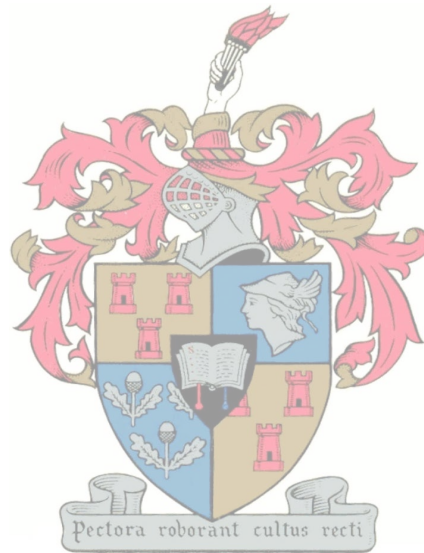


# **Cape Colony marriage in perspective**

By

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## **Declaration**

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## Abstract

Despite the importance of studying marriage patterns for a better understanding of colonial life, the subject has received little attention from a purely economic perspective. In his seminal work, *European Marriage Patterns in Perspective* (1965), J. Hajnal introduces the notion of a European Marriage Pattern (EMP) emerging in the late Middle Ages which became characteristic of Western European society in the early modern period. Hajnal points out several distinct aspects to distinguish Western European marriages from all other societies of the time. While existing literature in this field has typically focussed on the demographic features of marriage patterns, such as the average age of marriage, the share of the population that had never married, and the effects of the EMP on fertility and resulting population growth, little attention has been paid to the underlying mechanisms and causes of the EMP.

Using genealogical records to track the ancestry of colonial settlers in South Africa, this study will investigate the evolution of marriage in the Cape Colony. The focus is primarily on the persistence of the EMP and attempt to determine whether it continued to characterise the marriages of European descendants outside of Europe, or whether a distinct marriage pattern emerged in the Cape Colony in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century. It will explore the effect that such patterns may have historically had on family size, standards of living and life chances for European settlers at the Cape, with an aim to shed new light on the underlying causes of the EMP, by critically evaluating De Moor and van Zanden's (2010) three hypotheses of the origins of this distinct marriage pattern.

## Uittreksel

Ten spyte van die bydrae wat 'n studie van huwelikspatrone tot 'n beter begrip van die ekonomiese ontwikkeling en sosiale konteks tydens die koloniale era kan maak, ontvang hierdie onderwerp min aandag vanuit 'n suiwer ekonomiese perspektief. In John Hajnal se bekende publikasie, *European Marriage Patterns in Perspective* (1965), stel hy die konsep van 'n Europese Huweliks Patroon (EHP) voor. Hierdie patroon het waarskynlik in die laat-Middeleeue verskyn en die Wes-Europese samelewing in die vroeë-moderne tydperk gekenmerk. Hajnal beskryf sekere unieke aspekte wat Wes-Europese huwelike van alle ander samelewings van hierdie tydperk onderskei. Bestaande literatuur oor hierdie onderwerp fokus tipies op die demografiese kenmerke van huwelikspatrone, soos die gemiddelde ouderdom waarop individue trou, die gedeelte van die bevolking wat nooit trou nie en die gevolge wat die EHP op fertiliteit en bevolkingsgroei het. Min aandag is dus aan die onderliggende oorsake van die EHP gegee.

Deur gebruik te maak van die Suid-Afrikaanse Geslagregisters is dit moontlik om die herkoms van koloniale setlaars in Suid-Afrika na te spoor. Hierdie studie fokus dus op die ontwikkeling van 'n huwelikspatroon in die Kaapkolonie. Die vraag is of die EHP die huwelike van Europese afstammeling buite Europa steeds gekenmerk het en of daar 'n ander huwelikspatroon in die agtiende en vroeë-negentiende eeu in die Kaapkolonie na vore gekom het. Die vraag word beantwoord deur 'n kritiese analise van De Moor en van Zanden (2010) se drie hipoteses oor die oorsprong van hierdie eiesoortige huwelikspatroon.

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It would not have been possible to write this thesis without the help and support of the kind people around me, only some of whom it is possible to give particular mention here.

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For any errors or inadequacies that may remain in this work, of course, the responsibility is entirely my own.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

*The neglect of marriage by economists is either a major oversight or persuasive evidence of the limited scope of economic analysis – Gary Becker (1973).*

### 1.1 Orientation

Despite the obvious importance of marriage patterns for an understanding of colonial life, the subject has received little attention from economists. The age at which persons, especially women, first marry is a subject of considerable interest, since a woman is seldom able to bear children for more than the thirty years between ages fifteen and forty-five. A age at first marriage for women therefore plays a vital role in determining how many children she can bear and thus directly affects family size and the growth rate of the population (Wells, 1972: 415). In addition, higher female age at marriage allows women to enhance their human capital both formally and informally in the years before childbearing, resulting in an increase in human capital acquisition for the population, as more educated women will generally raise more skilled children (Foreman-Peck, 2011:292).

In his seminal work, *European Marriage Patterns in Perspective* (1965), John Hajnal introduces the notion of a European Marriage Pattern (EMP) emerging in the late Middle Ages which became characteristic of Western European society in the early modern period. Hajnal points out several distinct aspects that he argues, distinguishes Western European marriages from all other societies of the time, namely (i) high age at first marriage, particularly for women and (ii) a large percentage of the population who never marry. The increase in the stock of human capital that resulted from this unique demographic trend directly contributed to Western Europe's developmental success (Foreman-Peck, 2011:292).

### 1.2 Statement of the Problem

Existing literature in this field has typically focussed on the demographic features of this marriage pattern, such as the average age of marriage, the share of the population who never married, and the effects of the EMP on fertility and resulting population growth. Little attention has been paid to the underlying mechanisms and causes of the EMP until recently.

De Moor and van Zanden (2010) are the first to formally present an explanation for the emergence of the EMP. Their argument rests on a combination of three socio-economic and ideological factors namely (i) the shift towards consensus instead of parental authority in the

formation of a marriage, (ii) the position of women in the transfer of property between husband and wife and between parents and children and (iii) the accessibility to, and the size of, the labour market.

### **1.3 Research Objectives and Methodology**

This study aims to add to this literature in three ways: Firstly, by using genealogical records to track the ancestry of colonial settlers in South Africa, this investigation will provide for the first time, descriptive statistics of Cape Colony marriage patterns for the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. It will focus on the evolution of marriage in the Cape Colony, looking primarily for the persistence of the EMP in an attempt to determine whether it continued to characterise the marriages of European descendants outside of Europe, or whether a distinct marriage pattern emerged in the Cape Colony.

Secondly, it will provide an argument for the Cape Colony as a more suitable testing ground to display the unique features of the EMP. It will further provide a critical discussion of the validity and potential shortcomings of the three De Moor and van Zanden hypotheses, and the underlying causes of the EMP will be scrutinised against the new knowledge of Cape Colony marriage patterns.

Finally, it will explore the effect that such marriage patterns may have historically had on family size and standards of living for European settlers in the Cape, as well as provide a benchmark upon which comparisons with marriage patterns in other colonial settler populations can be made.

### **1.4 Chapter Outlay**

Chapter two contextualizes this study within the European economic history discourse in its broadest sense. A detailed introduction to the European Marriage Pattern: its origin, characteristics and significance is provided. An overview of the literature subsequent to the detection of the EMP is undertaken, highlighting the want for a concentrated effort on the part of scholars in the field over the last four decades to provide a unified explanation for the underlying causes of the EMP.

Chapter three presents an overview of the existing knowledge on early Cape Colony marriage patterns together with a discussion of the implications of these marriage patterns on early settler life. Secondly it will provide the necessary expansion, both in size and scope of these results using the latest genealogical registers as primary data source. Estimates of age at first

marriage for male and female settlers for the eighteenth to mid-nineteenth centuries are calculated. Finally an assessment of whether these patterns conform to the characteristics of the EMP is undertaken.

A discussion of the validity and potential shortcomings of the three De Moor and van Zanden hypotheses for the causes of the EMP are scrutinised against new knowledge of Cape Colony marriage patterns in chapter 4. Chapter 5 concludes.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

### 2.1 Contextualization

*Why Europe? Why did a relatively small and backwater periphery on the western fringes of the Eurasian continent, burst out into the world in the sixteenth century and by the nineteenth century had become a dominant force in almost all corners of the earth?*

This simple question, posed by Gale Stokes in her 2004 *Review of Recent Macrohories*, remains without a simple explanation. Indeed, the question has chronically been revisited over the last half century, but a consensus has yet to be reached as to the underlying causes of northwestern Europe's developmental success.

Attempts to explain "why Europe and not the rest" are not in short supply. Notable scholars include Diamond (1997), Acemoglu, Johnson and Robinson (2001), Easterly and Levine (2002), Rodrik and Subramanian (2003), and Landes (2006), all of whom have taken somewhat contrasting views by placing greater emphasis on certain factors over others in their respective accounts of the workings of the past. According to Stokes (2004), these views can be divided into two main camps: Those who maintain that there was "something unique in the European past lay behind its eventual economic development and power", and those who believe that there was ultimately "nothing particularly special about Europe and that its rise to dominance in the nineteenth century was not due to any exceptional qualities but to its good fortune at being able to seize vast amounts of gold and silver in the New World and to create other forms of wealth through colonial trade" (Stokes, 2001:509).

The latter is broadly in line with what is commonly referred to as the *geography hypothesis*. With a large following, both in the popular imagination and in academia, this hypothesis maintains that the "geography, climate and ecology of a society shape both its technology and the incentives of its inhabitants" (Acemoglu, 2003:27). Yet among those who are unsatisfied with an explanation that relies almost entirely on luck, most have taken to investigating what set north-western Europe apart from the rest of the world at the time – in the hope of uncovering a unique set of conditions that presided in this region alone, that were particularly conducive to an economic take-off. One of the prominent scholars in this group is David Landes, who in his exploration of *The Wealth and Poverty of Nations* (1999) makes strong

arguments for three unique and nonmaterial aspects of European society that fortified its developmental fate.

The first explanation offered by Landes is a somewhat paradoxical combination of factors that on the one hand portrays Europe divided: as a result of ethnic heterogeneity and lack of a unified political centre, without which the resulting competition would not have led to the race to conquer the Atlantic that characterised Europe in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. On the other hand, Landes offers a view of Europe united by a common academic language (Latin), which succeeded in facilitating the prevailing adversarial discourse, through which scholars were able to share technological advancements, disseminating new scientific knowledge across the continent with relative ease. The result was the “development of science as an autonomous method of intellectual inquiry that succeeded in disengaging itself from the social constraints imposed by organised religion and from the political constraints of centralised authority” (Stokes, 2001:510).

The second factor that Landes suggests set Europe apart was the prevailing work ethic that emphasised resourcefulness and empowerment. In his words: “What counts is work, thrift, honesty, patience, [and] tenacity. The only route to economic success for individuals or states is working hard, spending less than you earn, and investing the rest in productive capacity” (1999:523). In short, the fact that Europeans have historically prospered is simply down to the fact that they have consistently followed these fundamental practices.

Landes’ third explanation centres on the indigenous technology (for example the water wheel, spectacles, the mechanical clock, the printing press and gun powder). However, possessing superior technology in itself is not sufficient in explaining the kind of developmental success Europe enjoyed. Even if Europe did benefit from better technology, which Landes believes it did, the talent that distinguished Europe from the rest was their capacity to integrate knowledge from other cultures, like adopting gun powder and paper from the Chinese through the Muslim world. Landes suggests that a “systematic resistance to learning” from other cultures was China’s greatest obstacle before the Eighteenth century.

Although Landes does not stress property rights (the most powerful discussion of that aspect of Western development remains the domain of Douglas C. North and Robert Paul Thomas)<sup>1</sup>, one could categorise Landes’ arguments with what Acemoglu refers to as *institutional*

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<sup>1</sup> The Rise of the Western World: A New Economic History (Cambridge, 1973)

*hypotheses*, in that they centre around human influences. Very simply stated, according to this view, “some societies have good institutions that encourage investment in machinery, human capital and better technologies, and consequently these countries achieve economic prosperity” (Acemoglu, 2003:27).

Acemoglu qualifies his definition of good institutions by requiring them to possess three key characteristics, namely: (i) the enforcement of property rights for a broad cross section of society, so that a variety of individuals have incentives to invest and take part in economic life, (ii) constraints on the actions of elites, politicians and other powerful groups, so that these people cannot expropriate the incomes and investments of others or create a highly uneven playing field, and (iii) some degree of equal opportunity for broad segments of society, so that individuals can make investments, especially in human capital and participate in productive economic opportunities (Acemoglu, 2003:27).

While this study situates itself firmly within this body of literature, it is by no means an attempt to confront such mega-economic questions. It is therefore necessary to refine our investigation to a large extent. For this we turn to a demographic, or perhaps more appropriately labelled, domestic explanation for an increase in the stock of human capital that underpins both the geography and institutional hypotheses.

## **2.2 The cultural differences hypothesis**

Our attention therefore shifted to the cultural differences which have, in addition to Landes’ arguments, been used to explain why the Europeans rose to power in the nineteenth century. The economic effect of one such important cultural difference is clearly illustrated by the example of the cotton industries in China and Europe respectively.

Referring to China, Stokes (2001:518) notes that during the Ming dynasty in spite of a thriving cotton trade industry, spinning and weaving technologies were never adopted in cotton production. Developments of this nature that would elsewhere have been attributed to capitalist-style systems of production never took root in China. Jack Goldstone (1996:7) proposes that this failure on the part of the cotton industry to evolve and adapt new technology as actively as the Europeans did can be attributed to the unavailability of a female labour force in China. This he argues, is a result of the difference in family structure that existed in Europe and China respectively.

Recent research into family patterns confirms that European families supposedly exhibited a greater affinity for “economically rational behaviour”, evident by later marriage and smaller households, contrasted with China where early marriage and larger families were the norm.

Goldstone suggests that as a result of the traditional Chinese family structure, the so called “life path” of women was altered. In Europe women between their teenage years and marriage were typically wage earners, be it as a servant in a larger household or in a factory. The important cultural difference here was that women were viewed in society as individuals, capable of labour under the supervision of a non-family member. While their pay may have been less than that of their male counterparts, it was significantly more than they could have earned had they remained at home.

In China however, the practice of spinning and weaving remained within the confines of the household and were viewed as women’s errands. While the final products of their labour may well have ended up en route to one of China’s trade partners, women did not receive the kind of compensation for their labour in the form of a wage like their European sisters. Most importantly, Chinese women were not viewed in society as individuals but rather as members of their family, and would remain so until marriage when they would become members of their husband’s family.

Entrepreneurs in the Chinese cotton industry therefore did not have access to the kind of cheap female and child labour that was available in Europe. These entrepreneurs would have been forced to hire more expensive male labour, increasing the cost of cotton production to a point where they were not competitive to trade with. Disincentivised Chinese entrepreneurs chose not to relocate cotton production out of the household domain and into cotton mills, or to invest in more productive technology in cotton production (Goldstone, 1996:8).

Our primary investigation is thus transformed into a far narrower question that asks: How was the demographic transition that historically set Europe apart from the rest of the world unique? One possible explanation, or what Mary Hartman (2004:3) refers to as an “extraordinary development [that] has long been known but remains hidden in plain sight”, is detection of the European Marriage Pattern in the mid-1960’s by John Hajnal. This atypical and still unexplained household-formation system, featuring late marriage dominated north-western Europe from the 1500’s and distinguished the region from all other major agricultural regions of the world.



While existing literature in this field has typically focussed on the demographic features of this marriage pattern, such as the average age of marriage, the share of the population that had never married, and the effects of the EMP on fertility and resulting population growth, according to De Moor and van Zanden (2010:3) little attention has been paid to the underlying mechanisms and causes of the EMP. Hartman does not find it surprising that a solid connection has yet to be established between the discovery of this idiosyncrasy in marriage and household arrangements and the distinctive ways Western history evolves after the middle ages for a number of reasons. One such reason, she suggests, hinges on the priority historical texts have traditionally placed on the contributions of societal elites and are typically based on the roles and responsibilities of men. Standard historical interpretation relies on results that are derived exclusively from extra-domestic sites, the focus of which has remained largely confined to political and economic spheres.

