CHAPTER II

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CONDITIONS OF WOMEN
The social and economic conditions of women everywhere are to a large extent determined by the geography, economy, polity, culture and technological advancement of a given society. In South Africa, though the system of Apartheid played a significant role in this regard, it is relevant to briefly deal with the country's geography, economy and people as a background.

**Geography**

The Republic of South Africa occupies the southern extremity of the African continent. It has a total area of 1,221,037 sq. km or 471,445 sq. miles. It has common borders with Namibia on the north, Botswana on the north and with Zimbabwe, Mozambique and Swaziland on the north-east. Lesotho is entirely surrounded by South Africa. Most of South Africa consists of a vast plateau. The climate is subtropical.

South Africa's mineral resources form major chunk of the country's natural resources. The important mineral regions are the Witwatersrand and the Orange Free State producing gold, silver and uranium. The diamond areas are centred in Kimberley, Pretoria, Jagersfontein and Koffiefonthein. The Transvaal bushveld complex contains multiple occurrences of a large number of minerals including asbestos, chrome, copper, iron, magnesium, nickel, platinum, tin, uranium and vanadium. In Northern Cape Province important deposits of manganese, iron ore and asbestos occur in Postmasburg, Sishen and Kuruman areas. And in the north-western Cape Province, reserves of lead, zinc, silver and copper are being exploited.

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2. Ibid.
Economy

It is in mineral deposits that South Africa's wealth lies. The discovery of diamonds and gold during the later part of nineteenth century is the basis of country's economic development. According to the South African Year Book, important minerals in South Africa are gold, diamonds, platinum, chromium, vanadium, nickel, flurspar, chrome ore, manganese ore, antimony, asbestos, coal, iron ore, zinc, phosphates, uranium, vermiculite and zirconium. Mineral sales were worth R53,551 million in 1984 and mining contributed about 8.7 percent to the gross domestic product. Mineral export sales accounted for 48 percent of total export revenue and 80 percent of mineral production is exported. In 1983, export earnings amounted to R42819 millions. Gold has been the main source of foreign currency which accounts for 58.3 percent of export sales. South Africa is the world's largest producer of gold with an annual production of more than 600 tons.  

South Africa's manufacturing industry is the largest sector of the national economy, measured in terms of contribution to GDP. In 1988 it contributed R43,800 millions to GDP at factor cost, employing 1,348,700 workers. Industry is concentrated in four industrial areas namely Southern Transvaal, Western Cape, Durban-Pinetown and Port Elizabeth-Uitenhage accounting for more than 75 percent of net industrial output and employment.

South Africa's diverse climate permits the cultivation of a wide range of crops. Due to inadequate and erratic rainfall only 15 percent of the land is suitable for arable farming and the extent of irrigation is less than 8,000 sq. km. In spite of improvements in farming methods and conservation techniques, South Africa remains a relatively poor crop-raising country. This also imposes limits on animal husbandry. This resulted in the declining role of agriculture as a source of income.

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5 Ibid.
6 Ibid.
in the South African economy. From a record output of 13.6 million tons in 1981-82, the production fell to 3.4 million tons in the 1984-85 resulting in maize imports of 2.4 million tons. Nevertheless, because of a high degree of specialisation, experience, advance methods and considerable capital investment, certain branches of farming such as fruit and wool continue to make a substantial contribution to the economy and to exports in particular. Wool's export earning was R590.7 millions in 1986. The low productivity of farming relative to other sectors is reflected in the fact that it contributed only 5.3 percent of GDP in 1985. This is mainly because large numbers of inefficient African subsistence farmers in the 'Homelands' obtain very low crop yields. Even the White farmers who are relatively efficient obtain comparatively low yields by international standards. In Maize farming, yields per hectare are only one-fourth of those in the USA. Despite these problems agricultural products form a part of South Africa's exports especially wool, maize, sugar, groundnuts, tobacco, citrus and deciduous fruits. Agricultural products account for one-third of the total export earnings.

**People**

Five major ethnic groups make up South Africa's multiracial society. The 'Khoisan' peoples - Bushmen, Hottentots and Bergdamara - are survivors of the country's earliest inhabitants. The negroid Bantu - speaking peoples i.e., Africans fall into a number of tribal groupings. The major groups are formed by the Nguni comprising Zulu, Swazi, Ndebele, Pondo, Tembu and Xhosa on the one hand and by the Sotho and Tswana on the other. The European or 'White peoples' descended from the Dutch settlers of seventeenth century in the Cape, refugee French Huguenots, British settlers from 1820 onwards, Germans and more recent immigrants from Europe and ex-colonial African territories. The major language groups are

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7. Ibid. 8. Ibid. 9. Ibid.
Afrikaans (65 percent) and English (35 percent). The remaining population comprises 'Cape Coloureds' (i.e., people of mixed origin) and Asians, largely of Indian origin (referred throughout the study as Indians). In 1992, the estimated ethnic composition of the total population including homelands was Africans - 29,889,600 (75.9 percent), Whites 5,129,900 (13 percent), Coloureds 3,354,200 (8.5 percent) and Asians 1,007,300 (2.6 percent). The recent statistics show the distribution of population by province as represented in fig 2.1.

Fig 2.1: SA Population by Province, 1995

Fig.2.2 shows the South African population by race and the area occupied by each race. Though Whites comprise only 14 percent of the total population, they are spread over 87 percent of the total area. On the contrary the Africans who are 75 percent of the population occupy only 13 percent of the area. This is the consequence of the policies of apartheid. The data clearly reflects gross inequality and discrimination on the basis of race. Moreover Africans are concentrated in rural areas as shown in fig.2.3. Here, only in the case of Africans the rural residents outnumber the urban residents. In all other races it is reverse. Among the Whites, only a very small proportion reside in the rural areas. Among the Africans, the females outnumber males in the rural areas. In other races the difference is not significant. Overall, among all races, Africans are more in the rural areas and within the Africans women are concentrated in the rural areas. It is a known fact that

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10 Africa South of..., n.1, p.840.
urban areas are more developed than the rural areas. Therefore the Africans especially women who reside in the rural areas actually live in backward and underdeveloped conditions.

**Fig 2.2:** South African Population by Race and Area, 1990

The demographic structure of the population during 1972, 1980 and 1991 is represented in fig.2.4. From 1972 to 1991, there is no substantial difference in the proportion of males and females. In all the age groups the percentage of males and females is more or less the same. In the 1-19 and 20-54 years age groups, the percentage of males is slightly higher but in the age group of above 55 years.

**Fig. 2.3:** Urban and rural population by sex and race, 1990

Source: Development Bank of South Africa
females outnumber the males. It means that the life expectancy is more for females than males. This could be so as in South Africa men are more engaged in employment especially in mining where they are exposed to risk as well as health deterioration. When we study the graphs carefully, it is interesting to note that in the age group below 1 year the percentage of males and females is same during all the years. This indicates that in South Africa female infanticide is absent. Does this fact has any implication for the role of gender in the South African society? What impact does this have on the discrimination of women on the grounds of sex? In India and other Third World countries female foeticide and infanticide exist. It will be interesting to study the reasons for the absence of female infanticide in South Africa, but it is beyond the scope of the study.

Fig 2.4: South Africa: Population by age and sex (1972, 1980, 1991)

Source: UN Demographic year book 1972.

Despite an improvement in the racial distribution of personal income, income remains very unevenly distributed in South Africa. An estimate of the Gini Coefficient\(^{11}\) for South Africa in 1985 puts it at 0.64 - one of the highest in the world.\(^{12}\) It was estimated in 1988 that the White population received about 54 percent of total personal income while Africans received only 36 percent.

\(^{11}\) It is an index of income inequality.

