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List of Abbreviations

ANC:	African National Congress (South Africa)
BCP:	Basutoland Congress Party
CMA:	Common Monetary Agreement
COM:	Chamber of Mines
NAD:	Department of Native Affairs (South Africa)
NUL:	National University of Lesotho
NUM:	National Union of Mineworkers (South Africa)
OSSREA:	Organisation for Social Science Research in Eastern and Southern Africa
SACU:	Southern African Customs Union
UNDP:	United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF:	United Nations Children's Fund

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ABSTRACT

International migration is one of the critical pillars of Lesotho's political economy. As agricultural production experienced serious decline especially since the 1930s, male migration to the South African mines has become the mainstay of livelihood for Lesotho's rural population. The sub-subsistence nature of the agricultural productivity in Lesotho's rural economy suggests that migrant earnings take a larger proportion of the gross incomes of most rural households. Three main schools of thought in the migration debate are the neo-classical theory, the new-Marxist theory and the structuration theory. Although migration has been portrayed in the literature as a male affair, women have been historically involved in this process as well. However, women migration to South Africa was blocked and curtailed by the colonial policies, traditional authorities and males themselves driven largely by patriarchy and the ideology of domesticity. Consequently, women were left behind in the impoverished rural labour reserves tending after precarious agricultural production as their husbands were engaged in wage employment in the South African mines. Although male migration had been on the increase up until the mid-1970s, it is now on a decline due to various factors. Retrenchment is one of the important features of the current changing migration patterns. This phenomenon has set in motion a social transformation, which undoubtedly recasts gender relations in Lesotho's rural economy. While prior to accelerated retrenchment, the power of rural women, as de facto heads of households, tended to be on the increase, with retrenchment this power is on the decline as demure heads of households return. This social transformation has a tremendous impact on not only the social fabric of the rural households, but on the very survival of the rural folk in the context of dwindling sources of income. The social problems posed by retrenchment on the rural households are likely to be accentuated by the extension of permanent residence status to foreign migrant miners by the South African government in 1995. Given that Basotho migrants are already applying for permanent residence permits in South Africa, the implications of this on gender relations in Lesotho's rural economy are of enormous importance for this study.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Lesotho is a small country of about 30,000 square kilometres. It has a total population of approximately 2 million people, which has been growing at an annual rate of about 3%. The sex ratio of Lesotho's population is skewed in favour of women: there are approximately 100 females to 81 males (Goebel and Epprecht 1995, 4). Lesotho is one of the poorest countries in Sub-Saharan Africa and it is heavily dependent on external sources of capital formation. The recent Human Development Report of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) ranks Lesotho as 130th in the whole world under the category of countries with low human development (UNDP 1996, 136). Severely lacking in natural resource endowment, Lesotho's only natural resources are water and labour.

Lesotho has a very weak industrial base, which is dominated by 'foot-loose' foreign capital. Sustainable development of this sector and its increased labour absorptive capacity are in doubt, given the steady capital flight to South Africa since the 1994 political changes in that country. The agricultural sector is also experiencing serious decline in productivity, thus eroding the mainstay of rural subsistence. About 81% of Lesotho's total population resides in the rural areas. Arable land has been shrinking over the years due to various factors, including massive soil erosion; unplanned human settlements which have claimed large chunks of farmland; high rate of urbanisation which also takes part of the arable land; and general environmental degradation (Witzch 1992). About 87% of the total land area in Lesotho comprises rugged foothills and mountains suitable largely for livestock production rather than crop farming. Arable land has shrunk to a mere 9% from 13% in 1996. Landlessness is becoming a serious threat to the livelihood of the rural folk. The proportion of landless households is estimated to have grown from 12.7% in 1970 to 25.4% in 1986. In 1990 it rose further to 40%. This trend, combined with various other factors, has accentuated the incidence of poverty in rural Lesotho. The World Bank estimates that 54% of the rural population lives below the poverty datum line (1995, vii). The World Bank report further states that 90% of Lesotho's poor households reside in the rural areas.

The structural weaknesses of the productive sectors in Lesotho (i.e., industry and agriculture) help us understand the phenomenal employment crisis and rural-urban migration. Lesotho has a labour force of about 800,000 people and an unemployment rate estimated at 30%. Of the 30,000 job seekers who enter the labour market annually, the formal sector absorbs only 10,000. The residual labour either remains unemployed or engages in informal sector activities. This brief expose of Lesotho's economic situation underlines the significance of international labour migration to the Republic of South Africa today.

Lesotho is not only one of the poorest countries in Africa, but worse still it is also completely landlocked by another country – South Africa – and dependent on that country for its basic necessities of survival. That heavy external dependence, the impoverishment and the land-lockedness, emphasise Lesotho's economic vulnerability and political susceptibility to various powerful external forces. Given its weak agricultural base and the slow rate of industrial growth, Lesotho has always remained an adjunct of, and fully integrated into, the South African economy from

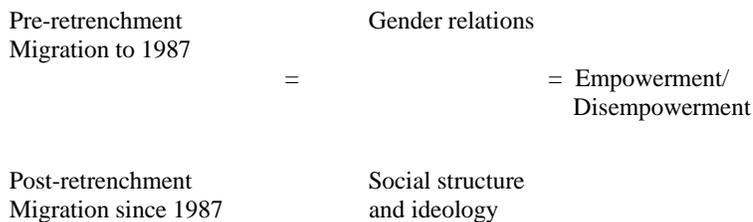
time immemorial. This relationship has been a complex one marked, in the main, by a domination-subordination syndrome. Put differently, Lesotho remains an economic appendage of South Africa in almost all aspects of its social milieu. Its economy is a typical enclave labour reserve, which is more of a distributive – cum–consumerist than a productive economy. It is no wonder, therefore, that the country relies heavily on external sources of capital formation: foreign aid, dividends from the Southern African Customs Union and migrant labour. Our major interest in this research project is in labour migration.

That Lesotho is a labour reserve par excellence brooks no denial. Of its meagre natural resources, water and people rank high. Both are exported to South Africa mainly for financial return. By far the most important of these transactions is the migration of unskilled Basotho labour to the South African mines, although in recent times brain drain to South Africa has been on the increase (Matlosa 1995). Although different aspects of this phenomenon have been studied by various scholars, the glaring missing link in the migration debate is its interface with gender relations. This study seeks to fill this lacuna in migration discourse by investigating the gender configuration of power and authority in Lesotho's rural political economy in the context of the changing patterns of migration.

1.1 Problem Statement

Labour migration from Lesotho to the South African mines has a fairly long history. It is as old as the South African mining industry itself. The broad socio-economic impact of this exodus of labour on Lesotho's political economy has been a matter of extensive debate (Murray 1981; Bardill and Cobbe 1985). The present study focuses, however, on the interlinkages of this phenomenon with the gender relations of production, reproduction, power and authority. The key problem that the study investigates can be summed up as follows: centuries of male migration have effectively increased the power of women who have become de facto heads of households although authority for strategic household decisions still rests with the absent male head. The massive retrenchment of migrant miners, since the 1987 workers' strike, has shaken up the rural gender power relations in a way that shifts the balance in favour of the de jure male head. This worsens the already precarious position of women in rural Lesotho. This is illustrated in our conceptual model below.

Figure 1. The conceptual model



Explanatory Note: Prior to the accelerated retrenchment of Basotho miners, which was triggered in part by the 1987 workers' strike, migration increased the household decision-making power of women. This was, however, held in check by the country's social structure and patriarchal ideology. The current retrenchment process changes the configuration of gender relations of power as migrants, de jure heads of households, return home. Traditional heads assume their socio-culturally-determined roles and responsibilities as women get elbowed further and further to the margins of power and authority. When this phenomenon is combined with the already debilitating social structure, attitudes and patriarchal ideology, the point that power of rural women is being effectively whittled is brought into sharp relief.

1.2 Hypotheses

Flowing from our general research question (How changing migration patterns impact upon gender relations) are the following hypotheses:

- (a) Male migration increases the power of women in Lesotho's rural economy, although the social system, patriarchy and ideology of domesticity restrict the boundaries of this power.
- (b) Retrenchment of Basotho migrants leads to diminution of power of rural women and when this combines with the patriarchal social system and ideology of domesticity, the marginalisation of women is further deepened.

In our research design, migration is the independent variable and gender relations constitute the dependent variable, and changes in migration over time influence the linkages between these two variables. From employment and income perspectives, migration patterns are changing for the worse. Our task is to determine how a change in the independent variable affects the dependent variable.

1.3 Purpose and Scope of the Study

This study traces the historical metamorphosis of male migration over a thirty-year period (1966-1996) since Lesotho's political independence. The roots of migration will form the background, not the major thrust, of the research exercise. The study identifies theories and patterns of migration. It assesses the impact of migration on gender relations in rural Lesotho under different sets of historical conjunctures. It uses the household as a unit of analysis. It provides empirical evidence of the empowerment-disempowerment dynamic of migration on rural women in the Mafeteng District.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

The overall objective of this study is to investigate the nature of the gender division of labour in Lesotho's rural households and how migration tends to transform this division of labour over time.

Drawing from the broad objective above, the specific objectives of the study are: **(a)** to elucidate the theoretical discourse on migration thus far; **(b)** to explain methodological instruments and approaches used in the study to collect and analyse data; **(c)** to map out historical conjunctures and patterns in migration that have in turn influenced changes in gender relations; **(d)** to bring out measurable indicators that highlight the empowerment-disempowerment dynamic of migration on rural

women; and (e) to project the possible futures of migration and gender relations in rural Lesotho.

1.5 Significance of the Problem

That migration has historically become the lifeblood of the Lesotho economy is an indisputable fact. This accounts, in part, for the massive literature that exists on this subject. This literature can be classified into two diametrically opposed schools of thought: (a) the neo-classical (rational choice) theory and (b) the (neo-) Marxist structuralism theory. An expanded treatise of these theoretical constructs is provided in Chapter Two. While very much inspired by these approaches, the analytical thrust of this study is anchored on the structuration theory which, unlike the new-classical and the neo-Marxist approaches, combines structural factors and the human agency in our broader understanding of migration and gender relations in Lesotho's rural economy. The case study of Lesotho is important for the simple reason that Basotho miners comprise the largest contingent of foreign labour complement on the South African mining industry.

