

“Do You Call Yourself a White Man?”

Nationalism, Criminalization of Interracial Sex, and the Policing of White Male (Hetero)sexuality in South Africa during Apartheid

Vengeance as legitimate aggression can yield tremendous pleasure, especially if it takes the form of a defense of moral purity.¹

In 1957, a nineteen-year-old colored domestic servant in Murraysburg, a small Afrikaner town in the Cape, informed her madam (female employer) that she had been assaulted in a garage by the town's deputy mayor, a seventy-year-old white man who for much of the previous eighteen years had also held the position of elder in the local Dutch Reformed Church. The madam, a married white woman who went to the same church and therefore knew the deputy mayor, told the domestic servant to inform her if he approached her again. Days later, while walking to her employer's home, the young woman was accosted by the deputy mayor, who whistled and beckoned her to join him, so “she ran into the house” and told her employer. The madam directed her to go back outside and stand by the front door while she watched from inside. The deputy mayor then made “an obscene gesture” and exposed himself, after which the madam angrily confronted him with an accusation in the form of a question: “Do you call yourself a White man?” She then contacted the police, who charged him with the sexual offense of having “enticed, elicited or importuned” a woman of color “to commit an immoral act.” He pleaded not guilty, but during his trial, the magistrate believed the women, both of whom testified. Ultimately the deputy mayor was found guilty of

1 Barrington Moore, *Moral Purity and Persecution in History* (Princeton, NJ, 2000), 11.

public indecency and sentenced to pay a fine or serve ten days in prison. By then, he had already resigned from his position as church elder.²

The deputy mayor is one of thousands of heterosexual white men convicted for seeking extramarital sexual contact with women of a different “race” in South Africa during the apartheid era (1948–94), characterized by the white supremacist policy of separate and unequal development of the four official racial categories of white, native, colored, and Indian (hereafter, the three so-called nonwhite races are collectively referred to as “blacks”).³ In 1950, the ruling Afrikaner National Party passed the Immorality Amendment Act, which prohibited interracial “illicit carnal intercourse” (extramarital sex) between “Europeans” (whites) and “non-Europeans” (people of other races).⁴ In 1957, the law, renamed the Immorality Act, was expanded to also make it illegal to even *attempt* to have interracial sexual intercourse outside marriage.⁵ While technically gender neutral, the legislation was crafted with the specific intent of stopping white heterosexual men from crossing the color line for sex. Between 1950 and 1985, the year it was repealed, at least nineteen thousand people were fully prosecuted for contravening the act (see table 1), and thousands more were arrested and either avoided trial or else had incomplete prosecutions. The application of the act inflicted hardship and humiliation on South Africans of both genders and all races; black women in particular suffered tremendous harm, as this paper demonstrates. However, white men composed the single largest category of individuals prosecuted, as well as convicted (see tables 1 and 2).

The systematic disciplining of heterosexual white men engaging in interracial sex was exceptional in European settler colonial societies where the interrelation of sexuality, gender, race, and class typically ensured that settler men could gain sexual access to colonized women with relative impunity. As scholars have extensively demonstrated, interracial sexual relationships between colonizing men and colonized women were fundamental to the making of empire.⁶ European

2 “Cape Deputy-Mayor Faces Immorality Charges,” *Star*, November 22, 1957. See also “Deputy Mayor (70) in Court,” *Argus*, November 22, 1957; “Karoo Town Elder Gives Evidence in Own Defence,” *Argus*, November 23, 1957; “Witnesses Recalled in Case against Elder,” *Argus*, November 25, 1957; and “Found Guilty of Public Indecency,” *Argus*, November 26, 1957.

3 Racial terminology is unavoidably problematic when it comes to South Africa’s past or present. This essay uses the official terminology of the apartheid era. In 1950, the National Party government passed legislation decreeing there were three official racial categories: white, native (indigenous black Africans), and colored (mixed race). Indians and other ethnic groups, such as Cape Malays, were initially categorized as subgroups of coloreds. Later the government added “Indian” as an official category. Population Registration Act (Act No. 30 of 1950), accessed November 6, 2021, https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Population_Registration_Act,_1950.

4 Immorality Amendment Act, 1950 (Act No. 21 of 1950), accessed November 1, 2021, https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Immorality_Amendment_Act,_1950.

5 Immorality Act, 1957 (Act No. 23 of 1957), accessed November 1, 2021, https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Immorality_Act,_1957.

6 The literature is too vast to cite in full. Ann Laura Stoler’s work has been especially influential, including *Race and the Education of Desire* (Durham, NC, 1995) and *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule* (Berkeley, CA, 2002). See also Ronald Hyam, *Empire and Sexuality: The British Experience* (Manchester, 1990), and the analysis by Mark T. Berger, “Imperialism and Sexual Exploitation: A Response to Ronald Hyam’s ‘Empire and Sexual Opportunity,’” *Journal of Imperial and*

powers had divergent policies regarding interracial sexual liaisons; as Carina E. Ray emphasizes in a recent essay, context is key to understanding the different types of interracial sexual encounters that took place (rape, prostitution, marriage, and concubinage), the ideologies that shaped them, the systems devised to regulate them, and the categories of people “marked out” for regulation.⁷ Nevertheless, a similar trajectory of settler/subject sexual dynamics emerged across empires. At the outset of empire formation, imperial powers such as the Dutch in the Cape in the seventeenth century and the Danish in the Gold Coast in the eighteenth century permitted stable interracial unions between European men and indigenous women who could act as cultural intermediaries. Such relationships were useful for forging economic and political alliances with local peoples.⁸ After conquest of indigenous territory and before the importation of settler women, sex between European men and local and enslaved women was accepted by authorities because it helped stabilize and sustain the colonial male population, thereby strengthening colonial rule. Whether in marriages or relationships characterized by long-term cohabitation (concubinage), or through rape or the services of prostitutes, settler men had their domestic and sexual needs met by colonized women for centuries.

It was generally the case that formalization of colonial rule and the establishment of settler society fatally stigmatized stable unions between white men and colonized women. With the arrival of European women, regimes of bourgeois respectability took hold, and white prestige became increasingly tied to notions of racial purity and the maintenance of social distance from colonized peoples. The shift in settler attitudes and policy revealed not imperial confidence but rather anxiety about the ambiguities of racial categories, the porousness of the boundary separating ruler and ruled, and, crucially, the instability of colonial authority. “Redefinitions of sexual protocol and morality,” as Ann Laura Stoler observed thirty years ago, “emerged during crises of colonial control precisely because they called into question the tenuous artifices of rule *within* European communities and what marked their borders.”⁹ Accordingly, concubinage became socially unacceptable (though such relationships persisted, often clandestinely), and imperial and settler colonial powers frequently prohibited interracial marriage.¹⁰ The

Commonwealth History 17, no. 1 (1988): 83–89; Margaret Strobel, “Sex and Work in the British Empire,” *Radical History Review* 54 (1992): 177–86; Robert Young, *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture, and Race* (New York, 1995); John D’Emilio and Estelle Freedman, *Intimate Matters: A History of Sexuality in America*, 2nd ed. (Chicago, 1997); Durba Ghosh, *Sex and the Family in Colonial India: The Making of Empire* (Cambridge, 2006); and Carina E. Ray, *Crossing the Color Line: Race, Sex, and the Contested Politics of Colonialism in Ghana* (Athens, OH, 2015).

- 7 Carina E. Ray, “Interracial Sex and the Making of Empire,” in *A Companion to Diaspora and Transnationalism*, ed. Ato Quayson and Girish Daswani (Hoboken, NJ, 2013), 190–211, here 191.
- 8 Julia C. Wells, “Eva’s Men: Gender and Power in the Establishment of the Cape of Good Hope, 1652–74,” *Journal of African History* 39, no. 3 (1998): 417–37; Pernille Ipsen, “‘The Christened Mulatresses’: Euro-African Families in a Slave-Trading Town,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 70, no. 2 (2013): 371–98.
- 9 Ann Laura Stoler, “Making Empire Respectable: The Politics of Race and Sexual Morality in 20th-Century Colonial Cultures,” *American Ethnologist* 16, no. 4 (1989): 634–60, here 651, emphasis in original.
- 10 Such as in the French colony of Louisiana (1724) and the German colony of Tanganyika (1906). Jennifer M. Spear, “Colonial Intimacies: Legislating Sex in French Louisiana,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 60, no.

Table 1. Completed prosecutions for interracial “Illicit Carnal Intercourse,” 1950–85

	White Men	African Wom.	White Wom.	African Men	Col. Men	Col. Wom.	Indian Men	Indian Wom.	Total
1950–1956	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	3,422
1957–1960	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	3,355
	White Men and Wom.		African Men and Wom.		Colored Men and Wom.		Asiatics	Total	
1961	425		181		191		4	801	
1962	452		196		167		10	825	
	White Men	African Wom.	White Wom.	African Men	Col. Men	Col. Wom.	Indian Men	Indian Wom.	Total
Jan. 1963–Jun. 1963	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Jul. 1963–Jun. 1964	417	206	9	5	12	133	2	6	790
Jul. 1964–Jun. 1965	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Jul. 1965–Jun. 1966	462	248	17	12	10	147	4	6	906
Jul. 1966–Jun. 1967	671	338	18	8	20	264	11	20	1,350
Jul. 1967–Jun. 1968	36	59	1	2	3	49	1	2	153
Jul. 1968–Jun. 1969	591	300	21	6	11	234	9	12	1,184
Jul. 1969–Jun. 1970	543	216	18	12	8	208	8	7	1,020
Jul. 1970–Jun. 1971	543	296	19	15	13	195	16	11	1,108
Jul. 1971–Jun. 1972	365	177	17	10	11	132	6	8	726
Jul. 1972–Jun. 1973	253	156	13	6	4	53	3	5	493
Jul. 1973–Jun. 1974	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	344
Jul. 1974–Jun. 1975	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	325
Jul. 1975–Jun. 1976	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	351
Jan. 1977–Dec. 1977	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	365
	White Men	African Wom.	White Wom.	African Men	Men, Race N/A	Wom., Race N/A			Total
Jul. 1977–Jun. 1978	95	78	0	9	65	48			295
Jul. 1978–Jun. 1979	98	86	2	15	74	44			319
	White Men	African Wom.	White Wom.	African Men	White and Nonwhite				Total
Jul. 1979–Jun. 1980	85	58	1	11	70				225
Jul. 1980–Jun. 1981	96	68	0	9	44				217
Jul. 1981–Jun. 1982	68	57	1	5	55				186
Jul. 1982–Jun. 1983	63	46	2	5	25				141
Jul. 1983–Jun. 1984	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a				n/a
Jul. 1984–Jun. 1985	48	40	0	5	27				120
Jul. 1985–Jun. 1986	4	2	0	3	2				11

Total 19,032

Table 1. Source: *Statistics of Offences and of Penal Institutions* (Pretoria: Department of Statistics), 1950 to 1985. Various reported were: “arrests,” “charges,” “prosecutions underway” and “completed prosecutions.” Completed prosecutions were reported for most years under examination. Totals provided are incomplete because the National Party government did not report statistics for every year under examination. In addition, categories for data changed numerous times over the years and are therefore inconsistent (“Wom.” for women; “Col.” for Coloured; “White and Nonwhite” category excludes those identified as Black). Statistics were published by calendar year from 1949 to 1962, thereafter they are dated Jul. 1 to Jun. 30, except for 1977. There is an overlap in reported number of prosecutions between 1977 and 1978. Gender and race identifiers were not reported every year, and sometimes only partially. No statistics for prosecutions were published for the years Jan. 1 to Jun. 30, 1963, 1964–1965, 1973–1977 and 1983–84, and no statistics for convictions were published for the years Jan. 1 to Jun. 30, 1963, 1964–1965 and 1983–84. For years not included in official reports, numbers were obtained from *Hansard*, where they were provided as replies to questions put to the Minister of Justice. In some cases, numbers reported in parliament varied slightly from those provided by the Department of Statistics; when there was a discrepancy the latter’s numbers are used. Numbers for completed prosecutions in the eleven years from 1950 to 1960 are provided by Helen Suzman (PP) who obtained them from the government. *Hansard*, February 23, 1962, column 1534.

reverse, sex between white women and indigenous or enslaved men, was rarely permitted in colonial contexts. White men deployed legal and extralegal methods to prevent sexual contact, whether real or imagined, between members of these subordinated groups whose sexualities were closely and sometimes violently regulated.¹¹ A similar power asymmetry between genders and races was visible in sexual regulatory mechanisms operating in the metropole. In Nazi Germany, for instance, the Law for the Protection of German Blood and German Honor (1935) criminalized sex between so-called Aryan Germans and Jews, however the state dealt with men from the persecuted Jewish minority and their female “Aryan” lovers with particular brutality.¹²

Scholars have also shown that notwithstanding the new imperative to make empire respectable, colonial settler men’s sexual exploits with colonized women *outside* marriage continued to be tolerated.¹³ As A. Leon Higginbotham and Barbara Kopytoff argue in relation to seventeenth-century Virginia, elites “tended to wink at the casual liaisons of white men and black women.”¹⁴ Sexual assault was frequently ignored,

1 (2003): 75–98; Sean Andrew Wempe, *Revenants of the German Empire: Colonial Germans, Imperialism, and the League of Nations* (New York, 2019), 144.

