Between Duty and Desire: Pre-Nuptial Pregnancy and Unmarried Motherhood in Anglican Cape Town during the first half of the Twentieth Century

by

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Abstract

Throughout the first half of the twentieth century couples were exhorted by both the church and secular authorities to delay sexual intercourse until after marriage, but popular attitudes towards premarital sexuality did not always reflect those of the authorities, nor were such attitudes necessarily a good index of popular behaviour. Marrying qualitative and quantitative techniques in a way that is sensitive to the limitations of both approaches, this thesis presents an interpretation of new evidence regarding prenuptial pregnancy and unmarried motherhood amongst a select group of South Africans living in Cape Town during this period. In so doing, it aims to shed light on the complex relationship between prescription and practice in the intimate lives of ordinary men and women. At the Cape, as in many other areas of the globe, the early to mid-twentieth century – an era often referred to as the 'golden age' of marriage and the family – saw a higher share of couples than ever before going to the trouble and expense of contracting marriages recognized by law. Nonetheless, the quantitative evidence presented in this study, compiled using individual-level birth and marriage records drawn from seven socio-economically diverse Anglican parishes in Cape Town, shows that, despite growing pressure towards marriage, out-of-wedlock pregnancies accounted for a substantial proportion of births, particularly within working class coloured communities. Although many out-of-wedlock pregnancies resulted in marriage, falling pregnant outside of wedlock was risky, especially for women from fragile family networks. Initially there was very little help available for women who, having fallen pregnant outside of wedlock, were unable to secure marriage, and while caring for unmarried mothers and their infants did slowly come to be regarded as necessary, if unpopular work, the social stigma attached to unmarried motherhood continued to influence the kinds of assistance they received. The qualitative evidence is used to examine some of the debates that emerged between female philanthropists, social workers, medical professionals and moral conservatives regarding the care of unmarried mothers, looking especially at notions of female deviancy and how these shifted to reflect different moral and political agendas. In addition, case records from two Anglican unmarried mothers' hostels are used to contrast the ideas put forward in these debates with the actual courtship experiences of unmarried mothers in Cape Town. These records support the hypothesis that attitudes towards premarital sexuality tended to be more ambiguous and courtship experiences more diverse than has previously been supposed.

Keywords: Sexuality; Prenuptial pregnancy; Single motherhood; Reproductive Rights in South Africa.

Opsomming[1]

Tydens die eerste helfte van die twintigste eeu het die kerk en sekulêre owerhede ongehude paartjies aangeraai om hulself van voorhuwelikse seks te weerhou. Ongehude paartjies se populêre opvattings en seksuele gedrag wat voorhuwelikse seks aanbetref het egter nie noodwendig die denke van die owerhede weerspieël nie. Hierdie tesis bestudeer deur middel van beide kwantitatiewe en kwalitatiewe tegnieke nuwe inligting oor die buite-egtelike swanger en enkelouerskappe van 'n geselekteerde groep inwoners van Kaapstad. Sodoende beoog die tesis om, met beide kwantitatiewe en kwalitatiewe tegnieke se tekortkominge in ag genome, lig te werp op die ingewikkelde verband tussen die voorgeskrewe en werklike seksuele gedrag van gewone mans en vrouens. In die vroeë tot middel twintigste eeu het Kaapstad, soortgelyk aan ander wêreldstreke, ook 'n "goue era" van die huwelik- en gesinslewe beleef, aangesien 'n groter aantal paartjies as ooit tevore moeite gedoen en finansiële onkostes aangegaan het om wettiglik te trou. Persoonlike geboorte- en huweliksrekords wat uit sewe uiteenlopende sosio-ekonomiese Anglikaanse gemeentes in Kaapstad versamel is, dui egter aan dat selfs met die groeiende druk om in die huwelik te tree, voorhuwelikse-swangerskappe steeds 'n aansienlike deel van die geboortes, veral in bruin werkersklasgemeenskappe, gevorm het. Alhoewel buite-egtelike swangerskappe dikwels tot huwelike gelei het, was buite-egtelike geboortes riskant, veral vir vroue met kwesbare familienetwerke. Aanvanklik was daar min hulp aan swanger ongehude moeders verleen. Mettertyd is die noodsaaklikheid van die versorging van ongehude moeders en hul kinders teësinnig aanvaar, maar sosiale stigmas verbonde aan ongehude moeders het egter steeds die aard van die hulp wat hulle ontvang het, beinvloed. Deur middel van kwalitatiewe getuienis word die debatte tussen vroulike filantrope, maatskaplike werkers, medici en moreel konserwatiewes rakende die versorging van ongehude moeders, geëvalueer. Die tesis skenk spesifieke aandag aan vroulike afwykende gedrag en hoe dit oor tyd verander het om verskillende morele en politieke agendas te reflekteer. Daarbenewens word gevallestudies van ongehude moeders van twee Anglikaanse tehuise gebruik om die idees in die debatte te kontrasteer met die werklike ervarings van ongetroude vroue in Kaapstad tydens hofmakery. Hierdie rekords ondersteun die hipotese dat die opvattings rondom voorhuwelikse seks en die ervarings tydens hofmakery meer uiteenlopend en divers was as wat voorheen aanvaar is.

Sleutelterme/ Terme: Seksualiteit; Buite-egtelike swangerskap; Enkelouerskap;

Reproduktiewe Regte in Suid-Afrika.

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My parents, Rob and Jane Richardson, made history an integral part of my growing up and have been a source of encouragement, unconditional love and grammatical assistance throughout my university career. Thank you for always having faith in me.

I am deeply conscious of the fact that to write this thesis I relied on sources that revealed the personal information and secrets of women and girls who might have been uncomfortable at the prospect of becoming historical subjects. I hope that my profound respect for these women and for the struggles which they faced is reflected in the work that follows.

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General Introduction

Throughout the second half of the twentieth century social commentators across the globe warned that the family, and many of the key institutions with which it was associated, were in a state of unprecedented crisis. Although not wholly without basis – illegitimacy and divorce rates did rise substantially in many communities throughout this period – this argument often presupposed that pre-nuptial sexuality, single-headed households and unstable unions were innovations of the 1960's, with the first half of the twentieth century often being described as a "golden age of marriage and the family".[2] But was this really the case, and if not, how ought historians to understand courtship behaviour and shifts that occurred therein within the course of the twentieth century?

This thesis was originally conceived as an exploration into how a growing desire for gender differentiated respectability, particularly amongst the urban middle-classes, affected courtship relations in early twentieth century Cape Town. But as I began to consult newspapers and magazines to better understand the different behaviours and practices which defined early twentieth century courtship, I noticed something strange; namely that what reporters and middle-class audiences in the 1920's and 1930's were saying about the family and the institution of marriage did not differ substantially from what many current social commentators have argued. "Sin easy in modern times" read one headline, while another suggested that the conventional home "would be abolished within the next hundred years".[3] In an even more scathing piece, the Right. Rev. Booth Coventry, moderator of the Presbyterian Church in South Africa, was quoted denouncing the "widespread immorality among the younger generation" and the "breaking down of the barrier between immorality and the upholding of the Christian ideal of chastity".[4] This discovery prompted me to begin looking more critically at early twentieth century courtship and at what happened when couples deviated from or circumvented the prescribed stages of engagement, marriage and then pregnancy. My work on this topic compliments that of a number of other scholars who have examined sexuality and courtship transition in the other parts of the world during this period.[5]

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[2] R. Probert. "The context of illegitimacy from the 1920s to the 1960s" in R. Probert (ed.) *Cohabitation and Non-Marital Births in Births and Wales, 1600-2012* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), p. 145.

[3] "Sin easy in modern times", *Rand Daily Mail,* 3rd June 1926; Also see: "Will homes be abolished in a hundred years?", *Cape Times* 19th June 1929.

[4] "Moderator speaks of widespread immorality", *Rand Daily Mail*, 30th March 1938.

Many mothers in twentieth century Cape Town produced children either conceived or born outside of wedlock. And yet, not much is known about these women or their children, nor do we have any real estimates of the true extent of this phenomenon. Partly this is due to the neglect that gender and family history has suffered in early twentieth century South African historiography, but it is also due to a lack of sources and to the difficulties associated with studying human sexuality, a topic as elusive as it is controversial.

Premarital sex is a matter that has concerned people in welfare, health, educational and other related spheres for the greater part of the twentieth century. However, because of its painful and embarrassing nature, it is a phenomenon which although spoken about at length in the abstract has often proved difficult to quantify or to find concrete evidence of.[6] A further difficulty is the persistence of certain images or stereotypes which have clouded twenty-first century perceptions of the single mother and her role in early twentieth century society.[7] I refer here, to quote Kenneth Hughes, "not only to the pejorative or prejudicial images of the unmarried black mother leaning on the State to subsidize the fruits of her promiscuity" but also to the "tragic or ambivalent images which come to many of us from high culture" and which have been deliberately perpetuated by reform era feminists.[8]

The work that follows combines individual-level parish data with court records, hostel reports and case vignettes to try and answer several separate but related questions. Who were the parents of illegitimate or premaritally conceived children and what sort of sexual relations gave rise to the birth of these children? How did attitudes and practices pertaining to premarital sexuality change depending on the race or socio-economic class of the individuals involved? How did the specific social conditions at the Cape shape the different types of relations that existed between men and women in the early twentieth century? And, perhaps, most importantly, how unusual was this behaviour and how did those involved respond to it?

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[5] Stephanie Coontz, for example, the author of *The Way We Never Were: American Families and the Nostalgia Trap* (New York: Basic Books, 1992) and *Marriage, a History: From Obedience to Intimacy or How Love Conquered Marriage* (New York: Penguin, 2005), has used a range of evidence to highlight the sentimentalized and inaccurate nature of popular portrayals of American courtship during the early twentieth century, arguing instead that this period marked the first significant break in the traditional courtship system of "courting in" and that this break shifted the nexus of power within courtship away from parents and other formal bodies towards courting youths.

[6] It was only in 1896, two years after birth and death registration was made compulsory at the Cape, that the Medical Officer of Health began to compile statistics on illegitimacy and it was not until 1955 that Cape Town's entire population was consistently included in these statistics.

[7] M. Motapanyane (ed.) *Motherhood and Single-Lone Parenting: A Twenty First Century Perspective* (Bradford: Dementer Press, 2016), pp. 115 & 117-192; For evidence of the persistence of these stereotypes in South Africa specifically consult C. MacLoed and K. Durrheim. "Racialising teenage pregnancy: 'culture' and 'tradition' in the South African scientific literature", *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 25 (5), 2002, pp. 778-801.

[8] K. Hughes. "Law, religion and bastardy: comparative and historical perspectives" in S. Burman and E. Preston-Whyte (eds.) *Questionable Issue: Illegitimacy in South Africa*, (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1992), p. 1.

Questions such as these are crucial to our understanding of sexual behaviour and its determinants over time, helping to answer the overarching question of whether a sizeable disjuncture existed between what was considered to be ordinary extramarital behaviour at an institutional level and what people did and considered to be ordinary extramarital behaviour in their everyday lives in early twentieth century Cape Town. But they also help to shed light on a host of other issues, including the position of women and children in Cape society, the nature and importance of interactions between different classes and races, the role and effectiveness of civil and church authorities in regulating reproduction and, of course, the operation of the family and kinship networks.[9]

In engaging with these issues this thesis contributes to an already rich literature on the changing nature of the family at the Cape.[10] However, where to date the vast majority of scholarship has focused either on the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, when slavery and uneven gender ratios complicated the dynamics of family formation, or on the very recent past, with rape and HIV/Aids both being positioned as key issues in the fight for increased economic and gender equality, this study explores the early twentieth century; arguably an equally critical period in the evolution of sexuality and family formation in South Africa.

However, the aim of this work is not only to shed light on a period that in the given context has received relatively little scholarly attention. It is also to challenge the myth that prior to the sexual revolution there existed a clear dichotomy between the ‘respectable’ majority and those on the other side of the moral divide; a myth which remains persistent even today and which, in conjunction with various normative discourses, has long provided a vocabulary for policy makers and officials with which to justify racial as well as class and gender discrimination.[11]

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[9] This sentence has been paraphrased from S. Burman and M. Naude. “Bearing a Bastard: The Social Consequences of Illegitimacy in Cape Town, 1896-1939”, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 17 (3), 1991, p. 373.

[10] For example, see V. Malherbe. “Ten Reasons for Not Marrying: Sex and Illegitimacy in Nineteenth Century Cape Town”, *Historia*, 52 (2), 2007, pp. 186-213; V. Malherbe. “Illegitimacy and Family Formation in Colonial Cape Town, to c. 1850”, *Journal of Social History*, 39 (4), 2006, pp. 1153-1176; G. Groenewald. “A Mother Makes No Bastard: Family Law, Sexual Relations and Illegitimacy in Dutch Colonial Cape Town, c. 1652-1795”, *African Historical Review*, 39 (2), 2007, pp. 58-90; P. Scully. *Liberating the Family?: Gender and British Slave Emancipation in the Rural Western Cape, South Africa* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1997).

Premarital pregnancy as a phenomenon has typically transcended class, national and racial boundaries, occurring in a variety of communities and social settings throughout history. Yet, particularly within the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, unmarried mothers were viewed throughout much of European society as a threat to the moral and social order of the civilized world. Although very much on the periphery of this world, Cape Town's middle and upper classes shared this sentiment, arguing that unmarried mothers ought to be perceived as "offenders of the mental and moral laws" of 'normal' society and that "the establishment of habits of self-discipline into the ordinary people of the country" was vitally important to the development of a stable social order.[12] But even as the distinction between the respectable and the disreputable became increasingly crucial to the maintenance of a peculiar bourgeoisie identity and spatialized social order, whether or not this distinction had the necessary practical currency within Cape Town's lower-middle and working class population to curb certain long-established behaviours is still open to debate.

In the chapters which follow many different aspects of premarital pregnancy are explored, both in terms of how this phenomenon was perceived and in terms of how it actually functioned. The argument which underpins much of what is discussed is that, despite having been referred to as a golden age of marriage and the family, the dynamics of family formation in early to mid-twentieth century Cape Town remained fluid, with a sizeable grey area continuing to exist between the ideal and the reality of family formation.

Chapter Outline

The early twentieth century was a period of change for women both in South Africa and abroad. It witnessed not only the enfranchisement of white women and the entry of an increasing number of women into the labour market, but also the emergence of welfare and health services designed specifically to cater to the maternity needs of the population. While from a twenty-first century perspective these changes were mostly positive, at the time they were a source of considerable anxiety regarding the future of the family unit.

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[11] For a fascinating account of the racialized construction of out-of-wedlock pregnancy and the effects that this had on American social welfare policies see R. Solinger. "The Making of the 'Matriarchy': The Persistence of Biological Explanations for Black Pregnancy", in R. Solinger. *Wake Up Little Susie: Single Pregnancy and Race before Roe v. Wade* (New York: Routledge, 1992), pp. 41-85.

[12] Cape Archives, A2182/51, newspaper report and Cape Archives, A2182/3 Mary Rolt Hostel (MRH hereafter) Minute book, November 1935.

Within this context more than one type of disciplinary regime emerged as social definitions of female deviancy shifted to reflect different moral and political agendas. The overarching narrative, however, was one in which the single mother was seen as representing "both a symptom and a cause of threatening social breakdown."[13] In the first chapter of this thesis, I examine how this narrative came into being and the discursive strategies employed in order to manage the anxieties it evoked.

In the second chapter I employ a dataset of over 2300 fertile marriages (with a first child baptized between 1900 and 1960) drawn from Anglican parishes across Cape Town to examine the extent to which popular attitudes towards premarital sexuality matched up with the censorious values expressed by the church authorities and the middle class press. In addition, using various demographic indicators, I explore how different "relational contexts and social geographies" framed the different choices made by couples at specific moments in the courtship process, looking in particular at the role that class, race, age and professional status played in informing these decisions.[14]

And finally, in the third chapter I move to evaluate specific instances of illegitimacy, using a selection of case files taken from Anglican unmarried mothers' hostels in Cape Town, both to confirm and to elaborate on the hypotheses that early to mid-twentieth century attitudes towards extramarital sexuality tended to be more ambiguous and courtship experiences more diverse than has previously been supposed.

That the focus of these three chapters is on the lives and experiences of young, working-class white and coloured women, rather than on African women, has largely to do with uneven patterns of urbanisation in South Africa; white and coloured women were drawn into new areas of work during the First and Second World Wars and inhabited Cape Town in much larger numbers than their African counterparts, especially during the interwar period.[15] They also generally had greater access to urban support networks (e.g. churches, charitable institutions) and state aid, meaning that they tend to appear more frequently in the records which I employ.

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[13] L. Gordon. *Pitied But Not Entitled: Single Mothers and the History of Welfare 1890-1935* (Cambridge, M.A.: Harvard University Press, 1994), p. 24.

[14] S. Szreter and K. Fisher. *Sex before the Sexual Revolution: Intimate Life in England, 1918-1963* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2010), p. 115.

[15] Elizabeth Thornberry notes that, unlike Cape Town, East London "attracted large numbers of women as well as men from rural Xhosa communities, who worked as domestic servants and shop helpers" but acknowledges that this was unusual within the South African urban context. E. Thornberry. "Rape, Race, and Respectability in a South African Port City: East London, 1870-1927", *Journal of Urban History*, 42 (5), 2016, p. 865.

Historiographical Overview

For much of twentieth century, at the same time that anthropologists and archaeologists had begun to write extensively on the social histories and cultural practices of the country's various indigenous populations, South African historians remained largely preoccupied with the political history of a select group of elites and policy-makers within the white population. In the late 1970's, however, this began to shift as the social history of ordinary South Africans, both black and white, became a subject of professional research. Since then, a wide range of excellent studies have been published on the social history of Cape Town. Some of these studies – in particular, Vivian Bickford-Smith's work on leisure and segregation, Elizabeth van Heyningen's work on public health and poverty, as well as Mohammed Adhikari's work on identity and inter-group relations within the coloured community – have helped to significantly broaden our knowledge of the history of Cape Town during the period under investigation.[16] In addition, a number of important local histories have emerged documenting different aspects of material life and culture in suburbs such as Mowbray, Black River, Maitland, and Seapoint throughout this period.[17]

With the advent of the HIV/AIDS crisis and following trends in international scholarship, the 1980's also saw the proliferation of a range of empirical case studies dedicated to understanding sexual behaviour and its determinants. One of the major criticisms of this body of literature, however, is that it has failed to properly historicize phenomena like rape and single motherhood, instead treating these phenomena as unique to the current order whilst ignoring the extent to which sexual control, violence and selective welfare provision were built into previous systems of rule.[18] In many respects, this is a valid criticism. Rape and its history has only just begun to be systematically studied in South Africa and while technically the first studies with regard to unmarried motherhood were undertaken by social work students in the 1950's, since then few attempts have been made to understand this phenomenon in full historical perspective.[19]

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[16] V. Bickford-Smith. *The Emergence of the South African Metropolis: Cities and Identities in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016); V. Bickford-Smith. *Ethnic Pride and Racial Prejudice in Victorian Cape Town* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); V. Bickford-Smith, E. van Heyningen and N. Worden. *Cape Town in the Twentieth Century: An Illustrated Social History* (Cape Town: David Philip Publishers, 1999); E. van Heyningen. "Public Health and Society in Cape Town, 1880-1910" (Ph.D Thesis, University of Cape Town, 1989); M. Adhikari. *"Let Us Live for our Children": the Teachers' League of South Africa, 1913-1940 (*Cape Town: University of Cape Town Press, 1993).

[17] J. Western. *Outcast Cape Town* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1981); U. Mesthrie. "Dispossession and Memory: The Black River Community of Cape Town", *Oral History,* 28 (2), 2000, pp. 35-43; A. Björnsdotter Teppo. *The Making of a Good White: A Historical Ethnography of the Rehabilitation of Poor Whites in a Suburb of Cape Town* (Helsinki: Helsinki Univ. Press, 2004); M. Paulse. "An Oral History of Tramway Road and Ilford Street, Sea Point, 1930s-2001: The Production of Place, by Race, Class and Gender" (Ph.D. Thesis, University of Cape Town, 2002). Additional area-specific histories of the Cape Peninsula include A. Kirkaldy. "The Sea is in Our Blood: Community and Craft in Kalk Bay c. 1880-1930" (M.A. thesis, University of Cape Town, 1988); S. Field. "The Power of Exclusion: Moving Memories from Windermere to the Cape Flats 1920s-1990s" (Ph.D. thesis, University of Essex, 1996); C. Keegan. "Aspects of Material Life and Culture in District Six c. 1930-1950s" (B.A. Honours thesis, University of Cape Town, 1982).

In 1991 Sandra Burman and Margaret Naude wrote a seminal article entitled "Bearing a Bastard: The Social Consequences of Illegitimacy in Cape Town, 1896-1939", which looks carefully at the changing provision for the illegitimate mother and child in Cape Town during this period and at how it reflected wider societal attitudes and concerns. Unfortunately, though, while this article was written in the hope that more studies would be initiated on this topic – efforts to interrogate "this rich vein of social history" remain limited, particularly as it pertains to the establishment and operation of philanthropic maternity homes in pre-apartheid South Africa.[20] There is also a distinct lack information on what gave rise to illegitimacy and how it intertwined with other kinds of sexual behaviour (e.g. premarital pregnancy, cohabitation) during this period.

Yet, while Burman and Naude are the most prominent of only a handful of historians to engage directly with the topic of illegitimacy and the social provisions surrounding such a phenomenon within twentieth century South Africa, there is sizeable body of research by South African historians dedicated to exploring the history of gender and family relations and of various forms of sexual control and deviancy in South Africa. The work of key scholars Pamela Scully, Patricia van der Spuy, Vertrees Malherbe, Robert Ross and Kirsten Mackenzie will be explored in more detail in the body of this thesis. For now though it is sufficient to say that some of the best and earliest research in this field has focused specifically on gender and sexuality in the early to mid-nineteenth century, with researchers like Pamela Scully arguing that the post-emancipation period provided especially fertile ground for the spread of new ideas regarding gender and the family.

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[18] P. Gqola. *Rape: A South African Nightmare* (Johannesburg: Jacana Media, 2015), p. 45.

[19] See for example E. J. van Andel. "'n Ontleding van die Persoonlikheid en Maatskaplike Agtergrond van die Blanke Ongehude Moeder in Suid-Afrika" (M.A. Thesis, University of Pretoria, 1948).

[20] S. Burman and M. Naude. "Bearing a Bastard", p.373.

There has also been some valuable work published on gender and sexuality in South Africa during the early to mid-twentieth century. Karen Jochelson's book *The Colour of Disease – Syphilis and Racism in South Africa, 1880-1950* and Susanne Klausen's slightly more recent study entitled *Race, Maternity, and the Politics of Birth Control, 1910-1939* have both provided key insights into the political economy of health and social welfare in early twentieth century South Africa. Jochelson suggests that in South Africa the process of defining venereal disease and its carriers was inherently political and that anxieties regarding its spread often reflected "wider fears about social and moral disorder".[21] Klausen draws similar conclusions regarding the provision of birth control in South Africa in the period between 1910 and 1939. In particular, she argues that the provision of birth control within South Africa was not originally motivated by a general concern for the needs or desires of women, but instead was the product of a growing impulse amongst white-elites to limit the size of poor-white families, and therein to promote the genetic health of the white race.[22]

Rebecca Hodes's article on the codification of sexual deviancy in South African medical practice and Linda Chisholm's research into gender and deviance in South African reformatories have both also been useful in exploring official responses to sexual nonconformity and in documenting the perceived link between mental deficiency and sexual delinquency amongst young girls in the period preceding the Second World War.[23] Hodes's research sheds light on how at the beginning of the twentieth century sexual deviance, or 'kink' as she has phrased it, was used as a convenient social and medical metaphor for behaviours or modes of being, such as masturbation and female sexual impurity, that evoked an uncomfortable response within broader society. Read together with Chisholm's analysis of reformatories like Eshowe Girls Reformatory and Standerton Industrial School for Girls, it is possible to see some of the practical implications that this view had for women. Chisholm makes the important point that whereas young men were usually classified as delinquents for engaging in theft or physical violence, young women were most often stereotyped as abnormal or deviant because of their sexual activities.[24] In other words, delinquency amongst women often came to be defined in explicitly sexual terms; an argument which is elaborated on in Chapter 1.

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[21] K. Jochelson. *The Colour of Disease: Syphilis and Racism in South Africa, 1880-1950* (Oxford: Palgrave in association with St. Antony's Press, 2001), p. 4.

[22] S. Klausen. *Race, Maternity, and the Politics of Birth Control*, *1910-1939* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), pp. 1-5 & 33.

[23] R. Hodes. "Kink and the Colony: Sexual Deviance in the Medical History of South Africa, c. 1893–1939", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 41 (4), 2015, pp. 715-733; Also see L. Chisholm. "Gender and deviance in South African industrial schools and reformatories for girls, 1911-1934" in C. Walker (ed.) *Women and Gender in Southern Africa to 1945* (Cape Town: David Philip Publishers, 1990), pp.293-313.

There is also a growing body of academic research which looks at how sex education manuals and organisations like the Purity League and the Pathfinders and Wayfarers formed part of a larger process of sexual socialisation which sought to channel the sexual behaviour of young adults in ways defined as socially useful and morally acceptable.[25] For example, in a recent article Sarah Duff shows how, whilst providing very little actual information about the reproductive process, texts like ‘Facts about Ourselves for Growing Girls and Boys’, a sex education pamphlet circulated by the Johannesburg Public Health Department in 1934 impressed upon its young, predominantly white middle-class readership the importance of ‘proper’ sexual intercourse; that is intercourse occurring within the bounds of a monogamous, heterosexual Christian marriage with the explicit aim of producing healthy children “in aid of a future, prosperous Union firmly under white rule”.[26]

In drawing on popular themes like health, reproduction, and the politics of knowledge, the above scholarship has played an important role in connecting South African research on sex and gender to that being undertaken by historians and social scientists elsewhere. In Britain and much of central Europe, a rich and theoretically sophisticated literature on sexual practice and discourse has developed.[27] Although statistical patterns in fertility decline and bridal pregnancy have been observed and individual records used to provide a welcome, if incomplete, social history of marriage and the family in these areas, a large portion of the above literature remains rooted in the intellectual history tradition.[28] While valuable in its ability to shed light on dominant constructions of sex, love and marriage, one of the criticisms of this tradition is that it privileges "representation" over "narrated experience", ignoring the "complex dialogue" that existed between ideals and individual behaviour.[29] As Claire Langhamer has pointed out historians still have much to discover about the ways in which ideas relating to sex and love "were understood, invoked and deployed in the 'round of everyday life'".[30]

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[24] L. Chisholm. “Aspects of Child-Saving in South Africa: Classifying and Segregating the Delinquent 1917-1934”, African Studies Seminar Paper, No. 251, 1989, p. 20.

[25] Much of this literature has focused on the sexual socialisation of African working-class youths in Johannesburg. However, Duff’s work promises to expand this literature to also encapsulate debates regarding the sexual socialisation and sex education provided for non-African youths. For a useful summary of this literature see C. Glaser. “Managing the Sexuality of Urban Youth: Johannesburg, 1920s-1960s”, *The International Journal of African Historical Studies,* 38 (2), 2005, pp. 301-327.

[26] S. Duff. “Facts about Ourselves: Negotiating Sexual Knowledge in Early Twentieth-Century South Africa”, *Kronos*, 41 (1), 2015, p. 235.

[27] For a summary of this literature see D. Herzog. *Sexuality in Europe: A Twentieth-Century History* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2011), pp. 1-6 & 221.

[28] C. Langhamer. “Love and Courtship in Mid-Twentieth-Century England”, *The Historical Journal*, 50 (1), 2007, pp. 174-175.

Locally, the predominant focus has also been on the different mechanisms employed by religious bodies, community organisations and the state to regulate sexual behaviour, with comparatively little attention being paid to the ways in which ordinary individuals navigated these controls to shape their own sexual and reproductive histories. To what extent, though, were the laws and homogenising discourses which authors like Duff and Hodes describe actually effective and how representative were the views which they expressed? Although there is a small but fascinating corpus of historical and anthropological work, dating back to 1940's and 1950's, which looks at the intimate lives and sexual practices of men and women in urban Johannesburg, these are both questions which have yet to be sufficiently addressed, particularly within the context of early twentieth century Cape Town. [31]

Helen Bradford's investigation into clandestine abortion in South Africa has hinted at some of the difficulties associated with controlling female sexuality. Her work reveals more than just the "the ubiquity of abortion" in late nineteenth and early twentieth century South Africa.[32] It also illustrates that, despite having limited access to the vote and to means of birth control, women from a range of different racial and class backgrounds were active in trying to regulate their own fertility; abortion functioning as a key "site of struggle" wherein contests between ordinary women, the state and the medical establishment took place.[33]

In their article Burman and Naude also highlight that many of the legal and social provisions which they discuss were "largely those imposed or provided by one group – the upper class white community", and are thus a poor measure of the attitudes and values of the community at large.[34] They argue that the city of Cape Town never had only one set of community values but several, and that as a result ideas about illegitimacy and family formation varied. The evidence presented in this thesis is directly linked to this argument.

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[29] C. Langhamer. "Love and Courtship", p. 175.

[30] C. Langhamer. "Love and Courtship", p. 176.

[31] See for example: E. Hellmann. *Rooiyard: A Sociological Survey of an Urban Slum Yard* (Cape Town: Oxford University Press for the Rhodes-Livingston Institute, 1948); L. Longmore. *The Dispossessed: A Study of the Sex-life of Bantu Women in Urban Areas in and around Johannesburg* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1959); T. D. Moodie (with V. Ndatshe and B. Sibuyi). "Migrancy and male sexuality on the South African Gold Mines", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 14 (2), 1988, pp. 228-256.

[32] H. Bradford. "Herbs, Knives and Plastic: 150 Years of Abortion in South Africa" in T. Meade and M. Walker (eds.) *Science, Medicine and Cultural Imperialism* (London: Macmillan, 1991).

[32] H. Bradford. "Herbs, Knives and Plastic: 150 Years of Abortion in South Africa" in T. Meade and M. Walker (eds.) *Science, Medicine and Cultural Imperialism* (London: Macmillan, 1991), p. 120.

[33] H. Bradford. "Herbs, Knives and Plastic", p. 120.

This study takes many of its thematic cues from scholars like Chisholm and Hodes, but as with the work of Bradford and of Buurman and Naude, it tries to understand sexuality within early twentieth century Cape Town from above *and* below, focusing on the tensions that existed between different middle and working class, white and coloured, male and female and individual and community notions of acceptable sexual behaviour. It also employs a somewhat different methodology in order to challenge the assumption that family formation in Cape Town always followed a prescribed course.

Methodology

Broadly speaking, the international literature dealing with pregnancy and marriage can be separated into two distinct streams. The first stream pioneered by the French Demographic School and later taken up by the Cambridge Group for the History of Population and Social Structure has tended to favour the adoption of statistical techniques, using data taken from parish registers to sketch the broad contours of phenomena like illegitimacy and bridal pregnancy over time.[35] The second stream, whose proponents include highly regarded family historians like John Gillis and Allan Macfarlane, is more qualitative. Within this context the "scrutiny of language" and "thick description" – both methods taken from historical anthropology – are used to shed light on the shifting nature of romantic relationships and on the "ideas and feelings" accompanying such shifts.[36]

By and large, the South African literature on this topic has conformed to the latter approach, with virtually all of the scholarship mentioned in the previous section relying heavily on qualitative sources like pamphlets, social welfare reports and court records. However, recently a number of scholars have emphasised the need for South African historians to take fuller advantage of advances in data-processing to capture and begin working with individual-level records on a much larger scale than before. Johan Fourie, for example, makes the compelling argument that in a country where "history writing was often the domain of the privileged", individual level sources, such as marriage records, death notices, prison and military records, voters' rolls and probate inventories have the power to "bring to light a wealth of new information about the lives of South Africans that have hitherto remained largely uncharted".[37] In this thesis I expand Fourie's argument to suggest that such records might also play an important role in helping historians to distinguish between *preference* and *practice* when discussing the functioning of specific normative discourses.

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[34] S. Burman and M. Naude. "Bearing a Bastard", p. 410.

[35] For an excellent history of the French demographic school and the family reconstitution method see R. Wheaton. "Observations on the Development of Kinship History, 1942-1985", *Journal of Family History*, 12 (1), 1987, pp. 285-302; For key examples of this approach, see P. Laslett, K. Oosterveen and R. M. Smith (eds.) *Bastardy and Its Comparative History (London:* Edward Arnold, 1980); R. Schumacher, G. Ryczkowska and O. Perroux. "Unwed Mothers in the City. Illegitimate Fertility in 19th-Century Geneva", *The History of the Family*, 12 (3), 2007, pp. 189-202; J. van Bavel. "Family Control, Bridal Pregnancy, and Illegitimacy: An Event History Analysis in Leuven, Belgium, 1846-1856", *Social Science History*, 25 (3), 2001, p. 449-479; G. Wyatt. "Bastardy and prenuptial pregnancy in a Cheshire town during the eighteenth century", *Local Population Studies*, 49, 1992, pp. 38-50.

[36] J. Gillis. *For Better, For Worse, British Marriages 1600 to the Present* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1985), p.8.

Letters and diaries survive irregularly, if at all, for the urban proletariat. As a result, in order to understand the evolution of modern courtship, historians have made extensive use of court cases (abortion, infanticide, breach-of-promise, child maintenance suits etc.), social surveys and the advice columns which proliferated in magazines and newspapers throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth century. But much like official reports and other formal archival records, these sources "embody complex problems of representation and representativeness".[38]

In her book *Promises Broken: Courtship, Class, and Gender in Victorian England,* which provides an excellent overview of breach-of-promise proceedings in nineteenth century England, Ginger Frost is careful to emphasise that for various reasons only a small minority of people used the courts as an instrument with which to resolve romantic disputes. In her chapter entitled, "The court as Public Theatre" Frost also explores how, while the lawyers engaged in such cases used a variety of tactics, the courtroom environment favoured cases in which certain courtship narratives prevailed. For example, many breach-of-promise actions involved cross-class courtship, with women tending to sue older, more financially established men. As a consequence thereof "their value as a barometer of lower middle [and working class] values" is limited, as is their ability to provide reliable information relating to the ages and class-relations of courting couples.[39]

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[37] J. Fourie. "Cliometrics in South Africa", *Studies in Economics and Econometrics,* 42 (2), 2018, p. 9.

[38] E. Huron and S. King. "Courtship at the coroners court", *Social History*, 40 (2), 2015, p. 191.

[39] G. Frost. *Promises Broken: Courtship, Class, and Gender in Victorian England* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1995), p.11.

Social surveys and court cases are also problematic in that they rely on and classify courtship relationships according to fixed categories, many of which obscure as much as they reveal and which have little intrinsic meaning apart from the laws and social institutions which define them. Even Leontine Young, professor of casework at Michigan University throughout the 1950's and one of the first professional social workers to publish on the "social tragedy" of illegitimacy, admits that when legal and religious restrictions on reproduction are put aside "there is no such thing as an illegitimate child, there is only a child."[40]

Despite touching on many of the topics which social historians find interesting, prescriptive literature, especially of the kind found in sermons, advice manuals, and journal and magazine articles, can also be misleading. Such literature, while providing historians with a surfeit of information on social standards and behavioural expectations, is often a poor guide to the actual experiences and attitudes of the majority. For example, for decades women have been receiving advice on household management, on style, on getting and keeping a man, on sex, and on the proper expression of emotions but that is not to say that they have always adhered to or even taken seriously such "decalogues of deportment".[41]

Quantitative data drawn from marriage and baptism registers is useful in that it has provided historians and demographers with the means to begin looking past these categories to the existence of various alternative patterns of family formation. A detailed analysis of both rural and urban parish registers has revealed that sexual activity in advance of marriage was relatively common in Europe throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries with pregnancy quite often preceding marriage.

Yet, despite strong arguments for complementing qualitative methods and the use of archival sources with quantitative data, conventionally trained historians have typically been quite wary of this mode of analysis, with Gillis et al asserting that "Demographers are ... more likely to be satisfied with inference from statistical correlations, while many historians look for causes at the level of intentional behaviour, which is best explored with qualitative sources".[42] Calling for a complete return to a more traditional narrative mode, Lawrence Stone makes the even stronger claim that "On any cost-benefit analysis the rewards of large-scale computerized history have so far only occasionally justified the input of time and money and this has led historians to cast around for other methods of investigating the past, which will shed more light with less trouble".[43]

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[40] L. Young. *Out of Wedlock: A study of the problems of the unmarried mother and her child* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1953), p. 7.

[41] "Ten Don'ts for Girl Students", *UCT Tattle*, 21 May 1936.

[42] J. Gillis., L. Tilly, and D. Levine (eds.) *The European Experience of Declining Fertility, 1850-1970: The Quiet Revolution* (Cambridge: M.A.: Blackwell, 1992), p. 3.

These criticisms are not entirely without merit. Quantitative history does require a large investment of intellectual effort and resources and, possibly as a result of this, quantitative historians have sometimes been less modest in their claims than others in the field. To recall Elizabeth Fox-Genovese and Eugene Genovese, demographers and quantitative historians seem to forget that "like every method, the quantitative remains just that – a method".[44]

However, whether deliberately naïve or simply short-sighted, such objections ultimately fail to provide a fair account of the quantitative approach. While certainly interested in like-trends, historical demographers have tended to focus primarily on probabilities, which, if used correctly, can shed light on (and may even help to distinguish between) intentional and unintentional behaviour.[45] Moreover, to eschew quantitative history because it is "difficult", either in method or substance, is to ignore the important role that statistics can play in allowing historians to ask new and different questions regarding the lives and social practices of the less articulate lower strata.[46]

It is also worth noting that ultimately "any division between quantitative 'lumpers' and qualitative 'feelers' is [in itself] artificial", as is the split between those who look only for structures and those who prefer to stress the ability of individuals to shape their own lives and situations.[47] In line with this view, there is currently a growing body of literature coming out of Europe which attempts to marry qualitative and quantitative techniques in a way that is sensitive to the limitations of both approaches.[48] In this thesis I adopt a similar methodology, using individual anecdotes to inform the statistical record and vice versa, whilst at the same time trying to take cognisance of some of the criticisms which have been levelled against the field of family history more broadly.

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[43] L. Stone. "The revival of narrative: reflections on a new old history", *Past and Present*, 85, 1979, p. 13.

[44] E. Fox-Genovese and E. Genovese. "The political crisis of social history: a Marxian perspective", *Journal of Social History*, 10, 1976, p. 211.

[45] I am grateful to Jan Kok for pointing this out to me and for helping me to properly understand the merits of a combined approach.

[46] Individual-level data can be especially useful in countries like South Africa where working class literacy rates remained low well into the 1900's and where the archives contain few personal papers, memoirs, clipping files and scrapbooks pertaining to the lives of non-elites.

[47] M. Lindemann. "The Sources of Social History", Encyclopaedia of European Social History, *Encyclopedia.com.* 24 March 2019.

[48] Emma Griffin, for example, makes a strong case for combining demographic and qualitative approaches. See E. Griffin. "Sex, Illegitimacy and Social Change in industrializing Britain", *Social History,* 38 (2), 2013, pp. 139-161,

Rayna Rapp has argued that whatever the mix of quantitative and qualitative methods, much work on the history of the family remains "conceptually wedded" to (1) an acceptance of the distinction between the family itself and the larger world and (2) a belief in the family as a natural (as opposed to a social) construction. In my analysis, I try to avoid a static cross-sectional examination of family life, instead viewing the family as a fluid entity, the boundaries of which can be seen "decomposing and recomposing in continuous interaction with larger domains".[49] It is, for example, important to acknowledge the role that families play in the organisation and normalization of certain socio-economic processes. As Rapp explains:

> It is through their commitment to the concept of family that people are recruited to the material relations of the household. Because people accept the meaningfulness of family, they enter into relations of production, reproduction and consumption with one another – they marry, beget children, work to support dependants, transmit and inherit cultural and material resources.[50]

At the same time, the Marxist feminist conception of the family as a key site for the oppression of women and the assumption that it is not in their roles as wives or daughters that women can ever "make history", both need to be more thoroughly interrogated. Women were, and still are, agents of change in various aspects of family life, defining as well as being defined by the family structures within which they operate.[51] It is also worth highlighting that individuals can occupy multiple distinct roles within the family setting, not all of which have to apply uniformly; a women can be a mother and not a wife, a man a husband and not the primary breadwinner; and a child might grow up in a household in which their ostensible parents are not their biological parents.[52]

Indeed, while Göran Therborn is correct in arguing that by 1900 the "male breadwinner working-class family […] had established itself as the normative of the European [and colonial] working-class", the existing literature on illegitimacy and bridal pregnancy attests to the variability of household structure and family life that remained present both before and after this point.[53] Interregional comparisons have also played an important role in complicating dominant gender hierarchies and representations of the family.[54]

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[49] R. Rapp, E. Ross, and R. Bridenthal. "Examining Family History", *Feminist Studies* 5 (1), 1979, pp. 175-177.

[50] R. Rapp, E. Ross and R. Bridenthal. "Examining Family History", *Feminist Studies,* 5 (1), 1979, p. 177.

[51] T. Hareven. "The History of the Family and the Complexity of Social Change", *The American Historical Review*, 96 (1), 1991, p. 124.

[52] R. Probert. "Introduction" in R. Probert (ed.) *Cohabitation and Non-Marital Births*, p. 2.

Source Summary

In this thesis I have tried to use as wide a range of sources as possible, supplementing the usual collection of newspaper clippings, pamphlets, conference reports and court cases, with various other, less publically-oriented forms of information. The quantitative data used comes out of a larger research project, housed at Stellenbosch University, which is facilitating the transcription of civil and parish registers from across the Cape.[55] While a more detailed account of the method used to analyse these registers will be included in the second chapter, it is important to note that for the purposes of this thesis the marriage and baptism registers of seven different Anglican parishes in Cape Town have been analysed. Although an effort has been made to include as diverse a selection of parishes as possible, one of the major limitations of the available data is that it is only representative of those baptising their children within the Anglican Church.

In the early twentieth century the Anglican Church was not only the largest but also one of fastest growing Christian denominations in Cape Town, incorporating 34.7% and 39.2% of the white and coloured populations respectively in 1936.[56] Despite rapid population growth these figures would remain more or less unchanged over the course of the next fifteen years, with the Dutch Reform Church, the city's second biggest Christian denomination in Cape Town, continuing to lag behind the Anglican Church, particularly in its ability to attract a sizeable coloured membership. In 1946, for example, coloured members of Anglican Church outnumbered coloured members of the Dutch Reform Church in Cape Town by 2:1, whilst outnumbering the Methodist and Roman Catholic Churches by more than double that margin.[57] The Anglican Church also boasted a large African membership; although Cape Town's small but growing African population was extremely varied in religious affiliation, with more than a fifth of the population in 1946 belonging either to an African independent church or to a faith or denomination not yet officially recognized.[58] It can also be deduced from the parish registers that the Anglican Church in Cape Town attracted its members from a diverse set of socio-economic and linguistic backgrounds, with many parishes adapting to meet the needs of the community they served. That said, the Anglican Church was a predominantly urban and English speaking institution, both factors which may have affected the way in which illegitimacy was interpreted and which are commented on in more detail in Chapter 2.

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[53] G. Therborn. *Between Sex and Power: Family in the World 1900-2000* (New York: Routledge, 2004), p. 24.

[54] See for example: H. Gates, J. Kok and S. Wang. "Burden or opportunity? Illegitimate births in the Netherlands and Taiwan", in Y. C. Chuang, T. Engelen and A. P. Wolf (eds.) *Positive or preventive. Fertility developments in Taiwan and the Netherlands, 1850-1950* (Amsterdam: Askant, 2006), p.81.

[55] The Biography of an Uncharted People is a multidisciplinary project which aims to equip a new generation of South African history scholars to understand and analyse large databases of individual-level records (e.g. baptism, marriage and death registers). Particularly in South Africa, where for a long time certain racial groups were excluded from censuses/ reports and were underrepresented in other archival material, individual-level records have the potential to shed new light on the demographic, health, migration, labour and social histories of large sections of the population.

