

Bitter Fruits of “A Merry Life?” Survival Chances of Children Born Out of Wedlock in Nineteenth-century Rural Estonia

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Abstract

The article explores the survival chances of children born out of wedlock in the Russian Baltic province of Livland from 1834 to 1891 and is based on court records as well as individual-level vital events data. The absence of a consistent mortality penalty for illegitimate infants and the considerable proportion of single mothers who went on to marry point to the lack of a strong social stigma. Other indicators, such as rates of stillbirths and early childhood mortality, mother's age and socioeconomic status, and the time span between the birth and marriage, give evidence of marginalization.

Keywords

illegitimacy, mortality, lonely motherhood, infanticide, Russian Baltic provinces

In the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, many European countries witnessed an upsurge in illegitimacy ratios. In 1850, the ratio of illegitimate births was about 6.5 percent in England, 9 percent in Sweden, 11.1 percent in Denmark, and exceeded more than 10 percent in most parts of Germany. It was only after 1870 that this trend reversed,¹ albeit not in all countries (e.g., Sweden and Finland²). By contrast, harsh treatment and strict paternal control kept illegitimacy rates low in Ireland.³ At the beginning of the twentieth century, Western and Northern Europe are believed to have had lower illegitimacy rates than the Southern and Eastern areas.⁴ Although very high ratios could be found in rural regions of Europe, children born out of wedlock tended to be an urban phenomenon.

The “illegitimacy explosion” of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries was “a compound phenomenon” that has often been related to waning social control as a result of industrialization, urbanization, and migration,⁵ although some earlier authors have expressed “grave doubts on the assumption that illegitimacy was directly correlated with modernization.”⁶ The temporal stability of spatial patterns of illegitimacy in Europe seems to indicate the importance of cultural and

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social norms and courtship traditions in shaping illegitimacy ratios.⁷ In Western Europe, extramarital pregnancy was most common among working-class women and agricultural laborers.⁸ Illegitimacy has also been seen as a historical function of the so-called European marriage pattern; it varied with age and the practice of celibacy.⁹ The marriage pattern that engendered a large reservoir of sexually active single adults established the conditions for higher levels of illegitimate births.

Illegitimate infants are generally considered to have been among the most vulnerable population groups in times past. Differences in mortality rates of infants born in and out of wedlock were 40–200 percent higher, and the status effect, once other factors are controlled for, could even be greater.¹⁰ However, the relative differences in mortality between legitimate and illegitimate infants varied somewhat among countries and time periods. In the Nordic countries, for example, differences in infant mortality according to legitimacy were much smaller in rural areas than in towns.¹¹ The severe mortality penalty illegitimate children experienced during infancy did not necessarily persist into early childhood. Between ages one and five, a statistically significant effect of the legal status of the child has often not been found, and the opposite can also be observed.¹² However, most historical studies of the health effects of growing up in a one-parent family have been restricted to the study of short-term effects (up to the age one).

Most recent research on out-of-wedlock births explores the survival chances of illegitimate children from an individual-level perspective. Excess mortality among children born out of wedlock has historically been associated with factors such as shorter breastfeeding time and artificial feeding, as well as the poverty, regional background, structural and material situation of unmarried mothers, which affected their ability to care for their infants, and the social stigma associated with unmarried motherhood.¹³ Unwed mothers also tended to be younger and the children were mostly firstborns, both of which are associated with higher infant mortality.¹⁴ The relative importance of the different factors is still being debated. However, the severity of the mortality penalty has been found to have been alleviated by the support of kin. Having parents or siblings in the parish often meant that a woman had access to various forms of support to aid her in the upbringing of her child.¹⁵ It has also been found that legitimation of the child by his father clearly improved survival chances.¹⁶ The prospects of an unwed mother varied between countries. In nineteenth-century Sweden, for example, an out-of-wedlock child has been described merely as an episode in a woman's life as most unwed mothers eventually did marry.¹⁷

Illegitimacy also increased in nineteenth-century Estonia. In Tartu County, the illegitimacy ratio rose from less than 3 percent in the 1830s and 1840s to over 7 percent at the end of the century, and in Viljandi County from about 3 percent to over 8 percent.¹⁸ In the 1920s, all-country rate fluctuated between 7 percent and 8.55 percent, and exceeded 10 percent during the economic crisis of the early 1930s.¹⁹ In contrast to several European countries, the illegitimacy ratio increased rather than declined in Estonia in the 1870s. The trend in nineteenth-century Estonia is somewhat similar to that in Finland and Sweden.²⁰ Estonia was overwhelmingly rural. In 1863 and 1897, the percentage of the Estonian urban population was only 8.7 and 15.5, respectively. The proportion of children born to unwed women in towns rarely exceeded 10 percent.²¹

In this study, we make use of individual-level data from parish registers, poll-tax lists (*revizskie skazki*), and listings of migrants and community members to estimate mortality levels for eight communities in two parishes in nineteenth-century rural Estonia. The average illegitimacy ratio for Holsitre in the parish of Paistu rose from 1.9 percent in 1834–1869 to 6.9 percent in 1870–1891. The corresponding figures for seven communities in the parish of Helme were 2.8 percent and 4.6 percent, respectively. The analysis focuses on mortality differences between the former period (until 1869) and the latter (from 1870 onward). Social norms can be inferred from demographic measures, but different measures can produce dissimilar results. The high stillbirth ratio and the absence of a consistent mortality penalty for illegitimate infants seem to point in opposite directions: the former to the existence of strong social stigma and the latter to its insignificance. In order to address the

question of stigmatization, we consider other sources such as court records of maintenance claims and infanticide. The relatively modest illegitimacy ratios in Estonia until the mid-nineteenth century are astonishing, given that the mean age at marriage for women was closer to that of Northwestern than Eastern Europe, and Estonian villagers, as has been suggested by folklorists, considered premarital intercourse acceptable or even honorable.²²

In accordance with earlier research in several European settings, I hypothesize that the mother's marital status had a strong effect on the child's survival chances in rural Estonia. The article will examine whether the consequences for the mortality level of children were more disruptive when the child was younger or older than one year. Our data shed light on the roles poverty and marginalization played in lowering the survival chances of children born out of wedlock but does not allow us to assess whether the severity of the illegitimacy penalty was alleviated by kin support. In order to understand the factors underlying the vulnerability of such children, the socioeconomic status of unwed mothers as well as their marriage chances will be considered. I assume that they would be disproportionally represented among the lower social groups. By looking at their life courses and at court records, I examine the risk that young women incurred by giving birth outside of marriage—did they lose their job and home, marry an older man or an immigrant, remain unmarried, migrate, or commit murder? Further investigation is needed to determine why in a country in which premarital intercourse was a time-honored custom, and the courts (in the period under study) frequently treated unwed mothers who killed their babies with leniency or as a formality, illegitimacy in some localities met such disapproval that made the illegitimate children rather victims of cruelty and neglect than focus of love.