\(^{12}\) *Africa South of ...,* n.4, p.777.
The same pattern is reflected in the difference in earnings between Whites and Africans. This reflects the differential between skilled and unskilled wage rates. Fig.2.5 clearly demonstrates this fact. The average earnings of the Whites are more than three times higher than that of the Africans. The Africans get the lowest compared to the rest of the races. In 1988 the differential in earnings between Whites and Africans in the manufacturing sector was 3.5:1, rising to 5:1 in mining and quarrying. The greatest differential is found between those residing in metropolitan areas (White and Africans) and the rural `Homelands' (mainly Africans) which is estimated to be 18:1 in 1985.13

![Average monthly earnings by Race, 1986](image)

**Fig. 2.5 :** Average monthly earnings by Race, 1986

Africans  Coloured  Indian  White

Source: Teaching about... APARTHEID, United Nations, 1989, p117.

Role of Women in the Traditional Society

Before analysing women's social and economic conditions under apartheid, it is relevant to look into the position of women in the tribal societies. These women are the Africans as other races do not belong to the African tribes. The Africans, as pointed out earlier, belong to many tribes. Confronted with such a variety, it becomes difficult to make generalisations about the place of women in traditional African society. Therefore, it will only be possible to a limited extent, to give generalisations of women's position while at the same time guarding against oversimplification. Such generalisations can be made as these groups show a marked degree of cultural cohesion despite the diversity of cultural patterns.

13 Ibid.
The legal status of the women is traditionally that of a minor. Before marriage her father and after marriage her husband become her guardians. Under the African customary law, women cannot "own property in their own right, inherit, or act as the guardian of their children. They cannot enter into contracts, sue or be sued without the aid of their male guardian." 

Similar provisions are reflected in the Indian traditional laws. Most famous of the Indian law givers is Manu. Manusmriti or the laws of Manu deal with socio-political philosophy. Manu for the first time legally assigned to woman her definite place in the society. According to Manu "by a girl, by a young woman, or even by an aged one, nothing must be done independently, even in her own house. In childhood a female must be subject to her father, in youth to her husband, when her lord is dead to her sons." 

Thus, like in Africa the Indian woman was always a minor. In South Africa, after marriage the husband becomes the woman's guardian. The woman is legally dependent on her husband. She cannot institute legal proceedings in the tribal court unless her husband acts as her representative. She cannot enter into a contract without his consent and must obey all his instructions.

The African women are not allowed to own property. When cattle are allocated to them, they cannot sell them without the man's consent. This condition applies as well to the property produced by their own labour such as hand-made mats. Neither

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18 Ibid.
does it become the property of the husband. It remains a family possession and the man by virtue of his position as the head of the house, has control over it. The Indian women on the other hand can own certain kind of property. Manu precisely defined the property rights of a woman. According to him she can hold the following six-fold property in her own inalienable right - "wedding gifts, bridal procession gifts, love gifts, gifts from brothers, gifts from mother and gifts from father." Further, any property which she may receive as a gift after her wedding from either family or her husband is also hers. All such special property is inheritable in the first instance by her children, secondly by her husband and thirdly by her father's family. Yet Manu decrees that "wife, daughter and slave are to have no property."

In South African tribal societies, marriage too puts women in a disadvantaged position. In a marriage relationship a woman is subordinate to the man. 'Lobola' - transfer of marriage goods forms an important part of the traditional marriage. The man receives no ownership rights over the woman. It is mainly an exchange for the woman's fecundity potential and it stands in connection with the father's right to the children. When the husband has paid the lobola the children belong to him and he retains the guardianship over them even if the woman leaves him under any circumstances. Lobola generally consists of cattle and the number is decided by negotiation depending on the affluence of the man and the status of the woman. Lobola has a stabilising influence on the marriage relationships. If the man ill-treats the woman, she can leave him and he forfeits his lobola. And if the woman is the guilty party and leaves her husband, her relatives must return all or part of the lobola. Both sides thus have an interest in the success of the marriage. In exchange for the lobola, the exclusive sexual rights of the woman and her ability to

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21 Ibid.
23 Ibid.
24 Steyn, n.17, p.348.
work are transferred to the man's group. The transfer of the marriage goods endows the woman with security and a measure of status. She can demand certain rights and has social status as a wife and later as a mother.

In the marriage relationship, there exists a clear division of duties between the husband and the wife. The traditional duties of the African woman are her household chores and looking after her children. She plays an important role in the economic sector which is that of a rural subsistence economy. There is strict division of labour between the sexes. The woman cultivates the land while the man tends cattle and make huts. In certain cases the woman is allowed to practice more specialised vocations such as being a witch doctor or a potter. In case of India, Manu allows the wife tremendous powers in the management of the household. It was the wife who has to control the household expenditure and supervise the general arrangements of the kitchen, furniture and periodical religious functions. According to him "she must be always cheerful, clever in the management of her house-hold affairs, careful in cleaning her utensils and economical in expenditure." 

Manu further says that within the house all the members of the family must show the highest regard for the women. According to him - "Women must be honoured and adorned by their fathers, brothers, husbands and brothers-in-law who desire their own welfare. Where women are honoured, there the gods are pleased; but where they are not honoured, no sacred rite yields rewards. Where the female relations live in grief, the family soon wholly perishes. Hence men who seek their own welfare, should always honour women on holidays and festivals with gifts of ornaments, clothes and food." Apart from the reasons why women must be honoured, the way they must be honoured proves that women do not think and aspire beyond mere ornaments and clothes. Their self-respect, emotional needs, education and career aspirations are undermined.

25 Sharma, n.16, p.219.
26 Ibid, p.220.
Thus, both in India as well as in South Africa, the woman's contribution in terms of household goods and services is very important and the husband is as dependent on her as she is on him. But at the same time the woman is to treat her husband with respect and be subordinate to him. Her role is defined and confined. The man is the undisputed head of the house and has authority over his wife and children. This authority is not unlimited, and the woman can seek protection from her own family in case of ill-treatment. As said earlier, if a man ill-treats the woman, she can leave him and he forfeits his lobola. Moreover, in cases of assault or slander, the woman's father or husband can demand damages.\textsuperscript{27} Damages can also be claimed in cases of seduction and the birth of an illegitimate child. Damages serve as compensation for the potential loss of lobola as a result of the daughter's seduction. However, the man is not responsible or expected to support his illegitimate child. This responsibility rests with the mother's relations.

In South Africa, the tribal law has been modified by the legislature. Sometimes, the native laws are codified like the Natal Code of Native Law. In other parts they are not codified and the Native Appeal Courts are expected in their judgements to take cognisance of changes in the customary life of the people. In both the systems there is the danger that the law will lag behind the changing circumstances and the women are denied freedom. However, it is interesting to know that there are provisions for the emancipation of the women under the native law. These provisions are very little known. According to the Natal Code of Native Law Section 28 (1) - "Any unmarried female, widow or divorced woman, who is the owner of immovable property or who by virtue of good character, education, thrifty habits or their good and sufficient reason, is deemed fit to be emancipated, may be freed from the control of her father or guardian by order of the Native Commissioners Court and vested with the full powers of a kraal head or with full rights of ownership in respect of any property she may have acquired and with full power to contract or

\textsuperscript{27} Steyn, n.17, p.351.
to sue or be sued in her own name. Any such widow or divorced woman may in the
discretion of the court be given control over the property of her major children.\textsuperscript{28} As
women's education is a necessary condition many uneducated African women do
not qualify for emancipation. It is important to question why women's character or
habits are emphasised for obtaining guardian or property ownership rights? Why
not such provisions apply to men? Is character not important for them?

To sum up, the African woman like the Indian woman, is perennially subordinate to
the man's authority in the traditional society. Some of the legal provisions are
extremely discriminating against women. Her position entails very little freedom.
But her role in the economy and the household is not undermined. In spite of their
subordinate relationships, the women enjoy security within the marriage relationship
as the husband has to protect her and provide for her materially. Although she has
no authority and she is continually dependent on others, she is certain that there will
always be somebody to care for her and see to her interests.

