

UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL

**A COMPARISON OF THE ECONOMIC STATUS OF MOTHERS BY MARITAL
STATUS: AN ANALYSIS OF SOUTH AFRICAN SURVEY DATA**

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I Michelle Hatch declare that

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Abstract

In the post-apartheid period, little research has focused on the economic welfare of South African mothers. In particular there are few studies that compare the economic status of mothers by marital status. Many children in South Africa live in households without fathers (Posel and Devey 2006), which indicates that there is a high incidence of single motherhood in South Africa. Previous research has shown that South African women are more likely to be poor than their male counterparts and female-headed households, on average, are poorer than male-headed households (Posel and Rogan 2009a; Armstrong *et al.* 2008; Hoogeveen and Özler 2006; Budlender 2005; Rose and Charlton 2002; Woolard and Leibbrandt 1999). These results suggest that single mothers and their children would be more likely to be worse off than families that include men.

Historically, insufficient data on motherhood made it difficult to identify a national sample of mothers; however recent household surveys have made it easier to do so. Using the General Household Survey (GHS) 2006 I am able to identify all women aged from 19 to 65 who are co-resident with at least one of their children aged 18 or younger. A disadvantage of this sample is that it excludes *not* co-resident mothers who have left their household of origin – often in pursuit of better work opportunities. Consequently the sample underestimates the extent of motherhood as well as the labour force participation rate of African single mothers in particular.

Despite this limitation, I am able to gain useful insights into the economic welfare of South African mothers. By undertaking a descriptive and poverty analysis I show that on average, African and White single co-resident mothers have an inferior economic status compared to African and White married co-resident mothers respectively. I also show that disparities in income exist between the two races with White mothers, on average, having greater access to resources compared to African mothers.

A benefit of the GHS 2006 is that it includes individual information on the receipt of social grant income. Thus I am able to quantify the impact of public transfers, as well as

other categories of income, on poverty alleviation. I show that African single co-resident mothers, in particular, are highly dependent on grants. The study also explores the Child Support Grant (CSG) specifically and notes that the grant is limited in coverage and value. Furthermore, I highlight that the only other formal method for single mothers to obtain financial assistance, is via the private maintenance system, which is fraught with inefficiencies and often the costs of engaging with the system far outweigh the benefits. This dissertation therefore highlights the plight of South African single co-resident mothers and concludes by suggesting methods for improving their economic status.

Contents

	Page
<i>List of Tables and Figures</i>	ix
<i>List of Acronyms</i>	xi
Chapter 1. Introduction	1
Chapter 2. Literature review	5
2.1 Introduction	5
2.2 Theory of labour supply and income determination	6
2.3 Gender differences in income poverty levels in South Africa	9
2.3.1 Poverty levels of single mothers in South Africa	13
2.4 Mechanisms in developed countries to increase single mothers' access to resources	14
2.5 Mechanisms in South Africa to increase single mothers' access to resources	25
2.6 Conclusion	33
Appendix 2A: Section 15 of the Maintenance Act 99 of 1998	37
Appendix 2B: Section 31 of the Maintenance Act 99 of 1998	38
Chapter 3. Data, definitions and descriptive statistics of mothers	39
3.1 Introduction	39
3.2 Data and definitions	40
3.2.1 The sample of mothers	42
3.3 Comparing the characteristics of single and married co-resident mothers	49
3.3.1 Individual characteristics of co-resident mothers by marital status	49
3.3.2 Household characteristics of co-resident mothers by marital status	53
3.4 Conclusion	64

	Page
Chapter 4. Comparing the socio-economic status of mothers by marital status	67
4.1 Introduction.....	67
4.2 Poverty estimates for single and married co-resident mothers.....	68
4.3 Decomposing poverty among single and married co-resident mothers.....	75
4.4 Lifestyle indicators for single and married co-resident mothers.....	78
4.5 Conclusion.....	89
Appendix 4A: Type of illness or injury suffered by co-resident mother in month prior to survey.....	92
Appendix 4B: Question 4.71 of the General Household Survey 2006.....	93
Chapter 5. Conclusion	94
References	103

List of Tables and Figures

List of Tables

Table		Page
Chapter 2		
Table 2.1	The monthly values of social grants as of 1 April 2009.....	10
Table 2.2	Number of grants by grant type at 30 June 2009.....	11
Chapter 3		
Table 3.1	The proportion and counts of co-resident mothers, 2006.....	46
Table 3.2	The proportion and counts of co-resident mothers by race, 2006	47
Table 3.3	The proportion and counts of co-resident mothers by marital status and race, 2006.....	48
Table 3.4	Individual characteristics of co-resident mothers by marital status, 2006	52
Table 3.5	Household characteristics of co-resident mothers by marital status, 2006.....	55
Table 3.6	Household income of co-resident mothers by marital status, 2006.....	59
Table 3.7	Average number of grants received in co-resident mothers' households, by marital status of the mother, 2006.....	64
Chapter 4		
Table 4.1	Poverty estimates for co-resident mothers by marital status, 2006.....	73
Table 4.2	Relative contribution of income sources to poverty alleviation for co-resident mothers, 2006.....	78
Table 4.3	Physical and mental health status of co-resident mothers, 2006.....	85

Table		Page
Table 4.4	Welfare of communities in which co-resident mothers reside, 2006.....	88
Table 4.5	Ownership of assets by co-resident mothers' households, 2006.....	89
Table 4.A	Illness or injury suffered by co-resident mothers, 2006.....	92

List of Figures

Figure		Page
Chapter 3		
Figure 3.1.	Kernel density plot of total household monthly income of co-resident African mothers by marital status, South Africa 2006.....	61
Figure 3.2.	Kernel density plot of per capita household monthly income of co-resident African mothers by marital status, South Africa 2006.....	61
Figure 3.3.	Kernel density plot of total household monthly income of co-resident White mothers by marital status, South Africa 2006.....	62
Figure 3.4.	Kernel density plot of per capita household monthly income of co-resident White mothers by marital status, South Africa 2006.....	62
Chapter 4		
Figure 4.1.	Cumulative Distribution Functions by marital status of co-resident African mothers, South Africa 2006.....	74
Figure 4.2.	Cumulative Distribution Functions by marital status of co-resident White mothers, South Africa 2006.....	75

Acronyms

ANC	African National Congress
ATO	Australian Taxation Office
CDF	Cumulative Distribution Function
CSA	Child Support Agency
CSG	Child Support Grant
CSVR	Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation
FGT	Foster-Greer-Thorbecke
GHS	General Household Survey
PRWORA	Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act
PSLSD	Project for Statistics on Living Standards and Development
SAPS	South African Police Service
SARS	South African Revenue Service
SMG	State Maintenance Grant

Chapter One

Introduction

The primary objective of this dissertation is to compare the economic status of South African single mothers with that of their married counterparts. Recent South African studies have shown that women are more likely to live in poverty than men and that female-headed households are more likely to be poor than male-headed households (Posel and Rogan 2009a; Armstrong *et al.* 2008; Hoogeveen and Özler 2006; Budlender 2005; Rose and Charlton 2002; Woolard and Leibbrandt 1999). South Africa also has a high proportion of children living in households without fathers. Posel and Devey (2006) use household survey data to estimate that from 1993 to 2002, the proportion of South African children whose fathers were either absent from the household or dead increased from approximately 43 per cent to 57 per cent. These results would suggest that there is a high incidence of single motherhood in South Africa, and that single-mother families would be more likely to be worse off than families that include men.