1.6 Methodology

Using the household as a unit of analysis, the authors conducted field research in the Mafeteng District during the period June 1996 to June 1997. During the data collection, a total of 18 villages were selected randomly, and in those villages 250 households were interviewed using a structured questionnaire. We chose Mafeteng District as the focal point of this study. Initially we had intended to carry out our research in at least two districts – one in the lowlands and the other in the highlands. The choice of Mafeteng District was a result of limited financial resources and time. Furthermore, Mafeteng is one of the districts with high incidence of poverty and with larger numbers of migrants to the South African mines. Thus, the research methodology and findings of this study could, with all likelihood, be replicated elsewhere in the country. Given its low industrial development, major economic activities in this district are inextricably tied, in one way or the other, to subsistence agriculture and migration. Women play a major role in subsistence production and males largely engage in international migration to the South African mines. Primary data was analysed over a three-month period: June – August 1997. Funds and time permitting, it is the intention of the authors to carry out a similar study on a national scale.

1.7 Characteristics of the Mafeteng District

Mafeteng District is located in the south-western part of Lesotho. With an area of 2090 square kilometres, it is one of the smaller districts. Agro-ecologically, the district has two zones: lowlands and foothills. In the previous decade, Mafeteng's migrant population was 11.4% of the total district population (154,339). This population was slightly higher than the country average of 10.6% (Huisman and Sterkenburg 1982; Huisman, 1983; Huisman and Sterkenburg 1984; Sechaba Consultants 1994).

1.8 Research Methods

Two principal research techniques were used to collect data: (i) observation, and (ii) purposive or judgmental sampling method. Structured and unstructured interviews

formed part of data collection. As appendix “A” clearly illustrates questions were concerned primarily with two broad categories of information: first, to ascertain, according to agreed upon measurements, the general impact of migration on women in the Mafeteng District. Second, to ensure that respondents respond to questions that bring out the empowerment/disempowerment dynamic in which we are interested. Rigorous observation was used over and above the questionnaire in order to get at respondents’ perceptions as well as at different gender perceptions on what the changing migration patterns actually mean, i.e., the changes and adjustments envisaged. This technique acted as a back up to the non-probability quota research methodology. Structured and unstructured interviews targeted household heads, either de jure or de facto, irrespective of gender.

1.9 Limitations of the Study

Like all other empirical studies, the present study has its own specific limitations which have to be brought to the fore in order to guide the reader. First, the study does not pretend to cover the broad subject of migration in its entirety. Generally speaking, migration has four broad areas: refugees, undocumented migration, brain-drain and contract migration. This study is limited to the last aspect only and uses Lesotho as a case study. Second, this study does not discuss gender in its own right as a field of inquiry, nor does it interrogate gender theory as such (for a discussion of feminist theories, see Williams 1997). We are concerned with gender only in so far as it interfaces with migration patterns. This is so because in this study migration is taken as an independent variable while gender and gender relations are considered a dependent variable.

Third, the study does not cover Lesotho as whole, but rather uses the Mafeteng District as a case study from which some useful extrapolations which may indicate national trends could be made. While our assumptions and research findings do not necessarily represent the general trend throughout the entire country, it is our hope that processes identified in this study could yield generalisations which may be applicable in other parts of the country. It, nevertheless, represents a good starting point for further research in this important area. Fourth, while migration is not considered a sensitive subject in rural Lesotho, gender is considered very much a private affair which most, if not all, respondents were hard put to discuss openly with strangers. This explains why the most difficult questions during the interviews were those related to gender relations.

Fifth, judging by the types of responses to the questions, at times it was difficult to ascertain whether some respondents had a similar understanding of some questions to that of the researchers. This problem was aggravated by the fact that questions had to be translated from English to Lesotho, so the translation may have slightly twisted the meaning and essence of the question. Finally, other subjective factors not related to our research methodology also acted as limitations. The extent of poverty and unemployment in rural Lesotho may have influenced some responses where respondents thought that we were government officials who could offer them jobs or other means of improving their livelihood. In some villages, for instances, we would be held for hours discussing various individual and village problems which did not have any bearing whatsoever on this study simply because villagers were convinced that we could proffer some solutions.

1.10 Organisational Structure of the Study

This study is divided into five distinct, albeit intertwined, chapters. Chapter One introduces the study, defines the socio-economic setting of Lesotho, and outlines the methodological aspects of the research. Chapter Two presents the conceptual framework of the study and a brief survey of the relevant literature. Chapter Three sketches out the migration-gender problematic by exposing the complex interface of the two phenomena in the context of changing patterns of migration. Chapter Four reveals the statistical evidence of our major research findings. Both chapters Three and Four are the key anchor of this study which could be read on their own especially for those readers already well versed with the historical and conceptual material on gender and migration. Chapter Five is a summation of the key findings and a brief discussion of the uncertain futures confronting most rural households given the current changes which are reshaping the migrant labour system.

2. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

The migrant labour system in Southern Africa remains a contested terrain in terms of both theoretical explanation in academia and policy responses by affected states of the region. The interface of labour migration with gender relations of production has become part of this rich epistemological discourse. Three broad theoretical approaches have dominated discourse on migration so far. These are the neo-classical (rational choice) theory; the neo-Marxist (structuralist) theory; and the structuration (structure-agency) theory.

2.1 The Neo-classic Theory

The neo-classical (rational choice) theory explains migration as a process driven by individual choice of migrants based on observed employment and income differentials between regions or between countries (Ketso 1991). Ketso observes that “implicit in this argument is a strong assumption that the resulting process of development will necessarily see to its (migration) phasing out” (1991, 54). For the neo-classical thesis, therefore, the human agency is crucial as a push-pull factor in migration. Proponents of this school argue that early Basotho migration to the emergent capitalist economy of South Africa in the 19th century was marked by the desire on the part of migrants to acquire guns and cash (discretionary migration), but was later compelled by deteriorating socio-economic conditions (compulsory migration) (Eldredge 1992, 1993).

This explanation of the migration phenomenon is inextricably located within the modernisation theory, which propounds that the modern capitalist economy (South Africa) attracts abundant labour from the traditional and backward economy (neighbouring states such as Lesotho). This process is seen to be mediated primarily by individual choice in response to economic incentives offered by the modern capitalist sector relative to the depressed economic conditions in the traditional sector. This perspective fits quite neatly in the Lewisian dual economy model which suggests that the unlimited labour supply in the traditional sector has, of necessity, to migrate to the modern capitalist sector in response to economic stimuli of job opportunities and higher income. Arthur Lewis (1954) postulates that the introduction of capitalism in the less developed societies brought about a dual

economy: the subsistence sector and the capitalist sector. The former was seen to be characterised by surplus labour and disguised unemployment. The latter was characterised by acute labour shortage and therefore high labour demand, which could be sourced from the subsistence sector.

The economic impulse of demand and supply and individual discretion are seen by this model to be critical in pushing labour out of the subsistence sector to the capitalist sector as migrants seek to better their lives. As Kabeer forcefully argues “the simplifying core of neo-classical theory ... is the assumption of rational choice, so that all human behaviour is explained as the attempt to maximise individual utilities in the face of economic scarcity” (1994, 97). Rutman clearly espouses this modernisationist perspective when he posits that:

... the decision to migrate is a rational response to economic incentives, i.e., it is a means for the village African to improve his income. His [*sic*] decision to leave (permanently or temporarily) the low productivity indigenous sector for jobs in the higher productivity modern sector is simply an expected response to better opportunities. From an individual’s point of view, the decision to migrate amounts to an investment because it involves an expenditure of resources for which there is a rate of return in the form of an increase in the stream of lifetime earnings (1974, 26).

Rutman’s argument is undoubtedly representative of the basic tenet of the rational choice approach which puts more emphasis on the individual migrant’s personal discretion to migrate rather than systemic forces compelling him or her to do so. Spiegel corroborates this argument by observing that male labourers make a rational decision to migrate “far from home in order to earn wages with which to build up the rural homes which they leave”(1981, 1). These men end up living in two worlds: the rural homestead which they must maintain and sustain for future retirement and the urban workplace which they need to support their rural social base. This theoretical model, like the modernisation paradigm of which it is an adjunct, does not treat the implications of male labour migration for gender relations in the rural economy. It overemphasises the human agency as a key locomotive for male migration and, unlike the neo-Marxist school, downplays the systemic factors. The explanatory value of neo-Marxism gives the pride of place to economic processes rather than the human agency.

2.2 The Neo-Marxist Theory

Contrary to the neo-classical school, the (neo-) Marxist structuralist theory draws its analysis of migration not so much from individual discretion, but from systemic factors and structures of production and reproduction. It focuses on three important systemic processes that drove the migration phenomenon: penetration of capitalism in Southern Africa; commodification of production which in turn undermined subsistence production; and the proletarianisation process which was a new feature of the African social order. This approach places a high premium on the processes of capital accumulation and class formation (Arrighi 1970; Magubane 1972; Wolpe 1972; Cliffe 1978; Kimble 1982; Murray 1981; Bundy 1988).

According to Kimble, the critical determinant of migration in Lesotho during the 19th century was “the increasing commoditisation of production. In the wider context of colonialism and imperialism, this process represented an important phase

in the primitive accumulation of capital and the uneven development of capitalism” (1982, 120). Kimble’s thesis is that the demand condition (push factors) for migration was driven by the uneven penetration of capitalism while the supply trajectory (pull factors) of this process was shaped by a constellation of interests of the ruling Koena lineage and the colonial state (1982, 136). Eldredge (1993) takes issue with Kimble’s argument which she sees as inadequate. She sees the major deficiencies of this thesis as structural determinism, which is a cancer of all Marxist epistemology – it ignores migrants’ own individual choice and discretion. For her, it is not correct to “assume that individual homesteads were so controlled by obligations to chiefs that they were unable to make individual choices concerning participation in migrant labour” (Eldredge 1993, 183).

