A Gendered View of the History of Professionalization in South Africa

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Women's participation in the labour force is one currently underresearched area of South African history (Walker 1990:5). Existing historical analyses include that of Guy on South African women in the precolonial period, and, for the colonial and apartheid eras, works by Beavon and Rogerson on women in the informal sector, van Onselen and Cock on domestic service, and Berger's work on women in South African trade unions (Guy 1990, Beavon and Rogerson 1986, van Onselen 1982, Cock 1980, Berger 1992). Women's entry into professional employment in South Africa is even more underresearched. Historical accounts of education, nursing, and midwifery have appeared only recently (Marks 1994, Burns 1995).[1]

Historical investigation into how professions have developed in the West began in the late 1940s. From that time through the 1970s, historians took a structural-functionalist view of professions, defining an occupation as a profession if it had certain attributes, such as a period of formal training, some sort of certification procedure, and the like. In the 1980s, the 'jurisdictional' approach gained prominence. In this approach, the professions are viewed as a dynamic system competing over jurisdiction — the right to dominate an area of work. While the jurisdictional approach is useful in that it helps to explain how some professions came into existence (for example, how nursing carved out its jurisdiction over patient care from medicine), neither it

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[1] While earlier histories of South African education and nursing exist (Malherbe 1925 and Searle 1969), these tend to be hagiographic and focused on the white population.

nor the structural-functionalist approach takes into account race, class, or gender in the development of the professions.[2]

Neither the structural-functionalist nor jurisdictional approaches can be applied validly to the development of professions in Africa, since they do not take into account the power dynamics (such as those of gender, race, and class) of the colonial and postcolonial world. While some study has been done on professionalization in an African context,[3] more research is needed. Is the idea of a ' profession ' inherently Western ? The African gender analysis approach (as detailed in Imam 1997) appear to be a fruitful approach for analysing the development of professions in Africa. In other words, relations of gender, class, colonialism, and race are interwoven, reinforcing each other and shaping the development of the professions in Africa.

In South Africa, African women progressively gained entry into professional occupations, starting in the early twentieth century. In the early 1900s, African women entered education and nursing; in the 1930s, librarianship; in the 1940s, social work and medicine; and in the 1980s, law.[4] What were they dynamics of gender, class, colonialism, and race which opened certain professions to women at particular times in the past? Once women entered the profession how were they treated, and did the status of the profession change?[5] While a complete analysis cannot be done within the scope of this paper, the following is a brief outline of factors involved in African women's entry into (and survival

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[2] It is interesting that the jurisdictional approach does not take factors such as race, class, or gender into account, since its · primary proponent, sociologist Andrew Abbott, modeled his theory on theories of race relations (Abbott 1995: 551-552).

[3] For example, see Last and Chavundunka 1986.

[4] Divinity (making up, with law and medicine, the 'learned professions') will not be considered here as one of the professions which women have entered. While women have preached and been religious leaders in South Africa (Gaitskell 1990, Comaroff 1985), the have not done so through formal training by Western institutions. The other professions above all had formal training and certification procedures instituted by whites or following Western models.

[5] Historians Joan Scott and Jill Conway have both pointed out that simply noting when women gained access to a profession is not enough: how women were accepted by the profession and what they were able to accomplish is even more important. See Scott 1989 and Conway (1989).

in) professional occupations in South Africa, from 1900 to the present, with an emphasis on the 1950s. In addition, questions will be raised regarding the connection between professionalization and political involvement.

Women's Entry into the Professions in South Africa

'Please tell me. What would you really like me to be, a nurse, a teacher, or a writer or something else?' These are the words of 16 year-old Xhosa schoolgirl Lily Moya, writing in 1951 to her mentor, the (white) educator Mabel Palmer (Moya 1987:166) As Lily Moya perceived, as an educated African woman in South Africa in the mid-twentieth century, few careers were available to her which would utilize her education. Palmer replied to Lily that nursing, teaching, and medicine were the primarily professional occupations open to African women, continuing: 'there are other occupations, librarianship, social work, commercial worker (short-hand, type-writing and accounts) etc., but I fear the openings for Bantu girls in these directions are very limited' (Moya 1987:175-6).