With time the South Africans were exposed to influences which had disintegrating
effects on their traditional way of life in general and on the position of the women in
particular. The two main factors which are responsible are the contact with
Western society and the process of urbanisation. Africans came into contact with
the Whites during the first half of the eighteenth century and since then the tribes
have been exposed to the Western way of life in one way or the other. The
important factors of influence were religion, economy and legislation. White
missionaries tried to convert Africans to Christianity. The Christian religious values
had implications for the position of the African women since many of their family
habits and customs were very different from the Christian dogma. Polygamous
marriages and African customs denounced by the missionaries affected the position

\textsuperscript{28} E. H. Brookes, \textit{Memorandum on the legal status of African women}, South African Institute of Race Relations,
February 5, 1958.
of the African woman over a period of time. The schools that they established had a westernising influence on the children. The children came into contact with Western values which prepared them for integrating into the economic system of the Whites. The legislation of the Whites influenced Black society strongly. Bantu law is subsidiary to the common law of the country, the common law being primary and valid for indigenous groups unless explicitly specified differently.

The contact of Bantu with the Western way of life has been intensified by the process of urbanisation. Adaptation to a dynamic urban life contributed to a change in the position of African woman. The disintegration of the traditional social groups and detribalisation are two important factors which resulted from urbanisation. The tribal life social groups which played an important role in the creation and maintenance of organised community life either disappeared completely or lost their functions to such an extent that they were no longer influential. The structure of blood lineages and groups and the important control measures that these groups exercised disappeared. Important primary groups such as the tribal initiation schools and age groups in which strict control has been exercised disappeared.

New groupings such as political groups for men, voluntary associations and women's associations and youth gangs have been formed in the Black urban communities.

We shall now discuss the economic and social conditions of women under apartheid. Under the economic conditions variables such as migration, urbanisation, employment, unemployment, wage disparities and poverty will be discussed.
Migration

In the previous chapter women under the migrant labour system is discussed in detail. Under apartheid because of this system the African women largely resided in the rural areas as it was illegal for them to migrate to the urban areas. But due to the deplorable conditions in the Bantustans, women did migrate to the urban areas. It is important to study how migration alters women's position in the course of social change. It is also relevant to see if migration affects the gender relations. Assessing the influence of migration on women's social position is complicated because geographical movement is only one of several social forces that transforms gender relations.

Migration provides individuals with a distinct set of opportunities for earning a livelihood. In South Africa too women migrated for the same reason. Theoretically geographical movement permits a redefinition of gender relations. But how women's social position changes following migration depends on factors such as (i) family and marital obligations particularly whether women migrated alone or with their children, (ii) productive roles both in communities of origin and destination, (iii) reasons for migration, (iv) the nature of the move i.e., temporary or permanent, long or short-distance, rural to urban or intra-urban etc.

Before looking into these factors we must break certain myths regarding the migration of women. Under apartheid women are supposed to be left behind in Bantustans while men migrate under the migrant labour system. But the statistics clearly demonstrate otherwise. We have already seen in Fig. 2.4 that males and females are more or less the same in rural and urban areas. Fig. 2.6 demonstrates the rural and urban distribution of population by race apart from age and sex. It is

31 Marta Tienda and Karen Booth, "Gender Migration and Social Change", International Sociology (Denver), vol.6, no.1, p.54.
32 Ibid.
clear that Whites, Indians and Coloureds are concentrated in the urban areas. While the percentage of Whites and Coloureds in the rural areas is less, Indians are almost absent. Africans on the other hand, are more or less equally distributed. Though the females are slightly more in the rural areas there is no substantial difference. This fact raises serious doubts about the extent to which the migrant labour system and various apartheid laws affected the female migration in South Africa.

![Graph showing population by age, gender, race and residence in South Africa in 1990](image)

Fig.2.6 : South Africa: Population by age, gender, race and residence, 1990

When fig.2.7 is studied, it becomes clear that in the age group between 1 and 19, there are more females in the rural areas. But in the 20-54 age group more women are seen in the urban areas and the trend continues in the age group of 55+. This reiterates the fact that women did migrate to the urban areas in spite of all the hurdles created by the system of apartheid. Fig.2.8, where number of women per 100 males is displayed, substantiates the argument. Moreover, when compared to the other countries women in South Africa are almost equal to men in the urban areas, though in the rural areas they are slightly more. In India, the percentage of women when compared to men is much lesser when compared to South Africa. All the graphs prove that women in South Africa migrated legally or illegally.
Migration can promote social mobility, economic independence and relative autonomy if women's moves are accompanied by an increased participation in wage employment and provide them more control over their earnings and greater participation in family decision-making. Alternatively, migration might simply transfer patriarchal authority in different forms from communities of origin to destination leaving gender asymmetries essentially unaltered.\(^{33}\) This would occur for instance among temporary migrants who move solely to supplement the resources of the family.

Marital and family status hold the key to understanding how geographic movement can alter women's social position. The position of women in the family determines their propensity to migrate. It is important to know whether family and marital status changes combined with the new opportunities afforded by migration alter women's position or whether it is the conflict between work and familial roles that precipitates these changes. Because of the diverse factors that condition and mediate the effects of migration on women's position and because these circumstances vary across societies, there is no consensus about whether migration improves or erodes...
women's position vis-à-vis men. Migration simultaneously can bring gains and losses for women if a greater degree of autonomy in public and private domains is accompanied by a heavier workload.

In South Africa as pointed out earlier women migrated for better opportunities and livelihood. The same reasons are given by the South African women for their migration as indicated in appendix III. Under apartheid as they migrated illegally they faced more problems and were exposed to the risk of being forcefully removed by the government authorities. It is relevant to study the areas where these women got employed. Women's employment will be discussed separately. Also their marital and family status will be looked into to finally understand the impact and implication of migration on women and their position.

Urbanisation

Lack of opportunities and facilities in the rural areas prompted men and women to migrate to urban areas where there were employment opportunities. Fig.2.9 shows the percentage of urbanisation in South Africa by province. It is maximum in Gauteng due to gold mining which employed men under the migrant labour system. In spite of legal restrictions women migrated to the urban areas. Fig.2.10 not only gives comparative statistics but also demonstrates that women's urbanisation increased by 1990. It is relevant to note that the percentage of women in India in the urban areas is much less when compared to the South African women. It has already been discussed how urbanisation disrupted the tribal societies and contributed to the changes in the position of women.
Employment

The 1985 census shows women comprising 51 percent of the total population, and making up 36 percent of the South African workforce. Of employed women, 23 percent are White, 15 percent Coloured, 3 percent Indian and 60 percent African. Within the race categories the breakdown is different: 36 percent of all Whites employed are women, 41 percent of Coloureds employed are women, 29 percent are Indian and 35 percent African.\(^\text{34}\) In 1970, 25 percent of all African women were economically active. Among the employed, 65 percent are domestic workers, 37 percent agricultural workers, 8 percent industrial workers and 7 percent professionals.

a. Domestic Workers

Domestic service constitutes important source of employment for Black women. White households employ African women in the domestic service. In 1984, 76 percent of White families had at least one 'domestic'.\(^\text{35}\) Jacklyn Cock\(^\text{36}\) interviewed

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\(^{35}\) 'Domestics' are workers who are employed as nannies, cooks, housekeepers, cleaners, washer women or general workers.

these people to know the reasons for choosing this occupation. Many of the servants interviewed were trapped in domestic service by the need to support themselves and their dependent children. Each domestic servant had an average of 5.5 dependents and 58 percent were sole bread winners in the sense that no one else in the house was employed in wage labour. Many of these women were single heads of families. When asked why she joined domestic service Elizabeth Sowelo said "I became a domestic servant because I have a big family to support." 37 Anna John who underwent technical education including basic computer applications remarked "I took up domestic service as all my applications for a job were rejected because I am a Black. The only job that I could easily get was that of a maid." 38 Pumza Magata explained "I left school to become a domestic servant as my mother could no longer pay my school fees." 39

These workers are aware of the ironies their work involves. One of the servants said, "My madam, she does nothing, but she can live in this nice house and have fat children. My children are hungry." 40 This statement points to the important function of domestic servants in South African society. They provide services which are essential for the reproduction of labour power both on a daily and a generational basis. 41 Daily reproduction involves numerous tasks of domestic labour such as cooking meals, washing, mending, cleaning and shopping. Generational reproduction includes child care. Both forms of reproduction and the role of African domestics in that process contributes to the well being of the South African economy. While a domestic worker is providing reproductive labour, she is effectively removed from her own family. African domestics are not permitted to have their babies or husbands with them. Because, if during nightly police raids, she is caught with her husband or children in her quarter, the employer is punished.

