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WOMEN'S WORK IN THE INFORMAL SECTOR:
A ZAMBIAN CASE STUDY

by

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Abstract: This article examines women's occupational careers and socioeconomic adjustment in Lusaka, Zambia, an area marked by high rates of urban migration and restricted opportunities for formal employment among women. The exclusion of women by virtue of education and opportunity from the urban wage labor force has resulted in the creation of alternative occupational options in the informal sector, including self-employment as petty traders, craft producers, and small entrepreneurs. Entrepreneurial activities initiated by unemployed squatter women in the city are usually intended to fulfill economic needs on a temporary basis and reflect a pattern of commercialization of "traditional" skills. An in-depth analysis of these women's socioeconomic adaptations in the Zambian case suggests an important conceptual link between urban and rural development processes and emphasizes the necessity for policy planning that takes into account the short-term entrepreneurial options that migrant women generate in the urban context.

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Women's Migration and Employment Patterns in Zambia

From the mid-1920s to the present, copper production has dominated Zambia's economy and has accounted for much of the urban migration outside of Lusaka. The industrial "pull" that characterized urban migration in Zambia is much more typical of the Copperbelt than it is of Lusaka. It is difficult to make a clear-cut argument about the psychological motivations for labor migration. The colonial economy is, nevertheless, an obvious factor producing a need for cash exchanges in the rural sector. The earliest patterns of labor migration to the Copperbelt involved temporary contract migration (cf. Du Toit and Safa, 1975:50-53). These migrants were hired by mines and other industrial concerns for periods of up to two years. They came to the towns and cities alone and lived in dormitory-like buildings provided by the mining companies.

By the late 1950s, there were an estimated 50,000 African migrants living in Ndola, one of the major Copperbelt cities (Epstein, 1961:30). At the time of Epstein's survey, some of these migrants had been residing in Ndola for fifteen or more years, but most had come to town within the previous five years on mining concession and other labor contracts. They included not only Northern Rhodesian nationals, but also migrants from the neighboring colonies who intended to return to their village homes after their contracts expired. These permanent squatters and stabilized migrants were products of the late colonial period.

A preponderance of adult males living in culturally rootless but highly supervised urban settings is characteristic of the period from World War I to the 1960s in Zambia, despite the rising migration of entire families and lone females in the decades preceding independence. Contract migrants usually sent cash back to their villages and oriented their lives toward the kin who stayed at home. Meanwhile, the women who remained in the rural areas assumed full responsibilities for agricultural production and marketing (although the fruits of their labor were often turned over to the men). Women constituted an important category of potential migrants. In his classic study of Xhosa migration in South Africa, Philip Mayer (1971: 210-223) asserts that education and attitudes toward external culture contact modified rural displacement patterns.³ Mayer concludes that the preference for male migration among the more conservative Xhosa or "Reds" was both culturally and economically motivated. Those "progressive" Xhosa who could bring their families to town did so. The fact remains, however, that male migration was the norm in southern Africa (cf. Magubane, 1975:230-235). It was sustained by both indigenous cultural influences and external economic and industrial forces.

The urban experience for many of Lusaka's men began with employment elsewhere, particularly in the Copperbelt towns and cities. By the mid-1950s, two-fifths of the male population of the Copperbelt had at least ten years of urban living experience, and nearly two-fifths had brought their wives to the city (Little, 1973:16). These migrant populations had thus

become stabilized in the city and had established a record of urban living experience. The income of the Zambian urban male was more than twice that of his rural counterpart in the 1950s and was at least seven times that of his rural counterpart by 1964 (Heisler, 1971). This situation has led Kenneth Little (1973:17-28) and other students of urban change in Africa to conclude that "the men followed the money and the women followed the men."

Although Little's hypothesis appears to be sustained by demographic movements from village to city in Zambia, it does not take into account the full range of women's incentives to migrate or the distinctive characteristics of their economic adaptations to the city. In addition to the women who migrated with spouses, many came to town initially as widows and divorcees who could no longer function well in the village context. They migrated to the city to earn a living just as the men had. In fact, the hidden incentives for female migration appear to have had a significant impact throughout southern Africa after World War I. This pattern is particularly evident in South Africa where a 500 percent increase in the (indigenous) African female population was documented for Johannesburg between 1921 and 1951 (Koornof, 1953:29).

A similar pattern is characteristic of Lusaka where the current population is approximately 450,000. Women migrating to the city now outnumber male migrants. Unlike South Africa's women migrants who swelled the ranks of domestic service, Zambian women are largely excluded from domestic work in preference to older men. The official statistics on Zambian male and female workers suffer from many ambiguities. The most recent data available are drawn from 1969 and 1970 census materials that desperately need further updating. Only those individuals employed in enterprises and concerns registered with the Labor Exchange are included with no clear allowances made for informal sector employment. The 1969 Labor Exchange figures listed 588,597 men in Zambia's urban labor force. This figure was projected to drop to 534,200 by 1979 (Todd and Shaw, 1979:22), due in part to the capricious dependence of the Zambian economy on fluctuating export prices for copper. Labor force projections from Lusaka's Central Statistical Office (1969-1984) record 20 percent of Zambia's population working within the informal sector, a total of approximately 135,000 people (Todd and Shaw, 1979:22). Of these individuals, approximately half are women.⁴ Table 1 presents a breakdown by sex of the nationwide population registered as working and seeking employment through the various Labor Exchange office in Zambia's major urban areas and provincial capitals.