Setting: Helme and Paistu Parishes

The three Baltic provinces of the Russian Empire (Estland, Livland, and Kurland) were rural economies that underwent a capitalist transformation of manorial and peasant systems as well as increasing social stratification in the nineteenth century. Up until the mid-nineteenth century, virtually all agricultural land belonged either to Baltic German nobles or to the Russian crown, and state estates as well as noble manors were large-scale agricultural enterprises based on *corvée*. The emancipation of 1819 did not significantly change the basic economic relationships: peasant labor obligations were now converted to labor rent based on “freely negotiated contracts.” By mid-century, the mutual economic dependence of manors and peasants had come to an end so that only a cash nexus in the form of rent or mortgages between the estate owner and the peasant farmer remained.

The area of our study includes seven adjacent communities (or manors)²³ in the parish of Helme and one in the parish of Paistu in northern Livland (Figure 1). Holstre in Paistu was a large state estate. The area was fertile and enjoyed increasing economic prosperity in the last decades of the century. It also manifested the greatest income disparity. However, the persistence of the habit of living and eating together and of old rural hygiene and sanitary customs diminished the potential effects of income inequality for a considerable time.²⁴ Residential segregation of farmers and married farmhands has been reported for some places in that region. The existence of *corvée* labor and the power of the landlord over individuals and the size of the units of land affected the size of the household. The mean size of the farmstead population was large and the kinship and generational structure was diverse; the typical farmstead contained eight or more adults (with children), or two or three conjugal units. With the introduction of money rent in 1849 in Holstre and in the early 1860s in Helme, the number of related and unrelated farm servants in the farmer's household decreased.

In rural areas, access to land largely determined an individual's and family's socioeconomic status. The population was divided into three broad categories: farmers with large and medium-sized farms (there were no small farms in the study area), skilled workers (teachers, gardeners, forest

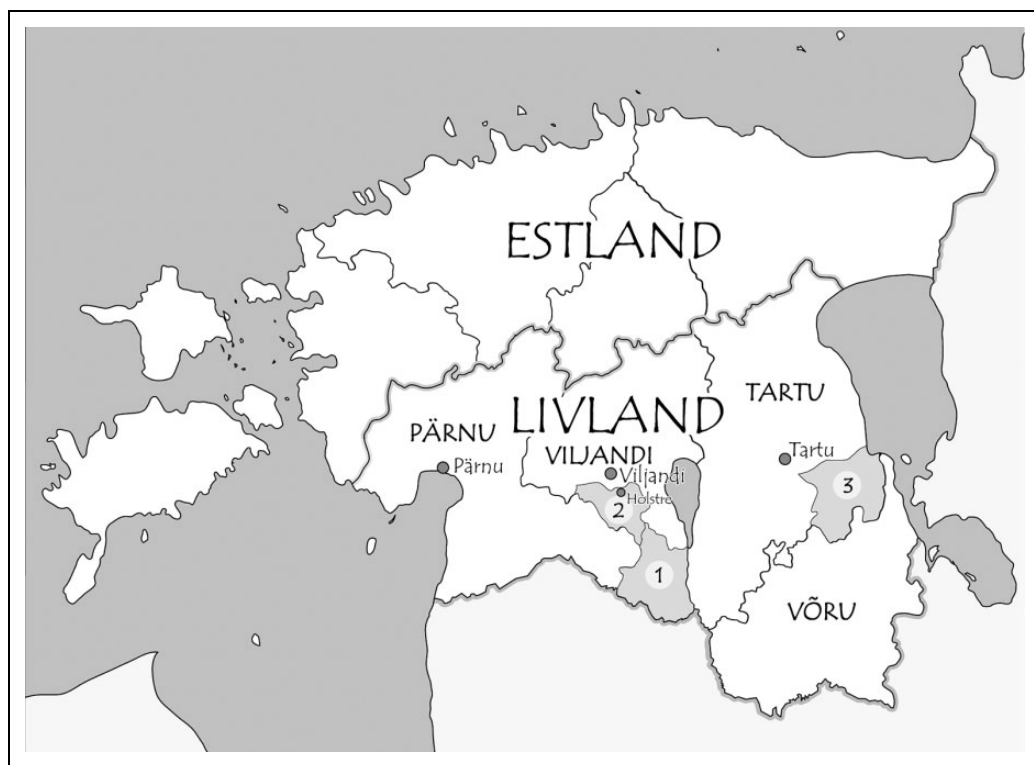


Figure 1. Map of Estonia, 1800s ([1] Helme Parish, [2] Paistu Parish, [3] Võnnu Parish).

wardens, millers, innkeepers, etc.), and the semi-landless (cottagers) and landless. The semi-landless and landless groups comprised nearly two-thirds of the study population. Cottagers had only a small parcel of land or no land at all and normally worked for wages. Those without land circulated among the farmsteads and manors as hired labor.

The principles dictating the relinquishing of property to the next generation became more important in the mid-nineteenth century when the practice of buying land in perpetuity began and the peasants were able to accumulate more wealth. Before farmland was turned into freehold, Baltic farmers did not possess strong tenure and inheritance rights. Agrarian laws discouraged the division of a farm and allowed only one heir to inherit it. Generally, the eldest son (or a married daughter) inherited the parents' holding in Estonia, and co-successors received compensation for their portions in cash, livestock, or goods. Only in the absence of surviving male siblings did farm succession continue down the female line. Laws governing the inheritance of movable property did not favor sons over daughters.

Nineteenth-century Estonia saw the onset of the demographic transition. The secular mortality decline in Estonia started around the middle of the nineteenth century, and the death rates of infants, young children, and adults decreased approximately twofold over the period of the study. No pronounced disparities in infant and young child mortality have been detected between farmers and landless laborers even in times of short-term economic stress. Declining mortality probably triggered the fertility transition, which started in the 1870s–1880s, and was slightly more advanced in Viljandi County than in the others.²⁵ The proportion of never-married women was approximately 15 percent.²⁶

Researchers who have studied premarital sex in Estonian villages largely disregard demographic data. Based on very fragmentary sources such as interviews, folktales and rhymes, or surveys by

Baltic German enlighteners, they claim that both young men and women led sexually active “merry” lives. In fact, folk songs ridiculed or disparaged female sexual promiscuity as well as sex for profit.²⁷ Pastor A. W. Hupel’s survey of the sexuality of Estonian peasants in the second half of the eighteenth century, published in 1777, has not been equaled by any author in richness of ethnographic detail. According to him, no strict sexual restraints existed before marriage.²⁸ Hupel considered Estonians to possess a voluptuous disposition. Very few parents were dismayed when their unmarried daughter became pregnant. Folklorist Merili Metsvahi concluded that before marriage, Estonian peasant women directed their own sexual lives and exercised considerable sexual autonomy. She believes that the development of capitalist relations and an inheritance system favoring sons over daughters brought about major changes in the family and sexual behavior. In Hupel’s opinion, the concept of virginity and the category of virgin in its conventional sense were unknown to eighteenth-century Estonian peasants. According to Hupel, young people often had intercourse over quite a long period of time without becoming pregnant as the man was expected to withdraw before ejaculation. This method of *coitus interruptus* explains why Estonians had so few children born out of wedlock.