Despite Hartman's criticisms of the historical literature for perpetuating this "ingrained view" that denies any real role for women's agency, domestic or otherwise, in contributing towards major developments in Europe's socio-economic history and ultimately an account of global economic development, historians' themes and approaches have slowly been evolving. Serendipitously timed with Hajnal's publication dispelling the prevailing misconceptions about European marriage ages, the 1960's witnessed not only the emergence of a new social history, but a new women's history, that for the first time contested the exclusivity of elite men in economic development explanations by arguing that ordinary citizens' actions, including the actions of women, must factor into explanations of how history unfolds (Hartman, 2004:4).

Hartman tries to rectify this by arguing that the more extra-domestic arenas along with the course of modern history itself, owe their most noteworthy features to the still largely overlooked European marriage and household system. She suggests that within the households of north-western Europe, women's behaviour mattered at least as much as men's – not only for creating unique gender and power arrangements within those households but also for shaping major developments beyond them (Hartman, 2004:4).

The recurring theme of this and the following chapters will be the still unexplored ramifications for Western historical development of the irregular north-western European system of late marriage.

### 2.3 Overview of the European Marriage Pattern

In order to appreciate the uniqueness of the EMP, it is useful to distinguish its most general characteristics from traditional marriage patterns elsewhere in the world for the same time period. While marriage patterns across the world do vary widely, the agricultural societies of Southern and Eastern Europe, India, China, Africa and the Middle East are characterised by early marriage particularly for women and large age differences between spouses, with grooms typically being seven to ten years older than brides. Marriages were traditionally arranged by the couples' parents and it was not uncommon for a newly married couple to move into the home of the groom's parents. Furthermore, it was rare to find a person who had remained single throughout their entire life.

But at least since the late Middle Ages, young persons in north-western Europe began to deviate from these traditional marriage patterns. In England, the Low Countries, much of Scandinavia, northern France, and the German-speaking lands, most men and women adopted relatively late marriages and the age difference between spouses became significantly reduced. This is the first distinctive feature of Hajnal's EMP that characterised marriages west of an imaginary line drawn roughly from Saint Petersburg (formerly Leningrad) in the former USSR to Trieste in Northern Italy. Hajnal refers to those countries east of this line as the "Eastern European Pattern" (EEP).

While it is true that the gentry continued to uphold early and family arranged marriage practices, they did not comprise the majority of the European population.

*From medieval times until the late eighteenth century or so, young persons in their late teens and twenties played the major role in selecting their own partners; and they usually did so as agricultural servants or apprentices residing in their employer's households. At marriage, these couples typically pooled their resources and created a simple or nuclear household of their own, which meant that most residences in north-western Europe housed just one married couple (Hartman, 2004:6).*

The second distinctive feature of the EMP is that a substantial portion of the population remains single throughout their lives, contrasted with almost universal marriage occurring in Eastern Europe. For example, by age 20-24 some three-quarters of women were still single in the European pattern while in Eastern Europe three quarters were married in this age group.

This is not to say that there were not significant differences between the marriage patterns of various western European countries; however, a distinct cleavage between any of them and the Eastern European pattern of Bosnia, Bulgaria, Russia or Serbia for instance was clear. This cleavage is particularly striking for women. Hajnal reports that in Western European countries fewer than 5 percent of women remained single around their 50<sup>th</sup> birthday. “In the European pattern unmarried life for an adult woman was accepted as a normal (if perhaps exceptional) alternative to marriage. In Eastern Europe this alternative scarcely existed” (Hajnal, 1965:103).

Table 1 below is constructed from Hajnal’s data on the single population as a per cent of total population in the age group, shown here for two countries displaying the EMP – Belgium and Sweden; and two countries displaying the Eastern European Pattern – Bulgaria and Serbia<sup>2</sup>. The difference is striking, particularly for women. In those countries displaying the EMP the share of unmarried men and women in the youngest cohort was relatively large (above 70 per cent), implying that the majority of men and women remained single before the age of 25. This is contrasted with the Non-EMP countries in which over half of the men in the 20 to 24 year old age cohort are already married and a staggering 16 per cent of women between the age of 20 to 24 remained single. More interesting is that in Bulgaria and Serbia only 1 percent of women remain unmarried after the age of 45 compared to 17 percent and 19 per cent in Belgium and Sweden respectively.

Table 1: Single population as per cent of total population in age group

<i>Country</i>	Men			Women		
	20-24	25-29	45-49	20-24	25-29	45-49
<i>"European Pattern"</i>						
Belgium	85	50	16	71	41	17
Sweden	92	61	13	80	52	19
<i>"Eastern European Pattern"</i>						
Bulgaria	58	23	3	24	3	1
Serbia	50	18	3	16	2	1

Source: Hajnal (1965).

<sup>2</sup> These countries were chosen arbitrarily for illustrative purposes; however, the trend is equally clear for any of the other European nations.

A review of the published information before 1800 on distributions of population by marital status suggests the general conclusion that the European pattern originated before the eighteenth century. The European pattern of age at marriage can be traced back in many countries to the first half of the eighteenth century or even earlier. Before the latter half of the seventeenth century, there is almost no statistical evidence on marriage, at least so far as unselected data (i.e. covering all inhabitants of an area) are concerned.

Hajnal concludes that the EMP is unique for all large populations for which data exist or reasonable surmises can be made: "In non-European civilizations there are scarcely any single women over 25" (Hajnal, 1965:107). Furthermore, little direct information on the distribution of marriage by age for countries where the marriage pattern is non-European exists. Hajnal reasons that this may be attributed to the fact that in such countries in many cases formal marriage registration institutions were inadequate, if in existence at all. Even in cases where registration may have accounted for the bulk of marriages, statistics of age are often unreliable since many people do not know their ages.

To overcome this record-keeping deficiency, Hajnal (1965:108) employs an indirect method of calculating age at first marriage statistics. This method involves calculations from the proportions of single persons by age cohorts. His calculations reveal that a non-European pattern implies a mean age for marriages of single women below 21 whereas according to the European pattern the mean age for the marriages of single women must have been above 23, and has in general been above 24. Studies have rarely made use of age statements at the time of the marriage registration, since statements of age are generally not given or are too incomplete to be of much use in parish registers for the eighteenth century (Hajnal, 1965:109).

An alternative method of determining age at marriage is the somewhat painstaking process of matching each marriage certificate with the baptismal certificates of the spouses so that their ages can be determined directly from their date of birth. Table 2 provides a summary of mean ages at first marriage calculated using the above method, for countries displaying the EMP, including England, Germany, France, and the Netherlands, all of which have a mean age at first marriage for men and women generally over 24. In addition, the mean difference in ages between spouses is relatively small, with husbands being on average less than two years older than their wives. In contrast, Table 3 shows mean ages at first marriage for those countries displaying non-EMP. In all cases, the mean age of marriage for women is below 24 and the

mean difference in ages between spouses is significantly more pronounced than in the EMP, with husbands generally being over three years older than their wives.

Table 2: Mean ages at first marriage for countries displaying the EMP.

	Mean age of husbands at first marriage	Mean age of wives at first marriage	Mean difference between spouses*
<b><i>England</i></b>			
1600-1649	28	26	24
1650-1699	27.8	26.5	15
1700-1749	27.5	26.2	15
1750-1799	26.4	24.9	19
1800-1849	25.3	23.4	23
<b><i>Germany (Durlach)</i></b>			
1701-1720	28.7	26.5	26
1721-1750	27.4	25.4	24
1751-1780	27.6	25.6	24
1781-1800	26.6	25.1	17
<b><i>France</i></b>			
<i>Crulai (Normandy) (1674-1742)</i>	26.6	25.1	17
<i>French Parish (1760-1790)</i>	27.4	26.2	14
<b><i>Netherlands (Amsterdam both sexes)</i></b>			
1626-1627	24.5		
1676-1677	26.5		
1726-1727	27.2		
1776-1777	27.8		
1809-1810	26.3		

\*Age in months. Positive values indicate that the husband was older

Source: Hajnal (1965).

Table 3: Mean ages at first marriage for countries displaying the non-EMP.

	Mean age of husbands at first marriage	Mean age of wives at first marriage	Mean difference between spouses*
<b><i>North America</i></b>			
<i>New Hampshire</i> (Before 1720)	25.5	22.3	38
<i>New England</i> (Before 1760)	27.1	23.3	46
<i>North Carolina</i> (Before 1741)	23.8	19.6	50
<i>French Canada</i> (1700-1730)	26.9	22.4	53
<b><i>Eastern Europe</i></b>			
	Mean age at first marriage for	Mean age at marriage	
<i>Serbia</i>	women.	(all marriages)	
1886-1895	20	21.7	
1896-1905	19.7	21.3	

Source: Hajnal(1965); Gallman (1984).

#### **2.4 A review of the literature since the detection of the EMP**

Unfortunately, Hajnal's work was largely overshadowed by the publication in the same year of distinguished Cambridge scholar Peter Laslett's ground-breaking book *The World We Have Lost: England before the Industrial Age* (1965). While his exposition of pre- and post-industrial English society focuses far more on the nuclear composition of households, Laslett does attempt to debunk some of the more commonly held misbeliefs about marriage and extended family households, to shed new light on the, until then, relatively unexplored link between domestic relationships and economic development. While Laslett never directly cites Hajnal's work on the EMP, he does make use of similar demographic records and his argument undoubtedly supports Hajnal's conclusions about northwestern European marriage patterns:

*It is not true to say that in earlier times, in the world we have lost, as we have called it, people, either ordinary or privileged, married much younger than we marry now. In fact, they were very much older in relation to their expectation of life.*

Laslett creatively illustrates this common misconception by referring to frequent appearance of teen-brides in Shakespeare's work, which one could argue, offers readers a form of social commentary on 16<sup>th</sup> century England. He quotes from the famous second scene of Romeo and Juliet in which Capulet beseeches the eager bachelor Paris, to delay his marriage proposal to his daughter:

*My child is yet a stranger in the world  
She hath not seen the change of fourteen years  
Let two more summer's whither in their pride  
Ere we think her ripe to be a bride.*

Laslett (1965:84) goes on to cite a number of instances of teen-brides appearing throughout Shakespeare's work to demonstrate the notion that English women of Shakespeare's day might have married in their early teens, or even before. Yet after examining all available records and evidence of marriages in Elizabethan and Jacobean England, Laslett finds that this is simply not the case. Instead he reports that marriage at these early ages was rare and not nearly as common in late teens as it was in the first half of the twentieth century.

In addition, the Church of England would not permit the marriage of persons under the age of the 21 without the consent of both partners' parents. Given that marriage licences were granted upon application to the bishop of the diocese which required the documentation of applicants' ages, Laslett's team was able to review a thousand licences containing the ages of applicants issued by the diocese of Canterbury between 1619 and 1660 to people marrying for the first time. Here follows a summary of their findings:

*One woman gave her age as 13, four as 15, twelve as 16: all the rest were 17 and over, and 966 of the women got married for the first time after the age of 19, that is nearly 85 per cent. The commonest age of first marriage for women in this sample was 22, and the median age was about 22¾ and the mean age about 24. Bridegrooms were something like three years older than brides, though some of the unions recorded showed an extraordinary discrepancy in age. Only ten men married below the age of 20, two of them at 18, and the most common age was 24; the median age was 25½ and the mean age over 26¾.*

Laslett also considers the difference between ordinary citizen's marriage tendencies against those of the gentry – after all *Romeo and Juliet* were not ordinary people. While difficult to make broad generalizations given the small sample sizes at his disposal, he finds that gentle brides were younger than others in this area in the mid-seventeenth century but bridegrooms were of much that same age as the rest of the population. He concludes that no class of the population, as far as their results show, married at anything like the ages suggested by popular literature throughout the centuries<sup>3</sup>. Table 4 presents Laslett's findings of marriage ages in English dioceses.

Table 4: Mean age at first marriage in English dioceses

	<i>Mean age of Bridegrooms</i>	<i>Mean age of Brides</i>
All applicants for licences, Diocese of Canterbury, 1619-1660 (1007 bridegrooms 1007 brides)	26.65	23.58
Standard deviation	4.61	4.12
Gentry only amongst Canterbury applicants (118 bridegrooms, 118 brides)	26.18	21.75
Standard deviation	4.41	3.60
Marriage of nobles,* from about 1600-1625 (325 brides, 313 bridegrooms)	19.39	24.28
Marriage of nobles,* from about 1625-1650 (510 brides, 403 brides)	20.67	25.99

SOURCES: P. Laslett. 1965. \*from T. H. Hollingsworth of the University of Glasgow

Laslett's work in this field continued later in the 1960's when he led a group of demographers from the Cambridge Group for the History of Population and Social structure, to launch the famous comparative global study entitled *Household and Family in Past Time: Comparative Studies on the Size and Structure of the Domestic Group Over the Last Three Centuries in England, France, Serbia, Japan and Colonial North America, with further Materials from Western Europe*. The study was embarked upon with two primary goals in mind. Firstly, the Cambridge scholars wanted to test whether the small size of northwestern European households had some effect on Europe's industrialisation and secondly, they wanted to see

<sup>3</sup> For an excellent discussion of the misrepresentation of bride age in modern literature see Chapter 4 of "The World We Have Lost" by Peter Laslett, 1965.



whether “the liberal political theory which emerged in seventeenth-century England was related both with the political theory which it replaced and with the actual structure of the society which gave its birth” (Laslett, 1972).

This decision by the Cambridge group to focus on the size and structure of nuclear families rather than building on Hajnal’s EMP work fundamentally changed the course of which all subsequent work in this field would follow (Hartman, 2004). By the time Hajnal’s work had been published in 1965, the Cambridge group had already launched their study and although their final text (*Household and Family In Past Time*, 1972) does cite Hajnal in the bibliography there is no real discussion of the European Marriage Pattern in the text. It seems like Laslett and the Cambridge scholars never took seriously the implications of Hajnal’s results until after he actually visited Cambridge later in the 1970’s.

Instead, the group’s main results confirm the dominance of nuclear household formation in preindustrial Europe. The study succeeded in challenging the prevailing sociological wisdom that multifamily households were actually much larger than nuclear ones. They found that in pre-modern contexts both household types usually contained just 4-6 people, but for different reasons. In the nuclear households of northwestern Europe, large household size was being driven by unrelated adolescent servants living with the family, and in multifamily settings elsewhere, household size was reduced by the splitting of households at various stages of evolution. However, the results of the study were largely inconclusive in determining whether or not nuclear households had an effect on economic or political change and the theory that the Western family pattern had a causal effect on north-western Europe’s path to industrialisation as resulting from smaller average household size, seemed refuted.

The group was also widely criticised for their use of computer-generated data series which some argued were not representative of European households over time and space. The group addressed these issues a decade later in a second set of comparative essays on family structure (1983).

Later work by scholars in the Cambridge group featured the use of new family reconstruction techniques using rich information collected from numerous untapped English parish registers as well as for some regions in Europe for which similar information was available between 1580 and 1837. Most noteworthy among these are E. A. Wrigley, R. S. Davies, J. E. Oeppen, & R. S. Schofield, eds. “*English Population History from Family Reconstruction, 1580-1837*” (Cambridge, 1997) and John E. Knodel, “*Demographic Behaviour in the Past: A Study of*

Fourteen German Village Populations in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century” (Cambridge, 1988). These studies are the first to offer an overview of the scope of marriage ages for males and females, as well as changes in fertility and mortality changes in the pre-industrial era and validate in more detail than ever before, earlier theories that point to marriage as the impetus for demographic shifts.

Hartman (2004:14) points out that, ironically by the time these results had been published the interest in investigations of this nature had largely petered out amongst historical demographers and had “long since lost the large and enthusiastic audience of social historians that they had enjoyed in the 1970’s and early 1980’s”. Most importantly, however, the authors themselves had avoided tackling the more interesting questions about the underlying causal relationships. In 1997 the Cambridge scholars presented their final volume of 25 years of demographic studies, publicly admitting that the “wider issues linking demographic with economic and social change [had] been almost entirely neglected, though they are ultimately of greater significance than they attempt to publish the facts on population history” (Wrigley, Davies, Oeppen, Schofield, 1997:550).

