

**Making Motherhood Work:
Women's Child Support Claims, Race, and the Remaking of Citizenship in South Africa, 1958-2015**

by

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Dedication

This dissertation is about support and, as such, is dedicated to the many pillars who held me up throughout this process—kin, friends, teachers, and, foundationally, Point women.

Livelihood strategies also extend past the time and place of this dissertation. I am the result of a fiercely strong woman, one who survived the Dust Bowl, fought for a college education in the 1930s, lost her husband, and struggled through her Master's so as to support her daughters. She is a pillar both genealogically and through her decades of encouragement. Thank you, Florence Brady.

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Relations Relations of debt and dependence are not merely the subject of this dissertation. This dissertation is the result of such relations and no gifts can fully reciprocate all that I have been given.

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Table of Contents

Dedication	ii
Acknowledgements	iii
List of Figures	xi
Abstract.....	xii
Chapter 1 - Introduction.....	1
Why Child Support	4
Situating Interventions	16
<i>Kinship and Dependence</i>	19
<i>Kinship and Economy</i>	28
<i>Kinship and Citizenship</i>	31
Outline of Chapters	39
Chapter 2 - Working Motherhood: Fieldsite and Methods.....	44
What is the Point?	44
<i>The Port</i>	45
<i>The Beachfront</i>	48
<i>The Street</i>	50
<i>The Vibe</i>	55
Research in a Context of Mistrust.....	59
Chapter 3 - “We have done everything right by our children”: Public Motherhood as Precarious Claim-Making in 1960s Durban	71
Motherhood on File	76
Families, Race, and the South African Welfare State	78
The Making of Motherhood in Apartheid South Africa.....	103
Discipline and Support: Furthering the Project of ‘Getting By’	121
Conclusions	126
Chapter 4 - Multiple Maternities: Maternal Repertoires and Support Seeking	129
On Metaphors and Maternity.....	141
“‘We are mothers, we are hustlers”- Making Motherhood Work.....	147
Managing Multiple Maternities	150
Conclusion.....	157

Chapter 5 - Problematic Paters and Foreign Fathers: Race, Class, and Paternal Projects	160
.....	
Fatherhood in The Files--1960s.....	169
<i>Victor</i>	175
<i>James</i>	182
Fatherhood on Point--2014.....	187
<i>Allen</i>	188
<i>Tonton</i>	192
Conclusion.....	197
Chapter 6 - The “Maintenance” of Family: Mediating Relationships in the South African Maintenance Court	200
.....	
Family Strengthening and a ‘Culture of Nonpayment’.....	207
Maintenance in South Africa: Background and Process.....	212
Economies of Intimacy.....	219
The Court’s Place in the Project of Family Making.....	222
Conclusion.....	230
Chapter 7 - They come to take our women and our jobs”: Migrants, Marriage, and National Belonging	233
.....	
Point Partnerships.....	239
Citizenship, Personhood, Belonging.....	240
<i>Marriage, Personhood, Belonging</i>	244
Intimacies in an Age of Insecurity.....	247
<i>Love Talk</i>	251
New Forms of Marginalization.....	252
Conclusion.....	257
Chapter 8 - Conclusion	259
Chapter 9 - Epilogue	265
Bibliography	270

List of Figures

Figure 1.1: Child Support Grant (Children’s Institute 2016).....	13
Figure 2.1: The Point in geographic context.....	44
Figure 2.2: The Toyota factory lot and cranes of the harbor.....	45
Figure 2.3: An aerial view of Durban's iconic beachfront. Point is on the left (southernmost) portion.....	48
Figure 2.4: Kombi taxis rush by on one of the Point's major intersections	50
Figure 2.5: Women trade washing-watching duties in a Point alleyway.....	55
Figure 3.1: Number of Maintenance Grants per thousand children aged 0-17 years (van der Berg quoted in Haarman 1998)	100
Figure 4.1: A statement about distribution on Maryann's door.....	129
Figure 6.1: Excerpts from the brochure "Maintenance and Child Support: A Shared Responsibility"	208
Figure 7.1: The dress of Muslim respondents as compared to their peers.....	253

Abstract

This dissertation, tracks the interrelationship between citizenship, kinship, and economy through the lens of claims made by poor South African women for resources to support their children. It is based on 18 months of fieldwork in South Africa that included extended ethnography in the inner-city Point neighborhood of Durban, interviews in isiZulu and English, oral histories, and archival research with court and welfare case files of neighborhood residents. The dissertation demonstrates how the content of citizenship is created and negotiated at the micro-political scale of interpersonal relationship through the everyday processes by which people seek to fashion a secure existence. By detailing women's labors to garner resources for their families and themselves, this dissertation argues that poor women are shaping the character of citizenship in post-apartheid South Africa and forging new relations between citizens and the state.

The critical backdrop to this research is the dramatic transformation of South Africa's political economy between 1960 and 2015. Alongside a transition that extended democratic citizenship for all, new forms of insecurity and exclusion framed by race, class, and gender, have emerged. The collapse of the waged labor system has made formalizing marriages all but impossible and family life increasingly tenuous, the burdens of which are predominantly shouldered by women who continue to be the primary caregivers of children. This dissertation takes a historical anthropological approach to analyzing the meaning of these political economic shifts by chronicling poor mothers' livelihood strategies across this period. A key aspect of these strategies is social protection and the political recognition it conveyed. The apartheid-era State

Maintenance Grant that once robustly supported a minority of white mothers has been replaced by a radical Child Support Grant (CSG) that now reaches 60% of all South Africa's children at a total cost of 3.5% of the national budget. However, the CSG targets children, not their caregivers, requiring mothers to look elsewhere for support and recognition. Crucially, women are building resource networks across families, friends, and communities that enable alternative conditions of debt and dependence in ways increasingly independent of marriage. Via this "kinshipping" labor, or the fostering of relations of dependence, this dissertation argues, women are redefining obligations between men and women, persons and communities, citizens and state.

This dissertation contributes to scholarship on kinship and citizenship. It shows how projects of social reproduction constitute contingent economic and political relationships that structure people's lives far more than any totalizing logic. By providing a robust account for how unequal capital accumulation and political power are brought about through the production and maintenance of kinship, this analysis contributes to longstanding discussions within both feminist and kinship theory about the inseparability of the domestic, economic, and political domains. Further, this research challenges geopolitical paradigms that separate the global north from south. South Africa's state social assistance programs generate issues mirrored in Canada, the US, and Europe, while at the same time unemployment and the postcolonial legacy link it to challenges faced across the African continent and beyond.

Chapter 1 - Introduction

Why do you want to move to town?" I asked the young nursing assistant, Phumzile. She replied in a voice barely audible, covering her mouth and further obscuring her words, "In the townships, they eat your money. In town, you eat for yourself." Her bashful demeanor, steeped in the Zulu tradition of *hlonipha*—patterns of speech and comportment to demonstrate respect—belied or, more aptly, arose from the boldness of her statement. She continued to explain that in the townships, where she lived on the outskirts of Durban, "we live with our family. In town, you live alone. [Now] If I have money, I have to buy something for them every time I get money. I don't get things that I want because I have to take care of them." In her framing, to leave the family home in the townships and move "to town", meaning closer to the city center, would enable her to sever or at least stretch the bonds of familial obligation around resource sharing. As one of the only income earners in her household and as a young woman, Phumzile was expected to turn over her weekly earnings to her grandmother in order to help support all the members of the household: herself, her grandmother, one uncle, two sisters, one brother and 5 young children, one of whom was Phumzile's daughter.

Phumzile bristled that her daughter went to school in a uniform with holes in it—a source of great shame to her—even though her mother had a "good job". Phumzile bemoaned the lack of control she had over the money she earned and resented the fact that her brother's car got new parts while her daughter's school fees went unpaid. For her, a move to town would free her from the obligation to support a family of 11 and allow her to focus her resources on herself and her

daughter. In town, she imagined, they would find a quieter house, better schools, and the opportunity to “eat nicely.”

Many of the residents I knew who lived “in town” in the inner-city Point neighborhood, had motivations much like Phumzile’s. They came seeking a “better life” in one form or another – better schooling, more employment opportunities, “proper” housing. Some moved in an attempt to manage the kinship obligations that—like Phumzile—they chafed against. The smaller flats and limited visitation policies of the inner-city buildings meant that family could not descend unannounced or en masse to make demands that were difficult to refuse. Others came from poorer areas with the vision of obtaining a job and sending remittances home. Confronted with the realities of scarce employment they cut family ties out of shame. Still others were running from a toxic home life riddled with the abuse and neglect that often goes hand and hand with poverty. Regardless of the motivation, those seeking independence were much disappointed. Much to their dismay, many of them found that they substituted one form of obligation for another. As one resident put it, town was a place where you, “left behind one family to make another.”

In some respects, the pervasiveness of obligation is not surprising. Multiple ties of debt and dependency are at the heart of how social personhood is defined in South Africa, most especially for black Africans, the race group to which Phumzile identified. Though desires like Phumzile’s to escape others’ claims on her resources were by no means uncommon, to voice such desires, was. The very suggestion that someone wished to “eat for oneself” was considered not only stingy but antisocial and provoked suspicions of nefarious actions such as witchcraft. Furthermore, as a young woman, to go against the gendered and generational expectations that elders and males should have greater control over her earnings posed a threat to carefully

guarded familial hierarchies and could incite violent retaliation. More and more people in South Africa today are surviving based on claims they are making upon a shrinking pool of wage-earners such as Phumzile.

However, Phumzile's longing for independence also arose out of a current political economic context in which jobs such as her nursing assistantship were increasingly scarce. Of the six adults in Phumzile's household, she was the only one who earned a wage. The other income came from government support in the form of her grandmother's pension, and Child Support Grants for 4 of the 5 children. It was only through practices of sharing and redistribution that all the members of Phumzile's household—and those of her neighboring households—were able to survive.

Though unfortunate, Phumzile's story is not unique to South Africa. Access to arable land or waged employment is less and less available to larger segments of the global population. In some contexts, in the global south—e.g. Brazil or Zambia—new forms of government assistance have stepped in to attempt to fill a part of the gap left by a dramatically shifting economy. Though such interventions are critical both for their recipients and for the new forms of governmentality they portend, the reality is that a diversity of livelihood strategies have become necessary for survival. These overwhelmingly involve claims of dependence, grounded in ideologies of kinship, upon persons, communities, and states that, in turn, are reshaping economies and political belonging across the globe.

I consider this global phenomenon from the perspective of poor women living a heterogeneous, inner-city neighborhood. Far from the freedom that Phumzile envisioned, life in town for poor women like herself, necessitated complex webs of obligation and accountability, the terms of which were not always clearly defined. Women found themselves forging

relationships of debt and dependency across divides of race, language, and nationality. As these relationships were formed, the forms of obligation they entailed also had to be negotiated.

This dissertation argues that poor women's ongoing labors to secure resources for their families and themselves not only respond to, but actively construct the gendered and racial economy of the country and remake the meaning of citizenship. The critical backdrop to this research is South Africa's radical child support grant, which reaches 60% of children but allocates no money for their caregivers. These grants reflect the post-apartheid reality where many South Africans lack access to traditional forms of political recognition—marriage and wage work—that also enabled social reproduction. Impoverished mothers have experienced their political support and recognition move from a social protection system that bolstered white motherhood to a democratic one that assists all needy children, but erases their caregivers.

Using archival and ethnographic research, I track the livelihood strategies of poor mothers living under these two regimes. My work reveals that women responded to men's declining ability to earn a family wage by cultivating new relations of obligation and dependency. I show how women built resource networks across families, friends, and communities that outlined alternative conditions of debt and duty not grounded in either a marital contract or relations of affinity. In the process, I argue, women redefined obligations between men and women, persons and communities, citizens and the state.

Why Child Support

This dissertation considers issues of citizenship, kinship, and economy through the lens of child support. In the United States and Europe, the term child support overwhelmingly evokes the idea of cash payments made between parents who no longer financially collaborate in the raising of their child(ren). Such payments are distinctive because they are oftentimes mediated

by formal institutions such as a court or a welfare office. My use of the term here is much more capacious. I continue to use the term child support because I am concerned with court-mandated cash payments between parents—referred to in the South African context as maintenance—and state grants for the support of children—South Africa’s State Maintenance Grant and Child Support Grant. Use of the term child support helps retain the important socio-legal meaning given to these payments. However, I also include other resources such as clothing, food, bedding, cell phone minutes, school fees, or child care that are sought, shared, or exchanged as part of the larger effort of child rearing. These resources are less commonly considered part of the purview of the formal category of child support, yet my informants specifically enumerated such things as critical to providing for the needs of their children. While any item on this list could be secured through a cash payment, in the context of poverty where cash is often challenging to access, these resources were often sought in their own right as in-kind exchanges. Furthermore, their distribution and re-distribution were managed by extra-legal systems of exchange and reciprocity through which people articulated their understandings of obligation and dependence.

Child support in this broader sense offers a useful analytic lens because it sits at the intersection of state, community, and interpersonal obligation. Through debates about who should provide what sorts of resources to children and why, the state’s obligations to its citizens, a community’s obligation to its members, and people’s obligations to one another are negotiated and defined. My examination of child support seeking reveals these processes.

In addition to its analytic purchase, the support of children has critical resonance to my historic actors—the mothers and fathers working to raise children in South Africa between 1958 and 2014, the social workers acting as gatekeepers to resources, and the policymakers outlining

the contours of their nations. In present-day South Africa, the financial security of children qua families is the metric by which both citizens and that state evaluate the success of the democratic project. While this reflects a shifting emphasis on children following the 1979 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, the financial welfare of children held significance in earlier decades, albeit with different meaning.

At various points throughout history, the notion of a crisis of the family has been invoked as a means of displacing social and political anxieties and giving name to their emotional intensity. Concerns about these crises have centered around how “the family” goes about caring for its child(ren). While oftentimes such discourses bespoke a socio-economic shift in which care for children in ways that were previously relied upon were no longer possible—in the case of black South Africans, such shifts were frequently brought about by racial rule—they also served to both reify a singular normative version of family (often nuclear) and obscure the incredible flexibility of families to weather change. For black South Africans, invocations of crisis punctuated changes such as rapid urbanization (Hunter [Wilson] 1936; Krige 1936), the migratory labor system’s spatial stretching of family bonds (Schapera 1947; Mager 1999; Delius and Glaser 2002), and the era of wageless life (Hunter 2006 & 2010, Ferguson 2016). Concerns about white families centered more on the problems improper child support caused for continued white dominance of the country. This might be an issue of white poverty and improper child rearing (Posel 1991); a decline in the white birthrate (Report on Committee of inquiry into Family Allowances 1961) or a change in family composition with the rise of women’s rights, employment, and divorce (Report on the Congress of the Family Year 1961). South African citizens, most often women, also took up the discourse of family crisis in order to make political claims about state policies that were making life untenable by grounding them in the morally

resonant language of the needs of children (for whites see du Toit for black Africans see Healey-Clancy 2017).

Since democratic transition, women often speak of an inability to support their children as a means of critiquing a state that has failed in its revolutionary promises and to articulate a crisis in social reproduction that characterizes the post-apartheid moment. During the recession of the mid-1970s, the South African economy made an important shift from one of labor shortage to one of labor surplus and accompanying unemployment. The viability of the rural apartheid homelands, which had been in decline for decades, finally collapsed with the loss of migrant remittances. Women flocked to the industrial sector to offset these losses. As the apartheid policies were slowly undone, it was hoped that newly available credit, freedom of movement, and political inclusion would rejuvenate the flagging economy. Democratic transition was to initiate South Africa's integration into a new global age of prosperity.

However, this radical transformation had rather unfortunate timing. A "better life for all", the promise of the new regime was not to be brought about through a redistributionist revolution as many of the anti-apartheid activists had hoped it would be. Instead, in keeping with the times, South Africa embarked on a "homegrown" structural adjustment program where massive deregulation and privatization was to foster a more "business friendly" environment that would usher in economic growth and job creation (Bond 2005:6). These jobs were envisioned to rectify the radical socioeconomic inequality of the past and bring about a virtuous democratic citizenry. Unfortunately, though South Africa's economy *did* grow, the net effect was a shedding, not accumulation of jobs (Seekings and Natrass 200)5. This has led to a rising number of unemployed who cannot and likely will not be able to enter the waged labor market. Hunter

sums up the generational shift that took place “from mostly men *earning a living* and supporting a wife to many men and women *making a living* in multifarious ways” (2012: 3)

In 2014, when I conducted the bulk of my fieldwork, the national expanded unemployment rate was 35% and the numbers were even starker when accounting for race, gender, or geographic location (STATSSA 2014).¹ Women faced disproportionately high levels of formal unemployment (39% for women, 22% for men) and black African women had the highest unemployment rate in the country (46%).² For KwaZulu-Natal, the province in which Durban is located, the expanded unemployment rate in 2014 was 39.5% (STATSSA 2014). The lack of formal jobs had a number of effects that are detailed throughout this dissertation. For the purposes of this section, the critical effect in the context of child support was the impact on marriage as the dominant social institution regulating parental support of children. Notably, scarcity of income hindered the ability of black Africans to formalize marriage through the exchange of *ilobolo* or bride wealth and the other gifts associated with the marriage process. Poverty’s impact on white and coloured families led to an increase in the divorce rate and single-parent families.

As discussed throughout this dissertation, moral panics over changes in rates of formalized marriage have a long history in South Africa and the tenor of these panics was shaped by prevailing racial ideologies. Here, I simply consider the numbers. Though marriage rates fluctuate year to year, formal marriage rates have declined overall since the 1960s, most dramatically among the black population (Budlender and Lund 2011; Posel et al. 2011).³ Using

¹ The expanded definition of unemployment includes those who are unemployed and who are available to work, whether or not they have taken active steps to find employment.

² In 2015, expanded unemployment rates by racial group and sex: black African women 46%, black African men 35%, colored women 39%, colored men 32%, Indian women 34%, Indian men 22%, white women 22%, white men 14%.

³ Though records of formal marriage rates have been gathered in South Africa for over a century (Breckenridge 2012) their reliability and analytic use require contextualization. Formal marriage rates are imprecise measures of marital status among black

census data, Budlender and Lund found that “in 1960, 2.9 per cent of African women aged 50 years and above were reported as never married, while in 1996 the percentage stood at 19 per cent and in 2001 at 17 per cent” (2011).⁴ By 2010, only 25 percent of all black women were married, compared to 60 percent of white women (Hall and Posel 2012:46). The pattern suggests that there was not only an increase in the age of first marriage, but that increasing numbers of women will never be married in their lifetime.

These trends were despite widespread desire and support for marriage as an institution.⁵ Though it was widely acknowledged that the high cost of bride wealth and nuptial gift exchange limited marriage to the wealthy, many argued that doing away with or modifying the gift amounts would negatively affect the symbolic value of the exchange (Rudwick and Posel 2014 and 2015, Yarbrough 2017). While some couples substituted cohabitation for marriage, for many, notably black women, cohabitation was considered undesirable either due to social stigma or due to an unwillingness to perform the expected domestic labor for a (likely unemployed) man without the status change that marriage would bring (Posel and Rudwick 2014; Walker 2013).⁶ Though couples infrequently married or cohabited, many had children together, in part due to the

South Africans, for whom marriage is a multiyear process and not a single event (Comaroff 1980). Furthermore, in more recent censuses, there is no attempt to differentiate between marital states and cohabitation arrangements despite that fact that they have very different social meanings (Budlender et al. 2004; Hosegood et al. 2009)

⁴ Scholarship on Africa in the 1980s on census data and fertility trends revealed that there were changes in fertility and nuptiality across the continent. However, even in these decades, South African marriage patterns were already exceptional (Harwood-Lejeune 2000; Lesthaeghe & Jolly 1995; Van de Walle 1993). The mean age of marriage for men (28.0 years) was higher than all other regions in Africa, and that of women (23.2 years) was one of the highest (Locoh 1988). Much of this difference is attributed to the social reorganization wrought by apartheid policies.

⁵ In addition to my informants consistently articulating a desire for marriage, see also Posel, Rudwick, and Casale who analyzed attitudinal data collected in a nationally representative survey of adults in South Africa found that almost 90% of black African unmarried adults (20 to 39 years) reported that they wanted to be married someday (2011).

⁶ Household survey data from 1995 and 2008 suggest that while marriage rates have been on the decline among Africans, rates of cohabitation have trebled from about 5% to 15% (Posel and Casale 2013). Nonetheless, Posel and Casale used data from the SASAS (2005) to suggest that cohabitation rates have not increased more because a majority of unmarried African men and women (64% of those 20 to 39 years) do not view cohabitation as an acceptable alternative to marriage (2013).

social value given to children and the act of childbearing.⁷ In their ethnographic research on fertility, Preston-Whyte and Zondi noted:

There is a sense in which the value placed upon children is so high for many people that marriage is, in some contexts, quite irrelevant to the bearing of a child. This is not to suggest that in general marriage is not regarded as the appropriate arena for birth. It is. But failing marriage, children have a value in themselves which cannot be gainsaid (1992).

Their findings from the 1980s and 1990s are in keeping with what I found in 2011.

Indeed, in the past three decades, fertility has not differed much by marital status (Moultrie and Timæus 2001).⁸

For the issue of child support, the key point is that overwhelmingly the care burden for raising those children who are born falls on the shoulders of women and, most dramatically, black women.⁹ In 2012, 69 percent of black African children lived with a female caregiver, without their fathers (Hall, Meintjes, and Sambu 2014).¹⁰ While a century of labor migration in South Africa ensured that many generations of black African children have had infrequent physical contact with their male kin, what is different in the post-apartheid moment is that black men are also *financially* absent. Scholars of the African family have tracked over the past 60 years how masculine and paternal gender roles increasingly emphasized economic contributions

⁷ Notably, fertility in South Africa has also declined over the past 40 years (Moultrie and Timæus 2003). While fertility data for Africans in KwaZulu-Natal are not available for the 1970s or 1980s, by the time of the 1996 census, fertility among Africans in KwaZulu-Natal was 3.7 children per woman. Five years later, in 2001, fertility in the same group was 3.2 children per woman (Moultrie and Dorrington 2004). Scholars suggest, the decline is primarily due to long birth intervals and high rates (at least by regional standards) of contraceptive use and, surprisingly not due to HIV (Hosegood, McGrath, and Moultrie 2009).

⁸ The Department of Social Development White Paper on Families quoted a study that found that 58% of births were to unmarried parents (Nzimande, cited in Department of Social Development 2012).

⁹ Though quite common, single motherhood remains quite stigmatized, especially among black Africans (Sennott et. al. 2016). Furthermore, there has been an efflorescence of research into the detrimental social and health consequences of extra marital birth for women and their children that has undergirded policy. These focus on the impact on education (Madhavan and Thomas 2005; Marteleto, Lam, and Ranchod 2008; and Grant and Hallman 2008); reduced earnings for women (Lloyd 2005) and elevated risks of poor health (Gage 1997) and death (Clark and Hamplová 2013) for children. Ethnographic research shows that South Africans are aware of these consequences thus suggesting their choices are based on other considerations (Harrison and O'Sullivan 2010; Madhavan, Harrison and Sennott 2013; Zwang and Garonne 2008).

¹⁰ Hall, Meintjes, and Sambu found that in 2012 just over a quarter (27%) of all African children do not live with either parent and a further 42% of African children live with their mothers but without their fathers (2014).

of men over other forms of care (Campbell 1992; Casale and Posel 2010; Denis and Ntsimane 2006; Hunter 2004, 2010; Walker 2005a, 2005b). In the present moment, high unemployment and infrequent cohabitation has meant that black African fathers provide little financial support and caregiving labor to their children.¹¹ Women presently must find the resources to raise children in a context where once reliable means (e.g., work, husbands, husbands' family) are now unavailable. It is not surprising, then, that child support, in my expanded sense, is one of women's primary concerns.

Child support, as an issue closely tied to child welfare, has also been an abiding concern of successive South African governments. As I cover in greater detail in Chapter 3, apartheid governments debated and experimented with a variety of policies to ensure that children had sufficient resources to grow into the proscribed roles for their racial group. At the crudest level, the concern for white children was that they receive sufficient education to be leaders of the nation and that they learn to cultivate a habitus that maintained racial distinction. Children in other racial categories required the resources to ensure that they be productive laborers (albeit in different categories of occupation) and not dependent on state resources. One of the most notable policies was a State Maintenance Grant (SMG) that was available since the early 1930s to single, mainly white, mothers to enable them to raise their children without working outside the home.¹² The amounts of the grant differed by racial category, with white/Europeans receiving the highest amounts and payments decreasing for coloureds and Indians respectively with Africans receiving

11 Comparing time use surveys Budlender and Lund found that South African men spend unusually low amounts of time on care for their children as compared to their counterparts in other developing countries (2011).

12 The SMG was modeled around a presumed nuclear family with the father as the primary breadwinner. Mothers were only eligible if they were widowed or separated; had been deserted by their spouse for more than 6 months; had a spouse who received a social grant; or had a spouse who had been in prison, a drug treatment centre for more than 6 months. It was only extended to non-married women in later years. Applicants had to prove that they had attempted, but were unsuccessful in obtaining, private maintenance from the other parent (Lund 2008).

the smallest allotment. Overwhelmingly the grants were used by white mothers as bureaucratic obstacles made them very challenging to access for other racial groups (Lund 1992).

At the time of democratic transition in 1994, the South African social security system was already notably well developed, if highly inequitable, for a middle-income country (Lund 2008; Woolard et al. 2011). After democratic transition, in 1998, the SMG was due to be cut because of critiques that it was an expensive and racist apartheid-era policy.¹³ However, the welfare of children was a guiding principal of the new dispensation. Mandela had signed the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and children's rights to basic nutrition, shelter, basic health care services and social services were enshrined in the new constitution.¹⁴ Early in Mandela's term, the slogan 'First Call for Children' was the public name for an interdepartmental National Programme of Action for Children in which each ministry was articulate goals to improve the well-being of children (Lund 2008). It was in this context that the Lund Committee on Child and Family Support, which had taken on the task of researching the potential effect of eradicating the SMG, was successful in campaigning for the introduction of a new grant designed to reach poor children, what became the Child Support Grant.

Introduction of the CSG took place in 1996 in a political climate of contestation over the values and visions of the new democracy and how to bring them into action. This was also a time when the new government was tempering some of its redistributive electoral promises and turning toward a more conservative macroeconomic policy. In a context of limited time, limited funds, and the necessity of governmental buy in the Lund Committee outlined a cash transfer that

¹³ At transition, the reached only 200,000 women and a similar number of children but made up 12% of the country's total spending on social assistance for the 1995/1996 year (Lund 2008). One study found that in 1990, only 0.2% of black African children received the SMG (Kuper 1998 cited in Patel and Plagerson 2016).

¹⁴ Section 28 of the Constitution specifies a set of fundamental rights for children. These include the right to basic nutrition, shelter, basic health care services and social services; the right to protection from abuse and neglect; and the right to family or parental care, or appropriate alternative care when removed from their family environment. Section 28 also states that a child's best interests are of paramount importance in every matter concerning the child.

would reach the largest number of poor children possible and would leave the door open for future advocacy efforts to shape it (Lund 2008).

The final form of the grant differed substantially from the Lund Committee’s recommendations and from the SMG. As opposed to a universal benefit for all children, as the committee recommended, it became a means-tested grant. However, an important component was retained, namely, in acknowledgement of the flexibility of family forms in South Africa, any caregiver of the child—father, mother, auntie, grandmother or non-kin—could claim the grant. To enable the broadest eligibility, payment amounts were kept low (R100 per month) but, as anticipated, they increased through advocacy. In addition to new payment amounts and eligibility criteria, the CSG also has a very different target. Unlike the SMG which contained a payment for the applicant mother and a payment for each qualifying child, the Child Support Grant contains only a payment for the child. The caregiver is a custodian of the funds, but the funds belong to the child. As will be elaborated upon throughout this dissertation, this fiscally necessary change had important effects on the social meaning of the grant monies.¹⁵

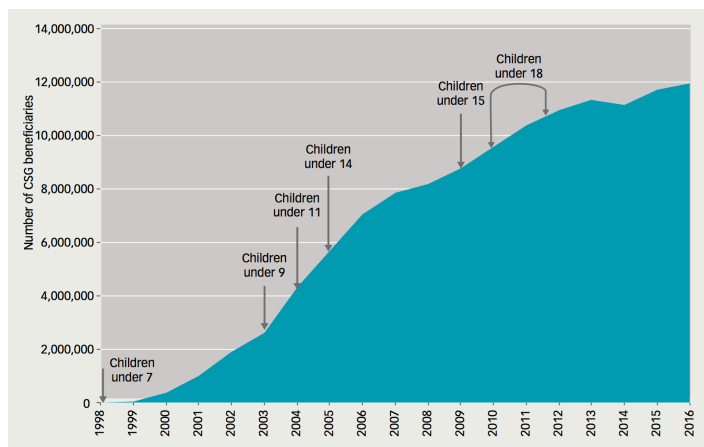


Figure 1.1: Child Support Grant (Children’s Institute 2016)

¹⁵ In 1995, the SMG consisted of a parent allowance of R410 and a child allowance of R127 for each child. The expense of extending the SMG to all racial groups equally was deemed unaffordable at an estimated cost of R12 billion, which was equivalent to the total social assistance budget in 1995/1996 (Lund 2008). The Lund Committee for Child and Family Support was appointed by the Minister for Welfare in 1996 to advise policymakers on equitable alternatives.

Government grants form the backbone of South Africa's poverty alleviation successes in the years since democratic transition (Delany et al. 2016; DSD et al. 2012; Hall and Wright 2010; Leibbrandt et al. 2010; Van der Berg, Siebrits, and Lekezwa 2010; Woolard and Leibbrandt 2010). Economists found that social grants helped to raise the income of the poorest segment of the population by 10 times and reduced income inequality by a quarter (Grinspun 2016; Woolard et al. 2015; World Bank 2014). In 1998, the percentage of the population benefitting from a social grant was 9.8 whereas by 2015, that percentage had grown to 30 (General Household survey 2015).¹⁶ The bulk of that growth comes from uptake of the CSG which increased from 150,336 recipients in 1999/2000 to almost 12 million in 2016 (See Figure 1.1 STATSSA 2016).¹⁷ At the time of my fieldwork, 60 percent of South African children received a CSG (Hall, Meintjes, and Sambu 2014). As the largest grant in terms of population reach, the CSG is attributed with numerous positive effects. An efflorescence of research has sprung up alongside the grants and the CSG has consistently been shown to improve child nutrition, health, and schooling outcomes by enabling caregivers to buy food and school necessities (Agüero, Carter, and Woolard 2009; DSD et al 2012; Grinspun 2016; Woolard and Leibbrandt 2010). Longer term, there is evidence that it is associated with a reduction in risky behavior among adolescents, increased household resilience to emergencies and supports caregiver work-seeking efforts and long-term investments (DSD et al 2012; Grinspun 2016). Because the CSG is predominantly collected by women for the children in their care, research

¹⁶ Uptake differs greatly by racial group with close to a third of black Africans and coloureds receiving a grant in 2015 More than one-third of black African individuals (33,5% and 27% respectively) as compared to 12% of Indian/Asian individuals and 6,3% of the white population (General Household survey 2015). These numbers are based on individuals actively apply for grants, not the government identifying them as needing such.

¹⁷ Importantly, these numbers do not reflect the total number of eligible recipients. Instead, these are the number of people who applied for a received a grant. Much of this increase is due to removal of administrative barriers to access and gradual changes in eligibility criteria such as a raising of the eligibility age of the child to 18.

has found that it enhances women's power and control in household decision-making and financial management (Patel et al 2012). In addition to national recognition of the positive effects of the CSG, it has also been praised by international researchers such as the World Bank and has been used as a model for poverty alleviation elsewhere (Patel 2011, World Bank 2014).

Despite the widespread acknowledgment of the success of social grants, the state consistently has been ambivalent at best about these policies. This was demonstrated in recent years with the ANC's willingness to use the future administration of the grants system as a political football to curry favors at the risk of millions of beneficiaries (de Vos 2017). The grants represent an enormous cost to the government with the child support grant alone taking up 3.5% of the national budget in 2015 (RSA 2015). They also fly in the face of a historically worker-oriented model of citizenship and an increasingly developmentalist approach to social welfare (see Chapter 3) Part of the unique design of the CSG is its unconditionality, meaning that recipients do not have to perform any required actions in order to collect the grant. Continued eligibility is solely based on income being below a threshold amount. Despite research that overwhelmingly contradict such claims, critics of the grants maintain that they disincentivize labor market participation and foster a culture of "dependency" on government aid. The CSG is especially rankling to such critics because though it targets children, those who predominantly collect the grant are healthy persons of working age—African women under age 35. The majority (96%) of beneficiaries of the Child Support Grant are women and 90 per cent are black (de Koker et al. 2006). Notably, these critiques do not operate in the same way as the villainized welfare queen of the United States. For as much as there are concern about women's work-seeking efforts, their spending habits, or their reproductive choices that might ring as familiar to an American audience, black women in South Africa are largely still thought of as the hard-

working self-sacrificing backbone of the African family. Instead, the blame for the poverty of black children is frequently laid on the shoulders of black African men who have abdicated their paternal responsibilities (see Chapter 5 and Chapter 6). An often-cited concern is that the CSG will cause fathers to feel absolved of their paternal obligations.

Debate over the CSG is just one part of a larger maelstrom of ideological views about how the state is to best tackle social welfare and development. The ANC, the ruling party since transition, came into power emphasizing redistribution as the best means for redressing racial inequalities. At the same time, many party leaders hold deep-seated antipathies to expanding welfare provisions on the basis that they promote dependency and under-development. In this way, debates over who is obligated to support children and in what ways are not simply an issue of policy and fiscal conservatism, but are a “site of contestation ... about the values and expectations in the ‘new’ South Africa” (Lund 2008:ix).

Despite the CSG’s laudable efficacy in reducing poverty and attendant poverty indicators, the small size of the monthly payment (appx \$100 in 2014) left a widely recognized shortfall of support (Neves et al. 2009; DSD, SASSA, and UNICEF 2012; Ferguson 2015). The questions remained as to how families were functioning in this era without waged work and how grants to children, as the most reliable form of household income, were reconfiguring relationships within the household, among neighbors, and with the state. This dissertation addresses these questions.

Situating Interventions

As previously discussed, what took place in the period from 1960-2014 was a dramatic shift in the political economy of South Africa that profoundly shaped intimate relationships, the availability of waged labor, gendered and generational hierarchies, and the category of citizenship. In order to capture the intersection of these multiple issues, this dissertation

considers the changing methods by which caregivers—overwhelmingly women—secured sufficient resources to support themselves and their children. I use the umbrella term *livelihood strategies* to describe the multiplicity of ways in which people garnered resources. My research subjects—caregivers living in the Point neighborhood of Durban—while highly differentiated, have in common a shared poverty at the time of my encounters with them. While some moved in and out of arrangements where they received a wage for their labor, even for those subjects living in more prosperous times, waged work was never the sole or even the primary source of resources. Instead, this dissertation tracked the varied processes—the relationships cultivated, the tasks performed, the emotions managed—by which people assembled networks of support from a variety of sources.

My analytic framing around livelihood strategies has two important implications. First, in keeping with other scholars, I seek to avoid the dichotomy between the formal and informal sectors that I find unhelpful for my analysis (Ferguson 2015; Meagher 2010). Scholars of Southern Africa have long acknowledged that the types of livelihoods attributed to each sector are not clearly distinguished and that the two economies are often integrated in important ways (see Du Toit and Neves 2007; Hansen and Vaa 2004; Hull and James 2012; Valodia and Devey 2012; van der Waal and Sharp 1988). In the case of the Point neighborhood, Callebert documented how waged work on the docks enabled petty trade of discarded or pilfered goods that was a critical supplement to migrant’s livelihoods (2017). Furthermore, the very founder of the term *informal sector*, Keith Hart has recognized that present economic conditions lessen the descriptive benefits of the term. As he noted, “When most of the economy is ‘informal’, the usefulness of the category becomes questionable” (2007, 28 see also Guyer 2004). Instead of distinguishing along the lines of purported formality, I am more concerned with the meanings

given to different income generating activities—e.g. within a moral hierarchy—and the relationships they inevitably entail.

As a second implication, and for very similar reasons, in describing my data, I analytically do not distinguish productive from reproductive labor. Since the rise of the service economy, the distinction between these two categories has not been neat. In my case, a large category of employment for black South Africans historically—men and women alike—has been ensuring the reproduction of white households. Secondly, with a decrease in the availability of waged work, an increasing number of people survive through practices of distribution that do not map cleanly onto either side (Ferguson 2015; Mosoetsa 2003). These practices form the heart of my data. This said, I do acknowledge the critical importance of these categories for a long line of scholars—most notably for me, Marxist feminists—in addressing the very different kinds of value and remuneration given to each. When engaging with literature, I will make clear how the terms are being used and what they are describing.

In keeping with Von Holdt and Webster, I distinguish between *earning a living* (as in regular paid employment) and *making a living* (as in creating one’s own income or subsistence) (2005: 5). This distinction more clearly reflects the comparisons my interlocutors make between work that is reliably remunerative and the assemblage of practices that, hopefully add up to sufficient resources for survival. In vernacular terms, this is reflected in the contrast between having a “proper job” and simply *ukuphanda* or “coping”.¹⁸ Practices of making a living most frequently are unreliable, insecure, and are often physically and/or psychologically harmful.

¹⁸As discussed later in this introduction, the verb *ukuphanda* retains a great deal of moral ambiguity. From a Zulu-English/English-Zulu dictionary, *ukuphanda* translates to “scratch up” or to “dig by scratching.” A secondary translation is to “sound for information” or to “pump” (Doke et al 2008:645; Margaretten 2015:70; Wojcicki 2002:356). However, the connotation is often associated with criminal activity. At the June 16th ANC rally, organizers would not allow Arthur Mafokate to play his well-known kwaito song “*Amajents ayaphanda*” because it was seen as glorifying crime. This censorship nearly caused a riot (Ashforth pers comm).

Even more than the amount of payment, the security of earning a living afforded the employee a high status and respectability and—for better or worse—attracted attention and demands from those around him or her.¹⁹

Kinship and Dependence

Like Phumzile, whose statements opened this chapter, people with any kind of available income—from government grants to government salaries—are subject to a wide array of insistent and morally binding demands on that cash.²⁰ These might include requests for medicine for a sick relative, school fees for a sister’s child, or funds for a neighbor to print a CV for a job application. Claim-making is an integral and expected part of the social fabric of South African life. As Ferguson summarized well, an answer to the persistent question of how people with no visible income support themselves is that “a great deal of the day-to-day activity in the region’s low-income communities is related to making, negotiating, contesting, and sometimes evading the social and affective claims that can be made on the meager streams of income and sources of wealth that such communities contain” (2015:96). Such claims, though most frequently in asymmetrical relationships, do entail reciprocity such that giver and recipient remain bound together in obligation (Mauss [1924] 2000). Parker Shipton reminds us, that loan or gift can just as easily “be made to help or to exploit—or maybe to do both at once” (2007:8).

¹⁹ A number of scholars discuss the important gendered implications of the different moral evaluations given to earning a living versus making a living (Barchiesi 2011; Ferguson 2015; Hunter 2010; James 2014). Because of the way the migrant labor economy was organized, black women in South Africa were excluded from earning a living and thus have a longer history of making a living. In contrast, black male success, as measured by the ability to marry, build and support a rural homestead, was predicated on the ability to earn a living. In the post-apartheid era, earning a living became ideologically tied to citizenship status.

²⁰ Recent scholarship has come out documenting that while South Africa’s “new middle class” are often understood to have succeeded, their relative wealth also makes them quite vulnerable to exploitative lending practices and requests for support from a host of less fortunate relatives (Barchiesi 2011; James 2014; Southall 2004; Standing 2014). It has been found that their extensive borrowing and frequent inability to keep up with repayments has been detrimental to their “financial wellness” (Cash 1996, cited in Bahri 2008; Crous 2008) and has resulted in psycho-social ills such as a deep sense of helplessness, divorce, homelessness, and even suicide (Niehaus 2012: 337–38).

Phumzile's desire to escape these claims speaks to their forceful nature. Indeed, a large body of ethnographic work on Africa documents enduring and widespread practices of distribution and dependence (Barnes [1967]1986; Bayart 1993; Bratton and van de Walle 1997; Ekwensi 1987; James 2014; Smith 2003; Tibandebage and MacIntosh 2005; Vansina 1990; Weinreb 2001). To be sure, such practices help solidify different kinds of social relationships such as those between kin, those between lovers, those between neighbors, and those between patrons and clients. But, more broadly, they can be understood as both redistributing resources (Polanyi [1944] 2001) and investing in "ties of dependence" (Swidler and Watkins 2007: 150) in a political economy where power and prestige are acquired through "wealth in people", or dependents (Barnes [1967]1986; Guyer 1993; Kopytoff and Miers 1977; Miers and Kopytoff 1977; Vansina 1990; Smith 2004).

Such ties of dependence sit at the heart of politics, economy, and social personhood in South Africa. Though the collapse of the migrant labor system has shrunk the pool of wage earners and the sums of reliable income, practices of claim-making and distribution are no less ubiquitous or critical. Their import in the current context has led some researchers to name them a system of "informal social protection" (du Toit and Neves 2009). While few women in Point would say they had friends, they did talk about having people:

Z: Do you have someone who helps you if you need something?

M: Yes, there is someone. She is my ears.

B: How so?

M: She calls me when she knows a place that needs workers; she helps me with things like that.²¹

²¹ This was an interview in which both I and Zandile were present and thus moved between English and Xhosa.

Z: *Ngubani umntu oncedana naye xa kukhona izinto ozidingayo?*

M: *Ewe sisi ukhona. Lindelebe zam.*

B: *Kanjani?*

M: *Yandibiza xa ezwile apho kuzoqashwa khona, izinto ezinjalo.*

Not only do ties of dependence offer resources in the present, they are also durable and allow people to mitigate social and economic insecurity by preserving the potential for resources and care in the future. Thus, every dependent cultivates links to multiple patrons to call upon for support. Patrons, in turn assemble a collection of clients to afford him or her social dominance, moral rectitude, and future insurance. Ties of dependence also travel up and down the social hierarchy with every patron also acting as a dependent and dependents distributing resources to those below them. The centrality of these ties of dependence has led some observers to note that, "[t]he truly destitute are those without patrons" and "the truly insignificant are those without clients" (Chabal and Daloz 1999:42; Swidler and Watkins 2007:151).

At stake in cultivating ties of dependence was also the status of one's moral personhood. Hoarding resources or stinginess— "to eat for oneself"—was seen as not only selfish and rude, but a refusal to participate in the very social practices that makes one fully human. Miserly persons were indeed the subject of envy and resentment—as implied by Phumzile's statement—but also derided and condemned. Such antisocial behavior was seen to arise from nefarious motivations and frequently attracted accusations of witchcraft (Ashforth 2005; Chabal and Daloz 1999). None of this is to suggest that every claim on resources went answered. However, people went to great lengths to refute or evade claims by more indirect means that could not be attributed to them directly. In Point, though many people bemoaned the rules that many of the buildings had on restricting visitors and overnight guests, they were also grateful that they had a good reason to keep away extended family who might try to stay with them.

Though dependence has long been a status reviled by welfare critics in South Africa and beyond, I am concerned with dependence not as a condition, but as "a mode of action," one which a person strives to embody (Bayart 2000, 218). Mauss reminds us that sharing is always a

generous and a self-interested action ([1924] 2000). In this way, ties of dependence are made up of a fraught mixture of egoism, self-sacrifice, competition, collaboration, antagonism and agreement that are coordinated through the mode of exchange. Affect is also integral to these relationships as sentiments, passions, caring, and solidarity are bound up with the multiplicity of conflicting motives. The emphasis on *labor* is important for two reasons. First, to highlight that dependence is not passively or easily attained but is the result of continuous and careful effort into building social relationships. Second, is to afford these efforts the same dignity and moral status more often associated with productive labor.²²

This dissertation focuses on what Ferguson terms “distributive labor” or the claim making processes by which people seek to “transfer of resources from those who have them, to those who don’t” through fostering ties of dependence (2015:100). I am particularly concerned with the *process* of pressing a claim of dependence, the forms of obligation and entrustment that are mobilized, and the varying success of such claims. Here I focus on a subset of the larger category of distributive labor, that of kinshipping, or the formation and solidification of relationships expressed in a kinship idiom.²³ My focus on kinshipping is at once theoretical and empirical. For the former, anthropology has a long history of scholarship on kinship as a political, and more recently, an economic institution for shaping social relations. Kinship relations are frequently the referential backdrop and the model for ties of dependence. When analyzing how bonds of obligation are formed on bases not necessarily tied to amity, kinship is paradigmatic. For the latter, my interlocutors also spoke about kinship relationships as exemplar

²² To be clear, I am not joining a group of writers who, albeit with laudable intentions, emphasize the productive and entrepreneurial components of the labors of the urban poor. To do so, I find, continues to reify only productive labor as valuable and misses the opportunity to recognize the value of labor not immediately identifiable as “productive”. My goal is not to recast different kinds of labor as productive but to instead re-locate value in different domains.

²³ I am indebted to Gillian Feeley-Harnik for the verbs kinshipping and kinchopping to describe the processual and contingent nature of kinship bonds. Other names for these processes include kinning and de-kinning (Howell 2003).

bonds of social obligation. For example, the notion of the paternalistic state was very powerful and critiques of state governance were made in the language of a failed parent—always an assumed father—who provided insufficient care of his progeny.²⁴ Further, my emphasis on child support and the care of children also led kinship relations to be foregrounded by my interlocutors, though often not in ways I expected.

Throughout my research, when women talked about their daily needs and hardships, they emphasized the labor involved in childrearing and the resources required to do so. This emphasis came about for two reasons. The first is, plainly, the sizable amount of labor and resources required for childrearing. South Africa remains a very heteronormative society and household labor continues to be divided along gendered lines. While men living with women might cook the occasional meal or watch the children now and again, such labors were infrequent and always framed as an exceptional act of sacrifice or generosity on the man's part. Women's household tasks were numerous. In addition to childcare these included washing, ironing, procuring food, cooking, sweeping, assisting with homework, and many more. The simple enumeration of these tasks does not fully convey the labor involved in completing each one.

Take for example the laundry which in a household with school-age children usually had to be done at least every other day to ensure clean uniforms. For those women who lived in a building with shared bathing facilities, this meant hauling water from the central tap to a basin on the floor of their room—often with curious toddlers underfoot. These basins could only accommodate 5-6 garments at a time, so women washed in shifts, piling the soapy clothes on a

²⁴ Similarly, in a 2008 survey conducted by Afrobarometer, South Africans were offered a number of statements that reflected different understandings of state power such as “Government is like an employee” or “the people should be the bosses who control the government.” Overwhelmingly, South Africans chose the phrase, “People are like children, the government should take care of them like a parent” (Afrobarometer 2009, 4). While this is a source of great frustration for those who emphasize a rights-based liberal democracy, scholars like Englund remind us that such kinship-based understandings can offer power forms of critique and claim making (2008). Further, it is not only citizens who make such claims, politicians too use the idiom of parenthood (again, frequently fatherhood) and the nurturance it implies to legitimize their political roles (Schatzberg 2001).

clean towel before hauling another 3-4 basins of clean water for rinsing. Because everything was line dried, all the washing was doused a second time in a fabric-softener rinse. Once dry, all of the items were ironed both out of decorum—schoolchildren could receive detention for un-ironed clothes—and to kill any possible insects. Given the amount of labor required, it was no surprise that those women who possessed automatic washing machines—which still had to be manually filled with water—could charge a hefty price for a load to be washed or simply to be spun so that the clothes would dry faster.

A second reason is the higher level of legitimacy given to the needs of children over other those of other actors. Although women were expected to translate resources into proper social reproduction, and indeed their ability to do so was consistently assessed by others, women themselves were not regarded as legitimate recipients of aid in their own right. At every level of assistance—from aid agencies to neighbors—children were the only subjects seen as deserving beneficiaries. Women could only access resources by mobilizing their relationship to the child, most often as mothers. Therefore, though childrearing came with a host of labor and resource requirements, it also give women an important claim-making vocabulary and a new mode for procuring getting resources via kinshipping.

This kinshipping labor took various forms that will be explored in more detail throughout this dissertation. In brief, it might involve claiming a Child Support Grant from the government to support the care of a child. It might involve giving a child the father's surname—*isibongo* in Zulu—to firmly locate the child in that lineage and enable claim making on the father's family even when the father was absent. It might include chronicling one's stellar caregiving on the body of a child through cleanliness, well-ironed clothes, warm hats, and full cheeks. Or, it might involve making connections with others, via a child. For example, though relations between

neighbors were immensely important for my interlocutors, they could easily live next door to someone and never “know them,” meaning have a connection and enabled exchange. Mere proximity was insufficient to instigate relationships. Instead, it was through their children that many women built relationships of trust and mutuality with their neighbors. Sithembile said:

“I know her because we stay in the same flat in the same floor. We both have children from the same age group. I came to trust her because we started by being friends and then you can see a person, you sit with somebody, you see what their character is like. You can see if the person is not right. You can see by the way she treats her children whether she knows how to treat people. When I am sitting with her and my children, she does not treat my children differently than her children.”²⁵

Furthermore, while ties of kinship are bonds that enable claims, they are also means by which people can manage requests without incurring community opprobrium. Kinship provides the legitimization for what Ashforth calls “discriminating entitlement” or an argument that limited resources must be directed certain people (e.g. kin) first and not, say, to neighbors. The sanctity of the kinship bond is what enables people to refuse obligation while still maintaining friendly relationships.

A primary argument of this dissertation is that kinshipping be understood as a livelihood strategy that enables both ties of dependence and claim making on different categories of persons. In doing so, I firmly locate kinship within the realm of political economy as shaped by, and more important, shaping, the economic context and women’s sense of national belonging. The past five decades have seen dramatic shifts in the political economy, notably the decline in demand for low-skilled and manual labor across the region such that waged work is no longer a primary source of income (Seekings and Nattrass 2005). Over the past twenty years, survival

²⁵ Sithembile: Ngahlangana naye ngoba sihlala kwi building eyi one and sihlala kwi floor eyi one. Futhi sinengane ezicishe zilingane ngeminyaka. Ukuze ngize ngimthembe saqala saba ngabangane then uyambona umntu umangabe uhleli naye ukuba character yakhe Injani. Uyakwazi ukumbona mangabe engekho right. Futhi uyakwazi ukumbona ngendlela a treat ingane zakhe ngayo ukuthi uzi treat kanjani. Noma futhi mangabe kukhona inagne zami sihleli nazo aka treat different than ingane zakhe.

economies have instead been built around small but regular infusions of cash such as from government grants and networks of distribution and enterprise defined by kin connections (du Toit and Neves 2009). In the current context of economic and social uncertainty, the ability to make claims upon kin for resources or resource access—claims that will be honored—is just as much the stuff of survival and economic innovation as remunerated labor, and often more reliable.

Once again, I emphasize relationships as requiring labor. Kinship is something that one *does*, not something that one *has* (Ferguson 2015; Franklin, McKinnon 2001)). However, the terms by which kinship is done are not natural and given, but subject to debate and contestation (McKinnon and Cannell 2013). Arguments about how to “do kinship” draw upon complex ideologies concerning hierarchy; reciprocal rights, duties, and obligations; material support; and sentimental connection (Carsten 2004:19). Kinship claims can be disputed or denied. Thus, the process of kinshipping not only produces relationships, it also requires them. “Categories are filled with meaning by all the partners concerned” (Howell 2003:468). However, differences in power mean that not all partners participate equally.

Within the heterogeneity of kinship ideologies, is a longstanding anthropological tenet that kinship relations entail reciprocal obligations. The meeting of those obligations is the very process by which kinship ties are solidified. Such exchanges require resources. Much recent scholarship has documented how the decline in the availability of waged labor has not only made meeting the basic material needs of survival more challenging, but has also strained people’s ability to meet their kinship obligations of exchange (e.g. Han 2012; James 2014; Schuster 2015; Seekings and Nattrass 2005; Weeks 2011). These strains have thrown into stark relief the ways

in which kinship obligations are not given, but are actively produced over time (Leinaweaver 2013; Rapp and Ginsburg 2011; Stout 2012; Van Vleet 2008).

My use of the term kinshipping calls attention to the fact that kinship is not simply the result of shared substance, shared space, or even marriage, but requires the persistent labor of building social ties and defining and meeting reciprocal of obligation. The dissertation considers the various ways in which the production of kinship—e.g. the making and meeting of obligations—is embedded in and shaped by its particular political economic context. I contend that kinshipping labor can neither be understood as an economic appropriation or instrumentalization of intimate relations nor as the domestication of economic logic (e.g. Constable 2009). Instead, I align with a lineage, inspired by Mauss, that intimate relationships are always already marked by generosity, obligation and self-interest that is inherently economic ([1924] 2000; Bloch & Parry 1989, Comaroff 1979, Zelizer 2000 & 2005). However, I take up Caroline Schuster’s call to not simply stop at that axiom, but to consider “how and for whom social reciprocity takes hold and the uneven ways the social units of debt are created” (2015: 17). As such, this dissertation reveals how moral relations of care, generosity, dependence, and obligation are intertwined with the tactical concerns of livelihood strategies under conditions of economic and social insecurity.

I consider kin relationship as being in motion and thus focus on kinship in process. Here, I attend to people’s work to both mobilize certain kinds of obligations on which claims could be based and their efforts to position themselves as particular kind of persons—trustworthy, responsible, and advancing—who might eventually reciprocate.²⁶ Each step of this process—the

²⁶ In part because such relationships are frequently asymmetric, this second part of kinshipping is often ignored. But, research has revealed the symbolic import that the potential for reciprocity, though not in kind, has in shaping which kinship claims will be honored or evaded (see du Toit and Neves 2007 & 2009 Neves and du Toit 2012; Seekings 2008b; Turner 2005).

naming and activating the relationally-appropriate form of obligation, the self-fashioning as a worthy beneficiary, and the reception of a patron—involves a contextual web of emotions, power, knowledge, and history that shape whether a claim to dependence will be honored or not. For as much as such relationships are a kind of social insurance, they are nonetheless quite contingent and this uncertainty is an important part of the process. By tracking these complex processes, this dissertation reveals how both livelihoods and kin relations are simultaneously produced through the work of becoming and enacting social personhood.

The empirical data of this dissertation is organized around a series of questions:

- What forms of obligation and entrustment do people mobilize when pressing a claim of dependence?
- How do these differ based on the political, economic, social, and relational context?
- How do people position themselves as deserving beneficiaries?
- How are such claims received?

The answers to these questions and the resulting analysis, I suggest, has theoretical implications for our understanding of kinship, economy, and citizenship more broadly. Though intertwined, I address these interventions in turn.

Kinship and Economy

This dissertation contributes to classical and contemporary theory on kinship to in its exploration of the relationship between domestic (kin) and political and economic relations. In anthropology, an analytic separation persists between the domains of kinship and politics, as supposedly involving fundamentally different (and often gendered) types of social relations (Fortes and Evans-Pritchard 1940). The transition from ‘premodern’ to ‘modern’ society was thought to entail a shift from political organization on the basis of kinship to organization on the basis of rationalized contract and law (Fortes 1969; Maine 1970 [1861]), thus stripping kinship of its political organizing force and relegating it to the domestic domain (Parsons and Bales

1955; see all McKinnon and Cannell 2013). In Africa, the absence of kinship in political processes became the mark of a modern social order (Douglas and Kaberry 1971; Mitchell and Epstein 1959; Powdermaker 1962).