- 11 In the southern United States during the latter half of the nineteenth century, for example, lynching became a primary means by which white men simultaneously reasserted power over newly freed African American men and reinforced the political and social subjugation of white women. Similarly, in southern African colonial contexts in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, indigenous men suffered repeated outbreaks of “black peril,” bursts of attacks by white men against African men under the pretext of protecting white womanhood from rape. On the southern United States, see Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, “‘The Mind That Burns in Each Body’: Women, Rape, and Racial Violence,” in *Powers of Desire: The Politics of Sexuality*, ed. Ann Snitow, Christine Stansell, and Sharon Thompson (New York, 1983), 328–49. Regarding black perils in southern Africa, see Charles van Onselen, *Studies in the Social and Economic History of the Witwatersrand, 1886–1914*, (Johannesburg, 1982), 205–74; Norman Etherington, “Natal’s Black Rape Scare of the 1870s,” *Journal of Southern Africa Studies* 15, no. 1 (1988): 36–53; John Pape, “Black and White: The ‘Perils of Sex’ in Colonial Zimbabwe,” *Journal of Southern African Studies* 16, no. 4 (1990): 699–720; Siegfried Huigen, “Blanke Angst voor Zwart Gevaar: De Ideologie van Jacob Lubs ‘Het Zwarte Gevaar’ (1913),” *Antipode* 1 (1993): 9–21; Henriëtte J. Lubbe, “The Myth of ‘Black Peril’: Die Burger and the 1929 Election,” *South African Historical Journal* 37, no. 1 (1997): 107–32; Jock McCulloch, *Black Peril, White Virtue: Sexual Crime in Southern Rhodesia, 1902–1935* (Bloomington, IN, 2000); Timothy Keegan, “Gender, Degeneration and Sexual Danger: Imagining Race and Class in South Africa, ca. 1912,” *Journal of Southern Africa Studies* 27, no. 3 (2001): 459–77; Jeremy Martens, “Settler Homes, Manhood and ‘Houseboys’: An Analysis of Natal’s Rape Scare of 1886,” *Journal of Southern African Studies* 28, no. 2 (2002): 379–400; and Oliver Phillips, “The ‘Perils’ of Sex and the Panics of Race: The Dangers of Interracial Sex in Colonial Southern Rhodesia,” in *African Sexualities: A Reader*, ed. Sylvia Tamale (Cape Town, 2011), 101–15.
- 12 Patricia Szobar, “Telling Sexual Stories in the Nazi Courts of Law: Race Defilement in Germany, 1933 to 1945,” *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 11, no. 1/2 (2002): 131–63.
- 13 Hall, “‘The Mind That Burns in Each Body’”; Hilary Beckles, *Natural Rebels: A Social History of Enslaved Black Women in Barbados* (New Brunswick, NJ, 1989); Pamela Scully, “Rape, Race, and Colonial Culture: The Sexual Politics of Identity in the Nineteenth-Century Cape Colony, South Africa,” *American Historical Review* 100, no. 2 (1995): 335–59; D’Emilio and Freedman, *Intimate Matters*; Martha Hodes, *White Women, Black Men: Illicit Sex in the Nineteenth-Century South* (New Haven, CT, 1997); Deborah Gray White, *Ar’n’t I a Woman? Female Slaves in the Plantation South*, rev. ed. (New York, 1999); Doris Garraway, *The Libertine Colony: Creolization in the Early French Caribbean* (Durham, NC, 2005); Ghosh, *Sex and the Family in Colonial India*; Peggy Pascoe, *What Comes Naturally: Miscegenation Law and the Making of Race in America* (Oxford, 2009); Emmanuelle Saada, *Empire’s Children: Race, Filiation, and Citizenship in the French Colonies* (Chicago, 2012), 156–59.
- 14 A. Leon Higginbotham and Barbara Kopytoff, “Racial Purity and Interracial Sex in the Law of Colonial and Antebellum Virginia,” in *Interracialism: Black-White Inter-marriage in American History, Literature, and*

Table 2. Convictions for interracial “Illicit Carnal Intercourse,” 1950–85

	White Men	African Wom.	White Wom.	African Men	Col. Men	Col. Wom.	Indian Men	Indian Wom.	Total
1950	122	59	13	5	6	58	2	0	265
1951	127	68	6	11	2	57	1	1	273
1952	143	89	9	9	6	56	0	1	313
1953	122	61	10	7	3	55	1	2	261
1954	181	85	7	6	2	77	2	0	360
1955	158	78	6	4	3	63	1	2	315
1956	148	63	11	6	7	67	3	0	305
1957	182	72	7	6	13	80	0	3	363
1958	234	87	12	10	7	104	0	3	457
1959	299	114	12	11	6	105	1	3	551
1960	214	90	10	13	8	85	3	3	426
1961	199	79	1	14	4	91	0	1	389
1962	196	82	10	9	4	77	1	3	382
Jan. 1963–Jun. 1963	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Jul. 1963–Jun. 1964	204	107	1	3	3	60	0	4	382
Jul. 1964–Jun. 1965	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Jul. 1965–Jun. 1966	204	148	4	7	4	80	1	4	452
Jul. 1966–Jun. 1967	349	180	11	5	5	126	4	13	693
Jul. 1967–Jun. 1968	22	33	1	1	1	19	1	1	78
Jul. 1968–Jun. 1969	336	188	9	4	5	121	6	10	679
Jul. 1969–Jun. 1970	284	123	7	4	3	87	3	4	515
Jul. 1970–Jun. 1971	252	144	10	7	9	81	8	4	515
Jul. 1971–Jun. 1972	184	100	9	7	4	59	1	2	366
	White Men and African Wom.	African Men and White Wom.	White and Nonwhite	Total					
Jul. 1972–Jun. 1973	224	4	76	304					
Jul. 1973–Jun. 1974	196	4	85	285					
Jul. 1974–Jun. 1975	167	2	93	262					
Jul. 1975–Jun. 1976	173	13	100	286					
Jul. 1976–Jun. 1977	148	17	72	237					
	White Men	African Wom.	White Women	African Men	White and Nonwhite	Men, Race N/A	Wom., Race N/A	Total	
Jul. 1977–Jun. 1978	82	67	0	7	n/a	53	42	251	
Jul. 1978–Jun. 1979	86	75	1	8	n/a	59	36	265	
Jul. 1979–Jun. 1980	76	54	1	10	58	n/a	n/a	199	
Jul. 1980–Jun. 1981	79	63	0	6	40	n/a	n/a	188	
Jul. 1981–Jun. 1982	62	52	0	4	42	n/a	n/a	160	
Jul. 1982–Jun. 1983	56	45	2	3	24	n/a	n/a	130	
Jul. 1983–Jun. 1984	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	
Jul. 1984–Jun. 1985	45	38	0	3	24	n/a	n/a	110	
Jul. 1985–Jun. 1986	4	2	0	2	1	n/a	n/a	9	
	Total 11,026								

Table 2. Source: *Statistics of Offences and of Penal Institutions* (Pretoria: Department of Statistics), 1950 to 1985. Various reported were: “arrests,” “charges,” “prosecutions underway” and “completed prosecutions.” Completed prosecutions were reported for most years under examination. Totals provided are incomplete because the National Party government did not report statistics for every year under examination. In addition, categories for data changed numerous times over the years and are therefore inconsistent (“Wom.” for women; “Col.” for Coloured; “White and Nonwhite” category excludes those identified as Black). Statistics were published by calendar year from 1949 to 1962, thereafter they are dated Jul. 1 to Jun. 30, except for 1977. There is an overlap in reported number of prosecutions between 1977 and 1978. Gender and race identifiers were not reported every year, and sometimes only partially. No statistics for prosecutions were published for the years Jan. 1 to Jun. 30, 1963, 1964–1965, 1973–1977 and 1983–84, and no statistics for convictions were published for the years Jan. 1 to Jun. 30, 1963, 1964–1965 and 1983–84. For years not included in official reports, numbers were obtained from *Hansard*, where they were provided as replies to questions put to the Minister of Justice. In some cases, numbers reported in parliament varied slightly from those provided by the Department of Statistics; when there was a discrepancy the latter’s numbers are used. Numbers for completed prosecutions in the eleven years from 1950 to 1960 are provided by Helen Suzman (PP) who obtained them from the government. *Hansard*, February 23, 1962, column 1534.

despite contemporary critics' objections.¹⁵ While such acts were frowned on by guardians of white prestige, in general, colonial powers tacitly accepted men's deeply felt sense of entitlement to sex with enslaved and colonized women; rather than confront settler men, authorities chose to ignore their disreputable sexual behavior for the sake of colonial stability. As a result, white men rarely faced serious legal or social consequences for pursuing illicit sex, whether coercive or consensual, across the color line. For example, in early twentieth-century Kenya, according to Brett Shadle, settler men who had extramarital sex with African women "sometimes came in for condemnation for what it meant to white prestige," but their actions were largely overlooked, and they usually "suffered no real repercussions."¹⁶ Similarly, Lora Wildenthal writes that in German West Africa, where rising disapproval of miscegenation, or race mixing, resulted in the criminalization of interracial marriage in 1905, "the cultural importance of sexual access to women of color did not change," and there were "never any positive penalties for German men who engaged in sexual relations with African women." Indeed, Wildenthal characterizes the debate over race mixing in the colony as "a struggle over how to preserve white German men's patriarchal sexual liberties while pursuing the goal of race purity."¹⁷

Not so in apartheid South Africa. There, contrary to colonial powers' habit of turning a blind eye, the National Party government attempted to protect white racial purity by *attacking* men's patriarchal sexual liberties. White men, often Afrikaner, were aggressively pursued by police, punished by the courts, shamed by the press, and ostracized by their communities; many died by suicide as a result. The extraordinary history of disciplining white heterosexual masculinity during apartheid was an unexpected consequence of a powerful colonial state being captured by an authoritarian and racist nationalist movement animated by a rare, if not unique, combination of profound fear of extinction and a zealously puritanical morality. Afrikaner nationalism's distinctive blend of ideological characteristics propelled the National Party to police straight white men's desire with particular remorselessness until the 1970s. The history of the Immorality Act is an example of a white supremacist state rigorously policing and punishing heterosexual white men in the name of racial purity, yet it has eluded sustained attention in the historiographies on colonial sex regulation, masculinity, white supremacy, and apartheid.¹⁸ For historians of settler

Law, ed. Werner Sollors (Oxford, 2000), 81–139, here 115. Originally published in *Georgetown Law Journal* 77, no. 6 (1989): 1967–2029.

15 An important example is Sol Plaatje, *The Mote and the Beam: An Epic on Sex-Relationship 'Twiixt White and Black in British South Africa* (New York, 1921).

16 Brett Shadle, *The Souls of White Folk: White Settlers in Kenya, 1900s–1920s* (Manchester, 2015), 7, 100.

17 Lora Wildenthal, *German Women for Empire, 1884–1945* (Durham, NC, 2001), 106. See also Daniel J. Walther, "Sex, Race and Empire: White Male Sexuality and the 'Other' in Germany's Colonies, 1894–1914," *German Studies Review* 33, no. 1 (2010): 45–71.

18 By contrast, since the 1960s scholars in other disciplines, such as legal, political, and literary studies, as well as cultural producers outside the academy, have long explored the Immorality Act's meaning and impact. Many of these scholars and artists witnessed the application of the act during apartheid, which surely helps explain their interest. Scholarly studies include B. R. Bamford, "Offences under the Immorality Act," *South African Law Journal* 77 (1960): 167–76; Pierre L. van den Berghe, "Miscegenation in South Africa," *Cahiers d'Études africaines* 1, vol. 4 (1960): 68–84; Julius Lewin, "Sex, Colour and the Law," *Africa South* 4, no.

colonialism, examining the creation and implementation of the act enriches our understanding of how, as Stoler writes, “the regulatory mechanisms of the colonial state were directed not only at the colonized, but as forcefully at ‘internal enemies’” within the white settler community.¹⁹ In a productive turn toward the specificity of apartheid South Africa, this essay demonstrates that under a combination of certain political and ideological conditions, a colonial regime’s commitment to racial purity can result in the marking out of straight men of the ruling race as the primary target of sexual regulation, and the internal enemies within the settler community can include respected men, including those with a high social status. Analyzing the Immorality Act also draws much-needed attention to the elemental importance of the mutually constitutive categories of sexuality and white masculinity in the production and maintenance of apartheid, a necessity indicated by the dearth of historical research on the policing of white male heterosexuality in that era.

Europeans began colonizing the Cape in 1652, and for centuries, the region adhered to the colonial sex pattern delineated in the preceding section.²⁰ From the onset of white settlement, interracial marriage was legally permitted, but it became intensely stigmatized after significant numbers of European women arrived in the eighteenth century—so much so that legal prohibition was unnecessary.²¹ After slavery was abolished in 1834, the racial caste system was undermined and miscegenation in the region became taboo, another example of how antimiscegenation sentiment and discourse were expressions of apprehension about whites’ political vulnerability. Also from the beginning of colonization, white men engaged in extramarital interracial sex without

3 (April–June 1960): 63–70; André du Toit, “Political Control and Personal Morality,” in *South Africa: Public Policy Perspectives*, ed. Robert Schrire (Cape Town, 1982), 54–86; Kopano Ratele, “Sexuality as Constitutive of Whiteness in South Africa,” *NORA—Nordic Journal of Feminist and Gender Research* 17, no. 3 (2009): 158–74; and Andy Carolin, “Apartheid’s Immorality Act and the Fiction of Heteronormative Whiteness,” *Tydskrif vir Letterkunde* 54, no. 1 (2017): 111–28. Important artistic works include Athol Fugard’s play *Statements after an Arrest under the Immorality Act* (1972) and the following works of fiction: Alan Paton, *Too Late the Phalarope* (New York, 1953); Des Troye, *An Act of Immorality* (Johannesburg, 1963); James McClure, *The Steam Pig* (London, 1971); Tom Sharpe, *Riotous Assembly* (London, 1971); Can Themba, “Crepuscule,” in *The Will to Die* (London, 1972), 2–13; André Brink, *Looking on Darkness* (London, 1974); and Zakes Mda, *The Madonna of Excelsior* (Oxford, 2002).

19 Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire*, 96. This observation has also been made by Jeremy Martens in “Citizenship, ‘Civilisation’ and the Creation of South Africa’s Immorality Act, 1927,” *South African Historical Journal* 59, no. 1 (2007): 223–41.

20 In 1652, the Dutch East India Company established a refreshment station at the Cape to support ships sailing between the Netherlands and colonial territories in the East Indies.

21 On the history of interracial marriage in South Africa, see I. D. MacCrone, *Race Attitudes in South Africa: Historical, Experimental and Psychological Studies* (Johannesburg, 1937), 68; George M. Frederickson, *White Supremacy: A Comparative Study of American and South African History* (Oxford, 1981), and the critical response of Hermann Giliomee, “Eighteenth Century Cape Society and Its Historiography: Culture, Race, and Class,” *Social Dynamics* 9, no. 1 (1983): 18–29; Patrick Furlong, “The Mixed Marriages Act (1949): A Theological Critique Based on the Investigation of Legislative Action and Church Responses to This Legislation” (master’s thesis, University of Cape Town, 1984); Julia C. Wells, “The Suppression of Mixed Marriages among LMS Missionaries in South Africa before 1820,” *South African Historical Journal* 44, no. 1 (2001): 1–20; and Johan Fourie and Kris Inwood, “Interracial Marriages in Twentieth-Century Cape Town: Evidence from Anglican Marriage Records,” *History of the Family* 24, no. 3 (2019): 629–52.

facing serious repercussions, and they continued to do so after the arrival of settler women and as European settlement expanded northward.

It was not until after the establishment of the Union of South Africa in 1910 that authorities began seriously interfering in white men's involvement in illicit interracial sexual liaisons.²² In 1927, the Pact Government, a coalition of the National Party and the Labour Party, passed the Immorality Act prohibiting sex between "Europeans" and "natives" (indigenous black Africans).²³ However, according to Jeremy Martens, the original Immorality Act was never intended to be a "comprehensive solution to the problem of miscegenation"; rather, it was a means by which to inculcate the association of racial membership with bourgeois "civilized" behavior in poor white men who cohabitated with African women.²⁴ The then minister of justice explained that the law was passed to "mould public opinion"—meaning, teach poor white men that sex with Africans was a threat to white civilization.²⁵ Only a few dozen mixed-race couples were arrested annually after 1927, indicating that the state did not seriously seek to block white men's largely unfettered sexual access to African women; meanwhile, sex with women belonging to other "non-European" races was permitted.²⁶ Martens also shows that the law was an outcome of the larger project of forging a cohesive white nation out of Boers and Britons, the two main white ethnic groups and erstwhile bitter enemies. Thus, it was another example of how, as Stoler observes, changes in sexual access "have invariably accompanied major efforts to reassert the internal coherence of [settler] European communities."²⁷ More broadly, the law demonstrates yet again that in the colonial context, producing racial identities—in this case whiteness—was inextricably entangled with regulating sexuality.