Living conditions favored premarital sexual activity. During the cold seasons, peasants slept together with the family and unmarried servants in the dwelling’s sole heated room, but during the summer months, they slept in different places—barns, cowsheds, and haylofts. In such places, it was easy to have intercourse without being seen. Love was also made outdoors in the woods and fields where there were no witnesses.²⁹ Boys’ nocturnal visits to girls were common, but these visits were normally collective and seldom led to intercourse.³⁰ Generally, boys tended to stay away from “fallen” girls and derisive traditional songs effectively helped to perpetuate this negative attitude.

The prevalence of premarital sex is indicated by the number of prenuptial conceptions and births. Erich Oehrman has estimated the proportion of prenuptially conceived first births to be 19 percent in the parish of Võnnu in 1834–1881.³¹ In Helme and Holstre, the percentage of first postnuptial births conceived prior to marriage was smaller (about 10 percent). The frequency of out-of-wedlock pregnancies increased from 1834–1869 to 1870–1891. Postnuptial conception was the predominant mode of reproduction in the three parishes of Estonia that have been studied to date in this respect. The available data suggest that in rural Estonia, bridal pregnancy was clearly less common as in several parts of Germany, the Nordic countries, and rural Kent.³²

Researchers have not studied the manner in which Estonian village people treated unwed mothers and their children, but fiction paints a bleak picture. In folklore, unmarried motherhood was considered a disgrace, although in some places such women could also receive sympathy and help from the village or manor.³³ We may also assume that the situation in Estonia did not radically differ from that in Finland, for example, where the treatment of unwed mothers and their children tended to depend on the mother’s socioeconomic status, personal traits, and the number of illegitimate children she had borne.³⁴ Social norms can also be inferred from demographic measures, as we will show.

Estonian folklore is rife with infanticide. There are ghost stories of murdered babies who were buried under a house as well as stories of how the devil had helped an unwed mother to conceal her pregnancy and relieved her delivery pains and was outraged when she changed her mind and did not murder the child eventually.³⁵ The newborn could also be saved from the devil and from death by accident, if the girl had prayed before the murder or had said “Thank Jesus” when the baby sneezed.³⁶ In one story, an infanticidal mother was released from jail with the help of the child’s father, an overseer.³⁷

The range of punishments for infanticide and concealing the death of an illegitimate newborn varied from whipping to imprisonment, hard labor, and relocation to Siberia.³⁸ If a woman secretly bore an illegitimate child that was later found dead, it was the court’s responsibility to prove her guilt, rather than the woman’s to prove her innocence. Mothers could claim that their unwanted babies were stillborn and the commission of infanticide (by strangulation, hitting, kicking, etc.) could

seldom be proved, as the evidence was often indirect: the woman had kept the pregnancy secret or the baby had been born covertly outside the dwelling or sauna (in a cowshed, barn, field, wood, garden, etc.). Keeping the birth secret was assisted by the fact that women only stopped working at the onset of labor, medical professionals were not involved in the delivery, and in warm seasons women could give birth outdoors or in a cowshed unwitnessed. Infanticide by neglect (“dropping” of the infant, etc.) often went undetected.³⁹ While the criminal court records are in German, the community court protocols are mostly in Estonian. The vocabulary used by village people can be revealing. In the spring of 1869 in Kodasoo, farmer Jüri Kruusberg dismissed farmhand Jüri Aulik before the end of his service contract, and the outraged servant accused the farmer’s wife of infanticide: before marriage, she had “laid her children in the mound” and now also “abandoned” a stillborn baby.⁴⁰ The community court dismissed his statement as defamation, but this case shows how easily women could be suspected of this crime.

Data and Methods

We began our analysis with the year 1834 because from that year until 1891, Lutheran parish registers include individuals’ surnames and socioeconomic status (SES). Illegitimate births were also greatly underreported until 1834. Vital events are derived from the Lutheran and Russian Orthodox parish registers.⁴¹ Data pertaining to in- and out-migration from the community are drawn from listings of migrants and parish members. The third source is the 1834 poll-tax list, which includes all taxpayers and provides us with data on the mothers’ age and civil status and SES. In 1834, there were 4,737 individuals living in seven communities in Helme and 2,537 on Holstre manor in the parish of Paistu. A total of 17,410 legitimate and 639 illegitimate children (including stillbirths) were born during the study period. We have linked the birth records from parish registers to records of migration and deaths from 1834 to 1891. In sum, the compiled data set covers all main life events, including migratory moves in and out of the Holstre and Helme communities between 1834 and 1891.

Of all the illegitimate births recorded, the fate of 625, or 98 percent, could be ascertained: they were stillborn, followed to at least the age of five, or to an intervening death or out-migration. Stillbirths were recorded in the baptismal and burial registers, but the number of stillbirths is somewhat larger in the baptismal than in the burial registers. The linkage of births to other vital events in order to establish the mother’s age, civil status, birthplace, and SES was aided by Lutheran parish member registers and listings of community members, which contain data on births, migratory moves, marriages, and deaths of all family members in the same place. The registers of Lutheran parish members were maintained during ten-, twenty-, or thirty-year periods, which makes it possible to follow families over time. Also Russian Orthodox communion lists could be used for linking children with mothers. Data on SES are derived from birth and death registers and poll-tax lists. In Holstre, the mother’s age at the time of the child’s birth as well as her SES could be identified in 87 percent of cases, and in Helme, in 92 percent.⁴² Data on mothers are missing for several Russian Orthodox parish members and in-migrants from other parishes and also for eight mothers who delivered stillborn babies as stillbirths were inconsistently recorded in parish member registers. Data on post-1891 events are mostly derived from parish member registers. These data are used to trace the fate of illegitimate children until the age of five (Table 1) and to follow their mothers until their marriage, migration, or death.

The analysis is not limited to survival chances but extends to other indicators such as the likelihood of marriage and migration in order to better understand the effects of illegitimate births throughout the life course. Until an individual formally stayed a member of a parish, his or her marriage was recorded in the marriage register of the home parish, regardless of where the event took place.

Table 1. Number of Events: Births and Deaths, 1834–1891.^a

	Helme		Holstre	
	1834–1869 N	1870–1891 N	1834–1869 N	1870–1891 N
All illegitimate births	228	246	58	107
Stillbirths	9	27	5	14
Infant deaths	62	56	18	17
Child deaths (1–5)	25	27	5	8
Unknown	6	9	1	1
Died before five (including stillborns)	96 (42.1 percent)	110 (44.7 percent)	28 (48.3 percent)	39 (36.4 percent)

Source: Own calculations.

^aAll children are followed up to age five (including deaths after 1891).

The pastor of Helme recorded the father’s name in half of the cases of illegitimate birth, and the pastor of Paistu did so in less than one-fifth. The limited number of cases in which the father is named makes it difficult to determine the role of the father’s SES on survival chances. Another complication is that linking father and child by means of the father’s first name and surname is problematic given the number of identical names. Single mothers seldom went on to marry the father of their illegitimate child eventually.

Lack of Control by the Community and Parents?