Table 1. The Zambian Population Working in the Formal Sector and Seeking Work through the Labor Exchange.

Total Adult Population	Working (Formal) Sector	Seeking Work	Registered at Employment College	Found Work at Employment College
Men 1,037,202	588,597	293,509	48,893	19,011
Women 1,121,122	141,297	178,419	2,541	659

Source: Population Census, 1969, Annual Report of Department of Labor, 1969-1975.

According to the 1969 Zambian Labor Exchange figures, males placed in both skilled and unskilled jobs in Lusaka outnumbered females by a ratio of 29:1. Women looking for unskilled and semiskilled jobs were often listed as "housewives" and thereby were relegated to a secondary position in their competition for employment. The barriers to married women's employment in the formal sector stem from both a colonial legacy of limitation and cultural barriers against female job seeking outside of the home in the urban context.

The increase of younger women in Zambian urban areas does not exclusively reflect the patterns of familial migration described above. It has been argued that single young women migrate to African cities in search of the vicarious experience of "bright lights" and a fast paced urban lifestyle (Little, 1973:22-25). This assumption is too broad to take into account the educational and generational differences between single Zambian women migrating to the city during the pre- and post-independence eras. Nevertheless, it does suggest that there are at least four categories of women migrants worthy of consideration in the Zambian context: 1) the older divorced and widowed women with little formal education; 2) the younger single women with some primary school training; 3) the women with mixed training and skills who accompanied their husbands; and 4) the town-born daughters of first generation migrants. At some point during their careers in the city, women from each of these categories have needed to work. They have all, however, been equally cut off from the urban wage labor force.⁵

Town-born women who are able to obtain some secondary education and specialized training hold different employment aspirations. These women are able to enter formal sector jobs in clerical, secretarial, and lower level management positions in increasing numbers. As a result, they are able to develop independent lifestyles and maintain moderately high standards of living. Yet, these subelite women are still in a relatively precarious socioeconomic situation.

Transitional and Subelite Women in Urban Zambia

Before examining the option of self-employment for Zambian urban women, it is necessary to assess the cultural and historical factors that influence their expectations about city life. The early generations of migrant women learned about modern urban life through rural mission schools, hospitals, and government centers prior to migration.⁶ These women had little schooling, on the average less than three years, and if they did work, they were pushed into marginal trades in the informal sector. Historically speaking, it is important to note that young women in this transitional category have continued to migrate to town while a new group of urban-born women has appeared with higher occupational expectations. Thus, the "generational" differences between the transitional migrants and the urban-born women persist synchronically. The data on women in Lusaka are drawn from observations and interviews with women working in four of Lusaka's townships: Marrapodi, Mandevu, Chawama, and Mtendele. My re-

search was conducted in 78 households within Marrapodi township. I have also drawn upon Karen Hansen's 1971 study of 90 working women in Mtendele township and Catherine Mwanamwabwa's 1977 survey of 30 women in Chawama township. These women are primarily first-generation migrants to Lusaka.

Although many of the early transitional migrants lacked education, they perceived the need of modern sector educational advantages for their children (Schuster, 1979:30; Jules-Rosette, 1981:64). Nevertheless, there are important cultural differences between the transitional migrants and the town-born women. Ilsa Schuster (1979:31) asserts: "(B)y and large, women of the transitional generation were married at the onset of puberty and instructed by female elders in the proper role of a traditional African wife. It was later that they adapted to the new elite or subelite status of their husbands." In many cases, however, these transitional women, in particular the women of Lusaka's squatter shantytowns, were locked into conservative and impoverished lifestyles in the city. They did not acquire opportunities to become upwardly mobile and were forced to adapt to the city with a limited set of cultural and economic resources. Women in this category experienced far less physical mobility and direct exposure to the organizational and occupational structure of the city than men. Both their opportunities and aspirations for formal employment remain relatively low; the degree and quality of their experience with urban life are limited.

In a longitudinal study of subelite women, Schuster (1979:68-70) concludes that even within this privileged and educated group, obtaining and keeping a job in the formal sector proves to be difficult. Schuster's in-depth case histories of 48 women in formal sector jobs demonstrate that only a small number remain in the positions where they started for more than two years.⁷ Many of these women leave their sponsoring companies within a few weeks after completing training programs to look for more lucrative opportunities. Often, however, this job switching does not actually lead to advancement but instead leads to a pattern of lateral employment transiency that mirrors the employment patterns of unskilled informal sector workers. Table 2 presents an overview of available data concerning women's employment in Zambia including the subelite professions.

Table 2. General Occupations Taken up by Women from the Employment Exchange Services between 1963-1973.*

Occupational Groups	1963	1964	1965	1966	1967	1968	1969	1970	1971	1972	1973
Professional	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	1
Managerial, Administrative	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
Clerical	7	13	13	14	96	168	155	266	--	408	453
Sales	--	--	43	39	78	62	74	55	--	122	128
Services	--	--	615	658	664	610	430	232	--	398	466
Agricultural	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	20	2
Productional	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	53	78
Total Vacancies Filled by Women	7	13	671	741	838	840	659	553	--	1001	1128
Total Women Registered	18	62	1763	1592	1465	2076	2541	2896	--	3419	3454

*NOTE: Figures for 1971 not available.

