, great evidence against its overriding relevance today? I have suggested that one reason lies in the methodological conservatism of the public health industry. But this is compounded by the use of often rigid gender categories in the study of “AIDS in Africa”, described in Chapter 1.⁵ Powerful men are neatly positioned as mobile/sexually active/infectors and disempowered women as immobile/sexually passive/infected in a narrative that forecloses the complex interweavings of male power and disempowerment, women’s resistance as well as collusion, and love as well as violence. The award winning film AIDS film *Yesterday* is just one example of how the media can reiterate these gendered and racialised stereotypes, celebrating the “resilience” but ultimately immobility and sexual passivity of rural women.⁶

Of course, many male migrants do become infected with HIV in towns and return home to infect their rural partners. Nevertheless, in a recent examination of discordant couples (where only one partner is HIV positive) in rural Hlabisa and Nongoma, Mark Lurie (2003) and his collaborators found that, somewhat to their surprise, in nearly a third of the cases it was women, and not men, who were HIV positive. If we compare this finding to Kark’s (1949) data, which suggested that married women infected their husbands extremely rarely, it raises important questions about sexual networking in rural areas today. Yet, taking the debate forward, Lurie’s study still focused on male and not female migration. The little evidence we have on women’s migration has indeed shown higher HIV prevalence rates among women who had a history of movement (Abdool Karim’s et. al’s (1992); Zuma et al. (2003)). These findings echo studies in other parts of Africa (Lydie, 2004; Decosas et. al., 1995; Nunn et. al., 1995).

This chapter explores the central institution in Kark’s analysis – migration – but concentrates specifically on changes in women’s migration patterns. Within the

⁵ This paper is based on a rough draft of a chapter for my PhD dissertation. I have kept in place references to other chapters to give a sense of how it fits into my broader thesis. The dissertation is provisionally called “Building a Home: unemployment, intimacy, and AIDS in post-apartheid South Africa” and I hope to complete it in May 2005. I realise that in a paper partly discussing methodology, I have not give much of my own. This is contained elsewhere in the dissertation, but see Hunter (2002, 2004). Broadly, my field work was split over 3 periods. For the first two periods, in 2000 and 2001, I lived in Isithebe Informal Settlement, Mandeni, undertaking ethnographic research for a little over 7 months in total. In the 18 months from June 2002 to the end of 2003, I tried to put more emphasis on historical analysis and, while spending the majority of my time living in Mandeni, I also spent time in Durban and elsewhere undertaking archival work. I have been working with the Africa Centre for Reproductive Health since 2002 and this culminated in me spending one month living in rural Hlabisa between November and December 2003 principally to investigate women’s migration from that area to Mandeni. Since January 2004 I have largely been writing up my dissertation.

⁶ *Yesterday* tells the story of a young KwaZulu-Natal mother who falls ill and discovers that she was infected with HIV by her mine-worker husband. It was showcased at the 2004 Bangkok AIDS conference and will no doubt become a powerful representation of AIDS in KwaZulu-Natal and South Africa. For a critique that *Yesterday* promotes an ahistorical and apolitical view of AIDS see Mbali and Hunter (2004); see also KaMncube’s (2004) and Sember’s (2004) critiques and complaints by traditional healers on the representation of a *sangoma* (diviner) in the film (reported in Sunday Tribune, Oct. 24, 2004).

historiography of migration, there has been a strong bias towards studying male migration. As Izzard (1985: 258) says:

women were presumed to play a passive role in terms of migratory behaviour, either following their husbands or being 'left behind' in the rural areas of out-migration.

I do not, however, simply want to make an empirical claim that women's migration is an important and rising phenomena. The chapter tries to probe different processes that have moulded women's migration over the last century. Which women are moving? On what terms are they engaging with urban or informal areas? How have the geographical and temporal patterns of movement changed? The chapter is by no means a comprehensive history of women's migration but it does seek to explore changing themes over time. To do so, I use both the terms "movement" as well as "migrancy". In its everyday usage, the term "migrancy" is so deeply associated with formal employment that it can easily be reduced to labour migrancy, which tends, as I argue below, to favour the recording of male movement.⁷ One consequence of conflating movement and labour migrancy is that it is often assumed that the longer a man is away from "home" the higher chance he has of catching an STD. Yet chapter 6 argued that the project of "building a home" in rural areas led some migrant men to practice sexual conservatism in urban areas. It may be that a rural woman "moving" to several places looking for work, or engaging in informal work, is more likely to contract an STD than a man who has stayed for long periods in urban areas – we do not know because research has tended to be so invested in the male migrancy model. As an initial step towards exploring both "migrancy" and "movement" I examine both census data, which is heavily weighted towards collecting information on long distance, long term, migrancy, and demographic data from the Africa Centre for Health and Population Studies which is better able to track movements over shorter distances and for shorter durations.

The first female migrants to towns, the chapter notes, were often divorced, widowed or abandoned women. Young, single, women -- the group who are most mobile today -- faced great controls on their mobility. Married women too faced pressure not to move, the strongest justification coming from a husband's continued commitment to building *umuzi* (a homestead). Yet as the 20th century progressed, the fragility of the migrant labour system, erosion of the agricultural capacity of rural areas, rise in levels of schooling, and expansion of demand for women's labour (notwithstanding the tightening of influx controls from the mid-1950s) meant that women increasingly questioned the virtues of a rural livelihood. Men were perpetually absent and becoming progressively unreliable sources of support. The case studies that I draw from are testimony to the fickleness of dependence on men and male migration. If the flow of women's migration had increased by the mid-century, however, by the latter part of the century it had become something of a torrent. The collapse of male labour, and therefore men's

⁷ A further advantage of a broader notion of "movement" over "migration" is that it more explicitly directs attention to a literature within feminist geography that explores how gender is produced in different spaces and examines how the movement, or non movement, of men and women works through and transforms gendered power dynamics (see particularly Massey, 1994 and McDowell, 1999).

provider role, has meant that men and women's ability to engage in the joint but contested project of building an *umuzi* is now greatly diminished, as demonstrated by very low marriage rates today.

These dynamics, together with, until recently, increases in work opportunities for women, and from the mid-1980s, relaxation in influx controls, have inclined steadily more rural women to move from rural areas, although often not permanently. A young unmarried rural woman is today often expected to move to find work, a dramatic reversal from the situation over much of the last century. I argue, however, that the vast majority of rural women who move today are facing considerably more tenuous economic (although not legislative) conditions than women before them as unemployment has reached staggering proportions. This is demonstrated through my research in rural Hlabisa and in an informal settlement, Isithebe, where I lived for long periods between 2000 and 2003. Informal settlements in South Africa mushroomed following the relaxation of influx controls. According to a recent HSRC (2002) report they are now the worse area for HIV infection with prevalence rates of 21% compared to rates of 12% in towns and 9% in rural areas. Social dynamics unfolding in these divergent spaces are thus vitally important if we are to grasp the socio-spatial dynamics of the AIDS pandemic.

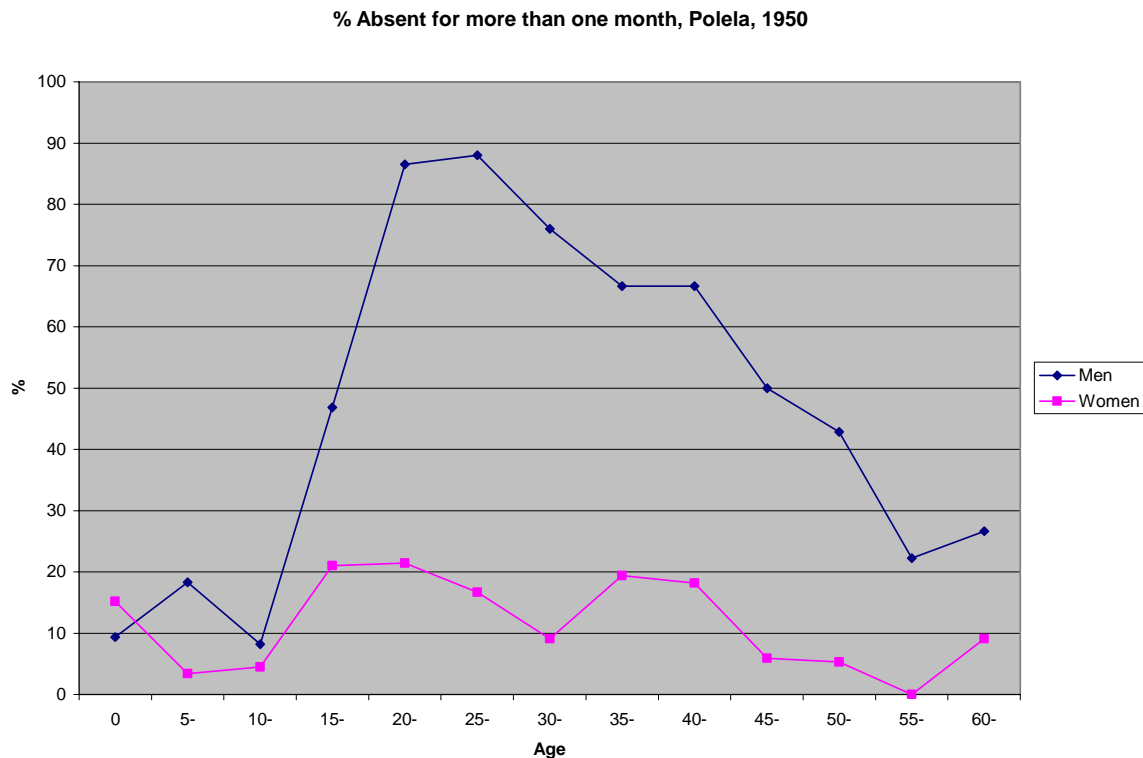
I stress economic forces but I try in this chapter to move beyond push/pull analysis and intertwine economic changes with a broader set of processes that moulded South African society: changes in household structure as marital rates have greatly diminished and most men and women now fail to "build a home" (chapter 1); an ambiguous "transformation of intimacy" whereby young people demand the right to choose their lovers, the ideal of marriage is based more on companionship, penetrative sex has become partly detached from reproduction and yet there is great difficulty in meeting the end game of romantic love -- marriage -- leading in some cases to relationships that are the apparent antithesis of "love" (chapter 4); a shift from men being seen as "providers within marriage" to "providers outside of marriage" including through sexual networks that incorporate gift exchanges (chapter 4); and the reworking of masculinities away from men becoming men through "building a home" -- a project which at times necessitated sexual conservatism -- towards greater value being placed on men's sexual conquest of women (chapter 5).

