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*the role, function and training of black first-line  
supervisors in some decentralized industries*

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*SOUTH AFRICAN HUMAN SCIENCES RESEARCH COUNCIL*

***THE ROLE, FUNCTION AND TRAINING OF BLACK  
FIRST-LINE SUPERVISORS IN SOME  
DECENTRALIZED INDUSTRIES***

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## Preface

Previous research by the Institute for Manpower Research has shown that Black first-line supervisors have an important role to play in the manufacturing industry.

It is hoped that this report on the role, function and training of Black supervisors will be of value to managers, personnel officers and all those who are active in the selection and training of these "men in the middle."

I wish to thank the managers, supervisors and workers who participated in the research and without whose co-operation the research would have been impossible.

The assistance of the Institute for Statistical Research for data processing and of the Institute for Information and Special Services for editorial services is acknowledged with appreciation.

  
PRESIDENT  
November 1977





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## OPSOMMING

Die doel met hierdie verslag is om die rol, funksie en opleiding van die Swart eerste-lyn toesighouer in sommige gede= sentraliseerde nywerhede te beskryf soos dit gesien word deur bestuur, die toesighouers self en die werker in die spanne.

Altesaam 24 vervaardigingsnywerhede in Rosslyn, Babelegi en Brits en wat 8659 werkers in diens het, het aan die navorsing deelgeneem.

Gestruktueerde onderhoude is met 245 Swart toesighouers en met 251 Swart werkers gevoer.

## SUMMARY

The aim of this report is to describe the role, function and training of Black first-line supervisors in some decentra= lized industries as seen by management, the supervisors them= selves and the workers on the teams.

In all, 24 manufacturing concerns employing 8659 workers in Rosslyn, Babelegi and Brits took part in the research.

Structured interviews were conducted with 245 Black supervisors and 251 Black workers.





## CHAPTER 1

### BACKGROUND AND AIM OF THE STUDY

#### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

During the SABRA conference held in September 1974, the position of Blacks in the labour force of South Africa was scrutinized. Among the papers read and topics discussed, Weideman and Du Preez (1974: 26) in their presentation indicated that most of the Blacks in the labour force are still employed as unskilled and manual labourers. According to them the main problem in the South African labour market is the imbalance between highly trained and unskilled labour. The problem of the South African economy and of productivity is not so much a lack of Black labour, as a lack of managers and trained workers. This can be attributed to amongst other things, the influence of the cultural background of the Blacks. Their culture does not favour the values of a Western-type production economy as is illustrated by the work of Mbiti and Matsheke. (Weideman and Du Preez, 1974: 26).

Notwithstanding the problems mentioned above Blacks are being given more and more responsibility in industry. It has been found by researchers of the IMR of the HRC that Blacks are being appointed as supervisors where these positions were traditionally reserved for Whites only.

In the work done by Redelinghuys (1974) on the attitudes of Tswana work-seekers towards type of work, supervision and area of employment, the importance of supervision in creating a positive attitude towards work was again stressed. Redelinghuys (1974: 70) states that: "The job seekers' views on supervision show that the Bantu worker insists on fair treatment and self-control on the part of the supervisor or employer. It is also because of this that the majority of job-seekers prefer a White foreman to a Bantu one. The latter is mainly preferred for reasons of communication. The reasons supplied for the choice of foreman indicate that it would pay the employer to ensure that -

(a) humane treatment is meted out in the job situation (no purpose is served by swearing or scolding);

(b) the worker knows who his supervisor is, and from whom he will receive orders;

(c) good work is noticed and commended, and

(d) attention is devoted to the training and selection of foremen."

In the project on labour turnover and absenteeism, Redelinghuys and Terblanche (1976: 95-96) found that: "Supervision plays a particular role in creating healthy personnel relations and this is where the function of the first-line supervisor should be emphasised. Workers mention, for example, that abuse is hurled at them, that there are disputes among supervisors, that the supervisor is inexperienced and the supervision too direct. The position of the supervisor is by no means an easy one ...". "The reasons advanced for the choice of a supervisor ... reflect what the workers expect in a supervisor. They want him to be just; he must not be 'jealous' - in other words, he must not feel threatened by a good worker. He must inspire confidence, must be able to help with problems at home and in the job, must be able to give them a sound training for their work, must be patient and must have status with the management."

The authors go further by concluding that: "The choice and training of the supervisor is therefore an important matter which perhaps does not receive enough attention ..." and they add: "Since supervision apparently plays an important role in personnel relations, ... thorough research into the role, function and training of the Black first-line supervisor is necessary." (Redelinghuys and Terblanche, 1976: 89).

As the quality of supervision is clearly a very important contributory factor to production and peaceful labour relations, the study of the role, function and training of Black first-line supervisors as an important area for research and describes the aim of this study.

## 1.2 DEFINING THE PROBLEM

Role theory provides the necessary framework for a study of the problems arising from participation in first-line supervision.

Looking at roles in society in general, Stark et al. (1973: 52) describe a role as "... a set of expectations applied to an occupant of a particular position or status ..." which is "... characterised by certain obligations (or duties) and privileges (or rights)." They also distinguish various types of roles such as prescribed role, subjective role and enacted role.

By a prescribed role is meant a set of expectations regarding one's behaviour as prescribed by the social norms of society - all people who are playing the same prescribed role

(say of a first-line supervisor) are expected to carry out the same role prescriptions.

By a subjective role is meant that despite the imposition of a uniform role prescription on all first-line supervisors, there remains some variation among different supervisors in carrying out the prescription. "A subjective role refers to the specific expectations one holds concerning one's own and others' behaviour." (Stark et al., 1973: 52).

"Finally, the enacted role refers more to specific overt behavior than to the mere expectations that, ... characterize the prescribed and the subjective roles." (Stark et al., 1973: 52). This term is often used interchangeably with role performance.

Other concepts in role theory that are applicable to the study of first-line supervisors, are role relationships which are the expectations that people who occupy a pair of positions in a social system have for each other; and role conflict which refers to a kind of dilemma where a person has two or more expectations at the same time and cannot fulfil all of them, and therefore has to choose one and exclude the others. (Stark et al., 1973: 122-124).

In a study on occupational stresses and job satisfaction Burke says that: "Role theory states that when the behaviors expected of an individual are inconsistent - one kind of role conflict - he will experience stress, become dissatisfied, and perform less effectively than if the expectations imposed on him did not conflict. Role theory likewise states that role ambiguity - lack of the necessary information available to an organizational position - also increases the probability that the person will be dissatisfied with his role, will experience anxiety, and will, thus, perform less effectively." (Burke, 1976: 235-236).

It is the intention of this research project to determine the expectations held for the role of Black first-line supervisors in certain industries. As the factors affecting role expectations are not all negative, the description of the role of the Black first-line supervisor should also reveal positive aspects. Burke concludes his report by saying that:

"Job pressures are not all bad. Certain job pressures may be useful under most conditions (e.g. high but realistic goals, a heavy workload, quality workmanship). Other job pressures may be dysfunctional under most conditions (e.g., too

little job authority, lack of information, conflicting job expectations) ... It would be in everyone's best interest to decrease those pressures that interfere with individual satisfaction and organizational performance and increase those pressures that facilitate individual satisfaction and growth and organization effectiveness." (Burke, 1976: 243).

In an analysis of the role of the first-line supervisor, it will be necessary to determine his position or status in the particular organisation and also to determine the expectations held for that position. The functions to be performed by the supervisor are implied in the expectations held for the role or the duties attached to the position.

As the first-line supervisor is the man between management and the worker, role relationships with both these positions will ensue, which might, and in most cases will, lead to role conflict for the supervisor.

As three clearly distinguishable positions - management, first-line supervisors and the worker - are encountered in the work environment, each of these will have a clear expectation and description of the role of the first-line supervisor. These expectations are more clearly defined by management than by the workers. Differences in the expectations might arise and, therefore, it is essential that the views of management, the first-line supervisor himself, and the workers should be determined in a study of this kind.

In obtaining the views of the above-mentioned three categories it will be possible to determine the prescribed role as prescribed by management, the subjective role as described by the supervisor and the enacted role as described by the workers. A further elaboration on the enacted role will be given in the discussion of the functions of the first-line supervisor.

### 1.3 DEFINITION OF CONCEPTS

In order to prevent any misinterpretation of the report the basic concepts used in the report will be defined.

#### 1.3.1 First-line supervisor

The first-line supervisor is the person who has direct daily contact with the employees (operators and labourers) on a face-to-face relationship. He usually directs and controls their activities in the production process.

### 1.3.2 Second-line supervisor

The second-line supervisor is the person who co-ordinates the activities of a number of first-line supervisors. He belongs to middle management and has more authority than a first-line supervisor. (In this report he will often be referred to as the first-line supervisor's boss).

### 1.3.3 Role of the first-line supervisor

The role of the first-line supervisor may be defined as that pattern of behaviour which enables the actor to accomplish the expectations concerning the task of the group for which he is responsible. (Dunkerley, 1975: 22; Kinlock, 1972: 28; Terry, 1974: 5).

### 1.3.4 Function of the first-line supervisor

Basically a first-line supervisor's function is the execution of his duties and responsibilities. Miller and From (1967: 207) states that: "His job is to ensure that the production or service schedules set up by higher executives are actually fulfilled." According to Steinmetz and Todd (1975: 22) the four basic functions a first-line supervisor performs are: "Planning, Organizing, Directing and Controlling." Other functions could also be added, such as motivating and training of workers.

### 1.3.5 Training

By training is meant the process by which a supervisor is taught how to play his role and how to fulfil his functions. During this process the supervisor must change. He must be taught how to treat people in a diplomatic rather than an autocratic manner, to see to it that they do their jobs.

Many of the present supervisors were recruited from the ranks of operators. They were skilful and 'good' operators. During training they must be changed from 'operators' to 'supervisors', which are completely different role positions in any industry.

#### 1.4 THE PROCEDURE FOLLOWED AND THE TECHNIQUES USED IN THE SURVEY

##### 1.4.1 Research procedure

To be able to describe the role, function and training of Black first-line supervisors a survey was done. In the survey information was collected from the following three sources, namely management, the Black first-line supervisors themselves, and the Black workers under their supervision.

##### 1.4.2 Research techniques

###### (a) Sampling

###### (i) Geographical area

Industries in the decentralised border areas of Brits, Rosslyn and Babelegi, all situated near Pretoria, were selected. The border areas were chosen because Black supervisors are more frequently used in these areas. A good cross-section of industries was thus obtained, (Table 1.1) as well as a saving on transport and fieldwork costs.

###### (ii) Type of industry and size of the labour force

Industries were selected according to:

the size of the labour force, whether Black first-line supervisors were employed, and the willingness of management to co-operate.

For the most part large and medium-sized industries were included, but a few small ones were also selected.

From Table 1.2 can be seen that medium-sized and larger factories were preferred above small factories. This was done mainly because supervision in the small factories is to a large extent still done by the few Whites present. In the larger factories more and more Blacks are being appointed in a supervisory capacity.

TABLE 1.1  
TYPE OF INDUSTRY AND SIZE OF THE LABOUR FORCE IN THE SURVEY

Type of industry	Number of industries		Size of the labour force			
			White	Black	Total	
	N	%	N	N	N	%
Textiles	4	16,7	69	1653	1722	19,9
Wood	4	16,7	101	1068	1169	13,5
Mineral (Non-Metal)	3	12,5	118	1158	1276	14,7
Metal Products	5	20,8	194	940	1134	13,1
Electrical Appliances	4	16,7	271	1140	1411	16,3
Motors and Spares	4	16,7	332	1615	1947	22,5
TOTAL	24	100	1085	7574	8659	100

TABLE 1.2  
SIZE OF THE FACTORIES

	N	%
Fewer than 150 employees	3	12,5
Between 150 and 300 employees	9	37,5
Between 300 and 450 employees	7	29,2
More than 450 employees	5	20,8
TOTAL	24	100

(iii) Respondents

Three categories of respondents were interviewed.

1 Management

The manager of each of the twenty-four factories visited was interviewed. They were not always in the position to answer all the questions put to them and the interviewer was referred to either the personnel manager, or the Black personnel clerk. Eventually the required information came largely from 19 White managers or personnel managers, 2 Black managers and 3 Black personnel clerks.

## 2 Black supervisors

Although the intention was to interview first-line supervisors only, some managers felt that all Black supervisors should be included. As there were not many Blacks in second-line or higher supervisory positions, all the Black supervisors on duty when the factory was visited were included in the survey. By this selection those doing nightshift or those being absent on the day that the interviews were held, were not included in the survey. Coloureds and Indians in supervisory posts were not interviewed.

In paragraph 1.5 full details about the supervisors will be given under the heading 'Characteristics of the Black supervisors'.

## 3 Black workers

It was not possible to include only those workers who worked under the direct supervision of the supervisors included in the survey because of the record system in factories.

When planning the project, the intention was to interview approximately 500 Black workers from the factories included in the survey. To achieve this, a 15 per cent random sample of names and addresses was drawn from the factory employee cards kept by the various personnel departments. As a large number of employees did not live in one of the areas where they could be traced, i.e. Brits Old Location, Ga-Rankuwa, Mabopane, Mothu-tlung and Temba, these names fell away. At the time when the fieldworkers were being trained, riots broke out in the residential areas for Blacks throughout South Africa. This made it very difficult for the fieldworkers to get the cooperation of the factory workers. The areas that were worst affected, were Ga-Rankuwa and Mabopane, and hence a very low percentage of respondents was obtained in these areas which provide the bulk of the labour force for Rosslyn. Eventually 251 Black workers were interviewed. Table 1.3 gives a breakdown of this group by sex and area of employment.

It is obvious that this group is not representative of the three areas and, therefore, no interpretation will be made by area. The group will be treated as a whole and will only be divided according to the type of industry, if such categorization provides significant information.



TABLE 1.3

THE RESEARCH GROUP OF BLACK WORKERS, ACCORDING TO SEX AND AREA OF EMPLOYMENT

Sex	Area of employment						Total	
	Rosslyn		Brits		Babelegi			
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Male	28	68,3	95	96,0	55	49,5	178	70,9
Female	13	31,7	4	4,0	56	50,5	73	29,1
TOTAL	N 41	100	99	100	111	100	251	100
	% 16,3		39,4		44,2		100	

In paragraph 1.6 full details about the Black workers will be given under the heading 'Characteristics of the Black workers!'

(b) Interviews

Structured interviews were held with each of the three categories of respondents. The schedules or questionnaires used for each category appear as Appendices 1, 2 and 3.

(c) Fieldwork

Information was collected by fieldworkers as follows:

(i) Interviews with managers were held by the author only.

(ii) Interviews with the supervisors were held by the author and other research officers of the Institute for Manpower Research, during working hours at the factory.

(iii) Interviews with the workers were held by Black school teachers recruited from schools in the residential areas surrounding the industrial areas. Residential areas included were: Ga-Rankuwa, Mabopane, Temba, Brits Old Location and Mothu-tlung. These interviews were conducted after hours at the worker's home.

(d) The schedules

Information required on the role function and training of first-line supervisors was gathered by means of schedules (Appendix 2) constructed to cover the following:

(i) The role of the supervisor

The role position of the supervisor in the organisation, the supervisor's role and the expectations held for that role, and procedures in the organisation and their influence on the supervisor's role.

(ii) The functions of the first-line supervisor

Planning  
Organising  
Directing - which included communication  
Controlling  
Motivating, and  
Training of new workers.

(iii) Training of supervisors

Selection, and  
Training.

1.5 CHARACTERISTICS OF THE BLACK SUPERVISORS

1.5.1 Sex

The research group consisted of 245 Black supervisors of whom 219 or 89,4 per cent were male, and 26 or 10,6 per cent were female. As there were so few females in the group, no separate analysis by sex has been made.

1.5.2 Type of industry

The research group, according to area and type of industry in which employed, is shown in Table 1.4.

1.5.3 Home language

As can be seen in Table 1.5 the highest percentage of supervisors has Tswana or Sotho as their home language. This confirms expectation, as the research areas are on the borders or in Bophuthatswana. Of the three areas Brits produced by far

the highest percentage in this category. This can be explained by the fact that Brits is situated in a more rural area where the population is more homogeneous than is the case in an urban area such as Pretoria, which provides the attraction to a more heterogeneous population as can be found in Rosslyn. Although Babelegi is in the Tswana Homeland, it was found that 56,3 per cent of the supervisors there were imported to supervise the locally recruited labour force. Hence the lowest percentage Tswana or Sotho-speaking supervisors was found in Babelegi. The only other language group that is reasonably well represented in the survey group is the Ndebele or Pedi-speaking supervisors. Considerable numbers of this ethnic group reside around Pretoria. All other ethnic groups were represented in smaller numbers and should not influence the results of the project meaningfully.