Although the uneducated women struggling for urban survival ostensibly live under quite different conditions than the subelite professionals, the line between these two categories is quite thin. The informal sector absorbs both school leavers and jobless graduates of secondary and technical schools. The transient subelite "drifter" may well at some point in her occupational career engage in informal sector employment. In a cognitive sense, her situation is remote from that of the small marketeer, but often not in real economic terms. Official statistics indicate that Zambian urban women in all categories are overwhelmingly under-employed. Similarly, ethnographic data suggest that the employment experiences of urban Zambian women of all strata reflect transiency, instability, and marginal access to the benefits of urban life.

Women in Lusaka's Informal Sector

For women, petty trading is the major source of informal sector income. Such trading ranges from small-scale vegetable vending and fishmongering to more lucrative home brewing and sale of beer and other illicitly produced alcoholic beverages. The female migrant with little formal education has a peculiar form of autonomy. In many ways, the woman who enters petty trading is unprepared for the complexities of urban life. Yet, she is not the incumbent of a rigidly fixed social status or a position in enterprise. Because she is freed from some of the familial and kinship expectations of village life, she can experiment with innovative survival strategies in a restricted economic niche. Moreover, she has an opportunity to creatively forge new social networks in order to maintain her economic situation. However, she loses the stability of a rural subsistence income.

Zambian women in the petty trades have difficulty obtaining sales licenses. These licenses are limited in number, and, until the late 1970s when women entered the trade more actively, official preference was given to male household heads who applied for marketeer's clearance. Although some vegetable vendors set up mats in front of neighborhood markets, even in the smaller townships of Lusaka, these market sales are regulated and require a health check. Consequently, those women who are squeezed out of the local markets resort to selling goods from their homes. The illegal and clandestine nature of these sales means that they must be intermittent. This situation limits both the regular clientele of the home traders and the profits that they can realize from sales. Home stalls are periodically raided by the police and their owners arrested and fined. Although I do not have data on arrest rates, the frequency of enforcement is high enough to discourage women in unauthorized trading from working on a sustained basis throughout the year. Thus, the situation of the home traders in Lusaka contrasts markedly with that of the more successful West African market women (cf. Faladé, 1971:217-229; Lewis, 1976:135-156).

Official market sales and fishmongering are far less risky and more rewarding activities than the home trades.⁸ Fishmongering requires the

preparation of the commodity through smoking or drying and is more financially lucrative than vegetable sales. However, as already stated, men dominate official trading. Women selling goods from their homes use their minimal profits for the purchase of more vegetables and for their immediate subsistence needs. Trade expansion is difficult from this niche. It is culturally acceptable for married women working from their homes to give profits over to their husbands. This expectation further restricts the expansion of their enterprises. As a result, with the exception of the more prosperous beer traders, married women in the home trades frequently abandon selling after a few months because of the frustration and low returns.

Women selling from home mark up produce prices to make a profit and are, therefore, commonly accused of overcharging. This situation is generally typical of township marketeers and grocers. Some women sell produce from their own kitchen gardens, but this type of production tends to be of little more than subsistence value. The following case study illustrates this point (Mwanamwabwa, 1977:26):

Clara Phiri

Clara Phiri lives in Chawama, a squatter area, and sells vegetables at the market. To obtain her daily supply, Clara starts off her journey at about 5 A.M., walking a ten mile distance to the airport junction on Great East Road, a delivery point for the growers who come from adjoining farm areas. There is a stiff competition between Clara and other buyers for reasonable prices and a variety of produce. When the appropriate vegetable produce has been purchased, Clara walks back for another ten miles to Chawama where she rearranges the product for retail sale in the market. There is no system of costing involved except that her experience in the urban market trade determines the price at which she sells her produce. In addition, she considers purchase price and seasonality.

Once at the market, Clara competes with other marketeers to sell her produce, which is very similar to that offered for sale by others. With limited demand from consumers in the area due to their income, Clara may end the day with half of her perishable produce unsold and without proper storage facilities or means of preservation. There is a great loss in economic and opportunity costs through inappropriate storage, method, and total activity time.

Other women who sell vegetables but do not belong to an organized market system like Clara are classified as unlicensed street vendors. They also repackage their produce and sell it at selected strategic points such as

near a shopping area. Some of these street sellers are firmly established but are still subjected to continuous police raids which result in frequent confiscation of their produce. Criticisms of alleged overcharging because of the unspecified weights of their produce and also the unhygienic conditions under which some of the produce is sold are made by the consuming public.

Clara's case emphasizes that even women with official stalls move into home and street vending to sell their surplus produce. These women continue to be the victims of police clean-up programs once they are licensed. Because some of the goods they sell are left over from their day's surplus or the surplus of other city vendors, their vegetables are of inferior quality and are sold to squatters at higher prices than are paid by the more wealthy city dwellers.