The most popular version of the neo-Marxist approach to labour migration in Southern Africa has been the articulation of modes of production thesis. The thesis views labour migration in Southern Africa as a product of various social forces and processes that have shaped the region’s political economy since the discovery of diamonds and gold in South Africa during the 19th century. Of crucial importance were the development of capitalism and the evolution of apartheid in that country. The emergence of capitalism and its uneven penetration in Southern Africa led to the formation of a regional sub-system in which the principal loci of capital accumulation were in South Africa. The neighbouring territories, including Lesotho, were subordinated to serve the labour needs of South Africa; to provide a ready market for its products and to supply needed raw materials for its manufacturing sector. This process attests to the validity of Samir Amin’s characterisation of the Southern Africa region as ‘Africa of the labour reserves’ (Amin 1981, 29).

Furthermore, the institutionalisation of apartheid in South Africa decidedly dehumanised the African majority and marginalised them from the centres of economic power. Through the creation of the so-called native reserves, apartheid barricaded Africans inside the four walls of the impoverished and overcrowded rural areas and townships as a reliable source of cheap migratory labour. It is this labour, together with that from beyond the borders of South Africa, that has contributed immensely to the expansion of the mining industry. In this process, South Africa became a regional economic powerhouse while its neighbours were to be relegated to labour reserves with fragile economies inextricably integrated into, and highly dependent on, South Africa. The encroachment of capitalism in the region re-shaped the African pre-capitalist social formations. The entrenchment of capitalism triggered a contradictory process of arresting the growth potential of the subsistence-based African mode of production, although it did not destroy it completely.

The articulation of the capitalist mode with the pre-capitalist modes of production was such that the former dominated, exploited and underdeveloped the latter’s productive forces and transformed their relations of production. Proletarianisation of the Basotho peasantry became a critical feature of this transformation. Basotho peasants were confronted with two basic options: either to engage in commodity production on a large scale so as to effectively compete with the white settler farmers or to engage in wage employment as cheap labourers for South African capital. Since the former was well nigh impossible, Basotho peasants opted for the

latter; hence the long history of Lesotho's engagement in the oscillatory labour migration to South Africa's mining industry.

As the migrant labour system was set in train, a contradictory, albeit dialectical, articulation of the capitalist and pre-capitalist modes emerged. Some scholars refer to this type of articulation as the 'conservation-dissolution duo' (Walker 1990). It facilitated dissolution of certain aspects of Lesotho's pre-capitalist modes, while at the same time it conserved those institutions and social (including gender) relations of these modes so long as they did not present a threat to the emergent capitalist mode. For Walker, therefore,

The relationship of migrant labour to rural African society was essentially parasitic, feeding on and eventually drastically weakening, if not killing, its host. This apparently contradictory process has often been noted – on the one hand the 'conservation' of traditional institutions as the basis of the system's reproduction, on the other hand the 'dissolution' of traditional institutions as the basis of the system's reproduction, on the other hand the 'dissolution' of these same institutions and relations under the pressure of prolonged absence of key members of society and the decline of the local economy. In fact these twin processes constitute the two sides of the same coin (1990).

Like the neo-classical approach, outlined in the previous pages, the neo-Marxist school has been criticised for its 'gender blindness' (Wright 1995, 776-777). While the neo-classical approach is completely silent on female migration, the neo-Marxist school generally views women as 'mining widows' left behind in the impoverished reserves to take care of the daily subsistence needs of rural households. Furthermore, both theories have been criticised for being functionalist and reductionist. Wright cogently argues that "where the neo-classical model is open to the charge of functionalism for placing too much emphasis on the benefits of migration to individuals, the structuralist model is open to the same charge with respect to the benefits of migration to capital" (1995, 778). It is important to explain migration and its interface with the ever-changing rural gender relations of production through a theory that provides a synthesis of both human agency and systemic factors or the socio-economic structure. This is the epistemological thrust of the structuration model "which privileges neither structure nor agency as explanatory factors but their complex interaction" (Wright 1995, 771).

2.3 The Structuration Theory

About a decade ago, a new approach which attempts to resolve the tension between the neo-classical and the neo-Marxist schools of thought emerged. This is generally referred to as the structuration model. It is predicated on earlier work by Anthony Giddens (1979), who posits that agency and structure are not mutually exclusive in the process of social change. Social structures and institutions are driven by human beings, much as human behaviour is influenced by social structures (Hyden 1996, 32). Clearly then the two forces (agency and structure) are mutually intertwined and play a critical role in social engineering and social change. Privileging one over the other only leads to deformed scholarship and a one-sided analysis of trajectories of social change in Africa in general and Lesotho in particular. Structuration, according to Wright, is a concept employed "to express the mutual dependency, rather than opposition of human agency and social structure" (1995, 771). It is

useful, therefore, to conceptualise migration and gender relations on the basis of direct and indirect interactions between structure and human agency.

2.4 Bringing Gender back in the Debate

Application of the structuration model in analysing migration in Lesotho will reveal, quite lucidly, that not only were women involved in migration as much as their male folk, but also that the process was propelled by a complex interplay of both human and structural factors. There is no gainsaying that migration affected gender relations in various ways since time immemorial. Individual discretion on the part of males and females as well as deteriorating economic conditions in Lesotho have driven the migration phenomenon. There have, however, been structural and institutional constraints placed by both colonial regimes, traditional authorities and males themselves to curtail, if not to eradicate, female migration over the years (Thabane 1997). This trend fitted perfectly well within what Mama (1996) terms the 'ideology of domesticity' which was, and still is, a

way of ensuring that women's reproductive work remained outside the public sphere, so enabling the appropriation of labour that had been so integral to the development of Western capitalism. That this sometimes resonated with indigenous African traditions of female domesticity is amply demonstrated in the literature on African households (Mama 1996, 28).

Not surprisingly, therefore, the British colonial government in Basutoland (present-day Lesotho) made various overtures to control women migration. As early as 1915, the Basutoland and Native Women Restriction Proclamation was promulgated. This law prohibited women migration without prior consent of either the husband, father or natural guardian (Roste and Sexwale 1987, 13). Contravention of this law would lead "to a fine of five pounds or in default of payment to imprisonment with or without hard labour for a period of three months" (Roste and Sexwale 1987, 14; Epprecht 1995, 35). This and other pieces of legislation that followed had a limited effect and, as Gay notes succinctly, "it has only been with the development of South African legislation after the National Party came into power that the movement of African Women to urban areas of South Africa has been halted" (1980, 46).

Of crucial importance was the effective curtailing of female migration to South Africa in 1963, when that country passed the Aliens Control Act "which made it an offence for foreign Africans to enter South Africa without a travel document. This law was reinforced by the Black Law Amendment Act which made it difficult for foreign Africans to enter South Africa for work except those recruited to work in the mines and farms" (Kishindo 1993, 7). The major concern of the apartheid regime in South Africa was "to keep women out of the towns and industrial centres in order to prevent permanent African urbanisation" (Wright 1995, 785). This move was undoubtedly politically motivated for it was meant to deepen institutionalised racial discrimination which became the hallmark of the National Party rule in South Africa since 1948. The idea was "to keep the resident urban African population as small as possible without scarring the urban economy. The Nationalist government found the prospect of an ever-enlarging urban proletariat politically alarming, looking upon the townships as hotbeds of 'communistic' dissent and agitation" (Posel 1997, 203).

Although the South African Native Affairs Department (NAD) was prepared to allow male migration to the mines and other key sectors of the urban economy, it was

intent on prohibiting rural migrants from settling in the cities on a permanent basis with their families. While the continued, but controlled, growth of the migrant work force was accepted as economically necessary, further African urbanisation was not. The NAD found the stream of women entering the towns from rural areas particularly disturbing, because it boosted the number of children born and bred in the cities. The NAD was perturbed, too, by the growing independence of what it called 'undesirable' women who had escaped the authority of parents or husbands (Posel 1997, 203).

Despite the legislative and structural constraints, which aimed at restricting Basotho women within the confines of the domestic rural economy, some have continued to engage in 'illegal' migration to South Africa in order to find some means of survival. It is estimated that about 10-30,000 Basotho women work illegally in South Africa as domestic, factory and farm workers (UNICEF 1991, 158). This figure may have been drastically reduced due to accelerated repatriation of illegal immigrants in South Africa particularly since the political changes of the 1990s. Table 1 depicts this trend during the period 1988-1995.

Table 1. Repatriation of illegal Basotho immigrants in South Africa, 1988-1995

Year	Figure
1988	4,400
1989	4,728
1990	3,832
1991	4,440
1992	6,235
1993	2,090
1994	4,073
1995	4,087
Total	34,885

SOURCE: Crush 1997, 21

It has not been easy for the authors of this report to desegregate the above figures in order to establish how many of the repatriated 'illegal aliens' are males and how many are females. However, the critical point, which is of key importance for this study, is that repatriation of female migrants to South Africa reinforces Mama's thesis of the 'ideology of domesticity', which is traceable to the pre-colonial days but which also became much more pronounced with the penetration of capitalism in Lesotho. She argues that the inculcation of the ideology of domesticity accompanied the development of a cash economy. Acting in consonance, these two changes had profound effects on women: their productive work and their contributions to both the wider economy and the sustenance of their households became less and less visible, and increasingly uncounted and unremunerated (Mama 1996, 28-29).

This development continues to shape and define the intricate interface between migration and gender in rural Lesotho, as the next section will highlight.

2.5 A Brief Literature Survey of Migration and Gender in Lesotho

Although historically both males and females have engaged in international migration to South Africa, a larger majority of women have been restricted from doing so and thus been left behind. Rural women have had to tend to a multiplicity of reproductive and productive tasks in the absence of their male folk. Gender relations became more complex as women began to manage agricultural production as their men engaged in wage employment in South Africa's buoyant capitalist economy. Although subsistence, and, to a limited extent cash crop, production became the preserve of women, children and the superannuated, crucial decision-making rested with the absent migrant husband who still remains a *de jure* head of household.