In the context of economy, there is a longstanding Euro-American myth that “the world of the household, kinship, and ‘non-capitalist’ institutions are radically different in their forms of sociality from the world of the market” that has been stubbornly difficult to dislodge (Bear et al. 2015:2). The pervasiveness of this orientation is due to the ways in which cultural understandings of kinship are intertwined with core (though culturally specific) paradigms that order our world: hierarchies of race, gender, and nationhood; the boundaries between nature and culture; and epistemologies of science, politics, and economy (Franklin and McKinnon 2001). The forms of sociality that became associated with each sphere—instrumental and rational for the economic and affective and impassioned for the domestic and kinship domain—were not only bifurcated, but were separated into “hostile worlds” where any suggestion of their intermingling promoted a great deal of anxiety, suspicion, and even outrage (Parsons and Bales 1955; Rosaldo 1984; Zelizer 2005).²⁷ I consider as part of this the present anxiety that the degrading effects of flexible accumulation and globalized capital are manifest in an incursion of market or commodity logic into the affective domain of kinship. Such claims discount abundant evidence in the historic and anthropological record of uses and reworking of kinship relations for various emotional, political, economic, and sexual ends that defy tidy categorization (Hirsch and Wardlow 2006).

²⁷ Yanikasako traces the evolution of a “bourgeois theory of human motivation” in which “interest” was stripped of its previously constitutive elements of passion and affect and subsequently emotions were rendered as suspicious (and always feminine) motivators of economic action (2002:9).

This dissertation is part of a long history of anthropologists and feminist scholars who critique the persistence of this analytic separation (Constable 2003; Comaroff 1987; Freeman 2007; Friedman 2005; Gough 1971; Ginsburg and Rapp 1995; McKinnon 1999; Richards 1941; Rosaldo 1974; Yanagisako and Collier 1987). A primary mode of critique, which I also employ, is an empirical demonstration of the interrelatedness of domestic kin relations and public political and economic relations (Carsten 2000; McKinnon and Cannell 2013; Rebhun 1999; Swidler and Watkins 2007; Zelizer 2005). However, what many of this important scholarship relied on was a demonstration of an interconnectedness rather than a demonstration of a mutual co-constitution. In this regard, this dissertation is part of a more recent strain of scholarship who show how kinship processes are not structured by but themselves produce and reproduce the very structure of the economy (Bear et al. 2015; Schuster 2015; Stout 2012; Yanagisako 2002).

In this dissertation, I track how women responded to men's declining ability to earn a family wage by cultivating new relations of obligation and dependency—a process I call kinshipping. I show how women built resource networks across families, friends, and communities that outlined alternative conditions of debt and duty not grounded in either a marital contract or relations of affinity. In the process, I argue, women redefined obligations between men and women, persons and communities, citizens and the state.

My analysis shows how projects of social reproduction constitute contingent economic and political relationships that structure people's lives far more than any totalizing logic. By providing a robust account for how unequal capital accumulation and political power are brought about through the production and maintenance of kinship, my analysis contributes to longstanding discussions within both feminist and kinship theory about the inseparability of the domestic, economic, and political domains.

Kinship and Citizenship

My contributions to scholarship on citizenship rest on an answer to the question of how it is that following democratic transition, when the majority of black South African's gained citizenship for the first time, this same group of persons increasingly protests that they have been excluded from the body politic. What definition of citizenship is in operation such that a host of rights, social assistance, and representation do not engender political belonging? The answer, or, really, answers, I suggest lie in the linkages between livelihoods, kinship, and citizenship as part of a contested field of political signification in South Africa today. These linkages are certainly not unique to South Africa, but the country's particular history render them more visible.

As I use it, citizenship means not solely legal enfranchisement, though that is certainly a component of the term. Instead, I use citizenship to include a broader sense of national belonging and social personhood. I locate myself in the communitarian tradition that takes the nation state to be one in many nested and overlapping layers of belonging that may include space-based, local communities, ethnic or racial identity groups, or supra-national groupings all of which comprise citizenship (Avineri and Shalit 1992; Daly 1993; Marshall 1950; Phillips 1993). This has been part of a broader move in feminist scholarship to incorporate gendered and non-Western centric visions of belonging by de-centering the nation state from conversations about citizenship (e.g. Pateman 1988; Vogel 1991; Walby 1994; Jones1997; Yuval Davis 1999). Critically, though they may be durable, none of these "communities" or "groups" are given, natural units (Yuval- Davis 1997). These are ideological and material constructions, whose boundaries, structures and norms are a result of constant struggles and negotiations, negotiations such as what this chapter consider (Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1992). Within this framework, citizenship is understood as "multi-layered" or constituted and negotiated vertically and

horizontally within these various spheres or layers, each within their own context (Yuval-Davis 1999).

I include concepts of belonging within citizenship because since the earliest anthropological scholarship on kinship, relatedness and belonging have always been understood as deeply intertwined. This helps bring to light the ways in which various scales of belonging can construct, often in contradictory ways, what women seen as their moral duty as citizens as well as what is available to them to meet those obligations. I use belonging as Feldman does to encompass “relatedness based on 1) social location 2) emotional attachment through self-identifications and 3) institutional, legal, and regulatory definitions that simultaneously grant recognition to and maintain boundaries between socially defined places and groups” (2016:8). Alongside the multilayered definition of citizenship above, this reveals how belonging is assembled and reassembled through a collection of immutable (gender, race, nationality) and mutable (class, language) characteristics; caregiving actions (caring for elderly kin or sending nieces and nephews to school); and regulatory categories.

Much of the carework that underlies the kinshipping labor I focus on here is enabled by resources that, historically, were obtained through work. However, resources are not the only issue at stake. The link between work and citizenship—what Barchiesi terms the “work-citizenship nexus” was foundational for the imagination of the modern nation state (Barchiesi 2011: 13). Historically, in segregationist and apartheid South Africa, this took a specifically gendered and racialize form whereby black African men were granted what little political recognition was afforded to black Africans, solely on the basis of their status as laborers. It was through their work status that African men encountered all the trappings of national belonging: identification documents, legal housing in the cities, health care, welfare provisions, taxation,

and, importantly, a wage. Yet this national belonging was in the context of racial oppression such that these provisions were either part of the state technologies of control or the experiences of exploitation, violence, inequality, and humiliation that accompanied waged work. For better or worse, in contrast, until the late 1970s, African women were only recognized as spouses to a laboring man. Their labor—in the rural reserves and, later, in the township house—was widely recognized as essential to supporting and stabilizing the household to which the African man was to return, though his wages were always insufficient to entirely support. However, African women could only gain legal representation, legal entry into the city, and rights to a house through her attachment to a man.²⁸

The scholarship on the gendered and racialized contours of apartheid citizenship is vast and this is by no means meant as an overview. Instead, I wish to call attention to the historic import of waged work and marriage for national belonging for the purposes of marking shifts in the political economy between the 1960s and the 2010s. Most critically for this discussion was that as new forms of political inclusion were expanding—labor unions recognized, social provisions introduced and representation broadened—older forms such as waged labor and marriage were declining. This decline took on a particular signification because both work and marriage were linked to a utopian vision of what democratic transition would bring.

In the case of work, having shaken off the indignities, violations, and inequities of the past, new jobs were to enable South African citizens to work their way out of poverty and inequality and to build an emancipated and self-sufficient nation. In what has been termed

²⁸ Prior to 1998, a woman in a customary marriage was considered to be a legal minor and subject to her husband's authority. Black African women could not own property, access credit, enter into contracts, or seek access to courts. This was enshrined for urban women in the Act 11(3) of the Repeal of the Black Administration Act (BAA) and for women living under the traditional authority of the homelands, in the Natal Code of Zulu Law of 1985. Different tribal authorities attempted to amend these provisions such that, for example, widows could retain a township house, but the results were uneven and in some cases the gains that women obtained (e.g. major status at the age of 21) could be lost upon marriage (Hunter 2010).

“aspirational Fordism”, the vision was of a social order of mass inclusion and citizenship brought about through labor (White 2012). “Work, in brief, promised to infuse democratic citizenship in the new south Africa with unprecedented social and ethical qualities” (Barchiesi 2011:4).

Engagement in fair labor was to transform ungovernable anti-apartheid activists into constructive citizens.

In the case of marriage, there were two components. First, critiques of apartheid policies were also made in the register of familial degradation. Protests against municipal beer halls, the migrant labor system, pass laws, racial categorization, or the Group Areas Act were framed as weakening marital bonds and crippling social reproduction. The repeal of these laws and the theoretical reunification of a conjugal couple in the same physical space was envisioned to pave the way to more harmonious unions in the democratic era. Second, a key component of the transition was to improve the position of women. In regards to marriage more specifically, an early piece of legislation, the Recognition of Customary Marriages Act of 1998, sought to eliminate laws that discriminated against customary marriages and to grant women the status of legal majors in the context of marriage—able to own property, acquire credit, inherit land, instigate a divorce. The legislative vision was that women be afforded political recognition regardless of their marital status and that, in the event of marriage, they retain the power to negotiate the union on equal footing with men.²⁹

The rather unfortunate timing of South Africa’s democratic transition meant that the ambitious dreams of substantive citizenship, social rights, and non-discrimination for all had to contend with the harsh reality of economic liberalization and the quite “counter-utopian”

²⁹ Like much of the democratic legislation, despite the laudable intentions, there have been a number of obstacles to realizing the emancipatory visions of the RCMA. The greatest has been the complicated relationship between the Constitution and customary law more generally. The RCMA reflects many inconsistencies and uncertainties with regards to the position of women in customary marriages verses the equality clause in terms of the Constitution (Kovacs, Ndashe, and Williams 2013).

conditions of market-driven globalization (Barchiesi 2011; Comaroff and Comaroff 2000). In brief, jobs to conform revolutionaries into citizens or even to support daily needs were scarce. Women's formalized rights felt hollow in a context where subsistence was increasingly challenging and marriage all but unavailable. Nokuthula, a consistently eloquent interlocutor, summarizes the feelings of betrayal and disillusionment well:

In 1994, we got our democracy but, up until now... Like, let's take for instance for me, I am a qualified educator. And I finished my degree in 2015, but I am still not working. And there are some areas where, like in an economy side, we don't have that democracy which they are talking about. We have just been told we are all citizens by being given those green ID books... And now, it's what they have, like, brain washed us, we have citizenship. So a democracy is just a content, an ideology for certain people that it works for them, but it is not working for all of us... If we say we are citizens, what rights do we deserve of our country now, as citizens? Because the only thing they push down to throats—that they busy showing us—is that we got democracy. You find other people they still got anger out of like they don't know how to express themselves because now they got democracy but they are still living to an old era which they were living before democracy. They find themselves, like, they want to show that they are also equal to the other groups that were dominating the country but the life that they are living or the lifestyle that they are living is still below those groups which were having that democracy before.

At the heart of Nokuthula's statement was not solely a concern about poverty or unemployment. Indeed, these phenomena are not new to South Africans. Instead, her bitterness arises from a change in the meaning of these conditions following democratic transition. Newly acquired citizenship was imagined to protect people from these challenges. For those who continued to suffer, their citizenship felt incomplete, “an ideology” but little more.

Though the state was initially envisioned to be a protector of robustly articulated rights, in the new political economy the obligation in the state-citizenship relationship took on a decidedly different form. In the absence of work, more and more of the population looked to the government as a direct provider of “basic needs”. This was not without precedent given that second-generation substantive rights—to housing, to education, to health care—were enshrined

in the new Constitution. People developed new repertoires of claim making—court challenges, service delivery protests, grant applications—to various forms of social assistance, not on the basis of their labor, but on the basis that the state had an obligation to people as citizens, as bearers of certain identities, as residents of particular spaces, or as supporters of the ruling party (Alexander 2010; Ferguson 2015). The successes of these claims were highly uneven. However, government grants represent a large domain in which the government upholds the obligation to act as a provider of support in the form of direct cash transfers, but only to certain categories of the population.

My analysis is concerned with which categories of persons can make such claims. I contend that, as Ferguson projected, the positive content of citizenship rests on people's abilities to fashion themselves as "rightful and deserving dependent[s] of the state" (2015: 162). For women, this still involves a great deal of kinshipping labor. Much has been made about the positive effects of the Child Support Grant on women's political and financial empowerment. However, my research offers an important corrective. I agree that in the context of economic insecurity it is profoundly meaningful that women have access to regular, albeit small, infusions of cash. Yet the distinction is often made that able-bodied men have the least claim to citizenship-as-dependence because there is no grants category that accommodates them. This is a misreading and an overstatement.

First, gender is not an eligibility condition for receipt of the CSG. Importantly, recognizing the diversity of family forms, the state designed the CSG to "follow the child," enabling any caregiver—mother, father, aunt, grandfather, grandmother, or non-kin—to access the grant for the child (Lund 2008: 53). Male caregivers of eligible children can and do receive grants. Men that don't receive the CSG are not left out because they are men or because they

aren't laboring, they are ineligible because they choose not to engage in the labor of caregiving. Second, despite the fact the 98% of CSG recipients are women, it is not a women's grant (Case et al. 2005). Women as individuals are no more viable dependents of the state than men. While there is historic precedence to understand women as dependents—of husbands or of the state supported by the State Maintenance Grant—the mother's portion is no longer a part of the grant. In the case of the CSG, the object of state intervention—the child—is a legal subject that cannot represent itself and requires a caregiver to hold the child's rights and interests in trust (Ruddick 2008). Importantly, children are the bearers of the right to state support. Adult caregivers are only the mediators. Notably, the framework of the CSG relies on the uncompensated labor of caregivers to translate grant funds into proper child care in a context where the monies are insufficient to support one let alone two people.

My distinction that the child support grant is a children's grant is critical in terms of substantive citizenship. Poor women cannot access state resources or recognition except in relation to a child. It is only by framing themselves not as a universal citizen, but as a particular kind of citizen-caregiver for a rights-bearing child, that women can claim a tie of dependence. However, this recognition is limited as women can only make claims for the child, not directly for themselves. This has empirical and theoretical implications. Empirically, though they hold the grant money and control how it is spent, women consistently acknowledge and describe that cash as "the children's money." Many have a clearly enumerated list of what it can and cannot be spent on. In part, this arises from widespread critique of women's mis-spending—makeup and hair being the greatest violations. Yet such critiques are not solely part of a persistent moral evaluation of motherhood, they also articulate the boundaries of women's control over grant monies.

At the level of theory, this has important implications for the scholarship on citizenship that has arisen out of Taylor's "politics of recognition" (1994). Scholars have noted how in the face of diminishing state resources, rights and obligations are no longer universally available and citizens must become certain kinds of subjects to make claims on the state (e.g., Ong 2003; in Africa, Englund and Nyamnjoh 2004). Entitlement to state resources is tied to an increasingly specific subject (Brown 1995; Fassin 2007; Feldman and Ticktin 2010; Petryna 2002; Redfield 2005; Ticktin 2006). In many ways, this is in keeping with the South Africa context. However, these scholars focus on how people must mark *themselves* as vulnerable to access state support. In contrast, my focus on kinshipping as a livelihood strategy considers how caregivers mobilize a *relationship*—here to a child—to enable state recognition and resources.

Substantive citizenship based in a relational identity is in many ways more in keeping with a relational personhood that has long been recognized as operating throughout Africa (Comaroff & Comaroff 2001; Englund 2006; Ferguson 2013; Guyer & Belinga 1995; Jackson & Karp 1990; La Fontaine 1985; Nyamnjoh 2002; Rice 2017; Riesman 1986). At the same time, while not dealing with the same object, Western feminist literature offers an important cautionary caveat in discussion about when the state framing of the child/fetus as an independent, rights-bearing subject relegates mothers to a secondary, less politically represented, status (Berlant 1997; Condit 1995; Mitchell 2001). Women face a double bind in defining themselves in terms of their relationship to a child: they may gain certain recognition, but their needs must be subsumed to those of the child (Fineman and Karpin 1995; Heriot 1996; Morgan and Michaels 1999). Such reservations are important for those some who might not have children or for whom their relationship with a child is not a primary one. However, such discussions have an orientation that understand a relationship as a means to support and

recognition, but not as an end goal. Instead, for many of my informants, they expressed that providing for the needs of their child(ren) *was their goal*. In the case of Nokuthula who is quoted above, her unemployment was a problem because of her inability to pay school fees or to buy new uniforms for her children. Her citizenship felt denuded because she was blocked in her ability to invest in the relationships that were important to her—here, her children. I do not see these, as some might, as conservative goals of an unliberated feminist. In contrast, I understand my interlocutors to have different endpoint in mind—one in which social reproduction, with an emphasis on the social—is possible.

A reevaluation of this end goal returns us to the concept of relational personhood. If we understand full personhood in this context as being “attained in direct proportion as one participates in communal life through the discharge of the various obligations defined by one’s stations”, then livelihood takes on a different meaning vis a vis kinship and citizenship (Menkiti 1984: 176). On the one hand, women’s kinshipping labor enables only a partial recognition the state. On the other, this partial recognition comes with (limited) resources that further the project of social embeddedness—itsself constitutive of relational personhood and relational citizenship. Thus, it might be more apt to speak in terms of understanding kinshipping as a livelihood strategy that enables citizenship.

Outline of Chapters

Following the introduction, Chapter 2 - Working Motherhood: Fieldsite and Methods provides a more grounded introduction to the fieldsite, the Point, and how its history and social geography shape the kinshipping labors of poor women. The particularities of the neighborhood also affected the methodology used to obtain the data for this dissertation and the historical and anthropological methods employed are discussed in depth. The presentation of data begins in

Chapter 3 “We have done everything right by our children”: Public Motherhood as Precarious Claim-Making in 1960s Durban,” which examines how women of varying races use public motherhood to make claims upon the 1960s welfare state. It outlines the terms under which motherhood was a valuable status with political potency, but whose meaning was difficult to control. It traces the history of South Africa’s welfare state as a system designed to capacitate and reform poor white families whose problematic domestic life was seen as muddying apartheid-era racial distinction.

Chapter 4, “Multiple Maternities: Maternal Repertoires and Support Seeking,” takes a narrower focus on one form of kinshipping labor. Following democratic transition, the robust welfare state that whites had previously enjoyed, as discussed in Chapter 3, was largely dismantled as the new government sought to extend services to all race groups. In the process, state recognition and support for poor women was eliminated. The chapter argues that, in response, women engaged in kinshipping labor that took the form of performances of motherhood in order to make themselves legible to the state and to garner support. Such performances required skilled management of semiotic repertoires and audience expectations that reveal the labor and expertise involved in kinshipping.

Underlying this discussion is also a methodological argument about the study of motherhood more broadly- here I am not concerned with “identity” and indeed don’t have access to an unmotivated notion of what women think of themselves as mothers. Instead I consider motherhood as a repertoire of words and practices.

Chapter 5, “Problematic Paters: Race, Class and Fatherhood,” turns the lens on paternal performances to explore how moral panics over the role of purportedly deviant fathers form a component part of anxieties about the future of the South African nation—both under “high

apartheid” and twenty years after democracy. This chapter argues that masculinities seen as both the hegemonic ideal and the stereotypes of male deviance impact the support given to men’s projects of caring for children. The chapter analyzes the effects of these moral panics on support for poor fathers’ projects of child rearing, attending to the particular racialized and gendered nature of this support.

Chapter 6, “The “Maintenance” of Family: Mediating Relationships in the South African Maintenance Court,” considers the role of the Maintenance Court in disciplining the deviant fathers discussed in the previous chapter and in empowering the women imagined to be their victims. Created in the 1930s, the historic function of the Maintenance Court was to extract payments from errant men to support their children. Today it has taken on new national meaning as a way to relieve the current state’s welfare burden by inculcating men into the culture of payment befitting proper citizenship. However, its effectiveness requires the labors of women to press a case. This chapter situates the Maintenance Court as one tool among a range of strategies that women draw upon for assembling a network of kin, friends, and lovers in an attempt to constitute a supportive family for themselves and their children. It argues that the logic of obligation used in the court undermines women’s ability to mobilize different forms of obligation created through transactional sex—often leading women to eschew the very institution set up to “empower” them in favor of the more volatile strategies detailed in the rest of the dissertation. Women must balance a host of competing obligations in their larger efforts to achieve economic stability, affective commitment for themselves and their children, and sexual intimacy. By tracing these decision-making processes, the chapter situates maintenance payments within larger economies of intimacy involving exchanges of money, affection, labor, and sex. In these economies, success in the court—an order that mandates maintenance

payments—can create a sexual debt that complicates women’s relationships with the father and new lovers.

The final chapter, Chapter 7- “They come to take our women and our jobs”: Migrants, Marriage, and National Belonging,” considers the experiences of a group of South African women who have married immigrant men. Since South Africa’s democratic transition in 1994, the country has shifted from producing to receiving refugees, most of whom hail from the rest of the African continent. The scale of the influx is significant. From 2006-2012, the new democracy received the highest number of asylum seekers of any country in the world. Not surprisingly, amidst high unemployment levels and deepening inequality, foreigners have become scapegoats for the economic and political ills of the country. Violent attacks on migrants in 2008 and 2015 were flash points amid persistent tensions manifested in daily acts of discrimination and a repeated refrain that foreigners “come to steal our women and our jobs.” In a context where poverty thwarts socially coveted marital unions, non-nationals’ employment and marriage to South African women is a clear source of frustration and jealousy. However, more is at issue than simply work and weddings. Rather, this chapter considers why women are willing to tolerate derision and submit their intimate lives to the threats of violence to enter into these transnational marriages. I argue, unions with foreign men afford South African women the status of full social adulthood and national belonging unavailable in domestic couplings and to which indigenous men have no alternative avenue. Thus, counter-intuitively, South African women are marrying foreigner men to gain a fuller form of citizenship than their male counterparts. Thus, as women rework the meaning and access to these various spheres of belonging through their intimate relationships, they also serve to rework the very definition of citizenship in South Africa today. In short, the intimate domains of sex and reproduction are, today, a key site where

political belonging is constituted. Nonetheless, the security and status change women gain in these marriages comes at the price of other forms of marginalization and insecurity. This chapter details the experiences of South African women “stolen” by foreigners and the ways in which their relationships illuminate the intertwining of intimacy and national belonging in South Africa.

Chapter 2 - Working Motherhood: Fieldsite and Methods

What is the Point?



Figure 2.1: The Point in geographic context

This analysis is enabled by a very specific geographic location namely, the Point neighborhood in South Africa's third largest city, Durban. While a unique urban space in South Africa, it is a microcosm for unemployment, xenophobia, poverty, and familial reorganization experienced across the country. Only 20 blocks long and 5 blocks wide (See Figure 2.1) the dense urban space of the Point requires consideration from various vantage points to grasp the impact of its geography on its inhabitants.

The Port

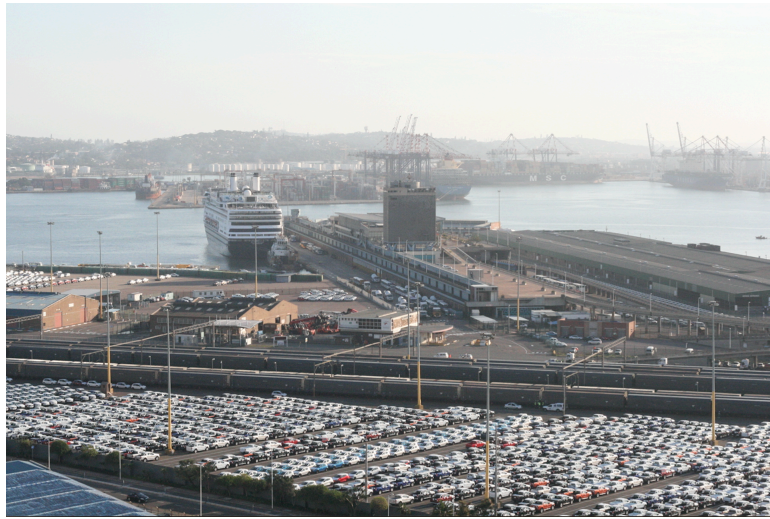


Figure 2.2: The Toyota factory lot and cranes of the harbor

The peninsula of the Point embraces Durban's harbor, which is the largest port in Sub-Saharan Africa. Until its relocation, South Africa's first rail line extended into the Point, making it a hub of economic activity. The port has a number of implications for residents. Since the nineteenth century, the port and the railway (both run by the parastatal South African Railways and Harbors) has been a large source of jobs and, later, housing. Between 1912 and the 1970s when containerization reshaped the shipping industry, the south west portion of the Point was dominated by housing for stevedores, shore men, and rail workers (Callebert 2017). Until as late as the 1980s, many were employed in handling of break-bulk cargo, or cargo that is neither containerized nor bulk packaged and thus needs to be loaded and unloaded piece by piece (Callebert 2017). African migrant laborers provided the hands and the backs that did this work while other race groups acted as lift operators, truck drivers, coal shovelers, switchboard operators, or the many many other occupations required to make the port run.

Though the neighborhood was deemed a white's only area under apartheid, due to its proximity to the city center, the presence of the port ensured it was always a nationally and

racially heterogenous space. Ship captains, Rail Foreman, engineers, and their families who were all overwhelmingly white lived in the single family houses on Camperdown while blocks away over 8000 predominantly Zulu migrant men lived in the labor compounds and municipal barracks on Bell Street (Callebert 2017).¹ In addition to the South Africans, sailors and soldiers from China, the Philippines, Norway, Greece, Portugal, Italy and many others came for extended shore leaves bringing their languages, cultural preferences, and their wages with them. Though Durban, unlike Cape Town or Johannesburg has never been known as a cosmopolitan city, the peninsula of the Point has a long-established leisure industry that caters to a variety of preferences. This diversity gave the neighborhood a reputation of licentiousness, a place where boundaries of all kinds could be transgressed. In some cases, this operated as a form of titillation such as with the notorious nightclub Smugglers Inn or “Smudges” which attracted white middle-class voyeurs in the 1960s and 1970s looking for an opportunity to drink and dance with drag queens, strippers, seamen, and even coloured people. In other cases, such transgressions were used to authorize the forced removal of a mixed community in the name slum clearance.

Along with jobs, the port brought money and resources into the neighborhood. Though dock work was dangerous, grueling, and unpredictable labor, Callebert found that his African informants had long careers of twenty or thirty years on the Durban docks because of the relative economic opportunities it brought (2017). Dock workers were not only laborers, they were also consumers and a host of petty traders, canteen cooks, barbers, legal and illegal liquor distributors, prostitutes, and washwomen made a living by servicing the labor force. Cargo that

¹ The uneven nature of the shipping industry was such that it required a ready supply of casual labor available to work on-demand. Until 1959 African workers were employed on a togt or day to day basis. Even after 1959 when they were hired on a weekly retaining, fee their work schedule changed day to day. Laborers were expected to present themselves to be considered for a job by 6:30am and if they worked over time (as many were required to do) they would not leave work until 11pm. These hours made residing in places other than the point very challenging and many Africans subjected themselves to the unpleasant regulations and squalor of the compounds out of this convenience (Callebert 2017).

was damaged and recycled or pilfered directly supported a large secondary trade industry both in the Point and in Durban's townships (Callebert 2017). In 2014, my respondents obtained a variety of goods—everything from new televisions to children's snorkels in bulk—from similarly “damaged” containers to resell throughout the neighborhood.

Like many other ports, the intermingling of many different kinds of people, goods, and economies gave the area a sense of lawlessness. At one level, the neighborhood had one of the most complicated property ownership schemes in the country making for a great deal of uncertainty as to what entity was responsible for managing which part of the street.² At another level, the neighborhood had long been associated with crime and deviance either from the numerous drinking establishments and robust vice economy or from the circulation of contraband brought by ships (Leggett 2001). People took advantage of the ambiguity wrought by heterogeneity such as the case of one of my respondents, an elder Greek gentleman who led a gang of young men from Spain, Italy, and Greece in the 1960s. Lacking a shared tongue, they developed their own language, unintelligible to those they sought to rob, who never saw them coming. While the aging whites of Durban argue that the crime of Point's past was tame compared to what is perpetrated by the overwhelmingly black population of today, my research found that the Point's unsavory reputation has been remarkably durable over time. From the residents in the 1950s to my respondents in 2013, crime, safety, and the neighborhood's negative influence on their children have been abiding concerns.

² The western strip along the harbor belongs to the national government and is leased by shipping companies or managed by South African Railways and Harbors. The land on which Addington Hospital sits belongs to the province of KwaZulu-Natal, but not the nurses' quarters adjacent to the hospital. Much to its chagrin, Durban Municipality owns pockets of sub-economic housing that dot the neighborhood and frequently wage court battles over who is responsible for derelict buildings. The southernmost tip is owned by a Malaysian development conglomerate attempting to create a luxury residential and commercial site. From Bell street south, this section has its own water, electricity, and police.

A climate of suspicion was further produced by the widespread transience of the neighborhood's population. While shore leaves could be multiple weeks in the early days, new populations of sailors and soldiers were constantly circulating. As an urban place where money could be made, the Point was often the first site of entry for people coming to the city from the countryside or other countries. Part of the "better life" these people sought was put these earnings towards lives elsewhere (as in the case of the African migrant workers) or to earn enough to move away from the neighborhood's crime and cramped quarters, especially if they had children. Thus, those who could, quickly left the neighborhood. For those who couldn't, leaving often remained their ultimate goal and precluded close ties to neighbor's. Even for those who lived for 20 years in the Point, it was never described as a community to which they belonged as much as a stopover on the way to a different life.

The Beachfront



Figure 2.3: An aerial view of Durban's iconic beachfront. Point is on the left (southernmost) portion

In contrast to the workaday grittiness of the Port, the Point's second face, the beachfront, presented an image of carefree leisure. A line of art deco style high rises painted in bright pastels abutted the white sand dotted with palm trees and colorful kiosks selling everything from

“traditional” Zulu beadwork to inner-tubes. Though this southern end of Durban’s beachfront was never the destination for the well-heeled, it has always attracted droves of less prosperous visitors looking to holiday next to the vivid blue waters of the ever-warm Indian ocean. Durban is a primary destination for South African’s seeking relief from the summer heat during the Christmas and New Year’s holidays. As such, over the years various businesses have sprung up over the years to entertain and amaze Durban’s holiday makers. Those often remembered include the trampoline park, the kiddie pools, the Mermaid Lido with its “homosexualist” organ grinder, Mini-town, the Snake Park, the Surf and Rescue Club, and Little Top.³ Prior to the 1980s when the beaches were racially integrated, many of these diversions trafficked in the consumption of exoticized racial difference such as the Indian snake charmers, the Zulu gumboot dancing competitions, or the extravagantly dressed rickshaw drivers that have become Durban icons.

The beachfront’s daytime amusements had after-dark counterparts in the bars, restaurants, and night clubs that line the neighborhood’s streets. It was also the place where extra-legal indulgences could be bought such as drugs, hard liquor, or sex. Whether it be the delight of a flea circus or the companionship of a prostitute, the Point was a well-known locale for the gratification of various pleasures. For the neighborhood residents, this had a number of important effects. The pleasure economy was a large source of revenue. A number of my respondents had at some point worked as waitresses in a neighborhood bar or night club. Sales of trinkets or panhandling on the beachfront was a reliable quick source of cash as was participation in transactional companionship or sex. The constant presence of holiday makers also enabled other

³ Throughout my research it was a challenge to find long time current or former Point residents who were willing to speak with me about daily life in the Point prior to the 1980s. Much of this is because of the stigma and poverty associated with the neighborhood that was felt acutely by this white population. However, there is a genre of speech and writing that involves the nostalgic remembrance of the Point as a place of carefree leisure and diversion. In this genre, the Point is characterized as a child’s wonderland filled with innocent amusement and, importantly, very safe. Such portrayals act as not-so-subtle racial critiques when people contrast these remembrances to the dangerous environment of criminality they argue exists today. Numerous examples of this genre can be found on the website Facts About Durban (www.fad.co.za).

forms of income generation such as the re-selling of pilfered cameras or ready marks for counterfeit schemes. This economy additionally offered many temptations such that a day's earnings could quickly be spent on readily available consumables. The neighborhood's atmosphere of carefree hedonism contributed to a devil-may-care attitude that many inhabitants shared. What residents termed a "fast life," was reinforced by a political economy in which future planning was often thwarted.

The Street



Figure 2.4: Kombi taxis rush by on one of the Point's major intersections

The vision of the neighborhood from the street offers an important third perspective. Residents living in Point referred to it as living "in town" in contrast to either the townships (also known as locations) created under apartheid for the Indian, coloured, and African racial groups or the suburbs that ring the downtown which remained overwhelmingly white. Point is a short distance from the city center making the city's commercial and financial services as well as the employment opportunities a short but ride away. The small middle and working class that lived in Point were civil servants, bank clerks, or office cleaners looking to save on transportation costs by living closer to downtown.

Partly due to its proximity to Durban's commercial hub and partly due to its historical status as one of the first places of white settlement in the city, the neighborhood was very well resourced. In addition to the natural asset of the sea, on the east end stood both the large state-run Addington hospital, and, next door, the Durban Children's Hospital which grew to international prominence midcentury for its exceptional care (Burns 2011).⁴ Bearing the same name was the neighborhood's primary school whose historic Afrikaans and English language curriculum was expanded in recent years to include a Madrasa that served the growing immigrant population from other African nations. Point residents had the unusual privilege of quality medical care and primary education within walking distance. In contrast, rural or township residents had to arrive at the hospital before 6am to attempt to access same-day services. Similarly, many sent their children to informal boarding houses where twenty or more children live in a neighborhood flat, cared for by a housemother, in order to access Addington school. Furthermore, residents enjoyed the presence of 3 large supermarkets within the neighborhood such that they could comparison shop as they walked their children to school.

Despite the presence of a small middle class and a few clusters of holiday flats, long-term residents in the Point have historically been poor. The neighborhood's reputation and industrial sector prevented the gentrification that many city planners imagined for such a centrally-located neighborhood.⁵ Until the 1980s, various undesirable elements of urban infrastructure were located in the Point's southern tip such as the sewage plant, a small jail, and a "Zulu hospital" for

⁴ Addington Hospital historically served the white and colored race groups until 1995, but the Children's Hospital had a mandate to serve children of all races, a thorn in the side of the apartheid government that led to the hospital's closure in 1985 (Burns 2011). A large municipal and community task-force succeeded in reviving the Children's hospital and the teen sexual health drop-in center opened in 2012, while the larger outpatient facility opened during my fieldwork in 2014.

⁵ The most recent incarnation of this is the luxury development that was constructed at the southern tip prior to the world cup in 2010 by a Malaysian and South African development partnership. The old railway houses were converted into R4million single family homes and a yacht harbor was built. The five luxury high rises stand mostly empty, though some restaurants and activities such as the evening farmer's market have sprung up there.

injured migrant workers. This made for inexpensive yet accessible land for the city's construction of various sub economic schemes. The most notable is Elwyn Court, a monolithic block of 140 flats that spans a full city block. Built in the 1940s to house poor white families who paid heavily subsidized rent, the building was municipally run until 2001 when the individual flats were sold off to their owners at a nominal cost. Since then, growing debt and the poor management of the building has plagued the municipal government. Horror stories of residents trapped on the seventh floor because of elevators that have not worked in a decade crop up every few years in the local papers (e.g. See Rondganger 2015).⁶ In the more successful schemes, begun after 1999, the municipality refurbished old holiday flats and charged well-vetted occupants close to market rent. Serving a different population, the Association for the Aged (TAFTA) runs three large buildings for low-income senior care across the street from where the native beerhall once stood.

Alongside this relatively stable population was a much larger transient population—sometimes including people who had been there for years—that circulated through the neighborhood. Such transience in many places is associated with social deviance and Point was no exception. Known as a place where fast cash could be made, the neighborhood attracted persons described by others as vagrants or street children who were constant targets of cleanup efforts by the city. The bulk of work opportunities were contingent jobs subject to daily or sometime hourly changes in demand. From the 1950s-1970s, much of the neighborhood was made up of short term boardinghouses or “hotels” to house a mobile work force. Durban's temperate climate also enabled workers looking to save more of their wages to sleep out on the

⁶ In 2001, residents were given the opportunity to buy their flats under a scheme called sectional title but were not counseled that under this scheme they would be responsible for an increasing monthly levy in addition to utilities, and the shared cost of building maintenance. As a result, many are heavily in debt and under the law could be evicted from their homes (Rondganger 2015).

beachfront or on the verandas of dockside sheds (Callebert 2016). In 2014, boardinghouses had become bachelor flats that could be rented by the week or the month or the lodges and “shelters” that served those who could not pay in advance.

The presence of so many persons, and notably children, living in poverty and purportedly “improper” circumstances prompted some of Durban’s early elite women to target the Point as a site for improving child welfare (Burns 2011). Between the 1920s and the 1930s, their activism created the Durban Child and Family Welfare Society, whose first initiative was to create crèches or daycares in the neighborhood. Later they formed the Child Family and Community Care center of Durban that employed social workers throughout the neighborhood to work directly with poor families. The legacy of these women persists today in a robust, though disaggregated, network of aid institutions. Churches throughout the neighborhood run a weekly feeding scheme and other organizations distribute food and occasionally toiletries on the beachfront. The Point is a manageable target for individuals or institutions looking to serve South Africa’s poor and/or save wayward souls because of its accessibility contra the townships and its population of poor people who include enough white faces to calm the nerves of skittish white liberals. Some started informal prayer groups that also distribute goods, others set up a more established outreach and counseling center in Addington school. For a handful of years, the University of South Africa ran an experience learning program for fourth-year social work students in the Point. The large concentration of poverty relief efforts is yet another resource the neighborhood offers.

Though the majority of people living in Point sought to eventually leave the neighborhood, many found it challenging to do so because living there was quite expensive. Because the available work was so unreliable and so low paying, unless they already had a family home elsewhere—as in the case of migrant workers—it was challenging for people to

save enough cash to move away.⁷ Very few people owned their home in Point and even those that did had to pay monthly levies and utility costs. For those who rented, rent for a single room-or even a month at the shelter—was consistently ten times what a similar space would be in one of the townships.⁸ There was no greenspace so food must be purchased instead of grown and children could not simply play in the yard or the street, but had to be watched by a neighbor who inevitably demanded remuneration for her services. Often residents became trapped in cycles of debt where they were constantly owing back rent or interest to loan sharks who funded last month's costs, leading one resident to say "In Point, everything is money."

⁷ In 2014, I encountered a handful of black Africans who had been allocated a government (RDP) house in the townships or outskirts of the city. While they would have preferred to live there, without regular jobs, many chose to remain in the city, citing that were they to leave, they would be sitting, hungry, in an empty house far from any opportunities for money making (see also Mbili 2016).

⁸ Shelter cost appxR950/mo (R38/day)

The Vibe



Figure 2.5: Women trade washing-watching duties in a Point alleyway

Photos do not easily capture a final valuable perspective on the neighborhood, namely its social atmosphere, or what South Africans call, the *vibe*. It is challenging to argue that anything is shared across all Point residents, other than geographic space, but during my fieldwork, there were understandings about the neighborhood and how it operated that were collectively held by many I encountered.

A unique feature of the neighborhood that shaped social life there was the high concentration of multi-story apartment buildings, the density of which was seen in only a handful of other places in South Africa. Thus, what residents termed “flat life”—referencing an apartment—occurred in small rooms or apartments and their adjacent hallways, in contrast to the

stand-alone houses surrounded by a yard that have long been the norm in South Africa. As mentioned before, occupants and their children did not have access to an outdoor extension of domestic space, a condition that many found unnatural and confining. They were also subject to the nuisances of sharing intimate space with non-family. “We are up in each other’s shit,” one woman joked when describing a fight taking place on her floor because one sick neighbor had blocked the communal toilet. Neighbors’ proximity also invited and supported a great deal of surveillance. Building managers, neighbors, or their guests could all view what parcels are brought home from the shops, what furniture is visible through always-open front doors; hear arguments or cries of passion; and smell what is for dinner or whose rubbish has been left out. This public visibility of intimate domestic life led many to say, “In town, you can never be free,” indicating a feeling of claustrophobia in which every decision was subject to public scrutiny.

The identities of the other persons with whom people shared space were important. Long-time white residents attributed a rise in the crime and degradation of the Point to the arrival of black South Africans following the repeal of the Group Areas Act in the late 1980s. Black South Africans, in turn blamed the influx of “foreigners” from the African continent after South Africa opened its borders in 1994. Yet race is only one category of difference in Point’s diversity.

As one woman noted, “Everyone comes from all over.” Indeed, a single hallway could contain white Afrikaans families who had lived in the neighborhood for years, black immigrants from Tanzania and Congo, coloured South Africans born in a Durban township, black South Africans from deep Zululand, aging white Greek immigrants who had come in the 1960s, and third generation Durban Indians. For some, this fostered a valuable cross-cultural education such as one Zulu woman married to a Burundian immigrant who said, “In town, it is easy to meet different people and learn different languages. If the children were to stay at the farm and only be

amongst people there, their mind won't open up and won't be wise. They will be suspicious. To learn another language is to understand." For others, diversity produced a great deal of turbulence. Because there were few shared norms of greeting or of sharing, people frequently offended or aggravated one another. Whether items exchanged were gifts or loans was a question of constant debate as well as the terms of reciprocation or compensation.

As part of this diversity of origins, a sense of rootlessness pervaded Point's occupants. Most people came to the city on their own, seeking a better life and new opportunities. Even if they had children in Point, their larger kin networks often remained elsewhere and thus unknown and inaccessible to other Point residents. Furthermore, the inability to amass wealth often strained relationships with kin living outside of the neighborhood. People often broke ties with family when they tired of the constant requests for money that they could not meet. Naomi summed up a common misperception, "When you live in town, life is fast so they think since you staying in town they assume you have money, all those things".⁹

The expense of the neighborhood also precluded relationships within Point. People were constantly "shifting" as they called it, running from debts or seeking a less expensive place to live. One respondent, Zandi encapsulated it well, "In flats, people are coming and moving. You don't know who your neighbors are. Someone can do something and just disappear." She compared it to an idealized vision of a township community saying, "In location, if they run away you can find them because they will come back. Their family is there... In the flat [in Point] you only bring your bag. [In the township] Even if they lie, you've still got their family." By contrasting "family" to "a bag," Zandi highlighted not only a difference in social personhood,

⁹ In isiZulu and English: Like besengishilo uma uhlala drobheni mpilo iyashesha basuke becabanga kuthi unayo imali ngoba uhlala drobheni all those things.

but also the lack of social accountability and durable connections that characterized relationships in Point. This sense of disconnection between residents manifested pervasive mistrust.

This lack of trust was based on profound social and epistemological concerns. Without extended kin or long-term connections to ground them, people felt they could not dependably know their neighbors. They worried that their neighbors may not be what they seem or may have questionable intentions. While I observed that my respondents had closer relationships with some people as opposed to others, all resisted the suggestion that they had friends. When asked who their friends were, a common response was “I do not have friends; I do not believe in friends at all...because I know what they’re capable of,” implying betrayal.¹⁰ The implied danger was betrayal either through gossip or action, which many had experienced.¹¹ They were vexed that it was so challenging to “know someone’s heart.” While this is a concern in South Africa more broadly and certainly beyond the Point’s climate of deception contributed to that worry (Ashforth 2005). Most people supported or supplemented their livelihood through forms of panhandling that involved various degrees of duplicitousness. One might beg on the street, which often involved highlighting characteristic that attracted more resources (e.g. a physical disability or care of children) that may or may not correspond to that person’s daily life. Others sold *amagwinya* (cakes) cooked in their kitchen or goods pilfered from the docks. Zulu speakers retain a moral ambiguity about such activities by describing them as *ukuphanda* which, depending on context, translated to begging, stealing, or, more vaguely, making things happen.¹² Likewise, English speakers used either the more passive terms “coping” and “getting by” or the

¹⁰ In isiZulu and English: Actually anginabo abangani. I do not believe in friends’ anginabo abangani nje at all...ngoba ngiyazi ukuthi ba capable of.

¹¹ There is a Zulu idiom that captures this well “Imiphanda ibulalwa yizakhelani” which quite literally translates to “pots are broken by neighbors” but more broadly means “the worst harm is done by one’s friends” (Doke et al.2008: 645)

¹² Many thanks to Molly Margaretten who helped me understand how this verb was being used. “Besishoda, yabo. So ngihamba ngiyophanda” [We were short/lacking (e.g. hungry), you see. So, I went and made things happen]. From a Zulu-English/English-Zulu dictionary, ukuphanda translates to “scratch up” or to “dig by scratching.” (Doke et al 2008:645; Margaretten 2015:70).

active verb “to hustle” to similarly thread an ethical needle. While those with whom I spoke set apart their own, and often those of their closest confidants, actions as morally vindicated, anyone else’s behavior was highly questionable.

The context of chicanery produced a deep sense of insecurity in Point residents. They were concerned that children would be snatched by nameless criminals who could disappear or that they would be unknowingly sold drug-laced food that would turn them into addicts. However, the most pervasive fear was that their neighbors would lie to them or about them—or, perhaps even more worrying, that their neighbors would tell the truth about them to someone else. Their vulnerability was heightened by the fact that people in the neighborhood were tremendously dependent on one another for survival. Neighbors loaned money or cooking oil when you were short. They told you when people were distributing food on the beachfront or where one could get donated clothes. They also bore witness to your daily activities and were privy to extensive information about one’s intimate life which they could choose to share with others. There was little space for the management of one’s image in Point and because of the density, the repercussions for malicious talk were high.

Research in a Context of Mistrust

This dissertation is informed by over 17 years of engagement with South Africa. The bulk of data were collected during a three-month visit in 2011, a year of fieldwork in 2013-2014, and follow up visits in 2015 and 2018. In May 2011, I traveled to Durban to conduct preliminary research on women’s livelihood strategies. The phenomenon of unemployed women who were raising children with little help from the fathers was widespread, but I sought a field site where the specificities of place shaped the particular contours of this pervasive social condition. I also sought to work against the bifurcation of scholarship on South African life into rural and urban—

even among scholars arguing for their interconnection. At the suggestion of Catherine Burns, I began looking into the history of the Point neighborhood as a very different sort of social space. It was neither the insular township on the edges of the city, nor was it a suburb. It could not be understood as a cosmopolitan haven of racial mixing such as Cato Manor in Durban or Alexandria in Johannesburg. It was segregated yet heterogenous; interdependent yet discordant; and poor yet rich in resources. The neighborhood offered a different side of the story of apartheid. Further, I believe, it is a harbinger of South Africa's future.

I moved to Durban in 2013 with my husband and 6-month old daughter in tow. I had a 20-block neighborhood to focus in on and a network of contacts, but this was very different from achieving access to and legitimacy with the residents whose experiences I sought to learn. Furthermore, the very real insecurities of the neighborhood meant it was not prudent for any outsider—let alone a young-looking, white American woman—to traverse the streets without a clear destination. So as to not contribute to the outrageous rent inflation taking place in the Point and to distance myself and my family somewhat from the neighborhood arguments into which I would inevitably be drawn, I lived a short distance away, arriving each morning by minibus taxi after all the children had been dropped at school.

Initially, I established myself with volunteer activities at sites across the neighborhood that put me in contact with Point parents, most often mothers. In one storefront ministry, I helped peel potatoes and dish plates for the twice-daily feeding scheme, organized clothing and toiletry donations, and occasionally taught computer skills. Those women who lingered and helped with the clean-up—aware they would receive additional resources—took our quieter time together to interrogate me about what brought me to Point and why. Was I a missionary? A social worker? A spy? Realizing that these were the intelligible categories for someone with my presentation, I

identified myself as a student wishing to learn enough to write a book that explained to Americans “how mothers in South Africa coped.” This became my introductory line when I went to churches to attend the women’s ministry meetings or outreach events, on home visits where I acted as an isiZulu translator for the community aid worker from a development agency run out of Addington Primary School, or when I sat for hours at the maintenance court amusing bored toddlers and keeping anxious women company as they waited for their case to be heard.

My recognizability in the neighborhood also derived from my friendship with important gatekeepers who had developed the trust of residents. Val Jenkins or “Jenks” had retired after 30 years of service in the HIV ward of the Durban Children’s hospital and, later, Addington Hospital. A taciturn coloured woman with a quick wit, Jenks was a walking kinship map. She knew every mother, granny, sibling, and cousin who came to the hospital, whether they took their meds, and how often the children went to school. I accompanied her on her days volunteering in the inner-city drop-in clinic, holding babies and chatting with parents before and after their appointments.

Nora Saneka, the principal of the formerly white Clare Ellis Brown Pre-primary school in Point, had worked in the neighborhood for decades and was a longtime activist for the neighborhood residents, especially the children. At her invitation, I volunteered at the school, assisting with events like sports day or after care activities. She introduced me to parents, former pupils, and former teachers and was a tremendous resource for oral history contacts as well as present-day stakeholders. A seemingly endless font of passion and vision, Nora was working to establish an Early Childhood Development (ECD) Forum of childcare centers to help improve the care these under resourced, under-staffed and often illegal centers provided. The Forum brought members together to share resources and knowledge (how to make toys out of recycled

materials or to talk to parents about nutrition) and to advocate for municipal policies to enhance ECD. I assisted with a project to map the landscape of child care centers in Point, developing a questionnaire about their staffing, hours, fee scale and demographics of the families they served. Data from the questionnaire help support a successful advocacy effort to obtain municipal support of subsidized breakfasts in the centers. Those data also appear in this dissertation.

From 2011-2016, the University of South Africa (UNISA) Department of Social Work ran a service-learning center in Point. The vision of the center was to integrate social science research and community engagement with the practical training of fourth year social work students. Supervised by Barbara McLean, the students undertook internships at sites or with groups throughout the neighborhood (e.g. at the refugee center or with the cardboard collectors). As part of their internships, students were expected to develop, implement, and assess an outreach project that met the needs of that community. During my time there, I offered guidance on qualitative research methods and accompanied students to their sites. Through the students' work, I attained a much broader understanding of the various communities within the Point and their very specific circumstances.

Barbara introduced me to an essential contact in my research, Ntombizandile Krakra, or Zandi, who had graduated from her UNISA program. A Point resident herself, Zandi was a keen observer and a tenacious researcher who, with two children at home, had spent 6 months integrating herself into the world of Point's cardboard collectors, understanding their rhythms, the internal dynamics of the group, and the challenges they faced. Zandi's initial role was to put me in contact with women in the neighborhood and she introduced me to many mothers scattered in buildings throughout Point, the most notable being a growing group of South African women married to foreigner men who I would never have encountered otherwise. In addition, Zandi

became an invaluable assistant and eventual collaborator. She provided isiZulu or isiXhosa translation when my skills were insufficient, translated and contextualized slang terms specific to Point, acted as a sounding board for me to check my understandings and interpretations, and revised my interview questions to better reflect the conceptual categories of Point residents. After I returned to the United States, Zandi continued to conduct interviews, as we had done together, focusing on South African/foreigner couples and their specific circumstances. She also transcribes the interview recordings and we talk regularly to discuss the transcripts, my writing, and the ongoing questions they provoke. Across my visits, I conducted over 220 semi-structured interviews during which I asked questions about household composition, where women garnered resources and why, and neighborhood relationships. Interviews were conducted primarily in a mixture of English and isiZulu. Zandi provided translation for Swahili and isiXhosa speakers.

The above has primarily outlined how I made contacts and conducted semi-structured interviews. But, that is only part of my methodology. The broad uptake of the Child Support Grant has fostered an abundance of scholarship of the effects of the CSG on women and children. Research methods have primarily included surveys, focus groups, and interviews. Such research has importantly refuted inaccurate critiques and retained the import of the grants in governmental discourse. However, research has not captured how the grants figure into broader terrains of social life. Through ethnography and particularly participant observation in an urban context where the grants are a critical but highly insufficient source of income, I was able to situate the grants within larger questions about how caregivers (predominantly women) garner enough resources to support children. I identified a sub-group of 24 women as key informants and I spent extended time with them throughout the day, both observing them in their carework at home and following them as they traversed the neighborhood building networks of support. I

observed how they negotiated with neighbors, social workers, or church employees, what kinds of claims they made, how they defined obligation or dependency, and how they worked to construct their relationship to the source. Public knowledge of the child support grant—how much was paid, when it was paid, how it was presumably spent—shaped women’s interactions with multiple parties in ways that aren’t visible in a single interaction. However, by following women throughout their networks and by triangulating that observational data with interviews I was able to discern how child support claims impacted larger systems of kinship, gender relations, racial tensions and, finally, national belonging.

As others have noted, participant observation offers a particularly potent methodology for accessing data that cannot or would not be meta-narrated: the rhythms of a woman’s day, the ways she responds to a neighbor’s request, how a room is organized and children are dressed. These quotidian minutiae are the meat of social scientific analysis. They are also the data that Point women most carefully guarded. As a young white woman asking questions about the raising of children, I was frequently interpreted to be a social worker or an aid worker. For those women who didn’t outright avoid me due to this interpretation, it was an understood practice that I would ask a series of questions about their lives and their household and they would offer well-rehearsed answers in exchange for immediate or future resources. Indeed, this is the format to which many of my first interviews conformed. To those who seemed most open, I would ask if I could come and visit them, which occasionally led to some very awkward cups of tea and clear cues that I was not welcome to linger.

One day, I had a visit scheduled with a woman, Lolita, who had been eyeing me cautiously for several weeks. I had visited her neighbor—with whom I later learned she had turbulent relations—as part of a home visit with the community aid worker, but I had never

received more than a polite greeting from her. It was a terribly day for a visit, my daughter, then eight months old, had not slept well the night before and we had no child care. I was exhausted and my postpartum back pain had flared up, making standing—the only thing that kept the baby from fussing—a challenge. With no means to contact Lolita, I took my daughter along, expecting the interaction to be short and that we could return home after another guarded tea-drinking session. Oftentimes children, and especially babies are greeted, in South Africa with squeals of delight and showered with affection. I knew such a reaction was possible, but Lolita, after an initial lukewarm cuddle, passed the baby back and turned to prepping the tea. The baby began to fuss and I wincingly stood to rock her. I fumbled through polite conversation, distracted by the baby, fatigue, pain, and Lolita’s piercing gaze. She interrupted me with an abrupt, “feed the baby and give her to me.” Startled, I sat down and complied. “Did you have a cesar?” Lolita, asked pointedly, using the colloquial term for a cesarean section. “No,” I replied, but Lolita spoke over me. “I did with my second and my back was not right for years. It still pains when the weather changes,” said taking the baby. As she rocked, she grilled me about my diet, my sleeping, my sex life. Hours later, when the baby woke up, she sent me home with brusque instructions about what I needed to do differently. She also invited me back.

In relaying this event, I don’t mean to suggest Lolita and I shared some universal experience of femininity or motherhood. At the most basic level, I had given birth in a well-funded hospital in the United States and had already seen a host of specialists about my back pain. I also had a husband with a flexible schedule who took on most of the physical labor of childcare in those early years. Lolita had a cesarean section in a government hospital during medication shortages and did not get the full dose of painkillers. Her husband could not take time away from his invaluable hourly job, nor did his vision of paternal responsibility include

childcare. Instead, she was left to care for an infant and toddler on her own. Instead, I highlight this interaction because it marks a shift in authority that was important to my building trust in the Point. I was experiencing difficulties about which Lolita had more knowledge and expertise. She chose to counsel me and to embrace the relative position of power that enabled. This shift did not undo the fact that I was a white, well-resourced, American in a context that valorized all of these attributes. However, it did recast me as also an inexperienced first-time mother, another identity that was intelligible to Point women, and one they found acceptable for continued engagement.