The primary factor influencing women's entry into the professions is education. While education for white South Africans has been free and compulsory since the early twentieth century, Africans (as well as Coloureds and Asians, as defined by the South African government) have always had to pay for their education. Since the 1800s, Western education was provided for Africans by religious missions. In South Africa (as well as in other parts of Africa), as many scholars have pointed out, mission education promoted a gendered division of labour, with girls being trained in domestic pursuits and boys in academic and industrial skills which would help them in the world of wage labour (Gaitskell 1990; Meintjes 1990; Cock 1990; Hughes 1990). Indeed, up through the 1970s, home economics, needlework, etc. were compulsory subjects for African girls (*Stepping into the Future 49*).

Teaching and nursing can be seen as extensions of women's domestic role. Caring, teaching, and nurturing have been viewed in Western culture as feminine traits. This view of women is also reinforced by biblical injunctions on women to be subservient and obedient. Thus, to the missionaries, teaching and nursing were logical occupational choices for African women. Teachers were needed to teach literacy so the word of God could be read and followed; nurses were needed to do the

domestic chores of the hospital. Both jobs were sanctioned by Western tradition and Christian ideology. Thus, there was little opposition to training African women to enter these professions.

The entry of African women into librarianship and social work in the 1930s and 1940s can also be explained in part by ideology. Librarianship and social work, in their emphasis on welfare, can also be seen as extensions of women's domestic role.[6] In addition, the increasing urbanization of South Africa created a need for more social welfare services, and African librarians and social workers could fill this need in the African community.

The Carnegie Corporation of the United States was instrumental in opening librarianship (and, more indirectly, social work) to Africans. The corporation made a study of library service in South Africa, and provided funding for the first library for Africans, the Carnegie Non-European Library, set up in the Transvaal in 1930. The corporation also did a major study of the 'poor white problem' in South Africa in the 1930s which led to the founding of social work as an academic discipline in South Africa. It could be argued that middle-class American values of self help (and ideas of women's 'place') promoted by the corporation led to an increasingly felt social need for social workers and librarians and to greater numbers of women (of all races) in these professions.

As shown in the Table, women of all races in South Africa made gains in professional employment from the 1930s to the 1940s. Men are not found in 'traditionally' female occupations, such as midwifery, while few women are found as doctors or lawyers, typically thought of as 'male' professions. Once again, ideology can be seen playing a role in keeping women out of these professions. Medicine and law (along with divinity) have 'traditionally' been perceived in the West as male occupations. The pervasiveness of this ideology may be one factor which kept African women (and women of other races) out of these professions for an extended period. Medicine and law could not be seen as extensions of women's domestic role, and women's entry into these fields were viewed as infringements on male prerogatives.

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[6] The greater number of African men than women listed as social workers in the 1936 and 1946 censuses remains to be explained, however. See the attached tables.

Economic factors have also affected women's entry into the professions. Only those families wealthy enough (generally through farming or trade) to pay for successively higher levels of education could send their children on to school.[7] Choosing which child to send to school is gendered as well – families might well be more likely to support the higher education of a male, who could become a lawyer or clerk, both higher paying occupational options than those open to African women – primarily teaching and nursing. (Nursing appears to have been a professional career preferred to some extent over others, because the nursing student was getting paid for work in the hospital wards while taking nursing courses. Some money could be earned while education was being furthered.[8]) Schools were often boarding schools, far away from a student's home area, which entailed additional travel and lodging expenses. Parents have tended also to be more protective of female children, thus they would not send them far away to school, thereby limiting their educational opportunities (Dlamini and Julia 1993). In addition, women often have not had the sponsorship and money from outside sources such as political or church organizations to study overseas, as many men have had the opportunity to do.

Political forces also affected African women's entry into the professions. The institutionalization of apartheid in 1948 affected all the professions. The Population Registration Act of 1949 gave every South African a registered race classification, dividing the population into four racial groups – Bantu, European, Asian, and Coloured. The Separate Amenities Act of the mid-1950s (repealed in 1987) restricted employment in some positions to members of specific races.