TABLE 1.4  
BLACK SUPERVISORS, BY TYPE OF INDUSTRY AND AREA WHERE INDUSTRY IS SITUATED

Type of industry	Area			Total number of supervisors	
	Rosslyn	Brits	Babelegi	N	%
	N	N	N		
Textiles	4	-	31	35	14,3
Wood	12	-	15	27	11,0
Mineral (Non-Metal)	38	8	-	46	18,8
Metal Products	21	7	2	30	12,2
Electrical Appliances	28	15	-	43	17,6
Motors and Spares	36	28	-	64	26,1
TOTAL	N 139	58	48	245	
	% 56,7	23,7	19,6		100

#### 1.5.4 Other languages spoken

Apart from their home language 78,4 per cent of the research group of supervisors could speak both official languages, i.e. Afrikaans and English. Some of these could also speak other Bantu languages. Of the remaining 21,6 per cent of the supervisors, 13,0 per cent could speak Afrikaans and another Bantu language, and 8,6 per cent could speak English and another Bantu language. It thus appeared that the majority of the supervisors at least could speak three languages.

TABLE 1.5

SUPERVISOR'S HOME LANGUAGE, BY AREA WHERE INDUSTRY IS SITUATED

Home language	Area						Total	
	Rosslyn		Brits		Babelegi			
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Ndebele-Pedi	21	15,1	3	5,2	7	14,6	31	12,7
Shangana-Tsonga	11	7,9	4	6,9	3	6,3	18	7,3
Tswana or Sotho	83	59,7	46	79,3	26	54,2	155	63,3
Venda or Xhosa	4	2,9	1	1,7	3	6,3	8	3,3
Zulu	12	8,6	1	1,7	4	8,3	17	6,9
Other	8	5,8	3	5,2	5	10,4	16	6,5
TOTAL	139	100	58	100	48	100	245	100

1.5.5 Age and level of education

The median age for the supervisors was 33,2 years and all age groups were spread reasonably evenly over the three areas. Table 1.6 shows the level of education by age. As expected it was found that the older supervisors had the least education. The younger the supervisor the higher was the level of education.

TABLE 1.6

SUPERVISOR'S LEVEL OF EDUCATION, ACCORDING TO AGE

Level of education	Age								Total	
	20-29		30-39		40-49		50+			
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Std 2	3	3,7	10	9,2	5	13,9	7	38,9	25	10,2
Std 3 - 5	14	17,1	22	20,2	12	33,3	6	33,3	54	22,0
Std 6	22	26,8	28	25,7	9	25,0	2	11,1	61	24,9
Std 7 - 8	37	45,1	33	30,3	8	22,2	3	16,7	81	33,2
Std 9 - 10	6	7,3	16	14,7	2	5,6	0	0,0	24	9,8
TOTAL	82	100	109	100	36	100	18	100	245	100

TABLE 1.7

SUPERVISOR'S LEVEL OF EDUCATION, ACCORDING TO TYPE OF INDUSTRY IN WHICH EMPLOYED

Level of education	Textiles		Wood		Mineral		Metal		Electrical		Motor		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Std 2	4	11,4	2	7,4	7	15,2	3	10,0	3	7,0	6	9,4	25	10,2
Std 3 - 5	9	25,7	9	33,3	9	19,6	7	23,3	5	11,6	15	23,4	54	22,0
Std 6	7	20,0	9	33,3	13	28,3	9	30,0	5	11,6	18	28,1	61	24,9
Std 7 - 8	13	37,1	7	25,9	13	28,3	6	20,0	21	48,8	21	32,8	81	33,1
Std 9 - 10	2	5,7	0	0,0	4	8,7	5	16,7	9	20,9	4	6,3	24	9,8
TOTAL	35	100	27	100	46	100	30	100	43	100	64	100	245	100

When matching the level of education against the type of industry in Table 1.7, it is found that the best educated group of supervisors was employed by the Electrical Appliances Industry. This industry was more capital intensive with generally more sophisticated machinery than most of the other industries, some of which were labour intensive. When asked about the required level of education of supervisors, management gave the following minimum requirements:

Experience	45,8%
Reading and writing	20,8%
Std 6	12,5%
Std 8	20,8%

From the above, it can be seen that the actual educational level of the supervisors surpassed the minimum requirements set by management.

#### 1.5.6 Other qualifications

Few of the supervisors had formal qualifications other than school education. In total only 21 (8,6%) of the research group had other qualifications, namely 3 Health diplomas, 8 Teacher's diplomas and 10 Trade certificates.

#### 1.5.7 Wages per week

The wages of the supervisors varied, according to a number of variables. The wages earned by the supervisors in the research group are presented in Table 1.8.

TABLE 1.8  
WAGES OF THE SUPERVISORS

Wages	N	%
Less than R29 per week	45	18,4
R30-R39	80	32,7
R40-R49	48	19,6
R50-R59	42	17,1
More than R60 per week	30	12,2
TOTAL	245	100

Median wage R39 per week

In the interviews with management the managers indicated that the supervisors earned 1,5 times to about twice as much as workers. Only in the Textile Industry did the managers indicate that the supervisors earned more than twice what the workers earned.

## 1.6 CHARACTERISTICS OF THE BLACK WORKERS

### 1.6.1 Sex and type of industry

The research group of 151 Black workers consisted of 70,9 per cent men and 29,1 per cent women. As can be seen in Table 1.9 it is only in the Textile Industry that female employees predominate. The second highest percentage of women is found in the Mineral (Non-Metal) Industry (30,4%). For the rest, about 10 per cent of the sample consisted of female employees.

### 1.6.2 Home language

Tswana or Sotho is the Home language of the majority of Black workers in the research group (60,2%) with Ndebele-Pedi the next highest percentage (26,3%). The above corresponds with what could be expected in the survey area. The other groups are minimally represented and are smaller than the corresponding groups among the supervisors (Table 1.10). As it was found that quite a number of supervisors were imported from existing factories in other areas, the higher percentage of supervisors of "foreign" ethnic groups is not unexpected.

### 1.6.3 Other languages spoken

Of the research group 14,7 per cent could not speak one of the official languages, i.e. Afrikaans or English, while 46,2 per cent could speak only one of the official languages, and the remaining 39,0 per cent could speak both official languages and one or more Bantu languages (Table 1.11). It may be concluded from the above that on the average the supervisors commanded more languages than the employees in the same factories.

### 1.6.4 Age

The age distribution of the Black workers is given in Table 1.12. The median age is 26,7 years which indicates that on the average the supervisors were about 6 years older than the workers.

TABLE 1.9

## SEX OF BLACK WORKERS, ACCORDING TO TYPE OF INDUSTRY

Sex	Type of industry										Total				
	Textiles		Wood		Mineral (Non-Metal)		Metal Products		Electrical Appliances				Motors and Spares		
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	
Male	22	31,4	34	87,2	16	69,6	50	89,3	30	88,2	26	89,7	178	70,9	
Female	48	68,6	5	12,8	7	30,4	6	10,7	4	11,8	3	10,3	73	29,1	
TOTAL	N														
		70	100	39	100	23	100	56	100	34	100	29	100	251	100
	%	27,9		15,5		9,2		22,3		13,5		11,6		100	



TABLE 1.10  
BLACK WORKERS' HOME LANGUAGE

Home language	N	%
Ndebele-Pedi	66	26,3
Shangana-Tsonga	15	6,0
Tswana or Sotho	151	60,2
Venda or Xhosa	4	1,6
Zulu	14	5,6
Other	1	0,4
TOTAL	251	100

TABLE 1.11  
LANGUAGES SPOKEN BY BLACK WORKERS

Languages	N	%
One or more Bantu languages	37	14,7
Afrikaans or English and one or more Bantu languages	116	46,2
Both official languages and one or more Bantu languages	98	39,0
TOTAL	251	100

TABLE 1.12  
AGE DISTRIBUTION OF BLACK WORKERS

Age	N	%
Under 19 years	27	10,8
20-29 years	137	54,6
30-39 years	49	19,5
40-49 years	25	10,0
50 years and older	13	5,2
TOTAL	251	100

Median age: 26,7 years

### 1.6.5 Highest school standard passed

The highest school standard passed by the Black workers is indicated in Table 1.13. If the level of education achieved is compared with that of the supervisors, it can be seen that on the average the supervisors are better educated than the workers.

It could also be mentioned that the workers in the 'electrical appliances' category had the highest qualifications compared with the other categories. This corresponds to the degree of education of the supervisors.

TABLE 1.13  
LEVEL OF EDUCATION OF BLACK WORKERS

Level of education	N	%
No education	24	9,6
Up to Std 2	19	7,6
Std 3-5	95	37,8
Std 6	71	28,3
Std 7-8	37	14,7
Std 9 and higher	5*	2,0
TOTAL	251	100

\*One has a B.Sc. degree and is employed in a laboratory as a quality controller.

### 1.6.6 Wages per week

The wages earned by the Black workers are shown in Table 1.14.

TABLE 1.14  
WEEKLY WAGES EARNED BY BLACK WORKERS

Wages/week	N	%
Less than R9	67	26,7
R10 - R19	51	20,3
R20 - R29	63	25,1
R30 - R39	61	24,3
R40 or more	9	3,6
TOTAL	251	100

Median wage: R21 per week

## CHAPTER 2

### THE ROLE OF THE BLACK FIRST-LINE SUPERVISOR

#### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

Roles are defined as patterns of behaviour which enable actors to accomplish expectations concerning tasks of a group. The role the person in a specific position is expected to fulfil, depends on which tasks are defined by the group for that position in that group. According to Parsons and Bales roles in any small group can be divided into two broad categories, i.e. (i) instrumental or task activities and (ii) integrative-expressive activities. A leader in such a group will be considered as instrumental leader of the group if he is "... boss-manager ... judge and executor of punishment, discipline, and control ..." or he will be considered expressive leader of the group if he is "... mediator, conciliator ... soothes over disputes, resolves hostilities ..." (Parsons and Bales, 1955: 318). When viewing the role of a first-line supervisor, "... most people tend to agree that the role is 'executive', in that it involves carrying out policies, practices and procedures which have already been determined upon at a higher level of authority and that it has to do with day-to-day control." (Dunkerley, 1975: 35). Stated in the simplest terms supervision means "getting work done through the efforts of others." (Steinmetz and Todd, 1975: 5).

What sort of role does a supervisor play in getting others to do the work? "Most people would recognise that this particular role involves being in a position of formal and given authority over 'men' ... of an individual being in charge of other individuals." (Dunkerley, 1975: 28). When viewed more closely the role of supervisor is not as simple as it may look. People in the position of supervisor who have to play the role probably accept that they are in charge of people, but simultaneously see themselves as being restricted in their authority over these people. This situation may arise either because management does not give them enough authority or because the people whom they supervise deny them the right to use it in the form it is given.

It seems that the role of supervisor may lead to role conflict because a supervisor has trouble in knowing with whom to identify himself - management or the workers in his team. In this connection Brosnan (1975: 538) states: "Managers, supervisors and foremen experience conflict situations as a result of their role in the firm."

When dealing with the supervisor's role in this report, it has to be noted that attention will be given to a new generation of first-line supervisors - Black people who occupy supervisory positions in industry. Traditionally these positions were held by Whites and very few, if any, of the Black first-line supervisors have come from a family background where their parents were in similar role positions.

Subsequently, the role of the Black first-line supervisor will be analysed under the following headings:

- (i) The role position of the Black first-line supervisor.
- (ii) The supervisor's role and the expectations held for that role.
- (iii) Procedures in the organisation that influence the role.
- (iv) The supervisor and the group, and
- (v) The supervisor and his immediate boss.

## 2.2 THE ROLE POSITION OF THE SUPERVISOR IN THE ORGANISATION

When referring to the role position of the supervisor in the organisation we refer to the position of the role in the hierarchy of authority. Where does the supervisor fit into the organisation's power structure? Such role position is usually indicated in the blueprint of the organisation's personnel structure. To determine the supervisor's role position similar questions were posed to the three categories in the research group. The questions concerned the supervisor's position as well as the position of his immediate boss.

### 2.2.1 The title of the position of the first-line supervisor's immediate boss

Management provided the titles by which they knew people in second-line supervisory capacity, in their factories. Supervisors gave the titles of their immediate bosses and the Black workers supplied the titles of their supervisors' bosses. Table 2.1 gives a comparison of the responses of the three categories. It can be seen that both the supervisors and workers displayed a lack of knowledge concerning the structure of the hierarchy of authority in their organisations. In many cases supervisors and workers were uncertain as to who the people in the second line of authority were, e.g. 17,1 per cent of the workers said

they did not know who their supervisor's boss was, and there are also significant differences concerning the title of 'Foreman' where 29,2 per cent of management, 42,4 per cent of the supervisors, and only 13,9 per cent of the workers viewed a foreman as the first-line supervisors boss.

TABLE 2.1

THE FIRST-LINE SUPERVISORS' IMMEDIATE BOSS, AS VIEWED BY MANAGEMENT, THE SUPERVISORS AND THE WORKERS

Title of boss	Management's view		Supervisors' view		Workers' view	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Manager	5	20,8	51	20,8	119	47,4
Foreman	7	29,2	104	42,4	35	13,9
Supervisor/Superintendent	6	25,0	48	19,6	10	4,0
Technician	2	8,3	7	2,9	-	-
Senior Supervisor Chief						
Induna, etc.	4	16,7	35	14,3	38	15,1
Don't know	-	-	-	-	43	17,1
Big Boss/Master	-	-	-	-	6	2,4
TOTAL	24	100	245	100	251	100

Authority is not clearly defined and this could lead to role conflict at the lower levels of authority. Role conflict could again lead to job dissatisfaction which might in turn lead to absenteeism, higher labour turnover and eventually to lower productivity.

### 2.2.2 The race of the first-line supervisor's boss

The race of the supervisor's bosses was indicated by the supervisors and the workers. The distribution indicated in Table 2.2 was found.

As it cannot be expected that the percentages should correspond exactly, the above distribution indicates that both supervisors and workers knew the race of the second-line supervisor although they might not have known the title of his position.

TABLE 2.2

RACE OF SUPERVISORS' IMMEDIATE BOSS, AS INDICATED BY SUPERVISORS AND WORKERS

Race	Supervisors		Workers	
	N	%	N	%
White	191	78,0	188	74,9
Black	54	22,0	63	25,1
TOTAL	245	100	251	100

The titles of second-line supervisors differed most if they were of different races. The supervisors indicated that 51,8 per cent of the Whites were known as 'Foreman' and 26,2 per cent as 'Manager' or 'Section Manager' whereas the Blacks in second-line supervisory positions were known as 'Senior Supervisor' in 61,1 per cent of the cases and 'Supervisor' in 27,8 per cent of the cases.

### 2.2.3 Title used for the supervisor's position

It was found that the supervisors themselves were not always certain about their own titles. Only in a few industries did the supervisors consistently give the same title for the position they held. Table 2.3 shows the various titles of the supervisor's position as given by management, the supervisors and the workers. No benefit would be derived from comparing the percentages of the workers' responses with those of the responses of the other two categories. The titles used by the supervisors for the positions they held, will be taken as the most important and the other categories' titles will be compared with them.

The following titles were given:

#### (a) Supervisor

The term 'Supervisor' was used in all six types of industry and in all three areas. In the Textile Industry it was the term used by 80 per cent of the supervisors interviewed. Because proportionately the largest number of workers came from the textile industry the highest percentage of workers gave 'Supervisor' as the title of their supervisors.

TABLE 2.3

TITLE OF THE FIRST-LINE SUPERVISOR'S POSITION, AS GIVEN BY  
MANAGEMENT, THE SUPERVISORS AND THE WORKERS

Title	Management		Supervisors		Workers	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Supervisor	6	25,0	88	35,9	137	54,6
Chargehand and team leader	12	50,0	67	27,3	14	5,6
Foreman	1	4,2	18	7,3	61	24,3
Boss Boy	4	16,7	27	11,0	6	2,4
Induna (Second-line)	1	4,2	15	6,1	18	7,2
Other (obvious White)	-	-	30	12,2	-	-
	-	-	-	-	15	6,0
TOTAL	24	100	245	100	251	100

(b) Chargehand and team leader

These two terms were used in all six types of industry and in all three areas. These terms were used mainly in the Mineral (Non-Metal) Industry in Rosslyn where 63 per cent of the supervisors gave it as their title. Rosslyn was poorly represented by the workers, hence the very low percentage of workers giving this term.

(c) Foreman

The term 'Foreman' was used by supervisors in the Wood and Metal Products Industries only. It was not used by supervisors in the Brits area. Workers in the Brits area used the term in all industries. As 'Foreman' was the term traditionally used for White supervisors, it would be expected that the term will not be used for Black supervisors.

(d) Boss Boy

The title 'Boss Boy' was used in the Motors and Spares Industry only. This term originated in the gold mines but has an unfavourable connotation for Black men who do not want to be called boys. It is therefore strange that the term was still encountered in the survey.

(e) Induna

'Induna' is a Zulu word and it would not be expected to be popular so near Bophuthatswana. The term was not popular and was used only in the Motors and Spares Industry.