Many scholars have argued that migration was related to the increase in illegitimacy as it often led to separation from the family and local community. This would have resulted in the collapse of traditional social controls, making extramarital intercourse more likely.⁴³ Migratory workers were believed to indulge in casual sexual relationships, which frequently resulted in the birth of an illegitimate child. Recently, the “vulnerable” immigrant hypothesis has been empirically tested using data from two towns, Leuven and Geneva, and in neither case were immigrants more likely than local women to become unwed mothers.⁴⁴

Laws and decrees checking migration to other peasant communities restricted freedom of movement in Estonia until the mid-1860s. In order to work outside the community, one had to apply for a certificate from the community authorities. It could be obtained only when a person did not have any outstanding tax debts and the taxes had been paid a year in advance or security had been provided that they would be paid.⁴⁵

By comparing the birthplace of the mother and the child, we can detect the lack of community social control. This comparison reveals that in the large community of Holstre (2,537 inhabitants in 1834), the proportion of immigrant unwed mothers more than tripled from 5 percent in the period 1834 to 1869 to 16 percent in the period 1870 to 1891, whereas the corresponding figures for Helme parish were 33 percent and 47 percent, respectively. In the parish of Helme, immigrant unmarried mothers were mostly from other communities within the same parish, with only 12.7 percent having come from more distant places. Local patterns of illegitimacy seem to have converged as the communities with very low illegitimacy ratios in 1834–1869 became more similar to those with higher ratios in 1870 to 1891: the ratio in Holstre rose from 1.9 to 6.9 percent, in Jõgeveste from 1.8 to 4.2 percent, and in Riidaja from 1.2 to 4.7 percent. The share of immigrant unwed mothers increased considerably only in Holstre, while in Jõgeveste and Riidaja in Helme parish their already sizable proportion increased very slightly. These three communities were characterized by low turnover

Table 2. Mean Age of Mothers by Type of Birth, 1834–1891.

	N	Mean Age at Birth	Standard Deviation
Holstre			
All illegitimate births	149	26.9	5.83
First illegitimate birth (single mother)	114	25.7	5.38
Age unknown	16	—	—
Helme			
All illegitimate births	443	27.7	6.13
First illegitimate birth (single mother)	296	25.5	5.09
Age unknown	31	—	—

Source: Parish registers and parish member registers (RA, EAA, f. 1286, 1288, 1290, 1296), and poll-tax lists (RA, EAA, f. 1865).

among the tenants, less frequent moves of the married servants from farm to farm,⁴⁶ and a relatively high percentage of native-born among the members of the community. Very low rates of illegitimacy in the period 1834–1869 lend support to the social control hypothesis. In Holstre, migrants who had illegitimate children had usually arrived without their parents and therefore had cast off also the surveillance of parents.

Close parental supervision and strong control are indicated by the fact that the mothers were relatively old at the time they bore their first illegitimate children (Table 2). The average age of those bearing their first illegitimate child (whose age could be established) was 25.5–25.7 years. In the period 1870 to 1891, however, it was 24.1 years. Livonian peasant laws allowed girls to marry at age sixteen with their parents' or guardians' approval and at age twenty-one without their approval.⁴⁷ In Holstre and Helme, 12.6–13.5 percent of single mothers bore their first known child before reaching the age of twenty-one, and only 6–7 percent of unmarried mothers were under twenty years old.

We use the term “first known birth” because the mothers could have given birth before they began to be observed (if they were migrants from outside the study area) or because the earlier stillbirths were not recorded in the birth register. Both factors may affect the mean age in Helme, as in Holstre the proportion of migrants among unwed mothers was low and the recording of stillbirths was more complete. Higher-parity out-of-wedlock births and numerous widows and conscripts' wives (or widows) among mothers account for the difference in the mean age at birth and the mean age at first birth. In Helme, 12.4 percent of illegitimate children were born to widows, whereas in Holstre their share was a mere 5 percent. Peasants aged between twenty and thirty-five were eligible for conscription. Conscripts had to serve for twenty-five years and rarely returned to the village. In Helme, the mean age of widows and conscripts' (“divorced”) wives when their illegitimate children were born was thirty-four years.

In several European settings, the mothers of illegitimate children tended to be (much) younger than those of legitimate children,⁴⁸ but this was not an overall pattern. In England, for example, unmarried women gave birth to their first child at a similar age to that at which married women were having their first child.⁴⁹ This similarity in ages, as well as the relatively low share of premarital pregnancies (see above) in our study area, suggests that young women either curbed sexual activity until marriage or became sexually active with the expectation of marriage. The mean age at first marriage for women rose from 23.5 to 25.8. An increasing age at marriage may have contributed to the rise in illegitimacy, but its impact was modest.

The percentage of illegitimate children born to farmers' daughters or sisters was 5 percent in Helme and 15 percent in Holstre. The percentage of illegitimate children born to daughters or sisters of skilled workers was about 2 percent. The others came from landless groups. This overrepresentation suggests

Table 3. Death Rates (Percent) of Legitimate and Illegitimate Children, 1834–1891.

	Helme		Holstre	
	1834–1869	1870–1891	1834–1869	1870–1891
Legitimate				
Stillbirths	2.2 ^a	2.9	4.4.	3.0
Infant deaths	25.8	20.2	17.5	15.9
Child deaths (1–5)	4.0	3.1	3.6	2.4
Illegitimate				
Stillbirths	7.9 ^b	10.9	8.6	13.1
Infant deaths	27.7	23.8	33.9	18.3
Child deaths (1–5)	5.1	4.5	4.3 ^c	3.2

Source: Own calculations.

^aRecorded inconsistently.

^b1859–1869, percentage of total 114 illegitimate births (see the text).

^c1839–1869.

that girls from lower social groups—the landless and cottagers—were considerably more prone to give birth outside of wedlock. Our results accord with findings from other settings that the control of sexual activity outside of marital unions was more important to farmers than to rural workers⁵⁰ and that working-class parents were less successful in bringing their daughters’ partners to marriage when the daughters became pregnant.

High Stillbirth Ratio and Infanticide

The high stillbirth ratio indicates that illegitimate infants were much less likely to survive the birth than children born to married mothers. In our study area, the rate of stillbirths for illegitimates was high during the entire period (see Table 3). In Helme, where their registration started only in 1859, this rate increased from 7.9 percent between 1859 and 1869 to 10.9 percent between 1870 and 1891. From 1870 to 1891, the rate of stillbirths among illegitimate children was in Helme 3.7 times higher, and in Holstre 4.2 times higher, than among legitimate children (see Table 3). For example, in the parishes of Võnnu, Kodavere, and Rāpina, the difference was considerably smaller from 1834 to 1881: 40 percent (3.3 percent vs. 4.5 percent).⁵¹ These figures may be underestimates as the rates among illegitimate children may be biased downward. Oehrns has noted that the true number of stillbirths of illegitimate children must have been higher than recorded, since many such births were kept secret.⁵² Interestingly, the pastor of Helme did not even include stillborn illegitimate babies in the parish registers from 1834 to 1858. During the period under study, the Pärnu Land Court tried at least fifteen cases of infanticide in Helme and Holstre, but in only eight cases is the “stillbirth” accordingly recorded in the parish register. The under-registration of stillbirths also becomes evident by comparing the parish registers with community court protocols that occasionally mention “losing a child.”⁵³