Under apartheid, access to education became further limited with the introduction of 'Bantu Education' in 1953. One of the first policies of apartheid, Bantu Education was set up to impose separate (and unequal) education on South Africans. Under the Bantu Education Act, mission schools were closed down. All education was henceforth to be provided by the government, along racial lines. Less money was spent on education for Africans, Asians and Coloureds than on education for

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[7] For example, social worker Ellen Kuzwayo and teacher Phyllis Ntantala were both able to attend school because their families were well-off farmers. See Kuzwayo (1985) and Ntantala (1994).

[8] For example, see Meer 1990 and Magona 1990.

whites. Professional training in areas such as nursing and social work had since their inception been separated into white and non-white schools, but the quality of the preprofessional education received by Africans suffered under Bantu Education, leaving them less educationally prepared to begin professional training.

Women's Survival in the Professions

In the professions in South Africa, discriminatory practices based on race (rather than gender, class, ethnicity, etc.) are most apparent. Nursing and social work were particularly affected by the ideology of apartheid. Apartheid required separate facilities for all races. Thus, according to apartheid ideology, African nurses could care only for African patients, and African social workers could help only Africans.

In nursing, before apartheid white and non-white nurses had equal status in the profession (in theory). In 1928 the Medical, Dental and Pharmacy Act required all nurses to be registered. The Nursing Act of 1944 amended the 1928 Act. It created the South African Nursing Association (SANA), and required all nurses of all races to be a member of the Association, 'whose duty it was to look after the interests of the nursing profession' (Searle 1969:232). The Nursing Act of 1957, however, segregated the profession, requiring nurses of different races to be registered on different rolls (Marks 1994).

Social work is another profession in which the primary division has been one of race, not of gender. Some training, but no degree programmes in social work existed by 1920 at the University of Pretoria, the University of Stellenbosch, and the University of Cape Town (UCT). All were universities for whites, although the University of Cape Town was an 'open' university – those who met the entrance qualifications were admitted, no matter what race.

The first degree programmes in social work in South Africa were at the University of Pretoria (started in 1929), University of Stellenbosch (1932), University of South Africa (UNISA) (1934), and University of the Witwatersrand (Wits) (1937). Wits was an 'open' university and UNISA a correspondence university. Significantly, one of the architects of apartheid policy, Verwoerd, became chair of the department of Sociology and Social Work at the University of Stellenbosch in 1933 (Webster 1981:90).

In theory, African students could study social work at UCT, UNISA, or Wits in the 1920s and 1930s. The first degree-holding African social workers were Charlotte Maxeke in the 1920s and Violet Sibusisiwe Makhanya in the 1930s, both of whom obtained their degrees in the ' United States.

In 1940, the Jan H. Hofmeyer School of Social Work opened in Johannesburg, through funding from private sources, including the Carnegie Corporation. The Hofmeyer school was the first school in South African (and one of the first in Africa) set up specifically to train Africans as social workers. It drew African students from all over the continent, many of whom later became political leaders in their own countries, such as Joshua Nkomo of Zimbabwe. These students were usually sponsored by church groups or their governments. Winnie Mandela is one famous graduate of the Hofmeyer school.

The school was taken over by the government in 1959 under the Extension of University Education Act, which stated that students could attend only institutions established for their own ethnic group. The Hofmeyer school, in accepting all Africans, did not fit this criteria and was closed down. Under apartheid, the government considered admission of 'alien' African students from outside of South Africa as an 'undesirable' influence on South Africa's African population. In addition, 'government officials claimed that the educational level was unnecessarily high and that the school attracted students who should be entering the teaching profession' (Lowe 1988:27).

Social work in South Africa began in the early 1930s at Afrikaner universities in response to the 'poor white problem'. Due to the world wide economic depression, poor farming practices, drought, and other environmental factors, in the late 1920s rural, unskilled and uneducated Afrikaners were forced off their farms to look for jobs in urban areas. There they came into competition with urban Africans for unskilled and semi skilled jobs at the lowest level of the economy, and they were not able to compete successfully. As mentioned above, a major study of this 'problem' was carried out by the Carnegie corporation.