As such, much of my initial participant observation was made up of collective teasing about my incompetence and foolishness: I was useless in the kitchen, I was a walking target for neighborhood crime, and clearly did not know what and what not to worry about with childrearing (of great concern was warm clothes, lesser was what non-food item went in the mouth). Many days were spent in one smaller building built in 1924 as a boardinghouse that contained single rooms and shared baths and toilets. These cramped quarters meant that many people used the passageways—open to the sky—as leisure space. We would gather, leaning on the balcony railing or sitting on the small stoop next to the street and talk. When mocking me waned, the women would complain about the building manager, other neighbors who were safely out of earshot, men, or the politics of distribution of the various resource sites. This was often a time for me to ask clarifying questions about what I had seen when I had accompanied one woman or another to the feeding scheme, a prayer meeting, or the school aid center. Undoubtedly such questions initiated another round of taunting, but the playful banter over how to describe an event revealed the terrain of concerns that women identified as important.

My goal is that my analysis will make long term contributions to the lives of my respondents. I also sought to make more immediate, though consistently insufficient,

reciprocation for the tremendous access that my respondents granted me. I provided a great deal of childcare so women could run errands unconcerned that they would be disciplined by the police or “the welfare” for leaving their children unattended. I acted as a guard for laundry hung on the line, for rooms that could not be locked, for a pile of foraged blankets. I hauled water for laundry or baths, held babies, washed dishes, and helped compose testimonies. Yet in the end, I believe my greatest contribution was diversion. For as much labor as Point women were constantly performing, many found their days quite tedious. Teasing me, teaching me, arguing with me, offered a small, low-stakes distraction. Point women were also quite adamant that their experiences and opinions be accurately captured and conveyed. At their request, I have retained many of their names and have indicated when I use pseudonyms.

Overwhelmingly my data are about the experiences of women. I do not see this as a limitation. Like the post-apartheid Child Support Grant (CSG), my research “follows the child” so as not to impose any preconceived notion of family onto my data. I was concerned with who was providing care, the resources and relationships the caregiver(s) drew upon, and the terms of the exchanges in which they participated. Men figure in my data to the extent that they appear in these negotiations. There is excellent scholarship that had been done in the past two decades about how masculinity and particularly black masculinity is being reworked in the context of virtually nonexistent marriage and waged work. Cognizant that masculinities and femininities are always reciprocally co-producing one another, my research provides another perspective. To say that my ethnographic subjects were also historical actors is not to name something unique to Point residents, but historicity featured in their lives in two quite specific ways. First, South Africa’s socio-political context produced a certain orientation to the past. The recency of the democratic transition provided an important colloquial periodization that people used to evaluate

the present. Most of my interlocutors were thirty years old or older meaning that either they remembered well the apartheid period or they had parents who experienced most of the arc of apartheid rule. There was a before and after transition and people were very clear with what *should* have marked the difference. People articulated their dissatisfaction with conditions in the present via both a nostalgic recalling of previous security and by grieving over a future that never came to pass.

There were also important historical continuities that people envisioned across the two regimes. As is seen throughout this dissertation the specter of “the welfare” haunts the post-apartheid moment. Many of my interlocutors had personal experience with social workers and children’s homes under apartheid rule, but even in the late 1980s and early 1990s, state removals of children or the intense disciplinary work of state social workers was much less frequent than the previous two decades. Following transition, the children’s homes were filled with AIDS orphans and child protection social workers were stretched thin dealing with a much larger target population. And yet the threat of “the welfare” who would come and remove children loomed large in the imagination of Point women.

Second, and more specific to the Point, historical knowledge was both quite prized and highly elusive. Because so few people saw themselves as belonging in Point and kin were almost always elsewhere, the neighborhood was a space where people could write their own histories. This produced a great deal of freedom and anxiety, as mentioned before. Historical grounding is what gave a person moral legitimacy. Thus, people were often engaged in the projects of unearthing others’ histories while also disguising their own.

Because the Point was a space of so much intervention, there are a number of records that attest to the management of the infrastructure and population in the Town Clerk files in Durban’s

municipal archive. These mostly focus on the municipal beerhall and migrant labor barracks, Elwyn Court and other sub-economic schemes for whites, issues of vagrancy and crime on the beachfront, and shipping concerns in the railway and port. The Killie Campbell Africana Library in Durban housed the archives of early women's groups who worked in the Point, transcripts of interviews with dockworkers, and Durban newspapers. In Pretoria, I also accessed the public records of the central government to examine the management of the SMG in Durban. I traveled to Johannesburg to examine the Transnet archives for the parastatal South African Railways and Harbours.

By reading these textual sources against the grain, I could glimpse fragments of the lives of people who lived in Point, but the fuller contours of their daily challenges remained shrouded. Fortunately, under apartheid, any form of governmental aid to a child (maintenance grant, grocery voucher, housing subsidy) had to be confirmed by the children's court. These court records contain not only testimony by the social workers and clients, and reports by the social worker, they often included case file notes, letters to and from clients, and interviews with clients' networks. I was able to access 150 case files of families living in Point seeking governmental or private support between 1960 and 1978. To find sources for the later years, I sought other repositories. When clients had children younger than 13 years, their case was handled by Durban Child Welfare. The agency provided me unlimited access to their library and archives, but a fire in 2002 and the merging of the segregated agencies of the apartheid era meant a great deal of material was lost. In one of the fortuitous moments historians dream about, through my contacts in the welfare system, I was able to gain temporary access to an abandoned government building where Durban Social Development files from 1978-1997 were lying in bureaucratic limbo. Donning masks and coveralls, my research assistant and I spent weeks

combing through the thousands of files amidst ashes from squatters' fires and rat droppings. In the interest of efficiency, we prioritized only the files for the white race group on the topics of maintenance grants and aid to families. While we likely could have found Point residents among the other race groups, I was cognizant that for our health and safety, it was not advisable that we remain in that building too long. In total, we photographed over 243 case files.

I coupled this written data with oral histories of current and former Point residents, some of whose families feature in the case files, and social workers who worked in the area. When possible, I would bring segments of a case file to interviews with social worker in an effort to seek the background thinking to a files' creation. I understand these interviews to be social texts as much as my archival sources. Their content and production are shaped by the social, cultural, economic, and political context. As with any text, I read them through a contextual lens and in critical comparison with my other available sources.

Chapter 3 - “We have done everything right by our children”: Public Motherhood as Precarious Claim-Making in 1960s Durban

In the early 1960s, three women racially classified as white, black African, and coloured, struggled to raise their children under conditions of intense poverty in the Point neighborhood in the city of Durban. As part of these efforts, these women sought aid from various institutions, including from the Durban Child Welfare Society. Magdalena, the white woman, received some food, clothing, and housing assistance, but, despite her vehement protests, her children were eventually removed to state institutions. Grace, the black woman also received food and clothing, and her child, this time at her request, was eventually taken into foster care and subsequently adopted. Rosemary, a coloured woman, received extensive support of not only food and clothing, but also a maintenance grant and a township house. She fought with the Society social workers over the removal of her children, which occurred a number of times over the years. In her case, they were always returned within weeks of their removal.

Across the cases, these women’s maternal status both enabled them to make claims for resources and attracted unwanted intervention for purportedly having “failed to realise [their] maternal role”. In this chapter, I consider the stakes of invoking motherhood for poor women of different races in apartheid South Africa, especially the insecurity caused by an ever-present danger of being seen to fail. Drawing on the ways in which motherhood as a particularly political identity has been linked to both activism and state control, I situate motherhood as both a multivalent and condensing term. By multivalent I mean that motherhood as a singular term can be used in many different settings to mean quite different things. Motherhood, as it is invoked

and enacted by the women in this chapter, and as it is understood and enforced by surveilling authorities, capaciously draws bodily comportments, material and social practices, normative understandings of social reproduction and labor all under its moral umbrella. As it does so, it condenses the separate elements into a single concept, juxtaposing them such that they are rendered malleable and porous, open to slippery entanglements, misrecognitions, and elisions. As the women in this chapter came to realize, such a self-evident, yet changeable signifier had enormous, but often unwieldy political potential. Carefully crafted invocations of seemingly proper motherhood all too easily could get away from you.

The context for this discussion is the early 1960s, a time of intense transformation for the ways in which motherhood was experienced, interpreted, and expressed in South Africa (Healy-Clancy 2017). As has been deftly covered by feminist historians, cross-racially, women's use of maternal discourses and strategies was an important part of overt activism against racist rule in both the segregationist and apartheid eras (Hassim 2006; Healy-Clancy 2017; Gasa 2007; Walker 1991).¹ This public motherhood was used to protest pass laws for black Africans in the 1910s, 1930s, and 1950s; to challenge labor laws and the migrant labor system in beerhall protests in the 1930s and 1950s; and to make claims upon the state for improved health care, welfare, and education for their children and themselves.² Whether they had children or not, women drew

¹ Feminist scholars have long debated the transformative potential of public motherhood to alter the subordination of women. Some argued that public motherhood while effective were inherently conservative because they reproduced a sex-gender system in which women were equated with maternal caregiving and domestic responsibility (e.g. Wells 1998). Others contended that they instead were a radical attempt to overthrow both the gendered and racialized oppression of the apartheid state because it found its apex in the lives of black mothers (e.g. Gasa 2007; Magubane 2010). Healy-Clancy deftly traces the ways in which the meaning of public motherhood shifted in the context of precolonial, colonial, Christian dominated, and apartheid politics (2017). I concur with her that public motherhood cannot be easily read to invoke any given sex-gender system, but instead its multivalence needs to be translated in each interaction (Healy-Clancy 2017).

² I use the term public motherhood in contrast to maternalist politics because it retains the idea that motherhood is a symbolic identity that invokes power and responsibility in multiple spaces (Healy-Clancy 2017; Semley 2011, 2012; Stephens 2013). It need not be tied to Western assumptions of passivity, submission or that a woman's identity as a mother is defined primarily with respect to her domestic responsibilities to biological children and their father (Oyewùmí 2000). Indeed, Healy-Clancy demonstrates that black African women, "as public mothers had long shaped precolonial "public policy." Moreover, under colonialism and apartheid, public mothers often worked around oppressive states to advance political goals in ways that could prepare them to make demands on state officials" (2017:5).

upon a maternal identity as a position that was cross-racially deserving of respect in order to accomplish a variety of goals (Walker 1981). They leveraged motherism as a discourse to gain not just political citizenship but a national recognition for their gendered labor (Hassim 2005:7). In each case, the choice to foreground a maternal identity was neither random nor the inevitable result of the gendered division of labor. Instead, it reflected the strategic work of actors to attempt to forward their political projects in terms that were meaningful and effective.

This chapter considers the mobilization of maternal identity from a different viewpoint. Instead of examining overt political activism, I examine the everyday efforts of women like Magdalena, Grace, and Rosemary, women attempting to care for children under conditions of poverty and racist rule. I focus on these quotidian processes in order to argue that the labor of ‘getting by,’ of ensuring the reproduction of vital relations through daily activity, not only lays the foundation for more traditionally conceived forms of political mobilization but is, in itself, a form of political action. I contend that because the domestic and political domains are co-constitutive, as feminist scholars have long espoused, women’s daily acts of survival are just as much the stuff of politics as mass protests. The personal is political, indeed. But when this theoretical realization is applied to a South African case, it reveals new contours to the nature of politics and domestic life—namely that making claims for domestic security are deeply political acts. Furthermore, when considering the 1960s, intersectionality is starkly evident; we see how racial ideology shapes both women’s gendered conditions of getting by and their political potential.

Organizations such as the Daughters of Africa or the Federation of South African Women used public motherhood as a means to give women of diverse backgrounds and agendas a unified identity and a grounded moral legitimacy for their activism in formal politics (Healy-Clancy

2017). Yet, the salience of motherhood as a recognizable political category was more thoroughgoing and permeated multiple scales. Women like Magdalena, Grace, and Rosemary—not activists or even community leaders—also relied on a maternal identity to make individual claims in their case for deserving support.

Motherhood is conceptualized as both politically potent and strategically efficacious precisely because it is a multivalent term that condenses differing experiences into a unified conception. This condensation is possible, in part, because the indexical and symbolic assumptions about what motherhood means seem to have remarkable historical consistency in the English-speaking world. These assumptions make motherhood *appear* to be a seemingly self-evident concept—the care of children—enabling the identity category to bridge differences of race or nationality in ways that are politically useful. Key to this efficacy is the *moral authority* motherhood affords to the projects that can be incorporated under its umbrella. The moral status of maternal care rests on a set of popular assumptions that can be summarized in three nested equivalencies: namely, caring for = caring about; good caregiving = feminine; carework = moral good.³ These equivalencies reach their apex in the social conception of the mother as the paradigmatic, selfless caregiver. Thus, women can imbue their actions and concerns with moral legitimacy if they can successfully subsume them under the heading of maternal care. For the

³ I am concerned with popular assumptions that the care literature has been at pains to unsettle. Critical for my discussion, is the colloquial assumption—persistent in the English-speaking world—that the actions of caring for someone entails, or are best performed when undergirded by, feelings of caring about that person (Buch 2015, Tronto 1993, Ungerson 1990). This assumed relationship between care affect and action is also highly gendered wherein women are thought to perform better care because they are believed to have greater intersubjective skills—e.g. they feel more care (Abel 2000, Reverby 1987). Further, what is thought to distinguish caregiving actions from other kinds of acts, is the presence of a moral orientation where providing care involves an ethical act of seeking “the good” in that given context, or in other words, carework is equivocated with a moral good (Mol et al. 2010, p13; Stevenson 2014). Despite decades of work by feminist scholars and activists, there remains a persistent popular conception that mothers have a natural proclivity to engage in good care actions because they have such a profound emotional attachment to their children (to name a few critical scholars: Chodorow 1978; Roberts 1993; Spelman 1988). When mothers fail to demonstrate that presumed emotional attachment or when they engage in practices socially construed as undesirable, they receive the double castigation of being morally corrupt and psychologically pathological (LaChance Adams 2014, Scheper-Hughes 1992).

women in my research, this meant narrating their needs—for food, for housing, for income—to social workers and judges as needs to support their maternal care. Even when their actions are readily evaluated as deviant, the women narrate those actions as maternal in hopes that the patina of the professed ideals of motherhood rubs off on them. However, as the experiences of Magdalena, Rosemary, and Grace reveal, the seeming moral unity of maternal care is precarious at best, vulnerable to its own capaciousness and the vagaries of an often-mercurial interpretation. Notably, the invocation of motherhood can quickly break down when that care is quite differently valued depending on race.

I argue that as motherhood became increasingly politicized both in South African and on an international scale, women's mobilization of maternal identity to make claims must be reconceptualized as more than identity politics, as a strategic discursive action of claims-making—as an attempt to make motherhood work.⁴ By invoking motherhood, women drew upon a presumed unified concept to make themselves legible as social actors and to make arguments about their desert for assistance. However, the multivalence of motherhood as an interpretive concept also posed challenges. Women labored to retain control over the meaning and translation of 'motherhood' as they used it, and their relative power was constrained by their poverty, gender, and place within a racial hierarchy. Attending to the unpredictable interpretations of motherhood has important historiographic consequences as well. I show that the outcome of cases often sat at the intersection of legitimating ideologies handed down through Commissions

⁴ Many of the women's activist groups in South Africa during this time forged connections with transnational leftist feminist movements whose politics emphasized public engagement as an extension of private maternal responsibilities. One of the most notable groups was the Women's International Democratic Federation, established in Paris in 1945, whose membership included women from the first, second, and third worlds. In 1955, representatives from Federation of South African Women attended the World Congress of Mothers in Lausanne and hosted a regional Congress of Mothers in Johannesburg later that year (Healey-Clancy 2017).

of Inquiry, legislation, and social work education and the idiosyncratic proclivities of the social workers and judges that the women encountered (Ashforth 1990). By considering this work in the early 1960s, I contribute to the scholarship that seeks to track how apartheid became elaborated not through a grand ideological blueprint, but through an uneven and often contradictory evolution at the level of street level bureaucrats (Posel 1991; Roos 2015).

Motherhood on File

The women whose experiences populate this dissertation were classified according to the four apartheid racial categories: white (European); Indian (Asiatic); coloured; and African (native or Bantu). They shared a geographic location in the Point neighborhood of South Africa's third largest city, Durban. Their lives entered the archival record because, by choice or by fortune, they interacted with South Africa's child welfare system and their maternal caregiving was subject to evaluation by neighbors, landlords, teachers, social workers, and, finally, a magistrate. These social workers and court officials were not only gatekeepers to critical resources such as grocery vouchers, rent subsidies, or a monthly government grant, they also decided whether women's maternal projects were worthy of support or required termination by removal of their children.

The below discussion is drawn from a sampling of Children's Court cases from 1949-1998 in which the participants' primary residence—or workplace in the case of black Africans—was the Point. Under apartheid, the Point, like all urban centers, was considered a whites-only neighborhood. Despite the presence of black men laboring in the neighborhood's railyard and shipyard, black women who cleaned the neighborhood buildings, Indian restaurant and shop owners, and the coloured nurses who staffed the neighborhood hospital, whites remained the legitimate face of the neighborhood. The majority of those whites living in the Point were either

poor or working class—a highly stigmatized social category in both mid-century and today—and many sought assistance from a social welfare infrastructure that had been created for their virtually sole benefit.

Prior to 1998, in order for a caregiver to receive state funds, the child had to be declared “in need of care” by a Commissioner of Child Welfare, usually a magistrate. Records of these Children’s Court cases contain a host of documents that argue for or against a variety of interventions, from receipt of a maintenance grant (the predecessor to today’s Child Support Grant) to removal of the child to a state institution or foster care. The documents include reports and letters produced by social workers in the Durban office of the Department of Social Welfare and Pensions and Durban Child Welfare Society; transcripts of trial hearings that include testimony from social workers, parents, and neighbors or friends; and letters or statements composed by school principals, neighbors, and the parents or children themselves. As arguments, these documents can be read as evidence for what constituted normatively desirable (and undesirable) family life in various times. Further, the surveillance to which poor families’ lives were subjected produced abundant data—albeit through a particular lens—on the intimate life of families in the Point.

I consider in depth three representative cases in which the clients differ by racial classification. This close reading reveals that while national discourse was uniformly concerned with reforming motherhood, the political meaning and political potential of that identity was sharply shaped by the racial ideologies of the 1960s. In each case, the women concerned mobilized their maternal status to further their individual goals. However, the interpretation of their maternal actions and the forms of support for which they were eligible were highly differentiated by race—a reality of which the women were well aware. Before turning to the case

files, I begin with the longer history of the development of the welfare system in South Africa and the ways in which it was both racialized and gendered.

Families, Race, and the South African Welfare State

The South African welfare state originated with the identification of a social problem—the inherent threat poor whites pose to proper (read: white) social reproduction—and the social and political anxieties that adhered around this category of people who were considered to be falling short of the expectations of their race. Occupying the hearts and minds of both bureaucrats and citizens in the early part of the twentieth century, the ‘poor white’ question forged the ideological underpinnings for the welfare state, the system of racist rule that would be formalized through apartheid, and the tenuous coherence of whiteness as a popular and political category.⁵ The primary mechanism for addressing the ‘problem’ of poor whites was intervention into the white family. As the turn of the twentieth century marked a shift in the relationship between the family and the state, older arguments about the demoralizing effects of welfare provision fell away in favor of a state need to oversee the upbringing of the next generation of citizens (Davin 1978). Concern over the quantity and quality of white children prompted the elaboration of a state system to oversee their proper care.

Both the state and citizens had adopted a domestic ideology that arose out of nineteenth century industrialization and was embraced by middle-class British and Americans, which espoused a nuclear family model with a male breadwinner, dependent full-time wife, and dependent children (Alexander 1976; Gaitskell 1983; Hall 1979; Malos 1980). Given that, within this paradigm, the proper care of the child took place within the institution of the family, families thus became the targets of reform efforts. Within the family, mothers were seen as most

⁵ For a more elaborated discussion of this intertwining see: Roos 2003, Teppo 2004, Dubow 1995, and Lange 2003.

responsible for the bodily care and moral upbringing of the children and improper care became linked to maternal inadequacy. To target such issues, an ideology of proper white motherhood arose that would shape the lives of women for a century.

There is general consensus amongst scholars that South African's colonial population experienced poverty as far back as the 18th century, though how that poverty was defined and conceptualized by political leaders varies considerably (e.g. Bundy 1986; Bickford-Smith et al. 1999; Freund 1992; Iliffe 1988). Prior to the British takeover of the Cape Colony in 1814, poor relief was provided through religious institutions, notably the Dutch Reform Church who opened the first orphanage in 1814, and the primary target of aid was the poor white farmers who were rendered indigent in those early years due to crop failure and diminishing land resources.⁶ In keeping with the new British Poor Laws of 1834, institutionalization became the primary state-driven mode of addressing poverty, and the poor were associated with physical infirmity and an inability to work. A Department of Public Health was created in 1891 in part, to deal with the poor white problem and the "sanitation" concerns over the racial intermingling of poor whites and non-whites (Swanson 1977). The poor-law ethos that no able-bodied person should be destitute was knit together with a Calvinistic belief in the value of hard work as a spiritual and moral virtue thereby rendering the 'fit needy' as both social aberrations and moral deviants. This framing of poverty, in addition to its health-based overlay, would form the ideological basis of later welfare schemes.

The decades around the turn of the century would change the scale of the problem of poverty and thereby alter how it was to be understood and addressed. Agricultural productivity slumped from the combined effects of drought, locusts, rinderpest, and the destruction of the

⁶ Brown and Neku (2005) argue that poor relief was for whites only whereas Iliffe (1988) and McKendrick (1987) suggest it included Africans as well.

South African War. Unskilled farmers flocked into the cities, but they were ill equipped to compete with overseas migrants or black Africans for the newly-created mining jobs.

Additionally, the 1902 profitability crisis in the mines created a large multiracial population in need of poor relief (Roos 2003). Despite the ever-increasing flood of unemployed whites into the city from 1890-1910, poverty was still thought of as a temporary condition as a result of the war. But the war only intensified a larger economic depression (Lange 2003).

How the colonial government understood this flood of persons into the city in terms of their needs and capacities was filtered through both the racial ideology and political economy of the time. The rural homesteads on which black Africans predominantly lived and practiced small-scale farming were still relatively self-sufficient. Few Africans were willing to submit themselves to the unpleasantness of waged work in an economy hungry for their labor (Comaroff and Comaroff 1991). Instead, they were driven to the cities by a combination of taxation and settler land dispossession that diminished agricultural and cattle rearing capacity. This produced an increasing reliance on cash both for survival and for important ritual practices such as the payment of *ilobolo* to solidify a marriage. However, that “need” for work and wages was understood as categorically different from the situations of other race groups. Colonial officials considered African laborers to be “target” workers who sought employment for a particular financial goal, but not out of the necessity of reproduction. Instead, it was assumed that the “African extended family”—often idealized as steeped in a culture of communal support—provided the labor and resources for social reproduction. In this framing then, when famine or disease resulted in the presence of destitute Africans in the city, the problem was not one of financial need, but of a breakdown” in the “traditional” family (Ferguson 2015; Hunt 1999; Iliffe 1987; Moore and Vaughan 1994). This was a powerful fallacy that subsequent governments

would use to legitimize the exclusion of black Africans from welfare provisions.⁷ Yet, beginning with the 1913 Land Act, and even arguably before, life in the reserves became increasingly untenable and rural families grew increasingly dependent upon migrant laborer and less capable of acting the imagined role of the social safety net.

In Durban, management of this influx of persons to the city took on a particular form. Prior to the 1920s, Durban's economy was dominated by merchant capital and the port (Maylam 1990). The economy's need for large number of casual and seasonal workers as well as the city's close proximity to African reserves, meant that Durban relied on a larger proportion of (male) migrant labor much earlier than other cities (Maylam 1995). Additionally, it had a much more robust infrastructure and legislature for managing and controlling this labor. As early as 1871, the Durban Town Council proposed separate locations for Indians predominantly out of a concern for the "Asiatic Menace," the name given to the fact that Indians competed intensely with whites for both space and employment (Swanson 1983).⁸ In these years, segregation was less directed at black Africans as a racial group—as it would be in later years—as much as a concern for imposing controls and restrictions on what was a relatively free and mobile working class (Maylam 1990). This was achieved through the construction of single-sex hostels—also called compounds or barracks—to house black workers in close proximity to the places where their labor was needed and contain them when it was not.⁹ There were four such hostels on the Point, and they provided housing, meals, leisure clubs, and beerhalls at the cost of curfews,

⁷ Far from a phenomenon of the segregationist or apartheid regimes, van der Merwe traces the origins of racially discriminatory social security provisions in south Africa to a 1705 decision in the Cape to cut previously equal poverty alleviation payments for Africans to half the payments made to whites. He argues, this "marks the start of a social security system that was to discriminate on the groups of race for almost three centuries" (van der Merwe 1997:97).

⁸ Durban's approach to the threat posed by Indians was threefold: residential segregation, political exclusion, and commercial suppression. While segregation efforts would not be successful for another few decades, limits on trade licenses and political representation were implemented early.

⁹ The first hostel for dock-workers in Durban was built as early as 1878 (Hempson 1979).

overcrowding, and filthy facilities. In addition to control, these “services”, often referred to in Native Administration documents as “welfare,” served other purposes (Hempson 1979). Profits from the municipal beerhalls, which by 1909 held a monopoly over beer production in the city, funded any investments into welfare, housing, administration or services for the black African population. The architecture of this ‘Durban System’—which would later be replicated throughout the country—had a profound impact on the provision of welfare for black Africans in the following decades (la Hausse 1992; Swanson 1976).

White poverty was first formalized as a category of intervention in the Transvaal Indigency Commission of Enquiry of 1906-1908 (Transvaal Government 1908). The Commission drew upon broader intellectual tropes circulating in Britain in which social issues were explained through biological precedent (Jones 1980). Social Darwinism provided the Commission a moral universe that linked nature and society and in which “poverty was both a symptom of a sick society and a sickness in itself” to be cured and prevented (Lange 2003:145). The Commission created a classification of poverty that separated poor whites—those structurally lacking the necessities of life—from the (non-white) chronically poor who were, by nature, ignorant, lazy, and indigent. Within this poverty hierarchy, decreasingly ranked from the unemployed to the criminal, intervention was needed to ensure that poor whites did not “fall from the ranks of civilization,” a status that was racially marked.¹⁰ But, biological explanations for poverty had to be handled carefully, lest the Commission alienate the rising Afrikaner nationalist movement by arguing that the predominance of Afrikaners amongst poor whites was due to inferior and irredeemable biology (Dubow 1995). Thus interventions had to be targeted at both an environmental and an individual level. Unemployment was to be addressed through job

¹⁰ Report of the Transvaal Indigency Commission, 1906-1908 (T.G. 13-08) para 7.

creation in the mines and railroads and moral and economic regeneration was to take place through state-based education and temporary charity.

Charity in the early twentieth century was to look very different from that of the nineteenth century and was based on quite different principals. During this time, Victorian reforms moved the basis of aid from one of sentiment to that of knowledge of the poor and what was best for them (Lange 2003). Prior to the Union of South Africa in 1910, poverty relief was provided mainly by churches and Afrikaans women's groups on an individualized and piecemeal basis.¹¹ With the union, the partnership between voluntary and state-based welfare was formalized and the work of private welfare organizations became more nationally coordinated. The poor whites thus became a categorized segment of the population about which knowledge was to be produced and tracked (Rose 1999).

Even with the creation of the category of 'poor whites,' the Transvaal Commission still understood white poverty to be a transitory, primarily rural, issue. But, between 1905 and 1910, high infant mortality rates recorded by the Cape Town Medical Officer of Health prompted the introduction of child protection legislation across the colonies that included the founding of a voluntary child welfare society and the provision of preventative health care units (Clark 1999). By 1913, the conditions in towns worsened, and the crisis of poverty became endemic. The danger of poor whites became the threat they posed to the tenuous hierarchy of race and class through their tendency to "sink into apathetic indigency and to fall below the level of the non-European worker" (Merriman 1913: 10).¹² Not only did poor whites embody a lower level of civilization than what was expected of their race, under the eugenic logic of the day, their social

¹¹ For more on these groups and their relationship to Afrikaner nationalism see Hofmeyr 1987, Butler 1989, and du Toit 2003.

¹² From the Report of the Select Committee on European Employment and Labour Conditions (S.C. 9-13) para 2. This language also reflects the larger colonial trend of investigations of white poverty being sites for the defense of middle-class European ideals. For more on this see Stoler 2002.

degradation was inheritable and could thus lead to the devolution of the entire white race (Lange 2003). Poor whites were thought to have intermarried too much and had produced “weak minded people who, although technically responsible, had not developed their moral sense” (Lange 2003: 148).

Within this new framing, the solution was to control the reproduction of the entire class through a network of institutions: educational, penal, and centralized charity distribution as part of a larger “civilizing mission” (Stoler 1992). These institutions allowed for systematized observation and knowledge production about the poor driven by an overarching “scientification” of poverty in which the deployment of policy-relevant expertise and models of social engineering were used to respond to the crises (Breckenridge 2014; Swanson 1977; Dubow 2006). Intervention became focused on childrearing and education because children with “poor” upbringing were seen as ill equipped for a future at the top of a racial hierarchy and thus posed a danger to the nation. The deficiencies of poor white families were to be compensated for by the school’s efforts to discipline children into the habits of hard work, temperance, and thrift as well as to solidify within them a notion of their superior white identity. The Prisons and Reformatories Act of 1910 solidified the relationship between penalization and education by placing the industrial schools under the administration of the prison. The Children’s Protection Act of 1913 put all children under the protection of the state and gave the state authority to intervene in their care, though in practice provision centered on non-black children (Bhorat 1995). All births had to be reported to the state to ensure newborn health and medical inspections were brought into schools. Addington Primary school in the Point neighborhood began to keep regular records of children with recurring health-related attendance problems and started a free lunch program for its poorest pupils. While these reforms were designed to address the needs of

all vulnerable children, in practice, most provisions were limited to non-black children with very few black African beneficiaries (Bhorat 1995).

The onset of World War I temporarily reduced unemployment and turned state preoccupations elsewhere. But the mining profitability crisis, spike in unemployment, and growing social unrest that followed the war caused a dramatic shift in how poor whites were apprehended. What had been understood as a social and ideological problem was transformed in the 1921 *Report of the Unemployment Commission* into a national danger that could bring about political upheaval. These fears were affirmed when a series of violent mining strikes including the infamous Rand Revolt of 1922 demonstrated that workers were willing to seize arms (O'Meara 1983; Bozzoli 1978a&b). Racial mixing between poor whites and non-whites that had been previously labeled as immoral and a threat to racial purity now took on a more ominous tone in which the ultimate nightmare was a political union that crossed racial lines and upended the ruling class (Freund 1988). Extensive attempts were made to clear the racially integrated slums in the urban centers, but greater emphasis was placed on the removal of non-whites than providing housing for those whites already in the city and slum conditions persisted (Parnell 1988).¹³ Increasing industrial development brought an influx of whites, mainly women, into the cities and when they could not afford the accommodation deemed suitable for their race, they rented rooms from coloureds and Indians, perpetuating problematic miscegenation (Brink 1978).

The psychiatrist Louis Freed documented that, despite widespread prostitution and sexual diseases across all races during this time, responses were quite different (1949). Over the subsequent decades, white women and their progeny were pulled out of this sexual economy through a number of labor and welfare laws aimed at promoting poor white families and a

¹³ In doing so, the government had to carefully negotiate a competing set of demands first from whites seeking protection of a desired standards of living and second from employers wanting cheap African labor (Davie 2005).

massive investment in white education that further promoted their preferential position in the labor market during the apartheid era. One such law was the 1921 Child Protection Amendment Act, which provided the foundations for what would later become the State Maintenance Grant to help support mothers and children who had lost their attachment to a wage-earning spouse (Mase 2013). Destitute mothers were given a “Mother’s Pension” in a bid to prevent the removal of a child whereas maintenance grants were given to for children placed with foster-parents under Children’s act 1921(Muirhead 2012). Women classified as Indian, coloured, or black African were largely excluded from this policy on the basis of “the 'civilised labour' view that people accustomed to modern lifestyles and consumption patterns [e.g. whites] had greater need of social protection” (van der Berg 1997:485). Instead, Indian and coloured single mothers—often labeled as prostitutes regardless of their practices—were given counseling in moral reform whereas black African women were subject to increasing levels of governmental control and when apprehended, were sent back to the rural areas where they could be supported and reformed by their families.

To prevent the feared non-racial union of the working class, intervention had to be made not just at the physical level, but also at the ideological. Political movements, in their effort to capture the poor white vote, emphasized racial solidarity over class solidarity and laws such as the Civilised Labor Policy of 1924 that sought to substitute poor whites for unskilled blacks, all reaffirmed race as the crucial marker of difference.¹⁴ Education, too sought to indoctrinate white children as to their superior status. White upliftment became a nationalist project and part of the

¹⁴ According to Freund and Pamell, the Civilised Labor Policy did little to increase the employment of poor whites at the lowest levels and served primarily to exacerbate the housing problem by making construction more expensive because it required the employment of poor whites (1988).

reconstruction of the post-war Afrikaner *volk* (Groenewald 1987).¹⁵ The Pact government, which began in 1924, expanded poverty relief in an effort to discipline poor whites into a productive and conformist working class (van Onslen 1982; Clynick 1996). In addition, as Seekings argues that the legislation that came out of the 8 years of Pact leadership laid the foundation for the welfare state through the work of the 1926 Pienaar Commission on Old Age Pensions and National Insurance that recommended the state enact non-contributory old-age pensions and disability grants and the 1928 Old Age Pensions Act (2007). At the same time, the landless, rural poor were placed in state settlements where they became wards of the state and were instilled with the values of hard work and ‘proper’ comportment (Davies et. al. 1976).

A critical part of enacting proper white citizenship was to embody the ideals of white motherhood. Both within the work camps and the urban centers, child-rearing practices were the site of intervention and were subject to extensive regulation (Roos 2003). This development fit the larger colonial trend of white poverty igniting concerns over “sexual, moral, and racial affronts to European identity” and the use of childrearing to police its boundary (Stoler 2002:153). The ranks of child welfare societies swelled to over 100 by 1924.¹⁶ Social welfare reforms and protective legislation focused intense energy on the home as “the preparatory environment for civic responsibility” and mothers, in particular for their guiding role (Stoler 1992:518). The newly formed position of social worker ensured that children were given formal education and that their upbringing was in accordance with the standards of the day. Their role was to address the overriding concerns with maternal inadequacy through both education and discipline. A variety of poverty relief cum social engineering programs—targeting primarily

¹⁵ This is not to suggest that racist ideology was only imposed from above. Poor whites themselves did a great deal of interpretive work to differentiate themselves from other races and they often relied on the exploitation of other racial groups even poorer than themselves. See Freund and Morrell 1988.

¹⁶ These would have been primarily non-state voluntary service organizations (Roos 2003).

white women—were initiated that included free meals for expectant mothers, summertime baby camps, dental clinics and mother-craft training (Berger 1983).¹⁷ Yet, even with these intensified interventions, the number of poor whites continued to grow, nearly tripling in the years between 1916 and 1933 and demanding a new level of response (Parnell 1988:120).¹⁸

The middle class white ideal was not reserved for that race group alone. For urban black African women, especially those among the mission-educated Christian elite, a reorientation of household labor and maternal duty towards a nuclear family model was an integral part of their conversion and progress towards a modern condition. Indeed, for these women, “Christianity was as much about a specific family form, of which they were the linchpin, as about a new faith in Christ” (Gaitskell 1983:242). Mission schools and church groups trained women in proper childcare practices, housework, and sexual modesty. However, this domestic ideology was fraught with contradictions for black women. First, housework training was as much about capacitating future housewives as it was about creating skilled domestic servants for white houses and ensuring a robust African workforce.¹⁹ Second, low wages for black Africans meant that “most African women could not afford to be full-time housewives and mothers, no matter how solid their marriage or devout their faith” (Gaitskell 1983:252). Temperance laws made navigating this contradiction all the more complicated for Christian women because beer brewing was one of the most lucrative work women could perform and it combined well with childcare and housework. Despite these challenges, many black women embraced the domestic ideology of the wife and mother as the linchpin of the family and guardian of virtue. As we saw

¹⁷ As part of the larger colonial project an equivalent form of regulation of motherhood and domestic training also existed for Africans. In South Africa see Gaitskell 1983.

¹⁸ Though difficult to measure, the number of government-defined “poor whites” nationally was recorded as 106,000 in 1916, 120,000 in 1921, and 300,000 in 1933.

¹⁹ Shockingly high infant mortality figures were recorded in Johannesburg in 1928 (705 deaths for every thousand African babies under one year versus 78 for whites) that, as Hunt has shown in other parts of the continent, produced enormous anxiety about the maintenance of a sufficient black labor force (1988,1999).

in the opening, claims to the right to live in families unbroken by migration and to care full-time for their children became a basis for struggle against a state that made such things impossible.²⁰ Thus, for both black and white women, mothering was not simply about social reproduction, but was tied to a larger obligation to uphold their respective races and, ultimately, their place in nation. Their mothering became a right and a patriotic duty.

From 1929-1932, the state marshaled a veritable army of ‘experts’ to employ the latest in social scientific methods to address the poor white question in the first Carnegie Commission investigation.²¹ This massive project was the first to systematically map the supposed causes of white poverty and to significantly alter the living conditions of poor whites. Roos argues compellingly that the Commission’s landmark five-volume report on all areas of life provided what Ashforth calls, a "scheme of legitimation" for state welfare policy through to the 1980s (1990).²² But there is disagreement amongst scholars as to how the Commission framed the problem of white poverty and its solution. Seekings argues that while the Pact government put greater emphasis on changing the environment and opportunities of poor whites, the Carnegie Commission opposed measures such as protected employment and suggested the solution lay in ‘rehabilitating’ poor whites through developing new personal and psychological qualities such as self-reliance and racial self-respect (Seekings 2008a). In contrast, Dubow and Davies suggest that though the Commission’s report was saturated with biological eugenic language, Malherbe, one of its primary authors and researchers eschewed biological determinism and believed instead in the power of the environment to shape human development (Davie 2005; Dubow 1995).

²⁰ Throughout this dissertation, I concur with Gaitskell that “Family life is and has long been for black women, something to struggle for, rather than against” (1983:254).

²¹ Davie argues against much of the scholarship on the commission to suggest that its investigation was not the first use of more positivistic social science research methods, but instead reflected a blending of ethnography, interviewing, oral history, and survey instruments that included intelligence tests, questionnaires, and the collection of photographic evidence (2005).

²² Ashforth defines this as: “sets of principals capable of explaining the problems faced by the state and justifying, by virtue of these explanations, the actions deemed necessary for the future of the state”(1990:3) see also Roos 2003:17.

Regardless of theoretical debates over whether environmental or psychological factors were the motor of social change, economic reality shaped what kinds of interventions—or intervention recommendations—were possible. There was consensus in the report that though material support was needed for poor whites, such support would be ineffective to move poor whites out of their “degraded” state and “inferior mentality” unless they were compelled to internalize the right (i.e. middle-class) values (Malherbe 1932:xvii-xviii). In keeping with the larger European political shift of governance *of* the family to governance *through* the family, the Commission sought to use the family as the primary mechanism to reorganize social values across the class as a whole. The family thus became “an agent for transmitting the norms of the state into the private sphere” (Teppo 2004:37). The ideal was the economically self-sufficient family that solved its own problems and was not a ‘parasite to society.’ When families deviated from this ideal—as all poor whites did—they would be subject to surveillance and policing by a newly professionalized class of state agents: social workers (Donzelot 1979).

While the family as a unit was an object of concern to the Commission, motherhood and childrearing once again formed a primary focus. The investigation of the committee included a detailed study of mothers and daughters of poor whites and the transmission of maternal care practices (du Toit 1996). Mothers were framed as the ultimate caretakers of the home and the custodians of their children’s moral well-being. Upon them fell the responsibility to mold white children into god-fearing and productive exemplars of their race. The well-documented idealized figure of the *volksmoeder* (mother of the nation) celebrated a maternal piety that glorified women’s domestic duties and linked the health of the home to the health of the nation—

conceived of as white Afrikanerdom—by laying the future of both on the shoulders of mothers.²³ The result was that in the years following the Commission, the government implemented many of the Commission’s recommendations including establishing a new Department of Social Welfare and Pensions in 1937 which, in addition to the 1937 Children’s Act, gave the government greater leeway over the management of poor white families and white mothers via the mechanism of welfare.²⁴

An important aspect of the Act was an increased focus on child grants that were much more targeted. In contrast to the “Mother’s Pensions” of the 1921 Act, there was much stricter regulation of the spending of the monies—specifically on childrearing necessities and no so-called “luxury goods” were allowed. Each grant recipient was allocated a supervisor to oversee how grants were spent and to ensure the grants did the work of rehabilitating families (Muirhead 2012). This said, following reforms in 1942, grant amounts were adjusted to enable caregivers to live off of them without seeking employment outside the home (Patterson 1953). Though the grants were made available to women of all races with low incomes and large numbers of children, eligibility was difficult and payments were highly unequal (Clark 1999).²⁵ A child with a father deemed capable of working was considered ineligible for the grant and children had to maintain school attendance to retain eligibility.²⁶ All other avenues of support had to be exhausted before an application for a maintenance grant in respect of an urban Black child could

²³ There is sharp disagreement as to the role of women in the creation of the *volksmoeder* image. Those who argue it was primarily a male construction include: Gaitskell and E. Unterhalter (1989), Brink (1978), and Mc Clintock (1995). Those who emphasize women’s involvement in its production include Kruger (1991), Vincent (1999, 2000), and du Toit (2003).

²⁴ Wylie notes that, until an overhaul of the Department of Native Affairs post-1948, this department administered poor relief to both blacks and whites (2001).

²⁵ For example, in 1948 the monthly maximum for the maintenance grants were £23L for whites, £11,10s for coloureds, £9L for Indians and £4L for black Africans (Patterson 1953:119). In contrast to welfare regimes in the North which tend to be undergirded by a commitment to some form of egalitarianism, instead in South Africa, welfare was meant to support and maintain a racial hierarchy. The trend is quite visible in the ratio of pension payments for different race groups. In, 1944, the ratio of payment amounts for whites, coloureds and Indians, and black Africans was 12:6:1. In, 1965 the ratio was 11:4:1; 1975, 7:3:1; 1980 3:2:1; and 1992 1.2 :1.1 :1 (Devereux 2007:545-546).

²⁶ Maintenance grants were payable to mothers, stepmothers or grandmothers for the care of a child where an order by the Children’s court had been made committing the child to their care.

be made.²⁷ Despite these barriers, by the end of 1942, 13,276 whites, 5,816 coloureds, 3,034 Indians and 190 blacks Africans were receiving maintenance grants (Iliffe 1987). Furthermore, the high level of supervision the grants entailed required a considerable work force.

The newly created Department of Social Welfare was unique in its structure as a separate body independent from the Department of Labor where welfare services had previously been located. This reflected a different vision for the role of social welfare as not simply addressing a problem of unemployment, but signaling “a desire and urge to solve the problem of poverty and consequent retardation amongst a large section of the European population” (van Schalwijk 1950:1). “Such solutions were meant to arise out of a careful and ‘scientific’ study and diagnosis conducted by professional social workers. Voluntary organizations, which provided the bulk of direct welfare services, were encouraged to employ trained and qualified social workers through a 75% subsidy of social worker salaries from the Department of Social Welfare.²⁸ The Children’s Act outlined the regulatory mechanisms for social workers protection of children from inappropriate care and the terms under which the state would offer monetary assistance. Thus the social workers acted as key mediators in the relationship between the state and poor white families.

The years between the Carnegie Commission and the Second World War saw a dramatic reduction in the number of government-recorded poor whites. There was rapid growth in manufacturing in South Africa's industrial centers such as Durban, and the war stimulated not only manufacturing of consumer goods and war resources, it also increased activity at the port.²⁹

²⁷ Once again, exclusion of black Africans was made on the basis that under customary law, no child would be without support. Furthermore, there was a concern that cash allowances to Black women would lead to a flood of rural women to the towns (Report of the Social Security Committee 1944).

²⁸ From 1938-1948 the number of social worker posts would go from 77 to 929 (Van Schalwijk 1950:2).

²⁹ The gross output of Durban's secondary industry rose from £13,599,000 in 1934-35 to £23,734,000 in 1939-40 to £49,275,000 in 1945-46 (University of Natal 1952:19).

Black semi-skilled labor was replaced with white labor, heightened tariffs allowed for the expansion of secondary industries, and the state massively expanded its relief work employment.³⁰ Additionally, by the late 1930s South Africa had the basis of a surprisingly extensive welfare state in which from 1938-1939 20% of the budget (approximately £10 million) of the new Department of Social Welfare went to ‘services of an essentially social welfare nature’ such as pensions, aid to farmers, and child welfare (Seekings 2008a: 515). Prior to 1939, the welfare program consisted of various contributory social insurance schemes providing for ill health, disability, unemployment, and retirement for most white and coloured workers. There were also a series of non-contributory social assistance schemes that provided means tested old-age pensions as well as disability grants for white and coloured people (Seekings 2005).³¹ Not only were African and Indian people excluded from these schemes, but coverage was far from comprehensive even for white or colored people.

In the years leading up to 1948, demands grew for a more comprehensive system for all race groups. Following a series of commissions of inquiry on the expansion of benefits, in 1944 the non-contributory old-age pension and disability grants was extended to Africans and in 1945 unemployment insurance followed suit (Seekings 2007). In 1947 family allowances were introduced for all races except black Africans (despite the Social Security Committee’s recommendation that urbanised Africans should receive them). Unlike the maintenance grants, these allowances were for intact nuclear families with three or more children where one or more people were employed. Eligibility was based on a *minimum* income. They were intended to compensate for the insufficiency of wages to meet the needs of raising families (Patterson

³⁰ By 1939 the central government had 98,000 jobs and 59% of these were made up of relief work (Abedin and Standish 1985:41).

³¹ Meaning that eligibility was based on income being below a threshold amount.

1953:116).³² With the arrival of apartheid in 1948, the Nationalist Party swiftly reversed the reforms to unemployment insurance, subsequently excluding African workers for the next 25 years, but never abolished the non-contributory old-age pensions or disability grants (Seekings 2007).

The expansion of state-directed welfare was indicative of an ideological shift in the understanding of the relationship between the state and its citizenry. During the Second World War, the circulation of documents such as the Beveridge Report on Social Insurance and Allied Service produced a new concept of citizenship in which all people were guaranteed certain “rights,” including social entitlements, regardless of their level of ‘civilisation’ (Dubow 2005). A radical transformation arose from state officials and elites embracing the idea that the state had a responsibility for ensuring the welfare of its citizens (Seekings 2005). The enhanced notion of state responsibility was also linked to the expansion of state power and regulation of the family to ensure a normative familial life and preserve the social order (Posel 2005). In the context of growing criticism of the non-interventionist state and the failure of markets to offer viable solutions to social problems, the state became the biggest actor in social engineering. Roos argues this resulted in a re-negotiation of a ‘contract of whiteness’ between poor whites and the state in which whites agreed to support the government in return for a guarantee of privileged status (2003). The maintenance of this contract became a condition of office for successive white governments and led to an expansion of state support for poor whites for the next thirty years.³³

³² The maximum monthly allowances in 1948 were £2 for whites, £1 for coloureds, and 15s for Indians (discontinued at the end of 1948). From 1947-1948, the minimum monthly income necessary to qualify for an allowance was decreased from £7L to £5L for whites and *increased* from £3,10s to £4,5s for coloureds following complaints that coloureds and Indians in some cases could obtain allowances exceeding that for whites.

³³ From 1930-1950 the state supported poor whites with employment, free housing and free medical care, education, and labor legislation (Abedin and Standish 1985:41).

As Iliffe suggests, following its election in 1948, the National Party went on, “to elaborate the most extensive welfare system in Africa, a system which, like the apartheid programme, was born of urbanization, inequality, state power, and rampant technocracy” (1987:142). However, unlike welfare states of the North which were premised on some form of equality, the basis of this welfare system was to support and maintain racial hierarchy. Even before 1948, the differential treatment of the four race groups had already begun to have profound social and economic effects. The pervasive ideology of the time—in many ways altered by apartheid policies—was that state spending on each race group should be directly linked to their direct tax contributions. This was meant to ensure that a black African majority would not become a burden on the white minority (Sagner 2000). However, this welfare dogma was retained in the context of both influx control that limited black Africans access to urban employment and a ‘civilized labour policy’ under which wages were hierarchically allocated according to racial categorization. Here I concur with economist Servaas van der Berg about the primary role of labor market inequality—as opposed to differentiated access to wealth or social power—in shaping the patterns of economic stratification by race that the post-apartheid government is at pains to overturn (2011).³⁴ In the city of Durban, labor—and by extension welfare—inequality was felt all the more starkly because of the municipal government’s dogged refusal to spend more than what the beerhalls generated on services for Africans.

A number of economic push and pull factors contributed to a large influx of black African migrant labor into Durban in the years between 1935 and 1955 (Maylam 1995). Life in the rural reserves was growing increasingly unsustainable and families there depended more and

³⁴ In this article, van der Berg makes two, related, arguments. First, for the labor market as setting the limits of redistribution in the democratic era and second for the historic import of labor and wage inequality that allows us to see how apartheid was only one instantiation of a longer history of unequal economic distribution that shaped racially differentiated development opportunities (2011).

more on the wages sent home from men who migrated to work in the city. Not only did more men migrate, but they were migrating for much longer time periods.³⁵ By the late 1940s, physician Sidney Kark found that 90% of the men between the ages of 20 and 25 were temporarily absent from the rural area of Pholela in Natal (1950). This had profound impacts on life in the rural reserves where, in the absence of husbands, women gained greater freedom and authority, but this came at the cost of greater labor burdens and the emotional stress of maintaining a long-distance marriage (Kark 1950; Hunter 2010; Moore and Vaughan 1994).

This rapid influx also strained municipal infrastructure. Though in 1937 the city of Durban had become a proclaimed area, meaning that all black Africans were required to live in designated townships, hostels or licensed servants' quarters, there was massive housing shortage.³⁶ The city was in a dispute with both the central government and the business community as to who was to bear the cost of housing for Africans and the government's investments had been woefully insufficient (Maylam 1988&1988).³⁷ In 1949, the Native Administration Department Manager, estimated that 30,000 of the 90,000 African males registered to work in Durban were without formal accommodation, which didn't account for the thousands of unregistered women and children also present in the city.³⁸ While black African women in most cases did not migrate to the cities unless they were divorced, in search of absconded men, or looking to support children born outside of marriage, they were present and,

³⁵ A 1943 survey conducted by Durban's Native Administration Department showed that the number of Africans employed by twenty-five of the city's industrial establishments, selected at random, rose from 3,904 in 1939 to 14,985 in 1943. By 1945 the total number of African males registered in employment by the Native Administration Department had reached 71,210 (TBD, 3DBN, Crime, Unauthorised Shacks, file 4. Memorandum by Mrs. Maytom 22 February 1948).

³⁶ City of Durban, Mayor's Minutes, 1937, p25.

³⁷ From the 1920s to the 1950s the central government constantly reprimanded the Durban local authority for not spending enough of its native revenue account funds on African housing, the effect of which would relieve the central state of this burden (Maylam 1988). The account was predominantly funded through the sale of beer which, while profitable, was entirely insufficient to meet the need for housing investments and the city adamantly refused to use tax income on African expenses (Maylam 1983).

³⁸ TBD, 3DBN, Crime, Unauthorised Shacks, file 5. Correspondence of Havemann to Town Clerk ,30 July 1949. Note that these numbers are in a context where the total population of Durban was roughly 400,000 (Kuper et al. 1958:50-51).

though illegal residents, could (until the mid-1950s) carve out lives for themselves in the cracks between municipal legislation (Hunter 2010).³⁹ This huge population of unhoused people slept predominantly in back rooms, parks, or in the sprawling shack settlements that ringed the city. These areas, deemed “black belts,” were widely perceived as hotbeds of crime, vice, and disease, as presented in University of Natal’s Housing survey: “the most serious threat to Durban's health and racial harmony lies in her slums and vast shack settlement, the breeding grounds of disease, crime, and despair made more dangerous by ignorance and neglect.” (1952:34). Far greater than those articulated threats were the concerns that these were highly unregulated spaces in which a great deal of informal trade and interracial mixing took place in areas quite close to the (white) city center.⁴⁰ In response, the municipal government launched a massive effort to construct the racially segregated townships for non-whites, “far afield, where they would be cheaply housed, physically controlled, and politically contained” (Bozzoli 1991:166). One of the primary technologies of control was the township house, allocated only to married men, as a means of disciplining the workforce and refocusing labor to support a nuclear family (Hunter 2010).⁴¹ So it was that though social spending on non-white racial groups increased gradually over time—

³⁹ There is huge regional variation to patterns of female migration shaped by geographic differences in agricultural productivity, access to transport, and the impact of schooling and Christianity. While some have revealed that young, unmarried women were the least likely to migrate to cities (Schapera 1940; Walker 1990) Bozzoli’s research demonstrated that in Pondoland, migration to town was a precondition to marriage (1991). We do know that between 1936 and 1946 the female African population of Durban doubled from 14,234 to 28,523. (TBD, 3DBN, Crime, Unauthorised Shacks, file 4. Memorandum by Mrs. Maytom 22 February 1948).

⁴⁰ I do not mean to suggest that shack settlements arose solely out of necessity. Despite their lack of sanitation and formal housing, they offered a number of advantages: inexpensive housing; proximity to jobs and municipal transport; relative freedom from the regulation of townships or hostels; and numerous opportunities for independent trade, most notably beer brewing (Maasdorp and Humphreys 1975; Maylam 1983). Despite raids by the police in illicit liquor-distribution, by the late 1940s Cato Manor, one of Durban’s most notorious informal settlements was a hub for weekend socializing for residents and non-residents alike (TBD, 3DBN, Crime, Unauthorised Shacks, file 5. Memorandum by K.J. Clarke, n.d.1949).

⁴¹ Responses to the relocation to township houses was uneven and most often the moved benefitted well-employed men accepted the transition because it gave them an opportunity to claim section 10 rights for a better house or for a house at all. Men who relied more on the shantytown community for their trade were less enthusiastic. Women, whose primary economic activities were tied to an illegal economy suffered the transitions the most because they lost not only their livelihoods, but also their tenuous hold on urban residence, as they could not claim a house without attachment to a working man (Sambureni 1997). It is also important to note that companies on the dock preferred migrant male labor from distant rural areas rather than the stabilized workforce in the townships because migrants would tolerate lower wages, longer hours, and work schedules (e.g. early Monday shifts) that township men would not (Hempson 1979; Sambureni 1997).

such as through the building of townships in the late 1950s and early 1960s—the motivation was frequently less an inclusion of Indians, coloureds and black Africans into the social citizenry and more an effort to exert control or mitigate potential conflict (Sagner 2000). Unrest in Durban such as the 1946 march against the Ghetto Act, 1949 race riots, 1952 defiance campaign, 1959 beerhall protests and dockworkers slowdown, and the 1960 riots in Cato Manor only increased the state’s investment in containing political activism.⁴²

By the late 1950s, the ‘poor white problem’ was largely thought to have been solved, but the nightmare of poor whites continued to loom large in the social imaginary. Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, the number of whites in well-paid job categories increased dramatically, while the number of white unemployed and manual laborers decreased (O’Meara 1996). Though considered extinct, the specter of hordes of poor whites and the degeneration they were thought to beget were often mobilized as an argument for social policy or regulation. As apartheid became more entrenched and the boundaries of proper whiteness became more clearly defined, the more the remaining poor whites conflicted with the prevailing order and the more marginal and less respectable they became (Teppo 2004). The expansion of white affluence that marked the 50s and 60s led to increased expectations for white lifestyles and poor whites only fell further and further behind. As the ruling Nationalist Party ensured white employment in civil service, deviations from the norm of the hard-working white man became indefensible. Defying the very category of whiteness, Teppo suggests that poor whites “became anomalies in a social order that increasingly rejected the possibility of their existence” and were subject to ever-increasing stigmatization and regulation (2004:167 see also Hyslop 2000). So-called “work shy” men were

⁴² This is by no means meant as an exhaustive list of the protests that took place between 1945 and 1960 as much as to say that, alongside the efflorescence of apartheid legislation, this was a time of fervent political action that shaped the domains in which the municipal and state government would invest, namely in the construction of townships and in police and surveillance equipment.

sent to labor camps and the extensive welfare system virtually ignored all other poor groups to ensure the eradication of this intolerable social category.