[56] Republic of South Africa, Bureau of Statistics: *Population Census 1936, Volume VI: Religions* (Pretoria: Government Printers, 1938). pp. 9 and 96.

A further limitation of the available data and of quantitative data more broadly, is that it can provide only a very general picture of a complex social practice like extramarital pregnancy, which, although of interest to the state and society at large, was also deeply personal in nature. In order to overcome this limitation Chapter 3 focuses on a selection of more detailed case summaries from the archives of the Mary Rolt Hostel and St. Monica's Home, both Anglican Maternity Homes which catered primarily to unmarried mothers. Like all formal institutional records these summaries function less as objective accounts of a series of actions or events as they do as "active, generative substances with histories [or] as documents with itineraries of their own" – both developing within the context of and contributing to established power hierarchies. [59] However, if read carefully, they do shed a rare light on the emotions, experiences and individual histories of different women within these institutions, helping to humanize what might otherwise appear to be a fairly abstract phenomenon. In addition, these summaries serve to highlight the varied responses that different individuals and communities had towards the fact of illegitimacy in the light of Cape Town's complex history and demographic makeup.

A Note on Terminology

Before embarking on the subsequent analysis it is necessary to briefly define some of the key concepts that will be used therein. Extramarital sexuality, like so many other 'social problems', "has been defined within a strong moral context and has therefore [typically] been seen as something inherently bad and destructive".[60] That said, there are many different forms of extramarital sexuality, not all of which have invited equal censure. In this thesis, the words premarital pregnancy and prenuptial pregnancy have been used interchangeably to refer to *any* pregnancy wherein the two parties responsible were unmarried at the time of conception (in older moral phraseology fornication but not adultery). The term bridal pregnancy – a subset of premarital pregnancy – is used to refer to pregnancies wherein the two parties responsible were unmarried at the time of conception but were married by the time of the baby's birth; a situation which, albeit frowned upon, was seen as preferable to unmarried motherhood. Unmarried motherhood, a phenomenon specific to women who gave birth outside of wedlock either as the result of a premarital pregnancy or a relationship with a married man, had especially far-reaching social implications in a society where the transmission of property was through the male line. Although less visible and therefore less susceptible to intervention, cohabitation, a situation wherein a man and a woman lived together without entering into a legally binding relationship, also appears to have been quite widespread in Cape Town and was of some concern to the legal and religious authorities. While cohabitation often led to premarital pregnancy, the two are distinct in the sense that a couple could cohabit without necessarily having children.

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[57] Republic of South Africa, Bureau of Statistics. *Population Census 1951, Volume III: Religions of the white populations of South Africa together with the 1946 Census Figures for All Races of the Population* (Pretoria: Government Printers, 1955), p. 58.

[58] Republic of South Africa, Bureau of Statistics. *Population Census 1951*, *Volume III: Religions,* p. 74.

[59] A. Stoler. *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Commonsense* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 2009), p. 4.

I have aimed to be consistent in my use of racial terminology and to make clear the religious identity of the persons to whom I refer. On most occasions I identify individuals simply as "black" (that is, African), "white", or "coloured"; racial terminology which, despite the reservations of academics, remains in regular usage in South Africa today.[61] However, terms such as "non-European" and "non-white" (used to describe all persons not of European origin), "native" or "Bantu" (used to describe individuals of African descent) and "Malay" or "Mohammedan" (used to describe practicing Muslims at the Cape, usually coloured in complexion), were more commonly used by the state and charitable institutions to describe race at the time and have been included in this thesis for the purposes of contextual accuracy.

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[60] R. Bell. *Social Deviance: A Substantive Analysis* (Homewood: The Dorsey Press, 1976), p. 37.

[61] W. Dooling. "Poverty and Respectability in Early Twentieth-Century Cape Town", *Journal of African History*, 59 (3), 2019, p. 414. The term "black" – employed almost always to describe individuals of African descent, a large proportion of whom speak Bantu languages , replaced the terms "native" and "Bantu" first in official usage and then in common usage around the middle of the twentieth century. Although deployed to discriminate against people under Apartheid, terms such as "black" and "coloured" have at times been taken up by members of these groups as an important form of self-identification and are currently being retheorized by both sociologists and historians. See Z. Erasmus (ed) *Coloured by history, shaped by place: New perspectives on coloured identities in Cape Town* (Cape Town: Kwela Books, 2001), p. 14.

I have used single inverted commas to indicate where words (like ‘non-European’) are used in their historical context.

Throughout the twentieth century these social categories functioned as important indicators of differential access to wealth, education, and political power, whilst also reflecting cultural differences to a certain extent. It must be emphasised though that “the decline of monogenetic theories of humanity” in favour of a theory of distinct ‘racial stocks’ only occurred within scientific and social reformist circles towards the end of the 19th century, with racial categories developing in significance but remaining at least somewhat fuzzy until the end of Second World War.[62] Particularly in the Cape, where there was a long history of mixed marriage and where prior to the passing of the *Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act* in 1949 a diminishing but not insignificant number of such unions took place annually, there were many individuals who could claim more than one racial identity.[63] That the record contains a number of examples of women being accepted into white-only hostels only later to be expelled for dissembling their true racial identity also suggests that the act of ‘passing for white’ might not have been unusual, especially in the decades before race classification was legislated. Yet, where the categories of “black”, “white”, and “coloured” are too narrow to account for such complexities, they are simultaneously not narrow enough to take into consideration important ethnic and language-related distinctions. For example, it seems unlikely that early 20th century Xhosa immigrants to the Cape would have placed themselves in the same general category as freed slaves from Mozambique and Madagascar who had arrived on Cape shores a century earlier, despite both being classified as “black” or as “native”. It is thus important that these categories not be viewed as definitive.

Within the context of this study, it is also important to recognize the role that respectability played in constructing and modulating definitions of race. In early twentieth century Cape Town, as in many other parts of the Anglophone world, respectability – a concept which had gender performance and sexual morality at its core – was deeply imbricated in constructions of race and class, and was often used to make political claims. It was a useful concept for supporters of segregation and white supremacy because, as Elizabeth Thornberry has argued, “it invoked race implicitly rather than overtly”, allowing calls for segregation to be couched in a language that appealed to specific ways of living and of enacting gender more than it did to obvious somatic differences.[64] However, respectability was also regularly employed by African and coloured elites, who in demonstrating their own respectability felt able to argue for greater political equality. At the same time, poor white women from fragile family backgrounds often found it difficult to measure up to standards of respectability derived from middle-class British culture. In short, although respectability and whiteness were often mutually constitutive categories, the relationship between these categorise was more complex and tenuous than white politicians and city fathers would have liked to admit, giving rise to various scandals and moral panics relating to racial degeneration and black peril.

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[62] D. Jeater. *Marriage, Perversion and Power: The Construction of Moral Discourse in Southern Rhodesia, 1894-1930* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1993), p. 42.

[63] Republic of South Africa, Bureau of Statistics, *Report on Marriages in the Union of South Africa 1935 to 1957*, p. 1; Also see J. Fourie and C. Inwood. “Interracial Marriages in Twentieth Century Cape Town: evidence from Anglican marriage records”, *The History of the Family*, 24 (3), 2019, pp. 631-645.

In this thesis, I define race as a social and *not* as a biological category. In her excellent study of poor whitism in twentieth century Maitland, Annika Björnsdotter Teppo points out that in Cape Town, a society "where inter-racial relationships occurred (if not always openly), the social, spatial and symbolic barriers between racial categories" were often more strongly constructed than "in those societies where people did not constantly have close encounters with the Other".[65] Nonetheless, such boundaries remained difficult to police, not least because the differences upon which they were based were difficult to clearly define. As Björnsdotter Teppo explains, in South Africa, the category white was "vague from the start", the discourses and signifiers of whiteness having varied substantially at different times and in different places throughout the twentieth century. The well documented practice of 'passing' for white speaks to the artificiality of this and other racial categories employed by the state.[66]

Yet part of the dilemma is that over time perceived social differences can help to engender a measure of objective separateness which is then used to further justify the 'fundamental' existence of such differences.[67] In short, while they were not themselves responsible for motivating behaviour or for allowing specific attitudes to develop, there can be no doubt that such categories had a significant impact on the lives of the people they were used to define, helping to generate certain notions of community at the same time that others were being eroded.

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[64] E. Thornberry. "Rape, Race, and Respectability", p. 867.

[65] A. Björnsdotter Teppo. *The Making of a Good White,* p. 88.

[66] In South Africa, as in certain parts of the United States, racial privileging the the racialisation of space encouraged pale skinned individuals to transgress the colour bar. For more information about this practice see G. Watson. *Passing for White. A study of racial assimilation in a South African school* (London: Tavistock Publications, 1970).

[67] J. Western. *Outcast Cape Town*, p. 9.

My use of the word community also needs to be explained. The term community harkens back to premodern times when people of the same religious and kin group formed stable co-operative units wherein economic behaviour and family connections tended to link people to one another in profound and meaningful ways.[68] In this thesis, and in much other contemporary academic discourse, the term is used more loosely to refer to people who share certain characteristics and/or inhabit the same rough geographical location.[69] Individuals who meet these criteria typically form what Anderson has called "imagined communities" where, despite limited face-to-face interaction, like circumstances help to foster a sense of solidarity and belonging in a rapidly changing world.[70] However, the force of such communities should not be overstated. Michele Paulse's thesis demonstrates that even in a predominantly coloured enclave of just a few streets people could live quite different lives, with religious and class affiliations complicating the development of a straightforward sense of social cohesion.[71] There is also a sizeable literature emphasising the role that racial segregation has played in limiting the emergence of overt class sympathies in early twentieth century South Africa.[72] This literature is important to keep in mind when examining class divisions in Cape Town.

Social class is a difficult variable to define.[73] In this thesis I have adopted the following classification: the upper class consists of high-income professionals, large landowners, bankers and businessmen; the middle class is comprised of clergymen, teachers, small employers, retailers, local government officials, and those occupying clerical positions; the working class includes both skilled and unskilled labourers (i.e. artisans, transport, construction and agricultural workers, commercial travellers and street traders).[74] However, it must be acknowledged that owing to the complex relationship between class and race in South Africa, whites and coloureds of the same class would have occupied different positions in the social hierarchy.

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[68] M. Paulse. "An Oral History of Tramway Road and Ilford Street, Sea Point", p. 5.

[69] For a more comprehensive discussion of the term see I. Sanders. *The Community* (New York: The Ronald Press Company, 1975).

[70] B. Anderson. *Imagined Community* (London: Verso, 1983).

[71] M. Paulse. "An Oral History of Tramway Road and Ilford Street, Sea Point", pp. 123-154.

[72] For a good summary of this literature consult B. Bozzoli (ed.) *Class, Community and Conflict* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1987), pp. 13-28; For a famous example of the debate surrounding class and race allegiances in South Africa, see H. J. Simons and R. E. Simons. *Class and Colour in South Africa 1850-1950* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1969), pp. 73-98.

[73] Marx famously identified two social classes: the bourgeoisie, who owned the means of production, and the proletariat, who worked to supply this production. Contemporary theorists such as Weber and Poulantzas have argued for a more comprehensive understanding of class in which provision is made for the existence of two or more intermediate groups (both scholars have also emphasised that there can be important intra-class distinctions in social status). For a brief discussion of these theories and of how they be applied in South Africa see: M. Paulse. "An Oral History of Tramway Road and Ilford Street, Sea Point", p. 3.

[74] This classification is based on an adapted version of that used by G. Stedman Jones in *Outcast London: A Study in the Relationship between Classes in Victorian Society* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1971), pp. 350-357.

Historical Background

Situated near to the southernmost tip of Africa, Cape Town was originally established as a refreshment station designed to service Dutch East India Company ships on their voyages between Europe and the East. In 1657 a number of ex-company officials were granted permission to establish themselves as independent farmers at the Cape, cultivating fresh produce to sell to company servants, thus beginning a process of colonial dispossession and permanent European settlement. By 1700, the outpost – which had once "consisted of little more than a fort on the shores of Table Bay" – had become a sizeable port town, the immediate hinterland of which was in the process of being transformed into a rich wine and wheat growing area.[75] Importantly, this expansion of settler production "did not take place in a human vacuum, [there being indigenous Khoisan communities present throughout the area], nor could it be achieved without labour", a resource which was secured through the importation of slaves from the East Indies, Madagascar and Mozambique and which over time led to an expansion of Cape Town's population.[76]

Although the employment of married recruits was not as actively discouraged in South Africa as was the case in the Dutch East Indies, the creation of stable settler (and slave) families was not a major concern for early administrators at the Cape.[77] Under Roman Dutch Law, adultery, polygamy, bigamy, rape, fornication, and concubinage all constituted crimes of incontinence, and the Dutch Reform Church, exclusively at first and then in partnership with other churches newly arrived in the Cape, did encourage cohabiting couples to marry, although this was possible only where both parties had already been baptized. But throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries white adult males consistently outnumbered white adult females, with the result that many immigrants found it difficult to find a suitable marriage partner.[78] Because of this it was not unusual for the less-connected members of the white male population to enter into unofficial unions with Khoisan or slave women, a demographic pattern which the VOC tacitly accepted and which, according to Ross, prompted a "continual re-casting and re-defining of the lines of social stratification" within the Cape.[79]

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[75] R. Ross. *Status and Respectability in the Cape Colony, 1750–1870: A Tragedy of Manners* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1999), p.6.

[76] R. Ross. *Status and Respectability,* p.6.

[77] A. Stoler. "Making Empire Respectable: The Politics of Race and Sexual Morality in 20th-Century Colonial Cultures", *American Ethnologist*, 16 (4), 1989, p. 637.

While Ross has also envisaged that some slaves did succeed in establishing long-lasting, monogamous relationships, it is clear that the institution of slavery disrupted ordinary processes of indigenous and slave family formation at the Cape in a number of ways.[80] For the 17th and early 18th centuries the legal position of slaves with regards to marriage has not proven easy to decipher, nor is there much available information on the frequency with which slave families were separated by the sale of a slave far away from his or her partner.[81] However, within the context of "extremely high sex ratios, isolated and atomised slave holdings, and a variety of disparate ethnic and cultural heritages" there were many obstacles to the creation of a lasting nuclear family unit.

By the late eighteenth-century an official ban on slave marriages meant that even children born of stable sexual relationships between slaves, or slaves and free persons, were officially illegitimate, with the law explicitly stating that slaves did not "possess the right of disposing of their children".[82] Moreover, while many continue to regard the 1820's - a period which saw the passing of two separate ordinances permitting Christian slaves to enter into legal marriage - as a key turning point in the establishment of viable slave families, historians like van der Spuy emphasise that change occurred slowly and unevenly amongst the slave population.[83] Tensions between the British colonial authorities, who had taken control of the

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[78] In his work on the eighteenth century white population, Ross estimates that ten percent of the Cape-born male adult population failed to marry, a figure which would ostensibly be much higher were Ross to include recent immigrants to the Cape in his sample. R. Ross. "The 'White' population of South Africa in the Eighteenth Century", *Population Studies,* 29 (2), 1975, p. 223.

[79] Often the product of unequal power relations, it is difficult to say how many of these unions were consensual. Patricia van der Spuy has argued that while "there is evidence of slave women cohabiting for many years with their masters […] the meaning attached to these forms of behaviour by the women in question should not be considered self-evident", especially given the absence of female (slave) voices within the colonial archive. P. Scully. *Liberating the Family? Gender and British Slave Emancipation in the Rural Western Cape, South Africa, 1823-1853*, p 109.

[80] R. Ross. "Oppression, Sexuality and Slavery at the Cape of Good Hope", *Historical Reflections*, 6 (2), 1979, pp. 425-227.

[81] R. Ross. "Oppression, Sexuality and Slavery", p. 426.

[82] G. M. Theal (ed.) *Records of the Cape Colony IX* (London: Government Printers, 1897-1905), pp. 150-151.

[83] P. van der Spuy. "A Collection of discrete essays with the common theme of gender and slavery at the Cape of Good Hope with a focus on the 1820s" (M.A. Thesis, University of Cape Town, 1993), pp. 117-125.

Cape permanently in 1806, and slaveholders meant that even with slave marriages being legalized, ultimate authority over wife and child remained in the hands of the slaveholder.[84] As a consequence, Cape slave families often remained "female headed", with family formation functioning independently of marriage even at the point where urban slavery was declining.[85]

In 1834 slaves at the Cape were finally emancipated.[86] At this point Anglicisation – the definition of which has been expanded by Bickford-Smith to include both formal and informal (i.e. cultural and ideological) changes to the system of rule – had begun to affect the city's population in diverse ways.[87] Most visible were changes in the colonial civil service, local government and the law, with English institutions and jurisprudence becoming increasingly dominant over the course of the nineteenth century.[88] However, British rule at the Cape also involved various social transformations.

"At the apex of the social pyramid", says Natasha Erlank, "[remained] a small government and military elite", but just beneath this group a large and increasingly influential middle-class was forming.[89] This middle-class was the product of a number of specific economic and religious sub-groups.[90] Digby Warren, for example, has differentiated between the merchant elite, who often "mixed on terms of equality with senior colonial officials", and a larger commercially oriented middle class, made up of less affluent Dutch merchants and English retailers with more localized investment interests.[91] Nonetheless, middle class society in Cape Town did develop a distinct group identity and culture, premised in a large part on the creation of a "rational public sphere" and on the spread of shared notions of morality and respectability.[92]

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[84] P. van der Spuy. "A Collection of discrete essays", pp. 117-125.

[85] According to the biennial reports submitted by the Guardian of Slaves less than ten applications for marriage licences were received between June 1826 and December 1833, two of which were turned down. P. van der Spuy. "A Collection of discrete essays", p. 121.

[86] Although it was only in 1838 after four years of compulsory indenture that they were granted full freedom of movement. S. Burman and P. van der Spuy. "The Illegitimate and the Illegal in a South African City: The Effects of Apartheid on Births out of Wedlock", *Journal of Social History*, 29 (3), 1996, p. 614.

[87] V. Bickford-Smith. "Revising Anglicisation in the nineteenth-century Cape Colony", *The Journal of Imperial and Common Wealth History*, 21 (2), 2003, p. 85.

[88] V. Malherbe. "Family Law and 'The Great Moral Public Interests' in Victorian Cape Town, c.1850-1902", *Kronos*, 36 (1), 2010, p. 8.

[89] N. Erlank. "Letters Home: The Experiences and Perceptions of Middle Class British Women at the Cape, 1820-1850" (M.A. Thesis, University of Cape Town, 1993), p.37.

[90] In her study of middle class culture in Great Britain, the United States of America, and Australia, Linda Young argues that here too middle class definition was "difficult to reach via the conventional criteria of work, income or political stance". L. Young. *Middle-Class Culture in the Nineteenth Century America, Australia and Britain* (New York; Palgrave, 2003), p.5.

[91] D. Warren. "Merchants, Commissioners and Municipal Wardmasters: Municipal Politics in Cape Town 1840-1854" (M.A. Thesis, University of Cape Town, 1986), p.228.

Up to the end of the eighteenth century, although codes governing sexual practice centred on the marital relationship and on the fulfilment of certain moral obligations, the contravention of such codes remained, at least theoretically, indistinct from other forms of immoral behaviour.[93] But this shifted with the transition from feudalism to liberal democracy in Europe and the rise of the bourgeois and middle class subject. Without title or rank, the Victorian middle class needed to find a way to achieve greater social/class coherence and to distinguish itself from the underclasses; this was accomplished, not through overt displays of power or privilege, but by introducing a new discourse on the human body and its reproductive capacity.[94] To quote Diana Jeater:

> The idea that physical health and sexual 'normality' were inextricably linked emanated from the middle classes and grew in influence during the [nineteenth] century. Unable to claim purity of blood […] the rising nineteenth-century bourgeoisie claimed purity of body instead.[95]

The work of French philosopher and social theorist Michael Foucault has been particularly useful in understanding the implications of this process. In *The History of Sexuality* Foucault contends that the nineteenth century witnessed the development and operation of a radically new regime of power/knowledge wherein medical, psychiatric and legal discourses intertwined to justify a new spatialized social order and class hierarchy. Within this context Foucault argues that sexuality came to function as "an especially dense transfer point for relations of power", with sexual deviancy functioning as a convenient scapegoat for "a vast array of social and medical problems", whilst moral purity fast became the chosen metaphor for a stable society.[96]

While perceptions of gender difference were certainly not absent in previous decades, historians argue that during the nineteenth century gender difference did begin to assume a qualitatively different form, becoming the "core around which middle class ideology was shaped". [97] As Natasha Erlank explains:

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[92] K. Mackenzie. "The South African Commercial Advertiser and the making of middle class identity in early nineteenth-century Cape Town" (M.A. Thesis, University of Cape Town, 1993), pp. 53-98.

[93] D. Jeater: *Marriage, Perversion, and Power*, p. 35.

[94] M. Foucault. *The History of Sexuality*. Translated from French by R. Hurley (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978), p. 3.

[95] D. Jeater. *Marriage, Perversion, and Power,* pp. 39-41.

[96] R. Hodes. "Kink and the Colony", p. 6.

> Whereas prior to the nineteenth century men and women were seen as different to one another, the difference had now become normalised in economic practices and political [and social] philosophies which asserted the inferiority of femaleness […and which involved] a reconceptualization of the limits of appropriate behaviour for men and women.[98]

Particularly as the ideology of a male breadwinner became stronger, respectability, which was organised around a complex set of social practices and representations, came to be defined in strictly gendered terms; men deriving their social status from their ownership of property, professional and business activities and political engagement, while women were expected to act as moral guardians of the home, their status emanating from their location within the domestic sphere and their consequent role as wife and mother.[99]

But although over time this model of gender relations and the respectable ideal that it promoted were made to seem both innate and universal, a cleavage existed, especially in the colonies, between the expected and actual behaviours of different men and women. As Kirsten Mackenzie has argued "middle-class colonial identity remained precarious, […] structured around the [imperfect] separation of men and women, of black and white, of politics and domesticity, […] and of the reputable and the disreputable", with scandal – often linked to adultery, illegitimacy and other acts of so-called sexual impropriety – functioning as both "an agent of disruption and regulation" within an ambivalent colonial world. [100]

It was not until the late 1880's that city fathers began to show any sustained interest in imposing these (largely middle-class) values and aspirations on the urban poor.[101] Since the earliest days of white settlement, Cape Town had been home to a vibrant underclass, with a multi-ethnic mix of sailors, soldiers, smugglers, prostitutes, and a growing number of casual labourers contributing to what Andrew Bank has described as Cape Town's "canteen-culture". But, while some of the more public manifestations of this culture were of considerable concern to the dominant classes throughout the nineteenth century – with the introduction of vagrancy laws and the Master's and Servants ordinance of 1841, as well as the presence of an increasingly large, albeit relatively unprofessional, police force acting to curb public disorder – religious proselytization amongst and direct intervention into the private lives of the labouring poor remained limited.[102] As a result, Elizabeth van Heyningen has argued that:

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[97] N. Erlank. "Letters Home", p.19.

[98] N. Erlank. "Letters Home", pp. 19-20.

[99] N. Erlank. "Letters Home", p. 21.

[100] K. Mackenzie. *Scandal in the Colonies: Sydney and Cape Town, 1820-1850* (Melbourne: Melbourne Univ. Press, 2004), p. 181.

[101] S. Burman and M. Naude. "Bearing a Bastard", pp.373-377. Also see V. Bickford-Smith. *The Emergence of the South African Metropolis,* pp. 13, 16-25.

> By the mid-nineteenth century a relatively ancient urban society existed in the mother city, in which sexual promiscuity was not only a necessary means of livelihood but was probably also culturally acceptable as loose connections were formed and broken – often violently – amongst the most wretched of the city's inhabitants.[103]

In Britain, though, the second half of the nineteenth century was a period characterised by growing social anxiety, with concerns arising from the upheavals of industrialisation, increasing economic competition within Europe, imperial embarrassments like the Indian Mutiny of 1857, and the spread of slums and poverty-related disease in urban areas in both colony and metropole being used to justify legislation and reform initiatives oriented towards social engineering.[104] Supported by a wide range of different interest groups, such interventions cannot be said to fall within the ambit of any single political or economic tradition. They were, however, significantly influenced by the Social Darwinist rhetoric espoused by the metropolitan bourgeoisie which saw the above developments as a consequence of feeble heredity, both sexual deviancy and miscegenation constituting key referents in the debate on degeneration.

Heavily dependent on new medical knowledge and investigative technologies which allowed behaviours apparently requiring intervention to be more effectively catalogued and counted, it would be some years before the above ideas gained traction at the Cape. Indeed, only as statistical data on perceived social ills like infanticide, infant mortality, abortion and illegitimacy were collected, "could both the pressure for reform be exercised and the necessary precision for specifying culprits and victims be deployed".[105]

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[102] Catherine Elks has also shown that throughout this period "the under classes proved very adept at side stepping the imposition" of even the most simple forms of control, developing novel strategies to keep their activities hidden even in the wake of increased surveillance. C. Elks. "Crime, Community and Police in Cape Town, 1825-1850" (M.A. Thesis, University of Cape Town, 1986).

[103] E. van Heyningen. "The Social Evil", p. 171.

[104] D. Jeater. *Marriage, Perversion and Power,* p. 40.

[105] C. Smart (ed.) *Regulating Womanhood: Historical Essays on Marriage, Motherhood and Sexuality* (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 12. Ann Laura Stoler explains that where in the metropole racial deterioration was blamed on the "moral turpitude and the ignorance of working-class mothers", in the colonies it was often thought that degeneration was more widespread. A. Stoler. "Making Empire Respectable", p.644.

Nevertheless, it would be incorrect to see these new forms of medical and scientific knowledge "as the endogenous result of 'Euromodernity'" when they were so often conceived as part of an on-going conversation between colony and metropole.[106] Despite the fact that the first professional doctors and researchers at the Cape were of British origin and were thus heavily influenced by metropolitan hypotheses regarding procreation and population control, these hypotheses and the interventions they engendered took on a new life at the Cape.

As in Britain, churches and charitable institutions were at the forefront of promoting a vision of domestic respectability which presupposed that women and men would remain sexually pure until marriage and occupy separate roles within it.[107] For these institutions it was imperative that Cape Town's poor learn to live more 'decently' and, as might be expected, it was women rather than men who were charged with making this ideal a reality.[108] That said, racial considerations, as well as shifting definitions of citizenship and community, complicated the way in which Cape society understood and sought to further the gender-specific performance of respectability.

In this thesis I try to gauge how successful the Church, medical establishment and middle-class were at imposing this new set of social and sexual mores on twentieth century Cape society, focusing in particular on how these mores were interpreted and put into practice by working and lower class individuals

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[106] R. Hodes. "Kink and the Colony", p.6.

[107] W. Dooling. "Poverty and Respectability", p. 421.

[108] With the help of various middle-class sponsors, the Anglican Church set up a range of clubs and organizations which sought to divert young girls' attentions away from the temptations offered by the city and to provide them with proper training in the domestic arts (e.g. sewing, knitting, cooking and childrearing). "The Marion Institute", *Cape Argus*, 18th May 1922.

1. "Too Unsavoury for our Fastidious Tastes": Premarital Pregnancy in the Public Imagination[109]

Introduction

In the Cape, as in many other areas of the globe, marriage rates increased relative to overall population growth throughout the first half of the twentieth century. By the 1950's a higher share of couples than ever before were going to the trouble and expense of contracting partnerships that would be recognized by law.[110] This, however, did not necessarily signal an equal decline in the illegitimacy ratio or in the rate at which couples were engaging in extramarital sex. On the contrary, in the decades leading up to this point, a number of other major shifts occurred in Cape society, all of which helped ensure that despite growing pressure to marry, the dynamics of family formation within the Cape Colony – and more particularly within Anglican Cape Town – remained fluid.[111] Over time, a variety of social narratives emerged to account for this fluidity and to deal with the anxiety which premarital sexuality evoked amongst the social elite and middle classes. This chapter uses newspaper reports, administrative documents, hostel records and other documents to examine how the 'social problem' of premarital pregnancy and single motherhood was understood and debated by different interest groups in Cape Town during the early to mid-twentieth century. Although primarily a conversation between church officials, female philanthropists and social workers, government and civil society groups (e.g. The Women's Christian Temperance Union) also played an important role in the debate around premarital pregnancy. In addition, judges and legal representatives helped to shape practical responses to premarital pregnancy by determining the legal framework surrounding illegitimacy and child maintenance.

At the beginning of the twentieth century care for unmarried mothers in Cape Town was limited. Social action, where it did exist, was very much focused on the saving of 'fallen' women from sin rather than on providing practical support to these women and their families.

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[109] This remark was made by Mrs Botha, wife of the Prime Minister Louis Botha, at a ceremony in 1915 marking the opening of new buildings at the Magdalena Huis, a predominantly Afrikaans home for unmarried mothers in Claremont. Dutch Reformed Church Archives, SKBD, KS 1691.

[110] R. Probert. "The context of illegitimacy from the 1920s to the 1960s" in R. Probert (ed.) *Cohabitation and Non-Marital Births*, p. 145; S. Burman and P. van der Spuy. "The Illegitimate and the Illegal", p. 615.

[111] "Die mees betekenisvolle feit is dat die proporsie van getroude persone tussen die een sensus en die ander spoediger toegeneem het dan die bevolking as geheel [The most significant thing is that the proportion of persons married increased at a faster rate than the population as a whole]", Republic of South Africa, Bureau of Statistics. *Population Census 1936, Volume III: Marital Condition* (Pretoria: Government Printers, 1938), p. viii.

Within this context, the welfare of illegitimate children was less important than securing the contrition of their mothers, many of whom were either immediately separated from their children or left to care for them without any assistance.[112] This changed as the century progressed, with high infant mortality and religious tensions, amongst a number of other factors, providing the impetus for the establishment of a range of institutions designed to cater to the practical needs of unmarried mothers *and* their children. However, despite growing organisational support for the plight of unmarried mothers and a newfound emphasis on the redemptive powers of "mother-love", such women continued throughout the subsequent decades to be seen as socially deviant and were often treated in a manner which affirmed this status.[113] Nonetheless, this chapter does track significant shifts in the way in which different groups, and particularly female philanthropists and social workers, understood single motherhood – moving from the notion that sexual deviance was rooted in biology (mental impairment) to the idea that single motherhood was largely due to troubled psychology. I begin by briefly considering the wider context within which these shifts took place.

Dominant Attitudes towards Sexuality and Reproduction

From a purely discursive perspective the early twentieth century in Cape Town, and in South Africa more generally, was a period characterised by relatively high levels of sexual conservatism, especially amongst the middle classes. At this time, public interest in reproduction and sexual health increased rapidly due to a confluence of social and medical factors.[114] Primary among these were concerns regarding the spread of venereal disease in the wake of the South African and First World Wars. This interest also spoke directly to the eugenicist aim of improving the national stock. Eugenic arguments – "derived from the notion that acquired characteristics were inheritable and thus that poverty, vagrancy and promiscuity were [race or] class-linked biological traits" – had gained in currency during the early decades of the 20th century; an era during which fears of physical contamination and degeneration were mounting.[115]

Although white poverty was not unheard of during first two centuries of white colonialisation in South Africa, most estimates suggest that the magnitude of the poor white population increased significantly over the course of the first three decades of the twentieth century.[116] Even before the effects of the Great Depression had been properly felt in South Africa, the Carnegie Commission concluded that at least 30 000 white individuals were living in what it classified as severe poverty.[117] While some of these individuals were still *bywoners* (labour tenants) on farms or the owners of unviable small-holdings in rural areas of the Cape and Transvaal, the number of landless, unskilled workers moving into cities and towns across the country had risen steadily since 1900. Between 1920 and 1931 South Africa's white rural population shrank by 13%, with white Afrikaners accounting for a large part of this exodus.[118]

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[112] S. Burman and M. Naude. "Bearing a Bastard", p. 411.
[113] Cape Archives, AB2182/27, Mary Rolt Hostel Annual Report 1926.
[114] R. Hodes. "Kink and the Colony", p. 7.
[115] A. Stoler. "Making Empire Respectable", pp. 643-645.

Initially, this sudden influx of Afrikaans-speaking poor whites into what were still predominately English-speaking cities like Cape Town and Port Elizabeth helped to fuel tensions between English and Afrikaans speakers.[119] However, over time a fragile political consensus developed which prioritized white rule and which saw "local economic and industrial development" as providing the basis for a greater cooperation between Afrikaans and English South Africans. Although the Pact Government originally used the poor white problem as a platform from which to mobilize support for its particular brand of national patriotism, the continued existence of poor whiteism ultimately threatened to undermine this consensus.[120]

Of particular concern was the supposed prevalence of miscegenation or racial interbreeding in working class slums, areas which despite official intervention often remained racially-mixed. On a visit to Cape Town in 1911 Maurice Evans, a Natalian expert on the 'native question', explained that:

> As a rule whites and coloured people keep apart and do not mix, but there are very many exceptions […] Young white men will be seen walking with well-dressed coloured girls, and an older European may often be seen with coloured wife and children of varying shades.[121]

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[116] J. Fourie. "The South African poor white problem in the early 20th Century: Lessons for poverty today", Stellenbosch Economic Working Papers 14/06, 2007.

[117] J.F.W. Grosskopf. *The Carnegie Commission Book I: Economic report: Rural impoverishment and rural exodus* (Stellenbosch: Pro Ecclesia, 1932), p. vii.

[118] K. Jochelson. *The Colour of Disease,* p. 55.

[119] K. Jochelson. *The Colour of Disease,* p. 55.

[120] A. Björnsdotter Teppo. *The Making of a Good White,* p. 17.

[121] M. S. Evans. *Black and White in South East Africa: A study in Sociology* (London: Longmans, 1911), pp. 296-297.

In inner-city Johannesburg the ‘situation’ was said to be even worse, with *The Star* newspaper reporting in 1917 that in working class suburbs like Doornfontein “[i]llegitimate children [were] numerous and of the most mixed description owing to the intermingling of all shades of colour with poor whites”.[122]

However, miscegenation was not the only thing worrying South African politicians and policy-makers. Instead, it was just one of the more visible signs of a broader problem of perceived moral degeneration amongst poor whites. Courtship customs were changing rapidly as white youths moved from small rural communities to larger towns in which unsupervised social interaction between males and females was a common occurrence.[123] At the same time, an increasing number of South African women were entering the workforce thus obtaining a degree of economic independence which gave them some leverage to question patriarchal authority in the family.[124] Jochelson argues that from the perspective of Afrikaner and South African Nationalists these changes were symbolic of a larger, more dangerous trend – “the disintegration of the family and hence the decline of the nation or the *volk*”.[125] Especially within Afrikaner Nationalist circles, but also generally, women were regarded as important bearers of moral purity and order in their homes and the nation at large. Their role, which was meant to be purely domestic, was to ensure the moral and physical health of the nation by raising hard working and morally conscientious future citizens.[126] Yet this could only be achieved where the ‘natural’ division of labour between men and women was respected and where the conventional family continued to function as the fundamental unit of society.

Primarily in the medical sphere, there were also fears about the declining white birth rate and the spread of venereal disease. Not only were white birth rates falling rapidly, but data collected at the time suggested that fertility rates were highest amongst poor whites, those considered the least fit to preserve white supremacy and to improve the national stock.[127] They were, according to doctors, also that part of the white population most likely to contract venereal disease.[128]

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[122] *The Star*, 5 November 1917, cited in N. Kagan. “African Settlements in the Johannesburg Area 1903–1923” (M.A. Thesis, University of the Witwatersrand, 1978), pp. 47–50

[123] The Carnegie Commission warned that working-class girls in particular had taken to “the habit of ‘gadding about’” and that evenings were often “spent in paying visits or in the streets” with immorality the inevitable result of such interactions. J.R. Albertyn. *The Carnegie Commission Book 5: Sociological Report: The Poor White and Society* (Stellenbosch: Pro Ecclesia, 1932), pp. 26-27.

[124] E. Brink. “The Afrikaner Women of the Garment Workers Union, 1918–1939” (M.A. Thesis, University of the Witwatersrand, 1986), p. 151.

[125] K. Jochelson. *The Colour of Disease,* p. 62.

[126] Afrikaner girls should be pure, modest and respectable so that they remain faithful to the highest ideal of womanhood, and so they are able to fulfil their duty as good mothers, explained *Die Huisvrou* in an editorial published on the 5th December 1922. For a more thorough account of the messages being conveyed in white women’s magazines at the time see A. Rommelspacher. “The Everyday Lives of White South African Housewives, 1918-1945” (M.A. Thesis, Stellenbosch University, 2017), p. 74.

Partly as a result of these concerns, new impetus was given to the concept of correct sexual socialisation. During the 1920's and 1930's the work of prominent educationalist E. G. Malherbe and colleagues saw sex education becoming part of white and some coloured school curricula for the first time, albeit on a relatively ad-hoc basis. While this represented a marked improvement on previous decades during which the "natural reticence" and "comparative ignorance" of the older generation had led to widespread youthful unfamiliarity with the facts of human reproduction, the content of the sex education which the youth received remained uncompromising on the purpose of and context within which sexual intimacy was expected to take place.[129] As explained by the prominent author and theologian Norval Geldenhuys, whose book *Marriage and Legitimate Birth Control* would become popular in subsequent decades, "the ultimate object of sexual desire in human beings is to bind together husband and wife within a legitimate marital bond" and to propel couples to have "as many children as their physical, financial and other circumstances justify". [130]

In line with this view much of the advice literature written for young people contained either vague or extremely clinical explanations of the sex act followed by a lengthy discussion on the importance of controlling one's sexual instinct and of remaining 'pure' for marriage. [131] In "Facts about Ourselves", for example, a manual published by the Red Cross and Johannesburg Public Health Department in 1934 and later used by schools across the country, children were told:

> With regard to talk on sex matters among yourselves, you would be well advised to say too little than too much. At the same time, with a little reasonable talk with your special friends of the same sex you may be able to help one another over little difficulties. But do not pursue the subject just for

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[127] K. Jochelson. *The Colour of Disease,* p. 57.
[128] K. Jochelson. *The Colour of Disease,* p. 57.
[129] A.J. Milne. "Foreword" in R.P.H. West. "*Facts about Ourselves for Growing Boys and Girls*" (Johannesburg: Public Health Department of the city of Johannesburg and the South African Red Cross Society, 1934) cited in S. Duff. "Facts about Ourselves", p. 223.
[130] N. Geldenhuys. *The Christian's sex life: a practical, up to date handbook intended for engaged and newly married Christians* (London: James Clarke, 1952), p. 10.
[131] S. Duff. "Facts about Ourselves", p. 223.

> the sake of talking about it … at all times, avoid silly or unnecessary talk about so big and so sacred a subject.[132]

The manual also placed great emphasis on the fact that "nature has put into us this great desire to be the parents of children in order that the race to which we belong may continue in strength and in increasing numbers", and that it was primarily for this reason that intercourse existed.[133] Sex education thus represented a means of "channelling youth sexuality into monogamous, heterosexual marriages" and was facilitated through the "careful management of knowledge" and the setting of clear rules regarding when and how sexual intercourse ought to take place.[134] To quote Mrs Shennen, of the Claremont Women's Christian Temperance Union "South African Boys and Girls are as fine as any in the world but it is the duty of parents and teachers to lead them in a clean and pure pathway. [For it is only] by the example of genuine lives on the part of parents that a sound and solid citizenship will be created". [135]

While some of the more punitive measures employed to deal with pregnancy outside of marriage a century earlier had fallen away, Cape Town's churches were similarly unanimous in their desire for sexual purity amongst the youth. [136] The Anglican Church in particular played an important role in urging parents and teachers within Cape Town to remain vigilant, particularly during times of war or "unusual excitement".[137] It also set up a number of organisations which intended, amongst other things, to impress upon a burgeoning urban youth the consequences of failing to respect the "divine law of human fertility".[138] The White Cross League, for example, established by the Anglican Church in England but operational in Cape Town throughout the early twentieth century, was specifically aimed at convincing young men to live sober and moral lives, with the deleterious effects of sex outside of marriage and childhood masturbation being made known to them in a subtle but definitive manner.[139]

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[132] R.P.H West cited in S. Duff. "Facts about Ourselves", p.224.

[133] R.P.H West cited in S. Duff. "Facts about Ourselves", p.224.

[134] S. Duff. "Facts about Ourselves", pp. 218, 235.

[135] "Value of example in training children", *Cape Times*, 21st June 1929.

[136] Within the Anglican Church there was nothing explicitly preventing unmarried mothers from receiving communion or having their children baptized. UCT Special Collections, BC1557, *Church of the Province of South Africa Handbook of Instructions Regarding Marriages* (Cape Town, 1914).

[137] *Cape Times*, 2nd May 1944, cited in V. Bickford-Smith, E. van Heyningen and N. Worden. *Cape Town in the Twentieth Century,* p. 55.

[138] "The Bishop of Oxford on the Responsibility of Marriage", *The Anchor*, 15th August 1916.

[139] "The White Cross League", *The Anchor*, 15th March 1916.

In addition, the church supported various women's groups in instituting social clubs and patrols meant to protect young girls from the temptations of city life. In 1915 a League of Honour was launched, aimed predominantly at white school girls and unmarried women employed within the commercial sector. Founded by the National Council of Women (NCW), the League's aims and methods mirrored those of the Christian Women's Temperance Union, appealing to high-minded religious sentiments whilst also satisfying a more basic desire for companionship and a sense of youthful camaraderie.

Buoyed by the League's success, the NCW also implemented a system of voluntary patrols wherein respectable women were asked to traverse Cape Town's streets in search of visible displays of indiscretion; this was an activity which brought middle class women into greater contact with their less affluent counterparts. The Marion Institute in District Six was one outcome of this engagement. Formed in 1917 by Deaconess Julia, an Anglican Sister, the institute focused exclusively on the plight of young coloured girls who, as a result of cramped domestic conditions, were frequently forced "out onto the streets" and into bars and cinemas at night. Functioning as both a night school and a girls' club, it provided lessons in home making and childcare as well as inexpensive meals to its members.[140]

As in Britain, female philanthropic groups in Cape Town walked a fine line. Aware that widespread social change was occurring and that females were in many instances the beneficiaries of this change, women like the Deaconess and Julia Solly, a prominent member of the South African Branch of the International Federation for the Abolition of State Regulation of Vice, were keen advocates of women's rights. But, as the product of their own position within society, their goal was always to improve it from within rather than to wholly overturn structures which underpinned it. As a result, they tended to support programmes which used novel techniques to guide young women in the pursuit of an already well-established set of norms and ideals, often reaffirming the status quo in the same breath with which they upset it. The Marion Institute, for example, enabled marginalised women to obtain a degree of education which they might not otherwise have acquired; the focus of this education, however, was on the acquisition of domestic skills and remained grounded in the ideology that a woman's most important duty was that of a mother and that her place was in the home.[141]

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[140] "Housing", *Cape Times*, 15th June 1929; "The Work of the Marion Institute", *Cape Argus,* 12th March 1930.

[141] W. Dooling. "Poverty and Respectability", p. 421.

A similar dynamic existed within the medical community, especially with regard to women's reproductive rights. While scientific developments in the way in which fertility was controlled and understood were fast occurring within the medical community, in South Africa attitudes towards the use of birth control remained ambivalent. At the Lambeth Conference in 1908 the Anglican Church still believed that the only moral way to prevent an unexpected birth was through abstinence, a position which it reiterated ten years later.[142] Change occurred in 1930 when the church passed a controversial resolution to endorse the use of contraceptives within marriage. None of the South African bishops in attendance, though, voted in favour of this resolution and within a few weeks the topic was being hotly debated within the South African English press. Many saw it as "a heartless act to bring into the world helpless innocent children doomed to lives of misery, poverty, ignorance, and crime, owing to their parents' inability to make the necessary provision for them".[143] Yet, there were also those who worried that if allowed into the wrong hands, birth control would provide the means for widespread promiscuity. "Birth control as it is taught today gives the unmarried young man and woman *every facility for immorality* in sex matters" wrote one appalled reader to the *Rand Daily Mail* (my emphasis).[144]

As Sussanne Klausen's work has shown, the medical community in conjunction with various extra-state birth-control organizations ultimately succeeded in putting certain measures in place to make contraception available to the city's female population, with Cape Town's first official birth-control clinic opening its doors in 1932.[145] But, designed primarily to aid those suffering the negative health effects of multiple consecutive pregnancies and to curb white poverty, these measures functioned "as a means to stabilise society [rather] than to reinvent it". As a result, clinics like the one mentioned tended to cater specifically to married women, justifying their existence in terms of maternal and family welfare rather than the desire of women to control their own reproductive capacity. [146]

This is not to say that unmarried women had no access to contraceptive devices. As Burman and Naude point out, "there appears to have been a brisk circulation of marriage certificates in the poorer parts of Cape Town" and, even where this was not the case, at no point did the South African government directly prohibit the manufacture, sale or use of mechanical devices intended to prevent pregnancy.[147] Contraception, though, was highly stigmatized, with many prominent medical professionals and health officials, including the editor of the South African Medical Record (SAMJ) Dr. William Darley-Hartley, opposing its use well into the 1930's and 1940's.[148]

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[142] S. Klausen. *Race, Maternity, and the Politics of Birth Control*, p. 33.