Astoundingly, after more than four decades since the detection of the EMP, not John Hajnal, nor Peter Laslett, nor any of the demographers from the Cambridge Group for the History of Population and Social structure who under Laslett’s leadership advocated the North-western European family pattern, endeavoured to discover when or why the pattern appeared in the first place or the extent of its effect on Europe’s economic development path (Hartman, 2004:11).

## **2.5 Addressing the causes of the EMP**

It was not until the 2010 publication by De Moor and van Zanden that new interest in these old questions was reignited. For the first time, an attempt at providing an explanation for the emergence of the EMP was formally presented. While their account remains tentative in many of its core arguments, it does provide an incredibly valuable point of departure from which new work on the subject can take root.

Their argument for the emergence of the EMP rests on a combination of three socio-economic and ideological factors namely (i) the shift towards consensus instead of parental authority for the formation of a marriage, (ii) the position of women in the transfer of property between husband and wife and between parents and children and (iii) the accessibility to, and the size of, the labour market (De Moor & van Zanden, 2010:4).

Their first motivation builds on the idea alluded to but never fully qualified by Hajnal, that focuses on the power relationships between spouses when entering into marriage. In the early middle ages marriage was a somewhat rudimentary institution, constituted merely by the “handing over of a girl, by her father, to the groom, the exchanging of gifts, and perhaps the girl’s *deduction in domum*, her being brought into the house of the groom or the family” (Biller quoted in De Moor & van Zanden, 2010:5). This definition of marriage slowly began to change as the Church took over responsibility for defining marriage. As De Moor and van Zanden highlight, the emergence of the EMP in North-western Europe coincided with the evolution of Roman Catholic doctrine that emphasised consent by both spouses rather than marriages that were formed against the wishes of both partners.

This argument suggests that as a result of this changing definition of marriage and the equalizing effect this had on the relative power status of consenting spouses, the bargaining power of women within marriages became stronger. Women were for the first time able to have some say in who they would eventually marry and parents of young couples had less and less authority to control the unions of their children. The power of the male household head in Europe was thus significantly diminished in comparison with other truly patriarchal societies at the time<sup>4</sup>.

Those who would criticise this explanation typically argue that the emergence of the EMP cannot be explained by the Catholic Church’s doctrine on marriage practices because the EMP arose in north-western Europe while other parts of Europe that were equally subject to Catholicism retained strong patriarchal family arrangements and non-EMP traits. While De Moor and van Zanden acknowledge the importance of this argument, they maintain the fact that the EMP ultimately dominated marriage throughout all of Western Europe west of an imaginary line from St Petersburg to Trieste that roughly corresponded with the presence of the Catholic Church in Medieval times is unlikely to be entirely coincidental. They concede however, that critics of this argument are correct in pointing out that other factors must have determined the origin of the EMP in north-western Europe, particularly in England and in the Low Countries. They therefore turn their attention to factors which they argue could have contributed to this formation and that explain why its birth place was the North Sea area.

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<sup>4</sup> De Moor and Van Zanden refer here to the difference in marriage practices between Europe and China: “[Parents] therefore let [children] find their own way in the world and hired other people’s children to do the work that in China would have been done by their own children...differences in paternal authority – strong in China, weak in Europe-explain why in Europe children were allowed to choose their wedding partner and set up their own household”.

The first of these factors centres on the transfer of property between generations and within households that distinguished north-western Europe from the South, specifically a woman's right to inherit and the ability to transfer property to and through women from husbands or relatives. De Moor and van Zanden stress the importance of timing for this kind of transfer to take place, noting that although there were many differences within Europe, brides and grooms both had property rights in their union and marriage played an important role in woman's right to access her inheritance: "...the bulk of the daughter's share of the inheritance was either transferred to her at the start of her marriage, in the form of a dowry, or at her parents' death" (2010:8). They note that inheritance upon marriage was more common in the South of Europe, while inheritance upon the death of one's parents was more prevalent in the North. In short intergenerational property transfer was more detached from marriage in the north than in the south.

De Moor and van Zanden argue that this difference in property transfer legislation in the north meant that women faced a different set of incentives that prompted them to increase their economic activities during their marriage, knowing that they had the ability to contribute towards the marital fund and could benefit financially from its appreciation. In addition, women in the north could enjoy certain financial benefits after marriage allowing for better opportunities for widows to start new businesses and potentially find new partners. This is contrasted with the incentives faced by women in the south whose personal wealth was essentially predetermined in spite of any economic activities they might have taken on during the marriage.

While the authors remain cautious about the kind of causal claims that can be made regarding the effects of property right customs on marriage patterns, they assert that there is almost certainly a relationship between the two: "If a woman had a right to her parent's inheritance without having to marry, there was no financial incentive for marriage. In contrast, the Southern dowry system created incentives for both parents and girls to arrange early marriages" arguable making it a far more paternal regime (2010:9). For these women, their share of the estate was in the form of a dowry (which would return to the wife in the event of her husband's death), the size of which was determined entirely by her family's financial status and willingness to support her, allowing for considerable control over her choice of marriage partner and marriage age by her parents. Furthermore, there was no incentive for these women to engage in any economic activities before the marriage that might make them

a more attractive to a prospective partner – a more common occurrence among their northern counterparts who could afford to wait before marriage.

Age at marriage also plays an important role here, since in the southern system a younger bride would have been easier to “sell” in the marriage market: “Her parents would have to pay a larger dowry to compensate the groom’s household for the smaller net positive contribution the bride would provide in the marital household...the younger the bride, the larger her net positive contribution to the marital household and therefore, the smaller the dowry her parents had to pay” (2010:10). In short, the south saw younger brides, earlier motherhood and less active participation of young women in the labour market as a result of the set of financial incentives designed by the more patriarchal system of property transfer rights.

The final and most fundamental explanation that De Moor and van Zanden offer builds on this notion of access to the labour market. While the abovementioned aspects of society, namely, consensus versus paternal authority and the distinction between property right customs, in all likelihood contributed to the spread of the EMP, the impetus for its establishment is ultimately fuelled by an exogenous shock namely, large population declines resulting from the Black Death after 1348.

This is not to say that prior to 1348 labour markets did not exist anywhere in Europe. All evidence suggests that well-developed labour markets already existed in some parts of Europe in which a substantial part of the population was employed in the late medieval period. However, the implications of the Black Death on the working age population (approximately 1.5 million people out of an estimated total of 4 million people died from the disease between 1348 and 1350 in England), resulted in a rising labour market with an increasing demand for both male and female labour resulting in sharp increases in real wages, particularly for women. This caused an increase in women’s earnings with the result that in some cases women were paid the same as men for the same kind of work.

De Moor and van Zanden suggest that the increased access to employment after the Black Death and the burgeoning labour market for women played a critical role in fostering a unique set of conditions under which EMP-characteristics could flourish.

## 2.6 Concluding Remarks

De Moor and van Zanden suggest that the EMP emerged from the unique power balances between husband and wife and between parents and children which differed significantly from traditional family relations elsewhere in the world at the same time. They argue that “the traditional inequalities between the sexes and the generations are caused by socioeconomic, ideological, and institutional factors” and “as women ha[d] a relatively large say in the marriage itself (as it is based on the consent of both spouses)—specifically when the women contributed to the income of their households, the particular features of the EMP—late and non-universal marriage—are the result of its relatively ‘democratic’ character”.

This study will echo the strategy of De Moor and van Zanden’s paper that suggests that the uniqueness of the more general features of the EMP are best displayed when contrasted with marriage patterns elsewhere in the world for the same time period. They do this by comparing EMP results to that of marriage patterns in China, but whether this is the most appropriate region given the nature of the comparison is debatable. Europe and China are culturally irreconcilable. That is to say, in the fundamental societal institutions of organised religion, class structure and property rights, the two differ greatly. It is questionable whether the EMP ought to be compared with China at all, given that in all likelihood, underlying cultural differences could conceal the distinct features of the EMP.

This paper compares a more culturally similar society. The Cape Colony provides an experiment in which we can view Europeans of the same cultural upbringing, constrained by similar laws governing their daily lives and divided by comparable class barriers to those found in Europe. It creates an opportunity to test De Moor and van Zanden’s three hypotheses for the underlying causes of the EMP. If valid, when confronted with similar social institutions namely, consensus versus paternal authority in the formation of marriage; distinct property rights governing the transfer of property between parents and children and between husbands and wives; and the access to and size of the labour market, particularly the involvement of women in the labour market; the Cape Colony ought to display a similar emergence of EMP-like marriage patterns. Where these institutions do hold but marriage patterns differ, new explanations must be sought.

Using genealogical records to track the ancestry of colonial settlers in South Africa the following chapter will focus on the evolution of marriage in the Cape Colony for the period 1652-1850. It will look primarily at the persistence of the EMP and attempt to determine whether it continued to characterise the marriages of European descendants outside of Europe, or whether a distinct marriage pattern emerged in the Cape Colony in the eighteenth, nineteenth and early twentieth century.

## Chapter 3: Cape Colony Marriage in Perspective

### 3.1 A unique colonial case study

What sets South Africa's economic history apart from similar colonial settlements, according to Charles Feinstein (2005:1), is its unique endowment of human and natural resources. Other societies typically possess one or two of the factors that Feinstein stresses are so important in creating a developing society. South Africa, he argues, possessed all three, the combination of which proved to be particularly valuable. These factors are (i) the presence of a large indigenous population, which in the case of South Africa was embodied by Khoisan and African natives that already occupied the Southern tip of Africa prior to the arrival of any European colonists, (ii) the mounting presence, from the nineteenth century in particular, of a large and increasing European settler population and (iii) rich mineral resource deposits particularly gold and diamonds, discovered in late nineteenth century, prior to which the economy depended almost entirely on agriculture with large parts of the country lacking adequate rainfall and other requirements for successful farming.

With such a unique historical endowment, it is astonishing that little empirical investigation into the demographic characteristics of European settlers in the Cape exists (Cilliers & Fourie, 2012). All of the empirical evidence on Cape Colony Marriage patterns (often cited in South African historian's accounts of Cape Colony societal development) currently stems from two studies. The first is the pioneering work of Robert Ross (1975) entitled *The 'White' Population of South Africa in the Eighteenth Century* and the second is *The Anatomy of a Colonial Settler Population: Cape Colony 1657-1750* by Leonard Guelke (1988). Ross and Guelke differ in their choice of primary data: Guelke makes use of the annual *opgaaf*, or the census of the Cape Colonial population, while Ross makes use of those individuals who were assessed for *opgaaf* and also appeared in the second edition of C. C. de Villiers's volumes of genealogies entitled *Geslags-registers van Ou Kaapse Families* as well as those included in J. A. Heese's *Die Herkoms van die Afrikaner*.

Perhaps due to limitations in their respective data sources these demographic estimates are only calculated from settlement in 1652 until the mid eighteenth century (1760 in Ross's study and 1750 in Guelke's study). Little is known about what marriage looked like for typical settlers in the latter part of the eighteenth century or nineteenth century and how events over these centuries might have affected the way in which households were formed.



The aim of this chapter is, firstly, to provide an overview of the results of Ross and Guelke's studies (these will hereafter be referred to as the benchmark results) together with a discussion of the implications of these marriage patterns on early settler life. Secondly, I will provide the necessary expansion, both in size and scope of the benchmark results using the latest genealogical registers as primary data source. Estimates of age at first marriage for male and female settlers for the eighteenth to mid-nineteenth century, using a dataset far greater than used by either of the benchmark studies will be calculated.

### **3.2 European heritage, religion and social structure**

Notions of marriage, including the characteristics individuals might consider in their choice of spouse and decisions about family life and size amongst European settlers at the Cape, had to have derived from the cultural and religious practices of VOC employees' homelands. Distinguishing exactly which customs might have come from which region of a culturally heterogeneous Europe, however, is not straightforward. VOC employees arriving at the Cape, who would eventually form the bulk of the settler population, typically came from the lowest class of North-western European society (Mitchell, 2007:3).

The end of Thirty Years War in 1648 saw European soldiers and refugees widely dispersed across the continent. Immigrants from Germany, Scandinavia, and Switzerland journeyed to Holland in the hope of finding employment, often lured by what would today be viewed as human trafficking organisations, in the form of crooked boarding house owners in Amsterdam (known as *seelenverkäufers* or soul-sellers), who worked as labour recruiters for the VOC:

*Commonly impoverished migrants to the city found that the only alternative to starvation was to enjoy the hospitality of such individuals who in turn recouped their investments by selling the labour of their unsuspecting guests to the VOC (Dooling, 2007:18).*

Beyond this, the company filled its ranks with farm labourers, artisans, and unskilled workers from both rural and urban areas who spoke a number of variations of French, Dutch, German and Scandinavian languages. Soldiers were contractually obliged to remain in the employment of the Company for a minimum of five years excluding the six months that the journey could have taken and were not permitted to return home during this time (Kearney, n/d.:2)

In their well-known account of the *Shaping of South African Society*, Richard Elphick and Hermann Giliomee (1989:524) raise the question as to whether ideas or institutions imported from the Netherlands could have played an influential role in the development of South African society. They suggest that similar to other imperial powers of the day, the Dutch believed themselves to be culturally and religiously superior to the rest of the world possessing a type of ingrained ‘cultural chauvinism’. Scholars of comparative race relations believe that the Dutch and English, who were the chief colonizing powers in South Africa, “moved beyond the spiritual unity of medieval Catholicism and the ordered hierarchy of feudalism, into the ferment of early capitalism, and hence that their populations had become more individualistic and more mobile, and their institutions more egalitarian and democratic” (Elphick & Giliomee, 1989:525).

According to Elphick and Giliomee colonial life was not made up of multifaceted social stratification but was characterized by a distinct cleavage in the population, namely, the hardworking citizens and the poor whom they detested. In most colonies, it is suggested that this type of ‘bifurcation’ became institutionalised into a two-tiered society in which Europeans dominated the rest. However, historians have generally emphasised religion rather than racism as the shaping force of societal inequalities in the Cape Colony. The VOC mandated Protestantism (although it also accepted Lutherans) amongst its employees and it is suggested that amongst Calvinists nearly all believed that Christian Europe was superior to members of any other race. In a discussion of the potential role religion may have played in South Africa’s legacy of racial discrimination, Patterson (1953) argues that:

*It would seem that primitive Calvinism, as modified by two centuries of increasing isolation and dispersion, and the imported and increasingly ingrained habit of slave-owning played a particularly important role in the ordering of attitudes and relationships...and in fostering the development of a bi-racial white/non-white society instead of the more flexible, pluralistic one imported from the Far East.*

Elphick and Giliomee question the extent to which Calvinism shaped early life at the Cape. They argue that the distinction between Calvinism versus Catholicism in terms of the emphasis placed on exclusivity with reference to non-European individuals is not clear. That is, Calvinist missionaries at the Cape did not prohibit intermarriage nor did they place less emphasis on the “equality of persons before God”. Furthermore, they argue, it is not clear as to how deeply Calvinism actually permeated society at the Cape or in which regions, classes,

and forms it became dominant. They suggest that it has not yet concretely been shown that Calvinism had any real impact on life at the Cape before 1830, despite the inclination to assume that there would have been a higher level of Calvinist influence in the “pious” seventeenth century when most immigrants were from Holland or Huguenots from France fleeing to escape religious persecution. They conclude that it was the VOC rather than the Church that shaped Cape society at the outset, by “creating distinctive legal status groups that remained in place until the 1820’s and 1830’s” namely, Company servants; freeburghers; slaves; and ‘Hottentots’ or Khoisan (Elphick & Giliomee, 1989:529)

Within the population of free settlers a vast disparity in wealth characterised the Cape. Leonard Guelke and Robert Shell (1983:265) argue that as early as the beginning of the eighteenth century, a “small, wealthy, economically active and politically powerful landed gentry” held the majority of wealth and controlled the authorities. Wayne Dooling (2007) qualifies the use of the term gentry stating that while the term typically denotes a society fractured along class divisions, in the Cape, these cleavages were reduced by ties of patronage, kinship and marriage:

*A most important aspect of community life was the circulation of land and wealth. In this regard, Cape landlords constructed a durable political economy in which the rules governing the circulation of land and wealth were defined in community and family terms, not dictated by an informal market over which they had little control. Although slaveholders had of necessity to participate in a market economy, it was their membership of a moral community that protected them against the sometimes detrimental consequences of participation in that economy.*

Otto Mentzel (1944:98), a resident of the Cape Colony between 1732 and 1740 provides a useful typology to describe the different class structures that evolved within the free burgher population at the Cape. He divides the Cape’s settler population into four classes. The first he calls the wealthy “absentee-landlords” who mostly lived in Cape Town. These men enjoyed a very comfortable life and did not partake in the day-to-day management of their many estates. Instead they employed *knechten* (white labourers) who cared for their rural properties which they would frequent only once or twice a year.