The high stillbirth ratio among illegitimate children might refer to the fact that in the 1800s, several illegitimate children became victims of infanticide in Helme and Holstre. Infanticide is a crime in which a mother kills or causes the death of her infant within 24 hours of an unassisted delivery, usually immediately after the birth.⁵⁴ The view that there was a sizable incidence of infanticide in Helme and Holstre is supported by the fact that, for example, in Tartu County, the rate of stillbirths among illegitimate versus legitimate children differed far less, and in some decades, the figures were

almost similar.⁵⁵ In Northern Estonia, the overall rate of stillbirths fluctuated between 3.3 and 4.3 percent from 1834 to 1858.⁵⁶

The fifteen infanticide cases tried at the Pärnu Land Court in 1834–1889 (eight in Helme and seven in Holstre) present different stories but nevertheless have much in common.⁵⁷ According to the testimonies, there were eyewitnesses to the crime only in one case, and in few instances, the other household members denied even knowing about the pregnancy. In 1841, thirty-three-year-old Liis Oinas, a conscript's widow, stated that she did not know she was pregnant but thought she was suffering from dropsy. The court did not believe her. Suspects claimed that the child's father was either an unknown man (a rapist, student, or soldier) or a known man (a head of the farm or a young man who did not keep his promise to marry). Births occurred in the open air or in a cowshed, barn, or dwelling house, but even when it happened indoors, other people were not present. The suspects had to explain why they had delivered a baby without assistance and in such a place. It happened accidentally and unexpectedly because "no one was around," she had felt "ashamed," or had not reached farther, and so on. Except in one case, the suspects denied committing infanticide. In the suspects' words, they had feared "shame" and "disgrace" for giving birth to an illegitimate child. In the penal code, "fear" and "shame" constituted mitigation, allowing the court to reduce the penalty.⁵⁸ In their study on infanticide in early modern England, Sharpe and Dickinson have demonstrated the crucial role of support networks of friends and family and concluded that mothers caught and prosecuted were disproportionately drawn from the group unable to marshal such support.⁵⁹ In our setting, the fate of the infanticidal women also seems to have depended on their intra-community relationships, and village people rarely testified against them. In Finland, people were also reluctant to testify to what they knew about such crimes.⁶⁰ As in early modern England, communities in rural Estonia dealt sympathetically with many suspected murderers. Their life histories reveal that three or four of them married later; another five had one, two, or four illegitimate live births; two migrated out; one raised his older son; and in two or three cases, their fate remains unclear (they could leave the parish, etc.). In 1885, Kadri Allast was punished for infanticide with a sentence of six years in a labor camp and exile to Siberia. Her first daughter Mari, born in 1881, was raised up by others. Mari did not marry but became a single mother as well.

Kadri Allast was the only one to receive a harsh penalty. In the other cases, only the "suspicions" remained, and for keeping the birth secret and concealing the baby's body, the women were punished with twenty, thirty, or forty lashes or two, four, or eight months' imprisonment. Even in the case of Epp Vannaus in 1855, in which she confessed to murder, the court of appeal of Livland did not convict her, while the testimonies of the witnesses and the suspect diverged, the testimonies and "objective circumstances" did not match on some points, and the autopsy did not prove that the baby had definitely died a violent death.⁶¹ She had given birth on the wedding day of the child's father, her master's son. The court prosecuted Vannaus for keeping the pregnancy secret and hiding the baby's dead body. Compassion for a desperate mother could transcend social boundaries. In early October 1862, a newborn baby was discovered partially buried in the garden of Helme manor, still alive, with its face left uncovered. Mrs. Schwartz, the wife of the manor's leaseholder, rescued the baby and asked the baby's mother, Maret Suuder, to breastfeed her.⁶² After Maret Suuder was convicted for her misdeed, Mrs. Schwartz asked the Pärnu Land Court to postpone her imprisonment for as long as the child was breastfed. The court of appeal of Livland allowed this. The baby, named Ann, was the daughter of a farm head's son; she grew up and married at the age of nineteen and had many children. Maret Suuder, Ann's mother, served an eight-month jail sentence and lived another thirty years thereafter. The court records do not reveal whether the court contemplated the social forces shaping such desperate acts. However, the lenient treatment of women suspected of this crime could be interpreted to mean that the judges saw the women as acting under the pressures of poverty and social stigma. This understanding had become dominant in German-speaking countries in the

era of the Enlightenment. The court could excuse itself by not having a reliable way of ascertaining the exact cause or time of death.

The abnormally high stillbirth rates in Helme and Holstre, plus the lenient treatment of unwed mothers suspected of infanticide, lend support to the assumption that women frequently resorted to infanticide to escape mockery, destitution, and other consequences of a life as a single mother. What accounts for the particularly high rates in Helme and Holstre can partly be guessed from the context. In Western and Northern European settings, researchers have focused on two major reasons for infanticide—stigmatization and (extreme) poverty. Helme and especially Holstre were among the most economically advanced rural areas in Estonia. Holstre was also one of the centers of the Estonian national awakening in its early phase in the 1860s. Unwed mothers were disproportionately from lower social groups, but this did not necessarily mean that they were barely able to support themselves, less the child. The act of killing the child shortly after the birth could then be interpreted as an effort to avoid either the shame attached to single motherhood or the economic burden or both. Swedish researcher Brändström suggests that if the marginalization of unmarried mothers were common, few would be expected to go on to marry.⁶³ In our sources, the mothers of stillborn illegitimate children are often difficult to link to births, and therefore, we were unable to establish the exact number of those who went on to marry. Even if we cannot provide percentages, we can ascertain that many of them managed to find a husband.

Infant and Early Childhood Mortality

In Holstre, the IMR of illegitimate children was nearly two times higher than for children born to married mothers from 1834 to 1869, but this differential became fairly negligible (15 percent) from 1870 to 1891 (see Table 3). By contrast, in Helme, the differential in mortality rates for children born in wedlock versus those born out of wedlock increased in the second period but nevertheless remained less pronounced (18 percent) than was common, for example, in Sweden or Denmark at the same time.⁶⁴

The absence of a consistent heightened mortality risk for illegitimate infants in rural Estonia raises the question of the existence of the social stigma. The similarity of infant mortality rates between children born in and out of wedlock points to a lack of stigma. Alternatively, we may argue that the significant differential in the rate of stillbirths refers to a selective effect—unwed mothers had already “got rid of” unwanted children. We assume that in order to understand the social stigma arising from illegitimacy, it is appropriate to consider several indicators, like the rate of stillbirths, the early childhood mortality rate, the mother’s age at birth, her socioeconomic origin, and her chances in the marriage market.

Studies of infant mortality in both historical and modern populations have shown that one of the most important factors affecting the levels of infant mortality is the manner in which babies were fed. Excess deaths among illegitimate infants have often been associated with shorter breastfeeding periods and artificial feeding of the children. Nineteenth-century Estonian villages had a strongly entrenched practice of breastfeeding, but cow’s milk was often given to children for at least some meals because of the mother’s heavy workload.⁶⁵ Although mothers normally returned to work a few days after giving birth, they continued to breastfeed their children for a long time, though irregularly, depending on their work schedule. Socioeconomic differentials in infant mortality risks were negligible, which might be explained by the fact that mothers, both farmers’ wives and servants, were engaged in extensive farm work, and the servants did not necessarily wean their children earlier. The same might apply to married and unwed mothers in the village—both groups were equally overloaded with farm work.