37 Personal interview, Elizabeth Sowelo, Johannesburg, August 28, 1996.
38 Personal interview, Anna John, Johannesburg, July 13, 1996.
39 Personal interview, Pumza Magata, Cape Town, August 8, 1996.
41 Cock, n.36, p.208.
with a fine ranging from R100 to R500 according to a new regulation enacted in 1979.42 Evelyn narrated her tragic story about her baby "When I was pregnant my madam did not give me leave. I worked till the day I gave birth and came back to work on the third day after the delivery. I was weak but I had to work. My baby was lying under the table while I was cleaning. They were so merciless. I could keep my baby for only three months. If I didn't send her I would have lost the job. My baby was given tin milk in my village when my breasts were full of milk for her."43

There is no legal minimum wage for domestic workers. Domestic work is excluded from the Basic Conditions of Employment Act, the Unemployment Insurance Act, the Labour Relations Act, the Workmen's Compensation Act, and the Wage Act.44 These workers are at their employer's mercy and goodwill. Moreover, the entire employment structure of domestic work is highly informal. Terms and conditions of employment are rarely recorded. Therefore, the domestics are left unprotected in cases of dispute and have little job security. Because of the lack of statutory regulation of hours of work or leave, these arrangements are determined by the employer so as to suit his or her own convenience.45 Accommodation is a small dark room often without water and toilet facilities. They are not allowed to bring their families. Even if both husband and wife are working for the same employer, they are not allowed to stay together.

Feminists in South Africa recognise that "White women stand in a power relation as oppressors of African women".46 And this power relation is dramatised in the institution of domestic service.

43 Personal interview, Evelyn, Johannesburg, July 18, 1996.
46 Cock, n.36, p.205.
b. Farm Workers

Mechanisation of agriculture removed a lot of women from farm work. The working conditions of farm labourers are more or less similar to those of domestic workers. Women classified as farm workers represent approximately 44 percent of the paid female labour force in South Africa. They have few rights, no legal protection against harsh conditions of work and no wages. Many farm workers are migrants employed on a daily or seasonal basis. Others live permanently on the farm. They are employed as domestic or casual labour especially during the picking and harvesting times. Women also work in dairies, chicken farms and drive tractors. The State has tried to channel workers into White farms. But influx control did not create a stable labour force. The Pass laws also contributed to this. When a farm worker has a stamp in her pass to do farm work, she is confined to farm work for the rest of her life.

The female farm labourers are paid very low wages and sometimes in kind. The Wage Act of 1957, which authorised statutory boards to fix minimum wages, does not apply to farm workers. The real wages and living conditions of farm workers both male and female have deteriorated over the last 20 years. Most workers are paid partly in cash and partly in kind. Government figures give the average monthly wages of full time workers in different areas in 1980 as shown in fig.2.11. The data clearly shows that farm workers receive such low wages inspite of their hard work.

Fig 2.11: Average Women monthly wages - Farm workers, 1980

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Average Monthly Wages</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Eastern Orange Free State</td>
<td>$500</td>
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<tr>
<td>Western Transvaal</td>
<td>$450</td>
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<td>North West OFS</td>
<td>$400</td>
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<tr>
<td>Highveld</td>
<td>$350</td>
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<td>Western Cape I</td>
<td>$300</td>
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<tr>
<td>Western Cape II (Reefs)</td>
<td>$250</td>
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Source: [Lapchick, n.42, p.12.](#lb/54)
Independent surveys have revealed wages which are far lower than the government figures. Women are paid much less than men for doing the same work. Casual or seasonal labourers are paid less than full time workers. In the Moiketsi area in the Northern Transvaal, women and children often work on tomato farms for no other pay than tomatoes. In 1980 in the Mathibes Kraal area in Lebowa, women seasonal workers on the cotton and citrus estates earned between 30 cents and 80 cents a day and had no income out of season and on an average, women farm workers work for 60-70 hours a week.\(^\text{48}\) There is no limit to the time they may have to work without a break and with no overtime pay. Some farm workers get paid annual leave, some unpaid leave and some no leave at all. In some places employers decide if they give the workers any sick leave. Assault on farm workers by their bosses is not uncommon. Farm machinery accidents and poisoning by agricultural chemicals are always a hazard and farmers discourage claims for compensation.

c. Industrial Workers

In the industrial sector, women are concentrated in clothing, textile and food industries. Though the wages are low, they are two to four times more than domestics. And they enjoy better bargaining capacity.

d. Professional Workers

The small number of women professional and clerical workers reflects the lack of education provided to African boys and girls in South Africa. Job reservation on racial basis excludes African women and men from the bulk of skilled and semi-skilled occupations. As professionals, women are mainly teachers and nurses. African women teachers are ill trained. Of 70,195 African teachers in 1975, only 2.1 percent had teaching qualifications.\(^\text{49}\) The salaries paid to the African women are generally lower than those of their European counterparts. Additionally, African women are often denied access to higher education and training opportunities.

\(^{48}\) Obery, n.40, p.60.

teachers are only 67 percent of that of White teachers.\textsuperscript{50} It is the same case with the nurses too. According to the Nursing Act of 1957, no non-White nurse can be elected to the Nursing Council or Nursing Association. Besides, there are provisions in law requiring a woman in public service to resign upon marriage.\textsuperscript{51} The official figures severely underestimate the number of African women working. Women in subsistence agriculture have not been included in workforce figures, as they are regarded "not economically active". Unpaid domestic labour is ignored in the same way. Estimates which rectified this bias put women at 50.4 percent of the "extended labour force" in 1991. This figure includes the subsistence agricultural sector and those active in non-market activities in 1991. This must be compared to the 39.6 percent when the stricter (and blind) definition of the labour force is used. It must also be compared with the 44.9 percent for women in the extended labour force in 1980.\textsuperscript{52} Even with the limited definition, there has been a marked increase in women's participation in the workforce. In 1960, women accounted for 23 percent of the workforce within South Africa, excluding the TBVC areas, in 1985, 36 percent, and in 1991, 41 percent as represented in fig.2.12. And the economic activity rate by sex is shown in fig.2.13. Here the economic activity of females is same for 1970 and 1990. But it has fallen substantially for men. This implies that men are slowly decreasing in the economically active population. The reasons for this is unknown.