With apartheid, welfare provisions for whites became more expansive and redistributive whereas those for other racial groups became residual or phased out. The Population Registration Act of 1950 classified the population into four racial categories which determined not only differentiated access to voting rights, but also to welfare benefits. In 1949, the Department of Social Welfare spent the overwhelming majority of its budget on social assistance to whites who comprised 20% of the population—again, despite the fact that the poor white ‘problem’ was thought to not exist. Likewise, 75% of the voluntary organizations that provided the direct welfare services to the population catered to whites only.⁴³ Whites had access to benefits such as free public education and public health care, subsidized housing, rent control, social grants, and community services such as luncheon clubs for the elderly, residential care, and rehabilitative social services (Patel 2011).

In the early 1950s, the Department of Social Welfare transferred welfare responsibilities for African and coloured persons to the Departments of Bantu Administration and Coloured Affairs, respectively, with the Department of Indian Affairs being formed in 1961. The national government used its welfare subsidies to drive separation in the private welfare sector, mandating differences in salary, allocations of equipment and transport, and even diets for residents in welfare institutions on the basis of racial category. As one coloured social worker working in the Durban Child Welfare Society in the 1960s bitterly joked, “We worked in the same building doing the same things, but every last thing was separated. Even their [the white

⁴³ Department of Social Welfare spent £9,750,000 social assistance of which £8,300,000 went to whites, £800,00 to coloured and Indians and £600,000 to Africans. Whites were 20.9% of the population, coloureds and Indians 10.3%, and Africans 68% (Rheinalt-Jones 1949: 416).

employees] toilet paper was softer.” Government allocation for support in the welfare and education of children differed dramatically. In the case of maintenance grants, however, from the 1960s onward, the largest *number* of beneficiaries were in the coloured and Indian race groups, though the *amounts* they received were far less than their white counterparts (see Figure 3.1).⁴⁴

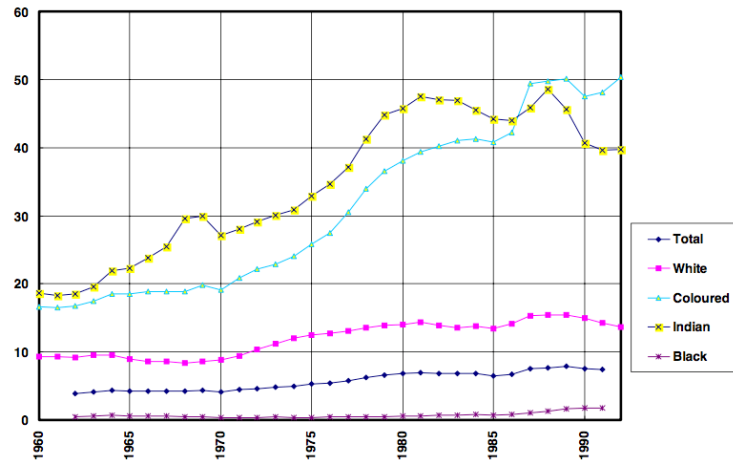


Figure 3.1: Number of Maintenance Grants per thousand children aged 0-17 years (van der Berg quoted in Haarman 1998)

Within the Indian and coloured populations, the dramatically smaller scale of welfare spending by the national government was compensated for in part by very active community and religious-based private welfare organizations, some of which were affiliated to the Mass Democratic Movement (MDM) and the United Democratic Front (Lund 1996). While often poor, these long-established urban communities had robust family and neighbor networks that offered important support to residents. The construction of township housing did represent an investment in infrastructure and services for non-white populations. However, the forced removals and the relocation—and often separation—of communities to the townships on the peripheries of the city destroyed or disrupted this important informal welfare support.

⁴⁴ It is important to note why these differences existed. The size of the Indian and coloured populations were larger than the white population at this time and there were a greater proportion of families living in poverty. Numerically, the black African population was the largest and had the largest number of impoverished families, however barriers to access lowered the number of maintenance grants available to this race group.

There was widespread knowledge about the poor and deteriorating state of urban black Africans in the 1950s and 1960s. Surveys conducted on African incomes in the late 1950s and 1960s clearly showed that average earnings for the majority of households were below any version of a poverty line.⁴⁵ Notably, these surveys reveal that families' spending exceeded earnings suggesting both income streams that were not disclosed to the researchers and the necessity of cycles of debt for subsistence (Watts and Lamond 1966). The impact of poverty took a particularly heavy toll on black African children who were found to have numerous poverty-related health issues such as malnutrition and gastro-enteritis.⁴⁶ Various groups such as Durban Municipal Welfare Clinics, Durban Bantu Child Welfare Creches, Kupugani, Our Daily Bread, and Cato Manor Welfare Huts provided a patchy network of aid in the form of childcare, subsidized milk powder to identified cases of malnourishment, feeding schemes, clinical care, relief rations and the more reliable old age pensions, disability grants, and maintenance grant. However, the amounts of the grant aid available to black Africans were also very low relative to other race groups, at levels consistently below the most conservative poverty data line.⁴⁷ During this time, the grants also thwarted any attempts at accumulation—operating more like the welfare system in the United States post 1995 than South Africa's current system.⁴⁸ As one researcher pointedly stated:

⁴⁵ For example, a survey by the Department of Economics at the University of Natal estimated that a subsistence income for a family of five in Durban was £23-£24 per month in 1959. Workers living in Cato Manor/Umkhumbane were attempting to support their families on incomes of £11-£12 per month (University of Natal 1959). See also: Committee on Socio-Economic Surveys for Bantu Housing Research 1960 and Watts and Lamond 1966.

⁴⁶ In a 1966 survey of children in KwaMashu—thus the children of ostensibly better off, “stabilized” families living in township houses—90 percent were found to be living in poverty (Watts and Lamond 1966).

⁴⁷ On average, social assistance to black Africans totaled 14-24% of the poverty datum line, whereas the totals for Indians were more frequently at par or 1.5x the datum line, 2x for coloureds and 5x for whites (Watts and Lamond 1966).

⁴⁸ Grant recipients in this period had a maximum income they could not exceed that included both cash and the value of in kind payment such as food, clothing, and transport). Like the US welfare payments of 2000, income over this maximum amount would be deducted from the welfare payments. This system had particularly insidious effects in the case of maintenance grants, where the minimum was calculated regardless of the number of people in the household. For example, in 1966, the maximum income for a black African family receiving government grants was R10.50 per month and any additional income—even the disability grant of an incapacitated father—would be deducted. This income was 14% of the estimated poverty datum line for 1966 (Watts and Lamond 1966).

“in the case of Bantu families where the mother has to support her children on the basis of maintenance grant figures alone... her children would be ill or dead within a few months — the gap is too wide for even the most intelligent and the most competent housekeeper to even have the most remote chance of coping” (Watts and Lamond 1966: 123).⁴⁹

Further, as apartheid became more elaborated, many of the meagre services were cut: the 1949 Bantu Education Act brought an end to school feeding schemes; black Africans were removed from eligibility for free milk in 1951, by 1960 all the Durban nursery schools had shut down due to lack of funding and training for teachers was eliminated. In a particularly cruel twist of fate, the beerhall protests in the early 1960s decreased the income to Durban’s native revenue account, resulting in deep cuts to welfare expenditures for black Africans in 1961 and 1962 (Watts and Lamond 1966).

Though unmarried motherhood in all racial groups was frowned upon both by state actors and by everyday citizens, it was an especially challenging lived reality for black African women such as Grace in the 1960s.⁵⁰ Section 10 rules made it difficult for unmarried mothers to access housing, unless they did so through a job, which, in turn, often precluded care for a child. In the newly-constructed townships, there were fewer extended kin networks to help with childcare and frequently neighbors charged high rates (Watts and Lamond 1966). By the 1960s, the rural reserves were impoverished and unmarried women with children, who couldn’t otherwise expect to marry, often moved to town themselves.⁵¹ Some entered informal ‘kipita’ (*ukukipita* means ‘to

⁴⁹ Unlike the post-apartheid grants, the design of maintenance grants was to support a woman to stay at home and care for children without having to seek additional income.

⁵⁰ While there is little composite data on the incidence of single motherhood in Durban, the qualitative researchers conducting studies in the townships in the 1960s describe a situation where marriage was delayed for longer periods of time and growing infrequent and “[t]he incidence of pre-marital pregnancies amongst young Bantu girls in the towns is unfortunately fairly common” alongside a recognition of some of the economic environmental causes for this phenomenon: “[I]jobola has been generally transformed into cash payments. However, given the low wage structure for Bantu workers, and the limited opportunities to save, this has resulted in the postponement of the age of marriage, and has contributed to a rise in the number of unmarried mothers” (Watts and Lamond 1966:288).

⁵¹ Some industries, such as textile firms, preferred to hire black African women because they could pay them less than men (Sambureni 1997). Housing for these women would have been in single-sex hostels and productivity was maintained through mandatory contraceptive use to discourage childbearing (Westmore and Townsend 1979). The textile industry was a major source of Durban’s economic growth in the 1960s (Freund 1995).

keep' in isiZulu) marriages in town with migrating men who were supporting a primary family in the reserves.⁵² While the terms of these marriages differed by couple—who paid for rent or food, duration of relationship, etc.—women frequently remained responsible for the children's needs such as clothing and school fees but because of the relationship, would not be eligible for a maintenance grant.⁵³

So it was that by the time Magdalena, Rosemary, and Grace encountered the social welfare system, it had become highly differentiated and fractured. In addition, the vision of welfare had moved from that of a human right to that of emergency relief in the context of assumed self-development. Indeed, as the former Deputy Secretary of Social Welfare said,

“the responsibility of every citizen's social security rests with the citizen himself. Only if his own efforts prove inadequate is the state prepared to step in with help and guidance. The independence of the individual, the family, and the community must be maintained and encouraged” (Quoted in Brummer 1964:3).

Yet, the notion of “independence” in this statement belied the many form of intervention the state made to control the lives of non-whites and to shape the families of all races into particular kinds of social units. Critically, women's maternal identity—how it was expressed and interpreted—sat at the nexus of “help and guidance” in the form of aid or discipline.

The Making of Motherhood in Apartheid South Africa

Rosemary Dunn was a 32-year old single mother racially classified as “coloured”. She reached out to the Durban Child Welfare Society in April of 1962⁵⁴ a year after her husband,

⁵² Because the children in these families were often not considered the primary responsibility of the wage-earning man, researchers identified children in these relationships as particularly vulnerable to poverty, malnourishment, or abandonment (Watts and Lamond 1966).

⁵³ Phillip Mayer provides a detailed account of how these relationships worked in East London in the same time period (1961).

⁵⁴ So-called voluntary organizations such as the Society provided the bulk of social service delivery at this time with subsidies for personnel and operating budgets coming from the national government. In Durban, the Durban Child Welfare Society provided casework for children 12 and under while the cases of older children were handled by the provincial branch of the Department of Social Welfare (Lund 2008).

Michael, had died, according to her report, and had left Rosemary, unemployed, with three young children: Christopher, approximately eight years old; Linda, four; and Ernest two.⁵⁵ She was referred to the Department of Coloured Affairs to apply for public assistance and a maintenance grant, but never received the money because she did not provide the appropriate documentation for the children—i.e., their birth certificates—and moved before the application could be processed, leaving no forwarding address. She was a client of the Durban Child Welfare Society off and on from 1962-1970 working with two social workers, Mrs. Smith and Mrs. Walljee. Over the course of that time, her children were removed from her care and sent to a children's home four times for the violation of abandonment. These removals occurred first, in 1962, for leaving her children all day “without supervision and food” and in the care of the neighbors in order to work, the second in 1963 when she gave birth to an illegitimate son Peter, and again in 1964 and 1969 when she was imprisoned for theft and fraud for listing the Society as a guarantor for her purchase of furniture on credit.⁵⁶

Despite these transgressions, and despite Rosemary's non-compliance, often hiding the children from the social worker's and refusing to produce necessary documentation, the Society offered Rosemary a great deal of support. The social workers frequently organized grocery donations and household furniture and arranged for Rosemary to receive a monthly maintenance grant. Upon her release from prison in 1962, the Society procured her a house in a newly created coloured township on the outskirts of the city⁵⁷ and arranged for the rent paid by the local Catholic Church, even retaining the house for her when she was re-imprisoned in 1969.

⁵⁵ TBD, 1DBN, Dunn Protection of Children case number 33/2/4/280/63. Christopher's birthdate is the subject of debate throughout the file as Rosemary is thought to have falsified birth records. In 1969, when according to the birthdate on the file, Christopher would have been 15, he was tried for car theft as a 20-year old.

⁵⁶ TBD, 1DBN, Dunn Protection of Children case number 33/2/4/280/63.

⁵⁷ In the 1960s this would have been predominantly people classified as coloured and Indian (Chari 2006).

Additionally, in each case, Rosemary's children were returned to her custody within weeks of their removal.

Rosemary's case reveals a complex relationship between the Durban Child Welfare Society and its clients. Rosemary was brought under case management because she transgressed from the ideal motherhood paradigm. But, the arguments made for the substantial support provided for by the society were done in the name of her actions *as a good mother*. It is worth considering what attributions of problematic and beneficial motherhood were called out by the social workers and how they were weighed against one another to legitimate intervention into Rosemary's family life.

One of Rosemary's primary transgressions was her inability to "maintain a proper home environment." In the report from her first visit with Rosemary, Ms. Smith devoted a great deal of space to an evaluation of the housing conditions in which Rosemary was living. She described the room by saying, "[t]he room is maintained in a filthy condition and there is no furniture. The family sleeps on the floor—there are two threadbare, filthy blankets and four pillows. There are no cooking facilities and no pots or crockery...Communal toilet facilities of the pail system are provided." Also, there was no garden for the children to play.

These critiques of Rosemary's home arose out of a larger conflation of living space with social habits that characterized government intervention in South Africa in the 1960s.⁵⁸ While single-family homes were thought to foster discipline and responsibility, apartments were seen as too "easy" and "spoiled" families by encouraging them to go out on the town instead of engaging in family activities at home.⁵⁹ Apartments and their lack of outdoor recreation space were even

⁵⁸ For a discussion on how this paradigm functioned in government action around Africans, see Posel, 2006.

⁵⁹ Report of Committee of Inquiry into Family Allowances 1961:14.

cited by one government commission as a cause of inadequate care and upbringing of children.⁶⁰ Given these concerns, the social workers went to great length to restructure Rosemary's home environment in terms of her housing. In contrast to her prior space, the housing that the Society found Rosemary included running water and flush-toilets. Ms. Smith noted, "The room is large and well-ventilated...[and is] maintained in a neat and clean manner."⁶¹ Also, an outdoor space was available for the children to play. The refiguring of space was seen to have helped to discipline Rosemary into becoming a more ideal mother.

A second cause of Rosemary's improper care of her children was her "inadequate spiritual care and the absence of positive religious convictions".⁶² Ms. Smith was initially critical of the lack of involvement of religion in the life of the Dunn family. But, after intensive casework, Rosemary was reported to be going to church regularly—indeed, the same church that was paying her rent—and Ms. Smith continuously emphasized Rosemary's re-invigorated religious spirit as evidence of the progress Rosemary was making. Ms. Smith used Rosemary's realization of her "religious duties and moral obligations" as one of the key rationales for returning the children to their mother's care.⁶³

A third concern was that Rosemary initially attempted to work to support her children. As part of maintaining the imagined ideal home environment, women were not supposed to "needlessly" work and leave their children uncared for during the day. Indeed, it was because Rosemary left her children during the day with the neighbors that the Durban Child Welfare Society re-invigorated their relationship with the Dunn family. As a single mother, the proscription to stay at home was more complicated. The Society "assisted and encouraged"

60 Ibid. p. 24.

61 TBD, 1DBN, Dunn Protection of Children case number 33/2/4/280/6.3.

62 Report of Committee of Inquiry into Family Allowances, 1961: 23.

63 TBD, 1DBN, Dunn Protection of Children case number 33/2/4/280/63.

Rosemary to find employment, but she was frequently listed as being unemployed. Instead, the Society arranged for groceries, rent payments, and furniture. At the close of the case, Rosemary was granted a Maintenance Grant, the amount of which would have been roughly equivalent to the salary of a menial job such as a hotel maid. It would not have been sufficient on its own to support the family without the help of the Society but it did allow Rosemary not to work. Indeed, as one commission report noted, “the main object of the introduction of maintenance grants was to enable mothers or foster-mothers to look after their children without being forced to seek employment away from home and in the open labour market.”⁶⁴ In this way, with the Society acting in the role of the husband provider, Rosemary could maintain the proscribed gender role of the full-time mother.

One of Rosemary’s greatest successes as a mother was the affective bond she shared with her children. Following each of the times that the children were removed to a Children’s home, Ms. Smith noted that Rosemary “begged that the children be returned to her and the children were obviously anxious to return to her.”⁶⁵ Despite the fact that Rosemary had deceived Ms. Smith by hiding the children before they could be removed, in her list of “positive factors” of Rosemary’s character, Ms. Smith included Rosemary’s “refusal to part with the children and her anxiety to have them returned to her” and “the strong bond of affection between mother and the children.”⁶⁶ This perceived bond formed an integral part of Ms. Smith’s argument that Rosemary be allowed to keep her children. It was effective, in part, because it resonated with prevailing beliefs that mothers should feel intense love and attachment to their children and that their good care as mothers would arise out of this emotional bond.⁶⁷

64 Ibid. p. 73.

65 TBD, 1DBN, Dunn Protection of Children case number 33/2/4/280/63.

66 Ibid.

67 Report of the Family Congress, 1961:17.

Despite her deviance from the maternal ideal, we see that the social worker's used Rosemary's successes to legitimate continued support and cast her as a woman capable of learning to be a competent mother. Such an argument was no small task. She was known to have abandoned her children without food and care during the day and had maintained a squalid home. On at least two occasions was imprisoned for theft and fraud, including using the Society as a guarantor for debts. In addition, she was continuously duplicitous in her dealings with the society. Yet, the social worker reframed her time in prison as a removal from the negative influence of friends and a form of rehabilitation. Her theft and fraud was labeled not as criminal, but as a problem of "living beyond her means", fixable through further counseling. A change in her housing was noted to have brought about improvements in her housekeeping. And, critically, the emotional bond between her and her children was continuously emphasized. With these arguments in place, the social worker concluded:

"The case history reveals the mother to be an unsatisfactory and unfit person to exercise control over her children. However, this does not mean that the children would benefit from removal from her custody...this mother can be helped to care for her children. Therefore, she should be given the opportunity to keep her children."⁶⁸

The social worker's mobilization of Rosemary's maternal successes to maintain the Society's support were quite unique. To understand how, we must compare Rosemary's case to others.

In 1960, Magdalena Amos, a white Afrikaans mother, approached the Durban Child Welfare Society for assistance with food and clothing. Her husband, who was a casual laborer on the docks, had not brought home any money in a month, and Magdalena and her 4 children were desperate. Since 1947, Magdalena had had a long history of coming to the Society for assistance,

⁶⁸ TBD, 1DBN, Dunn Protection of Children, unboxed, case number 33/2/4/280/63.

always at intervals spaced 6 months or more apart. This time, though the Society assisted her, they also began more intensive casework and were displeased with what their investigations revealed. The social workers levied critiques of money mismanagement and overindulgence in liquor alongside accusations of parental neglect. What began as a case to argue against further assistance for the family, ended with the children's removal to state institutions. Across the case, in letters and court testimonies, Magdalena mobilized her maternal identity to simultaneously make a case for her need and defend against her children's removal.

Magdalena was well-versed in the welfare landscape of Durban and how best to frame her appeals for support. As a white, Afrikaans woman, she was able to seek aid from a number of different agencies such as the Benevolent Society, the Dutch Reformed Church, and the Railway Welfare, based on her husband's job. For scheduled visits, social workers were sure to find a tidy home, with Magdalena present and presiding over the children. Often on days when the social worker had visited her home, Magdalena would visit the DCWS office unannounced to report another woman for a possible case of neglect. In one instance, she reportedly did this while drunk.⁶⁹ In moments such as these, Magdalena positioned herself as the defender of child welfare and the arbiter of good motherhood, thereby attempting to remove herself from possible rebuke.

Magdalena's carefully calibrated relationship with the Society was disrupted when an intimate neighbor reported her as neglecting her children. The reporter was Agatha, a recent divorcee, whom Magdalena had taken in, along with her three children, as a subletter to help with the rent. The women shared and frequently fought over the childcare responsibilities and domestic labor. After a particularly raucous fight, even ending in blows, over whose responsibility it was to remove the washing from the bathtub, Agatha retaliated by calling two

⁶⁹ TBD, 1DBN, box 464 Amos Protection of Children case number: 3/2/1/3/195 sub file: 33/2/4//308/59.

welfare agencies to report Magdalena for neglect. Not only did Agatha report Magdalena, but she testified at the Children's Court hearing as to Magdalena's inadequacy as mother. In letters, testimony, and visits with the social worker, Magdalena worked diligently to translate her actions into a definition of motherhood that was acceptable to the state. Her inability to do so ultimately resulted in the court's removal of the children to state institutions.

A primary domain in which Magdalena's conduct deviated from that of the ideal mother in 1960 was in the social life she cultivated beyond the house. The primary place of maternal caregivers in the 1960s was in the home, taking care of the domestic duties of cooking, cleaning, and childrearing. A mother's life was supposed to be an interiorly-oriented one to provide the basis of support for a man engaged in the public role of income generation. This housebound requirement was an especially difficult burden for poor women. Even in the case of Magdalena's family, where there was a male breadwinner, at the lowest levels, wages often did not support all of a family's needs. However, women's work outside the home was still seen as unnecessary. For a woman to separate herself from her children to "needlessly" work was considered negligent (Clowes 1994).

In her trial testimony, Agatha testified that Magdalena went out all day and sometimes part of the night while her children remained at home. She was accused of being "more interested in outside activities than her children".⁷⁰ These accusations brought up concerns both of maternal negligence and respectability. To suggest that Magdalena was out at night was to suggest that she was consorting with men who were not her husband and, because of the hour, served as a subtle hint that Magdalena might be engaging in prostitution. For the social worker,

⁷⁰ TBD, 1DBN, box 464 Amos Protection of Children case number: 3/2/1/3/195 sub file: 33/2/4//308/59. Testimony by Mrs. Erander Smith. Children's Court trial 17 January 1960.

Mrs. Glynn, Magdalena' activities outside of the house were in opposition to her expected role as wife and mother.

In her letters and testimony, Magdalena worked to bridge the discrepancies between the activities she engaged in outside of the home and the interiorly-oriented ideal of the wife and mother invoked by the social worker and Agatha. She argued that her activities outside were a critical part of her household duties and an extension of her maternal responsibilities, not neglect of them. She said she did not go out an “unnecessary” amount, but instead needed to go out to take care of shopping and to “see to business” to run the household.⁷¹ When she went out at night, Magdalena claimed, she was visiting her husband who worked on the docks—thereby reinscribing her potentially adulterous actions under the banner of matrimonial loyalty.

Who provided care for the children while Magdalena was out of the house was also a domain in which Magdalena was critiqued. Agatha testified that Magdalena left her children “just in the care of native servants, who lay on the floor of the kitchen and went to sleep.”⁷² This criticism was a slippery one that speaks to the complex relationship between mistresses and domestic labor. On the one hand, there was a long tradition in South Africa of black men and women assisting in the childrearing and domestic labors in white homes. In 1959, the presence of such staff was seen as critical to reproducing racial hierarchies in which black labor, viewed as more suitable for “lower” level jobs, freed up white labor for high-level functioning and white mistresses were conscripted to educate black staff in the respectability of white domestic life (Cock 1989). Magdalena's family, with their tenuous hold on working class status, would have felt the need for such racial distinction acutely.

⁷¹ TBD, 1DBN, box 464 Amos Protection of Children case number: 3/2/1/3/195 sub file: 33/2/4//308/59 Testimony by Mrs. Green. Children's Court trial 22 March 1960.

⁷² TBD, 1DBN, box 464 Amos Protection of Children case number: 3/2/1/3/195 sub file: 33/2/4//308/59 Testimony by Mrs. Green. Children's Court trial 10 March 1960.

On the other hand, black domestic caregivers were also seen as an insufficient and inappropriate substitute for white maternal care. Especially in the area of food preparation, as food was a symbol of maternal care and thereby was not supposed to be prepared by anyone except the mother. There was a great deal of social anxiety about the “damaging influence of the native nursemaid” on the health of white children, especially amongst poor whites who were seen as already too intimate with black lives (Stoler 2001: 850-851). Good white mothers, then, were to have help, but also were expected to closely supervise the contact between those domestic servants and their charges. In this way, Magdalena’s behavior was viewed as doubly problematic. First, she was inadequately asserting her racial superiority by failing to educate and chaperone her black staff. And, second, she left her children to the vagaries of what was seen as semi-civilized care. In response, Magdalena sought to do away with the complicated labor relations all together by arguing that her children were left in the care of her 19-year old daughter, Joanna. A white woman and elder kinswoman, there was little room to dispute about the acceptability about Joanna as a caregiver.

Magdalena was also criticized for what was characterized as inadequate and unacceptable food provision. Agatha testified that the children were given “only milk and bread” and were regularly undernourished. She went on to say:

“On several occasions, I had to give Magdalena’s children food when Mrs. Amos was away because she left no food in the house and the children were hungry. She often told me she had given her boy money to buy food for the children, but I don’t know what he did with it or if he ever got it...I was just renting part of the dining room...There was never any arrangement that I would look after Magdalena’s children during her absence.”⁷³

⁷³ TBD, 1DBN, box 464 Amos Protection of Children case number: 3/2/1/3/195 sub file: 33/2/4//308/59 Testimony by Mrs. Green. Children’s Court trial 10 March 1960.

This quotation reveals a trifecta of maternal critique. Magdalena spent time outside of the house. While she was away, where she purportedly should not have been, her children were hungry. To allow one's children to go hungry was the ultimate maternal transgression. Magdalena attempted to turn this criticism into a testament of her own money management. She responded, "I pay all my household commodities as I can afford them. When I have money, I buy groceries. When I have no money, we don't buy anything." In this statement, Magdalena worked to position herself as a responsible money manager with well-aligned priorities, living under conditions of duress.

Magdalena went on to deny that Agatha fed her children regularly and instead argued that she fed Agatha's children. It is likely that both were true and common enough; however, by this point, Agatha held more power in the courtroom. Magdalena attempted to defend herself by reasserting herself as an attentive mother and by discrediting Agatha. She argued that she gave her children milk and bread because they preferred it—thereby setting herself up as more attuned to her children's preferences—and that she regularly bought vegetables—signaling she knew about proper nutrition. Additionally, Magdalena continued, she not only cared for the welfare of her own children, but also ensured the welfare of Agatha's children:

"I would not have taken her [Agatha] in but for the sake of her children, for they were put out of a house and had nowhere to go, so I took them in though it was making the house crowded.... Agatha for one has such a lot to say about my home why couldn't she keep her home together."⁷⁴

Here Magdalena attempted to undercut Agatha as morally superior, saying that it was Magdalena who saved Agatha, a divorcee, and her children from a life on the street as a result of Agatha's inability to maintain a nuptial home.

⁷⁴ TBD, 1DBN, box 464 Amos Protection of Children case number: 3/2/1/3/195 sub file: 33/2/4//308/59 Letter from Mrs. Amos to the Commissioner of Child Welfare.

A final domain of Magdalena's maternal failure was around the consumption of alcohol. Respectable, Christian mothers were expected to abstain from alcohol or only sip demurely on holidays or festive occasions. The evidence suggests that Agatha and Magdalena both drank a great deal, together and with mixed company in their house. While also pleasurable, such actions were often important in forging relationships with other men or women who could be called upon later for favors or resources. These parties would have reduced the social isolation that was common in poorer, more transient neighborhoods such as the Point and which left poor families more vulnerable (Gordon 1988).

However, such conduct was highly frowned upon in the context of children and highlighted the disjuncture of Magdalena's actions with those of a respectable mother. Through her testimony and her letters to the magistrate, Magdalena continuously argued that not only did she engage in many of the practices of the ideal mother, but that, when she did not, it was still in the service of good motherhood. Clearly Agatha also engaged in conduct deemed problematic, but the children's court case was not an evaluation of her. By reporting Magdalena to the welfare, Agatha brought in a level of authoritative surveillance that not only confirmed the deviant practices of Magdalena, but also held the moral authority to condemn them. The end result was that Magdalena's children were removed to institutions in 1962 until they aged (or married) out of the system.

From the data available in the case files, Rosemary and Magdalena appear to be quite similar women. The files, which are constructed to provide evidence for the evaluation of their characters show that both engaged in activities deemed irresponsible for women and mothers at the time.⁷⁵ Yet the responses to these indiscretions was markedly different. Both women were

⁷⁵ Women's claim to political respect relied on an ideology that virtually beatified motherhood. For South Africa see du Toit 2003; Gaitskell 1983; Gaitskell and Unterhalter 1989; and Vincent 2000. For America, see Boris 1993.

recorded as socializing with men who were not their husbands. Both women had children by multiple men in an out of marriage. Neither woman retained suitable housing for any length of time, and both left their children unattended. Rosemary committed theft and fraud—crimes for which she was jailed for a few months. Magdalena was known to drink, however she argued,

“In all the time that I stay down here the Point Police can verify that I have never been locked up for being drunk or that I have had to go to jail for causing a disturbance. I have never stolen anything from anybody. I have never committed [sic] a murder. What did I do?”⁷⁶

Magdalena’s defensiveness is all the more poignant in a context where her actions prompted a great deal of moralizing language in contrast to those of Rosemary. Magdalena was characterized as a “disreputable woman” whose actions contributed to an “environment of drink and indecent living.”⁷⁷ Her use of alcohol is important given that in the 1950s and early 1960s there was a national frenzy over white women’s alcohol use as an antecedent to moral degeneration and miscegenation.⁷⁸ Rosemary’s race already evoked miscegenation and thus could not be saved from it. However, in contrast, Rosemary’s other transgressions receive little evaluation. In the case of Rosemary’s sexual relationship, this is especially surprising given, as others have suggested, the intense policing of coloured women’s sexuality that took place within the coloured community (Erasmus 2001).⁷⁹ Under these conditions, it would have been likely that

⁷⁶ Many of claims were corroborated by reports, however the Point Police did issue a statement saying she had been involved in drunken brawls and various disturbances.

⁷⁷ TBD, 1DBN, box 464 Amos Protection of Children case number: 3/2/1/3/195 sub file: 33/2/4/308/59 Testimony by Mrs. Green. Children’s Court trial 10 March 1960 and Letter from sister at St. Martin’s house to Commissioner of Child Welfare 11 October 1960.

⁷⁸ According to Roos, the alcohol panic was driven by Geoffrey Cronje, a University of Pretoria sociologist who also trained the majority of social workers during this era. Further, studies such as that done by the Johannesburg branch of the Social Services Association found that the number of white women convicted for drunkenness in Johannesburg, had increased to nearly half of all white convictions for alcohol-related offences. This was worrisome because “[a] European woman under the influence of liquor solicits Natives for immoral purposes” (Johannesburg Social Services Association in Roos 2015).

⁷⁹ At both at the state and at the community level the coloured racial category was spoken about in ways that associated them with immorality, sexual promiscuity, impurity, and untrustworthiness. Because of this, any state interaction with the coloured community inherently involved the disciplining of sexual relations (Erasmus 2001).

Ms. Smith, herself classified as coloured, would have been very critical of Rosemary's sexuality in ways that do not appear in the reports.

The relative credibility that is afforded to Rosemary and Magdalena is also quite divergent. Like Rosemary, Magdalena withheld information from the social worker, and frequently made testimony that was later documented to be untrue. However, we know this because the social workers who handled Magdalena's case sought out corroboration. They interviewed principals, neighbors, social workers from other institutions, sought court records and collected police reports. Very little of these investigative efforts were made on Rosemary's case. Magdalena's file is exceptional because of the amount of self-advocacy she did—writing letters, producing elaborate testimony, and even soliciting letters from former neighbors in support of her. However, this evidence was given very little weight in the final conclusion and oftentimes worked against her.

Also like Rosemary, Magdalena did not have enough money to support her children. But, whereas Rosemary was given groceries, furniture, housing arrangements, and ultimately a maintenance grant, Magdalena was offered far less support. Part of this was due to the fact that Magdalena had a husband who occasionally worked. In many respects, this could have been viewed as a status to be supported, that the Amoses more closely resembled the nuclear family ideal. But, even when Mr. Amos was unemployed or when his working wage was insufficient to cover the costs of rent and food, the Society did not assist. This is not because of the family makeup. The Society provided food and clothing (or support referrals) in the years prior to intensive supervision, but from 1959-1963, when social workers visited the home an average of ten times a year, no resources were offered. Instead, once the three elder children were sent to institutions, the court spent a great deal of time and resources attempting to extract a contribution

from Mr. Amos that amounted to almost 2/3 of his monthly salary.⁸⁰ Yet, he was never offered counsel in finding more remunerative work, a common form of assistance at this time. Though a consistent critique of Magdalena was that she spent too much time outside the home—quite possibly engaging in social and illicitly remunerative activities—little aid was offered to ensure she did not work or need to seek support elsewhere.

Critically, what was at stake in the cases was how Rosemary and Magdalena were perceived as mothers. Much of this hinged on caregiving. The case against Magdalena was that she was a “neglectful mother.” The files suggest that both women lived a times in conditions that the social workers found “dirty” and “overcrowded”, and that the children were found to be “thin and unkempt.”⁸¹ Magdalena (and likely Rosemary) knew the import of care to the evaluations of her and throughout her trial reiterated how she nursed one of her children back from the grave, how she regularly took them to the clinic, and how she “sat and sewed til early hours of the morning” making clothes for them.⁸² However, Rosemary’s issues were seen as remediable while Magdalena’s were not. Affective commitment was also central. Rosemary’s hiding of her children from the social worker was taken as a testament to her laudable attachment. When Magdalena hid her children and “kicked up such a row” at the social worker’s attempts at removal that a police escort had to be called, she wasn’t perceived as bonded to her children, but as “aggressive” and “abusive”.⁸³ In the case of Rosemary, she was deemed an “unfit” mother, but the social worker concluded, “but that does not mean the children should be taken away.”⁸⁴

⁸⁰ Records of the arrears that accrued suggest this was rarely ever paid

⁸¹ TBD, 1DBN, box 464 Amos Protection of Children case number: 3/2/1/3/195 sub file: 33/2/4//308/59 and TBD, 1DBN, Dunn Protection of Children, unboxed, case number 33/2/4/280/63.

⁸² TBD, 1DBN, box 464 Amos Protection of Children case number: 3/2/1/3/195 sub file: 33/2/4//308/59.

⁸³ Magdalena’s letters to the Commissioner of Child Welfare were extensive testimonials to her commitment to her children. In one poignant one she closed the letter saying, “I’m praying night and day for my children so that I can get them back. I can’t go on any more. I’m to [sic] weak to fight against [the social worker’s] scheming. I pray that God will show you we have done everything right by our children, we have sacrificed everything for them it can be proved, even the children can tell you sir.”

TBD, 1DBN, box 464 Amos Protection of Children case number: 3/2/1/3/195 sub file: 33/2/4//308/59.

⁸⁴ TBD, 1DBN, Dunn Protection of Children, unboxed, case number 33/2/4/280/63.

In the case of Magdalena, the social worker concluded that “with proper care, these children should develop into worthy citizens”, however, that care was not deemed to be Magdalena’s.⁸⁵

Many of the similarities of Magdalena and Rosemary’s case fall away when we turn to consider the experience of Grace Ngcobo, a Zulu woman from the rural area of Eshowe. In July 9, 1963, Grace gave birth to a baby boy, Themba, her third child. Shortly afterwards, likely in part because of the pregnancy and birth, Grace lost her job as a domestic servant where she lived with and worked for a mixed-race family. As a black woman, her termination meant that, under apartheid laws, she was no longer legally allowed to be present in the neighborhood designated for coloured persons on the edges of Durban proper.

During her first pregnancy, Grace had been working in Point and living as a subtenant in Cato Manor. However, since that time, the area where Grace had lived was cleared and informal housing was scarce. Grace found herself, as another woman in the same situation described, with “no home, hiding from the police, living like wild people” (Callinicos 2007: 172). Hopping from one backyard room to another, Grace and her newborn lived off the hospitality of other domestic servants willing to offer them food and possibly shelter for the night. On those lucky nights, they had to creep out from the yard early in the morning before the family discovered them. On other nights, fear of losing their own jobs in the context of high turnover kept fellow domestics from offering aid. Grace would walk for hours, ducking into alleys to dodge the police looking for curfew violators and catching a few hours’ sleep in a public toilet.

After three months of this, Grace approached a mixed-race woman, Ms. Jacobs, asking her to adopt Themba. Ms. Jacobs took the pair to the Durban Child Welfare Society to process the adoption. While Ms. Jacobs did not become Themba’s adoptive mother, Durban Child

⁸⁵ TBD, 1DBN, box 464 Amos Protection of Children case number: 3/2/1/3/195 sub file: 33/2/4/308/59.

Welfare did offer aid. This is particularly surprising because the Society's mandate at the time was to promote the welfare of children and families only of the white and coloured populations. Deviance from this mandate in Grace's case was partially due to pity. When they arrived, the social worker described Grace as appearing "in a state of neglect...dirty, poorly dressed, and malnourished. Her face reveals symptoms of fatigue."⁸⁶ However, the Society had for thirty years resisted calls to extend their services into impoverished black communities. Furthermore, the inclusion of coloured families was only due to the higher status afforded to this group under apartheid racial hierarchy and was an uneven inclusion at best. Thus, there was an institutional limit to charitable sentiment (Du Toit 2014). More than pity, then, the Society's willingness to give Grace food and to provide Themba milk, medical care, and eventually an adoptive family was the result of Grace's successful manipulation of the flexible category of colouredness.

At two-months, Themba's skin was lighter than his mother. Because of this, it was conceivable that Mrs. Jacobs, could adopt him. Though Grace had former ties to the Bantu Child Welfare Society from her previous two children, she allowed Mrs. Jacobs to take her and Themba to the better-resourced Durban Child Welfare Society. There, she completed forms about Themba's father, giving the same first name as the father of her other children, but omitting the Zulu last name of Ngcobo. Instead, she said, Themba's father was coloured. Though Grace had already registered Themba's birth as a black 'bantu' child, she went with Society social workers to the Population Registrar to have him registered as coloured. She then took Themba to the Addington Children's Hospital—which only treated white and coloured children— for treatment of malnutrition and exposure.

⁸⁶ TBD, 1DBN, Children Case Files Box 611, Mkhize, Sub File 33/2/4/282/63 Report by Professional Officer of Durban Child Welfare Society for Commissioner of Child Welfare, 24 September, 1963.

Prior to her contact with the Society, Grace's experience is concurrent with what scholars have told us about the lives of urban black African women in the 1960s. She had two children, Siphon, age 3, and Sylvia, age 2, with Elias Ngcobo, a police constable in Pinetown. As a man with a relatively good government job, it is likely that Elias was married with another wife and children living in a township house.⁸⁷ His relationship with Grace, while not unusual, would not have been welcomed by his family. In September 1962, Grace was reported to have "abandoned" the children with him, after which they were committed to Othandweni Infants home in Lamontville. Elias would have made much more money as a police constable than Grace as a domestic servant, and two small children would have made her work life a challenge. We can imagine her "abandonment" as an effort to coerce Elias into offering more support. The children, however, did not stay at the children's home long. By 1963, they were under the care of a maternal aunt in Lamontville. We don't know if this aunt was a blood relation, but Lamontville was an older township with comparatively wealthier residents. It is possible this was a caregiver who Grace would not have had to pay to house the children. Grace's mother was also a domestic servant living on her employer's premises in Pietermaritzburg. Not surprisingly, when the Society contacted her, she refused to take Themba or the other children—which would have been very difficult with her job—and further said Grace was "irresponsible and over indulged in liquor."⁸⁸

The social workers did not have a high opinion of Grace. In their assessment of her, one wrote:

The mother was unemployed and...she and the child lived illegally in the servants quarters of various Coloured owned homes...The mother does not play a prominent part on the Bantu community. She is a Bantu Domestic Servant of

⁸⁷ Given his job category, it is unlikely that he was a migrant laborer.

⁸⁸ TBD, 1DBN, Children Case Files Box 611, Mkhize, Sub File 33/2/4/282/63 Report by Professional Officer of Durban Child Welfare Society for Commissioner of Child Welfare, 24 September, 1963.

inferior status. Although she states that she is a member of the Roman Catholic Church, she does not appear to be aware of the church's doctrine. She does not participate in her religious duties and has not even had her baby baptized. Her main interest centers around visiting other Bantu Servants and abusing liquor. She does not appear to attach much importance to moral values. She is not conscious of her maternal roles. She abandoned her two older children and openly rejected the child Themba. She has been unreliable and uncooperative.⁸⁹

Grace was seen to have failed in cultivating moral values of religious participation and temperance. She had failed in creating economic security and stable housing. Despite the provisions she made for her other children and the constraints of her work, she was seen as having abandoned them and negated her emotional bond. Her lateness to appointments with the social workers was seen as non-cooperation. Despite these negative assessments, Grace still managed in securing assistance for Themba. While Themba was in the hospital receiving treatment, Grace signed the papers consenting to his adoption. However, she did not wait to hear if a family could be found, instead, she disappeared. Shortly after, Themba, then Clive, was fostered and eventually adopted into a Coloured family in Cape Town.

Discipline and Support: Furthering the Project of 'Getting By'

In all three of the above cases, Rosemary, Magdalena, and Grace sought out the assistance of the Durban Child Welfare Society to support their children. I place all these efforts under the frame of 'getting by' or the project of survival and social reproduction. These women invoked their status as mothers to needy children to make claims on resources and, in the case of Grace, institutional power. Motherhood was an available resource for their claim making because, by the 1960s, mothers has gained a particular social and political salience in South Africa. In the domain of social welfare, underlying ideologies of moral responsibility had shifted away from ideas that social ills arose from individual moral and character flaws, recognizing the

⁸⁹ Ibid.

influence of relations and opening a space wherein the institution of family could be targeted for intervention. In this period, problems such as juvenile delinquency, crime, or prostitution were addressed with interventions into the family and childrearing practices as the wellspring from which such issues arose (Ferguson 2015). In this framing, then, maternal care became both the source of problems for the ills of society and the powerful solution (Donzelot 1979). However, while motherhood as a unified category held enormous potency, the “problems” that maternal care was thought to beget or address were figured quite differently for different racial groups. Thus, the stakes for coloured, black, or white women invoking motherhood as a form of claim making were quite disparate.

In accounting for the difference in the outcomes of the three above cases, we must acknowledge the important role that the social workers themselves played. Social workers were the gatekeepers to a robust system of resources and restrictions. They were actors with a great deal of disciplinary power, but they were also constrained within a larger system. It is altogether possible that Rosemary’s statements were not subject to as much corroboration as Magdalena’s because coloured social workers like Mrs. Smith were not given the same resources of transportation, time, and police escorts as white social workers like Mrs. Glynn. Social workers were also people with personalities and proclivities. The social worker who successfully removed Magdalena’s children stands out in the files as having unusually harsh language and judgment. In contrast, Miss Coetzee, who oversaw Grace’s case used very sympathetic language in her report on Grace and the few times she also offered input on Magdalena’s case. Importantly, before Grace disappeared and left the Society no choice but to handle Themba’s case, Miss Coetzee was complicit in an effort to have him classified as coloured, despite many questionable data points that could have thwarted that effort.

I also want to focus on the different meaning given to the maternal status of these women. Though Magdalena and Rosemary's circumstances were similar, their differential treatment was a result of the social meaning their motherhood held vis a vis their racial categorization. Rosemary's transgressions were framed as issues of material need. This is, in part, because she was not described to exhibit the social ills stereotypically associated with coloured women—hypersexuality, drinking, and irresponsibility.⁹⁰ Practices that could have been framed as moral weaknesses (e.g. theft) were instead framed as evidence of economic want, as the assistance provided to her reflected. Magdalena's conduct, however, was framed as evidence of an improper "attitude towards life" and a lack of "proper values" when it came to family care.⁹¹ Given the national concern over these moral ills that were seen to be plaguing the white population, social workers were given a strong mandate to inculcate their clients with a set of values that placed children above material gain. Magdalena's case managers worked to do just that. Despite the ongoing presence of poor whites such as Magdalena, their categorical existence was continually denied. As one commission of inquiry noted, "whites are not suffering material want" and, "material want is incidental".⁹² Under these terms, the stakes of misrecognizing Magdalena's poverty were high, and the means to her reform was not economic assistance, as it was with Rosemary, but a value-based rehabilitation to impress upon her that she needed to foster a stable nuclear family for her children. As a white woman, households like hers was to be the basis for the future success of the white population.

⁹⁰ The fact that Rosemary had only three children by age 32 would have likely been seen as low fertility within her race group.

⁹¹ Report of Committee of Inquiry into Family Allowances (Pretoria, 1961), p.85.

⁹² Ibid. p. 59. Between 1951 and 1960 the unemployment rate of whites (though very small) had increased from 2.8 to 3.6 while the unemployment rate for coloureds increased from 10.3 to 16.3. A. L. Muller, *Minority Interests: The political Economy of the Coloured and Indian Communities in South Africa* (Johannesburg: South African Institute of Race Relations 1968) p. 19.

For black African women like Grace, her motherhood and the value of her children had quite a different meaning. Her motherhood was secondary, necessary only insofar as social reproduction ensured a continued labor force; her value was her *labor*, essential to the state's attempts to solve the labor question by both ensuring that there was enough black labor in cities while curbing the massive influx of black Africans into the city that by the 1960s was well underway. Black women were expected to assist in this project in three critical ways. First, by remaining in the native reserves. But for the small numbers of women employed in formal jobs in the city, black women were an unwanted presence in the city. Since early in the twentieth century, the presence of unattached black women in the city had been the source of tremendous national anxiety. By 1963 the apartheid government would succeed in making the presence of women like Grace—unemployed and destitute—illegal, punishable by fines or expulsion. Prior to that, however, the illegal presence of black women in the city was thought to breed lawlessness, prostitution, immorality, and of course, an overindulgence of liquor. As an unemployed, unmarried woman, Grace's condition only fed into these fears. Her history of alcohol use did not help her case.

Black women's second role was to enable the migration of male laborers into the city by remaining in the reserves. It was the imagined role of rural black women maintaining the homestead that undergirded apartheid state arguments against providing black men a family wage or offering black youth in the city poverty relief. Women's labor in the rural reserves, "provided a form of indigenous pension which enabled them to support the aged and destitute Africans" (Kaseke 2002: 222–23; see also Iliffe 1987:206). In short, black women *were* the welfare system for the black African population. Under this logic, the destitution of black women like Grace did not prompt the extension of support, but instead became a justification for

removal from the city. Instead of supporting a migrant labor system, Grace's poverty was a drain upon it. Grace's decisions to run away from the social workers (and their police escorts) when they visited her, as well as her disappearance, are all the more legible in this context.

The third important responsibility of black women was to raise black children to occupy the social position afforded to their race. By not caring for her two younger children herself, Grace deviated from the important role of labor reproduction qua social reproduction that undergirded the state's welfare logic. Instead, as progeny of an 'unattached' woman whose enjoyment of alcohol was read as immoral, her children were in danger of becoming unruly delinquents who would wreak social havoc and cost the government important resources.

Herein lies a critical difference to the cases of Magdalena and Grace. Though both were able to locate their actions under the moral umbrella of maternal care, their mothering was subject to different valuation due to their race in ways that powerfully impacted their daily efforts of social reproduction. Magdalena's children were viewed as future citizens. As such, her care for them was supported until it was deemed so insufficient it could not be remedied. Only at that point were her children sent to state institutions, but again, to be rehabilitated into productive members of the nation. For Grace, her child *a priori* was viewed as a burden on an already strained urban welfare infrastructure. Had she remained in contact, the likelihood was that both mother and child would be sent to the reserves where their poverty would be no less pressing, but decidedly less visible. Instead, Grace dodged this fate. Her actions suggest that she was savvy to recognize the different racial valuations of maternal care and their political power. The father she named for Themba had the same name as the father of her younger children, with the notable difference of being mixed race instead of black. She said she had no information as to his whereabouts as they only slept together once, thereby forcing the social worker to rely on her

word. By recasting Themba as mixed race, Grace was able to raise his social status and make claims on a better resourced welfare institution. In short, she was able to persist in the project of getting by and the provision for Themba, even and indeed because of her maternal absence.

Conclusions

The above provided a brief historical overview of the development of the South African welfare state from colonialism through until the 1960s and its related interpretation of proper family life and maternal practice as refracted through racial ideology. A close examination of three 1960s Children's court cases of women classified as white, coloured, and black African enabled an examination for the intermingling of domestic, welfare, and racial ideologies as they worked out in practice. In each case, the women made claims to welfare resources on the basis of their maternal status. I understand such efforts to be part of a larger practice of 'making motherhood work' by which I mean mobilizing the legitimacy and moral authority afforded to the social category of mother to enable the project of social reproduction, or getting by.

The category of mother had such potency to make claims because in popular discourse, motherhood functions as a symbol that subsumes very different meanings, identities, and experiences under a single referent. It is seen as a self-evident concept with tremendous social weight which affords the social position both great authority and great vulnerability to critique. Female activists across the century have drawn on this symbolic power and used public motherhood to contest state policy. The capacious reach of motherhood as symbolic concept allowed women's groups to transcend huge differences in ideology and social position. The above chapter argues that, in a similar vein, poor women also drew upon the potency of motherhood for their own political actions. However, they also confronted the ways in which motherhood is subject to very different meanings.

The South African welfare system, like its counterparts in other countries, developed an ideal type of motherhood that was used to evaluate and shape the lives of the families who encountered the system. In the context of intense racial hierarchy, it is not surprising that for the most part the ascendant ideal was that of the white middle-class homemaker who devoted full time efforts to childrearing, meal prep, cleaning, and (usually Christian-inflected) spiritual uplift. In many ways, a similar ideal was promoted within the coloured race groups with a greater emphasis also placed on service to the community (Erasmus 2001). Rural black African women were less subject to a domestic ideology based on the nuclear ideal because they were both understood to be living in adherence to very different cultural norms and because they were not recognizably part of an industrial class (Gaitskell 1983). However, their urban counterparts were subject to the disciplinary technology of influx control and the township house that attempted to make them into full-time mothers of a nuclear household.

For the women in this chapter, motherhood most lost its symbolic coherence in how deviance from the maternal ideal was defined and the regulation to which such deviance was subject. White women such as Magdalena were first and foremost deviant because of their poverty. A higher standard of living was seen as the marker of white civilization and ascendance. Improper practices such as too much time spent outside the home, multiple sexual liaisons, inadequate disciplining of native servants, and overconsumption of alcohol were only further evidence of how her internal sensibilities needed to be brought in line with the motives of thrift, piety, and discretion, more befitting of her gender and race. In contrast, Rosemary's poverty was seen as less of a moral failure and more of an obstacle to proper childrearing. Her primary deviance was as a single mother who sought work outside of the household instead of attending to the care of her children. Comparatively, Grace's poverty was also less an issue of personal

failure—although the report suggests she lost her job by virtue of improper conduct—as much as it was a violation of the role assigned to black women. The cause of her poverty was less a concern as much as its location. Women like her were not to be supported but relocated back to the reserves where they could be aided by an imagined kin network. She was failing in her role to ensure the reproduction of the migrant labor system and in her responsibility to produce the next generation of laborers. Importantly, these ideals and deviations were not formed in isolation, but were co-constituted through practices of differentiation and distinction. Likewise, social workers, aid workers, missionaries, teachers, and church women’s groups all engaged in the project of shaping domestic life and contributed to the conversation of what the ideal family should entail.

The files make clear—most visibly in Grace’s case—that in their claim-making, these women were aware of the dynamic, dual nature of motherhood—as singular symbol and as multivalent signifier. They worked hard to maintain control over how the meaning of motherhood was translated in a given context, most evident in Magdalena’s multiple letters. The efficacy of making motherhood work both relied on this duality and was threatened by it. However, not only was the singularity of motherhood subject to differentiated meanings based on race (and class), its meanings also shifted over time. Chapter 4 considers how Motherhood operated quite differently in Point in 2014.

Chapter 4 - Multiple Maternities: Maternal Repertoires and Support Seeking

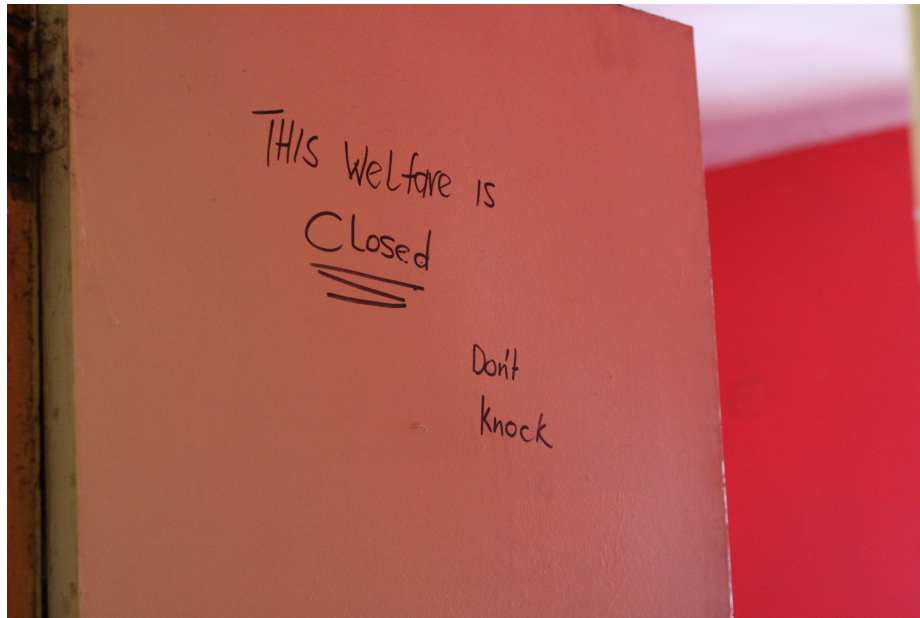


Figure 4.1: A statement about distribution on Maryann's door

Maryann and Lolita were in another fight.¹ This time it was over meat that Maryann had left in Lolita's refrigerator. The two women lived in adjacent rooms such that when Maryann's refrigerator broke, it only made sense that she would store her remaining chicken in Lolita's fridge until Maryann could afford to repair hers. Despite Lolita's appliance-hospitality, Maryann often complained that Lolita was ungenerous in her sharing of resources with neighbors, taking more than she gave—a dangerous accusation in South Africa. Now Lolita had crossed the line. She had used Maryann's meat. One afternoon during the meat incident, Maryann was away and Lolita and I were chatting in the open-air corridor outside her and Maryann's rooms. Out in this semi-public space, Lolita complained animatedly about Maryann's imposition, saying her

¹Unless respondents requested otherwise, all names used are pseudonyms.

perishables took up precious space and had been there too long. As her rant reached its apex, Lolita noted that the chicken had overstayed its welcome because Maryann was “lazy to cook.” “Me,” Lolita said emphatically, “I make my husband and children a hot meal every night. Many nights her kids eat just butter and rolls.” I smiled, also knowing Maryann’s hatred of cooking, but not wishing to say more. “You know,” Lolita continued, her voice dropping conspiratorially, “the girls are getting poor marks”—referring to Maryann’s daughters newly enrolled in the neighborhood school— “they will probably have to repeat. I told Maryann to go over their work with them, but she is lazy to do it. That’s what I did with [my son] and his marks are good.”