A second class of settlers consisted of landlords who resided on their farms and were largely responsible for the production that would supply the Cape Town market. They possessed ‘excellent farms, paid for and lucrative’. These individuals produced more than their

subsistence needs and lived ‘like a gentry’. Many employed *knechten* but for the most part they personally oversaw production on their estates.

The third class were the hardworking farmers who laboured alongside their slaves. All members of such households, including women and children participated in agricultural production. Such a farmer was ‘both master and knecht’. Lastly there were the poorer stock farmers of the far interior. Estate inventories of arable farmers from the middle of the eighteenth century confirm such disparities of wealth (Fourie, 2012).

Dooling (2007:162) expands the work of Guelke and Shell, with the aim of better defining this so-called Cape landed gentry in greater historical detail that had previously been achieved. He concludes that the Cape’s elite can be classified as a gentry for the following reasons: (i) in line with Mentzel’s description of the first class of settlers, they took active control over agricultural production on their farms by personally commanding their slave labour force; (ii) by controlling local branches of law and power, these elite were aware of their superiority in relation to the rest of the population, particularly the poorer settlers, and as a result they monopolized rule over the countryside; (iii) despite commitment to the partible inheritance system a great degree of landed stability existed within particular localities from the middle of the eighteenth century to the time of slave emancipation.

Van Duin and Ross (1987:88), however, have long since been opposed to the notion of classifying the Cape’s elite as landed gentry. They concede that it is theoretically possible that the general increase in wealth in the colony from the slow and steady expansion of agricultural production could have been limited to a small group of wealthy landed gentry and admit that it has concretely been shown that the distribution of wealth between the rich and poor farmers was very wide. Nevertheless, they maintain indications are clear that the holding of property remained widely spread in the Colony and argue that this did not result in the development of a small group of very rich men monopolising production in the colony:

*In 1814 although eleven men owned six or more farms, 73% of Cape farms were in the possession of individuals whose only agrarian property it was. (Van Duin & Ross, 1987:88).*

Van Duin and Ross’s argument is more compatible with a view which sees a large number of Cape farmers as enterprising agrarian capitalists, who were increasingly demanding in their place in the government of a colony in which they were the dominant, but not the ruling class

(Van Duin & Ross, 1987:88). This debate goes beyond the scope of this paper, but it is crucial that the importance of class structure, the degree of inequality between citizens and property rights and transfer legislation not be overlooked in an investigation of how marriage patterns evolved at the Cape and the importance of the role of women in the intergenerational transfer of property that allowed for the making of a stable landed class.

### **3.3 Early Cape marriage customs**

Social networks established through marriage at the Cape were mostly local, limited to within the colony rather than across international boundaries under the greater imperial umbrella. Local marriages among the elite often reflected European connections particularly among the French Huguenots who immigrated as a group. These unions mirrored the types of household systems present in Europe. A case can be made for European families who, while honouring connections to their mother country, made marriage alliances within local networks demonstrating the “importance of local kinship in creating Cape colonial identity that differentiated settlers from indigenous Africans and Asian slaves” (Mitchell, 2007:1).

The original free population of the Cape Colony was largely sustained by the immigration of bachelors (VOC company men). Marrying into indigenous elite families was not practiced in the Cape as it was in Southeast Asian settlements for example and familial marriage connections only began to take root by the time the first-born Cape generation reached marriageable age. Mitchell (2007:4) stresses though that “family networks, endogamy and repeated affinal marriage” practices were established as early as the second generation of settlers and persisted throughout the eighteenth century.

The early government at the Cape believed that a prerequisite for a stable colony was the establishment of a large number of married farmers with large families, as opposed to a high number of bachelors. Under the leadership of Commander Simon van der Stel, there was an early attempt made to transport Dutch orphan girls to the Cape. While they did succeed in shipping a handful of girls from Amsterdam and Rotterdam, the immigration of young men in to Cape was much larger than that of young girls. Despite the efforts of the Political Council there were too few women of marriageable age in the Cape (Biewenga, 1999:211). Ross notes that in 1713 the sex ratio stood at 180 adult men to 100 adult women.

This deficit of suitable marriage partners was no doubt felt by the young men themselves who struggled to find brides. According to Guelke’s calculations (1988:463) approximately one-third of all adult men in the 1705 census never married. This unbalanced sex ratio also meant

that women were more likely to remarry than men. The greatest imbalance of the sexes was found in the frontier districts where there were 227 men for every 100 women. Cape Town and the immediate surroundings were slightly less extreme, having 174 settler men for every 100 settler women in Cape Town and 193 men to 100 women in the surrounding rural district<sup>5</sup>.

Inter-group marriage was also not uncommon<sup>6</sup>. The 1705 census shows that 9 white settler men (3.6 percent of all married men) married free black wives. The fact that these unions were officially recorded is important because they demonstrate a society that was prepared to legitimize marriage between whites and free blacks. It is very likely that there were many more unrecorded “illegitimate” relationships between white men and women of other races including free blacks, Khoisan and slave women.

Even so, Ross (1999:28) reports that knechten found it difficult to marry into farming families. He cites the rather dismal tale of Claas van Mook, a knecht living and working on the farm of one Hendrik Neef near Riebeeck-Kasteel in the Swartland district. Claas approached his employer asking for his step-daughter, Catherine Knoetsen’s hand in marriage. Neef allegedly forbid the union admitting that he would have allowed it if Claas had come from a family of standing: “*Neen...aan jou niet, maar dat je een boeren seun was, dan wel.*” Tragically, this ended in an altercation in which Neef was killed and for which Claas was executed. This is just one infamous case in which marriage could not triumph over entrenched class divisions and Ross concedes that there were many knechten who in spite of these prejudices married happily into farming families.

It is crucial to note, however, that neither the early years of settlement, when choice of marriage partner may have been somewhat limited due to population size, nor later in the eighteenth century, when the size of the European settler population had expanded rapidly due to high birth rates and ongoing immigration, did home language or religious denomination appear to have defined marriage patterns at the Cape. Mitchell (2007:3) emphasizes that choice of spouse rested on reasons other than place of origin or theological

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<sup>5</sup> Guelke’s estimates do not include the non-settler white population of white farm servants (*knechts*) and Company personnel. The addition of these groups he suggests would substantially increase the imbalance between sexes in the white population.

<sup>6</sup> For a detailed account of inter-group and inter-racial marriage at the Cape from 1652 to 1795 see H.F. Heese’s *Groep Sonder Grense* (2005).

persuasion and marriage across class divisions was more acceptable in the Cape than it might have been in Europe:

*Thus endogamy, rather than being used to create or sustain a narrow elite, was instead a component of a more general settler identity that embraced landed gentry, middling stock farmers and households of modest means.*

### **3.4 Huguenot marriage**

The Revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685 by Louis XIV banning Protestantism in France resulted in a large number of French Huguenots fleeing to Holland where Protestants remained protected. Since Holland would not be able to accommodate such a large number of individuals on a permanent basis, the VOC saw the situation as an opportunity to relocate a number of Huguenot refugees to the Cape where it was hoped that their practical skills (such skills as were lacking in the Colony) of wheat farming, olive growing, wine and brandy making and cattle rearing, could be put to productive use in the still sparsely settled community<sup>7</sup>.

Huguenots wishing to immigrate to the Cape would only be accepted by the VOC on the condition that they would become settler farmers. The VOC's main motive behind this naturalisation was to prevent Huguenots from becoming an autonomous group, with the kind of political liberties they had previously enjoyed in France and ultimately avert them from establishing their own "state within a state" (Wijnsbeek, 2007:97). Thus between 1688 and 1700, approximately one hundred and seventy French Huguenot refugees arrived at the Cape with little more than the clothes on their backs, and in line with most VOC agreements were required to stay for at least five years (Hunt, 2005:136).

Huguenots were not only supplied with a free ticket to the Cape and stipend according to their circumstances, but were provided upon arrival at the Cape with as much land as they could cultivate and any farming equipment, seed or cattle they might require and a sum of money on credit which they were allowed to repay in kind, in the form of vegetables, fruit, grain, meat and wine. "This type of repayment was most convenient to the Company, always intent on ensuring the revictualling of its fleet and afraid of running short of indispensable produce" (Kearney, n/d:3).

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<sup>7</sup> Fourie & Von Fintel (2011) show that the specialised wine-making skills of the Huguenots provided the group with a sustainable competitive advantage, supporting an explanation of initial and persistent productivity differences between settler groups at the Cape.



The VOC allegedly had mixed feelings towards the Huguenots at the Cape. Pleased with the notion that the colony would benefit from the skills of the new settlers, the Company endeavoured to financially assist the essentially destitute Huguenot settlers in the form of further financial aid, “but when this extra help and the privileges for the Huguenots caused resentments among the other inhabitants of the Cape, the VOC decided in 1700 to officially stop the immigration of Huguenots to South Africa” (Wijsenbeek, 2007:98).

Cultural adaptation took place rapidly since new identities had to be shaped in a settler environment. Few Huguenots had worked as farmers in their homeland, so not only did they have to adapt to the cultural traditions of the Dutch and German farmers they had been placed amongst, but also to a new means of livelihood (Whiting-Spilhaus, 1949:54). The Huguenot settlers were initially considered outsiders by the Dutch and German settler population and social relations between the groups remained strained until the beginning of the eighteenth century.

At first, French single men vowed never to take Dutch wives and Patricia Romero (2003:32) argues that the Huguenots attempted to “cling to their French-ness through marriage and naming patterns amongst themselves” and apart from those who were already married upon arrival, the majority of Huguenots who did marry took French spouses. But the two groups quickly became allied in their struggle against Governor W. A. Van der Stel’s economic autocracy (Kearney, n.d:25), and inter-group marriage was not uncommon and could be seen as early as first or second marriages. Similar to the rest of the Cape’s settler population, there were a number of Huguenot men who never married. Romero suggests that the language barrier may have played a role in the prolonged bachelorhood that characterised the Cape but cites the shortage of women at the Cape as the main reason.

Through a systematic study of Huguenot marriage patterns at the Cape, Romero (2003:44) hoped to show that daughters of Huguenot refugees were more likely to marry outside of their group on their first marriage, and if widowed would most likely marry back into the French population bringing back any assets they may have accumulated from the first marriage. Contrary to her initial suspicions about inter-group marriage trends, she found that more daughters of Huguenot refugees actually married out of their group on their second marriage rather than back in. Moreover, she notes a tendency of siblings to marry into the same families as their older sisters or brothers. These marriage strategies were potentially not



preference-driven but developed rather out of economic and locality motivations due to the partible inheritance system at the Cape.

Both Romero and Mitchell's work on Huguenot marriage patterns sheds considerable light on how closely intertwined inheritance laws and marriage practices were at the Cape. Despite the prohibition of marriage between first cousins dictated by Protestant doctrine, the practice was very common at the Cape. German- and Dutch-speaking immigrants might have accepted the notion of marriage between non-nuclear family members despite admonition by the church as it was not thought of as extraordinary in their home countries. More importantly, intra-family marriage made sense in the context of a system of partible inheritance and appeared to become a dominant marriage strategy amongst families of all nationality at the Cape. This marriage strategy as well as the extent to which dynastic marriages contributed to the maintenance of the Cape landed gentry will be explored in greater detail in the following chapter.

### **3.5 Some benchmark results**

Before an attempt to understand the underlying causes of Cape Colony marriage patterns can be undertaken, it is first necessary to consolidate existing empirical and anecdotal evidence of early marriage pattern at the Cape. The results of Ross and Guelke's studies show that age at first marriage for men was relatively late across all districts. Furthermore Guelke reports that men married noticeably later than women, being on average 13 years older than women at first marriage. However, this difference was not typically as simple as a 30 year old man marrying a 17 year old girl: 10 to 30 per cent of men married widows who were considerably older than themselves. In fact, widows often married men who had not yet been married before and were approximately the same age or younger than themselves. But widowers were more likely to marry women who had never been married before than to marry widows. In these cases the age differences could have been beyond twenty years.

Table 5 shows Guelke's age at first marriage estimates for 1705 and 1731 by sex and district. The estimates reported by Ross on the other hand differ notably from Guelke's, the main reason being that Ross includes free blacks as part of the "white" population. The age at first marriage for men in Ross's sample is just over 25 years which he admits may be considered low. Table 6 shows Ross's estimates of age at first marriage for men by age of wife.

Table 5: Age at marriage of first-time married settlers at the Cape

District	Males				Females			
	1705		1731		1705		1731	
	Age	N	Age	N	Age	N	Age	N
Cape Town	32.7	14	28.1	36	18	21	19.3	63
Rural	28.8	25	27.4	124	16.8	34	18.8	122
Frontier	30.3	24	25.4	47	17	25	18.6	57
Colony	30.2	63	27.1	207	17.2	80	18.5	242

Note: Table is based on adults who were married at the time of the census for the first time  
Source: Guelke, L. 1988. Pg. 463.

Table 6: Age of husbands by age of wives at first marriage at the Cape, before 1760

Age of wife	No. of husbands older	No. of husbands younger	Mean age of husbands	Median age of husbands	Mean age difference between spouses*
Under 20	85	6	25.2	23.5	93
20-24	32	15	25.3	24.9	33
25-29	3	7	23.9	22.6	-48
Over 30	1	8	26.9	24.6	-114
Total	121	36	25.3	23.1	66

\*Age in months. Positive values indicate that the husband was older  
Source: Ross (1975:224)

There was considerable pressure on girls to marry young, the result being that teen marriage amongst females was very common. Guelke reports age 15 as the mode for first marriage for females in the 1705 census; 18 as the mean in Cape Town; 16.8 in the Rural District; and 17.0 in the frontier district. Ross's estimates for women's age at first marriage appear to be closer in line with Guelke's, reporting a mean age for women of 21 and a median age of 19 years and six months at first marriage.

These estimates are in line with the general impression of life at the Cape for this early period. According to the Chief Archivist for the Union of South Africa:

*At the Cape the increase was numerically greater than was usual in other parts of the world. It was quite common for girls of fifteen or sixteen and young men a few years older to marry and have a family of ten or fifteen. These early marriages made the women look at least ten years older than their European sisters, and before middle age made them stout, a characteristic noticed in a number of Cape ladies (Botha, 1926:41-44).*

Marriages in this early period were relatively stable. For settler men, first marriages lasted 23.3 years on average and there was little difference in mean marriage lengths between Cape Town and its surroundings; however males from the frontier Drakenstein had longer marriages with a mean length of 25 years. Interestingly, these estimates were not contingent on the end of the marriage being due to the death of the husband or the wife. Guelke reports that mean marriage lengths for marriages that ended as a result of the death of the husband or as a result of the death of the wife were identical. Table 7 presents Guelke's findings on the marriage stability of first-time married settlers.

Table 7: Length of marriage of first-time married settlers

District	Males				Females			
	1705		1731		1705		1731	
	Marriage Length	N	Marriage Length	N	Marriage Length	N	Marriage Length	N
Cape								
Town	23.1	15	21.4	53	21.3	11	27.3	17
Rural	22.2	43	27	89	21.7	25	25.5	43
Frontier	25	31	25.3	35	23.9	10	21.1	12
Colony	23.3	89	25	177	22.1	46	25.1	72

Source: Guelke, L. (1988: 466).

Ross too highlights the fact that remarriage of both widows and widowers was common, swift and more frequent among men than women, citing the potential effects of higher mortality among women given the dangers of childbirth and the absence of male deaths in

war; as well as the possibility that middle aged men were more likely to be able to find a suitable marriage partner than a woman of the same age (although this seems unlikely given the unbalanced sex ratio and the frequency of older women marrying younger men is recorded). Table 8 shows that women who married immigrants were more likely to remarry than those who did not.