Despite the apparent extent of single motherhood in South Africa, and despite the higher poverty rate among females, comparisons of the economic status of mothers by their marital status are notably absent from the literature. Indeed, there are few studies in South Africa that have explored motherhood in general, possibly due to data limitations which in the past have made it difficult to match women with their children. Due to South Africa's history of apartheid, most studies on economic status and poverty have tended to focus on racial differences (see for example Van der Berg *et al.* 2009; Van der Berg *et al.* 2007; Hoogeveen and Özler 2006). This may be another reason why few poverty studies have focused on gender differences, or on the economic well-being of mothers.

Recent household surveys have made it possible to match women with their children thus facilitating research on motherhood. This dissertation uses data from the 2006 General Household Survey (GHS) to identify a sample of mothers aged from 19 to 65 who are co-

resident with at least one of their children aged 18 or younger. The lack of a birth module within the GHS 2006 prevents all mothers from being identified and only those who are living with their children can be included in the sample via a maternal relationship question. I analyse this group of mothers to ascertain whether single mothers who are co-resident with their children, on average, are economically disadvantaged compared to married mothers who are living with their children.¹ This would be consistent with findings in many developed countries where single mothers and their families have been shown to be more vulnerable to poverty than other types of families (see for example Philo *et al.* 2009; Christopher *et al.* 2002; Wong *et al.* 1993). A primary difference between these two family-types is that married mothers would be expected to benefit from the income earned by their male spouse whereas single mothers do not have a co-resident male partner who offers economic support. Single mothers may receive financial support from other sources, for example, the income of other adults residing in their household, private maintenance paid by their former partner, or widows may receive benefits from a spousal life insurance policy. However, international data show that notwithstanding the possibility of these alternate sources of income, single mothers, on average, continue to be economically disadvantaged compared to their married counterparts.

An important consideration in South Africa is that mothers living with their children are less likely to be labour force participants compared to *not* co-resident mothers, which is likely to result in a sample of co-resident mothers underestimating the economic status of mothers in general (van der Stoep 2008). This is particularly relevant for African single mothers, among whom labour migration rates are relatively high and who consequently are less likely to be co-resident with their children (Posel and van der Stoep 2008). Despite this data limitation, a study of co-resident mothers is significant as it provides an indication of the average economic status of single and married mothers and their children, which, in turn, would be expected to highlight the importance of developing and improving mechanisms to increase the welfare of South African single-mother families.

¹ Throughout this study, married mothers denote mothers who indicated their marital status to be ‘married’ or ‘living together like husband and wife’ whilst single mothers denote mothers who are reported as being ‘divorced or separated’, ‘widowed’ or ‘never married’.

I use two methods to compare the economic status of mothers by marital status. First, I undertake a descriptive analysis of the data to compare differences in individual and household characteristics of mothers by marital status. A descriptive analysis will not be able to ascertain whether single motherhood *causes* a woman to be relatively economically disadvantaged, but it can provide initial insights into this relationship. Second, I conduct a poverty analysis using the Foster-Greer-Thorbecke (FGT) poverty measures. As part of the poverty analysis, I examine lifestyle indicators to gain insights into the standards of living of the two groups of mothers. Furthermore, I use decomposition techniques to determine the contribution made by various categories of income towards poverty relief.

Given South Africa's political history, economic status and poverty levels have tended to vary along racial lines. Apartheid-era political policies, of which Whites were the beneficiaries, have resulted in a skewed distribution of resources with highest poverty levels among Africans, and lowest levels among Whites. To provide a comprehensive overview of the economic status of single mothers, I focus on Africans and Whites, with the latter group expected to be better off. What is also of interest, however, is to examine the effect of marital status on mothers *within* each population group to see if single mothers are worse off than their married counterparts within each group.

This dissertation is structured in the following way. Chapter One provides an introduction to the study. Chapter Two provides a review of theoretical literature on labour supply and income determination which explains why females are less likely to participate in the labour force and why they earn less than males. Chapter Two also looks at gender differences in income poverty in South Africa, and provides reasons for why females are more likely to live in poor households than males. I discuss the large number of children with absent fathers and how this would imply that there are many single-mother households in South Africa. I also discuss the impact of gendered access to resources on single mothers and their households. Lastly, Chapter Two discusses the efficacy of mechanisms in developed countries, and in South Africa, designed to increase single mothers' access to resources.

In Chapter Three I outline the data used for the study, the sample of mothers identified and I compare the individual and household characteristics of co-resident single mothers with those of their married counterparts. I include comparisons of education levels, living arrangements and various measures of income. Chapter Four compares the socio-economic status of mothers by marital status by conducting a poverty analysis and by comparing various lifestyle indicators. The Foster-Greer-Thorbecke (FGT) poverty indices are calculated in order to quantify the poverty headcount rate, the poverty gap and the poverty gap squared. I then decompose the FGT measures using the Shapley-value to compute the contribution made by various categories of income towards poverty alleviation. An advantage of using data from the GHS 2006 is that it includes information on grant receipts, thus the impact of public transfers on economic welfare can be quantified. Measuring poverty using income and expenditure data provides a useful indication of the extent of poverty; however, a more qualitative approach reveals useful insights into how poverty manifests itself and affects individuals' quality of life (Woolard and Leibbrandt 1999). Hence I identify various lifestyle indicators, such as access to medical aid, access to municipal services and ownership of assets, to compare the average standard of living of single mothers with that of married mothers. Chapter Five concludes the study and suggests future work that can be undertaken to improve the socio-economic status of single mothers and their families.

Chapter Two

Literature review

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter I review the theoretical and empirical literature that describes the economic status of women and I discuss how that affects the welfare of single mothers. The primary objective of this chapter is to explore the reasons why single mothers are expected to be more likely to live in poverty than their married counterparts.

Few studies have researched the prevalence or economic wellbeing of single mothers in South Africa. There is evidence to suggest that many children live without fathers, and that a family headed by a woman is worse off than other types of households (Armstrong *et al.* 2008; Gustafsson and Worku 2006; Posel and Devey 2006; Rose and Charlton 2002). In this chapter I look at reasons why single-mother families living in South Africa would be expected to have less access to resources than other family types and I discuss certain steps that may be taken to improve their welfare.

Section 2.2 discusses Gary Becker's (1965) theory on household production and the allocation of time which explains why women have become specialised in performing household duties whilst men pursue careers in the job market. In section 2.3 I discuss female poverty levels in South Africa and I explore the reasons why women, on average, have less access to resources than men. The economic status of South African single mothers is also discussed. Various mechanisms are available internationally and locally to provide assistance to single-mother families. The effectiveness of these mechanisms is analysed in sections 2.4 and 2.5 respectively. Section 2.6 explores ways in which the South African maintenance system can be improved and it concludes the chapter.