Home trade in vegetables is often combined with the sale of other commodities such as dried fish and cooking oil. These ingredients are used in preparing the staple diet of township dwellers, and there is always a need for purchasing one or more such items after regular marketing hours. It also is not uncommon to find charcoal and vegetable trading together. At-home charcoal trading, however, requires a relatively large capital outlay with the promise of improved profits, but it is seen as a step up from vegetable vending.

Unlike home vegetable vending, the sale of homemade arts and crafts including embroidery, stitchery, crocheted articles, and ceramic work is not subject to strict legal monitoring, despite a recent prohibition against street vending in Lusaka.⁹ The sale of craft items can be conducted on a door-to-door basis with the assistance of middlemen and small children. Generally, craft sales are used by married women to supplement household income. Although these crafts may provide an invaluable contribution to the household economy, they hold little potential for increased economic autonomy among women. Quite to the contrary, home trades reflect women's increasing dependence on marginally employed men in their efforts to make household ends meet (cf. Hansen, 1977:16). Moreover, the illicit nature and subsequent inconsistency of the home trades reinforces the dependence of women upon male breadwinners.

Among other forms of unlicensed commerce for women, beer brewing is the option with the highest economic profits and the greatest legal risks. The beer trade and related enterprises require women to have freedom of movement. Therefore, women who engage in this trade do not consider a husband an immediate advantage. Although some married women are engaged in the beer trade, most of those whom I interviewed were widowed, divorced, or temporarily living alone. Their families and the immediate drinking circle constituted their primary social networks. Many married women do not even consider brewing as a viable alternative because they fear arrests or fines and cannot obtain familial support for these activities.

Family structure and obligations influence women's self-employment careers. Married women with children in Lusaka's squatter areas are tied to their homes in ways in which their rural counterparts are not. Although the children that I observed were casually watched by neighbors, community organization among squatters was such that adults often could not adequately account for the whereabouts of children. While the township housewife is liberated from much of the burdensome water fetching, wood chopping, and agricultural work of the countryside, she has the responsibility for monitoring children and preparing food alone. In the rural milieu, these responsibilities were shared with an extended family network. The city situation suggests that further investigation of the relationship between child morbidity and urban squatting might be pursued in a subsequent study.

On the other side of the coin, women who are successful in obtaining the coveted marketeer's license enabling them to work outside of the home have developed community reputations and have been instrumental in organizing marketeers' unions.¹⁰ Some prosperous home and street traders are even able to accrue enough expertise and financial backing to move into large market stalls, tea cart trade, and small restaurants or grocery stores. This sort of career pattern, however, is more typical of official market vegetable vendors, fishmongers and home charcoal traders than it is of women producing and selling crafts.

The increased profits in craft sales come from a combination of ceramic work with beer brewing. Although such a combination may be economically beneficial to migrant women, it effectively closes them off from extensive public trade and confines their activities exclusively to a township audience. Thus, craftswomen and brewers remain marginal because of their limited education and their inability to make full use of the trade networks and employment opportunities in the city. Their recourse to informal trade networks is also restricted by a variety of legal and social barriers.

Home Trades as Urban Entrepreneurship: The Case of the Women Brewers

Zambian society unofficially fosters the brewing of home beverages by placing a positive social valuation on the beer drinking circle or mikotokoto (cf. Epstein, 1961:36-46). During the colonial period, Zambian urban migrants were denied access to imported alcoholic beverages. Nevertheless, since the drinking circle was a significant part of village social life for men, it was readily adapted to the urban industrial centers and home-brewed beer is culturally esteemed by many recent urban migrants. Most home brewing, however, is still illegal and punishable by a nine-month jail sentence or a fine of up to 500 kwacha (U.S. \$660). Moreover, despite the legalization of the controlled brewing of higher grades of chibuku (local grain beer) for sale in taverns by the Lusaka City Council in the late 1970s to increase its revenue, the sale of illicit chibuku and stronger beverages (kachiasu and seven days gin) continues. "Legalized"

chibuku is supposedly made according to specific health regulations and is marketed at fixed prices.

The association of the home beer trade with prostitution exists among Zambian law enforcement agencies. A recent survey (Mwanamwabwa, 1977:42) claims that 70 percent of the home brewed beer produced in Zambia is connected with prostitution. This finding suggests the importance of examining the legal as well as social barriers to women's participation in the labor force and requires a broad view of their informal employment strategies.

The shebeen queens or women who brew beer for community gatherings and trade are careful to cultivate good relationships with local officials. Like the home vegetable vendors, they must be circumspect about their activities. It is not, however, possible to hide the brewing process, as it entails long hours of outdoor cooking before the beer can be brought inside to settle. Despite the potential official harassment, the shebeen queens do not appear to have developed collective resources for their own legal and economic protection. They cooperate in small brewing groups, but their produce and marketing are coordinated on a large scale only by the new middlemen or shebeen kings who have entered the trade.

The local home beer trade originated in Lusaka's squatter townships. By the late 1970s, women producing legal chibuku could easily engage middlemen to expand their trade outlets to recognized commercial enterprises. Reputable women's groups such as the YWCA community organization even moved into chibuku sales as fund raisers. Most legal brewing interfaces with the bar trade and has become taxable for government revenues. Nevertheless, illicit brewing continues to flourish in underground trade networks with the transport in alcohol controlled by men. While marginal subelite women are connected with the bar trade as modern sector prostitutes, the shebeen brewers engage in a "traditional" form of prostitution centered around providing companionship for members of the local drinking circle.