Thirty second-line supervisors were included in the sample of supervisors. They gave the titles of their positions as 'Senior Supervisor', 'Senior Induna', 'Senior Foreman' and 'Senior Boss Boy'. These titles corresponded with similar titles of first-line supervisors, with the term 'Senior' attached to them.

2.2.4 The size of the supervisor's team

In the unit and small batch production "... a median of twenty-one to thirty operators in the span of control of first-line supervisors was found." (Dunkerley, 1975: 42). In the large batch and mass production industry "... the median for span of control increased to as high as forty-one to fifty." (Dunkerley, 1975: 43).

Looking at Tables 2.4 and 2.5 we find that both groups of respondents indicated corresponding team sizes for their industries. It can also be seen that the mass production industries, i.e. Textiles, and Motors and Spares have a greater number of larger teams, which corresponds with Dunkerley's (1975) findings stated in the first paragraph. Although managers had different ideas about the size of team that a supervisor should manage, this should be seen against the background of the type of industry in which each was a manager. Of the 24 managers interviewed only three thought that their worker teams were too large. These teams averaged 20, 40 and 60. Three more managers were not certain and the remaining eighteen (75%) said that the teams in their factories were not too large. These teams varied between 6 and 60. The sizes of the teams in the survey compare favourably with the sizes of teams recorded in the literature. (Dunkerley, 1975: 42-43). Keeping this in mind, it does not seem necessary to suggest any changes in the sizes of teams under the control of first-line supervisors in the areas where the research was done.

2.2.5 Kind of work done in the supervisors' sections

As can be seen in Table 2.6 the kind of work being supervised covered a large range of manufacturing activity.



TABLE 2.4  
SIZE OF SUPERVISOR'S TEAM, BY TYPE OF INDUSTRY

Size of team	Type of industry										Total			
	Textiles		Wood		Mineral (Non-Metal)		Metal		Electrical Appliances				Motors and Spares	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Smaller than 10	6	17,1	8	29,6	12	26,1	15	50,0	24	55,8	20	31,3	85	34,7
10 - 20	13	37,1	7	25,9	14	30,4	7	23,3	12	27,9	15	23,4	68	27,8
21 - 35	8	22,9	7	25,9	10	21,7	5	10,7	6	14,0	15	23,4	51	20,8
Larger than 36	8	22,9	5	18,5	10	21,7	3	10,0	1	2,3	14	21,9	41	16,7
TOTAL	35	100	27	100	46	100	30	100	43	100	64	100	245	100

TABLE 2.5  
 SIZE OF WORKER'S TEAM, BY TYPE OF INDUSTRY

Size of team	Type of industry								Total					
	Textiles		Wood		Mineral (Non-Metal)		Metal		Electrical Appliances		Motors and Spares			
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%		
Smaller than 10	25	35,7	22	56,4	11	47,8	36	64,3	20	58,8	10	34,5	124	49,4
10 - 20	5	7,1	9	23,1	8	34,8	13	23,2	10	29,4	11	37,9	56	22,3
21 - 35	13	18,6	4	10,3	3	13,0	1	1,8	1	2,9	2	6,9	24	9,6
Larger than 36	22	31,4	4	10,3	1	4,3	5	8,9	3	8,8	6	20,7	41	16,3
Don't know	5	7,1	0	0,0	0	0,0	1	1,8	0	0,0	0	0,0	6	2,4
TOTAL	70	100	39	100	23	100	56	100	34	100	29	100	251	100

TABLE 2.6  
KIND OF WORK DONE IN SUPERVISOR'S SECTION

Kind of work	N	%
Stores, security	41	16,7
Assembly	57	23,2
Operator, maintenance	87	35,5
Welding, paint shop	18	7,3
Packing, polishing, decorating	21	8,6
Testing, quality control	16	6,5
Miscellaneous	5	2,0
TOTAL	245	100

It was also found that 130 (53,1%) supervisors said that everybody in their teams could do all the kinds of work while 115 (46,9%) said that there was a division of labour and that not everybody could do all the kinds of work.

From the author's own observation it seemed that only in those sections (24,5% of the cases) where operators had attendants (help in the form of unskilled labour) was it possible that some attendants could not do the operator's work. It may be concluded that in the majority of cases supervisors were not expected to control people who did the kind of work with which the supervisors were not acquainted or could not do themselves.

#### 2.2.6 The supervisor's ability to do all the kinds of work in his section

Both the supervisor group and the worker group were asked to say whether the supervisor was able to do all the kinds of work in the section better than, just as well as or not as well as anybody else in the team. The responses of supervisors and workers are shown in Table 2.7.

From the above we can deduce that the workers were not as impressed by the supervisors' ability as the supervisors were themselves.

Although 50,6 per cent of the workers felt that they could do the work in the section just as well or better than the supervisor (Table 2.7), 83,3 per cent deemed the supervisor better qualified to be in a supervisory position. Most of the reasons (Table 2.8) point towards the work itself, i.e. better

knowledge, training or more experience. The same applies to the reasons given as to why the supervisor was not better qualified. It is interesting to note, however, that the humane factor in supervision is also mentioned and 6 per cent of the workers gave, "he knows how to treat people" as the reason.

In a sense the reasons picture the good supervisor as a person who knows the job but also knows how to treat people.

TABLE 2.7

SUPERVISOR'S ABILITY TO DO ALL THE KINDS OF WORK IN HIS SECTION, AS INDICATED BY THE SUPERVISORS AND WORKERS

Ability	Supervisors		Workers	
	N	%	N	%
Better	187	76,3	124	49,4
Just as well	40	16,3	85	33,9
Not as well	18	7,3	42	16,7
TOTAL	245	100	251	100

TABLE 2.8

REASONS GIVEN BY WORKERS WHY SUPERVISORS ARE BETTER, OR NOT BETTER QUALIFIED, TO BE IN SUPERVISORY POSITION

	N	%
<u>Better qualified:</u>		
Better knowledge of the work	90	35,9
Better qualifications or training	24	9,6
He knows how to treat workers	15	6,0
More experience	47	18,7
More than one of the above reasons	23	9,2
Cannot give judgement	4	1,6
Sub-total	203	80,9
<u>Not better qualified:</u>		
The worker taught the supervisor	15	6,0
He does not know how to treat workers	6	2,4
He has less experience	16	6,4
He has fewer qualifications	6	2,4
More than one of the above reasons	5	1,9
Sub-total	48	19,1
TOTAL	251	100

Reasons given by supervisors why they were better qualified, just as well qualified or not better qualified are given in Table 2.9.

TABLE 2.9  
REASONS GIVEN BY SUPERVISORS WHY THEY ARE BETTER, OR NOT BETTER QUALIFIED, TO BE IN SUPERVISORY POSITION

	N	%
<u>Better qualified:</u>		
I taught the workers the job	187	76,3
<u>Just as well qualified:</u>		
We all do the same kind of work	40	16,3
<u>Not better qualified:</u>		
The workers have more experience	7	2,9
The workers have a better knowledge	9	3,7
Physical disability/Appointed from outside	2	0,8
TOTAL	245	100

It should be in the interest of management not to employ supervisors who are in a position where the workers do not grant the supervisor the necessary respect, regarding his ability to be in that position. Worker dissatisfaction of this kind does not contribute to healthy relations and high productivity.

### 2.2.7 The workers' ability to do the supervisor's work

Workers were asked: "Are you able to do his work?"

From the reasons given by workers in Table 2.10 as to why they were able to do their supervisor's work, it can be seen that quite a number of them saw themselves as potential supervisors. This may be a reason why some of them felt that their supervisors were not better qualified to be in that position.

Again we have the reasons which centre round the work but also, to a much lesser extent, the question of the treatment of people.

From the foregoing two Paragraphs 2.2.6 and 2.2.7, a pattern develops in which it is evident that not all supervisors were superior to the members in their teams. Of the workers 48 (19,1% of the total) said the supervisors were not better quali-

fied than themselves (see Table 2.8); 42 indicated that the supervisor could not do all the kinds of work in the section as well as the workers (see Table 2.7); and 171 of the workers said they were able to do the supervisor's work (see Table 2.10).

TABLE 2.10  
REASONS GIVEN BY WORKERS WHY THEY ARE ABLE OR NOT ABLE TO DO THE SUPERVISOR'S WORK

	N	%
<u>Able to do the supervisor's work</u>		
I do the work when he is absent	134	53,4
I taught him	7	2,8
She taught me how to do her work	24	9,6
I know how to treat people	6	2,4
Sub-total	171	68,2
<u>Not able to do the supervisor's work</u>		
I don't know the work	15	6,0
Not qualified or educated to do it	28	11,2
Do not have the experience	25	10,0
Cannot control people	7	2,8
Miscellaneous (Too old, wrong sex, etc.)	5	2,0
Sub-total	80	32,0
TOTAL	251	100

## 2.2.8 Experience in supervisory position

Table 2.11 gives an indication of the number of years that the supervisors had been in a supervisory position. If we compare the supervisors' experience according to the three areas it can be seen that those in the Brits area had the shortest period of experience. This is easily explained by the fact that this area is newly developed. The comparatively large percentage of supervisors with long experience in Babelegi can be explained by the fact that 56,3 per cent of them were brought in by management from similar factories where they had obtained experience before they were brought to Babelegi. All in all the supervisors cannot be regarded as a very experienced group.

TABLE 2.11  
EXPERIENCE AS SUPERVISOR, ACCORDING TO AREA

Years' experience	Area						Total	
	Rosslyn		Brits		Babelegi			
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Less than 2 years	39	28,1	28	48,3	10	20,8	77	31,4
2-3 years	46	33,1	24	41,4	15	31,3	85	34,7
4-5 years	23	16,5	3	5,2	13	27,1	39	15,9
6-7 years	16	11,5	2	3,4	3	6,3	21	8,6
More than 7 years	15	10,8	1	1,7	7	14,6	23	9,4
TOTAL	139	100	58	100	48	100	245	100

### 2.3 THE SUPERVISOR'S ROLE AND THE EXPECTATIONS HELD FOR THAT ROLE

What does the supervisor actually do and what is expected of him from management and from the workers?

#### 2.3.1 The work role

As illustrated in Table 2.12, great similarity was found between management's expectation, supervisors' actual work role, and workers' expectation. Concerning this aspect very little role conflict should be experienced by the supervisors.

The pattern observed is very similar for all types of industry except for the Textile Industry where supervisors do not experience their participation in the way or to the extent, expected by the workers. The supervisors do not participate in the production to the same extent as in the other industries. This might be an explanation for the relatively higher wages paid to supervisors in the Textile Industry mentioned under the characteristics of the Black supervisors. Except for the difference of opinion between supervisors and workers in the Textile Industry the pattern of work role fulfilment and expectation follows a similar trend.

TABLE 2.12

WORK ROLE OF SUPERVISORS, ACCORDING TO TYPE OF INDUSTRY, AS (i) EXPECTED BY MANAGEMENT,  
(ii) EXPERIENCED BY SUPERVISORS AND (iii) EXPECTED BY WORKERS

		N	%				
(i) Management's expectation work role							
Do part of the work		13	54,2				
Only supervise		11	45,8				
TOTAL		24	100				
(ii) Actual work role as experienced by supervisors							
Work role	Textiles	Wood	Mineral	Metal	Electrical	Motors	Total
	N %	N %	N %	N %	N %	N %	N %
Do part of the work	11 31,4	16 59,3	27 58,7	20 66,7	31 72,1	39 60,9	144 58,8
Only supervise	24 68,6	11 40,7	19 41,3	10 33,3	12 27,9	25 39,1	101 41,2
TOTAL	35 100	27 100	46 100	30 100	43 100	64 100	245 100
(iii) Workers' expectations							
Do part of the work	45 63,3	25 64,1	15 65,2	37 66,1	20 58,8	18 62,1	160 63,7
Only supervise	25 35,7	14 35,9	8 34,8	19 33,9	14 41,2	11 37,9	91 36,3
TOTAL	70 100	39 100	23 100	56 100	34 100	29 100	251 100



### 2.3.2 Paperwork

First-line supervisors were not expected to do much paperwork (Table 2.13). The majority of the group spent less than 10 hours per week on paperwork which consisted mostly of handling clock-cards of their workers. Some also had to write reports or complete production schedules or orders for material. Those who did more paperwork were either second-line supervisors or could be replaced by clerical staff.

TABLE 2.13

THE DISTRIBUTION OF SUPERVISORS, ACCORDING TO TIME SPENT ON PAPERWORK

Time spent on paperwork per week	N	%
No time spent on paperwork	72	29,4
Less than 10 hours	131	53,5
More than 10 hours	42	17,1
TOTAL	245	100

The above shows that the supervisors were not tied down by paperwork and could, therefore, spend most of their time supervising their teams, or participating in the production process.

### 2.3.3 First thing done with a new worker who joined the team

The Hawthorne Studies conducted at the Western Electric Company near Chicago, discovered that humanitarian factors, and not only his physical environment had an influence on a worker's efficiency. Steinmetz and Todd (1975: 10) condense the value of humane sympathetic treatment into the following sentence: "The tenet that the good supervisor is one who takes genuine, sincere interest in the employees and who tries to treat them like people and not machines was developed as a basic supervisory principle." In this project questions were posed to determine the sort of introduction a new worker experienced from his supervisor when joining the team. Was he made to feel at home or was he left out in the cold to find his way around by trial and error? Supervisors' answers about their behaviour towards new workers are tabulated in Table 2.14.

TABLE 2.14  
SUPERVISOR'S INTRODUCTION OF A NEW WORKER

Way of introduction	N	%
Nothing done	4	1,6
Supervisor introduces himself only	122	49,8
Introduction to the other team members	62	25,3
Shows him the work	57	23,3
TOTAL	245	100

It is evident that 74,7 per cent of the supervisors did not introduce the new worker to his team mates. This can hardly lead to the quick development of an esprit de corps which is necessary for the efficiency of the team.

2.3.4 Action taken when workers argue about the work or between themselves

The supervisory style usually comes to the fore during conflict situations. Some questions on action taken during such situations were asked. The answers to these questions are given in Tables 2.15 and 2.16.

TABLE 2.15  
ACTION TAKEN WITH REGARD TO WORKERS WHO ARGUE WITH SUPERVISOR  
ABOUT THE WORK

Action	N	%
Never had the problem	20	8,2
Take the arguing worker to the boss	134	54,7
Solve the argument between themselves	91	37,1
TOTAL	245	100

It follows from Table 2.15 that problems with argumentative workers are referred to higher authority because the supervisors do not have enough authority to discipline an arguing worker. This is not unique to Black supervisors at all. Brosnan (1975: 537) writes: "Most people in the firm seemed to be aware of the low status position of foremen and supervisors so they were not likely to be worried about the effect of misleading a supervisor". Table 2.15 also shows that these ar-

guments do occur because only 8,2 per cent said they never had had the problem.

Reactions to the statement concerning actions taken when two workers got into a serious argument were similar to those taken when a worker argued with the supervisor about the work.

TABLE 2.16

ACTION TAKEN WHEN TWO WORKERS GET INTO A SERIOUS ARGUMENT

Action	N	%
Never had the problem	17	6,9
Take the arguing workers to the boss	63	25,7
Intervene and end argument	165	67,3
TOTAL	245	100

It is clear from Table 2.16 that supervisors were better able to solve arguments between workers, than they were able to discipline workers who argued with them. Different techniques were used by the supervisors and they mentioned the following:

- (i) "Separate them."
- (ii) "Sit down and talk it over."
- (iii) "I take them one by one and let each tell his side of the story. Afterwards I call both and we talk together."
- (iv) "I ask for grievances once a month."

2.3.6 Role played in the discharge of a worker

A question on the role played by a first-line supervisor in the discharge of a worker was posed to management only because it was evident that supervisors did not play a significant role in this connection. Management expected supervisors to recommend discharge if a worker did not work properly in 15 cases (62,5%). Five (20,8%) expected regular reports and four (16,7%) did not expect supervisors to play any role in the discharge of a worker. Several managers said that Black supervisors were not willing to take steps against the people they supervised; therefore the discretion of discharging a person lay completely with management or sometimes with the second-line supervisor who, in most cases, was still White.

## 2.4 PROCEDURES IN THE ORGANISATION AND THEIR INFLUENCE ON THE SUPERVISOR'S ROLE

All factories have certain rules and regulations to administer the enterprise and to comply with certain laws. Questions about a number of these rules and regulations were included in the schedules used in the interviews to determine their influence on the supervisor's role in situations where applicable.

### 2.4.1 Deductions made from wages

Whenever money is deducted any employee would want to know why it has been deducted, and somebody should be in a position to explain it.

Management indicated that in most cases the clerical staff would be responsible for any explanation about deductions. Only in two factories did the managers say that the supervisors were responsible for such explanations. In four cases nobody was responsible, which might lead to dissatisfaction among the workers.

As it was determined that the supervisors were not expected to play a role here, they were asked if they were told why money was deducted and if they understood the deductions. Of the research group 150 (51,2%) indicated that all deductions were explained to them by somebody, but 95 (38,8%) indicated that deductions were not explained to them.