Two contradictory processes have attended to this: migration has in some instances curtailed the power of women while it has bolstered that power in other circumstances. For instance, the absence of migrant workers has increased women's participation in real production, and, in that way, their power has been relatively enhanced (the empowerment dynamic). Conversely, their participation is governed by the whims and caprices of their absent husbands who still wield *de jure* decision-making power and authority: this and the control of women by the husband's agnates kin tend to disempower them (the disempowerment dynamic). Even though women gain some amount of autonomy in the absence of their migrant husbands, that is severely constrained. Mafeje demonstrates this clearly as follows:

[t]he longer the male heads of households stay in the Urban areas, the greater the autonomy of the women but also the greater the burden of work and responsibility and not uncommonly the greater the sense of insecurity. There is always the chance of women being deserted by their migrant spouses. When this happens, not only do they lose remittances from the men but also their rights in land are jeopardised and the household property put at risk of being claimed by husband' agnates kin. Under these circumstances we cannot think of the autonomy gained by women by default as liberation in any real sense of the word (Emphasis added) (1991, 28).

One of the costs of migration is labour shortage for agricultural pursuits, rural development projects and many other off-farm income-generating activities in the affected communities. This has, in most instances, threatened the very survival of rural households. As Murray observes "the economic viability of the rural household depends, above all, on the distribution of paid and unpaid labour... small female-headed households are at a striking disadvantage in respect of their direct access to the earnings of migrant labourers, since they predominate in the category of households without paid employees" (1981, 154). Kwesi Prah (1989) observes that the absence of male labour has a detrimental effect on the rural economy. He concludes, "most of the heavy rural farm work is done by women and children. The yield per hectare of key grains has over the past two decades been in steady decline" (1989, 120).

Migrants' employment contracts rarely take into account peak seasons of subsistence activity in the labour reserves, although the labour reserves are

supposed to reproduce and maintain the mine labour force. The problem of labour shortage has to be understood also in the context of a variety of functions (including household chores, social reproduction, and other on-farm activities) that women perform, all of which compete for limited time and resources. These include, inter alia, weeding, harvesting, maize shelling, threshing, winnowing, bagging, milling and preparing food (UNICEF 1991, 151).

It can be safely argued that when women were restricted in the overcrowded and unproductive reserves, multifarious benefits were to flow to the mining houses. First, women's involvement in subsistence production would provide a convenient economic base for production, reproduction and renewal of extra-cheap male migrant labour without employment benefits except a poor pension package and some compensation against mine accidents. Secondly, this would, then, strengthen the mining houses, justification for meagre wages paid to migrants who are, in fact, treated as singly men without families and housed in low cost single-sex compounds. Thirdly, the migratory and semi-pesant nature of this workforce would undermine trade unionism and workers' bargaining power with employers. Finally, the female-based sub-subsistence production helped the mining houses to turn the labour reserves into dumping grounds for redundant labour.

The mining industry's strategy of keeping mine labour both migratory and extra – cheap was publicly enunciated by its spokesperson as early as 1944 with the following words:

It is clearly to the advantage of the mines that native labourers should be encouraged to return to their homes after the completion of the ordinary period of service. The maintenance of the system under which the mines are able to obtain unskilled labour at a rate less than ordinarily paid in industry depends on this, for otherwise the subsidiary means of subsistence would disappear and the labourer would tend to become a permanent resident upon the Witwatersrand with increased requirements (Emphasis added) (Davies, O'Meara, and Dlamini 1988, 9).

The gender division of labour was fashioned in such a way that it accords with this strategic goal of the mining houses geared largely towards profit maximisation and cost minimisation of their business concerns. This, however, should not suggest that the gender division of labour was purely a creation of capitalist penetration and accumulation. Other internal forces were clearly at work. As Bozzoli captures this process:

[b]ecause female oppression performs certain functions for capitalism, this does not mean that it was a pure creation of capitalism. To pose this would be to deny the history of female oppression in other, non-capitalist, and societies...This functionalist tendency in Marxist attempts to cope with female oppression reflects an anti-historical and economical bias (cited in Eldredge 1993, 183).

Besides commoditisation, the power relationship in gender division of labour was defined by patriarchal ideology embedded in the socialisation, production, reproduction and household patterns of Basotho society. One critical aspect of patriarchal ideology in Lesotho is the facile characterisation of women as conservative, apathetic, passive, naïve, submissive and weak (Epprecht 1995). It

was partly due to this perception that women's voting rights became such a heated issue during the 1965 pre-independence election. The 'radical' Basutoland Congress Party (BCP) vehemently opposed the "franchise for women" (Epprecht 1995, 49) on the grounds that they lacked political maturity and did not pay tax. The BCP argued that women need to learn politics first and would vote sometime after independence. One of its stalwarts felt that granting a franchise to women "would be an insult to the people of Basutoland... Here in Basutoland we know that a woman is a child and is a property of her husband' (Epprecht 1995, 50). Perception that portrays women in these patronising and condescending terms should be dismissed. Women have played a positive and progressive role in Lesotho's society, economy and politics either quietly or publicly.

While capitalism and patriarchy help us understand why women were left behind as their male counterparts migrate, they do not tell us the full story. Eldredge (1993, 193) identifies other crucial factors. First, women were required by chiefs, husbands and the colonial state to provide both productive and reproductive labour in the reserves. As for the latter, bearing and upbringing of children were the crucial factors. Children were also perceived as an economic asset and social security in old age. Eldredge sums it up:

African men and women could count in social security in their old age only if they had land and children. The association of children with social security in old age is a universal one, and even modern welfare systems do not provide adequate security for elderly people without children. Gaining control over biological reproduction in order to have children was a compelling reason for Basotho men to control their wives (1993, 194).

Secondly, "women represented for men the provision of social security throughout their lives especially in their old age" (ibid.). Thirdly, women's continued use of agricultural land allotted their absent husbands with crucial guarantee against confiscation of such land by chiefs on grounds of non-use.

Both the customary and common law provided legal and social justification for this configuration of power that essentially defined women as minors, thus curtailing their rights and social mobility. For instance, access by women to all assets including fields, homesteads, property and cash income is usually through men. Under customary law, a woman is considered a perpetual minor. Before marriage she is the responsibility of her father/male guardian, upon marriage the responsibility of her husband and the paternal male affine, and if widowed the responsibility of her elder son and the paternal male affine.

Under common law a woman is a minor until she reaches age 21– the majority age. This has deepened male domination in almost all facets of social life which, for our purposes in this paper, is vividly marked by the amount of power and authority that the migrant miner wields over his wife vis-à-vis subsistence decisions in the reserves. Men are, therefore, the final decision-makers in their households even in their absence, when the homestead is managed by women. It is rather ironic that a de facto household head "who not only runs household chores, but also has at times to take important decisions in connection with children, fields, cattle, should be accorded the status of a minor" (Mamashela 1985, 166). Patriarchal ideology is so entrenched in Lesotho that women's own self-concept, attitudes and values

consciously or unconsciously embrace and reproduce this ideology that is the very basis of their oppression and exploitation (Kimane 1985, 185). Kimane then concludes that “Basotho women have to develop a positive image of themselves in which they view themselves as persons of worth, whose talents and capabilities are unique in their own way. It is with this positivism that women can sufficiently assert themselves in society...” (Kimane 1985, 186). Roste and Sexwale argue that:

With the changing property relations and legal structures, the women tend to be oppressed under both Roman-Dutch and customary laws which have their basis in different modes of production and periods of time. Patriarchal ideologies based on pre-capitalist and pre-colonial relations are carried over under the cloak of tradition...(1987, 6).

The most glaring effect of male migration has clearly been the assumption by a majority of women of the roles of household managers in the rural economy. This has bestowed upon them a plethora of obligations and responsibilities in the context of limited decision-making power and authority unless they are separated or widowed, but even they still have to consult paternal male affine. So, we are presented here with a vicious cycle of the domination/subordination syndrome that shapes and governs gender relations in Lesotho’s social milieu. It is inaccurate to argue, as Foulo does, that the explanation for agricultural decline in rural Lesotho lies on the assumption that women are ill suited for farming (Foulo 1996, 15). It is not that women are ill suited for farming but rather that there are various socio-cultural stereotypes and legal inhibitions that constrain women’s potential as efficient farmers.

A recent UNICEF report observes that although women are very often in charge of the day-to-day managing of the family and the farm, “it is crucial to realise that major decisions on crop and livestock production and on investment are often delayed by the absence of the male head of the family” (1994, 215). This has had a negative impact on women’s efforts at increasing productivity of the subsistence sector in the rural economy. This has also inhibited their engagement in cash crop production and adoption of new farming techniques. According to Kishindo, “the fear of a veto or criticism may be a cause of poor response to new practices and technologies by women managing holdings on behalf of their absent husbands” (1993, 9). Does the currently changing character of migration affect this situation positively or negatively? The next chapter will investigate the changing pattern of migration to the South African mines and will also interrogate the implications of this for gender relations in Lesotho’s rural political economy.

3. MIGRATION AND GENDER IN LESOTHO

Lesotho’s dependence on labour migration to the South African mines is much more pronounced than is the case with any other Southern African state. The gains of migration to Lesotho include, inter alia, deferred pay, which is 30% of miners’ income and is regularly deposited in Lesotho Bank; migrant remittances, which constitute about 80% of affected rural households; and a ‘safety-valve’ for domestic employment crisis (Matlosa 1992, 41-42). A closer scrutiny of the migrancy phenomenon will reveal, however, that the above benefits are not only ephemeral, but are devoid of any longer-term development prospects and social stability of the

rural polity. As Elkan has argued in the case of Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland, migration can also be seen as a social cost to the labour supply states:

While one can argue that labour migration provides benefits in the form of income-earning opportunities that would not otherwise exist, the degree of dependence on this source of income, especially in the case of Botswana and Lesotho must also be regarded as a cost. Whatever may be true of the long run, there is no question that in the short run if South Africa were to close her frontiers to prospective migrants all the three countries would be worse off, and in Lesotho there would be severe distress. Such a degree of dependence on a particular source of income must be counted as a cost (1980).

Basotho migration to the South African mines has experienced upward and downward fluctuations over the years. As table 2 below clearly illuminates, the average number of Basotho migrants on the South African mines was on the increase in the 1970s reaching a peak in 1977. From then on the migration pattern generally assumed a downward spiral.