As in Sundumbili township (chapter 6) these dynamics in rural and informal areas are buffered and shaped by South Africa's uneven geography. Focusing on rural Lesotho in the early 1980s, Spiegel (1981) noted how rising rural inequalities caused by stabilization policies within the mining industry could result in male wages being partially distributed through sexual networks. Today, unemployment, combined with the continued relative high wages for the smaller number of employed men, has undoubtedly increased this schism and I would argue that these sexual networks now increasingly stretch between the rural and the urban as a consequence of women's mobility. There are still some women who migrate permanently to towns, and a very small number who undertake movements to a new husband's *umuzi*. But probably the majority of rural women tend to pivot multiple movements around their rural home, a fairly flexible arrangement allowing for women's frequent movement, the cheap reproduction of children, the transfer of resources through sexual liaisons, and the redistribution of state benefits, especially

pensions, usually through the presence of a rural *gogo* (granny). This is a somewhat “ideal type” representation of change which, of course, masks tremendous variety; yet it is not, I think, without value. Instead of AIDS research being fixated with male migration, and working through somewhat clichéd stereotypes of women as victims, it needs, I argue, to concentrate much closer on how the social epidemic has emerged from dynamics of rural household restructuring, changing labour markets, and differing meanings attached to love, sex and money – all processes that cannot be understood without gender and yet equally cannot be understood through a paradigm of undifferentiated male power.

Part I: Women’s migrancy up to the 1950s: A brief overview

Women were certainly not immobile in pre-industrial *isiZulu* speaking society. Marriage necessitated a woman taking a “long journey” from her father’s to her husband’s kraal and there are numerous examples of women’s mobility within kinship networks.⁸ Mining and secondary industrialisation, however, transformed movement and disease patterns and it was these dynamics that were captured so brilliantly in Sidney Kark’s article in 1949. The chart below is constructed using Kark’s (1950) own data and shows the high levels of male absence in the 1940s.



⁸ The “Long journey” is of course Harriet Ngubane’s (1981) term. An example of the high mobility of women in the 19th century can be found in the 1887 Gumakwake case drawn from in chapter 2.

Even as Kark was writing, however, women's mobility was undoubtedly on the increase. The total number of women in urban areas increased by 15 times between 1911 and 1960, compared to a 5 fold increase in the number of men (Simons, 1968: 278). The rural based Keiskammahoek surveys showed a marked increase in women's absence between 1936 and 1946 (Houghton & Walton, 1952). In Bechuanaland in the early 1940s Schapera too found women to be increasingly mobile (Schapera, 1947). Certainly until pass laws were extended to women by the Nationalist government in the mid-1950s, women had relative freedom to move into South African towns (Wells, 1982). Indeed, Kark's own data found that up to 20% of women in certain age groups were absent from Polela in the late 1940s.⁹ And these levels are important because, although his 1949 article emphasised the centrality of male-migration to the spread of syphilis, it also found that the majority of rural women who infected men were themselves infected in urban areas.

I won't probe these dynamics in detail but I do want to point out several themes evident in the early 20th century migration literature. It is now well established that as women began to move to towns, chiefs and elders "jealously guarded their control over women, to ensure the continuation of homestead production and their dominance within rural society" (Walker, 1990: 173, see also Guy, 1987; Marks, 1989; Carton, 2000). The most noted groups of female migrants to towns tended to be widows, women looking for absent husbands, junior wives in polygamous unions, unmarried mothers, and unmarried women who had passed the common marital age (Schapera, 1947; Walker, 1990; Bonner, 1990). A first point of note therefore is that unmarried women without children appear not, on the whole, to have been a dominant group within the earliest migrants, a point which I will return to in the next section. A second point is that, marginalised by the colonial labour market, these early migrants were unable to take up formal work and relied heavily on informal activities, notably beer brewing and "prostitution" (White, 1990; Bonner, 1990; Walker, 1990). A third point is that women's migration was far more likely to be permanent, or at least longer term, than the migration of men.¹⁰

There was of course great diversity in these trends. The geographical unevenness in the decay of rural production, in the penetration of schooling and Christianity, and in the proximity of potential migrants to well established travelling routes, meant that migration differed greatly by region. Basotho women were a dominant early group on the Rand and even within a single country such as Bechuanaland there was great diversity in migration experiences (Bonner, 1990; Schapera 1947). Moreover, although young unmarried women were often seen as being among the least likely to migrate, as early as the 1920s Christian educated women from Phokeng moved to work in Johannesburg to accumulate consumer items before entering matrimony (Bozzoli, 1991).

⁹ Other sources on women's mobility include Bonner (1990) and Walker (1990). See also the 1930-32 Native Economic Commission, including the testimonies of Kunene, Mtembu, and Mahamba at Dundee on Sept 19th, 1930. p. 1367 and Sibusisiwe Makanya (6310).

¹⁰ In addition to Schapera (1947) and Walker (1990) see the 1930-32 Native Economic Commission, testimony of Archdeacon Lee, Vryheid, Thursday 18th September, 1930, p. 1404. White's (1990) study is, however, the classic example of early female migrants maintaining strong links to their rural homes.

Part II: Women's movement from the mid-century

The memories of my elderly informants whom I interviewed in rural Mandeni or Sundumbili Township stretch back to roughly the 1930s. Women with whom I spoke recalled the intense social pressure for women to remain in rural areas. To be seen as respectable, and thus marriageable, a young woman was required to embody a chaste demeanour and display *inhlonipho* (respect). Those women who showed signs of leaving a rural area, the ultimate expression of rebellious movement, could be labelled with insults that included “*isifebe*” (loose woman) and be rendered unmarriageable.

The pressure to embody *inhlonipho* was embellished with the not insignificant attraction of *ukwakha umuzi* (to build an *umuzi*). Although a man, even in his absence, was the formal head of an *umuzi* building an *umuzi* was seen as a joint male and female project that required obligations from both sides and did provide an element of security and status to rural women. If a young wife lived a somewhat subordinate life, in time she would gain the status of *umamezala* (mother in law) and command considerable power over her own daughter-in-laws. The sense of an implicit bargain – the ceding of many domains of control to men in exchange for support – pervades interviews and court cases, coming to the fore when such agreements break down. In this setting, if a woman sought employment this could be seen as an affront to a man's capacity to support, both as a father and as a husband. Mrs Mhlongo, now in her 70s, said that her husband's attitude was that there was “no need to work since there was no poverty”.

The evocation of “tradition” to deter women from movement did not go unchallenged. Educated women, usually with the highest aspirations and equipped with English language skills, were often the first to take up work in towns (Vilakazi, 1965; Mbatha, 1960; Mayer, 1980; Bozzoli, 1991). Christian women also were more likely to demand that they accompanied their husbands to urban areas. As the case of Mrs Mthembu below suggests, Christian notions of “love” -- intimacy, companionship, and the realisation of a domestic femininity in a “modern” urban space -- had strong resonance among Christian men and women who considered themselves *phucukile* (civilised/modern).

Mrs Mthembu was born in Endulinde, some 20 Km from central Mandeni, in 1940. Her father worked in Johannesburg and her mother looked after their rural home. Both her parents were Christians. Mrs Mthembu completed Std 6, a high level of education for the time and reflective of her Christian background (on the whole women from Christian families were much more likely to have a higher level of education and those who migrated to Sundumbili Township were better educated than those who stayed in rural areas). She married in 1965, at first staying in her husband's rural home to look after the umuzi. Her husband was a Christian. Mr Mthembu worked at first at a hotel in Tugela and shortly after secured a job in SAPPI in Mandeni attaining a four room township house in Sundumbili Township. In such circumstances, a number of men whom I interviewed said that they preferred to live with a concubine to ensure that their wives stayed in the rural areas to protect the umuzi. Christian men, however, were by far the most likely to bring their wives to stay with them. Mrs Mthembu also pushed for such a

relocation “When you marry your husband”, she said, “you must go with him to the town.” This reflects the dominant Christian view that love and marriage should be fostered through intimacy and companionship (see chapter 4).