Slightly more than those to whom the deductions were explained, indicated that they understood all deductions made, i.e. 159 (64,9%) while the remaining 86 (35,1%) did not understand the deductions made from their wages.

When the workers were asked about explanations of deductions from their wages, 180 (71,7%) of the group said that all deductions had been explained to them at some stage, but only 157 (62,5%) said that they had understood the explanations. As the workers were less educated it is understandable why a higher percentage did not understand explanations that had been given only once. This statement is underlined by the fact that as many as 62,8 per cent of the workers in the textile industry did not understand the deductions made from their wages as compared to only 8 per cent in the Electrical Appliances Industry who did not understand. In total there were approximately one third of both workers and supervisors who did not understand the explanations of the deductions made from their wages.

## 2.4.2 Regulations concerning workers turning up late

What role does a supervisor play in disciplining a worker who turns up late? It was found that supervisors had very little to do with these people. Management explained that the use of the clock-card system placed the responsibility for disciplining late-comers on the administrative staff who had to deduct pay and/or the attendance bonus.

In five factories it was found that workers who arrived late for work were punished by being suspended, and in four factories no punishment was given immediately, but a record was kept and workers were warned that if that sort of behaviour continued they would be discharged. Supervisors were then asked whether they agreed with the regulations and why they agreed or disagreed. Reasons given by those who agreed with the measures taken to punish workers appear in Table 2.17. Of the 245 Supervisors 24 (9,8%) did not agree with the regulations.

TABLE 2.17

REASONS GIVEN BY SUPERVISORS WHO AGREE WITH MEASURES TAKEN TO PUNISH WORKERS

Reasons	N	%
It is good for discipline	141	63,8
If they are not punished production will fall	65	29,4
No response	15	5,4
TOTAL	221	100

Those supervisors who did not agree with the regulations felt that it was unfair to punish people for coming late if they had no control over the means of transport, or that it was bad for production if people were suspended.

When the workers were asked what happened when they turned up late for work they mentioned measures that appear in Table 2.18.

When the workers were asked whether they were satisfied with the procedure, 164 (65,3%) indicated that they were not.

First-line supervisors play a negligible role in disciplining a worker who turns up late for work. The difference in attitude between supervisors and workers concerning the disciplining of workers turning up late for work is significant.

Only 9,8 per cent of the supervisors did not agree with the disciplining regulations while 65,3 per cent of the workers were not satisfied with the regulations. The supervisors most probably felt more satisfied because they realised the importance of punctuality for the production process, while the workers were more concerned about their own inconvenience in arriving at work on time. It should be possible for first-line supervisors, as the people who really can communicate with the members of their teams, to do something to make the workers slightly happier about unpopular regulations. Supervisors could be utilised in convincing workers about the importance of punctuality for production.

TABLE 2.18

MEASURES TAKEN WHEN WORKERS TURN UP LATE FOR WORK, AS GIVEN BY THE WORKERS

Measures taken	N	%
Pay deducted	199	79,3
Suspension	11	4,4
Reprimanded, asked for an explanation, recorded	31	12,4
Nothing	10	4,0
TOTAL	251	100

#### 2.4.3 Regulations concerning absenteeism

These regulations were very similar to those concerning late-comers. One exception was found, namely that workers guilty of absenteeism were more readily discharged on the grounds of desertion after an inquiry was held.

A slight shift of supervisors' opinion was also observed in that fewer agreed that the regulations were good for discipline (50,2% compared with 57,6%) and more felt that the regulations could benefit production (37,1% compared with 26,5%).

The workers' reactions were also very similar to their reactions to the regulations concerning late-comers. Amongst them there was also a slight shift in that they were less dissatisfied with these regulations. A probable explanation could be that the transport factor, which they blamed for coming late, does not apply to absenteeism. Here also, first-line supervisors could attempt to convince the high percentage (at,6%) of the workers that the regulations are necessary in the production

industry and that they are not there merely to make life miserable for the workers.

#### 2.4.4 Requests for leave

As the supervisor's role expectation involves him in being a link between the workers in his team and management, it is to be expected that a worker would take his request for leave to his immediate supervisor. This, of course, need not be the case in all factories.

The supervisors indicated that only 37 (15,1%) of them handled requests for leave independently. Another 44 (18,0%) said that they played no role whatsoever.

The majority, i.e. 140 (57,1%), said that although they did not grant the leave on request, the official responsible for granting the leave always asked for their opinion on the request for leave, while the remaining 24 (9,8%) said that they were sometimes consulted by the person responsible in deciding on the granting of leave.

The question put to the workers was slightly different. They were asked whom they approached when they had trouble at home. The majority, i.e. 198 (78,9%), approached their immediate supervisor while the rest went either to the second-line supervisor (32 or 12,7%) or to the personnel clerk (21 or 8,4%). They did not say who granted the leave, but gave the answers appearing in Table 2.19 as to the treatment they received when approaching the responsible person when they had trouble at home.

TABLE 2.19

TREATMENT WORKERS RECEIVE WHEN APPROACHING THE RESPONSIBLE PERSON IF THEY HAVE TROUBLE AT HOME

Treatment	N	%
It never happened	7	2,8
Leave granted with pay	25	10,0
Leave granted without pay	147	58,6
Treated humanely and colleagues helped	59	23,5
Refusal to grant leave	13	5,2
TOTAL	251	100

The procedures concerning request for leave seemed to be quite clear to both categories of workers and supervisors, but they were not consistent throughout. It seems that first-line supervisors could be entrusted with more responsibility concerning the control of their workers, which might include granting leave when requested by a worker with a problem warranting it.

#### 2.4.5 Complaints about pay

The workers were asked to whom they would go when they were unhappy with their pay. The responses give an indication of the functioning of the regulations concerning complaints about pay and also the role that the first-line supervisor played. The workers gave the responses shown in Table 2.20.

TABLE 2.20  
PERSON TO WHOM A WORKER COMPLAINS ABOUT PAY

Person to whom he goes	N	%
I go to the first-line supervisor	162	64,5
I go to the second-line supervisor	32	12,7
I go to the office or paymaster	51	20,3
I am afraid to complain	6	2,4
TOTAL	251	100

From the above can be deduced that the first-line supervisors did play an important role in solving workers' problems other than technical ones only. Furthermore all factories in the three areas visited did not have the same procedure. The importance of the first-line supervisor in dealing with these types of complaints should be appreciated by more managers.

## 2.5 THE SUPERVISOR AND THE GROUP

### 2.5.1 Introduction

When Dunkerley (1975: 95) discusses the supervisor in the group, he views the group "... as in the organisational setting as well as in the setting of the small group." He also sees the supervisor "... not merely as a member of the group, but as the leader of the work group."



Dunkerley (1975: 116) refers to the work of Likert when he views the supervisor, as a member of the group, as being "employee-centred or job-centred." He illustrates the relation between the orientation of the supervisor and production by comparing 7 high-producing supervisors to 10 low-producing supervisors according to their orientations.

In Figure 2.1 it can be seen that only one of the seven high-producing supervisors were job-centred while seven out of ten of the low-producing supervisors were job-centred.

FIGURE 2.1  
RELATION BETWEEN SUPERVISOR'S ORIENTATION AND PRODUCTION

	<u>Job-centred supervisors</u>	<u>Employee-centred supervisors</u>
High-producing	1	6
Low-producing	7	3

Source: Dunkerley (1975: 116)

Dunkerley (1975: 117) admits that other variables also play a part in production but we will not follow the argument any further in this report.

### 2.5.2 The atmosphere in the group

A number of questions were set to management, the supervisors, and the workers to determine the atmosphere in the group, which in turn ought to be the result of the supervisory style of the supervisor.

To determine the atmosphere in the group, questions were set about the opportunities that supervisors had for talking and joking with members of the team. As indicated in Table 2.21, 60 per cent of both supervisors and workers indicated that they were not allowed to joke and talk while working.

When those workers who indicated that they were not allowed to talk and joke were asked whether they were satisfied not to do so while working, 37 (15,1%) said that they were not satisfied and 110 (44,9%) said they were satisfied and gave the reasons listed in Table 2.22.

TABLE 2.21

OPPORTUNITY FOR JOKING AND TALKING WHILE AT WORK, AS INDICATED  
BY SUPERVISORS AND WORKERS

	Supervisors		Workers	
	N	%	N	%
Allowed to joke and talk	98	40,0	101	40,2
Not allowed to joke and talk	147	60,0	150	59,8
TOTAL	245	100	251	100

TABLE 2.22

REASONS GIVEN BY WORKERS WHO ARE SATISFIED NOT TO TALK AND JOKE  
WHILE WORKING

Reason	N	%
The work is dangerous or too noisy	17	6,9
Lowered production	59	24,1
No need to talk while working	34	13,9
TOTAL	110	44,9

Of the workers who were allowed to talk and joke (see Table 2.21), 29,5 per cent, said that the supervisors did not mind them talking and joking and 10,8 per cent said that they were reprimanded if they talked too much.

On the whole it seemed that the atmosphere in the work place varied considerably. As the type of work and amount of noise also varied, this could be expected. In some cases workers were allowed to communicate freely, while 24 per cent indicated that they had to concentrate on the job completely for fear of lowering production.

The managers were asked whether they felt that supervisors were members of their respective teams, or whether they kept themselves apart. Of the managers 13 (54,2%) felt that the supervisors could be seen as members of their respective teams.

On a direct question as to whether supervisors should make friends with people in their teams, only 8 (33,3%) managers approved, while another 5 (20,8%) said that they should be friendly, but not friends. The remaining 11 (45,8%) felt that being friendly would endanger the discipline in the team. The picture derived from the above is that the management expected the supervisors to be job-centred. The impression gathered during the interviews was also that the managers expected the supervisors to be job-centred and not employee-centred.

The supervisors also gave the impression of being job-centred, rather than employee-centred, because only 86 (35,1%) indicated that making friends with the workers would lead to better relationships at work. The majority of the supervisors, i.e. 151 (61,6%), felt that it would have an adverse effect on their status and said that one could not work with friends, or that it would lead to favouritism if a supervisor were to make friends with the people in the team.

### 2.5.3 Favouritism

In previous research (Redelinghuys 1974: 39: "Bantoevoormanne, by implikasie maak hulle dus ook heelwat skuldig aan voortrekking.") it was indicated that some supervisors had favourites among the workers in their teams. Favouritism has negative effects on good leadership and on team spirit.

To determine to what extent favouritism was present in the research group, workers were asked if the supervisor had special "chums" among the workers. Of the 230 workers who responded to this question 44 (17,5%) said that their supervisor had special "chums" the others said he had not. The reasons given for these answers appear in Tables 2.23 en 2.24.

TABLE 2.23  
REASONS GIVEN BY WORKERS WHO SAY SUPERVISORS HAVE SPECIAL "CHUMS" IN THE TEAM

Reason	N	%
His "chums" get the soft jobs (the good machines)	14	5,6
He treats them better <sup>1)</sup> or he treats the others worse	17	6,8
He does not scold them - he pardons them	9	3,6
He has special friends, but he does not favour them	4	1,6
TOTAL	44	17,5

<sup>1)</sup> One respondent said: "If you are a favourite you are not dismissed from work when you loaf."

TABLE 2.24

REASONS GIVEN BY WORKERS WHO SAY SUPERVISORS DO NOT HAVE SPECIAL  
"CHUMS" IN THE TEAM

Reason	N	%
He treats us all alike	149	59,4
He is concerned about the job	15	6,0
I have not noticed it yet	22	8,8
TOTAL*	186	74,1

\*21 (8,4%) gave no response to the question.

The reasons provided above indicate that favouritism does occur and that it has a detrimental effect on efficient leadership and a good team spirit.

A further question was posed to the workers to determine the degree of favouritisms of the supervisors. They were asked: "Does the supervisor pick on some members in your team? Explain why you say Yes or No." The responses are shown in Table 2.25.

TABLE 2.25

REASONS GIVEN BY WORKERS AS TO WHETHER OR NOT SUPERVISORS PICK  
ON SOME MEMBERS IN THE TEAM

Yes, they do pick on members	N	%
He is short-tempered and smometimes even beats up some people	25	10,0
They get the dirty jobs or are made to work harder	8	3,2
They are watched closely or suspended or even dismissed	13	5,2
Sub-total	46	18,3
<u>No, they do not pick on members</u>		
He treats us all alike	99	39,4
Circumstances prohibit, or problems are investigated on a fair basis	34	13,5
He is not quarrelsome	19	7,6
Sub-total	152	60,5
No response	53	21,1
TOTAL	251	100

#### 2.5.4 Leader-member relations

Dunkerley says that the leader-member relations involve the degree to which the leader is personally accepted and liked. If the leader has the loyalty and confidence of his group, he needs little else to influence the group: "It is easier to lead a group in which you are liked or accepted than it is to lead one in which you are disliked or rejected." (Dunkerley, 1975: 121).

The response of the workers to the question: "Do you like working under your supervisor?" was that 209 (83,2%) said they liked working under their supervisor and that only 35 (13,9%) said they did not like working under their supervisor. Only 7 (2,8%) gave no response.

TABLE 2.26

REASONS GIVEN BY WORKERS FOR LIKING OR NOT LIKING TO WORK UNDER THE SUPERVISOR

Reasons given for liking the supervisor	N	%
His technical efficiency	16	6,4
He co-operates with workers/Knows how to handle people	17	6,8
He gives understandable explanations	27	10,8
He is fair, reasonable and polite	77	30,6
He understands my/our problems	72	28,6
Sub-total	209	83,2
<u>Reasons given for not liking the supervisor</u>		
Bad communication	12	4,8
Unfair treatment/He has favourites	23	9,2
Sub-total	36	14,0
No response	7	2,8
TOTAL	251	100

From the above it appears that the workers liked those supervisors with whom they could communicate, those whom they understood, and those who understood them. Here we have a direct indication of the preference workers have for employee-centred supervisors.

In the research project on The attitude of male Tswana job-seekers done by Redelinghuys (1974: 32), attention was given to the workers' view of supervision. They were asked why they preferred working under either White or Black supervisors. The reasons given were classified under the following five headings:

- (i) Fair treatment
- (ii) Employee-centred supervision
- (iii) Leadership characteristics
- (iv) Self-control
- (v) Communication.

It was also found "... that the majority of job seekers prefer a White foreman to a Bantu one." (Redelinghuys, 1974: 70).

The reasons given by the research group of Black workers preferring to work under a White supervisor correspond to those found by Redelinghuys (1974). As can be seen in Table 2.27 they prefer Whites mainly because of the traditional leadership characteristics of the Whites, such as more status and a wider knowledge. Fair treatment by Whites is also important as those preferring Whites said that Black supervisors tend to have favourites amongst the team members. Self-control was also mentioned by a few.

TABLE 2.27

REASONS GIVEN BY WORKERS WHY THEY PREFER WORKING UNDER A WHITE OR A BLACK SUPERVISOR

Reasons	Preference					
	White		Black		None	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Fair treatment/no favouritism/ self-control	34	13,6				
Leadership characteristics (status, knowledge)	38	15,1				
Better communication			86	34,3		
Employee-centred (better understanding of our problems)			75	29,8		
No preference (colour is not important, qualifications and ability count)					18	7,2
Sub-total	72	28,7	161	64,1	18	7,2
TOTAL			251	100		

The majority of the group preferred working under a Black supervisor (64,1% as to 28,7%). The reasons given here were better communication and a better understanding of the workers' problems or employee-centred supervision. This result does not correspond to the result found by Redelinghuys (1974). Redelinghuys' study was done among rural Blacks, which could be an explanation for the difference. In a study by Redelinghuys and Terblanche (1976) done in urban areas, it was found that 32,9 per cent of the men and 34,1 per cent of the women compared with the 28,7 per cent in this study, preferred a White supervisor, while 46,4 per cent of the men and 40,0 per cent of the women as compared with 64,1 per cent of the workers in this study, preferred a Black supervisor. In the study by Redelinghuys and Terblanche which was done in 1973, 20,6 per cent of the men and 25,9 per cent of the women were neutral, while only 7,2 per cent of this study which was done in 1976 had no preference.

The image that a first-line supervisor is there to represent management and to be job-centred, is making way for the view that the first-line supervisor is there to alleviate problems arising on the shop floor.

#### 2.5.5 Is supervision an easy job?

When management was approached to find out whether they thought that first-line supervisors found their job easy, they answered as indicated in Table 2.28.

TABLE 2.28

REASONS GIVEN BY MANAGERS FOR THINKING FIRST-LINE SUPERVISION IS EASY OR NOT EASY

Reason	N	%
Yes, it is easy because it is a straight-forward job in which expectations are not too high	9	37,5
No, it is difficult because they lack training and they experience pressure from management and from the workers	12	50,0
Uncertain because some of them lack experience and training	3	12,5
TOTAL	24	100

It was also found that the answers to the above question by both supervisors and workers gave an indication of the supervisor's role in the group.

When the supervisors were asked if supervision was an easy job, 200 out of 245 said "No, it is difficult" and they gave the reasons appearing in Table 2.29. Only 45, (18,4%) said supervision was an easy job.