Table 8: Remarriage rates at the Cape before 1760

	No.	No. remarrying	Proportion remarrying
Women marrying immigrants	95	21	22%
Women not marrying immigrants	201	33	16%
Total women	296	54	18%
Men immigrants	82	18	22%
Men non-immigrants	173	35	20%
Total men	255*	53	21%

\*The number of men included is smaller than the number of women as only those men whose marriage to women in the sample was their first were included.

Source: Ross (1975:225)

Guelke reports that second and third marriages accounted for 4.2 percent of adult males and 14.7 percent of adult females. Widows were therefore more pressured to remarry with the result that most remarried within 2 years of husband's death while widowers typically remarried between 2-3 years after wife's death. However, there were also a number of widows who did not remarry. Guelke and Ross both suggest that remarriage patterns were more affected by the imbalanced sex-ratios than by life-expectancy differences between genders<sup>8</sup>.

### 3.6 New data sources

This chapter now addresses the need for the expansion of the existing knowledge about Cape Colony marriage patterns beyond the mid-eighteenth century. This study makes use of a similar data source, namely genealogical registers of European settlers at the Cape, but on a far greater scale than has been attempted before.

Historical demography estimates often provide an essential point of departure upon which the reconstruction of socio-economic circumstances can take place. Paradoxically, historical

<sup>8</sup> Guelke's life span estimates for the period are provided in Appendix A.

records tend to have more complete and reliable quantitative information about birth, death and marriage in the past than about prices or production, the more traditionally used indices for measuring standards of living and welfare (Wrigley 1969). With the family regarded as the most universal of all institutions it is natural that it forms the basic unit of demographic analysis. Genealogical records are therefore a fitting data source for a study that aims to investigate marriage patterns in a historical context.

This study uses the 1986 edition of Heese's new genealogical registers published by the Genealogical Institute of South Africa (2008), which contains complete family registers of all settler families from 1652 to approximately 1830 as well as those of new progenitors of settler families up to 1867. Consequently, the dataset created for this research allows for the calculation of historical demographic estimates from a sample size far larger than has ever been attempted using South African data.

The new series is compiled from the baptism and marriage records of the Dutch Reformed Church archives in Cape Town. Where possible, this was supplemented with information gathered from marriage documents of the courts of Cape Town, Graaff-Reinet, Tulbagh, Colesberg which was collected from a card index in the Cape Archives Depot. Much of the information was also obtained from death notices in the estate files of Cape Town and Bloemfontein. Information was also taken from published works of inter alia D.F. du Toit Malherbe: *Family register of the South African nation* (1966), I. Mitford-Barberton: *Some frontier families* (1968) and various genealogies on individual families. The new GISA dataset<sup>9</sup> covers 14,048 families with information on 401,602 individuals between 1652 and 2007.

Mistakes inevitably crop up in work involving information that was collected from various sources and which was then rewritten several times before publication. In the compilation of the South African Genealogies, many of the original documents were also lost, errors sometimes occurred in the documents themselves, and in others writing was faded, indistinct and sometimes almost illegible. In the full data set of 401,602 entries there are 139,739 entries that are complete in terms of a birth date and baptism date. By calculating the average interval between the birth date and baptism date of these individuals, it becomes clear that on

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<sup>9</sup> See Cilliers & Fourie (2012) for a more detailed description of the data sources and the data capturing process. An excerpt is provided in Appendix B.

average, individuals were baptized within the first year of their lives. Accordingly, in cases where the birth date of an individual is omitted in the registers, we have used the individual's baptism date as a proxy for their birth.

Before any estimates of marriage age can be undertaken a number of potential data concerns must be addressed. The first questions the representativeness of the GISA data of the actual historical population. While the registers are complete up until 1869, it does contain information on individuals up until 2007. This information only exists, however, where families have taken it upon themselves to keep information on their family trees up to date with record keepers at the South African Genealogical Institute. This calls into question the representativeness of the registers after 1867, since we cannot know what kind of a bias this kind of self selection into the registers could create. Figure 1 provides a comparison of the sample size with estimates of the total population over the period<sup>10</sup>. The close correlation between the sample and total population of the eighteenth century has already weakened by the mid-nineteenth century, and growth in the sample slows considerably relative to the total population by the turn of the twentieth century.

Secondly, the representativeness of the marriage dummy must be considered. Figure 2 provides a comparison of the sample size with the presence of a first marriage dummy. There is a close correlation between the sample size and the marriage dummy with the marriage dummy remaining a relatively fixed proportion of the sample for all periods of interest. As a result of the possible bias in the sample after the second half of the nineteenth century, this study will only provide estimates up to 1850. While this limits the scope of the analysis that can be provided to some extent, the estimates calculated in this chapter still expand on existing knowledge of marriage patterns in the Cape by a century.

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<sup>10</sup> Comparisons are only provided for each year that a population estimate is available.

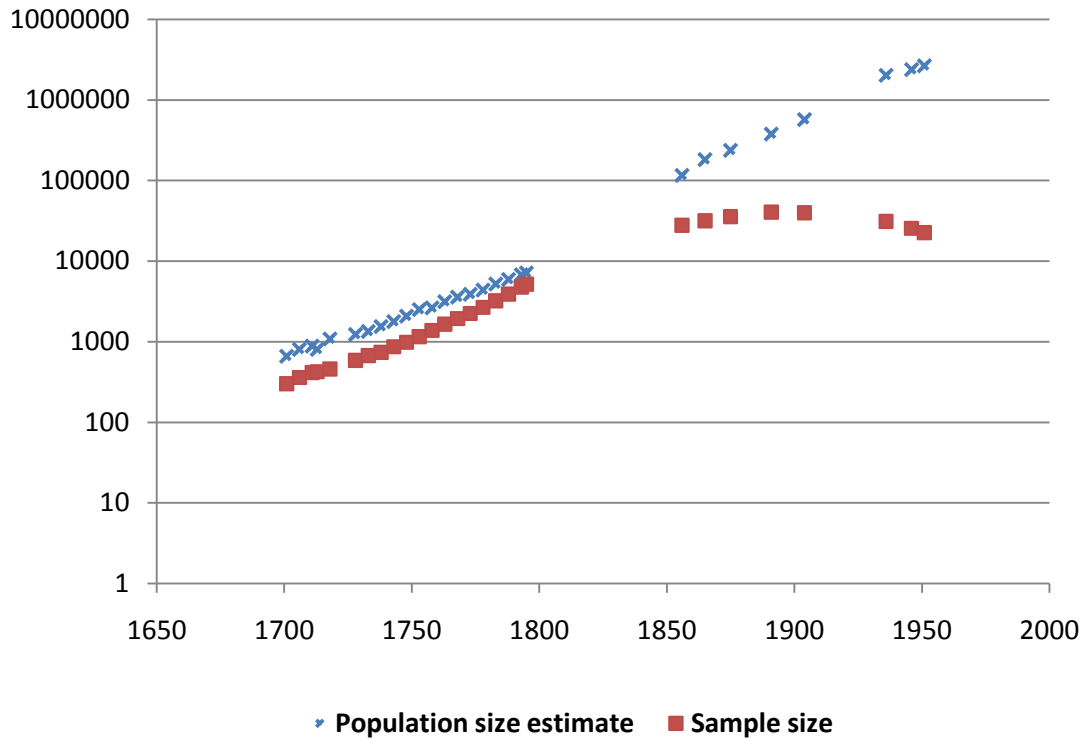


Figure 1: Comparison of sample size and population estimates  
Source: Cilliers and Fourie (2012)

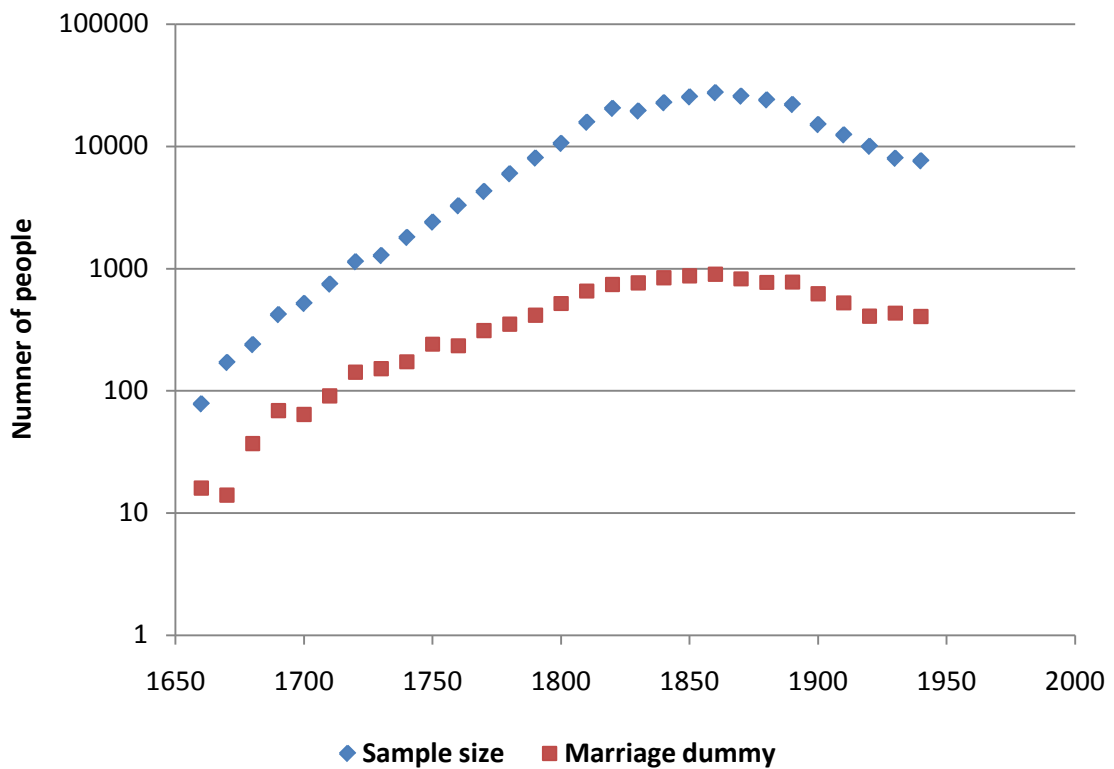


Figure 2: Comparison of sample size and marriage dummy  
Source: GISA (2008)

A final concern is the unbalanced age–sex ratio of the population as already touched on in the overview of early Cape Colony marriage. Hajnal questions how the “overall account might be balanced” in a society where almost 100 percent of women marry while there is a surplus of females in the population. This is pertinent in the European context where traditionally there is a surplus of females with resulting spinsters as a “normal condition, occasionally aggravated by war” (Hajnal, 1965:127).

Hajnal suggests that the ratio of the total number of men to the total number of women in the population, while often cited in this context is in actual fact of little importance. What is important rather is the ratio of males to females in the population at “prime marriageable ages”. He notes at the time of writing (1965) that the situation in England was that women far outnumbered men:

*Yet so far as availability for marriage is concerned there is a shortage of women. The ‘surplus women’ are mainly widows over 60. It is probable that in eighteenth century Europe this ratio was much less favourable to women’s chances of marriage than in many non-Western populations. There is, of course, always an excess of boys at birth, some 105 male births for every 100 female births. Male mortality is heavier than female mortality and in eighteenth century Europe the excess of males dying was probably sufficient, not only to produce equality of the sexes by the marriageable age, but also to create a female surplus (Hajnal, 1965:127).*

Gallman (1984:612) suggests, however, that mean age difference does not necessarily depend entirely on societal norms or individuals preferences. He suggests that at the aggregate level, an imbalanced sex ratio will affect mean age differences between spouses. In a society where men outnumber women, he argues that the competition between brides to find a husband will drive brides’ ages down while men will typically marry later or not at all.

This confirms the results found for the Cape Colony. In the earliest period (1700-1750) for which I could create an age-sex distribution for the Cape, men far outnumbered women in every age cohort as shown in Figure 3 below. This confirms both Ross and Guelke’s unbalanced sex-ratio figures for the early eighteenth century.



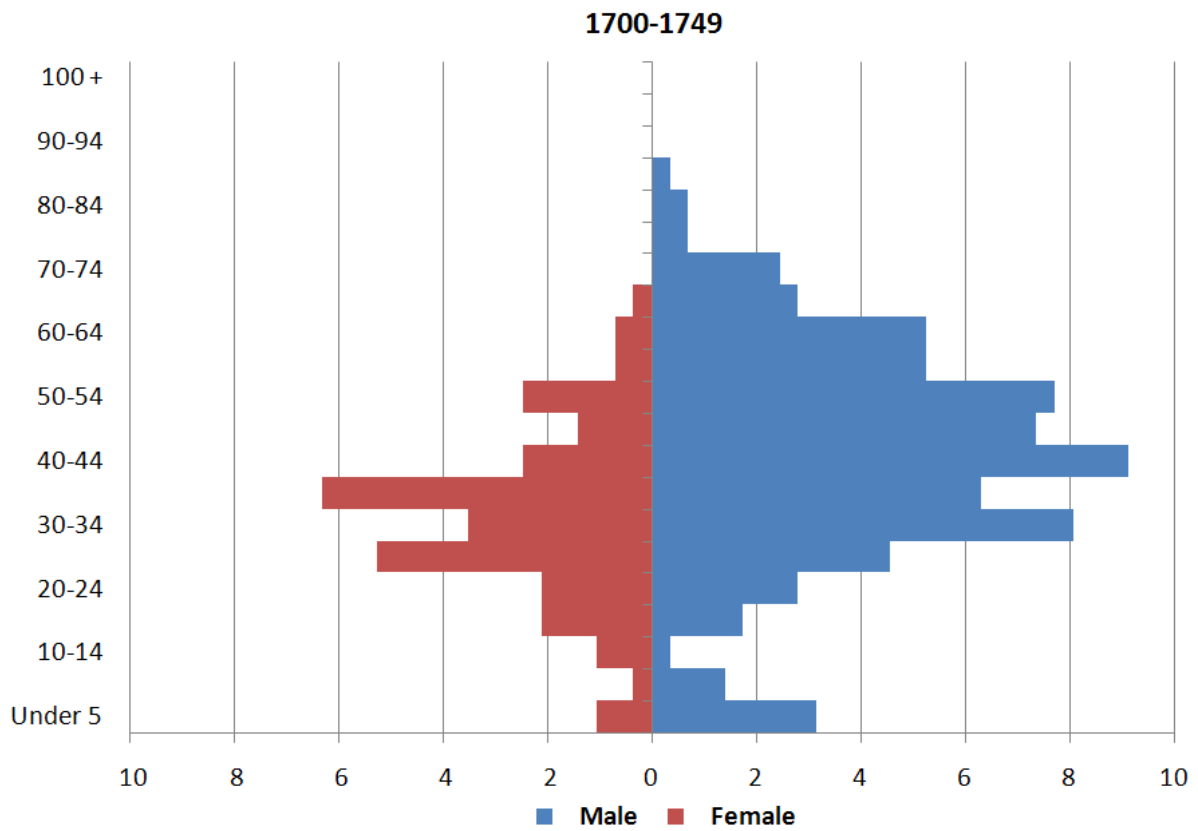


Figure 3: Gender pyramid by age at death, 1700-1749.