One way for women to earn income without moving was through local employment. The most common local work for women in Mandeni was employment in local sugar farms. Pay, however, was appalling and young, unmarried, woman looked on with increasing restlessness at the vulnerable position of married rural women, whether they worked or not. Men were staying away for longer and longer periods and an increasing number absconding to towns. Declining rural production meant that if the *umnumzana* (head of household) fell ill, died young, or abandoned the house, either his wife or, perhaps daughter, had a strong economic incentive to move to seek work. Mrs Zulu was one woman who took a decision at a young age to migrate to an urban area.

Mrs Zulu was born in Nongoma in 1940. I interviewed her in a 4 roomed house in Sundumbili Township. Her father, who had 7 wives, worked as an induna in a mine in Jo’burg while her mother looked after the rural umuzi. Mrs Zulu finished Standard 2 in a mission school and she might have continued further had her father not died when she was young. The relatively early death of Mrs Zulu’s father, and subsequent financial difficulties, seemed to have been important in shaping her mother’s attitudes towards Mrs Zulu’s migration. While Mrs Zulu’s abrupt departure was not sanctioned, she was welcomed when she returned back to the rural areas. She recalls some of the dilemmas that young women faced:

MH: What did young women use to say [about migrancy]?

Mrs Zulu: Some they said lets wait so that we marry. When we talked about that we said it is good to marry but we saw that married women were poor.

MH: What do you mean that they are poor even though they are married ?

Mrs Zulu: Some husbands are up and down with the girlfriends, some you can see that they are no more supporting their home and sending money, the wife gets so poor she must get food from other people. Sometimes your husband doesn’t come back from Jo’burg and you ask other men who went with him why my husband doesn’t come back home and they tell you that he is having another wife there. Maybe his children are sick here.

Mrs Zulu left home when she was 16 to work in a kitchen at a local farm. She was unhappy at the poor pay in this first job and took up a number of other domestic position before arriving in Johannesburg. In Johannesburg she fell pregnant (she says that before leaving home she had soma’d, engaged in thigh sex, to prevent pregnancy). Eventually she split up with her Jo’burg boyfriend upset that he was having many girlfriends. She then returned home, leaving her child in Nongoma before moving to Empangeni to find work. In 1984 she moved to Mandeni and began work in a factory in Isithebe, stayed at first with her sister. She is now living with a married man who has a wife in a rural area.

The late 1950s to the 1980s was a time of increasing demand for women's labour but also of tightening controls over women's movement and housing opportunities. Pass laws were extended to women and the Group Areas Act hardened racial segregation. Taking Durban as an example, up until the 1950s, informal areas such as Cato Manor were spaces where women might access informal housing. But as a consequence of the Group Areas Act, men and women were pushed from these spaces into formal housing projects such as KwaMashu, where access to housing was restricted to men. The rapid expansion of married township housing in the 1950s and 1960s therefore took place at the same time as heightened legal restrictions that slowed down rural-urban movements (see Gilbert and Crankshaw, 1999 on the situation on the Rand). Women in Durban probably had the following options in the 1960s and 1970s: living with their husbands in a township house, living as a concubine in a township, staying with relatives, being lucky enough to secure a place at Thokoza women's hostel, or securing accommodation through work as a domestic worker -- the latter giving women probably the greatest bargaining power over men (on the relative power of domestic workers in Durban see Mbatha, 1960; Preston-Whyte, 1981).

Mrs Mnguni (below) was both a victim of women's migration to Durban, losing her husband to a concubine, but then a beneficiary of women's easier access to land in the 1980s as a consequence of legal reforms by the KwaZulu Government. In the early 1980s she secured her own plot in Sundumbili Township and began building *imijondolo* to rent. Her testimony, though showing the insecurities wrought by male migrant labour, contrasts vividly with those of women today who complain of the difficulty in finding work and housing.

Mrs Mnguni was born in Ongoye, Mtunzini district, in 1937. Her father died when she was young and she was raised by her mother. Her final year of school was standard 2. Mrs Mnguni married in a rural area but her husband, who worked in Durban, began living with another woman in KwaMashu and failed to support her. At quite a late age, when her children had already left school, she moved to Mandeni and began staying with her sister-in-law, finding work in the then white town Mandini as a maid. She also engaged in informal work, including collecting scrap metal from the industries and selling it for recycling (a job I have heard a number of women say was quite lucrative at the time). In the early 1980s the KwaZulu government began selling plots of land in Sundumbili Township (see Chapter 6). These were among the first opportunities for women to own property in the township. Mrs Mnguni bought a plot in 1986 for R136, built a house and lived with her boyfriend who died in 1990. She also built imijondolo and began to rent them out. While not rich, she appears relatively comfortable.

The diverse and contradictory forces at work -- the labour market, Christianity, housing, legislative changes and deepening rural decline -- and the fact that my interviews were concentrated in one area, make generalisations very difficult to formulate, a fact compounded by the dearth of secondary material on women's migration. Nevertheless, I would suggest a number of themes. First, that notions of intimacy fostered by Christianity were important in justifying the movement of wives into new urban spaces that expanded rapidly in the 1950s and 1960s; second, that if legislative loops tightened on women, the demand for women's labour rose, aided by increases in schooling; third, that the tenuous

rural conditions nudged progressively more women towards deciding to abandon rural areas, even if most women did maintain a rural path, at least at first.

Part III: Migration in the Contemporary Period

The remainder of this chapter will look at women's movement from one rural area, Hlabisa, to an informal settlement, Isithebe. I want to begin, however, by taking a brief detour in order to explore data that suggests that despite the continued prevalence of the male-migrant-infector-model, rural women are indeed moving quite considerably. The data also suggests that these movements are more frequent than those of men.

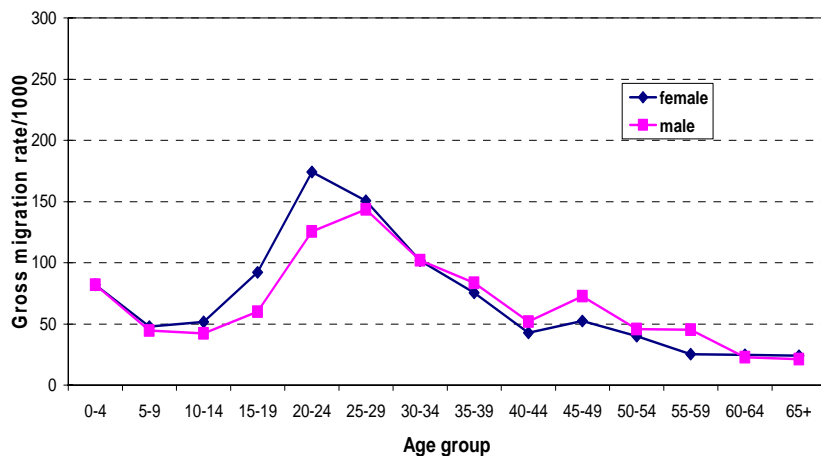
Migration or Movement?

Drawing on data collected since the year 2000, the Africa Centre for Health and Population Studies in Hlabisa has uncovered a surprising finding: rural women appear to be more mobile than rural men. The Africa Centre's data is still preliminary but women appear to move shorter distances and more frequently than men, in part because they often leave children in rural area.¹¹ The findings by the Africa Centre that women move more than men are at odds with established thinking and research and this discrepancy arises principally from different ways of defining "migration". Household surveys, and census data, show more male than female migration, though steady increases in women's movement. The October Household survey defines migration as absence from home for more than a month each year to work or seek work. Posel and Casale (2003) draw from this data and data from the South Africa Labour and Development Research Unit (SALDRU) to find significant increase in women's migration from 1993 to 1999, although the figures still show that men are twice as likely to be migrants. The census records a migration event if an individual moves across the boundaries of a Magisterial district over a five year time period. The conclusion resulting from this method -- that there are more migrating men -- seems to make intuitive sense since significantly more women than men do stay in most of South Africa's rural areas (in Hlabisa the masculinity rate, the number of men compared to 100 women, is 84).