2.2 Theory of labour supply and income determination

In South Africa, the labour force participation rate of women has been lower than men (Hausmann *et al.* 2009; Casale and Posel 2002). Moreover, women who have engaged in market work, on average, have earned less than their male counterparts (Posel and Rogan 2009a; Ntuli 2007; Woolard and Woolard 2006; Budlender 2005). Becker's (1965) theory of the allocation of time offers one possible explanation of why females, on average, have not attained the same wage and employment rates as males within the labour market.

Becker (1965) explains the concept of "productive" consumption by households. When household members are not engaged in market work, they are engaged in the production of commodities that maximise the household utility function. Commodities may be in the form of pure leisure activities, for example, viewing a play or reading a book. Alternatively, the commodities produced may contribute towards household production, in the form of cleaning the house, cooking for the family or childcare. The full cost of commodities includes the prices of capital goods and raw materials used in their production, as well as the indirect cost of an individual's time as measured by foregone market earnings.

Members of households engage in market work in order to earn income to afford to produce the various commodities. The division of labour within households has traditionally resulted in females being more likely to assume responsibility for household production with males being primarily responsible for working in the labour market (Becker 1985). This is largely due to men having developed a comparative advantage in market work and consequently being relatively more productive in the labour market than in household production in comparison to women.

In contrast, women have developed a comparative advantage in household production. Whilst women have to assume responsibility for childbearing, women's specialisation in household production is a product of several factors which include cultural norms about a

woman's role in the family, as well as the preferences of some women to perform household duties. Consequently, female labour force participation rates have been lower than those of men which, in turn, has contributed towards women, on average, earning less than men (Mincer and Polachek 1974).

Women may be less likely to invest in their human capital, with the family focusing more on the education and experience of the male whose career prospects traditionally have not been affected by childcare and housework commitments. Similarly, employers anticipating job discontinuity may invest less in training and developing the skills of female employees. With lower levels of formal and on-the-job training, women's wages, on average, are likely to be much lower than men's (Polachek and Mincer 1974). The combined effects of women being primarily responsible for household production, and the lower investment in female human capital has led to women being less likely to be labour force participants and, on average, earning less than men. Consequently, the gendered household division of labour is perpetuated given that the foregone earnings of a woman continue to be less than those of a man which promotes the specialisation of women in household production (Becker 1985).

Becker (1985) notes that there has been a large increase in female labour force participation since the middle of the twentieth century and attributes this largely to the rise in female earning power which has effectively raised the opportunity cost of a woman's time spent in household production. A general rise in wages would also increase the male wage rate which would afford family members more time for non-market activities via the income effect. However, the rise in female labour force participation in many countries (Hausmann *et al.* 2009) would suggest that the positive female wage response has outweighed the negative income effect of higher earnings received by a family's male market participant.

Despite the increase in female labour force participation, Becker (1985) observes that the earnings of women, on average, remain inferior to those of men. Indeed, recent evidence shows that average female wages continue to be less those of their male counterparts

(Hausmann *et al.* 2009). Becker (1985) explains that this gender gap in earnings is largely due to the fact that despite being labour market participants, women tend to retain the primary responsibility for household production. Given that childcare and other housework are energy-intensive activities, women who do engage in market work whilst still being responsible for household chores are likely to be less productive than men and will seek out jobs that involve less energy and less time away from home (Becker 1985). This will also impact negatively on their wage rates, their choice of occupation and on the likelihood of their employers investing in their human capital (Polachek and Mincer 1974). The inferior economic status of women is therefore perpetuated. As noted by Becker (1985: S41-S42):

“a small initial difference can be transformed into large observed differences by the reinforcing effects of specialised investments”.

A shortcoming of Becker's (1965) theory of household production and utility maximisation is that it predicts that a family will maximise a household utility function subject to the family wealth constraint. An underlying assumption is that where family members do not have identical preferences, household members are assumed to accept the preferences of the male head who as a benevolent decision-maker, is assumed to transfer resources to all members altruistically thereby ensuring all members act in the best interests of the household. In many cases, however, income is unlikely to be shared equally by all household members and women are likely to be allocated fewer resources than men (Chant 2007; Budlender 2005). Thus even when women live in a household that benefits from the income of an employed male, women may be significantly worse off.

A further assumption of this model is that women who are engaged in household production will have the financial support of an income-earning male. The increase in single motherhood worldwide, however, suggests that many women are not likely to have male partners to support them financially (Heuveline *et al.* 2003). These women are potentially doubly disadvantaged by their inferior status within the labour market as well

as having no husband to support them. Single-mother families would therefore be expected to be more likely to be poor than the traditional two-parent family depicted in Becker's model.

2.3 Gender differences in income poverty levels in South Africa

Labour market research shows that although there has been a “feminisation of the labour force” in post-apartheid South Africa, women are still considerably less likely to participate in the labour force than men (Hausmann *et al.* 2009; Casale and Posel 2002). Moreover, unemployment rates among females are far greater than male unemployment rates (Posel and Rogan 2009a; Shepherd 2008; Banerjee *et al.* 2007).

Women have made some advances within the labour market as they are being increasingly represented in higher-level, more lucrative occupations (Shepherd 2008). This may be attributed to the increase in female education levels, as well as to women benefiting from equal opportunity programmes (Casale and Posel 2005).² Furthermore, more women appear to be operating their own businesses within the formal sector of the economy (Casale and Posel 2005).

However, among individuals who are employed, a significant gender gap in earnings remains (Ntuli 2007; Woolard and Woolard 2006). There is evidence that this has fallen over the past decade but the gender imbalances still exist (Muller 2009). Part of the reason for the persistence of gender inequality is that much of the rise in female employment is associated with work in sectors that are characterised by lower earnings and job instability (Casale and Posel 2005). For example, far more women are self-employed within the informal sector or working as domestic workers, than men (Banerjee *et al.* 2007). Furthermore, even where both genders find work in similar occupations, there is still a large difference in earnings with males, on average, earning more than females (Hausmann *et al.* 2009).

² The Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998 (Department of Labour 1998) defines women as one of the designated groups for whom employers must implement affirmative action measures.

Another reason for a persistent gender gap in income is that a bias within the household remains. Women are still, whether by choice, norm or prejudice disproportionately responsible for household production, and in particular childcare (Goldblatt 2005). This form of labour is unpaid and takes time away from income-earning employment (Woolard and Leibbrandt 1999). As discussed in section 2.2, this division of labour within the household results in women earning lower wages than men on average. Accordingly, women are penalised when they choose, or are expected, to look after their children and as a result of them being expected to perform other household duties.

A further reason why a woman's income, on average, is lower than a man's income is because females are more reliant on grant income (Posel and Rogan 2009a). The value of social grants is generally lower than median earned income, and consequently, women are likely to have access to fewer resources than men (Posel and Rogan 2009a). Table 2.1 lists the values of grants as of 1 April 2009.