So, from its inception, social work in South Africa was ethnically based and targeted at a specific class: rural Afrikaners. It was meant to uplift poor whites, not all the poor and downtrodden of society (Lowe 1988:31-32).

No unified professional community of social workers has existed in South Africa. (Indeed, it is difficult to say that a unified professional community exists in any profession in South Africa, due to the legacy of apartheid.) For example, the only professional social work journal in South Africa, *Social Work/Maatskaplike Werk*, is published by an Afrikaner university, Stellenbosch (Lowe 1988:29). African social workers thus often publish their work outside of South Africa, in regional journals such as or international journals such as *International Social Work*.

Many professional organizations are split into racially based groupings which have only become inclusive within the last five to ten years. For example, several professional social work organizations exist, reflecting divisions along ethnic lines promulgated by apartheid. The South African Black Social Workers Association (SABSWA), was founded in 1945 and is the oldest professional social work association in South Africa. In the mid-1980s it had 540 members, including Africans, Coloureds, and Asians. The Social Workers Association of South Africa (SWASSA) was founded as an all-white organization in 1951 in response to the founding of SABSWA. Since the early 1980s it has accepted members of all races, and had 670 members in the mid 1980s. The other major professional association is the Society of Social Workers of South Africa (SSWSA), founded in 1980 as a multi-racial organization. In practice, it was composed primarily of whites, with a few Coloureds and Indians. It had 350 members in the mid 1980s.[9]

Librarianship is similarly divided by along racial lines. The South African Institute of Library and Information Science (SAILIS) was ·stablished in 1930 as the South African Library Association. It was not ¿ounded as an exclusively white organization (although it was so in practice). From 1962 to 1980, however, it did formally exclude non-whites from membership. In the early 1990s it has 2,260 members, 30 per cent of whom were African. The African Library Association of South Africa (ALASA) was founded in 1964 by African members forced out of SAILIS. It currently claims to be non-racial. The third major professional association is the Library and Information Workers Organization (LIWO), founded in 1990. LIWO cuts across race and

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[9] Figures from Lowe (1988:30).

class – it is open to anyone who is interested in library or information work (IFLA 1993:16-17).

The South African government has strictly regulated some professions, defining not only who can be a professional, but defining the profession itself. Nursing, as mentioned above, has been divided along racial lines, and to be employed, nurses are required to belong to the government controlled professional organization, the South African Nursing Association.

Similarly, employment as a social worker in South Africa has been state controlled. Not only are almost all social work positions subsidized in some way by the government, but to work as a social worker one must be registered with the government through the Council of Social and Associated Workers, a body set up under the Social and Associated Workers Act of 1978 to regulate and define the practice of social work. The act defined social work as adjusting the individual to the larger surrounding context. The individual was therefore to be made to fit the mould (shaped by apartheid) of separate development. Another law, established in 1985, the 'Rules Relating to the Conduct of a Social Worker Which Shall Constitute Unprofessional or Improper Conduct' made it not just unprofessional but illegal to see social problems as · having any source in the broader social structure (Lowe 1988:30-31). As of 1995, these laws are still on the books.[10]

Librarianship has not been so tightly controlled. Membership in the South African Institute of Library and Information Science is not required to work as a librarian in South Africa. In addition, although the organization is subsidized by the South African government, it has not had any statutory power.

Economic forces also affect women in the professions. Not only have white professionals such as nurses and teachers been paid more than those of other races, within the professions men are paid more than women (Marks 1994; Andrews 1991). For example, African teacher and social worker Sindiwe Magona (1991) has related how she discovered that she was making significantly less money than male teachers at her school, when she had higher qualifications and greater experience. Bringing this salary discrepancy to the attention of her

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[10] See Bernstein (1995).

(male) supervisor, she was told that men were paid a family wage. It was assumed that the men were supporting a family, when in reality most of them were single, and Magona was a divorced woman supporting three children !