In contrast, the Africa Centre visits each household of its much smaller 90 000 reference group every six months and is able to record shorter term movements over shorter distances and movements not associated with work, patterns more likely to fit women's movement. An "external" migration event is when a resident has moved in or out of the "surveillance area" for longer than a 3 month period. Notably, this definition does not

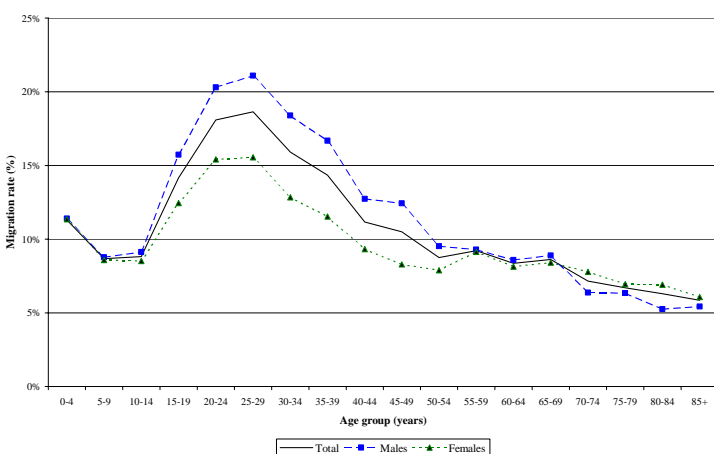
¹¹ The Africa Centre has established a migration working group to probe this Hlabisa data. I would like to acknowledge the extent that this chapter draws from my access to the Africa centre's data and to interaction with this group as well as with Kobus Herbst, who facilitated the sampling and the Thabede family with whom I stayed in Hlabisa. I conducted the interviews in rural Hlabisa in 2003 jointly with Thembeke Mngomezulu and I learnt much from this collaboration. Census data below is taken from Kok (2003) and reproduced with the kind permission of Pieter Kok.

capture some “traditional” migrants, for instance men who work away from “home” for long periods and return “home” only for short periods. The Africa Center’s definition of “migration” is therefore more akin to an index of “movement” than “migration” as commonly defined. Nevertheless, as stated, it may well be that “moving women” are just as vulnerable to HIV infection, perhaps more so, than “migrating men”. Below are charts derived from the Africa Center and census data:

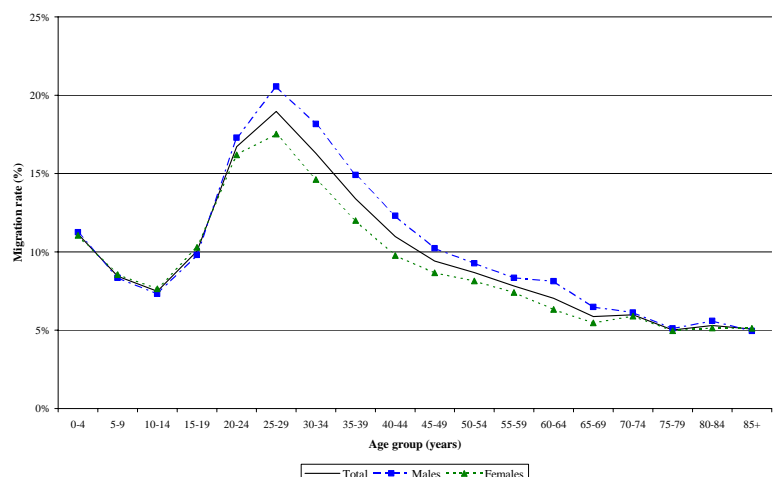


Measuring “movement”, measuring “migration”: The Africa Centre defines an external migration event as occurring when a person moves in or out of the “surveillance area” for a duration of more than 3 months for any reason, a method that favours the tracking of women’s “movement”. The census records a migration event if a person moves from one magisterial district to another over a 5 year period, a method that favours the tracking of male “migration” (however, note the increase in women’s migration from the 1970s to the 1990s even using this method).

Age-specific migration rates (1975-1980)



Age-specific migration rates (1992-1996)



Isithebe Informal Settlement

What conditions might women moving from rural areas face today? Situated on tribal land surrounding Isithebe Industrial Park, *KwaSithebe*, as it is known locally, has been called at various times a “slum” or a “squatter camp”. It is true that since 2000 when I first began staying in Isithebe there have been examples of disorder: one of my neighbours whom I knew shot and killed his friend by accident while they were playing cards, another robbed a local factory with an AK47 and fled the police, the shop attached to the house where I stay was held up at gunpoint earlier in 2004, and AIDS has ended the lives of many people. At the same time the daily 7 am siren ringing from the factories is symbolic of a restless rhythm of industrial time that pervades the settlement. I am therefore using “informal” not to suggest disorder but to describe a high density area that lacks the infrastructure of roads and reticulated water found in formal townships. These impressions are, of course, shaped by my own gendered and racialised entry into Isithebe. I was known to have the approval of important people including the chief and *induna*; stayed with a well respected and relatively wealthy family who owned a shop and tavern; and was able to control my own mobility through the ownership of a car.



Taken from the *umuzi* where I stayed, this photograph shows a row of *imijondolo* (rented, single roomed, accommodation). In the background are the factories of Isithebe Industrial Park.

At the time when SAPPI was built in the area in the 1950s, Isithebe was a well-watered rural area with a reasonably dense population living in *imizi* (see 1937 aerial photo in Chapter 2). The rural economy supported the production of crops that included *imimbila* (corn), *obhontshisi* (beans), *obhatata* (sweet potato), and *amantongomane* (ground nuts) while a number of families grew sugar for the local Matikulu Sugar Mill. White owned sugar cane farms bordering the tribal areas also employed labour, although much of this was sourced from Mpondoland. As population pressure increased following the establishment of Isithebe Industrial Park in 1971 land began to be “sold” by *izakamizi*

and houses built on these plots with the chief and *induna* taking a cut of any payment. Many new residents originated from the north coast of KwaZulu-Natal and gained access to land; in the early 1980s only 2% of informal houses were rented (Ardington, 1984). The thousands of *imijondolos* were built largely in the 1980s as population pressure increased following the rapid expansion of Isithebe Industrial Park. *Imijondolo* were built by *izakamizi* (local families) and other entrepreneurs who themselves could acquire the status of *izakhamizi*. The family with whom I stayed for instance arrived in the early 1980s with some capital, bought land, and built around 50 *imijondolos* to rent as well as a shop.

A class of local entrepreneurs and “traditional” leaders might have rued the increased migration to Isithebe but they had a stake in an orderly increase in the population. While the Mathonsi chiefs have progressively lost control over land and became politically challenged by largely ANC supporting industrial workers, an abiding theme in the area is how different chief’s repositioned themselves in order to benefit from the money economy. This is seen in the former chief Mathonsi’s receipt of a Backie when the state negotiated land for the industrial park in the early 1970s (the grandfather of the present chief); in the “gifts” to the chiefs and *indunas* when land is “sold” (its selling is denied by the chieftdom authorities although ownership is rarely disputed provided a plot is occupied and it is passed within recipient families); in the present day Chief’s own ambiguity as he moved from COSATU member and industrial employee to IFP supporter when taking control of the chieftdom; and in his recent forage into taxi ownership.¹² In an area where modernity is powerfully symbolised by the literal overshadowed of the area by factories, “tradition” is an extraordinary malleable concept even by its apparent custodians. One consequence of this orderly growth of an “informal” settlement is that there has never been a squatter population; this would not have been allowed by the Chief, *izinduna* (chief’s assistants) or *izakamizi*. Another is that, unlike in other tribal areas where women are less likely to be granted land, some early women arrivers were allowed to gain a vital toe-hold in local property as demonstrated by the case of Mrs Khumalo.

Mrs Khumalo was born in Nongoma in 1952. Her mother was forced to seek work in Matikulu after her husband died and Mrs Khumalo herself obtained domestic work while staying with her mother. In 1972, she moved to Mandeni and worked as a domestic in the white areas before obtaining factory work in 1981. She bought land for R500 in 1982 from an isakhamuzi (original owner) and built her own mud, wood, and stone house. She uses her house as a small shebeen during times of unemployment. Since I first met her in 2000 she has been in and out of formal work in the factories, supplementing any earnings with money from the shebeen and from baby sitting for other working women. When she

¹² See Shula Marks’ *Ambiguity of Dependence* for the ambiguity of prominent Zulu leaders towards the state. On the chief’s role in the Isithebe area I am drawing from numerous interviews with residents, from observations, and from archival sources. On the latter, an important source is the school report-card styled reviews of chiefs’ performance found in the Pretoria Archives. The 1966-7 review of Mcatshangelwa Mathonsi read: “This chief has allowed squatters to clutter up his ward. I suspect that anyone who gives him a fee would be accepted and given a place to stay.” He was awarded a half bonus. Pretoria Archives. N1/1/3/5 Revision of chief’s bonus 1966-7.

is not working she can often be seen rolling a wheelbarrow across the informal settlement carrying beers for her shebeen. She lived with her boyfriend, Jonathon, for over a decade. He was made redundant from a large firm and she constantly complained about his alcoholism. He died in October 2004.

The removal of decentralization subsidies in the early 1990s and rapid trade liberalisation in the post-apartheid period occasioned a period of tremendous industrial restructuring (chapter 2). However, retrenchments did not stop the inflow of people into Mandeni. According to 2001 census data, in the two wards roughly comprising Isithebe informal settlement, the population increased by an extraordinary 300 - 400 % between 1996 and 2001 alone. Figures 1,2 and 3 demonstrate the tremendous growth of the area despite the shedding of jobs.¹³



Figure 1: 1981



Figure 2: 1989



Figure 3: 1999

Figures 1,2 & 3: Isithebe Industrial Estate and Informal Settlement. Between 1989 and 1999, in particular, the informal settlement surrounding the park grew tremendously, despite the reduction of jobs from approximately 23 000 to 15 000 in the industrial park.

The large number of unemployed women and men means that every weekday, hundreds of unemployed people move from factory to factory to *fesa* (seek work). Some have done so for more than 2 years without finding employment. Yet, rent and land prices have continued to rise. In the informal settlement the typical rent for an *umjondolo* is R20 -

¹³ Reflecting the prominence of the clothing and textiles industries in the area, the biggest group of residents are now women aged between 15 and 34 (24%), followed by men aged 15-34 (19%), women aged 35-64 (12%), and men aged 35-65 (9%). According to the 2001 census 76% of people living in Isithebe Informal Settlement have never married, a total of 39% of people are employed, 28% unemployed and 33% not economically active (a broader definition of unemployment that included those discouraged from looking for work would give a higher figure). This compares to a figure of 11 % unemployment for the Mandeni area found by Ardington (1984) in the early 1980s.