Community court protocols do not reveal any instances in which masters dismissed unwed mothers with babies. If the woman continued working as usual, court cases did not emerge from

it. If the unwed mother herself left the service, the court dealt with the question of leaving before the contract's end and the unpaid part of the salary. According to the peasant laws, if a servant with an annual service contract left before its end, he or she lost the deposit payment and part of the salary, except in cases of serious illness and the like.⁶⁶ The protocols reveal that if the mother was an "immoral" woman with several lovers, she did not receive the unpaid part of the remuneration; if complaints about her behavior were not put forward, the court ordered the master to pay her for the days she had worked.⁶⁷ According to the law, female servants' "improper" life could also easily have served as an excuse for dismissal.⁶⁸ It has been argued in other settings that, due to the demand for a permanent labor force, farming households accepted illegitimate births among the unmarried servants and took in servant mothers and bastard children.⁶⁹ A similar argument can be made concerning rural Estonia. Living and work arrangements enabled mothers to remain at work, but landless mothers had less opportunity to rely on grandparents to support the child as they often lived separately.

Differences in mortality levels for legitimate versus illegitimate children between ages one and five can be observed in our study area (see Table 3). In both periods, the mortality rate of illegitimate children was somewhat higher than that of legitimate children and the difference between rates increased. Our findings seem not to support, for example, what has been found for The Hague and what has been implied for England and Wales.⁷⁰ The multivariate analysis of mortality risks for legitimate versus illegitimate children aged one–five in the city of The Hague showed that a statistically significant effect of the legal status of the child could not be found.⁷¹ Among the illegitimate children, the SES of the mother had a strong influence on the death risks of children.

The reasons for vulnerability in Estonia could be both the stigmatization and poverty. As will be shown below, the percentage of illegitimate children who were legitimated or became part of a two-parent family in their early childhood was very low in our study area. International research has shown that in terms of survival prospects, children who had a (step)father were certainly better off than children who lived alone with their mother. In Helme and Holstre, the lack of a male parent resulted, to a large extent, from the disadvantageous position of single mothers in the marriage market. The bulk of illegitimate children also lacked brothers or sisters to take care of them. The mother's heavy workload did not facilitate caring for a child, and unwed mothers, along with their children, lacked emotional and financial support. Until working age (10 years old at the latest), children were seen as an economic burden rather than an asset.

Marriage Prospects of Single Mothers

As mentioned above, the legitimation of the child by his biological father or a stepfather improved his or her survival chances in many settings. Therefore, we will now examine whether and when single mothers managed to find a husband and who these were.

In Holstre and Helme, 40–44 percent of single mothers went on to marry and the fate of 13–16 percent remains unknown. In Holstre, 7 percent moved out, and in Helme, 17 percent did not stay in any of the studied seven communities. Marriage chances improved considerably over time. In Holstre, 30 percent of the single mothers who had started their reproductive career from 1834 to 1869 married. The chances were at least twice as large for those single mothers who started their reproductive career in the period 1870–1891. In nineteenth-century Kent, at least a half and in agrarian Sundsvall, over 80 percent of women who bore illegitimate children went on to marry.⁷² This suggests that illegitimacy was more stigmatized in Helme and Holstre, especially in the period 1834–1869. On the other hand, the situation in rural Estonia clearly differed from that on Skye in Scotland, where only 7 percent of the mothers of the illegitimate infants went on to marry on the island (others, of course, may have married elsewhere).⁷³ In rural Estonia, marriage to the child's father was highly unlikely or, in case of Holstre, even exceptional. Our data set includes an instance in which a man

fathered three illegitimate children with different women in three different communities and eventually married another girl, and an instance in which a man fathered three illegitimate children with the same woman and then married another local woman.⁷⁴

Women who repeatedly gave birth to illegitimate children were in a less favorable situation. At least three-fourths did not marry if they had two or more illegitimate children in their lifetime. For the vast majority of the single mothers in Helme (80 percent) and Holstre (85 percent), their first birth out of wedlock remained their only such birth. But others were already multiparous. Our data set, however, does not always cover the complete reproductive life histories of these women as they might also have given birth in communities outside the study area or after the end of the observation period. In our data set, the maximum number of children any unwed woman had was five. In Holstre, Liis Mägi is an example. Her first child died at six weeks of age, but the next four survived the first five years, and at least three of them married. In Helme, Riin Kirjat bore five illegitimate children: one died as an infant, two others died between the ages of one and five, one left the parish at the age of eighteen, and one daughter married at the age of nineteen after bearing an illegitimate son at the age of eighteen. Our observation period is too short to study the intergenerational transmission of nonmarital childbearing. In Helme, it occurred in nine instances.

The time span between the birth of a child and the marriage of the mother could be rather long. In Holstre, 20 percent of unwed mothers found a marriage partner within two years after having their first child; for 27 percent, it took two–five years; and in more than half of the cases, it took over five years. The corresponding figures for Helme were 25 percent, 34 percent, and 41 percent, respectively. The mean age difference between spouses was seven years in Holstre and 11 years in Helme. The proportion of marriages in which the husband was at least 10 years older than his wife was 15 percent in Holstre and 36 percent in Helme. In Holstre, marriages in which the wife was at all older than the husband made up a quarter of the total. In Holstre, one-fifth of single mothers married a widower, and half of them married a man from another community. In Helme, 30 percent married a widower, and 11 percent married a retired conscript. In Holstre, farmer's daughters had an advantage as nearly 60 percent of them went on to marry, and two-thirds married a groom from a farming background. Generally, staying single has been interpreted as a sign of marginalization, but this interpretation may not hold in each sociocultural context (e.g., islands). It might, instead, show that being single was acceptable by the community and a woman was capable of raising her children alone.

In Holstre, the low chances of survival for the illegitimate children combined with the low marriage chances for their mothers, as well as the lengthy time span between the birth of the child and the marriage, meant that only twenty-five illegitimate children saw the marriage of their mother. Of these twenty-five, only eight were under five years at that time, which makes it impossible to study the effect of a mother's marriage on her child's chances of survival. Three unwed mothers left Holstre when their child was alive, and they could marry elsewhere. In nine cases, the mothers were non-local-borns and whether they married elsewhere is unknown. In the parish of Helme, the proportion of children who saw the marriage of their mother was similar to that in Holstre. Therefore, the vast majority of illegitimate children remained without paternal care before the age five.

Illegitimacy does not seem to have prompted considerable out-migration. In Holstre, the percentage of out-migrants was negligible. There is serious underreporting of temporary migration in our sources, but we can nevertheless assert that unwed mothers in Holstre tended to stay in their native community and rely on kin or neighbors or other household members for childcare, housekeeping, and care during illness rather than leaving the community long term to avoid the exclusion, rejection, or shame that the illegitimacy had created. However, high mortality rates suggest that wider family links were not as important a determinant of children's survival among illegitimate children as might be supposed from international research. In the parish of Helme, where the communities were

smaller and residential mobility more common, it would be difficult to associate the single mothers' movements from one community to another with illegitimacy.