After the National Party was elected in 1948, official policy on extramarital interracial sex changed abruptly and drastically. The National Party government passed the Immorality Amendment Act two years after winning power; mixed marriage between "Europeans" and "non-Europeans" had been prohibited the previous year. The rapid and radical expansion of antimiscegenation law was the result of the South African state being captured by a nationalist movement that was not only intensely racist but also deeply embedded in a puritanical religion.

22 At the turn of the twentieth century, the Boer republics and British colonies of the Cape and Natal prohibited "illicit" sex between white women and African men, legislation spurred by white prostitutes selling sexual services to black men. The laws were provoked by white men's desire to reassert their racialized gender authority over both groups, not by fear of miscegenation. Van Onselen, *Studies in the Social and Economic History of the Witwatersrand, 1886–1914*, 109–64; Ros Posel, "'Continental Women' and Durban's 'Social Evil,' 1899–1905," *Journal of Natal and Zulu History* 12, no. 1 (1989): 1–13; Elizabeth van Heyningen, "The Social Evil in the Cape Colony, 1868–1902: Prostitution and the Contagious Diseases Acts," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 10, no. 2 (1984): 170–97.

23 Immorality Act, 1927 (Act No. 5 of 1927), accessed November 4, 2021, https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Immorality_Act,_1927.

24 Martens, "Citizenship, 'Civilisation' and the Creation of South Africa's Immorality Act, 1927," 224, 225.

25 Quoted in Martens, "Citizenship, 'Civilisation' and the Creation of South Africa's Immorality Act, 1927," 238.

26 Between thirty-three and sixty-seven mixed couples were convicted annually between 1935 and 1948. Union of South Africa, *Debates of the House of Assembly* (hereafter cited as *Hansard*), March 2, 1950, column 2275 (C. R. Swart, minister of justice).

27 Stoler, "Making Empire Respectable," 651.

The National Party (established in 1914) was the political embodiment of Afrikaner nationalism that had always opposed miscegenation with a vehemence that signaled great anxiety regarding the tenuousness of Afrikaner identity. Indeed, the very basis of Afrikaner nationalism was existential fear.²⁸ Afrikaner nationalism emerged in the immediate aftermath of the devastating South African War (1899–1902) between the Boer republics and British empire that ended with the absorption of the former into the British imperial sphere.²⁹ In the decades following their defeat, Boers experienced massive socioeconomic upheaval and uncertainty: they lost their republics, underwent swift urbanization, and saw their rural economies and lifeways disintegrate as a result of the acceleration of capitalism in mining and agriculture. Furthermore, as racist settler colonialists, they felt enormously vulnerable to *oorstroming* (flooding) by the far larger, “uncivilized” population of Africans: in 1911, the total population of South Africa was 5,972,757, and whites composed only 21.4 percent of the total population, roughly one-third Briton and two-thirds Boer, whereas Africans composed 68 percent of the population.³⁰ Their old world shattered, embittered toward Britain, and consumed by feelings of insecurity and social inferiority, educated and ambitious men of the Boer petty bourgeoisie rapidly realized they had little hope of professional advancement in the English establishment. Frustrated, they adopted a strategy of gendered ethnic mobilization as Afrikaners who sought to preserve a mythical Afrikaner *volk* (ethnicized notion of people and nation), imagined exclusively as the blood-pure, Afrikaans-speaking descendants of the original Dutch settlers who colonized the Cape.³¹ Afrikaner nationalism offered psychologically insecure white Afrikaans speakers reeling from the loss of their republics a cultural movement and ideology dedicated to the restoration of their social order by shielding them from the many “evils” of cosmopolitanism, anglicization in the now British territory of South Africa, and the *swart gevaar* (black danger). In short, the mobilization of ethnicity reflected and exploited Boers’ need for ontological security.³² Rather than being motivated by “dogmas of superiority,” Afrikaners “grasped at nationalism” out of a defensive compulsion to survive.³³

Afrikaner nationalist ideology was extremely complex and changed significantly over time, and a great deal has been written and debated about its intellectual origins and

28 Johan Kinghorn, “Social Cosmology, Religion and Afrikaner Ethnicity,” *Journal of Southern African Studies* 20, no. 3 (1994): 393–404, here 401.

29 In 1910, the two former Boer republics of the Transvaal and Orange Free State merged with the British colonies of Natal and the Cape to become the Union of South Africa.

30 William Beinart, *Twentieth-Century South Africa*, 2nd ed. (Oxford, 2001), appendix, table 1.

31 T. Dunbar Moodie, *The Rise of Afrikanerdom: Power, Apartheid, and the Afrikaner Civil Religion* (Berkeley, CA, 1975); Hermann Giliomee, “The Growth of Afrikaner Identity,” in *The Rise and Crisis of Afrikaner Power*, ed. Heribert Adam and Hermann Giliomee (Cape Town, 1979), 83–127; Heribert Adam and Hermann Giliomee, *Ethnic Power Mobilized: Can South Africa Change?* (New Haven, CT, 1979); Dan O’Meara, *Volkskapitalisme: Class, Capital and Ideology in the Development of Afrikaner Nationalism, 1934–1948* (Cambridge, 1983); Charles Bloomberg, *Christian Nationalism and the Rise of the Afrikaner Broederbond in South Africa, 1918–48* (Bloomington, IN, 1989).

32 Uriel Abulof, *The Mortality and Morality of Nations* (New York, 2015), 229.

33 Kinghorn, “Social Cosmology, Religion and Afrikaner Ethnicity,” 403.

development. Suffice to say for the purposes of this essay that it contained numerous political views and intellectual tendencies, including Dutch neo-Calvinism, segregationist ideology, and, starting in the 1930s, German National Socialism.³⁴ Regardless of their differences, all tendencies were profoundly influenced by neo-Calvinism. At the heart of Afrikaner culture and society were the three neo-Calvinist Dutch Reformed churches, nicknamed the *susterkerke* (sister churches), the largest and by far the most powerful of which was the Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk (Dutch Reformed Church). The churches were integral to shaping Afrikaner nationalism's antihumanist, antimodernist ideology: according to Johan Kinghorn, the *susterkerke* "nurtured the underlying values, the very soul of Afrikaner mobilization."³⁵ And all tendencies agreed it was imperative for the *volk* to remain a separate and distinct group from all other social groups that in subsequent decades were variously termed races, nations, or ethnic communities. Afrikaner nationalists understood race not in simple biological terms but as a biocultural phenomenon, a hybrid concept that "aligned readings of bodily difference closely with differences of class, lifestyle and general repute."³⁶ English-speaking whites and the *volk* were perceived as belonging to the same race but culturally different, therefore, the admonition to remain distinct pertained also to the English (and other white ethnic groups).

In the 1930s, a group of far-right, pro-republican nationalists began proclaiming that the Afrikaner *volk* were a distinct nation that, like all nations, had been "entrusted a special calling" by God.³⁷ This was the beginning of Christian nationalism, the ideology of the faction of Afrikaner nationalism that would ultimately win power in 1948. The faction's leading ideologues extolled ideas about nation and race gaining ground in Europe (a consequence of the influence of Afrikaner nationalist intellectuals who had studied there), such as the Romantic German idea of the absolute state and, for some, Nazism.³⁸ They claimed the *volk*, though few in number, were called to ensure the survival of Christian *blanke beskawing* (white civilization) on the African continent, which they perceived as beset by paganism and, after 1945, heathen communism. Also, Afrikaners were said to have a paternalist obligation of trusteeship to help the "backward" races become Christian and civilized. Hence the *volk* had a sacred duty to maintain their uniqueness, meaning they needed to "dis-entangle" themselves "from a plural world."³⁹ Remaining distinct required guarding

34 Saul Dubow, "Afrikaner Nationalism, Apartheid and the Conceptualization of 'Race,'" *Journal of African History* 33, no. 2 (1992): 209–37; Moodie, *The Rise of Afrikanerdom*.

35 Johan Kinghorn, "Modernization and Apartheid: The Afrikaner Churches," in *Christianity in South Africa: A Political, Social, and Cultural History*, ed. Richard Elphick and Rodney Davenport (Berkeley, CA, 1997), 135–54, here 141. See also Bernard Lategan, "Preparing and Keeping the Mindset Intact: Reasons and Forms of the Theology of the Status Quo," in *Maintaining Apartheid or Promoting Change? The Role of the Dutch Reformed Church in a Phase of Increasing Conflict in South Africa*, ed. Wolfram Weisse and Carel Anthonissen (Munich, 2004), 53–66.

36 Deborah Posel, "What's in a Name? Racial Categorisations under Apartheid and Their Afterlife," *Transformation* 47 (2001): 5–74, here 53.

37 Nico Diederichs, *Nasionalisme as Lewensbeskouing en sy Verhouding tot Internasionalisme* (Bloemfontein, 1936), quoted in John S. Sharp, "The Roots and Development of *Volkekunde* in South Africa," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 8, no. 1 (1981): 16–36, here 30; O'Meara, *Volkskapitalisme*, 70.

38 Sharp, "The Roots and Development of *Volkekunde* in South Africa," 32.

39 Kinghorn, "Social Cosmology, Religion and Afrikaner Ethnicity," 403.

their purity—morally, culturally and biologically—making miscegenation a fundamental threat to their survival as a *volk* and their destiny as keepers of the Christian faith in Africa. Underpinning the injunction to remain racially pure was the sexual puritanism promoted by the neo-Calvinist *susterkerke*. Given “the close synergy” between Afrikanerdom’s religious, cultural, and political leaders, ideas about miscegenation and sexuality were dispersed through the Afrikaner churches, cultural organizations, and institutions, as well as the National Party.⁴⁰

During the turbulent 1930s, proponents of Christian nationalism aggressively stoked white anxiety about miscegenation. They were alarmed by the frequency with which the *arm blankes* (poor whites), the large population of destitute white Afrikaans speakers streaming into cities to escape rural poverty, were settling in mixed-race urban slums, alongside and sometimes with blacks.⁴¹ When for complicated economic and ideological reasons the ruling National Party “fused” with the pro-British South African Party in 1934 to form the United Party, the pro-republican, right-wing faction of the National Party broke away to form the Gesuiwerde Nasionale Party (Purified National Party); the rebranding broadcast their radicalism. The “purified” nationalists made hostility to race mixing a central plank of their political platform. From the outset, they railed against the United Party for permitting interracial marriage, a deeply gendered discourse that was simultaneously an expression of genuine fear of *gelykstelling* (leveling of racial status distinctions) and a rhetorical strategy for drawing support from the United Party.⁴² Their agitation strengthened the prevailing “racist consensus in white society,” as Jonathan Hyslop shows, from which the National Party would benefit in the 1940s.⁴³

From the mid-1930s through World War II, the National Party was at its most extreme, a virulently racist party repeatedly extolling the *volk*’s racial purity. During these years, Afrikaner cultural and political organizations held events

40 Kobus du Pisani, “Puritanism Transformed: Afrikaner Masculinities in the Apartheid and Post-apartheid Period,” in *Changing Men in Southern Africa*, ed. Robert Morrell (Pietermaritzburg, 2001), 157–76, here 158.

41 On the “poor white problem,” see Timothy J. Keegan, *Racial Transformations in Industrializing South Africa: The Southern Highveld to 1914* (Braamfontein, 1986); Robert Morrell, ed., *White but Poor: Essays on the History of Poor Whites in Southern Africa, 1880–1940* (Pretoria, 1992); Judith Tayler, “‘Our Poor’: The Politicisation of the Poor White Problem, 1932–1942,” *Kleio* 24 (1992): 40–65; Hermann Gilimee, *The Afrikaners: Biography of a People* (Charlottesville, VA, 2003), 315–54; Susanne M. Klausen, *Race, Maternity, and the Politics of Birth Control in South Africa, 1910–39* (Houndmills, 2004); and Jonathan Hyslop, “Workers Called White and Classes Called Poor: The ‘White Working Class’ and ‘Poor Whites’ in Southern Africa, 1910–1994,” in *Rethinking White Societies in Southern Africa, 1930s–1990s*, ed. Duncan Money and Danelle van Zyl-Hermann (London, 2020), 23–41.

42 The National Party exploited Afrikaner men’s alarm at the erosion of patriarchal authority over Afrikaner women who were undergoing proletarianization in the 1930s. Invoking the specter of miscegenation tapped into white men’s fear of losing their power and status as whites, as well as control over “their” women’s sexuality. Jonathan Hyslop, “White Working-Class Women and the Invention of Apartheid: ‘Purified’ Afrikaner Nationalist Agitation for Legislation against ‘Mixed’ Marriages, 1934–9,” *Journal of African History* 36, no. 1 (1995): 57–81.

43 Hyslop, “White Working-Class Women and the Invention of Apartheid,” 72. See also Lindie Koorts, “‘The Black Peril Would Not Exist If It Were Not for a White Peril That Is a Hundred Times Greater’: D. F. Malan’s Fluidity on Poor Whiteism and Race in the Pre-apartheid Era, 1912–1939,” *South African Historical Journal* 65, no. 4 (2013): 555–76.

and published texts demanding that political action be taken against race mixing, deploying a discourse invoking both scripture and science. For example, sociologist Geoffrey Cronjé, a pro-Nazi and highly religious nationalist intellectual who played a prominent role in the elaboration of apartheid theory, was obsessed with the danger posed by “blood mixing,” insisting there was an urgent “requirement to protect the ‘purity’ of the Boer-nation’s blood.”⁴⁴ At a *volkskongress* held in 1944 and attended by representatives of hundreds of Afrikaner churches and cultural organizations, participants affirmed that Afrikaners were a pure white race who needed to refrain from bringing together “that which God has separated.” For this reason, “there [could] be no *gelykstelling* and no *verbastering* [miscegenation].”⁴⁵

In the tumultuous postwar years, the National Party was adept at tapping Afrikaners’ insecurity provoked by social and economic changes unleashed during World War II, along with resentment at the United Party for postwar food shortages, remaining war restrictions, and the rising cost of living.⁴⁶ Particularly upsetting for urban poor whites and Afrikaner farmers dependent on black labor was the arrival in cities of thousands of Africans seeking employment in the expanding manufacturing sector.⁴⁷ During the 1948 election, the National Party adroitly exploited Afrikaners’ fears and feelings that their world was in flux and offered the solution of racial *apartheid* (apartness) as both a political doctrine promising to protect whites’ dominance of the economy and a psychologically reassuring guarantee to separate whites and blacks socially and spatially. The concept was deliberately vague in many respects—necessary given that the National Party was a fragile coalition of Afrikaners with divergent economic interests.⁴⁸ But the party was unequivocal on the emotional issue of *bloedvermenging* (blood mixing), and a central promise during their campaign was to protect white racial purity by finally putting an end to miscegenation. Like the Nazis with their Law for the Protection of German Blood and German Honor, the National Party proffered antimiscegenation law as a “stabilizing measure.”⁴⁹

44 Dubow, “Afrikaner Nationalism, Apartheid and the Conceptualization of ‘Race,’” 229. See also Moodie, *The Rise of Afrikanerdom*. During World War II, Cronjé joined the Ossewabrandwag, a pro-Nazi Afrikaner paramilitary group. On his contribution to the development of apartheid theory, see Bloomberg, *Christian Nationalism and the Rise of the Afrikaner Broederbond in South Africa, 1918–48*; Patrick Furlong, *Between Crown and Swastika: The Impact of the Radical Right on the Afrikaner Nationalist Movement in the Fascist Era* (Hanover, NH, 1991); J. M. Coetzee, *Giving Offense: Essays on Censorship* (Chicago, 1996), 163–84; and Neil Roos, “Alcohol Panic, Social Engineering, and Some Reflections on the Management of Whites in Early Apartheid Society, 1948–1960,” *Historical Journal* 58, no. 4 (2015): 1167–89.