Table 2. 1: The monthly values of social grants as of 1 April 2009

Old Age grant	R1,010
Disability grant	R1,010
War veterans' grant	R1,030
Grant-in-aid	R240
Child Support Grant	R240
Foster care grant	R680
Care-dependency grant	R1,010

Source: South African Social Security Agency (2009a)

South Africa's social security system has been described as relatively advanced for a middle-income developing country and comparable with programmes in many developed countries (Armstrong and Burger 2009; Booysen 2004). Moreover there has been a considerable expansion of public transfers in recent years (Van der Berg *et al.* 2009). Whereas there were only 2.4 million grant recipients in total in April 1998 (Armstrong and Burger 2009), this number has increased to 13,401,138 as at 30 June 2009 (South

African Social Security Agency 2009b). Table 2.2 presents the number of grants by grant type as at 30 June 2009.

Old Age grant	2,454,300
Disability grant	1,282,702
War veterans' grant	1,453
Grant-in-aid	47,947
Child Support Grant	8,996,926
Foster care grant	509,603
Care-dependency grant	108,207
Total	13,401,138

Source: South African Social Security Agency (2009b)

The category that has experienced considerable growth, and that is largely responsible for the expansion of the system, is the Child Support Grant (CSG) (Armstrong and Burger 2009). Makiwane and Udjo (2006) show that in March 1999, 0.27 per cent of eligible children were obtaining the CSG and this figure had grown to 44.86 per cent by March 2005. Part of the reason for the increased coverage is that the age limit has been increased. When the CSG was initially introduced in 1998 only children under the age of seven qualified (Triegaardt 2005). Currently it covers children under the age of 16; however it is intended to cover children between the ages of 15 and 18 in a phased manner over the next three years (Department of Social Development 2009; ANC 2009). A detailed discussion of the CSG follows in section 2.5.

Of particular interest when studying the welfare of mothers is the role played by grant income in improving the economic status of these women and their children. As highlighted by Posel and Rogan (2009a), women, on average, are more dependent on grant income than men. Moreover, Goldblatt (2005) notes that females are the primary recipients of the CSG. Thus, grant income would be expected to contribute towards improving the welfare of mothers, and in particular single mothers who do not have a co-resident male partner to support their families. Despite the fact that grants are relatively

low compared to median earnings, previous studies have shown that they have played a major role in poverty alleviation and that they are well targeted as they have been successful in reaching the poor individuals they are intended to assist (Armstrong and Burger 2009; Armstrong *et al.* 2008; Samson *et al.* 2004). Thus grants would be expected to assist in raising the welfare of single mothers, in particular, but they would be unlikely to elevate them to the economic status of married mothers who would be expected to have the earnings of a male spouse to support them

As a consequence of the factors described above, women are more likely to live in poverty than men. Posel and Rogan (2009a), working with a poverty line of 322 Rands per capita per month (measured in 2000 prices) show that females are significantly more likely than males to live in poor households. Furthermore, poverty rates among males have fallen faster than poverty rates among females. Using data from the 1997 and 1999 October Household Surveys and from the 2004 and 2006 General Household Surveys, Posel and Rogan (2009a) show that from 1997 to 2006, the rate fell by 4.8 percentage points among men, and only by 2.2 percentage points among women.

Over time, an increasing number of women have been living in households without an income-earning male (Posel and Rogan 2009a). One possible explanation for this may be the falling marriage rates among African women (Posel and Rogan 2009a; Gustafsson and Worku 2006; Casale and Posel 2002). This has led to an increase in the number of households that rely primarily on the income earned by a woman, or on social grant income. Due to the gender inequalities that exist, when households are highly dependent on the income received by women, they are more vulnerable to poverty.

Possibly also as a consequence of low marital rates, there has been a significant increase in the number of households headed by females (Posel and Rogan 2009a). Individuals named as the household head tend to be the primary income providers (Posel and Rogan 2009a) so it is not surprising that female-headed households are more likely to be poor than male-headed households (Posel and Rogan 2009a; Armstrong *et al.* 2008; Hoogeveen and Özler 2006; Rose and Charlton 2002; Woolard and Leibbrandt 1999).

Budlender (2005) shows that in 1995 and 2002, income and expenditure in male-headed households was more than double that of female-headed households. Furthermore, Posel and Rogan (2009a) calculate that in 2006, 32.5 per cent of male-headed households were poor, compared to 62 per cent of female-headed households.

Measuring female poverty levels using household and income data may fail to capture women's true experience of poverty, however. In particular this type of study would fail to capture the many benefits to women when they live in a female-headed household. When living with males, women may be victims of domestic violence, they may suffer from an uneven distribution of household resources and from a lack of autonomy (Chant 2007; Budlender 2005). It is therefore important to consider that under some circumstances living without men may afford women a better quality of life that is not captured by income and expenditure data.³

2.3.1 Poverty levels of single mothers in South Africa

There is little work on the incidence of single motherhood in South Africa but work on fatherhood suggests that there are a large number of children in South African who are growing up without co-resident fathers. Posel and Devey (2006) show that from 1993 to 2002, some 43 to 57 per cent of South African children had absent or deceased fathers. Furthermore, Gustafsson and Worku (2006) use Census 2001 data to show that 48.4 per cent of African mothers between the ages of 20 and 40 had never been married. These findings, together with the increase in female household-headship, would suggest that there are many households in South Africa headed by single mothers. For reasons discussed in the previous section, these households would be expected to have less access to resources and to be more at risk of being poor.

If non-resident fathers are alive, they may be capable of contributing financially towards the wellbeing of the single mother's household. Posel and Devey (2006) estimate that

³ Similarly, living with men may afford women a better quality of life in a way not captured by income and expenditure data.

between 1993 and 2002 the percentage of children with absent (living) fathers ranged from 36 to 45.8 per cent. South Africa, like many other countries, has a private maintenance system designed to ensure that non-resident parents take financial responsibility for their children. However, the inefficiencies of this system have made it easy for non-resident fathers to evade the financial duty they owe towards their children (Bonthuys 2008a; Bonthuys 2008b). The failings of the South African private maintenance system will be explored further in section 2.5 and the effect of the malfunctioning maintenance system as well as the effect of a gendered access to resources on the socio-economic status of single mothers will be examined in Chapters Three and Four.

2.4 Mechanisms in developed countries to increase single mothers' access to resources

Several international studies have shown that single-mother families, on average, tend to be worse off than traditional two-parent families (Philo *et al.* 2009; Christopher *et al.* 2002; Wong *et al.* 1993). The economic status of single mothers varies between nations with some countries providing greater financial assistance than others. Much attention has therefore been focused on investigating the types of mechanisms that are most successful in improving the standards of living of single mothers and their children.