As sporadic vegetable vending has proved less lucrative, some married women in the squatter townships have moved into permanent and temporary beer trading in competition with the established shebeen queens. These women, however, tend to confine their activities to the production and brewing of beer. Permanent brewers commissioned to make legal chibuku can operate openly and plan their business activities on a long-term basis. Temporary traders strictly engaged in illegal brewing rely on connections with an underground network and brew on a sporadic basis.

Maria Khosa: A Home Beer Trader

For both personal and legal reasons, Maria chose not to brew the stronger illicit beverages. Instead, she worked regularly at brewing a mild South African beer as a daily source of revenue. As her community reputation grew, she became eligible to enter the legal beer trade. For the most part, however, she confined her sales to the home base and did not use middlemen to expand her clientele.

Hansen (1973:130-131) provides a case study profile of Maria's trading activities.

Maria Khosa is a 25 year old Sotho from Botswana. She grew up in Johannesburg where she married a Zambian Neenga by civil marriage five years ago. While in Johannesburg, she worked as a domestic servant. They came to Lusaka three years ago (in 1970) where the husband, Mr. Elfes Phiri, has worked as a security guard ever since. Mrs. Khosa has attended school for seven years, her husband for eight years. She is a member of the Anglican Church, he of the Dutch Reformed Church. The couple have no living children; all of the four children the wife bore have died.

On their first coming to Lusaka, Mrs. Khosa and Mr. Phiri lived at Mandevu, a squatter settlement where they rented a house. After two years at Mandevu, they moved to Mtendele where they are now building a house of their own, two rooms of which are finished. The house is planned to have six rooms.

Mr. Phiri earns K50 (U.S. \$66.00) a month, all of which he hands over to his wife. A good deal of the money is currently being spent on the completion of the house. Further, they send every month K10 (U.S. \$13.20) to the husband's matrilineal relatives who live near Petauke. Because of these expenses, Mrs. Khosa started her beer brewing, which she has done for three months. She brews ample supplies of beer every week from Thursday until Sunday. The kind of beer she brews is a South African beer, which she calls 'Banba.' The beer is consumed in one of the family's two rooms, which is not yet furnished, except for some odd chairs and tables which serve to accommodate the clientele. The beer is sold in metal cups for which 10 ngwee (13¢) are charged. Mrs. Khosa reckons to make a profit on her beer sale of K10 (\$13.20) every week.

Mr. Phiri did not interfere much with his wife's beer trade. Being a security guard, he was away from the township at work from four p.m. to twelve p.m. and returned to Mtendele on his bike at night conveniently enough to help his wife close down the trade. As the control of illegal beer brewing was becoming very much stricter, Mrs. Khosa was considering domestic work instead.

Emilia Chomba: A Sporadic Brewer

Maria's activities contrast with those of her neighbor, Emilia Chomba (Hansen, 1973:131). Emilia brewed kachiasu, which is strictly prohibited. Because of the fear of local surveillance, her activities were sporadic. She made approximately 18 kwacha (U.S. \$23.76) per month from brewing to supplement her husband's income. However, during some months Emilia did not brew at all. Her sales were marginal and she often considered abandoning the alcohol trade altogether. Emilia did not accommodate her clients at home. Instead, she ran a "cash-and-carry" operation that relied heavily upon the city-wide underground network for illicit alcohol sales.

Potting and Beer Brewing
as Combined Home Trades

Scholars of African urbanization have emphasized that the most successful migrant entrepreneurs pursue several avenues of self-employment at once (cf. Little, 1973:85-86; Beveridge, 1978). The beer trade emerges in fuller perspective when we consider the mixed career patterns of many women brewers. The serial pattern of job shifting described in the literature on male migration does not explain the situation of Zambian women with combined trades in the informal sector.¹¹ Since the avenues of self-employment open to these women are limited, combination in this case is a sign of employment stability rather than employment transiency. Women who pursue combined trades generally do so on a permanent basis and shift from an emphasis on one or the other depending upon economic and seasonal variations. Combining trades requires considerable familiarity with the urban scene and cross-cutting social networks.

The women potters of Lusaka provide an excellent example of the combination of the shebeen trade with craft enterprises. As a contemporary adaptation of traditional skill, potting may be relied upon to bring in a steady, although small, source of revenue. The shebeen traders make the pots to be used for their weekly beer parties. Additionally, these pots, and other ceramic figures, are sold independently as craft articles during peak tourist seasons; the potter develops some notion of the craft articles that appeal to an outside audience while continuing to produce a basic set of pots for home use and the chibuku trade. Generally, the more experienced master potters are able to adapt to the external tourist trade while the younger women who learn ceramic skills as part of the urban shebeen activities have difficulty diversifying their products. These limitations stem chiefly from their lack of knowledge of traditional potting skills. My case study profiles suggest that differences in expertise create a range of variations in the ability to diversify and work successfully in combined trades. This range of adaptation is a key feature of urban potting that may be characteristic of other women's trades as well.