And just like that, a conversation about meat out of place became a conversation about motherhood—both Maryann’s and Lolita’s. The transition, if one could even call it that, was subtle and swift. The subjects flowed so easily into one another that it was only much later that I noted what had happened.

Unknown to Lolita, the chicken had already served an important purpose beyond simple nourishment. The week prior I had come by to visit Maryann. Her door was closed, as it often was. On it was a note scrawled in marker, “This welfare is closed. Don’t knock.” a pointed message indicating that Maryann did not want people coming to borrow things from her (See Figure 4.1). Hearing voices, I knocked anyway. A smiling Maryann answered to reveal another woman, Jamila, sitting in front of a spread of mismatched teacups, bowls of sugar and milk, and cakes all crowded on a tray that balanced on an overturned bucket. Jamila, an Indian woman, worked for a well-endowed historically white church that ran an aid program out of the neighborhood school. The school children, like their families, identified predominantly with the black African and mixed-race coloured racial groups with some white and Indian families also represented. Coloured women like Lolita and Maryann considered themselves different from

women like Jamila both in terms of race and a broadly defined “culture.” Here, too there was an added dimension of social power. Though not formally trained as one, most neighborhood residents referred to Jamila as “the school social worker.” This was in part due to her efforts to counsel troubled kids and in part because she distributed resources from the church such as groceries, clothes, school supplies, and, that day, cakes.

As I entered, Maryann offered me tea—a regular ritual—gesturing casually to the milk and sugar, the display of which were new to me. I mentioned that the room smelled good, glancing at the pots bubbling on the hotplate. Jamila laughingly explained that Maryann had been relaying a story of her trip to the shop where she had persuaded someone to capitalize on a two-for-one sale on chicken and give her one. Maryann grinned broadly, holding her cigarette lightly in her hand, “Oh yes, I just said ‘Are you going to say no to these children?...It’s not for me.’ The girls said, ‘Mommy do you know that man from work?’ I said, ‘No my darling, he is just a very nice man.’” We all laughed at Maryann’s cleverness. Jamila wrinkled her nose, adding “She is so naughty.” Bolstered by the laughter, Maryann shrugged casually and said, “My family must have their meat. What must I do? I made a plan.”

The lives of women like Maryann and Lolita represent much of what urban poverty looks like in present-day South Africa. They are exemplars of a large population group—women not formally married or employed who receive government grants for at least some of their children. Unlike the women of the previous chapter, Maryann and Lolita did not interact with a social worker in order to receive their grants. By providing documentation that their income was below a certain threshold and by showing the birth certificates of their children, they were able to register to receive a Child Support Grant of R140 each month. In 1960, such grants only reached a small proportion of the population. But by 2014, close to 60 percent of South African children

received a grant (Hall, Meintjes, and Sambu 2014). Despite the CSG's broad reach and demonstrated efficacy in reducing poverty, the small size of the monthly payment (appx \$100 in 2014) left a widely recognized shortfall of support (Ferguson 2015; Neves et al. 2009). Unlike the apartheid-era predecessor, the CSG was not designed to replace the full-time work of a caregiver. Furthermore, the supplementary welfare resources that white and coloured poor families could once draw upon, were entirely privatized and unreliable. Yet, at the same time, government agents and lay people alike used the social and financial stability of families as a metric for evaluating the state's efficacy, citizens' commitment, and ultimately, the success of the new democratic South Africa. This chapter considers how poor families were functioning in this era without waged work and how grants to children, as the most reliable form of household income, reconfigured relationships within the household, among neighbors, and with the state.

This chapter draws upon ethnographic fieldwork with families and aid programs in the dense inner-city Point neighborhood. For women who lived in the well-resourced but costly Point neighborhood, grants covered a crucial, but minimal portion of their monthly expenses. The men they lived with could find pick-up work nearby that garnered enough income to mostly cover rent. However, it was up to women to "make a plan" to secure cash, food, clothing, blankets, or other family necessities. Resources such as chicken-benefactors, neighbors, and wealthy churches were available, if one learned to access them. My research tracked how women discerned and applied effective ways of speaking and acting to claim support from many categories of persons including social workers, pastors, imams, school principals, boyfriends, and neighbors. These claims took the form of what I term performances of acceptable motherhood.

In the above vignette, Maryann, Lolita, and Jamila participated in performances of

acceptable motherhood. These included both discourses and practices that, in different contexts, were labeled as indicating an unobjectionable—as opposed to an “ideal” or “deviant”—maternal status, as well as critiques and evaluations of these actions. Motherhood here is not necessarily synonymous with biology but indicates a social relationship brought about through long term acts of care and nurturance for dependent children (Fonseca 2003; G’sell 2016). Such performances are also not random, but cluster into repertoires and scripts—social proscriptions and textual artifacts—that “contain the rules and roles of performances” for a given time, place, and audience (Carr 2011, 192; also Bauman 1996; Silverstein and Urban 1996). In other words, these directives delimit the interpretive range an actor has to play with in order to be believable, or, in J.L. Austin’s terms, “felicitous,” and therefore efficacious (1962; Butler 1989). While innovation and improvisation are possible, and in some cases desirable, repertoires and their component scripts give coherence to various performances, thereby enabling scholarly examination and comparison of these repertoires as objects across time and space (Tilly 2008). This chapter considers what work performances of adequate motherhood did for women living in the Point in 2014. What repertoires of motherhood were available? How were they learned? How were they received?

I argue that performances of adequate motherhood are both a strategy and a resource in South Africa that poor women can leverage for aid and for prestige. In short, successful performances enable claim making and social power. However, due to a long history of moral panics over mothering as both cause of and solution to the social degradation of the citizenry, it is a slippery resource with high stakes (Ferguson 2015). Though potent, these maternal performances are shifting and changeable and offer a precarious claim to social recognition. At certain times and places, a given maternal repertoire may explicitly be more highly valued—for

instance the ascendance of the white, middle class housewife. In everyday practice, however, there are multiple repertoires in circulation. Further, multiple people and institutions are concerned with scrutinizing and evaluating maternal performances—from the neighbor to the social worker to the parliamentarian. This multiplicity means that in order to successfully position themselves, women must cultivate a number of semiotic skills.

The social import of performances of motherhood is no less critical in other places in South Africa and arguably beyond, but the particular social spatial dynamics of the Point neighborhood create a stark backdrop for analysis of these issues. Sandwiched between the tony beachfront, the central business district, and the railyard and shipyard, the Point is a 20-block long peninsula that contains some of the densest urban space in the country. The neighborhood's high concentration of multi-story apartment buildings meaning that residential life occurs in small rooms or apartments, in contrast to the stand-alone houses surrounded by a yard that have long been the norm in South Africa. The proximity of neighbors invites and supports a great deal of surveillance. Building managers, neighbors, or their guests can all view who is visiting, what parcels were brought home from the shops, what furniture is visible through always-open front doors; hear the arguments or cries of passion; and smell what is for dinner or whose rubbish has been left out. Such public visibility of intimate domestic life fosters opportunities for maternal performances to cultivate respectability or prestige. It also provides ample fodder for maternal critique. For in these contexts, someone like Lolita knows exactly how often and what meals Maryann does or does not cook for her family.

In part because of its racial and ethnic heterogeneity and in part because of its proximity to Durban's port, the Point has long had an insalubrious reputation as a site of debauchery. Permanent residents have historically been poor, their livelihoods based on contingent jobs at the

port or railway or their skill in extracting funds from the holiday makers or sailors who passed through the neighborhood with money to spend. This culture of chicanery alongside a large transient population—immigrants, sailors, and soldiers—impeded a sense of community cohesion. Further, the availability of casual jobs and quick cash attracted a high concentration perceived social deviants such as single mothers, prostitutes, drug dealers, and street children, giving the neighborhood a reputation as a “den of iniquity” and a “murky underworld” (Leggett 2001, 109; Margaretten 2015).

As residents often stated, “In Point, everything is money.” The neighborhood’s central location and robust infrastructure—e.g., a school, a hospital, and many shops—made it a very expensive place to live. Rent for a single room was consistently ten times what the same space would be in one of the townships.² Because of the high expense of housing, few women could afford to live alone and support their children. Together with a man—often the father of one of their children—these women rented a portion of a room, a room, or a studio apartment in one of the multi-unit buildings that predominate the neighborhood. Their boyfriends worked as graffers or car guards, directing drivers in exchange for small tips. A few men had higher earnings in jobs as truck drivers and security officers, or dealing drugs, but these were the exception. Though some women worked part-time as waitresses in beachfront cafes, the lack of such opportunities, their responsibility for small children at home, and the high price of even neighborly child care made such work difficult. In addition to the domestic work of cleaning and cooking, women spent most of their days circulating through neighborhood institutions—church soup kitchens,

² In 2014, the bottom of the rental market in Point was about R2000 a month for a single room with a shared toilet. Prices increased with amenities. In addition to rent, most tenants also paid for electricity and water and meter-based systems made those fees difficult to dodge. For comparison, in the same year, a rented shack/room in one of the townships was about R200 a month and often utilities—to the extent that they existed—were included. However, it would cost a township resident R18 each way or R36 return to come to the city center. Point residents could walk, take a free bus, or a R5 taxi.

refugee care centers, school aid centers, informal prayer groups, or the beachfront—seeking food, clothing, blankets, and money. Thus, claim-making was a part of everyday life and exchange of resources, information, or labor constituted and demonstrated relationships between people (Mauss [1924] 2000). Because this was a social world in which every person was a potential donor or petitioner, performances were consistently expected and, in many cases, demanded.

Successful maternal performances first require that women observe and assess interactions to cultivate an in-depth knowledge of “contextualization cues.” These semiotic indexes communicate the rules and roles for a given interactive context (Gumperz 1982). Through this analysis, Point women develop what Carr calls “anticipatory interpellation” which allows them to forecast how a more powerful audience will expect them to act (2009). Applying this knowledge, women then work to attune their maternal performance to these expectations. Yet, this calibration does not only happen in one direction. In the geographically dense context of the Point neighborhood, interactions often have multiple audiences with varying social power. For instance, neighbors are often privy to interactions with social workers. Frequently, these various audiences hold different and often conflicting definitions of acceptable motherhood (e.g., the hard-working prostitute who puts food on the table vs the celibate Christian mother who relied upon the Church’s soup kitchen). Women in the Point deploy another set of semiotic strategies to manage these contradictory metrics of evaluation as well as the discord their conjunction produces.

The visibility of women performing multiple contradictory maternal repertoires challenges ontological assumptions about personhood, namely, that one’s words and actions sincerely represent a stable, individual self (Carr 2011). Revealing the performative nature of

motherhood destabilizes the mechanisms by which audience members evaluate the efficacy of a performance. Sincerity is put into question and insincerity is equated with morally reprehensible falsehood and deception. Aware of the suspicions of their audience(s), women use the metalinguistic term “the hustle” to delineate between sincere and insincere performances and therefore re-establish their credibility as actors (e.g., “there I was just hustlin”). In doing so, they work to again produce a cohesive image of themselves—a single self amongst multiple maternities—that makes the contradictory practices “hang together” (Mol 2002).³ Nevertheless, the invocation of the hustle, which acknowledges that one’s words and actions might not always transparently reflect one’s interior self, is not possible or efficacious in every interaction. Audiences such as social workers and pastors require greater assurance that what they witness is sincere action. The result is a complicated landscape of layered stages and audiences that poor women seek to navigate.

The successful performance of adequate motherhood has long had high stakes for poor mothers in South Africa and available repertoires differed sharply by race. As discussed in the previous chapter, for the first half of the 20th century, poor white mothers were the targets of robust state poverty relief cum social engineering programs to rectify a class *habitus* that was seen as a threat to the racial hierarchy. By the 1960s, white mothers in the Point could make claims upon a variety of institutions: e.g., churches, aid societies, state agencies, parastatal organizations for a wide array of welfare provisions.⁴ A veritable army of social workers, such as those in the previous chapter, policed adherence to repertoires of adequate maternal care that

³ Mol’s writing on atherosclerosis highlights the work that goes into producing cohesion out of multiplicity either by treating discrepancies hierarchically in which one displaces the other or additively by which both entities are allowed to coexist because their discrepancy is attributed to different orders and is therefore unproblematic (2002).

⁴ By 1950, the poor whites who dominated the Point had access to benefits such as free public education and health care, job reservation, subsidized housing, social grants, and rehabilitative social services (Patel 2011).

demonstrated sobriety, thrift, Christian piety, respect for patriarchal dominance, and, critically, an awareness of white racial superiority (Teppo 2004). Were they to founder in their performances, as Magdalena women's lives were subject to increasing intervention and, frequently, their children were removed to state institutions.

Under apartheid, low income women of color faced a far more limited range of welfare assistance than white women, but their higher poverty levels made their maternal performances no less critical. Poor coloured families were associated with promiscuity, criminality, drug and alcohol abuse, and vulgarity (Erasmus 2001).⁵ Coloured and white social workers promoted and rewarded repertoires of respectability that eschewed interaction with black Africans and embraced white middle-class norms of conduct (Adhikari 2006). In contrast, the repertoires emphasized by volunteers at the Durban Indian Child Welfare Society valorized the Indian mother as the keeper of a specifically Indian tradition against a hostile foreign—read white—environment (Kuper 1960; Nowbath 1978).⁶ Indian women were encouraged to be submissive to their husbands and to strictly discipline girls to a life of domestic labor and relative enclosure while showering affection on sons as emissaries to the outside world (Meer 1972).⁷ For urban black mothers, culturally-specific childrearing practices were not valued, but instead, were viewed as a sign of backwardness. The repertoires of deserving black motherhood, then, emphasized a woman's ability to shed her rural roots and rear her children in “modern” ways that

⁵ The historic marginalization of people classified as coloured has led to a racial identity based on a negative argument of non-resemblance rather than a positive self-definition. Some argue that despite changes in coloured identity over the past century, certain elements remained consistent including a strategic attempt at assimilation to dominant white society which manifested in placing value on associations with whiteness—clothing, hair styles, cuisine, kin photos—and a concomitant distancing from black Africanness (Adhikari 2006).

⁶ Unlike the Durban Child Welfare Society that served the white and coloured population, the Durban Indian Child Welfare Society employed very few social workers. Instead the society relied on Local Committees or community volunteers—often teachers, principals, religious officials etc.—who knew the applicant families—in order to administer and oversee the distribution of aid (Nowbath 1978).

⁷ There is tremendous linguistic, religious, and cultural diversity in the Indian Diaspora community in South Africa. However, scholars suggest that due to both a shared experience of discrimination and a shared familial, it is possible to talk in terms of a shared “Indianness” and an “Indian Family” (Kuper 1960, Vahed and Desai 2001).

involved regular medical checkups and inoculations, dressing them in western clothes and expensive shoes, and teaching them English or Afrikaans (Gaitskell 1983).

In 2014, women in the Point were similarly the subject of national concerns over “family disintegration,” but they lived within a dramatically altered welfare landscape as compared to their predecessors (DSD 2012:3). Since the 1970s, waged jobs have contracted, undercutting men’s ability to formalize marriages and support families.⁸ Poor women who by 2014 were overwhelmingly single mothers, were increasingly vulnerable to unemployment, poverty, and HIV/AIDS. The robust welfare services that once supported poor whites were stretched thin as they tried to address years of unequal treatment of a much larger population. Despite a national concern about poor (in both senses of the word) mothering, only low-income children, not their mothers, bore the right to state aid. Family allowances were no longer fiscally possible. The mothers’ component of the Maintenance Grant, the apartheid-era predecessor to the Child Support Grant (CSG), was jettisoned and the grant payment reduced to allow for broader eligibility (Lund 2008).⁹ Thus, for poor women in the new South Africa, it was only by framing themselves as a particular kind of citizen-caregiver for a rights-bearing child that women could gain state recognition and support. However, this recognition was quite limited as women could only make claims for a child, not directly for themselves.

The retrenchment of state services and a narrowing of the terms under which they could request aid left poor women in a precarious position. Notably for my argument, the logic of the

⁸ Whether a “white wedding” in a Christian church or a traditional wedding, *ilobolo*, or bride wealth transferred from the groom to the bride’s family, remains a critical element of the process of marriage. *Ilobolo*, usually figured in cows (e.g, 10 cows for a woman with no children) and converted to cash, by design is many times the monthly wage of most men and entirely out of reach to most unemployed men.

⁹ The CSG is a radical form of social welfare that has made huge difference to the lives of poor women. Two unique elements of the grant are its status as a cash transfer with no conditions required from the recipient (other than a means test) and its design to “follow the child” thereby recognizing the caregiving provided by grandmother, aunts, fathers and non-kin in addition to mothers (Lund 2008: 53).

CSG pervaded community relationships as well. Although women were expected to translate resources into proper social reproduction, they themselves were not regarded as legitimate recipients of aid in their own right. The neighbor, pastors, or school principals to which Point women turned to make claims saw children as the only social actors worthy of aid.¹⁰ Therefore performances of motherhood—of care for a deserving child—enabled women to make claims upon critical resources otherwise unavailable to them.

Herein lies the center of what was at stake in Maryann and Lolita's performances of motherhood to one another and to me. It is a pressing concern that poor women have no mechanism to achieve state recognition other than through their status as mothers. However, this lack of recognition does not only exist at the level of the state. Women's recognition from their own community members and sometimes their own household is also predicated on successfully embodying shifting and contradictory performances of deserving motherhood. This gives them a rather tenuous hold on subjectivity indeed.

Today in South Africa, it is no longer just social workers or the state that evaluate deserving motherhood—it is something that everyone has taken up, from the volunteer dishing out plates at the soup kitchen to the neighbor in the stairwell. These audiences are pervasively present and overlapping. Neighborly critiques—as seen with Agatha and Magdalena—have long been present, but now, more than ever, their opinions matter. While the gossip of a neighbor no longer results in the removal of a child to a state institution, it can cut a mother off from critical resources and information and thereby heighten her economic and social insecurity. In the Point,

¹⁰ This is in part due to the privileged social position given to wage (or any) labor as a condition of social citizenship. Any able-bodied adult who could work, *should* work, regardless of employment availability. To ask for aid if the capacity to work exists is to invite a criticism of laziness. Since the 1920s, children have been exempt from this requirement and are thus viewed deserving beneficiaries of state and public support. As the normatively assumed caregivers of the deserving child, mothers can often successfully make the argument that work outside the home in addition to caregiving is not possible or beneficial (Ferguson 2015).

successfully learning, enacting, and managing performances of motherhood is a critical means to survival.

On Metaphors and Maternity

Performances of motherhood were an effectual tool for women like Maryann and Lolita—as they were for their predecessors—because of motherhood’s appearance, despite its malleability, as a self-evident concept. Both analytically and ethnographically, the term demands clarification. My use of motherhood is specific. Many American feminists today retain a distinction first proposed by Adrienne Rich between motherhood, as the social, ideological construct of the maternal subject, and mothering as the active, relational work of care that is shaped by context (1986; Ruddick 1989). The surge of feminist scholarship that followed drew upon Butler’s work on gender to complicate this contextually-constructed work of mothering and to carve out a space for the resistant subject to participate in the construction of an alternative maternal identity (1989, 1990; Hequembourg 2007; Lewin 1993; O’Reilly 2004; Ryan-Flood 2009; Fraser and Nicholson 1990) and to explore how resistance is a privilege shaped by race, class, and political context (Collins 1994; Glenn, Chang and Forcey 1994; Lareau 2003). In contrast, I am not concerned with the maternal subject or identity as such—how Point mothers understood themselves or mothering. Indeed, I argue that these are not data to which I have access. Instead, I focus on the semiotic work of authoring and authorizing certain versions of motherhood as social facts. Thus, like Chandler pace Butler, I use mother as a verb: “To be a mother is to enact mothering” in an inherently interactive mode (1998, 273).

In this chapter, “motherhood” incorporates two domains: first, the labor and practices of mothering, and second, the discourses and norms of motherhood—often evaluations of that

mothering work—that are in circulation in a particular social group or sub-group.¹¹ In doing so, my analysis brings together once more the distinction between motherhood and mothering. A motherhood performance is made up of the material and symbolic acts women engage in as they care for a child and the ways in which they narrate, critique, and perform those acts to different audiences—their children included—to have themselves understood as someone who is called a mother.

My use of the term performance is also specific. Performance captures the idea of the social life of words and actions, e.g., things done in the presence of an audience—be it a child, neighbor, social worker or boyfriend. In my use, performances are a class of speech acts which, J.L. Austin aptly terms “performatives” in that they do social work in the world such as persuade or protest (1962). The content of performances is collectively produced by the language ideologies, repertoires, and actors within a given interactional context. Language ideologies outline the situationally specific conditions under which actors can do work with words and how their actions may be interpreted (Bauman and Briggs 2003; Carr 2009; Irvine and Gal 2000). Repertoires capture the temporal durability of performances, the historical sedimentation of ways of acting and speaking that contain rules and roles to ensure repetitive reenactments achieve a given reception or comprehensibility (Bauman 1996; Butler 1990; Jackson 2005). This is how in various times and places, the concept of the “deserving mother” conjures up different clusters of words and actions—repertoires with attendant scripts—that could or could not be enacted. These repertoires can be inhabited by an actor, or in Goffman’s term, an *animator*, in accordance with the roles a given language ideology assigns to various persons (1981). Actors can interpret the script, improvise, or refuse the assigned role altogether, but such deviation threatens the

¹¹ These distinctions were drawn out by Walker, but she includes a third domain of maternal identity that I find less useful for this analysis (1995).

comprehensibility or effectiveness of the performance (Austin 1962; Briggs 2007). Performance offers a name to the work that women do to adhere to or avoid the repertoires of an interactional context.

Motherhood as I use it, then, is performed, and attributed, in the socially constituted acts of mothering. In this interactional model, motherhood is not static and singular, but rather multiple and iterative, brought about in the act of performance for an audience (Butler 1989; Fraser and Nicholson 1990). But, the performance is limited to durable repertoires—discourses and practices that a given audience view as constituting “deserving motherhood.” These include not only ways of speaking but also involve actions of care such as modes of food preparation, bathing, clothing, or discipline. In short, motherhood can be many things, but not everything works at any given time. Likewise, not all people can enact all repertoires of motherhood. Differences of race, religion, or habitus constrain the possible repertoires that a woman can take up in a particular interaction.

While the term performance may evoke play or, at least, interpretive creativity, the boundaries of that play are quite limited by already existing directives and by differences in power. As others have responded to Austin, not all people have equal power to do work with words and the relative power of an actor vis a vis an audience shapes the degree to which an actor can rework repertoires (Brada 2013). For women in the Point, performances of deserving motherhood were a means of making claims and were thus most frequently done for a more powerful audience that was evaluating and assessing them. They enacted performances as part of a “semiotic economy” that valued—and materially rewarded—certain repertoires of motherhood in certain contexts (Carr 2011, 82; Keane 2007). The women I worked with were constrained by the existing repertoires and lacked the power to fully set the terms of deserving motherhood.

However, by learning the language ideologies and repertoires in circulation in the Point, women could calibrate their performances of motherhood to various audiences and thereby intervene in the distribution of resources. In this way, performances of motherhood were key survival strategies.

As a strategy, performances of deserving motherhood required a great deal of knowledge and skill. In order to be successful, women had to become, as Carr says, “ethnographers of language” to learn in detail the repertoires of speech and action valued in each kind of interaction (2011,19). One effect of the narrowing of South Africa’s welfare system is that where claim making once involved a more limited range of interactions mostly with persons who functioned as social workers, in 2014 the audiences were more varied and diverse and their interactions far less formal and routinized. For instance, while state social workers in 1960 had a fairly set script for home visits—one that resembles what unofficial social workers like Jamila use today—the terms of interaction with the volunteers at the church soup kitchen are quite different and little resemble the ritual confessions expected at an informal prayer group. It was only through continued and repeated participation in these various settings that women learned the particular contextualization cues that signaled the expected ways of acting (Gumperz 1982). It is not surprising, then, women’s abilities to successfully perform motherhood varied enormously. Some were quicker studies while others were more adept at acclimating performances to different contexts. Though all of the women with whom I worked made claims upon a number of persons and institutions, many began to specialize in certain interactional contexts. These specialties arose out of women’s personal history with certain audiences as well as their performative assets such as race or linguistic knowledge, here meaning the ability to speak Afrikaans, Arabic, or isiZulu.

Not only did women learn the contextualization cues for a given interaction, they also had to develop “anticipatory interpellation” or an understanding of how a more powerful audience would expect *a person like them* to enact deserving motherhood (Carr 2009). This meant attending to what counted as deserving motherhood in a given context and how repertoires of deserving motherhood changed based on the race, class, social position of the actor. The very notion of deserving vs. undeserving motherhood points to the moral evaluations to which motherhood has long been subjected and with which feminist scholars have been concerned (Jeremiah 2004; Ladd-Taylor and Umansky 1998; Scheper-Hughes 1989). Point women were well aware that standards of “good” and “bad” motherhood are defined within a given sociocultural context rather than from an extra-social metric (Gustafson 2005; Van Gillies 2006). However, though the women with whom I worked were aware of constructions of deviant and ideal motherhood, successful performances required them to enact a middle category: *deserving* motherhood. By virtue of their poverty and lack of high class *habitus*, Point women could not successfully perform repertoires of ideal motherhood. Further, embodying almost any ideal would only have limited their eligibility for aid. Instead, the repertoires that attracted support were those of *adequate* motherhood, neither stellar nor disgraceful, but unobjectionable motherhood, in need of support. This might involve dressing children in stained, secondhand clothes that were meticulously ironed or speaking about homemade remedies to forgo expensive medicine. The critical knowledge was determining an alignment of the values of the audience as they mapped onto the particular subject position of the actor so as to enable a successful performance.

My framing of women’s work as strategic performances can inadvertently invoke an opposition between a performance as “an act” or somehow “false” and a “real,” intentional self. I

disagree with this opposition on both theoretical and methodological grounds. At the theoretical level, the pejorative connotation of performance is due to the American language ideology according to which words and actions that do not directly reference the speaker's internal thoughts or feelings are not only insincere but false (Carr 2011). Yet as Rosaldo has demonstrated, there is a culturally specific relationship between intentions and words (1982). Instead of questioning the intentions of an individual speaker, she posits, we should understand speech acts as social facts, or as Carr suggests, "as joint products of many speakers" (2011, 218—219). Herein lies the methodological issue.

If, according to Briggs, researchers must understand interviews—and arguably any interaction—as platforms for the subject's performance of self, then the opposition between "strategy" and "truth" is not only unhelpful but also impossible to discern from the data available (2007). However, if like Rosaldo and Carr, we view all words and actions as equally "real" in that they have social consequences, then we can examine the form that these performances take and how their audiences view, interpret, and react to them.

This distinction is especially important for this research with Point women. First, as a white, American researcher who was, correctly, perceived to be economically better off, women often made claims upon me for resources or contacts to jobs. For those who did not know me well, I was also consistently misinterpreted as a social worker who held the power to remove their children. Thus, any data to which I had access constituted a strategic performance. There were no methods to step outside of that orientation.

Second, dispelling the association of performance with falsehood or insincerity is all the more critical in a study on mothers. Strategic actions are seen as both antithetical to sincerity and to love. It is well-trod ground that there is great cultural discomfort with any analysis that might

imply that mothers do not ultimately love their children (Scheper-Hughes 1989). However, the question of whether Point women *really* loved their children is neither my concern nor within my ability to answer. Instead, what I have access to are performances and their reception. Maryann's wiping of her son's nose was as much a performance as how she cooked the chicken for Jamila. She might wipe to show her son love or to relieve discomfort. Or, she might wipe to show a pastor that her child was well-cared for and that she was the kind of person who attends to things like runny noses. These multiple interpretations are not incommensurate. One does not negate the presence of the other. As a researcher, I attended to how Maryann's son and the other audiences to her wiping responded to the action and the outcomes that arose from it. I argue that within the semiotic economy of the Point, there were important contexts in which such wiping—alongside other acts—was rewarded with critically needed support.

“We are mothers, we are hustlers”- Making Motherhood Work

As has been already noted, the context in which Point women performed motherhood were evaluative interactions between persons with unequal power. Teachers, social workers or pseudo-social workers, and neighbors constantly assessed the words and actions of women to determine if they aligned with valued repertoires of deserving motherhood. However, two simultaneously held ideological regimes made this evaluation quite complicated. First, as mentioned above, performances were expected and disciplined—to not clean your house on the day the social worker came to visit provoked criticism as did the failure to greet your neighbor. Second, also present was an ideology that words and actions should reflect the inner psyche of the actor. Therefore, clean houses and hellos should arise out of personal desire for tidiness and hospitality. But, no one was naïve enough to think that this was a community uniquely populated with overly clean or friendly people. This produced what Judith Irvine terms a “sincerity

problem” or an inability to assess whether acts referred to inner states (1982). The result was high levels of mistrust and anxiety throughout the neighborhood as residents guarded against insincere performances with little epistemological grounding to enable assessment.

Due to the density of the neighborhood, the suspicions of insincerity that pervaded interactions caused a further complication for Point women. As one walked the streets, stairwells, or beachfront, they were visible to other pedestrians, taxi passengers, and apartment residents hanging out of windows who often would announce their presence with a shout of greeting or a catcall. Frequently these overlapping audiences valued quite contradictory repertoires of deserving motherhood. For instance, one prayer group leader who was cultivating a following of mothers through prayer and patronage, chastised a group of women she had seen in line at the Episcopal Church soup kitchen as she drove her Mercedes out of the neighborhood. She accused the women of “religion shopping,” implying they lacked a sincere commitment to spiritual transformation. In another case, a woman was seen selling the toddler shoes she had received as a donation from the refugee care center and the manager accused her of misrepresenting her need. The presence of multiple audiences rendered the multiple maternities of Point women visible and gave evidentiary fodder for critiques of insincerity and duplicitousness.

Point women managed these accusations of dishonesty through their use of the term “the hustle.” I first encountered it one day, early in fieldwork, while waiting outside with a group of women to walk to a Christian prayer meeting.

BG: Where is Claudette?

M: (crossly) I called her. I dunno what she’s doing.

P: (laughing) She’s taking off her Muslim clothes...she can’t go to church with Muslim clothes so she’s put jeans on. (all laugh) “Those people that live a double life. Hey, but when you are a mother, we must do.

S: Ja, that's the life, we are mothers, we are hustlers. That's what we do. We are hustling.... That's how we survive.

L: (laughing) double jobs.

P: A double life. I must do this, do that...In the day I am a Muslim, in the night I must be a *febe* (prostitute).

This is the same joke Maryann was sharing with Jamila when she told the story about “making a plan” to get the chicken. The ability to hustle—to successfully enact the repertoire expected by your audience—was a source of pride, a skill. It was part of being a mother. Further, to name your actions as the hustle was to share in a collective recognition that some performances did not necessarily refer to inner states, but could nonetheless, be effective.

The term hustle most likely came from African American vernacular communicated to South Africa through music, movies and the television that virtually every family owned. In South Africa, the concept retained much of its American meaning as a “survival strategy” (Anderson 1976; Stack 1974;), a form of creative opportunism (Thieme 2013; Venkatesh 2002), and a form of deceit through either manipulation or charm in the pursuit of pecuniary gain (Wacquant 1998). The key here is that the ability to successfully perform a multiplicity of valued repertoires—which necessitated disconnecting at least some words and actions from inner reference—was a form of social capital that Point women recognized paid dividends within the semiotic economy.

Further, the metalinguistic concept of the hustle did critical work for Point women as they managed the multiplicity of audiences and the ubiquitous suspicion of insincerity. It was a descriptive mechanism that allowed women to attribute contradictory actions to different epistemological orders and therefore create cohesion (Mol 2002). By invoking the hustle, women could call out one performance as insincere and work to (re)establish another as “real”—meaning referring to the inner self. In the case of the prayer group, Sheila, one of the “religion

shoppers” told the leader afterwards that she had to hustle for her sister who was sick and had no food at home. Therefore, she had gone to the soup kitchen with Tupperware in hand but with a non-believing heart. Through her use of the term, Sheila re-framed her presence at the soup kitchen as an insincere request and her involvement in the prayer group as committed belief. In doing so, Sheila reconstituted herself as a trustworthy, and therefore deserving, mother. However, as powerful as the category of the hustle was for women’s management, it had rather limited effect.

Managing Multiple Maternities

In 2014 government welfare and aid societies were no longer able to offer the support to mothers of all races that they did to white mothers during apartheid. Thus, Point women cultivated large networks of people such as social workers, pastors, imams, school principals, boyfriends, and neighbors. These various audiences, who often valued different and sometimes conflicting repertoires of deserving motherhood, were frequently simultaneously present in the same interaction. The ability to calibrate their performances to the appropriate audience and to make these diverse performances hang together into a cohesive maternal self was a skill Point women regularly practiced and, occasionally, also, blundered.

Many of the women with whom I worked had grown up in a state child welfare institution, and thus knew best the social worker’s repertoires for deserving motherhood. Notably, the social workers circulating in the neighborhood in 2014 were not employees of any state agencies that could remove children. They did, however, regulate access to aid such as groceries or school uniforms. Maryann and Lolita would clean their rooms meticulously and set a pot of beans to boil on the stove to demonstrate their thrift and work ethic, but would also set

out milk and sugar for the tea to exhibit hospitality. For women with less high-status partners than Lolita's white husband, they would remove any evidence of a man (who might be giving them money or invite inquiries about their sex lives). Luxury items such as hair creams or body sprays also countered their claims to poverty or sexual purity, and would therefore be squirreled away into cupboards. The children's fresh-pressed uniforms were hung on display. The children themselves were counseled to stay in the room and not play with the neighbor's children who might be perceived as a bad influence. The children were expected to show respectful—greeting the social worker and pouring tea—and disciplined behavior—sitting quietly and not speaking during the interview only answering questions as directed.

In contrast, the many informal prayer groups and churches that offered aid to neighborhood children of the community demanded a slightly different repertoire. Women would come equipped with Bible verses they had memorized to describe their poverty in Christian idioms of graceful suffering. The children, too, were coached to be able to recite the opening of the Lord's Prayer. Here, children were encouraged to play freely and mothers responded to their children's requests with indulgent kindness.

Boyfriends, too, demanded certain conduct in order for the women to enjoy the privilege of the cash they brought home. These included sexual and domestic labors, but also dictated the treatment of the children, who frequently had different fathers. Women had to be careful not to be seen as spending the boyfriend's money on another man's child but also—in the event of a generous donation of gym shoes or clothing—that the other children were not seen as better resourced than the boyfriend's own. This meant a delicate and rarely successful calibration of the desires and opinions of boyfriends, children, donors and of course the women themselves. Sometimes these would create conflict with donors who might ask why a child was barefoot

when shoes had been given only the week before. Women had to swiftly generate explanations that would counter any concerns of ungratefulness or suspicions that the shoes had been sold.

Some women also made claims upon various Muslim associations for aid. This required that women know how and when they were supposed to be fasting, Arabic greetings, and prayers for maternal piety. Only women with particular social capital could perform these repertoires. Their children were enrolled in Madrasa and had Muslim names whose genealogies the women could recite. Wearing the hijab was a highly visible marker of identification with a Muslim audience, but it did not protect women from suspicions of insincerity. There was a circulating discourse disparaging black African women who, during Ramadan, would “put on hijab and go running” to receive zakat money. The Zulu and Xhosa women I knew who had married Burundian men and converted to Islam complained of these critiques as irritating and hurtful. They bemoaned that their commitment was constantly under question and considered the suspicions racist because, in Durban, Islam was more closely associated with the Indian community. These women experienced the converse of the “sincerity problem” wherein they felt they lacked the means to demonstrate their genuineness.

In contrast, Claudette, who moved between Christian and Muslim maternal repertoires, felt less personally attacked, but also complained of facing a higher burden of proof. As a more recent convert, she said, her Arabic should not be held to such high standards. However, if she encountered a church pastor on the street while wearing the hijab, it was more challenging to reframe its interpretation. Her success in performing both repertoires depended on her ability to keep those two audiences separate. It also depended on her maintaining good relationships with neighbors by sharing the spoils of her work. A disgruntled neighbor was a threat who could bring the contradictions between these two repertoires to the fore. Instead, as seen above, Claudette’s

skills in performance provoked mostly praise and amusement.

The most complicated performances of motherhood by far were those for women's most proximate neighbors such as between Lolita and Maryann. The generosity of neighbors was the lifeblood of survival of Point women. Neighbors provided anything from cooking oil to loan payments when someone was short, short-term childcare for a trip to the store or job interview, or much needed appliances (or appliance space in the case of Lolita). Importantly, neighbors were the source of vital information about who was passing out biryani, when a new church opened its doors and its donation bins, or when a much-coveted flat became vacant. These exchanges embedded women in complicated webs of reciprocity and obligation where neighbors were constantly tallying their credits and debts. Women sought to cultivate a delicate balance between appearing generous enough with their time and resources to inspire other neighbors to be the same, but not so generous as to invite too many requests. Women likewise cultivated closeness with neighbors through their own and others children—caring for them, feeding them, offering friendly advice. Success was a fragile balancing of demonstrating one's own skill against the potential of appearing to be “too proud” or superior to others. Therefore, actions such as prohibiting children from playing with the neighbor's children when the social worker visited could quickly backfire and alienate neighborly allies if not handled deftly.

In addition to the resources and labor that neighbors provided, the collusion of neighbors was necessary to maintaining cohesion across contradictory repertoires of motherhood. The assistance of neighbors could support a metalinguistic narrative that differentiated between “the hustle” and sincere action. Sheila's re-framing of her attendance at the church soup kitchen as a caretaking act for her sister was accepted in part because she had a history of active participation in the prayer group and in part because she brought a neighbor to the group to pose as her sister,

which both verified the story and increased the leader's following. Conversely, an alienated neighbor could sabotage a performance by calling attention to the discrepancies between repertoires. One of the most potent threats was a holdover from the era of a more robust welfare system. An angry neighbor might report a woman to "the Welfare" and trigger state intervention or, at worst, removal of the children.

I was walking into the building one day when Priscilla, the notoriously corrupt manager of Maryann and Lolita's building, called me into her office. In exchange for free housing, Priscilla collected rent, interviewed new tenants, issued eviction notices, and enforced the building rules, giving her a great deal of access to tenants' lives and power over them. Like the tenants, I trod a careful line with Priscilla to keep my distance, but not alienate her. That morning she was especially chatty and asked me how my work with "the mothers" was going. She complained about a tenant, Rose, saying that Rose was a prostitute who didn't discipline her children and let them "run wild." In his "wildness," Rose's eldest boy had beat up Priscilla's middle child, who had stolen Rose's hotplate to sell. Rose then refused to pay rent.

Priscilla related this to me indignantly and directed me to talk to Rose and "set her straight," something I had no intention of doing. Furthermore, Priscilla continued, she was very concerned about the condition of Rose's children and wanted me to be present when she called "the Welfare." As she dialed, I reiterated that I had no connection to anyone at Durban Child Welfare, but was cut short by Priscilla who was declaring to the person on the other end of the line that she wished to report an incident of child abuse. While I stood there, Priscilla proceeded to enumerate a list of Rose's maternal failings. She said Rose would drink and go out with men all day and night, leaving her children unsupervised in a locked room. Priscilla, positioning herself as the savior, would then unlock the door to get access to the children so she could "feed

them nicely,” bathe them, and give them clean clothes. Rose, she said, was “ungrateful” for all Priscilla had done for her and would instead swear at her for interfering.

Though Rose, like many tenants, had a tense relationship with Priscilla, she otherwise was well-respected in the building. She was away from the building most of the day and she often paid an older resident, Gogo Sotatshe to watch her two younger children. Gogo spoke well of Rose, praising her for working hard and “seeing to” her children well. Gogo often borrowed the food or diapers from Rose’s children for some of her other charges who were not as well provisioned. As one of the few women who lived alone with her children, Rose was praised as being both “mother and father” by earning money and organizing care. She had a reputation for being a “good hustler” which enabled her to support her family, provide a wage to others, and maintain a reputation within the building as a good mother.

No social worker ever came to follow up on the report on Rose, much to Priscilla’s disappointment. As we saw in the case of Magdalena, an identical list of complaints in 1960 resulted in intense supervision by a social worker and, likely, removal. As of 2014, however, the child welfare services were wildly fragmented and overburdened and calls of neglect were often simply overlooked. Furthermore, in the intervening years the child protection model had shifted from removal to family strengthening that involved supporting the child in the home. But, many Point women had grown up in state institutions and they remembered well the intervention neighborly critiques of motherhood could bring. Indeed, though such reports no longer brought down the arm of the state, they still retained disciplinary effect. Instead, regulatory forms of surveillance had become as dispersed as the sources of aid. The consequences, while different, are just as deeply felt.

Maryann continued to go to the prayer group long after the others had stopped going. She

had garnered the leader's favor and received a regular supply of groceries and lotions. These resources she refused to share with the other women, arguing that they were rewards for pious adherence that her neighbors did not deserve. Fed up one day by what she saw as Maryann's habitual stinginess and pride, Lolita unexpectedly returned to tell the leader that Maryann had spent the previous Sunday drinking with a man on the beachfront, not watching her young daughters. "And you know those girls have green eyes and would be snatched by anyone," Lolita noted, adding another layer to the transgression. Indeed, Maryann had been on the beachfront socializing with a former colleague from work who had gone on to buy her daughters new spring clothes, a boon for their family. It is likely that invoking the hustle would not have helped Maryann explain her weekend performance because that particular group leader was known to find talk of hustling distasteful and sinful as opposed to entrepreneurial, as others did. Maryann knew this and instead argued that it wasn't her on the beach, but her sister who, from a distance, resembled her. Yet, in this interaction, Maryann lacked the power to reframe the interpretation or, like Sheila, the social capital to bring a friend to verify her version. Unconvinced, the prayer group leader lectured Maryann on her maternal responsibilities and dismissed her from the group.

The successful performance of multiple repertoires of motherhood to different audiences depended on women's ability to make multiple repertoires hang together in a comprehensible way. As much as the notion of the hustle was one tool for such work, so too was the cultivation of amicable relationships with neighbors. A performance's success was dependent on the supporting roles of children and neighbors. Discord with these supporting actors could undermine a performance or undo the tenuous cohesion women build across multiple maternal repertoires. An angered Lolita highlighted the contradictions between Maryann's actions as a

party girl/socialite and the expected conduct of a Christian mother. Despite her skills, without supporting actors Maryann could not regain the performative authority to successfully recuperate a cohesive harmony between these contradictory repertoires. The result was that she was cut off from a lucrative source of aid.

Conclusion

While the Point neighborhood of Durban has a unique history and urban density, it functions as a critical microcosm of larger trends facing the country and the continent. Rapid urbanization has not slowed over the past six decades making urban centers sites of limited housing, rising housing costs, and increased conditions of overcrowding. Waged labor is increasingly unavailable to new and old urban residents and people are finding ways to meet the needs of a cash economy through a broader array of economic activities. Tensions are high as an influx of immigrants only contributes to feelings of scarcity. Though informal segregation still remains, South Africans, especially the urban poor, are living in increasingly diverse communities where they must rely on people of very different racial and cultural backgrounds.

I have argued that in the absence of state welfare services that provide sufficient resources for survival, poor mothers rely upon a large network of multiple categories of persons to make claims for resources, labor, and assistance. Given that claims for themselves are not recognized as legitimate, poor women's requests take the form of performances of deserving motherhood, carefully aligned to the values of particular audiences. These performances require women to be skilled ethnographers and learn the rules of each interactive context, as well as how those rules map on to their particularly racialized body. In the context of the Point, women must also attend the presence of multiple audiences, frequently with conflicting values. Performances that contradict the value system and preconceptions of the audience validate suspicions that Point

women engage in performances that are false and insincere. Women manage this concern—brought about through the multiple maternities they are asked to embody—by marking certain performances as strategic and others as authentic with the term the hustle. However, this ability to create cohesion—to make their multiple maternities hang together—is dependent on the collusion of supporting actors, often children and neighbors. Without the support of these collaborators, Point women can be left without a stage to stand on.

For as much as I have focused on how women use performances of motherhood to shape the distribution of resources, also at play is the issue of recognition. The inhabitants of the new South Africa now enjoy many new forms of inclusion such as voting rights and constitutional rights to housing, water and social services to name a few. However, the persistence of poverty and the decline of waged labor have led to many forms of exclusion from the promises the new democracy was supposed to bring. Some of this exclusion has been mitigated by the broad expansion of social grants such as the CSG, but the categories of recognition remain quite limited to the elderly, the child, and the sick or disabled. Able-bodied women and men who find themselves out of work and out of opportunities lack the mechanisms to make claims for support of their own, individual, projects of living. As demonstrated by Point women, motherhood offers women access to a repertoire of legitimate claim making that recognizes and incorporates them into the national social fabric. However, this recognition remains limited as their legibility and merit resides not in their own needs or even in the value of their maternal labor, but in the social value of the child. The rest of the dissertation takes on the effects of this limited legibility from a variety of angles. The next chapter considers how concerns about fatherhood as always intertwined with ideals of motherhood and family, have changed between the 1960s and 2014. Having discussed motherhood in depth, I attend to how discourses of family disintegration and

paternal failure shape men's projects of supporting their children. From there, I turn to negotiations between women and men as they are mediated through the transactions in the maintenance court. Finally, I consider the meaning of marriage to both social personhood and membership within the polity. These final chapters do not take citizenship as a given, but instead attend to the contours and boundaries of a lived sense of belonging. In short, I track how citizenship is worked out in everyday practices such as the wiping of noses and the cooking of meat.

Chapter 5 - Problematic Paters and Foreign Fathers: Race, Class, and Paternal Projects

In April 1961, the Congress on Family Life was held in Pretoria as the culminating event of the Family Year, a year of national reflection and research on the condition of the South African family. Attended by over 750 delegates, the Congress brought together those concerned with “the deteriorating condition of family life in this country” so as to formulate agendas for various social sectors—welfare, religious institutions, education, civic organizations—to “restore family life to its place of honour.”¹

In one of the first addresses of the Congress, Professor S. Pauw, Principal of the University of South Africa, named some of the outcomes of family deterioration that would be discussed throughout the Congress: “Some of us are deeply concerned about family life and have a fear of serious retrogression which we believe is evident in the divorce rate, the neglect of children, juvenile delinquency, in the neglect of the older generation, and in the disturbed personalities which our families produce.”² He went on to place these current issues in historical perspective as products of a particular moment:

“I also believe that we in South Africa have all but passed through a difficult phase in regard to our family problems. This phase was the transition from country to town, in which the vast majority of Afrikaans urban families was concerned. We are now entering a period in which most urban families have survived this stage and have attained a measure of security and stability. They feel at home in the city and have to a great extent achieved a secure pattern of life, which ought to contribute to the stability of family life. But we must not shut our eyes to some serious problems. We must not only be concerned about the visible

¹ Opening Address by the Governor-General. Report of the Family Congress. University of Pretoria 4-7 April, 196. The Steering Committee of the Family Year and the Family Congress. Pretoria:8.

² S. Pauw. “Family Life in Transition.” Report of the Family Congress. University of Pretoria 4-7 April, 196. The Steering Committee of the Family Year and the Family Congress. Pretoria:11.

signs of the decay of family life. Visible decay is only symptomatic of a general and deeper tendency to complete social decay.”³

Statements such as these are prevalent throughout the report of Congress proceedings and echo the official discourse of other governmental writing of the same period. Indeed, the late 1950s and 1960s saw a renewed fear over family disintegration that focused on the social ills that had come with widespread postwar economic prosperity and greater global integration.

A number of historic changes gave this “crisis in the family” its particular flavor. First, the economic growth that came with the war and the immediate postwar years—together with twenty years of welfare investment—had all but eradicated the ‘problem’ of poor whites.⁴ In many cases the women who had filled the labor gaps left by men during wartime did not leave their jobs, and more women were entering the workforce every year. With full employment came concerns that this new white middle class had lost touch with important Christian national values of family, church, and marriage. Parents were thought to be too busy in the workplace and too concerned with social climbing to attend to the needs of their children:

“A competitive urge to succeed, to excel, to outdo and out rival others in their standard of living, is symptomatic of a high degree of selfishness and egoism. Self-interest is the overriding factor. No effort is spared and even great hardship is endured for the sake of personal rights and privileges, but there is marked reluctance to be drawn into any undertakings involving obligations.”⁵

During this time, divorce rates among the white population soared, which only fueled concerns about the security of the white nuclear family (Burman and Fuchs 1986:15). Furthermore, there was an international growth in psychology as a discipline, and in contrast to a prior emphasis on material need, a turn in official government policy toward a concern about mental and moral

³ Ibid:15.

⁴ By 1959 only a tiny percentage of whites were unemployed. Lazar (1987: 90) estimates that in 1959 only 13 314 whites – less than 0.5 per cent of the total white population, and only one per cent of the white workforce – were registered as unemployed.

⁵ Report from the Committee of Inquiry into Family Allowances, 1961:12.

welfare of white children (Muirhead 2012). This change in emphasis manifested in an abiding concern that the shift in parental attitudes was causing moral degeneration in youth. Between 1955 and 1960, four commissions were convened to delve into the problem of delinquent white youth that detailed issues of drug abuse, suicide, homosexuality, theft, pregnancy, and workshy behavior amongst juveniles (Glaser 2005). Fueled in part by the ‘ducktail and flick knife’ subculture that gained popularity among white youth in the 1950s and 1960s, news stories of ducktail gangs’ promiscuity, aggressive behavior, destruction of property, and flagrant disregard for the rule of law incited discussion intervention by the state and social workers alike (Glaser 2005).⁶ The consensus was that parents, most notably fathers, had failed to inculcate their children with proper values and respect and had lost their authority and control. In addition to national censorship of books and entertainment material,⁷ there was renewed effort for social workers to provide “specialised attention” to parents who couldn’t cope.⁸

In quite a similar vein, the years prior to 2014 saw a reinvigorated national concern about “the breakdown of families” in ways that have been addressed throughout this dissertation (SAIRR 2012:4).⁹ The language in the 2012 White Paper on Families is remarkably familiar:

“The South African society, with specific reference to family life and school life, is experiencing a serious moral breakdown or degeneration, described as the process of declining from a higher to a lower level of morality (Louw, 2009). Moral degeneration is often seen as preceding or concomitant with the decline in

⁶ Arguably, the fact that these anti-establishment youths would soon constitute the electorate was of great concern to the state. Further, Kate Mooney has argued that the Ducktail movement received so much attention because the deviant and idle behavior evinced by these youths had always been associated by the apartheid government with Africans, thus—very much like the poor whites of the 1940s, bringing the idealised white Christian identity into disrepute (1998).

⁷ Members of the South African National Council of Child Welfare attributed the growth in juvenile delinquency to the youth being influenced by ‘undesirable’ cultural discourse from modern western society. In their opinion, economic and technological developments “made of man a cog in an impersonal machine”. KAB, File 2/OBS 3/1/663 N7/22/3 Agencies Section 48 of the Children’s Act 1960: “Our Children’s Day”, Appeal by Mrs JJ Fouché, state president’s wife, 3 July 1968.

⁸ By 1957, the Society for the Protection of Child Life, set up a Parent Guidance Office to offer parents support by social work experts. KAB, File 3/CT 4/1/10/14 E4/1 Vol. 4. Maternity and Child Welfare. South African National Council for Child Welfare, 1946-1954. SA National Council for Child Welfare: Annual Meeting and Committee, Port Elizabeth, August 1959. “Report by the SPCL on New Service”.

⁹ A brief overview into the policy work done in regards to families includes: 1992 White Paper for Social Welfare; 2001 a draft National Policy Framework for Families was developed by the Department of Social Development and issued in 2005; 2005 Children’s Act; 2011 Green Paper on Families; and 2012 White Paper on Families.

quality of life, and in South Africa it is widely-reported in the media and is evident and reflected in social ills such as a general lack of discipline, violence, poverty, unemployment, a high crime rate, school vandalism and corruption. According to Louw, (2009), these moral ills, which have negative implications for society, have been attributed to a lack of a positive value system in society as a whole as well as to social media and technology which often infiltrates family life by, for example, exposing children and youth to pornography and other negative influences (Louw, 2009; Bayaga & Jaysveree, 2011) (DSD 2012:29-30).

In contrast to the predominant focus on white families in 1960s (conversations about non-white families were taking place in other spheres), in the 2010s the implied emphasis is predominantly on black African families who, numerically, made up the majority of those families experiencing poverty. Furthermore, the efforts in the 2010s were in direct response to the instabilities wrought by government policies in the 1950s and 1960s. Conscious of this history and in keeping with a new national vision, policy drafters were very careful to not explicitly promote a single normative ideal of family life and to acknowledge the flexibility of family forms. Nevertheless, implicitly, a nuclear family formalized through marriage was reasserted as the most beneficial through the articulation of family challenges. For example, the 2012 White Paper on Families states:

“Non-marital childbearing—is also high in the country, particularly among Africans and Coloureds (Nzimande, 2007)... Socioeconomically although family structure and parental marital status *alone* do not guarantee positive or negative outcomes (Manning, 2002), non-marital childbearing has been shown to have more negative implications for children’s education, economic and overall well-being, with research indicating that *stable* marital unions “benefit nearly every aspect of children’s well-being. This includes greater educational opportunities, better emotional and physical health, lower incidences of anti-social behaviour such substance abuse, early sexual activity for girls, and delinquency for boys” (Wilkins, 2012:vi)” (emphasis in original, DSD 2012).

While the statement hedges its claims, the preference for nuclear families as the basis for beneficial childrearing is clear. In the framing, concerns about family instability centered around

the rising number of black children living in households headed by unmarried women.¹⁰ In this context where “economic activity” and “self-sufficiency” were valued, these female-headed households were recorded as “less likely to be economically active than individuals living in households with male heads” and “more dependent on social grants as the main source of household income than maleheaded households (44 percent compared to 67 percent)” (DSD 2012:19).

Of the ills that South African families were listed to be facing—poverty and inequality, unemployment, housing, HIV and AIDS, absentee fathers, crime, substance abuse, gender-based violence, teenage pregnancy and moral degeneration—four of them notably had a black male source. Indeed, as Posel suggests, in the decades since transition “there was widespread alarm at the prospect that the newborn democracy, the fledgling nation, was sick to its core, confronted with the threat of moral death at the very inception of its new life;” and, at issue was black male sexual and economic irresponsibility (2005: 248). In an opinion piece on 'Restoring Respect for Family', Bongani Khumalo, founder of the South African Men’s Forum, summarized the issues well:

“Men form a large proportion of the moral degeneration that we see in our society. There is not a single crime-whether rape, robbery or abuse-where a man is not the common denominator. Until you address the issue of men, and the violence they perpetrate in our society, you will not begin to steer society towards moral regeneration” (2002).