Finally, ideological forces as well as economic affected women's survival in the professions. Western, Christian ideas of purity and morality are reflected in the ways women's employment was regulated by the government. For example, in the mid-1950s an African teacher who became pregnant without being married was forced to quit her job. Because of such actions, non-white professional women in South Africa moved in and out of professional employment. Sindiwe Magona, mentioned above, worked in the informal sector selling ginger beer after losing her job as a teacher when she became pregnant without being married. She works in various other occupations, such as domestic service and preparing and selling sheep's heads, before she can find another professional job (Magona 1990). Professional certification was thus no guarantee of professional employment for non-white women in South Africa.

Professionalization and Political Involvement

Having posited that political, economic, and ideological forces have influenced women's entry into and survival in the professions the question arises: what did women do to counteract these forces? Does a connection exist between professionalization and political involvement in South Africa? In other words, why did the constraints of gender, race, class, and ethnicity lead some professionals to withdraw into their profession and maintain the status quo, and others into political involvement? For example, Oliver Tambo has commented that if he and Nelson Mandela were not politicized before they began their law practice in Johannesburg, they would have become so through their work as lawyers on behalf of Africans, fighting against the injustices faced by Africans every day (Meer 1991:213).

Due to their education, status, and professional networks, African women were particularly suited to become leaders in the African community. For instance, nurses Maggie Resha and Albertina Sisulu (the wives of African National Congress leaders Robert Resha and Walter Sisulu) became politically active in the 1940s and 1950s, as did social

worker Winnie Mandela.[11] While the political involvement of such women has been examined in terms of their interpersonal relations, it has not been evaluated in the context of their involvement in their professions.[12] Did they become politically involved because of their work, as Tambo suggests is possible ? Was their political involvement an outgrowth of their involvement in other voluntary organizations (professional, religious, etc.) (Matsepe 1981:246; Swilling 1988:98). Or were they politically active because their husband or significant other was involved in politics? (Matsepe 1981:246; Ramphele 1991:215).

The political, economic, ideological forces mentioned as factors influencing women's entry into and survival in the professions are similar to those constraining professional women's political involvement. For example, under apartheid, those who were politically active could be declared subversive and a threat to the government, being removed to a Bantustan, detained, or exiled (Bernstein 1985). Who would take care of the children if the mother was taken away for her political involvement, since child care was still seen as a female task?[13] Similarly, in the African National Congress of the 1950s and 1960s and the Black Consciousness movement of the 1970s, women who were involved were expected to cook and perform domestic duties at political meetings.[14]

Conclusion

This preliminary investigation raises more questions into the development of the professions and women's political involvement in

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[11] On these women's political involvement, see Resha 1991; Mandela 1984; Meer 1991.

[12] For instance, the primary work on African women's political involvement from 1910 through 1950s, Cherryl Walker's Women and Resistance in South Africa (1982), does not examine the professional identities of politically involved women.

[13] For instance, although both Nelson Mandela's first wife Evelyn and Winnie Mandela praised Nelson's skills as a father, from biographical sources it appears that the women of the family (Nelson's mother and sister, Evelyn, later Winnie) took care of the children. See Meer 1991; Mandela 1984.

[14] See Meer (1990:158) and Ramphele (1991:219-20). Assata Shakur also notes this relegation of women to domestic, subservient roles in the Black Power movement in the United States in the 1960s and 1970s.

South Africa. How much of their own volition were women expressing in their political involvement (or lack thereof) – were they simply involved because of their husbands or boyfriends? Can a life-cycle pattern of women moving in and out of motherhood, professional, and informal sector employment be traced? Do 'dynasties' exist of three to five generations of professionals?

This overview has neglected relations of class, ethnicity, and colonialism to those of gender and, primarily, race. More research needs to be done to provide a more nuanced view of the interrelationship between these factors. Most importantly, more research is needed on African attitudes concerning women's roles. In this study, women's entry into the professions was ascribed primarily to the influence of Western ideology, particularly Christianity. Undoubtedly African attitudes also came into play.