[143] "Letter to the Editor", *Cape Times*, 6th September 1930.

[144] "Letter to the Editor", *Rand Daily Mail*, 15th June 1931.

[145] S. Klausen. *Race, Maternity, and the Politics of Birth Control*, p. 111.

[146] S. Klausen. *Race, Maternity, and the Politics of Birth Control*, pp. 113-120.

The legal situation regarding illegitimacy was equally complex. Martine Spensky makes the argument that:

> In a patriarchal society where power is in the hands of the fathers, a society where blood ties and property are privileged, it is important that fathers be sure of their paternity before they pass their names and property on to their sons [... and that as a result] Before women were able to control their reproduction – and even later, to a certain extent – gender relations were articulated around the control of women's bodies in order to ensure male reproduction.[149]

But how, and to what extent, the law intervened to ensure the correct functioning of these relations depended on the legal heritage and objectives of the government in question.

More tolerant than the English bastardy laws, which Ginger Frost has labelled the "harshest in Europe" and wherein an illegitimate child was regarded as *filius nullius* (nobody's child), legal doctrine at the Cape remained tied to the old Roman-Dutch principle that *eene moeder maakt geen bastaard* (a mother makes no bastard). [150] This rule meant that illegitimate children were legally associated with and could still inherit from their mother, or as Dutch jurist Grotius paraphrased, "in regard to the mother illegitimate children are as good as legitimate".[151] It was also possible to have a child legitimated *per subsequens matrimonium* (as a result of subsequent marriage). A child was, therefore, not legally disadvantaged so long as his/her parents married before it came time to inherit.[152]

Nonetheless, the illegitimate child's position was still historically "ascribable to the fact that parents were [to be] punished for their immoral behaviour", a burden which often fell most heavily on the child's mother.[153] The law clearly stated that not only the mother, but also the natural father was subject to the duty to maintain an illegitimate child, and there was even a procedure which enabled women without means to sue for maintenance *in forma pauperis*.[154] Yet, at this time, when paternity was denied under oath by a man, a woman's oath had little to no validity in the absence of outside corroboration; this legal precedent remained in force until 1981, when in the case of *Mayer v Williams* the courts finally acknowledged the difficulty of finding witnesses to corroborate an act which likely occurred behind closed doors.[155]

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[147] S. Burman and M. Naude. "Bearing a Bastard", p. 383.

[148] S. Klausen. *Race, Maternity, and the Politics of Birth Control*, pp. 12-13

[149] M. Spensky. "Producers of legitimacy: homes for unmarried mothers in the 1950s" in C. Smart (ed.) *Regulating Womanhood: Historical Essays on Marriage, Motherhood and Sexuality* (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 100.

[150] G. Frost. "The Black Lamb of the Black Sheep: Illegitimacy in the English Working Class, 1850-1939", *Journal of Social History*, 32, 2003, p. 293; E. Spiro. "Legitimate and Illegitimate Children", *Acta Juridica*, 53, 1964, p. 64.

[151] R. S. Welsh. "Legitimacy in the Conflict of Laws", *Law Quarterly Review*, 63, 1947, p. 712.

[152] See E. Spiro. "Legitimate and Illegitimate Children" for a more comprehensive summary of the legal framework used in the adjudication of illegitimacy cases in twentieth century South Africa.

The story of Anna Abrahams attests to the harsh consequences of such a rule. A 17 year white women, Anna fell pregnant in April 1929 whilst still living with her mother on the outskirts of Cape Town. Following the birth of her son Stephen, Anna wrote to 21 year old Stephen Dowell, the putative father of her child. When Stephen replied a few days later denying paternity, Anna tried to open a case against him but was soon advised by the Wynberg magistrate that she would need to produce two witnesses before her testimony against Stephen would hold any weight. Unable to find anyone to corroborate an act which happened in secret, she later dropped the case, returning to live with mother and raising the child on the meagre income of a part-time seamstress.[156]

A similar principle applied in seduction suits. Although by the late 1960's such legislation was considered decidedly anachronistic, throughout the first half of the twentieth century South African common law held that sexual intercourse with an unmarried virgin, without the consent of her guardian, was actionable.[157] In the eyes of the law women were presumed to be the weaker of the two sexes and thus "more likely to succumb to immoral propositions", and as a result she and her family were entitled to compensation in exchange for the reputational damage suffered. [158] Seduction suits frequently accompanied paternity suits, particularly in the case of very young mothers. The precedent remained, however, that "where there [was] no corroboration of the plaintiff's evidence, judgment [had to be] given for the defendant".[159] Moreover, whilst it was possible for significant sums to be awarded in damages this typically only occurred in extreme cases. For example, in *De Stadler vs. Kramer*, arguing that "the conduct of the defendant [was] most reprehensible from every point of view", the Simonstown Magistrate awarded the plaintiff £50 in damages – roughly a year's wages for an unskilled worker in Cape Town at the time.[160] In this matter a young woman of just 15 years had lost her virginity to a 60 year old widower. [161] The two parties had first met when the girl went to buy fish from the widower's house in July 1918 and within a few months "friendship, followed by affection and subsequent seduction" had occurred.[162] The defendant's claim that the girl was a prostitute was rejected by the court, which, even on appeal, ruled that he had "inflicted a most serious injury" on "scarce more than a child", in the process violating the provisions of the *Girls' and Mentally Defective Women's Protection Act.*[163]

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[153] South African Law Commission Report. *Investigation into the legal position of Illegitimate Children,* Project 38 (Pretoria: Government Printers, 1985), p. 39.
[154] E. Spiro. "Legitimate and Illegitimate Children", p. 65.
[155] South African Law Commission Report. *Investigation into the legal position of Illegitimate Children*, p. 46.
[156] Cape Archives, AB2182/25, Case Book, 1922- 1932, 119/36.
[157] T. Bennet, C. Mills and G. Munnick. "The Anomalies of Seduction: A Statutory Crime or an Obsolete, Unconstitutional Derelict", *South African Journal on Human Rights*, 25, 2009, p. 331.
[158] T. Bennet, C. Mills and G. Munnick. "The Anomalies of Seduction", p. 331.

Breach of promise suits (which might include a charge of seduction) were also frequently linked to illegitimacy, and the legal issues surrounding it, with Peter Laslett observing that prenuptial pregnancy was most often "an incident of courtship".[164] Breach of promise suits stemmed from a time in pre-Reformation canon law when a valid engagement was seen as contract of "perfect obligation, in which the disappointed party could sue for specific performance" – or, in other words, for a compulsory marriage.[165] However, after the Marriage Order-in-Council of 1838, Cape Judges, in line with their English counterparts, stopped compelling marriage, instead awarding monetary compensation to the injured party. Kirsten Mackenzie has explored how this commodification of female honour impacted Dutch women at the Cape, arguing that in a society where "gesture was all-important", many such women objected to the substitution of monetary damages for more traditional means of restoring female honour and legitimating a child.[166]

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[159] This precedent was decided in the case of *Kemp vs. Van Rensburg*. A. Russell and G. Swift (eds.) *The South African Law Reports [1911], Cape Provincial District* (Roodepoort: Juta & Company, 1988), p. IV.

[160] For more information regarding average wages and living costs in Cape Town see E. Boddington. "Domestic Service: Changing Relations of Class Domination 1841-1948 A Focus on Cape Town" (M.A. Thesis, University of Cape Town, 1983).

[161] E. Roper and H. Scholtz (eds.) *The South African Law Reports [1921] Cape Provincial Division* (Roodepoort: Juta & Company, 1988), pp. 17-21.

[162] E. Roper and H. Scholtz (eds.) *The South African Law Reports [1921] Cape Provincial Division*, p. 20.

[163] E. Roper and H. Scholtz (eds.) *The South African Law Reports [1921] Cape Provincial Division*, p. 20.

[164] P. Laslett. "Introduction: Comparing Illegitimacy over Time and Between Cultures" in P. Laslett, K. Oosterveen and R. Smith (eds.) *Bastardy and Its Comparative History* (London: Edward Arnold, 1980), p. 54.

[165] F.P. van den Heever. *Breach of Promise and Seduction in South African Law* (Cape Town: *Juta and Company, 1954),* p. 11.

Despite this, there were still instances in which breach of promise suits were effectively used by women in Cape Town, if not to secure a marriage, then at least, in the words of 21 year old spinster Catherina Lotter, to bring a dishonest suitor "to book".[167] "He begged and prayed of me to withdraw the matter [but] I told him that he had behaved very badly […] and that I would not withdraw unless he fulfilled his obligation", Lotter, a Dutch women from Moorreesburg, told the court in her case against 40 year old Pieter Coetzee in 1914.[168] Lotter was suing Coetzee, a Cape Town divorcee, for his refusal to marry her subsequent to what she perceived as his mother's interference.[169]. In another lawsuit in 1926, Anna Huizen, a young spinster from Sutherland, sued commercial traveller Robert Henry Charles for reneging on his promise to marry her. In her affidavit Huizen argued not only that her reputation had been damaged, but also that she had incurred significant expenditure in preparing for the marriage and "in proceeding to Cape Town prior to the appointed date and waiting there on and after such a date for the solemnization of the marriage".[170] Huizen was awarded the sum of £100 by the court.[171]

Ultimately, as with other illiquid cases at the time, "in suits alleging seduction and breach of promise [...] the verdict owed much to interpretation and judicial discretion"; a factor which perhaps explains why only a very small proportion of failed engagements resulted in legal action between 1900 and 1950.[172] While breach of promise suits remained "a flexible instrument", particularly in the hands of women from the middle and upper classes, for the less affluent the gendered language of these suits could work *against* rather than in favour of a female plaintiff.[173] In a case typical of the period, Alida Gabriel sued Johannes Theron for damages "by reason of the fact that upon the promise of marriage, [he] seduced and did hold carnal connection with [her], as a result of which she became pregnant and was delivered of a female child in December 1919". Theron responded by claiming that "the plaintiff was […] a women of loose and immoral character who was not a virgin" at the time of the seduction.[174] This was a standard line of argument, but given that working class courtship didn't involve the same public ritual and well-established timetable that it did amongst the elite, the application thereof tended to be most successful in cases where the social status of the women being slandered was low. Although race is not recorded, even in the abstracts of cases that came before the Cape Supreme Court, it is also likely that in a society in which sexuality, race and class still functioned as referents for one another, women of colour would have been at a particular disadvantage in such situations.

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[166] K. Mackenzie. "Wollstonecraft's Models? Female Honour and Sexuality in Middle-Class Settler Cape Town, 1800-1854", *Kronos*, 23, 1996, p. 63.
[167] Cape Archives, CSC 2/6/1/460.
[168] Cape Archives, CSC 2/6/1/460.
[169] Unfortunately, the outcome of this case is not recorded in the magistrate's folio.
[170] Cape Archives, CSC 2/1/1/1078_5_1.
[171] Cape Archives, CSC 2/1/1/1078_5_1.
[172] Malherbe makes this argument for an earlier period but the legal situation with regards to breach of promise and seduction remained little changed in the intervening years, even as the number of such cases declined. Less than 30 breach of promise cases appeared before the Magistrates Court in Cape Town between 1900 and 1950. V. Malherbe. "Paternity and Illegitimacy: A Problem for Church and State at Cape Town, to the Mid 1800s", *South African Historical Journal*, 55 (1), 2006, p. 71.
[173] V. Malherbe. "Ten Reasons for Not Marrying", p. 206.

The Founding of Unmarried Mothers Hostels

Functioning as a major commercial entrepot, connecting the region's fast industrialising hinterland with the world beyond Southern African shores, by the late nineteenth century the Mother City was experiencing not only rapid economic but also rapid population growth.[175] Its small scale industry linked to transport, food processing, construction, and craft and textile manufacturing, expanded and modernized during this period, with the city becoming home to a diverse mix of labourers, factory workers and artisans, as well as a significant number of 'white collar' workers.[176] And yet, not dissimilar to the nineteenth century labour market described by Gareth Steadman-Jones in his book *Outcast London*, Cape Town's economy still offered minimal secure industrial employment, with a large proportion of the population participating in casual or sweated work and moving in and out of the labour force depending on the rise and fall of various trades as well as a shifting demand for unskilled labour.[177]

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[174] Cape Archives, CSC, 2/1/1/897, 431.

[175] Cape Town grew from a city of just 20 016 in 1838, to a bustling metropolis of 187 331 inhabitants in 1911, continuing to expand at a similar rate in subsequent decades. Figures taken from the 1838 Cape of Good Hope Blue Book and the 1911 Census. See Republic of South Africa, Bureau of Statistics. *Population Census 1911, Report* (Pretoria: Government Printers, 1913), p. 24.

[176] J. Whittingdale. "The Development and Location of Industries in Greater Cape Town" (M.A. Thesis, University of Cape Town, 1973), pp. 50-68.

[177] In his study of Victorian London Stedman Jones examines London society, focusing especially on the vast numbers of casual and irregular day labourers, artisans and seamstresses engaged in seasonal and workshop trades within the city. G. Stedman Jones. *Outcast London*, pp. 38-40. In her Master's thesis Helene Blowden Reitz follows Stedman Jones's lead, examining the lives of delivery boys, gardeners, milkmen, hawkers, dock workers, assistant grocers, night watchmen and other casual labourers in early twentieth century Cape Town. A draft version of this thesis is held at Stellenbosch Special Collections, Batson collection (D) Box 5.

For coloured youths in particular, the introduction of a formal system of apprenticeship in 1922 restricted opportunities for entry into skilled trades like printing and engineering. [178] Reflecting both the general economic situation in Cape Town as well as a gradual hardening of racial attitudes, the gap in living conditions between white and coloured families also began to widen during this period. A household survey in 1944 indicated that "judging by a very simple and tolerant understanding of occupancy one coloured household in three was overcrowded [as compared to] one European household in thirty". [179]

The presence of such visible poverty and overcrowding within Cape Town prompted the emergence of new legislative instruments, as well as new forms of charity designed at once to assist and to regulate the needy. As different "remedies against poverty and idleness were proposed" by politicians, preachers and public officials, an emphasis was placed on the distinction between the 'worthy' and 'unworthy' poor, solidarity being limited to those who conformed to set social expectations, and were thus considered 'deserving' of social support.[180]

Initially very little aid was available to unmarried mothers who, having contravened the prescribed stages of engagement, marriage and only then, pregnancy, fell squarely within the category of the underserving poor. In the early decades of the twentieth century professional maternity care was still in its infancy, the focus being primarily on married women. Organisations like the Ladies Branch of the Free Dispensary, for example, provided out-patient care for pregnant women on the condition that they were married, with Jane Elizabeth Waterston arguing that the best way to inculcate a sense of responsibility amongst the poor was to ensure that only the right kind of people had easy access to relief. [181]

The situation of unmarried mothers seeking refuge in Cape Town did improve though, albeit gradually. By 1913 five separate homes for unmarried mothers had been registered as official charities of the Peninsula. [182] These included: The House of Mercy and the Refuge of The Good Shepard, run by the Anglican Church, Magdalena Huis administered by the Dutch Reform Church, and Vrede Oord and The Rest, both of which were under the direction of the Salvation Army. A decade later several other institutions had been added to this list including St. Monica's Home and the Nanniehuis, both of which were specifically designed to meet the maternity needs of the coloured community.

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[178] Wits Historical Papers Archive, AD1715, 24/2/4. "The Coloured People: A Factual Survey", SAIRR, 1953.

[179] Stellenbosch Special Collections, Batson Collection, Overcrowding Report, 24th March 1944.

[180] Romano suggests that the "nexus between morality, poverty and public policy is nothing new", but that the deserving/undeserving poor dichotomy became particularly stark during the late-Victorian period as fears surrounding the "urban invasion of the dangerous poor" mounted, especially amongst the middle classes. S. Romano. *Moralising Poverty: The 'Undeserving' Poor in the Public Gaze* (London: Routledge, 2018), pp. 15 and 32.

[181] UCT Special Collections, BC700, letter dated 10th January 1900. Waterston writes: "my ladies work steadily day after day for long hours giving relief and seeing that the wrong people do not get it". Her motivation for not administering to unmarried mothers is further explained in L. Bean and E. van Heyningen (eds.) *The Letters of Jane Elizabeth Waterston, 1866-1905* (Cape Town, Van Riebeeck Society, 1983), pp. 252-253.

The growth of such institutions reflected a significant change in attitude, for although the "idea that financial help beyond the barest minimum meant condoning sin and encouraging immorality" remained strong amongst certain sections of the population, caring for unmarried mothers and their infants came to be regarded by most as necessary, if unpopular work.[183] As Burman and Naude note, however "the smallness of the pool of educated people and the conservative intellectual climate" at the Cape meant that while new ideas regarding public welfare were gradually taking hold, it would be incorrect to view these changes as the direct product of "a decline in religious fervour [or a] greater preoccupation with the values of democracy and equality of opportunity".[184] On the contrary, these institutions emerged at a time when fears surrounding the growth of urban slums, ambivalent attitudes towards rising female employment and concerns linked to the prevalence of vagrancy, prostitution and miscegenation in the post-South African War period were fuelling not only calls for greater racial segregation but also the emergence of a new, more stringent discourse on the importance of 'respectability' and the proliferation of middle-class values at the Cape. [185]

That said, with public health statistics gaining in importance throughout Europe during the early decades of the twentieth century, Cape doctors, many of whom were trained in British Medical Schools, became increasingly determined to lower the city's high infant mortality rate – and in turn, illegitimacy. Speaking at Cape Town's first Child Welfare Conference in 1917, Cape Town's then Medical Officer of Health, Dr. Jasper Anderson commented on:

> The importance of retaining and maintaining the largest number of infants alive and in strong physical condition, especially in view of the enormous loss in consequence of the war of our own adults who physically, intellectually and

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[182] Dutch Reform Church Archives, Ref 193.

[183] L. Young. *Out of Wedlock*, p. 8; Dutch Reforms Church Archive, SKDB KS 1691.

[184] S. Burman and M. Naude. "Bearing a Bastard", p. 411.

[185] E. van Heyningen. "The Social Evil in the Cape Colony 1868-1902: Prostitution and the Contagious Diseases Acts*", Journal of Southern African Studies*, 10 (2), 1984, p. 188.

> temperamentally are of the most use to the state […] and also because of declining birth rates.[186]

Influenced by the establishment of modern techniques of scientific investigation and developments in the fields of eugenics, for Anderson and his colleagues the home had become a key site of modern statecraft and it was strongly felt that the preservation of *white* infant life constituted "one of the greatest patriotic works of the day".[187] And yet, curbing infant mortality required that they, and the church groups and female philanthropists with whom they were often in partnership, engage with what was referred to by Mrs. Louis Botha as the "seamy side of humanity", infant mortality often being attributed to improper sanitation, overcrowding, drink, low wages and single motherhood.[188] The fact that for much of the above period "the mortality rate of European illegitimate children [was] twice as great" as that of legitimate children was seen as particularly noteworthy, helping to justify the establishment of various care-facilities dedicated to helping babies born of European single mothers in an environment where the prevailing view was that "every European child should be given a fair chance to prove himself a worthy citizen, no matter what were the circumstances of his birth". [189]

The empire-wide circulation of reports regarding "white slavery", or the procurement of white women for international prostitution rings, was also important in prompting middle class women in Cape Town to become more involved in providing centres of refuge for white unmarried mothers.[190] As fortune seekers of all kinds, including prostitutes and pimps from the fleshpots of Europe, flocked to South Africa during the first decades of the twentieth century, local prostitutes came increasingly to be regarded not as pariahs but as the helpless victims of an "odious commerce", who if properly rescued might eventually be fit for reabsorption into white society.[191]

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[186] Stellenbosch Special Collections, PAM 18 CHI.

[187] The Right Hon. Arthur H.D. Acland, former Minister of Education in Britain speaking at South Africa's first Child Welfare Conference in 1917, Stellenbosch Special Collections, PAM 18 CHI.

[188] Dutch Reforms Church Archive, SKDB KS 1691 and Stellenbosch Special Collections, PAM 18 CHI.

[189] T. Shadick. "Public Health Influences", *The South African Medical Journal*, September 1934, p. 678.

[190] For an excellent summary of the international "white slavery" debate and the emergence of various moral panics relating to female sexuality see J. Doezema. "Loose women or lost women? The re-emergence of the myth of white slavery in contemporary discourses of trafficking in women", *Gender Issues,* 18 (1), 1999, pp. 23-50.

[191] *The Shield*, August 1906, p.31 cited in H. Fischer-Tiné. "'White women degrading themselves to the lowest depths': European networks of prostitution and colonial anxieties in British India and Ceylon ca. 1880-1914", *The Indian Economic and Social History Review*, 40 (2), 2003, p. 168.

The primary impetus for the construction of a maternity hostel/s for black and coloured mothers came from a somewhat different direction. Although official figures suggest that white infants accounted for a relatively small proportion of total infant deaths within the Union, infant mortality statistics for the coloured and African population tended to be imprecise and were generally of less concern to Cape Town's religious elite than the prospect of an increasing number of pregnant coloured women converting to Islam.[192] For a variety of reasons, including but not limited to "pity for individuals, religious beliefs on the value of charity, economic considerations" and a desire for fresh converts, the Muslim community in Cape Town proved willing to receive into their homes pregnant women unable to seek assistance or undergo their confinement elsewhere.[193]

As was emphasised by the Matron of St. Monica's, an Anglican home established to train coloured midwives and provide a Christian environment in which unmarried coloured women might give birth, one of the key difficulties associated with "turning back the great wave of Mohammedanism" sweeping the Peninsula was the openness that the Muslim community showed towards helping "lasped Christian women […] at [their] time of Motherhood".[194] In her own words, "in the case of the young girl who went adrift, her home, if she had one, was closed against her, [and as] she could no longer work the one who gave her shelter and cared for her *won* her" (my emphasis).[195]

It was, however, more than just the provision of shelter that prompted the conversion of many Christian women to Islam during this time. Describing Cape Town's working-class, Elizabeth van Heyningen has argued that at the dawn of the twentieth century, particularly in slum areas like District six, racial as well as religious boundaries remained fluid with "Muslims, [often] living side by side with Christians and Jews".[196] Given this context, it makes sense that a certain amount of cross-religious interaction would have taken place, in some instances resulting in marriage and/or the birth of a child. Nonetheless, such interactions greatly distressed church leaders. To quote an article published in the *Pilot*, the official mouthpiece of the Diocese of Cape Town:

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[192] In 1937, when infant mortality rates for all races first started being recorded for the Union as a whole, the death rate for coloured infants was 165.9 per 1000 births, a figure triple that of the death rate for white infants which stood at 56.6. Republic of South Africa, Bureau of Statistics. *Union Statistics for Fifty Years* (Pretoria: Government Printers, 1960), B-29-30.

[193] S. Burman and M. Naude. "Bearing a Bastard", p. 384.

[194] Wits Historical Papers Archive AB2029/Ha 4-6.

[195] Wits Historical Papers Archive AB2029/Ha 4-6.

[196] E. van Heyningen. "Poverty, Self Help and Community: The Survival of the Poor in Cape Town, 1880-1910", *South African Historical Journal*, 24 (1), 1991, p. 129.

> Church people do not realise the pressure put upon their fellow Christians who are in districts where Moslems are numerous. Two men have lately been found who propose to turn Moslems [in order to marry Moslem girls], yet they have been confirmed and are apparently good churchmen. The sister of a server, a member of a keen church family has also lately turned and has been married to a 'Malay'.[197]

A further report entitled "Turning Malay: Do you Know how it Happens?" published by the Cape Town Diocesan Mission to Moslems read:

> So often in our mission work we meet the story – "Yes I have given up Christianity and turned Mohammedan, but I could not help it and so many do it. The man always came to see me wearing a hat and I did not know he was Malay. He said he would marry me if I went into his religion, which he said was the same as mine because there was only one God. He said they believed in Jesus Christ; and at first I did not understand that they denied Jesus Christ's death on the Cross and did not believe that He was the Son of God. My people chased me away and his mother took me in, and was kind to me. It was only afterward that I began to see what I had done. Now I am sorry because my children are growing up without hearing of their loving Father or Jesus the children's friend, but I cannot oppose my husband for their sake as well as my own".[198]

While such accounts are clearly one-sided, and like the discourse on "white slavery" tend to sensationalise a phenomenon which had existed for some time and which was far more complex than was often alluded to, that they had a marked effect on the public imagination is attested to by the case of Susan Niemand, an inmate of St. Monica's, who in her deranged fear that "the Malays" were trying to steal her child, attempted to take the child's life.[199]

The above case might be regarded as somewhat exceptional. Yet, fears that the Muslim community were purposefully adopting unwanted children, both white and coloured, in order to swell their numbers were widespread, with the *Cape Times* going so far as to suggest that the Muslim community was using the adoption of these infants to ensure that future generations of 'Malay' children would be paler in appearance and thus achieve a higher status within Cape society.[200]

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[197] The reason behind the two men's apparent conversion was mentioned later on in the article. Wits Historical Papers Archive AB2029/Jd: Article entitled "Christians Who 'turn Moslem'", selected press clippings 1925-1936 (undated).

[198] Wits Historical Papers Archive AB2029/JA14 (undated).

[199] Wits Historical Papers Archive AB2029 / Aa & St. Monica's Minute Book 1927-1933, 10 December 1928.

Public Perceptions of Illegitimacy

In Cape Town, as in many other cities across the globe, the first half of the twentieth century was a period of rapid social change especially for women. In the Mother City, an expanding manufacturing and commercial sector offered opportunities for women to enter the labour market at precisely the same time that their involvement in this market was becoming an economic imperative for many families. While social taboos against women's employment outside of the home remained intact, the "escalating impoverishment of South Africa's rural populations triggered a rapid exodus to the cities", with the burden of urban survival falling increasingly to women whose 'nimble fingers' and cheap labour were in high demand in a competitive industrial environment.[201] As a result, female participation in the work force rose steadily with women constituting nearly a fifth of the total working population in the Cape by 1936.[202]

This entry of women into the labour force, together with a growing awareness of the poor white problem and of social ills like overcrowding and juvenile delinquency, provided the basis for various moral panics throughout the period. In particular, city fathers worried about the disintegration of the family and the dangerous sexuality of the working girl. At this time, explains Elsabé Brink, "the maxim that the morality of young, single working girls was suspect, was widely held by the South African press, state, church and welfare organisations".[203] In possession of both leisure time and disposable income, these young women were viewed as having abdicated the feminine space of the home in favour of a life of "looseness and immorality" and were even sometimes held responsible for leading middle class husbands astray, although by the 1920's and 1930's this narrative had been largely reinterpreted by female philanthropists.[204]

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[200] 'What Muslims Want', *Cape Times*, 19th June 1925. Burman and Naude make the important note here that even if this motive did exist "it is unlikely that the ultimate aim was to become part of the white community, since Muslims were distinguished for the most part not only by skin colour and religious and dietary laws, but also by the adoption of a special form of dress." See "Bearing a Bastard", p. 385.

[201] L. Vincent. "Bread and Honour: White Working Class Women and Afrikaner Nationalism in the 1930s", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 26 (1), 2000, p. 61.

[202] At 4:20 the Cape female to male worker ratio was more equal than the Union average of 4:64. The Cape Town female to male worker ratio was 2:34. Republic of South Africa, Bureau of Statistics. *Population Census 1936, Volume VII: Occupations and Industries* (Pretoria: Government Printers, 1938), p. ix.

[203] E. Brink. "Only Decent Girls Are Employed: The Respectability, Decency and Virtue of the Garment Workers on the Witwatersrand during the Thirties", *History Workshop Working Paper*, 9-14 February 1987, p. 10. Brink has written widely on Afrikaner women and their involvement in the South African Garment Workers' Union. Much of her work focuses on the way in which these women sought to redefine themselves in the eyes of the public, asserting their respectability and dignity, even in the face of widespread social ostracism.

Indeed, as much as extramarital pregnancy and the immorality it implied had come to be regarded as a serious social problem by the mid-1920's and early 1930's – representing both a symptom and a cause of threatening social breakdown – societal perceptions concerning this phenomenon were far from uniform.[205] Throughout the 1920's a fierce debate was waged between women's organisations rooted in the reform tradition of the late 1890's and early 1900's and more conservative social commentators who felt that institutions like the Society for the Protection of Child Life and unmarried mothers' hostels were encouraging the 'social tragedy" of illegitimacy. At the crux of this debate was an attempt to understand illicit sexuality and what it was that drove certain women and not others to fall pregnant outside of wedlock. Moral conservatives typically regarded single mothers as delinquents, whose disregard for the mores of society at large ought not to go unpunished. Reform era feminists, on the other hand, were far more likely to position single mothers as victims of sexual exploitation or adverse home circumstances, arguing that it was only through charitable intervention that further out-of-wedlock pregnancies could be effectively prevented.

In South Africa, as in the United States, this debate was dealt with in part by ensuring that the public discourse around extramarital sexuality and illegitimacy assumed racially specific forms.[206] Cape society had long been informed by certain gender, class and racial hierarchies. Various authors, including Vivian Bickford-Smith and Saul Dubow have examined how, by the second quarter of the twentieth century, racial preoccupations and notions of biological as opposed to social difference had become paramount within the Cape.[207] Within this context morality, as an analytical category, had become more firmly tied to the regulation of racial purity and to the formulation of a cohesive white national identity, with immorality often viewed as a characteristic naturally ascribable to those occupying the darker side of the racial spectrum.

When the first official statistics on illegitimacy were released by the Cape Town Medical Officer of Health, in 1896, it was the stark difference between coloured and white illegitimacy ratios (% illegitimate births of total births) that was the immediate focus, and which went on to dominate subsequent conversations around illegitimacy.[208] In that year, 21 of every 100 coloured births were illegitimate, whereas this was true of only 4 of every 100 white births. Judging the difference to be the result of the coloured community's lower level of civilisation and the demoralising effects of overcrowding and poverty, scholars often combined biological and environmental arguments in their explanations. Sheila Patterson, for example, argued that illegitimacy in Cape Town existed primarily because premarital pregnancy was treated with 'considerable complacency' by the lower and lower-middle class coloureds. She also emphasised that 'transient liaisons' that led women to send children away to live with female relatives while working to support them from afar, were the result of both the harsh economic circumstances and the coloured population's weak family structure.[209]

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[204] Report of Commission on Labour Supply, Vol. 3. Cape Town: Cape Printed Paper, G. 3 of 1894, p.80.
[205] L. Gordon. *Pitied But Not Entitled*, p. 24
[206] See P. Scully. "Rape, Race, and Colonial Culture: The Sexual Politics of Identity in the Nineteenth Century Cape Colony, South Africa", *The American Historical Review*, 100 (2), 1995, pp. 335-359.
[207] V. Bickford-Smith. *The Emergence of the South African Metropolis*, pp. 113-129.

In justifying their work to the public, the sisters at St. Monica's repeatedly emphasised the appalling conditions within which many coloured women in Cape Town were forced to give birth.

> Housing conditions are appalling. In tiny single rooms these coloured people live together, sometimes two or three families in one room, sometimes in lofts – in tiny places scarcely larger than cupboards – in cellars, in underground rooms, whose only light or air comes from the door, or in adapted stable […] The bed may be a heap of dirty straw on the floor [which itself] may have holes large enough to see through into the room below. Is it any wonder that in such surroundings, with no privacy or attempt at it, ideals are lowered and disease, moral and physical is rampant?[210]

The Wilcocks Commission, a commission investigating the conditions of the coloured population living in the Union, drew similar conclusions, suggesting that within suburbs like Athlone and District Six high illegitimacy rates were the product of "indecent, evil housing conditions" and the "impossibility of separation at night of adolescents, of children from adults".[211]

This argument, although not specific to the black and coloured population, was used most frequently with reference to it, the general feeling being that moral degeneracy was part of the ‘non-European’s’ “biological constitution” and thus that its members were more likely to fall prey to the negative moral influences of environmental factors like overcrowding.[212]

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[208] S. Burman and P. van der Spuy. "The Illegitimate and the Illegal in a South African City: The Effects of Apartheid on Births out of Wedlock", *Journal of Social History*, 29 (3), 1996, p. 614.

[209] S. Patterson. *Colour and Culture in South Africa: A study of the status of the Cape Coloured people within the social structure of the Union of South* (London: Routledge, 1953), pp. 149, 150.

[210] Wits Historical Papers Archive AB2029/BA, Annual report (1932), p. 7-8; For a similar argument see "Disease due to Social Evils", *Cape Times*, 21st June 1929.

[211] "The Hell in which the Coloured man lives", *The Sun*, 8th July 1938.

And yet, as much as coloured girls were considered more naturally prone to sexual delinquency, premarital pregnancy tended to transcend racial boundaries occurring amongst the white population more than was comfortable. Initially, drawing on the assumptions of the mental testing movement, social workers and officials were quick to blame lapses in sexual propriety amongst the white population on mental incompetence or “feeble-mindedness”.[213] For example, a standard social-worker’s report from the early 1920’s might read:

> Joyce [an unmarried mother] is about 3.5 years retarded intellectually. She is therefore on the borderline between normality and mental defect. Her judgement and reasoning are as a consequence of her defect impaired to such a degree in my opinion as to render imperative her supervision for as long a period as possible.[214]

Although unacceptable from a modern perspective, this narrative was useful in that it emphasised the distance between the white unmarried mother/female deviant and the ‘normal’ white women who understood the rules of socially acceptable feminine behaviour. It was also a narrative which made particular sense within the context of a perceived overlap between moral and physical deviancy.

Influenced by the work of individuals like Henry H. Goddard, who was the head of a training school for ‘feeble-minded’ girls and boys in New Jersey, South African psychologists at the time believed strongly that there was a relationship between ‘antisocial’ behaviours like illegitimacy and mental incapacity or under-development. Especially in the case of girls, the physical (mental incapacity) and the moral (sexual rebellion) were often viewed as mutually reinforcing, with prominent youth psychologist Marius Moll suggesting that “the incidence of mental defect amongst sexually delinquent females [was] higher than in any other group of wrongdoers”. [215]

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[212] L. Chisholm. “Gender and Deviancy in South African Industrial Schools”, p. 301.

[213] Mental testing refers to the administration of psychological tests designed to be an objective and standardized measure of intellectual capacity. Growing out of an intellectual and social climate heavily influenced by eugenicist theory, the mental testing movement rose to prominence in Europe and the United States at the beginning of the twentieth century. It later spread to other parts of the world, including South Africa where it was used justify growing racial segregation. For a more thorough history of mental testing in South Africa see J. Shingler. “Education and the Political Order in South Africa 1902-1961” (Ph.D. Thesis, Yale University, 1973); Also of relevance is S. Dubow. “Mental Testing and the Understanding of Race in Twentieth Century South Africa” in T. Meade and M. Walker (eds.) *Science, Medicine and Cultural Imperialism*, pp. 148-177.

[214] Cape Archives: AB2182/16.

In the 1930’s the above narrative expanded to accommodate new fears regarding the welfare of Cape Town’s white population. In combination with reports issued by the Women’s Christian Temperance Union and the findings of a Dutch Reform Church Commission in 1931, the 1932 Carnegie Commission helped to illustrate that overcrowding, and the “deadly moral effects” with which it was associated, were not unique to the city’s coloured inhabitants. Particularly as white women began to “drift from country to town in search of employment” with which to supplement the increasingly menial income of their rural kinfolk, rhetoric developed which deliberately stressed the sexual vulnerability of the migrant girl.[216]

The narrative of the poor country girl, whose essential innocence rendered her unable to respond wisely to the ‘blink bedrog van die stad’ [glittering graft of the city], suited the philanthropists and social workers involved in the administration of unmarried mothers’ hostels as they were anxious to provoke public sympathy and thereby secure the funding which they so “urgently needed”. [217] For example, in her address to donors at the Mary Rolt Hostel’s annual meeting in 1936, Mrs. H. Steyn cautioned that young European girls who came from the country to Cape Town to go into domestic service were liable to spend their free time “wandering about” and involving themselves in indecent activities, and that it was the responsibility of the community to provide these girls with a club where they might “meet their men friends and find healthy amusements”.[218] This concern was repeated in the hostel’s annual report, in which Dr. Wilhelmus A. Willemse, a specialist at the University of Pretoria in criminology and juvenile delinquency, was quoted as saying “domestic service in cities away from their home is a danger to European girls” especially where there has been “discord [and] social backwardness in their home life”.[219]

But it was not only philanthropists and social researchers that were worried that changing social and economic conditions within urban South Africa were prompting increased immorality amongst the youth. New technologies like the motor car, which increased the mobility of young persons, provoked widespread anxiety amongst both the clergy and the older adult population, with the Bishop of Johannesburg, Arthur Karney, warning that the motor car was facilitating predatory behaviour and being used for "immoral purposes" by unmarried couples throughout the city.[220] At much the same time, the Dutch Reform Church Commission for Vigilance against Social Evils warned that in removing the gender separation characteristic of many earlier leisure activities, public spaces like beaches, dance halls and the bioscope were making immorality easy and that young people's clothing was becoming increasingly improper.[221] Reflecting a similar attitude, an article in *Die Huisvrou* expressed shock at the modern girls' preferred dress and at the way in which young couples bathed in close proximity "wearing hardly any swimwear". [222]

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[215] Cited in L. Chisholm: “Aspects of Child-Saving in South Africa”, p. 20.

[216] “Houses- More Houses and More Houses”, *Cape Times*, 15th June 1929. Also see “Helping Factory Girls”, *Cape Times*, 8th May 1926.

[217] “Stedelike Bearbeiding”, *Die Kerkbode*, October 1938.

[218] “The Work of the House of Mercy”, *The Anchor*, March 1924; “Girl Workers in Need of a Club”, *The Cape Times,* 23rd Oct 1936.

[219] Cape Archives, AB2182/27, MRH Annual Report 1938.

Even as concerns for the moral wellbeing of the urban youth grew, extramarital pregnancy continued to be regarded as an extreme and fundamentally deviant phenomenon; a view which was reinforced in the 1940's and 1950's, when adaptions of psychoanalytic theory gained currency, providing a new, more psychologically complex vocabulary with which to explain illegitimacy. Transforming the unwed mother from a woman with a compromised intellect or with unhealthy leisure pursuits into someone suffering from a deeper form of neurosis, this vocabulary saw the belief that punishment was the best way to prevent a second fall being supplanted by attempts to better understand and 'treat' the psychological determinants of illegitimacy.[223] In the words of Jane Wrieden, a leading Salvation Army Social Worker:

> [Currently, the unmarried mother] is a person whose psychology is understood in terms of her early childhood relationships carried over to the present, especially the mother/daughter relationship. Her pregnancy is often a purposive acting out of her inner drive.[224]

Arguing definitively that "the unmarried mother is an unhappy and neurotic girl who seeks through the medium of an out-of-wedlock birth to find an answer to her own unconscious conflict and needs", Leontine Young, prominent social work theorist and author of the bestselling book *Out of Wedlock: A Study of the Problems of the Unmarried Mother and Her*

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[220] "Vultures Driving Fine Cars", *Rand Daily Mail*, 15th Dec 1927.

[221] Dutch Reform Church Archives, "Schema van Werksaamhede" presented to the Dutch Reform Church Synod by the Kommissie Van Orde, 1932.

[222] Mev. Ds. Zievogel. "Reinheid: Aan die Dogters van ons volk veral," *Die Huisvrou*, (XV), (783), 27th April 1937, p.9.

[223] R. Solinger. "The Girl Nobody Loved: Psychological Explanations for White Single Pregnancy in the Pre-Roe v. Wade Era, 1945-1965", *Frontiers*, 11 (2), 1990, p. 47.

[224] J. Wrieden. "The Meaning of the Maternity Home", *Children,* 3 (1), 1956, p. 24.

Child, felt similarly that unwed motherhood was the product of psychological maladjustment and unhealthy relationship dynamics.[225] That this narrative was also active in South African academic circles is evident in the work of Aletta Loots, a scholar at Stellenbosch University, who, in one of the earliest studies into single motherhood in Cape Town, observed that:

> Al hierdie meisies het 'n uitweg uit hul emosionele moeilikhede gesoek deur 'n buite-egtelike kind in die wêreld te bring. Byna geen was regtig lief vir die man of gelukkig by hom nie […] Die dogters het mans gekies wat hul op die ou end tog sal seermaak en verneder, en dan het hul onderwerp of 'n bitter stryd gevoer om wraak te neem" [all of these girls sought a resolution to their emotional problems through the birth of an illegitimate child. Almost none of them were really in love with or happy with the father of their child. Instead, they chose men who would hurt and belittle them and then became involved in a bitter fight for revenge].[226]

In this extract, Loots, like Young, rejects the idea that having an out of wedlock child [was] something that "just happened", choosing rather to see illegitimacy as a fundamental consequence of gender and family dysfunction.[227] While ostensibly more compassionate than earlier views on illegitimacy which stressed the biological as opposed to psychological roots of the phenomenon, Loots's argument continues to deprive the unwed mother of any real agency, her assumption being that the girl's actions, although in some ways very deliberate, were carried out without any forethought or rational understanding thereof.

Martine Spensky has argued that during the 1950's and early 1960's, the objectives of unmarried mothers' homes in Britain "metamorphosed dramatically", with homes that had for a long time discouraged adoption suddenly becoming "producers of legitimacy".[228] Spensky attributes this shift in attitudes to the growing influence of child psychology and of psychoanalytically oriented social work which, she suggests, gave rise to the belief that, being mentally unstable themselves, unmarried mothers were less equipped than married-but-childless middle class couples to raise psychologically well-adjusted children.[229]

While a similar shift took place in Cape Town, it did so gradually, with some unmarried mothers' homes and welfare organisations becoming firm proponents of adoption, while others remained steadfast in their conviction that adoption was unnecessary and that unmarried mothers could be rehabilitated. Nonetheless, by the time the staff at the Mary Rolt Hostel wrote to the Red Cross to demand that its welfare workers stop calling at the institution to offer help to its mothers to have their infants adopted, psychologists were becoming ever more attached to the notion of the nuclear family; the view that keeping unmarried "mothers and their babies together" was best for the child was losing ground. [230]

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[225] L. Young. "The Unmarried Mother's Decision About her Baby", *Journal of Social Casework*, 28 (1), 1947, pp. 27-34.

[226] A. Loots. "Die Ongehude Moeder: Volgens 'n Studie in die Inrigtings vir Ongehude Moeders in Kaapstad" (M.A Thesis, Stellenbosch University, 1951), p.50.

[227] L. Young. *Out of Wedlock,* p. 22.

[228] M. Spensky. "Producers of legitimacy: homes for unmarried mothers in the 1950s", p. 110.

[229] M. Spensky. "Producers of legitimacy: homes for unmarried mothers in the 1950s", p. 112.