45 Quoted in Dubow, “Afrikaner Nationalism, Apartheid and the Conceptualization of ‘Race,’” 218.

46 In 1939, the “purified” nationalists joined forces with Afrikaner nationalists who broke away from the United Party over its decision to side with Britain against Germany, together becoming the Herenigde Nasionale Party (Reunited National Party).

47 During the war, approximately two hundred thousand white men out of a labor force of nearly eight hundred thousand volunteered to fight overseas, and the black manufacturing workforce grew 7.7 percent annually. Nicoli Natrass, “Economic Growth and Transformation in the 1940s,” in *South Africa’s 1940s: Worlds of Possibilities*, ed. Saul Dubow and Alan Jeeves (Cape Town, 2005), 20–43, here 24–25.

48 O’Meara, *Volkskapitalisme*, 225–47. On competing meanings of apartheid, see Deborah Posel, *The Making of Apartheid, 1948–1961: Conflict and Compromise* (Oxford, 1991).

49 Szobar, “Telling Sexual Stories in the Nazi Courts of Law,” 140.

Unbeknownst to Afrikaners, however, the National Party would also seek to impose on society the “strict public morality” that leading Afrikaners in church and cultural organizations desired.⁵⁰ This was a necessary corollary to their providential responsibility to uphold Christianity in Africa and “civilize” the “backward” races. Surprising everyone, including its own members, the National Party won the election, though barely: it gained the most seats, but the party lost the (white) popular vote to the United Party, which made it dependent on support from other parties.⁵¹ Crucially, the weak victory meant the National Party failed to secure a mandate to inflict a “puritan ethic ... on the entire society.”⁵²

Though swept to power by a minority of white (and barely a majority of Afrikaans-speaking) voters, the National Party government immediately inaugurated a major program of social engineering aimed at restoring a sense of social order, defining racial categories, and strengthening Afrikaners’ ethnic identity and unity. The new government spent its first decade in power passing a battery of defensive laws institutionalizing racial difference and separating the races.⁵³ Almost overnight, race became “the critical and overriding faultline” in society, the “fundamental organizing principle for the allocation of all resources and opportunities” that led to a person’s racial identity largely determining, in deeply gendered ways, the course of their life trajectory.⁵⁴ Keeping races apart required clearly demarcating and then policing racial boundaries. Furthermore, protecting white blood from “contamination” and ensuring that only “blood-pure” whites gained access to the enormous privileges attached to whiteness made it essential to police white fertility and sexuality. Consequently, the National Party government rushed to curtail white involvement in heterosexual interracial sex by strengthening antimiscegenation law. Doing so also had significant strategic value. The United Party was acutely divided over miscegenation policy—they agreed it was an “evil” but were split over how to stamp it out—and the National Party had been working since 1934 to broaden its appeal among the white electorate, in particular right-wing members of the United Party, by forcing the party to expose its ambiguity on the issue.⁵⁵ This affirmed the National Party’s image as the true champion of white purity and supremacy. As one United Party member of parliament (MP)

50 Giliomee, *The Afrikaners*, 547.

51 The United Party and Labour Party alliance won 50.9 percent of the popular vote, whereas the National Party and Afrikaner Party alliance won 41.2 percent, but the electoral system was heavily weighted in favor of rural constituencies. In terms of seats, the National Party won seventy, the Afrikaner Party won nine, the United Party won sixty-five, and the Labour Party won six.

52 Kinghorn, “Modernization and Apartheid,” 146.

53 For example, the Population and Registration Act (Act No. 30 of 1950) required all South Africans, including whites, to register their racial classification with the state. For a list and description of major apartheid laws, see “Apartheid Legislation 1948–1990,” O’Malley: The Heart of Hope, Nelson Mandela Foundation, accessed December 6, 2021, <https://omalley.nelsonmandela.org/omalley/index.php/site/q/03lv01538/04lv01828/05lv01829/06lv01830.htm>.

54 Posel, “What’s in a Name?,” 52.

55 Hyslop, “White Working-Class Women and the Invention of Apartheid,” 71. For detailed analysis of the United Party’s position on miscegenation, see Furlong, “The Mixed Marriages Act (1949).”

bitterly remarked in 1950, the National Party was making the United Party appear by comparison to be “Satan’s pawn.”⁵⁶

The National Party’s first major piece of legislation, what Patrick Furlong calls the “pilot measure of the apartheid program,” was the Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act (1949), which criminalized marriage between whites and blacks.⁵⁷ As T. E. Dönges, minister of the interior, explained when introducing the bill, its object was “as far as possible to promote racial purity.”⁵⁸ The legislation was largely symbolic since, by 1945, less than 1 percent of marriages contracted in South Africa were “mixed.”⁵⁹

But their second antimiscegenation law would strike at what a 1939 official commission of inquiry had deemed was “the main source of miscegenation”: *extramarital* interracial sex.⁶⁰ A few weeks after introducing the bill prohibiting interracial marriage, the government tabled the Immorality Amendment Bill because, as Dönges explained, prohibiting interracial marriage was “naturally only the first step ... but it is inadequate and incomplete” and “must be followed up by the prohibition of extramarital blood mixture.”⁶¹ The bill extended the original 1927 Immorality Act to prohibit whites from having illicit sex with all “non-Europeans,” which really meant extending the previous law to include coloreds, the other nonwhite racial category defined in law in 1950.⁶² Barring sex with coloreds was vital. In Cronjé’s words, coloreds presented “the utmost danger to the European race in South Africa” because they often “passed” as white, which enabled them to “mix” their blood with supposedly pure whites, resulting in the “seeping of non-white blood into the European population.”⁶³ Thus, coloreds were far more of a threat to white purity than were other races. When explaining the bill’s purpose, a National Party MP declared, “We proclaim to the world that we are for the preservation of the ideals of purity of blood and purity of race in South Africa.”⁶⁴ The fundamental importance of protecting white racial purity in driving the creation of the Immorality Amendment Act has been underestimated by scholars, as shown by the tendency to assert, incorrectly, that it banned extramarital sex among “the races,” as though aimed in a general way at containing all South Africans’ sexual activities within their allocated race.⁶⁵ The bill proposed heavy

56 *Hansard*, March 2, 1950, column 2232 (Col. R. D. P. Jordan, United Party).

57 Furlong, “The Mixed Marriages Act (1949),” 78.

58 *Hansard*, May 19, 1949, column 6164 (T. E. Dönges, minister of the interior).

59 On the symbolism of the antimiscegenation laws, see du Toit, “Political Control and Personal Morality,” 63. The statistic is from W. L. R. von Scholtz, “Die Rol van Politieke Opvattinge en Sosiaalekonomiese Faktore in die Ontstaan van die Wette,” in *Op die Skaal: Gemengde Huwelike en Ontug*, ed. Etienne De Villiers and Johan Kinghorn (Cape Town, 1984), 11–28, cited in Fourie and Inwood, “Interracial Marriages in Twentieth-Century Cape Town,” 638.

60 Government of South Africa, *Report of the Commission on Mixed Marriages in South Africa* (Pretoria, 1939), 35.

61 *Hansard*, May 19, 1949, column 6164 (T. E. Dönges, minister of the interior).

62 See note 3.

63 Geoff Cronjé, *’n Tuiste vir die Nageslag* (Johannesburg, 1945), 39, 44, translated from the Afrikaans by Ronel Koekemoer.

64 *Hansard*, March 1, 1950, column 2208 (J. E. Potgieter, National Party).

65 The National Party never attempted to prohibit extramarital sex between members of so-called nonwhite races. Here is a representative example of mischaracterization of the act: “The Immorality Amendment Act 21 of 1950 criminalised sexual relations between members of different races.” Christof Heyns, ed., *Human*

penalties on conviction: a maximum of five years' imprisonment for men and four years for women (regardless of race).

During the parliamentary debate, National Party MPs repeatedly asserted Afrikaners had an "instinctive" aversion to sex with black people.⁶⁶ For example, Dönges claimed white purity had been "preserved ... to an extraordinary extent in the past 300 years" because the *voortrekkers* (pioneers—in this case Afrikaners' revered ancestors) had not succumbed to the same fate as other small white communities "encircled by black hordes."⁶⁷ Yet the government also insisted that antimiscegenation laws were urgently needed. The contradictory claims alerted political opponents to Afrikaner elites' insecurity regarding their whiteness and shame about their past relationships with black women. As was widely known, among the original Boers and subsequent *voortrekkers*, it was not uncommon for men to cohabit with black women, a history that Afrikaner nationalists were now unable to acknowledge, either to themselves or others. Indeed, one United Party MP sparked outrage when he stated Afrikaners were responsible for the existence of mixed-race populations in South Africa and mentioned the name of a prominent Afrikaner from the eighteenth century who "married" a black woman. National Party MPs objected to his "insulting" statements that contained "the most vile insinuations" and produced "a sense of nausea and repugnance."⁶⁸ In total denial of Afrikaner men's past (and present) desire for black women, the National Party government countered that Afrikaners had developed a natural aversion to interracial sex after just a generation or two of settlement in the Cape. Sam Kahn, the sole Communist Party MP and an articulate opponent of antimiscegenation law, astutely discerned in their rantings "genetic guilt," observing that Afrikaners were "now trying to purify themselves of what they regard, wrongly, as a sin committed by their ancestors."⁶⁹ As Robert Young observed of white men's abhorrence of miscegenation in colonial contexts, "Disgust always bears the imprint of desire."⁷⁰ Similarly, regarding South Africa, J. M. Coetzee asserts, "The text of apartheid deserves to have restored to it the chapter that has been all too smoothly glossed over ... namely, a denial and displacement and reprojection of desire."⁷¹

When debating the Immorality Amendment Bill, political parties on all sides acknowledged that white men were responsible for illicit (hetero)sex across the color line.

Rights Law in Africa (The Hague, 1997), 2:247. See Susanne M. Klausen, "Pining for Purity: Interracial Sex, the Immorality (Amendment) Act (1950), and 'Petty' Apartheid," in *The Routledge Companion to Sexuality and Colonialism*, ed. Chelsea Shields and Dagmar Herzog (London, 2021), 219–29.

66 For leading Afrikaner intellectuals' virulent assertions of this "instinct," see the essays in Geoff Cronjé, William Nicol, and E. P. Groenewald, eds., *Regverdige Rasse-Apartheid* (Stellenbosch, 1947).

67 Union of South Africa, *The Senate of South Africa Debates* (hereafter cited as *Senate Debates*), June 28, 1949, column 6327; and *Hansard*, May 19, 1949, column 6167 (T. E. Dönges, minister of the interior).

68 *Hansard*, May 24–25, 1949, columns 6461 (Arthur Barlow, United Party) and 6475 (J. J. Fouche, National Party).

69 *Hansard*, May 24, 1949, column 6421–22 (Sam Kahn, Communist Party).

70 Young, *Colonial Desire*, 140.

71 Coetzee, *Giving Offense*, 178.

(Interracial homosex, while policed, was far less visible until the 1960s.)⁷² Parliamentarians, who were white and overwhelmingly male, subscribed to the powerful colonial trope of chaste white womanhood and consequently could not imagine white women desiring black men.⁷³ One male MP, praising women's "pure and decent" nature, declared they did not need "protection from temptation" because "you can count on the fingers of one hand the number of white women who want to sleep with a black man"; another called such a woman "a rare occurrence."⁷⁴ (During apartheid, few white women would in fact be arrested annually for contravening the Immorality Act.)⁷⁵ All agreed men were to blame. Already in the interwar era, Martens shows, parliamentarians deplored white men who "rejected and subverted bourgeois moral values" by having interracial sex.⁷⁶ In 1927, the minister of justice lamented the "particular evil" of white men cohabitating with African women; another MP argued that because of their "duty to civilization," such men "should be punished more severely" than African men living with white women.⁷⁷ During debates about interracial sex in 1949 and 1950, MPs reiterated similar arguments. As before apartheid, the United Party pronounced miscegenation repugnant and agreed white men were to blame but opposed criminalizing extramarital interracial sex, arguing legislating morality was ineffective. Instead, they urged that the "problem" be solved through moral education. In the words of United Party leader Jan Smuts, "racial blood mixture is an evil" but one that must "be dealt with by religion, morality, by the general standards of a community," not by a law.⁷⁸

But to the Christian nationalists at the helm of the National Party, a law was necessary because white men who had illicit sex with black women were a danger to the race. Before the National Party won power, Cronjé, an antiscegenation zealot who had been calling for such legislation for years, described them as treacherous race traitors. In 1945, he wrote,

There are whites, born in this country, who have degenerated to such an extent in respect of morality, self-respect and racial pride that they feel no objection against blood mixing ... Whites must protect themselves against these conscienceless and criminal blood-mixers not only by banning marriages, but by making all blood mixing punishable. *The individual is responsible to his community for all his activities ... It is the duty of the community to punish such atrocities ... [because] the interest of the nation outweighs self-interest ... At*

72 Glen Retief, "Keeping Sodom out of the Laager: State Repression of Homosexuality in Apartheid South Africa," in *Defiant Desire: Gay and Lesbian Lives in South Africa*, ed. Mark Gevisser and Edwin Cameron (Braamfontein, 1994), 99–111.

73 In 1950, three of the 153 MPs were women: Margaret Ballinger (Native Representative), E. A. Benson (United Party), and Bertha Solomon (United Party).

74 *Hansard*, March 1, 1950, columns 2182 (W. H. Stuart, independent) and 2192 (Dr. D. L. Smit, United Party).

75 Why this was is not yet clear. Patriarchal policing of white female sexuality likely hindered their ability to commit interracial "immorality," although undoubtedly some women exploited assumptions about their irrefutable moral purity to evade detection.