TABLE 2.29

REASONS GIVEN BY SUPERVISORS FOR SAYING SUPERVISION IS DIFFICULT

Reason	N	%
Too much responsibility concerning the work	53	21,6
The people create problems (because they were used to working under White supervision)	79	32,2
Work and people must be looked after	39	15,9
Frightened of the people's threats	14	5,7
Bridge between management and workers	15	6,1
Sub-total	200	81,5

The question put to the workers read: "Do you think it is an easy job to be a supervisor?" and "Why do you say so?" The responses were as appear in Table 2.30.

TABLE 2.30

REASONS GIVEN BY WORKERS FOR THINKING SUPERVISION IS AN EASY JOB

Reason	N	%
<u>Yes</u>		
When experienced or trained	35	13,9
It is easier work (no proper reason given)	62	24,7
Sub-total	97	38,6
<u>No</u>		
Too much responsibility	30	12,0
Technically difficult	14	5,6
Difficult to control people	70	27,9
You need experience and training	17	6,8
You are threatened by workers	18	7,2
Sub-total	149	59,7
Don't know	5	2,0
TOTAL	251	100



The most alarming category is the one concerning the threats of workers to supervisors. It is a factor to be considered that supervisors fear threats from subordinates when performing their expected role in the work situation, and they should be trained in handling such threats.

It is also significant, but not strange, that more of both the workers and management thought supervision an easy job than did the supervisors themselves (38,6% and 37,5% compared to 18,4%).

The category with the largest response for all three groups of respondents show that working with people creates the biggest difficulties for the supervisors (Managers 50%; Supervisors 32,2%; Workers 27,9%). As working with people is the supervisors' responsibility, and part and parcel of their work, proper training could at least minimise this problem.

## 2.6 THE SUPERVISOR AND HIS IMMEDIATE BOSS

### 2.6.1 Introduction

The role played by a supervisor towards his immediate boss was investigated by determining the relationship between first-line and second-line supervisors, as viewed by management and the first-line supervisors.

Management felt that in most cases the first-line supervisors were not qualified to do the work of second-line supervisors. This was the feeling of 13 (54,2%) managers, and the reason commonly given was that second-line supervisors were mostly White technicians or artisans and as the Blacks were not technically trained, they could not take over from the technically trained White second-line supervisors.

Another nine (37,5%) managers said that the first-line supervisors had already acted in second-line supervisory capacity. This was mainly in factories where second-line supervisors were not technical staff, and where technical work was done by mechanics or the maintenance team who were not integrated into the line. The remaining two managers (8,3%) said the first-line supervisors in their factories could not execute authority and could, therefore, not do the work of the second-line supervisors.

On the more personal level supervisors were asked how much experience they had working under their present second-line supervisor. The majority of them, 135 or 55,1 per cent, had less than 3 years' experience under their present supervisor.

Another 90 (36,7%) had between 3 and 8 years' experience under their present supervisors, while the remaining 20 or 8,2 per cent had more than 8 years'. It seemed that although a large number did not have long experience under their present supervisors, they at least had enough experience to give an opinion about these people. They were subsequently asked which qualities about their immediate bosses they liked and which they disliked.

### 2.6.2 What the supervisor likes about his immediate boss

In line with the stated preferences of the workers for their supervisors (see Par. 2.5.3) the supervisors also preferred those bosses who were employee-centred. Again it is the human relations aspect which predominates in the reasons given for liking the immediate boss. As can be seen in Table 2.31, 23,4 per cent of the supervisors liked the boss who "understands my problems" 19,4 per cent the boss who "co-operates with us in the work" and 22,0 per cent the bosses who "exercise self-control," i.e. do not abuse us. Only 5,5 per cent of them liked their bosses for their "technical skill." The employee-centred immediate boss is thus preferred and if such people are appointed, it could lead to higher production and more job satisfaction. It thus seems that the best first and second-line supervisor would be a person who is technically well skilled but whose attitude is employee-centred.

TABLE 2.31  
QUALITIES OF THEIR IMMEDIATE BOSSES SUPERVISORS LIKE

Reason	N	%
His technical skill	19	5,5
He understands my problems	81	23,4
He understands the worker's problems which I take to him	55	15,9
He co-operates with us in the work	67	19,4
He gives good explanations	26	7,5
He exercises self-control	76	22,0
He teaches me to handle people	4	1,2
He is fair	15	4,3
He trusts me	3	0,9
TOTAL	346*	100

\*The total of 346 is made up of 231 respondents saying that they liked a certain thing about their immediate boss while 115 of them gave two reasons. The other 14 said that there was nothing about their bosses that they liked.

### 2.6.3 Qualities of his immediate boss which the supervisor dislikes

Table 2.32 shows that bosses who are not employee-centred were not liked. Of the 127 supervisors who indicated that they did not like their immediate bosses 26,8 per cent gave as reason the boss's short temper and 28,3 said they dislike him because he was "unreasonable, bossy or threatening." Essentially, the relationship with his subordinates on a personal level was the reason for not liking him.

TABLE 2.32  
QUALITIES OF THEIR IMMEDIATE BOSSES SUPERVISORS DISLIKE

Reason	% of 245	N	%
He is short-tempered	13,9	34	26,8
He is unfair/He has favourites	5,3	13	10,2
He is unreasonable/bossy/threatening	14,7	36	28,3
He undermines my authority	6,9	17	13,4
He doesn't understand us	4,9	12	9,4
He does not appreciate small things	4,9	12	9,4
He has to attend meetings - cannot do the work	1,2	3	2,4
TOTAL	51,8	127*	100

\*101 (41,2%) respondents mentioned one dislike and 26 a second. The other 144 respondents said there was nothing about their immediate bosses that they disliked.

### 2.6.4 Ability of the supervisor to do his immediate boss's work

When asked if they could do their immediate boss's work, 131 or 53,4 per cent of the supervisors thought that they could, for the reasons appearing in Table 2.33.

Supervisors had the idea that second-line supervisors needed a certain amount of skill which comes through training and experience. It did not seem that they expected to move up in the hierarchy too easily. Although more than 50 per cent felt that they could be promoted, it was mainly those who had the skill, ability and experience in that factory.

TABLE 2.33

REASONS GIVEN BY SUPERVISORS WHY THEY COULD OR COULD NOT DO THE BOSS'S JOB

Reasons for being able to do the job	N	%
I taught him the work/I always did it/ I do it when he is absent	41	16,7
I do the same work/It is easy work	75	30,6
I can do half the work and can learn the rest	15	6,1
Sub-total	131	53,4
<u>Reasons for not being able to do the job</u>		
The work is too difficult	15	6,1
I need more experience	10	4,1
I need more training	89	36,3
Sub-total	114	46,5
TOTAL	245	100

## CHAPTER 3

### THE FUNCTION OF THE BLACK FIRST-LINE SUPERVISOR

#### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

The definition of the function of a first-line supervisor states that basically four functions should be performed, i.e.

- (i) Planning
- (ii) Organising
- (iii) Directing, and
- (iv) Controlling.

Other functions could be added and in this report an additional two functions will be discussed, i.e.

- (v) Motivating, and
- (vi) Training of new workers.

In the interviews with managers each manager was requested to place five tasks of the first-line supervisor in rank order of importance to the firm. According to the 24 managers, the functions were placed as illustrated in Table 3.1.

TABLE 3.1  
TASKS OF SUPERVISORS, IN RANK ORDER OF IMPORTANCE ATTACHED TO THEM BY MANAGERS

Tasks	Rank order						Total
	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	N/A*	
Achievement of production	13	5	3	2	1	0	24
Quality control	4	12	4	3	0	1	24
Training of new workers	6	7	6	2	2	1	24
Representation of workers	1	2	4	9	7	1	24
Planning of production	1	3	6	4	4	6	24

\*Managers said that the task was not part of the first-line supervisor's function.

As can be seen in Table 3.1, the managers ranked the five mentioned tasks of supervisors in the following rank order from most important to least important:

- (i) Achievement of production
- (ii) Quality control
- (iii) Training of new workers
- (iv) Representation of workers
- (v) Planning of production.

The above rank order was not calculated precisely, because of the number of responses indicating that certain tasks were not seen as a function of the supervisor.

As all firms aim at producing goods at a profit, it is to be expected that management would expect supervisors to function, so as to achieve production of a good quality and quantity.

### 3.2 PLANNING OF PRODUCTION

Planning means the formulation of a course of action for the future, be it short or long term. Although some authors (Steinmetz and Todd, 1975: 22 and Dunkerley, 1975: 76) see planning as a function of a first-line supervisor they admit that it varies, according to the type of activity being supervised.

At least six or 25 per cent of the managers in the survey said that planning was not a function of the Black first-line supervisor at all. The other managers ranked planning low in importance as a function of a supervisor. When asked whether management informed the first-line supervisor about company personnel policy, 58 per cent said that they informed them fully and the other 42 per cent informed the supervisors only partly or not at all.

From the above, it may be concluded that in some factories Black first-line supervisors are not yet seen as part of management.

### 3.3 ORGANISING

By 'organising' is meant the arrangement of personnel, material, equipment, machinery and work area to accomplish the plans set for the unit. The supervisor is responsible for assigning the right person to the right job.

When the managers were asked: "What role does the supervisor play in the allocation of work in the team?", the majority (15 or 62,5%) said that the supervisor played a major role in the allocation of work.

As the allocation of work is basic to achievement of high levels of production it can be seen why the managers viewed this function of 'organising' as very important.

In the interviews with the supervisors, they were asked how they organised the work when someone in the team was absent, so as to make sure the work continued. The results can be seen in Table 3.2 and show that in most of the cases, the supervisors did the work of the absent person themselves, rearranged the work, asked for a substitute. Only in 7,3 per cent of the cases did the second-line supervisor step in to do the organising. It therefore appears that the first-line supervisors were expected to and actually did perform the function of 'organising' relatively well.

TABLE 3.2

STEPS TAKEN BY THE SUPERVISORS TO MAKE SURE THE WORK CONTINUES  
WHEN SOMEONE IN THE TEAM IS ABSENT

Steps taken	N	%
Supervisor does the work	57	23,3
Supervisor rearranges work and/or workers	72	29,4
Supervisor finds a replacement	81	33,1
The boss finds a replacement	18	7,3
All do the same work	17	6,9
TOTAL	245	100

Another question put to the supervisors to test their contribution to the organising function, particularly concerning machinery, was a question on the adjustment of the machines. In this respect it was shown that 26,5 per cent were responsible for the adjustment of the machines in their section, whereas 27,4 per cent were in charge of teams who did not use machines. The rest, i.e. 45,7 per cent, had to report to the maintenance section of the factory if a machine needed adjustment. Here again, the responsibility of the organisation of adjustment of machines rested with the first-line supervisor.

#### 3.4 DIRECTING

Whenever directions are given, communication takes place. Various questions on communication in the directing process were put to the respondents and the reactions given are set out below.

##### 3.4.1 Is the first-line supervisor responsible for directing his team?

The workers were asked from whom they received their instructions. The majority (140 or 55,8%) said they received instructions from their supervisors only, while the rest said that they received instructions from their supervisors but sometimes also from higher authority.

On the further question as to whether they approved of the way in which they received their instructions, the responses appearing in Table 3.3 were given:

TABLE 3.3  
RESPONSES OF WORKERS, AS TO THE WAY INSTRUCTIONS WERE GIVEN BY  
THE SUPERVISORS

Yes, I approve of the way instructions are given	N	%
Instructions are clear and understandable	126	50,2
The supervisor gives instructions in a kind (not harsh) and humane pleasant manner	56	22,3
<u>No, I do not approve of the way instructions are given</u>		
Instructions are confusing	25	10,0
Supervisor makes us work too hard, is not polite and hurts my human dignity	8	3,2
I have to accept	28	11,2
Instructions not clear	3	1,2
No response	5	2,0
TOTAL	251	100

Also important is the question of whether higher authority acknowledges the supervisor in the chain of communication down the line. Supervisors were very much aware of their position of authority over their team members and indicated that they alone should receive instructions from their supervisors. This happened in the majority of cases as 81,6 per cent of the supervisors indicated. Of the others 15,1 per cent indicated that their superiors gave them the instructions sometimes, but on other occasions to the workers directly. The remaining 3,3 per cent said that the superior gave the instructions directly to the workers, but mostly in their presence. In answer to the question whether they approved of their supervisor's conduct, the following answers were recorded: 91,0 per cent said that they approved; 5,3 per cent stated that their authority was undermined and 3,7 per cent indicated that their supervisor's instructions were not clear, or that they did not want the responsibility of communicating instructions to the workers.

From the above it seems reasonable to conclude that the majority of supervisors are willing to perform the function of "directing" their workers. Only a few did not fulfil this function. Interesting to note here, is that in the Brits area 95,8 per cent of the respondents were the only people to receive the instructions from their immediate superiors, and only 4,2



per cent were not the only link in the communication line between management and the worker. In Brits and Babelegi in respectively 79,1 per cent and 75,9 per cent of the cases, the supervisor was the only link in the line. In both areas more than 20 per cent of the supervisors were not accorded the authority to be the only one to communicate instructions to their workers.

It is interesting to note here that in the responses to the question as to whether the supervisor dislikes his immediate boss, 6,9 per cent gave as a reason for disliking him that the boss undermined his authority (Par. 2.6.3). This figure corresponds very closely to the 5,3 per cent stated above where supervisors said that their boss undermined their authority. On the whole it seems that the function of 'directing' is the responsibility of the first-line supervisor. The following sections will throw some light on how this function is fulfilled and problems encountered in fulfilling it:

#### 3.4.2 Communication between groups

Steinmetz and Todd (1975: 195) state that "... one of the primary responsibilities of the supervisor is to communicate effectively to the employees. This means that he or she must be able to get messages across to the employees and also to be adept at receiving messages from them." Supervisors should thus be able to make themselves understood and to understand the workers. Verster (1976) gives a thorough discussion of communication with Black workers which could aid the understanding of the process in an organisation.

##### (a) The language used by the supervisor in directing workers

When asked what language was used as means of instruction between supervisors and workers, responses were as indicated in Table 3.4. In most cases communication took place through the medium of the common home language. Where other languages were used, the categories for supervisors and workers do not correspond. This could be due to a variety of reasons, ranging from a different interpretation given to the question by the workers, to the possibility of workers who worked under White or Coloured first-line supervisors having been included in the sample of workers. It should also be remembered that most supervisors were from the Rosslyn area, whereas the smallest number of the workers in the sample came from this area.

TABLE 3.4

LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION, AS INDICATED BY SUPERVISORS AND WORKERS

Language of instruction	Super=visors		Workers	
	N	%	N	%
Home language	135	55,1	106	42,2
Another Bantu language	99	40,4	63	25,1
Afrikaans or English and another Bantu language	11	4,5	82	32,7
TOTAL	245	100	251	100

When the workers were asked "Do you understand the language in which your instructions are given to you?", they responded as is indicated in Table 3.5.

TABLE 3.5

WORKERS' UNDERSTANDING OF THE LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

	N	%
	I understand very well	136
I understand well	67	26,7
I understand reasonably well	41	16,3
I do not understand so well	7	2,8
TOTAL	251	100

It seems from the above that a bigger effort should be made by supervisors to make themselves clearly understood by their subordinates. It should be remembered that, traditionally, a subordinate Black does not ask a superior to repeat an instruction. More attention could be given to this problem of communication when training supervisors.

(b) Inter-ethnic group relations

Apart from the language used in communication, people from the same ethnic group have a better understanding of each other's customs, religion, etc. Inter-ethnic conflict is something that is not peculiar to South Africa and, therefore, a question was put to gather information on inter-ethnic relations.

Of the twenty-four respondents from management, only one could recall an incident of inter-ethnic conflict between a first-line supervisor and the workers in his factory. The answers of supervisors and workers on the question about inter-ethnic relations are indicated in Table 3.6.

TABLE 3.6  
INTER-ETHNIC RELATIONS BETWEEN SUPERVISORS AND WORKERS, AS  
INDICATED BY SUPERVISORS AND WORKERS

Relationship	Super=visors		Workers	
	N	%	N	%
All the same ethnic group Get along well with members of another ethnic group	36	14,7	128	51,0
Do not get along well with members of another ethnic group	206	84,1	94	37,5
	3	1,2	29	11,6
TOTAL	245	100	251	100

Supervisors had to indicate where there were members of different ethnic groups in their teams, even if only one belonged to a different group. A worker could answer in the category "same ethnic group" if he belonged to the same ethnic group as his/her supervisor.

Although the answers of the two groups of respondents did not correspond significantly, they do indicate that ethnic differences are not viewed as much of a problem in the relationship between supervisor and worker.

(c) Relations with older members

Age is a very important determinant of status in traditional Bantu culture. Difficulties with communication could arise in the work situation if younger members of the labour force are appointed as supervisors over older members. Questions to this effect were included and 15 supervisors, forming 6,1 per cent of the total number, said that the older members did not respect them. The others (64,5%) said they were accepted by older members in their teams, and found the older members followed the directions, and did their work as members of the team, or that (29,4%) no older members were present in the team.