Table 2. Average number of Basotho employed on the South African mines, 1970-1984

Year	Number
1970	87,000
1971	91,000
1972	99,000
1973	110,000
1974	103,000
1975	113,000
1976	121,000
1977	128,000
1978	124,000
1979	124,000
1980	120,000
1981	123,000
1982	117,000
1983	115,000
1984	114,000

SOURCE: Ketso 1990, 67

The past decade has witnessed far-reaching changes in the migrant labour system. The critical aspects of these have been the reduction in the intake of foreign African labour from the labour supply states in the region and the systematic retrenchment of some foreign migrants. The mining industry, therefore, began to openly adopt an inward-looking labour recruitment strategy premised on its desire to redress internal employment crisis in South Africa. One of the authors has argued elsewhere that this took four forms: internalisation of labour supply; stabilisation of the labour force; mechanisation of production and the closure of marginal mines (Matlosa 1992, 37). It is worth noting, however, that the mines' inward-looking labour

recruitment strategy was, in a very subtle fashion, tied with South Africa's regional destabilisation campaign against those of its neighbours which were critical of apartheid and supportive of the liberation movement in the 1980s. These developments have most invariably led to increased retrenchment of foreign mine migrants. Some writers have argued that:

Large-scale retrenchment...is part of a strategy to undermine the NUM, reduce militancy, avoid the consequences of collective bargaining, reduce labour costs and engage in the "the social dumping" of the costs of capital investment and restructuring into the removed environment of employment-hungry labour reserves (Coplan and Thoahlane 1995, 145).

As the largest supplier of foreign migrant labour, Lesotho has obviously been hardest hit by these recent changes. Not only have large numbers of Basotho miners been retrenched, but also recruitment of novice labour has been drastically curtailed. It is likely that in the next five years, recruitment of novice labour will come to a virtual halt judging also by the current restructuring of The Employment Bureau for Africa (Davies and Head 1995a; Davies and Head 1995b; Matlosa 1996). The fluctuations in the enrolment of Basotho labour on the Chamber of Mines-affiliated mines over the past decade is illustrated in table 3 below.

Table 3. Lesotho labour complement on the COM mines, 1985-95

1985	101,120
1986	106,379
1987	108,895
1988	105,116
1989	105,000
1990	103,040
1991	93,319
1992	92,354
1993	89,940
1994	89,076
1995	69,710

SOURCE: Teba – Lesotho. January 1996.

Judging by the above statistics, Basotho labour on the mines increased since 1985, a trend which was reversed after the historic mineworkers strike of 1987, which led to the dismissal of 40,000 foreign miners, of which 10,000 were Basotho. The process of scaling down Basotho labour continued steadily during the latter part of the 1980s, only to accelerate at alarming proportions during the 1990s. According to the above data, the cumulative average reduction of Basotho migrants on the COM mines alone during the 1990s is about 6,700 per annum. Earlier on, Petersson had predicted that about 5,000–6,000 Basotho miners would be retrenched annually, while the number of novices recruited was projected to stagnate around 2,000 (1993, 29). Petersson's prediction was not totally off the mark as data in table 3 clearly demonstrates.

All things being equal, it can safely be projected that the retrenchment of Basotho labour will continue in spite of (and probably due to) the changed political environment in South Africa. Coplan and Thoahlane observe that “the number of Basotho employed in the mines is steadily decreasing through retrenchment, with the loss of more than 14,000 jobs since 1987” (1995, 140). While Coplan and Thoahlane estimate the extent of retrenchment since 1987 at 14,000, Thabane puts the figure at 20,000 (1995, 191). This disparity emphasises the lack of reliable data on retrenchment of Basotho migrants from the South African mining industry.

Naturally, Basotho minors and their wives are worried by these developments for they threaten their households’ primary means of subsistence – the fountain of their very survival. The Lesotho government is also bothered because both retrenchment and declining intake of mine novices would lead not only to the loss of a critical source of external revenue, but would also impose an extra obligation of addressing social demands of returning migrants and the increasing domestic unemployment.

The other dark side of the retrenchment process is that in many instances it translates into a raw deal for the miners whose rights are usually trampled underfoot by the unscrupulous mine management. Coplan and Thoahlane found that in the process of retrenchment, there was wide-spread denial and misappropriation of worker’s “severance packages, provident fund and long-service bonuses; systematic attempts to undermine contract provisions negotiated with the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) and to target unionists for dismissal; and corrupt practices and nepotism in rehiring and recruitment” (1995, 141). Most retrenched miners interviewed for this study also complained bitterly about the above practices as they had clearly fallen prey to manipulation by mine management and Teba officials.

Besides retrenchment, Lesotho is also confronted by the recent decision by the South African government to grant residency permits to Basotho migrants who have worked in the Republic for five or more years since 1986. In October 1995, the South African government, through President Nelson Mandela and Home Affairs Minister Mangosuthu Buthelezi, and the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) agreed on an offer to all foreign migrants on the South African mines for a permanent residence status in that country. All eligible miners were to apply for permanent residence status from November 1995 until March 1996 although the period was subsequently extended. The offer was open to those miners who:

- (i) had entered the Republic of South Africa before 13 June 1986;
- (ii) were ordinarily resident in the country before that date;
- (iii) were not prohibited persons at that stage; and
- (iv) were in possession of a voter’s eligibility document, which allowed them to vote in the April 1994 elections (Sechaba Consultants 1997, 11).

This decision was reached in 1995, after a lengthy process of bargaining and lobbying by the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM). It is worth noting that this decision was taken without prior consultations with the labour supply states such as Lesotho. Of a total of about 100,000 Basotho migrants on the South

African mines, about 34,000 have applied for permanent residence status since the offer was extended to them in October 1995, as table 4 below indicates.

Table 4. Basotho mineworkers' applications for permanent residence permits as of November 30, 1996

Province	Application granted	Application under process	Total
Gauteng north	3,732	9	3,841
Gauteng south	889	94	978
Northern cape	5	0	5
North west	4,173	0	4,173
Mpumalanga	2,977	268	3,245
Free state	20,003	0	20,003
Total	33,630	387	34,113

SOURCE: Department of Home Affairs, South Africa.

The implications of this for Lesotho are many and varied: loss of a considerable proportion of the deferred payment estimated at R21 million per month; substantial reduction of Lesotho's share of the revenue accruing from the Southern African Customs Union; loss of labour that could be put to effective use in the agricultural sector. The most important issue of note regarding both retrenchment and granting of residency permits is that South Africa has consistently adopted a strategy of taking unilateral decisions vis-à-vis international labour migration. Surprisingly, this tendency continues even under the new democratic dispensation in that country, which many thought would be more sensitive to the fears and interests of the neighbouring countries. It was partly in view of the likely deleterious effects of unilateral decisions to reshape migration patterns in Southern Africa that Crush recently recommended as follows:

bilateralism is not necessarily a bad or inefficient short-term policy measure for dealing with cross-border migration by and between two nation-states. What is also needed, in the specific historical and geographic context of Southern Africa and the SADC, is a new multilateralism in the area of population movement, akin to those developing for trade, infrastructure and investment (1997, 32).

The last section examines the implications of the twin processes of retrenchment and residency permits for gender relations in rural Lesotho.

3.1 Implications for Gender Relations

The earlier discussion has highlighted the central position occupied by women in the development of Lesotho's rural economy despite their restricted power, authority and social status. It is worth noting that most rural households are headed by women. The 1995 data produced by the World Bank report reveals that

About 54 percent of all households are headed by women. About 25 percent are formally (de jure) headed by women (who are single, widowed, divorced or abandoned

by their spouses); and about 29 percent are effectively (de facto) headed by women, because the male head of household is absent. The other 46 percent of households are headed by men who live at home (1995, 24).

This pattern may change with the increased retrenchment of Basotho migrants on the South African mines. Returning miners would assume their status of de jure and de facto heads of households and thus further marginalise their wives from key processes of households' survival strategies. Although women may not openly or quietly oppose this change in the households' power configuration, this trend may ignite tensions within the affected families. But, looked at from a different angle, it could be argued that returning migrants may find it extremely difficult to assume headship role without the requisite resources that conventionally go with the position of being a bread winner, i.e., regular income, stable job, etc. They may just abandon that role, leaving it to their wives as they scout for wage employment in the urban areas.

Whether they assume their roles as household heads or whether they abandon it, the point still remains that the returning migrant labourers may not ensure family stability as some would assume. It has always been argued by various experts in this field that migration has historically tended to destabilise the social fabric of the rural households. It does not follow, however, that the return of migrants due to retrenchment will bring internal stability of the households. The economic decline of the household due largely to the loss of remittances from the mines may act as a destabilising factor.

Retrenchment will obviously lead to a substantial loss of critical income for rural households. It is estimated that miners' remittances constitute about 70% of the gross income for the majority of rural households. This reflects the extent to which Lesotho's rural economy is so [in]securely anchored to external sources of income/capital. This also attests, albeit indirectly, to the sub-subsistence nature of Lesotho's agricultural production. Put differently, therefore, Lesotho's agricultural productivity is sufficient only to supplement migrant remittances – the key foundation of the survival of the rural folk. Devastating drought, chronic soil erosion, vicissitudes of the rain-fed agricultural activity, lack of instruments of production and disincentive to produce are part of the larger bleak picture of the future of agriculture in Lesotho.

Retrenchment will not necessarily boost Lesotho's agricultural sector by providing additional labour. It has been noted earlier that one of the adverse effects of migration is the shortage of labour for agriculture in particular. It cannot be assumed, however, that the return of miners, in and of itself, would solve the problem of labour shortage. One pervasive tendency among returning miners is that they have lost confidence in the capability of agricultural productivity to act as a panacea for their multifarious household needs. Mine employment tends to be accorded high premium in terms of miners' preferences and their list of survival strategies. This is why it does not look ironic to a miner if he responds to his retrenchment by looking for another mine job, rather than engage in agricultural production. Agriculture may generally remain the task of women, while men attempt to get new mine jobs or engage in rural-urban migration looking for alternative wage employment in the cities.

