

An analysis of marriage timing and intensity in nineteenth-century Tasmania

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Abstract *Between 1840 and 1853, over 4,000 convict women were sent from Ireland to Tasmania as part of the British system of transporting prisoners to Australia. Once in the colony, convict women became an integral part of the labour force. Marriage was a turning point in the life of these convicts, giving them new rights and freedoms. Due to an advantageous marriage market, most convict women were able to marry. Thus, they built families which became critical to the success of the colony. Until now, few researchers have discussed the lives of convicts with the use of advanced quantitative methods. The current study is the first to both look solely at marriage and use event-history models to study convicts in Tasmania. Inspired by second-wave feminism, this study focuses on female convicts. The current results have been obtained as part of a greater study of marriage and convicts in Tasmania. Using a database of 2,973 Irish female convicts, through the lens of event-history analysis, the results for timing and intensity of marriage show the necessity to define the marriage market as a process. Three factors are emphasized within this project: access, value, and desirability.*

Theoretical focus Marriage acted as a turning point in the life of Irish female convicts. The main theoretical framework used to understand marriage in nineteenth-century Tasmania is that of the marriage market. Three aspects of the marriage market are discussed through the timing and intensity of marriage: access, value and desirability. First, access is considered through how convicts met their future spouses. Being employed has been found to be a key factor in individual stories of marriage in Tasmania. Second, value on the marriage market is linked to the role of women in marriage. This role, in Tasmania, was one of reproduction and taking care of the household. As such, demographic research informs us that ageing women are expected to have a lower hazard of marriage due to a lower value as fertile mates. Otherwise, research on convict character has shown that convicts who committed specific crimes such as Arson were perceived as of a better character, whilst convicts who re-offended in the colony were seen as of a worse character (Snowden 2005). Third, although Becker (1973) sees marriage as the optimum, the desirability of marriage may vary according to life events. Reid (2007) suggests that convicts with longer sentences would have an increased desire to marry as marriage would give them access to more freedoms. Otherwise, stresses such as giving birth to a child could have increased the desire to marry.

Data The Founders and Survivors project (FAS) aims to trace the lives of the 73,000 convicts who arrived between 1803 and 1853 in Tasmania. A subset of the FAS is the Life Course Ships project led by Janet McCalman, which has traced the lives of all convicts who arrived on selected ships, resulting in a total sample of 24,000 convicts. Irish female convicts who arrived between 1840 and 1853 in Tasmania were over sampled. The Female Convicts Research Centre (FCRC), is an affiliated group which focuses on the lives of 13,000 female convicts who arrived in Tasmania. Each of the previously mentioned databases use both the information located on convict records and the information located in birth, marriage and death registers to create complete life-courses. The Life Course Ships sample was used as the initial database. Using both the FAS's and the FCRC's more complete databases, details on specific life events were added to this initial sample. Identifying only Irish female convicts who were traced to either a birth, a marriage or a death, and for whom each variable of interest was included, the final database includes 2,793 life-courses. This hierarchical database is formatted in a way which permits the use of event-history analysis.

Methods To understand the timing and intensity of marriage, a life-course approach has been taken. Descriptive statistics on both the proportion of women who married and the median time between arrival and marriage are given to provide a global understanding of marriage. To better understand the links between the selected variables and marriage, the Cox regression model is used

Table 1: Result of Cox regression on the marriage hazard (Marriage vs Single)