It is beyond the scope of this thesis to examine in detail why such perspectives developed, and what precise political and moral agendas they served. It should, however, be noted that in labelling the unwed mother as ill or incapable of rational thought, it was possible to reaffirm the boundaries of socially acceptable feminine behaviour, whilst also working to retain the myth that ordinary young women were not privy to the same intense sexual urges as their male counterparts. Also of relevance is the fact that such narratives helped to entrench existent social hierarchies, some being more permanently susceptible to the "moral danger" described by social commentators in Cape Town than others. As American scholar Rickie Solinger explains:

> By moving the governing imperative from the body (biology) to the mind (psychology), theorists after the war made all of the fixed relationships previously defining white illegitimacy mutable, indeterminate, and even deniable. Psychological explanations transformed the white unwed mother from a genetically tainted unfortunate into a maladjusted female who could be cured [… while at the same time the non-white unwed mother continued to] carry the permanent stain of biological and moral ruin.[231]

This idea is reiterated in Burman and Naude's work which suggests that where middle class white women in Cape Town were regarded as "pure but frail creatures who might make one mistake but be rehabilitated", coloured women were generally seen as "naturally debased and promiscuous" and thus considered less able to reform.[232]

Treatment and Objectives in the Care of Unmarried Mothers

Far from remaining abstract theoretical constructs, the different perspectives discussed above often had material effects on the lives of the individuals to which they referred. Biological, social and psychiatric explanations of single pregnancy inspired the work of leading social work administrators, influencing both public policy and the institutional culture of organizations established to provide assistance to extramaritally pregnant women. Comparatively, these organizations were often quite sympathetic towards the plight of the unmarried mother, committee members expressing their private concern for the "cruel temptation and the disappointed dreams" which many such women had suffered.[233] Indeed, as early as 1922, E. Murray, daughter of Doctor Andrew Murray and patron of the Magdalena Huis, spoke of the need for tact and kindness to supplant punishment in the care of the unmarried mother. "Like a flower-bud too-early scarred and blackened by the hot winds of life", such a girl might begin to open up "under the influences of warmth and sunshine", revealing a heart "not wholly spoiled", explained Murray.[234]

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[230] Cape Archives: A2182/14 General Correspondence, 1955.

[231] R. Solinger. "The Girl Nobody Loved", p, 45.

[232] S. Burman and M. Naude. "Bearing a Bastard", p. 412.

The perceived objectives of institutions like the Magdalena Huis were not, however, unaffected by the way in which society chose to view such women. Placed in environments often closely resembling the reformatories for female deviants which Linda Chisholm describes, unmarried mothers were subject to "constant, albeit benignly expressed surveillance". Regarded as minors, both morally and psychologically, their right to self-definition and freedom of movement was regularly curtailed in small but significant ways.[235] For example, girls in the Magdalena Huis were required to ask the matron's permission before leaving the premises, to adhere to strict visiting hours and to be in bed before 10 pm, even on weekends. [236] Life in the Nannie Huis was equally regimented, as figure 1 illustrates.

Wary of being seen as "mak[ing] sin easy", these institutions implemented regimes which prioritised hard work, frugality and piety, with each inmate being made to reflect carefully upon the "asocial nature" of their past behaviour and to express contrition for it before being allowed to re-enter society.[237] "In Magdalena House there is no luxury […] All the housework and laundry is done by the girls. Our motto is 'industry, cleanliness, discipline, order'" reported the *Kerkbode*.[238] In a similar vein, the *Anchor,* referring to the House of Mercy, one of Cape Town's oldest Anglican rescue homes, emphasised that "the steady, hard work of the laundry [was] good for character" and that a "rigid economy" was necessary if its inmates where to achieve "moral and physical salvation".[239]

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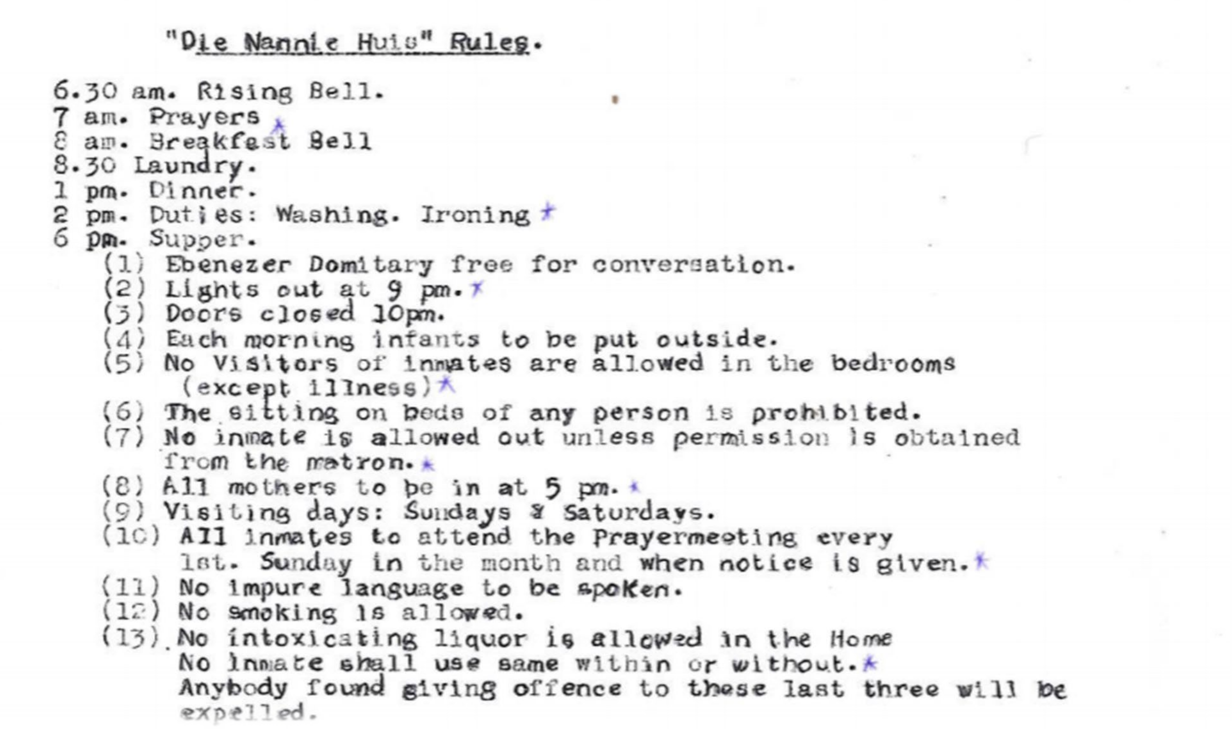
[233] Cape Archives A2182/27, MRH Annual Report 1931.
[234] E. Murray. *Broken Lilies*. pp. 2-5. Dutch Reform Church Archives, B 781.
[235] L. Chisholm. "'Gender and Deviancy in South African", p. 302.
[236] Dutch Reform Church Archives, SK 1691.
[237] E. Murray. *Broken Lilies*, pp. 2-5. Dutch Reform Church Archives, B 781.
[238] Dutch Reform Church Archives, Ref 193.
[239] "The Work of the House of Mercy", *The Anchor*, March 1924.



"Die Nannie Huis" Rules.

6.30 am. Rising Bell.
7 am. Prayers *
8 am. Breakfast Bell
8.30 Laundry.
1 pm. Dinner.
2 pm. Duties: Washing. Ironing *
6 pm. Supper.
(1) Ebenezer Domitary free for conversation.
(2) Lights out at 9 pm. *
(3) Doors closed 10pm.
(4) Each morning infants to be put outside.
(5) No Visitors of inmates are allowed in the bedrooms (except illness) *
(6) The sitting on beds of any person is prohibited.
(7) No inmate is allowed out unless permission is obtained from the matron. *
(8) All mothers to be in at 5 pm. *
(9) Visiting days: Sundays & Saturdays.
(10) All inmates to attend the Prayermeeting every 1st. Sunday in the month and when notice is given. *
(11) No impure language to be spoken.
(12) No smoking is allowed.
(13) No intoxicating liquor is allowed in the Home
No inmate shall use same within or without. *
Anybody found giving offence to these last three will be expelled.

Figure 1.1: The Nannie Huis Rules, 1922

Prayer meetings and bible study classes conducted by ministers and church groups from a variety of different denominations also formed an integral part of daily life within these institutions, it being felt that an atmosphere of quite devotion was necessary in order for the inmates to fully grasp the spiritual ramifications of their actions and to regain a sense of self-respect.[240] Bishop Lavis of the Anglican Church, the Ladies of Mowbray Presbyterian Church, the Nurses' Christian Association, the Baptist and Methodist Ladies Organisations and students from Stellenbosch University were all regular visitors to The Mary Rolt Hostel, for example.[241]

Life within the hostels also served to reinforce the containment of females in roles of domestic subordination, with rehabilitation as well as deviance being interpreted in strictly gendered terms. Behaviours considered detrimental to the 'reclamation of good womanhood' (e.g. smoking and the use of profanity) were banned in favour of more appropriate activities like sewing and reading, whilst training in nursery care and other domestic pursuits was also provided.[242] With these skills, and with some experience of living in a structured environment, it was hoped that the majority of girls would at least be able to secure steady employment, even if they were unlikely to be easily reabsorbed into respectable society.

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[240] CA A2182/27, Annual Report 1929.
[241] Cape Archives A2182/27, MRH 30th Annual Report.
[242] M. F. Smith. "Changing Emphases in Case Work with Unmarried Mothers", *The Family*, 1934, p. 311.

For many of these institutions the placing of illegitimate children was a difficult and contentious issue, the debates surrounding which both played into and complicated established stereotypes regarding extramarital pregnancy. Arguing that to relieve the unwed mother of the consequences of her error "would naturally have a hardening effect on the girl, killing her maternal instinct and sense of responsibility [and leading] in many cases [to] a second and third fall", the Mary Rolt Hostel and St. Monica's Home actively discouraged adoption.[243] But as reports emphasising the youth and mental/psychological inadequacies of unwed mothers began to surface, questions about their eligibility as parents and their capacity for reintegration into broader society prompted some institutions to assume the opposite approach. Advised to secure " 'n normale toekoms vir hulle kindertjies in 'n normale huis [a normal future for their children in a normal house], an estimated 95% of women entering the Magdalena Huis gave their babies up for adoption.[244]

In Cape Town as a whole, the number of young mothers in favour of adoption seems to have fluctuated, with many mothers, especially those in service, preferring, when they had the means, the older and more temporary system of either formal or informal foster-care.[245] Informal foster-care, or "baby-farming" as it was derogatively called, had a negative reputation. "Most acute cases of wasting or malnutrition are in the hands of foster mothers" warned the Child Life Protection Society in 1914, an observation which, according to the *Cape Argus,* remained valid even after numerous amendments to the Infant Life and Children's Protection Acts. [246]

The state, in its capacity as welfare provider, did also offer all single mothers, whether unmarried, widowed or deserted, access to a monthly grant.[247] However, the provision of such a grant – and by implication the placing of these supposedly very different types of women within a single category – was not uncontroversial. The image of the unscrupulous unwed mother using the fruits of her promiscuity to secure state benefits has been surprisingly persistent in modern times, having emerged in the 1920's and 1930's and still affecting current debates regarding the efficacy of public welfare programmes. As one commentator in the 1930's explained:

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[243] Cape Archives A2182/14, Letter to Mrs. Moore, dated March 1921.

[244] Dutch Reform Church Archives, KS 1691. Memorandum 1962.

[245] Formal adoption was only legalized in South Africa in 1923. Prior to this a system of formal foster-care existed under the Child Life Protection Society.

[246] Child Welfare Society, Wynberg. 6th Annual Report of the CLPS, 1914, p. 5 and "Farming-out system caused many deaths among babies", *Cape Argus*, 9th July 1960. The article read: "About 200 babies born to domestic servants died last year – many as a result of their mothers farming them out to foster parents to avoid losing their jobs in private homes […] Deaths [in this instance] are mostly caused by gastro-enteritis, the result of neglect and unhygienic conditions in the homes of foster parents."

[247] Cape Archives, SWP/7/27/1. General Correspondences. Children's Act.

> There is danger in application of the grant in all [illegitimacy] cases. It may not be difficult to find in such a case that the mother may continue to have illegitimate children *because* of the grant […] Cases are known in which one unmarried women has as many as four children all by different men (my emphasis).[248]

This stereotype, while appearing to run directly counter to the dominant view of the unwed mother as lacking agency and logical foresight, still cast her as a social deviant whose ability to manipulate the goodwill of those around her had the potential to undermine not only the health of the nation/race but also the proper functioning of the state. It had a very real impact on the attitude of the state towards unmarried mothers, the belief that financial help beyond a certain point might encourage immorality preventing any significant increases in this subsidy over time. [249]

Conclusion

"The belief that the family is disintegrating has a long history", writes Pat Thane, but for obvious reasons, this belief has tended to surface most prevalently at times of major social upheaval or transition.[250] Early twentieth century Cape Town, like many other cities at the time, was in a state of flux. The colonial bourgeoisie in Cape Town had, since the mid-nineteenth century, been grappling with the problem of creating and protecting social status in an environment so far removed from the centres of colonial rule. Within this context, sexual sanctions were used to demarcate positions of power, enforcing middle-class conventions of respectability and thus maintaining the "personal and public boundaries" of race and class.[251] However, by the twentieth century, shifts in the landscape and demographic make-up of the city in conjunction with new data on the prevalence of urban poverty, infant mortality and illegitimacy within Cape Town, had given rise to concerns regarding the efficacy of these sanctions and what Stoler has referred to as the "moral and cultural hygiene" of the population at large.[252]

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[248] Cape Archives, SWP/7/27/1. Children's Act, Response from the CLPS, p.4.

[249] L. Young. *Out of Wedlock,* p. 8.

[250] P. Thane P. *Happy Families: History and Family Policy* (London: British Academy Publishers, 2010), p. 13.

[251] A. Stoler. "Making Empire Respectable", p. 634.

These concerns were dealt with, in part, through the establishment of new welfare and public health services, some of which were designed specifically to cater to the maternity needs of the urban poor. The form in which these services were provided, though, depended heavily on a woman's marital status and on whether or not she was regarded as adequately deserving of assistance. Despite growing concern for the plight of unmarried mothers, many hostels continued to exclude pregnant women on the bases of race, religion, and number of illegitimate pregnancies, while even those who were accepted were treated very differently to their married counterparts. The disciplinary regimes in these hostels, while sharing certain features with the reformatory and industrial school, did evince differences in the way in which these women were incorporated into a larger system of control. It is also important to recognize that although they tended to adhere to the same broad contours, definitions of respectability were seldom uniform and, as a result, different institutions and interest groups were capable of responding to unmarried motherhood in slightly different ways. That said, with a range of different discourses circulating all serving to confirm their deviance, the women in these institutions were often seen as abnormal and were treated accordingly. Chapters 2 and 3 serve to interrogate this assumption.

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[252] A. Stoler. "Making Empire Respectable", p. 634

2. Fact vs. Fiction: Measuring Illegitimacy and Bridal Pregnancy in Anglican Cape Town

> The proportion of children in a society born or conceived outside marriage is not by itself sufficient to define the characteristics of that Society's sexual life, but the information is a vital preliminary to any such definition.[253]

Introduction

In the early twentieth century couples were exhorted by both the church and secular authorities to delay sexual intercourse until after marriage. Popular attitudes towards premarital sexuality, however, did not always reflect those of the authorities or the social elite, nor did popular behaviours necessarily mirror these attitudes. Behavioural psychologists have explained this discrepancy in terms of a distinction between descriptive and injunctive norms. Descriptive norms refer to typical or average behaviours (how people act in reality) while injunctive norms refer to socially prescribed standards of behaviour (how people are expected to act by their peers and society at large). These two concepts can and often do map quite closely onto one another but this is not always the case. In *Sex before the Sexual Revolution: Intimate Life in England 1918-1963* Simon Szreter and Kate Fisher grapple with precisely this tension:

> Despite the common expression of censorious values, many developed pragmatic personal codes of morality which determined the behavioural choices they made […] their decisions to have sex or not [having been] formed by a set of gendered and class dependant codes, which allowed for a number of circumstances in which premarital intercourse was considered logical, acceptable or even sensible.[254]

While various scholars have commented on the "tensions between the European marriage model and the pattern of out-of-wedlock births among Cape Town families", we still know very little about how popular attitudes towards premarital sexuality operated within this context and whether a similar pattern to that described by Szreter and Fisher existed within Cape society.[255] On the one hand, this lacuna can be attributed to the failure of family history to take root and establish itself as a recognizably separate field of scholarship in South Africa. But, on the other hand, it is also the product of a dearth of adequate statistical information.

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[253] S. J. Connolly. "Illegitimacy and Pre-Nuptial Pregnancy in Ireland before 1864: The Evidence of some Catholic Parish Registers", *Irish Economic and Social History*, 6, 1979, p. 5.

[254] S. Szreter and K. Fisher. *Sex before the Sexual Revolution*, p. 115.

[255] V. Malherbe. "Illegitimacy and Family Formation in Colonial Cape Town", p. 1153.

Birth and death registration was only formalised at the Cape in 1894, and although Cape Town's Medical Officer of Health compiled statistics on illegitimacy from 1896 onwards, the accuracy of these statistics is difficult to gauge. Of the four territories later to become South Africa, the Cape had the most sophisticated civil service and over the course of the next decade was able to implement a civil registration process that was relatively efficient, particularly in urban areas.[256] But progress was slow and, at times, haphazard, with the Medical Officer of Health himself admitting that, especially in the early years, the results of this process left "much to be desired".[257] Broken down into the categories of "European" and "Non-European", with Africans living in Cape Town sometimes but not always being included within these statistics, they function as a poor guide to trends within the African or coloured community.[258] Moreover, in failing to count instances in which conception but not birth, occurred outside of wedlock, the available statistics tacitly perpetuate a powerful but false premise, namely that where illegitimacy rates were low, so too were rates of extramarital pregnancy, with family formation remaining strongly tied to the same set of normative and institutional values presented in the advice literature being published at the time.

Particularly in Europe, a detailed analysis of both rural and urban parish registers has revealed that despite low illegitimacy rates, sexual activity in advance of marriage was surprisingly common throughout both the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.[259] Jan Kok, Hilda Bras and Paul Rotering use a dataset of nearly ten thousand fertile marriages to show that, between 1870 and 1950, roughly a quarter of Dutch brides were pregnant at marriage.[260] Dribe et al report that this was true for 38% of brides in nineteenth century Eastern Belgium.[261] In his analysis of the agricultural parish of Gosforth, Cumberland,

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[256] C. Simkins and E. van Heyningen. "Fertility, Mortality, and Migration in the Cape Colony, 1891-1904", *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 22 (1), 1989, p. 79.
[257] National Library of South Africa, Report of the Medical Officer of Health for the Cape Colony (1896), (1899), (1904).
[258] S. Burman and P. van der Spuy. "The Illegitimate and the Illegal", p. 615.
[259] The statistics listed in this section are drawn primarily from countries in Europe not because Europe was particularly comparable to South Africa at this time but because it is one of the only regions for which such figures exist. O. Saito. "Historical Demography: Achievements and Prospects", *Population Studies*, 5 (3), 1996, pp. 537-538.
[260] J. Kok, H, Bras and P. Rotering. "Courtship and Bridal Pregnancy in the Netherlands, 1870-1950", *Annales De Demographie Historique*, 2, 2016, pp. 165-191.
[261] M. Dribe, M. Manfredini and M. Oris. "The roads to reproduction: Comparing life course trajectories in preindustrial Eurasia" in C. Lundh & S. Kurosu (eds.) *Similarity in Difference: Marriage in Europe and Asia, 1700-1900*, p.111.

William Williams finds the bridal pregnancy rate to be as high as 40% between 1920 and 1951.[262]

Although the kind of extensive family reconstruction projects undertaken in Europe in the 1960's and 1970's have yet to be implemented in many other areas of the globe, a similar , if slightly less marked trend is visible in countries like Australia and the United States of America, for which detailed data on non-marital pregnancy is available.[263] In Australia, for example, non-marital conception occurred in the case of 30 per 1000 unmarried women aged 15-44, a large proportion of whom entered into shotgun marriages. As a result the bridal pregnancy ratio (no. of illegitimate births/no. of legitimate births) sat at between 10% and 15% for mothers aged 20-24 years throughout the first half of the twentieth century.[264]

Employing methods from the digital humanities and the newly-transcribed, individual-level baptism and marriage records of several Anglican parishes, this chapter examines trends in the non-marital conception of children in Cape Town between 1900 and 1960. A composite dataset – based first on a subset of manually linked records and then expanded using a deterministic algorithm – allows for comparison between women whose *first birth* was conceived after marriage, women who married while they were pregnant and women who married only after the birth of their first child. These pregnancies are then also compared with observations in the baptism records where excluding those instances in which the father was reported deceased or missing, the father is not named. While there is no indication of the legal status of a child on the baptism record, children baptized thus were usually illegitimate.

While it is impossible to isolate the exact motivations of men and women in Cape Town, the available data supports the idea that a sizable disjuncture existed between what was considered to be ordinary premarital behaviour at an institutional level, and what people did and considered to be ordinary premarital behaviour in their everyday lives. Although formally portrayed as a rare and deviant phenomenon, premarital sexuality appears to have been widespread in Anglican Cape Town, with the data suggesting that between a quarter and a third of all brides within the Anglican Church were pregnant upon marriage.

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[262] W. M. Williams. *The Sociology of an English Village: Gosforth,* p. 64. For another English example see J. Robin. "Prenuptial pregnancy in a rural area of Devonshire in the mid-nineteenth century: Colyton, 1851-1881*", Continuity and Change*, 1 (1), 1986, pp. 113-124.

[263] For a fascinating account of the evolution of premarital pregnancy in America see: D. Scott Smith and M. Hindus. "Premarital Pregnancy in America 1640-1971: An Overview and Interpretation", *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 5 (4), spring 1975, pp. 537-570.

[264] G. Carmichael. "Non-marital pregnancy and the second demographic transition in Australia in historical perspective", *Demographic Research*, 30, 2014, pp. 613, 623.

Conceptual Background

Although courtship, or the process of seeking the affections of another usually with the intention of winning a pledge of marriage, has long been an important part of how societies organize themselves, it has come in many shapes with major variations occurring across time and space. A particularly useful approach to understanding the structural role of courtship within different societies is to look at specific "family systems" and the role that marriage played within these systems. In his work, Göran Therborn identifies five major functions of marriage, an institution which he defines as a key "part of the wider institutional complex of the family", and sees as pertaining "to a specific sexual order, as well as to [a] more general social order".[265] These functions have primarily to do with procreation, the arrangement of childcare and the division of labour and authority within the household. But as Claude Lévi-Strauss's famous analysis of systems of exchange of women among different male descent groups has shown, marriage is also a useful mechanism in the management of social integration and/or social division.

Without going into too much detail regarding the sex–marriage order and its relationship to the political economy, it is worth noting that marriage has long served to extend hierarchies of race/ethnicity, class and ownership beyond the individual, with inter-marriage being used as a way in which to form networks and secure social status across multiple generations. [266] As a result, marriage and the control of sexuality that it implies have often been more important to the propertied or elite classes than they have to those at the bottom of social order.[267]

In a global environment where until quite recently many societies failed to regard unmarried woman as adults, men and women have also typically had very different motivations within courtship and faced disproportionate risks in premarital (sexual) relationships. In his study of premarital pregnancy in nineteenth century Verviers, George Alter explains the situation thus:

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[265] G. Therborn. *Between Sex and Power,* p. 132.

[266] C. Lévi-Strauss. *The Elementary Structure of Kinship* translated from French by J. Harley Bell, J.R. von Sturmer and R. Needham (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969), pp. 52, 98, 134-221.

[267] P. Laslett. "The Bastardy Prone Sub-Society" in P. Laslett, K. Oosterveen and R. M. Smith (eds.) *Bastardy and its comparative history*, p.226.

> The 'double standard' under which the same behavior is interpreted differently for men and women is central to [understanding their respective sexual and courtship] behavior. For the male a sexual conquest provides status within the peer group. Women who behave in the same way, however, are strongly censured and socially stigmatized. Status in the female peer group, presumably, comes from having a steady partner and the expectation of marriage. *Chastity has little value for its own sake and at some point a developing relationship with a young man more than offsets the risk to a woman's reputation*. These sexual encounters are in a sense *public as well as private*, and their social implications are more important than any expression of individuality (my emphasis).

Alter's research highlights the extent to which women specifically have had to negotiate between the long-run goal of marriage and their partners' demands for immediate sexual gratification within courtship.[268] He argues that, especially amongst the lower and working-classes, sexual activity was often seen as a sign of commitment or as a means of cementing a budding relationship between two courting individuals. However, if a woman allowed sex to occur too early, she risked being branded as 'loose' or disreputable – a label which once applied would substantially lessen the pressure on her current and future male partners to concede to marriage, and which might lead to multiple failed courtships. Certainly, the older a woman became, or the less attractive she was on the marriage market, the greater the risks she would have had to take in courtship and the less likely she would have been to be able to enforce a marriage.

That said, Alter is careful to emphasise that even in a culture which tolerated, and at times went so far as to encourage, male sexual freedom, there was still widespread recognition that the ultimate male status lay in being the head of a household and stable family network. It was, thus, an aspiration of men as well as women to get married and to bear legitimate children. This argument is important because it suggests that social and economic opportunities for males matter when analysing different patterns of sexual behaviour and their outcomes. For men who were able to achieve a certain status and respectability it would have been disingenuous to allow their personal lives and reputations to be damaged by evidence of sexual misconduct, especially in societies which placed, if not equal, then at least some value on male purity. It also seems logical that in circumstances where few men could expect to fulfil the economic role required of them as husbands and primary breadwinners both male and females had fewer incentives to marry.

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[268] G. Alter. *Family and the Female Life Course: The Women of Verviers Belgium, 1849-1880* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1988), p. 119.

Finally, Alter is keenly aware of the bearing that different courtship behaviours had on public life and of the important role that the community played in regulating these behaviours. Throughout this chapter, I emphasise the need to understand twentieth century courtship, and courtship in general, as a process of social and personal bargaining involving *multiple* parties each with their own separate agenda. Many scholars have argued that at least in Europe, and its various offshoots, the early 20th century saw courtship becoming "more and more a private act conducted in the public world", with romantic love surpassing familial approval as a necessary precondition of marriage. [269]

> In the generalised and cross-regional histories of Western culture and in sociological analyses it is assumed that young people approaching marriage in the first half of the twentieth century did so armed with a new set of ideas about love, sex and intimacy. New forms of consumer culture created a new emphasis on 'expressivity, romantic attachment and erotic adventure' [with the] rituals of courtship and the decision to get married being transformed, as 'the emotional attachment between sexual partners through falling in love' came to be understood as the *basis* of the relationship.[270]

But even in these societies, how much freedom youths had to find a partner who matched them emotionally and physically was contingent on the political and economic needs of the family or social group at large, with parents, siblings, neighbours, peers and church and state authorities all continuing to demand some say in the courtship process. The nature of courtship relationships and respect for formal rituals of marriage thus varied depending on the "internalization of the official value system, and with the proximity/distance to the agents of social control".[271]

One of the most significant contributions that the field of Family History has made to the study of courtship has been to complicate our understanding of the relationship between these 'agents' and local communities. It was previously thought that there was a causal link between rising rates of non-marital sexual activity and industrialization and urbanization, with premarital pregnancy being viewed as a product of social disorganization and waning familial/parental authority during this period. Subsequent discussions in Family History, however, have shown that pre-marital sexual activity and bridal pregnancy were often an accepted part of courtship within pre-industrial societies and that local attitudes towards premarital pregnancy often differed substantially from those proclaimed by church and state officials, especially within poor or culturally mixed communities.[272]

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[269] B. Bailey. *From Front Porch to Back Seat: Courtship in Twentieth- Century America* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1989), p. 3.

[270] S. Szreter and K. Fisher. *Sex before the Sexual Revolution*, p. 165.

[271] G. Therborn. *Between Sex and Power,* p. 133.

Over the course of the last three decades, family historians have also begun to question the perceived association between extra-marital pregnancy and social isolation, although the view that certain women were more illegitimacy prone than others continues to influence the thinking of many of these scholars. When it was first put forward in 1973, Peter Laslett's notion of a bastardy-prone sub-society seemed promising. Relatively simple in its original conception, this sub-group consisted of a geographically concentrated "series of bastard-producing women, whose activities persisted over several generations, and who tended to be related by [either] kinship or marriage".[273] However, despite being much cited, concrete examples of Laslett's bastardy prone sub-society remain elusive.[274] But that is not to say that illegitimacy and single motherhood are necessarily randomly distributed phenomena.

On the contrary, an important branch of the existing literature has stressed the extent to which class and occupation are correlated with illegitimacy and single motherhood. In her illuminating study of illegitimate maternities in twentieth century Aberdeen, Barbara Thompson suggests that the incidence thereof tended to be concentrated within specific "unskilled, unattractive and menial positions".[275] Thompson's argument has since been corroborated by a number of surveys. Indeed, scholarship on single motherhood in post-industrial Europe has tended to support the argument that it was in areas with "sizeable pockets of industrial production" or with high levels of poverty and underemployment, where illegitimacy rates were at their highest and where the phenomenon was most "clearly concentrated within a small number of families".[276]

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[272] George Alter summarizes some of these discussions in *Family and the Female Life Course*, pp. 112-115. For more recent analyses of this debate see E. Griffin. "Sex, Illegitimacy and Social Chance in industrializing Britain", *Social History*, 38 (2), 2013, pp. 139-161 or J. van Bavel. "Family Control, Bridal Pregnancy, and Illegitimacy: An Event History Analysis in Leuven, Belgium, 1846-1856." *Social Science History*, 25 (3), 2001, pp. 449-479.

[273] P. Laslett. "The Bastardy Prone Sub-Society" in P. Laslett, K. Oosterveen & R. M. Smith (eds.) *Bastardy and its comparative history*, pp.217-220.

[274] Even Laslett struggled to find proof of the existence of such societies, broadening his definition of the bastardy prone sub-society considerably as he attempted (and often failed) to find patrilines in the data.

[275] B. Thompson. "Social Study of Illegitimate Maternities", *British Journal of Preventive and Social Medicine*, 10 (2), 1956, p. 77.

[276] E. Griffin. "Sex, Illegitimacy and Social Change in Industrialising Britain", *Social History*, 38 (2), 2013, p.140.

Race and household composition also appear to affect the likelihood of an out-of-wedlock birth.[277] While Therborn recognizes that illegitimacy is not a phenomenon that is unique to any one family system, he does highlight the unusual prevalence thereof within Creole societies. The product of "unequal encounters and deep interpenetration" between a ruling class of European colonizers and a class of ruled 'non-Europeans', such societies have often developed dual family systems wherein informal unions have predominated, especially amongst the popular classes. [278]

> The scarcity and the inaccessibility of white women was, on the dark side of Creole society, compensated for by the prevailing norm and practice, by violence if need be, of the sexual accessibility of black, Indian, Creole and mulatta women. For slaves, marriage was often prohibited, and in many cases informal mating strongly encouraged. Male sexual predation became almost institutionalized among the white rulers. Within their racial boundaries, this provided role-models for the classes and races of the ruled males. For non-white women, sexual relationships with white or at least lighter-skinned males did not necessarily involve violence and male exploitation. [But still] the Creole family had distinctive features in its *instability and informality, inactive, little-controlled sexuality, informal, unstable unions, male absenteeism, and matrifocality*. The patrilineal, patriarchal, ritually formal white family had its opposite in the loose, matrilineal informality of coloured Creoles (emphasise mine).[279]

In this extract Therborn emphasises the impact of colonialism on social integration and familial stability within the Americas, Indonesia and certain parts of southern Africa, focusing in particular on the role that sexual violence and non-marriage (e.g. concubinage and informal unions) played within Creole societies.

The focus on family systems and familial stability in explaining premarital sexual behaviour has complicated the stereotypical image of the socially isolated single mother. In a well-known article published in 1976, Louise Tilly, Joan Scott and Miriam Cohen argued that in industrial Britain female migrants to urban areas were the victims of an unfortunate paradox.

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[277] G. Alter. *Family and the Female Life Course,* p. 113 and J. Gillis. "Servants, Sexual Relations, and the Risks of Illegitimacy in London, 1801-1900." *Feminist Studies,* 5 (1), 1979, pp. 142-173 and K. Oosterveen and R. M. Smith. "Bastardy and the family reconstitution studies of Colyton, Aldenham, Alcester, and Hawkshead," in P. Laslett, K. Oosterveen and R.M. Smith (eds.) *Bastardy and Its Comparative History*, pp. 94-121 and W. Seccombe. *A Millennium of Family Change: Feudalism to* Capitalism in *North-western Europe* (New York: Verso, 1992), p. 242.

[278] G. Therborn. *Between Sex and Power, p*p. 34, 90.

[279] G. Therborn. *Between Sex and Power, p*p. 35,36.

Driven by the “loneliness and isolation of work in the city” as well as by economic need, these women were often quick to find mates.[280] Yet, poverty and isolation also rendered them

highly vulnerable to desertion and abuse, their ability to enforce a marriage diminishing in the absence of traditional family and community structures, suggest Tilly et al. This argument is not wholly without basis. Indeed, there is evidence to suggest that the rates of desertion were higher in big cities, where a combination of anonymity and geographical mobility meant that men could “disappear” in a way that was impossible in small-town and agrarian communities.[281]

Unwed mothers were not, however, always entirely separate from their parents and kin. In fact, in his study of premarital pregnancy in eighteenth century Leuven, Jan van Bavel discovers that women who fell pregnant outside of wedlock were far more integrated and socially connected than might be expected.[282] He finds, for example, that “among unmarried immigrants as well, those who came to Leuven alone had a lower chance of conceiving than did immigrants who came with family or any kin or friends”.[283] This finding speaks to a growing literature which has stressed the need for a broader and more flexible definition of kinship, which takes into account a whole range of family systems and other social arrangements, whilst also highlighting the need for a more careful exploration into the lives and behaviours of the men and women who were at the centre of these trends.[284]

Bridal pregnancy and illegitimacy are connected but distinct outcomes of premarital sexual behaviour; both of which need to be defined in order to properly understand premarital pregnancy. The rate of these phenomena within a society is contingent on the proportion of and the frequency with which women are having premarital sex, the efficacy and use of contraceptive measures and the control that women have over gestation, relating either to miscarriage or abortion.[285] However, bridal pregnancy circumvents illegitimacy in instances where a couple are able to legitimate an out-of-wedlock pregnancy by marriage before the birth of their child. Illegitimacy, thus, refers to any *birth* occurring to a woman while she is unmarried, i.e., single, widowed or divorced. The differences between bridal pregnancy and illegitimacy are analysed in this chapter to the extent that the data allows. A dearth of information pertaining to single fathers in the single mother dataset prohibits a direct comparison between it and the fertile marriage dataset, making it difficult to draw any definite conclusions regarding the distinction between and the impact of different factors on these two phenomena.

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[280] L. Tilly, J. Scott and M. Cohen. “Women's Work and European Fertility Patterns”, *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 6 (3), 1976, p. 464.
[281] L. Gordon. *Pitied But Not Entitled,* p. 20.
[282] J. van Bavel. “Family Control, Bridal Pregnancy, and Illegitimacy”, pp. 450-453.
[283] J. van Bavel. “Family Control, Bridal Pregnancy, and Illegitimacy”, p. 472.
[284] G. Levi. “Family and Kin-A few Thoughts", *Journal of Family History*, 15 (4), 1990, pp.567-578; M. Das Gupta. “Kinship Systems and Demographic Regimes” in D. Kertzer and T. Fricke (eds.) *Anthropological Demography. Towards a New Synthesis* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1997), pp. 36-52; A. Perranoud. “The Coexistence of Generations and the Availability of Kin in a Rural Community at the Beginning of the Nineteenth Century”, *The History of the Family*, 3 (1), 1998, pp. 1-15.
[285] P. Cutright. “Illegitimacy: Myths, Causes and Cures”, *Family Planning Perspectives,* 3 (1), 1971, p. 26.

The approaches described above are useful in that they provide a framework for further investigation into bridal pregnancy and illegitimacy. Courtship was an evolving process which involved negotiation on many levels, and which had moral as well as practical determinants. These determinants affected men as well as women, both of whom had a degree of agency within the courtship process. Clearly, a relationship existed between class, family composition and premarital pregnancy, but the exact nature of this relationship is difficult to decipher. The precise impact of grand processes of social change (e.g. industrialisation) on illegitimacy and bridal pregnancy is also hard to glean.

Targeted qualitative research points to the existence of regional and temporal variations in both the scale and nature of these phenomena throughout Europe.[286] Richard Adair has, in fact, suggested that births outside of marriage varied more than any other demographic factor in Early Modern Europe.[287] The presence of this variation is important because it highlights the role local custom, culture and circumstance play in informing patterns of family formation. Unfortunately, though, it also limits the extent to which this research can be used to understand bridal pregnancy and illegitimacy in South Africa. Scattered references to "sitting up" in the records of the Cape Supreme Court suggest that within certain Afrikaner communities traditions from rural Europe continued to influence courtship practice.[288] Yet, European studies are problematic in that they miss the racial component within South African society. They also often pay attention to the distinction between Protestant and Roman Catholic courtship preferences, a distinction without much relevance in largely Protestant Cape Town.[289]

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[286] R. Adair. *Courtship, Illegitimacy and Marriage in Early Modern England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996), p. 4.

[287] R. Adair. *Courtship, Illegitimacy and Marriage in Early Modern England,* p. 5.

[288] See for example *Kemp vs. Van Rensburg*. A. Russell and G. Swift (eds.) *The South African Law Reports [1911], Cape Provincial District* (Roodepoort: Juta & Company, 1988), p. 292.

[289] J. Kok, H, Bras and P. Rotering. "Courtship and Bridal Pregnancy", p. 171.

In this chapter, illegitimacy and bridal pregnancy are explored by looking at some of the factors most likely to influence premarital pregnancy in the Mother City: the socio-economic and racial background of the individual partners, their age, the characteristics of their relationship (how alike in age and occupational status were they?), as well as their migration history and literacy status. Higher rates of illegitimacy and bridal pregnancy are expected within lower income groups, for whom the passage of wealth across generations was less of a concern. Taking into account the research of Burman and van der Spuy amongst others, which highlights the different cultural and family pressures which existed within the white and coloured populations in Cape Town, we might also anticipate that the bridal pregnancy would have been a more usual occurrence amongst the city's coloured inhabitants.[290]

Data and Methodology

According to Louise Tilly, "one of the key impulses of social history's development is a populist vision that aims to seek out how ordinary people lived and acted in the past".[291] To satisfy this impulse, social historians have made innovative use of a complex range of sources, combining governmental records with more personal and immediate materials to begin reconstructing the everyday lives of the invisible majority. Unlike in Europe, however, where there are a number of archives which seek explicitly to document the history of everyday life (e.g. the Mass Observation Archive at the University of Sussex, the Family Life and Work Experience Archives at Essex University and the Expatriate Archive Centre at the Hague), in Africa such archives, as well as the materials needed to fill them, are rare. One way to get around this is to employ the family reconstitution method, which involves linking records of basic demographic events, usually of an ecclesiastical nature (baptisms, marriages, burials), within and between individual lives to recreate individual life histories and the histories of different families and communities. But, while substantial efforts in the digitization systematic linkage of such records have been made, particularly with recent advances in computer systems and operations research, this methodology remains underutilized within the field of African History.[292]

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[290] The term coloured is generally used to describe former slaves primarily of South East Asian origin, indigenous Khoisan and the descendants of these groups who, according to Wayne Dooling, "coalesced into a single underclass during the second half of the nineteenth century". See W. Dooling: "Poverty and Respectability in Early Twentieth-Century Cape Town", *Journal of African History*, 59 (3), 2019, p. 414.

[291] L. Tilly. "Social History and its Critics", *Theory and Society*, 9 (5), 1980, p. 668.

[292] J. Fourie. "The Data Revolution in African Economic History", *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History,* 47 (2), 2016, pp. 193-197.

In this section, I describe the record linkage strategy used to join the baptism and the marriage records of couples in seven Anglican parishes in Cape Town. Although only formalised in the latter half of the nineteenth century, it was the practice of clerics at the Cape to compile separate handwritten volumes in which the baptisms and marriages of individuals within their parish were recorded. Considered significant for the government's own recordkeeping, the volume dealing with marriage typically included the following for each party: first name and surname, age, profession, birthplace, current place of residence, race, race-change and condition at marriage (i.e. bachelor, spinster or widow).[293] The date of marriage was also noted, as was the contract type (anti-nuptial or in community of property) and whether or not a couple was married by banns or license. Finally, the document included evidence of consent of a legal guardian in the case of a minor and an acknowledgment of the signatures of the bride and groom. While slightly less detailed, the volume in which baptisms were recorded also contained useful information, reflecting a child's date of baptism, date of birth, first name, the father's name(blank if illegitimate), the mother's first name (and surname if illegitimate), the father's occupation or rank and the parent's abode.

As Eleanor Fox and Martin Ingram note, there are potential pitfalls in using for demographic purposes "what are essentially ecclesiastical documents, compiled in often unknown but certainly less than ideal circumstances, by fallible and sometimes negligent humans".[294] These records do not provide the demographic information necessary to establish illegitimacy or bridal pregnancy *rates*, although it is possible to calculate illegitimacy and bridal pregnancy *ratios* by dividing the number of extramarital births by the total number of births recorded in a given parish register. Roger Finlay has further suggested that the geographical extent of a parish, its population density as well as small changes to its boundaries can lead to defective baptism registration, whilst numerous historians have also commented on the difficulties associated with accounting for stillbirths and infanticide within their calculations.[295] Nonetheless, almost fifty years after the Cambridge Group for the History of Population and Social Structure was founded, parish registers continue to be used by historians as a valuable source of information regarding extramarital sexuality, particularly when used in combination with other sources detailing the experiences and perceptions of individuals within the same time period. It is also significant that in the Cape Town registers a child's date of the baptism *and* date of birth are both recorded, alleviating the necessity of baptisms being taken as a proxy for births. Although not uncommon in the field of Family History, this practice is problematic especially for the 19th and 20th centuries during which the interval between birth and baptism tended to fluctuate more widely than in previous centuries. Baptism was one of the two primary sacraments administered by the Anglican Church in Cape Town, retaining its importance as a rite of initiation into the Christian faith even as other sacraments such as confession and absolution – practiced in the High Church – fell away.[296] Yet, while couples were strongly encouraged to baptize their children, and usually did within three to four months of birth, as in other areas of the world, the possibility does exist that infants dying very soon after birth were never recorded.[297]

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[293] According to the 1950 Population Registration Act all South Africans had to be classified into one of three races: white, 'native' (black African), or coloured (neither white nor 'native'). However, because the determination of a person's race fell primarily to census takers and other bureaucrats and was often decided using arbitrary physical markers, it was legally possible for individuals to petition the state in order to have their racial classification changed. When such a change occurred following marriage it was noted by the priest.

[294] E. Fox and M. Ingram. "Bridewell, bawdy courts, and bastardy in early seventeenth-century London" in R. Probert. (Ed.) *Cohabitation and Non-Marital Births*, p. 11.

[295] R. Finlay. "Distance to church and registration experience", *Local Population Studies*, 24, 1980, pp. 26-40.

Chosen for their socio-economic and geographic diversity, the parishes in this study served the areas of Langa, Athlone, Maitland, Mowbray, Sea Point, Kenilworth and Parow. Located in Cape Town, an urban centre with relatively stable parish boundaries, these parishes were free of some, if not all, of the problems of distance and accessibility which Finlay mentions. Table 2.1 provides a brief description of the demographic makeup and history of these areas.

My methodology in linking these records owes much to the pioneering work of The Cape of Good Hope Panel Project; a project housed at Stellenbosch University, which has developed a sophisticated procedure for linking households in the Cape Colony tax records over multiple generations.[298] Knowledge of this procedure facilitated the construction of a model with which it was possible to predict whether a couple in the baptism record could be successfully matched to a couple in the marriage register.[299]

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[296] L. Ekundayo. "The Practice of Baptism and its Justification in the Anglican Church", *Journal of the Humanities and Social Sciences,* 21 (4), 2016, pp. 32-33.

[297] The average interval between birth and baptism, excluding adult baptisms, was 101 days.

[298] See A. Rijpma, J. Cilliers and J. Fourie. "Record Linkage in the Cape of Good Hope Panel", *Historical Methods: A Journal of Quantitative and Interdisciplinary History,* 53 (2), 2020, pp. 112-119.

[299] This model was designed in conjunction with Auke Rijpma, a scholar at Utrecht University who was also instrumental in the development of the linkage strategy used in The Cape of Good Hope Panel Project. For more information on the methodology used for and the rationale behind this project see J. Fourie and E. Green: "Building the Cape of Good Hope Panel", *The History of the Family*, 23 (3), 2018, pp. 493-502.