It follows from the above, that traditional cultural aspects such as age differences and ethnic differences are not serious blockages to communication between supervisors and workers.

(d) Small talk between supervisor and workers

Responses by supervisors and workers given to the question as to whether informal communication took place between a supervisor and the workers in his team (e.g. talking about football, politics, women and other topics outside the factory) while they were working, are reflected in Tables 3.7 and 3.8.

Table 3.7 shows that 22,0 per cent of the supervisors and 33,5 per cent of the workers indicated that small talk took place while working. The reasons supplied by the two groups as to why small talk did not take place, differed somewhat. The possibility that small talk might distract the attention and that this loss of attention might be dangerous, was mentioned only by supervisors, while workers gave more emphasis to differences in status and no mutual interest.

TABLE 3.7

SMALL TALK BETWEEN SUPERVISOR AND WORKERS, WHILE AT WORK

Reasons for not talking	Super=visors		Workers	
	N	%	N	%
The work is dangerous or noisy	22	9,0	-	-
Production rate will drop	154	62,9	86	34,3
Difference in status	11	4,5	20	8,0
No mutual interest	4	1,6	23	9,2
Talks to favourites only	-	-	3	1,2
They do talk	54	22,0	84	33,5
No response	-	-	35	13,9
TOTAL	245	100	251	100

In answer to a question on what the boss would do if someone in the group talked or joked, 76,3 per cent of the supervisors said they would be reprimanded. All the above indicates that communication on the job usually concerns production and that the opportunity for small talk is limited.

On the question as to whether they indulged in small talk during lunch time, 68,1 per cent of supervisors said they did

converse with the workers about some of the aspects mentioned in the question.

TABLE 3.8  
THE REASONS GIVEN BY SUPERVISORS FOR NOT TALKING DURING LUNCH TIME

Reason	N	%
They were separated by management	43	56,6
Fear of loss of status	22	29,0
No mutual interest	11	14,4
TOTAL	76	100

The reasons given by those who said no, are tabulated in Table 3.8. The reasons show that management played a role in this regard, usually with a view to enhance the status of the supervisor. The fear of loss of status was also mentioned by the supervisors.

### 3.5 CONTROLLING

The function of control is to establish some system by which feedback is given on how subordinates are performing. One such a system is to control the quality of subordinates' work. The managers indicated (see Par. 3.1) that they expected supervisors to control the quality of the team's work as one of the more important functions of a supervisor.

Forty per cent of the supervisors indicated that they had a share in controlling the quality of their team's work, but 57 per cent said that quality control was done by the quality control section of the factory. The remaining 3 per cent said that no quality control was done or necessary in their sections.

Another aspect of control is the evaluation of an individual's performance. The supervisors and workers were asked what happened if a worker performed better than the other workers in the team. As can be seen in Table 3.9 most of the supervisors recommended these workers to higher authority for either promotion (24,9%) or a wage increase (42,9%). The other 32,2 per cent of the supervisors did very little if anything at all to encourage a good worker.

TABLE 3.9

## TREATMENT OF A WORKER WHO WORKS BETTER THAN OTHERS, AS VIEWED BY SUPERVISORS AND WORKERS

Treatment	Super=visors		Workers	
	N	%	N	%
Recognition without compensation except for more responsibility*	47	19,2	8	3,2
Recommendation for compensation in the form of an increase**	105	42,9	63	25,1
Recommendation for promotion or appraisal form completed	61	24,9	43	17,2
Nothing done	32	13,0	137	54,6
TOTAL	245	100	251	100

\*Example of an answer in this category: "I give him more work to get production up - he won't make scrap."

\*\*Example of an answer in this category: "I recommend him for best worker of the month."

The workers from their side indicated to a far greater extent than supervisors that nothing or very little was done (57,8%). This is not unexpected because some workers might not have been aware of increases awarded to colleagues. Their responses to the categories of recommendations for increase and promotion, followed the same pattern as those of the supervisors, i.e. more indicated recommendation for an increase than for promotion.

On the question of the importance of a supervisor being able to "spot talent" among the workers, 54 per cent of the managers interviewed said that it was a very important function of the supervisor. The others did not think talent spotting was a function of the Black first-line supervisors. They thought talent spotting was the function of White second-line supervisors.

As the project advanced, it came to the researcher's attention that shirkers or people who don't do their work properly, also play a role in a supervisor's daily experience. Approximately 42 per cent of the managers expected supervisors to report shirkers to higher authority. On a further question on the actions taken by supervisors, only 16,7 per cent of the

managers said that the supervisors did not report shirkers because they were afraid of the workers. About 40 per cent said that the supervisors did report to higher authority.

TABLE 3.10  
ACTION TAKEN BY SUPERVISORS WHEN A WORKER IS SHIRKING, AS REPORTED BY WORKERS

	N	%
He reprimands	79	31,5
Talks nicely	30	12,0
Reports to higher authority	46	18,3
No chance for loafing	10	4,0
No proper response	86	34,3
TOTAL	251	100

It thus seems, according to Table 3.10, that a reasonable discrepancy exists between the expectations of managers and the experience of workers. The workers have the impression that supervisors settle the problems of shirking themselves and very few report to higher authority. The high percentage under the heading "no proper response" might be due to the fact that many Black workers misunderstood the term "loafing" as used in the questionnaire. By loafing they understood "coming late" and these responses were not accepted but classified as "no proper response."

To determine further the control supervisors had over their workers, the workers were asked what they did if a supervisor gave instructions they did not like. Table 3.11 shows the workers' responses.

The supervisors thus seemed, to be successful in controlling the workers. Only 11,6 per cent of the workers refused to accept instructions they did not like, in which case the supervisor lost control over them. The most common response was that workers accepted instructions they did not like without complaint but with fear. This was the case with 86 (34,3%) of the workers. Their fear was either of losing their job as a result of insubordination or of a deduction from their pay.

When the managers were asked what sort of trouble was experienced in the work teams, only 9 of them (37,5%) said that they very seldom had trouble. Disputes over production, pay or

fringe benefits and laziness of the workers, were the usual forms of trouble experienced.

TABLE 3.11  
WORKER'S RESPONSE TO INSTRUCTIONS HE DOES NOT LIKE

Response	N	%
It never happens	39	15,5
I refuse to do it/I ignore the instructions	29	11,6
I consult higher authority or the works committee representative	30	12,0
Accept with complaint (reasoning, grumbling or back-chat)	34	13,5
Accept without complaint but with fear	86	34,3
Accept without complaint and without fear	33	13,1
TOTAL	251	100

In answer to the question "What can be done to help them (the supervisors) solve the problems they encounter?" 50 per cent of the managers suggested better communication up the line, in the form of an open door to the manager or council meetings; better training was mentioned by 20,8 per cent.

The last question put to workers concerning the control function of their supervisors was about the supervisor's form of action when a worker was disobedient. Table 3.12 shows the response.

TABLE 3.12  
SUPERVISOR'S ACTIONS TOWARDS A DISOBEDIENT WORKER, AS INDICATED BY WORKERS

Supervisor's action	N	%
It never happens	33	13,1
No response or nothing happens	51	20,3
Reports to higher authority (arbitration)	89	35,5
Threatens, warns, suspends, quarrels	38	15,1
Dismissal	40	15,9
TOTAL	251	100



Here it seems that the largest group reported disobedience to higher authority (35,5%), while 31 per cent controlled the disobedience by threats or even the dismissal of workers, which explains why workers accepted instructions without complaint.

### 3.6 MOTIVATING WORKERS TO WORK HARDER

In most factories a certain production rate or target is set for the team. It is one of the main functions of supervisors to see that this target is met. A number of questions were set on this aspect of the supervisor's functions.

In answer to the question whether they were expected to work too hard, 46,1 per cent of the supervisors said that this was indeed the case, although some said that it happened only on occasion. The other 53,9 per cent said that management was reasonable in selecting the production rates.

On the question as to why they urged their teams to work harder, 115 (47%) said that it was necessary because of the production target set. Of the rest, 76 (31%) mentioned that it was necessary only under special circumstances such as after a breakdown, or when urgent orders were received. The other 54 (22%) said it was not necessary to do anything.

Table 3.13 shows what steps the supervisors took when rush jobs had to be done.

TABLE 3.13  
STEPS TAKEN BY SUPERVISORS TO MAKE WORKERS WORK HARDER WHEN RUSH JOBS HAVE TO BE DONE

Motivation	Supervisors		Workers	
	N	%	N	%
Encouragement through explanations and help	170	69,4	115	45,8
Harsh instructions	-	-	15	6,0
Work overtime	8	3,3	61	24,3
Bonus promised or given	11	4,5	4	1,6
Nothing (Machine sets the pace)	56	22,9	36	14,3
TOTAL	245	100	251	100

The majority of supervisors (69,4%) said that they encouraged their teams by explanations and by helping them. The workers agreed (51,8%) but distinguished between harsh instructions and polite instructions, as can be seen in Table 3.13. Far more workers said they had to work overtime than indicated by supervisors, and both groups drew attention to the fact that conveyor belts and machines can set the pace for workers.

Very few supervisors made use of a bonus for motivating workers. It was most likely not in their power to promise a bonus, but one very young supervisor on his own initiative promised his workers a "Groovy" (soft drink), if they responded favourably to his efforts to make them work harder.

The supervisors were also asked how the workers responded to their efforts. The majority said that the workers responded favourably, while the same 22,9 per cent indicated no response because there was no effort. Only two supervisors, i.e. 0,8 per cent of the research group reported unfavourable responses, and 6,1 per cent reported that some members of their teams responded favourably, while others responded unfavourably.

It thus seems that supervisors have little more than their persuasive ability to motivate workers to work harder, which underlines the fact that a supervisor must be a leader.

### 3.7 TRAINING OF NEW WORKERS

In the interviews with management it was found that some of them expected the supervisors to train new workers. Of the 24 managers, 19 or 79,2 per cent saw training of new workers as an important function of a supervisor. (See Table 3.1 where this function was placed first, second or third among the five functions mentioned to them.)

The supervisors and workers responded to the question "Who trains a new worker?", as indicated in Table 3.14.

Again supervisors' and workers' reactions did not correspond. More supervisors said they were responsible for the training, while more workers indicated that the training was done by an experienced hand. Both groups indicated that very few workers were trained in a training section. As most of the work was manual unskilled labour, very little training was required.

It is clear, however, that the supervisors do have a responsibility in the training of new workers.

TABLE 3.14

WHO TRAINS A NEW WORKER, AS INDICATED BY SUPERVISORS AND WORKERS

Trainer	Super=visors		Workers	
	N	%	N	%
The supervisor	168	68,6	100	39,8
Experienced workers	69	28,2	99	39,4
Training section	6	2,4	27	10,8
Was experienced	2	0,8	25	10,0
TOTAL	245	100	251	100

### 3.8 TREATMENT OF BLACK FIRST-LINE SUPERVISORS WHO FAIL TO MEET EXPECTATIONS

A final question on the treatment of supervisors who did not meet expectations was set to the managers. They responded as is indicated in Table 3.15.

TABLE 3.15

TREATMENT OF SUPERVISORS WHO DO NOT MEET EXPECTATIONS

Treatment	N	%
Demote the supervisor	10	41,7
Discharge the supervisor	6	25,0
Struggle along	4	16,7
Retrain	4	16,7
TOTAL	24	100

These responses seem harsh but the managers also said that it was seldom necessary to take action. Some of them could recall instances where supervisors with relatively good records had had to be discharged on grounds of overstepping their authority or not meeting the expectations of management. Only a few could recall actually demoting a supervisor and said that such people resigned after demotion.

## CHAPTER 4

### SELECTION AND TRAINING OF BLACK FIRST-LINE SUPERVISORS

#### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

"The training of foremen has come to be an area of great concern to industry, ..." (Dunkerley, 1975: 140). Although training is extremely important for the supervisory role, there is at present very little consistency in methods of training or in the reasons for training.

Imberman (1975), says: "If most supervisory training courses cause no change in the foremen's measurable performance, are such training courses worthwhile? The answer is obviously negative." Notwithstanding the above negative comment, the training of supervisors continues. One example can be found in the Report of the Department of Labour in New Zealand (1976) where it is said that: "Applications for subsidies under the Incentives for Training Schemes introduced during the previous year continued to increase steadily." The estimated expenditure for 1976 was \$1,060,593, of which "Off-job training for trades and similar vocations" received 71 per cent and "Supervisory training" 13 per cent. The remaining 16 per cent was divided between three other categories, i.e. "Group training, Training of trainers and Industrial relations training."

In Redelinghuys' study (1974: 70, 61) on job seekers it was indicated that it would pay the employer to ensure that amongst other things "... attention is devoted to the training and selection of foremen."

It has also been found in the present research project that trained supervisors have more success in fulfilling their tasks, than those who had no special training as supervisors.

#### 4.2 SELECTION OF BLACK FIRST LINE-SUPERVISORS

Before anybody can be trained as a supervisor the most capable persons should be selected. De Villiers (1974: 64) under the heading "Selection for promotion", suggests that the "... individual concerned (should be) moved about on a planned basis from one work situation to another, so that different personalities and job problems can be brought to bear on his formative experiences ..."

In listening to some of the managers during the interviews, it was clear that they sometimes selected unsuitable

people as supervisors. One such a statement was: "When I appointed him to supervise five machines, he was successful, but when I wanted him to supervise fifteen, he failed." The manager expected an ex-operator to supervise machines and, therefore, selected his best operator, forgetting that the man had to supervise operators and not machines. If this man had been selected for his supervisory capabilities, and not for his operational capabilities or had he been trained in supervisory skills, he might have been a success, but now he was a failure personally and in the factory too. A number of questions were put to managers and supervisors to form an idea as to how supervisors were selected.

Managers were asked "How do you select first-line supervisors?" They provided only three answers: 45,8 per cent said they selected first-line supervisors because of their skill in the job they do; 41,7 per cent selected them on experience on the line, and only 12,5 per cent of the managers mentioned selection by testing of some sort or other. In the selection of skilled and experienced workers, the managers considered a person's leadership characteristics, personality and ability to communicate. Only 16,7 per cent of the managers were willing to appoint a supervisor from outside the factory, i.e. someone without experience in that factory or on that line.

Later in the interview managers were asked to place five qualities of first-line supervisors in rank order. They ranked the qualities in the following order:

- (i) Leadership
- (ii) Ability to get along with people
- (iii) Technical skill
- (iv) Fair judgement
- (v) Educational level.

From the above it can be deduced that most managers are aware of the fact that supervisors should be able to lead and get along with people, as well as being technically skilled.

When asked who did the supervisor's job when he was absent and had to be replaced, it was found that 25 per cent of the managers were of the opinion that he/she had to be replaced by a worker, 41,7 per cent suggested he should be replaced by another supervisor, and 33,3 per cent that he should be replaced by someone in a higher position (Table 4.1).

TABLE 4.1

WHO DOES THE SUPERVISOR'S JOB WHEN HE IS ABSENT - RESPONSES OF  
MANAGEMENT AND SUPERVISORS

Replacement	Management		Supervisors	
	N	%	N	%
Never absent	-		17	6,9
A worker	6	25,0	44	18,0
Another supervisor	10	41,7	99	40,4
Higher authority	8	33,3	85	34,7
TOTAL	24	100	245	100

The supervisors said that in 18,0 per cent of the cases it was done by a worker, in 40,4 per cent of the cases by another supervisor, and in 34,7 per cent of the cases by someone in a higher position. The remaining 6,9 per cent said they were never absent (see Table 4.1).

In Paragraph 2.2.7 it was mentioned that 134 (53,4%) of the workers interviewed indicated that they did the supervisor's work when he was absent. Another 37 (14,8%) saw themselves as capable of doing the supervisor's work. This might be a slightly inflated opinion of their own abilities, but at least they saw themselves as potential supervisors, and workers who stand in for supervisors should be watched because they can demonstrate their capabilities.

In another question the workers were asked directly whether they were capable enough to be promoted to the position of supervisor (Table 4.2), 126 (50,2%) said they could do the job, while 120 (47,8%) said they could not and the other 5 (2,0%) did not respond or were undecided. It is interesting to note that some workers felt that they could not take the responsibility.

Experience obtained prior to becoming a supervisor, contributes to the ability of a supervisor to do his work. The kind of work done prior to becoming a supervisor would give an indication of what kind of workers become supervisors (Table 4.3).