Mrs. Kave: A Bemba Potter

Mrs. Kave is a 45 year old Bemba widow. She came to Lusaka twelve years prior to her interview in 1975, shortly after the death of her husband. Some years before her migration, she had moved from her small home village in northern Zambia to Ndola to accompany her husband who worked in the mines. Trained as a Bemba ceremonial mistress or nacimbusa, Mrs. Kave was already skilled in traditional ceramic work when she came to Ndola. There, she began to experiment with pottery sales in combination with home beer brewing.

When Mrs. Kave moved to Lusaka, she chose to reside near a stream that cuts across Marrapodi and Chaisa townships. The stream contains natural clay deposits that facilitated her potting work. She continued beer brewing and was soon joined by several young women apprentices in her neighborhood. Mrs. Kave's already competent potting skills improved as she taught the members of the "collective" how to make pots for shebeen parties. Although she monitored her apprentices' brewing and potting activities, Mrs. Kave did not engage in any form of prostitution and did not coordinate their beer or craft sales.

With continued residence in Lusaka, Mrs. Kave gained a sense of the local crafts market. While she did not regard herself as an artist, she learned marketing skills from the men engaged in the local art trade. Mrs. Kave modified the traditional ceremonial figurines used in Bemba initiation rites for commercial sales¹². The figurines that she produced were rough renderings of fish and animals that were portable and cheap enough to acquire a certain exotic appeal for the tourist consumer audience. The figurines were sold for 50¢ a piece in 1975. By 1977, Mrs. Kave had more than tripled her price as she acquired a more accurate sense of the tourist market.

All pots have a standardized appearance. One skilled woman's pots can be distinguished from those of another only by the subtle hatchmarks under the lip. Standardization is important because it facilitates a rapid production process. Even more significant is the fact that pots for beer storage and drinking are expected to be uniform in appearance. They are functional rather than decorative art objects. Individualization in ceramic work results from the tourist trade where some variation is sought in figurine production. Even so, Mrs. Kave and other potters never sign or mark their work by name. This anonymity is typical of women's crafts production as opposed to the individualized commercial arts made and signed by men in Lusaka¹³.

Most of Mrs. Kave's apprentices were unwilling to experiment with pottery as a major source of their income. Moreover, they did not explore marketing strategies such as the systematic use of middlemen and regular street hawking. Instead, the potters viewed themselves neither as artists nor exclusively as business entrepreneurs. Lacking a stable entrepreneurial identification, these women were able to shift income generating strategies as circumstances dictated.

Ironically, trade combination has resulted in an inadvertent type of entrepreneurial experimentation. The African entrepreneur generally exploits a variety of economic strategies to develop urban markets and supply sources (cf. Beveridge, 1978:2). According to this perspective, urban potters in combined trades are in an ideal position to become successful entrepreneurs if they are astute enough to tap the basic needs of the local community and the external economic demands of tourists and other outside consumers. Peter Marris (1968:31) has described the small entrepreneur in Africa as an individual with "an ability to assemble and reassemble from what is available . . . a new kind of activity, to reinterpret the meaning of things and fit them together in new ways." In certain respects, women in the crafts who adapt traditional skills to work in the urban informal sector comply with these criteria for entrepreneurship. Nevertheless, both their marketing skills and the extent of the local market for their goods are limited. Collective marketing will be essential to their entrepreneurial expansion.

Current Prospects for Women's Careers in Lusaka's Informal Sector

Much of the petty trading conducted by women is intermittent, economically frustrating, and illegal. Married squatter women who work in the informal sector suffer a stigma of "double" marginality. If their husbands enter the wage labor sector at all, they do so in the capacity of unskilled workers in insecure employment positions. The women work to supplement their husbands' meager incomes and do not develop independent resources or occupational identities. Without channels of access to education and training, these women are doomed to further economic loss.

Employment in the formal sector depends upon educational qualifications. It might be argued that town-born women have increased opportunities for schooling and formal wage employment. However, the fourth grade (formerly known as Standard II in Zambia) constitutes the terminal educational level of many of the urban poor, both males and females. By the time Zambian school children reach the seventh grade (Standard VI), young women constitute only 37 percent of the population attending school nationwide¹⁴. At this point, students must pass a comprehensive examination to enter Forms I and II of lower secondary school. The women who have not been excluded at the lower primary levels usually drop out before Form I¹⁵. By the time of high school education, males outnumber females in the Zambian public schools by a ratio of almost three to one. Needless to say, migrant women and many of their first generation daughters are excluded from reaping the benefits of higher education and the economic opportunities associated with them.

From the perspective of relative educational opportunities, the informal sector appears to be a socioeconomic repository for school drop-outs, the sporadically unemployed, and the under-employed. Accordingly, those who cannot find work attempt to "make" work. A prevalent argument to account for the economic adjustment of poor and undereducated urban women

revolves around kinship and ethnicity. It is presumed that ethnic networks are transplanted from villages and symbolically enlarged with the rural-urban migration process (cf. Gutkind, 1965:48-60). Using these networks as resources for self-employment and mutual aid, migrant women facilitate their socioeconomic adaptation to the city.