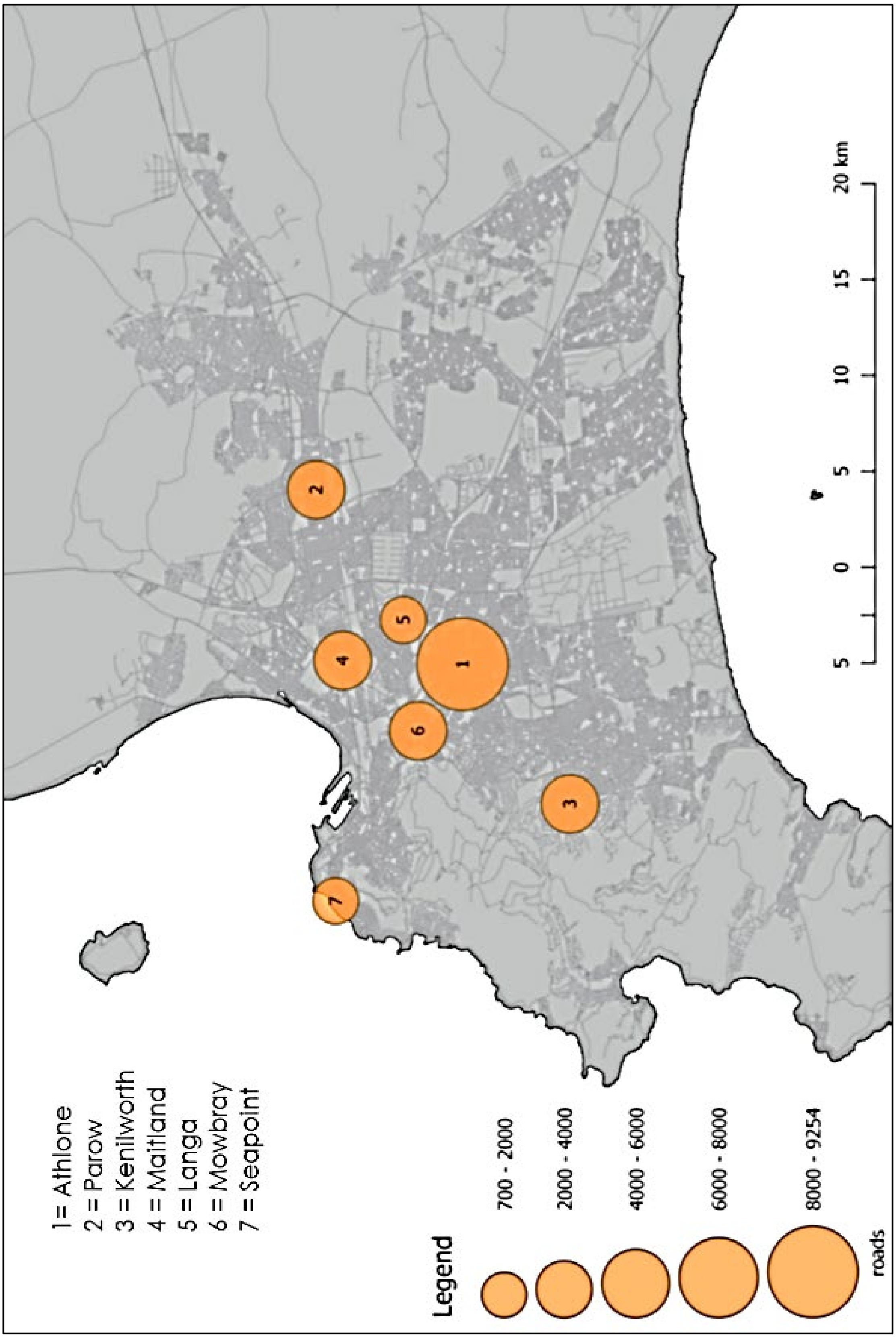
1= Athlone
2 = Parow
3 = Kenilworth
4 = Maitland
5 = Langa
6 = Mowbray
7 = Seapoint
Legend
700 - 2000
2000 - 4000
4000 - 6000
6000 - 8000
8000 - 9254
roads
5
0
5
10
15
20 km
1
2
3
4
5
6
7

Figure 2.1: Map of the transcribed parishes with circle size indicating the total number of baptisms in the dataset for each parish

Seapoint	Kenilworth	Parow	Mowbray	Maitland	Athlone	Langa
Tramway Company establishes a line to the area in 1862, making it Cape Town's first commuter suburb. Area initially only houses Tramway employees. Tramway Company shuts its doors in 1895 and proximity to ocean and mountain encourages upper middle-class white residents to occupy the area. In 1898 the foundation stone of St. James Church is laid. Africans forced to leave the area under the Native Reserve Locations Act of 1902. Parish remains predominantly urban. Buildings of brick and stone are most common by 1910. In 1955 Seapoint is declared a "whites-only" area under the Apartheid regime.	1882 Train Station is constructed in Kenilworth and area becomes sought after because of its proximity to the country's first horse racing course. Area loses some of its prestige but continues to develop. Its development is tied to that of Claremont and Wynberg, both older and more established areas at the time. Small but well-built properties. Population is predominantly white and middle-class.	A village is established here in 1902. Population is small but growing, especially as many poor white families make the decision to migrate to the city. Initially the area remains relatively rural with families owning large plots of land but by 1922 several factories have been established and land prices rise. The area becomes increasingly developed and is upgraded to a municipality in 1939. St. Margaret's Parish is consecrated in 1943. Population remains white and predominantly lower-middle class well into the second half of the twentieth century Strong Afrikaner Nationalist presence and voter base.	Village established in 1853 on the farm Welgelegen. In the early 1900's slums and overcrowding increase in the inner city. Those who can, move to the developing suburbs of Mowbray, Rondebosch and Claremont. From 1896 onwards Mowbray, Rondebosch and Claremont all require the external walls of new buildings to be off stone or brick. Racially mixed area. Coloured and white population.	1880's tuberculosis and smallpox isolation hospital established at Rentzkies Farm, near present day Maitland. By 1911 Maitland's population was evenly split between coloured and white residents and numbered 5761. In 1917 an attempt is made to clear the central slum area by establishing housing schemes in Maitland and Pinelands (later known as Maitland Garden Village). During the 1920's and 1930's Maitland is still a relatively rural parish, primarily inhabited by coloured farm workers and casual labourers.	While still close to the city centre, Athlone, unlike Mowbray, allows its residents to build with wood and iron instead of limiting them to the more expensive mediums of stone or brick. The suburb develops in a piecemeal or on an ad-hoc basis until 1926 when the city council is granted a loan to establish a housing scheme in the area. Housing scheme is meant to cater to Cape Town's coloured population and the area stretches to become one of the first areas resembling what is now the Cape Flats. Houses are small and overcrowded but are generally less informal than those in areas like Langa. 1950 forced evictions occur in certain areas.	Relocation of black Capetonians to the Uitvlugt camp (later called Ndabeni) in 1901. Black residents forcibly removed to Langa, a new location further from the city centre in the early 1920's. In 1927 the township of Langa is officially established, becoming the primary residential option for Cape Town's black population in the wake of the Native Urban Areas Act of 1923. By the 1930's the township houses two barracks and various hostels set up to accommodate a growing stream of migrant workers. During the Second World War a relaxation of the pass laws due to a labour shortage in the city's manufacturing industry causes Langa to become increasingly overcrowded.

Table 2.1: Parish characteristics and history

I began by manually creating a training dataset. In manually matching observations across the baptism and marriage records the following routine steps were taken. The marriage and baptism registers of a single parish were alphabetised and compared. As each observation pertained to a husband *and* spouse rather than to an individual, a large number of straightforward links could be made on the basis of male and female first names and surname only. The fact that 70% of males and females in the manually matched sample had more than one first name aided the matching process.

In order to account for errors in the recording process minor spelling variations between names were permitted – e.g. a surname could be listed as “Patel” and “Patell” but given the same unique first names a true match was assigned. For interpreting nicknames, a basic knowledge of the idiosyncrasies of Dutch/Afrikaans and Anglophone naming practices was also important. It was, for example, useful knowing that in English the nickname “Dick” was often used in place of the first name “Richard” and that in Afrikaans both “Jan” and “Johan” are common diminutives of the first name ’Johannes’.

Although rare, there were certain cases in which the names of a husband and spouse in the baptism data were equivalent to that of more than one husband and spouse in the marriage data. Here, I was careful; if two names could not be distinguished, I did not attempt a match. There were instances, though, where additional information regarding a couple’s street address, professional status or even age helped to remove whatever ambiguity existed between two sets of names. Time elapsed between marriage and first birth also functioned as a useful indicator of the plausibility of a match, my assumption being that, while obviously possible for a woman to give birth/ baptize many years subsequent to marriage, the closer a baptism was to a marriage the more likely I was to be identifying the same couple.

The unmatched data consisted of two groups: (i) where a unique male and female name and surname existed only in a parish’s baptism register and not their marriage register (by far the most likely reason for non-matches) and (ii) where the names of a couple in the baptism register matched the names of two different couples in the marriage register without the additional information required to distinguish between them. Overall, the above process resulted in a dataset of 480 links based on a dataset of 2620 observations from St. Mark’s Parish in Athlone and 1275 links based on a dataset of 3937 observations from St. Peter’s

Parish in Mowbray. Of a total of 1755 links, 740 of these pertained to ostensible first births – a more than sufficient number with which to create an effective matching algorithm.

After combining these matches with the remainder of the unmatched data, candidates for comparison were then created using the Jaro-Winkler string distance (with the penalty for first mismatches in the first four characters set to 0.15) between the men's surnames as a blocking variable. A blocking strategy based on indexing (e.g. age or date of birth) would have been less computationally intensive but because all of the shared variables are string variables such an approach was not possible. Subsequently, I calculated the distances between the features of these candidates, looking specifically at the string distance between male first names, female first names, and at the distance in years between date of marriage and date of baptism. Although male profession appears in both sets of records, I chose not to include it in our calculations because it was likely to bias my results in favour of those with job stability, a characteristic to which few in the lower and working classes could lay claim.[300]

I then used half of the available data to fit a statistical model where the distances predict for each candidate pair the true manual link. The Cape of Good Hope Panel Project experimented with various models, including a logistic regression as a "high performing, yet easy to interpret classifier" and a random forest classifier as the classifier which "best minimized false positives".[301] Taking my cue from this project, I employed a random forest model, allowing it to compute weights for the different variables as well as the threshold at which a link could be determined.

Finally, I applied this model to the complete data for each of the seven parishes mentioned. The number of links which the model yielded differed depending on the size of the parish. Generally though, the retention rate fluctuated between 20% and 30%, a rate similar to that which was achieved through manual observation.

Athlone	Mowbray	Langa	Maitland	Parow	Seapoint	Kenilworth
989	486	77	187	87	252	230

Table 2.2: Summary of the number of matches (i.e. marriage and baptism records successfully linked) by parish

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[300] G. James, D. Witten, T. Hastie, and R. Tibshirani. *An introduction to statistical learning*: *Vol. 6*. (New York: Springer, 2017), pp. 203, 270. 366.

[301] A. Rijpma, J. Cilliers and J. Fourie. "Record Linkage in the Cape of Good Hope Panel", 2019, p. 6.

Although lower than I might have hoped, an average retention rate of 25% is very much in line with what has been achieved by scholars using similar data in other parts of the world.[302] It also makes sense given the context within which the data was collected. The first half of the 20th century was a turbulent period in Cape Town's history, during which much movement occurred not only to and from the city but also within it. Rapid demographic growth, high rates of poverty and overcrowding as well as frequent changes to the city's housing and labour policies meant that it was not unusual for a parish's population to change significantly from one five year period to the next. Particularly in the Depression years rising unemployment and underemployment coupled with housing shortages within Cape Town precipitated intra-city movement; this movement was later exacerbated by early segregationist policies and the disruption of global war, and culminated in the forced removals implemented by the Apartheid government in the 1950's and 1960's.[303]

At the same time economic factors in South Africa's overall development were driving immigration on a more grand scale, with Cape Town functioning as a point of entry for large numbers of skilled migrants coming from depression-era Europe. Many of these migrants were attracted by the work and investment opportunities offered by the rapid expansion of South Africa's inland mining sector.[304] In general white immigrants, however poor and uneducated, experienced high upward social mobility and spatial mobility. So too did white Capetonians, who benefited from the preferential twentieth century labour market, education and other Apartheid-era policies.[305] One would expect that lower levels of social and spatial mobility for coloured and African residents would make it easier to trace this population over time within the parish registers. Yet a cursory inspection of the marriage and baptism records reveals that the white population had a lower name density than the ex-slave population

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[302] See especially C. Gibson-Davies, E. O. Ananat and A. Gassman-Pines. "Midpregnancy Marriage and Divorce: Why the Death of Shotgun Marriage Has Been Greatly Exaggerated", *Demography*, 53 (6), 2016, pp.1693-1715.

[303] Alan Mabin and Dan Smit argue that the disruption caused by the Second World War "unleashed a modernist planning fervour in South Africa", prompting a gradual reorganization of the urban landscape in large centres like Cape Town. A. Mabin and D. Smit. "Reconstructing South Africa's cities? The making of urban planning 1900-2000", *Planning Perspectives*, 12 (2), 1997, p. 203.

[304] V. Bickford-Smith, E. van Heyningen and N. Worden: *Cape Town in the Twentieth Century: An Illustrated Social History*, p. 70.

[305] J. Cilliers and J. Fourie. "Occupational Mobility during South Africa's Industrial Take-Off", *South African Journal of Economics*, 86 (1), 2018, pp. 3-22.

(predominantly coloured).[306] As a result the potential for ambiguity between matches and the chance of a match being discarded is likely to have been less within this population.

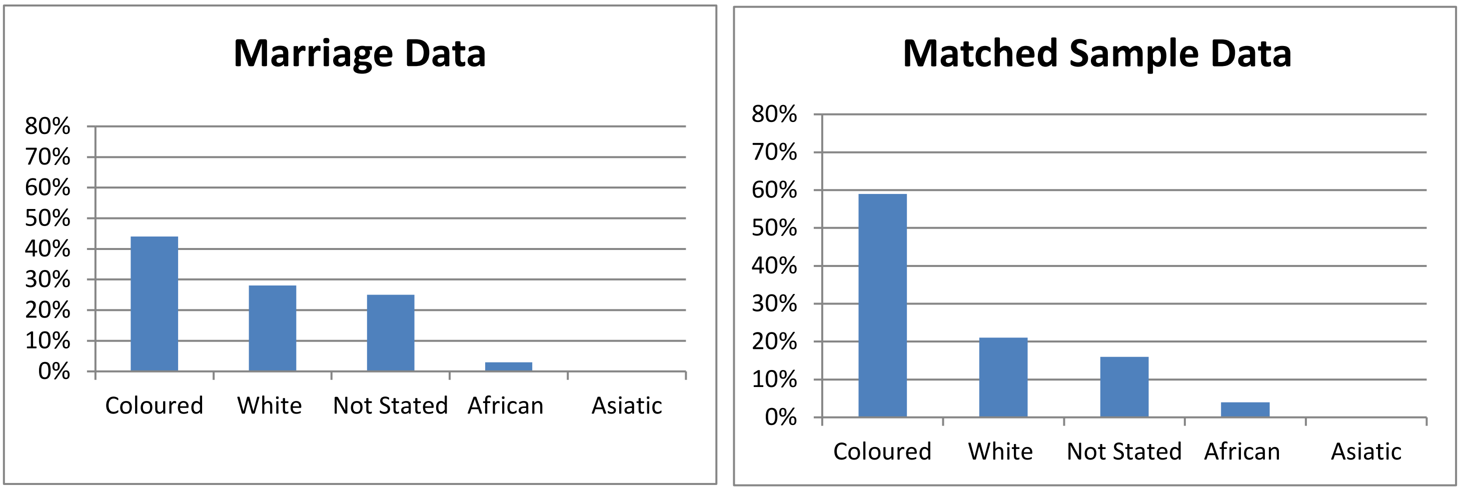

Figure 2.2: Figure comparing the percentage of marriages by race in the unmatched dataset to the percentage of marriages by race in the matched dataset

A comparison between the different racial groups represented in the unmatched marriage data (the register for which race is available) and those represented in the matched sample is an imperfect but useful way in which to assess the randomness of the sample. In this instance there does appear to be a slight overrepresentation of coloured couples within the matched sample, something which can be ascribed both to the greater mobility of white persons and to the fact that the training data was compiled using observations from Athlone and Mowbray – both with large coloured populations – and the model was thus more successful at matching couples within these two parishes. But despite this variation, that the two datasets are more or less similar does provide some indication of the reliability of the linkage procedure. A detailed inspection of the unmatched data in conjunction with a number of more focused comparisons also suggests the absence of any overt age or profession related selection biases. When controlling for differences in race, neither age nor profession differ substantially across the matched and unmatched data. Finally, there is a good correlation between the number of observations per five year interval in the matched and unmatched datasets (Figure 2.3). In both datasets the largest concentration of observations is between 1930 and 1950 and it is for this period that the most accurate conclusions can be drawn, although even in the 1910's and 1920's the total number of observations is not negligible. This too offers some indication of the reliability of the matching procedure.

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[306] This is likely due to the fact that slaves were often given generic old testament names such as Jan or Abraham or otherwise given calendar names (e.g. January or Friday) – both of which failed to reflect the cultural or ethnic diversity of the enslaved population and which made it difficult to differentiate between individuals.

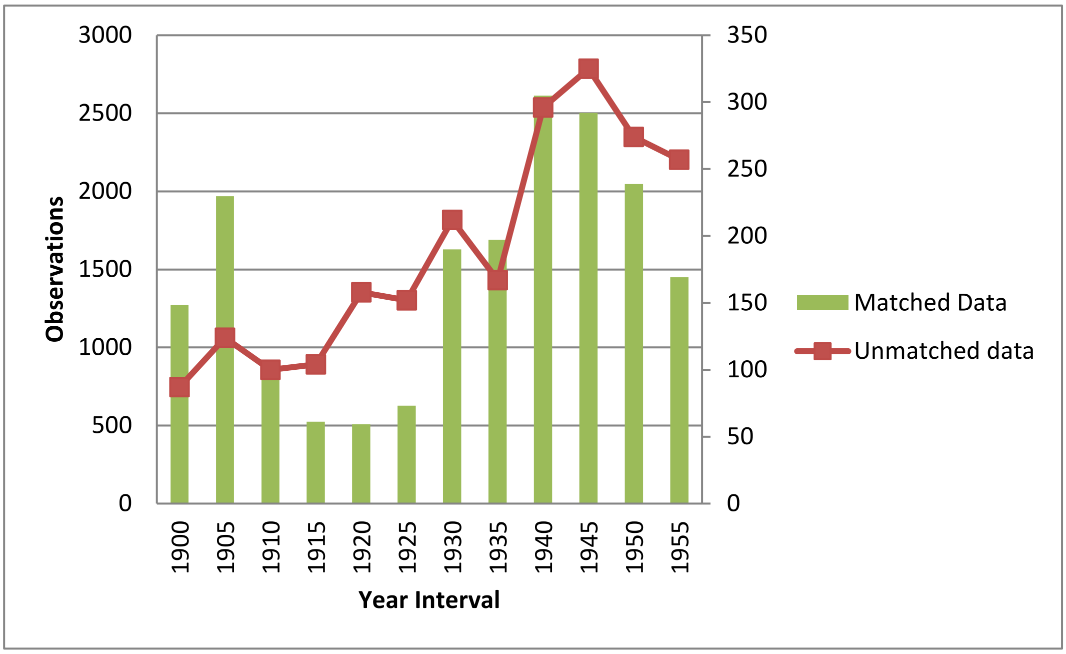

Figure 2.3: Dataset distribution by year, with the left-hand axis indicating the total number of unmatched baptisms per five year interval and the right-hand axis indicating the total number of baptisms matched to a marriage per five year interval

Of course, there may have been other factors affecting the potential for a match. Although probably far less common amongst Christian couples who did eventually plan to marry, concealment, evasion and migration were all legitimate strategies in response to an unplanned pregnancy, particularly for men and women of means. But the absence of such observations is likely to lower rather than to falsely inflate the findings of this study. Moreover, taking into account differential access to contraception, abortion and other means of concealment, this study does not try to draw any set conclusions regarding the determinants of illicit sexual behaviour but rather focuses on analysing the determinants of different courtship and familial outcomes within the Anglican population – outcomes which may have changed substantially (e.g. a couple leaving the church completely) were such plans carried through.

As birth order is not recorded, there is also the possibility that as a result of temporary migration not all of the links in the original data pertained to actual first births. Again, though, this would cause bridal pregnancy to be underrepresented rather than overrepresented in the matched data, thus supporting the hypothesis that bridal pregnancy was relatively common in Anglican Cape Town during the period under investigation.

Ultimately, the most significant limitation of the data is that it only reflects pregnancies within the Anglican Church. Records for other well established churches (e.g. the Dutch Reform Church) do exist but have yet to be transcribed. Data on these churches would allow for interesting comparisons. Intuitively it seems to make sense that the number of premarital pregnancies within the Dutch Reform Church would be lower than the number of premarital pregnancies in the Anglican Church. However, until this is properly measured it remains uncertain as to whether or not this was actually the case.

It is also worth noting that, while the premarital pregnancy ratio is unlikely to have remained static throughout the period under investigation the matched dataset is not a reliable indicator of change over time. Parishes enter and exit the sample at slightly different intervals, meaning that the composition of the matched dataset is not fixed. One way in which to overcome this is to separate the dataset into its constituent parishes and then to look for like trends over time (see appendix A). Unfortunately, such an exercise diminishes the number of observations available for analysis in each case and thus gives rise to a much higher degree of variability in the premarital pregnancy ratio. As a result, it is difficult to discern any clear trends in the data or to know whether these trends reliably reflect shifts in the way in which premarital pregnancy and single motherhood were viewed.

Nonetheless, it does seem that premarital pregnancy was at its highest during the 1925 to 1945 period, a pattern which would make sense within the context of the Depression and the Second World War – both events which increased the number of bridal pregnancies and illegitimate births occurring in other parts of the world.[307] The fact that generally the premarital pregnancy ratio declined between 1945 and 1960, before rising again during the 1970's and 1980's, is also consistent with the argument made by Pat Thane, amongst others, that the 1950's was a period of "unusual" conservativism, during which tolerance for premarital sexuality and alternative family formation was relatively low on all sides of socio-economic spectrum.[308]

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[307] P. Thane. *Happy Families: History and Family Policy*, pp. 13, 24.

[308] P. Thane. *Happy Families: History and Family Policy*, p. 7.

Premarital Pregnancy in Practice

In specific terms the above exercise yielded a dataset of 2308 couples, or 4616 individual persons, married in Cape Town and each matched to a specific baptismal record between 1900 and 1960. By comparing the date of marriage of each couple in the matched sample to the date of birth of the first child registered as being born of that marriage it is possible to split the dataset into three distinct subsets. The first subset pertains to couples who recognized a child born before their marriage, the second to couples who conceived their first child outside of wedlock but who were able to marry before the child's birth and the third to couples who both conceived and produced their first child within marriage. An interval of eight months is taken as the criterion for a bridal pregnancy as some children may have been born to wedded couples prematurely.[309] The results of such an analysis are summarised in the table below. [310]

	Premarital Birth	Premarital Conception	Post-marital Conception
Athlone	155 (15.7%)	379 (38.3%)	441(44.6%)
Mowbray	63 (13%)	145 (29.8%)	273 (56.2%)
Langa	19 (24.7%)	10 (13%)	43 (55.8%)
Maitland	56 (30%)	63 (33.7%)	66(35.3%)
Parow	16 (18.4%)	13 (14.9%)	55(63.2%)
Seapoint	9 (3.6%)	33 (13.1%)	209 (82.9%)
Kenilworth	1 (0.4%)	15(6.5%)	213(92.6%)
Total	**319 (13.8%)**	**658 (28.5%)**	**1300 (56.3%)**

Table 2.3: Pregnancy type by parish, measured in absolute numbers and as a proportion of total number of births in the matched dataset

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[309] This is in line with the interval used by J. Kok, H. Bras and P. Rotering.

[310] The percentages don't perfectly add up because a small number of observations are incomplete or missing data and so cannot be easily divided into one of the relevant subgroups.

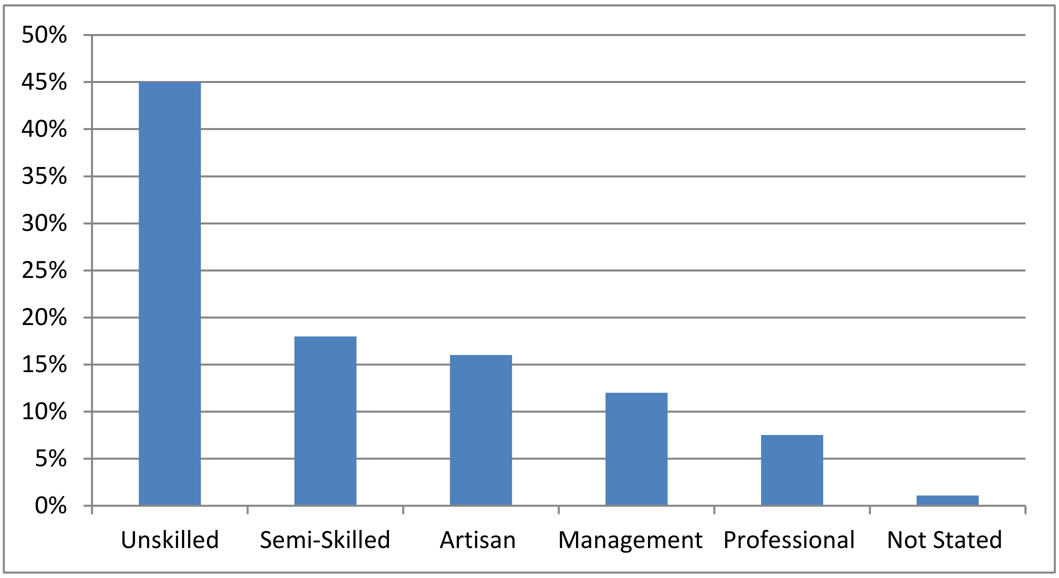

Figure 2.4: Distribution of the matched dataset by the profession of the primary breadwinner

Racially the above dataset is biased in favour of the coloured population with the result that it is also slightly skewed towards the less affluent side of the socio-economic spectrum (figure 2.2). Whites and coloureds made up roughly equal parts of the Anglican population for the majority of the period under investigation.[311] And yet, coloured individuals make up 71% of the sample both because of the functioning of the model and because the largest of the transcribed parishes, Athlone, served a predominantly coloured working-class area.

While there is no easy way to control for this discrepancy, it is possible to extrapolate what the above figures might look like were the population more accurately distributed by calculating the likelihood of premarital birth or conception for the different races and then normalising this over the Anglican population as a whole. This puts the bridal pregnancy ratio at just under 25%, whilst the proportion of premarital births relative to the overall number of matched births sits at 10%. These figures indicate that unmarried women accounted for a significant proportion of pregnant women in Cape Town, especially when they are considered in combination with the substantial number of women whose extramarital pregnancies *did not* end in marriage.

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[311] In 1936, for example, coloured membership of the Anglican Church was estimated at 60 086 while white membership was estimated was at 57 591. See the 1936 Union Census for more details or see the Bureau of Census and Statistics. *Union Statistics for Fifty Years Jubilee Issue: 1900-1910* (Pretoria: Government Printers, 1960), p. 12.

Statistics collected by the Cape Town Medical Officer of Health indicate that illegitimate births in Cape Town averaged 17.5% of the total registered births between 1896 and 1940.[312] This figure may be slightly inflated, particularly given the tendency of unwed mothers from rural areas to travel to the city in order to give birth, but the illegitimacy ratio varied substantially depending on where and how the data was being compiled. For example, between 1927 and 1939, 35% of births at the Peninsula Maternity Hospital in District Six were to single mothers.[313] During roughly the same period, just less than one in four of the baptisms transcribed for Maitland occurred in the absence of a clear father figure – a high proportion for a city in which conservative attitudes towards sexuality seem to have prevailed.

Furthermore, several factors suggest that this is only a lower bound estimate of the true proportion of men and women engaging in premarital sex in Cape Town during this time. As Jan van Bavel explains:

> It is common in quantitative historical research to use the incidence of extramarital pregnancy as an indicator for the sexual activity of unmarried people. Indeed, it is probably the best available indicator, but only the tip of the iceberg will be observed this way. We have to take into account that regular sexual intercourse yields a monthly probability of conception of between 15% and 50%.[314]

Although relatively crude by today's standards, contraceptive devices were increasing in availability and functioned as a further impediment to conception. For much of the period being investigated it was a criminal offence to advertise any "means, methods, medicines, drugs or appliances calculated to prevent or intended for the prevention of conception".[315] In 1917 the South African Government also briefly discussed passing legislation which would curb access to these devices but politicians and doctors were never able to agree on a process that would prevent birth control from being employed for immoral purposes whilst still making it available in medically legitimate cases (e.g. where women were too frail to bear another pregnancy).[316] Thus, while information regarding contraception was limited, diaphragms, cervical caps, soluble pessaries and rubber sponges were all legally accessible technologies which could be used to prevent pregnancy.[317]

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[312] Annual Reports of the Cape Town Medical Officer of Health, cited in S. Burman and M. Naude. "Bearing a Bastard", p.377.

[313] Where a mothers name was present but only a dot or question mark existed where the father's name should have been, it was assumed that the child was illegitimate. Married mothers were typically encouraged to name the father of their child even if he was absent. If he was deceased a mark to that effect was made on the record. These observations have been excluded.

[314] J. van Bavel. "Family Control, Bridal Pregnancy, and Illegitimacy", p. 454.

[315] B. Goddefroy. "Medical and Ethical Aspect of Abortion", *South African Medical Journal* , July 1932, p. 472.

It is also necessary to make allowance for brides whose premaritally conceived pregnancy was terminated in miscarriage or illegal abortion. The likelihood of a fertilized ovum surviving for a full nine months was lowest amongst the economic class with the highest concentration of premarital pregnancies, contributing to a downward bias in the data.[318] Although it is difficult to find direct evidence pertaining to abortion during the period under investigation, such information having often been limited to closed networks of nurses, midwives, pharmaceutical travellers and a small body of independent clients, court records indicate that a number of women at the Cape were able to make use of this option. Burman and Naude identify thirty-six individual cases of abortion or alleged abortion to reach the Cape Supreme Court between 1896 and 1940.[319] Despite the fact that procuring an abortion could cost upwards of £20 – a sum which would cost a white domestic servant several months' salary – it is likely that these cases provide only a glimpse into a far more widespread phenomenon. Indeed, as Helen Bradford's work on abortificants has shown, women were sometimes prepared to go to considerable lengths "in the search for elusive control over their fertility".[320]

Ultimately, these results raise a number of important questions regarding Cape society and the kind of attitudes, characteristics and patterns of behaviour that influenced ordinary individuals, allowing them to fall pregnant and still baptise their children within such a range of different circumstances. A brief inspection of the data with regard to birth intervals supports the hypothesis that Cape Anglican Society, with a particular emphasis on the coloured population, was relatively tolerant of premarital sex.

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[316] S. Klausen. *Race, Maternity, and the Politics of Birth Control*, p. 15.

[317] S. Klausen. *Race, Maternity, and the Politics of Birth Control*, p. 71.

[318] B. Reay. *Microhistories: Demography, Society, and Culture in Rural England, 1800- 1930 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996),* p. 181.

[319] S. Burman and M. Naude. "Bearing a Bastard", p.378.

[320] H. Bradford. "Herbs, Knives and Plastic", pp. 124-125.

A bimodal distribution like that illustrated in Figure 2.5 has also been seen by various scholars as a good indicator of a permissive society.[321] These scholars argue that in societies where premarital pregnancy was something to be hidden (e.g. the United States) or was used primarily as a means of fertility testing, most couples married as soon as they realised that they were pregnant, leading to a high concentration of births 6-8 months after marriage.[322] In communities such as Denmark and the Netherlands, and even in some parts of rural England, where premarital sexuality was less stigma-inducing, and where as a result "conception did not stampede couples into sudden marriages", the opposite trend was visible, with the majority of births occurring either 10 or 11 months after marriage or within 3 to 6 months of marriage.[323]

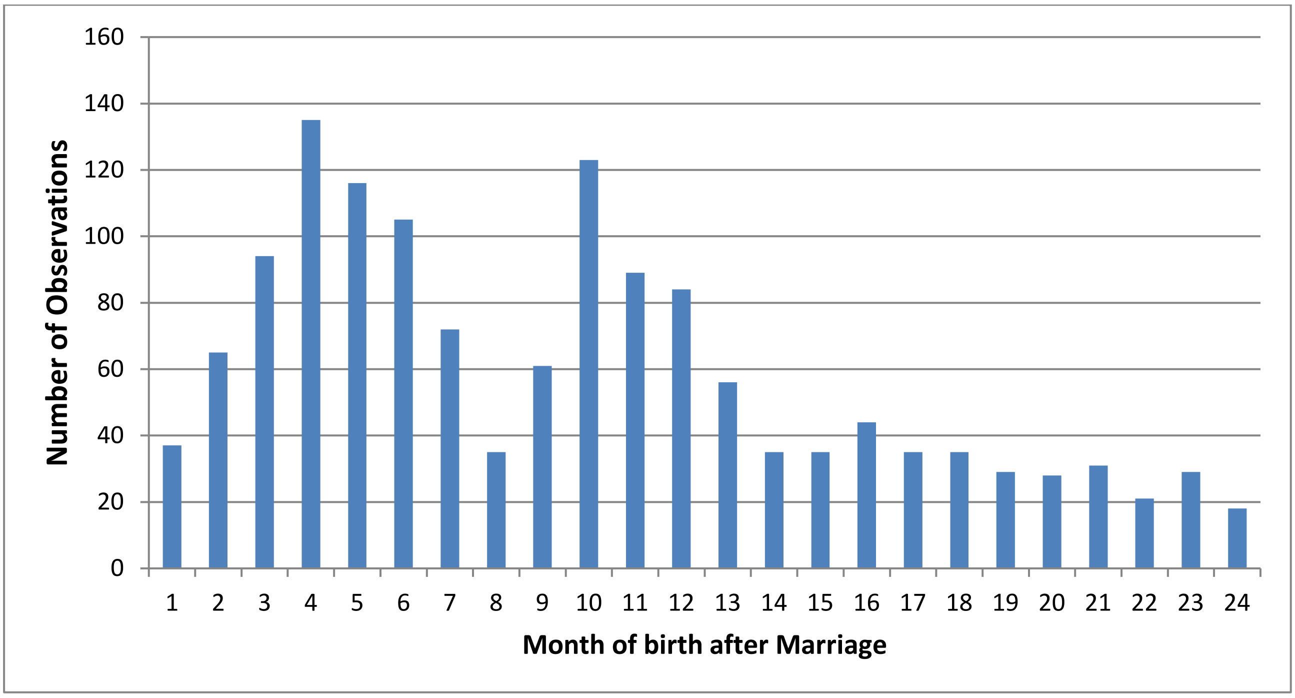

Figure 2.5: The absolute number of children born in the matched dataset by month after marriage for the first 24 months

Combined with the fact that such a significant proportion (13.8%) of couples married only after the birth of their first child, the above figure conforms to this distribution and gives legitimacy to the notion that in Cape Town couples were able to marry in their own time, using the principle of legitimation *per subsequens matrimonium* to enter into legal marriage only when they felt ready or had the financial agency with which to do so.[324]

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[321] H. Christensen. "Cultural Relativism and Premarital Sex Norms", *American Sociological Review*, 25 (1), 1960, pp. 31-39; G. Alter. *Family and the Female Life Course,* p. 132 and J. Kok, H. Bras and P. Rotering. "Courtship and Bridal Pregnancy", p. 172.

[322] H. Christensen. "Cultural Relativism and Premarital Sex Norms", pp. 35-36.

[323] J. Gillis. "Servants, Sexual Relations, and the Risks of Illegitimacy", p. 157.

The age difference between the various groups of brides is another common marker used to examine the extent to which premarital sexuality constituted part of 'mainstream' behaviour within a particular setting. Where this gap is small it is likely that pregnant and non-pregnant brides had relatively similar courtship trajectories, most pregnant brides having fallen pregnant within an age bracket where, like most of their peers, such women could shortly expect to marry or at least to enter into a stable relationship with a man.

Table 2.4 demonstrates that when brides in the sample become pregnant just prior to marriage, the difference in ages between non-pregnant and pregnant brides (as well as their grooms) was less than a year. Where a child was born very soon after marriage, however, this difference was much larger. Thus, the stage of the courtship process in which a woman fell pregnant affected age at marriage.

Considering that on average, coloured couples within the matched sample were more than 2 years younger than white couples at marriage, while working-class men got married between two and three years earlier than their white collar counterparts, it is also possible that much of the variation in age that exists between the three groups is a product of group composition rather than it is of pregnancy type. This hypothesis is tested in the following section. Male ages appear to have had no effect at all, where female ages had only a very marginal effect on the likelihood of a premarital pregnancy once controlling for race and class.

That for pregnant and non-pregnant brides marriages peaked between the ages of 21 and 23 years for women and 24 and 26 years for men, implies a relatively long period of self-restraint. It also gives the impression that sexuality in the time leading up to marriage was perhaps a more 'normal' behaviour than some narratives suggest, occurring in ways that made premarital pregnancy, if not indistinguishable from, then at least fairly similar to 'conventional' marriage, particularly when a child was born between six and eight months after a marriage.

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[324] J. Gillis. "Servants, Sexual Relations, and the Risks of Illegitimacy", p. 157.

Birth Status	Mean Female Age	Mean Male Age	Mean Age Difference
Premarital Birth	24.07	27.33	3.26
0-3 months after marriage	20.28	23.02	2.58
3-6 months after marriage	21. 44	24.08	2.60
6-8 months after marriage	22.06	25.55	3.42
Post-marital Birth	23.48	26.88	3.36

Table 2.4: Age at marriage by interval between marriage and the birth of the first child for the complete matched dataset

It is also important that, especially within the coloured population, the spousal age gap did not vary significantly between the different groups. Historians working with marriage data often use age at first marriage and the spousal age gap as an indicator of female agency, arguing that a low female age at first marriage and a large difference in age between husband and wife diminished a woman's power in deciding the terms of a union and her ability to exert influence within it.[325] A relatively stable spousal age gap and age at first marriage would thus seem to indicate that neither bridal pregnancy nor illegitimacy were, as some of the literature suggests, the result of older males taking advantage of much younger females.

Although the ages of the single mothers in the unmatched sample cannot be easily ascertained, it is probable that, of women who conceived outside-of-wedlock, the younger were more likely to marry than the older. Within an economic and social environment wherein the cost of becoming an unwed mother had to be weighed against the cost of remaining a spinster, as a woman grew older the pool of eligible men to which she was exposed diminished, as did her bargaining power within the marriage market. Having possibly engaged in a number of failed courtship relationships already, she was less able to use premarital intimacy as a symbol of her commitment, while at the same time being subjected to growing sexual demands in the light of previous liaisons.

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[325] For further information see S. Carmichael. "Marriage and power: Age at first marriage and spousal age gap in lesser developed countries", *The History of the Family*, 16 (4), 2011, pp. 416-432.

Assessing the Determinants of Premarital Pregnancy

In South Africa, as elsewhere, it is difficult to pin down exactly what motivated individuals to choose one avenue of family formation over another. Both the white and coloured communities claimed to "conform to the social ideals of European civilisation", with the Coloured Joint Council demanding that coloured men and women throughout the union be subject to the same marriage laws as "other communities whose methods of life, whose outlook on marriage and its consequences, individual or social, [are] derived from the long established and widely recognised principles of Roman Law". [326] At the same time, the state and the dominant bourgeoisie strove hard to ensure that respectability – an essential element of which was sexual restraint – became an important part of working class identity regardless of race.[327] And yet, premarital pregnancy remained prevalent, and this not merely amongst the city's "most wretched" or vulnerable.[328]

Using the data which has been compiled, a number of distinctive features may be identified, both of the circumstances in which premarital pregnancy occurred and of the ways in which ordinary individuals responded to such an event. In order to isolate these features, I rely mostly on simple descriptive techniques, but in tables 2.5, 2.6 and 2.7 a logistic regression is also used to untangle the effects of potentially confounding variables like race and class. In simple terms a logistic regression calculates the probability (p) of the dependent variable (in this instance: is a child conceived before marriage?) being a yes or no in terms of odds, or, in other words, the probability of a yes divided by the probability of a no (p/ 1-p) for a range of independent variables. The regression coefficients of the independent variables are the natural logarithms of the odds and by exponentiating them and looking at their direction, it is possible to tell what kind of relationship the different independent variables have to the dependent variable when still controlling for multiple other factors.

In all of the regression models profession has been used as a proxy for class and has been coded for males, as well as for the bread-winner only (i.e. the partner with the highest profession classification). This approach is necessary in that without disregarding female occupation entirely, it prevents the results from being skewed by the high proportion of women who left their occupation unstated. Parish fixed effects (group dummies) are also included as a way of controlling for the average differences across parishes in any observable *or unobservable* predictors, such as differences in demographic make-up, size, sophistication etc. Time fixed effects (year dummies) control for variation over the course investigation period. A standard linear regression model (OLS) is incorporated into tables 2.5, 2.6 and 2.7 as it provides interpretable coefficients which give some indication of the relative size of the different effects.

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[326] Wits Historical Papers Research Archive, AD843/ 52/3/6, "Memorandum of the Marriage Law as it affects the Cape Coloured Community", 1942.

[327] W. Dooling. "Poverty and Respectability", p. 411.

[328] E. van Heyningen. "The Social Evil", p. 171.

Tables 2.5 and 2.6 summarize models in which the dependant variable is an out-of-wedlock conception, meaning that a 1 has been assigned to those observations in which a child is born less than eight months (240 days) prior to his/her parents' marriage and a 0 assigned to observations for which the opposite is true. Observations for which the number days elapsed between marriage and the birth of a child isn't calculable have been excluded. Table 5 uses a stepwise approach to measure the relative importance of race, male class, breadwinner class, as well as age and literacy level in determining the likelihood of a premarital conception (illegitimacy and bridal pregnancy). Table 2.6 employs roughly the same approach but includes a number of slightly more complex variables (e.g. a difference in class between spouses). In order to check the robustness of what appears to be a significant class effect, a variable measuring whether or not a marriage included an anti-nuptial contract – a habit generally specific to the middle and upper classes – has been added to this table.

Table 2.7 summarizes a model in which the dependent variable is a Sunday baptism, meaning that a 1 has been assigned to those observations in which a child is baptized on a Sunday and a 0 assigned to observations for which the opposite is true. Two main independent variables are included in this model: race and out-of-wedlock conception. A third independent variable is added which measures the interaction between these two variables.[329]

As the figure below indicates, only a small proportion of the women who conceived outside of wedlock were not originally from Cape Town, suggesting that such pregnancies cannot be easily attributed to rural naivety or a lack of preparedness for the risks and opportunities of city life. There also does not seem to have been an unusually marked difference in class or rank between the two parties. Instead, challenging the narrative of the sophisticated seducer and his inexperienced prey, premaritally pregnant couples tended to be similar in background and social standing as well as age, although premaritally pregnant women did marry slightly younger than other brides (Table 2.6). The absence of such disparities within the dataset does not necessarily suggest that there were not premaritally pregnant couples between whom this kind of power-imbalance existed, but rather that these couples were unlikely to marry, the permanence of their relationship being threatened by the very dynamics which had created it.

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[329] Interaction occurs when the effect of one variable depends on the value of
another variable. Interaction effects are common in regression analysis. G. James, D. Witten, T. Hastie and R. Tibshirani. *An introduction to statistical learning : Vol 6* (New York: Springer, 2017), p.115.

Due to the high proportion of women who left their occupation unstated it is difficult to control for female class. It is thus not possible to tell whether female and male class affected courtship outcomes equally or whether male class is acting as a proxy for female class. Nonetheless, Table 2.5 does provide some indication of the disadvantages which lower and working-class males might have faced on the marriage market, both in their struggle to attract women of a higher class and in their frequently delayed efforts to accumulate the capital necessary to establish a home and take on various dependents.