TABLE 4.2

REASONS GIVEN BY WORKERS WHY THEY COULD OR COULD NOT BE PROMOTED

Can be promoted	N	%
I have the experience	52	20,7
I have the qualifications or knowledge	52	20,7
I was promised by higher authority	20	8,0
No reason given	2	0,8
Sub-total	126	50,2
<u>Cannot be promoted</u>		
I do not have enough experience	33	13,1
I am not qualified	33	13,1
I cannot take responsibility	25	9,9
No opportunity	22	8,8
No reason given	7	2,8
Sub-total	120	47,8
No response	5	2,0
TOTAL	251	100

TABLE 4.3

KIND OF WORK DONE PRIOR TO BECOMING A SUPERVISOR, ACCORDING TO AREA

Kind of work	Area						Total	
	Rosslyn		Brits		Babelegi		N	%
	N	%	N	%	N	%		
Labourer	38	27,3	9	15,5	13	27,1	60	24,5
Operator	77	55,4	31	53,4	31	64,6	139	56,7
Other	10	7,2	9	15,5	3	6,3	22	9,0
Supervisor	14	10,1	9	15,5	1	2,1	24	9,8
TOTAL	139	100	58	100	48	100	245	100

The majority of the supervisors (56,7%) were operators before they were promoted. They also indicated that 75,9 per cent of them had worked in the same section of the factory as

where they were now supervisors. Only 24,1 per cent had not worked in the same section. Thus, the usual practice of promoting supervisors from the floor was adhered to by the factories in this project.

#### 4.3 TRAINING OF PROSPECTIVE SUPERVISORS

Both the internal and external training of supervisors are costly, especially for small factories.

What is meant by "training of prospective supervisors" or "supervisory training"? In a circular of the NDMF the objective of supervisory training is given as: "To teach Black and Coloured supervisors the basic concepts of management, i.e. planning, leading, communicating, motivating and controlling." The above-mentioned course is presented to those who have attended the "T.S.S. Job Relations, Job Instruction and Job Methods courses."

It is clear that more is needed in the training of supervisors, than on the job training in technical skills, but both the internal or external training of supervisors is costly, especially for the small factory.

At the time of the survey very little training had been provided for prospective supervisors. Table 4.4 represents the distribution of trained and untrained supervisors as indicated by the managers and the supervisors themselves. As can be seen very few received training through external instances such as NDMF, BIC or NOSA. A somewhat larger number were trained by a training officer or the training section of the factory. The training of people by a training section in a factory, or by the firm with a number of factories, is limited to large organisations with sufficient numbers to warrant expenditure on training staff. The bulk of the supervisors received no supervisory training at all.

TABLE 4.4

TRAINING OF SUPERVISORS, AS GIVEN BY MANAGERS AND SUPERVISORS

Training	Managers		Supervisors	
	N	%	N	%
No training	12	50,0	129	52,7
Internal training	8	33,3	70	28,6
External training	4	16,7	46	18,8
TOTAL	24	100	245	100



#### 4.4 EFFECT OF TRAINING ON SUPERVISION

It is difficult to prove beyond doubt that trained supervisors fare better than the untrained. In the following discussion the behaviour and attitudes of trained and untrained supervisors are compared.

##### 4.4.1 Steps taken to make sure the work continues

In Table 4.5 trained and untrained supervisors are compared as to the steps they took to ensure that the work continued when someone in the team was absent.

TABLE 4.5

STEPS TAKEN TO MAKE SURE THE WORK CONTINUES WHEN SOMEONE IN THE TEAM IS ABSENT, INDICATED BY SUPERVISORS, ACCORDING TO THEIR TRAINING

Steps taken	Training						Total	
	None		Internal		External			
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Supervisor does not work	26	20,2	20	28,6	11	23,9	57	23,3
Supervisor rearranges work/workers	32	24,8	26	37,1	14	30,4	72	29,4
Supervisor finds a replacement	44	34,1	16	22,9	21	45,7	81	33,1
The boss finds a replacement	13	10,1	5	7,1	0	0,0	18	7,3
All do the same work	14	10,9	3	4,3	0	0,0	17	6,9
TOTAL	129	100	70	100	46	100	245	100

It was found that the 46 supervisors with external training worked in five of the six categories of industries. Only the Wood Industry did not have supervisors with external training.

What is noteworthy is that no supervisor with external training had replacements made by some higher authority. Although the percentages in the other two categories were low, they indicate that some of them were not yet in full command of their teams, whereas it seemed as if those with external training were.

#### 4.4.2 First thing done when a new worker joins the team

Table 4.6 shows that more of the trained supervisors introduced the new worker to the team members than did the untrained. More untrained supervisors let the workers start working immediately.

TABLE 4.6  
FIRST THING DONE TO NEW WORKER BY SUPERVISOR, AS INDICATED BY THE SUPERVISORS, ACCORDING TO THEIR TRAINING

First action	Sort of training						Total	
	None		Internal		External			
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
I introduce myself	64	49,6	35	50,0	23	50,0	122	49,8
Introduce to other workers	20	15,5	24	34,3	18	39,1	62	25,3
He has to start working	42	32,6	10	14,3	5	10,9	57	23,3
No response	3	2,3	1	1,4	-	-	4	1,6
TOTAL	129	100	70	100	46	100	245	100

When the workers were asked what the first thing was that the supervisor did when they joined the team, they responded as indicated in Table 4.7.

TABLE 4.7  
FIRST THING DONE TO NEW WORKERS BY SUPERVISOR, AS INDICATED BY WORKERS

First action	N	%
Supervisor introduced himself only	12	4,8
I was introduced to other workers	48	19,1
I was shown around the factory	35	13,9
Nothing was done, I had to start working	156	62,2
TOTAL	251	100

According to Table 4.7, the workers are of the opinion that most of the supervisors made them start work immediately. The difference between the responses by supervisors and workers in this regard is too large to ignore. Whether the cause was for forgetfulness on the part of the workers or lip service from the supervisor, cannot be determined. What is important is that more than 60 per cent of the workers felt "nothing was done, I had to start working." This points towards an important principle in any kind of managerial training, namely that the trained must believe in what he is expected to apply.

#### 4.4.3 Settlement of arguments

Two questions concerning arguments were asked. The first question put to supervisors was about their behaviour towards a worker who argued with them about the work. Compared according to their training, they responded as indicated in Table 4.8.

TABLE 4.8  
BEHAVIOUR OF SUPERVISOR TOWARDS ARGUING WORKER, ACCORDING TO TYPE OF TRAINING

Behaviour	Training						Total	
	None		Internal		External			
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Settle argument myself	41	31,8	21	30,0	29	63,0	91	37,1
Tell the Boss	72	55,8	47	67,2	15	32,6	134	54,7
Never had the problem	16	12,4	2	2,8	2	4,4	20	8,2
TOTAL	99	100	70	100	46	100	245	100

A large percentage of externally trained supervisors settled the arguments themselves while the untrained supervisors had to tell their bosses to settle the arguments for them. Internally trained supervisors seemed the weakest of the three categories.

The responses to the question as to how supervisors settled arguments between workers, are recorded in Table 4.9

TABLE 4.9

BEHAVIOUR OF SUPERVISOR TOWARDS WORKERS WHO HAVE AN ARGUMENT BETWEEN THEMSELVES, ACCORDING TO SUPERVISOR'S TRAINING AND WORKERS

Behaviour	Supervisor's training						Workers	
	None		Internal		External			
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Self-settlement	82	63,6	45	64,3	38	82,6	154	61,4
Tell the Boss	34	26,4	22	31,4	7	15,2	77	30,7
Never happened	13	10,1	3	4,3	1	2,2	20	8,0
TOTAL	129	100	70	100	46	100	251	100

Again only the externally trained supervisors showed a much higher percentage of self-settlement of arguments between workers. The workers' responses correspond very closely with those of the supervisors.

## CHAPTER 5

### SYNOPSIS AND CONCLUSIONS

#### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

Three groups of respondents were questioned with the aid of three different questionnaires (Appendices 1, 2 and 3) on the role, function and training of Black first-line supervisors in six types of industry. The three groups consisted of:

- (i) 24 Managers
- (ii) 245 Black supervisors and
- (iii) 251 Black workers.

The industries are situated in three industrial areas: Brits and Rosslyn in the border areas, and Babelegi in the Bophuthatswana Homeland - all near Pretoria. The Black supervisors and workers resided mainly in Bophuthatswana in the residential areas of Brits Old Location, Mothu-thung, Mabopane, Ga-Rankuwa en Temba. A few supervisors resided in residential areas in Pretoria, i.e. Atteridgeville and Mamelodi.

The industries included are the following:

Textile Industry - 4 factories  
Wood Industry - 4 factories  
Mineral (Non-Metal) Industry - 3 factories  
Metal Products Industry - 5 factories  
Electrical Appliances Industry - 4 factories  
Motors and Spares Industry - 4 factories.

The interviews with the managers and supervisors took place during April and May 1976, and the interviews with Black workers between June and August 1976 - a time when unrest in the residential areas occurred. The interviews with managers and supervisors were conducted by the researcher and staff members of the IMR whereas interviews with workers were carried out by Black school teachers after they had been familiarized with the questionnaire.

#### 5.2 DESCRIPTION OF THE SURVEY GROUP

The required information from management was provided by 19 White managers or personnel managers, 2 Black managers and 3 Black personnel clerks.

The 245 Black supervisors were chiefly males (90%) and Tswana or Sotho-speaking. The majority (68%) of the supervisors had passed Std 6 or had a higher level of education; their median age was 33,2 years and their median wage R39,8 per week.

The Black workers were also chiefly males (70%) and 60 per cent spoke either Tswana or Sotho. Their median age was 26,7 years and they earned a median wage of R21,10 per week.

### 5.3 THE ROLE OF THE BLACK FIRST-LINE SUPERVISOR

The position of the first-line supervisor was not clearly defined. Although the title of 'Supervisor' was the most popular, outdated titles like 'Boss-Boy' or 'Induna' were also still in use.

The expectations that management had for the role of supervisor did not differ significantly from the role played by supervisors. On the whole the impression was gained that the supervisors were more job-centred than employee-centred. The majority did not make friends with the workers, but the workers did not mind working under their supervisors. The majority of the workers usually preferred a Black to a White supervisor because communication was easier. Those who preferred a White supervisor mentioned fair play and leadership as reasons for their choice.

Supervisors were approached when workers encountered pay problems, but supervisors did not play an important role in explaining deductions made from employees' pay.

### 5.4 THE FUNCTION OF THE BLACK FIRST-LINE SUPERVISOR

Planning was not seen as a function of the supervisor, but they were expected to organise the workers and machinery in their sections, and directing was therefore a very important function of the supervisors. The supervisors met most of the expectations concerning directing and communication held by management and workers. Factors such as language difficulties, inter-ethnic group relations and age differences did not seem to block the effective performance of the supervisor.

Most supervisors had a control function. Disciplinary control was adequate when trouble arose among the workers. Where factories had no special quality control section, this form of control was usually seen as part of the control function of the supervisor.

Managers and supervisors saw training of new workers as an important function of supervisors, but the workers to a large degree indicated that they had been trained by experienced workers, rather than by supervisors.

#### 5.5 SELECTION AND TRAINING OF BLACK FIRST-LINE SUPERVISORS

Only a few managers indicated that proper selection techniques were employed in the selection of supervisors. Usually supervisors were selected from experienced operators because of their proven technical skill in operating the machines used in the section. Just over half of the supervisors received no special training as supervisors.

#### 5.6 CONCLUDING REMARKS

The function and aim of management in a private undertaking is to make a profit. This does not mean that such an organisation has no other obligation. Without the profit, however, there would be no organisation. The role descriptions and the functions of all personnel are directed towards that main aim of the organisation, and the function and role of the first-line supervisor should be judged against this aim. One can therefore understand that management ranks the achievement of high levels of production as the main function of the first-line supervisor. The first-line supervisor must achieve this through the efforts of others and in this study management appreciated this fact, because as, when ranking the important qualities of the supervisor, leadership and the ability to get along with people were ranked first and second.

To ensure that the supervisor can be an effective leader of his group, management must endeavour to create a suitable environment - physical, organisational and psychological - in which it will be possible for the supervisor to do an effective job.

Although the overall picture received from the research was reasonably favourable, certain basics were still being disregarded or received insufficient attention.

The research showed that the scientific selection of supervisors received very little attention. Most of them were selected because of skills shown at operator level without a thought being given to leadership qualities. If the correct people could be selected, De Villiers' suggestion (1974: 54) to decentralize management can be taken more seriously. Black

first-line supervisors could then form a much more integral part of management.

The lines of authority should be more clearly drawn. The supervisory climate is difficult for a supervisor if he is not regarded as such by the people in his team. The supervisor should be kept well informed about pay deductions and other service conditions. As these service conditions usually have a rational basis, the reasons should also be explained. The status and prestige of the first-line supervisor would be enhanced in this way, but it could also pay dividends in a better relationship between top management and workers by diminishing the chances of misunderstandings.

In any group where there is a division of labour the roles to be played can be divided into the instrumental and the expressive ones. From management's point of view the first-line supervisor's role is instrumental in that he has to see that the work is done. If the workers and supervisor are, however, viewed as a group with the supervisor as group leader, it has been shown by other research that the instrumental role is better served by an employee-centred type of supervisor. It must be remembered that the quota system, the speed of the assembly line and other measures to achieve production do put a strain on the workers. The only person with whom a discussion of any significance on the shopfloor can be held, is the first-line supervisor.

What has been said shows that the first-line supervisor must be trained because his job entails more than just skill in operating machines. Training, however, costs money, and to keep the wastage in this regard as low as possible, proper selection procedures are a must.



HOOFSTUK 6  
SAMEVATTING EN GEVOLGTREKKINGS

6.1 INLEIDING

Drie groepe respondente is met behulp van drie verskillende vraelyste (bylae 1, 2 en 3) ondervra oor die rol, funksie en opleiding van Swart eerstelyntoesighouers in ses nywerheidstipes. Die drie groepe het bestaan uit:

- (i) 24 bestuurders
- (ii) 245 Swart toesighouers en
- (iii) 251 Swart werkers.

Die nywerhede is in drie nywerheidsgebiede geleë: Brits en Rosslyn in die grensgebiede, en Babelegi in Bophuthatswana - almal naby Pretoria. Die Swart toesighouers en werkers was hoofsaaklik in Bophuthatswana in die woongebiede Brits Old Location, Mothuthung, Mabopane, Ga-Rankuwa en Temba woonagtig. Etlike toesighouers was in woongebiede in Pretoria woonagtig, naamlik in Atteridgeville en Mamelodi.

Die volgende nywerhede is ingesluit:

Tekstielnywerheid - 4 fabriekes  
Houtnywerheid - 4 fabriekes  
Mineraal- (nie-metaal) nywerheid - 3 fabriekes  
Metaalproduktenywerheid - 5 fabriekes  
Elektriese apparaatnywerheid - 4 fabriekes  
Motors - en onderdelenywerheid - 4 fabriekes

Die onderhoude met die bestuurders en toesighouers het gedurende April en Mei 1976 plaasgevind, en dié met Swart werkers tussen Junie en Augustus 1976 - 'n tyd toe onrus in die woongebiede voorgekom het. Die onderhoude met bestuurders en toesighouers is deur die navorsers en personeelle van die IMN gevoer, terwyl onderhoude met werkers deur Swart onderwysers afgehandel is na hulle met die vraelys vertrouwd gemaak is.

6.2 BESKRYWING VAN DIE OPNAMEGROEP

Die verlangde inligting oor bestuur is deur 19 Blanke bestuurders of personeelbestuurders, 2 Swart bestuurders en 3 Swart personeelklerke verskaf.

Die 245 Swart toesighouers was hoofsaaklik mans (90%) en Tswana- of Sothosprekend. Die meerderheid (68%) toesighouers

het st. 6 geslaag, of het 'n hoër opleidingsvlak bereik; hul mediaanouderdom was 33,2 jaar en hul mediaanloon R39,8 per week.

Die Swart werkers was ook hoofsaaklik mans (70%) en 60 persent het ðf Tswana ðf Sotho gepraat. Hul mediaanouderdom was 26,7 jaar en hulle het 'n mediaanloon van R21,10 per week verdien.

### 6.3 DIE ROL VAN DIE SWART EERSTELYNTOESIGHOUER

Die posisie van die eerstelyntoesighouer is nie duidelik omlin nie. Hoewel die titel 'Toesighouer' die gewildste was, was verouderde titels soos 'Boss-Boy' of 'Indoena' ook nog in gebruik.

Die verwagtinge wat die bestuur vir die rol van toesighouer gekoester het, het nie betekenisvol verskil van die rol wat toesighouers gespeel het nie. In die algemeen is die indruk geskep dat die toesighouers meer werkgesentreerd as werknemergesentreerd was. Die meeste toesighouers het nie met die werkers vriende gemaak nie, maar die werkers het nie omgee onder hul toesighouers te werk nie. Die meeste werkers het gewoonlik 'n Swart toesighouer bo 'n Blanke toesighouer verkies, aangesien kommunikasie met eersgenoemde makliker was. Dié wat 'n Blanke toesighouer verkies het, het onpartydigheid en leierskap as die redes vir hul keuse aangedui.

Toesighouers is genader wanneer werkers betaalprobleme teengekom het, maar toesighouers het nie 'n belangrike rol in die verduideliking van loonaftrekkings gespeel nie.