Wong *et al.* (1993) investigate the economic status of single-mother families in eight countries, namely Australia, Canada, France, Germany (the Federal Republic), Norway, Sweden, the United Kingdom and the USA. Data are obtained from the Luxembourg Income Study (LIS) which sources information from, for example, population surveys, household income and expenditure surveys and tax files in the various nations. Single-mother families are defined as households headed by mothers younger than 65 who are divorced, separated, widowed or never-married and who live with one or more child under the age of 18. There are no other adults living with the family. In each country, the economic status of single mothers can be measured as the ratio of their net disposable income relative to the average net disposable income of two-parent families.

Analysing statistics collected between 1979 and 1984, Wong *et al.* (1993: 177) find that:

“cross-country differences in demographic characteristics, labour force participation rates, levels of public and private transfers, and the degree of income testing account for much of the difference in the relative economic status of single-mother families in different countries”.

They show that increases in private and public transfer income raise the welfare of single mothers but that the income-testing of benefits reduces economic wellbeing. The adverse effects of means-testing are largely due to the negative effects on labour force participation. Women with inferior job opportunities who are not likely to earn much in paid employment would have a greater incentive to rely on social welfare instead of earnings. In contrast to this, universal benefits would not be taken away from low-income women should they enter paid employment. Thus, poorer single mothers would be more likely to work if benefits were not income-tested. Labour force participation, in turn, considerably improves the well-being of single mothers (Wong *et al.* 1993).

A more recent study by Christopher *et al.* (2002) investigates the gender gap in poverty in eight developed countries: Australia, Canada, France, (the former) West Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden, the United Kingdom and the USA. Using 1994 and 1995 data from the Luxembourg Income Study they examine the effects of single parenthood, gendered differences in earnings and state transfer programmes on gender gaps in poverty. In this study, single-mother families are defined as households headed by single females aged from 25 to 54 who live with children under 18. There may be additional adults, for example, a grandparent in the household and any income provided by these individuals is incorporated in the calculation of household income. Christopher *et al.* (2002) note that while the size of the gap varies from country to country, women’s poverty is higher than men’s poverty in all nations except for Sweden. Moreover, after controlling for the effects of differences in age and education, Christopher *et al.* (2002) find that for all states except Sweden, single-mother families have a greater likelihood of being poor than any other type of family.

Swedish single mothers are less likely to be poor compared to single fathers, single female non-parents and single male non-parents. However, they are still more likely to be in poverty compared to married parents, and married non-parents (Christopher *et al.* 2002).

Christopher *et al.* (2002) investigate the extent to which welfare systems and labour markets in the various countries contribute towards closing the gender gap in poverty and by implication assisting single-mother families. The existence of state taxation and transfer systems reduces the gap in all countries, a finding which indicates that the implementation of a public welfare programme pulls more women out of poverty than it does men. The study shows that welfare systems in Sweden and the Netherlands are most effective in reducing the gender poverty gap – by 51 and 21 per cent respectively. In all other countries, the reduction in the gap is substantially lower at figures of eight per cent or less. These results suggest that the tax and transfer systems in Sweden and the Netherlands are more woman-friendly than those in the other nations. The fact that differences in male and female poverty rates still remain in most countries however, shows that public benefits alone, even when they are targeted towards women, do not eliminate these differences.

The gender inequalities that exist in labour markets around the world also contribute towards the higher poverty rates among women compared to men. Christopher *et al.* (2002) focus on single workers as it is single individuals that drive the gender gaps in poverty. Given that household data are used to quantify the poor, a male and female living in the same household will have the same poverty measure. Measured differences between the sexes are therefore highlighted when using data on single persons. In all countries except Sweden, when personal market earnings are isolated as the only source of income, women's poverty rates are higher than men's. They conclude that lower rates of female labour force participation, lower female wage rates, the greater number of women in part-time employment and their greater tendency to reside with children all result in women, on average, being poorer than men.

To eliminate the effects of part-time employment, Christopher *et al.* (2002) restrict the sample to full-time workers. Results show that the gender poverty gap in most countries tends to fall but still exists. This suggests that differences in wage rates and in job opportunities are still factors causing the different poverty rates for males and females. An implication of this is that increasing female employment rates per se will not eradicate gender poverty gaps and countries that attempt to improve the economic status of single mothers purely by increasing their employment will not achieve their objective unless other inequalities within the labour market are simultaneously addressed.

France is an example of a country that has generous employment supports for mothers— for example subsidized child care. Therefore, the labour force participation of women is less likely to be constrained by childcare commitments. However, France still experiences moderately high gender poverty gaps, which would suggest that the solution is not just to get women into the labour force (Christopher *et al.* 2002). General job market characteristics, such as the types of jobs women have access to and their rates of remuneration, need to be improved so that female labour force participants have the same status as their male counterparts.

Sweden exists as a notable exception when analysing the economic status of single-mother families. Swedish mothers benefit from employment supports, (such as subsidized child care, job protection and paid parental leave), they receive state transfers and allowances (such as child benefits and housing benefits) (Ryrstedt 2006), and they benefit from a labour market characterised by fewer gender inequalities than elsewhere in the world. Given that they are able to combine income from the labour market with the substantial assistance they receive in the form of state transfers, Swedish women are in a fortunate position where “almost all women are able to form households without male partners and escape poverty” (Christopher *et al.* 2002: 235).

Although many Swedish single mothers work part-time, this does not appear to increase their poverty levels compared to men. Indeed, when female and male full-

time workers are compared, the gender poverty gap actually increases compared to when all workers – full-time and part-time – are compared. It would appear, therefore, that women are not heavily penalised if they choose to be the primary caregiver of their child.

Christopher *et al.* (2002) caution that increased labour force participation may lead to women exchanging dependency on a male spouse for dependency on employers. Gender discrimination in the form of inferior job opportunities and lower wages for women is encountered in labour markets around the world (Fortin 2005; Blau and Kahn 2000). Whilst Sweden's labour market is less discriminatory than those in many other nations, it is still characterised by sex segregation. A major advantage in Sweden, therefore, is that women, including single mothers, are not dependent on one institution. They are able to improve their economic status by increased labour force participation as well as via generous social welfare programmes. By implication, improving the status of single mothers requires a multi-faceted approach which includes social benefits targeted to assist single mothers, and women in general, as well as taking all the steps necessary to ensure a non-discriminatory labour market.

Norway is another country that appears to have been successful in reducing the poverty rates among single mothers. Bratberg and Tjøtta (2008) investigate the income effects of divorce in families with dependent children in Norway and assess the effectiveness of the various state programmes and interventions designed to assist children in divorced families. They use a random sample of the population drawn from a longitudinal database containing individual level information for the years 1989 to 1996.

Norway has a low level of income inequality, a high rate of female labour force participation and a fairly generous post-divorce income programme for divorcees who have custody of children. The support given to custodians includes child benefits for each child plus one additional child. Thus a custodial parent with two children will actually receive the benefit for three. Support is also given in the form of extra tax

deductions as well as benefits to assist with childcare. Furthermore, a custodian not earning any market income will receive extra benefits. A major advantage of the Norwegian system is that maintenance payments from the non-resident parent are enforced by the government. The state prescribes the minimum level of child support⁴ and if the non-resident parent defaults, the government pays the custodial parent and the authorities then assume responsibility for recovering the amount from the defaulting parent.