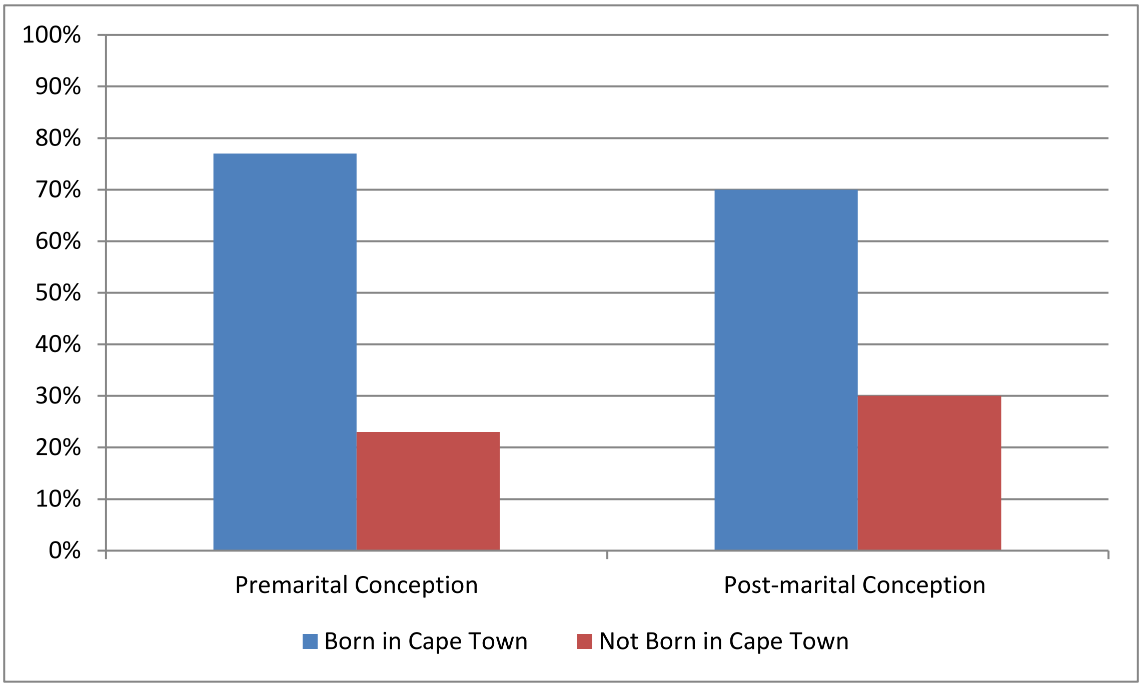

Figure 2.6: Conception type by female birthplace

The above observations are vital in that they help to mediate against an interpretation of premarital pregnancy which assumes an imbalance of power between men and women. "Country girls, humble in station, innocent in the ways of the world and seduced by predatory city men, socially their superiors – these are the images of fallen servants that embellished charity appeals and provided material for didactic novels" throughout Britain's industrial period, writes Gillis.[330] As chapter 1 illustrates, very similar views emerged in Cape Town during the first half of the twentieth century. Yet, the data tells a somewhat different story, providing further evidence of the extent to which descriptive and injunctive norms diverged. But if tensions between male and females are not what was primarily driving this phenomenon then how else ought historians to conceptualise it?

Over the past several decades a rich literature has developed outlining the social, demographic, and economic determinants of premarital childbearing.[331] Within this literature race, income level and education have all been identified as key factors in deciding whether or not a woman is likely to fall pregnant prior to marriage, although the relative impact of these determinants is still being debated and appears to have shifted depending on the social norms and structure of the society concerned.[332]

In the work that follows I explore three separate, although possibly overlapping, couple-level explanations for premarital pregnancy, looking at how these are reflected in the data. The first of these explanations is linked to race and to cultural differences in the way in which family systems operated, the second to harsh economic circumstances and the role that class played in informing courtship outcomes and the third to education and the impact of basic literacy on pregnancy type. These are by no means the only valid explanations for premarital pregnancy. However, these explanations provide a useful starting point in trying to assess what motivated premarital pregnancy, particularly within such a heterogeneous society.

Given a sample size of only 73 couples, it is difficult to draw any major conclusions regarding premarital pregnancy and its frequency amongst the African population. It is, however, immediately apparent from the data that the coloured population in Cape Town experienced significantly higher levels of premarital pregnancy than the white population, with premarital conceptions out-numbering marital conceptions within this population by a sizeable margin. Furthermore, Table 2.5 would *seem* to demonstrate that race was not, as some scholars have suggested, simply a proxy for other observables like class or education, as even when controlling for these variables coloured couples still had a greater chance of falling pregnant prior to getting married.[333] I problematize this statement later on this chapter.

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[330] J. Gillis. "Servants, Sexual Relations, and the Risks of Illegitimacy", p. 143.

[331] See K. Kim. "Trends and Determinants of Premarital Conception: Love in Korea", *The International Journal of Japanese Sociology*, 26 (1), 2017, pp.23-38 for a recent contribution to this literature.

[332] S. J. South. "Historical Changes and Life Course Variation in the Determinants of Premarital Childbearing", *Journal of Marriage and the Family,* 61 (3), 1999, p. 762.

	Dependent Variable: Out-of-wedlock Conception					
	Logistic		Logistic		OLS	
Coloured or African Race Couple	1.851	***	1.855	***	0.383	***
	(0.222)		(0.226)		(0.042)	
Male Working-class	0.985	***				
	(0.222)					
Breadwinner Working-class			0.869	***	0.134	***
			(0.201)		(0.035)	
Female Age			-0.038	**	-0.007	**
			(0.015)		(0.003)	
Male Age			-0.002		-0.001	
			(0.012)		(0.002)	
Female Signed			-0.246		-0.052	
			(0.187)		(0.039)	
Male Signed			0.263		0.056	
			(0.185)		(0.040)	
Constant	12.273		14.224		0.639	
	(882.744)		(1455.398)		(0.471)	
Year fixed effects	Yes		Yes		Yes	
Parish fixed effects	Yes		Yes		Yes	
Observations	1905		1928		1928	
Adjusted R^2					0.185	
Log Likelihood	-1086.529		-1084512			
Akaike Inf. Crit.	2309.057		2313.024			

Table 2.5: Logistic and Ordinary Least Squares Regression of the odds of a premarital conception at first marriage of matched Cape Town couples, with a first child baptized between 1900 and 1960.

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[333] The proportion of mixed race couples within the sample was negligible (N = 6) and so these observations were eliminated.

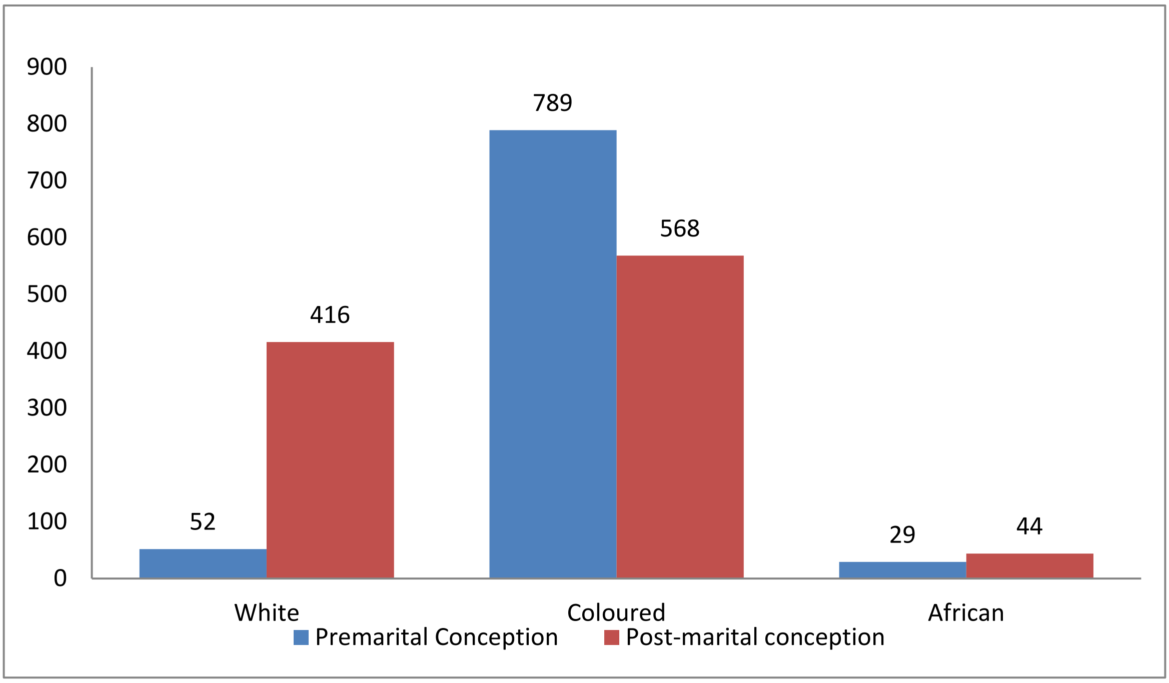

Figure 2.7: Conception type by couple's race in absolute numbers

Explanations for why race might have had a visible impact on courtship outcomes are multi-faceted and will require much further scholarly debate.[334] Much of the research surrounding sexual attitudes within the coloured community has tended to emphasise the "importance of the relatively recent attitudinal and material heritage of slavery".[335] Scholars from a range of different disciplines have pointed to the utility of adopting dual or even triangular family systems (i.e., a family system in which more than one type of socio-sexual union was allowed to predominate) within the post-emancipation period, drawing on different theories of kinship and group identity to explain the persistence of fluid family ties and the sexual leniency which accompanied such ties within the coloured community. British social anthropologist Sheila Patterson, for example, stresses the prevalence of the matricentral family type within this community. Writing in the 1950's Patterson was the product of a particular functionalist approach which saw the patriarchal nuclear family not only as morally superior to the extended or predominantly matricentral family type, but also as the most efficient unit for dealing with the challenges of modern society.[336] Nonetheless, Patterson's work provides a number of key insights into how coloured family life and structure differed from the ideal put forward by a white, increasingly suburban middle-class.

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[334] E. Griffin. "Sex, Illegitimacy and Social Change", p. 142.

[335] S. Burman and P. van der Spuy. "The Illegitimate and the Illegal", p. 615.

[336] D. Chambers. *A Sociology of Family Life: Change and Diversity in Intimate Relations* (Cambridge M.A.: Polity Press, 2012), p.22.

Until linked to census data, the parish registers cannot provide any information regarding the composition and family backgrounds of individual spouses. This prevents factors like father's occupation, the timing of father's or mother's death, the family size and sibling order from being tested against more general community attitudes and traits.

Although very difficult to prove unequivocally, it does appear that premarital pregnancy may have less stigma-inducing within the Anglican coloured community – a factor which might explain (and be explained by) the prevalence of premarital pregnancy within it.[337] I test this by comparing how premarital pregnancy affected baptism behaviour within the two communities. It makes sense that the larger the stigma attached to premarital pregnancy within a particular community, the less willing parents would be to baptize their premaritally conceived children on a Sunday – a day on which baptisms typically took place in full view of the congregation. Table 2.7 explores this hypothesis. It shows that amongst white families premaritally conceived children were less likely to be baptized on a Sunday but that this was not the case for coloured families. This result holds even if illegitimate births are excluded.

However, stigma alone does not explain why premarital pregnancy was so much less likely to occur within the white population.[338] So what prompted young adults within this population not to fall pregnant outside-of-wedlock? Superior access to birth control was probably an important contributing factor. Another possible explanation may lie in the aspirational costs associated with premarital pregnancy, particularly for white females.

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[337] Unfortunately, the parish registers also provide no way for researchers to distinguish between children born of consensual and non-consensual premarital sex despite the fact that exploitative relationships (i.e. rape or incest) may account for some of the observed births.

[338] This is obviously an imperfect assumption, although it does seem that If not sexual practice, then at least sexual desire has been largely constant over time and that rising illegitimacy is more closely tied to socio-economic changes than it is to moral or biological differences. E. Griffin. "Sex, Illegitimacy and Social Change", p. 141.

	Dependent Variable: Out-of-wedlock Conception			
	Logistic Full Sample	Logistic Full Sample	Logistic Excluding Unskilled	OLS Full Sample
Coloured or African Race Couple	1.864 ***	1.809 ***	1.782 ***	0.382 ***
	(0.225)	(0.280)	(0.329)	(0.042)
Breadwinner Working-class	0.874 ***	0.737 ***		0.135 ***
	(0.199)	(0.217)		(0.035)
Female Age		-0.091 ***	-0.118 ***	-0.007 **
		(0.024)	(0.032)	(0.003)
Male Age		0.012	-0.018	-0.001
		(0.019)	(0.026)	(0.002)
Class Difference			-0.622	
			(0.438)	
Antipuptial Contract			-0.977	
			(0.462)	
Constant	13.353	16.673	18.887	0.642
	(1455.398)	(3956.180)	(2788.317)	(0.467)
Time fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Parish fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	1933	1102	776	1928
Adjusted R^2				0.185
Log Likelihood	-1096.354	-537.278	-410.52	
Akaike Inf. Crit.	2328.709	1204.556	923.04	

Table 2.6: Logistic Regression of the odds of a premarital conception at first marriage of matched Cape Town couples, with a first child baptized between 1900 and 1960

During South Africa's industrial take-off, white South Africans experienced high levels of social mobility. For white males this mobility was mostly the product of intergenerational improvements in occupational attainment.[339] For white females marriage represented a more permanent avenue for upward mobility. Yet although 'marrying up' represented a real possibility in a society which remained male dominated and in which interracial marriages were becoming increasingly rare, such a possibility existed only for "the right sort of women".[340] Thus, while white women tended to slightly delay marriage, therein maximising their potential for an advantageous match, they had a strong incentive to avoid behaviours which would diminish their prospects on the marriage market (e.g. extramarital sex).[341] A white unmarried mother might have had greater access to material assistance in the short term but she was unlikely to become the respected wife of a civil servant or a well-to-do businessman.

Coloured women, by contrast, likely had far more limited aspirations – or at least recognised that a future of this kind was probably beyond their grasp. With segregation slowly replacing assimilation in liberal ideology and practice, opportunities for social and material advancement within the coloured community became increasingly slim, undermining the impetus to remain chaste. [342] This explanation, though, does exclude the calculations of lighter-skinned coloured women for whom marriage to a man socially recognised as `white' may have been a route to middle class status.

Ultimately, one ought to be extremely cautious of the conclusion that race was in any way a driver bridal pregnancy or illegitimacy. While the data allows profession to be held constant and comparisons made between different racial groups, it does not take into account the fact that as a result of policies of racial discrimination white artisans, for example, or white teachers, would have enjoyed significantly better incomes than their coloured counterparts, and that whites in general benefited from a far better education.

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[339] J. Cilliers and J. Fourie. "Occupational Mobility", p. 4.

[340] *Imperial Colonist*, (2) (4), April 1903 quoted in J. Bush. "'The Right Sort of Woman': Female emigrators and emigration to the British Empire, 1890-1910", *Women's History Review*, 3 (3), 1994, p. 395.

[341] For example, white women could make use of a larger range of adoption and fostering facilities S. Burman and M. Naude. "Bearing a Bastard", p.381.

[342] This was despite the continued existence of a non-racial franchise and the formal equality of all citizens before the law – both part of Cape Town's so-called "special tradition". V. Bickford-Smith. "South African Urban History, Racial Segregation and the Unique Case of Cape Town?", *Journal of South African Studies,* 21 (1), 1995, p. 68.

Furthermore, even if race did influence the belief systems and cultural practices of certain parts of the coloured community, the term "community" itself is problematic in that it suggests a level of social cohesion which is unlikely to have existed in reality. It may have been that a greater cosmopolitanism and tolerance of difference predominated in certain diverse, socially and economically complex, lower-income and largely coloured or mixed residential areas than in white middle-class suburbs. The record would seem to suggest that in areas like the multi-racial, multi-ethnic suburb of District Six even clergymen exhibited an unusual degree of tolerance – born from their experience of living within these suburbs, perhaps, or from their knowledge of the difficult economic and social realities which community members faced. In his autobiography *Writing Black*, Richard Rive describes how the women from a brothel close to where he grew up in District Six would all attend an Anglican Mass on Christmas Eve, and subsequently host a Christmas party at their house of ill-repute attended by the minister (albeit briefly) and much of the neighbourhood.[343] However, in slightly more affluent areas, or in rural villages and coloured mission settlements like Genadendal, attitudes were probably far less flexible. [344] Through a number of interaction model the data indicates, for example, that coloured couples living in suburbs like Kenilworth and Parow were less likely than their counterparts in Athlone and Mowbray to fall pregnant prior to marriage, thus complicating the idea of any kind of homogenous racial community.

In foregrounding race, it is also easy to overlook the extent to which pregnancy was also contingent on a variety of other interrelated factors like shifting class attitudes towards courtship, economic and educational opportunities, social cohesion, and the effects of poverty and urbanization on male-female relations within Cape Town. Amongst the elite and merchant classes premarital pregnancy was often "treated as an absolute family disaster", not least because bourgeoisie status and the accumulation of wealth across generations depended heavily on the issue of legitimate inheritance.[345] As a consequence thereof, women from affluent social backgrounds, whether white *or* coloured, were expected to engage in closely monitored and very public forms of courtship, the chaperone or female escort assuming a key function within this social stratum. Of course, with engagements becoming progressively longer and more ritualized as the century progressed, even this kind of heavily circumscribed social existence was not enough to entirely prevent such pregnancies from taking place. Indeed, a small number of pregnant brides in the matched sample occupied semi-professional positions in teaching and clerical work. But individuals from comparatively wealthy backgrounds, whether because they had preferential access to and knowledge of contraceptive methods or because they had greater incentives to remains chaste, do appear to have been less likely than their less affluent counterparts to experience bridal pregnancy or illegitimacy.

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[343] Richard Rive. *Writing Black* (Cape Town, 1981), pp. 3-6.

[344] In her work on mission stations and their operation during the mid-nineteenth century Pamela Scully found that a very strict sexual code was in place, a code which effectively limited coloured women's rights to their own bodies. The strictures of this code may have diminished somewhat by the early twentieth century but it makes sense that in such an environment sexual relations would still have been quite carefully regulated. P. Scully. "Rape, Race, and Colonial Culture", p. 345.

[345] A. G. Weiss. "The Cape Coloured Woman: within an Industrial Community and at Home" (M.Soc.Sc. Dissertation, University of Cape Town, 1950), pp. 44-45.

It is thus logical that within the Anglican community it was not just coloured couples, but working and lower class coloured couples, who were most likely to fall pregnant prior to marriage This is a finding which is confirmed by Table 2.5 which shows that, even when controlling for factors like race and age, working class couples or couples for whom the primary breadwinner earned a working class wage were still significantly more likely to experience an out-of-wedlock conception than those where the primary breadwinner occupied a white-collar position. The presence of an anti-nuptial contract (usually specific to upper-class couples) is added as a robustness check.

That said, premarital pregnancy in Anglican Cape Town was by no means a phenomenon which, as some of the narratives described in chapter 1 seem to imply, was unique to a poor few. In Column 4 of Table 2.5 a restricted sample was used which excluded the unskilled and lower-working class, and class still had a significant effect on premarital conception, while Figure 2.4 indicates that bridal pregnancy in particular was also relatively common within the 'respectable' working classes (e.g. the semi-skilled and artisan classes).

This kind of pregnancy reflected the ambivalent status of the individuals within this group and the complex combination of incentives to which they were subject. Youths from these communities were often less restricted in their courtship activities, spending a greater amount of time unsupervised with members of the opposite sex. Yet, family pressures and social integration were still such that should a pregnancy occur marriage was usually enforced.

	Dependent Variable: Sunday Baptism			
	Logistic Full Sample	Logistic Full Sample	Logistic Excluding Illegitimate Births	OLS Full Sample
Out-of-wedlock Conception	-1.564 ***	0.153	0.044	0.013
	(0.125)	(0.388)	(0.398)	(0.059)
Race		2.912 ***	3.029 ***	0.348 ***
		(0.319)	(0.354)	(0.040)
I(Out-of-wedlock Conception x Race)		-2.642 ***	-2.492 ***	-0.362 ***
		(0.430)	(0.445)	(0.063)
Constant	-17.315	-20.262	-2.617 ***	-0.53
	(625.627)	(2399.545)	(1.052)	(0.406)
Year fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Month fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Parish fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	2290	1930	1642	1930
Adjusted R2				0.237
Log Likelihood	-1070.801	-832.369	-685.284	
Akaike Inf. Crit.	2313.602	1824.737	1514.568	

Table 2.7: Logistic Regression of the odds of a Sunday baptism of matched Cape Town couples, with a first child baptized between 1900 and 1960

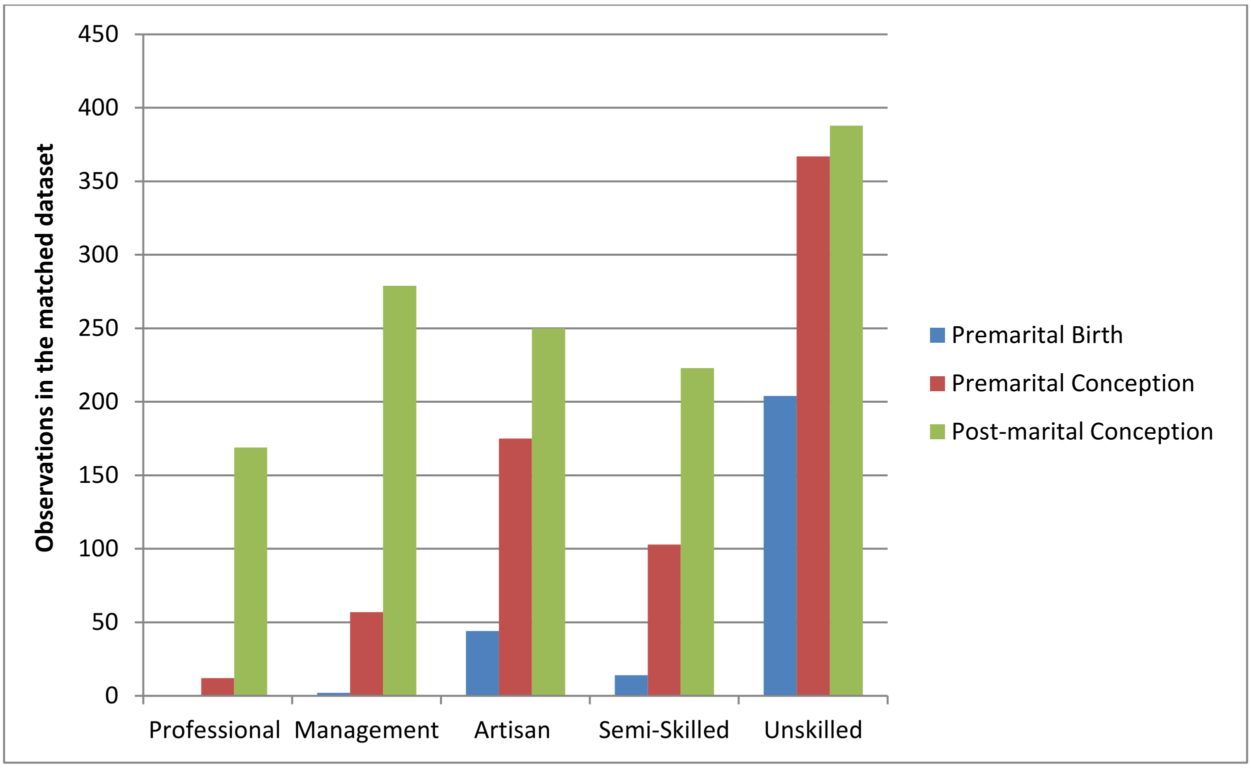

Figure 2.8: Pregnancy type by profession of primary breadwinner in absolute numbers

The situation in which such youths found themselves is best described by Anna Weiss in her work on coloured factory workers in the late 1940's. She writes that where:

> [Amongst the upper-working classes] it will hardly ever happen that a girl falls pregnant without being married. I only know of one case in three years. This was treated as an absolute disaster. The parents of the girl were in despair. The father threw the girl out of his house and a married sister had to come to her rescue. The girl got married four months before her baby was born. But only when her child was one year old, and the couple had proven their worth was a family reunion affected. [In the case of middle-working class family] pregnancies of unmarried girls will happen more often but the reaction of the parents will not be quite so drastic. The girl will most probably get a hiding, the man will be made to marry her. Once they are married the incident will be forgotten.[346]

Importantly, what seems to be being explained here is not a collapse of social control over the working class youth but rather a process of value stretching in which working class groups subscribed to middle class values when and if circumstances allowed, but also developed their own alternative values. These values enabled them to uphold the mantle of respectability whilst acting in ways which accommodated their practical needs. In a society where working-class youths were often regarded as an important source of additional income for their families and were expected to have the resources necessary to set up a home prior to formal cohabitation, there were genuine restrictions to marriage.[347] That such pregnancies did end in marriage attests, if not to the centrality of marriage within this social stratum, then at least to its long-term desirability, with Weiss's explanation highlighting the ongoing role that the family played in mediating working class courtship relations.

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[346] A. G. Weiss. "The Cape Coloured Woman", pp. 44, 45.

Finally, Table 2.5 shows that female and male literacy did not affect pregnancy type independently of class and race, suggesting that the lack of a basic education is not what was driving conception outside of wedlock. But it would be incorrect to disregard education entirely. Literacy only measures a very simple level of educational attainment, failing to account for differences between primary and secondary education or between formal and informal schools attendance (e.g. home schooling). Szreter and Fisher maintain that in Britain differences between the classes in the typical strategies used to help daughters preserve their innocence were closely tied to "divergent educational provision in this period, with only middle-class girls benefiting from the secondary education which was necessary to make sense of the birth control and sex manuals available, which were deliberately written in a dry scientific manner".[348] It is very possible that a similar dynamic may have existed in South Africa.

Conclusion

Although it is now widely accepted that "the language and the content" of the diagnoses levelled against unmarried mothers throughout the first half of the twentieth century were the product of a particular moral, religious and political agenda, the notion that premarital pregnancy was something which, prior to the sexual revolution, existed outside of and "interrupted the functioning of ordinary social [and courtship] processes" remains fairly widespread.[349] Partly this is because of the difficulties that historians have faced in quantifying the precise number of children conceived outside of wedlock, and hence, in gaining an accurate picture of the true extent of premarital sexuality during this period. This chapter has attempted to expand contemporary knowledge of family formation within Anglican Cape Town by quantifying premarital pregnancy and examining what specific attributes characterised the – apparently quite common – phenomenon of premarital sexuality which could result in bridal pregnancy or illegitimacy.

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[347] M. Paulse. "An Oral History of Tramway Road and Ilford Street, Sea Point", pp. 80-82. Paulse explains that for residents in her sample marriage during their early 20s permitted young adults to contribute economically to their parental households for a certain period of their adult lives before setting up their own independent households.

[348] S. Szreter and K. Fisher. "Sex before the Sexual Revolution", History and Policy. Available at http://www.historyandpolicy.org/historians-books/books/sex-before-the-sexual-revolution (15th May 2019).

[349] P. Laslett, K. Oosterveen and R. M. Smith (eds.) *Bastardy and Its Comparative History*, p. 1.

Where the public narratives and debates surrounding illicit sexuality in early-mid twentieth century Cape Town outlined in Chapter 1 tended to view premarital pregnancy as a the product of poor genes, social alienation and misguided personal views, contemporary scholarship on the topic has stressed the extent to which premarital pregnancy was related to risk-taking and bargaining within the marriage market. This emphasis is born out in my analysis, which suggests that all three outcomes – illegitimacy, bridal pregnancy and legitimate conception – were part of a similar pattern, with a range of often intersecting social, economic and educational pathways leading to each.

As a result, the similarities as well as the differences between the groups are striking. They tended to be of similar ages: pregnant brides and their grooms were younger, while couples marrying after the birth of their first child were slightly older. On average though marriage appears have taken place between the ages of 20-24 years for women and 23-27 years for men, peaking at similar times, whether or not an illicit pregnancy had occurred. Perhaps unsurprisingly, premarital pregnancy appears to have been concentrated within specific largely coloured (or mixed) working class residential areas. This is *not* to say that there was ever a direct causal relationship between race and out-of-wedlock conception, or that any of the above indicators acted as simple pre-determinants of an individual's sexual attitudes and behaviours. The subsequent chapter highlights just how complex and varied the motivations of women in these circumstances often were.

However, these findings do highlight the important role that individual and community level factors played in courtship negotiations during this period, whilst at the same time challenging the dominant tendency to portray premarital pregnancy, and premarital sexuality generally, as something which only befell a small group of 'bastardy-prone' women on the fringes of conventional society and which was necessarily exploitative. At the same time, the fact that bridal pregnancy was still far more prevalent than illegitimacy does suggest that where possible marriage was something to which both white and coloured women within the

Anglican Church aspired. Premarital pregnancy within this context should thus be seen, not as a reflection of a total collapse of social control, but rather as an indicator of the complexity of Anglican coloured and working-class attitudes towards premarital sexuality.

3. "Wandering Girls": Unmarried Motherhood in the Anglican Maternity Home

Introduction

Much of the focus of this thesis has been on general trends in the attitudes and behaviours surrounding premarital pregnancy in early-mid 20th century Cape Town. While important from an analytical standpoint, such an approach can make it difficult to articulate the true complexity of unmarried mothers' lives. This chapter aims to address this deficiency, complementing the information already gleaned with insights from over 500 individual case reports taken from the Mary Rolt Hostel and St Monica's Home, institutions which catered to white and coloured women respectively. Compiled primarily for administrative purposes by the hostel matrons, these reports present an unusually detailed picture of the varied circumstances of women entering these institutions and of the different trajectories that their lives followed post admission. Despite attempts to "follow up each girl [and] verify her story", the staff within these hostels depended heavily on unmarried mothers themselves for the information which they noted.[350] Therefore, although still ultimately subject to the individual and institutional biases of the author, these records were often the product of an on-going dialogue between the unmarried mother and the hostel staff.[351] Repeating, sometimes verbatim, the responses of these women and their families to the fact of premarital pregnancy, they provide a rare window into the feelings and experiences of those at the heart of this phenomenon. Using these records, I hope to show that unmarried women were not as they were often portrayed – as innocent victims, sex delinquents or poorly-adjusted neurotics – but rather ordinary women acting within the context of a dynamic courtship system within which the meaning and content of respectability differed on the basis of class and circumstance.

Although they operated differently, St Monica's Home placing slightly less emphasis on rehabilitation than the Mary Rolt Hostel for practical as well as ideological reasons, both were institutions which ultimately sought to lessen the number of unwed mothers 'wandering about', seeking help within the Muslim community, or entering prostitution in order to support themselves. St Monica's and the Mary Rolt Hostel believed that the unwed mother was becoming "more and more common", and given the extent of overcrowding within them, it is not hard to see why.[352] Despite frequent efforts to expand their in-patient wards, by the late 1930's the two institutions regularly had to refuse cases through a lack of space.[353]

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[350] Cape Archives, AB2182/27, MRH Annual Report 1921.

[351] Hostel staff often referred to unmarried mothers as girls regardless of their age, a habit that reinforced the unequal power dynamics which already existed in these spaces. Unless quoting, I use the phrase "young women" in place of "girls". I also use the term "residents" instead of "inmates", which has a much more negative connotation and is most often associated with mentally ill or behaviourally deviant persons (e.g. criminals).

While high throughout the first half of the twentieth century, the illegitimacy ratio (expressed as the percentage of illegitimate births per total births) in Cape Town peaked at between 18 and 20% during the 1910-1930 period.[354] At roughly the same time, the Argus reported that Cape Town's female population was becoming more "hospital-minded", meaning that an increasing number of women were choosing to give birth in a maternity ward rather than in a private home.[355] As a result of these factors, as well as of the growing publicity of maternity homes, institutions like St Monica's Home and the Mary Rolt Hostel saw their populations swell.

Yet, even as the number of women entering these institutions increased, they seldom fitted the image being portrayed, albeit in different ways, by the press, state and church officials, social workers, doctors and even the hostels themselves. A central strand of the various narratives described in Chapter 1 was the view that illegitimacy, when it did occur, was something that existed far outside of the sphere of ordinary social and romantic contacts. The unmarried mother, in other words, would and never could be part of the marriage system and the conventional gender hierarchy with which it intertwined. She was an aberration, or in less obviously disparaging terms, a walking contradiction who had contravened the normal organisation of courtship. The evidence presented in Chapter 2 complicates this characterization by suggesting that sexual activity in advance of marriage was, in fact, relatively widespread, with between a quarter and a third of all brides within Anglican Cape Town walking down the aisle pregnant. It also emphasises the influence that individual and community level factors such as class, race and age had on courtship negotiations during this period. Chapter 3 takes this argument one step further by acknowledging the role that single mothers played as historical agents, capable of shaping their own lives and courtship experiences in small but relevant ways. It also deals specifically with some of those aspects of single motherhood which serve either to confirm or contradict the narratives regarding premarital pregnancy and family formation discussed in chapter 1.

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[352] Wits Historical Papers Archive, AB2029 Aa4, Minute Book 1933-1937.

[353] K. Edin & M. Kefalas. *Promises I Can Keep: Why Poor Women Put Motherhood before Marriage* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), p.3.

[354] Annual Reports of the Cape Town Medical Officer of Health as summarised in S. Burman & M. Naude. "Bearing a Bastard", p. 377.

[355] Wits Historical Papers Archive, AB2029 Aa7, Minutes May 1945 - Oct 1938.

No systematic history of the two hostels from which the cases in this study derive has yet been undertaken, and this work does not propose to provide such an analysis, but an explanation regarding their founding and basic organization is included at the beginning of the chapter. Chapter 3 then moves to analyse who it was that turned to these institutions and why. The relationship between hostel staff and residents, as well as the strategies that residents employed to retain a degree of independence during their stay, are also examined. The chapter concludes by exploring the trajectories which residents' lives followed once they left the hostel.

The Mary Rolt Hostel

In December 1920 a group of over fifty predominantly English speaking middle and upper class white women met at the YMCA rooms in Long Street, Central Cape Town to discuss the plight of white unmarried mothers and their children.[356] Spurred on by a recent Child Life Protection Society report stating that within a six month period forty-two white females had come forward to enquire about the availability of foster parents for their children, a committee was soon set up to determine the feasibility of establishing a hostel for white unmarried mothers.[357] Foster care was viewed by upper and middle class Cape Society as a poor substitute for maternal care for both practical and moral reasons. Still unclear regarding the precise causes of infant death, much of Cape Society thought it physically harmful for babies to be separated from their mothers at a very young age.[358] It was also assumed, particularly within upper-class philanthropic circles, that there was considerable "moral danger" in making life too easy for unmarried mothers by allowing them to avoid their maternal responsibilities.[359] The proposed hostel would address these problems by providing food and accommodation for unmarried mothers and by helping them to become accustomed to their new role.

Through the work of the committee appeals were made and subscriptions collected in order to raise the £2000 necessary to purchase a property large enough to house several expectant mothers and a small staff. The available funds were then used to purchase 3 Station Road, Mowbray and the property was officially occupied in September 1922. Founding members of the hostel included women from some of Cape Town's most prestigious families, including Lady Rose Innes, Mrs. J. Smuts, Lady Lukin, Lady Stanley, as well as the Mayoress of Cape Town. Mary Rolt, the wife of the Anglican Dean of Cape Town, acted as the hostel's official chairperson.[360] One of the first of its kind in Cape Town, the hostel was organized to mirror a number of equivalent institutions in Britain. A constitution and a series of by-laws governed its functions, the majority of which were carried out by separate welfare and house committees.[361] Middle class women with prior experience in charity work tended to dominate both committees, the members of which were elected by subscribers and donors at the hostel's annual general meeting.[362] But in keeping with the sexual division of labour characteristic of this period, an all-male advisory committee was also established to manage major business transactions.[363] The hostel staff comprised a housekeeper, a lady-superintendent (matron) and one or two full-time nursing assistants, many of whom formed part of an already established network of English Rescue workers.[364] Finally, while hostel residents were typically transported to a nearby hospital in order to give birth, the hostel appointed an honorary medical adviser who could be called on to deal with any mid-pregnancy complications.[365]

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[356] Cape Archives, AB2182/ 1, MRH Minute Book December, 1920.
[357] Cape Archives, AB2182/14 General Correspondence, 1921.
[358] Cape Archives, A2182/53 Leaflets.
[359] Cape Archives, A2182/27, MRH Annual Report 1922.

That the hostel was established to *contain* long held fears regarding class, race, gender, and the family is reflected in the aims and methods which it laid out.[366] Convinced that a strong maternal bond was one of the best ways of guaranteeing that unmarried mothers would conduct themselves responsibly in future, the hostel placed significant emphasis on teaching its residents how to "to care for and maintain their child[ren]".[367] Religion and domestic work also formed key components of the hostel's redemptive program.

The hostel opened its doors to women of every Christian denomination, and despite strong anti-Semitic sentiment following the arrival of a large contingent of "poor and alien" Eastern

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[360] Cape Archives, A2182/27, MRH Annual Report 1922.
[361] Cape Archives, A2182/27, MHR Minute Book, November 1922.
[362] Cape Archives, A2182/48, MRH Trust Deed 1922.
[363] Cape Archives, A2182/27, MRH Annual Report June 1922.
[364] Cape Archives, A2182/27, MRH Annual Report May 1925.
[365] Cape Archives, A2182/27, MRH Annual Report May 1926.
[366] R. Kinzul. *Fallen Women, Problem Girls, Unmarried Mothers and the Professionalization of Social Work 1890-1945 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993),* p. 36.
[367] Cape Archives, A2182/27, MRH Annual Report May 1926.

European immigrants to Cape Town in the early 1900's, did agree to admit the occasional pregnant Jewish woman.[368] That said, most of the hostel staff belonged to the Anglican Church and although the percentage of Anglican residents declined over the years relative to the percentage of Dutch Reformed, Roman Catholic and Presbyterian residents, the tone within the hostel was still heavily influenced by Anglican doctrine.[369] Hostel workers tended to measure their own success by the rate of religious conversion confessed by the unmarried mothers under their care. A concerted effort was also made by the staff to have each new-born baptized and some mothers chose to baptize their children immediately in the hostel Chapel, where the residents attended regular morning and evening prayer meetings.[370]

When they were not engaged in religious pursuits, hostel residents were expected to be working. The hostel sought, as its duty, to equip expectant mothers with the skills necessary to provide for themselves and their offspring once they exited the hostel. To this end, residents were required to do all the domestic work at the hostel including the laundry and to take orders for sewing and knitting in their spare time. Domestic pursuits like cooking, cleaning and laundering were favoured by the hostel over café and factory work for a variety of reasons. Some studies now show that domestic servants were, in fact, disproportionately represented among populations of unmarried mothers. Live-in female servants were often vulnerable not so much due to predation but because they had to keep their affairs secret and so lacked the (peer) social control mechanisms available to other women. At the time, though, domestic service was still considered to be the safest and most gender appropriate form of employment for unmarried girls.[371] As one of the hostel's annual reports explained:

> The aim of this [h]ostel is to give girls what had been lacking in their homes, to build up their Faith [and] to train them to be good mothers and capable housewives […]. Under these conditions domestic service with a sympathetic mistress appears to be the best form of employment for our girls.[372]

The households in which domestic servants worked were seen as providing working class women with a healthy example of middle class home life, whilst also ensuring that their movement and behaviour were constantly monitored.

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[368] E. van Heyningen. Poverty, Self-Help and Community, p. 137.

[369] Cape Archives, A2182/27, Annual Report May 1941.

[370] Cape Archives, AB2182/25, Case Book, May 1927 - May 1932.

[371] For a summary of this literature see J. Gillis. "Servants, Sexual Relations, and the Risks of Illegitimacy", pp. 144-145. M. Fahrni has also discussed these dynamics in "'Ruffled' Mistresses and 'Discontented' Maids: Respectability and the Case of Domestic Service, 1880-1914", *Labour/ Le Travail,* (39), 1997, pp. 69-97.

[372] Cape Archives, A2182/27, MRH Annual Report May 1938.

Particularly in the early years, the hostel staff made sure to keep a close eye on the individuals entering and exiting the premises, monitoring all communication between women within the hostel and the outside world. Visitors were generally permitted only during specified visiting hours and the hosting of non-relatives was discouraged. A chaperone was usually appointed when the girls wished to leave the hostel grounds. The unmarried mothers were also required to leave any letters they had written, unsealed on the matrons desk so that she might censor any content which she considered inappropriate.[373]

The committee was also extremely strict about not allowing back those who had defied the hostel rules or who were judged to have given in to "old temptations".[374] No girl who had been in the hostel before was "in the event of another fall, ever [to be] taken in again, nor [was] she [to be allowed] to visit" the other residents.[375] The reason for this was simple. Such women could no longer claim the immaturity and inexperience required to make them true 'victims' and thus did not deserve the support offered by the hostel.

There does appear to have been a real desire amongst many young mothers and their families for anonymity. Therefore, the personal histories of the women were kept private, usually being known only to the Matron and relevant hospital authorities.[376] But whilst respecting their wishes in this matter, the hostel staff was wary of allowing the hostel residents to entirely escape the censure which their position warranted. It was clearly communicated to those who were allowed to stay that they had transgressed the bounds of acceptable feminine behaviour and that it was only through the correct combination of contrition and care for their child that they could regain a foothold in conventional society. Women who wished to enter the hostel only briefly before giving their child up for adoption and returning as soon as possible to their previous lives, were turned away, it being made clear to them that such an outcome "was contrary to the constitution of the hostel".[377]

Equally contrary to the constitution of the hostel was the acceptance of any women designated as 'non-white'. The precise reasoning behind this rule was never clearly laid out but was in line with the belief that the colour of their skin made such women less capable of reform and that as a result they required alternative kinds of assistance from the state and civil society. There were some light skinned coloured women who managed to gain entry, as with the case of Martha, who was moved from the hostel days after admission when "it was found that [she] was coloured", speaking to the porousness of race, particularly in the era preceding the passing of the Population Registration Act.[378] This case also reflects the extent to which race, class and education were bound up in the minds of the white middle class. Despite the fact that neither of these traits was specific to the coloured population, it was decided that Martha was coloured partly because, in the words of the matron, "the girl cannot read or write, not even her name" and appeared to have had limited social training.[379] However, by and large, even relatively affluent coloured and African women were expected to use different facilities to their white counterparts. St. Monica's Home was one such facility.

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[373] Cape Archives, A2182/25, Minute Book, November 1935-February 1940.

[374] Cape Archives, A2182/27, MRH Annual Report May 1928.

[375] Cape Archives, A2182/27, MRH Annual Report May 1926.

[376] Only first names are used to protect the identity of the women whose stories are explored in the subsequent analysis.

[377]Cape Archives, AB2182/ 3 Minute Book 1935-1940; Cape Archives, A2182/14 General Correspondence, 1955.

St. Monica's Home

In 1917, three years prior to the opening of the Mary Rolt Hostel, a group of Anglican sisters set up South Africa's first training school for coloured midwives at 182 Bree Street. Attached to the training school was a thriving district practice. Out-patients from a range of different localities, including Salt River, Observatory, Mowbray, Maitland and Athlone were attended to.[380] Where necessary, in-patients were housed in the home's maternity ward – one of the few in Cape Town to accommodate non-European women and to accept all prospective mothers, married or unmarried.[381] Unlike the Mary Rolt Hostel, St. Monica's was also willing to accept women giving birth to a second illegitimate child.

The home typically had a permanent staff of six consisting of a Hon. Medical Officer, a Matron, a Ward Sister, a District Sister and two Staff Nurses. Because of the medical nature of the establishment, senior posts were reserved for individuals with significant prior experience and training. Initially this meant relying on recruits from Britain, although this changed as the nursing profession became more established in South Africa and more women sat the Colonial Medical Council exams. A pioneer in the prevention of maternal and infant mortality within the coloured community, St Monica's Home opened Cape Town's first free antenatal clinic in 1919.[382] Although this is not explicitly stated in St. Monica's records, the end of the First World War and the Spanish Influenza epidemic of 1918 probably played a part in motivating the establishment of this clinic, which aimed to limit the incidence of toxaemia and other child-birth related diseases amongst Cape Town's working class population. The home would also later open an infant welfare clinic where first-time mothers could bring their new-borns for weekly check-ups.[383]

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[378] The Population Registration Act, passed in 1950, required that all South African inhabitants be classified and registered in accordance with his or her racial characteristics as part of the system of apartheid.