76 Martens, "Citizenship, 'Civilisation' and the Creation of South Africa's Immorality Act, 1927," 224.

77 Quoted in Martens, "Citizenship, 'Civilisation' and the Creation of South Africa's Immorality Act, 1927," 236, 239.

78 *Hansard*, May 19, 1949, column 6175 (Jan Smuts, leader of the United Party).

night, under cover of darkness, they steal into the [black] locations, where they commit treason against the white race.⁷⁹

“Blood-mixers” included the “mentally retarded poor white,” as well as men who by day “[kept] up a respectable front.”⁸⁰ In 1947, Cronjé proclaimed that interracial sex was as unnatural as bestiality.⁸¹ His demand that white men subordinate their desires to the needs of their race was consistent with his fascist leanings, but he was far from alone in wanting to locate and punish transgressive men: during debate over the Immorality Amendment Bill, a National Party MP stated in 1950, “We are surrounded by a sea of coloureds, yellows and blacks,” adding that therefore “the individual is of no account when the future of your nation is at stake.”⁸²

Protecting society against treasonous straight white men required imposing Afrikaner nationalism’s hegemonic masculinity on men adhering to other white masculinities.⁸³ Kobus du Pisani has termed Afrikaner nationalism’s ideal type of manhood as “essentially puritan in nature” and describes it as highly patriarchal, homophobic, politically conservative, and Christian; the masculine ideal held “an unyielding Protestant view based on ‘pure’ New Testament principles” and prescribed “rigid austerity and strictness in conduct and morals.”⁸⁴ A man was the undisputed head of the family, which, in common with all nationalist movements, was a gendered cornerstone of Afrikaner nationalism.⁸⁵ Accordingly, he was prescribed the role of faithful guardian of the household’s material and spiritual well-being and held ultimate authority in the home, where he enforced normative behavior with a “predilection for militaristic discipline” and where corporal punishment was the “accepted method of disciplining children.”⁸⁶ In turn, however, he was to fully submit to church authority: as one leading nationalist ideologue asserted, “the husband,” too, needed to “live according to the law of God.”⁸⁷

In addition, and in keeping with Christian nationalism’s sexual puritanism, hegemonic Afrikaner masculinity demanded sexual self-control; nationalists vehemently

79 Cronjé, *’n Tuiste vir die Nageslag*, 47, 62, emphasis in original, translated from the Afrikaans by Ronel Koekemoer.

80 Cronjé, 47, translated from the Afrikaans by Ronel Koekemoer.

81 Coetzee, *Giving Offense*, 174.

82 *Hansard*, March 1, 1950, column 2180–81 (Dr. A. J. R. van Rhyn, National Party).

83 On marginalization of competing masculinities, see R. W. Connell and James W. Messerschmidt, “Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept,” *Gender and Society* 19, no. 6 (2005): 829–59, and Andrea Cornwall and Nancy Lindisfarne, introduction to *Dislocating Masculinity: Comparative Ethnographies*, ed. Andrea Cornwall and Nancy Lindisfarne (London, 1994), 11–47.

84 Du Pisani, “Puritanism Transformed,” 158. See also Sandra Swart, “‘Man, Gun and Horse’: Hard Right Afrikaner Masculine Identity in Post-apartheid South Africa,” in Morrell, *Changing Men in Southern Africa*, 75–89.

85 On the centrality of the family in nationalist movements, see George L. Mosse, *Nationalism and Sexuality: Respectability and Abnormal Sexuality in Modern Europe* (New York, 1985); Nira Yuval-Davis and Floya Anthias, eds., *Women-Nation-State* (New York, 1989); and Anne McClintock, “Family Feuds: Gender, Nationalism and the Family,” *Feminist Review* 44 (1993): 61–80.

86 Du Pisani, “Puritanism Transformed,” 163–64.

87 E. P. Groenewald, “Purified Human Relationships,” in *Report of the Family Congress* (Pretoria, 1961), 38–41, here 40.

condemned what they termed “permissive,” or immoral, behavior.⁸⁸ Sex was to take place only between married women and men of the same race for procreation. As one Dutch Reformed Church minister explained bleakly, sex “is beastly if it is outside of God’s goal for procreation.” In fact, he added, when “exercised and propagated ... without love, as mere readiness of fleshly urges—[sex] is ... demonological.”⁸⁹ Monogamy was compulsory. In his keynote lecture at the National Party–backed Family Congress in 1961, the ubiquitous Cronjé judged “senseless infidelity in marriage” a result of “man’s lack of submission” to the highest authority: God.⁹⁰ Yet Afrikaner nationalists’ compulsion to punish white male adultery extended only insofar as the extramarital sex threatened racial purity. Hypocritically, the state never intervened in white men’s sex lives to prevent extramarital *intraracial* sex. To give one infamous example, in 1959, a scandal erupted when it became known that a group of white male police officers, including at least one who was married, had intercourse with white sex workers while investigating a brothel; their payment for sexual services had been reimbursed by the state.⁹¹ The ruthless disciplining of white men for *interracial* illicit sex was because infidelity with a black woman was seen as more than “senseless”—it was treacherous.

As Robert Morrell has demonstrated, there is a complex history of white, African, and other masculinities coexisting and competing in modern South Africa.⁹² Initially, in the Union of South Africa, the dominant masculinity in white society was “imperial masculinity,” a consequence of the British conquest of the Boers, but it was never hegemonic. Certainly it was the case that “relations between white men were harmonised through the shared exercise of political power and participation in public life, particularly sports,” as well as military conscription, but nevertheless, various subordinate Afrikaner and English masculinities persisted.⁹³ Alongside white masculinities, there existed a powerful African masculinity forged in precolonial polities that resisted the imposition of settler masculinities.⁹⁴ Even within Afrikanerdom, no single masculinity prevailed in the first few decades following the

88 On Afrikaner nationalism’s obsession with the threat that “permissiveness” posed to apartheid, see Susanne M. Klausen, *Abortion under Apartheid: Nationalism, Sexuality, and Women’s Reproductive Rights in South Africa* (New York, 2015), 58–82.

89 C. J. Visser, letter to the editor, “Christ and Sex,” *Die Kerkbode*, September 1, 1965, 1113, translated from the Afrikaans by Anri Delpont.

90 Geoff Cronjé, “The Formulation of a Family Policy,” in *Report of the Family Congress*, 153–78, here 162.

91 “What Police Spent on Prostitutes,” *Star*, January 27, 1960; “Swart Orders Probe into Vice Traps,” *Star*, May 8, 1959. The Dutch Reformed Church was “dismayed” by the incident and sent a letter of protest to the minister of justice “on this distasteful issue.” “Church Rejects Police Methods,” *Die Kerkbode*, August 26, 1959, 309, translated from the Afrikaans by Anri Delpont.

92 See Robert Morrell, “Of Boys and Men: Masculinity and Gender in Southern African Studies,” *Journal of Southern African Studies* 24, no. 4 (1998): 605–30; *From Boys to Gentlemen: Settler Masculinity in Colonial Natal, 1880–1920* (Pretoria, 2001); “The Times of Change: Men and Masculinity in South Africa,” in Morrell, *Changing Men in Southern Africa*, 3–40; and, with Lahoucine Ouzgane, “African Masculinities: An Introduction,” in *African Masculinities: Men in Africa from the Late Nineteenth Century to the Present*, ed. Lahoucine Ouzgane and Robert Morrell (Houndmills, 2005), 1–20.

93 Morrell, “Of Boys and Men,” 629. On the importance of sport and military conscription, see Albert Grundlingh, André Odendaal, and Burridge Spies, *Beyond the Tryline: Rugby and South African Society* (Johannesburg, 1995), and Jacklyn Cock and Laurie Nathan, eds., *War and Society: The Militarisation of South Africa* (Cape Town, 1989).

94 Morrell, “Of Boys and Men,” 620.

union's establishment because Afrikaner identity was too tenuous. Myriad social and political differences among "the landed, landless and urbanised Afrikaners," as well as between wealthier Afrikaners in the Western Cape and the relatively poor Boers in the provinces to the north, threatened ethnic fragmentation. However, the creation of state-funded employment schemes that "uplifted" poor Afrikaans-speaking men in the 1920s and 1930s successfully "defused" that possibility.⁹⁵ In the 1950s, Afrikaner nationalists working through institutions such as churches and schools consolidated their ideal of masculinity and succeeded for a time in hegemonizing it within Afrikanerdom.⁹⁶

When the National Party tabled the Immorality Amendment Bill, it was unknown how many white men were pursuing sex with black women. The government repeatedly claimed most culprits were foreign men, mostly sailors on leave in South African ports, but acknowledged that some were also fellow South Africans. One National Party MP admitted, "One always finds people who are weak, who have no will power, who cannot resist temptation."⁹⁷ The minister of justice agreed there were white South African men who were "not colour conscious" and thus who could not be trusted to act in the interest of the white race. For this reason, he asserted, "We must pass this Bill in order to protect the weaker members of our community against themselves, and also to protect society against them."⁹⁸ Disgusted by the proposed law, a Labour Party MP called it reminiscent of Nazi law because it had "a bit of sex ... a bit of sadism ... a bit of cruelty ... and plenty of race prejudice."⁹⁹ The bill easily passed and was given royal assent on May 1, 1950. Immediately thereafter, the state began imposing hegemonic Afrikaner masculinity on the whole of white South African manhood.¹⁰⁰

As mentioned previously, the Immorality Amendment Act was a symbolic expression of Afrikaner nationalism's obsession with racial and moral purity and a useful weapon vis-à-vis competition with the United Party. But its real historical significance is the vigorousness with which it was enforced. Certainly, as elsewhere, the National Party government intended for the act to operate discursively to shape racialized gender subjectivities and identities.¹⁰¹ What Szobar observed in the race-defilement trials held in Nazi Germany applies equally to the interracial "immorality" arrests and trials held under apartheid: while they "commented on only one category of offender (men and women in 'mixed' relationships), what was said about these issues constructed a set of social proscriptions and norms that had both ideological and practical significance" for

95 Morrell, "Of Boys and Men," 618. See also Sandra Swart, "A Boer and His Gun and His Wife Are Three Things Always Together": Republican Masculinity and the 1914 Rebellion," in Morrell, *Changing Men in Southern Africa*, 75–89.

96 Du Pisani, "Puritanism Transformed," 159.

97 *Hansard*, March 1, 1950, column 2199 (W. H. Faurie, National Party).

98 *Hansard*, March 1, 1950, column 2168 (C. R. Swart, minister of justice).

99 *Hansard*, March 2, 1950, column 2271 (Leo Lovell, Labour Party).

100 For further analysis of the act's passage, see Klausen, "Pining for Purity."

101 Andrey Makarychev and Alexandra Yatsyk, "Biopolitics and National Identities: Between Liberalism and Totalization," *Nationalities Papers* 45, no. 1 (2017): 1–7, here 4.

the population as a whole.¹⁰² For this reason, the National Party government relied on newspaper coverage of arrests under the act and subsequent trials to help inculcate in whites a new normative attitude toward interracial sex and the white men engaging in it. And the press eagerly complied.

But the regime also genuinely sought to extinguish extramarital interracial sex. The type of encounter did not matter; for whites, sex across the color line was to be stamped out regardless of whether it occurred through rape, prostitution, consensual casual encounters, or loving relationships. As scholars have documented, the imposition of a puritan ethic unleashed a vicious “hidden war on sexual dissidence” targeting homosexual white men, prostitutes and other so-called sexual deviants.¹⁰³ Far less understood is that the attack on defiant sexualities spurred another, much broader, highly visible attack on *heterosexual* white men pursuing interracial sex. Here the Immorality Amendment Act became a blunt biopolitical weapon with which to modify the sexual behavior of transgressive straight white men.

Thus, the National Party abruptly revoked patriarchal tolerance of white men’s interracial sexual exploits. The act unleashed the police and courts on them and the black women with whom they were caught having sex, and the policing and punishing of straight white men’s “traitorous” sexual impulses were conducted with a merciless determination commensurate with Afrikaner nationalism’s intense intolerance of nonconformist behavior. Based on the premise that “there is only one correct way of thinking and behaving,” Afrikaner nationalism disallowed disobedience.¹⁰⁴ This was a restrictive political environment, such that “questioning authority or the validity of an order” was simply forbidden.¹⁰⁵ From 1948 onward, successive National Party governments enforced a “totalitarian principle” of social regulation that stressed “law and order”; moreover, the religious basis of Afrikaner nationalism “made it possible ... to turn a modern-day inquisition loose on anyone of alternative mind,” not least straight white men who rejected the ban on sex across the color line.¹⁰⁶

The South African police force’s vice squad rapidly became infamous for its crude and humiliating enforcement tactics, including spying on couples having sex in homes, cars, fields, and countless other private and public spaces. Officers watched long enough to be certain “carnal intercourse” was underway before arresting couples so that evidence could be collected in the forms of eyewitness accounts regarding sexual

102 Szobar, “Telling Sexual Stories in the Nazi Courts of Law,” 135.

103 Retief, “Keeping Sodom out of the Laager,” 99. See also Edwin Cameron, “Unapprehended Felons’: Gays and Lesbians and the Law in South Africa,” in Gevisser and Cameron, *Defiant Desire*, 89–98; Glen Elder, “Of Moffies, Kaffirs, and Perverts: Male Homosexuality and the Discourse of Moral Order in the Apartheid State,” in *Mapping Desire: Geographies of Sexualities*, ed. David Bell and Gill Valentine (London, 1995), 56–65; Glen Elder, “The South African Body Politic: Space, Race, and Heterosexuality,” in *Places through the Body*, ed. Heidi J. Nast and Steve Pile (London, 1998), 153–64; and Michiel Heyns, “A Man’s World: South African Gay Writing and the State of Emergency,” in *Writing South Africa: Literature, Apartheid, and Democracy, 1970–1995*, ed. Derek Attridge and Rosemary Jolly (Cambridge, 1998), 108–22.

104 Du Pisani, “Puritanism Transformed,” 165.

105 Breyten Breytenbach, *The True Confessions of an Albino Terrorist* (New York, 1983), 49–50.

106 Kinghorn, “Social Cosmology, Religion and Afrikaner Ethnicity,” 400; Kinghorn, “Modernization and Apartheid,” 142.

positions and the location of clothing on the body, testimony about the warmth of bed-sheets, stained underwear, and discernible sexual fluids. Arrests could be violent; some men attempting to flee were shot by police, and at least two police officers were shot dead when approaching couples in cars.¹⁰⁷

Government statistics related to annual prosecutions are incomplete because of the government's reluctance to share them. They are also difficult to interpret because the terminology for identifying individuals changed over time. Nevertheless, it is clear that starting in 1950, hundreds of interracial couples were prosecuted annually (though it was commonly assumed that only a fraction were caught given the clandestine nature of the offense), and every year, white men far outnumbered all the other categories of individuals prosecuted and convicted under the act (see tables 1 and 2). The men ranged in age from the teens to midseventies; regarding ethnicity, one study conducted in the late 1950s reported that most were Afrikaans speakers.¹⁰⁸ Press coverage suggests the majority were from the lower classes, but men from all social backgrounds were arrested, including politicians, Dutch Reformed Church ministers, school headmasters, laborers, businessmen, farmers, and police officers. Men of remarkably high social status were prosecuted. For example, in 1958, Gideon Keyser, a former private secretary to Prime Minister G. J. Strijdom, was sentenced to four months in prison for "enticing," or propositioning, a sixteen-year-old African girl, and in 1959, Andries Beyers Hofmeyr, a seventy-year-old lawyer (and brother of the highly respected and powerful politician Jan Hendrik Hofmeyr), was arrested for kissing an African woman in his office.¹⁰⁹ No systematic research exists on the women's identities, but statistics indicate that the vast majority were African and colored (a tiny number were Indian), and press coverage shows they included sex workers; rape victims; lovers having casual encounters; and women leading quiet lives as partners in stable, mixed-race relationships, often raising children together with white fathers.¹¹⁰ Few white women or black men were prosecuted (see table 1).