Today, professional women in South Africa make up less than 4 per cent of the economically active population (ILO 1993:144). Since relations of gender and power change over time, an historical approach to the professions is of use to current public policy because it provides a perspective on the modern-day gender inequality in professional occupations.

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Appendices

Table 1: Whites in South Africa, Age 15+

Total	1926 [a]		1936 [b]		1946 [c]	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Total population	n.a	n.a	n.a	679,487	827,127	822,631
Total in professions	n.a	n.a	19,406	20,469	87,482*	41,598*
Teacher	7,305	11,777	8,805	13,144	10,458	12,438
Nurse	101	4,458	651**	7,223**	174	11,493
Midwife	----	315	----	680	----	593
Librarian	27	62	65	254	106	574
Social worker	28	20	31	128	117	605
Physician	1,535	78	2,499	144	3,502	341
Barrister	199	1	279	n.a	327	7
Lawyer	2,079	8	2,693	35	2,603	44

Source: [a] *Fourth Census of the Population of the Union of South Africa, 4th* May, 1926. Part XI, Table 2.
[b] *Sixth Census of the Population of the Union of South Africa*, 5th May, 1936. Vol. VII, Table 1.
[c] Seventh Census of the Population of the Union of South Africa, 7th May 1946. Vol. V, Table 1.
---- Not available
n.a. Not applicable
 * *includes persons in entertainment and sports.*
** *includes mental and leper attendants.*

Table 2: Africans in South Africa, Age 10+

Total	1936 [a]		1946 [b]	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Total population	2,398,134	2,329,631	2,962,511	2,779,700
Total in professions	17,605*	4,335*	33,128*	10,241*
Teacher	4,758	3,441	7,505	6,448
Nurse	253**	571**	190	2,935
Midwife	----	41	----	78
Librarian	----	----	16	16
Social worker	7	----	42	27
Physician	----	----	----	----
Barrister	----	----	13	----
Lawyer	7	----	5	----

Source: [a] *Sixth Census of the Population of the Union of South Africa, 5th May,
1936,* Vol. IX, Table 13.

   [b] *Seventh Census of the Population of the Union of South Africa,
7th May 1946.* Vol. V, Table 12.

---- *Not available.*

n.a. Not applicable.

 * *includes persons in entertainment and sports.*

** *includes mental and leper attendants.*

Table 3: Coloureds in South Africa, Age 15+

Total	1936 [a]		1946 [b]	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Total population	n.a	n.a	268,730	266,246
Total in professions	886*	530*	n.a	2,449
Teacher	1,544	1,084	3,065	1,626
Nurse	27**	93**	8	393
Midwife	----	204	----	233
Librarian	2	2	5	3
Social worker	----	2	8	23
Physician	14	1	12	1
Barrister	----	----	----	----
Lawyer	----	----	----	----

Source: [a] *Sixth Census of the Population of the Union of South Africa, 5th May, 1936.
Vol. VII, Table 14.*

   [b] Seventh Census of the Population of the Union of South Africa, 7th May
1946. Vol. V, Table 6.

---- *Not available.*

n.a. Not applicable.

 * *teachers are not included in this figure.*

** *includes mental and leper attendants.*

Table 4: Asians in South Africa, Age 15+

Total	1936 [a]		1946 [b]	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Total population	n.a	n.a	82,759	69,368
Total in professions	614*	80*	1,964	306
Teacher	677	72	1,046	206
Nurse	2**	35**	1	32
Midwife	----	21	----	41
Librarian	2	----	3	----
Social worker	----	----	4	1
Physician	10	1	29	4
Barrister	n.a	----	1	----
Lawyer	n.a	----	15	----

Source: [a] *Sixth Census of the Population of the Union of South Africa,* 5th May, 1936.
Vol. VII, Table 9.
[b] *Seventh Census of the Population of the Union of South Africa,*
7th May 1946. Vol. V, Table 9

---- *Not available.*
n.a. Not applicable.
 * *teachers are not included in this figure.*

** *includes mental and leper attendants.*