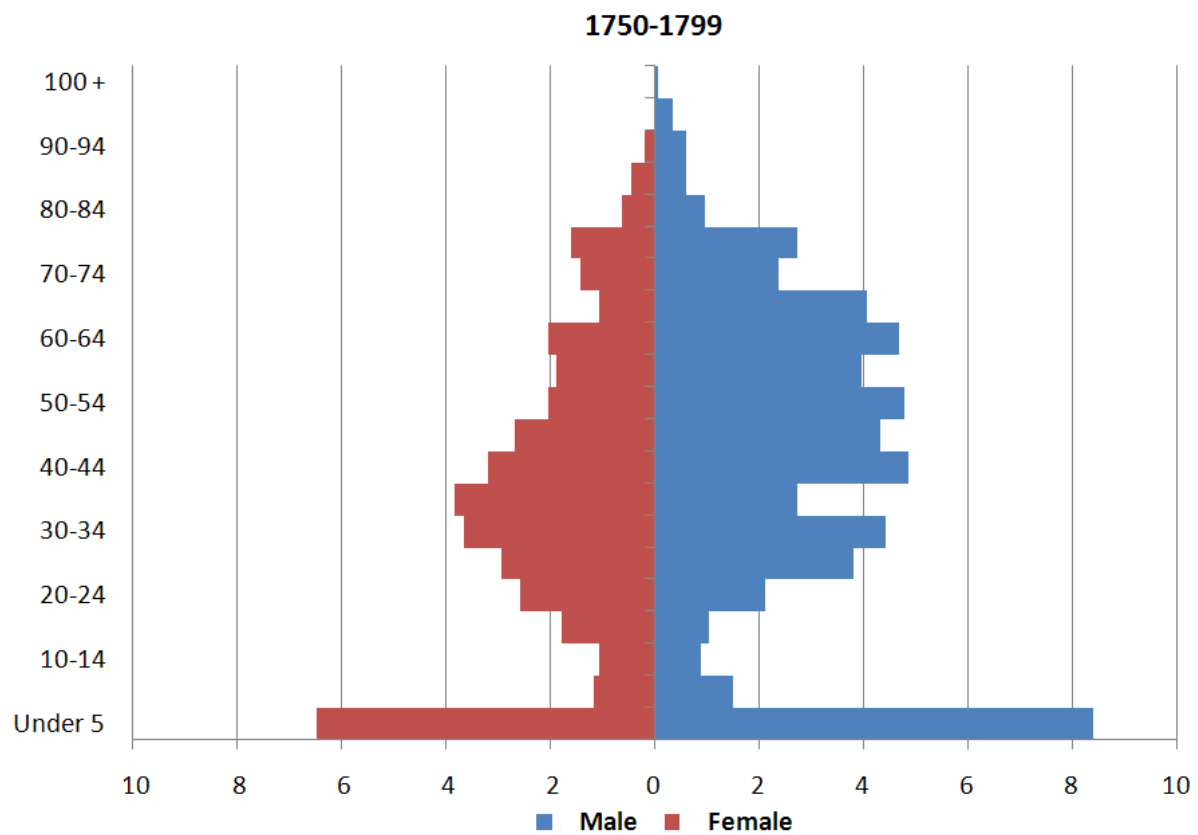


Figure 4: Gender pyramids by age at death, 1749-1799.

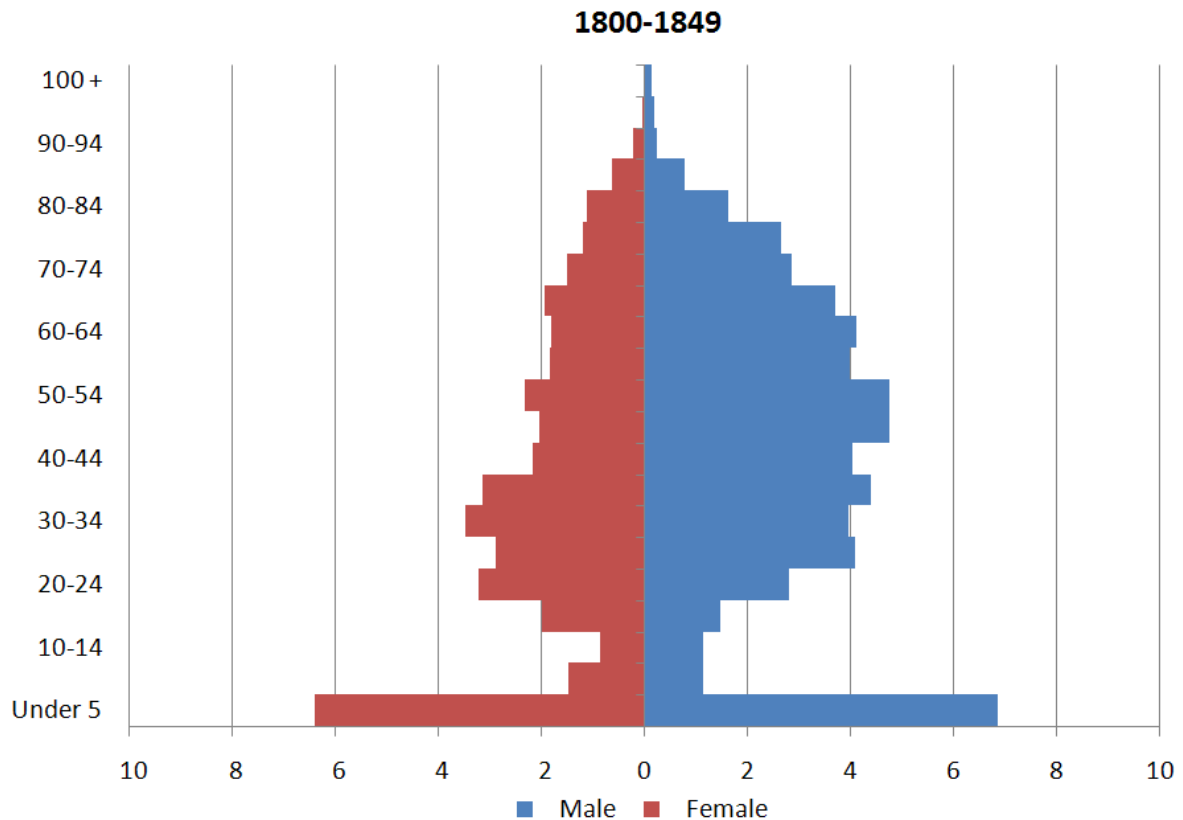


Figure 5: Gender pyramid by age at death, 1800-1849.

Expanding the existing knowledge of settler demography using the new dataset uncovers that from the middle of the eighteenth century onwards; the age-sex ratio of men and women at the Cape becomes far more balanced and looks more comparable to the traditional pyramid shape that one would expect to see in this kind of distribution as shown in Figures 4 and 5. The implications of this balancing out of men and women in the Cape is arguably the most fundamental contribution this paper offers to the explanation of the evolution of marriage patterns at the Cape that is posited in the following chapter.

### 3.7 New results: expanding our knowledge of settler marriage

What remains is the task of calculating new marriage age estimates for the Cape up until the mid-nineteenth century. The distribution of marriages by age, and the mean age at marriage calculated from it, provides perhaps the most natural approach to study marriage given the data at hand. In the Cape Colony data, the unhappy task of matching each marriage certificate with the baptismal certificates was undertaken by the creators of the South African Genealogical Registers. This saved considerable time and effort since calculating age at first marriage was now entirely straightforward. A new variable called “age at first marriage” was constructed by subtracting individual’s birth or baptism year from the year of first marriage.

Table 9 presents the new results calculated by half century periods for the Cape Colony. Similar to Guelke's results for the earliest period, I find that men tended to marry women that were significantly younger than themselves, although this trend seems to disappear over time. According to Ross's estimates for the period before 1760 the mean difference in age between husband and wife is five years and six months (Ross 1975:224). The new estimates seem to largely confirm this result, with a similarly high mean difference in age between spouses for the period spanning 1700-1749 of 7 years and 6 months.

Table 9: Summary of new age at first marriage results at the Cape, 1700-1850

		Mean husbands' age at first marriage	Median husbands' age at first marriage	N	Mean wives' age at first marriage	Median wives' age at first marriage	Mean difference between spouses*
1700-1749	30	30.1	28	30	25.8	20.5	53
1750-1799	212	28.7	25	207	26.8	24	23
1800-1849	102	31.8	26	106	28.5	26	39

\*Age in months. Positive values indicate that the husband was older

Mean estimates in this sample appear to overestimate age at first marriage for women, particularly in the earliest period where the sample size is very small and is easily biased by outliers. The median age at first marriage is perhaps a better indicator of the actual figure as it is less subject to interference of outliers, although the general trend in age at first marriage which is of most interest can be seen clearly with either measure. For women then, the median age at first marriage of 20.5 in the earliest period (1700-1749) is perfectly in line with both Ross's median estimate of 19.6 and mean estimate of 21.0 for women born around 1730 and slightly higher than Guelke's estimate of 18.5 for all districts in 1731. These early estimates also seem to be in line with the general impression of family life in the Cape. According to Chief Archivist for the Union of South Africa and author of *Social Life in the Cape Colony in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century*:

*It was rare to find an unmarried lady and for a married woman to have no offspring was looked upon almost as a disgrace...Early marriages were the general rule and large families averaging twelve were common. The necessities of life were easily obtained at a low cost and the warm climate of the Cape was both healthy and pleasant. These factors accounted for early marriages and the increase in offspring when each household was owing to the healthy and sober lives of the parents (Botha, 1926:44).*

Moreover, these results fit perfectly into Hajnal's non-EMP archetype (typical of pre-industrial, agriculture based, patriarchal societies) displaying a very young age, particularly for brides upon first marriage of around 20.5 (well below 24), a large difference in ages between husbands and wives (husbands being on average 7 and a half years older) and near universal marriage for women. However, estimates for later periods reveal a somewhat different picture. It would seem that, over time, the Cape Colony has shifted away from the non-EMP that clearly characterized it in the first half of the eighteenth century to a pattern more closely resembling the EMP from middle of the eighteenth century persisting through to the middle of the nineteenth century, displaying a higher age at first marriage, particularly for brides as well as a significantly diminished difference in ages between spouses of between 2½ and 3½ years between 1750 and 1850.

### **3.8 Concluding remarks**

I will refer to the distinct marriage pattern that characterizes the Cape after 1750 as a Pseudo-EMP, as it displays all the characteristics of Hajnal's traditional EMP but appears to have originated for different reasons than those cited by De Moor and van Zanden as the most likely underlying causes of the EMP. The detection of this Pseudo-EMP at the Cape necessarily calls into question the validity of the three De Moor and van Zanden hypotheses. The next step in this research is to delve deeper into the three potential causes of the EMP, scrutinising them against what is known of Cape Colony society and the Pseudo-EMP that characterised it.

## Chapter 4: Revisiting the EMP

After presenting an overview of the EMP which emphasised the need for a better explanation of the origins of this unique household formation system and offering the Cape Colony as a more appropriate case study against which to contrast the more general features of the EMP, the stage has been set to critically evaluate the three De Moor and van Zanden hypotheses of the underlying causes of the EMP, namely: (i) consensus versus parental authority in the formation of marriages; (ii) property rights and the position of women in the transfer of property; and (iii) the size and accessibility of the labour market.

### 4.1 Consensus, inheritance and familial marriage strategies at the Cape

At age twenty John Findlay moved to the small church town of Lady Grey in 1859 to work as a trader on the farm *Oranjefontein*. There he met Katherine Schreiner, the eldest of four siblings and daughter of a German missionary Gottlob Schreiner and his wife Rebecca. The Schreiner's had lived a difficult life to say the least, constantly moving from one mission station to the next, and living amongst the African community which they so clearly detested. In Rebecca's words her greatest concern was "the difficulty of keeping the children separate from the swarthy demon of the house...how difficult it is to live as we do amongst the gross, sensual heathen, to preserve that delicacy of thought and feeling so indispensable for a right development of the female character". Throughout their struggles as a family, they were upheld by Gottlob's faith and Rebecca's determination to raise her children in a devout household (Ross, 1999:71).

Soon after meeting, John and Katherine became engaged, but John's entry into the family was not met with very much enthusiasm by Katherine's parents. Her family disliked John's frivolous character and alleged that Katherine's motive for attaching herself to him was to escape the control of her difficult mother and the strict rules which were imposed on her. All the same, given the exacting code of morality and racial restrictions the family lived by, John may very well have been the first suitable man Katherine had ever come across and she was not in a position to pass him or the opportunities he presented up (Ross, 1999:71).

Her parents, though, were against the union, perhaps as a response to Katherine's rebellion against them but it is not unlikely that they were simply concerned for her future happiness. Interestingly, however, her parents seemed most perturbed by their suspicion that Katherine had acted in a manner so as to encourage John's affection, behaviour which was unacceptable

for a young lady, particularly a missionary's daughter. Despite their qualms with John, and a few episodes of more serious conflict between John and Gottlob, Katherine's parents eventually informed John that "their daughter was of age, and that, though they would regret the marriage, they left her perfectly at liberty to do as she felt fit" (Findlay, 1954:137).

Gottlob himself presided over the small wedding ceremony between Katherine and John and in the years that followed, John financially supported his wife's family. Sadly, John and Katherine's story is not one that ends happily. Katherine was reportedly miserable in the marriage and at times hoped for a divorce but was advised by her mother to "put her faith in God's wisdom despite her unhappiness". But after losing her fourth of twelve children from complications during birth, Katherine reportedly experienced a mental breakdown and was forced to live out her final years in an asylum in Pietermaritzburg (Ross, 1999:74).

In spite of their many misfortunes, the story of John and Katherine is nonetheless one in which the decision to marry was taken by the marriage partners themselves, even in the face of opposition by the bride's parents. If this was at all typical behaviour for the time it would confirm the hypotheses, firstly, that the majority of men were able to escape from the control of their parents at a relatively young age and set up on their own and secondly, that parental authority was not the most central feature of unions between young men and women at the Cape.

There is little doubt that the Cape remained a relatively patriarchal society throughout the early period, organised around the roles and responsibilities of men in society. The head of this patriarchal family was the *Boer*. In his roles as husband, father, farmer, hunter and frontier fighter, he was a rather formidable figure to his children, in particular to his sons, with whom he may have experienced some tension until such time as they were married and were given their own farms, or journeyed into the frontier to take up new land (Patterson, 1957:240).

Even so, there is little evidence of the kind of arranged marriages that De Moor and van Zanden cite as common in truly patriarchal societies of the time, in which marriages were largely determined by parents whose utility depended on the marriage outcome of their children. Instead, marriage at the Cape appears to have been motivated to a large degree by status, and strategic marriages to preserve property within a family were very common. As previously alluded to but not yet explored in full, inheritance laws and marriage patterns were closely linked at the Cape.

While the 1865 Report of the Law of Inheritance Commission for Western Districts states that ‘Colonial Law of Marriage has no necessary connection with the Colonial Law of Inheritance’ it did identify that the ‘consequences of the law of marriage are very generally spoken of as consequences of the law of inheritance’ (Walker, 1957:66). The legal system of the Cape Colony was based on the principles of Roman-Dutch Law. This system stressed primacy of the rule of law above all else and was recognized for its fastidious attention to ‘due process, legality and precedent’. Equality before the law, a notion appearing only in the later nineteenth century liberal discourse, did not yet exist (Ross, 1993:155).

Marriages at the Cape were traditionally carried out ‘in community of property’ which mandated that any assets brought into the marriage by each partner became joint property. The law stated that upon the death of one’s spouse, the surviving spouse would receive between a half and two-thirds share of the estate while the remainder was to be equally distributed between the offspring. Heirs, regardless of whether they were male or female, were entitled by law to a ‘legitimate portion of the estate’. This traditionally meant that children would divide inheritance equally amongst themselves, but more importantly it ensured that wills could not be used to disinherit an heir nor be employed to benefit one member of the family over another (Guelke, 1989:81).

However, it appears as if in the early period at least, male heirs were favoured. Dooling (2005:155) provides the example of Jan Blignaut, a wealthy land owner, whose sons Jan and Pieter were both able to purchase farms from the estate upon his death in 1752. None of his three daughters who were all married at the time of his death acquired any fixed property; however, his sons-in-law all purchased a number of slaves from the estate.

Resulting from the Roman-Dutch law of succession, an individual’s estate would most often end up being dissolved upon their death. Dooling (2007:31) argues that this was due to the combination of the partible inheritance system together with the fact that settlers tended to have large households, so that an individual’s assets, whether they were in the form of land or slaves, would be divided up between the individual’s widow or widower and their many children often resulting in the dispersion of wealth. This fragmentation of large estates was one of the primary reasons why the elite class of large-scale slave-owners struggled to grow. While more affluent individuals who perhaps owned several farms or slaves could bequeath some wealth to their heirs after their passing, the dispersal of property to some degree was an unavoidable result:

*In a family with six children, at the death of a parent, the surviving spouse would inherit half the estate and the children would split the other half equally. One-twelfth of a farm was not likely to maintain subsistence, let alone be a stepping stone to prosperity. If, however, a pair of siblings was to cooperate with siblings from another family, an equitable exchange was possible that would put both couples on a better footing (Mitchell, 2007:8).*

In spite of the continuing Christian ban against marriage between close relatives, including the prohibition of first-cousin marriage advocated by Calvin, there were always exceptions in early-modern Europe (Goody, 1983:11). Similarly colonial society at the Cape bent these Christian, European norms and as a result, familial unions made up a considerable proportion of the recognized marriages at the Cape (Mitchell, 2007:15).