R80 per month while in Sundumbili, a single room can cost up to R150 per month.¹⁴ What's more, unlike in the boom period of the 1980s, when a reasonably secure income was attainable, new arrivals are usually unable to buy their own plot of land, especially at today's inflated prices.



Ukufesa (to wait for work). All day long women like these walk around the factories looking for work. This is also a common meeting place for men and women

Relationships in an “informal” space

The geography of modernity, with its own history touched on in Chapter 1, shapes perceptions of Isithebe. The informal settlement is often seen by residents - usually with some pride - as more respectful of “traditional” institutions and customs than its neighbour Sundumbili Township. Most residents speak very little English and in the evenings Ukhozi FM can be heard playing traditional music and *isiZulu* programmes. On weekdays, by 9.00 the lights of most informal settlement residences are extinguished while the township is still bustling with activity. Mrs Khumalo, 50, mentioned above, once joked to me about the presence of *amaqhikiza* (elder girls responsible for guiding younger girls) in Isithebe which gives a sense of the way the area is coded as “traditional”. At the same time, for migrants the availability of water and electricity also positions Isithebe as a “modern” space, at least compared to the rural areas from where most residents migrate.

These modern technologies of *intuthuko* (development) are experienced alongside emerging opportunities that some women have for economic independence and new forms of liaisons. Love letters, and discussions over sex and sexuality, are very much a

¹⁴ Pudifin & Ward (1986) report that in the mid-1980s women's wages were typically R18-R38 a week while accommodation ranged from R3.50 to R5 per month. Today, interviews suggest that many people spend a higher proportion of their wages on rent. This is largely because continued rapid in-migration has kept rents high, while job-losses and high unemployment has depressed wages.

part of rural life and yet co-habiting is rarely practiced in rural areas without the payment of *ilobolo*. New spaces of intimacy were evident one night in Isithebe Informal Settlement close to my family's house when men and women were entangled in intricate ball room dancing moves, a popular and "modern" recreational practice in the moonlight outside the *imijondolo* of the informal settlement. Caricatures and jokes directed towards recently arrived woman are a further measure of Isithebe's perception as a modern but dangerous space for women. Stereotypes include the young *ibhinca* (rural bumkin) walking hand in hand with her boyfriend in a public show of affection less permitted in rural areas; the proud young woman living in an *umjondolo* and supporting her lover; and the rural woman who demands greater sexual intimacy, experimentation, and pleasure from her boyfriend.

I want to touch now on love letters from Isithebe. I have been present several times when love letters have arrived for acquaintances, although most residents say that letters are now being partly superseded by "love SMSs". The claim that some relationships involve considerable intimacy and are positioned within a "love culture" is important not simply to challenge the instrumentalism that is evident in much of the AIDS literature. The existence of "love" moulds the very structure of sexual networks since a common practice is for both men and women to have a "main" lover as well as more casual relations. As the case of Fikile below shows, movement between rural and urban areas can now foster a woman having more than one "main" lover, and it is these men – constituted within a love culture – with whom condoms are the least likely to be used. If "love talk" facilitates great ambiguity and flexibility within relationships today, crucial to its sometimes malleable, sometimes brittle, texture is how it is still underpinned by the idiom of marriage, despite the rarity of the practice. I begin with an extract from one letter sent to a 34 year old lady, Bongi, from a man working in a well-paying firm. The lady is fiercely independent, and runs a successful business. She laughed off the letter off and said that she is not interested in the man:

Ngiyajabula kakhulu mangaba impilo izawell ... Selokhu ngaqala ukukubona ngezwa kuxhaphazela isisu ngenxa yovalo enganginalo. Kodwa ke ngiyethemba uzongizwela ngane kama ... Nginamunyumunyu enhlizweni ngawe ntokazi emhlophe njengezihlabathi zolwandle. My heart is beating like a fire uma ngicabanga about you. Izandla zam zisoft like banana ... sengifuna umfazi ozovusa umuzi wakithi ...

I am very happy that your health is going well. Since I started to see you I could feel my stomach boil because of the trepidation I had. But I trust that you will feel sorry for me, my mothers child ... I have deep emotion in my heart because of you, my pure lady [as white as the sand from the sea]. My heart is beating like a fire if I think about you. My hands are soft like a banana ... I want a woman to build up/raise my families home.

In the next letter a man in his 50s is *shela*-ing (proposing love to) a woman in her early 30s whom I have known for some time and is very poor and quite ill. Beginning by informing her about the death of the his children's mother, the suitor then tries to allay any fears that he might be sexually impotent, an embarrassing topic that a letter can address most easily. The importance placed on sexual performance suggests that

relationships even with very large age gaps are constituted not simply around gifts from men to women but also around sexual satisfaction and/or procreation:

Ngiyjabula mangaba usaphila mina angiphili nawe uyazi inkinga yami ngashiywa umama wezingane zami. Ngazama ukukutshela kodwa wena konke lokho ukushaya indiva kangazimisele ukudlala ngawe kodwa ngikuthanda ngenhliziyo yami yonke... Kantike ungakhathazeki nenduku isavuka kahle angigugile ngaleyondlela ngiyaphila ukudla kwakho uyofika kusagcwele phama igula lilinde wena ngelakho wedwa kangiphisani ngalo.

I am happy if you are still alive. I am not well and you know my problem that the mother of my children left me. I tried to tell you everything but you ignore me. I do not intend to play with you but I love you with all of my heart ... Don't worry as my penis is still working, I am not that old. I am healthy for you and you only [your food, you'll find it still full, it is yours only, I don't give it to anyone]

The following are three letters collected over a short period by Bongi all concerning Mr Mathe, 36, her neighbour and close friend. In itself the nature of this friendship, whereby a man can consult a female friend about his letter writing and love affairs, says much about the flexible gender roles in Isithebe. The first letter was sent by Mr Mathe to a mutual acquaintance; the second was shown to Gugu, although she persuaded him not to send it; the third was received by Mr Mathe. These demonstrate how multiple forms of relationships can exist all with different demands and characteristics. In the first he is proposing love to a woman:

Ngcela ucacise kusukela manje ngicela ungemukele ngoba nawe uyazi ukuthi ngiyakuthanda inhliziyo yakho iyazi ukuthi vele mina ngiyafa ngawe ntokazi.

Please be specific from now on please accept me and you know that I love you, your heart knows that I worship you my lady.

In the second he is ending a relationship with a woman in very direct terms saying that she is *isifebe*, a slut.

Sengikhathele ...uwe ngicela sehluwane ngoba uyisifebe lesi esishishiliza ngenkomo phansi. Amandiya, amakhaladi nabantu uwe uyafeba sifebe ndini. Isikhona intombi engithandana nayo sala nobufebe bakho. Impendulo angiyidingi.

I am tired of you can we please break up because you are a slut that gets around using her vagina on the floor. Indians, Coloureds and blacks it's you being a slut, you slut. There is already a girl that I am involved with so stay with your slutness. I don't need an answer.

The third was from a woman with whom he has a child. She is informing him that she wants to end the relationship since she is getting married to another man. The reference to Shembe, probably the fastest growing church in the area, is interesting because it is often said rather mockingly that the main reason why women attend Shembe is to find a polygamous husband:

Ngibhala lencwadi sengizame kaningi ukuthola noma ukuthola kodwa ngehluleka ngafona ucingo lwakho lutho. Ezibuhlungu njengoba wazi ukuthi ngingumnazaretha futhi ngake ngasho ukuthi ngifuna umshado. Sengi wutholile ngamanye amazwi angisakufuni akusavunyelwa lutho lapha kimi abantu baya-ekhaya ngawo lomsombuluko.

I write this letter and I have tried many times to reach you but didn't succeed, I tried calling you on the phone and there was no response. The bad news as you know that I go to the Nazareth church [Shembe] and I have told you before that I want to get married. I have found some one to marry me, in another words I don't want you anymore. No one is allowed to do anything to me, the other family is coming the next Monday [to begin marriage proceedings].

The terms within which the intimacy suggested above is practiced depends on men and women's work prospects and housing. A small survey conducted in Isithebe earlier in the year (of 28 residents who live in *imijondolo*, other questionnaires are pending to make a total of 50), by an 18 year old resident, suggests that women's financial position plays a large part in determining living relationships. Of the fifteen women surveyed, thirteen said that they lived alone, although most of them said that they had boyfriends who stayed over. Two said that they co-habited with men. It is noticeable that almost all of the women who worked said that they preferred to live alone. These findings reflect an apparently contradictory discourse in the informal settlement: men are indispensable for companionship, sex, biological and social fatherhood, and sometimes financial support and yet they can frequently *hlupha* (disturb) women, for instance by having other girlfriends, taking their money, trying to control them and putting them at risk of contracting AIDS. In the same survey, just over half of the men said that they lived with girlfriends, and just under a half said that they lived alone. The dominant view among men is that they need to live with women not simply for sex and companionship but for domestic services such as cleaning and cooking. Those who said that they lived alone had girlfriends staying over but said that living permanently with a woman was too expensive. The women who lived with working men tended to be newer to the area and more likely to be unemployed. The ability of men to attract women was supported by evidence of considerable salary differentials in Isithebe: according to the survey men earnt almost twice as much as women (R436 per week average compared to R224 – see also census data in Chapter 2).