Bratberg and Tjøtta (2008) compare the average economic status of divorced individuals with that of married individuals. A lack of data on cohabitation prevents them from identifying divorcees who are cohabiting with other adults. They identify this as a limitation of their study as they are unable to identify divorcees who have been able to improve their economic status as a result of pooling resources with household co-habitants. However, they maintain that the primary findings of their study are unlikely to be affected by this omission. The household earnings for single-mother families are therefore based solely on the gross taxable own earnings of the mother as reflected in the tax register.

Bratberg and Tjøtta (2008) compare the following income measures:

A = Post-tax earnings before any child-related transfers;

B = A + ordinary child allowances;

C = B + extra advantages for custodial parents;

D = C + child support from the non-custodial to the custodial parent.

They factor in equivalence scales to incorporate economies of scale in household expenditure as well as the average time children spend with non-custodial parents and they then compare income by gender, marital and custody status. Comparing income

⁴ Bratberg and Tjøtta (2008) note that traditionally the minimum rate was 11 per cent of gross income for one child, 18 per cent for two, 24 percent for three and a minimum of 28 percent for four. Reforms in 2002 resulted in future calculations factoring in the earnings of both parents together with the actual child-related costs.

measure D, divorced men with custody, on average, have the highest income levels. Their income levels, on average, are greater than those of married individuals, as well as divorced women with or without custody. Divorced men with custody and married persons earn, on average, approximately 37 per cent and 31 per cent more than divorced women with custody respectively, so single mothers are still relatively disadvantaged. However the mean income measure D for divorced women with custody is substantially higher than their measure A. Their income measure A is about 57 per cent and 44 per cent less than measure A for married individuals and divorced, custodial males respectively. These figures illustrate that correctly targeted state programmes can significantly improve the economic status of single mothers. These programmes, however, do not appear to have been successful in completely eliminating inequalities.

Divorced women without custody, on average, are worst off economically. As Bratberg and Tjøtta (2008) note, this is probably due to the loss of financial support from an income-earning male as well as the fact that they do not receive any of the child supports described above. A major gap in the Norwegian system would appear to be that divorced women without custody of their children suffer the most from the effects of gender discrimination. This is highlighted by the fact that divorced men without custody, on average, receive about 58 per cent more income than divorced women without custody when comparing income measure D. Bratberg and Tjøtta (2008) point out that the focus of their study is on child benefits and consequently social welfare payments are excluded from the analysis. These payments may serve to alleviate the situations of divorced, non-custodial mothers.

Bratberg and Tjøtta (2008) observe that a vital feature of the system is the state enforcement of maintenance payments within divorced families. They calculate that, on average, child support from a non-resident parent serves to almost equalize the income of a custodial mother with that of a non-custodial father (going from income measure C to D). Prior to accounting for private maintenance transfers a non-custodial father, on average, receives approximately 24 per cent more income than a

custodial mother (comparing income measure C). Given this finding, it is important to explore the private maintenance systems in other countries to assess whether all are as effective as the Norwegian system.

Skinner and Davidson (2009) compare child maintenance schemes in 14 countries: Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, The Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway; Sweden, the United Kingdom and the USA. Their study relies mainly on data supplied by national informants, predominantly academics, in response to a questionnaire. Child maintenance policy varies from country to country. Differences include whether the court or an agency is responsible for concluding agreements between parents; the flexibility of parents to arrange their own agreements; the size of maintenance payments and whether there is an advanced maintenance scheme in place.

The advantage of court determination of maintenance amounts is that as legal judgments they are enforceable. Disadvantages are that they are subject to the discretion of judges which can be inconsistent from case to case. Legal costs, adversarial settings and delays are major drawbacks of a court system. The role of an administrative agency varies from nation to nation. For those countries that have an agency, their functions can include the assessment, receipt, transference and enforcement of maintenance payments. Skinner and Davidson (2009) note that when agencies are responsible for determining amounts, they are often calculated using set guidelines and formulae. This can serve as an advantage as a predictable outcome may reduce parental conflict. Disadvantages of agency arrangements are that their bureaucratic structures may undermine efficiency, and that formulae can be inflexible and confusing.

The freedom of parents to reach their own agreements also varies from jurisdiction to jurisdiction. Advantages of parental decision-making are that it may facilitate cordial relations between separated parents, and it is potentially a quicker and less costly method. A disadvantage of this method, however, is that, if not ratified by a court, the

agreements may not have legal standing and may run into enforcement problems. Skinner and Davidson (2009: 37) note that further problems with private agreements as indicated by the respondents from the various countries are that:

“(t)hey could also lead to different maintenance outcomes for children in similar situations and the potential for one parent to manipulate or coerce the other into an unsatisfactory arrangement was also highlighted”.

An issue that needs to be addressed in all countries is the size of maintenance payments. Skinner and Davidson (2009) find that the income and expenses of the non-resident parent, normally the father, are important components of a maintenance calculation in all countries and that generally the ‘needs’ of a child could be considered when determining amounts. Trends in determining maintenance amounts show that the contact time a non-resident parent spends with a child is factored into the maintenance calculation. Skinner and Davidson (2009) find that when a child spends the same amount of time with both parents, then child maintenance transfers could in principle be eliminated in many of the countries studied. Presumably this would be to allow for costs incurred by the non-resident parent when the child is visiting with them. The danger of this is that a non-resident parent may be motivated to seek greater contact with the child purely to reduce the amount of maintenance they are required to pay, and in certain countries, to increase the state benefits they receive. In some countries, the awarding of various public benefits is based on a child’s living arrangements. For example, in Sweden and Norway, the child benefit is paid to the parent with whom the child mainly lives (Ryrstedt 2006)⁵. It is debatable whether a financial motive for seeking contact with a child would result in the contact being in the child’s best interests (Ryrstedt 2006). Moreover, given that in many countries women, on average, earn less than men (Hausmann *et al.* 2009), reduced financial support for the mother as a result of increased contact time with the father is likely to render the mother’s household economically disadvantaged compared to the father’s.

⁵ In Norway, the allowance can be divided between parents if the child lives with both of them alternately. This may also be the case in some circumstances in Sweden (Ryrstedt 2006).

Defaulting on maintenance payments is a problem encountered in many countries around the world. This has resulted in authorities coming up with innovative enforcement mechanisms. These range from attaching earnings, charging interest on debt, deducting from bank accounts, attaching and selling assets, revoking drivers licenses, confiscating passports, criminal prosecution and imprisonment, although the latter two appear to be seldom used in practice.

Australia is an example of a country where the Child Support Agency (CSA) collaborates with the Taxation Office in order to assess the liability of a non-resident parent. The effects of the Australian CSA maintaining strong links with the Australian Taxation Office (ATO) are that they “enhance the effectiveness of the assessment, compliance and enforcement processes” (Fehlberg and Maclean 2009: 8). Some maintenance defaulters will continue to avoid their responsibilities by lying about their taxable income. However, individuals may be less inclined to lie if the threat of prosecution has the weight of a taxation office behind it.