Inheritance negotiations must therefore have played an important role in marriage decisions at the Cape given the frequency with which inter-family marriage between pairs of siblings is said to have occurred. Mitchell (2007:8) acknowledges that we may never exactly know to what extent young individual's exercised choice in who they would marry or how enthusiastic they were about their situation as settlers in unexplored territories. She suggests that whether or not couples made their own plans or to what extent parents had a hand in arranging partnerships, the fact that women played some role in creating and sustaining relationships challenges Romero's assertion that patriarchal fathers controlled marriage choices. "Women, mothers, aunts, sisters, cousins", she argues, "linked families across landscapes and across generations" (Mitchell, 2007:8).

Upon British annexation of the Cape it was settled that the existing legal system would be maintained. The legal charters of 1828 and 1834 both emphasised that the foundation of the law would stay as it was. The South African legal system would therefore remain rooted in that of eighteenth-century Netherlands, despite intermittent calls for the introduction of the British system (Ross 1999:51). In the nineteenth century, for example, the British government attempted to replace the Colony's existing laws of marriage and inheritance with their own, but met with considerable resistance from the landowning classes.

Dooling (2007:32) cites the case of land owners in the nineteenth century *Highveld* who refused to relinquish the partible inheritance regime. These land owners, he suggests, were comparable to the fathers of the American Revolution in their steadfast belief that partible inheritance was synonymous with republican virtue, despite the potential risk of their families



becoming divorced from their land. British primogeniture, the feudal right of succession belonging to the firstborn child, by which the whole real estate of an intestate passed to the eldest son, by contrast, represented the ‘customs of the middle ages’:

*When Lord Milner tried to abolish partible inheritance in the Transvaal in the aftermath of the South African War, he found implementation difficult as landlords remained stubbornly wedded to customary practice (Dooling, 2007:32).*

While the law of succession demanded the division of property amongst those settlers who privately owned farms at the Cape; a complex system of land tenure involving loan farms, which were in theory leased from the VOC, could not be subdivided. Settlers were prohibited from simply dividing up these holdings into smaller and smaller pieces along the lines of the division of property necessitated by the partible inheritance system. On the whole, these farms were sold off in their entirety, and generally retained their original size well into the nineteenth century. The consequence of such a system meant that landed property at the Cape changed hands regularly (Ross, 1993).

To nineteenth century new British entrants, the Cape’s system of land tenure must have seemed disastrous and the records of relatively prosperous settlers show that their concerns were not ungrounded:

*Each generation, seemingly, had to build up its holdings anew. British commentators, who naturally saw primogeniture as the only means to secure landed stability and unhindered capital accumulation, found partible inheritance objectionable wherever they went. What such commentators failed to realise, however, was that for many of the world’s ancient landed classes, equal division of property upon death had deep cultural significance, even if it did threaten landed stability and the continuity of lineages (Dooling, 2007:32).*

The purpose of this in-depth discussion of the inheritance system at the Cape is to illustrate that the system remained largely the same throughout the period of interest, despite the number of regime change. The distinct Pseudo-EMP that evolved at the Cape did so in spite of the fact that inheritance legislation remained largely unaltered from the beginning of the eighteenth century through to the middle of the nineteenth century. This suggests that inheritance legislation and the role of women in the transfer of property may not have the

kind of effect on the age at which individuals chose to marry posited by De Moor and van Zanden.

That is not to say that these laws did not play any role in the formation of marriage at the Cape – all discussion thus far is to the contrary. The system of partible inheritance at the Cape no doubt had a major role to play in the marriage strategies of individuals at the Cape as demonstrated by the frequency of familial marriage, but it seems to have been more influential in determining who an individual would marry rather than when<sup>11</sup>.

#### **4.2 The rise of a Cape “Widowarchy”**

De la Croix and Mariani (2012) posit that as soon as economic motives become important in society, most powerful and wealthy men will choose to have as many wives as possible and enjoy larger reproductive success. Following the medieval spread of Christianity, however, it became almost impossible for men to concurrently father different children from multiple women, and remarriage was only possible after widowhood. Strict monogamy was therefore progressively institutionalized and enforced and is confirmed by the deterioration of the status of illegitimate children in society. More recently, the introduction of divorce and the possibility of remarriage has driven the transition from monogamy to what De la Croix and Mariani (2012:1) have coined *serial monogamy*: an institutional setting in which men can again have children with different women (and *vice versa*) but not simultaneously.

According to De la Croix and Mariani (2012:2), serial monogamy essentially started off as an intertemporal version of polygamy, in which divorce was usually initiated by men. In contrast the Cape appears to have been home to a different brand of serial monogamy that was driven by the death of one’s spouse rather than by divorce, through which men could still have a number of wives, enjoy larger reproductive success and reap certain financial rewards.

In the early period (from settlement until at least 1750) as a result of the large age differential between men and women upon first marriage, widowhood was almost a certainty for women in the Cape. This presented a unique opportunity for men to accumulate wealth through

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<sup>11</sup> Of course not everyone at the Cape married their cousin or into the same families as their siblings. As discussed in Chapter 3, a share of the population married immigrants, suggesting that family connections and financial resources were not the *only* defining factor in an individual’s choice of spouse, since most new immigrants who married at the Cape would not yet have been well-established in society (Mitchell, 2007:8).

strategic marriage to wealthy widows. Guelke and Shell (1983) note that a similar situation unfolded in the colonial settlement of Virginia in North America:

*In Virginia, the death rate produced such a rapid turnover of husbands and wives that widowhood became a principal means for the concentration of wealth...The man who needed capital could get it most easily by marrying a widow. And she was likely to get it back again, with whatever he had added to it, when he died (Morgan quoted in Guelke & Shell, 1983:279).*

Unions of this nature are reported frequently enough at the Cape to look like conscious strategy rather than repeated coincidence. Notorious widow-marrier and one of the richest men at the Cape during the eighteenth century, Martin Melck, allegedly made his fortune by strategically marrying wealthy Cape widows. Melck came from humble beginnings as a farm labourer for one John Philip Giebler, but upon Giebler's death, Melck married his widow by the name of Anna Margeretha Hop and in doing so became owner of two of the most prestigious farms in the Stellenbosch district namely *Elsenburg* and *Muldersvlei*. Upon his first wife's death, he quickly remarried the widow of Hercules Malan, one Maria Rosina Loubser, once again increasing his estate. Guelke and Shell (1983:280) report a number of the Cape's wealthiest men to have been so-called widow-marriers, including Adam Tas, Jan Cloete, Jan Blignaut and Henning Viljoen.

At the heart of the matter, though, is the fact that the role fulfilled by widows in the Cape made them conduits for the accumulation and transmission of property and slaves from one generation to the next. While land may have changed hands regularly at the Cape, the resulting owners were regularly related by marriage. Families were not necessarily tied to specific estates but were frequently confined to specific localities. Women were therefore central to ensuring the preservation of wealth (Hall, 1994), and marriage within relatively limited geographical boundaries helped limit the destructive effects of partible inheritance system (Dooling, 2005:159).

#### **4.3 Accessibility to, and the size of, the labour market**

Beyond the central role played by women in facilitating the transfer and maintenance of wealth at the Cape, the involvement of women in the labour force played a driving role in the Cape's economic development. De Moor and van Zanden posit that the increased access to employment after the Black Death and the burgeoning labour market for women played a critical role in fostering a unique set of conditions under which EMP-characteristics could

flourish. Testing this hypothesis against our knowledge of the Cape experience is not straightforward since the structure of Cape's labour market was markedly different from that of Europe at the time of the emergence of the EMP. Moreover, the Cape did not suffer a comparable exogenous shock to its population growth resulting in a sudden increase in demand, particularly for women, in the labour market.

Instead, the Cape was relatively fortunate in its unique endowment of human and natural resources. Land and inexpensive slave labour were abundant and as a result all major sectors of the Cape's agrarian economy, specifically the production of wheat and wine and the ranching of sheep and cattle, underwent slow and steady expansion over time. Pieter van Duin and Robert Ross (1987) report that the Cape's economic growth resulted from the slow and steady expansion of both the internal and external markets leading to a general increase in wealth in the colony. They emphasise, however, that this does not imply anything about the level of success with which this affected individual's members of the society nor how wealth was distributed.

This view of the Cape's economy is supported inter alia by Boshoff and Fourie (2010) who demonstrate that the Colony attained significant economic growth from the combination of exporting goods to other settlement as providing services to passing ships; and De Zwart (2011) who, by calculating long term real wages at the Cape, shows that the eighteenth century was a period of steady growth in living standards and by the nineteenth century, Cape living standards were on par with those on the European continent.

Largely supported by subsistence agriculture, the Cape's economy was not for the most part, based on wage-labour. Observing economic life in the 1730's Mentzel (1944) recalls that:

*The inhabitants and free burghers derive their living principally from grain growing, vegetable gardening and viniculture. Besides, all of them either engage in trades, for instance as blacksmiths, wagon builders, tailors, boot makers, carpenters and thatchers, or they keep a general dealer's and wine shop.*

Fourie (2012:6) confirms this, reporting that by the early period employment was already diversified across the major sectors of the economy. Primary sector occupations ranged from crop and stock farming, predominantly in the Drakenstein area; to more productive employment in the form of bakers, brewers, millers and artisans closer to Cape Town; to

services provision in Cape Town and its immediate surroundings<sup>12</sup>. Productive labour was therefore by no means absent from the life at the Cape, nor was women's involvement therein. Recall Mentzel's typology of the third class of hardworking farmers who laboured alongside their slaves. All members of such households, including women and children participated in agricultural production. On women's roles within the Cape's agriculture based economy, Patterson (1957:240) notes that:

*The Boer woman's place was beside and a little behind the male head of the household. The household and family were her charge and she knew nothing of emancipation...She taught the children to read the Bible and heard their Catechism. She sent her man to war or on commando, and worked the land and defended the home while he was away. Usually she was no meek housewife but a spirited and strong-willed creature.*

For those women who did not labour alongside their husbands on the land, many worked in the production of agricultural by-products or as teachers, nurses and wine traders (Fourie, 2012:7). As for women in the later period, the traveller, Borchardt, recalls the picture of a typical Stellenbosch woman in 1861:

*Seated for hours in the back hall at a small table, tea tray in front of her, regulating the household, acting as family scribe and dealing out home-made medicinal remedies (Patterson, 1957:243).*

In short, the presence of women in daily economic life at the Cape remained relatively constant throughout the period of interest. While it is difficult to identify the extent to which this role may have increased as a result of the abolition of slavery in 1834 (although this did not in itself mean the immediate end of the practice of slavery altogether) (Ross, 1993:94), the trend of higher ages at marriage for women and the diminishing age differential between husbands and wives had long since evolved (see Figure 6). The emergence of EMP-like marriage patterns in spite of the continued involvement of women in the labour market at the Cape challenges De Moor and van Zanden's third hypothesis. New explanations must therefore be sought for the emergence of this Pseudo-EMP at the Cape.

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<sup>12</sup> See Table A5 in Appendix A for a breakdown of employment by sector.

#### 4.4 Explaining the Pseudo-EMP at the Cape

In the search to understand the evolution of the Pseudo-EMP at the Cape, Occam's razor might be gainfully employed; that is to say, the simplest explanation is in all likelihood the best. Gary Becker's seminal work entitled *A Theory of Marriage* (1973) is one such simple approach, proposing that marital behaviour can be examined in a traditional economic framework based on two basic assumptions regarding marriage: Firstly, since marriage is typically entered into on a voluntary basis, either instigated by two individuals wanting to marry or by their parents, it can be assumed that individuals' expected utility is raised by marrying. Secondly, since men and women compete to find suitable marriage partners, a marriage *market* can be presumed to exist (Becker, 1973:300).

A simple, albeit artificial way to order the way in which marriage decisions are made is to say that individuals first decide when to enter the marriage market and thereafter endeavour to find a suitable marriage partner. Becker argues that earlier marriage will occur for those individuals who desire a larger number of children; whose expected lifetime income is higher; and whose level of education is lower. Once in the marriage market, a person will search for a partner until the value of any expected improvement in the mate he can find is no greater than the cost of his time and other inputs into additional search. The gain from marriage has to be balanced against the costs to determine whether the marriage is worthwhile. The larger the gain is relative to the costs, the larger the net gain from marriage; presumably therefore, the larger too is the fraction of persons who marry. Since the benefits will be greater the longer the expected duration of marriage, people will search more carefully and marry later when they expect to be married longer, for example, when divorce is more difficult or adult death rates are lower (Becker, 1973:335).

The search for a marriage partner would likewise be longer if more potential mates were available, as the expected gain from additional "sampling" would be greater. Marriage then should generally be later in dynamic, mobile, and diversified societies than in static, homogenous ones, *ceteris paribus* (Becker, 1973:336). People marry relatively early when they are "lucky" in their search but will also marry early when they are overly pessimistic about their prospects of attracting someone better (or overly optimistic about persons they have already met). Therefore early marriages contain both lucky and pessimistic persons, while later marriages contain unlucky and optimistic ones (Becker, 1973: 336).

The case of the Cape Colony fits nicely into Becker’s typology. From 1750 the age-sex ratio becomes balanced resulting in a larger variety of potential spouses in the same age cohort. As a result, the competition for brides, that had previously been driving the age of women at first marriage lower and lower, eased, allowing for the age difference between spouses to first diminish and ultimately disappear by the beginning of the nineteenth century. Consequently, age at first marriage, for women in particular, steady increased (see Figure 6).

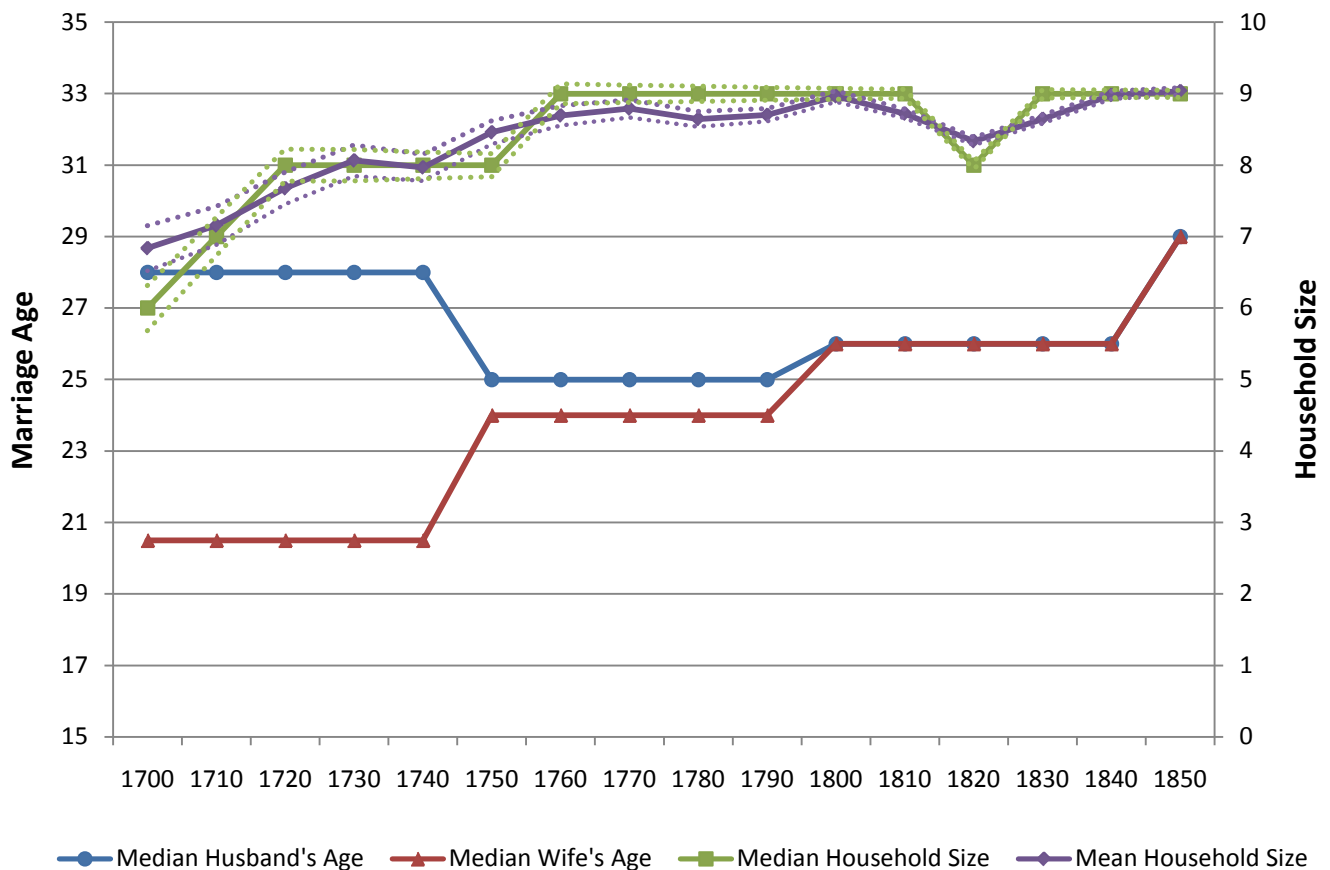


Figure 6. Age at first marriage and household size at the Cape, 1700-1850

These increases in women’s age at marriage however, are not immediately reflected in household size by my estimate. Figure 6 plots male and female age at first marriage together with household size over time. Given the nature of the genealogical registers, household size is calculated as the average number of children a man fathers in his lifetime with all partners and should not be confused with the traditional measure of female fertility. It is only by the end of the nineteenth century that household size begins to diminish for the first time possibly resulting from the impact of industrialization on female fertility (Wannamaker, 2012; Galor, 2011) and the effects of war (Cilliers & Fourie, 2012).