Child Support Claims at the Community Court

Unwed mothers were able to claim maintenance from the presumed father of the child if the father acknowledged having intercourse with the child's mother or if such intercourse could be proven and the father could not prove that the woman had been intimate with other men too.⁷⁵ In one such case in Holstre, a male witness testified that seven or eight boys had visited twenty-six-year-old Mari Otto in a barn.⁷⁶ There is folklore evidence that boys helped each other with such kind of testimonies in order to escape paying upkeep.⁷⁷ The sum of the child support could also be divided between two putative fathers.⁷⁸ The father was obliged to pay for the child's upkeep (for food and clothes) until the child turned ten years and started to provide for him- or herself.⁷⁹ If an engagement was called off before the wedding, the woman was also entitled to upkeep as a divorced woman. Community court protocols reveal that girls sometimes tried to seize boys' clothes as "proof" of intimacy. In most cases, however, other household members or friends were brought to court to testify.

The community court protocols of Holstre have been preserved almost entirely. Between 1873 and 1891, eighty-four babies were born live to unwed mothers in Holstre. Nine of them died within three months. During these years, the court resolved seventeen child maintenance claims filed by locals. Hence, roughly, one-fifth of mothers filed a maintenance claim. In two instances, the father acknowledged paternity, and in five, the court relied on testimonies to compel the father to contribute to the support of his child. In all, less than half of the claims were successful, since the mother was not able to find (a sufficient number of) witnesses.⁸⁰ The rather small number of claimants may be explained by different motivations. It might be that most fathers supported their children voluntarily (e.g., gave the mother a cow). The small number can also be explained by being too proud to ask help at court. However, it is more likely that women were discouraged by the fact that only one of the eight presumed fathers who were put on trial acknowledged paternity. Moreover, the community court of Holstre also settled claims by putative fathers demanding compensation from women for defaming them for claiming they were the child's father. These claims all failed, but in one case, a pregnant woman was sentenced to twenty-four hours in jail for spreading unfounded rumors.⁸¹ The small number of child support claims also cannot be explained by subsequent marriages as only one of the seventeen claimants went on to marry within the next three years. In this case, the husband (who was not the child's biological father) waived the claim. Even if single mothers expected to marry, only 10 percent of them in those years actually found a husband within three years after the child's birth. There is little basis for assuming that women did not press child support claims because the amount in question was small.⁸² Frequent disputes over remuneration and compensation show that village residents otherwise eagerly claimed the payment of insignificant sums or items. At that time, child support was between eight and ten rubles per year in Holstre. For this sum, one could buy, for example, a *chetvert* (= 147 kilograms) of rye or ten bushels of potatoes or two–three pigs, depending on their size. If a father did not comply with the court's decision, the community court obliged him to go into service on a farm.⁸³ The amount of child support varied from place to place and over time. In the 1850s and 1860s, in some less-developed regions, it was only four–six rubles per year or a certain amount of grain.⁸⁴

Conclusions

There were different pathways that led women to have a baby outside of marriage. There was a broad spectrum of ages, with the youngest being eighteen and the oldest being forty-four years old. Illegitimate births largely stemmed from thwarted courtships or failed attempts to attract a husband,

although singles over thirty or forty, as well as widows, apparently did not anticipate a marriage.⁸⁵ Some were prostitutes.⁸⁶ A woman could have a series of out-of-wedlock births from the same man or different men. Court records reveal that some illegitimate children were also born from exploitative master–servant relationships, but this was not typical.

The mean age at first birth was similar in and out of marriage, which indicates effective social control rather than to female “sexual autonomy” before marriage. The bulk of single women were sexually active at about the age at which they married rather than the age at which they reached sexual maturity as was the case, for example, in rural England.⁸⁷ In the close-knit community of Holstre, most mothers of illegitimate children were locals, and in the parish of Helme, they were mostly locals or from neighboring communities. The case of Holstre suggests that they were also not prone to migrate out of their native community, at least not for a long time. Illegitimacy was strongly socially biased. In our study area, an illegitimate birth also tended to be an event strongly shaping the marriage chances of the mother as well as the survival chances of the child, rather than an isolated phenomenon early in the life cycle, as in rural Sweden.⁸⁸ Less than half of unwed mothers in Helme and Holstre eventually did marry, and marriage with the child’s father was highly unlikely. Roughly half stayed unmarried, but most of the others did not marry much older men. In Helme parish, however, one-third had to accept a widower. However, the fact that the proportion of unwed mothers in Holstre who eventually found a husband doubled suggests that the marginalization of such women declined considerably over the given period. In a farming setting, young women did not risk losing either their job or their home by giving birth outside of marriage. However, they often had to rely on themselves or their parents rather than on the fathers of the children, who generally were not eager to support their illegitimate offspring.

Our study reveals that the differential of stillbirths among babies born in wedlock versus those born out of wedlock amounted to three or four times. One possible explanation might be that the mothers resorted to infanticide to escape shame or economic burden. The court treatment of such women was rather formal and lenient. Differences in infant mortality between legitimate and illegitimate children were pronounced in Holstre from 1834 to 1869 but fairly negligible from 1870 to 1891 and rather moderate in the parish of Helme. In both periods, the early childhood mortality rate of illegitimate children was somewhat larger than that of legitimate children.

The decline in mortality rates, as well as the rising proportion of single mothers who eventually married, reflects the improving situation for single mothers at a time of socioeconomic modernization. The life stories of lone mothers and illegitimate children in Holstre and the parish of Helme suggest that bearing children outside marriage in rural Estonia was a form of deviancy until at least the 1870s but from that time onward was increasingly seen as part of normal sexual culture. In this regard, it was not until the late nineteenth century that the Estonian experience became more similar to that in, for example, rural Germany or the English county of Kent.⁸⁹

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36. E 16340–16341; E 16705; E 23683–23685; E 5314, pp. 14–15; ERA II 40, pp. 320–21; ERA II 63, pp. 441; ERA II 166, p. 113.
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38. *Ulozhenie o nakazaniikh ugolovnykh i ispravitel’nykh* (St. Petersburg: Tip. 2 otd-niia sobstv. e.i.v. kance-lijarii, 1845), §§ 1922–1933; *Ulozhenie o nakazaniikh ugolovnykh i ispravitel’nykh 1866 goda. S dopole-niiami po 1-e dekabrya 1879g.* (St. Petersburg, 1866), §§ 1449–1460.

