

## **Women in Mining: Reproducing Labour in Mines**

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Previously mines emphasized the divide between work and home and sort to tightly control this artificial and socially constructed divide. One majorly acknowledged link between the mines and the household was the provision by rural homes of labour to mines and the rest were hidden.

Currently, most studies, especially those looking at traditionally masculine occupations or sectors such as mining, continue with the trend of focusing on the workplace without much reflection on how work impacts on and is impacted upon by the reproduction space. Households, in the current mining literature, continue to be seen as mere appendages to the production space and not instrumental and crucial spaces. As a result of this, there is a neglect of the broader social and household influences in the construction of a worker.

This paper will therefore look briefly at history of mining in South Africa and how the divide between production and reproduction was maintained. More importantly, we shall show how the introduction of women to mining is bringing these hidden interconnections to the fore. Women's experiences in mining will be used to show how the two spaces are constantly in conversation with, influenced by and not separate from each other. We shall therefore look at interplays between production and reproduction spaces.

The main argument of the paper is that the boundary between the two spaces is a porous and artificial one and the introduction of women in mining shows the constant engaging and negotiating taking place in between the two spaces. The focus will be on women who work in the Platinum industry doing occupations that are located underground, a space previously seen as masculine.

Data for this study was gathered through the use of two methods; participant observation and in-depth interviews. This afforded me the opportunity to participate in the natural daily lives of these women. I worked at a mine for two and a half months doing underground work, changing between occupations and work crews. This allowed me to gather in-depth information on women in mining.