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{Fig2.12.png}
\caption{Fig.2.12 : Women in workforce}
\end{figure}

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{Fig2.13.png}
\caption{Fig.2.13 : Economic Activity Rate by Gender}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{50} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{51} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{52} Beijing Conference Report, 1995 (South Africa), p.36.
Figure 2.14 shows employment by profession, race and sex in 1989. African women predominate in the domestic service. The latest figures on the same theme are represented in fig.2.15. It is apparent that although women make up two-fifths (39.4 percent) of the workforce they account for two-thirds (68 percent) of all service workers, more than half (57.3 percent) of all clerical and sales workers and half (50.7 percent) of all professional, semi-professional and technical workers. Within each broad occupational category women do certain kind of jobs: 73.3 percent are listed as domestic workers out of which 95.5 percent are women, 73.4 percent are listed as clerical workers out of which 64.4 percent are women, 48 percent are listed
as professional, semi-professional and technical occupations out of which 23.3 percent are women and 62.7 percent are listed teachers out of which 92.6 percent are women.

Nursing and domestic services are highly feminised jobs with more than 90 percent of them being women. Other such jobs include physiotherapy (91.4 percent), occupational therapy (92.2 percent), radiotherapy (93.3 percent), dieticians (93.2 percent), social workers (86 percent), librarians and information officers (88.8 percent) and hair-dressers (78.6 percent). On the other hand, women workers are

2.25
obviously under-represented in the following categories - in artisans (5.1 percent), transport, delivery and communications (5.9 percent), managers and technical (19.3 percent), mining and quarrying (0.9 percent), engineers (3.1 percent) and judges and magistrates (9.6 percent).

South African women continue to enter the labour force under different conditions, with different levels of education and job training. From the fig.2.15 it is clear that certain women are found in some occupational categories rather than others. White women (20.4 percent) are represented more in the managerial, executive and administrative occupations (77.6 percent), in clerical and sales occupations (57.8 percent) and in professional and semi-professional occupations (45.4 percent). In contrast they are under represented in service occupations (5 percent). Indian women (2.6 percent) are represented more in artisans, apprentice and related occupations (5.6 percent), in production supervisor occupation (5.4 percent) and in clerical and sales occupations (5.1 percent). They are under represented in service occupations (0.5 percent). Coloured women (12.7 percent) are represented more in production supervisor occupations (24.1 percent), in artisan and apprentice (19.3 percent) and in farming and related occupations (18.4 percent). They are under represented in managerial, executive and administrative occupations (5.4 percent). African women (64.2 percent) are represented more in service occupations (83.4 percent) and farming and related occupations (79.9 percent). They are under represented in managerial, executive and administrative occupations (12.1 percent). The occupation of the South African women interviewed are displayed in table V of appendix IV. It can be pointed out that while women of all races are employed in all categories of jobs, it is only among Africans that we find domestic workers. In the labour market occupational segregation between women and men exists. From the differences between the workers, it is apparent that women do not constitute a homogeneous group.

2.26
Women entrepreneurs are engaged in the informal sector conducting small business activities. Self-employment has become an alternative with 25-30 percent of the labour force engaged in it. Figure 2.16 reflects the 1991 census figures for employers and self-employed people for the different race-gender groups. One flaw is that the category "employers and self-employed" includes both top directors and people running small scale businesses. If only the topmost layers are included, the position of women is even worse with the position of African women deteriorating markedly. In 1989 of the 23,817 chief executives, general managers and company directors employed by the government, 1,401 (6 percent) were women. Of these 26 were African, 19 Indian, 49 Coloured and 1,307 Whites. The African women are engaged in beer brewing, petty trading, running restaurants, hair dressing, vegetable selling and other such related businesses often not covered by the national statistics. Such enterprises are characterised by low levels of income and productivity, low risks, multiple roles combining both domestic and business related tasks. The main problems are - (i) lack of adequate education and training, (ii) lack of access to credit and other financial resources, (iii) lack of information on how to start a business, (iv) weak bargaining power because of limited representation in decision making bodies and (v) lack of mobility.
Unemployment

Figure 2.17 indicates unemployment in South Africa by sex. Though throughout, the female unemployment is more than that of male, when keenly observed the graph indicates that there is actually not much gap. That means the problem of unemployment is faced by both the sexes more or less in an equal manner. From 1983, the rate of unemployment increases slowly and reaches the peak in 1987. The reasons are not known/studied. Then it slowly comes down. But from 1983 to 1989, the rate of unemployment increases. Though racial break-up is not given, it is assumed that as Africans constitute the majority of population, more number of them are unemployed. The 1991 census puts unemployment at 18 percent overall with 53.4 percent being women. Fig 2.18 shows unemployment by race and sex. Among the non-Whites there is more unemployment compared to Whites. And in every race the percentage of women unemployment exceeds that of men. It is important to remember that women are engaged in subsistence agriculture, informal and domestic sectors which are often excluded from the employment category.

Fig. 2.17: Unemployment in South Africa by gender
Thousands

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Fig. 2.18: Unemployment - 1993
Percentage

Wage Disparities

Women are discriminated in pay. The average earnings of African women are less than half of African male workers and amount to only 8 percent of the income of White males. Before dealing with women’s discrimination let us deal with the general discrimination of pay between the races. In South Africa, Africans are discriminated in pay on the racial grounds. Fig.2.19 demonstrates this fact. Here Whites are paid the highest while Africans are paid the lowest. It is shocking to find that the Whites are paid around 6 times higher than the Africans. And it is important to note that it is not a private organisation but the government paying the salaries. It is therefore a clear case of institutional discrimination on grounds of race.

Fig.2.19: Monthly salaries paid by govt by race, 1970

Fig.2.20: African cotton textile workers wages by gender, 1975

Fig. 2.20 shows the African cotton textile workers' wages by sex. In all the grades in both urban and rural areas, the wages paid to men are always higher than that paid to the females.

Figure 2.21: African Teachers' Salaries (as from 1.4.1974)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Classification</th>
<th>Male (R)</th>
<th>Female (R)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Head of secondary school</td>
<td>4,089 - 5,288</td>
<td>3,525 - 4,759</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher with degree</td>
<td>2,115 - 3,525</td>
<td>1,904 - 3,102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qualified teacher</td>
<td>1,163 - 2,538</td>
<td>987 - 1,748</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unqualified teacher</td>
<td>987</td>
<td>917</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Figure 2.21 reflects the difference in the salaries paid to male and female African teachers. It is evident that in South Africa women are discriminated in pay both on the basis of race as well as sex. As pointed out earlier, the African women receive lesser wages than the White women. Figure 2.22 shows women of all races as a percentage of earners in each income bracket in 1991. 53.6 percent received no income while 59 percent received less than R999 per annum and 50.2 percent received below R2999. Only 9.3 percent received above R300,000 per annum. Once again it is important to mention that these statistics do not seem to reflect the actual reality as most women earn income in the informal and domestic sectors. A 1992 national study of young people between the ages of 16 and 30 years illustrates both the racial and gender disparities. According to the study, overall 37 percent of all working women earned between R100-500 a month and only a quarter earned above R1500 a month. 71 percent of the employed African women, 59 percent of African men, 57 percent of Coloured women and 34 percent Coloured men earned less than R1000 a month. The most populated income category for each race and gender group reflected the racial hierarchy as shown in fig.2.23.

Fig.2.22: Women as % of income brackets, 1991

![Graph showing women as % of income brackets, 1991.]


Fig.2.23: Average Monthly Income by Race

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Income Range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White men</td>
<td>R2000 - R2999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White women</td>
<td>R1000 - R1499</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coloured men</td>
<td>R1000 - R1499</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African men</td>
<td>R700 - R999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coloured women</td>
<td>R100 - R299</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African women</td>
<td>R100 - R299</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The reasons for lower average income of women could be - (i) Women are concentrated in certain sectors of the economy, for instance in services rather than in production. (ii) Within each sector women are concentrated in certain jobs like secretaries, teaching and nursing. (iii) There is discrimination against women in pay. Even where women performed the same jobs, they often received lower pay and fewer benefits than men.