An effective way of ensuring an uninterrupted flow of child maintenance payments to the co-resident parent is via a guaranteed maintenance scheme (Skinner and Davidson 2009). The advantage of these schemes is that they guarantee children a minimum level of economic support irrespective of the conduct of the non-resident parent. Some disadvantages of these schemes are that, if means tested they can negatively affect work incentives, they may provide incentives for non-resident parents not to pay, and where a flat rate exists, children may be receiving much less maintenance than what was actually awarded by a court. Furthermore, there may be delays in receiving the funds.

Countries with guaranteed maintenance systems appear to be far more successful in ensuring that co-resident parents receive maintenance payments. Skinner and Davidson (2009) show that the countries with the highest proportion of non-widowed single parents receiving child maintenance payments are Sweden and Norway – 94.8 and 77.7 per cent respectively. By comparison, the percentages in Australia, the

United Kingdom and the USA are 33.2, 21.5 and 31.7 per cent respectively, which are among the lowest. Sweden and Norway have guaranteed payment schemes whereas the other nations do not. Although the average maintenance amounts in Sweden and Norway tend to be relatively low, the co-resident parent is spared the uncertainty of not knowing whether monies will be paid or not. Furthermore, maintenance amounts in these countries are supplemented by relatively generous public benefits (Bratberg and Tjøtta 2008; Ryrstedt 2006; Christopher *et al.* 2002).

Skinner and Davidson (2009) cite the research of Skinner *et al.* (2007) which evaluates the potential of child maintenance to reduce poverty (regardless of whether payments are actually received or not). Their results show that child maintenance payments have the potential to make a contribution towards poverty reduction. Decreasing maintenance default rates may therefore make a considerable contribution towards poverty alleviation.

Given that single mothers, on average, are worse off than their married counterparts, some researchers have asked whether marriage can be viewed as an effective anti-poverty strategy (Pandey and Kim 2008; Mauldin and Mimura 2007). This is particularly relevant in the USA where the 1996 Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) has sought to alleviate poverty by, among other things, promoting and maintaining marriage. Mauldin and Mimura (2007) emphasize that whilst marriage can be helpful in improving the circumstances of single mothers, the quality of the marriage is of considerable importance. They suggest that interventions prior to marriage that help women to understand the potential consequences of poor marital choices, may be more effective than assistance programmes that attempt to mediate after a marriage has taken place. Pandey and Kim (2008) stress that in promoting marriage, the authorities must not overlook the role of education in improving the welfare of single mothers by increasing their earnings capabilities. Moreover, they argue that more educated women are likely to have better marriage prospects and enjoy more stable unions. They therefore advocate using

funds to support the higher education of single mothers rather than just implementing programmes that promote marriage.

2.5 Mechanisms in South Africa to increase single mothers' access to resources

In South Africa, there are two formal mechanisms whereby single mothers can obtain financial assistance. They can claim maintenance from their former partner and/or they can obtain financial support from the government through social welfare grants. Maintenance is either in the form of child or spousal support. Bonthuys (2008b: 334) notes that following Constitutional Court judgments:

“the duty to maintain children rests firstly on their parents. The State must provide mechanisms to facilitate enforcement of children’s rights against their parents and, where there are no parents, or where parents cannot maintain children, the State must maintain them”.

Child maintenance payments are obtained via the private maintenance system. One of the mandates of the Lund Committee for Child and Family Support (hereafter referred to as the Lund Committee), which was established by the Welfare Ministry in 1995, was to explore ways in which parental financial support could be increased (Lund 2008). The committee reached the conclusion that reform of the deeply faulty private maintenance system was a necessity and several of its recommendations were incorporated into the Maintenance Act 99 of 1998 (Lund 2008). However, numerous inefficiencies persist and in many cases the costs of engaging with the system continue to outweigh the benefits.

Problems first arise during the pre-court process (Bonthuys 2008b). The burden of obtaining, or increasing, maintenance for a child from a non-resident parent (usually the father) is borne by the residential parent (usually the mother) who has to initiate proceedings. Maintenance officers, in many instances, have been unable to obtain the necessary financial and employment details from fathers who have been able drag out the

pre-court process by failing to appear at court, or by bringing incomplete documentation (Bonthuys 2008b). Mothers have been faced with the transport, emotional, time, childcare and other costs associated with having to appear repeatedly at court, prepare the necessary documentation and engage with uncooperative fathers and ill-equipped maintenance officers (Bonthuys 2008b). A single mother who has entered the maintenance system is clearly in need of financial support so can ill-afford days off from work or the costs of childcare.

These difficulties are more acute for poor and rural women who have little hope of covering any of the above-mentioned costs, and hence of accessing the system (Bonthuys 2008b; Goldblatt 2005). Moreover, poorer and illiterate women are more dependent on maintenance officers to explain the process to them, to help them fill in the necessary forms and to manage all correspondence relevant to their cases. Given the shortage of adequately trained maintenance staff, these women are likely to be disadvantaged when trying to secure a reasonable amount of maintenance (Goldblatt 2005).

A mother has the option of employing a lawyer but for many single mothers, in particular poorer mothers, this service is likely to be well beyond their means. Given that men, on average, continue to earn more than women, fathers are more likely to have the funds to pay for legal representation than mothers (Bonthuys 2008b). Fathers are therefore more likely to navigate the system successfully and ensure an outcome in their favour.

If a mother has been successful in obtaining an order directing the father to pay maintenance, the mother faces the next uphill battle of enforcing the order. A father may just stop paying, in which case it is the mother who again incurs the above-mentioned costs in dealing with the courts. Fathers can take advantage of the protracted legal processes as in many cases fathers are not ordered to pay arrears maintenance, which effectively forces a mother to pay for the amounts that were defaulted on, prior to and during legal proceedings (Bonthuys 2008a; Smythe and Artz 2005). Moreover, defaulters are seldom suitably punished. In a small number of cases, they have received suspended or ordinary jail sentences, but in many cases they escape punishment which

reinforces the incentive to default on payments (Bonthuys 2008a). Fathers may furnish highly technical reasons for not paying, and the burden of refuting these arguments falls on the mother. With fathers, on average, being more likely to afford legal representation, they are more likely to prevail in litigation (Bonthuys 2008b).

Maintenance awards have been notoriously low and have often been determined simply by asking the father how much he can afford to pay. In many instances, the cost of the child, or the income of parents, do not appear to have even been factored into the maintenance calculation, despite this being required by the Maintenance Act 99 of 1998 (see Appendix 2A) (Budlender 2005; Department of Justice 1998b). Bonthuys (2008a: 198) cites a 2004 study conducted for the Commission of Gender Equality that found that in the sample of maintenance files examined:

“the median monthly income of women claiming maintenance was R800. Eighty one per cent of the men from whom maintenance was claimed were employed in the formal sector and 9 per cent in the informal sector, with a median income of R2 845. The median expenditure on children as reported by claimants was R980 per month. The average amount of maintenance ordered was R272 per child”.