Although the Immorality Amendment Act targeted errant white men, its enforcement was a gendered process that put black women at tremendous risk of various forms of abuse and severe harm. The police used black women and teenagers as "traps" to catch white men—a potentially dangerous practice, as critics pointed out.¹¹¹ Also, women were vulnerable to rape by police officers after their arrest. In many cases, couples were taken to police stations in separate vehicles, and it is

107 "Police Watch Hospitals for Wanted Man," *Star*, September 18, 1959; "Stiltfontein Shooting Inquiry," *Star*, September 29, 1959; *Hansard*, February 23, 1962, column 1541 (Helen Suzman, Progressive Party).

108 Van den Berghe, "Miscegenation in South Africa," 78–82.

109 Jan Hendrik Hofmeyr (1894–1948) was deputy prime minister from 1943 to 1948. "Immorality Act Appeal Fails—Woman Breaks Down as She Hears Keyser Must Go to Jail," *Star*, March 25, 1958; "Lawyer Charged Under Immorality Act—Girl Tells Court of Watching Couple from Window," *Star*, August 14, 1959.

110 "Two Found Guilty of Immorality," *Argus*, December 23, 1957; "Couple Lived Together Ten Years: Jailed," *Argus*, January 10, 1958; "Eighteen Years Together; Immorality Conviction," *Cape Times*, March 20, 1965.

111 "Sentenced for Immorality," *Argus*, January 30, 1958; "Native Girl Was Trap for Man," *Argus*, July 31, 1959; "MP to Ask about Traps," *Argus*, April 27, 1960; "MP Attacks Use of Police Trap in Immorality Act Case," *Argus*, April 19, 1963; "Morals Case Policeman Was Over-zealous," *Argus*, June 18, 1969.

probable that women were raped, and some possibly murdered, en route.¹¹² Rape was defined in common law as vaginal penetration without a woman's consent and was prohibited regardless of a perpetrator's race, and black women and girls reported being raped by officers, as well as by other white men.¹¹³ Unsurprisingly, however, they were rarely believed by the courts. Magistrates repeatedly disregarded their testimony, claiming it either could not be believed or lacked corroboration.¹¹⁴ Disbelief in accusations of rape by women of all races long predates apartheid; assumptions about a woman's respectability had routinely shaped courts' judgments such that women whose gender performance did not conform to English middle-class norms frequently had their complaints dismissed.¹¹⁵ But a woman's race also mattered. Racist assumptions commonly led courts to conclude "black women and girls, lacking respectability, did not experience the same degree of harm from a sexual assault as their more respectable white counterparts."¹¹⁶ Whereas National Party rule inaugurated a sharp break in the official approach to white male heterosexuality, the ongoing unwillingness to take rape seriously attests to the *continuity* of misogyny post-1948, indeed to the present day.¹¹⁷

Occasionally white men were convicted of rape; a few such men were even sentenced to corporal punishment.¹¹⁸ But far more often, white men initially charged with the offense of raping a black woman would have the charge lowered to the offense of having committed interracial illicit carnal intercourse and either be acquitted or else found guilty but receive relatively light or suspended sentences.¹¹⁹ Some men charged with

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- 112 Linda Naicker, "The Role of Selected Churches and Communities in the Development and Maintenance of Inter-racial Relationships in Natal in the Context of Apartheid (1970–1994)" (master's thesis, University of KwaZulu-Natal, 2012), 73, 96.
- 113 "Native Girl of 12 Complains of Assault," *Star*, October 1, 1959; "Native Girl Accuses Piet Retief Farmer," *Star*, July 27, 1960; "Atherstone for Trial," July 29, *Star*, 1960; "Acquitted," *Star*, October 26, 1960; "Constable Faces Charge under Immorality Act," *Argus*, September 3, 1963.
- 114 See, for example, "Sentence in Immorality Act Case," *Argus*, November 17, 1959; "Four European Youths on Immorality Act Charge," *Argus*, November 14, 1963; "Four European Youths Acquitted," *Argus*, December 5, 1963; "Immorality Act: Father of Three Jailed," *Argus*, February 9, 1966.
- 115 Scully, "Rape, Race, and Colonial Culture"; Elizabeth Thornberry, *Colonizing Consent: Rape and Governance in South Africa's Eastern Cape* (Cambridge, 2019), 133–92.
- 116 Elizabeth Thornberry, "Rape, Race, and Respectability in a South African Port City: East London, 1870–1927," *Journal of Urban History* 42, no. 5 (2016): 863–80, here 872.
- 117 Rachel Jewkes, Yandisa Sikweyiya, Robert Morrell, and Kristin Dunkle, "Gender Inequitable Masculinity and Sexual Entitlement in Rape Perpetration South Africa: Findings of a Cross-Sectional Study," *PLoS ONE* 6, no. 12 (2011): e29590.
- 118 "Jail and Cuts for Man's Assault on Native," *Star*, December 26, 1958.
- 119 In 1957, the offence of "illicit" carnal intercourse was changed to "unlawful." On the legal interpretation of the law pertaining to rape see Garth M. Hardie and Gordon F. Hartford, *Commentary on the Immorality Act (Act No. 23 of 1957)* (Cape Town, 1960), appendix A. In 1953, a colored teenager reported a rape by a white police officer, who was initially convicted. He appealed, and in the Supreme Court, the judges believed sexual intercourse had taken place. However, they concluded that while "she seemed to us to be telling the truth," the Crown had failed to prove absence of consent; therefore, he was found guilty on the alternate charge of having interracial sex and sentenced to one year of imprisonment with hard labor. Verdict, 1–2, Regina vs. Izak Johannes Pretorius, Supreme Court, Natal Provincial Division, located in the Pietermaritzburg archive depot (hereafter Supreme Court, Natal Division), NAB RSC LEER, 1/1/210 01 23/1953. In 1959, a married white man, age twenty-four, was charged with raping a "young Native woman," but the magistrate did not believe her and instead found him guilty of contravening the Immorality Act. "Sentence in Immorality Act Case," *Argus*, November 17, 1959. In 1962, three white males, ages seventeen, twenty, and twenty-one, were initially charged with raping a forty-eight-year-old married colored woman in her house, but the charge

rape immediately pleaded guilty to having had interracial sex, undoubtedly to avoid risk of a harsher penalty.¹²⁰ It appears that other times, the testimonies of black women and girls, some as young as fourteen years of age, of violent attack were so compelling that the magistrate in fact believed rape or attempted rape had occurred—but nevertheless convicted men of the lesser offence.¹²¹ This includes cases where there had been witnesses, including police officers, such as the case of an ambulance driver being caught raping a “mentally retarded” fifteen-year-old African girl in the back of the ambulance.¹²² Almost unbelievably, women and girls who testified they were raped were frequently convicted along with their white rapists of (consensual) “unlawful carnal intercourse,” meaning, in effect, they were found guilty of having been raped.¹²³ The obscene injustice in such outcomes is plain, yet it is noteworthy that the act was used to discipline white men the courts were clearly loath to convict of the more serious charge of rape. The trend also made white rape more socially visible than it would have been otherwise; this was assured by the routine publication of men’s names and hometowns, as well as the details of their crimes. It is also clear that some women used the Immorality Act as a defensive weapon with which to ward off white men who were harassing them by reporting them to police; women even agreed to act as “traps,” a tactic that sometimes led to men’s prosecution.¹²⁴

Another form of violence against black women and teenagers was subjection to mandatory vaginal examinations. Standard police procedure was to immediately take couples arrested for contravening the act to district surgeons for genital examinations in order to secure samples of vaginal fluid and semen as evidence for the prosecution. Though historians have yet to analyze this practice in relation to enforcement of the Immorality Act, exams by white male doctors must have been at minimum humiliating and terrifying for black women and girls—and possibly painful; Elizabeth van Heyningen has described how brutal they could be for white prostitutes held in the Cape

was changed to one of contravening the act. “Immorality Act: Three in Court,” *Argus*, April 9, 1962. See also “Immorality Act Sentence,” *Argus*, March 19, 1960; “Immorality Act Charge,” *Argus*, July 29, 1960; “Constable Faces Charge under Immorality Act,” *Argus*, September 13, 1963; “Immorality Act: Father of Three Jailed,” *Argus*, February 9, 1966; “Six Months for ‘Lucky Man,’” *Argus*, April 20, 1966.

120 For example, in 1958, a white bricklayer, age twenty-two, was charged with raping an African woman, but during the hearing, he pleaded guilty to contravening the Immorality Act and was sentenced to six months’ imprisonment. “Immorality Act Verdict,” *Argus*, August 16, 1958. See also “Contravened Act: Jailed,” *Argus*, September 2, 1959.

121 During sentencing of one white man convicted of interracial “immorality,” the judge said the man had been “very rash’ in frightening the woman’s husband away and then committing the offence,” suggesting he believed she had been raped. “Immorality Act Verdict,” *Argus*, August 16, 1958.

122 “Shocking Record, Magistrate Tells Ambulance Driver,” *Argus*, November 16, 1961. See also, “A Deputy Mayor, Girl in Court,” *Argus*, June 27, 1966.

123 In 1958, a white man and an African woman were convicted and sentenced to four months in jail, with two months suspended. She said she was raped, “but medical evidence did not support her allegation.” “Two Appeal after Sentence,” *Argus*, June 6, 1958. In 1965, a white man, age twenty-two, with a previous conviction for the rape of an eleven-year-old girl, raped a colored girl, age thirteen, and was found guilty “of conspiring to contravene the Immorality Act.” He was sentenced to six months in jail, and the girl was “referred to the Juvenile Court.” “Barman Jailed for Offence with Girl (13),” *Argus*, October 21, 1965.

124 “Native Girl Was Trap for Man,” *Argus*, July 31, 1959; “Native Woman Says She Screamed—as Arranged,” *Star*, January 7, 1960.

Town Lock Hospital in the 1890s.¹²⁵ For Dr. Zureena Desai, who was prosecuted along with Professor John Blacking for contravening the act in 1969, the experience remains a vivid memory. Desai recalls the shock and anger she felt during her exam, although she suspects the district surgeon performing the procedure was uncomfortable, “possibly embarrassed,” because, as a recently graduated medical doctor herself, she was a professional colleague.¹²⁶

The use of the legal penalty of imprisonment for contravening the act was likewise gendered and raced. In practice, convicted men and women were normally incarcerated for terms ranging from three months to a year, although first-time convictions often resulted in suspended sentences. However, black women were at greater risk of imprisonment than white men. Lacking the necessary financial resources to obtain legal representation, many black women immediately pleaded guilty because they did not understand the nature of the charge, were intimidated by the process, or simply wished to get their punishment over with as quickly as possible.¹²⁷ In contrast, white men often hired lawyers, and as a result, many were acquitted or had their sentences reduced or suspended on appeal. By 1956, at least sixty-two black women had been incarcerated while the men involved went free.¹²⁸ The higher rate of imprisonment for black women was widely reported and made a mockery of the claim that the Immorality Act was applied equally to all.¹²⁹ In 1963, the *Argus* newspaper, in a rare example of the white press reporting on the experiences of black women on trial for contravening the act, conveyed the terror felt by one young colored woman when learning her fate. Upon being sentenced to prison, she “screamed and ran from the dock shouting, ‘I do not want to go to jail. It is not necessary that I be punished. I will kill myself,’” and had to be restrained.¹³⁰

Another type of gendered, racialized punishment, this time aimed at white men, was public shaming. The National Party government wanted the press to publicize the names of men arrested and report the nature of their sex crimes in hopes the publicity would shame them, as well as further stigmatize interracial sex and the men who engaged in it. The government assumed the publicity would instill in wavering white men sufficient fear of exposure to prevent them from contravening the act, reasoning indicating Afrikanerdom was a shame culture.¹³¹ Swart heavily emphasized

125 van Heyningen, “The Social Evil in the Cape Colony 1868–1902,” 170–97, here 183–84. Lora Wildenthal notes that in German West Africa, women suspected of being prostitutes were also subjected to vaginal examinations, making them “state-certified sexual instruments of the men.” Wildenthal, *German Women for Empire, 1884–1945*, 105. See also Philippa Levine, “Venereal Disease, Prostitution, and the Politics of Empire: The Case of British India,” *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 4, no. 4 (April 1994): 579–602.

126 Dr. Zureena Desai, interview with author, Dublin, June 14, 2018.

127 “Swart Promises to Go into Penalties Under Immorality Bill,” *Star*, January 31, 1957; “Q. C. Explains Anomalies of Immorality Act,” *Star*, April 4, 1957.

128 “Changes in Immorality Law Urged,” *Star*, January 26, 1956.

129 “Reply to Morals Inquiry,” *Argus*, September 25, 1954; “Immorality: Joint Trials Urged,” *Argus*, January 20, 1956; “Immorality Law ‘Anomalous,’” *Argus*, January 26, 1956.

130 “Sentenced Woman Hysterical,” *Argus*, July 5, 1963.