Industrialization brought economic independence for some women, giving them the opportunity to approach intimacy on their own terms, and yet casualisation and de-industrialization has left many younger women more dependent on men. The most desperate women are recent arrivers who have the worst employment and housing opportunities. The combination of relatively rich men and poor women, accentuated by economic decline, is central to the exchange of sex in the informal settlement. We need to be wary of accounts of decline, and as I have argued be sensitive to the way that talk of "no love" itself reiterates a love narrative. Nevertheless, these testimonies, as many others, do suggest that more recently arriving young women are facing harsher conditions:

Before, people didn't rely on anyone, they were having money, now they have to rely on other people ... some see this man today, this man tomorrow, and that man the following day ... some men are working in factories, some outside like taxi drivers ... Today the situation pushes them to this thing ... they are scared [of AIDS] but sometimes they just say that there is no such thing, they just ignore it ... (Mrs Ndlela, 40s, long term resident)

Sometimes she is loving someone who treats her badly, maybe he abuses her by hitting her or something. So she says let me try another. But then she finds that he is also going to treat her badly. [Then] she will *qoma* (choose a lover) another one, maybe she is looking for money. Others they come from far, they want work, they end up having to *qoma* a lot of boyfriends because they can't find work. The men give them money for rent, food and clothes (Zandi, 24 yrs).

Women arriving in the 1980s to Isithebe, as I have argued, tended to be in a much better economic position than those arriving today. Mandeni's men, however, have profited very differently from the recent period of de-industrialisation. Some male *izakhamizi* (original residents) and entrepreneurs have become part of a successful rentier class, channelling earnings or retrenchment packages into the lucrative *imijondolo* business. Men with relatively high earnings attract women with whom to co-habit or have casual relations. Yet many men are unemployed and can combine looking for work with sitting and drinking, complaining bitterly about the poor economy, including how this affects their relationship to women. The area is famous for its large consumption of *isiqata* or as it is called locally *isipikiliyeza* ("the pick is coming", meaning that your grave will soon be dug) or *ukhakhayi lwemfene* (crown of a baboon, because the drink makes peoples' hair fall out). For R2.50 Rands a man can buy a litre of this concoction, get drunk for the whole day and forget all of his problems (this potent brew evolving from the *isishiyemane*, is made from brown sugar, brown bread, yeast, *umthombo* (malt) and, it is rumoured in some cases, agents such as battery acid). In 2000, I spoke to a group of unemployed men outside a furniture factory in Isithebe Industrial Park. The men began by expressing anger at being asked to pay bribes to secure employment.¹⁵ Yet the most emotive topic was how difficult it was for poor men to attract girlfriends. This caused great resentment against richer men in the area who were able to attract numerous women. To outbursts of laughter from the crowd, one man said that he hadn't had a girlfriend for 3 years. As he spoke, and as if to underline his lack of *ubudoda* (manliness), a woman burst in to tell me: "they are not men if they don't work."

¹⁵ I was told that jobseekers are often expected to pay a bribe (*ukugwaza*) in order to gain employment. For women, sex could sometimes provide an alternative to monetary transactions.



The male-migrant-infector-model has remained so powerful because African men continue to be represented as having undifferentiated power. This cartoon appeared in the popular daily *Isolezwe* on Nov. 1, 2004 and reflects a prominent theme of cartoonist Qap's Mngadi, the disempowerment of men. The man is saying "My wife, these children of ours don't all look alike" and she is replying "What? You take *isigatha*, *ubkokweni* [both potent home brewed drinks], *ugologo* [purchased spirits] and dagga, what do you expect?"

The following two interviews, which end this section, demonstrate the vulnerable position of new arrivers to Isithebe, including around accommodation. Note also their contrast to the testimony of Mrs Khumalo who arrived in the early 1980s, attained work, physically built a home, started a shebeen, and supported her boyfriend when he was unemployed. In a metaphorical as well as concrete sense the circumstances when she arrived in Isithebe in the early 1980s allowed her to "build a home" and eventually take the responsibilities of a household head – though for newer arrivers this is rarely the case.

Busi is aged 24 and has two children who both stay in her rural home, Mahlabathini. The childrens' father left for Jo'burg and Busi subsequently heard that he had found another girlfriend. Busi first found work as a domestic worker in Ezikhawini (a township near to Empangeni) but she left this when the family failed to pay her. In 2003 she came to Isithebe and began staying with a friend. Since then she has not found work. Busi says that she is sick of fesa-ing (queuing looking for work) and in any case, even if she gets work it will only be for R65 a week (employers usually prefer to choose the most experienced people from the large labour pool and hence newer migrants, if they find work, tend to be concentrated in lower paid "service" jobs in clothing firms). Eventually, her friend whom she was staying with asked her to leave saying that she wanted her boyfriend to move in with her. Busi eventually got her own place and started a relationship with a Taxi Driver who helped to support her. At the end of May, however, she argued with him and in July she entered into a relationship with his friend who works at a large, relatively well paid, factory, moving in to stay with him. The taxi driver, she said, never provided enough for her. Her new boyfriend, however, was hiding the fact that he was already married and one day his wife arrived and heavily beat Busi. "Then I had no hope of living well and started joaling with friends. I started drinking and

smoking dagga, sleeping around for food. Sometimes I get money like 100, 150 and buy nice trousers because they are a good style and can attract men. I am not really selling my body but I do have a lot of boyfriends ... sometimes we use condoms, sometimes not, it depends on him, but I know that there is AIDS ... it is that sometimes I forget condoms when I am drunk”.

If Busi is forced by circumstances to have multiple boyfriends, a partial narrative of “love” is more directly present in the case below. Fikile has a “main” lover in both Isithebe and Melmoth, her rural home, as well as an *umakhwapeni* (secret lover) in Isithebe. This gives us an idea as to how relationships, with differing level of support, commitment, and emotion, can stretch from rural to more urban areas. As the next section argues, these relationships must be conceptualised as being integral to the very reproduction of rural households today.

*Fikile is 26 years old and is from Melmoth. She has 2 children from 2 different men. She separated from the first father saying that she was young, at 17, to have a serious boyfriend. The second father ran away saying that the child was not his. One of these children has now died while the other stays with her grandmother. She left the Melmoth area in 2003, April, after the death of her parents because there was no one to support her and her 2 smaller brothers. She now stays with her cousin in Isithebe who, with her husband, have a 4 room house. She has 2 boyfriends in Isithebe who both give her money and are working. The main one supports her with food and money, some of which she sends home. The other, an *umakhwapeni* (secret lover, literally “under the armpit”), gives her 50 or 100 Rands irregularly. Her main boyfriend does not want to use condoms and she says that she trusts him but she uses condoms with the other. Fikile also sleeps with a boyfriend from home and doesn’t use condoms because he claims to be her “indoda yami ngempela ngempela” (my man, for real, for real), although he is not working and can’t support her. She has never worked at Isithebe factories since it is difficult for her to get employment without experience. She does washing and ironing for a lady one a week earning R50.*

Rural Hlabisa: Leaving *ikhaya*

In the dry and dusty heat of rural Hlabisa in November 2003 the two Africa Centre employees and I stopped at a rural school to ask for directions. In the staff room the teachers asked me why I (a white) was in rural Hlabisa. I told them that many people from rural Hlabisa moved to Mandeni, where I was researching, and I was interested in the reasons. To the laughter of her colleagues, one female teacher said: “*Bafuna amafutha amadoda*” (literally, they want the fat of men). I asked what was *amafutha amadoda*? “*AmaSperms*”, was the answer. “But there were men with sperms in the rural areas?” I said. “Yes, but they have no money,” she replied. This association of virility, sex, and movement, is a dominant one and underlines the fact that men without money and work are seen as “useless”, as not real men. Young school leaving women whom I spoke with in rural Hlabisa scoffed at the thought of staying *emakhaya* (at home or in a rural area) to wait for a man to *lobola* them, rejecting with equal vigour the prospect of working for R10 a day weeding sugar cane alongside their uneducated mothers. Several days after stopping to ask for directions at the first school, I visited another school in an area well known for its close migratory links to Mandeni. I asked a class of Standard 10 students what they wanted to be when they left. The collated answers illustrate the high hopes of young people despite the dearth of prospects: chartered accountant (9), electrician (3), nurse (2), teacher (1), security (1), economist (1), doctor (1).

In November and December 2003 myself and Thembeke Mngomezulu visited 28 *imizi* in Hlabisa district while I stayed with a rural family. Households were randomly selected from those which were recorded as having close links with Mandeni or where recent migration events had been linked to co-habitation or marriage. A full review of changing rural household structure in South Africa is beyond the scope of this chapter.¹⁶ Nevertheless I would like to make three observations. First, there has been a quite dramatic move away from patrilineal patterns whereby household formation was marked by a woman making a “long journey” to her new husband’s *umuhi*. This is evidenced by the low rates of marriage and the prevalence of households that span three or four generations. Evidence that the decline of marriage in rural areas is a relatively recent phenomena can be gleaned from a number of sources.¹⁷

Second, marital decline is not simply a cause of changing household structure but a consequence of shifts towards the organization of households around more flexible forms of kinship (but non-conjugal) bonds. Noting how conjugal bonds are characterised by

¹⁶ For more details on the Africa Centre data set see Africa Centre Population Studies Group (2003) and Hosegood and Timaeus (forthcoming). See the special edition of *Social Dynamics*, Winter 2003, for recent studies on household changes in South Africa, especially the article by Margo Russell.