	Model 1 HR
Age-group on arrival	
<i>(ref: <30)</i>	
30-39	0.823***
40+	0.520***
Marital status	
<i>(ref: single)</i>	
Married	0.641***
Urban-Rural conviction	
<i>(ref: Village)</i>	
Town	1.091*
Port cities	0.986
Crime in Ireland	
<i>(ref: Theft and burglary)</i>	
Violent crimes	1.250*
Livestock theft	1.143*
Arson	0.998
Against society	0.986
Unknown	0.839
Religion	
<i>(ref: Catholic)</i>	
Protestant	0.997
Time of arrival	
<i>(ref: 1840-1847)</i>	
1848-1853	1.274*
Sentence length	
<i>(ref: 7 years)</i>	
>7 years	1.309**
Province of conviction	
<i>(ref: Leinster)</i>	
Munster	0.956
Ulster	0.807*
Connaught	0.699**
On the town	
<i>(ref: No)</i>	
Yes	0.927
Current incarceration	
<i>(ref: Free)</i>	
Incarcerated	0.125***
Sentence status	
<i>(ref: Under sentence)</i>	
Sentence ended	1.635***
Pregnancy status	
<i>(ref: Not pregnant)</i>	
Pregnant	2.323***
On-going period	
<i>(ref: 1840-1849)</i>	
1850-1853	1.245**

1854+	1.452***
<i>Interactions with time</i>	
Time of arrival	
<i>(ref: 1840-1847)</i>	
1848-1853	0.906***
Sentence length	
<i>(ref: 7 years)</i>	
>7 years	0.918**
Province of conviction	
<i>(ref: Leinster)</i>	
Munster	0.988
Ulster	1.065
Connaught	1.149***
On the town	
<i>(ref:No)</i>	
Yes	1.109***
Log Likelihood	-13,930.420
Note:	*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01
n=	2,793
Source:	Irish Female Convicts Database

to study marriage. This simple, and informative model has previously been used to study marriage in the context of Antwerp (Puschmann et al. 2016, 2012, 2014). Given its nature as a survival model, the Cox model takes into account time and can track changes through time. Moreover, the Cox model provides a range of advantages over other event-history models. Namely, the Cox model is a semi-parametric model, which signifies that the form of the risk through time does not need to be known. The Cox model also allows for the use of time-varying variables. Thus, changes in the status of a woman during her time under observation can be tracked and used to better understand marriage.

Findings The previously suggested analysis of marriage will be able to discuss both the timing and intensity of marriage. The results that have been produced emphasize the need to understand marriage as a process. Table 1 shows the results of a cox regression model for marriage. First, women need to gain access to the marriage market. In Tasmania, access to the “marriage market” changed as the convict system ended. The law’s unsystematic application meant a woman could marry even if she had been previously married in Ireland. Overall, one factor stands out as having limited access to the market; women under incarceration were outside the marriage market. The regression results show that women who were in jail at any point in time are 10 times less likely to marry than women who were in the free world.

Once access to the marriage market is defined, factors which may have had an impact on a woman’s value on the marriage market are considered. Age had the highest impact on a woman’s value on the marriage market. The results for age reflected a long-standing demographic hypothesis, that ageing women have a lower value on the marriage market. Crime in Ireland and in the colony had little to no impact on marriage. By controlling for a range of variables the regression shows that only having been convicted of animal thefts or of a violent crime was related to the hazard of marriage in Tasmania. Moreover, the lack of significance between recidivism and marriage is highlighted. Further research should look at gaining a better understanding of what the character of convicts was and how to better formulate the impacts of recidivism.

Although access and value on the marriage market can both have an impact on the marriage

hazard, marriage's desirability can fluctuate. Contrarily to what was expected, having children did not have an impact on the hazard of marriage. Further research should seek to create more ways in which to format time-varying variable as a way to include times during which children were either dead or in orphanages. This also means that further cleaning, linking and transcribing of convict data needs to be done to add this information. Factors such as being pregnant or having a longer sentence had a statistically significant positive impact on the marriage hazard. Whilst longer sentences seem to have increased marriage's value as a way out of the convict status, pregnancies would have rushed marriages as women were more vulnerable once they got pregnant outside of marriage.

Overall, this research shows that having access to the marriage market as defined by the laws and periods under incarceration had the highest impact on the hazard of marriage. Moreover, this research will show the possibilities available in convict data to study life courses.

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