Since the granting of residency permit to migrants is a relatively new phenomenon, its likely impact on gender relations is not yet clear. Furthermore, the likely response of the miners themselves to this new move still remains a moot point. It can, however, be surmised that it will trigger the majority of Basotho miners into taking up South African identity documents so as to enjoy privileges and rights, which were previously preserved for South African citizens alone. Whether they will actually take up full citizenship by physically relocating their families to South Africa still remains debatable. There are, of course, a lot of odds and opportunities that are presented by the option of relocation to South Africa. The issue of residency permits does not present us with clear-cut signals as to its effects on gender relations in Lesotho's rural economy. As Chapter Four will indicate, this process may have various possible outcomes:

- (a) Some miners may abandon their wives and families as they take up South African citizenship, especially in those cases where husband and wife are not agreed on this issue.
- (b) Others may relocate together with their wives and families, especially in those cases where husband and wife are agreed on relocating and this may not affect gender relations adversely.
- (c) Some other miners may not relocate at all although they may take up South African permanent residence permits primarily for fear of the unknown as migration is currently in a state of flux and reluctance to cut their socio-economic ties with their kith and kin in rural Lesotho.

4. RESEARCH FINDINGS: REVIEW OF THE EVIDENCE

4.1 The Socio-demographic Characteristics of Respondents

As indicated in Chapter One, this study is based on the data collected in 18 villages in the Mafeteng District over a population sample of 250 households. Researchers used purposive or judgmental sampling and observation as the key research techniques to collect relevant data, which could allow us to test the hypotheses of this study and to make generally useable observations which could apply to other parts of the country. Tables five, six and seven below present basic biographic data on respondents regarding size of household, age and gender of respondents.

Table 5. Size of households

Size	Frequency	Percentage
Below 5	90	36
5 – 9	147	58.8
10 – 15	13	5.2
Above 15	0	0
Total	250	100.00

A large majority of respondents (about 59%) reported having between 5 and 9 members of the household, which is a large number given the dwindling resources

for survival in Lesotho's rural economy. Most of these households rely more on migrant remittances than on domestic resources to eke out a living. Most of these households were also managed by women either as de facto or de jure heads. The dependence of these rural households on migrant remittances is worsened by their lack of alternative income generating activities (see tables 28 and 29, under Appendix "B"). The critical link of households to male migration to the South African mines is shown vividly in table 30, under Appendix "B"). However, the incidence of termination of mine employment effectively put an added burden on the survival strategies for affected households as table 30, under Appendix "B", clearly indicates.

Table 6. Age of respondents

Age	Frequency	Percentage
Under 20	1	0.4
20-29	25	10
30-39	54	21.6
40-49	70	28
50-59	48	19.2
60 and above	52	20.8
Total	250	100

The highest proportion of our total population sample was in the 40 – 49 age category whose percentage share is 28, while the under 20s constituted the smallest share of the sample. Naturally, this was bound to be so, for a majority of males involved in mine migrancy are in the age category 40-49.

Table 7. Respondents by gender

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	114	45.6
Female	136	54.4
Total	250	100.00

The gender balance of the respondents points to a slight edge of female respondents (54%) over males (45%). This is not surprising. In fact, it was to be expected, given that most males are hardly ever present in the rural areas. They are either in the South African mines or in Lesotho's own urban centres working or looking for employment. Women are, therefore, the main human pillars of the rural subsistence economy as the previous chapters have argued. The employment status of the respondents reveals interesting, albeit predictable, outcomes as table 8 below shows.

Table 8. Employment status of respondents

Employment status	Frequency	Percentage
Employed	44	17.6
Unemployed	206	82.4
Total	250	100.0

While unemployment is rife in Lesotho generally, it is more acute in the rural areas where in fact the incidence of poverty is much more chronic. Of the total population sample, 82% are unemployed and only 18% are employed. Table 23, under Appendix “B” details the type of employment among respondents. It shows that the highest proportion of our sample (about 32%) is engaged in oscillatory migration to the South African mines. The high incidence of unemployment, coupled with poverty, emphasise the high dependence rate of the rural households on migrant remittances from the male folk involved in labour migrancy. Lack of basic necessities of subsistence on the part of rural households is further emphasised by the educational levels of the respondents and their ownership of the basic means of production as shown in tables nine, ten and eleven below.

Table 9. Educational levels among respondents

Education	Frequency	Percentage
No formal education	32	12.8
Primary education	185	74
Secondary education	21	8.4
High school education (COSC)	10	4
Post – COSC	1	0.4
Other	1	0.4
Total	250	100.0

While 74% of our respondents had acquired primary education, 12.8% had no formal education and 0.4% had gone through post-COSC level of education. This is explicable by the fact that the meagre resources of most rural households did not allow respondents to access education beyond the primary level.

4.2 Ownership of the means of production

Table 10. Number of fields per household

Number of fields	Frequency	Percentage
0	89	35.6
1	64	25.6
2	52	20.8
3	39	15.6
4	2	0.8
5	4	1.6
6	0	0
Total	250	100.0

That the highest percentage of the respondents (35.6%) had no fields is a clear indicator of the perennial problem of landlessness in the Mafeteng District. Even those households which had either one (25.6%) or two (20.8%) fields had difficulties in ploughing and cultivating their land in order to meet their daily survival needs in the context of a systematic agricultural decline and sporadic drought (see table 24, under Appendix "B"). Women's severely restricted access to land which is worsened by patriarchy, ideology of domesticity and Lesotho's land tenure regime has aggravated the problem of landlessness and low agricultural yields in the rural economy. The major crops cultivated were maize, beans, wheat, sorghum and peas (see table 26, under Appendix "B"). Agricultural produce is used mainly for subsistence rather than commercial exchange (see table 25, under Appendix "B").

Table 11. Livestock ownership

Own livestock	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	143	57.2
No	107	42.8
Total	250	100.0

Although most interesting and, indeed, revealing, responses to the questionnaire were on the issue relating to the impact of migration trends on gender relations in the rural polity. Our hypotheses were (a) that migration tends to increase the power of women more by default than by design especially prior to the 1987 miners' strike, and (b) that the post-1987 strike accelerated retrenchment leads to the diminution of the power of women and their marginalisation from management and control over household resources and survival strategies (see Chapter One). Firstly

we asked a question which solicited respondents' opinions regarding the manner in which decisions affecting the households were made to assess the roles and stakes of wives and husbands. The second question related to who actually makes the said decisions. The third inquired into who implements these decisions. The fourth question asked respondents to express their views on the rural gender relations in the context of male migration. Responses to these questions were interesting not only because they reflected varying perceptions of males and females regarding gender relations, but also more so because they suggest that the exploitative and oppressive nature of these relations be generally taken for granted by rural societies. Consider the tables below.

Table 12. Male responses regarding how decisions affecting the household are made*

	Frequency	Percentage
By consultation b/n spouses	76	66.7
By husband	30	26.3
By wife	4	3.5
By husband and relatives	4	3.5
By wife and relatives	0	0
Total	114	100.0

* Decisions in areas of livestock, agriculture and the general social welfare of the household.

The nature of gender relations regarding decisions that affect the household as perceived by male respondents is that males, as heads of households, claim the larger share of responsibility, although there is an underlying assumption that this is done in consultation with females. While 66% of respondents argued that decisions are made in a consultative manner by both husband and wife, 26% submitted that they are made by husbands alone.

Responses by female respondents were also both revealing and intriguing as table 13 below illuminates.

Table 13. Female responses regarding how decisions affecting households are made*

	Frequency	Percentage
By consultation b/n spouses	86	63.2
By husband	18	13.3
By wife	24	17.6
By wife with relatives	8	5.9
Total	136	100.0

*Decisions in the areas of livestock, agriculture and the general social welfare of the household.

Like their male counterparts, most female respondents reported that most decisions affecting the well being of the household were made in constant consultation with their husbands. Some did recognise that their husbands had more power to make binding household decisions on their own. Unlike the responses from the male respondents, some females (17%) argued that they had power to make decisions on their own. In this category of respondents are (a) those wives with migrant husbands, and (b) those women who are either widowed or deserted by their husbands and are thus effective heads of households in their own right. This observation unequivocally confirms our hypothesis that absence of males in the rural society empowers females probably more by default than by design. Tables fourteen and fifteen below provide responses by male and female respondents respectively to a question on migration and empowerment of women.

Table 14. Female responses on whether male migration increases power of women

	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	62	45.6
No Major Difference	11	8.1
No	41	30.1
No opinion	22	16.2
Total	136	100.0

About 46% of female respondents believe that the long absence of males due to migration tends to increase the power of women while 30% argue that this is not so.

Table 15. Male responses on whether male migration increases the power of women

	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	44	38.6
No Major Difference	16	14
No	31	27.2
No opinion	23	20.2
Total	114	100.0

About 39% of male respondents argued that male migration increases the power of women, while 27% argued to the contrary. The fact that 16% of female respondents and 20% of male respondents expressed no opinion on this question emphasises our observation in Chapter One that some respondents were reluctant to air their views on this issue which they deemed too private to discuss with strangers.

As regards who actually makes critical decisions for the household, tables sixteen and Seventeen below indicate that both males and females play a crucial role although 38% of male respondents reckoned they play a dominant role as household head in this process, while 16.9% of female respondents argued they play a central role.

Table 16. Male responses as to who makes household decisions

	Frequency	Percentage
Husband	44	38.6
Wife	6	5.3
Both Husband and Wife	61	53.5
Husband and relatives	3	2.6
Wife and relatives	0	0
Total	114	100.0

Table 17. Female responses as to who makes household decisions

	Frequency	Percentage
Husband	21	15.4
Wife	23	16.9
Both Husband and Wife	83	61.1
Husband with relatives	0	0
Wife with relatives	9	6.6
Total	136	100.0

The male respondents did not regard women as playing a major role in their own right in making household decisions except through their consultations with them. About 54% of the male respondents submitted that household decisions are taken through consultation between husband and wife. On the contrary, female respondents recognised that women do play a critical role in the decision making process in their own right, even though 61% of them reported that decisions are taken through consultations.