¹⁷ Libby Ardington’s (1988) study of rural Nkandla reported still quite high marital rates in the early 1980s: “Most of the unmarried mothers who had stated in 1982 that they intended marrying the father of their children had done so by the time of the resurvey in 1985” (1988: 16). In contrast, out of nearly 14 000 migrancy events captured within the Africa Centre’s “data surveillance areas” only 103 were noted as taking place because of marriage. Moreover, of the families we visited where marriage had been reported, all were undeniably middle class, either living in well-to-do rural *imizi*, or in township houses occupying professions such as teaching. More detailed statistics and arguments on the reduction of marital rates, including the way that this is linked to chronic unemployment, can be found in chapter 2.

fairly rigid male and female roles within marriage, Niehaus (1994) first suggested that these were being superseded by more flexible sibling bonds. Yet if the instability of conjugal relations can result from migrant labour and women's greater employment, as Niehaus noted, an additional driving factor today is clearly chronic unemployment. Indeed, the structure of households has changed vastly over the last 20 years. Rather than being perpetually reconstituted through the dynamic of marriage, today's rural households cross several generations and serve as a site for the cheap reproduction of children, the production of small amounts of subsistence farming, and the redistribution of a pension, usually from *gogo*, and other state benefits such as the child support grant. A third point is that mobility, including women's mobility, forms a vital part of these kinship networks. Today, not only are relationships much less likely to be organized around conjugal bonds but networks now stretch much further into informal and urban areas and, as evidence in these areas suggests, incorporate more transactions linked to sex. The massive expansion of Isithebe Informal Settlement in spite of a decline in jobs in the industrial park is a vivid expression of this trend.¹⁸

The two case studies below help us to consider household dynamics in the rural areas from which women migrate. The first case demonstrates the importance of kinship networks, in this case including a mother, son, and daughters. If in the past a woman who was least likely to migrate was young and unmarried and would establish her own home through marriage, this is no longer the predominant pattern today. Gezekile's household suggests the value of flexible kinship networks where none of the members are building their own *umuzi* and movement and flexible gender and generation roles are central to its very existence. At one stage, Gezekile worked in Mandeni to support the household while the eldest daughter looked after her mother's children. Then her son, Dumisani, was lucky to attain work but left his children in the *umuzi*. Now the mother looks after the young children and help for the *umuzi* is given by two of her children. This is quite a well off family but in less well off kinship networks there will be more pressure on women within these social groupings to engage in informal sexual liaisons. The second case, below, was chosen because it demonstrates the vulnerability of rural women, and their dependence on men, even if they move between rural areas. Such large age gaps between women and their lovers (35 years) are of course not typical. Yet it is telling that Thokazani has rebelled against having relationships with unreliable men of her own age. Her present boyfriend might not be a "provider within marriage" but co-habitation means that he is a somewhat more reliable "provider outside marriage" than her previous boyfriends.

Gezekile: Generational cooperation and movement

Gezekile, 52, lives in a rural umuzi in Hlabisa with her mother, 3 of her children, and her 4 grandchildren. Her five children (2 sons and 3 daughters) all still have close links to the household. Dumisani (28) works in Isithebe for a loan company, Ntombi, 26, stays in Mandeni and the 23 and 22 year old girls and 15 year old boy are all still at home in

¹⁸ Posel and Casale (2003) have argued that women in the 1990s appear to be pushed into the labour market often entering informal work or being unemployed.

Hlabisa. The 2 younger daughters have a child each and the son has two children, all of whom stay at home. Gezekile broke up with her husband in 1982 when he left her for another woman. She then went to Mandeni and found work in a clothing factory until she returned last year. For part of the time when she was away her eldest daughter Ntombi looked after her sisters and brothers. Now that her mother has returned Ntombi herself has moved to Mandeni staying at first with her brother Dumisani who manages a loan company before moving into her own place. He helped her to find temporary work with this company.

I caught up with Dumisani in Mandeni in July 2004. He gave the impression of being confident and resourceful and spoke very good English despite spending most of his education in a rural school. He says that from Standard 5 he had to look for temporary work to help his family and improved his English at that time. He clearly has a very close relationship with his mother, Gezekile, and says that his father has rarely helped their home. He told me that he helped his sister, Ntombi, find part time work when she arrived but that she has now been lucky to find work sewing. His advice to his sister is that she must be independent and not rely on men. Eventually he wants to set up his own home but for now he is happy to support his family. He is a very strong Christian which clearly shapes his outlook on life.

Thokozani: Not migrating – dependence on an older man

Thembeke and I interviewed Thokozani, 22, on a sweltering day at a house not too far from a main road where she stays with her 57 year old boyfriend, Lindokuhle. The couple stay with Lindokuhle's mother and his 25 year old daughter (who is thus older than Thokozani). Thokozani's home is Maphumulo, but she moved to Hlabisa when her mother came to stay with her husband (her mother is now in Durban). Thokozani fell pregnant in Hlabisa at the age of 17 and she now has 3 children, aged 4, 2 and 1. The first two are from one father, the second from another. Her children were previously staying in Maphumulo but Lindokuhle allowed her to fetch them to his umuzi. Thokozani says that she fell in love with the elder Lindokuhle because she had so many problems with all of her previous boyfriends. They were abusive, would hit her, would drink, wouldn't support their children, and were having too many girlfriends. Lindokuhle treats her nice and doesn't drink, she says. Thokozani's life is undoubtedly shaped by her poor education and lack of an ID. She only finished standard 6 and the fact that she doesn't have an ID makes finding formal work difficult. She says that she is ill but that she doesn't know what is wrong with her. There are now izifo eziningi (many diseases, a phrase often used as a coded way of saying AIDS). Her current boyfriend Lindokuhle does not wear condoms and she thinks that if she gets igciwane (the germ, referring to AIDS) she will get it from him because he used to have many girlfriends. When he sends her to town there are rumours that he is with someone else. She has only ever had one job, ironing, and left that when she fell pregnant. Maybe if she gets an ID she can get a job as a domestic worker. Thokozani talks of how many girls in rural areas have multiple boyfriend for money but that she is content with just Lindokuhle. She seems pleased when we ask whether she considers herself umakoti (the wife) of the umuzi.

Conclusions

The rapid onset of HIV/AIDS today immediately leads us to evoke Kark's analysis of male migration and STIs. Indeed, his emphasis on male migrancy seems to make sense given the statistical bias towards capturing male migration rather than female "movement" -- the latter which tends to be for shorter periods, over shorter distances, and less associated with work. And it certainly is still the case that a higher proportion of women contract STIs from their husbands or long-term partners than the other way around. At the same time, very high rates of women's movement unsettle the male-migration-model. I have begun to explore this trend but there are a considerable number of questions that require probing. Exactly what patterns of movement do rural women engage in? Is women's migration circular, as is common with men, or perhaps "hexagonal" where women are moving to a number of places before returning "home"? What connection is there between women's migration and women's HIV status?

In understanding women's migration we should not fall foul of narrow and economic "push/pull" models. Nor should we flatten out differences in the processes driving women's migration over time. Accounts suggest that in early part of the century young unmarried women were often not the first migrants. My informants suggest that by the 1950s and 1960s women faced a strong dilemma over whether they should move to towns. Some of the women who did migrate took advantage of increased domestic work and industrial work, doing relatively well in urban spaces. Others remained in rural areas and usually married. By the 1980s and 1990s the joint but contested project of building an *umuzi* -- already severely buffered by migrant labour -- had effectively collapsed. The ending of influx controls has increased women's movement to towns but this is often not as permanent as might have been anticipated. And despite the long and valuable literature linking familial dissolution to the policies of segregation, the free movement of men and women in the post-apartheid period has not on its own facilitated more stable unions.

Rather than being seen as *izifebe*, young rural women are now expected to move to towns, although they usually preserve their links to rural areas particularly through their children. Money from the wage economy filters through to rural areas both from better off men having relationships with women in rural areas and from women migrants who engage in relationships in urban or peri-urban areas and pass money back to rural areas. The pattern of male wages fuelling sexual networks in rural areas, noted by Spiegel in the early 1980s and described in Chapter 2, has been stretched as women's mobility has increased. Of course, AIDS is no doubt compounding the vulnerability of rural areas. Although I have no proof, the death of both of Fikile's parents, mentioned earlier, would certainly be consistent with large numbers of AIDS deaths that place additional strain on social groupings. Yet, arguably the deepest impact of the AIDS pandemic may well only be felt in decades to come when the present generation of *gogo*'s -- in effect the most reliable breadwinners today -- have been replaced with a cohort shattered by AIDS.