## Chapter 5: Conclusion

The literature subsequent to the detection of the EMP lacks a unified explanation for the underlying causes of the EMP. De Moor and van Zanden are the first to address this shortcoming by proposing three hypotheses for the underlying causes of the EMP namely: the shift towards consensus versus paternal authority in the formation of marriages; property rights and the role of women in the transfer of property between husband and wife and between parents and children; and lastly, an increased role for women in the labour market.

The Cape Colony is offered as a more suitable testing ground to display the unique features of the EMP. Using genealogical records to track the ancestry of colonial settlers in South Africa, this study estimated Cape Colony marriage patterns for the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. In addition to the new descriptive statistics provided, the large and significant impact of the European heritage, religion and class divisions in a society facing continuous immigration was evaluated.

Marriage patterns in the early period (up to 1750) conformed to Hajnal's description of the non-EMP, typical of patriarchal, pre-industrial, agriculture-based societies. A distinct marriage pattern, however, was discovered to have emerged at the Cape in the mid-eighteenth century. This was termed a Pseudo-EMP, as it appears to be similar in its distinctive features to Hajnal's traditional EMP but differs from De Moor and van Zanden's theories of the underlying causes of the EMP.

A critical discussion of the validity and potential shortcomings of the three De Moor and van Zanden hypotheses for the underlying causes of the EMP revealed that (i) the Cape society did not experience a comparable shift towards consensus rather than paternal authority in the formation of marriages but remained a fairly patriarchal society throughout the period of interest. This does not diminish the importance of the role that women, especially widows, played in facilitating the accumulation and transfer of property from one generation to the next and the role that women played in the formation and preservation of relationships. (ii) While the complex system of partible inheritance and land tenure at the Cape played a major role in the marriage strategies of individuals at the Cape as demonstrated by the frequency of familial marriage and the rise of a Cape "widowarchy", it seems to have been more influential in determining who an individual would marry rather than when. And finally, (iii) women's involvement in daily economic life and active participation in the labour market at the Cape remained relatively constant throughout the period of interest.



The emergence of the Pseudo-EMP in spite of these notable differences from the European experience calls into question the validity of the three De Moor and van Zanden hypotheses for the underlying causes of the EMP. New explanations therefore had to be sought for the emergence of this Pseudo-EMP at the Cape.

Marital behaviour is therefore examined in the simple economic framework proposed by Becker (1973) in which individuals first decide when to enter the marriage market and thereafter endeavour to find a suitable marriage partner. Earlier marriage occurs for individuals who, (i) desire a larger number of children (ii) whose expected lifetime income is higher, and (iii) whose level of education is lower. Once in the marriage market, a person will search for a partner until the value of any expected improvement in the mate he can find is no greater than the cost of his time and other inputs into additional search.

I posit that marriage patterns at the Cape resulted primarily from the balancing out of the age-sex ratio after 1750 resulting in a larger variety of potential spouses for individuals in the same age cohort. As a result, the competition for brides that had previously been driving the age of women at first marriage down, eased, allowing for the age difference between spouses to first diminish and ultimately disappear by the beginning of the nineteenth century.

What remains to be explored is the causal link between the demographic pattern of higher female age at marriage and economic growth at the Cape and whether the rise in demand for human capital in the process of development was the main trigger for the decline in fertility and the transition to modern growth. This goes beyond the scope of this dissertation but is an invitation for future research.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A: Tables and Figures

Table A1: Census Population: White Settlers, African and Asian Slaves, Free Blacks and Knechts. Summary of Totals

	1682		1705		1731	
	No	%	No.	%	No.	%
African/Asian						
Slaves	192	33.4	1057	37.8	4303	58.9
"Free Blacks"	49	8.5	111	4	295	4
White Knechts	45	7.8	66	2.4	83	1.1
White settlers	288	50.2	1559	55.8	2627	35.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>574</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>2793</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>7308</b>	<b>100</b>

Note: Census population excludes Company personnel, Company slaves, Khoikhoi and San  
Source: Guelke, L. (1988: 459).

Table A2: Life span of adult settlers

District	Males				Females			
	1705		1731		1705		1731	
	Age	N	Age	N	Age	N	Age	N
Cape Town	58.6	17	53.9	62	49.8	18	54.9	64
Rural	48.9	59	57	194	45.1	38	59.2	130
Frontier	55.8	49	52.7	72	57	27	54.2	41
Colony	52.9	125	55.5	328	52.4	83	57.2	235

Source: Guelke, L. (1988: 466).

Table A3: Average number of children of adult settlers

District	Males				Females			
	1705		1731		1705		1731	
	ANC	N	ANC	N	ANC	N	ANC	N
Cape Town	5.4	36	5.5	88	5.3	32	6.2	73
Rural	4.9	87	7.2	176	5.9	67	7.9	151
Frontier	6.7	45	7.4	58	8	43	8	58
Colony	5.5	168	6.8	322	6.4	142	7.5	282

Note: ANC = Average number of children an individual had in a lifetime with all partners.  
Source: Guelke (1988:467).

Table A4: Fertility of female settlers

District	No. of		Age at First Child	Age at Final Child	Fertility Period (FP)	ANC	FP/ANC
	Cases	N/Tot					
1705							
Cape Town	18/81		19.1	33.9	14.8	6.3	2.3
Rural	33/120		19.2	33.6	14.3	6.4	2.2
Frontier	19/67		18.3	38.6	20.3	10.1	2
Colony	70/268		18.9	34.9	16	7.4	2.2
1731							
Cape Town	72/143		20.4	33.8	13.4	6.3	2.1
Rural	152/231		19.9	38	18.1	8.3	2.2
Frontier	56/71		19.9	36.2	16.3	8.2	2
Colony	280/445		20	36.6	16.6	7.8	2.1

Note 1: N = the number of women for whom data were available .

Tot = the total number of settler women in that district at the time of the census

Note 2: The number of years between the birth of the first child and the birth of the final child

Note 3: ANC = Average number of children of men and women from all partners

Note 4: Average number of years between births of children; calculated by dividing fertility period by total number of children

Source: Guelke, L. (1988: 468).



Table A5: Employment type as percentage of the population by district, 1732

	Cape Town District	Stellenbosch	Drakenstein
Farmers	22.8	56.7	87.2
Other Primary	6.7	3.5	0
Secondary	21.9	8.5	0.3
Tertiary	15.6	1.4	0.3
Other Primary	32.9	29.8	12.2
N	416	141	288

Source: Schutte (1980); Fourie (2012).

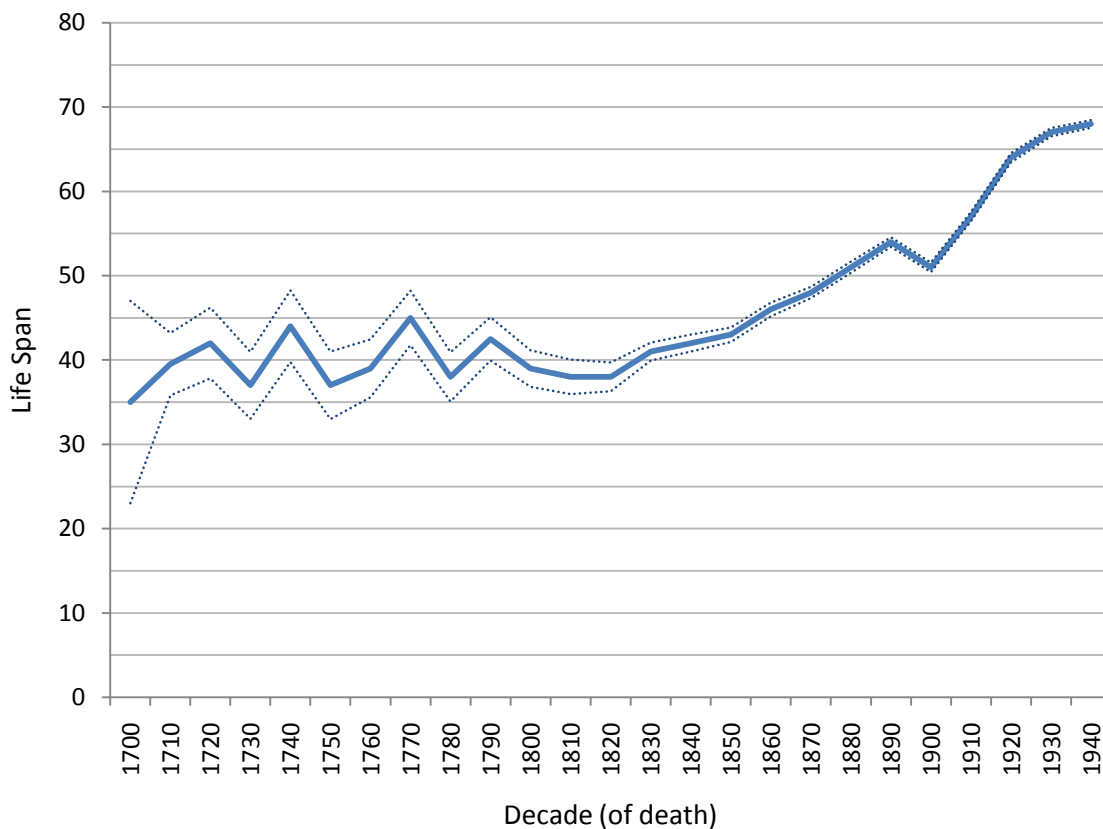


Figure A1: Median life span of settlers by decade of death with 95 per cent confidence bands, 1700-1940

## Appendix B: Digitising GISA (2008)<sup>13</sup>

At the outset, digitising the data into a functional format for this study proved an enormous task. The first step in the data-capturing process was to create a custom-designed data-manipulation software programme that was able to convert the text-file PDFs into an Excel compatible format that captured only the relevant information. This was a cumbersome task as the programme, while innovative, was not able to distinguish between successive families and meant that data had to be fed through the programme on a family by family basis.

Given the nature of the dataset, our investigation of household characteristics meant we needed to link fathers to their offspring. To do this we first had to create a unique identity (ID) for each person in the dataset, and match that ID to a household ID. Under each family's surname we listed each family member's generation number (using 'A' to signify the first arrival) and number in the household (using '1' to signify the first born). This enables us to link children to their father and to each other.

The complete dataset covers 14,048 families with information on 401,602 individuals. The following information was captured for each individual: surname; first names; generation number, birth date, baptism date; death date; birth place; baptism place; death place; marriage variables up to five marriages; marriage dates and places; and unique individual identifiers and household identifiers for analysis purposes. Of the 401,602 entries, 323,167 contain information on birth or baptism date, or both, and 84,609 entries contain information on birth or baptism date, or both, and death date. Such numbers offer the promise of better parameter estimation that large datasets make possible.

Mistakes inevitably crop up in work involving information that was collected from various sources and which was then rewritten several times before publication. In the compilation of the South African Genealogical Registers many of the documents were copies of originals that had been lost, some of the documents contained errors, and in some the writing was faded, indistinct and sometimes almost illegible. The obvious errors – such as when an individual's death date was listed as ten years before his birth date – were easily removed, but, fortunately, were only a tiny fraction of the full sample, which point again to the benefits of the large sample size.

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<sup>13</sup> This is an excerpt from Cilliers and Fourie (2012), *Economic History of Developing Regions* (Forthcoming).

The most serious problem in working with baptism dates is simply that some children were never baptised or their baptism was not registered. Alternatively the names of either the children or their parents may have been entered incorrectly. However, the traditional way of naming children in Afrikaner families proved to be a big help to genealogists. The eldest son was usually named after the paternal grandfather and the second son after the maternal grandfather and the eldest daughter was named after the maternal grandmother and the second daughter after the paternal grandmother, as shown in Figure 2, an excerpt from the South African Genealogical Registers (2008).

Ross (1975, 220) notes a further potential problem, which is that “farmers who lived in the remote interior came to town so rarely that they [brought] walking children for baptism and sometimes several at a time”. Ross notes that if this was common practice it would hamper demographic analysis, but fortunately GISA (2008) documents these instances as ‘multiple baptisms’, and in fact, according to Ross’s calculations, they were fairly uncommon: he estimates that “baptisms [were] rarely delayed for more than four to six months”. Our data confirms the tradition of multiple baptisms. In our full dataset of 401,602 entries there are 139,739 entries that have both a birth date and a baptism date. By calculating the average interval between the birth date and baptism date of these individuals, we can see that, on average, children were baptised within the first year of their lives. Accordingly, in cases where a person’s birth date is omitted we have used the baptism date as a proxy for the birth date.

Death dates are far less frequent in the registers. Ross (1975, 219) attributes this omission to early South African burial customs. Calvinism, the dominant religion of the settlers, does not call for any formal sacrament or burial ritual as part of the funeral proceedings, so burials often took place without the presence of a clergyman who might have kept a record of such events. As there were few churches and nearly all of them were in towns, it was customary for each farm to maintain its own plot of hallowed ground in which its members were buried. The resulting record-keeping deficiency prompted civil authorities to take it upon themselves to record deaths, and in 1714 they ordered clergymen to notify them prior to a burial.

However, record-keeping of deaths remained poor in spite of this directive (Ross 1975, 219). This reduction of the sample size owing to the missing dates of death may introduce two biases into the results. First, people who owned a large number of possessions, assets or property were more likely to have had their deaths recorded, since their estate would have had to be dealt with in some fashion. The result is that our life span calculations may be

biased away from those who were entirely destitute. There is thus the possibility then that our life span estimates are biased upwards.

This bias should at least be consistent if the percentage of non-recording remains the same across the sample period. However, this is not the case, at least towards the end of our sample period. Figure 3 compares the sample size with estimates of the total population over the period. For the 18th century there is a close correlation between the size of the sample and the size of the total population, but by the mid-19th century the correlation has weakened, and by the turn of the 20th century growth in the sample size has slowed considerably relative to the total population. Interpretations of 20th century estimates should thus be undertaken with care, as we are not sure to what extent the missing entries may create an upward bias.

A second potential bias results from the non-recording of deaths of very young infants. In these cases there is a high likelihood that neither the birth nor the death was ever registered. Yaukey et al. (2007, 122) note that even if a large percentage of infant deaths were registered, they may often have been misallocated in place and time. Where administrative systems were not well developed and deaths were not registered until after some delay, there may have been a temptation to record the date of death as the date of registration rather than the actual date of occurrence. If this was common practice, the under-reporting of infant deaths could result in our infant mortality rates being slightly underestimated.