Within this logic, men are the problem, and the moral degeneration of the individual is clearly mapped onto the moral precarity of the nation. Should men fail “to don the mantle of responsible fatherhood,” they threaten the possibility of national stability (Posel 2005:249).

¹⁰ Co-residence with fathers differs dramatically by race. In 2012, 69% of black children lived without their fathers. The number of children who live in the same household with both biological parents presents an even starker comparison: 28% for black children, 81% for Indian children and 77% for white children (Hall et al. 2014).

This chapter considers the work of fathers living in the two very different times of these panics over family decline and, ultimately, deviant masculinities. The fathers considered here hail from a variety of races and ethnic groups, and none embrace the masculine identity considered problematic in their respective times—what I call dominant deviance. In addition to their paternal status, what they share is membership in another stigmatized social category: the poor. Their shared poverty makes them reliant on outside sources of support—and the attendant moral evaluation that brings—to assist them in their projects of caring for children. This chapter is concerned with the effects of these larger panics on the daily lives of men attempting the quotidian work of social reproduction at the tenuous fringes of poverty.

I argue that men's abilities to claim support for their projects of caring for children is shaped by their relationship to the dominant ideas of masculine deviance in their socio-historic context. Certain norms of acceptable and unacceptable gendered behavior were applied to and shaped the availability of support afforded to fathers of different races. Further, as these notions of dominant deviance shift over time, so too does the conditions of possibility for claim making. More specifically, in the 1960s the two versions of male dominant deviance at play were the inattentive father and the juvenile delinquent that resulted from derelict care. These fostered anxieties over male control and providership were often at odds with one another. Concerns that children—and especially male children—required the strong involvement of a disciplinary father figure lest they lapse into juvenile delinquency would seem to place higher value on male presence. But, in the case of single fathers, their responsibility to work to earn sufficient support was more frequently held in higher esteem. Their presence in the lives of their children was insufficient to garner state support. In contrast, though the dominant male deviance in 2014 was

also one of the absent father, valued masculine ideals had shifted such that male presence—even amidst poverty—was rewarded and supported.

Drawing upon case files from the Durban Children’s Court, I explore how in the 1960s social workers responses to the efforts of poor white and coloured single fathers to raise their children were shaped by national concerns over paternal obligation and juvenile delinquency. Further, the lack of a woman in these homes to ratify the family as a social unit constrained the forms of aid the households received. I compare these earlier cases with participant observation from 2014 of fathers soliciting resources from patrons—a very different audience. With a very different spectre of male dominant deviance at play—the black absentee father—the work of these Indian and Congolese fathers is met with much greater sympathy than the 1960s fathers. Strikingly, in these present-day examples, the invisibility of a female caregiver at home serves to enhance the worthiness of these fathers, rather than undercut it.

Throughout this chapter, I rely on two concepts to analyze how gendered power—manifested in the ability to make claims—was organized along racial, class, and ethnic lines. First, I draw upon the concept of hegemonic masculinity, first developed by Raewyn Connell, that has gained dominance in South African gender scholarship over the past few decades. By this I mean a version of masculinity—norms of speaking and acting—that is culturally valued above others and bestows power and privilege upon those who espouse it (Morrell 1998).¹¹ In other words, what are the (socio-historically particular) conventions of behavior and self-presentation that are viewed as defining a ‘real’ man or a ‘successful’ man as an ideal-type? The use of hegemony is important because it is inherently relational and speaks to the multiplicity of masculinities that coexist and co-constitute one another. This is analytically valuable in the South

¹¹ Importantly, dominance here does not mean a head count or numerical dominance as much as cultural value, in Morrell’s terms “a question of relations of cultural domination” (1998:607–8).

African context where a long history of racial rule has so clearly divided the political and economic landscape along lines of gender, race, and social class making subordinate masculinities always present.

Hegemony, in the Gramscian tradition also retains a sense of the fragility of dominance. Ascendance is not a given nor stable condition, it must be achieved through constant contestation, defense, and reproduction. As I use it here, the social power of hegemonic masculinity rests in its deployment by on the one hand social workers and on the other potential benefactors. In such instances, dominance is evident in “[t]he ability to impose a definition of the situation, to set the terms in which events are understood and issues discussed, to formulate ideals and define morality’ (Connell 1987: 107). In this chapter, as I consider two important eras for constructions of various masculinities, the 1960s and 2014, the concept of hegemonic masculinity allows me to attend to the differences in what forms of masculinity were dominant and subordinate in each era as well as how masculine ideals differed by race, class, and ethnicity.

A second concept I employ is that of dominant deviant masculinity (or DD masculinity). I use this to refer to the male gendered forms of speaking and acting whose deviation from the ideal or even subordinate masculinity are seen by people in power as *the most problematic*. Again, this speaks to a hierarchy of valuation given to gendered behavior. Dominant deviance refers to the male behaviors that are collectively deemed the most dangerous, the most disruptive, and provoke social anxiety in a given socio-historical context. DD masculinities are not simply subordinate to the hegemonic ideal, as in lesser in power, they are specifically negatively marked as troublesome and damaging.

While the arguments of this chapter are more broadly applicable, they are steeped in the particularities of the Point neighborhood in the socio-historic contexts of the early 1960s and mid

2010s. The men whose experiences form the heart of this chapter can all be understood as foreigners in some sense. This status had important effects for how their claims were perceived in their respective times. In both time periods, the neighborhood was the first, if sometimes the only, home for a variety of immigrant groups. In the 1960s these were predominantly groups from the Mediterranean and Iberia – Greece, Spain, Portugal, Italy—whose economies were relatively weak vis a vis South Africa’s (Glaser 2010).¹² Post-apartheid, there was an influx of political and economic refugees from the rest of the African continent. The heterogeneity of the neighborhood and relative lack of social cohesion made it an easier community for immigrants to integrate into. The relative availability of jobs also helped immigrants quickly establish themselves. Ethnic and linguistic enclaves formed throughout the neighborhood and assisted newcomers in finding housing and jobs. In the 1960s, the area around Hospital Road was dominated by Greek immigrants who overwhelmingly worked as builders and bricklayers. In 2014, the building named Montrose housed an overwhelming proportion of immigrants from Burundi whose male members worked in transport and delivery companies that serviced the port. Though originating from quite different countries, the immigrant groups in these eras shared the common experience of being outsiders who had to work to make themselves fit into a country already riven with divisions. When not clustered in ethnic groups, many foreigners joined various gangs within the neighborhood both as a form of sociability and for protection. Emilios, a gentleman who migrated from Greece in the late 1950s, spoke with pride about a gang he led of Spaniards, Portuguese, Italians, Greeks. Without a common language, they developed their own vernacular that also served to confuse the bar patrons and sunbathers they sought to rob.

¹² Following the election of the National Party in 1948, the government imposed a highly restrictive European immigration regime. However, in the early 1960s, the intensity of the skilled labor shortage prompted the Nationalists to actively recruit European immigrants. For example, about 22 000 legal immigrants arrived in South Africa from the Portuguese mainland between 1963 and 1971 (Glaser 2010:69). Glaser suggests that European recruitment was a political choice: “[f]aced with the alternatives of mass European immigration or lifting the skills colour bar, the apartheid regime opted for the former” (2010:66).

Emilios noted that their shared marginalization from white South Africa further solidified the gang's relationships. However, the high concentration of foreigners in the Point was closely bound up with the neighborhood's reputation as an unruly place of crime, an "area known for drunkenness and loose living" in the words of one social worker.¹³ This reputation could work against a foreigner seeking to relocate elsewhere, such as the case of Rhodesians seeking improved housing (Dougherty 1981). For the immigrants from other African countries, the neighborhood's reputation instead afforded them a modicum of security. Fearing xenophobic violence (e.g. "in the locations [townships] we would be killed"), people bemoaned the ability to move elsewhere. But, in 2015, when a wave of xenophobia swept through Durban, throngs of immigrants set rubbish bins alight and overturned cars to block the roads to Point and defend their right to be there. The "army of Zulus" that my interlocutors imagined were marching towards Point, instead avoided the neighborhood.

Fatherhood in The Files—1960s

By the 1960s, following forty years of deliberation over the poor white question, the throngs of poverty-stricken whites with little institutionalized support had been replaced by a small number of poor whites supported by an expansive welfare system that catered to them to the exclusion of other racial groups. Yet the reduction in the number of poor whites did not translate into a reduction in the anxiety their presence produced. Like Roos, "I also see the spectre of poor whiteism as a constant backdrop to the historical dramas" or early apartheid state building. However, I push his timeline of the mid-1950s further into the 1960s (2015:1171). After the postwar economic boom, there were not enough whites to meet the demands for skilled labor (Davenport 1992). Yet, to allow those positions to be filled by other racial groups was to

¹³ TBD, 1DBN, box 464 Amos Protection of Children case number: 3/2/1/3/195 sub file: 33/2/4//308/59.

risk upending the entire racial hierarchy on which the apartheid system was premised. Coloureds were barred from taking jobs and their unemployment levels rose, leading to a rapid deterioration in their economic position relative to whites (Jung 2000:184).¹⁴ At the same time, the expansion of white affluence that marked the 50s and 60s and increasing availability of consumer goods—and advertising media that promoted them—led to raised consumer expectations for modern lifestyles. This only served to further marginalize the remaining poor whites and the economically weakened coloureds who could not maintain such practices.

In the various commissions of inquiry that took place during this period, the rise of juvenile delinquency—which was noted to have taken place across all race groups—was attributed to an increase in the inadequate care and upbringing of children (Glaser 2005). However, in the case of white families, many argued, these issues did not arise from the problem of material want. Instead, they were the result of a shift of values from piety and familial love toward consumerism, materialism, and personal ease. As one commission of inquiry report stated:

“It is held that inadequate care and upbringing are much more due to inherent weaknesses in parents than to financial circumstances, that insufficient material means in present-day society are usually associated more with personality deficiencies than lack of opportunity; and that the economic factor is outweighed by way of life of the parents. In a straightforward case of want, there is usually a particular social background which can hardly be separated from human material as such. There are those with personality deficiencies who cannot easily secure a settled place in society, while others are handicapped by inferior mental endowments. The ability to secure the necessities of life is therefore automatically affected by the quality of human material. There are, however, so many forms of social assistance and welfare aid available to such weaker members of the community that there is really no need for their families to suffer any neglect. Inadequate care and upbringing are also ascribed to the maintenance of too high a standard of living and easy credit facilities, and it is asserted that, where the

¹⁴ The 1956 Industrial Conciliation Act and 1965 Shops and Offices Act reserved jobs for whites and coloureds could not advance beyond certain positions. The remuneration of coloured employees relative to whites dropped from 41 percent in 1945 to 24% in 1970 (Jung 2000:184)

parent is devoted to the child, economic need is not an insurmountable problem”¹⁵

Bypassing the possibility of structurally based “financial circumstances,” the discourse of parental care that came to circulate in the 1960s was a responsabilizing one, which placed the blame of shortfall squarely on the individual. As elsewhere, the role of provider was foundational to hegemonic understandings of fatherhood in South Africa (Morrell 2006). Feminist scholars of care, who have teased out the distinctions of a caregiving continuum, place the provider role as one of often financial care, contributing to, if distanced from, the direct physical work of caregiving (Tronto 1993). In this text parental devotion ensured economic security. By individualizing the challenges of financial circumstances, official discourse such as the above gave rise to the possibility of a financially-evaluated dominant deviance, one which equated financial failure onto a personal failure of fatherhood. Thus, when not an issue of a “personality deficiency”, the problem of inadequate care was one of a misappropriated modernity seen as arising from the consumption of Western—notably English and American—goods and popular culture.

In his presentation at the Congress of the Family Year, J. De. W. Keyter, Professor of Sociology and Social Work at the University of the Orange Free State, made the link between inadequate care and its psychological and social effects on the child more clear:

“Indifference, irresponsibility, lack of interest and control, and immorality on the part of the parents figure in increasing measure as the leading causes of neglect of children and teenagers. In this regard, the increasing extent of serious forms of juvenile misbehaviour and the rising number of children and youngsters who are declared to be out of control, bear damning witness to the decline in parental control of the child. Almost without exception a lack of healthy home conditions and parental interest and care figure largely in the case records of juvenile delinquents and offenders.”¹⁶

¹⁵ Report on the Committee of Inquiry into Family Allowances, 1961:23.

¹⁶ J. De. W. Keyter. “Family Disorganization and its Nature and Extent.” Report of the Family Congress. University of Pretoria 4-7 April, 196. The Steering Committee of the Family Year and the Family Congress. Pretoria:11.

These two quotes help to outline the contours of the dominant deviant masculinities of concern in the 1960s. First, fathers either too caught up with the demands of their job or too disinterested in the responsibilities of parenting failed to exert the proper control and discipline within the family. I term this dominantly deviant provider role *indifferent fatherhood*. Whether that indifference results from lack of interest or (what is deemed) inappropriate prioritization, it fatherhood with a misplaced focus. In other words, a lack of or misplaced emphasis of “caring about” results in a lack of financially “caring for,” the perceived cornerstone of the provider role. Second, fathers could fail to provide the moral framework for their children, especially boys. The dominant deviance here was *moral* indifference, and the result of such negligence was juvenile delinquency.

In the 1950s and 1960s, juvenile delinquency took the form of the Ducktails, the name given to a (predominantly white) youth gang subculture.¹⁷ They embodied what was seen as the problematic embrace of Western counterculture in the form of fashion, music (especially rock-'n-roll), films, and comics (Mooney 1998). Named after the iconic hairstyle, their motivating ethos was the pursuit of pleasure and diversion. They were often found in entertainment spaces such as the cinema or bioscope cafes or enjoying cross-racial music jam sessions in dance halls, billiard rooms, bars, or *shebeens* (illegal liquor selling establishments), which, in Durban, were frequently found near the beachfront. In the Point, one ducktail gang was known to occupy the Blue Grotto café on the bottom level of a beachfront structure while another frequented the rough and notorious nightclub The Smugglers Inn (Buttigieg 2016). Notably, the Point gangs were more multiracial than other ducktail gangs. The male members also engaged in more

¹⁷ " The South Africa Ducktails were part of a broader 1950s international youth culture, which took the form of the Teddy Boys in Britain; the Greasers in the US; the Bodgies and Wedgies in Australia; the Halbarstarke and Nozems in Holland; the Schwarze Jakken in Germany; the Blousons Noirs [Black Jackets] in France and the Stiljags in the Balkan States (Mooney 2016).

violent and destructive activities such as “vandalism, the temporary theft of cars for the purposes of joy-riding, the assault of innocent bystanders, inter-gang street fighting, petty crime, the buying and selling of illicit liquor and *dagga* (marijuana), the molesting of girls and women, and the assault of African and homosexual men.”¹⁸ In Durban in 1962, one ducktail gang took over the midnight show at the Playhouse theater and overturned the police vehicles that attempted to restore order (eNongqai Staff 2011: 3-11).¹⁹

Kate Mooney, the leading scholar on the Ducktails argues that they had the time to participate in so many of these activities in part because they hailed from class backgrounds that afforded them economic security that allowed them to actively avoid work.²⁰ A 1961 social work thesis on the Ducktails of Greyville suggests this was less the case in Durban. The researcher noted:

“The home of Lennie and Tony's parents was typical of the homes from which many of the Greyville Ducktails came. Several social agencies in Durban (among them, the Social Services Association, Durban Child Welfare Society and the Department of Social Welfare) at one time or the other, dealt with this family. Records showed evidence of petty criminality, drunkenness, workshyness, desertion, illegitimacy and a general low level of social morale, with a complete disregard for cleanliness, privacy, personal rights and privileges. The family was also desperately poor” (Huthwaite 1961:37-38).

Of the twenty-five gang members the researcher described, only one came from what she categorized as a “middle class home” (Huthwaite 1961). Instead, they were homes with a great deal of economic insecurity and with which social workers were consistently engaged. However,

¹⁸ list from Mooney, Kate. 1998. "Ducktails, flick-knives and pugnacity": subcultural and hegemonic masculinities in South Africa, 1948–1960,' *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Special Edition: Masculinities in Southern Africa vol. 24, no. 4 (1998), p. 754.

¹⁹ In 1960, Joan Huthwaite observed “In Durban there are several Ducktail groups which possess all the essential characteristics of antisocial gangs. These congregate in specific neighborhoods, generally in the central city area and in underprivileged neighbourhoods, the Greyville area being one such neighbourhood” (Huthwaite 1961:4).

²⁰ In addition to protected employment in the public sector, especially on the railways, and widespread public works programs, the Colour Bar Act of 1926 provided employers tariff protection on condition that a reasonable proportion of “civilized” (i.e. white) workers were employed which was extended through amendments to the Industrial Conciliation Act of 1956 and 1959.

in keeping with the focus of the time, it was the psychological condition of the family, not the poverty that was the concern.

The Ducktail masculine subculture was at great odds with the hegemonic masculinity espoused by the South African state. By 1960 the state was made up of Afrikaans-speaking white men who embraced a masculine identity—constructed in opposition both to British whites and to the majority non-whites of the country—that had brought them into power. This hegemonic masculinity valued “independence, resourcefulness, physical and emotional toughness, the ability to give (and depending on your position) take orders, of being moral and God-fearing.”²¹ At its most conservative manifestation, this masculinity espoused a puritanical commitment to austerity and strictness in conduct and morals.²² Fathers were expected to be not only the good provider but also the moral compass of the family through strict discipline and irreproachable personal conduct. Yet these rigid strictures were indeed eroding with the arrival of economic prosperity and a more urbanized population. The Ducktails, with their hedonistic rebelliousness, represented the furthest edges—the dominant deviance—of a larger shift in masculinity across the 1960s.

To address the transformations in values and lifestyle that urbanization and industrialization had wrought on the structure and functioning of the family, the apartheid government introduced new legislation to oversee the protection, welfare, and supervision of children in the form of the Children’s Act, 1960. This legislation created a host of administrative bodies and a re-invigorated role for the social worker in “ensuring that poor families attain

²¹ Morrell, Robert. 2001. The Times of Change: Men and Masculinity in Southern Africa. in *Changing Men in Southern Africa*, ed. Robert Morrell. Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press pp. 3-40. p. 15

²² Du Pisani, Kobus. 2001. “Puritanism Transformed: Afrikaner Masculinities in the Apartheid and Post-Apartheid Period. in *Changing Men in Southern Africa*, ed. Robert Morrell. Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press pp157-176. p 158

happy, orderly domestic lives”.²³ These social workers’ case files reveal how the moral evaluations of fathers in light of the social fear embodied by the dominant deviants of the indifferent father and the ducktail shaped the support available to single fathers attempting to raise children in the early 1960s.

Victor

The de Esclana family first came to the attention of the Durban Child Welfare Society (hereafter the Society) when Ethel Diplock, the mother of Victor’s children, contacted them in 1958 seeking assistance. Four months prior she had given birth to twin girls, Julia and Joan and the family was experiencing financial difficulties. The babies’ father, Victor age 43, was employed at the Durban Ship Guard Company that served the bustling Durban port, and though his employment was consistent, his pay was dependent on the number of ships in the port and could vary widely.²⁴

Victor, an immigrant from Spain, had not yet been racially classified but was in the process of applying for a white identification card—documentation that would have gained him access to more lucrative jobs—while he continued working under an unsupported “white” classification.²⁵ Ethel’s race had been classified as “coloured”, as was that of their children. The Society assisted with groceries, and the family was not heard from again until June of 1959 when Victor called the Society to report that Ethel was intoxicated and neglecting the twins. In July of 1959, Ethel was arrested for public drunkenness and imprisoned for seven days. The response of

²³ Report of the Family Congress, (Pretoria: University of Pretoria, 4-7 April, 1961) p. 177.

²⁴ Casual labor was a common feature of many of the jobs available in the port and until the standardization that came with containerization in the 1970s, the vast majority of men employed on the docks were subject to the vagaries of the shipping industry. Dubbeld, Bernard. 2003. *Breaking the Buffalo: The Transformation of Stevedoring Work in Durban Between 1970 and 1990. International Review of Social History*, 48(11): 97-122.

²⁵ Mrs. Estevo, the social worker assigned to their case described Victor as “white in appearance, but with complexion and features of a Portuguese.

the Society was not to leave the girls (then 15 months old) in the care of their father, but to put them in temporary foster care. They were returned to the family only when Ethel returned. Following her imprisonment, Ethel was reported to have attempted to find a job, but failing that continued to drink.²⁶ Another daughter, Luisa was born in January of 1960. In November of that year, Ethel and Victor separated, and Ethel subsequently left the family. Victor, left on his own with three young children, placed the twins at St. Philomena Children's Home and Luisa at St. Thomas Babies' Home "as boarders" and agreed to pay for their upkeep.²⁷

In 1963, a Children's Court case was opened for the de Esclana children because St. Philomena's Home alerted the society that the fees for the twins had not been paid in a year and they were unwilling to continue to care for the girls unremunerated.²⁸ Because the children were coloured, the case was managed by a coloured female social worker, Mrs. Estevao. Married to a Portuguese immigrant herself, Mrs. Estevao was the first coloured social worker to be employed by the Durban Child Welfare Agency. In her 20s at the time, Mrs. Estevao was beginning what would be a long career at the Society. She inquired into the living conditions of each of the parents and, finding them unsuitable, recommended that the girls be declared 'in need of care', making them effectively wards of the state and committed to the children's homes. They remained there until the twins were fostered in 1971 at age 13.

Victor's status as a Spanish immigrant is important to the context. During the 1960s, Portuguese—and likely Spaniards and Italians by extension—fit awkwardly into South Africa's

²⁶ Ethel was already known to the Society's branch in Pietermaritzburg. In the years leading up to 1958, Ethel had had five children—two with a previous husband and one with another lover—all removed by the affiliate Pietermaritzburg Child Welfare Society due to her and her previous husband's heavy drinking.

²⁷ The children could not be house together, as St. Philomena would not take children under the age of 5 and Luisa was less than a year old. The boarder status meant that they were seen as temporary residents and Victor retained custody over them and control over decisions about their care.

²⁸ de Esclana Protection of Children case number 33/2/4/234/63, Durban Archives Repository

racial hierarchy.²⁹ Though European in origin, oftentimes they had darker skinned complexions that was misinterpreted as placing them the coloured racial group.³⁰ This was not helped by the fact that there was a stereotype that these groups were more likely to marry or socialize across racial boundaries and that, economically, they were at the bottom of the white racial group—the space that, until quite recently, white Afrikaners had occupied (Glaser 2010). Moreover, they differed from other immigrants of European descent—namely British and German—because they often struggled with local languages and were Catholic, whereas the overwhelming majority of white South Africans were Protestant.³¹ As Glaser summarizes, “[t]hey were white, yes, but on the margins: exotic, darker-skinned, Catholic, poorer than most whites, less educated, keeping to themselves, [and] unpredictable in their loyalties (2010:77). This helps to explain how, without his official identification card, Victor would have faced the employment obstacles that coloureds faced in this era.

The de Esclana file, reveals a strong difference between the evaluation of Ethel as a mother and Victor as a father. During her investigation, Mrs. Estevao found that Ethel was unemployed and paying her rent through occasional domestic work. Ethel was living on what Mrs. Estevao called an “unsavoury” road noted for “illicit liquor brewing” and populated by a mixture of racial groups, including black Africans, which would have been both undesirable and illegal at the time. In addition to her objectionable residence, Ethel’s psychological condition seemed to be of great concern to Mrs. Estevao, who characterized the mother as “irresponsible as

²⁹ Scholarship on the history of European immigrants in South Africa is quite limited, though most coverage exists for the largest group, the Portuguese. Here I extrapolate Glaser’s positioning of Portuguese within the racial hierarchy to also include Italians and Spaniards because of important shared attributes: complexion, romance language, Catholic religion, and in the 1960s an impoverished home country (2010).

³⁰ Glaser notes anecdotes about darker-skinned immigrants having to keep their identity documents on them when utilizing whites-only facilities such as beaches or public transport (2010).

³¹ In 1972 an anthropologist conducting research in a poorer white suburb of Durban noted a number of immigrant families from Italy and Portugal who spoke no English, though they had lived in Durban for “many years” (Clark 1978:13).

far as her maternal roles” and “emotionally unstable” as evidenced by her inability to have a stable relationship with a single man and to remain sober. However, the more trenchant criticism was reserved for Victor who was presented as having far greater shortcomings. Mrs. Estevao asserted that Victor was a comprehensive failure. He had “failed to conform to social norms” by not marrying Ethel, he had failed to establish a home for the children, he had failed to improve his financial position through finding additional work opportunities, and he had failed to maintain regular contact with his children, though the file reveals that he was the only parent to visit the children. The most energetic critiques were reserved for Victor’s failure in regards to payment of the boarding fees.

Financial concerns are central to this case. The issue was not solely that the care of the children was being paid for, but also who was involved in the payment. Though the girls’ care was supported by the state children’s home grant administered by the Department of Coloured Affairs, in the years from 1963-1968, the Society continuously attempted to enact a contribution order for Victor, finally succeeding in 1968. But such legal actions were not taken against Ethel, as they often were against women like her.³² Following Mrs. Estevao’s initial investigation, Ethel dropped out of the file altogether. Instead, it was Victor’s inability to pay the board for the girls from 1962 to June of 1963 that remains the dominant concern in the de Esclana case. Because of Victor’s lack of payment, Mrs. Estevao argued he was “irresponsible,” “unreliable,” lacking in initiative, and altogether, an unsuitable man and father.

Mrs. Estevao’s opinion was important for a number of reasons, not least of which because she was a gatekeeper of state assistance for Victor. Though transitioning poor children to the status of wards of the state was common practice, other forms of assistance were available and

³² Of the 52 case files on Point families from the 1950s and 1960s, 13 include instances where a contribution order was issued for the mother. Of those 13 cases, 9 were of coloured women.

often offered. However, the gendered expectations placed on fathers foreclosed the possibility of these options for Victor.

Mrs. Estevao reiterated across the file that Victor's primary transgression was his lack of earning power and subsequent non-payment. Additional notes in the file suggest that that Victor was polite, kept a tidy and well-furnished room, and had no other social vices save irregular church attendance. Despite the fact that he had no debt other than the board fees and a stable work history, Mrs. Estevao castigated him as "financially irresponsible". She labeled him as, "unreliable as revealed in his failure to keep his agreement re. the boarding fees." In court, Victor disputed that he was "irresponsible", saying that he intended to pay, but was unable to make enough to cover his own costs and the board costs. Mrs. Estevao disputed his claims to poverty, saying that he "lacked initiative as revealed by his failure to improve his financial position by finding more remunerative employment or supplementing his income." We see that, in Mrs. Estevao's estimation, Victor's failure to occupy the provider role that sat at the heart of the hegemonic masculinity at the time led to his being constituted a moral failure.³³ Within the hegemonic understanding of fatherhood as provider and inadequate provision as evidence of indifferent deviance, the social worker read Victor's inability to pay the boarding fees as an index of his failed fatherhood. While it seems evident that Victor likely—affectively—*cared about* his children, he was unable to appropriately—financially—*care for* them. Without the financial care, sentiment little mattered and was rendered invisible.

³³ Though most of the men I write about share genes with at least one of the children they care for, I distinguish social fatherhood from the biological act of insemination to maintain a sense of the constructed nature of this social role. I understand the provider role of social fathers not as a given, but as something that is socio-historically produced in certain contexts. This is a well-trod scholarly domain. In South Africa, scholarship on the conflation of social fatherhood with providership: Dworkin et al. 2012; Hunter 2006; Jewkes et al. 2012; Morrell 2006. On the well-elaborated discourse about men's failure to perform it: Montgomery et al. 2006.

Mrs. Estevao's castigation of Victor speaks to his liminal position in South African society. He was on the path to be classified as a white man, a status which would have afforded him access to better jobs, healthcare, and housing. However, it also would have rendered his relationship with Ethel illegal. That Mrs. Estevao, a confirmed coloured woman, is afforded leeway to evaluate Victor at all, let alone so harshly, is further indication that he was not fully considered white. A white social worker just as easily could have been assigned to the case, with little disruptions. Mrs. Estevao likely had different stakes in disciplining Victor's behavior. Her actions mirror what Constant-Martin says about coloured elites, which she was. He said, "even when they placed themselves in opposition to white power base, they sought to prove their level of civilization by demonstrating to what extent they had succeeded in assimilating those very same codes and clauses that whites used as markers of differentiation" (2001:253. And when they did such things, they did it in the name of raising the coloured community's status. Victor's identity as a Spanish immigrant only confirms this. Married to a Portuguese man herself, Mrs. Estevao would have had little tolerance for actions that would contribute to a negative perception about Iberian immigrants, and she would have been well-versed in the stereotypes to which these immigrants were subject.

Victor's placement of his young children in a children's home on what was meant to be a provisional basis so that he could continue to work could be seen as a laudable act of initiative and demonstrative of responsible parenting. Without family nearby, Victor had very little alternative. Hiring a black nanny, as was common practice for mothers, even in his earning group, without the presence of another woman in the house would have invited accusations of miscegenation and possible legal ramifications. Even had he been able to afford it, during the

1960s, there was a chronic shortage of pre-school and nursery school facilities.³⁴ There were mechanisms to support the girls' stay as boarders without fully institutionalizing them, but, Mrs. Estevao was unwilling to pursue any of them. In her report, she stated: "A reduction [of the board fees] was considered, but in view of the high cost of maintaining children in Children's Home, it was not possible to give this case charitable consideration." Here we see that Mrs. Estevao's evaluation of Victor's financial irresponsibility likely motivated her evaluation of the case as ineligible for support.

This is further evidence of why Victor was not offered a family allowance—a monthly sum that would have tripled his income. Notably, to qualify for a family allowance, a man could not earn an income above a certain level, but could also not earn an income *below* a certain level.³⁵ This minimum requirement was meant to encourage a father who was fit to work to "improve his position", which Ms. Estevao argued, Victor was unmotivated to do.³⁶ The concern in supporting Victor was not solely that his economic drive would be dampened, but that it would undermine his role in the family as the primary provider. These anxieties were articulated by a national commission of inquiry into family aid:

"The material care of his family is one of the basic responsibilities of the parent. If the State were to enter this province to some extent by paying a family allowance for the better care of the child without demanding anything in return, there would be some danger that a right-minded breadwinner and citizen might lose his sense of independence, initiative, and sense of responsibility".³⁷

³⁴ Across South Africa, in March 1970, there were 263 registered creches or places of care for white children, with accommodation for a total of only 11, 376 children country-wide. Report of the Department of Social Welfare and Pensions, 1966-1970, (Pretoria 1970) p. 47.

³⁵ The Smuts government introduced family allowances on April 1, 1947 as one of its social security measure. Father's were not eligible for maintenance grants, but if they had over 3 children, were gainfully employed, and could not support their family on their own salaries, they could receive a family allowance the amount of which exceeded that of the maintenance grant. Report of the Family Congress, (Pretoria: University of Pretoria, 4-7 April, 1961).

³⁶ Report on Family Allowances p.46

³⁷ Report on family allowances, p. 61.

Under this logic, providing Victor with a family allowance would not just inhibit Victor's patriarchal authority in the family and in his social world, but would also diminish his motivation to be a responsible citizen and, indeed, his very manhood.³⁸

The denial of economic support to Victor reveals the very gendered nature of state support in the 1960s. State Maintenance Grants (SMG) were available to white, coloured, and Indian *mothers*, and only mothers who lacked connection to a man who supported them monetarily. Unlike their present-day manifestation, the Child Support Grant, these grants were meant to replace waged work and allow women to stay home to care for the child without seeking work outside of the home. Though the SMG was the most generous form of support, many other forms of economic aid were distributed to women under the logic that they provided important affective care to children. Yet there was no woman in Victor's home to authorize the family as an entity worthy of support. Further, Victor's emotional commitment to his children—as evidenced by his frequent treks across the city to visit them—were illegible to the state social worker. He was still seen as “neglectful” because he did not enact his expected role as father and provide monetarily for their upkeep.

James

A second case reveals the complexity of the relative value of father's affective care in relation to their financial support within interpretations of the provider role. In 1958, James Delport, a 44-year-old white man, was given custody of his three sons, James Jr. (16), Anthony (14) and John (8), after his wife divorced him. In 1962, they moved from then Rhodesia and arrived in Durban destitute where they were assisted with food by the Department of Social

³⁸ Gordon states, “anxieties about family life, furthermore, have usually expressed socially conservative fears about the increasing power and autonomy of women and children, and the corresponding decline in male, sometimes rendered as fatherly, control of family members.” *Heroes*, p 3.

Welfare and Pensions (hereafter Department). James Sr. was quite hard of hearing and had a difficulty obtaining employment, but following his encounter with the Department, he found a job with the city and James Jr. found a job in the rail department. This employment status allowed the family to live in the Lucien Hotel in the Point and take their meals in the dining room. In May of 1963, the family came back into the purview of the Department when the middle son Anthony was picked up for truancy—a transgression he frequently made as he was often teased in school for his stutter. A Children’s Court case was opened and Anthony was left in the custody of his father on the condition that he attend school and enroll in a speech clinic to improve his stutter, which he did for a time. For two months, the family was supervised by a white social worker, Ms. Ross, who oversaw the case. In July, Anthony was truant again and stowed away on a ship to Beira only to be returned and placed in a children’s home. Ms. Ross questioned Anthony about his motivation to leave, and Anthony reported that he felt that his father didn’t want him. By this point, James Jr. had left his job, and the family was in a dire financial position. The social worker, Ms. Ross argued that James Sr. was unable to properly supervise his sons and recommended that Anthony and John should be taken to a children’s home where they would receive “consistent yet kindly discipline”.³⁹

In stark contrast to Victor’s case, financial concerns do not figure as prominently in James Sr.’s case. Ms. Ross was concerned that the family’s income was out of proportion to their expenses with the loss of James Jr.’s job and she noted that James Sr. did not have the means to arrange for private boarding of his sons, leaving the children’s home as the only option. Instead of critiquing James Sr. for this state of affairs, as Mrs. Extevaio had done, Ms. Ross said, “In spite of the financial difficulties experienced by this family, they have striven to improve their

³⁹ Delpport Protection of Children case number 33/2/4/128/63, Durban Archives Repository

circumstances and the standard of living maintained is on par to the average working middle-class family”. While the report did include the recommendation that James Sr. “improve his position,” the deviance of the children was written onto evaluation of the father. The overwhelming concern about James’s fulfillment of his provider role was his inability to appropriately discipline of the two younger boys, the deviance of moral indifference.

Two key factors formed the base of Ms. Ross’ final decision to remove the brothers. First, James Sr. was away from home during the day, leaving the boys unsupervised. This was the same issue that Victor also faced. The second was James Sr.’s disability, which had the effect of emasculating him. Ms. Ross argued that James’ deafness and resulting speech impediment left him dependent on his sons and, importantly, less able to control them. While in Victor’s case, his financial failure undermined his paternal status, James Sr. was precluded from proper fatherhood by his deafness and dependency, which eventually led to the removal of his children.

In light of this emasculation, it is interesting to note the strong emphasis Ms. Ross placed on emotional ties. Ms. Ross lauded James Sr. for being an attentive parent and noted that he was “very genuine in his concern for his son’s welfare.” She observed that “when Anthony and his father are together they appear to be very fond of each other, and there is a close bond between them,” arguing a similar relationship between James Sr. and John. Though she argued for the boys’ removal, she added a caveat, saying that James Sr. was “most anxious that both Anthony and John should, however, not be removed from Durban, in as far as he wishes to remain in close contact with them.”

Across the report, James Sr. is portrayed as a loving father who attends to the needs of his sons as best he can and even ensures they attend church regularly. It is thus not a surprise that in the Children’s Court hearing, he protested the removal of his sons, maintaining he was “not

‘unfit’ to exercise proper control” and stating that he did not “drink or misbehave himself.” Yet, the order is confirmed and the boys are removed, only to visit their father on school holidays.⁴⁰

The comparison of the two cases throws into stark relief the masculine double bind that these poor fathers were caught in. The very job that allowed James Sr. to provide in part for his family and for which he was praised also opened the door to the perception of neglect and under-supervision that aroused the concerns of child welfare personnel. In addition, James Sr. demonstrated an affective, emotional bond that was praised by the social worker. However, his relative economic success vis a vis Victor (James Sr.’s salary was more than three times that of Victor’s best earnings) and the sympathy of the social worker were still insufficient to afford him state support to keep his children. Notably, the experience of mothers in the same position was often the reverse.⁴¹

Whites emigrating from Rhodesia in the years around the 1965 Unilateral Declaration of Independence were also a recognizable immigrant group in Durban. By the 1980s, Durban was colloquially dubbed “Little Rhodesia” in light of huge influx of people who had settled there. Though more readily accepted as belonging to the white racial group, these Rhodesians did not meet with an uncomplicated racial solidarity from Durban whites. South Africa’s government was a strong supporter of Ian Smith in an effort to forestall majority rule in such a close neighbor. Many Rhodesians were met with pity for the upheaval the country was experiencing in the 1960s and 1970s. In Durban, while British conservatives took Rhodesians for commonwealth

⁴⁰ As an additional note, Anthony’s behavior only worsened in the children’s home and he was finally sent to a reform school in Cape Town. The letter requesting his transfer asks “Will you kindly make the necessary arrangements for his removal AS SOON AS POSSIBLE as he is a source of great trial and difficulty in our home and we have already had to wait several months while his transfer was receiving attention.” (Emphasis in the original). Ibid.

⁴¹ In another case of a mother in 1963, the mother’s emotional commitment to her children allows her to garner state support even in the face of serious neglect. The social worker argued, “The case history reveals the mother to be an unsatisfactory and unfit person to exercise control over her children. However, this does not mean that the children would benefit from removal from her custody...this mother can be helped to care for her children. Therefore she should be given the opportunity to keep her children.” (Maureen)

kin, the more liberal were politically hostile to the likely causes of their migration (Dismayed 1980). As one opinion writer stated, Rhodesians were not always welcome charity cases, “Nobody asked the ex-Rhodesians to come to South Africa, so why do they complain so much about conditions here? Do they expect us to come running to them with handouts?” (Dismayed 1980). Like most immigrant groups, the Rhodesians were blamed for the housing crisis, driving up rents, and, in later years, unemployment (Dougherty 1981).

The evaluation of James was shaped by racialized and gendered stereotypes. As a fully recognized white man, in contrast to Victor, higher stakes were placed on the successful social reproduction enabled by his parenting success. It is important that James’ had white sons—as opposed to Victor’s coloured daughters. These boys were highly prized and their status demanded that all efforts be made to ensure they became productive citizens. Notably, though Anthony did not display any of the dress or self-presentation of the ducktail, he undoubtedly was exposed to them. It is not unlikely that ducktails were among the people who harassed Anthony, if not in school than on his travels to and from. As a young white male living in Point, he would have encountered ducktails on a daily basis. His truancy and disobedience put him on the edge of juvenile delinquency and made him a candidate for a remaking of his manhood in a reform school. Furthermore, it was a concern that James Jr. quit his job. Though his age was beyond the social worker’s purview by that time, such evidence of workshyness would have been cause for concern that he was slipping into delinquency.

In contrast to Mrs. Estevao’s castigation of Victor, Ms. Ross’ demonstrated overarching sympathy towards James Sr. In part, this may be due to her viewing James as racial kin. Though still under Afrikaner rule, Durban’s white population traced its ties more closely to England and the antipathy between Afrikanners and British whites led to divergent masculine ideals. It is

likely that she was of the political persuasion that saw James a case of a victimized white man from the tumultuous Rhodesia as opposed to a political undesirable or a freeloader. It is possible these factors contributed to Ms. Ross's more highly valuing James's emotional care and her far lesser emphasis on his economic failure than what Victor faced. Despite her sympathy, though, it is unlikely that Ms. Ross would have been able to justify that a father who had both failed in his role as provider and lacked a fully self-reliant masculine self could successfully raise three boys by himself, providing the proper moral framework to save them from the deviance of delinquency and thereby ensure their success.

Fatherhood on Point–2014

By 2014, poor fathers lived in a very different social landscape. In addition to a change from apartheid authoritarianism to majority rule, the comprehensive welfare state that was available to white families in the 1960s was stretched thin as it tried to reach all race groups and address years of unequal treatment. The culture of social work care transitioned from one of institutionalization to one of “family preservation” and support for children in their own home. While under apartheid, family allowances were the only forms of welfare available specifically to support (white) fathers, in 2014, fathers were eligible for the Child Support grant (CSG). However, not surprisingly, paternal caregivers only form 2% of CSG recipients (Patel 2012).

The context of limited state aid and 40% unemployment country-wide dictates that poor families must seek aid from a variety of sources. The women I worked with had large networks of people and institutions they drew upon such as social workers, pastors, imams, school principals, boyfriends, and neighbors. The fathers with whom they were partnered had different,

parallel, networks of patrons and income earning opportunities. Given the multiplicity of sources, efforts to gain support were complex and variable.

Here I consider the efforts of two fathers to garner support from these public sources. Like Victor and James, while these fathers did not necessarily embody the dominant deviant masculinity that held sway in the public minds of their time, it loomed large in their lives. In 2014 the stereotype of the black man who impregnated women and abandoned his children to the women haunted the minds of most.⁴² I argue that, in contrast to the 1960s, this social panic made the efforts of my informants more sympathetic and *more* worthy of support.

Allen

Allen and Vijy were one of three Indian families in the building where I worked in 2014. They had met ten years before when both lived in the Indian township of Phoenix. Vijy, then in her mid-thirties, had quarreled with her mother and wanted to move out. Two weeks after meeting Allen, they had married, and the couple moved into his family's home. Plagued by family conflict, the couple bounced back and forth between Point and Phoenix until 5 years ago when came to the building and settled, in part, because they did not have to pay utilities in addition to rent.

Allen had an unlined face, and his age was only marked by his white beard. He had a round belly that bespoke his love of beer, and he resembled a schoolboy when the polo shirts he often wore barely covered his girth. In contrast, Vijy's face was creased with care and years in the Durban sun, and she looked older than her 44 years. Sharp-tongued, she would swiftly move

⁴² Though I knew many men who occupied such a category in my other work in South Africa, I encountered very few in my fieldsite. The high expense of the Point neighborhood meant that few people could afford to live alone and young men clustered in single rooms with multiple roommates. In many cases this situation was temporary because the density of other people in these rooms curtailed romantic projects in ways that these men found intolerable long term.

between castigations and teasing, and her broad smile revealed wide gaps between her remaining teeth. Married late, the couple had two children: Calvin, 8, and Katy, 5, and they lived together in Blenheim, the primary building where I worked. Allen's elderly father also lived with them in a curtained off portion of the room, and his sizable pension was the primary source of income and paid the monthly rent. When he died in late 2014, the family was left destitute. Many said they had received an inheritance of many thousands of Rands, but mismanaged it, such that when I re-connected with them in April of 2015, they were living in a shelter or on the beachfront depending on how much they garnered in donations in a given day.

Many years ago, Allen had been a part of a sales team distributing linens and curtains throughout the KwaZulu-Natal coast. When I met him in 2014, he had turned his salesmanship to selling stickers on the beachfront. He would buy a roll of 100 individual stickers depicting Mickey Mouse or Disney Cars characters for R10 from one of the many Chinese import shops in the neighborhood. Pushing Katy in a large donated stroller, together they would walk the beachfront selling the stickers for R1 each. They often targeted the south end of the beach where a development that included a water park, restaurants, and tourist shops attracted many middle and upper class families who were willing buyers of Katy and Allen's stickers. Katy and Allen would also eat multiple meals of hamburgers and KFC offered by beachfront patrons, some of which they would inconspicuously package up and take home to the others.

Despite the fact that people of Indian origin, had been in South Africa for in some cases five or more generations, they continued to be treated as a type of foreigner in South Africa. Note that in 2005, there was a thesis written about Durban Indian identity entitled, "The Struggle to be South African" (John-Naidu 2005). Indians (or Asiatics) were one of the four primary race categories under apartheid, and people were categorized as Indian according to skin

pigmentation, surname, religion, and cultural practices. Within the hierarchy, Indians were granted relatively more privileges than black Africans—better wages, land ownership capabilities, and larger housing allocations. Yet, they were still a marginalized minority with little political influence. This middle-status frequently left them reviled by groups on both sides of the racial hierarchy—too exotic and unassimilable for whites and too privileged and exclusive for black Africans.⁴³ Though the population of Indian origin is quite linguistically and religiously diverse, at various moments, there has been a great deal of ideological work within the community done to assert a collective “Indian-ness” as a defensive identification or to mark out the particular kinds of subordinations Indians have suffered. In a characteristically incendiary opinion piece, sociologist Ashwin Desai wrote in 1998:

“Many people outside the community will struggle to understand how Indians are still made to feel they do not belong. Sometimes it is just a look, a sneer or a whispered "amakula". Many other times it is pretty damn explicit, like affirmative action policies where only pigment counts. Throughout South African history, the Indian has always been the scapegoat, the perpetual stranger. During indenture, Indians were super-exploited and brutalized During apartheid Indians were denoted in the history books as the "Indian problem" and herded into "coolie locations." And in times of economic downturn, like 1949 and 1985, Indians became victims of African anger. Indeed Indians' entire history, with the odd protest here and there, is a chronology of victimization” (1998).

In contrast, at other times, members of the Indian community sought to slough off the racial designation which they saw as retaining the divisive and discriminatory politics of the apartheid past. This was the case when playwright and anti-apartheid activist, Ronnie Govender, wrote:

"At a recent seminar, I objected to being called an 'Indian' playwright. Athol Fugard has never been referred to as a 'white' playwright' and I have not noticed Mbongeni Ngema being called a 'Zulu' playwright.... While my wife may wear a sari and I may eat curry and rice, I am an African. I was born here and I am a South African, in as much as those born in Britain are British, and those born in France are French and nobody has the right to deny me my birthright" (1999).

⁴³ Indo-African relations have a long history and a long scholarship in South Africa that trace how antipathies between the two race groups were manufactured from above and reproduced from below. In one of the earliest periodizations, Mahoney traces antagonism between Africans and Indians in Natal back as far as the nineteenth century (2012:123-125).

This brief coverage of an altogether much larger issue is simply to demonstrate that the Indian identity was fraught and contradictory and an Indian father's relative social status depended on the person to whom they were making claims.

The intersection of race and gender was critical to Allen and Katy's success on the beachfront. Durban has one of the largest populations of South Asians outside the subcontinent. In the ideologically durable apartheid-era racial hierarchy, Indians are seen as the merchant class of shopowners, salespeople, and skilled craftsmen. Whereas a black or white father performing the same acts would likely be seen as lazy for not working, Allen's "sticker sales" were read as an enterprising attempt to improve upon a situation that arose out of bad luck. Notably, Katy and Allen's benefactors were not middle or upper class black South Africans. Predominantly, they were either the small number of whites who came to that end of the beach or, more often, the large number of Indian families who came to the beachfront for leisure or charity work. Early in the morning or throughout the weekend, throngs of Indian families would line the beachfront to walk or gather for picnics.⁴⁴ Many Indians also came to the beachfront expressly to offer charity, often in the form of large-scale food distribution.

Allen also benefitted from a stereotype held by whites, coloureds, and Indians alike that Indians are more "family oriented" than other racial groups, which gave credence to the perception that in contrast to the absentee father, he was appropriately "caring for" his children through his entrepreneurship. Statistically, those in this racial group have higher rates of marriage and lower rates of divorce and tend to live in multi-generational extended-family units

⁴⁴ One day an Indian ward councilor had a meeting near the beachfront and encountered Allen and Katy on his way back to the car. Wanting to include his wife in this moment of giving, the Councilor drove back to Phoenix to fetch her before picking up Allen and Katy to take them on a grocery shopping spree of over R1400 (the near value of their rent). They bought an entire package of diapers—something very rare for Katy—and new clothes. Vijy said she was shaking that day as they unloaded bag after bag from the car and into the building. Neighbors and Vijy's brother who also lived in the building came asking for help and Allen was angered when Vijy distributed food. They fielded a great deal of jealousy from the neighbors for this boon.

(Blom Hansen 2012; University of Durban, Westville 1985; Ziehl 2001). Thus when Allen took Katy out by himself, he was seen as a dutiful father, performing caregiving tasks usually reserved for women and attempting to fulfill a provider role through selling stickers. In this way, he also marked himself out as different from the stereotype of the black South African man who abandoned his children. In contrast, had Vijy been the one to take Katy out, her clothing and conduct would have invited much greater scrutiny and less sympathy. Allen hid the fact that he had a wife at home, thereby enhancing his sympathetic status. Vijy supported the idea that Allen was acting as a provider. She embraced the identity of a housewife, saying, disdainfully, that she did not need to go “run and beg” like the other women in the building because her husband “worked.” Katy was also an asset. She was a small, attractive girl child with an infectious smile, and her size and gender lent her a vulnerability that enhanced Allen’s paternal status and she was in little danger of being read as delinquent. The stroller was also a luxury item that indicated that wealthier patrons had seen fit to invest in Allen before, thereby paving the way for future aid.

Tonton

South African fathers were not the only ones who sought public support of their paternal projects. Tonton, like his girlfriend Nisha, was from Congo. Separately, they left Congo in the mid-2000s and made their way to a refugee camp in Zimbabwe. Finding the camp uninhabitable, they chose to forfeit their refugee status to come to South Africa in pursuit of more opportunities. In South Africa, Nisha’s asylum case was denied. Guided by social networks, they both landed in the large Congolese community in the Point neighborhood, where they ultimately met in 2011. Nisha had two small children, ages 2 and 4, with a previous boyfriend, and in 2013 she and Tonton had a son, Beni.

As is covered more in Chapter 7, following democratic transition, South Africa saw a

rapid influx of immigrants from the across the Africa continent. By 2011, immigrants made up 4.2% of the population, with 71% of those coming from other African countries. The swift arrival of African non-nationals—who overwhelmingly settled in cities—coincided with continued urban housing shortages, rising food and fuel costs, and aging electricity and transport infrastructure. It is not surprising that the South African poor, themselves from groups newly incorporated into the citizenry, railed against the presence of foreigners making claims upon a shrinking pot of resources. Immigrants were blamed for crime, housing shortages, unemployment, and a lack for services. Frustration with government inaction has been turned upon the bodies of migrants in frequently violent attacks throughout the past two decades. As one participant in the 2008 xenophobic riots said:

“We are not trying to kill anyone but rather solving the problem of our own country. The government is not doing anything about this, so I support what the mob is doing to get rid of foreigners in our country” (Madondo 2008).

However, anti-immigrant sentiments were not solely the purview of the poor. In his capacity as Minister of Home Affairs Mangosuthu Buthelezi stated:

“South Africa is faced with another threat, that is the [South African Development Community] ideology of free movement of people, free trade and freedom to choose where you live or work. Free movement of persons spells disaster for our country” (1997).

It is both deeply ironic and not surprising that, a mere 11 years after the end of influx control, a black African leader would equate freedom of movement with national disaster. Indeed, present-day patterns of exclusion and violence have historical antecedents in colonial and apartheid era “spatio-ethnic discrimination” (Landau 2011:5). I concur with Landau that “non-nationals’ lives parallel those of apartheid-era black labourers: omnipresent and economically active but nonetheless stigmatized and vulnerable to the whims of neighbor and state” (2011:8). It is in this

broader historic view that a comparative project such as the one undertaken in this chapter, becomes all the more important.

Tonton's family of five relied almost solely on his income for their needs, the demands of his provider role large. Prior to the birth of her eldest, Nisha had worked in many of the neighborhood hair salons, but presently could not earn enough to cover the cost of the chair rental and the cost of childcare for 3 children. Nisha tried to informally "make hair" with her previous clients, but Priscilla, the manager of the building where she and Tonton lived, was also a hair stylist and barred Nisha's clients access to the building.

Like many of his countrymen, Tonton worked as a car guard, watching cars and assisting drivers with parking or packages in exchange for small tips. Fortuitously, one of Tonton's friends had his own vehicle and good connections. Together, these friends and two others would make a daily commute northward to a guarding territory in a very wealthy part of the city. Though this commute meant that Tonton was often out of the house for 14 hours a day and had to purchase his own food, his earnings were about 1.5 times those of the car guards in the Point. Almost more important than the cash earnings, though, were the in-kind donations Tonton received. It was common practice that car guards would ask drivers for food, clothing, or odd jobs in addition to the R1 or R2 coin most handed over. Tonton was uniquely skilled at cultivating patrons.

In his late 20s, Tonton was always smartly dressed, often in track suit pants or colored jeans and a branded T-shirt with immaculate white running shoes. Nisha made sure he had the trendiest twists or braids in his long hair. He looked far less scruffy than many of the other panhandlers the drivers would encounter across the course of the day and his mannerisms were equally refined. Tonton had a reserved demeanor that conveyed quiet observation and sustained

thought before action. Spare with words and inoffensive, Tonton could be off-putting, but his smile spread his full lips and transformed his face to one of openness.

Though he knew very little English, Tonton did have a cell phone that took photos. He would show drivers photos of Beni and ask Sir or Ma'am for "food", "clothes" or "nappies." Tonton could answer questions about Beni's name or age and had a stock of charming photos he could flip through for the interested driver. In his guarding territory, Tonton would often see the same drivers repeatedly and developed a rapport with them. Some, most often women, remembered the photos of Beni and would bring donations of clothes or toys. Tonton would then take photos of Beni in the clothes and sitting in one of his siblings' laps to show the patrons later. This evidence of the donations well-used and the image of the playing children helped solidify the connection to his patrons and opened the door for future aid. Around Christmas, Tonton would come home with bags of men's and baby's clothing, toys, and diapers from his regulars. On days when he didn't make it to his post out of illness or choice, his friends would deliver packages they collected "for the young father with the little ones." The middle-class people whom I knew considered donations such as these, part of their Christian duty. Many complained about the constant solicitations they faced from street children at stoplights or the calls for aid on TV. Instead, they argued, they felt better giving in-kind donations to someone they "knew" such as their domestic worker or regular car guard, citing that such donations could not be used for ill such as drugs or liquor, as cash could.

Though welcomed, the donations of clothes often caused conflict for Tonton and Nisha. Both were very fashion conscious and appreciated that the clothes were recognizably high-profile and expensive brands. In contrast, Beni's siblings had far fewer clothes, and Nisha spent a great deal of time and money trying to ensure they appeared equally well-dressed. On days when

Tonton didn't work, Nisha would spend hours on her hair and makeup, and dressed in their finest, the family would walk the beachfront to see and be seen. As much as they loved this class performance, it invited requests from friends and neighbors who thought they had purchased Beni's clothes. When Nisha or Tonton told the requesters that the clothes were donated, this was seen as an insufficient excuse not to share. Neighbors complained that either Nisha and Tonton were lying—citing their love of fashion and the other children's clothes as evidence—or that donated clothes freed up resources that could then be shared. The very class positioning Tonton and Nisha craved obligated them to share with their neighbors in ways they could not afford. By refusing, Tonton and Nisha often alienated neighbors and contributed to Nisha's feeling that they were unliked and unsafe as the “only” Congolese in the building. Such feelings of insecurity were more than the stuff of everyday worries, as the xenophobic attacks in 2015 attested.