Tables 31 and 32, under Appendix "B", indicate male and female responses regarding who implements household decisions. The overall picture that emerges from responses by both genders is that household decisions are implemented by all members of the household. This position is maintained by about 53% of the male respondents and 48% of female respondents.

The responses by males and females to a question regarding gender division of labour on decision-making around participation in community development and local political processes also indicate their diametrically opposed perceptions. On the one hand, about 43% of male respondents believe that the husband determines the extent of his wife's participation in community development and political

processes. Female respondents, on the other hand, maintain that although the male does play a role, the individual has a free choice to participate in community development and political processes. About 20% of female respondents argued that wives themselves make decisions to participate in community development and political process and 27% submitted that the individual is free to choose without undue hindrance by the male head.

Tables 18 and 19 below show that, despite the differing perceptions on a variety of issues in the decision-making processes, the majority of both male and female respondents expressed satisfaction with the nature of gender division of labour in their households. In the case of males, 64% of the respondents were satisfied with the existing gender division of labour in their households. As for females, 65% of the respondents were satisfied with the gender division of labour in the household, while 5% expressed dissatisfaction.

Table 18. Male respondents' feelings about the existing gender division of labour in the household

	Frequency	Percentage
Satisfactory	73	64
Unsatisfactory	0	0
No opinion	41	36
Total	114	100.0

Table 19. Female respondents' responses on the gender division of labour in the household

	Frequency	Percentage
Satisfactory	88	65
Unsatisfactory	7	5
No Opinion	41	30
Total	136	100.0

With regard to retrenchment and the granting of permanent residence status, our respondents confirmed our hypotheses that retrenchment of miners tends to recast rural gender relations in a way that reinforces male domination and disempowers women, and that the granting of permanent residence status may also shake gender relations either for good or for ill. The views of the respondents on retrenchment and its impact on rural households are depicted in tables 20 and 21 below.

Table 20. Male responses on whether retrenchment of mine migrants in any way affects the household decision-making process

	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	14	12.1
No	3	3.0
Leads to poverty	59	51.8
Leads to family instability	22	19.1
No opinion	16	14.0
Total	114	100.0

Table 21. Female responses on whether retrenchment of mine migrants in anyway affects the household decision-making process

	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	18	13.0
No	5	4.1
Leads to poverty	61	44.9
Leads to family instability	34	25.0
No opinion	18	13.0
Total	136	100.0

A large majority of respondents agreed that retrenchment does affect their households, emphasising the point that it causes a plethora of problems including poverty and family instability.

4.3 The Permanent Residence Status: Respondents' Views

Table 22. Respondents' views on permanent residence status in South Africa

Views	Frequency	Percentage
No	119	47.6
Qualified no	43	17.2
Yes	63	25.2
Matter for individuals	20	8
Undecided	5	2
Total	250	100.0

Besides retrenchment of Basotho migrant miners on the South African mines, an equally perplexing development is the recent granting of the permanent residence status to foreign miners by the South African government. This came as a result of a protracted lobbying by the National Union of Mineworkers in 1995 for the granting of citizenship to foreign miners. The main argument of the NUM rested on their long-held desire and aspiration to abolish the exploitative and oppressive migratory labour; to eradicate the compound system; to allow these miners an opportunity to enjoy the fruits of the economy that they have built through their sweat and blood over the last century; and to fight against separate development and allow migrants to stay with their families at their site of labour. Reluctant to immediately grant foreign miners full citizenship in the face of the rising tide of xenophobia in South Africa, Mandela's government took a softer option by granting these miners a permanent residence status with the option of full citizenship after five years. We have outlined the conditions upon which these miners were to qualify for this offer of residency in Chapter Three. In the same Chapter, we have also provided the number of Basotho miners who have already applied for the permanent residence status. It is worth noting that Basotho miners comprise the largest number of applicants for this offer of amnesty by South Africa to migrants from the entire Southern African region. This observation suggests that the impact of this offer, whether palatable or deleterious, will be more profound in Lesotho than in any other affected countries. Our general observation was that a considerable number of miners may apply for permanent residence status, but would not physically relocate to South Africa. However, dates from the field points to a different direction. About 48% of our respondents did not prefer taking up the offer of permanent residence status in South Africa nor would they even consider becoming South African citizens. The reasons advanced by this category of respondents for their negative attitude towards permanent residence status included the following:

- (i) It will break families;
- (ii) Their dislike for urban lifestyle;
- (iii) Culture shock;
- (iv) Fear that breadwinners may abandon nuclear and extended families;
- (v) Lesotho may lose a larger proportion of its citizens;
- (vi) They will not be able to own land and livestock given a different land tenure regime in South Africa;
- (vii) Not keen on starting a new life in South Africa;
- (viii) That the permanent residence permits is a veiled strategy to incorporate Lesotho into South Africa;
- (ix) Afraid of political instability, violence and crime in South Africa;
- (x) Life in South Africa is too costly and depends on cash.

The common characteristics of this category of respondents are that: (a) they are elderly; (b) they have large households; (c) they have less education; (d) they have a considerable amount of assets, by rural standards, such as livestock and land;

(e) they have stronger socio-economic links with their kith and kin. Many factors influence the negative attitude of our respondents to the permanent residence. First, migrants do not seem to have sufficient information regarding this offer of amnesty and are therefore reluctant to commit themselves. Second migrants seem to confuse permanent residence status with citizenship, hence their uncertainty when it comes to the option they really want. Third, the practical application of this amnesty still leaves lots of doubt on the part of miners. For instance, those miners who have been granted permanent residence status are not yet entitled to pension nor are they allowed to settle in any province in South Africa other than the one initially chosen before they become full citizens. Fourth, some migrants and their wives would not publicly disclose their desire for accessing the offer of amnesty for they reckon that the Lesotho government is against it. As they thought that the researchers might, in some way or other, be connected to the government they opted for the “No” answer. Only 25% of the respondents seemed eager to take up the offer, while the rest floated in between the two extremes. The reasons advanced by this category of respondents for the “yes” option were as follows:

- (i) Life in Lesotho is too harsh;
- (ii) Employment is available in South Africa;
- (iii) An opportunity for a better life;
- (iv) It will lead to smooth, gradual integration of the two countries;
- (v) It makes it possible for families of migrants to live together in South Africa legally;
- (vi) It accords migrants their right to enjoy socio-economic benefits in South Africa given their enormous contribution to that country’s wealth;
- (vii) This move will redress the severe employment crisis in Lesotho;
- (viii) This amounts to a concrete step towards dismantling apartheid, unlike retrenchment, which essentially deepens apartheid.

The common characteristics of this category of respondents are that: (a) they are young; (b) they have smaller households or are unmarried; (c) they are educated; (d) they lack assets and are landless; (e) they do not feel a strong sense of attachment to the rural society although they would not like to totally sever relations with their rural kith and kin.

The gender implications of this new development is of utmost significance for this study. Given that these implications are not yet clear-cut, we can only surmise the likely outcomes. First, in a case where the husband and wife are agreed on taking the offer of permanent residence status and relocating to South Africa, the gender division of labour in the household may remain the same as before. This may be a dominant tendency whereby “the nuclear family of wives and children would go with the husband, but the extended family would usually remain behind in Lesotho” (Sechaba consultants 1997, 18). Second, in cases where husband and wife are not agreed on the matter, mainly as a result of the latter’s reluctance, the former may abandon the family and establish a new familial relationship in South Africa. In this latter case, the abandoned wife effectively becomes a household head and has to

fend for the daily survival of other members of the household. In our entire sample, we came across only one case like this, which suggests that this may not be a dominant tendency. Thirdly, the other likely scenario is the one where the miner takes up permanent residence and leaves behind his nuclear and extended families without severing ties with them. This scenario is in accord with what Sechaba Consultants' recent survey noted as "the possibility for the miner who takes up permanent residence in South Africa of maintaining a home in Lesotho, where these members of the family or extended family might live" (1997, 18).

5. CONCLUSIONS: UNCERTAIN FUTURES

This study sought to verify the following assumptions: (a) that male migration tends to increase the power of women although more by default than by design while also recognising that the social system, patriarchy and the ideology of domesticity restrict the boundaries of this power; and (b) that retrenchment of Basotho migrants on the South African mines leads to diminution of the power of rural women and when this combines with the patriarchal system and the ideology of domesticity, the marginalisation of women is further deepened.

After providing a broad background, the study ventured into the theoretical framework that has thus far informed the migration discourse. The three major theories discussed in this report are (a) the rational choice approach; (b) the neo-Marxist school of thought; and (c) the structuration model. According to the authors of this report, while the rational choice and neo-Marxist schools provide useful insights for our fuller understanding and explanation of the migration phenomenon, the structuration model seems to be the most powerful analytical instrument which unravels the varying dynamics that drive the migrant labour system in Southern Africa. It is on the basis of this theoretical model that we were able to inject a strong dose of gender and gender relations in discussing the migration phenomenon in Lesotho.

Our research findings are many and varied. First, male migration to the South African mines does increase the power of women and this was confirmed by both male and female respondents in our sample. Second, retrenchment of male migrants tends to narrow the horizons of women's power over various household responsibilities and obligations. Third, the recent granting of permanent residence status to foreign miners by the South African government may introduce a new dimension in the gender division of labour on the affected rural households.

The future of not only the rural households, but also of Lesotho as a country in the context of the current changes in the pattern of international migration, clearly hangs in balance. It has, therefore, been suggested by some writers (Cobbe 1991; Matlosa 1995; Vale and Matlosa 1995; Makoa 1996) that in order for Lesotho to assure its future in the changing political economy of Southern Africa, it has to contend with four main options, namely, (a) maintaining the status quo; (b) negotiating with the new South African government for the return of the so-called conquered territory; (c) arrangement for a formal bilateral common labour market with South Africa; and (d) formal political integration with South Africa.

Maintaining the status quo means leaving things as they are presently and relying on what fate has in store for Lesotho's future. Lesotho's economic dependence on its only neighbour, South Africa, would continue and the migrant labour to the South African mines will be subjected to varying changes beyond the control of the Lesotho State. The accelerated retrenchment of Basotho miners may continue. Furthermore, if Basotho miners continue to apply for permanent residence, this will surely whittle one of Lesotho's major external sources of revenue. It will undoubtedly put some pressure on the survival strategies of rural households in Lesotho and more so on women who play a critical role in the rural political economy.