Lusaka's townships and squatter areas, however, are characterized by a high ethnic mix, and a city government policy that prohibits numerical domination by a single ethnic group. Furthermore, women working in the informal sector come from a variety of regional and ethnic backgrounds and live in a broad range of family situations. Ten of the seventy-eight households that I surveyed in the Marrapodi area were polygynous households. In the Marrapodi area, approximately twelve different ethnic groups including migrants from three nations (Zaire, Zimbabwe, and Malawi) were represented in my household sample. Strategies of familial adaptation to town life certainly vary based upon ethnicity. Nevertheless, the cooperative associations and apprenticeship circles established among women marketeers and craft workers in Zambia are not directly tied to ethnicity.

The potters of Bemba origin train women from other ethnic backgrounds. The beer circles from which their consumers are drawn are multiethnic in composition. A similar ethnic plurality is characteristic of the women's marketeering collectives. In Lusaka, urban life, particularly among squatters, juxtaposes individuals from a variety of backgrounds. The most viable community networks are based upon local residence and the exchange of goods, ideas, and services. Some experienced women traders are able to exploit these immediate community networks and to move beyond them to consumer markets that transect social class and regional background.¹⁶ Descriptive data suggest that women's collectives and voluntary associations are far more important than ethnicity as factors in urban adjustment (cf. Little, 1978:175-189).

Isolated women in illicit home trades, however, seldom operate on a collective basis, either in terms of production or marketing. They must retain a low community profile. In their case, extensive kin and ethnic ties are often an obstacle because they result in added home responsibilities. Many squatter women attempt to maintain anonymity and social distance from their neighbors by reason of their tenuous legal status, transient residence in the townships, and conflicts between domestic and commercial relationships. Even the beer drinking circle is not stable in its composition and does not offer a constant support network because of squatter transiency and the legal threats surrounding brewing.

Women from the rural milieu with traditional skills find a combination of the beer trade and related craft outlets to be a viable urban alternative. Combined with a steady craft enterprise, both local community and outside "markets" may be tapped by beer trading. The innovative nature of shebeen trading coupled with crafts derives from the structure as well as the substance of this type of trading. Women in the shebeen trades offer a key example of combined entrepreneurial career patterns in the informal sector as opposed to sporadic single-item trading. This pattern suggests the importance of reexamining successful informal sector entrepreneurship

with respect to the combination of trading options employed rather than merely assessing the viability of a single type of trade (for example, vegetable sales vs. fishmongering).

Conclusions: Alternative Urban Adaptations
for Migrant Women

As formal education and employment opportunities increase for town-born women, marketeering and home entrepreneurship may decline in importance as urban socioeconomic options. The hopes and aspirations of many women in the transitional generation may be realized as their daughters gain greater access to formal educational opportunities that allow them to reap the benefits of urban social and economic life. At present, however, descriptive data from the Zambian case indicate that it is important to develop a model that links the career patterns of rural and urban women in development. To this end, the following methodological suggestions emerge as an outgrowth of the Zambian research data.

1. There is a need to structure an innovative approach to the study of African women in development that uses criteria both subjectively and objectively relevant to the topic; premature abstraction about the role of women in development prior to requisite field inquiries should be avoided.
2. The assembly of an adequate primary data base requires longitudinal case study materials on women's rural and urban career patterns in combination with quantitative data on migration and socioeconomic adjustment.
3. In this regard, subject feedback is critical to collecting case study profiles that fill important information gaps concerning the life options and career choices of particular strata of urban women (e.g., informal versus formal sector workers and the urban poor versus the elite and subelite women).
4. Formal education is not the only solution to women's employment problems in Zambian urban areas. The type of apprenticeship relationships developed in men's cottage industries and small enterprises should be explored as a means of practical training for women.
5. Ultimately, the present research serves as a point of departure for devising a model that integrates data on women of diverse strata in rural and urban areas as part of a comprehensive overview of women in development. Such a model may eventually be used to facilitate the inclusion of women of rural and urban backgrounds in overall strategies of national development¹⁷.

The women's activities described in the case studies are sexually segregated and, with the exception of beer brewing, do not involve cooperative activity. Legal restrictions reinforce the sporadic nature of informal sector employment. The official support of cooperative efforts has been largely oriented toward men in the rural areas. When women's cooperation exists, it has not met with broad based government support. There is a need for policy planning that takes into account the short-term entrepreneurial options of urban women through community-based training operations and more flexible legal options for women in small informal sector enterprises.

In Zambia and other nations in technological and economic transition, the informal sector absorbs the overload of the jobless, the underemployed, and the economically marginal. Urban women in the informal sector are only part of a larger cultural and economic picture. The present analysis of Zambian women in the informal sector is intended as a point of comparison with similar cases in which a wide gap persists between the technoeconomic goals of development and women's access to education, formal employment, and the socioeconomic benefits of change.