Tonton's success rested on his skill in mastering the semiotics of the context in which he worked, knowingly deploying the appropriate indexes of proper fatherhood, caring for in his work and caring about in his “careful” photo displays. The neighborhood where he car guarded was trafficked by predominantly wealthy white people, most often women. In this context, his foreignness was an advantage. Though he was black, the fact that his minimal English was inflected with a French accent removed him from the category of a black South African man. A stereotype of black South Africans as lazy and reliant on handouts pervades white South African circles. Coupled with the idea that the preference given to blacks in hiring decisions—a notable reversal of apartheid era job reservation for whites—is a form of “reverse racism” renders a South African black man who car guards highly problematic. In contrast, as a Congolese man, Tonton would be interpreted as taking initiative. His impeccable grooming, which would no doubt appeal aesthetically to his patrons, would constitute further evidence of his good character.

Finally, his use of his cell phone—a technological status symbol—to attest to his fathering work marks him as in stark contrast to the South African father who “eats for himself.”

The advantages of foreignness however are limited, as will be seen in Chapter 7.

Conclusion

The above discussion argued that hegemonic and dominant deviant masculinities impact heavily upon father's efforts to secure resources to care for their children. However, the impact of these masculinities is not always straightforward, nor is it durable. Following the 1960s, the hegemonic and dominant deviant masculinities became increasingly important in both welfare cases and popular consciousness due to the international rise of psychology. In contrast to a prior emphasis on environmental conditions—unemployment, housing, religion—social work began to emphasize personality traits and psychological health as sites of aberration, and therefore, intervention. Furthermore, psychological conditions weren't contained to the individual, they could affect others, most critically children whose characters were seen as especially impressionable. Social workers weren't supposed to simply dispense aid, but to comment upon and cultivate certain moral dispositions in the beneficiaries of aid in the name of ensuring the psychological health of the future generation.

In all of these cases, the men involved did not embody either the hegemonic or the dominant deviant masculinities of their respective times. They were immigrants, foreigners, seeking to insert themselves into a highly differentiated South African society. In the 1960s, the white population was presumed to have all attained middle class status and the coloured race group—despite a worsening economic position—was held to middle class expectations. The hegemonic masculinity in both cases embodied a hardworking father whose affective commitment to his family was demonstrated through economic provision and robust discipline. The dominant

deviant masculinity, then, was the indifferent father who demonstrated neither care for nor care about due to both idleness and permissiveness. The feared result of the indifferent father was a generation of juvenile delinquents who lacked the character and the social tools to be productive members of society and who upended racial hierarchy by engaging in practices that were associated with other race groups.

In 2014, anxieties centered less around the reproduction of a dominant race group as much as the viability of the new democracy. Hegemonic masculinity retained its providership component, but also included the affective commitments of caring about as indexed through physical presence. Dominant deviant masculinity took the form of the absentee father whose simultaneous physical and financial absence left a generation of women and children dependent on the state. The new nation was seen as in danger of collapsing due to the violence, hypersexuality, and financial irresponsibility of black fathers.

In her article on “The Scandal of Manhood”, Posel calls attention to the intensity of the threat that the errant father was seen to pose to the new democracy because of his position *as father*. She says, “the source of the perceived threat to the moral order was at its very core: within the domain of the home, wielded by the head of the family and the father of the nation. The very pillar of the society was creaking” (2005:248). In many ways, the same can be said of the 1960s concerns about the indifferent father. At the very moment when the apartheid project of pulling poor whites into the middle class was thought to have been completed, the center of the Christian National moral order—family, religion, austerity, paternal authority—was unsound. This threatened the future of the apartheid project and the racial order.

The intimate nature of the threat posed by the familiar insider takes on new connotations when used to evaluate and outsider, foreigner. In the case of James and Victor, their status as

white and almost white found them problematically incorporated as part of the national problem. Their foreignness did not afford them sufficient distinction from the threat of dominant deviance. Further, their shared poverty worked against them. More than providership, what they could offer was affective commitment. However, without financial contribution, this care was insufficient to garner them state support. The immigrants of 2014 encountered a very different set of evaluations. Their racial and ethnic difference, their foreignness, distanced them sufficiently from the South African absentee father such that they could leverage their affective commitment as worthy of support. A shift in hegemonic masculinity that valued emotional investment further helped their cause.

The following chapter considers state led interventions taken in the democratic era to regulate absentee fathers. Over the course of two decades various state parties have worked toward reform of the Maintenance Court system. The efficacy of the Court became tied to various ideological projects such as cost recovery, curtailing male sexuality, cultivating male citizenship, and capacitating women's ability to claim their newly acquired rights. However, though concerns about absentee fathers sat at the intersection of issues of money, sex, and kinship, there was an incomplete understanding about how economies of intimacy work in South Africa. The following chapter offers a corrective.

Chapter 6 - The “Maintenance” of Family: Mediating Relationships in the South African Maintenance Court

Cebo sat with her body held tensely upright, furiously texting and restlessly sweeping her eyes around the rows of chairs filled with women, waiting. A smartly dressed woman in her thirties, Cebo was one of eighty women that day who, with luck, would have their cases heard by one of the four maintenance officers in Durban’s Maintenance Court. These Courts bring estranged, unmarried parents together for the purpose of enforcing the Maintenance Act, which requires both biological parents of a child, regardless of their marriage relationship, to contribute financially to the raising of that child.¹ The act and, by extension, the Court are primarily concerned with the financial relationship between parents, yet the transaction of money from a father to a mother that ideally results from a Maintenance Court hearing is but one part of broader economies of intimacy that mothers and fathers must negotiate—systems of exchange that include money, affection, labor, and sex (Cole 2009). Women like Cebo, raising children without paternal support, participate in these exchanges as they assemble a network of relationships to support themselves and their children—in other words, a functional family. Cognizant of the rules of reciprocity that govern these exchanges and the composition of their own social network, women make complex calculations about how and whether to use the Maintenance Court.

Cebo had had two young children with her previous boyfriend, Fikile, who lived in Cape Town with his parents. At one point, Cebo, too, had lived with them, cared for his parents, and

¹ Maintenance procedures for formerly married parents are outlined in divorce proceedings and renegotiated in divorce courts.

provided the home with domestic labor. Three years ago, though, the couple separated after the birth of their second child, and Cebo, without a job or a home, took Fikile to the Maintenance Court. For eight months, until Fikile lost his job, the security company where he worked deducted payments from his wages. After the payments ceased, Cebo moved back to Durban to live with her mother, who could help with the children. A year went by, in which Cebo found a job and lived in a flat of her own, near her mother. At that time, she and Fikile reconciled, and he moved into her flat, but after a few months, the couple split again, and Fikile moved back to his parents' home and sought work there. Angry at the breakup and Fikile's distance, Cebo returned to the Court, where I met her, to renew the three-year-old maintenance order.

Over time, Cebo's goals for her family had changed, and with it, her relationship to the Court. In her first trip to the Court, she explained, she was desperate, suddenly finding herself with two children and no income or home of her own and, still in Cape Town, far from her family. Though Fikile no longer spoke to her, she could still occasionally call on his family for help with child care or to transport the older child to school. Together with the maintenance payments, this help made the situation livable for her. Later, when the payments ended, relations with Fikile's family soured because they blamed her wage garnishing for tarnishing his reputation and causing his subsequent job loss. Seeking help from her own family, she found enough support that she felt that the hassle and acrimony weren't worth the possible monetary gain of pursuing a maintenance claim from Fikile's family in his stead. After Fikile moved back in with her, he still did not pay maintenance, but their burgeoning relationship, his assistance with child care, and the income from her own job, kept her out of the Court. Over time, they began to argue over what she felt was an unfair double burden of her wage earning and domestic

labor. When their relationship ended, she returned to the Court, enraged and seeking to make sure he “took on his fair share” of child-rearing duty.

This chapter examines the decisions that women like Cebo—unmarried, underprivileged, and black African—make about whether to use, threaten using, or avoid the Maintenance Court and situates them within women’s larger projects of constituting a family for themselves and their children. Cebo is part of a subset of a large demographic group of poor single mothers in South Africa. The women of this subset have children with wealthier men who are often formally employed, thus allowing them to make use of the Maintenance Court, if they so choose.

In the context of the Point neighborhood, most frequently the women with whom I worked lived together with other women or new boyfriends. The former partner most often was not a resident of the neighborhood. However, on two occasions, the father worked in the Point and my respondents were at pains to explain to the police officers issuing the subpoenas just where and how to ensure a meeting with the men. Despite this, relative, proximity, there was little paternal cooperation in child rearing, in keeping with larger trends in the country. In a national research study in 2012, researchers found that 69 percent of black African children lived without their fathers (Hall, Meintjes, and Sambu 2014).² Oftentimes these non-resident men were themselves unemployed and this condition shaped their engagement with their children. In the small number of cases that form the basis for this chapter, these fathers were at least occasionally employed and for various reasons chose not to direct some of their earnings to support their child(ren). The expanding demographic category of the “female headed household,” while not

² Unmarried black parents have comparatively low rates of cohabitation: 23 percent, compared to 59 percent for whites (Hall and Posel 2012). Hall, Meintjes, and Sambu (2014) found that “just over a quarter (27%) of all African children do not live with either parent and a further 42% of African children live with their mothers but without their fathers.” The number of children who live with both biological parents in the same household presents an even starker comparison: 28 percent for black children, 81 percent for Indian children, and 77 percent for white children (2014).

new, prompted national concerns about the physical, emotional, and economic absence of men (DSD 2012).

A full discussion of the factors that contributed to this demographic reality has been covered more extensively elsewhere in this dissertation. In review, a number of studies attribute current family configuration to the destructive impact of a century of labor migration and apartheid-era legislation that split families between the rural areas and the urban workplace (see Hosegood, McGrath, and Moultrie 2009 for a review). The historical literature reveals how families navigated the migrant labor system and the “patriarchal bargain”—women’s willingness to maintain a rural household in exchange for the economic support and social status provided by a migrating husband—served to hold families together in the midst of a great deal of social and economic tension (Bozzoli 1991; Hunter 2009; Mayer 1961; Murray 1981; Preston-Whyte 1978.) Demanding a different periodization, other scholars suggest that it was the decline in migrant jobs in the context of high unemployment has made marriage inaccessibly expensive and men less able to take on the role of provider (Campbell 1992; Casale and Posel 2010; Denis 2006; Hunter 2004, 2010; Walker 2005a, 2005b). Still others note that household configuration may also represent an active choice on the part of women to avoid long-term relationships—and the accompanying labor—with men who cannot or do not contribute to the household (Rice 2017; Walker 2013).

This chapter once again focuses on those “female headed households” —the women who raise children in South Africa’s current context of economic and relational insecurity. I situate the Maintenance Court as one tool among a range of strategies that women like Cebo draw upon for assembling a network of kin, friends, and lovers in an attempt to constitute a supportive family for themselves and their children. It is widely known that the Maintenance Court is

plagued with problems and is often ineffective, especially when fathers are unemployed or do not receive a pay slip.³ Often aware of these challenges, women continue to view the Courts as an important part of their toolkit to achieve ends that are not solely about maintenance money. I demonstrate the temporal, relational, and institutional complexities women must take into account as they determine how the Court contributes to their efforts to build and sustain their family.

My ethnographic data reveal that women's choices about how to engage the Court arise out of a variety of motivations, which often shift over the duration of a parental relationship. In this decision-making process, the potential monies received from a Maintenance Court process are often less important than their effects on women's affective and sexual relationships. For those who do pursue an order, women see potential payments as representative of an emotional reconnection with an errant father, or as a symbolic redress of his abandonment of his responsibility. For those who avoid the Court, the rationales are all the more complex. Some women fear that the inevitable antagonism produced in a court process will thwart any possible reconciliation between the parents or, at least, a positive relationship with the child. Others shun any contact with the father for themselves or their children, often because of a history of domestic violence. A final category of women reveals that even a successful court process can have problematic relational effects. These women do not pursue orders because they seek a relationship with another man who will interpret her receipt of maintenance money as enabling the father access to her sexuality.

³ In the event that a father is unemployed, the court cannot mandate that he pay maintenance—a great weakness for women in the context of high unemployment. The court can mandate that he submit regular documentation that he has been looking for work, but family and friends can easily supply signatures for these forms. In these situations, the act stipulates that the duty of support can pass on to his parents, and the mother may lodge a maintenance claim against them; however, I have never seen this provision used, except as a threat.

Research on child-support decision making in other, wealthier countries (Huang and Pouncy 2005; Laakso 2002; Meyer, Cancian, and Chen 2015) reveals many of the same motivations for or against using the Court.⁴ However, the particular relationships among sex, money, labor, and love in South Africa demand new understandings of the economies of intimacy that shape women's actions. Research on maintenance in South Africa shows that men default on maintenance payments in part because they create incomplete exchanges in which women do not reciprocate money with sexual favors (Khunou 2012). Focusing on women users, this chapter contributes to scholarship on maintenance and child support by highlighting how women employ an understanding of the interrelationship of money, sex, and affect in their interaction with the Court. To untangle this interrelationship, I draw upon sociological and anthropological literature on transactional sex.

Below, I argue that the reciprocal effect of money upon sexual and affective relationships is critical to understanding black women's use of the Maintenance Court in their efforts to constitute a family. Black women raising children without fathers are being targeted as part of a larger state effort of "family strengthening" (Department of Social Development 2012). These women are engaged in their own projects of family making, which help them survive a demographic reality of economic and relational insecurity. Part of the logic informing their strategies—that of the relationships among money, sex, and affect—is not present in official discourse on even the most diverse of family forms, yet, informed by this logic, women's actions

⁴ Research in the United States found that women with positive relations with the father avoid court proceedings because they worry it will antagonize the father and lead to reductions in informal economic support (Edin and Lein 1997; Laakso 2002; Lerman 2010; Nepomnyaschy 2007; Nepomnyaschy and Garfinkel, 2010; Pate 2005a, 2005b; Waller and Plotnick 2001), reductions of support in the form of child care (Brown and Brito 2007; Brown and Cancian 2007; Meyer, Cancian, and Chen 2015; Pate 2005a, 2005b; Sano, Richards, and Zvonkovic 2008; Waller and Plotnick 2001), and reductions in a father-child bond (Edin 1995; Grall 2000; Nelson 2004; Pate 2005a, 2005b; Sano, Richards, and Zvonkovic 2008). Conversely, others found that mothers avoided court proceedings because their relationship with the father had been negative (e.g., abusive) (Dail and Thieman 1996; Edin 1995; Harris 2015; Waller and Plotnick 2001). Finally, as in South Africa, a lack of information about the system on the mother's part (Edin 1995; Harris 2015) and the inability of the father to pay were noted reasons for not pursuing a case (Harris 2015; Huang and Pouncy 2005; Lin and McLanahan 2007; Sano, Richards, and Zvonkovic 2008).

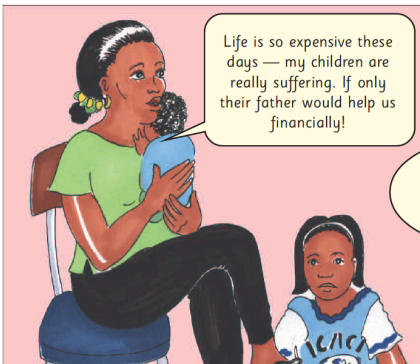
are having real demographic effects on their own families and their children's fathers. This chapter raises questions about the effects of economies of intimacy on family formation. An understanding of these relationships is critical to understanding poor women's lives in South Africa today.

This chapter primarily draws upon six months of fieldwork at Durban's Maintenance Court, observing intake interviews, mediation sessions with maintenance officers, hearings with the magistrate, counseling sessions between clients and attorneys, and—often the most revelatory—the conversations of women during long periods of waiting in the Court's halls. These observations allowed me to identify patterns in how cases were structured and progressed, how the Maintenance Act was implemented in practice, and what interactions between women and attorneys or Court staff looked like. Observations were contrasted with fifty-three in-depth interviews with intake counselors, maintenance officers, attorneys, legal aid staff, and a core group of twenty-five black women who either were seeking maintenance or had decided not to pursue cases. Women outside the Court, who did not utilize it, were a ten-person subset of the larger research cohort that I followed for a year. These ten women had previous partners who were employed and therefore could entertain using the Court. Though South Africa is a racially and culturally diverse society, with a small, but growing, black middle class, the demographics of the mothers in the study reflect the population in the Court in 2014: poor, young (between the ages of 18 and 40), and black African.⁵ Of the twenty-five women whose stories inform this chapter, only four had formal part-time jobs. This demographic composition mirrors what other researchers on the Court found in other parts of the country (Khunou 2012; Mills 2004).

⁵ Only a small proportion of South Africans would not consider themselves poor; however, the poorest of the poor, who often live in rural areas, usually do not make use of the maintenance court either, because courts are too challenging to access in rural areas, or because the fathers of their children are also poor and a case would be moot.

Family Strengthening and a ‘Culture of Nonpayment’

The Maintenance Court is a critical part of South Africa’s family policy framework, which seeks to address a perceived “family disintegration” by “strengthening families,” specifically, by making them more economically stable (Department of Social Development 2012:3,23). The language of family decline, by no means new, is currently concerned with black children growing up in households headed by unmarried women and the prevalence of “absentee fathers” who do not contribute money or labor to their children’s care (Department of Social Development 2012:18). As we have seen in previous chapters this privileging of a middle-class nuclear family model reflects an ahistorical misrecognition of both the flexibility of family forms and the labors—primarily of African women—to maintain the functioning of families, often in the absence of men (Delius and Glaser 2002; Hunt 1999; Hunter 2010; Krige 1936; Mager 1999; Moore and Vaughan 1994). Recall the experience of Grace in Chapter 3, also an unmarried mother with an unsupporting former partner. Her efforts to compel her previous partner to contribute were taken as disregard for and abandonment of her children. In 2014, poor single mothers are more often interpreted as both the victims of hypersexual and negligent men and irresponsible in their birth control choices (see Figure 6.1 and Chapter 5). However, rather than viewing these women as in need of rescue, proponents of the Maintenance Court system, instead frame them as capacitated to act as a powerful corrective force to the ills of family decline.




The maintenance laws of South Africa were created to help women in this situation, and to give children the very **minimum** they need in order to live a normal life.




The maintenance laws cannot force a man to love and care for his child, nor can they force a woman to think carefully before bringing yet another child into the world. They can do nothing to give a child the security, confidence, and good example that a caring father can give. The laws simply ensure that both parents support their child financially.

Responsibility



But I feel this duty of support is unfair to men. Look, I had a short relationship with a woman. I didn't expect her to get pregnant! Now she has another boyfriend and I have another girlfriend. Why should I continue to pay this ex-girlfriend money every month?


Many men feel this way. But if a man helps to create a baby, he is responsible for that child. No matter what the ex-girlfriend or ex-wife does, the responsibility **to the child** remains.



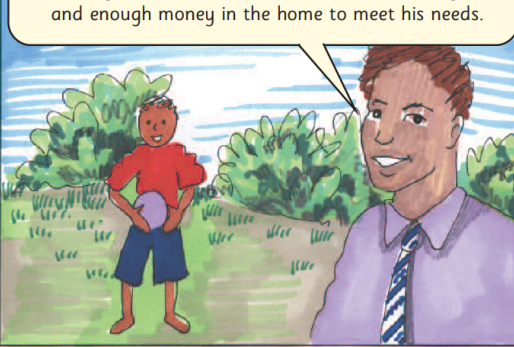

I'm sorry my son has to go through this. His father doesn't want to be responsible! Well, there's a law to protect us and to make him act responsibly.

And you, Nomvu? Will **you** act responsibly, too, and not have another child until you're able to provide a stable home and family?

Since I'm paying all the money, I have decided to take an interest in my child, and be the father he needs. I may not live with him, but I can still be a good influence in his life.



Does it sound crazy? It isn't. Luckily, Nomvu realises that although we don't love one another, we both love our child, and want what's best for him. Our child is the one who benefits the most — he has a mother **and** a father, and enough money in the home to meet his needs.




And for the sake of our child, I do not prevent Mike from spending time with our son. I realise that a child needs a father. Mike may not be perfect, but he loves his child and most importantly, our son needs his father!

Figure 6.1: Excerpts from the brochure "Maintenance and Child Support: A Shared Responsibility"¹⁶

A well-functioning Maintenance Court, which ensures that men financially support their offspring, is seen by South African policy makers as important for two reasons. First, it empowers women to demand financial support for their children—theoretically a desired outcome for the state and mothers. Second, fathers who support their children privately relieve the burden on the state to support them. This is of no small import, as constitutional and international commitments to reducing the vulnerability of children have been met primarily through the child support grant (CSG) which takes up 3.5 percent of the national budget (Republic of South Africa 2015).

Despite the extent of the state’s social assistance spending, government officials have remained ambivalent about the system (Seekings and Natrass 2011). On the one hand, the ANC has claimed that it has made progress in reducing poverty through income redistribution and the provision of basic services (ANC 2009). But, at the same time, an ideological shift has taken place away from an older rights-based model to a developmentalist paradigm in which “too much” spending on social assistance can, as one minister said, “entrench the culture of entitlement” that poor South Africans are thought to have (DSD 2006; Meth 2004; Molewa 2010).

Over the past two decades, a series of cost-recovery plans to compel people to pay for services have been launched in an effort to recoup the economic costs and mitigate the purported ideological pitfalls of such extensive social spending. In some cases, the technologies were quite material, such as the pay-per-use water meters that discipline poor South Africans into water-conserving and rates-paying citizens (von Schnitzler 2008). Others were more ideological, such as the *Masakhane* (“let us build together”) campaign which sought to transform a perceived

⁶ Developed by Educational Support Services Trust and the Department of Justice and Constitutional Development in 2003.

“culture of non-payment” associated with thirty years of apartheid-era resistance that involved a refusal to pay taxes, rents, and utility bills. The campaign focused on educating people on their rights and responsibilities as citizens by retooling the payment of taxes and utilities to signify a form of democratic participation. But this retooling took place alongside what, for many, was a decline in their economic position, and few were willing to take on these new financial responsibilities. Partially as a result of this economic shift, the *Masakhane* campaign was largely a failure. But, the logic of the campaign—and its emphasis on payment as indexing good citizenship—remained.

The emphasis on economic participation as civic duty is also part of the new government’s policy on families. Again, previous chapters revealed that while this fiscal emphasis takes a particular form in the post-apartheid era, the orientation is not itself new. The policy goals as articulated in the 2012 White Paper on Families is to foster families to be “economically self-sustaining” so that their “members are able to contribute effectively to the overall development of the country” (2012:8). The role of state welfare was envisioned to afford citizens, “the opportunity to play an active role in promoting their own well-being” (DOW 1997:59). This orientation is quite different from a redistributive model as articulated in the guiding document, the Freedom Charter, which states “The people shall share in the country’s wealth!”⁷ So it is that the problems of families are that they are dependent on government grants instead of contributing to development, as proper citizens should. Of course, both the concepts of “family disintegration” and a “culture of nonpayment” are highly racialized and gendered (Department of Social Development 2012:3). Concerns about marital decline are directed less at

⁷ Originally written by the South African Congress Alliance (an umbrella group that included the ANC) in 1955, the Freedom Charter articulates the guiding principles of the struggle against apartheid and was revisited upon democratic transition and multiple times since as a reminder of what a properly liberated nation should include.

the 67% marriage rate amongst whites than at the 24% marriage rate amongst black Africans (Posel et al. 2011). While characters of multiple races are represented in the comic in Figure 6.1, the primary story depicts the plights of Nomvu a recognizably black African woman and her non-white lover, Mike. Black fathers are described as “absent”, not simply because they do not live with their children—as many have not done for the past hundred years of labor migration—but because they do not *pay* for their children (DSD 2012:19). Under these terms, the solution to the problem of unsupported children becomes an enforcement of the presumed support obligation of biological parents by both obliging mothers to bring fathers into the Court and by compelling fathers to pay.

The obligation to support a child cannot be taken as given, but must be understood as something produced in a specific socio-cultural and historical context. Many years of scholarship on kinship in Southern Africa have noted that social and biological parenthood are not necessarily coterminous and different categories of people may participate in supporting a child (Armstrong 1994; Krige 1936; Schapera 1940; Preston-Whyte 1974). But within this heterogeneous landscape of care, South Africans frequently emphasize the support obligations of biological parents (Jewkes et al. 2012; Madhavan et al. 2008; Morrell and Richter 2004; Walker 2005).⁸ The malleable yet naturalized nature of this discourse makes it an ideal mechanism for the supporters of the Maintenance Court to mobilize in “responsibilizing” parents.

Historically, the state maintenance grant (SMG) and the Maintenance Court were closely connected and understood as two prongs of a single system. Women were not eligible for an SMG unless they could prove they had tried and failed to obtain maintenance through the Court. The CSG does not have such requirements and efforts have been made to delink it from the Maintenance Court (Lund 2008). However, as we have seen, the two remain closely intertwined

in the minds of policy makers. In 2002, the Committee of Inquiry into a Comprehensive System of Social Security reported that:

“despite being plagued by problems, . . . the private maintenance system is an important system and as a result it should not be discarded. There is a legal and moral duty on the part of both parents to provide for their child[ren]. . . . The state’s duty to provide enters the picture only when parents are unable to provide—not because they do not want to” (Taylor 2002:58).

Here it is clear that fathers’ non-payment is assumed to arise not out of necessity, but out of personal inclination, in this case interpreted as a moral failure. The Maintenance Court is seen as an important mechanism for ensuring that the state not end up footing the bill for the irresponsible choices of fathers.⁸ Thus, as one Parliamentarian said, the Maintenance Court should seek to “strengthen families and put the government out of business” (PMG 1999). Notably, invisible in all of this discourse, is that the disciplinary potential of the Court relies on the motivation and persistence of women to bring a case.

Maintenance in South Africa: Background and Process

The democratic transition led to an increased legislative commitment to empowering women, though often in name only (Hassim 2006; Walker 2013). A reform of the private maintenance system—widely understood to be ineffective, racially discriminatory, and burdensome for women—was understood as an early step (Burman and Berger 1988a, 1988b; Lund 2008). In 1997, the South African Law Commission made a preliminary review of the system and outlined recommendations for its reform, the first of which was an interim amendment of the Maintenance Act of 1963 to improve issues of implementation and equitability and to ensure compliance with the 1996 constitution and South Africa’s international

⁸ As a reminder, while any caregiver of a child may apply for a grant—male or female, kin or nonkin—96 percent goes to female caregivers, the majority of whom are mothers and grandmothers who care for children without the assistance of fathers (Vorster and de Waal 2008).

commitments.⁹ In its present incarnation, the maintenance system is governed by the Maintenance Act of 1998 and the Maintenance Amendment Act of 2015. These acts are meant to facilitate the legal enforcement of the common-law duty of parents to financially contribute—in an amount proportionate to their respective incomes—to the provision of their dependents’ food, clothing, accommodation, medical care, and education. In this legislation, the Courts are intended as a “user-friendly, one-stop” site for unmarried women to seek maintenance without the need of a lawyer, but the realities are quite different (Department of Justice and Constitutional Development 2003).

To understand the changes made in 1998, let us first examine the process of procuring a maintenance order. In many ways, the structure of the process remains the same today as it was in 1963. To begin the process, the claimant, for ease here called the mother, must complete and submit to the court clerk an application for maintenance order, often requiring translation, of both the legal language and the English text (Singh, Naidoo, and Mokolobate 2004).¹⁰ This form requires that she have the father’s full name, identification number, home or work address (preferably both), and telephone number—no small feat, given the estrangement that invariably precedes a claim (Budlender and Moyo 2004). Upon receipt of the application, the Court sets a date and notifies the father that he is required to attend. In some courts, the mother is forced to notify the father herself, sometimes risking personal injury; in others, she might participate in a “point out,” where she identifies the father to an accompanying police officer, who serves the

⁹ Section 27 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act 108 of 1996 provides that all citizens have the right to health care, food, water, and social security, and section 28 provides that every child has the right to family care or parental care and to basic nutrition, shelter, and basic health-care services. Both are affected by the provision of parental maintenance. South Africa ratified the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (1979) on December 15, 1995, and signed the Convention on the Rights of the Child on November 20, 1998. Earlier, on September 30, 1990, South Africa signed the World Declaration on the Survival, Protection, and Development of Children, which does not specifically address maintenance, but in point five declares that committed countries will ensure respect for the role of the family in providing support for children.

¹⁰ Updated copies of all forms can be found at http://www.justice.gov.za/forms/form_mnt.htm.

subpoena (Community Agency for Social Enquiry 2012). On the appointed date, provided both parties are present and possess the necessary documentation of their assets and expenses, both meet with a maintenance officer to determine the proportional funds available from each parent for the approved expenses for the child. If the parties can agree on a maintenance amount, it is outlined in a maintenance order—a legally binding document, signed by both parties. If the parents do not agree, or if the father does not appear on the appointed day, the case goes before a magistrate for a formal hearing, where both parents will give evidence regarding their financial situation. In the case of a father's continued absence, the magistrate can issue a warrant for his arrest (often not enforced without pressure from the mother), or, after ten days of nonpayment, can enforce an order by garnishing his wages or attaching his property and debts. The result may be that, for a time, the man complies with an order through regular payments. In the likely event that he fails to pay, he may be subject to a fine and imprisonment for up to a year; however, the mother must report and document the default and initiate a separate court process, often drawing out several months. Understandably, it is not uncommon that maintenance arrears often reach into the thousands of Rands, with little hope of payment (Witbooi 2002). The 1998 act came about in a period when political pressure did not allow time for a complete overhaul of the system (Wamhoff and Burman 2002). Instead, it was a stopgap measure to repeal an earlier instantiation, the 1963 act, and address the most problematic parts of the prior system—the burden of proof shouldered by women in lodging a claim and the virtually complete lack of enforcement of a maintenance order, often as a result of nonimplementation of the 1963 act (Budlender and Moyo 2004; South African Law Commission 1997).

The 1998 act provided for several improvements to this process. A critical one was the creation of the position of maintenance investigators, whose job it is to relieve the burden on

mothers by investigating the fathers' whereabouts, financial position (such as businesses or property he might have registered in someone else's name), or reasons for a change in status (such as job loss), and to take statements from relevant witnesses who can inform a maintenance inquiry. The 2015 amendments sought to enhance the reach of maintenance investigators by giving them access to cell-phone databases and the assistance of credit bureaus to track fathers down (South African Press Association 2014). The positive impact of this position cannot be overstated. In courts where they have been appointed investigators are overburdened with cases and the challenge of tracing often undocumented activities (Coutts 2014; De Jong 2009; Mamashela 2006).

A second change to aid the enforcement of orders is that attachments of property, debts, and garnishment of wages can now be done within the Maintenance Court, whereas before it required a separate conviction of the man for default (South African Law Commission 2014). Unfortunately, these powerful enforcement mechanisms are still fraught with inefficiencies. Wage garnishment creates a large burden for employers, can result in retribitional dismissal, and has to be reinitiated in the event of a job change (Singh et al. 2004). Further, garnishment is effective only when fathers are working in sectors steeped in bureaucratic documentation—for example civil servants. For those in other sectors, such as taxi owners, who may make a considerable income but collect no pay slips, wages cannot be garnished. The Department of Justice has attempted additional measures, such as partnering with taxi associations, to enhance compliance with the Court (Wamhoff and Burman 2002; Jeffery 2015). While attaching property may motivate some men to produce payments, many develop strategies to avoid such measures, such as selling assets to others. Also, to attach property, women must pay a sizeable fee upfront to the sheriff to both attach and subsequently store the moveable goods (Mamashela 2006). Such

payments are not possible for many women applicants. Finally, all these attachments are effective only to the extent that they are used by court officials—which varies greatly by court.

A third improvement is the allowance for granting maintenance orders by default in the event that men do not attend a maintenance hearing, thus reducing delays in the process. The Department of Justice and Constitutional Development has implemented two electronic payment systems to help facilitate the delivery of payments and theoretically reduce the labor of court personnel. In 2006, the Department of Justice and Constitutional Development (DOJCD) rolled out the Justice Deposits Account System (JDAS) and Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT) system that is now operating in all but one Maintenance Court (De Jong 2009). JDAS is an electronic financial system utilized to administer bail, fines, and maintenance monies received by magistrates' courts, which can be paid using EFT. EFT has reduced the need for beneficiaries to wait in long lines to collect their payments and has freed up court staff time. Problems with the recording of account numbers have meant that payments have been sent to the incorrect beneficiaries or have been processed late, but overall the systems have improved efficiency (South African Law Commission 2014).

In light of these reforms, the question becomes: if compelling fathers to support their children financially is ostensibly so beneficial to the state and to women, why then might women who could take men to the Court choose not to? One answer, captured well by research on the Court, is that, despite reform efforts, the Maintenance Court remains fairly ineffective (De Jong 2009; Mamashela 2006; Singh, Naidoo, and Mokolobate 2004; South African Law Commission 1997, 2014). While the 1998 act enlarged the powers of the Court to enforce maintenance payments and created policies and positions to relieve the burdens on applicants, problems of procedural ambiguity, insufficient training, resources, and manpower, and discrimination persist

(De Jong 2009; South African Law Commission 2014). Women still bear the overwhelming burden of labor in lodging a claim for payments that are consistently below their needs and are frequently defaulted on (Community Agency for Social Enquiry 2012). In the intervening years, an impressive amount of research and resources have gone into reform of the system, and legislative amendments to improve the Court's capacity are ongoing.¹¹

Following the 1998 changes, reform of the maintenance system again became a national priority when, in 2003, the Constitutional Court ruled that the logistical problems of the Maintenance Court hobbled the good intentions of the act and constituted a failure to meet the constitutional obligation to protect the rights of women and the best interests of children (Bannatyne v. Bannatyne; Clark 2005). Scholars and activists—an often overlapping category in South Africa—produced research outlining the problems of the system and suggestions for reform.

A central theme in the literature is the ineffectiveness created by insufficient funding for the private maintenance system. Instances include problems of understaffing, both of maintenance officers and investigators (De Jong 2009; South African Law Commission 2014; Wamhoff and Burman 2002), insufficient training of maintenance officers and investigators (Budlender and Moyo 2004; Community Agency for Social Enquiry 2012; De Jong 2009; South African Law Commission 2014), and insufficient court resources, such as offices, computers, plugs, and phones (Budlender and Moyo 2004; Coutts 2014; De Jong 2009).

¹¹ Operation *Isondlo* (isiZulu for an alimony or maintenance payment) was a three-year project launched in December 2005 by the DOJCD to capacitate the maintenance courts. The DOJCD also launched the Maintenance Turnaround Strategy, which conducted trainings, bought cameras for the courts, and initiated EFT and mediation procedures. At writing, the South African Law Commission is still finalizing its review of the entire maintenance system. Recent legislation that has gone into effect allows the cellphone tracking of maintenance defaulters, the issuing of interim orders, and the blacklisting of defaulters on credit websites—a ruling that attracted extensive legislative debate.

A second theme is that many of these problems of funding have led to challenges in implementing the 1998 act. These include the facts that maintenance officers and investigators do not use the full scope of their power as per the act (Community Agency for Social Enquiry 2012; Coutts 2014; De Jong 2009; Singh, Naidoo, and Mokolobate 2004), maintenance orders and procedures vary greatly among courts (Budlender 2005; Community Agency for Social Enquiry 2012; Grieve, Moses, and Barberton 2005; South African Law Commission 2014; Wamhoff and Burman 2002), maintenance issues are seen as a nonpriority for court staff (Community Agency for Social Enquiry 2012; South African Law Commission 2014; Wamhoff and Burman 2002), and a lack of staff causes long delays, making women wait all day, only to be told to return the following day, for cases that drag out for years (Community Agency for Social Enquiry; Singh, Naidoo, and Mokolobate 2004; Wamhoff and Burman 2002).

A final theme is the challenges women face directly, including discrimination, disrespect, and a lack of discretion from court staff (Community Agency for Social Enquiry 2012; Mills 2004; Singh, Naidoo, and Mokolobate 2004), corruption in the form of missing or misplaced files (Community Agency for Social Enquiry 2012; Coutts 2014), insecurity in relation to violent former partners (Community Agency for Social Enquiry 2012; Khunou 2012; Mills 2004), and insufficient or incorrect information about rights in relation to the system (Community Agency for Social Enquiry 2012; Wamhoff and Burman 2002).

Given the numerous challenges with the private maintenance system, women's reluctance to engage with it because they find it an exercise in futility has been well documented by researchers, yet *even if and when* the awarding and payment of maintenance ran smoothly, my research reveals, the transaction of money from men to women has complicated relational effects. The findings in this chapter contribute to these literatures, first by situating the decision

to pursue maintenance in larger projects of family making, and second by considering how that project is shaped by the interrelationship of sex, money, affect, and power—what Cole calls economies of intimacy (2009).

Economies of Intimacy

The lives of the women covered in this research are pervaded by economic and relational insecurities that shape their abilities to constitute a family in their terms. As others have noted, women adamantly seek an idealized family built around a monogamous marriage of romantic love, one that adheres to normative gender roles of male economic provision and female domestic care (Ashforth 1999; Hunter 2009, 2010). In this ideal, women achieve economic stability, affective care, paternal support for their children, and sexual fulfillment in a single relationship, yet the reality is that few men have the economic means to support a family, and the men that do—as well as the women who seek relationships with them—rarely practice monogamy. It is a context in which neither the income from labor nor the support from a partner can be counted on to be exclusive or enduring—the two issues, of course, being closely linked. Because of the confluence of these two insecurities, women must build a functional family by seeking economic stability, affective care for themselves and their children, and sexual fulfillment from different relationships that also change over time.

Women assemble around themselves a network of relationships that, like all families, are bound together by reciprocal obligations that include various assemblages of money or gifts, emotional support and affection, domestic labor, and sex. Systems of exchange as processes that bind people into relationships of mutual obligation that are enduring and laden with culturally and historically specific meaning have been at the center of a long tradition in anthropology and sociology, stemming from Marcel Mauss ([1924] 2000) and Arnold van Gennep (1960). It has

been well documented that in South Africa, as well as elsewhere in Africa, men and women foster networks of obligation—“ties of dependence”—with one another through the exchange of sex, labor, love, and material support (Swidler and Watkins 2007; Verheijen 2013). This is a system of exchange whereby the giving of gifts or money, most often by a man to a woman—which serve to demonstrate and constitute emotional attachment—engenders and obligates the receiver to some form of reciprocity, usually sexual (Cole 2009; Hunter 2009). Conversely, sexual favors and other “comforts of home,” such as domestic labor and caregiving, themselves valued, demand the reciprocal sharing of material resources from those who have enjoyed them (Leclerc-Madlala 2003; White 1990). But the simplicity of the above summary belies the variability of such exchanges and the complexity and delicacy involved in their negotiation. For the relative values and terms of such exchanges are always relationally contingent, and their affective power means that an inappropriate reciprocation can be emotionally hurtful and relationally damaging. For example, if a boyfriend were to suddenly offer gifts of a lesser value, or if a girlfriend were to welcome a traveling boyfriend home with a meal of only rice and gravy, these acts would engender not only painful feelings of rejection, but also suspicion that feelings of affection, and therefore allegiance, may have strayed.

Men’s and women’s choices to enter into such exchanges are constrained by their historical, cultural, and economic position and an environment of highly unequal power relations, rampant sexual violence, and pervasive HIV. With this context in mind, both parties can benefit from choosing to participate in these exchanges. For men, most often the funders, the giving of resources to multiple partners affords prestige and an elevated masculine social status, moral legitimacy for their redistribution of resources and the avoidance of witchcraft accusations, sexual satisfaction and the comforts of home, and social insurance in the form of a

person they can call upon in the future (Ashforth 1999, 2005; Hunter 2005, 2010; Swidler and Watkins 2007; White 1990; Verheijen 2013). For women, their choice to couple takes place in a cultural context in which women are expected to be partnered—ideally, wed—and the unattached woman attracts accusations of disobeying culture, husband-snatching, or prostitution (Rice 2017; Verheijen 2013). Furthermore, there are a number of ritual and kin-based tasks that only males are supposed to carry out and while such cultural dictums can be bent, not without social consequence. In addition to the social benefits of conforming to cultural norms, depending on the dynamics of the exchange, women also have the potential to gain access to material resources, a source of occasional child-care labor and affection for their children, affective care for themselves, a patron they can call upon in desperate times, and (ideally) sexual fulfillment (Cole 2009; Leclerc-Madlala 2003; Swidler and Watkins 2007; Verheijen 2013).

Women in my research participated in the exchange of sex, money, and affective support toward a variety of ends. Some engaged in the more direct forms of exchange of material support—for anything from food, clothing, cell minutes, to perfume or liquor—for sexual favors. Others had sexual partners—often called Ben Tens—whose explicit role was purely for the pleasure of the sexual experience.¹² Many women, in addition to other men, had a primary partner, with whom they felt the closest affective connection or who provided the best form of social father for their children. All these relationships were exchanges that fostered ties of dependence in which the participants could make future claims upon one another for sex, money, labor, or affective care.

¹² Named after a children's television program, Ben Tens are usually younger men who rarely contribute economically to the household, but—critical for women's self-worth—engender in their partners a sense of desirability and an identity outside of the maternal caregiver.

The Court's Place in the Project of Family Making

Cebo and Fikile's story, in the opening vignette, reveals the ways in which the women, men, and children who enter the Court are situated in a web of social ties whose bonds are reinforced through exchanges of money, sex, love, and labor. The terrain of this network is always in flux, as jobs are lost and found, family members die, children are born, new boyfriends are brought into the picture, or old relationships break apart. Despite this changeability, the bond between parents is a relatively durable one, which allows women to make claims upon the resources of a man far longer than in a purely sexual relationship (Guyer 1994). Thus, in deciding whether to pursue a Maintenance Court case, my respondents accounted for past connections and ruptures, present needs, and future expectations within economies of intimacy.

Critical to women's decision to enter the Court were the social meanings given to the payment and nonpayment of maintenance monies. Given the goals of the Court, women who considered a case began with a financial question: whether money could be obtained from such a process. For the women who saw a case as anything more than a threat, relations with the father and his family were often so poor that they could not lobby for support another way. Women then considered whether he was working or had property that the Court could seize and sell. If money could be attained, women assessed the value of that money in relation to the social meaning given to it and the possible effects of pursuing a court order. If the woman had lost or severed all contact with the father, initiating a case could forge a connection where one was lacking and, as some women hoped, induce the father to have a relationship with the child.

However, bringing a case almost invariably resulted in angering the man, which could worsen an already poor relationship between the man and the woman and, in the worst-case scenario, result in a refusal to pay coupled with violence. Further, women feared it could alienate

the father from his offspring. Whether the payment of maintenance money engendered feelings of affection or anger from the father, its meaning within economies of intimacy had further complicated effects. For even if the process results in payments from the father, a woman's acceptance of them could obligate her in his eyes, or the eyes of others, to reciprocate with sexual favors. My informants weighed the value of these possible effects, and carefully assessed their feelings about the father, their financial situation, what they perceive the father's financial situation to be, their support network, whether they have romantic (or other) attachments, and what their hope was for the future relationship among themselves, the father, and their offspring.

For the women with whom I worked, attempts to secure child support in any form were rarely purely rational calculations, but instead were emotionally fraught, sometimes contradictory attempts to negotiate a broad and shifting relational field. The rupturing of ties with their children's fathers was usually painful. Even when their children were not entirely "planned," all the women at some point had embarked with their ex-partner on a collective project of raising them. During that time, his financial support had been an indication of his emotional attachment and commitment to their partnership and their offspring. The loss of affective care and financial support was often taken as a sign that the mother and the offspring were considered unworthy of his love.

When communication had broken down with an ex-partner, some women sought a court order, not only out of financial need, but also in the hope that through the process, an amicable relationship could be restored and future payments might again index an emotional bond. Such hopes, though improbable, were not entirely unfounded. Indeed it is the outcome promoted by court brochures such as in Figure 6.1. Additionally, some maintenance officers saw it their role

to counsel couples and reconnect them, but their successes were few.¹³ As Goldblatt notes, “many men and their families regard maintenance claims against them as an attack” (2006:249). Typically, the Maintenance Court hearings I witnessed were sad, angry affairs, filled with explosive and bitter accusations of infidelity, poor parenting, or lack of visitation. Most maintenance officers, instead of engaging in their content, struggled to sideline such emotional battles in the twenty minutes they had to foster an agreement on payment amounts.

Frustrated and wounded, many women cried throughout the day, saying, “I don’t understand why he is not paying; he was such a good guy.” In interviews after, they expressed shock and hurt at the anger that surfaced in the hearing, as men railed against having any relationship—economic or otherwise—with them. The hearing concretized women’s feelings of abandonment, and many were haunted, later, by the “vicious words” that had been hurled at them. Many women spoke of their choice to pursue a court case with chagrin, saying when the payments stopped coming, as they so often did, they had been left with neither love nor money:

“Seeking maintenance is . . . time-consuming . . . and emotionally draining, and for what? You go up and down, up and down, and what? Now he will not answer my calls. [She sighs.] What must I do? I do wish we were a complete family, but I don’t sit on it. I don’t want to be depressed because of the choices I have made.”

Arguably, the women who experienced the greatest success in the Court were those who, as in Cebo’s final visit, viewed the court process as a means to achieve vengeance for perceived mistreatment. This is not to say that monetary need was not a part of their case, but—like their ex-partners—they came to the hearing angry and felt empowered by the idea that the law was on their side. The rage that men exhibited in a court hearing, to them, was an indication that they

¹³ Couples can receive mediation if they are referred to the family advocate, but such referrals are rarely made, and often men do not attend. It is worth noting that in its Maintenance Court pamphlets, the DOJCD promotes this idea that men who have been estranged from their children will be incited to take an interest in their child because they are compelled to pay money; however, I have yet to see such an effect.

were being taught a hard lesson. Women like twenty-three-year-old Gladness, who had a well-elaborated discourse about women's rights, saw the Court as a disciplining force, which helped reestablish justice for women. She was purportedly duped into taking on debt to finance her ex-partner's auto repair business because she held a job as a domestic one day a week and was thus more creditworthy. The business was supposed to be a step toward a future she and her partner were building together, but when it fell on hard times, he took the tools and ran, leaving her and their two-year-old son at the mercy of a local loan shark, who lived in the neighborhood of the single room she rented in the inner city. She said,

“These South African men are running away from responsibility. They want no strings attached. Us girls suffer the consequences. Us women have to say no or do something.”

Gladness felt that action—in the form of a court case—was a way of demanding the respect she felt had been denied her and was necessary, both for reclaiming her own self-worth, and as a lesson for her young son.

Such a sentiment was echoed in 2012 by Phindi, who had felt powerless within an abusive relationship and found the Court to be a forceful corrective to a gendered power imbalance (see also Khunou 2012). She had come from a rural area to live in Durban and had been swept off her feet by her previous partner, who owned a pawnshop and wooed her with promises of a carefree life. He had been a heavy drinker, and with a complicated pregnancy and subsequent postbirth confinement, she had been less willing and able to keep up with his social and sexual demands. She grew increasingly fearful for her own and her daughter's safety until she moved in with a girlfriend from church, who encouraged her to start a case. She said, “Men always pay with their mouths. To get them to put their hand in their pockets, you must come with

a gun.” Phindi felt that the impersonal, public space of the Court gave her the authority to stand up to her former partner and demand the money she felt was rightfully owed to her daughter.

For women like these, feelings about process often hinged less on the payments than on their experience in Court. In the case of Gladness, whose ex-partner never appeared for a hearing, the magistrate garnished his wages, and she left feeling validated and empowered. Phindi, however, felt pressured by the maintenance offer to accept an amount far lower than she needed. Her experience left her feeling disappointed and betrayed by a system that failed to protect her.

Other women, highly cognizant of the emotional estrangement and economic disappointment that often resulted from the Court process, chose not to utilize the Court at all or to not return to it after fathers defaulted. For women like Thandi, the thin hope of a future relationship with her child’s father shaped her considerations. Though he had found work and a new relationship in a distant city, she felt the potential relationship was more valuable than the uncertain economic gains and inevitable emotional discord a maintenance hearing could bring.

BG: Does he give you anything?

T: When I asked him for money, he says, “at the end of the month,” but it never comes.

BG: Will you take him to court?

T: Hmmmm, no. I want us to be a family. This other woman, she’s not good... When this job is finished, he’ll come back, and we can stay nicely together.

BG: Oh?! [surprised]

T: [Laughing] But, you know, if I go to the court, there will be no cows [marriage proceedings].

This decision was no doubt influenced by the fact that Thandi herself was working, and she was living with her sister, who had a “good job,” so she had a modicum of economic security, which left her free to indulge in dreams of marrying her children’s father. At another time and under other circumstances, she may have chosen differently. But, more important for this consideration

is that women like Thandi echoed what other scholars have found (Cole 2004)—that relationships between unmarried mothers and fathers are not simply sexual, but are often seen as potential marriages. The cows in Thandi’s statement were the metaphorical or actual cattle that men’s families give to women’s families in marriage negotiations. As infrequent and inaccessible as marriage was—as affirmed by Thandi’s laughter—it remained the sought-after ideal (Hunter 2010). Thandi and others like her felt that initiating a court case jeopardized the hope for that ideal, however unlikely it may be.

Others who avoided the Court saw a court case as not only a threat to their future relationship with their children’s father, but also as an impediment to their child’s relationship with his or her father. In these cases, the desire to foster a nurturing relationship between the father and the child kept them away from the Courts. When I met Thuli, in her late thirties, she had a new boyfriend, who, though he bought her clothes and cell-phone minutes, was uninterested in Nothi, the daughter Thuli had had with Mvu. Mvu had met Nothi a few times when the girl was small, but they had lost contact over the years. Now that Nothi was a teenager, she and Mvu had recently found each other on Facebook and had begun spending time together—a fact about which Thuli was immensely pleased and did not want to disrupt:

“He doesn’t send money and stuff, [and hasn’t for some time,] but I don’t force the issue. . . . I want him to have a relationship with her. I didn’t have a relationship with my father. I want to be a family and for him to spend time with her. You can’t make someone love you or be there if they don’t want to.”

To Thuli, the making of “a family”—meaning, for her, a warm father–daughter relationship—was something a court case would endanger. Thuli’s situation is emblematic of many women who cultivate multiple relationships to serve a variety of ends. With her new boyfriend, she found an element of economic support—which had to be supplemented through other labor and relationships—and a sexual relationship that may have been pleasurable to her,

but the new boyfriend did not demonstrate the affective care for Nothi that Thuli prized and which she hoped to retain in Mvu.

Another group of women avoided the Court because they did not want a relationship of any kind with the father of their child. These were often relationships with a history of domestic violence, and, in contrast to Phindi, they did not feel the Court would protect them from future abuse (Khunou 2012). As one woman said, “the first one, I could not go [to court] because he would kill us if he saw us; the second [man], I would kill him.” Such concerns were by no means unfounded, as there have been incidents where men have violently attacked women during maintenance hearings, and maintenance officers often have the additional role of acting as bouncers. Further, these women often did not want their ex-partner to have any place in their child’s life, because he was either a bad influence, or a source of emotional pain, or both. As, Nomusa said, “I do not want my son to know him. What might he learn? To have children and abandon them?” Though the payment of maintenance has no legal relationship to privileges of access to the child, my interlocutors expressed that if a man were paying, they would feel compelled to let him visit his child, regardless of how bad an influence he might be. To open a case, these women expressed, was to submit themselves and their children to the likelihood of disappointment and the feeling of rejection all over again.

A final group of women I wish to consider were those who chose not to use the Court because to do so would impede their relationship with another man. For these women, or more importantly, for their new partners, the bond created through maintenance payments was a form of unpaid debt that, in principle, could give ex-partners a legitimate claim to sexual favors from the woman. I first became aware of this when my thirty-four-year-old research assistant, Zama, told me she would not seek maintenance from the father of her first two children because she

was “moving on in love” with a new boyfriend, Thabo. Initially, I thought Zama was affirming Thabo’s care and support of not just his own child, but of all three children. However, Zama elaborated to say her choice was instead based on a concern for the jealousy Thabo would feel if she continued to receive money from her previous partner. She suggested she needed to be “finished, finished”—as in to sever all ties—with her ex-partner to build a future with Thabo.

Zama’s decision is legible in a context in which it is widely understood that material contributions require reciprocation through sexual favors. Though it is not uncommon for young, unmarried women to have relationships with multiple men that involve different forms of material exchange, the practice continues to be frowned upon by men (Hunter 2009; Pettifor et al. 2012; Strebel et al. 2013). A handful of my informants had new boyfriends who disapproved of a continued connection with a prior lover, though the connection was a transaction of money mediated by the Court. Underlying this disapproval was first the notion that economic support, no matter how achieved, bore traces of an emotional commitment (Garey and Townsend 1996; Hunter 2010; Jewkes et al. 2012; Jewkes and Morrell 2011). Given that a man faced few legal repercussions for nonpayment, compliance with payment indicated other motivations.

Second, many understood women’s acceptance of maintenance money as creating a debt that entitled the giver to some form of reciprocity, most likely sexual favors. To these disapproving boyfriends, the presence of this unpaid debt was akin to a form of infidelity: the woman to whom they wished to have exclusive sexual access had outstanding sexual obligations to another man (Ashforth 1999). The fact that a state body such as the Court had mediated these payments, for these men, did not cleanse the money of its burden of reciprocity. Regardless of whether the new boyfriend had any intention of supporting children by another man, the residue of infidelity was intolerable to them. Some new boyfriends also disapproved of women’s

spending money from him on children from another man. To continue to receive money from the boyfriend, many women used a common strategy of sending the children to live with other kin, whom they will occasionally pay, so as to not muddy the waters of obligation.

Given the interconnectedness of sex, money, and affective commitment, these women found that the specter of obligation produced by maintenance payments hindered their attempts to build a relationship with another man. Notably, through its provision of grants, the state was often called a de-facto father. However, receipt of the CSG created no such obligation. Thus, for women with good prospects elsewhere, seeking maintenance from a previous partner may not be worth the entanglements of debt—whether they intended to fulfill them or not.

Conclusion

The above considers one small piece of the large and complex puzzle of family life in the new South Africa. Since democratic transition, reform of the maintenance system has been an important strategy for ensuring the rights of women and children. Strengthening the system has been a critical governmental response to shifts in the composition of the family as marriage has become inaccessible, childbearing frequently occurs outside of marriage, poor mothers increasingly rely on government grants, and fathers, often unemployed, participate less in the physical, emotional, and economic lives of their children. Yet despite a great deal of research, activism, policy making, and notable improvements, the maintenance system continues to founder in its ability to transfer money from the hands of fathers to those of the women who provide daily care for children.

Many problems stem from budget shortfalls and ideological oversights that have hindered the implementation of some fairly progressive policies. Documents such as the 2012 White Paper on Families and the South African Law Commission's 2014 report on the maintenance system

call for such radical actions as exploring forms of maintenance other than monetary payments to involve fathers who cannot afford to pay and community-based punishments for maintenance defaulters that emphasize correctional supervision and community service. We have yet to see the extent to which these can be realized within the institutions with which women regularly interact and the effects they will have.

This chapter has considered a different, but related issue. Though the deficiencies of the Maintenance Court have certainly affected women's engagement with it, concerns about whether or not they will receive money for their labors is not women's only consideration. My data have shown that maintenance payments are part of larger economies of intimacy that women must account for when deciding whether to pursue a case. Women are aware that even if a court case is effective and she receive payments, receipt of them may negatively affect other relationships upon which she relies. Therefore, women must carefully assess the complexities of the social network that provides them with money, sex, labor, and love (today and into the future) and the cultural conventions that govern such exchanges, to determine the relative value of maintenance money.