131 A shame culture deliberately uses fear of shame to enhance or maintain conformity. This is a concept first proposed by Ruth Benedict in her influential study *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword: Patterns of Japanese Culture* (Boston, 1946). Helpful overviews on the concept are David Nash and Anne-Marie Kilday, *Cultures of Shame: Exploring Crime and Morality in Britain 1600–1900* (Houndmills, 2010); Daniel

the power of public shaming in 1950: “Today ... public opinion is strengthened by two factors; that is by the publicity given to this in the courts and by the punishment that is imposed. *Public opinion therefore derives its power from the shame which attaches to the accused* when he has to face trial by the court on such a charge. That is where public opinion comes into operation, but when a man goes and does these things in the slums, and public opinion never sees him doing so, never gets to know about it, what does he care about public opinion?”¹³² Hungry for sex scandals that promoted sales, newspapers closely followed arrests and trials. Commodifying couples’ shame, the English and Afrikaans white press habitually published the names and hometowns of men and women caught and the circumstances of their arrest, and they also reported on the subsequent trials. Couples’ prosecutions were essentially shame spectacles, and knowing their communities closely watched them was often excruciating for both black women and white men and upsetting for their families.¹³³ (No research exists on the impact of the prosecution process on women, white or black, but there is evidence that the latter, at least, were also shamed.)¹³⁴ The black press also covered interracial “immorality” trials, and some reporters wrote approvingly about proceedings, revealing the patriarchal desire to keep white men away from black women and black women from straying from their race. Others were critical, a position evident in the sympathetic depictions of women and, if the story had a romantic angle, couples on trial.¹³⁵ Ultimately, the Immorality Act provoked continual public discussion of interracial sex in newspapers and magazines, as well as in parliament, the courts, and other arenas; as one woman wrote in a letter to the *Star* newspaper in 1963, she was fed up with “the sordid, foul Immorality Act reports which appear in all the papers so frequently.”¹³⁶ As Michel Foucault realized, attempts to repress sexuality often have the ironic effect of inciting endless sexual discourse.¹³⁷ The press reports were a genre of “quasi-didactic entertainment” that simultaneously shamed transgressors, titillated readers, and educated South Africans of all races regarding normative sexual relations between the races, a discourse identified as a shaming technique in other contexts.¹³⁸

M. T. Fessler, “From Appeasement to Conformity: Evolutionary and Cultural Perspectives on Shame, Competition, and Cooperation,” in *The Self-Conscious Emotions: Theory and Research*, ed. Jessica L. Tracy, Richard W. Robins, and June Price Tangney (New York, 2007), 174–93; and Peter N. Stearns, *Shame: A Brief History* (Urbana, IL, 2017).

132 *Senate Debates*, April 18, 1950, column 1006–7 (C. R. Swart, minister of justice), emphasis added.

133 Simon Meyerson, who under the pen name Des Troye wrote the novel *An Act of Immorality*, was a court reporter in the early 1960s, and he recalls watching African children in the public gallery for “nonwhites” crying when their mothers were convicted and taken out of the courtroom to be transported to prison. Interview with author, London, September 4, 2021.

134 See the testimony of a young African woman convicted of contravening the act in 1951 and sentenced to four months’ imprisonment with hard labor. Rex vs. Zagerus Theodorus Epie de Jongh van Arkel, Supreme Court, Natal Division, NAB RSC LEER 1/1/203 01 49/1951.

135 For an example of critical press coverage, see Juby Mayet’s flattering profile of Dr. Zureena Desai: “Dr. Desai Talks to Juby Mayet,” *Drum*, May 1969, 54–55. Black press coverage of interracial “immorality” cases and its impact on black women and their families and communities requires further research.

136 Letter to the editor, “They Say I’m Dumb,” *Argus*, April 10, 1963.

137 Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, vol. 1 (Paris, 1976).

138 Nash and Kilday, *Cultures of Shame*, 135.

Despite vigorous enforcement and the attendant widespread publicity, the 1950 Immorality Amendment Act failed to halt white men's pursuit of interracial sex. Very soon after its enactment, the National Party government became frustrated by the continual arrests. Because apartheid was supposedly serving a holy purpose, fanatical Afrikaner nationalists were disconcerted and angered by the blatantly unholy behavior of their *broeders* and, ironically, by the unrelenting publicity of their cases. Their anger was intensified by the reports of recalcitrant men evading conviction and incarceration while the women with whom they were arrested were jailed. Believing a major reason for men's ongoing insubordination was their knowledge that it was often impossible to prove vaginal intercourse had occurred, the government in 1957 enhanced the courts' ability to secure convictions by providing a far broader legal definition of interracial immorality. In the amended version of the law, now renamed simply the Immorality Act, it became illegal to also "entice, solicit, or importune ... any immoral or indecent act"—all terms left undefined in the legislation—between a white person and a black person.¹³⁹ The policy underlying the changes, as a judge stated in 1959, "is common knowledge, namely, to punish all overt tendency towards sexual intimacy between white and coloured."¹⁴⁰ As the justice minister exulted, "the European will no longer be able to say: 'You cannot prove that I committed the act; you only saw me lying there next to her, or in such and such a position, but you cannot prove that this did happen.'" Such a defense, he confidently asserted, "will no longer help him."¹⁴¹

Also in 1957, the National Party government intensified legal punishment for sexual offenses, increasing the maximum length of imprisonment for both genders (regardless of race) to seven years, now to be served performing compulsory hard labor. In addition, corporal punishment was added as a penalty for men: a maximum of ten cuts with a cane for those under the age of fifty. Legal scholars have argued persuasively that corporal punishment in hierarchical societies is a ritual aimed at "subjugative shaming," employed "to marginalize and discipline the social 'other.'"¹⁴² In African colonial contexts, punishment regimes often included whipping and caning colonized men; doing so "delivered the message of white supremacy."¹⁴³ By adding corporal punishment as a penalty for white men found guilty of having interracial sex, the National

139 The Immorality Act, 1957 (Act No. 23 of 1957) consolidated existing laws pertaining to numerous sexual matters, including brothels and all forms of "unlawful carnal intercourse." The 1950 law on illicit interracial sex was amended and included as Section 16. In the 1957 law, the terms "solicit or entice" and "an immoral or indecent act" were also included in Sections 14 and 15 of the amended law, regarding sex with minors and sex with "female idiots or imbeciles," respectively. Hardie and Hartford, *Commentary on the Immorality Act (Act No. 23 of 1957)*.

140 Cited in Hardie and Hartford, *Commentary on the Immorality Act (Act No. 23 of 1957)*, 46.

141 *Senate Debates*, May 20, 1957, column 2347 (C. R. Swart, minister of justice).

142 Laurie A. Gould and Matthew Pate, "The Discipline of Difference: Ethnolinguistic Heterogeneity and Corporal Punishment," *International Journal of Comparative and Applied Criminal Justice* 36, no. 3 (2012): 211–28, here 224, 212.

143 Thomas McClendon, "Whipping Boys: South Africa's Limited Reform of Judicial Corporal Punishment in the 1960s and 1970s," *African Studies* 77, no. 3 (2018): 354–77, here 357. See also David M. Anderson, "Punishment, Race and 'The Raw Native': Settler Society Kenya's Flogging Scandals, 1895–1930," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 37, no. 3 (2011): 479–97; Stephen Peté and Annie Devenish, "Flogging, Fear and Food: Punishment and Race in Colonial Natal," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 31, no. 1 (2005): 3–21; and Paul Ocobock, "Spare the Rod, Spoil the Colony: Corporal Punishment, Colonial Violence, and

Party was also delivering the message of hegemonic Afrikaner masculinity.¹⁴⁴ For example, in 1957, a young white man found guilty of having interracial sex with a fifteen-year-old African girl (he was initially charged with rape) was reprimanded by the magistrate, who stated, “You have degraded yourself, and debased your standing as a European,” and sentenced him to imprisonment and five strokes.¹⁴⁵

Sentences of corporal punishment aligned with the Christian nationalist belief that the overarching imperative to keep the white race morally and biologically pure rendered inconsequential the welfare of individual whites, regardless of gender. Corporal punishment appears to have been reserved mainly, though not exclusively, for young male members of the race. Drawing on the Christian nationalist ideal of the family and displaying once again its authoritarianism, the National Party government asserted that white youth required strict moral guidance. As a Dutch Reformed Church report explained in 1951, “The child cannot be equated with the parent ... nor the subject with authorities ... There is a just, God-pleasing hierarchy of power in the family and the state.”¹⁴⁶ Thus, the minister of justice, C. R. Swart, defended cuts with the cane as a punishment by invoking the duty of the father to discipline the child. Conjuring the image of the state as a righteous, stern patriarch chastising an unruly son, he explained, “If a young man comes before them who has misbehaved himself with a person of a different color, the Courts have it in their power to order he be given a jolly good hiding and sent home ... I think it is wise to keep this corporal punishment clause in for application in many cases, because I think that in a large number of cases of indecency and immorality, what the accused needs is a good hiding, the hiding that his parents should have given him earlier.”¹⁴⁷ The previous year, a United Party MP called corporal punishment “a sadistic system,” to which Swart replied, “Did your father never give you a beating?”¹⁴⁸

For older white men, the extent of Afrikaner nationalism’s intolerance of “blood-mixers” was most evident in the National Party government’s merciless response to their suicides. There are no national statistics on white men’s suicides related to enforcement of the Immorality Act, despite repeated requests in parliament; however, by the 1960s, newspapers were regularly reporting them and the subsequent inquests where the act was blamed for their deaths. Methods men used to kill themselves included shooting, drowning, gassing, burning,

Generational Authority in Kenya, 1897–1952,” *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 45, no. 1 (2012): 29–56.

144 Angus McLaren has analyzed this phenomenon in the metropole, where flogging queer men in nineteenth-century Britain was part “of a more general shoring up of the definition of ‘normal’ masculinity.” Angus McLaren, *The Trials of Masculinity: Policing Sexual Boundaries, 1870–1930* (Chicago, 1997), 26.

145 “European Gets Three Years and Five Lashes for Immorality,” *Star*, December 6, 1957. See also “Cuts for Youth,” *Argus*, May 28, 1958. On the use of corporal punishment in boarding schools, see also Robert Morrell, “Masculinity and the White Boy’s Boarding Schools of Natal, 1880–1930,” *Perspectives in Education* 15, no. 1 (1994): 27–52.

146 Quoted in Kinghorn, “Modernization and Apartheid,” 144.

147 *Hansard*, January 31, 1957, columns 391–92 (C. R. Swart, minister of justice).

148 *Hansard*, April 30, 1956, column 4621 (S. J. Tighy, United Party, and C. R. Swart, minister of justice).

hanging, poisoning, and jumping from tall buildings.¹⁴⁹ Some killed their children beforehand.¹⁵⁰

Suicide is a complex cultural phenomenon, but clearly, in these cases, the stigmatization of interracial sex was the root cause. Therefore, while the Immorality Act as a coercive instrument of sexual behavior modification plainly failed to deter countless white men from pursuing black women for sex, it was exceedingly effective at intensifying the revulsion toward miscegenation. The continual production and circulation of discourse related to the Immorality Act fomented disgust toward offending men to such an extent that members of the public (of all races) felt entitled and emboldened to assist the state in policing white male heterosexuality. Informing became a major means by which police learned about interracial sexual liaisons. Many of these informers were white women adhering to the Afrikaner nationalist gender ideal of *volksmoeder*, the politically subordinate “mother of the nation” responsible for maintaining the *volk*’s traditions.¹⁵¹ Some were exceedingly forceful at sexual policing; one woman used a leather belt to thrash a man she found hiding under her domestic servant’s bed before calling police.¹⁵² Female informers attributed their own complicity to outrage at men’s failure to conform to hegemonic Afrikaner masculinity, as in the case of the female employer discussed at the beginning of this essay who had the deputy mayor of Murraysburg arrested. However, in reality, motives could be complicated by personal agendas. The Murraysburg woman, for example, had herself been “censured” by her church council, of which the deputy mayor was a member; therefore, in her case at least, revenge was a likely motivation.¹⁵³

By the early 1960s, interracial sex was so severely stigmatized it became in the eyes of Afrikaners the most reprehensible crime a white man could commit. In 1962, the eminent jurist Oliver Deneys Schreiner, a judge of the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court of South Africa from 1945 to 1960, stated in his presidential address to the South African Institute of Race Relations that for many whites, miscegenation had “been elevated into a crime so atrocious as to make all other crimes relatively menial.”¹⁵⁴ A decade later, the *London Observer* reported that to “the average Calvinist Afrikaner,” being accused of having sex with an African woman was akin to

149 A few examples include “Due in Court; Man Found Shot,” *Argus*, February 26, 1962; “Man Gassed Himself over Charge,” *Argus*, November 1, 1963; “Constable on a Charge Shoots Himself,” *Argus*, May 31, 1967; “Hanged Himself after Found with Black Girl,” *Cape Times*, November 27, 1971; and “Eighth-Floor Death Fall,” *Argus*, December 13, 1971.

150 “Man Awaiting Trial Gassed Himself and Daughter,” *Star*, June 9, 1960; “S. A. Public ‘Disgusted’ with Act,” *Rand Daily Mail*, February 27, 1971.

151 On the history of the formation of this gender norm, see Elsabe Brink, “Man-made Women: Gender, Class and the Ideology of the *Volksmoeder*,” in *Women and Gender in Southern Africa to 1945*, ed. Cherry Walker (London, 1990), 273–92; Anne McClintock, “‘No Longer in a Future Heaven’: Women and Nationalism in South Africa,” *Transition*, 51 (1991): 104–23; McClintock, “Family Feuds”; and Marijke du Toit, “The Domesticity of Afrikaner Nationalism: *Volksmoeders* and the ACVV, 1904–1929,” *Journal of Southern African Studies* 29, no. 1 (2003): 155–76.

152 “She Thrashed Man under Servant’s Bed,” *Argus*, May 15, 1967.

153 “Karoo Town Elder Gives Evidence in Own Defence,” *Argus*, November 23, 1957.

154 Oliver Deneys Schreiner, *Realism in Race Relations* (Johannesburg, 1962): 1–20, here 6. For a profile of Schreiner provided when he became the new president of the South African Institute of Race Relations, see “New President Distinguished Son of South Africa,” *Race Relations News* 23, no. 2 (1961): 18–19.

being suspected of raping their sheep—a quip that equated interracial sex with bestiality and African women with animals.¹⁵⁵ Miscegenation was a massive transgression within Afrikanerdom, where conformity was compulsory, and Afrikaners routinely responded to men arrested under the Immorality Act with ostracization. Men were expelled from their communities, socially excluded, and publicly condemned, and they lost status, reputation, and employment. For Afrikaner men, whose very identity depended on being perceived and accepted as respected members of the *volk*, such experiences were agonizing. Some coped by quitting their jobs and relocating with their families rather than living with the exclusion and judgment meted out by neighbors and colleagues.

Some Afrikaner men apparently found it too painful to endure the stigmatization and the feelings of shame unleashed in them when caught. According to press coverage, the men who killed themselves had been perceived as “respectable” Afrikaners, meaning employed men who were married and had children.¹⁵⁶ In short, the suicides seem often to have been men who literally could not bear exposure for failing to conform to the normative behavioral ideals of hegemonic Afrikaner masculinity. Clearly some men had learned the lesson of hegemonic masculinity and truly believed they had committed an unspeakable act of treason, because they died by suicide incredibly swiftly after being arrested—one man hanged himself in his jail cell less than four hours after being arrested, and another drove his car into the sea within an hour of his arrest.¹⁵⁷ Contemporary observers consistently attributed the suicides to shame, though it is sometimes unclear whether they thought men killed themselves because of shame about what they had done (the emotion) or because they found the social consequences of getting caught unbearable (stigmatization). In 1962, Progressive Party MP Helen Suzman tabled a private member’s bill to decriminalize extramarital interracial sex, and during her speech, she condemned the law for driving white men to suicide, stating the reason they took their own lives “is, of course, shame.”¹⁵⁸

Many men described in vivid terms the horror of getting caught contravening the act. In 1970, journalist Jaap Boekkooi wrote, apparently about Afrikaner men specifically, that “the average White victim of the Act behaves in court somewhat like a man facing a revolutionary firing squad. He knows a conviction is some sort of living

155 “Immorality Act Falls into New Disrepute,” reprinted by *Washington Post*, February 11, 1971.