39. National Archives of Estonia (hereinafter RA, EAA), RA, EAA, f. 1089, n. 1, s. 1, p. 6, 7.02.1874 (hereinafter 1089/1/1).
40. RA, EAA 2648/1/23, fos. 35v–36v, 17.03.1869.
41. The great majority of Estonian country folk in this region were Lutherans, but in two communities of Helme, there was a considerable number of Russian Orthodox people, too. Families were mixed, children of one and the same family could be baptized in different churches.
42. The date is known for 92 percent of the cases in Holstre and 80 percent of the cases in Helme. In other cases, we know the year of mother's birth.
43. van Bavel, "Family Control," 450.
44. Ibid., 471–4; Reto Schumacher, Grazyna Ryczkowska, and Olivier Perroux, "Unwed Mothers in the City: Illegitimate Fertility in 19th Century Geneva," *The History of the Family* 12, no. 3 (2007): 200–201. In Lyon, by contrast, 79 percent of unwed mothers were migrants: Guy Brunet and Jean-Luc Pinol, "Vulnerable and Unsteady: Life Histories and Changes of Residence of Unwed Mothers in Lyon at the End of the Nineteenth Century," *Continuity and Change* 25, no. 2 (2010): 263–84.
45. Livländische Bauer-Verordnung am 13. November 1860 Allerhöchst bestätigt (1861), §§ 355, 358.
46. The sources allow to follow the changes of residence according to demographic events, that is, births and deaths of family members.
47. Livländische Bauer-Verordnung (1860), §§ 939, 941. In 1819, it was less precisely defined: "everyone who had reached the age of majority" could marry (§§ 352, 353).
48. Kok, Poppel, and Kruse, "Mortality Among Illegitimate Children," 198; van Bavel, "Family Control," 454; Peter Teibenbacher, "Fertility Decline, Illegitimacy, and Denomination. The Demographic Story of the Wald Parish between 1880 and 1938," in *Many Paths to Happiness. Studies in Population and Family History: a Festschrift for Antoinette Fauve-Chamoux*, eds. M.-P. Arrizabalaga, et al. (Amsterdam, the Netherlands: Askant, 2010), 246.
49. Reay, *Microhistories*, 182; Samantha Williams, *Unmarried Motherhood in the Metropolis, 1700–1850: Pregnancy, the Poor Law and Provision* (London: Palgrave, 2018), 7–8.
50. Knodel, *Demographic Behavior*, 222; Teibenbacher, "Fertility Decline," 249.
51. Oehr, *Biostatik dreier Landkirchspiele Livlands*, 28.
52. Ibid., 29.
53. RA, EAA 3671/1/21, p. 69, 26.04.1885; p. 159, 14.06.1885.
54. Mona Rautelin, "Female Serial Killers in the Early Modern Age? Recurrent Infanticide in Finland 1750–1896," *The History of the Family* 18, no. 3 (2013): 350.
55. Laarmaa, *Rahvastiku Loomulik*, 114–5.
56. Sulev Vahtr, *Eestimaa talurahvas hingeloenduste andmeil (1782–1858)* (Tallinn: Eesti Raamat, 1973), 185.
57. RA, EAA 915/1/3046, 3365, 3497, 3498, 3737, 3829, 4680, 4808, 5046, 6368, 6826, 7109, 7180, 7218, 8083.
58. *Ulozhenie o nakazaniakh ugovnykh* (1845), §1922, (1866) § 1449.
59. Jim Sharpe and J. R. Dickinson, "Infanticide in Early Modern England. The Court of Great Sessions at Chester, 1650–1800," in *Infanticide: Historical Perspectives on Child Murder and Concealment, 1550–2000*, ed. Mark Jackson (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2002), 35–51.
60. Rautelin, "Female Serial Killers," 357, 364.
61. RA, EAA 915/1/3497.
62. RA, EAA 915/1/3829.
63. Brändström, "Illegitimacy and Lone-Parenthood," 103; Reid et al., "Vulnerability," 93.
64. Edvinsson, Gardarsdottir, and Thorvaldsen, "Infant Mortality," 474.
65. Herbert Ligi, "Imikute ja laste suremuse geograafia Eestis 18.–19. sajandil," *Kleio. Ajaloo Ajakiri* no. 8 (1993): 7; Pärdis, *Eesti argielu*, 55–58.
66. Livländische Bauer-Verordnung, §§ 383, 385.

67. RA, EAA 3671/1/19, fos. 92–92v, 2.07.1882; RA, EAA 3671/1/22, fol. 27, 11.05.1884; RA, EAA 3671/1/23, fol. 171v, 24.10.1886; RA, EAA 3671/1/25, fos. 105v–106, 14.07.1889.
68. Livländische Bauer-Verordnung, § 358.
69. Teibenbacher, “Fertility Decline,” 246.
70. Hannaliis Jaadla and Alice Reid, “The Geography of Early Childhood Mortality in England and Wales, 1881–1911,” *Demographic Research* 37 (2017): 1871.
71. Kok, Poppel, and Kruse, “Mortality Among Illegitimate Children,” 193–211.
72. Brändström, “Illegitimacy and Lone-Parenthood,” 103; Reay, *Microhistories*, 189.
73. Reid et al., “Vulnerability,” 93.
74. Both were non-natives.
75. Liefländische Bauer-Verordnung (1820), § 365; Livländische Bauer-Verordnung, § 948.
76. RA, EAA 3671/1/11, fol. 56v, 31.08.1873.
77. ERA II 271, p. 26.
78. RA, EAA 1099/1/1, fol. 11v, 27.11.1865; RA, EAA 3556/1/5, fos. 73v–74, 28.11.1869.
79. Livländische Bauer-Verordnung, § 948.
80. RA, EAA 3671/1/11, fol. 56v; RA, EAA 3671/1/12, fos. 95–95v; RA, EAA 3671/1/13, fol. 17, 17.12.1876; fol. 20v; RA EAA 3671/1/19, fol. 7, 5.03.1882; fol. 15, 19.03.1882; f. 63, 27.05.1882; RA EAA 3671/1/21, fos. 231–233, 2.08.1885, 31.08.1885; RA EAA 3671/1/25, fos. 61v, 96v, 10.02.1889, 19.05.1889; fos. 184v–185 9.03.1890.
81. RA EAA 3671/1/13, fol. 20v, 7.01.1877.
82. It would be interesting to know whether the children who received alimony had better survival chances. In our data set, the number of recipients is by far too small to draw conclusions, but interestingly, they survived up to the age five. In one case, however, mother was a migrant and there is information neither on the mother nor the child in the church records (the claim is recorded in the community court protocol).
83. RA, EAA 3671/1/13, fos. 247v–248, 11.08.1878.
84. RA EAA 3400/1/1, fol. 1, 24.09.1856; RA EAA 3266/1/1, fol. 6, 08.05.1864; RA EAA 2801/1/3, fol. 2v, 06.02.1859; RA EAA 2563/1/15, fos. 1v–2, 12.01.1868.
85. In Holstre, one-fifth of singles who had the first illegitimate birth were over thirty-one years old; in Helme, their share was ca. one-sixth.
86. Cases where women had taken remuneration or gifts for sex. See examples from other communities, RA, EAA 3556/1/5, fos. 60v–61, 14.01.1869; EAA 3448/1/13, fol. 182, 11.01.1885.
87. Reay, *Microhistories*, 181–2.
88. Brändström, “Illegitimacy and Lone-Parenthood,” 111.
89. Reay, *Microhistories*, 180–82; Knodel, *Demographic Behavior*, 219.

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Kersti Lust has written extensively on the economic and social history of Estonia from the late 18th century to the early 20th century. Her research interests stretch from early modern wrecking to price controls during WW I.