Bibliography

- AFRICA CENTRE POPULATION STUDIES GROUP. 2003. *Socio-demographic and health events 2000*. Monograph Series No. 1. Chiweni E. Chimbwete, AJ Herbst (eds). Mtubatuba, South Africa.
- ARDINGTON, ELISABETH. 1988. Nkandla Revisited: A Longitudinal Study of the Strategies Adopted to Alleviate Poverty in a Rural Community. *Centre for Social and Development Studies. University of Natal. Working Paper No. 16*.
- ARDINGTON, ELISABETH. 1984. *Decentralized Industry, Poverty & Development in Rural KwaZulu*. Durban: Development Studies Unit, University of Natal.
- BONNER, PHILLIP. 1990. "Desirable or undesirable Basotho women?" Liquor, prostitution and the migration of Basotho women to the Rand, 1920-1945," in *Women and Gender in southern Africa to 1945*. Edited by C. Walker, 221-50. Cape Town: David Philip.
- BOZZOLI, BELINDA and NKOTSOE, MMANTHO. 1991. *Women of Phokeng : consciousness, life strategy, and migrancy in South Africa, 1900-1983*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- BURAWOY, MICHAEL. 2000. *Global ethnography : forces, connections, and imaginations in a postmodern world*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- BURAWOY, MICHAEL. 1991. *Ethnography unbound : power and resistance in the modern metropolis*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- CARTON, BENEDICT. 2000. *Blood from your children : the colonial origins of generational conflict in South Africa*. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia.
- CASALE, DANIELA and POSEL, DORRIT. 2002. The Continued Feminisation of the Labour Force in South Africa: An Analysis of Recent Data and Trends. *The South African Journal of Economics* 70:168-95.
- COCKS, PAUL. 2001. Max Gluckman and the Critique of Segregation in South African Anthropology, 1921-1940. *Journal of Southern African Studies* 27:739-56.
- COHEN, DAVID. 2004. The Uncertainty of Africa in an Age of Uncertainty. *Paper presented at the History Department, University of KwaZulu-Natal, April 30th*.
- GILBERT, ALAN and CRANKSHAW, OWEN. 1999. Comparing South African and Latin American Experience: Migration and Housing Mobility in Soweto. *Urban Studies* 36:2375-400.
- GLUCKMAN, MAX. 1940. Analysis of a social situation in Modern Zululand. *Bantu Studies* 14:1-30.
- GUY, JEFF. 1987. Analysing Pre-capitalist Societies in Southern Africa. *Journal Of Southern African Studies* 14:
- HAMMOND-TOOKE, W. 1997. *Imperfect Interpreters*. Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press.
- HOSEGOOD, VICTORIA and TIMAEUS, IAN. Forthcoming. Household composition and dynamics in KwaZulu-Natal: Mirroring social reality in longitudinal data collection. In. Van de Wells, E. *African Households*. University of Pennsylvania.
- HUNTER, MARK. 2004. Masculinities, multiple-sexual-partners, and AIDS: The Making and Unmaking of Isoka in KwaZulu-Natal. *Transformation*, 54.
- HUNTER, MARK. 2002. The Materiality of Everyday Sex: Thinking Beyond 'Prostitution'. *African Studies* 61:99-120.
- IZZARD, WENDY. 1985. Migrants and Mothers: Case-studies from Botswana. *Journal of Southern African Studies* 11:258-80.
- KARIM, QUARRAISHA ABDOOL, KARIM, SALIM S. ABDOOL, SINGH, BIPRAJ, SHORT, RICHARD and NGXONGO, SIPHO. 1992. Seroprevalence of HIV infection in rural South Africa. *AIDS* 6:1535-9.
- KA MNCUBE, BHEKI. 2004. Not a great South African Film. *Natal Witness*, 24th June
- KARK, SIDNEY. 1950. The influence of urban-rural Migration on Bantu Health and Disease. *The Leech* 23-37.
- KARK, SIDNEY. 1949. The Social Pathology of Syphilis in Africans. *South African Medical Journal* 23:77-84.
- KARK, SIDNEY & EMILY. 1999. *Promoting Community Health. From Pholela to Jerusalem*. Johannesburg: Wits University Press.
- KOK, PIETER, O'DONOVAN, MICHAEL, BOUARE, OUMAR and VAN ZYL, JOHAN. 2003. *Post-apartheid patterns of Internal Migration in South Africa*. Pretoria: Human Science Research Council.
- LURIE, MARK, WILLIAMS, BRIAN, ZUMA, KHANGELANI, MKAYA-MWAMBURI, DAVID, GARNETT, GEOFF, SWEAT, MICHAEL, GITTELSON, JOEL and KARIM, SALIM ABDOOL. 2000. Who infects whom? HIV-1 concordance and discordance among migrants and non-migrant couples in South Africa. *AIDS* 17:2245-52.

- LYDIE, N., ROBINSON, N., FERRY, B., AKAM, E., DE LOENZIEN, M. and ABEGA, S. 2004. Mobility, Sexual Behavior, and HIV infection in an Urban Population in Cameroon. *Journal of Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome* 35:67-74.
- MARKS, SHULA. 1989. "Patriotism, Patriarchy and Purity: Natal and the Politics of Zulu Ethnic Consciousness," in *The Creation of Tribalism in Southern Africa* Edited by L. Vail, Berkeley: University of California Press.
- MARKS, SHULA. 1986. *The ambiguities of dependence in South Africa : class, nationalism, and the state in twentieth-century Natal*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- MASSEY, DOREEN. 1994. *Space, place and gender*. Cambridge: Polity.
- MBALI, MANDISA and HUNTER, MARK. 2004. Yesterday's stereotypes are a thing of the past. Sunday Tribune, Oct 17.
- MBATHA, M. 1960. Migrant Labour and Its Effects on Tribal and Family Life Among the Nyuswa of Botha's Hill. *Masters Dissertation, Department of Bantu Studies, University of Natal*.
- MCDOWELL, LINDA. 1999. *Gender, identity and place : understanding feminist geographies*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- MYER, LANDON, MORRONI, CHELSEA and SUSSER, EZRA. 2003. Commentary: The social pathology of the HIV/AIDS pandemic. *International Journal of Epidemiology* 32:189-92.
- NGUBANE, HARRIET. 1981. "Marriage, Affinity and the Ancestral Realm: Zulu marriage in female perspective," in *Essays in African Marriage in Southern Africa*. Edited by E. Krige and J. Comaroff, 84-95. Johannesburg: Juta.
- NIEHAUS, ISAK. 1994. Disharmonious Spouses and Harmonious Siblings: Conceptualising Household Formation among Urban Residents in QwaQwa. *African Studies* 53:115-35.
- NUNN, ANDREW, WAGNER, HANS-ULRICH, KAMALI, ANATOLI, KENGEYA-KAYONDO, JANE and MULDER, DAAN. 1995. Migration and HIV-1 seroprevalence in a rural Ugandan population. *AIDS* 9:503-6.
- POSEL, DORI and TODES, ALISON. 1995. The shift to female Labour in KwaZulu/Natal. *The South African Journal of Economics* 63:225-46.
- POSEL, DORRIT and CASALE, DANIELA. 2003. What has been happening to Internal Labour Migration in South Africa, 1993-1999? *The South African Journal of Economics* 71:455-79.
- PRESTON-WHITE, ELEANOR. 1981. "Women Migrants and Marriage," in *Essays in African Marriage in Southern Africa*. Edited by E. Krige and J. Comaroff, 158-73. Cape Town: Juta.
- SCHAPERA, ISAAC. 1947. *Migrant Labour and Tribal Life: A Study of Conditions in the Bechuanaland Protectorate*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- SCHOEPF, BROOKE. 2004. "AIDS, History, and Struggles over Meaning," in *HIV and AIDS in Africa: Beyond Epidemiology*. Edited by E. Kalipeni, S. Craddock, J. Oppong and J. Ghosh, 15-28. Oxford: Blackwell.
- SILBERSCHMIDT, MARGRETHE. 1999. *Women forget that men are the masters : gender antagonism and socio-economic change in Kisii District, Kenya*. Uppsala; London: Nordic Institute of African Studies; Global.
- SIMONS, HAROLD JACK. 1968. *African women. Their legal status in South Africa*. London; printed in the Netherlands: C. Hurst & Co.
- SPIEGEL, ANDREW. 1981. Changing Patterns of Migrant Labour and Rural Differentiation in Lesotho. *Social Dynamics* 6:1-13.
- VILAKAZI, ABSOLOM. 1965. *Zulu transformations. A study of the dynamics of social change. (Second impression.)*. Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press.
- WALKER, CHERRYL. 1990. "Gender and the development of the migrant labour system c. 1850-1930: An overview," in *Women and Gender in southern Africa to 1945*. Edited by C. Walker, 168-96. Cape Town: David Philip.
- WELLS, JULIA. 1982. "Passes and Bypasses: Freedom of movement for African women under the Urban Areas Act of South Africa." in *African Women and the Law: Historical Perspectives*. Edited by M. Hay and M. Wright, Boston: Boston University Press.
- WHITE, LUISE. 1990. *The comforts of home : prostitution in Colonial Nairobi*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- YACH, DEREK and TOLLMAN, STEVE. 1993. Public Health Initiatives in South Africa in the 1940s and 1950s: Lessons from the Post-Apartheid Era. *American Journal of Public Health* 83:1043-50.
- ZUMA, K., GOUWS, E., WILLIAMS, B. and LURIE, M. 2003. Risk factors for HIV infection among women in Carletonville, South Africa: migration, demography and sexually transmitted diseases. *International Journal of STD & AIDS* 14:814-7.