[379] Cape Archives, AB2182/25, Case Book, May 1927 - May 1932.

[380] Wits Historical Papers Archive, AB2029 Ba, Annual Report 1929.

[381] Wits Historical Papers Archive, AB2029 Aa7.

Like the Mary Rolt Hostel, St Monica's was largely dependent on grants from the Community Chest and private donations to fund the Home's upkeep. Street collections were held regularly, while letters of appeal were published in the *Cape Times* and displayed on tram indicators free of charge.[384] Even so, it was not unusual for the home to be short of money and the conditions under which the staff was forced to operate were, at best, rudimentary. By 1950 the original building had deteriorated to such extent that efforts were made to acquire new premises. An article in the *South African Medical Journal* plainly describes the dire state into which the old premises had fallen:

> The accommodation was inadequate and unsuitable. The roof leaked, the walls were damp and the place was rat-infested. The so-called nursery measured 12 x 13 ft., and was a glorified passage between a small room where patients' meals were served and waiting mothers were bathed, and a corridor leading to the ward […]. In winter the temperature was freezing and in summer it often rose to 90°F or more. Normally it contained about 14 cots placed touching each other in two rows. At times, however, as many as 26 infants were housed here and on these occasions baskets were placed on the floor under the cots.[385]

That St. Monica's had been allowed to become so dilapidated, despite a nine year campaign to raise the funds for a new building, was considered to be a "public scandal" by Bishop Lavis and other prominent social commentators.[386] Yet, even at its most cramped and poorly equipped, St. Monica's was still a far better option than some of the unsanitary dwelling places of the city's poorest inhabitants.

During the 1920's and 1930's Cape Town underwent a severe housing crisis, as a result of which many families were forced to share a room in the already overcrowded heart of the city or to construct temporary shelters made from stone, old iron and sacking beyond the city limits.[387] Aware of the dangers that life in these "rough shanties" and slums posed to the health of both mother and baby, St Monica's midwives made it part of their mission to educate and provide material assistance to expectant mothers within these areas.[388] Between 1917 and 1949 of the 14,097 women assisted by St. Monica's midwives just over a third were attended to in their homes.[389] Despite extensive experience, the midwives continued to be dismayed by the degree of squalor and deprivation which they encountered. It was not uncommon for a woman to be found lying on the bare ground, giving birth in full view of her neighbours, nor was it unusual for a newborn baby to be clothed using only scraps of newspaper.[390]

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[382] Wits Historical Papers Archive, AB2029 Ba, Annual Report 1929.

[383] Wits Historical Papers Archive, AB2029 Ba, Annual Report 1934

[384] Wits Historical Papers Archive, AB2029 Ba, Annual Report 1925.

[385] E. Barrow. "An Analysis of 1617 Consecutive Births at St. Monica's Home, Cape Town", *South African Medical Journal*, 26 (19), 1951, p. 329.

[386] Wits Historical Papers Archive, AB2029 F1, Article clipping: "Bishop's Appeal for St. Monica's Rebuilding Fund", *Cape Times,* 1945.

Wayne Dooling has described the process whereby absentee landlords in District Six and the City Bowl increased their profits by squeezing more and more people into poorly maintained properties with limited facilities.[391] He argues that, during the 1920's, Cape Town's city councillors, often landlords themselves, were slow to address the problem of overcrowding within the city centre but that by the 1930's such a project had become unavoidable. However, even as slum clearances proceeded apace, "housing schemes for the poor remained 'a matter of paper and not of fact'".[392] The result was even greater overcrowding.

Reports from St Monica's contain vivid illustrations of the circumstances in which many of the Home's coloured and African patients lived. That housing conditions were appalling, particularly in District Six, was repeatedly emphasised, with a typical district room being described thus:

> Size about 4 ½ ft., x 14ft. A low sloping roof, 6ft., to 8ft. high, in bad condition with many leakages. Plaster walls in bad state of repair, and not weatherproof. Flooring so rotten as to be unsafe in many places. The shutter, which partly covered the aperture where a window should have been, was part of an old stable door and quite inadequate to serve the purpose intended. The room was lighted usually by one small fixed window, 2ft., by 2ft.[393]

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[387] W. Dooling. "Poverty and Respectability", pp. 415-416. For more information regarding this crisis see W. Dooling. "'Cape Town knows, but she forgets': segregation and the making of a housing crisis during the first half of the twentieth century", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 44 (6), 2018 , pp. 1057-1076.

[388] Wits Historical Papers Archive, AB2029 Aa7, St Monica's Home Minutes 1945-1948.

[389] Wits Historical Papers Archive, AB2029 Ba, Annual Report 1949.

[390] Wits Historical Papers Archive, AB2029 Ba, Annual Report 1926, 1932, 1937, 1944.

[391] A 1933 housing survey found that in some wards a dedicated bathroom existed in only 4% of households Cape Archives, 3/CT 4/1/5/576, Evidence of Dr. Higgins, April 1934.

[392] W. Dooling. "Cape Town knows, but she forgets", p. 1073.

[393] Wits Historical Papers Archive, AB2029 B3, Annual Report 1927.

Although the committee was careful enough not to assign any blame, the home's 1944 report confirms Dooling's argument that, at least initially, municipal action did little to alleviate the housing crisis. The report clearly stated that housing conditions in the slums were worse than ever and that "with so many houses being demolished" and nothing affordable being built in their stead, people continued to live "in tiny lofts under staircases, or in any filthy hole where their mattress will fit". [394] That same year St Monica's took the difficult decision to black list certain dwellings that were felt too dangerous for midwives to go into, even in response to emergency calls.[395]

That said, the relationship between the St. Monica's staff and the communities which they served was generally positive. With the midwives doing as much as they could to provide expectant mothers with physical and emotional support, maternal deaths were few amongst their patients and the fact that they were willing to assist expectant mothers in their own homes free of charge endeared them to even the most reluctant of families.[396] In one of the home's reports it was recounted how without anywhere "to go except the shared room in which [a] case was in progress", two of the men responsible for fetching the midwife sat outside the door and played their ukuleles, soothing both midwife and expectant mother.[397] In another touching anecdote a staff nurse described how, having answered an urgent call in the early hours of the morning from a patient living in a shack at the top of Signal Hill, she and a fellow nurse lit a fire and tidied the shack, leaving the mother "bright and happy" and full of gratitude.[398]

However, concern for the plight of young mothers within these communities was not St. Monica's only motivation for fostering such congenial relationships. As already noted, St Monica's formed part of a larger mission network, the aim of which was to prevent an "increasing section of [Cape Town's] working class population" from becoming "Mohammedan at heart".[399] To quote Archdeacon Lavis, founder of St. Monica's Home and Chairman of its committee:

> St. Monica's is a very real part of the Mohammedan Mission Work in the Cape, particularly [as regards] young and misled mothers with their tiny

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[394] Wits Historical Papers Archive, AB2029 B3, Annual Report 1944.

[395] "Midwifery work in Hovels", *Cape Times*, June 1945.

[396] "St. Monica's Home", *Cape Times*, 14th March 1925.

[397] Wits Historical Papers Archive, AB2029 B3, Annual Report 1933.

[398] Wits Historical Papers Archive, AB2029 B3, Annual Report 1934.

[399] Wits Historical Papers Archive, AB2029 Ha6, Speech Notes, p. 1.

> infants […].Whether the father of the tiny babe is a Moslem or not is not of such great importance but what is of great importance is the fact that the next step prompted by the Tempter to the already erring one, is to hide what is shame in the eyes of her Christian friends under a cloak of seeming respectability – in a Moslem household, an easily opening door resulting almost inevitably in the forsaking of her Christian Faith.

Claims such as this angered the Muslim community which felt that "a more unwarranted and deliberate perversion of the facts [was] impossible to conceive".[400] A full account of the debate which ensued is beyond the scope of this thesis, the emphasis of which is on premarital pregnancy and not on the relationship between Muslim and Christian groups within Cape Town.[401] Nonetheless, it is worth noting that the competition that existed between Christians and Muslims for converts within Cape Town was important in mobilizing support for unmarried mothers, particularly in poor, predominantly coloured areas which might otherwise have been neglected. Furthermore, it worked to provide women in Cape Town with an unusual degree of leverage against church officials and hostel staff, who had to tread carefully and reserve some of their judgment in recognition of the fact that unmarried mothers – whether white or coloured – could and sometimes did seek refuge within the Muslim community.

Ordinary Girls, Complicated Courtships

Female philanthropists in charge of unmarried mothers' homes dealt with the problem of understanding the illicit sexuality of their charges by relying on a familiar story of seduction and abandonment; the same loose narrative used by female reformers in the previous century in their efforts to reclaim and redeem prostitutes. In this story unmarried mothers were presented as the victims of poverty, inexperience and unbridled male lust, with hostel reports emphasising the deleterious effects of combining female weakness and immaturity with masculine desire.[402] Shifting this narrative slightly, and complicating the framework within which we understand women's reform efforts, social workers and medical practitioners were more likely to explain illegitimacy in terms of psychological maladjustment and defective genetics.[403] Within this context the unmarried mother was categorized either as "feebleminded" or later as psychoanalytic theory gained in currency, as neurotic and repressed.[404] Current scholarship has challenged both of these interpretations, suggesting that they reveal more about the prejudices, moral anxieties and professional aspirations of those involved in managing out-of-wedlock pregnancy than they do about unmarried mothers themselves. But further efforts are needed, particularly within South Africa, to understand the unmarried mother not as a discursive figure but as an individual with her own identity and desires.

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[400] *The Moslem Outlook*, "St. Monica's Mission Home", 11 July 1925.

[401] For a landmark case which reflected some of the tensions at the heart of this debate see Solomons *v.* The Child Life Protection Society reported in *The South African Law Reports [1917] Cape Provincial Division* edited by Hon. Judge A. F. Russell (Roodepoort: Juta and Company, 1988), p. 276.

[402] Cape Archives A2182/1, Annual Report 1944.

[403] A. Loots."Die Ongehude Moeder", pp.30-50.

One of the major methodological challenges of investigating the Mary Rolt Hostel and St. Monica's home case records lies in disentangling the different voices involved in their construction. The experience of unmarried mothers, as presented in these records, was mediated in a number ways, shifting to accommodate the questions being asked, who was doing the asking, as well as the relationship between interviewer and interviewee. Thus, foregrounding the perspective of unmarried mothers in the first half of the twentieth century involves reading these case records 'against the grain'. The intention of such an exercise is not to ignore the genuine crises which many women faced as a result of their single pregnancy. Rather, it is to look carefully at the individuals within the Mary Rolt Hostel and St. Monica's Home and at how they came to be there in a way that treats them as ordinary human beings participating in a courtship process which presented both opportunities and difficulties for working class women.

Often small in size, catering to between ten and twenty women at a time, philanthropic maternity homes like the two analysed in this study received only a small proportion of women relative to the overall illegitimacy ratio. Unlike the middle class girl who left the city to spend time with her aunt or uncle on the farm or the upper class girl sent on a European tour, these women, the majority of whom came from racially-mixed, working class neighbourhoods like Salt River or Athlone, lacked the resources – financial or familial – to keep their pregnancy private. [405]

Women who tested positive for venereal disease or who were suspected of being prostitutes were technically barred from these institutions, but, in the interests of curbing part-time solicitation within inner-city Cape Town and preventing the further spread of syphilis, allowances were sometimes made.[406] St. Monica's was not as strict as it might have been with regard to venereal disease; in 1937 the home even set up its own venereal disease clinic to save its patients from having to attend the City Hospital's municipal treatment centre before gaining entrance to its prenatal ward.[407] The Mary Rolt Hostel also proved more lenient than its admissions policy implied, although it did transfer some of its more 'morally troublesome' residents to reformatories.[408]

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[404] A. Loots."Die Ongehude Moeder", pp.30-50.

[405] This is important considering that this thesis aims to explore how sexuality was understood and practiced by ordinary people and not just the elite.

A persistent fear of Muslim interference was part of what motivated this lenience. Hostel staff, especially at St. Monica's, worried that if they didn't accept at least a large proportion of the women arriving at their gates, such women would inevitably be tempted by the "ever open door of the Mohammedan house".[409] This, however, was not their only cause for anxiety. Both institutions were also well "aware that the migration of unmarried mothers to larger cities could signal their search for an illegal abortion rather than for a maternity home".[410]

Helen Bradford has argued that although abortion, in some form or another, was a strategy long practiced by almost all classes in South Africa, 1910-1960 was a time when surgical abortion (as opposed to the oral consumption of abortificants) was becoming increasingly common, especially amongst women in urban areas.[411] Whereas more affluent, married women seemed sometimes to be able to approach sympathetic male doctors or, occasionally, "eminent (and expensive) gynaecologists for discreet abortions", the remainder of the population, including working class white and coloured women tended to rely on nurses and midwives, many of whom were semi-skilled operatives of the surgical industry but earned far lower wages and enjoyed limited statutory protection in comparison to their male counterparts.[412] In Bradford's words "those who had not started, not completed, or had abandoned their stint of cheap labour could still practise independently […] not least as abortionists".[413]

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[406] Cape Archives, AB2182/25, Case Book, May 1927 - May 1932.
[407] Wits Historical Papers Archive, AB2029 Aa, Minutes March 1937.
[408] Cape Archives, AB2182/25, Case Book, May 1927 - May 1932.
[409] Wits Historical Papers Archive, AB2029 Ha6, Speech Notes, p. 3.
[410] R. Kinzul. *Fallen Women, Problem Girls,* p. 68.
[411] H. Bradford. "Herbs, Knives and Plastic", p. 127.
[412] H. Bradford. "Herbs, Knives and Plastic", p. 130.
[413] H. Bradford. "Herbs, Knives and Plastic", p.130..

More detailed work is required before any assessment can be made of the true extent of abortion in Cape Town. However, it is clear that clandestine abortions were taking place. “For evident reasons it is quite impossible to assess the incidence of criminal abortion, but we are all well aware that it is going on around us all the time”, wrote one doctor in the *South African Medical Journal* in 1936.[414] Traces in their case records suggest that some of the women who turned to homes like the Mary Rolt Hostel and St. Monica’s Home, did so after already having attempted to get an abortion or being pressured to do so by their lovers or male friends. [415]

Often though, if not a lack of information, then a lack of money or of nerve helped to deter ordinary women from procuring abortions.[416] As already suggested, even a relatively cheap abortion at the hands of an ex-nurse or midwife might cost upwards of £20 – a sum which most working class women could scarce afford. Such procedures were also frequently dangerous and painful experiences, in which instead of the dilation and curettage performed by doctors, midwives would insert a thread of wire or other similarly crude instruments into a woman’s cervix in order to initiate an abortion. Complications were common. In one particularly disturbing article published in the *South African Medical Record* entitled “The Adventures of a Crochet Hook”, a Professor of gynaecology at the University of Cape Town described the case of a 23 year old widow who, after visiting a midwife in an endeavour to establish menstruation and get rid of an unwanted pregnancy, had begun to experience an occasional “stabbing pain’ to the right of her pelvis and discovering a “small lump” in the same area – both the result of a crochet hook which had passed into the womb and been left there, eventually perforating the intestine. The woman survived but spent eleven days in hospital, later remarking “that it was better to be born lucky than to be born rich”.[417]

If a woman did not have the funds for an abortion or simply did not want to face the risk of an illegal and potentially life threatening procedure, she might still choose from several alternatives to the charitable maternity home. Where possible, many women chose to stay with their families, being cared for throughout their pregnancy and then giving birth either at home with the help of a midwife, or at one of Cape Town’s growing number of public hospitals. However, not all families proved willing or financially able to provide support for such women, nor were they necessarily in a position to pay the fee required for a hospital delivery. Thus, while they might have hoped to avoid "the investigation, supervision, and lengthy stay required by most maternity homes", working class women, in particular, did not always have this luxury.[418]

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[414] S. M. Kock. “Abortion: Its Medical, Ethical and Legal Aspects”, *South African Medical Journal*, August 1936, p. 526.

[415] Although she chose not to procure an abortion, before coming to the Mary Rolt Hostel, Nellie was given £75 in notes by the father of her child in the hope that she might use the money to do something about her pregnancy. Cape Archives, AB2182/25, Case Book, May 1927 - May 1932.

[416] R. Kinzul. *Fallen Women, Problem Girls,* p. 69.

[417] E. Crichton. “The Adventures of a Crochet Hook”, *South African Medical Record*, December 1926, p. 549.

Yet, while a large proportion of the women who entered these homes came from working class backgrounds, confounding the stereotype that it was only women from *extremely* low paying, low prestige occupations that bore illegitimate children, the kinds of work that the unmarried mothers did before coming to these institutions varied. A significant number of women entering the Mary Rolt Hostel (38% between 1922 and 1932) were engaged in domestic or factory work, falling into precisely that category of 'working girl' that women within the middle class were so worried about.[419] However, that commerce was a growing area of employment for white women within Cape Town is visible from the records, especially in the post-1930 period during which an increasing number of women entering the hostel identified as secretaries, typists and office workers.[420] A small proportion of the women even occupied semi-professional positions in teaching and nursing or came from homes where they didn't have to work, with one Mary Rolt Hostel resident's mother objecting strenuously to the fact that, despite her daughter's respectable upbringing, she would have to engage in menial domestic duties during her stay.[421]

A survey of Mary Rolt Hostel residents between 1922 and 1947 indicates that a majority (just under 80%) were between the ages of 17 and 25, an age bracket which is more or less in line with the average age of courtship in Cape Town at the time.[422] The median age of marriage in Cape Town's Anglican Church for coloured women was 22 years.[423] The median for white women was 23 years. As discussed in Chapter 2, this provides an indication that premarital pregnancy, and possibly even single motherhood, were, at least in some instances, part of rather than anomalous to the ordinary courtship system.

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[418] R. Kinzul. *Fallen Women, Problem Girls,* p. 69.

[419] Cape Archives, AB2182/25, Case Books, 1922-1932.

[420] E. Baddington. "Domestic Service in Cape Town 1891-1946: An Analysis of Census Reports", Conference on Economic Development and Racial Domination, Paper 19, UWC October 1984, pp. 3-4.

[421] Cape Archives, AB2182/25, Case Book, May 1927 - May 1932.

[422] Cape Archives, AB2182/25, Case Books, 1922-1947.

[423] J. Fourie and A. Rommelspacher. The Anglican Marriage Records of Cape Town, 1865-1960. Mimeo. These numbers are calculated using 7569 marriages of white women and 12124 marriages of coloured women in the Anglican Church in Cape Town between 1922 and 1947. The respective averages are 24 and 24.7 years.

Information gleaned from the Mary Rolt Hostel case files also undermines the view that unmarried motherhood was clearly linked to a particular state of mind or character type. Few hostel residents appear to have exhibited any obvious signs of ‘delinquency’, with less than 10% of the women admitted in the hostel’s first four years having received institutional care prior to their admission and over a third having already undergone confirmation within the protestant church.[424] Moreover, while hostel residents were sometimes categorized as “feebleminded”, modern scholarship has repudiated the use of such labels as well as the science behind them. As historian Barbara Meil Hobson explains, the diagnostic standards used to assess this catchall condition were often highly subjective and tend to hold little empirical weight.[425]

Unfortunately, St. Monica’s in-patient records are not as detailed or consistent as those kept by the Mary Rolt Hostel, making it more difficult to establish a clear profile of the women entering the home. Nonetheless, information gleaned from the home’s annual reports, as well as a survey of its minute books, provides evidence to support the idea that, like their counterparts at the Mary Rolt Hostel, its unmarried patients came from poor but not unconventional backgrounds. Consistent with the lower age of courtship within the coloured community, they often fell pregnant slightly earlier than unmarried mothers at the Mary Rolt Hostel but other than that, differences in their behaviour were minor and definitely not indicative of any biological predisposition towards premarital sexuality – another argument which has lost scientific credibility in recent years.

So why then, in the absence of any major deficiency or obvious signs of dysfunction were these women becoming single mothers and what can this tell us about the courtship experience of working class women more generally? The answer to this question is complex and needs to be examined in the light of the dynamic context in which these pregnancies occurred and were related.

Although often exaggerated by female philanthropists, it is clear that an undercurrent of exploitation did exist in some of the relationships which gave rise to illegitimacy. Particularly within the field of domestic service, the boundary between home and work life could become sufficiently blurred as to render working class women vulnerable to the exploits of their employers. Live-out servants, many of whom had to walk long distances, were also sometimes targets of sexual assault. The experience of Evelyn, a 20 year old white nurse who fell pregnant after being "attacked one night on her way back to Valkenberg hospital", speaks to the vulnerability of the unchaperoned women in a society that naturalized the meaning and consequences of male lust.[426]

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[424] Cape Archives, AB2182/25, Case Book, 1922- 1932.

[425] B. M. Hobson. *Uneasy Virtue: The Politics of Prostitution and the American Reform Tradition* (New York: Basic Books, 1987), p. 192.

It is very difficult to tell how widespread rape and other forms of sexual assault were in Cape Town during this period. Surviving records represent a minute portion of the actual cases of reported rape; reports which themselves provide an inaccurate reflection of the total number of rapes actually occurring within Cape Town. In his Ph.D. thesis, Fransch grapples with some of the many difficulties surrounding these records. [427] He cautions that while "rape statistics may officially appear to increase and decrease, […] they fail to reflect changing rape legislation and thus the expanding definition of the legally defined rapist" and are thus an unreliable indicator of rape trends. He also emphasises that there were (and still are) many different reasons for individuals within a South African context to avoid reporting rape and sexual assault. Thus, while the number of rape, attempted rape and sexual assault cases which came before the South African courts during the first few decades of the twentieth century was very small in comparison to the total number of criminal cases being heard within these courts, it does not necessarily follow that such crimes were rarely being perpetrated.[428]

In the aftermath of the South African War, fears of interracial rape spread nationwide with major 'black peril' scares occurring in 1902-1903, 1906-1908, and 1911-1912.[429] While concerns linked to urbanisation, degeneracy and islamisation tended to feature most prominently in the appeals made by hostel staff, public panics about black men who raped white women also played easily into the hyperbolic narratives of male sexual irresponsibility and aggressiveness and female vulnerability and victimization favoured by female philanthropists.[430]

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[426] Cape Archives, AB2182/25, Case Book, May 1927 - May 1932.

[427] C. Fransch. "'... wood, carved by the knife of circumstance ...'? : Cape Rapists and Rape in South Africa, c. 1910-1980" (Ph.D. Thesis, Stellenbosch University, 2016), p. 84.

[428] C. Fransch. "... wood, carved by the knife of circumstance ..."?, pp. 110-111.

[429] E. Thornberry. "Rape, Race, and Respectability", p. 873.

[430] In 1913 the Commission Appointed to Enquire into Assaults on Women (commonly referred to as the Black Peril Commission) found that between 1900 and 1912 cases of black and coloured men raping white women outnumbered cases of white men raping white women. Importantly, though, this finding might have been the result of police being less likely to prosecute cases in which the defendant was white or of the white women in such cases being more reluctant to come forward.

Not all kinds of exploitation, however, were easy to explain or fitted as neatly into the formula provided by female philanthropists and hostel staff. Stories of sexual abuse, including those of women pregnant by their fathers, brothers, or other male relatives were seldom voiced, and were heard only with great difficulty. In one particularly harrowing case 14 year old Wilhelmina was brought to the Mary Rolt Hostel by her sister, who told hostel staff that the father of the baby was a young boy of roughly the same age.[431] Wilhelmina later disclosed that the child's true father was her brother-in-law and was assisted by the hostel in laying a charge against him. Cases like Wilhelmina's are few and far between in the hostel records, though, possibly because of the absence of a vocabulary with which to properly describe sexual exploitation of this nature.

Even when telling their own story, it is likely that unmarried mothers sometimes deliberately appropriated the language of melodrama used by female philanthropists to describe the illicit sexuality of working class women. Kinzul observes, to "those for whom respectability exerted a powerful force […] the melodrama provided them with the only acceptable language available to talk about sex".[432] As a result, this language may have been the only way for unmarried mothers to express their genuine social and economic vulnerability and to articulate their varied experiences of gender and courtship to matrons whose class status and perceptions of femininity were very different to their own.

As the case files do not provide a comprehensive courtship history of every resident, understanding how different women came to be in such a position is to some degree speculative. However, the available evidence suggests that the majority of illicit sexual relationships which led to women entering the Mary Rolt Hostel and St Monica's Home occurred not between master and servant or between assailant and victim, but between ordinary men and women of similar age and social standing. On the one hand, such relationships need to be understood, at least in part, as the outcome of a long tradition of alternative family formation at the Cape, and in human society more generally.[433] On the other hand they also need to be understood as the product of a quiet revolution in sexual mores occurring among working class youth in early twentieth century cities.[434] At the turn of the century the Church, the medical establishment and the middle classes within Cape Town had begun working together to try and regulate the domestic lives and sexual behaviour of the working classes, but despite their best efforts, ideals like sexual purity proved difficult to enforce because of changes taking place at both a global and a local level.

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[431] Cape Archives, AB2182/25, Case Book, May 1927 - May 1932.

[432] R. Kinzul. *Fallen Women, Problem Girls,* p. 105.

[433] John Gillis, amongst others, has made the point that the family is not an ahistorical concept and that what we view as traditional marriage is, in fact, a relatively modern invention developed to help the state and church gain control over the process of family formation. J. Gillis. *For Better or For Worse*, p.190.

In many parts of the world, early adulthood amongst the working classes had altered significantly by the early twentieth century with revolutions in agriculture and industry prompting young people to leave home and achieve economic independence far earlier than had been the case a century prior.[435] Moreover, while Edward Shorter was perhaps naïve in claiming that the rise of wage labour saw working class women experience greater levels of sexual freedom and fulfilment, economic independence did provide both men and women with increased leverage against the dictates of kin and church, helping to create new possibilities for experimentation and emotional satisfaction within courtship.[436] Stephanie Coontz, for example, suggests that the rise of wage labour, amongst other long-run political, economic and cultural factors, was crucial in encouraging individuals to begin choosing mates on the basis of personal affection rather than political or economic gain.[437]

At the same time a shifting urban environment provided opportunities for men and women to meet and interact in a variety of different circumstances. In *The Emergence of The South African Metropolis* Vivian Bickford-Smith suggests that within the twentieth century city "urban boundaries had to be imagined, [and] could be frequently crossed" as novel spaces developed to accommodate - and were themselves instrumental in creating - new social identities and traditions.[438] But where South African historians have explored the role that public beaches, dance halls and the bioscope played in separating black from white, scant attention has been paid to the opportunities that these new spaces created for hetero-social relationships. Nonetheless, in South Africa and elsewhere, such spaces – spaces which were initially frequented by working class youths – played a crucial role in breaking through the strict gender separation characteristic of many earlier leisure activities and in removing courtship "both by distance and anonymity, from the sheltering and controlling contexts of home and local community".[439]

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[434] In making this argument I follow those historians who contend that the early twentieth century change in sexual mores, rather than being a post-war middle-class phenomenon, was forged by young urban working class men and women who "helped chart the modem sexual terrain" that middle class women would later function within and wherein they would begin to develop their own desire for increased sexual fulfillment and expression. See J. Meyerowitz. *Women Adrift: Independent Wage Earners in Chicago, 1880-1930 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988),* p. 116.

[435] See S. Duff. *Changing Childhoods in the Cape Colony: Dutch Reformed Church Evangelicalism and Colonial Childhood, 1860-1895* (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), p. 119.

[436] E. Shorter. "Illegitimacy, Sexual Revolution, and Social Change in Modern Europe", *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 2 (2), 1971, pp. 237-272.

[437] Stephanie Coontz is one of a number of prominent historians to argue that in the period between 1800-1950 cultural and economic changes allowed for the older functions of marriage (e.g. economic distribution, network creation etc.) to be slowly eroded and for the love match to triumph as a cultural ideal. S. Coontz. *Marriage, a History*, pp. 7-10.

[438] V. Bickford-Smith. *The Emergence of the South African Metropolis,* p. 6.

This transition horrified older generations, for whom it became increasingly difficult to discern if and when inappropriate forms of interaction were taking place.[440] As one shocked observer remarked in *Die Huisvrou:*

> Daar is veral kleredrag- te kort rokke […]En wat van die saambaaiery, met byna geen baaiklere aan? En dan tog so saam te sit, en so saam te wandel, sonder selfs ń bad-handdoek om, of kamerjas aan? [There are especially ways of dressing, dresses that are too short etc. […] And what of the bathing together, wearing hardly any swimwear? And then still the sitting together like that, and walking like that, without even a towel around them or with a bathrobe on?][441]

Parents and employers, however, were not the only individuals who found it difficult to adjust to changes occurring within the courtship system. As courtship norms evolved to become less ritualised, young people themselves were also exposed to differing expectations and obligations, with urbanisation rendering even the most conventional relationships somewhat volatile.[442] Women especially were vulnerable to this volatility. As Linda Gordon explains:

> There was a considerable increase in "desertion" in large cities […] at the turn of the century, for reasons of both opportunity and incentive. The combination of urban anonymity and geographical mobility meant that men could 'disappear' in a way that was impossible in small-town and agrarian communities.[443]

Although describing the United States, Gordon could just as easily be discussing early twentieth century Cape Town where innovations in transport and the casualization of Cape Town's labour force complicated the courtship process by limiting the social pressure which could be brought to bear on men in the event of an unplanned pregnancy. As a temporary landing-point for sailors, soldiers and fortune seekers from across the globe, Cape Town was a city from which individuals came and went with relative ease, meaning that it was possible for men to simply "get onto a boat" as a way to avoid taking responsibility for a pregnancy.[444]

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[439] B. Bailey. *From Front Porch to Back Seat,* p.3. Also see K. Peiss. *Cheap Amusements: Working Women and Leisure in Tum-of-the Century New York* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986).

[440] R. Kinzul. *Fallen Women, Problem Girls,* p. 58.

[441] "Reinheid: Aan die Dogters van ons volk veral", *Die Huisvrou*, (15), (783), 27 April 1937, p.9.

[442] E. Griffin. "Sex, Illegitimacy and Social Change", pp.141-143.

[443] L. Gordon. *Pitied But Not Entitled,* p. 20.

It was also a large enough urban settlement that even where "arrangements were made for a marriage" the putative father might simply "fail to turn up", as happened in the case of Violet, a 25 year old shop assistant who was designated as "borderline coloured".[445] Like many of the other fathers of children born at the Mary Rolt Hostel, Violet's German fiancé could not be traced subsequent to her admission.

Arguably, though, such cases only represent one side of a more multi-faceted story in which working class women were both victims and agents. It was generally in the interests of hostel residents to frame their courtship experiences in terms of the narratives supplied to them by social workers and hostel staff. Nevertheless, some residents chose to step outside of the conventional script of seduction and abandonment in ways that proved difficult for middle class observers to comprehend. In such cases the ruptures and silences in the record are often as revealing as the words themselves. When Irene, a 23 year old waitress of Dutch descent, arrived at the Mary Rolt Hostel in January 1928 her record simply stated that she had a "very unsatisfactory history".[446] The same comment was made with reference to Marie, a 21 year old white general servant from Rondebosch.[447] Such women were usually suspected of engaging in sexual relationships unlikely to result in marriage, which in Irene's case meant seeing a married father of nine, but could also refer to other more innocent forms of casual dating.[448]

Few of the women in the Mary Rolt Hostel and St. Monica's Home records explicitly described having sex with 'pick-ups'— men they met in dance halls, movie theatres, or on the street. However, when in 1927, Minnie, a 17 year old white factory worker from Observatory came to the Mary Rolt Hostel pregnant by the son of a Cape Town holiday maker, she was not the first hostel resident to have known the father of her child only briefly.[449] On the contrary, many of the women who arrived at both the Mary Rolt Hostel and St. Monica's Home were surprisingly vague regarding the names and addresses of their beaus.[450] Although sometimes motivated by a genuine desire to conceal the identity of the man concerned, this vagueness more often reflected the informal nature of the relationship which had given rise to the pregnancy. It was certainly not unusual for women entering St. Monica's and the Mary Rolt Hostel to have fallen pregnant without a promise of marriage. It was also not entirely uncommon for women to list more than one man as the potential father of their child. Whereas 19 year old Henrina refused to name her child's father, claiming that she "didn't want to have anything [more] to do with him", 17 year old Carolina, a white general servant originally from Oudtshoorn, gave one name and then another, confusing the hostel staff and leading them to believe that she had been sexually involved with several men prior to falling pregnant.[451]

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[444] In a letter to the Mary Rolt Hostel, Mrs. Burns railed bitterly against the putative father of her daughter's unborn child and his mother for engineering precisely such an exit. Cape Archives, AB2182/16, General Correspondence.

[445] Cape Archives, AB2182/25, Case Book, May 1927 - May 1932.

[446] Cape Archives, AB2182/25, Case Book, May 1927 - May 1932.

[447] Cape Archives, AB2182/25, Case Book, May 1927 - May 1932.

[448] Cape Archives, AB2182/25, Case Book, Sept 1922- Nov 1926.

Thus, whereas some of the women entering these homes seem to have been operating within an older tradition of courtship, within which sexual intercourse was acceptable as long as it occurred after an engagement, many others – particularly those who had known their children's fathers for only a very short time – were participants in an emergent popular leisure and urban youth culture within which new courtship practices and standards of sexual behaviour were being forged by both men and women. Within this context, women who were hesitant about risking premarital sex might be considered dull, while women who were too eager were often seen as lascivious – a difficult position caused by the double standard. When it occurred, pregnancy was often an unplanned and unwelcome consequence of this trade-off, in response to which working class women in particular sometimes ended up in philanthropic maternity homes. The following section discusses what it was like to inhabit these homes, particularly in light of the complex power relationship which existed between maternity home residents and staff.

Docility and Disobedience

In its 1922 annual report, the Mary Rolt Hostel stated:

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[449] Cape Archives, AB2182/25, Case Book, May 1927 - May 1932.

[450] It was the unofficial policy of the Mary Rolt Hostel to try and contact these men, but this could be difficult given the proportion of unmarried mothers who did not know the where the father of their child lived or how to get hold of him. Cape Archives, A2182/27, MRH Annual Report May 1930.

[451] Cape Archives, AB2182/25, Case Book, Sept 1922- Nov 1926.

> It would, we feel sure, interest and perhaps surprise many of the readers of this report to hear of the eager and ready response with which the girls meet what is being done for them. Those who visit the hostel constantly speak in the highest praise of the healthy, happy and above all home[ly] atmosphere of the house.[452]

In their depiction of maternity home life, hostel staff often drew on the metaphor of the home and the extended family in order to emphasize the harmonious nature of the relationship between themselves and the unmarried mothers with whom they worked. Although obviously part of broader project to legitimise these institutions and to lend credibility to their reform programme, such depictions were not entirely inaccurate. It was part of the ethos of the Mary Rolt Hostel and St. Monica's Home to provide a domestic "refuge" for single mothers in which they felt accepted and cared for irrespective of their past behaviour and, while it is difficult to discern whether or not the staff always adhered to this ethos, both institutions do seem to have inspired significant loyalty amongst the women and communities which they served.[453] Letters from unmarried mothers suggest that they were often intensely devoted to maternity home matrons, with many expressing their sincere appreciation for the help received and communicating a firm desire to remain in contact with the institutions responsible. Acting on this desire, women who had given birth at St. Monica's frequently returned to the home to attend its weekly infant welfare clinics and to seek medical advice from the nurses.[454] They also willingly participated in social events like the home's annual Christmas Party. Likewise, old girls from the Mary Rolt Hostel appear to have responded positively to the lasting support which the hostel offered, with women like Alice continuing to visit the hostel, even several years after the birth of their illegitimate child. A 20 year old shop assistant from Observatory, Alice was admitted to the Mary Rolt Hostel in August 1925, giving birth to a baby boy and remaining at the hostel until the following June. Six years later she was still in contact with the matron.[455]

Yet despite the affection and respect that many unmarried mothers felt for maternity home workers, the relationship between workers and residents within these institutions was not equal, nor was it necessarily free of conflict. Except for girls under the age of sixteen, some of whom were committed as wards of the state, unmarried mothers entering the Mary Rolt Hostel and St. Monica's Home did so voluntarily. Once resident, though, they were subject to the hierarchical arrangement of power within these institutions. Particularly within the Mary Rolt Hostel there were various requirements, both of attitude and behaviour, which had to be met. In keeping with the dominant narrative of seduction and betrayal which they espoused, hostel staff expected unmarried mothers to appear sufficiently contrite and to invest fully in the redemptive programme prescribed by the hostel. Women who were unable to do this or who, in the matron's words, were guilty of "causing mischief" were promptly asked to leave.[456] For example, 20 year old Sarah was made to return home to her mother immediately after she was discovered talking over the garden wall at night to the married father of her child.[457] A similar outcome befell 24 year old Rosalind, who was sent home for provoking dissent amongst and "causing trouble with the other girls".[458]

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[452] Cape Archives, A2182/27, MRH Annual Report May 1922.

[453] Wits Historical Papers Archive, AB2029 Ba, Annual Report 1949 and Cape Archives A2182/1, Annual Report 1944.

[454] Wits Historical Papers Archive, AB2029 Aa, Minutes August 1937.

[455] That the relationship between Alice and the hostel staff remained very positive is reflected in her case notes which read: "Alice often comes to the hostel" (1927), "Alice came regularly to the Lent talks and often comes here with Austin" (1928), "Alice came to tea in July and August" (1928). Alice remained in touch with the Mary Rolt Hostel up until 1932, and was listed as attending a Christmas party at the hostel that same year. Cape Archives, AB2182/25, Case Book, Sept 1922 - Nov 1926.

Case records reflect the experiences of unmarried mothers as recorded by maternity home staff; individuals who no doubt listened, heard, and recorded selectively. As a result, it is difficult to find accounts which directly reflect the attitudes of unmarried mothers within these institutions. However, it is significant that apart from those who were expelled, there were also women who themselves made the decision to leave the Mary Rolt Hostel and St. Monica's Home. For just less than one in every ten inhabitants at the Mary Rolt Hostel, the requirements of institutional living and the atmosphere within the home proved too stringent, causing them to conclude their stay before the hostel staff had given them permission to leave.[459] "Very restless, refuses to stay" the case file of one 32 year old resident read.[460]

The records of women who did stay hint further at the resistance which some unmarried mothers showed towards the restrictive policies implemented by these institutions. Unsurprisingly, it seems to have been difficult for adult women to acquiesce to the permanent surveillance which characterised life within the Mary Rolt Hostel and St. Monica's Home. Thus, various structures emerged which were designed to help hostel residents to bypass this surveillance. At the Mary Rolt Hostel, for example, a secret letter posting scheme seems to have developed to enable hostel residents to converse with those outside of the hostel walls on their own terms.[461]

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[456] Cape Archives, AB2182/25, Case Book, May 1927 - May 1932.
[457] Cape Archives, AB2182/25, Case Register, 1932- 1947.
[458] Cape Archives, AB2182/25, Case Register, 1932- 1947.
[459] Roughly 8.5 % of the 200 cases transcribed from the register between 1932- 1947 resulted in unmarried mothers leaving the hostel early. Cape Archives, AB2182/25, Case Register, 1932- 1947.
[460] Cape Archives, AB2182/25, Case Register, 1932- 1947.

Another way in which residents expressed their independence was by refusing to wholly adopt the moral philosophy advocated by the hostel staff.[462] As mentioned, maternity home workers judged themselves most successful when the charity and religious training which they provided moved unmarried mothers within their care to proclaim conversion. However, there were many women whom remained unwilling to fully embrace Christianity. St. Monica's patients specifically often came from areas in which religious identity was relatively fluid and in which the moral ideals proposed by the staff had limited purchase. A case like Jane's, in which she and her mother "only smiled" while the hostel matron pleaded with Jane to accept the help of Christian friends instead of moving in with her "Malay boy" and his family, was typical within this context.[463]

An examination of the relationship between hostel staff and residents exposes both the convergences and the disparities between bourgeois and working-class visions of respectability. Ultimately, it is worth noting that while aspirations to respectability in the conventional sense often shaped the stories of unmarried mothers in their interviews, in their real lives it seems that many hostel residents retained a more flexible definition of the concept. In contrast to middle class sexual mores which set chastity against promiscuity, in working class neighbourhoods premarital sexual activity occurred without community approval but without strong condemnation either, a reality which is also reflected in the diverse trajectories which the lives of unmarried mothers followed after leaving the hostel.

Mixed Fates and Multiple Trajectories

In October 1923, Grace, a 20 year old white nurse from Kalk Bay entered the Mary Rolt Hostel.[464] Henry, Grace's son, was born two months later. As per the rules and with Grace experiencing slight health problems, the two remained at the Hostel for several more months. During this time, it seems that Grace was in constant contact with the father of her child, Vernon, although there is no indication of what this contact entailed and, if there was talk of marriage, it appears not to have borne any fruit since in July 1924, Grace – taking Henry –

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[461] Cape Archives, AB2182/25, Case Register, 1932- 1947.

[462] Wits Historical Papers Archive, AB2029 Aa, Minutes April 1938.

[463] Wits Historical Papers Archive, AB2029, Aa, St Monica's Minutes August 1937.

[464] Cape Archives, AB2182/25, Case Book, Sept 1922 – Nov 1926.

went to work as a mother's help for Mrs Graham in Seapoint. After a tense row between employer and employee, "Gracie took the law into her own hands and followed Vernon, to Johannesburg where he met and married her." Shortly thereafter Vernon gave up his job as a bank clerk to take over the family farm in Lichtenburg, where "all were very kind to" Grace. The couple had had two more children and remained happily married when the hostel lost contact with Grace in 1928.

Grace's case highlights the sizeable grey area which existed between the respectable ideal of family formation and illegitimacy in its most stereotypical form. Even more importantly, it illustrates the agency which women might exercise within these circumstances. Grace did not come from a broken or chronically poor home, nor did she have a clear history of mental or psychological instability and yet by her own admission, she had intercourse with Vernon quite willingly. She then proceeded to live as an unmarried mother for more than a year before travelling across the country with her infant son in order to enforce a marriage between herself and Vernon, eventually managing, despite a somewhat chequered history, to adopt the reputation of respectable country wife.

While certainly unconventional, Grace's case was by no means exceptional. In 18% of the cases recorded by the Mary Rolt Hostel between 1931 and 1947 the fate of mother and baby is unknown.[465] The immediate outcome of the remaining 164 cases can be summarised as follows: in 42% of the cases mother and baby were assisted by and went home to parents or relatives, 18% remained boarding at the Mary Rolt Hostel or another similar institution, 18% had their babies adopted or sent them to live with foster mothers and 10% went to situations in which they were able keep their baby. These outcomes, though, were rarely static, tied as they were to the shifting lives of both mother and child.

Like Grace, some of these women would go on to marry the father of their illegitimate child, sometimes months or even years after his/her birth – an avenue which both institutions encouraged so long as the father was not already married, or else suspected of being a Muslim.[466] Delayed marriages seem to have been particularly common during the Second World War, but occurred throughout the 1920's and 1930's. Correspondence between the

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[465] Cape Archives, AB2182/25, Case Register, 1932-1947.

[466] Whenever the putative father of the illegitimate child was himself married, St Monica's and the Mary Rolt Hostel protected his legitimate wife and family by trying to make the unmarried girl independent of him and encouraging an end to all relations between her and the father. Martine Spensky observes a similar pattern in her analysis of homes for unmarried mothers in Britain. M. Spensky. "Producers of legitimacy: homes for unmarried mothers in the 1950s", p. 113.