Negotiating the return of the conquered territory means that the government of Lesotho would request the South African government to give back the land that was usurped by the Afrikaner during the Basotho-Boer wars of the 19th century. This land forms part of the Free State province of South Africa. It has been argued by some that this land would help boost Lesotho's ailing economy and thus reduce its dependence on migrant remittances. But how this will happen is not made clear by the proponents of this option. It also seems "exceedingly doubtful that South Africa would be willing to cede the 'conquered territory'" (Vale and Matlosa 1995, 84). Surely this is a very unlikely outcome, given land scarcity in South Africa itself and the nationalistic emotion that this option evokes.

Negotiating the bilateral common labour market between Lesotho and South Africa may, at this stage, be a viable option. A new migrant labour agreement between the two countries could emerge as an outcome of this new relationship. The central aim of such an arrangement should be to redress the past economic imbalances between Lesotho and South Africa and geared towards putting in place a mutually beneficial bilateral labour market regime. The existing institutional arrangements that bind the economies of these countries, such as the Southern African Customs Union (SACU), the common Monetary Agreement (CMA), and the Labour Agreement, may provide building blocks for a bilateral common labour market between Lesotho and South Africa.

The issue of political integration of Lesotho into South Africa is not new. It dates back to the formation of the Union of South Africa in 1910. Article 151 of the 1909 South African Act envisaged the incorporation of Lesotho, Botswana and Swaziland (the then British High Commission Territories) into the Union of South Africa. This did not materialise due to Basotho's disdain for institutionalised racial discrimination in South Africa. The justification for this option now, by its exponents, is that statutory apartheid has been dismantled and so Lesotho stands to gain by formally joining South Africa. This proposal, however, does not seem to command a wider support of the rural folk judging by the attitudes of our respondents towards this idea.

Whichever option Lesotho adopts, the gender relations in the rural economy have to be reconstructed in such a way that the worth and value of women's labour is fully recognised and compensated accordingly. Women have had their [un]fair share of the burden of socio-economic hardships in Lesotho's rural economy and thus far their agony and tribulations have been ignored by the state. The state's rural development policies and programmes have to be sensitive to this stark

reality. However, women should not only wait, rather helplessly, for the male-dominated state institutions to emancipate them, but should also organise themselves and struggle for their own economic and political liberation.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Power

For the purpose of this study, power is taken to mean the strength, capacity and/or ability of an individual (or collection of individuals) to carry out his/her will while pursuing certain goals (Collin 1988, 156). The four crucial aspects raised by this definition are: (i) understanding power as individual-based and, therefore, involving issues of choice (decision-making), agency, and intention; here, differences of interest between the powerful and the powerless are implied but no less important (Weber 1946); (ii) understanding power as a structural relationship; here the individual will and intention are subordinated to power relations that are more or less determined by, for instance, the class structure of society (Poulantzas 1978); (iii) appreciating the existence of hidden forms of power which also implies finding ways of highlighting those where they exist; (iv) appreciating that power need not always be repressive and coercive but may also be productive and enabling.

Authority

Inextricably linked to the concept of power is authority, which we define in this study as official power or legal right given to an individual or a group of people to do certain tasks/functions (Collin 1988, 15). Like power, authority defines both individual status and structural relations in society.

Gender

In grappling with the concept of gender, we are less concerned with the biological-cum-physical distinctiveness between males (masculinity) and females (femininity). We consider such differences as inconsequential in a study whose focus is not fertility trends and population growth, but social change. Our analysis is, therefore, deeply embedded in the social division of labour between men and women in society. We investigate how that division of labour interfaces with the complex interplay of power and authority in Lesotho's labour reserve economy. Put rather simply, gender can be taken to be a socially and culturally constructed phenomenon out of which arise male superordination and female subordination.

Migration

In common usage, migration refers to movement of people from one region of a country to another or between/among different states for a variety of reasons. Permanent migration describes permanent resettlement of migrants, while oscillatory migration is that where migrants vacillate back and forth between home and the work place. This study is about inter-state oscillatory migration. There are generally four types of cross-border migration in Southern Africa with varying degrees from one country to another: (a) refugees; (b) undocumented (illegal) migration; (c) brain drain; and (d) contract labour migration to the mines. With the exception of refugee flows, South Africa has been the key destiny for this phenomenal population exodus. This research concentrates on mine migrancy and unravels its impact on gender division of power and authority.

Gender Relations

This concept, for our purposes, refers to social relations and division of labour between men and women. The economic subordination that underwrites this relationship is of particular interest to our research. This cannot, however, be divorced from the ideological and cultural justifications whose function is the reproduction of a specific trajectory of gender relations. Like class relations, gender relations are structurally determined and socially constructed. Structural and social determinants, therefore, play a key role in defining and driving relations of production and reproduction between men and women in societies.

Empowerment

Following on our definition of power, empowerment is a measurable, observable, positive change in the ability to do something. Those who are empowered are empowered by a sudden or gradual change whose effect is to increase their ability and capability to do something. Such empowerment may co-exist with other undesirable effects: divided families, etc. In this sense, empowerment becomes an unintended result of massive labour migration by menfolk to the South African mines. It includes, *inter alia*, expansion of women's areas of competence into what is conventionally considered a male preserve.

Disempowerment

Disempowerment, on the contrary, would refer to the reverse process. It refers to the reduction of an individual's power and authority to do something. In this study, we argue that the gradual and sometimes sudden return of menfolk from the South Africa mines ostensibly raises questions of the changing rural gender relations as returnees take up their "rightful" place as heads of households: a process which further domesticates women and reduces their power. The competence and relative authority of women to manage the household property then diminishes and this is what disempowerment is all about. Like empowerment, disempowerment is observable and measurable; and unlike the former, the latter is negative.

Class

In this study, class is taken to mean social relations of production which are defined in terms of: (a) ownership or non-ownership of the means and instruments of production; (b) employment or non-employment of labour power of others; and (c) the type of economic activity undertaken (Roberts and Edwards 1991).

Household

In anthropological epistemology, a household is the second smallest unit of social organisation to a nuclear family. It comprises individuals bound together not only by ties of consanguinity, but by their social relations to each other and to the means of production that sustain the unit. Unlike a nuclear family, therefore, a household is not just biologically determined. Rather, it is a broadly constructed social entity whereby blood relations, wage earners, managers of the common assets and labourers contribute to the common good of the unit. Mafeje correctly asserts that "while the composition of African households is largely voluntary, kinship ideology actually sets its parameters" (1991, 21). But again to suggest that a household is a site of co-operation, equitable power sharing and the collective

responsibility for the welfare of the unit would be incorrect. It is important to recognise that a household is also an arena of a plethora of familial conflicts, including gender struggles, which largely revolve around the contestation for power and authority.

APPENDIX B: ADDITIONAL TABLES

Table 23. Types of employment of respondents

Type of employment	Frequency	Percentage
Farming	5	11.4
Industry ¹	4	9.1
Service ²	13	29.5
Mine migrant	14	31.8
Manual ³	3	6.8
Self-employed ⁴	1	2.3
Governmental ⁵	4	9.1
Total	44	100.0

¹ Builder (1); Construction (3)

² Domestic (2); Café Attendant (1); Hotels (7); Cook (1); Security (1); Nurse (1).

³ Gardener (1)

⁴ Shoemaker (1)

⁵ Chef (4)

Table 24. Fields cultivated

Number of fields	Frequency	Percentage
All Fields	120	74.5
Partial	41	25.5
Total	161	100.0

Table 25. Use of agricultural produce

Usage	Frequency	Percentage
Consumption	131	81.4
Sale	2	1.2
Both	28	17.4
Total	161	100.0

Table 26. Types of crops cultivated

Type	Frequency	Percentage
Maize	139	53.5
Beans	27	10.4
Wheat	17	6.5
Sorghum	68	26.1
Peas	9	3.5
Total	161	100.0

Table 27. Types of livestock

Type	Frequency	Percentage
Cows	111	41.9
Sheep	66	24.9
Donkeys	43	16.2
Pigs	3	1.1
Goats	22	8.3
Horses	19	7.2
Chicken	1	0.4
Total	265	100.0

Table 28. Presence or absence of income generating activities (other than farming, livestock, migration, wage employment)

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes (Present)	101	40.4
No (Absent)	149	59.6
Total	250	100.0

Table 29. Types of income generating activities

Type	Frequency	Percentage
Buying and selling paraffin	1	0.7
Doing odd jobs in the village	53	35.8
Practising traditional medicine	2	1.4
Organised into co-operatives	3	2.0
Doing odd jobs in district centre	2	1.4
Informal sector	9	6.1
Labour-intensive work (fato-fato)	30	20.3
Selling home brew	11	7.4
Poultry project	3	2.0
Selling vegetables	13	8.9
Runs café	4	2.7
Candle-making	1	0.7
Radio and TV repairs	1	0.7
Owens tractor for rental	1	0.7
Depends on relatives	14	9.7
Total	148	100.0

Table 30. Migration history of respondents

	Frequency	Percentage
Husband migrant at present	65	26
Husband migrant in the past	174	69.6
Single son migrant at present	3	1.2
No migrant (past and present)	3	1.2
Total	250	100.0

Table 31. Reasons for termination of mine employment among migrants

Reason	Frequency	Percentage
Retired	9	5.2
Resigned	23	13.3
Illness	39	22.4
Fired	13	7.4
Retrenched	71	40.8
Death	19	10.9
Total	174	100.0

Table 32. Male responses as to who implements household decisions

	Frequency	Percentage
Husband	23	20.2
Wife	5	4.4
Both Husband and Wife	22	19.3
All members of Households	60	52.6
Wider Circle of relatives	4	3.5
Total	114	100.0

Table 33. Female responses as to who implements household decisions

	Frequency	Percentage
Husband	10	7.4
Wife	15	11.0
Both husband and wife	43	31.6
All members of the household	65	47.8
Wider circle of relatives	3	2.2
Total	136	100.0