Poverty

It is important to explore the question of women and their share of poverty in South Africa. This is explored by using 'household' as the unit of analysis. The household may be defined as all individuals who live within the same compound with the exception of those who have not been present for at least half the previous month.
and its economic well-being is estimated using total income received by the household in the form of wages from both the regular and casual employment, self-employment remittances, rental income and income from subsistence production.\textsuperscript{54} Differences in household size and composition are adjusted for using adult equivalent scales. To calculate a headcount measure of poor households, average adjusted household income has been compared to a minimum income level or poverty level. The poverty line chosen is referred to as the Household Subsistence Level (HSL). Two separate HSLs are provided. For urban areas the minimum level of income required by a family of two adults and three children is specified as R825.10 per month. HSL for rural areas for two adults and four children is taken to be R723.05 per month.\textsuperscript{55} These two are converted into average adult equivalent income measures yielding R267.21 per adult in urban areas and R207.64 in rural areas. Poor households in these areas are identified as those whose average adult equivalent income falls short of the converted poverty lines. The total number of households in poverty represent the sum of the urban and rural poor households.

To test the representation of women among the poor, the 'risks' faced by women and men of living in a poor household should be considered. The risks of being in poverty for a particular group in society is defined as the percentage of that group who are poor. The risk of poverty for women therefore is calculated as the number of poor women as a proportion of the total number of women. The number of poor women or men is estimated as the sum of all women or men who live in households which are classified as poor. In terms of the adjusted HSL poverty lines, the number of poor women who are 6.5 million was larger than the number of poor men who are 5 million.\textsuperscript{58} Figure 2.24 illustrates that the risk of being in a poor household is larger

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{54} South Africans Rich and Poor: Baseline Household Statistics, SALDRU, August 1994, p.iv.
\item \textsuperscript{55} Dori Posel, Households and Women in South Africa: A Poverty Profile (unpublished), p.5.
\item \textsuperscript{56} Ibid.
\end{itemize}
for women than men. The socio-economic conditions in South Africa shows significant rural urban differences in access to resources and standard of living. If there are more women than men living in rural areas then spacial location could explain the sex differences in poverty risks.

Fig.2.24: Poverty risk by gender, 1993    Fig.2.25: Poverty risk by gender and residence, 1993

![Graph showing poverty risk by gender and residence, 1993](image)

Clearly where women and men live is important when accounting for the incidence of poverty as shown in fig.2.25. The risk of being in poverty is higher for both rural women and men than it is for the urban dwellers. But spacial location alone cannot be the factor explaining the sex differences in the share of poverty. We have already seen that the percentage of African women and men living in rural or urban areas is more or less the same. If the proportion of all women and men living in these areas is roughly equivalent then why is the poverty risk for women in rural areas higher than it is for men? Why even in urban areas a greater proportion of women than men are poor?

Fig.2.26: Poverty risk by female and male-headed households, 1993

![Graph showing poverty risk by female and male-headed households, 1993](image)
These questions can be addressed partly through identifying different household structures and by comparing the incidence of poverty between these household types. At the outset, a distinction can be made between male and female-headed households. Figure 2.26 demonstrates that the risk of poverty for female-headed households is higher than that of male-headed ones. Figure 2.27 gives the percentage of all households headed by women. The data is broken down by race and by rural, urban and metropolitan locations. It is observed that the risk of poverty is considerably greater for female-headed households in rural areas. Figure 2.28 reveals that only 17 percent of all women-headed households are single person households. Among them 51 percent are Whites, 17 percent Indian, 13 percent African and 5 percent Coloured.

Figure 2.29 shows that in all race groups the female-headed households are significantly poorer than the average households. Overall, the total households income for female-headed is R1141 a month compared to R2089 for all households. And the per capita income for female-headed households is R243 compared to R468 for all households.\(^5\) The female-headed households are further classified into the following types - (i) Households where women are partnered and both live in the

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\(^5\) Beijing .., n.52, p.19.
household- \( H(1) \). (ii) Households where women are partnered but whose spouse is absent - \( H(2) \). (iii) Households where women are not married - \( H(3) \). (iv) Households where women is the head but lives elsewhere - \( H(4) \). (v) Households which have an absent male-head - \( H(5) \).

Of all female-headed households in South Africa those whose female-head is absent shows highest incidence of poverty as illustrated in fig.2.30. The dominant of the female-headed household types, comprising 54 percent of all households is where the female head is not married. These statistics support "the findings of several studies on social and sexual relations in South Africa which have suggested the increase in the number of women who choose not to marry and who decide to raise families without forming permanent attachments with fathers of their children, or with other male partners." My interviews substantiate this argument where the instances of unmarried mothers among Africans are high compared to other races as shown in table XI of appendix IV.

The statistics discussed contribute three important results for understanding the incidence of poverty among women - (i) Female-headed households are more likely to be poor than male-headed households. (ii) There are more female-headed

\[\text{Fig. 2.29: Income of woman-headed & other households 1993}\]

\[\text{Fig. 2.30 Poverty risks for women and men female-headed households, 1993}\]

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households in rural areas than in urban areas. (iii) Rural households headed by women tend to be worse off than equivalent urban households.

It could be argued that the higher incidence of poverty among the female-headed households reflects women's disadvantaged position in the labour market both in terms of jobs that are available to women and income that can be earned. Women either face fewer opportunities than men in wage work or the jobs that women occupy offer lower rates of remuneration than men's jobs. Historically, women's access to the labour market has been undermined by the gendered nature of the migrant labour system and by legal restrictions which limited women's entry into urban areas and waged work. These restrictions also explain the greater number of female-headed households in rural areas. Thus women's greater share of poverty reflects the effects of uneven development between urban and rural areas, unequal opportunities in employment and discrimination in pay.

Under the social variables, education, marital status, health, infant mortality, fertility, family planning and population control, contraceptive use, teenage pregnancy, abortions and social security measures are discussed.

Education

The South African education system under the control of the apartheid has been characterised by two features - (i) segregation which has partly accounted for the gross inequalities in the education system and (ii) centralisation which has contributed to its rigid authoritarianism. Consequently a significant proportion of African women are illiterate. Fig.2.31 demonstrates that the illiteracy rate of the African women is the highest and that of the White women is the lowest in South Africa. In the rural areas the rate is higher than in urban areas among the Africans.

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and the Coloureds. It is interesting to note that among Whites the illiteracy rate is lower in the rural areas compared to the urban areas. The reasons for such a reverse trend is unexplored. But it can be questioned whether White rural areas are better developed than the White urban areas? Does such a situation exist anywhere else in the world?

![Fig.2.31: Illiteracy rates of women by Race and Residence - 1993](image)

Apartheid established a rigidly segregated education system. Segregation means differentiating the population in terms of educational opportunity. Those classified as White had access to free and compulsory education amply resourced by public funds. Those classified as Africans, Coloureds and Asians were subjected to different laws and regulations according to their 'racial classification'. For many decades education was neither compulsory nor free for the Africans. Conditions remained grossly inadequate. Segregation thus went hand in hand with racial inequality.

One important aspect of the segregated education system is gross disparities in spending between African and White education. Figures 2.32, 2.33 and 2.34 display striking disparity between the education spending on Africans and the Whites. Maximum is spent on the Whites and minimum on the Africans.
The education system became centralised when a legislative programme was introduced which gave the executive arm of government, in the form of Cabinet Committees appointed by Whites-only Parliament, sweeping powers to determine and implement policies on education for all races. There was no democratic participation in the formulation of education policy for either Whites or Africans. As Whites had the vote and political influence in the ruling party, their views and needs were taken into account. For Africans this was only the case in so far as their need for education coincided with the regime's need for economic growth and political stability. One consequence of this was a highly authoritarian education system with

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60 Ibid, p.68.
a narrow syllabus, rigid conditions of teachers employment, coercive systems of
discipline in schools and consultation procedures with local communities that lacked
all democratic content. The consequence for women of these two features of the
apartheid education system - segregation and centralisation - were contradictory.
On the one hand the expansion in education for both Africans and Whites meant
that there were increased educational opportunities for women in general. But
because the changes took place under conditions of segregation, opportunities for
Black women were limited and restricted.