Mary Rolt Hostel and past in-patients also reveals that a large proportion of unmarried mothers were able to find alternative marriage partners, even in instances where they had kept their illegitimate child. In the interim, they were often supported by their families, though sometimes secretly, at the cost of the children believing their grandmother to be their biological mother and their biological mother to be their older sister.[467]

Sent by the Salvation Army, 20 year old shop assistant Constance and her baby Robert entered the Mary Rolt Hostel on the 6th January 1923 when Robert was one month old. Constance had lost all trace of Robert's putative father and stayed at the hostel only briefly, before going to work on a farm. Six years later, though, Constance's mother wrote to the hostel to say that Constance had been "happily married 3 years already" and that Robert, of whom all were "very fond", lived with the family in Stellenbosch.[468]

Alice's story is similar to that of Constance. A 21 year old certified school teacher originally from the small Western Cape town of McGregor, she arrived at the Mary Rolt Hostel in January 1924, giving birth to a baby boy shortly thereafter.[469] Having had the child christened at a Dutch Reformed parsonage in Cape Town, Alice remained at the hostel for the next five months, caring for her son and acting as wet nurse to "a little starved baby" that the Hostel had agreed to keep. Taking her little boy with her, she then took a position as a wet nurse with another family in the city.[470] By the end of 1924, Alice's employer was not speaking well of her, and she had returned to her mother in McGregor. There she met and married Mr Edward Turner, a detail that was verified in January 1928 when the hostel matron visited the couple. "Alice very happy, Michael a busy little boy, who now has a half- brother of 2 years, Karl" she wrote, following her visit. This good news was confirmed on two later occasions.[471]

Throughout their early lives Constance and Alice walked a fine line between respectability and disrepute, but neither girl was so disgraced that she was unable to reintegrate into conventional society subsequent to the birth of her illegitimate child. Allan Macfarlane has convincingly argued that marriage was often the product of a "cost-benefit calculation" for both men *and* women.[472] While finding an alternative marriage partner could be difficult, it was possible, as Constance and Alice's stories illustrate. Moreover, even where this was not the case, it was still not completely unusual for women to choose single motherhood over an undesirable marriage. Beatrice, for example, asserted repeatedly that she "was not desirous of accepting an offer of marriage", despite the father of her child Buster having visited the hostel twice before the birth and agreeing to pay for her confinement in full.[473]

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[467] There are several cases in the Mary Rolt Hostel records in which the grandmother is recorded as having officially adopted the child.

[468] Cape Archives, AB2182/25, Case Book, May 1927 - May 1932.

[469] Cape Archives, AB2182/25, Case Books, Sept 1922- Nov 1926.

[470] Cape Archives, AB2182/25, Case Books, Sept 1922- Nov 1926.

[471] Cape Archives, AB2182/25, Case Books, Sept 1922- Nov 1926.

There are various reasons why Beatrice might have insisted on the above outcome. "Establishing a legally indissoluble marriage meant [the] acceptance of certain prescribed roles", many of which were as, if not more, demanding than parenthood itself and which "if not properly fulfilled", could create practical as well as psychological tensions.[474] From a practical perspective the security and economic benefits afforded by marriage to the working class mother and her child could also be negligible. Certainly, marriage was not a guarantee against desertion. Joyce's father deserted his family several times, despite her parents being legally married.[475] Moreover, while two could often live more cheaply than one, once married a woman became a *feme covert* without legal identity or rights apart from her husband, rendering her subject to her husband's financial failings as well as his successes. Within this context, a partner like that of Margaret, whom the magistrate openly concluded couldn't be fined for damages because he hadn't any funds, had the potential to become more of a financial burden than a support. Indeed, to quote one of the speakers in a 1945 parliamentary debate on community of property "the effect of the law today is this; a woman with an illegitimate child is in a much happier position as regards her own ability to maintain and provide for her child than a woman properly married to a bad husband". [476]

This was true particularly in the light of women's increasing movement into the formal workplace where they gained access to their own source of income and to female networks with whom they might share the costs and duties of childbearing. The hostel records indicate that grandmothers, aunts and fellow factory or domestic workers were often involved in providing for illegitimate children, and although formal adoption only became available with the passing of the Adoption of Children Act in 1923, informal adoption was relatively common.[477] It is also interesting to note that even formal adoptions often took place within the same parish or locality, reflecting the continued involvement of community networks in the care of illegitimate children and possible ongoing contact between birth mothers and these children.

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[472] A. Macfarlane. *The Origins of English Individualism: Family, Property and Social Transition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978),* p. 321.
[473] Cape Archives, AB2182/25, Case Book May 1927 - May 1932.
[474] J. Gillis. *For Better, For Worse,* p. 185.
[475] Cape Archives, CSC 2/6//1/460, 64.
[476] Cape Archives, AB2182/27, MRH Annual Report 1930.

This, of course, is not to say that there was no stigma attached to bearing an illegitimate child. Especially within the white community, to fall pregnant outside of wedlock was a serious matter, to be kept hidden if at all possible.[478] Although this attitude was often temporary, it was not unheard of for working class parents to refuse to acknowledge the existence of their illegitimate grandchildren. In 1923, 29 year old dressmaker Florence was one of a relatively small number of unmarried mothers at the Mary Rolt Hostel whose parents would not admit them home subsequent to the birth of their illegitimate child.[479] Thus, after her son Dirk was born, Florence moved into a shared room in Kalk Bay with Elaine, a friend from within the hostel.[480] By going out to work every day as a seamstress, Florence managed to support her son, and together with Elaine, even agreed to take in two young foster children. Florence was later able to reconcile with much of her family. The hostel reported that by 1927 Florence was having dinner with her mother and sisters for the first time since the "tragic happenings".[481] But the continued absence of Florence's father from these meetings is telling, as is the fact that Florence eventually went to live with her adult brother and not her parents.

Yet, Florence's parents may have had financial as well as moral reasons for reacting as they did. In a society where female wages were low, the cost of a fatherless child could fall rather heavily on the child's maternal grandparents, putting the latter in a difficult economic position. In some families this did not matter. In a large working-class family like Florence's, though, income and living space were in limited supply, making the burden of an additional body difficult to bear in practical terms. The cost of an illegitimate child also explains why some employers were quite punitive in their approach towards unmarried mothers. Burman and Naude suggest that employers were often reluctant to acknowledge that a female servant was pregnant in case this placed them in a position of responsibility towards woman and child.[482] This point is attested to in some of the letters which the Mary Rolt Hostel received from concerned employers. A Mrs. Gordon, for example, wrote to the hostel matron in 1936 to say that one of the girls in her employment was pregnant and without resources, but that having given the girl two weeks' worth of wages she was not willing to do anything further for her. [483] She hoped that the hostel would be able to provide some support, adding that the girl was "quite pleasant and amenable to discipline".[484]

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[477] It is difficult to find direct evidence of this kind of case but the existence thereof is alluded to in several hostel reports.

[478] In a letter to the Mary Rolt Hostel in 1939, Florence admitted to not having left the house since becoming pregnant and begged the matron to allow her to come to the hostel under the cover of darkness as she said she felt terribly "self-conscious" and did not want too many "outsiders" to know of her condition.

[479] Cape Archives, AB2182/25, Case Book, May 1927 - May 1932.

[480] Cape Archives, AB2182/25, Case Book, May 1927 - May 1932.

[481] Cape Archives, AB2182/25, Case Book, May 1927 - May 1932.

As it often did with families, the attitudes of employers varied. Trained domestic servants were much in demand in Cape Town during the 1930's and 1940's.[485] Consequently, "domestic service with a sympathetic mistress" was judged by the hostel to be the best form of employment open to its mothers and there is evidence to suggest that many employers were at least partially sympathetic to the plight of these women. In several instances girls who came to the hostel were able to return with their baby to their previous mistress. In the case of Ruth, a 21 year old British housemaid, the hostel noted that her employers, Mr. and Mrs. Goodridge, had become so devoted to the child that they officially adopted it.[486]

In everyday life, then, respectability and the social acceptance which it implied seems to have been a more amorphous or malleable concept than is commonly assumed, at least within the Anglican working classes. The records from St. Monica's support this hypothesis, providing further evidence that courtship was a complicated process, and that while in theory there was little awareness of this, in practice allowances were made, especially within poor and religiously diverse areas.

Particularly within the coloured community, an unexpected number of illegitimate children appear to have been born to secretly cohabiting couples, many of whom were in stable partnerships and who planned to enter into a religious, if not a legal, marriage at some point. Anomalies sometimes arose from the fact that legal marriage was construed as a Christian event, with civil marriage becoming popular amongst some but not all sections of Muslim population.[487] It is clear, though, that while it was more difficult for Muslim marriages to be recognized by law, cohabitation was a state that was by no means unique to Cape Towns' Muslim population. District Six patient, Wilhelmina, a confirmee of St. Paul's who lived unmarried with the Christian father of her two children at 59 Shepard Street, was impervious to the advice of the staff at St. Monica's, as was Rose who ignored the matron's suggestion that she go home to her mother, instead returning to live as the reputed wife of "her man, a Roman Catholic".[488]

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[482] S. Burman and M. Naude. "Bearing a Bastard", p. 381.
[483] Cape Archives, AB2182/16, Letter from Mrs. Jean Gordon, 25th September 1936.
[484] Cape Archives, AB2182/16, Letter from Mrs. Jean Gordon, 25th September 1936.
[485] S. Burman & M. Naude. "Bearing a Bastard", p. 400.
[486] Cape Archives, AB2182/25, Case Book, May 1927 - May 1932.
[487] Polygamous Muslim marriages were not legally recognized.

South African divorce legislation which, prior to reforms enacted in 1979, required evidence of adultery, malicious desertion, incurable insanity, or habitual criminality before a marital union could be terminated, was a contributing factor to the incidence of cohabitation within Cape Town. Separated from their spouses for one reason or another, those who wanted to remarry would have to bear the cost – financial and emotional – of a legal divorce. For those unwilling or unable to do so, cohabitation was a viable alternative. Kathleen, a 26 year old coloured patient at St. Monica's, was one of several women at the home to have parted from her husband without obtaining a divorce.[489] She came to the hostel to give birth to the second child of her common-law partner.

In addition, economic circumstances sometimes conspired to delay or to permanently prevent marriage. The cost of setting up a respectable working class home in Cape Town was substantial throughout the 1920's and 1930's. The report of the Economic and Wages Commission of 1925 calculated that the combined purchase of food and fuel, and the payment of lights and water, as well as rent at the current cost of living was 6s. per week higher than an average weekly wage for all male occupations in the Cape Peninsula.[490] The Cost of Living Commission, a later governmental commission conducted in 1932, found that many working class couples in Cape Town were struggling to make "ends meet" and falling into debt "in spite of the strictest economy".[491] By limiting their ability to set up a respectable home, these economic factors complicated working class couples' prospects for marriage.

Many of the women admitted to St. Monica's Home expected to marry the father of their child as soon as it could be afforded. Mary, a 20 year old coloured girl, remained at St. Monica's for only a few days before returning to the 'Malay' community, where she had been living with the father of her child and his mother. "Mary insists on a Malay marriage as soon as the boy has saved up enough money", the home reported, later adding that although she received a "few shillings each week" from her beau in order to pay for her confinement,

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[488] Wits Historical Papers Archive, AB2029 Aa, St Monica's Minutes April 1939, October 1937.

[489] Wits Historical Papers Archive, AB2029 Aa, St Monica's Minutes April 1940.

[490] UG14/1925 *Report of the Economic and Wages Commission*, (chair S. Mills), p. 15.

[491] UG3G/1932 *Report of the Cost of Living Commission* (chair F.J. Fahey), p.15.

Mary was in fact saving this money for her marriage clothes.[492] It is difficult to know what the precise intentions of the Mary's partner were in this instance, but on a labourer's wages, the cost of a formal marriage and of setting up a separate household could prove prohibitive, especially in the short-term.[493] Thus, it was not wholly unusual for lower- working class couples to postpone their marriage until the requisite economic resources became available.

Couples also occasionally encountered unforeseen opposition from parents and kin. While it was becoming increasingly difficult for parents to control how their sons and daughters met and interacted with potential marriage partners, they were still fairly vocal in their right to approve such matches and, at least until their offspring reached the age of majority, could prevent a union which they opposed from taking place. Premarital pregnancy was a strategy which young people might use to put pressure on parents who were obstructing a marriage. However, particularly where religious or racial differences were concerned, the success of such a tactic was by no means assured.

Overall, neighbours appear to have been remarkably tolerant of cohabitation and of children whose parentage was not quite as it seemed, provided that a certain level of discretion was maintained and that individuals respected the need to adopt certain widely held codes of behaviour in public. In Cape Town society, as in the society which Pat Thane and Tanya Evans describe in their book *Sinners, Scroungers, Saints: Unmarried Motherhood in Twentieth Century England*, "there seems to have been a widespread discreet understanding that innocent well-meaning people could find themselves in difficult situations and should not be rejected, provided they did not flaunt their transgressions".[494] Unmarried mothers from the Mary Rolt Hostel and St. Monica's Home were seldom permanently cast out of the families and communities from which they had come, instead going on to live what by the standard of the time, would have been decidedly ordinary lives.

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[492] Wits Historical Papers Archive, AB2029 Aa, St Monica's Minutes August 1937.

[493] Martin Ingram explains that historically marriage has often been associated with the creation of a new household, and that while the converse has not always been true, there is usually a "powerful congruence between the two institutions". M. Ingram. "Cohabitation in context in early seventeenth-century London" in R. Probert (ed.). *Cohabitation and Non-Marital Births*, p. 35.

[494] P. Thane and T. Evans. *Sinners, Scroungers, Saints: Unmarried Motherhood in Twentieth Century England,* p.2.

Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to reconstruct the stories and perspectives of a variety of individual women, whose behaviour, although a cause of much anxiety within middle class circles at the time, has seldom been viewed in context. In doing so, its aim has not been to provide a celebratory account of these women or of the maternity homes which assisted them, nor has it been to imply that the treatment and experiences of different groups of unmarried mothers were necessarily the same. Even in the decades preceding apartheid, state and church resources were differentially allocated, advantaging white unmarried mothers over their coloured counterparts, who were seen as both more prone towards illegitimacy and less capable of reform. Religious differences also impacted on the response of local communities to unmarried motherhood. However, unmarried mothers at the Mary Rolt Hostel and St Monica's Home did share a number of interesting characteristics; they were young, often working-class, and, most importantly in the eyes the dominant bourgeoisie, both were considered to have 'wandered off course', their pregnant stomachs and ringless fingers proof of their failure to tow the moral line.

Yet, despite having 'wandered of course', these women were less of an aberration than was often supposed by those in positions of authority. Predominantly from racially-mixed, working class neighbourhoods, unmarried mothers at the Mary Rolt Hostel and St Monica's Home came from communities within which premarital sex was, if not a part of mainstream courtship behaviour, then at least much closer to the norm than in many other social environments. Obviously, this in itself is not enough to explain single motherhood within these communities. Premarital sex did not always result in pregnancy, and even where it did, many couples chose to marry before the child's birth. Nonetheless, within a period of economic instability, increasing geographic mobility, and waning family and community supervision, premarital sex held risks, particularly for women.

In the previous chapter, I argue that early-twentieth century courtship should regarded as a process of personal and social bargaining in which both men and women were active participants.[495] If viewed in this way, it is possible to see several paths which might have resulted in an illegitimate birth. Firstly, there were instances in which women were at best mistaken or misled and at worst sexually exploited by men who had no intention of marrying them. Women with fewer social resources were more vulnerable to being deceived or abandoned as they lacked the influence to enforce a marriage. Secondly, some women chose unwed motherhood as the alternative to an undesirable marriage. Although such women might suffer social disapproval, they might also avoid other longer lasting hardships in the form of physical abuse and limited economic and bodily autonomy. Finally, there were couples who shared a mutual intention to marry and whose children, many of whom were later legitimated by marriage, were the product of sexual unions that were premature in terms of economic resources.[496] There were also a small number of cases in which the desire to marry was present, at least at conception, but where its fulfilment was permanently impeded by insurmountable financial and legal odds, the sudden death of one partner, or the intractable opposition of parents.

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[495] G. Alter. *Family and the Female Life Course*, p. 139.

All of these paths are represented in the case records discussed in this chapter. That these different paths existed serves to highlight the essential complexity of the living and marital arrangements of ordinary working class people within early to mid-twentieth century Cape Town. Notwithstanding the presence of strict societal attitudes towards sexuality, within such communities the dynamics of family formation were relatively fluid, facilitating the accommodation of a range of individual needs and circumstances. Value was placed on female chastity before marriage, but, for practical reasons, it was seldom "considered the sole or predominant virtue in a bride".[497] This ought not to be interpreted as an obvious sign of female sexual emancipation or equality. The sexual double standard which had concerned female reformers during the second half of the nineteenth century had certainly not disappeared. However, courtship was changing and, as the above cases illustrate, working class women played an important role in shaping courtship outcomes within the wake of these changes.

For obvious reasons, narratives such as these – in which ordinary women found ways to adapt to a constantly evolving courtship process and in which communities played a key role in raising illegitimate children – did not easily make their way into the public discourse around illegitimacy. Contemporary historians, however, have both the tools and the obligation to begin unearthing these narratives and in so doing to "revise long held myths about family life in the past as well as generalizations about the impact of the grand processes of social change on the family".[498]

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[496] G. Alter. *Family and the Female Life Course*, p. 139.
[497] G. Alter. *Family and the Female Life Course*, p. 114.
[498] T. Hareven. "The History of the Family and the Complexity of Social Change", p. 124.

General Conclusion

In his work on respectability and its conduits at the Cape, Robert Ross makes the important point that:

> For obvious reasons the historical record tends to over-emphasise either the top of society, who are role models and create information, or the bottom who are targets of prurient disapproval and offence from those who, for whatever reason, feel the need to intervene.[499]

Modern conservatives in their framing of courtship and family life in the period preceding the Sexual Revolution have often, whether consciously or not, recreated the image of a society in which there was a clear dichotomy between those who conformed and those who did not; between the 'respectable' majority and those on other side of the moral divide.[500] But did such a simple dichotomy actually exist, or is our idea of family life simply premised on an archive that Ross argues is designed in such a way as to constantly emphasise the separation between top and bottom, whilst also privileging the ideas and experiences of a select social elite? This thesis has analysed this question with specific reference to premarital pregnancy and unmarried motherhood in Anglican Cape Town.

The early twentieth century was a period of rapid social and economic change in Cape Town, during which administrative reforms, advances in biological knowledge and an increasing emphasis on public health allowed for new information to emerge regarding the sexual lives of the population at large. As in many other colonial port cities, so in Cape Town, the spread of venereal disease, as well as the publication of modern statistics on illegitimacy, infant mortality and overcrowding helped to fuel growing panics about sexual immorality and degeneration. In response to these panics, and to influential trends in policy thinking from abroad, welfare and health services designed specifically to cater to the maternity needs of the working class population were established.

Although a fierce debate continued to rage between women's organisations rooted in the reform tradition of the late 1890's and early 1900's which believed that it was only through active intervention into the sexual, conjugal and domestic lives of the urban poor that the family unit could be preserved, and more conservative social commentators who felt that institutions like the Society for the Protection of Child Life and unmarried mothers hostels were encouraging the 'social tragedy' of illegitimacy, these services were eventually extended to unmarried mothers.

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[499] R. Ross. *Status and Respectability*, p.83.

[500] S. Coontz. *The Way We Never Were: American Families and the Nostalgia Trap*, Chapter 1. For a more global interpretation of this phenomenon see M. Bittman and J. Pixley. *The Double Life of the Family: Myth, Hope and Emergence* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1997), pp. 1-16.

However, as the first chapter of this study illustrates, despite a growing awareness of the plight of the unmarried mother and increased organisational support for such women in Cape Town, they continued to be viewed as fundamentally deviant and were treated thus. The language employed to describe this deviance, through which it was possible to contain issues of social change and of sexual and class conflict, largely mirrored that being used in Europe and the United States. What made the conversation in Cape Town distinctive was the complex racial and religious context in which it developed. In South Africa, as in the United States, the public discourse surrounding unmarried motherhood was refracted through a racial lens and mediated in such a way that white unmarried motherhood and black or coloured unmarried motherhood were assigned strikingly different meanings. This sometimes translated into differential treatment for the women involved, with fewer resources being allocated to the care of black or coloured unmarried mothers.

In Cape Town, though, support for coloured unmarried mothers was given an unusual impetus. Aware of the help being offered to unmarried mothers by the Muslim community and anxious to prevent an increasing section of Cape Town's coloured population from becoming "Mohammedan at heart", the Anglican Church in particular saw provision for these women as an essential part of its missionary enterprise.[501] Thus, while race determined much of the language used to describe unmarried motherhood and limited the services available to black and coloured single mothers, religious concerns also influenced the public discourse surrounding illegitimacy. Interestingly, this meant that while homes for unmarried mothers were usually segregated by race and different standards applied to white and coloured or black unmarried mothers, these standards did not always benefit white women (for example, The Mary Rolt Hostel was only open to women during their first pregnancy, whereas this stipulation did not apply to those entering St. Monica's).

Analysing the discourse surrounding out-of-wedlock pregnancy can tell us much about broader fears relating to social and economic change in urban Cape Town. More difficult to gauge is to what extent these discourses accurately represented the lives of their subjects. Just because unmarried motherhood was described and treated in a certain way by those in positions of power does not mean that this is how it was understood and experienced by ordinary people; nor does it mean that such views accurately reflected more generalized individual and community attitudes towards premarital sex. Despite significant inter-parish variation, illegitimacy and bridal pregnancy accounted for a substantial proportion of births within Anglican Cape Town; the data suggests that on average one in three marital births in the seven parishes which have been transcribed was the result of a premarital conception, while in parishes like Maitland as many as one in four children was baptized without a father present. In addition, a not insubstantial number of children (13%) within the matched sample were legitimated *per subsequens matrimonium,* meaning that although their birth preceded their parents' marriage, such a marriage did eventually take place.

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[501] Wits Historical Papers Archive, AB2029 Ha6, Speech Notes, p. 1.

The quantitative evidence presented in this study serves to corroborate as well as to complicate Burman and Naude's argument that different communities within Cape Town had very different commitments to the values of legitimacy and of sexual purity.[502] Race and class were both important factors in determining the likelihood of a premarital pregnancy in Anglican Cape Town. Illegitimacy and bridal pregnancy ratios were at their highest within predominantly coloured, working class parishes like Athlone or Maitland. However, neither phenomenon was entirely concentrated within these communities. Instead, it seems that it was only amongst the white upper and middle classes – those who were mainly responsible for the legal and social provisions available to unmarried mothers – that illegitimacy and bridal pregnancy were more or less absent. Possibly this had more do with access to contraception and to efficient ways of concealing pregnancy than to major differences in sexual behaviour, but it does also speak to the disparities between bourgeoisie and working class visions of respectability and to the effect that these disparities had on risk-taking within courtship. As Regina Kinzul writes, "although middle-class sexual mores set chastity against promiscuity, some working-class women held to a more fluid definition of respectability that could include varying degrees of sexual experience"; an argument which is borne out in the final chapter of this thesis.[503]

In this chapter case files from the Mary Rolt Hostel and St. Monica's Home were used to shed light on the varied lives and experiences of unmarried mothers in Cape Town. Although these records pose their own methodological challenges, they nevertheless reveal how different women negotiated the crisis of out-of-wedlock pregnancy, in particular helping to illuminate why they turned to maternity homes, how they experienced life within them and the mixed trajectories that their lives followed after giving birth. While they were seldom treated as such, women in this position were often active and resourceful agents, capable not only of shaping their own sexual histories, but also of resisting the constraints imposed on them and retaining a sense of independence even within the confines of the unmarried mothers' home. For these women the line between respectability and disrepute was far more tenuous than bourgeoisie commentators would have liked to admit, a tenuousness that, contrary to image of the unmarried mother as a life-long outcast, seems to have worked both ways, with unmarried mothers – especially those from racially-mixed, working class neighbourhoods – often managing to reintegrate into conventional society.

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[502] S. Burman & M. Naude. "Bearing a Bastard", p. 410.

[503] R. Kinzul. *Fallen Women, Problem Girls,* p. 57.

In conclusion, this thesis has told two intertwined stories: one about public perceptions and official responses to bridal pregnancy and unmarried motherhood in Cape Town during the first half of the twentieth century, and the other about the diverse lives and experiences of the individuals, and particularly the women, at the centre of these separate, yet related phenomena. Of course, fathers and premaritally conceived children have histories of their own and, though neither is absent in the telling of unmarried mothers' stories, these histories are large and complex enough to be the subject of independent research. Once uncovered, they will allow for a more complete picture of extramarital sexuality and its consequences in South Africa.

In order to create such a picture it is also important that the findings put forward in this study, which relate mainly to Anglican Cape Town, be considered within a broader context. An absence of reliable demographic data and a lack of sustained analysis pertaining to the data that is available (e.g. parish registers) has meant that scholars know very little about the shape and extent of bridal pregnancy and illegitimacy across different parts of South Africa. The premarital pregnancy ratio in Cape Town, a garrison and university town, may have been somewhat exceptional but without additional information this is difficult to verify.[504]

Equally difficult to know is how the ratio of premarital pregnancy in the Anglican Church compared to the ratio of premarital pregnancy in other religious communities in Cape Town. The evidence presented in Chapters 2 and 3 suggests that although out-of-wedlock pregnancy transcended the boundaries of class, race and religion, these factors were crucial in determining local responses to this phenomenon. Cape Town's Muslim community appears to have been more accepting of out-of-wedlock pregnancy than its Christian counterpart but this requires further investigation, as does the supposition that there were significant differences in out-of-wedlock pregnancy between denominations within the Christian Church.

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[504] J. van Bavel. "Family Control, Bridal Pregnancy, and Illegitimacy", p. 459.

The trends observed in this thesis reflect a particular moment or set of moments in Cape Town's history, during which sexual attitudes and behaviours varied widely. Over time growing prosperity, especially amongst Cape Town's coloured and African populations, and the gradual spread of middle-class sexual mores, may have led to greater uniformity and to a more substantial decline in the illegitimacy ratio. As noted, although the number of bridal pregnancies per annum within the Anglican community remained high, marriage rates were increasing relative to overall population growth, and had the population had the chance to adapt without interruption to the effects of rapid urbanisation and industrialisation, informal liaisons might have become less common.[505] Such arguments are purely speculative, however, in the light of the impact of new legislation which caused serious dislocation in family life.

The introduction of the apartheid system in 1948, while "not as great an innovation as at first sight appears", would change the legal dynamics of family formation in Cape Town.[506] In 1949 the government passed the Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act, an act preventing marriage between white individuals and those regarded as coloured, African or Asian. The following year legislation was passed which instituted strict residential segregation, and by 1953 the Reservation of Separate Amenities Act ensured that access to public spaces was decided on the basis of race. Influx controls were also imposed, limiting the right of Africans to be in urban areas. All of these laws generated enormous upheaval in community and family norms, one of the unintended consequences of which was rising illegitimacy ratios.[507]

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[505] R. Probert. "The context of illegitimacy from the 1920s to the 1960s" in R. Probert (ed.) *Cohabitation and Non-Marital Births* , p. 145 and S. Burman and P. van der Spuy. "The Illegitimate and the Illegal", p. 615.
[506] S. Burman and M. Naude. "Bearing a Bastard", p. 413.
[507] S. Burman and P. van der Spuy. "The Illegitimate and the Illegal", p. 630.

Appendix A

The figures included in this section reflect individual parish pre-nuptial pregnancy ratios, calculated by dividing the number of premarital conceptions in the matched dataset by the total number of births per five year period for each parish. Primarily because of issues relating to sample size, these ratios are only a very crude measure of pre-nuptial pregnancy over time. However, they are useful in illustrating the role that community and demographic pressures played in shaping courtship outcomes. Even in relatively homogenous societies demographers have found sexual and reproductive patterns to be "extremely locally diverse, not only in terms of social class, but also community and 'place'".[508] In Cape Town then, a city characterised by high levels of racial, ethnic, religious and socio-economic diversity, it is hardly surprising that pre-nuptial pregnancy ratios varied widely from parish to parish. Given the high degree of demographic change in areas such as Mowbray, it does also seem likely that pre-nuptial pregnancy ratios in such areas would have fluctuated, although perhaps not quite to the same extent as Figure 4.2 seems to indicate. The figures below reflect the number of out-of-wedlock conceptions divided by the total number of first children baptised in each parish.

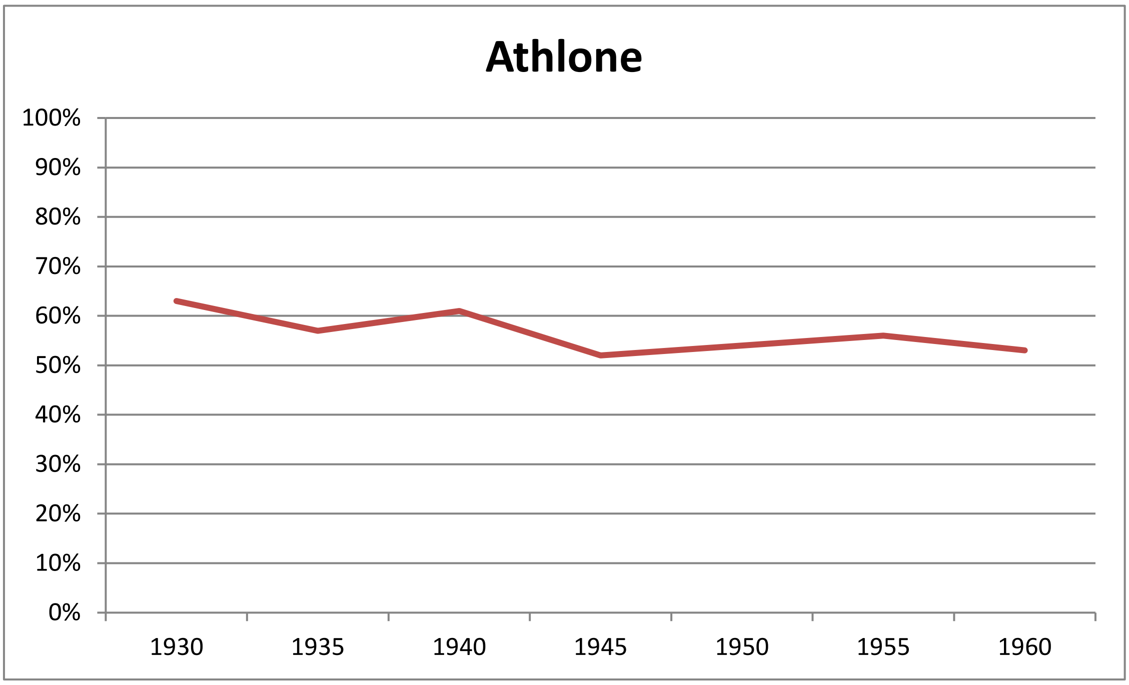

Figure 4.1: Pre-Nuptial Pregnancy Ratio for St. Mark's Parish, Athlone, 1930-1960

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[508] S. Szreter & K. Fisher. *Sex before the Sexual Revolution*, p. 338.

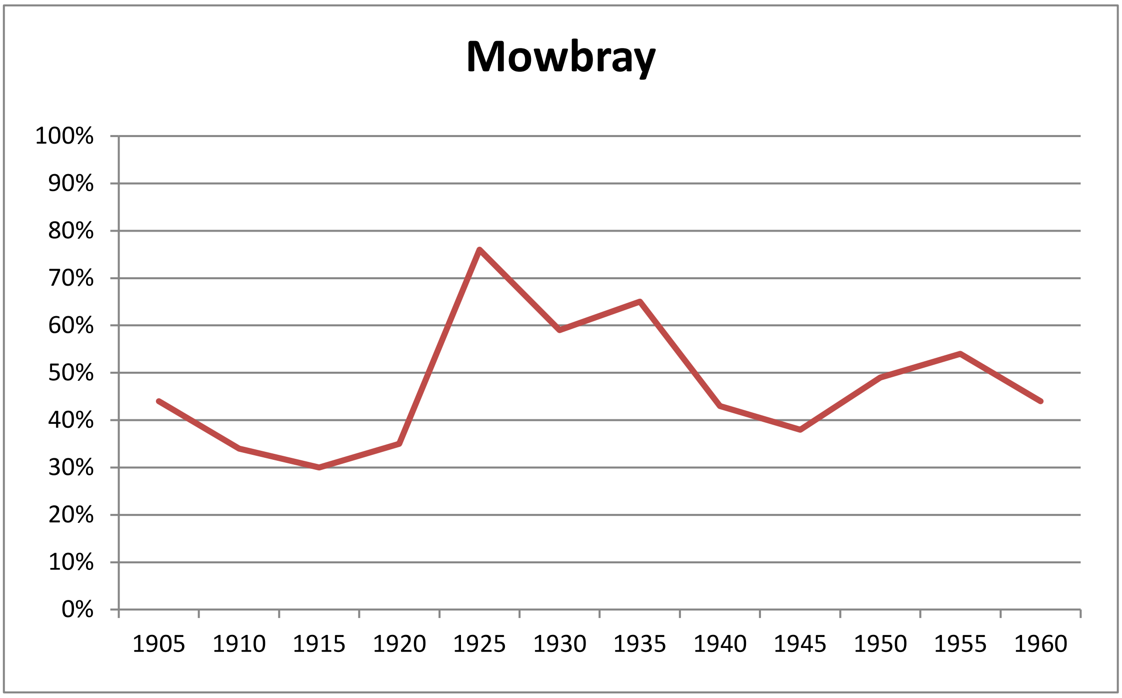

Figure 4.2: Pre-Nuptial Pregnancy Ratio for St. Peter's Parish, Mowbray, 1905-1960

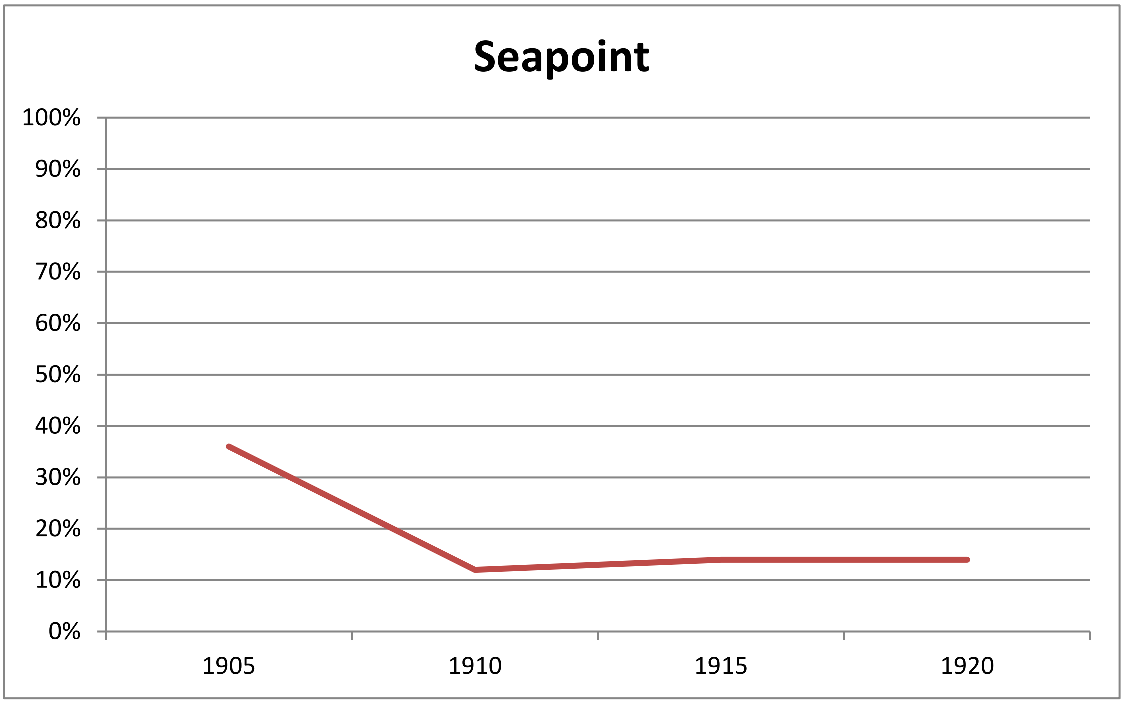

Figure 4.3: Pre-Nuptial Pregnancy Ratio for St. James the Great Parish, Seapoint, 1905-1920

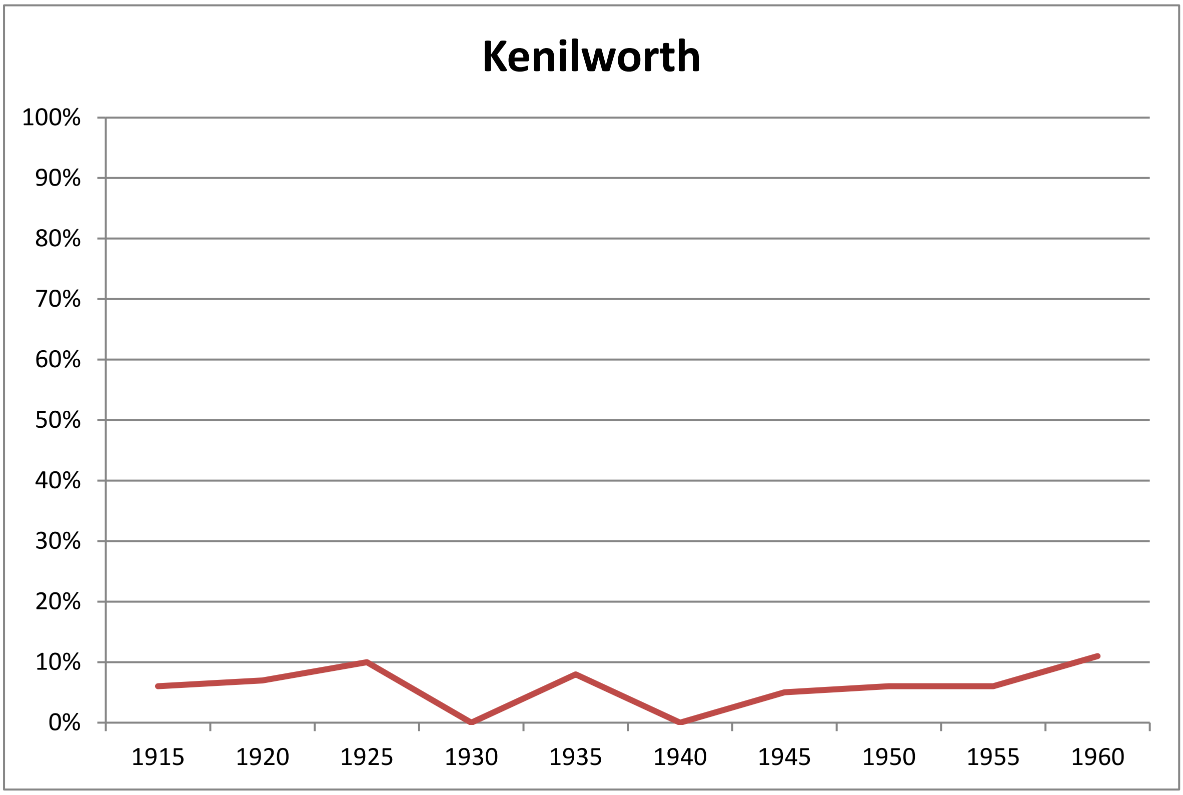

Figure 4.4: Pre-Nuptial Pregnancy Ratio for Christ Church Parish, Kenilworth, 1915-1960

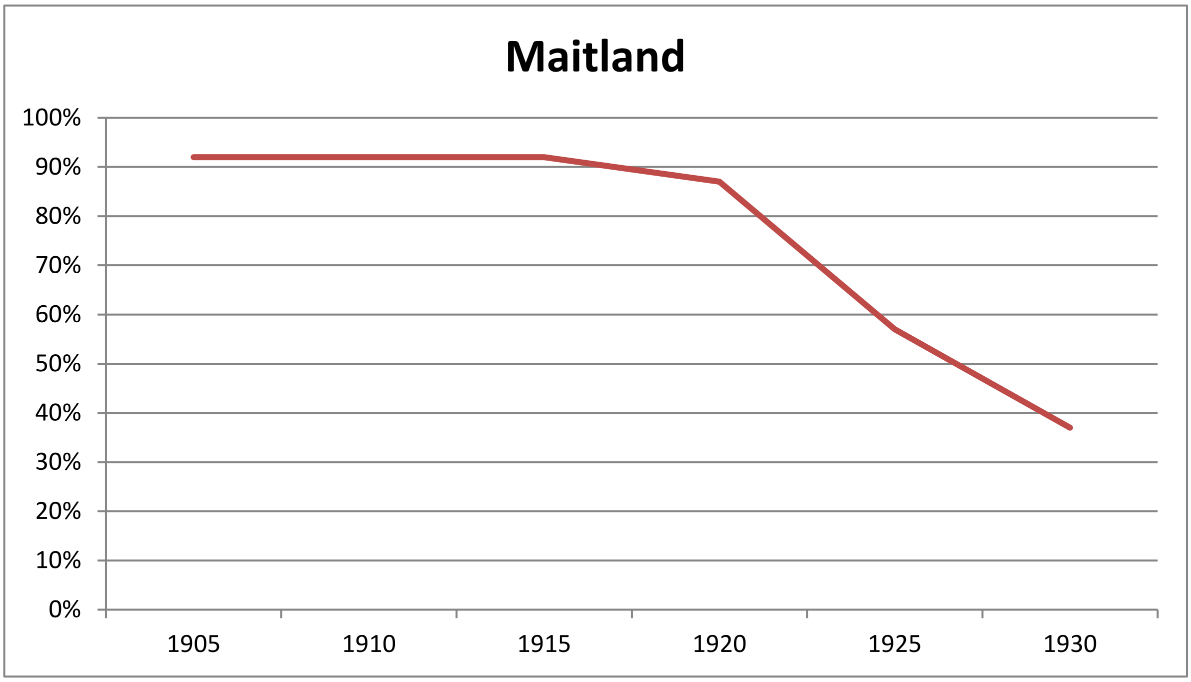

Figure 4.5: Pre-Nuptial Pregnancy Ratio for St. John’s Parish, Maitland, 1905-1930

Appendix B

Year	White Ratio	Coloured Ratio	Coloured + White Ratio
1900	3.80 %	21.42 %	13.94 %
1901	4.03 %	14.20 %	10.54 %
1902	4.48 %	22.47 %	15.93 %
1903	5.47 %	19.10 %	14.54 %
1904	4.11 %	20.16 %	14.48 %
1905	6.79 %	19.23 %	15.18 %
1906	7.93 %	24.62 %	18.83 %
1907	7.68 %	25.27 %	19.28 %
1908	6.83 %	27.11 %	20.67 %
1909	7.96 %	22.79 %	17.95 %
1910	9.40 %	23.34 %	18.81 %
1911	8.69 %	22.78 %	18.32 %
1912	9.40 %	25.06 %	20.50 %
1913	9.46 %	23.62 %	19.42 %
1914	6.49 %	25.75 %	18.04 %
1915	6.90 %	26.48 %	18.65 %
1916	7.50 %	25.27 %	18.50 %
1917	6.77 %	25.01 %	17.62 %
1918	7.04 %	25.35 %	17.96 %
1919	8.34 %	25.77 %	18.16 %
1920	6.45 %	24.74 %	17.86 %
1921	5.86 %	25.36 %	17.54 %
1922	6.58 %	26.51 %	19.13 %
1923	7.18 %	25.85 %	19.17 %
1924	6.34 %	24.74 %	18.23 %
1925	5.84 %	24.12 %	18.10 %
1926	4.67 %	24.20 %	17.53 %
1927	5.54 %	23.03 %	17.38 %
1928	5.38 %	23.18 %	17.26 %
1929	6.01 %	22.65 %	17.31 %
1930	4.98 %	23.63 %	17.46 %
1931	5.59 %	23.01 %	17.42 %
1932	4.86 %	23.04 %	17.42 %
1933	4.40 %	22.44 %	17.21 %
1934	5.31 %	23.39 %	18.36 %
1935	4.75 %	21.90 %	17.13 %
1936	5.42 %	21.99 %	17.18 %
1937	4.72 %	21.91 %	17.18 %
1938	5.47 %	21.11 %	16.47 %
1939	5.02 %	22.35 %	17.32 %
1940	5.02 %	21.77 %	16.77 %

Table 5.1: Illegitimate Birth Ratios, Cape Town, 1900-1940 (Source Burman & Naude, 1991)

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