156 There were white men from other ethnic backgrounds who killed themselves after arrest, but Afrikaners appear to have been the dominant ethnic group. This is unsurprising given that it seems the majority of men arrested were Afrikaners. But it also appears that English-speaking South Africans and immigrants, along with Afrikaans-speaking men who either opposed apartheid or else lacked respectability (such as repeat offenders), had greater resistance or were wholly impervious to shame and stigmatization and therefore were unlikely to commit suicide. Moreover, no evidence of suicide has thus far been found in relation to black men or women, or to white women, despite the opinion of one magistrate that “it was a greater shame for a White woman than for a White man to be convicted under this Act.” “Native Jailed,” *Argus*, n.d. (news clipping from 1959).

157 “Hanged in Cell after Arrest,” *Star*, January 12, 1971; “Immorality Act Fear: Suicide,” *Argus*, February 23, 1962.

158 *Hansard*, February 23, 1962, column 1541 (Helen Suzman, Progressive Party).

death.”¹⁵⁹ A year later, a man sentenced to five months’ imprisonment told a reporter that as an Afrikaner, being convicted had “irreparably damaged” his soul. He could “understand why others [had] committed suicide.”¹⁶⁰

Undoubtedly, a major factor in some men’s suicides was an acute awareness that their families, whose welfare was one of Afrikaner men’s God-given responsibilities, were also stigmatized by their transgression. Judge Schreiner observed in 1962, “It seems likely that this legislation is the cause of a substantial proportion of the unexplained suicides by White men. The oppressive sense of shame engendered by this legislation affects wives, children and relatives of the men convicted for the rest of their lives, and the shadows spread outside the immediate family beyond the first generation, extending still further the range of misery.”¹⁶¹ That same year, the United Party objected to the Immorality Act (though still condemning miscegenation) by lamenting that arrest for its contravention “carries with it the humiliation, the pain and the suffering of whole families ... They never throw off that stigma. They sell their homes, they emigrate, they get away from that atmosphere in which they realize that they are continually suspect.”¹⁶² Women attested to the damage to families caused by their husbands’ arrests. One woman explained that after her husband of nineteen years had been sentenced to four months’ imprisonment for having a two-year affair with the couple’s domestic servant, the “stigma shattered and ruined my life and the lives of my children. Everybody was so cruel about it.” Nevertheless, when he returned home, she stood by him as a loyal wife—until he was arrested for the same offense a second time and she felt compelled to divorce him for the sake of her children.¹⁶³ Even after men’s suicides, tainted families were forced to continue carrying their shame. In 1971, a teenage girl whose father had shot himself days before the start of his trial quit high school because, according to a close relative, other schoolgirls “kept pointing her out and showing her newspaper cuttings”; she “couldn’t face the shame,” the relative explained, “so she is leaving.”¹⁶⁴ Because families also “had to endure shame and humiliation,” as early as 1959, lawyers, politicians, and members of the white public called for newspapers to stop publishing the names of men arrested, but their urgings went ignored.¹⁶⁵ By the early 1960s, even fervent Afrikaner nationalists were alarmed by the damaging effect the Immorality Act was having on white families: the pro-National Party newspaper *Die Burger* complained that “the punishment contained in the Immorality Act is not the three, six or nine months’ imprisonment. It is the shame of the publicity to the offender’s relatives rather than to himself.”¹⁶⁶

159 “White Skeleton Rattles Its Vicious Bones,” *Sunday Tribune*, September 27, 1970.

160 “Convicted Man on ‘Mixing,’” *Argus*, March 5, 1971.

161 Schreiner, *Realism in Race Relations*, 6.

162 *Hansard*, February 23, 1962, column 1548 (D. E. Mitchell, United Party).

163 “Mother Divorces Man Who Had Affair with African Maid,” *Sunday Times*, October 11, 1970.

164 “Morals Act Man’s Family Suffers,” *Rand Daily Mail*, February 22, 1971.

165 “Names in Immorality Cases Should Not Be Kept out of the Press,” *Star*, November 2, 1959. See also “Problem Growing—Many Suggestions Made to Reduce Immorality,” *Star*, October 28, 1959, and “Initials Only in Immorality Cases?,” *Star*, October 1, 1960.

166 Quoted in “Publicity Is the Real Punishment, Says ‘Dawie,’” *Argus*, August 25, 1962.

When advocating her private member's bill in 1962, Suzman declared, "Nothing, but nothing, to my mind, can outweigh the misery and degradation that this law has brought in its wake. Thousands upon thousands of people have been publicly humiliated, have had their careers ruined and their family lives wrecked, and their community lives rendered non-existent by being dragged into court under the Immorality Act."¹⁶⁷ But the government was unmoved. B. J. Vorster, minister of justice, replied as follows:

I do not want to try in any way to minimize the serious consequences of the Act ... But at the same time I should like to put this question: Does that not in fact prove in what a serious light this offence is regarded? Why should such a great stigma attach to the commission of this act if the public does not regard it as a particularly serious offence? Does that stigma not prove that we were right when we introduced this Bill originally, and that in doing so we were expressing the feelings of the public, Afrikaans-speaking and English-speaking? ... We are not dealing here with a "disgusting law"; it is the act itself which is so disgusting and so abhorrent.¹⁶⁸

With this answer, Vorster proclaimed that the suicides were in fact *confirmation* that the government was correct to criminalize interracial sex.

The National Party's implacability, so visible in Vorster's comment, led to a continual rise in the annual number of prosecutions for another decade (see table 1), a result of the much broader, vague legal definition of interracial immorality that made it possible to interpret a far wider range of behaviors as criminal sex acts.¹⁶⁹ After 1957, the law's lengthened tentacles now grasped couples previously out of harm's reach. More couples in long-term committed relationships were arrested, and a white man and a black woman could be arrested merely for standing by the side of a car, leaning against a wall together, or sitting, fully clothed, on a blanket in the *veldt* (field).¹⁷⁰ This is perhaps the most poignant example: in 1966, a twenty-five-year-old white man and a nineteen-year-old colored woman were convicted of "conspiring to contravene" the act and sent to prison because they "had each other's name tattooed on their wrists."¹⁷¹

As research on the idea of race makes increasingly clear, there was considerable continuity in the discourse of race as a biological category after World War II, evident in

167 *Hansard*, February 23, 1962, column 1540 (Helen Suzman, Progressive Party).

168 *Hansard*, February 23, 1962, columns 1558 and 1560 (B. J. Vorster, minister of justice and prisons).

169 Contemporary legal scholars stated it was impossible "to give a conclusive definition" of "immoral" and "indecent" acts. Hardie and Hartford, *Commentary on the Immorality Act (Act No. 23 of 1957)*, 63.

170 In 1967, a young white man and colored woman were arrested for "standing face to face leaning against a wall" late one evening. They were found guilty of "conspiring to commit an indecent act" and given suspended prison sentences. "Suspended Sentence for Two," *Argus*, January 9, 1967. On the couple caught sitting together on a blanket, see Klausen, "Pining for Purity," 219.

171 "Tattooed Couple Jailed under Act," *Argus*, February 3, 1966.

a wide range of political, intellectual, and social movements.¹⁷² Therefore, Afrikaner nationalists were unremarkable for continuing to subscribe to biological notions of race and to desire racial purity. They were, however, extraordinary for how openly and unapologetically they clung to racist prewar concepts and discourses that were increasingly discredited elsewhere because of their association with fascism and Nazism.¹⁷³ In 1968, for example, an Afrikaner academic asserted, “There are millions of underdeveloped people of different ethnic groups in the country who are dependent on the help and guidance of the Whites. But we can only give this if we see to it ourselves that we do not descend into the sewer of integration.”¹⁷⁴ By then, such crude statements were out of sync with a world order rapidly embracing antiracist and human rights discourses propelled by the horror of genocidal war crimes. More important, the apartheid regime was exceptional for the lengths it went to maintain the fantasy of white racial purity and the brutality of the attempt to do so.

The National Party government’s attempt to hegemonize Afrikaner nationalism’s racist, puritanical ideal of white masculinity within white society failed, testimony to the enduring strength of older, competing white masculinities that validated or at least tolerated sexual access to black women. Many white men continued feeling entitled to interracial sex, a sentiment that had pervaded the region long before 1948, necessitating its criminalization in the first place. As Judge Schreiner noted about the Immorality Act as early as 1962, “This legislation seems to be fairly describable as unrealistic. It does not face the fact, which is highly unattractive to many Whites, that there are, and always will be, some of their number who are prepared to take part in sexual relations with non-Whites, and the further fact that there are limits to what punitive Acts of Parliament can achieve.”¹⁷⁵ The regime was unable to persuade all white men to conform to hegemonic Afrikaner masculinity and lacked the power to force them to comply. The regime would also prove powerless to prevent the emergence of new white masculinities that reflected the international loss of legitimacy of racism post-1945, which created greater discursive space

172 Michelle Brattain, “Race, Racism, and Antiracism: UNESCO and the Politics of Presenting Science to the Postwar Public,” *American Historical Review* 112, no. 5 (2007): 1386–1413; Nils Gilman, *Mandarins of the Future: Modernization Theory in Cold War America* (Baltimore, 2003); Nicolas Guilhot, “Imperial Realism: Post-war IR Theory and Decolonisation,” *International History Review* 36, no. 4 (2014): 698–720; Robert Sussman, *The Myth of Race: The Troubling Persistence of an Unscientific Idea* (Cambridge, MA, 2014); Michael Yudell, *Race Unmasked: Biology and Race in the Twentieth Century* (New York, 2014); Angela Saini, *Superior: The Return of Race Science* (Boston, 2019). Notorious examples of scientific racism in studies on human intelligence include Arthur R. Jensen, “Social Class, Race, and Genetics: Implications for Education,” *American Educational Research Journal* 5, no. 1 (1968): 1–42, and Christopher Brand, *The G Factor: General Intelligence and Its Implications* (Chichester, 1996). Pining for racial exclusivity also persisted in other contemporaneous nationalist movements ranging from within South Africa to nation-states beyond Africa, but they lacked the power to be as harmful. See, for example, Jon Soske, *Internal Frontiers: African Nationalism and the Indian Diaspora in Twentieth-Century South Africa* (Athens, OH, 2017); Nadia Y. Kim, *Imperial Citizens: Koreans and Race from Seoul to LA* (Stanford, 2008); and Robert A. Fish, “‘Mixed-Blood’ Japanese: A Reconsideration of Race and Purity in Japan,” in *Japan’s Minorities: The Illusion of Homogeneity*, ed. Michael Weiner, 2nd ed. (London, 2009), 40–58.

173 I owe this point to Vineet Thakur.

174 P. J. Coertze, “Akkulturasië,” in *Kultuurbeïnvloeding tussen Blankes en Bantoe in Suid-Afrika*, ed. Geoff Cronjé (Pretoria, 1968), quoted in Sharp, “The Roots and Development of *Volkekunde* in South Africa,” 16.

175 Schreiner, *Realism in Race Relations*, 6.

in white supremacist societies, including South Africa, for liberal and antiracist ideas to take root. With increasing defiance over the decades, white men fell in love and pursued relationships with black women despite state repression (as did black men and white women).¹⁷⁶ Further study of interracial relationships during apartheid would contribute new knowledge to the “vastly understudied sphere of love” in African history.¹⁷⁷

Yet dogmatic conservative Afrikaner nationalists, nicknamed the *verkrampste* (the closed-minded), refused to accept that legal rules in themselves were insufficient to eradicate deeply established social norms and popular practices; hence, while in control of the National Party, they continued relying on the law for a solution to straight white men’s sexual insubordination. Much of the ensuing suffering experienced by South Africans of both genders and all races caught up in the Immorality Act’s machinations was publicly documented and deplored beginning in the 1950s. Regardless, the regime continued enforcing the act, although, for reasons too complicated to explain here, less aggressively after 1971.¹⁷⁸ The ongoing application of the act is further testament to the remorselessness of political projects seeking to bring order to a chaotic world by reaching for a state of purity. Afrikaner nationalism utilized the law as a discursive device; as a deterrent; as punishment; and as revenge, a form of “legitimized vengeance” on white heterosexual men who betrayed the race.¹⁷⁹ Barrington Moore contends that in the twentieth century, the idea of moral purity facilitated the persecution and extreme cruelty perpetrated under the catastrophic regimes of Stalinism, Nazism and Maoism.¹⁸⁰ The history of the Immorality Act reveals it also played a crucial role in paving the way for the moral catastrophe of apartheid. Additional study of its application will further heed the call for more consideration of the ways purity discourses have fostered social cruelty.¹⁸¹

176 Some men requested race reclassification to marry black women, others left the country with their beloveds, and still others stated in court they had no regrets and would continue the relationships after serving their prison terms. “White Says She Wants to Marry Coloured Man,” *Star*, February 7, 1959; “He Will Take Coloured Girl from Union,” *Star*, March 10, 1959; “African Woman Flies to Marry in Belgium,” *Star*, December 3, 1964; “He Became a Coloured—for Love,” *Star*, March 3, 1966; “Immorality Act: Man Acquitted,” *Argus*, July 2, 1966; “Morals Act Couple to Wed Abroad,” *Argus*, November 20, 1971.

177 Mark Hunter, *Love in the Time of AIDS: Inequality, Gender, and Rights in South Africa* (Bloomington, IN, 2010), 12; Jennifer Cole and Lynn M. Thomas, eds., *Love in Africa* (Chicago, 2009).

178 In brief, in 1969, the so-called *verligte* (enlightened) faction of the National Party finally defeated the once dominant *verkrampste* faction. The new leadership reflected the waning power of Christian nationalism within Afrikanerdom, which made it more sensitive to both national and international criticism of the Immorality Act. Ultimately, the act was undone by the challenge to apartheid mounted by the powerful mass democratic movements that emerged after the Soweto uprising (1976). Further information on the repeal of the Immorality Act is in Klausen, “Pining for Purity.” For analysis of the conflict between the *verligte* and *verkrampste* factions, see Heribert Adam and Hermann Giliomee, *The Rise and Crisis of Afrikaner Power* (Cape Town, 1979); Dan O’Meara, *Forty Lost Years: The Apartheid State and the Politics of the National Party, 1948–1994* (Johannesburg, 1996), 116, 255–56; and Jamie Miller, *An African Volk: The Apartheid Regime and Its Search for Survival* (New York, 2016).

179 Joel Feinberg, “The Expressive Function of Punishment,” *Monist* 49, no. 3 (1965): 397–423, here 403. Thanks to Luigi Corrias for bringing this article to my attention.

180 Moore, *Moral Purity and Persecution in History*.

181 Robbie Duschinsky, “Purity, Power and Cruelty,” *Critique of Anthropology* 31, no. 4 (2011): 312–28, here 313.

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