### 6.4 DIE FUNKSIE VAN DIE SWART EERSTELYNTOESIGHOUER

Bepanning was nie as 'n funksie van die toesighouer beskou nie, maar daar is van hul verwag om die masjinerie en werkers in hul afdelings te organiseer en leiding was derhalwe 'n baie belangrike funksie van die toesighouers. Die toesighouers het voldoen aan die meeste van die verwagtinge rakende leiding en kommunikasie wat deur die bestuur en werkers aan hulle gestel is. Faktore soos taalprobleme, interetniese groepeerhoudinge en ouderdomsverskille het blykbaar nie 'n nadelige uitwerking op die werkverrigting van toesighouers gehad nie.

Die meeste toesighouers het 'n beheerende funksie gehad. Dissiplinêre beheer was voldoende wanneer moeilikheid onder die werkers ontstaan het. Waar fabrieke geen spesiale gehaltebeheer=afdeling gehad het nie, is die vorm van beheer gewoonlik beskou as deel van die beheerfunksie van die toesighouer.

Bestuurders en toesighouers het die opleiding van nuwe werkers as 'n belangrike funksie van die toesighouer beskou, maar die werkers het in groot mate aangedui dat hul deur ervare werkers opgelei is en nie soseer deur die toesighouers nie.

#### 6.5 KEURING EN OPLEIDING VAN SWART EERSTELYNTOESIGHOUERS

Slegs 'n paar bestuurders het aangedui dat behoorlike keuringstegnieke in die selektering van toesighouers gebruik is. Toesighouers is gewoonlik uit ervare operateurs gekies, aangesien hul reeds bewys gelewer het van hul tegniese vaardigheid in die hantering van die masjinerie wat in die seksie gebruik word. Net meer as die helfte van die toesighouers het geen spesiale opleiding as toesighouers ontvang nie.

#### 6.6 SLOTOPMERKINGS

Die funksie en doel van bestuur in 'n private onderneming is om wins te maak. Dit beteken nie dat so 'n organisasie geen ander verpligting het nie. Sonder die wins sou daar egter geen organisasie wees nie. Die rolbeskrywings en die funksies van alle personele is gerig op die hoofdoel van die organisasie, en die funksie en rol van die eerstelyntoesighouer moet aan hierdie doel beoordeel word. Dit is dus te verstaan dat die bestuur die bereiking van hoë produksievlakke as die vernaamste funksie van die eerstelyntoesighouer ag. Hy moet dit bereik deur die pogings van andere, en in die studie was die bestuur bewus van die feit, aangesien in 'n rangskikking van belangrike eienskappe van die toesighouer, leierskap en die vermoë om met mense klaar te kom, eerste en tweede geplaas is.

Om te verseker dat die toesighouer 'n doeltreffende leier van sy groep kan wees, moet die bestuur probeer om 'n geskikte omgewing te skep - fisies, organisatories en sielkundig - waarin die toesighouer in staat sal wees om sy werk doeltreffend te verrig.

Hoewel die geheelindruk wat uit die navorsing ontvang is, taamlik gunstig is, is sekere basiese aspekte nog verontagsaam, of het dit onvoldoende aandag gekry.

Die navorsing het getoon dat wetenskaplike keuring van toesighouers baie min aandag geniet het. Die meeste van hulle is gekeur op grond van hul vaardigheid as operateurs, sonder enige aandag aan hul leierskaphoedanighede. Indien die regte mense gekies word, kan De Villiers (1974: 54) se voorstel om bestuur te desentraliseer, in 'n ernstiger lig beskou word. Swart eerstelyntoesighouers sou dan 'n meer integrerende deel van bestuur kon uitmaak.

Gesagslyne behoort baie duideliker afgebaken te word. Die toesighoudende klimaat is moeilik vir hom indien die toesighouer nie deur die mense in sy span as sodanig beskou word nie. Die toesighouer moet goed ingelig wees aangaande loonaftrekkings en ander diensvoorwaardes. Aangesien hierdie diensvoorwaardes gewoonlik 'n rasionele grondslag het, moet die redes ook verduidelik word. Langs dié weg kan die status en aansien van die eerstelyntoesighouer nie net verhoog word nie, maar hoër diwidende kan verwag word as gevolg van 'n beter verhouding tussen topbestuur en werkers deur die uitskakeling van moontlike misverstande.

In enige groep waar daar werksverdeling is, kan die rolle wat gespeel moet word, in instrumentele en ekspressiewe rolle ingedeel word. Uit 'n bestuursoogpunt gesien, is die eerstelyntoesighouer se rol instrumenteel in die opsig dat hy moet toesien dat die werk gedoen word. Indien die werkers en die toesighouer egter as groep beskou word, met die toesighouer as groepleier, het ander navorsing getoon dat die instrumentele rol meer deur 'n werknemergesentreerde tipe toesighouer gebaat word. Daar moet ook onthou word dat die kwotastelsel, die spoed van die monterbaan, en ander maatreëls wat aangewend word om produksie te verhoog, spanning by die werkers veroorsaak. Die enigste persoon met wie 'n bespreking van enige betekenis in die werkwinkel kan gevoer word, is die eerstelyntoesighouer.

Wat tot dusver gesê is, toon dat die eerstelyntoesighouer opgelei moet word, aangesien sy taak meer behels as blote vaardigheid in die hantering van masjinerie. Opleiding kos egter geld en om verkwisting in die opsig so laag moontlik te hou, is behoorlike keuringprosedures onontbeerlik.

APPENDIX 1

HUMAN SCIENCES RESEARCH COUNCIL  
INSTITUTE FOR MANPOWER RESEARCH

THE ROLE, FUNCTION AND TRAINING OF FIRST-LINE SUPERVISORS IN  
INDUSTRY

LIST OF QUESTIONS : PERSONNEL MANAGERS

- 1 Area in which industry is situated  
Number of employees?
- 2 (a) What industry are you in? (e.g. metal)  
(b) What sections are there (e.g. body shop)  
(c) What products are made in each section? (e.g. frames)
- 3 (a) Job description of second-line supervisors (e.g. foreman)  
(b) Is he White or Black?  
(c) How many first-line supervisors does he supervise?
- 4 (a) Job description of first-line supervisor (e.g. team leader)  
(b) How many employed?  
(c) What are their normal qualifications?
- 5 Are the teams under supervision of the first-line supervisors too large?  
Why do you say so?
- 6 How does the payment of first-line supervisors differ from that of the workers under their supervision?
- 7 Who explains what deductions are to be made from wages to the employees?
- 8 Do you normally expect first-line supervisors to do production work? (e.g. direct labour)
- 9 How do you select first-line supervisors?
- 10 What training is provided for potential first-line supervisors?
- 11 (a) Who discharges an employee?  
(b) What role does the first-line supervisor play in these actions?

- 12 What is your experience with trouble in the work teams?  
 (a) Does this occur often?  
 (b) What are the causes?
- 13 Is the first-line supervisor a member of the team or does he not make friends with them or do some make friends and others stay aloof?
- 14 What role does he play in the allocation of work in his team?
- 15 Do you think first-line supervisors find their job easy?  
 Why do you say so?
- 16 What can be done to help them solve the problems they encounter?
- 17 Who does the work of the first-line supervisor when he is absent?
- 18 Do you think that the first-line supervisors are capable of doing the work of the second-line supervisors?  
 Why do you say so?
- 19 Is there sometimes inter-ethnic conflict between first-line supervisors and line workers?
- 20 Place the following tasks of the first line-supervisor in rank order of importance (for the firm)
- quality control
  - Achievement of production
  - Training of new workers
  - Planning production
  - Representation of workers
- 21 Place the following qualities of first-line supervisors in rank order
- Fair judgement
  - Technical skill
  - Leadership
  - Ability to get along with people
  - Educational level
- 22 What are the rules and regulations in your factory that are applicable when a person turns up late for work?

- 23 What are the rules and regulations in your factory that are applicable when a person is absent?
- 24 Should a first-line supervisor make friends with people in his team?  
Why do you say so?
- 25 How important is it for a first-line supervisor to be able to "spot talent" among the workers?
- 26 What is done with a first-line supervisor who does not meet the expectations of his role? (e.g. comes late, is absent frequently, does not follow instructions).
- 27 To what extent is the first-line supervisor informed about the company personnel policy?

APPENDIX 2

HUMAN SCIENCES RESEARCH COUNCIL  
INSTITUTE FOR MANPOWER RESEARCH

THE ROLE, FUNCTION AND TRAINING OF FIRST-LINE SUPERVISORS IN  
INDUSTRY

LIST OF QUESTIONS : BLACK FIRST-LINE SUPERVISORS

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Area where industry is situated

- |   |                             |   |                                     |   |  |
|---|-----------------------------|---|-------------------------------------|---|--|
| 1 | What is your home language? | 2 | What other languages can you speak? | 3 | What language do you use in your team? |
|---|-----------------------------|---|-------------------------------------|---|--|
- Afrikaans  
English  
Ndebele-Pedi  
Shangana-Tsonga  
Tswana-Sotro  
Venda  
Xhosa  
Zulu  
Other
- 4 How old are you?
- 5 What is the highest school standard that you have passed?
- 6 Name any other qualifications, (e.g. teaching diploma, completed apprenticeship)
- 7 What is your take-home pay per week?
- 8 Are the deductions that are made from your pay explained to you in detail?  
Do you understand them?  
Explain the deductions
- 9 (a) What is the name of the position of your immediate boss? (e.g. foreman, section manager)  
(b) Is he White or Black  
(c) What is your position called? (e.g. team leader, boss boy)



- (d) What are the people under your supervision called?  
(e.g. grinder, welder, fitter)
  - (e) How many people work under your supervision?
  - (f) How long have you been working as mentioned above in  
(c)
- 10 What work did you do immediately before you were appointed in your present position?
- 11 Did you work in the same section before you became a supervisor?

#### THE NATURE OF THE WORK

- 12 (a) What type of factory do you work in?  
(b) What type of product is made in your section?  
(c) What type of products do you and your team make?
- 13 Please describe the different kinds of work done by your team briefly
- 14 Can everybody in the team do all the kinds of work?
- 15 Can you do all the kinds of work  
better  
just as well  
not as well as anyone else in your team?  
Why do you say so?
- 16 Do the workers expect the supervisor to be able to do all the kinds of work better than anyone of them?  
Why do you say so?
- 17 Have you got to do a certain part of the work yourself?
- 18 Do you do paperwork?
- 19 If 'Yes', what kind of paperwork?
- 20 How much time do you spend on paperwork per week?
- 21 Were you by any means specially trained for your job as supervisor?

- 22 (a) What sort of training?  
(b) How long did it take? weeks days  
(c) By whom was it done?

#### THE ROLE OF THE FIRST-LINE SUPERVISOR

- 23 Do you think your boss expects your team  
(a) to work too hard?  
(b) to work too hard sometimes?  
(c) to work just enough?
- 24 Is it sometimes necessary to take steps to make your team work harder?
- 25 If 'Yes' (a) Why is it necessary?  
(b) How do you do it?  
(c) How do the workers take it?
- 26 What do you do if a person in your team argues with you about the work?
- 27 What do you do if two workers get into a serious argument?  
Why do you do this?
- 28 What is the first thing you do when a new worker joins your team before you show him the work?
- 29 How does a new man in your team learn his job?
- 30 Is there time for joking and talking in your team while they work?  
If 'No', do you think the workers are satisfied not to talk and joke a bit?  
Why do you say so?
- 31 Do you talk to your group about football, politics, women and other things while they are working?  
If 'No', why not?
- 32 What will your boss do if he sees someone in your group joking or talking?
- 33 Do you talk to your group about football, politics, women and other things during teabreak or lunch?  
If 'No', why not?

- 34 If a man has trouble at home and asks for leave, do you give permission, or must you ask the boss?
- 35 If you must ask the boss does he ask for your opinion?
- 36 If someone in your team is absent, what do you do to make sure that the work continues?
- 37 If a worker works better than most of the other workers on your team, what do you do? Why?
- 38 Who checks the quality of your team's work?
- 39 If a machine needs adjusting, what do you do?
- 40 Is supervision an easy job?  
Why do you say so?
- 41 What are the rules and regulations in your factory that tell you what to do if a person turns up late for work?  
Do you agree with these rules?  
Why do you say so?
- 42 What are the rules and regulations that tell you what to do when a person is absent?  
Do you agree with these rules?  
Why do you say so?
- 43 Should a supervisor make friends with people in his team?  
Why do you say so?
- 44 How long have you been working under your present immediate boss (foreman)?
- 45 What are the things about your immediate boss which you like?
- 46 What are the things about your immediate boss which you dislike?
- 47 Do you think you can do the job of your immediate boss?  
Why do you say so?
- 48 Are there members in your team who belong to a different ethnic group than you?

If 'Yes', do you get along well with them?

Why do you say so?

49 Are there members in your team who are older than you?

If 'Yes', do you experience any difficulties with them?

Why do you say so?

50 Who does your job when you are absent?

51 Does your immediate boss give instructions to you only  
or does he give instructions to the workers directly  
or does he sometimes give the instructions to you and  
sometimes to the workers directly?

Do you approve of his way of giving instructions?

Why?

52 Sex:

Male

Female

53 Are you local or imported?

APPENDIX 3  
HUMAN SCIENCES RESEARCH COUNCIL  
INSTITUTE FOR MANPOWER RESEARCH

THE ROLE, FUNCTION AND TRAINING OF FIRST-LINE SUPERVISORS IN  
INDUSTRY

LIST OF QUESTIONS : BLACK WORKERS

BIOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Area where industry is situated

Fieldworker's number

Number of questionnaire

- 1 What type of factory do you work in?
- 2 What kind of work do you do?
- 3 What is your home language?      What other languages can you speak?      What language is used by your supervisor?  
  
Afrikaans  
English  
Ndebele-Pedi  
Shangana-Tsonga  
Tswana-Sotho  
Venda  
Xhosa  
Zulu  
Other
- 4 Do you understand the language in which your instructions are given to you?  
  
Very well, well, reasonably well, not so well
- 5 How old are you?
- 6 What is the highest school standard that you have passed?
- 7 What is your take-home pay per week?  
or your hourly wage?

- 8 Are the deductions that are made from your pay explained to you?  
Do you understand the explanations?  
Explain the deductions?
- 9 What is the name of the position of your supervisor?  
(e.g. team leader, boss boy, induna, foreman)  
  
(Use this name in the rest of questionnaire)  
Is he Black or White or Coloured?  
Is he Male or Female?
- 10 What is the name of the position of his immediate boss?  
(e.g. foreman, section manager, chief induna)  
  
Is he Black or White?
- 11 Do you think that your supervisor (team leader) is better qualified to be in that position than you are?  
  
Why do you say so?
- 12 Are you able to do his work?  
  
Why do you say so?
- 13 Do you prefer working under a White or Black supervisor?
- 14 What are your reasons?
- 15 Please describe the different kinds of work done by your team
- 16 Can you do all the kinds of work?  
Yes, No, We all do the same work
- 17 How many people work with you in the team?
- 18 Can the supervisor do all the kinds of work better than the team members? just as well as the team members, not as well as the team members?
- 19 Has the supervisor got to do a certain part of the work or does he only supervise?
- 20 What does the supervisor do to people in the team who loaf?
- 21 Does the supervisor have special "chums" in the team?  
  
Why do you say so?

- 22 Does the supervisor pick on some members of your team?  
Explain
- 23 Is it possible that you could be promoted to supervisor?  
Explain
- 24 Do you think the supervisor expects you  
to work too hard  
sometimes too hard  
just enough?
- 25 What does the supervisor do to make you work harder when  
a rush job has to be done?
- 26 What does the supervisor do about a man who does his work  
very well?
- 27 What happens when you turn up late for work?  
Are you satisfied with the procedure?
- 28 What happens when you are absent from work?  
Are you satisfied with the procedure?
- 29 If you have trouble at home (e.g. illness of a family  
member, death) to whom do you go with your problem?  
How are you treated then?
- 30 If you are unhappy about your pay, to whom do you go?
- 31 What do you do if your supervisor gives you instructions  
that you do not like?
- 32 What does he do if you disobey?
- 33 What does he do if two workers get into a serious argument?
- 34 What did the supervisor do with you when you joined the  
team, before he showed you the work?
- 35 How were you taught the job you are doing now?
- 36 Do you have time for jokes and talking while you work?  
If 'Yes', what does the supervisor do if he sees you  
joking or talking while you work?

- 37 Do you like working under your supervisor?  
Please explain
- 38 Does the supervisor talk to the team members about foot=ball, parties and other things during work-time?  
Please explain
- 39 Do you think it is an easy job to be a supervisor?  
Why do you say so?
- 40 Does your supervisor belong to a different ethnic group?  
If 'Yes', do you think that this leads to your dis=advantage?  
Why do you say so?
- 41 Do you receive instructions  
(a) only from your supervisor  
(b) sometimes from the supervisor and sometimes from somebody in a higher position  
(c) only from a higher position?
- 42 Do you approve of the way you receive your instructions?  
Why do you say so?
- 43 Sex: Male, Female



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