In fig.2.35, at the primary and secondary school level, Africans outnumber all other
races as they are the majority of the population. Among African and Coloured there
are dropouts as primary enrolment is higher than the secondary. But in Indians and
Whites the secondary is more. The percentage of increase in enrolment is very
high in Whites. School statistics of girls are quite satisfactory as per the fig.2.36.
Nearly 50 percent of them joined the school and their number increased. When the
ratio of boys per girl in each school standard is studied in fig.2.37, boys are slightly
more in kindergarten and standard I, but from there till the IX standard girls
outnumber the boys. And in X and XI classes boys outnumber the girls. It can be
concluded that while girls outnumber boys at the primary level, boys outnumber the
girls at the secondary level.

Fig.2.35: Enrolment at primary &
secondary schools, 1993

Fig.2.36: School statistics of girls, 1986

61 Ibid, p.69.
The 1993 figures prove otherwise. Figure 2.38 illustrates that in pre-school the number of boys and girls are equal. While boys outnumber girls in primary school, the girls outnumber boys in the secondary school. Moreover, in 1993 the drop-out rate is higher among boys than girls as indicated in fig.2.39. It is 53 percent for boys and 44 percent for girls at primary level and 51 percent and 46 percent respectively at secondary level. The statistics suggest that the drop-out rate for girls have declined over the last 20 years. This is not an indication of better education for girls. Rather, it is due to the willingness of the girls to persist education despite the problems encountered. It also undermines the popular belief that girls are dropping out of school at a faster rate than boys.
Coming to the reasons for the drop-out rates, Kate Truscott\(^{62}\) in his research on gender and education argued that teenage pregnancy is the reason for dropping out among the girls. Most of the women in my sample gave teenage pregnancy as the reason for high drop-out rate among the girls (see appendix III). At the national level, the reported rate of teenage pregnancy is 330 for every 1000 women under nineteen years of age. But why does such high teenage pregnancy not lead to higher drop-out rate for girls? According to the study one reason is that the stigma attached to teenage pregnancy is less than it was twenty years ago. Another reason for dropping out of boys and girls is because their parents are unable to afford to keep them there. Girls are supposed to stay home and look after youngsters while parents work. Sometimes they are sent to rural areas to assist other family members. It was suggested that boys drop-out of school because they do not wish to be subjected to authority or wanted to do "silly things like stealing cars"\(^{63}\)

In some of the European universities, students of other races are permitted. Fig.2.40 indicates that in such universities the percentage of Coloured and Asians is more than that of the Africans. It is a clear case of racial discrimination. African women are very less at the University level compared to the women of other races, as depicted in fig.2.41.

\(^{62}\) Kate Truscott, "Gender in Education", (Johannesburg, April 1994), p.17.

\(^{63}\) Ibid.
White women's rate at this level of education is very high. But when compared to men, the number of women at the university level is very low as indicated in fig.2.42. In 1990 women accounted for 47.8 percent of the total university enrolment. Of these women 49 percent were White, 38 percent African, 7 percent Coloured and 6 percent Indian. The women were not evenly distributed between the universities. At Vista University which caters for African teacher upgrading 67 percent of the students were female. Conversely, only 37 percent of the students at the Medical University of South Africa (Medunsa) were female. The largest number of African women university students studied through the University of South Africa (UNISA), a correspondence university. The fact that it was a correspondence university eliminated any face to face contact between the students or the teachers. This indirectly promoted non-racialism and Africans could equally take up courses. In 1990, the 37,463 African female UNISA students accounted for three times the number of African female students at all other universities.64

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64 Beijing ..., n.52, p.28.
The concentration and confinement of women to certain disciplines is illustrated by fig.2.43. Of all the students enrolled for Home economics at universities 99 percent are women. Women are poorly represented in other fields. At more advanced levels, men outnumber women markedly. A total of 32 percent of students at post-graduate level are White. Figure 2.44 shows the profile of women at advanced levels.

Even in the teacher training colleges Africans were less than Whites in 1966 as indicated in fig.2.45. But by 1972 their number increased. And the difference between Whites and Africans reduced. According to the fig.2.46 women outnumber men to a large extent at the enrolment at teacher training colleges. Teaching is a profession where women are concentrated most. Literacy by economic activity is displayed in fig.2.47. The breakdown for men and women is not available. However, the majority of those in the domestic workers, housewives, informal and subsistence sectors would be women. Figure 2.48 shows the literacy rate by sex and race in 1988. The literacy rate for Whites is highest followed by Indians and Coloureds. The important observation is that among Africans the literacy rate between the males and females is more or less the same. In Coloureds and Whites the female rate is higher than the male while in Indians it is lower.
Marital Status

Figure 2.49 displays the marital status by race in 1960. The following observations can be made -

(i) It is surprising to note that in the unmarried category, Coloureds and Asians outnumber even the Africans.

(ii) Among the married, Whites are the highest. White women enjoy such family security when compared to other races.

(iii) The divorce rate is highest in the Whites and among Africans it hardly exists. The White women seem to be more independent and assertive. And in a system where the African women strive to be with their husbands it is not surprising that the divorce rate is almost absent among them.
And among the widowed, both African and White women are more or less the same.

From the above observations it is clear that the African women are not actually deprived of marriage and moreover their divorce rates are negligible. It has to be questioned as to what extent did the apartheid system actually affect the family lives of the Africans. According to the UN statistics in 1990, in South Africa the percent of women married between the age group of 15-19 years is 5.1 percent, aged 25 plus is 49 percent. At 60 years the percent of women not married is 57 percent. The divorce rate of women aged between 25-44 is only 3.7 percent. My sample, however, indicates that the percentage of unmarried are high among all races compared to those who are married (see table III of appendix IV). This shows a trend where women are remaining 'single' in South Africa.

Health

In South Africa, the White population enjoys a high standard of health care. They suffer no diseases related to malnutrition. They have adequate supply of doctors and hospitals. In contrast, Africans suffer from severe malnutrition and lack of medical care. The South African Medical Journal states that there are 18,000 physicians in South Africa of whom 85 percent are White, 9 percent Indian, 3 percent Coloured and 3 percent Africans. The same report tells that "many beds are vacant in hospitals treating White people." Infant mortality rate of Africans is very high compared to other races as depicted in fig.2.50. Figure 2.51 shows infant mortality by race and sex. It is shocking to note that the infant mortality rate for boys is higher than girls among all races in South Africa. Even the adult mortality rates are higher for men than women as shown in fig.2.52. The life expectancy is once
again higher for females than males as shown in fig.2.53. Figure 2.54 reveals that infant mortality rate is higher in India than in South Africa. According to fig.2.55 the life expectancy for women is more in South Africa compared to India.
In 1979, out of 45,000 reported cases of tuberculosis 78.5 percent were African, 18.5 percent Coloureds and 1.5 Indians and only 1.5 percent Whites. Fig.2.56 demonstrates this. Apartheid adversely affects the mental health of the African women. Migrant labour system, apartheid laws and torture in prisons are some of the causes of mental problems experienced by women due to enforced separation of families for long periods. A study published by WHO points out that racism has implications for mental health. In 1976, the American Psychiatric Association investigated into this problem and concluded that apartheid had a destructive impact on the family and the mental health of Africans, especially women.