Notes

1. The data presented in this study were collected in Lusaka, Zambia from 1975 through 1979 as part of a longitudinal study of two squatter townships. Individuals from 200 households were interviewed. In 1971-72 Karen Hansen conducted a similar study in the Mtendele township in which she interviewed 90 married women who were either unemployed or working in the informal sector. The present study was funded by the National Science Foundation, grants #Soc. 76-20861 and #Soc. 78-20861. The author is solely responsible for the conclusions of this study. The census figures cited here are taken from the Population Census: Annual Report of the Department of Labor, Lusaka, Zambia, 1969-75.
2. These figures are quoted from the Census of Population and Housing, First Report, Lusaka, Zambia, 1970:A19.
3. Philip Mayer (1971:210-223) emphasizes that those Xhosa migrants with some education (the "Schools") brought their wives to town because of money, land tenure, and kinship considerations. The less educated migrants followed the lone male pattern characteristic of early 20th century rural-urban movements across southern Africa.
4. As already indicated, an estimated 20 percent of the urban labor force now works in the informal sector. About half of the informal sector workers are women for whom there are few wage labor jobs. The 20 percent figure is based on labor force projections conducted by the Central Statistical Office in Lusaka. See "Projection of the Labour Force 1969-84." Population Monograph No. 3, Lusaka, Zambia: Government Printing Office, 1976.
5. Many Zambian men seeking employment register with the government Labor Exchange. While women register as well, they have less incentive to do so, and there is a wide discrepancy between the actual numbers of men and women who register. As of 1973, 39.9 percent of the men who registered with the Labor Exchange were placed in a variety of urban occupational positions as opposed to 25.4 percent of the women. In absolute terms, the male placement is highly disproportionate. As Table 2 indicates, the number of women entering skilled and semi-skilled occupations is steadily increasing. These women are primarily town-born and have had access to formal education. However, many of the transitional women migrants discussed here never reach the Labor Exchange rosters.
6. Mayer (1971:30-41) describes the socialization of rural Xhosa for town life with regard to schooling and mission contact. He argues that this preparation predisposes the more "progressive" Xhosa to migrate to East London and contributes to their sociocultural stabilization in the city. However, Mayer does not explore the economic motivations and consequences of migration in depth.

7. Schuster (1979:68) states that out of 48 women interviewed in clerical and lower managerial professions in Lusaka: "Almost none remained in the particular position where they started for more than two or three years, including time spent training." Although her sample is small, her data suggest that job switching and "transiency" are characteristic of the careers of subelite women. Obtaining and keeping a job in the formal sector proves to be both difficult and problematic for these women.
8. Catherine Mwanamwabwa (1977:37-38) notes that the initial capital outlay for fish sales exceeds that of vegetable vending. In addition, the fish must be smoked, cured, or frozen. Given the initial investment and the problems of storage, it is often difficult for petty traders in fish to compete with the nationalized Zambia Lakes Fisheries company and its official outlets. The petty traders often purchase from the national company and resell their produce at higher prices in the local townships.
9. Street vending in the downtown area was prohibited in Lusaka by a 1976 city council ordinance. This ordinance had a particularly devastating effect upon street vegetable and produce sales. It also curtailed the activities of street curio and tourist art salesmen. Vegetable hawkers, art and craft producers, and their middlemen all suffered from this legal prohibition.
10. Todd, Mulenga, and Mupimpila (1978:6-7) found that the majority of the marketeers in Chaisa settlement, where much of my interview data was collected, were vegetable vendors. Out of 320 individuals with official market stalls, 150 sold vegetables and fruits. Only twelve stall owners were craftsmen. Rather than diversifying, women tend to sell vegetables when they enter the official market trade. According to a 1974 Ministry of Rural Development report, nearly all of Zambian rural and urban women undertake work involving food production, processing, and sales.
11. Kenneth Little (1974:32-39) describes urban opportunism as the key to understanding job seeking patterns among migrants. With only lateral mobility, it is not uncommon for a single individual to hold over thirty jobs in the formal and/or informal sector over a five-year period. Urban opportunism is the product of multiple outlets for casual labor and semiskilled work in the African city. The combining of informal sector trades among women is a separate pattern that indicates job stability rather than switching.
12. Audrey Richards (1956:140-152) analyzes the ceramic figurines traditionally made during the three year long Bemba chisungu initiation ceremony. Mrs. Kave was originally trained as a nacimbusa or ceremonial mistress for the chisungu rites.

13. Elsewhere (Jules-Rosette, 1979:116-130 and Jules-Rosette, 1981:103-127) I describe the commercial carvers, painters, and ceramic workers in Lusaka. These artists and artisans produce for a mixed local and tourist audience. Originality and individual creativity are particularly important to the male carvers and painters, who self-consciously view themselves as artists.
14. These figures are taken from Educational Statistics for 1973, Zambian Ministry of Education, Lusaka, Zambia, 1975. Official statistics indicate a large number of dropouts after the fourth grade (from 127,390 to 95,530 total students for 1973). The largest percentage of young women drop out after the sixth grade or do not continue for pre-secondary training.
15. While the percentage of female students in Grade 7 and Form I remained the same in 1973, total student enrollment figures dropped from 85,213 for Grade 7 to 17,570 for Form I secondary preparation.
16. Little's (1978:177-185) argument suggests that urban voluntary associations are more important than kin and ethnic ties in moving beyond insulated urban community networks. Through these means, women are able to mobilize occupational, religious, and cultural groups to their social and economic advantage.
17. In Africa, Asia, and Latin America, women among the urban poor are doubly marginal (cf. Perlman, 1976:248-251). They are physically and culturally isolated in many ways, and they tend to be excluded from both economic development plans and the central political processes. Further studies of the career patterns and life experiences of these women is essential as a point of departure for both basic research and a sensitive assessment of the effects of development policies on women in Third World countries.

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