Such findings are critical because consideration of these economies of intimacy upon which women rely are rarely, if at all, a part of policy concerned with alleviating women's poverty. The exception to this are the discussions about reducing the spread of HIV. However, these frequently rely on a trope of protecting "vulnerable women" who are susceptible to infection because they are "driven to exchange sex for gifts by virtue of their economic destitution" (Ashforth 2014:214).¹⁴ Yet research such as the above chapter details and such as

¹⁴ By framing women as victims, activists, researchers, and aid workers could give a socially-palatable answer to the question of why even in the face of HIV awareness and safe-sex knowledge, women and men often did not change their sexual practices. Women's victimization also offered a new course action in the form of women's empowerment programs which have become the de rigeur form of intervention in the last decade.

that conducted by Verheijen in Malawi demonstrate that women's choices surrounding sex and money are far more complicated than simple evaluations of economic necessity (2013 also Mojola 2015). Nevertheless, such exchanges have become essential to women raising children on their own in the context of South Africa's relational and economic uncertainty. Further, economies of intimacy and the cultural conventions that govern them have profound effects on family formation that are not yet fully understood yet are essential for any policymaking around "strengthening families" or poverty alleviation.

This chapter suggests that the cultural meaning given to the gifts and exchanges that solidify relational bonds are a product of their political and economic contexts. This demands a reconsideration of the many ways in which people are making family under conditions of material poverty. In the present context, where exchanges of bridewealth to solidify a marriage—a long-time topic of inquiry for anthropologists—are less possible, what forms of exchange now solidify the bonds of family? How are these exchanges managed, and what conventions have arisen? Where co-residence is not a given, what form do intimate family bonds take, both vertically—between children and their caregivers—and horizontally—between mothers and their partners? By seeking to answer such questions, we would gain a far richer understanding of how family forms have responded to new political economies.

The next chapter considers marital exchanges in a rather different context—namely between South African women and men who have migrated from other parts of the African continent. Here, the rituals of *ilobolo* are central to social transformation that women seek to become different kinds of persons and citizens. However, such marriages come with social costs. These marriages, formalized in the midst of intense xenophobia, offer another perspective on how women and men go about their projects of social reproduction, or, making a family.

Chapter 7 - They come to take our women and our jobs”: Migrants, Marriage, and National Belonging

Zandi was in the midst of a difficult visit home. She had returned to her rural township to tell her parents that while she had been away at university in the city, she had become pregnant. The pregnancy was an issue, but almost more so the conditions surrounding it. Zandi's father had gone against the cautionary advice of his neighbors who said that education in the city only led to trouble and very little learning. Then there was the issue of the boy. This was not just any boy. Zandi had met him in 2009 when they were working at a beachfront restaurant together. Their courtship began not with long conversations, but with English lessons. Zandi was moved by the fact that her coworkers mistreated him because he was from Burundi. "Burundi!", Zandi's father had said when she told him about the father of her child. "Where did you meet someone from Burundi?!" It was a far cry from the rural Eastern Cape. Zandi had met Touissant because she was living, as many students did, in the heterogeneous Point neighborhood where immigrants from all over the continent lived alongside various racial and ethnic groups from across South Africa. Much to Zandi's relief, her father did not berate her for having a relationship with "a foreigner." Instead, he asked that Touissant offer *inhlawulo*. Sometimes translated as “damages” this a payment made by a man to a woman's family to restore honor to an unmarried woman he has made pregnant. It also serves to transfer the Touissant swiftly agreed, eager to begin marriage negotiations.

The relative ease of her father’s acceptance, however, was not a harbinger of how others would react. During the same visit, an old friend came by to see Zandi. "Hawu!", her friend had

said, "Are you not scared if this guy can make you pregnant and then leave you with the children and run away to his country?" Her scorn revealed her underlying judgement. Zandi replied quietly, "No, I am not scared of that." Her friend continued to press the question, insinuating that Zandi should be very concerned and ashamed to have taken up with such an unreliable category of men such as foreigners from Africa. After a pause, Zandi asked her own question,

"Isn't it you have a baby?"

"Yes,"

"How old is the baby?"

"Two years,"

"And where is the father?" Zandi landed the question pointedly.

The answer came much quieter now, "I don't know". In the retelling of the interaction, Zandi continued, "[Her] boyfriend stays there, you can see the house where we are sitting," she pointed out an imaginary window, "but he can't come and support [the baby]...(she sighed) People they make people pregnant and run away...So if it happened to me, it won't be new. It is what is happening here, even now."

Here Zandi offers a pointed commentary on the landscape of intimate relationships in South Africa today. As previously discussed, in the span of a generation, rates of marriage have dropped dramatically to the point that marriage is now the, highly prized, exception rather than the norm. Though fertility has declined, children are cherished and childbearing remains an important maker of social adulthood. The collapse of waged labor has meant that not only are men unable to formalize marriages through the exchange of *ilobolo* or bridewealth, many also struggle to send money home to their children who, overwhelmingly live with their mothers. Thus, as Zandi notes, the idea that a man could "make you pregnant and then leave you with the children and run away" was not an imagined nightmare, but an everyday lived reality for many.

In her conversation with her friend, Zandi argued that a relationship with a foreigner was no more a source of fear or shame than a relationship with a local man. However, Zandi and the others like her were well aware that these were not equivalent relationships and they did not enter into them lightly. Thuli, a Zulu-speaking woman also married to a Burundian man, described her initial doubts:

When he asked me out, I was scared of dating foreigners because, first, I was new in Durban. People used to say terrible things about foreigners, that they are selling drugs or criminals. I never wanted to associate myself with that kind of people. Local people also say bad things about you when you are dating a foreigner. Things like you are a bitch, you are dirty, you like money, you are a prostitute. So, I was afraid of being seen with him.

These everyday forms of discrimination also had high stakes counterparts. Since South Africa opened its borders to immigration in 1994, the country has been racked with a new form of violence and discrimination, this time targeting black bodies from outside the country. In this period, South Africa transformed from a “refugee-producing to a refugee-receiving country” (Warren 2015). Between 2006 and 2012 South Africa accepted the highest number of asylum seekers of any country in the world (UNHCR 2012).¹ In 2011, immigrants made up 4.2% of the population, with 71% of those coming from the African continent (STATSA 2011).² In addition to the relative economic and political stability South Africa offers, the post-apartheid ideals of equality and nondiscrimination enshrined in the Constitution have produced some of the most progressive asylum laws in the world (Warren 2015). Whereas in other countries, refugees are forced into overcrowded camps, in South Africa migrants who have applied for asylum can live and work anywhere in the country until their refugee status is finalized. On paper, asylum

¹ For comparison, in 2009 South Africa received 222,300 asylum claims as opposed to the US which received 47,900 the same year (UNHCR 2012).

² The 2011 census found that 2,199,871 documented immigrants were living in South Africa with a total population which then stood at 51,770,560 (UNHCR 2012). Though an exact number of undocumented immigrants is not known, a conservative estimate is that there were 500,000 in 2011. It is likely that these numbers are higher now given the political and economic strife on the continent (Warren 2015).

seekers and refugees are entitled to the same basic rights as citizens (Landau 2011). Of course, lived reality is much different.

The question of whether or not an immigrant, such as Zandi's husband Touissant, is in the country "legally" is both difficult to answer and, at times, irrelevant. The Department of Home Affairs (DHA), the governmental body in charge of overseeing immigration, has a conflicting stance towards documenting immigrants (Amit and Kriger 2014). On the one hand, the department seeks to keep track of how many migrants are in the country. On the other hand, by documenting their presence, the Department imbues migrants with certain rights, which goes against a second goal of limiting the number of migrants through deportation. Thus, many migrants who have presented themselves for registration have been refused documentation so they may be deported later. In 2007, South Africa was a world leader in the number of deportations (Landau 2011:3). Furthermore, even those who do possess legal documents—documents that entitle them to work and study, to access health care, to open bank accounts, and to a life free from the threat of arrest or detention—have been beaten, harassed, their papers torn up and, deported (Amit and Kriger 2014). Xenophobic violence in 2008 and 2015 also resulted in the injury and deaths of hundreds of immigrants, those who married them, and those who sought to defend them.

This chapter considers why women like Zandi and Thuli are willing to tolerate derision and submit their intimate lives to the threats of violence to enter into these binational marriages. How do they understand their partners as husbands or as fathers vis a vis South African men? How have these marriages reconfigured their relationships to kin, to their community, and to the state? Though such marriages are still infrequent, answers to these questions reveal the possibilities and limits of black women's citizenship in the new South Africa.

To begin answer these questions, I offer a key context to the quote that begins the title for this chapter. As we are seeing erupt across the globe, in South Africa foreigners have become the scapegoat for the economic and political ills of the country with everything from crime to rent inflation to a lack of public services blamed on their presence (Warren 2015).

However, three unique features give the anti-immigrant rage in South Africa its specific tenor. First, is South Africa's history of nation building which across multiple governments, has in every case been predicated on exclusion. I concur with Landau that the South African state has rejuvenated apartheid-era forms of spatio-ethnic political discrimination once reserved for black South Africans, now deployed upon the new outsider to be denied legal identity: the non-national (2011). Like black South Africans under apartheid, the presence and labor of non-nationals are critical to the functioning of the South African economy. While no less true in the present context of economic decline, the argument that immigrants are a drain on housing and public services is also a reproduction of apartheid arguments for prohibiting permanent African settlement in urban areas. Excluding immigrants from full access to such services maintains their status as cheap, disposable sources of labor.

This leads to the second feature. Like most migrants around the world, foreigners in South Africa are more frequently employed in more precarious, lower-paying, and hazardous jobs that locals are unwilling to take. This has contributed to a situation where, quite unusually, foreigners have a significantly *higher* employment rate—albeit in the informal or grey market—than their local counterparts (Budlender and Fauvelle-Aymar 2012).³ This relative economic success gives foreigners a contradictory social position as they occupy low status jobs but enjoy

³ This statistic is all the more surprising because it holds a number of variables that constitute “immigrant advantage” constant. Budlender and Fauvelle-Aymar found that “a foreign-born migrant with the same age, gender, and level of education, belonging to the same population group and residing in the same place as a South African, has a higher probability of being employed than a South African non-migrant. This is a very unusual finding, as in most developed countries where data are available, the rate of employment for foreign-born migrants is a lot lower than for local workers” (2012).

greater wealth and the prestige that comes with it (Tafira 2010). Thus, they are doubly vulnerable to the vagaries of state harassment and neighborly jealousy.

Furthermore, not only are foreigner men able to garner some earnings, they also choose to use these earnings to formalize marriages, occasionally, with South African women, the import of which I will discuss in a moment. It is no surprise then that black South African men—overwhelmingly unemployed, poor, and unmarried—feel enraged and cheated out of the promises that democracy was supposed to bring. In a context of widespread unemployment where low earnings also hinder the solidification of intimate relationships through marriage, non-nationals' employment and marriage to South African women is an obvious source of frustration and jealousy. Their frustration and jealousy finds its voice in the constant critique that foreigners “come to take our women and our jobs.” However, at issue is not simply work and love.

It is a well-worn trope that foreigners plagued by police harassment and political insecurity would seek out marriages with local women to solidify their claims to the polity. However, this does not answer why South African women would agree to be “taken.” I argue that, in a strange reversal, black South African women marry foreign men to gain access to adult status, social inclusion, and, ultimately, a fuller form of citizenship within their own nation state. I contend that in contemporary South Africa full social citizenship includes an amalgam of newly available forms of state recognition and welfare provisioning undergirded by other forms of social belonging and adult personhood that are unavailable to poor black women and men in the present moment. Thus, as women rework the meaning and access to these various spheres of belonging through their intimate relationships, they also serve to rework the very definition of citizenship in South Africa today. In short, the intimate domains of sex and reproduction are, today, a key site where political belonging is constituted and in this particular case, black South

African women are gaining political belonging through marriage to foreign men. Nonetheless, the forms of inclusion women gain in these trans-national marriages comes at the price of other forms of marginalization and exclusion that cannot be overlooked. These tradeoffs reveal the limits of current redefinitions of citizenship.

Point Partnerships

The experiences of these women are shaped by the context in which they live. The Point neighborhood is a highly heterogeneous space and is known for a high concentration of non-nationals. The Point has been one of the few spaces in Durban where immigrants can safely live and work. As such, there is a high concentration of non-nationals living alongside native South Africans. Critically, in terms of shaping ideas of belonging, the Point is considered a transitory neighborhood in which few people lay claim to long-term residence and ownership. This enhances feelings of mistrust amongst community members and overall there is very little sense of neighborhood solidarity. On the other hand, it also mitigates internal discord over “insider” and “outsider” identities as found in other heterogeneous urban spaces such as Alexandra in Johannesburg. Thus, when anti-immigrant attacks did take place in Point in 2015, the instigators were not from within the neighborhood, but from the townships beyond.

The woman I worked with met their husbands—at work, in their buildings, through friends—because they were living in this neighborhood. Many of the women did not like the neighborhood because of its high density and high crime rate and said it was not a place they wished to raise children. However, because of the trans-national nature of their union, they had to continue to live in the neighborhood both to be closer to their husband’s work and out of concerns of safety. Though there was still discrimination in the Point, there was greater tolerance in the presence of so many non-nationals and those who chose to live among them.

The women in this chapter comprise a sub group of 12 women out of my larger group of interlocutors. The women hail from a mix of South African Zulu and Xhosa backgrounds. The majority of them (11) are married to immigrants from Burundi and converted to their husband's religion of Islam. The twelfth is married to a Christian Tanzanian. The women range in age from 25-35, as do their husbands. Their husbands predominantly arrived between 2006 and 2010. Most of the women knew one another from attending Madrasa classes together. There is also a close-knit Burundian immigrant network of which their husbands are a part and some of the families socialize together.

Burundian migrants to South Africa are a small percentage of total immigrants. The UN estimated a total of 5,227 in South Africa in 2015 (2015). Furthermore, Muslims comprise only 2.5% of the population of Burundi. However, due to a disproportionate level of political ascendance among the Muslim population in Burundi, many more Muslims have felt the effects of the political turmoil of the early 2000s and are immigrated. For those that come to South Africa, many seek out Durban as a place to reside, in part, because there is a large, centralized, Muslim population and a mosque within the Point neighborhood. The climate is also more temperate than Johannesburg or Cape Town.

Citizenship, Personhood, Belonging

This chapter makes important contributions to scholarship on migration and marriage. For my purposes, the bulk of this scholarship can be broken up into two strains. The first involves men who migrate from poorer countries to wealthier countries in order to support marriages and wives they have left in their country of origin (for Africa this includes: Cole and Groes 2016; Hannaford 2017; Ikuomola 2015; Mercer Page and Evans 2008). My respondents were well aware of the possibility that they could be secondary wives to a primary marriage their

husbands had in their natal country. They spent a great deal of energy corresponding with in-laws and members of the sending community in an attempt to confirm the existence of these other families. To date, none have been revealed.

The second, larger, strain of scholarship pertains to women who migrate and marry men in a wealthier receiving country (For Africa: Cole 2014a-c; Cole and Groes 2016. For other locations: Constable 2003; Faier 2009; Freeman 2011; Fresnoza-Flot 2017; Sirijit 2013; Sirijit and Angeles 2013). Despite the relatively larger size of this strain scholarship, a far smaller number of studies focus on the inner-workings of the marriages and, notably for me, the status change that the spouses native to the receiving country enjoy (Cole 2014a-c; Faier 2009; Fresnoza-Flot and Merla 2018). Further, as Dahles (2009) and others have noted, research on transnational (and binational) marriage overwhelmingly looks at the experiences of women with only a few exceptions (e.g. Lafferty and Maher 2014; Thompson, Pattana and Suriya 2016) however these are interested in men from wealthier countries to poorer ones.

This chapter is also predominantly concerned with the experience of women. However, in this case women are the indigenes of a (comparatively) wealthier receiving country who choose to marry a reviled foreigner man. While issues of belonging, exclusion, power, economics, and affect pervade all of this scholarship, the differences of gender, race, and origin in my case have profound implications for how these couples navigate their joint projects of social reproduction.

At stake in discussions of citizenship are peculiarities about the ways in which it is operating in South Africa today. In 2014, when I asked my friend, Sthembile, a longtime political activist, what she wished for in her life, she said simply, “a job where I can be able to get a salary that will be enough to support myself and my family.” It matters that Sthembile’s greatest wish was for a job *to support her family*. Her desire was articulated not simply a matter

of survival but as a concern of social reproduction. Sthembile was not simply concerned with preventing hunger or cold, illness or death she was concerned that her parents have security in their old age or that her children could go to a good school. In short, she envisioned a job as a means to shoring up the relationships that were important to her life. It was insecurity in this reproduction that led Sthembile and other black women like her to say that they felt excluded from citizenship in the new South Africa.⁴

How is such a thing possible? In one sense, the question of what is the meaning of citizenship in South Africa was answered in 1994 when democratic transition replaced minority white rule with universal suffrage. The new constitution—globally recognized as one of the most progressive and inclusive guiding documents—offered to all citizens a radical expansion of rights including the right to non-discrimination on the basis of race, gender, sexuality, age, culture, in addition to socioeconomic rights to housing, health care, food, water, and social assistance. This was the guiding principle of a better life for all- a rainbow nation of tolerance and shared prosperity.

Unfortunately, in the democratic moment, the majority of South Africans are overwhelmingly poor. Not simply poor, but lacking the very basic housing, health care, food and water the new constitution guaranteed. The rapid success of a small but highly visible black middle and upper class fuels the feeling for many that they have been left out of the promises of liberation. In other words, the supposedly universalist character of liberal citizenship was deeply exclusionary of the very persons it purported to include. Despite the intensity of discrimination

⁴ In the past two decades, there has been an efflorescence of scholarship on the “crisis of social reproduction.” In Africa, this scholarship centers around youth unable to transition to adulthood see Alber, van der Geest, & Whyte 2008; Christiansen, Utas & Vigh 2006; Classen 2013; Cole & Durham 2008; Comaroff & Comaroff 2004; Hansen 2005; Hunter 2010; Mains, Hadley & Tessema 2013, 2007; Masquelier 2013, 2005; Mbembe 2008 [2001]; Prince 2006; Roth 2008; Vasconcelos 2010; Vigh 2006; Weiss 2004). I am not just concerned with adulthood as it affects social reproduction, but social reproduction as it shapes people’s notions of citizenship. I also join with Jones (2009) to emphasize that blockages should not be taken as stasis but should provoke scholars to attend to how people forge alternative means or ways to work around the blockage.

against foreigners both socially and politically, it would be incorrect to assume that the lines of demarcation between deserving insiders and threatening outsiders lie solely along national borders. Indeed, short of deportation, many poor South African citizens suffer similar exclusions: denial of legal status and documentation; harassment, arrest, and detention; and obstructed access to constitutional rights, state services, and legal due process (Landau 2011).⁵ The state and popular marginalization of poor South Africans leaves them in a tenuous position vis-a-vis their own citizenship.⁶ This has led one scholar to claim, “[the poor] are considered to be less than fully entitled members of the South African polity. What separates non-nationals from citizens is the degree to which exclusion is both bureaucratically institutionalized and socially legitimate” (Landau 2011:8).

To understand the effect of women’s kinshipping labor on producing their citizenship requires a definition of citizenship that goes beyond simply legal enfranchisement. I use citizenship to include a broader sense of national belonging and social personhood that takes the nation state to be one in many nested and overlapping layers of belonging. These may include space-based, local communities, ethnic or racial identity groups, or supra-national groupings all of which comprise citizenship (Avineri and Shalit 1992; Daly 1993; Marshall 1950; Phillips 1993). Thus, citizenship here is conceived of as “multi-layered” or constituted and negotiated within these various spheres or layers, each within their own context (Yuval-Davis 1999).

⁵ Notably, police target people for deportation on the basis of appearance (darkness/lightness of skin), language, and documentation. Using this profile, a not insignificant number of South Africans belonging to linguistic minorities have been deported as well.

⁶ Statements such as this one is not to overlook the fact that South Africa’s investments in poverty alleviation are higher than any other developing country (Ferguson 2015). However, despite enormous spending in cash transfers, education, and housing construction, South Africa remains a global leader in inequality measurements (World Bank 2016). Key assets such as profitable land, quality education, and integrated housing remain out of reach for poor people, who make up an increasing proportion of the country (Gelb 2008).

Belonging to these groups, in Feldman's terms, is achieved via the possession of immutable (gender, race, nationality) and mutable (class, language) characteristics that often underlie regulatory categories; as well as through personal actions (caring for elderly kin or sending nieces and nephews to school) that shape emotional attachments and mutual obligation (2016). Once more, citizenship as a social process, is rendered visible.

In this chapter, a key component of belonging is belonging as fostered through the creation and the maintenance of social relationships—the meeting of obligation, the practice of social reproduction. Here I am concerned with spheres of belonging and social personhood that cohere around the family and are cross-cut by race, gender, and class. I focus on black women's belonging to a kin group or network of relationships of obligation with blood and non-blood relations, belonging in a cultural group—here both Xhosa and Zulu, and to the larger nation of South Africa.

In the post-apartheid moment, while women gained political franchise and access to an abstract notion of rights, they lost previously available means of social reproduction and social belonging, namely marriage and work. Thus, at the same moment that capital and regulation have been privatized, so too have the paths to social and political belonging been privatized. By this I mean, they are mediated and negotiated at the micro political scale of the interpersonal and the intimate. In short, it is in the space of intimate relationships that people are actually creating citizenship.

Marriage, Personhood, Belonging

In order to understand why someone like my friend Zandi would choose to marry a foreigner and submit herself to various forms of personal and political violence, requires a more robust definition of what exactly full social citizenship entails. A definition that accounts for the

critical work done at the scale of interpersonal, intimate relationships such as that between Zandi and Touissant. It also requires situating this work as part of larger shifts in the political economy of intimacy. Though the contours have changed in critical ways across the last century, black women's status in these three spheres—kin group, cultural group and nation—has been mediated by the institutions of marriage and wage labor.

Among Zulu and Xhosa people, marriage marks a critical part of the social transition from adolescence to fully recognized adulthood with the accompanying forms of respect and responsibility (Liebenberg 1994; Cook 1931; Guy 1990). By creating an *umuzi* (*umzi*) or separate household, sons become *umnumzana* the head of household, a man of worth and status (Hunter 2010). These men fulfill their obligation—to their living family and to their ancestors—to continue the lineage through marriage to a *umakoti* (bride/daughter in law) who in turn is obligated to care for her husband and mother in law and the necessary children.

Prior to colonialism, such marriages were solidified through the exchange of gifts, the most notable being the *ilobolo* or bridewealth of cattle given from the family of the husband to the family of the bride. However, since the early 20th century, settler land dispossession reduced fathers' capacity to raise and give cattle for sons' marriages. Instead, an increasing dependency on cash drove sons into a wage economy hungry for labor. *Ilobolo* and the marriages it solidified became tied to son's earnings through the migration to cities, upending gendered and generational hierarchies.

In the segregationist and apartheid eras, black women's national belonging was severely limited and linked to the status of working men. Though men were desired in cities for their labor, successive white governments sought to limit men's claims to urban life granting them only temporary residence in the city and confining them to be housed in single-sex hostels. The

critical work of social reproduction—birthing and raising of children, growing of food, caring for the elderly, and honoring the ancestors—was done by women living on rural reserves. By virtue of their waged labor, black men gained partial membership—the membership available to them—in the polity. Black women, by contrast, were barred from entering the city legally as workers and in a colonial reworking of customary law, were labeled as legal minors, unable to own property, retain custody of their children, or move without the consent of their husband or tribal elders.

Women’s labor was critical to the functioning of the migrant labor system and enabled men’s entrance into the polity and retention of their belonging in their kinship system and ethnic homeland. In the virtual absence of men, women translated men’s wages sent home into care for the children and elderly, built houses, produced food, and met the cultural and kinship obligations of the *umuzi*. Though long criticized for fostering marital instability, the migrant labor system fostered what some have termed a “patriarchal bargain” where as long as men sent home a sufficient proportion of their wages, women were willing to work for the *umuzi* and both could enjoy the heightened status of *umnumzana* and *umakoti* (Kandiyoti 1988; Moodie with Ndatshe 1994). Men’s familial role was marked not through their physical presence, but through the *ilobolo* they had paid and the remittances they sent home to the family, what Hunter has come to call “provider love” in which sentiment is given substance through material care (2010: 16).

At democratic transition, black women gained the most in terms of formal political belonging. In addition to obtaining the vote, there was widespread recognition of the structural forms of gender discrimination that had been built into the country’s working. There was a nation-wide commitment to encouraging women’s participation in government and addressing

the inequalities of the past from a particularly gendered perspective (Hassim 2005).

Unfortunately, much of the progress took the form of newly enshrined legal rights and very little substantive redistributive gender change (Hassim 2005). Women have remained the primary caregivers of children, however, the historical means of supporting those children—waged work, husband, or husband's kin—are no longer available, making the security of poor black women especially tenuous. Thus, what women can and do expect from their intimate relationships with men has dramatically changed.

Intimacies in an Age of Insecurity

In 2014, the group of 12 black African women whose experiences frame this chapter, stood out from the many other women I met first, because their children shared the same father and, second because they had married the father of their children both through customary *ilobolo* and an Islamic Nikah ceremony. Though there are colloquial evaluations of the relative virtues of foreign men—Malawian's are good lovers, Nigerians are rich and powerful, Tanzanians are family men—marriage between South Africans and foreigners remains uncommon for all the aforementioned reasons. Thus, I was surprised to encounter this tightly-knit group of transnational spouses—united because their spouses all came from Burundi and many knew one another and because in keeping with both domestic and Burundian custom the women had converted to their husband's religion and attended Madrasa together.

When I asked the women to describe the origins of their relationship, their stories all began with an outpouring of frustration and criticism of the local men they had dated. The women both spoke from their own experience and drew upon circulating tropes of the absent black father to make their arguments more legible. Many friends and sisters like Zandi's friend in the opening vignette who had children by multiple fathers who did not offer support. One woman

summed it up well when she said, “I don't know what kind of men are these [local] men. Because I don't understand how can a man be able to take a plate of food and eat and they don't know what their child is eating.” To eat for one's self is a criticism that cuts to the heart of moral personhood. This selfishness of men she saw as a violation of the sanctity of fatherhood. She went on to complain that men were not only *financially* absent, but though they were not working, they remained *physically* absent, as they had been during labor migration. She bemoaned the embarrassment her daughters felt when their schoolmates teased them for not having a father. “You can be responsible and you don't have the money.” She said, “At least he should show his children that they have a father.”

Their husband's different orientation to family was a key distinction many women cited in their decision to pursue the relationship. Thuli was one of the women who had been quite reluctant to date a foreigner, due to the derision she felt in the community. However, her experiences with local men gave her different terms on which to evaluate the relationship.

We are able to stay together as a family. What I saw different about him from other South African man is that his children always come first. Other South African make their children a last priority. With him I know whatever happens his children will always be his first priority.

One of the most important priorities was that foreign men chose to put their earnings towards the payment of *inhlawulo* and *ilobolo*. While the exact amounts of these ritual payments are negotiated between families, they are sizeable investments, many times the monthly income of even the most successful of the foreigner husbands I knew. For example, monthly rent for a flat for the family would cost about R4500 in 2014. The *inhlawulo* payment for Zandi's first child was R6000. This payment had to be completed before negotiations over *ilobolo* could begin with the final amount totaling somewhere in the range of R50,000-R70,000. As scholars over time have noted, this bridewealth payment is not uni-directional but part of a larger

exchange between families that takes place over the course of many years (Comaroff 1980). However, that exchange was complicated by the cultural differences between the bride and groom's family and the lack of space and accommodation in the Point neighborhood to enable the kind of celebratory gathering that would usually take place in the rural areas. This is all to say that a primary rationale for women choosing to marry foreigner men is that foreigner men had the means to marry them and would use that money for marriage.

The symbolic import of formalizing marriage for the women I knew cannot be overstated. Finding a man who will pay for *ilobola* is equivalent to winning the social lottery (Hunter 2006 Rice 2015). The payment of bridewealth is a signal both of the social value of the woman and of the good work her family did in raising her. By getting married, women met a primary kin obligation as daughter and sister—sister because theoretically, brothers can use their sister's *ilobolo* to formalize their own marriages.⁷ Further, she ensured that her children would be a legitimate part of a lineage, thereby appeasing her ancestors. Movement into the role of married woman gave these women the status of moral adult personhood, though tempered by discrimination against their spousal choice. In doing so, it gave them access to a form of belonging that had been inaccessible in recent decades.

Foreign men's allocation of money was not simply important economically but was also critical for its indication of emotional commitment. In South Africa, two competing ideologies operate simultaneously in regards to the relationship between love and money (Thomas and Cole 2009). The first, which is more common to people in this room envisions love and money as existing in "hostile worlds" in which the presence of one negates the possibilities of the other (Zelizer 2005). This was in operation when Sthembile was concerned about being accused of

⁷ Theoretically, the bridewealth resources for a girl child is to be used by brothers in their own marriage transactions, though this rarely happens except among very wealthy families today.

being a prostitute for dating a foreigner. In the second, money, or economic support are an important constitutive part of love. Using this orientation, though they recognize the barriers *ilobolo* creates for formalizing marriage South African women argue that the practice is absolutely critical to the demonstration and creation of love. Unless they paid *ilobolo*, women claimed, how could they know that men truly loved them and how could they be inspired for their love to grow (Yarbrough 2016). Using this second set of logics, the women I knew argued that how their foreigner husbands spent money—on bridewealth, on food, on the children—demonstrated the greater love they had for their wives and family and brought about greater love from the women in return.

The good character of their husbands was not just demonstrated through their spending habits, but also through their honesty. “Why Touissant?”, I asked Zandi. “Awweeeee,” she giggled, “you know mens, they lie. Me, I don’t like someone who thinks he is big and tells stories...and Touissant don’t lie. He don’t lie.” Another woman, Maya, regaled a story of a previous boyfriend who always left her waiting saying, “I’m coming, I’m coming”, but never turned up. She said she came to expect that nothing he said was true. When she first met her Burundian husband, he charmed her by being 20 minutes *early*.

The most critical form of honesty for all of the women was fidelity. They spoke disparagingly about the proclivity of the native men they knew to sleep with multiple women. In part, this was an issue of sexual loyalty, of no small import in a country with such a high AIDS rate. But also at stake was a division of resources. If men were with other women, it meant some of their money was going elsewhere. The women I knew were relieved to not have the conflicts that infidelity brought on. “We do fight,” Maya said, “but never one day do we fight about a lady. If he is cheating, (she said laughing) he is doing it so nicely that I can’t see anything, ever.”

More important than the act of infidelity, for Maya, was that she did not feel the effects of divided attention or resources.

As they talked about their foreign husbands' fidelity, the women made a fascinating cultural shift. They described their husbands' actions as embodying *inhlonipho*, or respect (Finlayson 2002; Soga 1932; Hunter 1961 [1936]). This is a critical concept of moral personhood that sits at the heart of what it means to be Zulu or Xhosa (Whooley 1975; Mayer 1972). Historically used to indicate acts of deference that upheld social hierarchies, often gendered, this pre-colonial concept became linked to specifically female sexual purity through Christian missionary influence (Hunter 2010). However, the women I knew used it to indicate a male commitment to marital *equality* in both conduct and communication. One woman, Maya explained:

“I went with him because saw his qualities, the way he treated me. Because in previous relationships that I was in, the people I was with, either they would cheat or did not treat me right. With him I saw that he was not the type that liked woman and he respected me. When we had a problem, he knew how to talk with me without fighting me. He knew how to humble himself and apologize.”

Here, critically, it was *men* who demonstrated deference and sensitivity and, notably non-native men. In this way, women like Maya took up ideas of conduct befitting a morally upstanding Zulu or Xhosa *woman* and laminated them onto their foreign husbands. I see this as part of a re-negotiation of marital meaning that has taken place as companionate marriage and spousal choice-- important means by which women assert a modern identity—have been knit together with so-called ‘traditional’ marriage forms (Abu-Lughod 1990; Burbank 1995; Hirsch 2003; Hirsch & Wardlow 2006; Rice 2016; Thomas & Cole 2009).

Love Talk

Explanations such as what I have just detailed that justify their marital choice through appeals to moral ideas such as fidelity, cultural obligation or respect where themselves political

acts for the women I knew. As in the opening vignette, these women were constantly asked to explain their justification for such a surprising marriage to a host of questioners, myself included. Thus, their answers were well-rehearsed and anticipated the accompanying judgements. When I asked Thuli how her family had responded to her relationship, she answered, “They were saying the things that most South Africans say about foreigners. That he wants to marry me because he wants to get an identity document and he wants to stay in the country, or he could just leave me, all those things.” Sthembile noted that her motivations were also questioned, “When people hear you are with a foreigner they always assume you with him cause you after his money and also that you had no other choice because no other person is interested in you.” In this context where arguments about the instrumentality of the marriage choice are seen to undermine the emotional sincerity, appeals to affection and attachment become all the more important. Notably, this critique of the mercenary African woman also has a long history that has been given academic credence (Ferguson 1999). In their choice of a foreign husband women face a complicated calculus that includes often a history of failed relationships with local men, the prospects of achieving social belonging through marriage and the economic support that came with that commitment. It is benefits such as these that allow women to endure the both anticipated and surprising hardships they faced due to their marital choice.

New Forms of Marginalization

By marrying a foreigner, I contend South African women gained a greater sense of belonging in the spheres of kinship and cultural expectation. However, these gains were not uncomplicated and they came at the expense of other forms of exclusion and marginalization. As Zandi said, “When I go to any office, I have to be prepared to fight. I have to fight because I know the treatment I am going to get is not nice.” The everyday forms of discrimination women

faced arose from assumptions about the relationship between Islam and racial identity. All of the women I knew had converted, usually from Christianity and, wore a hijab and often long tunics when they went out in the neighborhood. Muslims in South Africa are a small minority and Islam becomes ethnicized and in association with the groups in which it is more commonly practiced. In Durban, Islam is associated with the city's large Indian population. The women I knew, all of whom were black South Africans, presented an unusual union of black bodies and Muslim dress that onlookers were at pains to comprehend.



Figure 7.1: The dress of Muslim respondents as compared to their peers

The first assumption people made was that the women I knew were themselves foreigners. When running errands in town they faced sneers on the sidewalk, rude shopkeepers, or taxi drivers who would not give them change. Much of the derision came from fellow South African women. “I will get in the taxi”, Zodwa said, and the women will be pulling up their face and will say to their friend in Zulu “aren’t they hot in all those clothes? Maybe that is why they

are so smelly, they are always sweating.” Zodwa, had an arsenal of swift retorts she often used to demonstrate her cultural and linguistic comprehension as well as her married status, “My hair is so much cleaner than in my *isicholo*.” She would reply in Zulu, speaking of the circular hat exclusively worn by married Zulu women.⁸ Women with frustration about how quickly after their response, such mocking would shift to nervous laughter and exclamations of “*ungumngane wami, ungu sisi wami!*” (you are my friend, my sister).” Zandi and Zodwa criticized what they saw as the “small mindedness” of their kinswomen, saying ““I am no more your friend than five minutes before. You need to know that I am *from here* for you to treat me better?”

A second misperception was that the women were poor and had dressed in Islamic clothes to come to the city to beg. On Fridays, some black South African women would come to town, dressed in hijab for the occasion, to take advantage of the practice of Zakat or alms-giving to poor Muslims. Zodiwa, who worked in town in a predominantly Indian neighborhood by one of the oldest Mosques, hated patronizing local businesses for this reason. One day she had gone to buy lunch and as she arrived at the counter to place her order, the Indian shopkeeper took a R2 coin out of the zakat drawer, brusquely gave it to her and told her to go.

The insult of such assumptions was threefold. First was the presumption that their conversion to Islam was insincere. My respondents spoke at length about their choice to convert and cover themselves. They took hours out of their week to attend Madrasa classes and Zodiwa was proud to be one of the teachers. They took their commitment to Islam very seriously and the suggestion that their covering was a mere ploy to gain resources was quite hurtful. Second was the insinuation that they were so poor that they would beg, an act they found humiliating. All of the women struggled to make ends meet, but found the idea of begging and particularly begging

⁸ Zodiwa and Zandi related these stories to me in a mix of Zulu and English, knowing my understanding of both. Here, they spoke in English, though the original comment would have been made in Zulu.

through the deceptive appropriation of a sacred practice to be disgraceful. The third insult was the suggestion by fellow-Muslims, and particularly Indians, that they were somehow lesser than sisters-in-faith. There is a longstanding antipathy between black South Africans and Indian South Africans.⁹ Black South Africans often complain that Indians look down upon them and mistreat them. That the shopkeeper Zodwa encountered assumed she was a beggar instead of a paying customer only fed into larger racial divides. She felt that as a Muslim sister she should have been treated with respect, but because of her black skin she was presumed to be a deceitful African and was brushed off as an unwanted nuisance.

The particular conflation of Islam with Indian-ness in Durban also led to problems within the women's own cultural groups. Once they dispelled the assumptions that they were foreigners themselves or impersonating believers to attract resources, their decision to convert, even when sincere, attracted ridicule. Other black South Africans accused them of being disloyal to their culture and to their race by appropriating what they deemed as "Indian culture." Because of the aforementioned racial strife between Indian and black South Africans, practicing "Indian culture" was viewed as defecting and seen as implying Zulu or Xhosa culture was not good enough for them.

It is critical to situate the post-apartheid anti-immigrant sentiment in a longer history of South African politics wherein the creation of "insiders" and "outsiders" along the lines of race, class or geographic residence was a critical part of the functioning of the polity. The violence of the last two decades is not simply a moment of zealous nationalism. "The nation" has long been a body that could be contaminated by "outsiders"—be they nationally native or foreign and the welfare of "insiders" has been premised on the exclusion of a differentially defined "alien." The

⁹ The scholarship on this is vast. For a sampling see: Bonachich 1973; Edwards and Nuttall 1990; Freund 1995; Hemson 1977; and Thiara 1999.

present form this “outsider” takes is the African non-national. Thus concerns about marriage between non-nationals and South Africans must be understood as part of a much broader resistance to mixing—between ethnic groups, across races, across class that pervades South Africa. This resistance is not solely an issue of xenophobia—or the construction of the stranger as a threat to society per Fourchard and Segatti 2015—but also part of a long discourse of anti-miscegenation whereby African immigrants are understood to embody differences in culture, ethnicity, and at times race that could sully the purity of the host community—akin to the pervasive concern about interracial marriage. Finally, also at issue is a class conflict wherein foreigners’ economic ability to formalize marriages—and access their symbolic capital—has provoked intense jealousy from South African men who feel that their poverty is a reminder that they have been left out of the promises that democracy was supposed to bring.

In addition to the feelings of anger that these accumulated forms of discrimination produced, women married to non-nationals also spoke of a deep sense of isolation. In part, this arose from friends or kin who did not accept their marriage and broke off ties with them. At other times, this was a product of living in the Point neighborhood that, despite its density, lacked a cohesive sense of community. Women complained that they did not fully know their neighbors or have deep friendships that were possible in the townships. Many of the women I knew did not work and stayed at home to care for young children. They often bemoaned what they felt were more rigid gender norms held by their husbands that discouraged their working or going out where they might interact with other men.

The social effects of this isolation were varied. At one level, it manifested as a sense of loneliness. Women complained that nobody came over to drink tea, or that they knew few people with whom they could leave their children when they went to the shops. The closeness of the

group of women who attended Madrasa together was an attempt to minimize these effects. At another level, it manifested as a lack of social support that left these women more vulnerable.

Though all of their husbands worked, the earnings were unreliable and there were many months when income did not cover expenses. In such moments, the economic support of kin or loans of money or food from friends and neighbors was the stuff of survival. Further, all of the women had experienced some form of physical violence from their husband. For Zandi, who had the support of her family and the presence of Touissant's extended kin in Durban, she could call on other family to assist her in creating a livable home situation. Alternatively, Zodwa, whose family had disowned her and who lacked affinal kin, felt disempowered by a dearth of advocates and trapped within a marriage that had not lived up to her expectations.

Conclusion

In April 2017, there was another spate of Xenophobic violence in South Africa this time accompanied by a PRO-xenophobia march. It is sadly not a phenomenon particularly unique to South Africa, though the history of apartheid does contribute a particular flavor. Yet, the repeated imagery of burned shops and angry machete-wielding South African men tells us very little about the lived experience of foreigners from Africa and those South Africans who just might love them. This chapter reveals that the decision to marry a foreigner that some South African women have made is a complicated one with high stakes.

Today, black South African women have access to a form of citizenship that their mothers and grandmothers could only fight for. They can retain custody of their children, own property even in the city, take an absentee father to court. They can vote for the highest office in the country and expect that a number of their leaders will look like them. None of the women I knew denied the import of the many benefits they enjoyed. But, they often bemoaned the

hardships that had accompanied them. Without access to marriage or jobs, women felt blocked in their ability to meet their obligations to their elders or their children. In short, their membership in the nation felt incomplete.

In this context, I have argued, marriage to a foreign man became a pathway to a fuller form of citizenship. These women gained the respected status of *umakoti* or bride and the financial and social partnership of a husband they could build a home with. The women and their children became legitimate members of their own and their husband's lineages. However, these marriages, which were the very condition of possibility for these women to enjoy these additional forms of belonging, also came at the price of other forms of exclusion. In exchange for some membership in some spheres, these women sacrificed ready recognition of themselves as South African and suffered accusations that their Islamic conversion was either insincere or a form of cultural defecting. These tradeoffs highlight the import of these negotiations for women like Zandi, for poor South Africans and for others across the world who are navigating what citizenship means in our global age.

Chapter 8 - Conclusion

The arc of this dissertation arose out of a persistent puzzle I confronted in South Africa in the early decades after democratic transition. Though discourses of rights and invocations of the constitution pervaded everyday conversations, time and again, poor black South Africans complained to me that they did not feel they were citizens of the new South Africa. They characterized citizenship as merely symbolic—the stuff of ID books and voting booths—or ideological—the content of political discourse—but found the term quite empty in describing their lived reality. At one level, I took this as an important critique of the many failures of the ruling party to live up to the promises of liberation. However, such an analysis was insufficient. There were many terms by which South Africans could and did criticize the ruling party. The choice of failed citizenship was clearly doing more for them.

The people with whom I interacted were overwhelmingly in their 30s or older. Transition was not in the distant past. They themselves, or their parents, remembered well what it was like to live under apartheid governance. They had experienced the continued efforts to render black South Africans citizens of independent bantustans and, subsequently, foreigners within the South African nation state. They had witnessed the rise and collapse of the tri-cameral system, the strange pseudo-representation offered up by a government floundering in its control. In short, they knew well the various forms that citizenship could take. Thus, their use of failed citizenship to describe their disappointment in their present condition, contained within it a historic residue of past struggles and prior imaginings of a future that never arrived. My own analysis of citizenship, then required attention to this history, to the ways in which citizenship was

negotiated between state actors and those living within the polity. As such, I turned to the period of the late 1950s and 1960s when the bureaucratic contours of apartheid citizenship—especially as they related to families—were being outlined and, summarily, contested.

Notably, my respondent's lamentations about their citizenship status centered around economics. But these were not mere objections to the rise in unemployment and consumer need that had been democracy's unfortunate sidekicks. Instead, these were concerns about how the economic situation rendered meeting family obligations challenging and oftentimes untenable. Instead of caring for their aging parents, people found themselves reliant on their pensions. Monies for school fees, uniforms, and stationary was hard to come by for one's own children, let alone for a niece or a nephew. Most critical for my friends was that marriages were all but impossible. The foundational process by which families solidified relationships of debt and dependency for multiple generations was unavailable.

This dissertation seeks to make sense of these concerns through an attention to the interrelatedness of citizenship, economy, and kinship. In each of these three areas, it takes a processual approach. Citizenship is not a singular status that is conferred by a nation state. Instead, it is layered and multifaceted. Citizenship involves the negotiation of multiple spheres of belonging that are frequently in flux. So, too is the economy. Here I have shown that economic relationships are not structured by a singular dominant logic. Instead, they are situated, mediated, and worked out in a dense clustering of everyday interactions. These most often take the form of negotiations of debt and dependency. Thus, at the heart of both citizenship and economy lie relations of kinship. These, too, are not possessed, but achieved, built, and maintained. I have used the term kinshipping to capture this sense of motion, and, most important, the labor required.

While the intertwining of citizenship, economy, and kinship impact many concerns of daily life, this dissertation has used the lens of child support as a means of revealing the ways in which politics and economy are built up through intimate interpersonal relationships. It has done so through an analysis of child support claims in the periods of the late 1950s and 1960s and the 2010s during which time South Africa experienced a dramatic political economic shift that altered intimate relationships, the availability of waged labor, and the category of citizenship. I have demonstrated that poor women's labors to secure resources for their families and themselves not only respond to, but actively construct livelihoods, economy, and the very meaning of citizenship. The previous chapters have revealed that through their kinshipping labor to press claims for support, women redefined obligations between men and women, persons and communities, citizens and the state.

The first chapter, "We have done everything right by our children," considered how women within three different race groups used the kinshipping process of public motherhood to shape their interactions with the 1960s welfare state. It revealed how welfare entitlements, economic position, and citizenship were closely tied to gendered and racial categories. However, the category of public motherhood at once capacious and particular offered a morally and politically potent means for poor women to negotiate their position.

Considering a very similar issue in the quite altered political economic landscape of the 2010s, the "Multiple Maternities" chapter focused on the slightly different kinshipping strategy of performances of motherhood. In this latter era, public motherhood as an identity no longer garnered political recognition or economic support. Instead it was the needs of children that attracted such resources. The chapter shows that in response, poor women had to reorient themselves to their deserving children through performances of motherhood that attended to the

very different maternal expectations of the various audiences upon which they pressed claims. It reveals that these performances of motherhood are the tenuous means by which poor women secured a livelihood and attained a neutered form of state recognition through the widespread child support grant.

The following chapter, “Problematic Paters,” reveals the ways in which the efficacy of kinshipping as a strategy for securing a livelihood and political positioning was always crosscut by ideologies of gender and race. Bringing the 1960s and 2010s into a single frame, the chapter shows the historical persistence of anxieties about the future of the South African nation that manifested as moral panics over purportedly deviant fathers. These moral panics had very different, though nevertheless profound, effects on poor father’s efforts to raise their children in these eras.

The “‘Maintenance’ of Family” chapter focuses on the Maintenance Court, a primary state mechanism for disciplining deviant fathers. In the 2010s, the Court was re-envisioned as a critical apparatus to lessen the state’s welfare expenditure on the many children who received the child support grant. In the process, court mandates would imbue absent fathers with financial and moral responsibility that were seen as the cornerstones of proper citizenship. The transformative potential of the court relied on the labor of mothers to initiate and continue a case. Yet, the chapter reveals that many women were either disappointed in or avoided the Court altogether because its processes thwarted the kinshipping projects they valued. Instead of making citizens or stable families, the court instead fostered discord and unstable forms of dependence that stymied women’s efforts to build new relationships.

The final chapter, “They come to take our women and our jobs,” reveals the critical role that marriage plays in achieving economic security and national belonging. Since democratic

transition, immigrants from the African continent have become the new category of reviled foreigner on which to pin the blame for economic scarcity. However, by marrying immigrant men, the chapter shows, South African women achieve economic support and full social citizenship within their own nation.

The arc of these chapters tracks the linkages between livelihoods, kinship, and citizenship as part of a contested field of political signification in South African history. The result is an important scholarly intervention. For as much as kinship scholars and feminist theorists have argued for the analytic integration of the domestic, economic, and political domains, their separation remains stubbornly persistent. Much of this arises out of the mid-twentieth century separation of scholarly subfields (kinship anthropology, economic anthropology, and political anthropology; family sociology, economic sociology, and political sociology) (Thelen and Alber 2018). This dissertation is part of the most recent wave of scholars to push for a re-integration (e.g. Schuster 2015 on economy; Thelen and Alber 2018 on politics). In contrast to these other scholars who focus on either, economics or politics, this dissertation integrates all three. However, my goal was not merely to demonstrate their interrelationship. Instead, this dissertation revealed the related processes by which each are brought into being. I have shown how through their kinshipping labors, women refigured the political economy and remade the meaning of citizenship.

The stakes of this intervention are not simply theoretical. As the puzzle that prompted this research reveals not only poor South Africans, but numerous others across the world are struggling to define what citizenship means in our global age. The import of its meaning is not small. In their Annual review of Anthropology article, Petryna and Follis propose that citizenship be understood as containing the “fault lines of survival” (2015). This dissertation sits at the heart

of such a project. I propose an understanding of citizenship that accounts for both intersectionality and relationality. We must attend to the forms of layered belonging negotiated through one's embodied and lived social location. Such a robust definition of citizenship must also attend to the ways in which spheres of belonging affect and are affected by their membership in other layers with differential political powers and often differential hegemonic political projects. Furthermore, we must not only understand these form of belonging as relational to one another but as social relationships that require work and reproduction to maintain. This dissertation shows how projects of social reproduction constitute contingent economic and political relationships that structure people's lives far more than any totalizing logic. In this way, citizenship cannot be understood as a binary of something that one does or does not have, but as a spectrum of statuses that are emergent and negotiated, but nonetheless critical to survival.

Chapter 9 - Epilogue

It was late afternoon and Odette was refusing to answer her mother's repeated phone calls. To be accurate, these were not phone calls that Odette could have picked up her phone to answer. They were missed call messages that a caller can send for free, without using cell phone air time, to ask the receiver to call them back. But Odette had no plan to call back. It was her birthday and she was embittered not only that her mother had taken so long to contact her, but that she made no monetary investment—be it a phone call, a gift, or a visit—to acknowledge Odette's special day. We sat on a makeshift couch assembled from stacked boxes and tucked blankets that dominated the single-room unit that was home to her, her five children and her long-term partner.

Odette leaned back against the wall and sighed audibly. She complained that life had been better before she re-encountered her mother at age 17. She had lived in a children's home since the time she was 6 and developed what she described as an independent, self-sufficient life. "People who grow up with their mothers and fathers don't know how to do things," she said. By 17 Odette had developed strong ties to a wealthy foster family who supported her schooling and she was poised to receive a volleyball scholarship to university. With her mother's arrival, Odette lost much of that support and instead was asked orient her life to maintaining her impoverished mother, a responsibility she never appreciated nor embraced.

As we talked, we heard running footsteps in the hall and calls of "Jamilla, Jamilla" the name of the pseudo-social worker who worked for a well-endowed historically white church that distributed resources such as groceries, clothes, or school supplies to neighborhood families.

That day she was handing out 30kg grocery parcels, which I helped Odette carry back up the rickety stairs to her room. With precision Odette stashed away the cans of fish and meat into back cupboards, out of sight from the hallway. To my surprise, she filled her empty tubs only part of the way with dried beans and rice and then set the remaining food aside. She laughed at my raised eyebrows and said that she would give the rest to Sheila, her next-door neighbor. Puzzled, I noted that Sheila, too, had received a grocery parcel, calculating in my head that Sheila had no more mouths to feed than Odette. “Yes,” Odette concurred, “but she needs the help, and, besides, she is family.”

Starting from the premise that kinship is something that one *does*, not something that one *has*, Odette’s decision to resist the literal and figurative calls of obligation from her birth mother while meeting obligations to her next-door neighbor revealed how, that day, Sheila was more of a family to Odette. This dissertation has explored the political economy of kinship in a context where high unemployment and economic insecurity has made marriage—one of the most formalized of kinship bonds—all but inaccessible for the majority of South Africans. Childbearing—another key kinshipping mechanism—is still available and oftentimes quite prized. While childrearing comes with great costs and labor, the woman without children remains pitied by her peers.

In this context of economic scarcity, to which South Africans are not newcomers, it is women who procure food when none is readily available, who assemble appropriate wardrobes out of hand-me downs or trades, or who secure the cash to pay school fees when nobody in the household is working. At the same time, the claims that women can make—and expect to be honored with any reliability—upon the fathers of their children are increasingly up for

negotiation. In response, the women with whom I worked assembled networks of support upon whom they could rely.

Odette and Sheila are notable because over the past decade they have formed a long association amidst a culture of disconnection. Another mixed-race woman like herself, Sheila's daughter was Odette's best friend back in her "wild days" of night clubbing and drug-dealing boyfriends. Sheila's daughter was killed in a robbery a few years ago around the same time Odette's eldest daughter was hit by a taxi. Ever since, the two women and their numerous dependents have "shifted together" moving from building to building, often living in proximate rooms.

Despite their shared experienced, there is little that would bond Sheila and Odette together at face value. Sheila's sons were still active in the drug trade and Odette sought to distance herself and her children from association with such activities. Though the sons occasionally brought in much needed money, Odette was critical of Sheila's "soft hearted" tolerance of their abusive behavior. Conversely, Sheila often called Odette a "lazy mother" and accused her of being negligent of her children's health needs. I mention these examples to highlight the ways in which the trust that Sheila and Odette cultivated in their relationship was fragile and not necessarily based in some form of enduring amity. Instead it took a great deal of work.

In addition to sharing her dry goods, Odette was the one of the pair who usually found their next living place, often sacrificing choice spots if there weren't two rooms. When she attended an aid society with her gaggle of children, the extra blankets and pillows she often garnered, she passed on to Sheila. In so doing, Odette positioned herself as a dutiful daughter to Sheila, both dependable and generous with her spoils. Twenty years Odette's senior, Sheila's

labors took a different form. If a social worker or police officer paid an unanticipated visit to the building and found Odette's children unattended, Sheila would claim responsibility for them. When the Muslim Aid society that supported Odette "caught" her in line at the Episcopal church's soup kitchen, Sheila told them that Odette had gone for her benefit. These labors, often discursive, she framed as a kind of maternal care through which she managed Odette's reputation in the neighborhood and re-established herself as a trustworthy custodian of knowledge about Odette's intimate domestic life.

Odette and Sheila's kinshipping work, essential to their survival in this relational economy, reveals the imbrication of intimate relationships and economic processes that anthropologists have long pondered. The assembly of these networks involved the cultivation of relationships of dependence in which women would be able to make claims upon others for resources. Such relationships were the result of persistent efforts of women to build social ties and to position themselves as particular kinds of persons, as well as to manage the claims made upon them. I have argued that this kinshipping labor can neither be understood as an economic appropriation of the family nor as the domestication of economic logic. Instead, I see both livelihoods and kin relations as being simultaneously produced through the work of becoming and enacting social personhood.

Further, in a context in South Africa where the security of one's social reproduction mark the contours of national belonging, this kinshipping labor takes on meaning at another scale. Though they gained formalized inclusion into the polity at democratic transition, poor black women and men, feel blocked from realizing the freedoms that liberation was supposed to bring. In response to a government that may acknowledge their challenges on paper, but has done little to address them in substance, South African women are making claims upon persons more likely

to heed their requests. In so doing, they are reshaping their place in the new nation and the very meaning of citizenship itself.

However, it is important to remember that relationships such as Odette and Sheila's are in motion, they are kinship in process. Such efforts must constantly be reinvigorated and refreshed. Obligations have varying timetables for their satisfaction. Further, though kinship entails obligation, these obligations can also be ignored. On the eve of my departure from South Africa, Odette and Sheila's building was closed and they were forced to once again "shift". This time, Odette leaped at the chance to occupy a large room with its own toilet and left Sheila to fend for herself. Soon after Odette went to visit her mother for the Easter holidays. When the phone rang this time, it was Sheila whose call went unanswered.

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