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Figures 2.57 and 2.58 prove that the system of apartheid mentally affected almost all the races of South Africans. It is interesting to note that even Whites suffer from Meningitis - a disease related to mental condition as displayed in fig.2.57. Even in the graph 2.58, though Africans are the highest in the mental hospitals, Whites too are in significant numbers. Under apartheid no mention is made about the Whites' mental problems. Were Whites too affected by the system of apartheid in some way? In South Africa was there a situation where the oppressor and the oppressed experienced same problems or tensions? This fact has to be further probed into, to break some of the apartheid myths.

Fig.2.57 : Meningitis patients by race, 1973

Thousands

Fig.2.58 : Patients in mental hospitals by race

Thousands

Fertility

Fig.2.59 indicates high fertility rate for Africans and very low fertility rate for White women in 1960. But by 1980 the rate for Africans came down considerably. There was a further fall by 1994 as shown in fig.2.60. Among the African women the fertility rates are the highest in the rural and lowest in the urban as shown in fig.2.61. Throughout, the rates are higher in Africans and lower among Whites. It is clear that Whites are educated and aware of the family planning methods while Africans remain backward with high fertility rates. The total fertility rates of different
countries are compared in fig.2.62. The fertility rate of South Africa is like that of India and China. In developed countries like Japan and USA these rates are very low. In 1990 South Africa's fertility rate has decreased but not as substantially as that of China.

Fig.2.59 : Fertility rate by race

Fig.2.60 : Fertility rates by Race

Fig.2.61 : Fertility rates of African women, 1993

Fig.2.62 : Total fertility rates - countrywise

Family Planning and Population Control

White minority thinking has been dominated by worry over the difference in size between the African and White populations, the former constituting 76 percent of the total. In South Africa the White electorate has been urged not only to support and maintain Nationalist rule, but also to have more babies. At the same time policies were being aimed to reduce the Black population. Notions of racial superiority combined with a belief in their God-given right to rule have dominated the thinking underlying the population control programme.  

This was explicitly revealed in contributions made at a symposium on the 'Population Explosion in South Africa' organised by the Northern Transvaal branch of the South African Medical Association in 1971. Among the contributors was Dr. Chris Troskie, ex-president of the Medical Association of South Africa, who argued that there were two groups among mankind - the 'haves' and 'have nots'. The first group is intelligent with production potential and has a sense of responsibility and civilisation. The second group lacked such sense and 'bred recklessly'. The symposium urgently called for national co-ordination and rapid implementation of a programme to control population growth. Special emphasis was laid on the African majority. The symposium outlined the basic strategy which was adopted by the regime three years later in the form of "National Family Planning Programme".

While in the geographical terms the programme is national, it is the African majority who are to be the prime targets. It is they who are considered incapable of controlling their family size thereby being responsible for population explosion in South Africa.

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In 1980, 2 percent of the budget (health) was allocated to preventive medicine where family planning was given top most priority. In 1973 only 5 fully trained family planning doctors were there. By 1976 a team of 671 personnel was brought. The team increased to 835 in 1977 and 10 decentralised units were introduced in the rural areas. In 1976, 2,045 family planning clinics were there. By 1978, the number grew to 3000. The main techniques suggested were (i) oral contraception - the pill, (ii) Intrauterine Devices - loop and the coil, (iii) Injectable contraceptives - Depo Provera and (iv) Sterilisation and vasectomy.

Fig.2.63 shows the contraceptive use by race in 1970. Injection is used mostly by Black women. The latest statistics are reflected in fig.2.64. Among African women there is substantial increase in contraceptive use by 1994. Women are more concerned and take far more responsibility for contraception than men. Family planning is therefore gender-specific in South Africa. In a national study of 2000 young people between the ages of 16 and 30 years, 60 percent of the African women, 36 percent of the Coloured women and 54 percent of the White women said they used contraception of one sort or another. Conversely, 27 percent of African men, 34 percent of Coloured men and 52 percent of White men said they used contraception in order to plan their partner's pregnancies. 71 My interviews with the South African women indicate the same as shown in appendix III.

71 Beijing..., n.52, p.34.
In some cases, women are forced to use contraception against their will, or without their knowledge. There is open abuse of injectable contraceptives. African women prefer injectable contraceptives because they are able to keep it hidden from their partners. Regarding sterilisation, women are not asked for their consent. Moreover, in rural areas women are not given a choice besides the use of Depo Provera. Depo Provera has been classified cancerous in the West. This is prescribed solely for African women in South Africa. It has to be questioned if Depo Provera is really as dangerous? Because it is not always condemned. According to a doctor from United States, it is actually recommended by many doctors to women in US.\textsuperscript{72} Tim Wilson, Director of Hospitals, Department of Health, Pretoria, argued that "no research has proved that Depo Provera is cancerous or dangerous. It is in fact a negative propaganda by the manufacturers of pills. It is one of the best contraceptive methods available."\textsuperscript{73} Figure 2.65 shows that contraceptive use is higher in South African women than in India.

**Teenage mothers**

The reported rate of teenage pregnancy, excluding TBVC areas is 330 per 1000 females under the age of 19 years. The percentage of all live-births to teenagers was 14.6 percent for the country as a whole in 1991. The racial breakdown is

\textsuperscript{72} Ndulo, n.66, p.99.

\textsuperscript{73} Personal interview, Tim Wilson, Johannesburg, August 28, 1996.
represented in the fig.2.66. Many of these teenage mothers are forced to leave schools and they are single mothers with inadequate means to support their children. Of the 69,912 teenage pregnancies in 1991, 2,500 (4 percent) were to girls under the age of 15 years. Births to teenagers and particularly to those under 15 years constitute both a social and a medical risk to both the mothers and children. In the absence of obstetric care, women who give birth before the age of 18 years are three times more likely to die in childbirth than those between the ages of 20-29 years.

**Abortion**

Legal abortion is available to a very limited number of women of South Africa. The Abortion and Sterilisation Act of 1975 stipulates that abortion is only permissible where (i) continued pregnancy could endanger the life or constitute a serious threat to the physical or mental health of the woman, (ii) there is a serious risk that the child will suffer from a serious physical or mental handicap, (iii) the pregnancy has resulted from rape, incest or unlawful intercourse with a mentally handicapped man and (iv) the pregnancy occurs in a woman who is mentally handicapped or unable to understand the full implications of the parental responsibility.

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74 Cape Times (Cape Town), August 12, 1994.
Only 40 percent of the applications for abortions were considered in 1991. Around 70 percent of all legal abortions were performed on White women. Women who have no access to legal abortion frequently resort to illegal means. Figure 2.67 indicates the number of illegal abortions that took place from 1980-87. It is estimated that 300,000 abortions a year are done illegally in South Africa. These figures are difficult to establish accurately, but it is recognised that septic abortion rate reflects the illegal abortion rate. Illegal abortions increase the national mortality rates, the incidence of pelvic inflammatory disease, infertility and psychological trauma.

Fig. 2.67: Abortions

Social Security Measures
The provisions for social security for African women under apartheid are extremely inadequate. Only a small number of them are eligible for it. Among those excluded from it are -

(i) those earning less than R10.50 per week,
(ii) domestic workers, agricultural workers,
(iii) seasonal workers and those whose earnings are calculated on commission basis.76

76 Ibid.
Africans in general and women in particular are affected by these provisions as their wages are low. In 1975, the maximum monthly pensions for Africans was R23.75 compared to R88.00 for Whites. In case of accidents or occupational diseases, the compensation paid under occupational Diseases in Mines and Works Act 1973 is different for Africans and Whites. As Africans are hardly paid any compensation, African women, especially widows face hardship. As regards maternity leave, since there are no fixed government rules on the subject, most African women are not allowed to avail any maternity leave.

Thus after analysing all the economic and social variables, the conditions of women under apartheid becomes clear. Though African women are discriminated by race and sex in South Africa, the statistics presented break certain myths regarding their position in the society. In the light of the data presented women's role in the economy and the society must be reconsidered.