Thus, on average, the fathers in this study earned over three times more than the mothers yet the mothers were required to cover over two thirds of the children’s expenses. When income levels are considered, some fathers have employed devious methods to understate their resources in order to reduce their maintenance obligation, for example, ‘selling’ their assets to girlfriends, family trusts or other family members (Bonthuys 2008b).

Another factor undermining the efficacy of the maintenance system is that fathers may use custody blackmail to stop mothers from making financial claims against them (Varcoe and Irwin 2004). Losing custody of their children is a reason why many women remain in abusive relationships (CSVr 2008). It is plausible that many mothers would drop maintenance complaints if threatened with a custody battle which would be both emotionally and financially draining. The tendency of the South African legal system to

separate maintenance enquiries from custody hearings facilitates this type of threatening conduct.

The courts have come up with some innovative solutions in dealing with maintenance defaulters which include ordering control over a father's pension fund and annuities out of which maintenance payments will be made, as well as periodical imprisonment over weekends (Bonthuys 2009b). The courts are also empowered to issue emolument attachment orders which effectively subtract payments directly from a father's salary (Lund 2008). Courts may also attach assets owned by the father and use the proceeds of sales to pay maintenance, although this remedy is frustrated by fathers who 'sell' their assets to third parties. Many cases of maintenance default, however, do not make it to the stage of adjudication as a result of the numerous costs described above. Consequently, only a few mothers benefit from these innovative solutions whilst many maintenance defaulters get away with not paying for their children.

There have been some improvements to the system in that maintenance investigators are starting to be appointed in courts (Bonthuys 2008b). Many courts still lack investigators hence the task of tracking a former partner and researching their economic status still falls on the mother who will often lack the resources to conduct this type of search. Moreover, in many cases, women have left a relationship as they have been victims of domestic violence and are afraid of claiming maintenance from their former partner as this may place them in harms way (Goldblatt 2005).⁶ Maintenance investigators may partially solve this problem by serving as an interface between a mother and her former partner during the information-gathering phase, but they are unlikely to be able to prevent all acts of violence. Moreover, the incompetence of maintenance staff may undermine any potential gains from the appointment of investigators.

⁶ Lund (2008) notes that whilst the Lund Committee was sitting, it was advised of an incident where a mother had been shot dead in a court room by the father against whom she was claiming maintenance.

Spousal maintenance is awarded to a person upon the dissolution of a marriage, and is not obtained via the private maintenance system. In many instances, it only lasts for a limited period of time and is seen as ‘rehabilitative’ in order to give the spouse receiving maintenance the opportunity to find employment and become self-supporting. Courts seem to favour the ‘clean-break’ principle that promotes financial independence of individuals following divorce (Bonthuys 2008a). Moreover, spousal maintenance often does not include a specific portion to cover ongoing childcare costs.

In determining spousal maintenance, courts appear to fail to account for the negative effect childrearing would have had on a mother’s career prospects, and how the mother’s childcare and homemaking would have positively impacted on her spouse’s career. As Bonthuys (2008a) notes, even if a mother finds employment after divorce, her earnings capacity is always likely to be behind that of her former partner’s. As an attempt to overcome these inequalities, in principle, the parent who has been primarily responsible for childrearing is awarded a greater share of the marital assets but, as Bonthuys (2008a) observes, this seldom happens in practice. Mothers are therefore seldom fully compensated for their role in household production.

Smythe and Artz (2005) point out that defaulting on maintenance is an act of domestic violence as defined by the South African Domestic Violence Act 116 of 1998 (Department of Justice 1998a).⁷ Moreover, economic abuse is a form of violence which the United Nations (2006) identifies as having been neglected and in need of more attention. Economic abuse appears to have been largely overlooked in South Africa where the maintenance system in its current form serves to facilitate this type of abuse. It is widely acknowledged that South Africa has a very high level of domestic violence (SAPS 2009; Seedat *et al.* 2009; United Nations Development Fund for Women 2009) and in response to this, in the State of the Nation address (Zuma 2009), the President re-affirmed the government’s commitment to combating crimes

⁷ Included within the definition of economic abuse in section 1(ix)(a) of the South African Domestic Violence Act is “the unreasonable deprivation of economic or financial resources to which a complainant is entitled under law or which the complainant requires out of necessity, including household necessities for the complainant, and mortgage bond repayments or payment of rent in respect of the shared residence”.

against women and children. Demonstrating this commitment would require reform of the private maintenance system.

In many instances, fathers are too poor to pay anything and under these circumstances, the financial assistance available to mothers is in the form of the Child Support Grant (CSG) from the state. The introduction of the CSG was a recommendation of the Lund Committee as a method of transferring cash to poor children. The implementation of the CSG in 1998 coincided with the phasing out of the State Maintenance Grant (SMG) which had been in place since 1947 (Triegaardt 2005). Just before its phasing out, the SMG reached approximately 400,000 poor women and children and was valued at R410 for parents and R135 per child under the age of 21, with an upper limit of R700 per month (Lund 2008; Goldblatt 2005). The amount paid to a child's parent recognized the caregiver's role in raising a child.

Budget constraints prevented the extension of the SMG to all needy South African families; hence the Lund Committee was tasked with developing an affordable alternative. Moreover, the SMG was conceived using the traditional two-parent family as a model which was inappropriate in the South African context which was characterised by different family forms largely as a consequence of apartheid policies (Lund 2008). For example, many children did not have a parent as their primary caregiver but were cared for by their grandparents and other family members. The termination of the SMG was met with much resistance but as noted by Lund (2008: 30):

“It seemed clear that the amount of R1.2 billion then being spent annually on SMGs could be easily lost, without being replaced by anything else”.

A primary focus of the Lund Committee therefore was to implement the appropriate system that would allow for the transfer of a cash grant to all deprived South African children. The trade-off was the very low value of the grant which was valued at just R100 when first introduced. Moreover, the grant only covered children under seven years and consequently the coverage was also substantially less than the SMG. The fact

that the CSG would be means-tested instead of being a universal transfer further restricted the number of children who could benefit.

A key objective of the Lund Committee was to put in place the appropriate mechanisms that would allow for incremental increases in the value of the grant (Lund 2008). Analysis of the value of the grant over the past 10 years demonstrates that this objective has been achieved as it has increased 140 per cent to R240. Furthermore, as discussed above, coverage has increased significantly with the age range of eligible children being progressively extended. Thus, whilst much controversy surrounded the introduction of the CSG and the phasing out of the SMG, it would appear that the CSG has been highly successful in contributing towards the economic wellbeing of millions of South African children.

Several criticisms of the grant persist, however, most notably that the value of the grant, whilst higher than at inception, is still very low. Furthermore, the threshold amount for the income test is set very low meaning that many vulnerable children are excluded. As of 1 April 2009, a single mother must earn no more than 28,000 Rands per annum to qualify for the CSG (Department of Social Development 2009). Administrative problems have also resulted in mothers having to incur high costs to access the system, and have made the CSG an unreliable source of income (see Bonthuys 2008a; Bonthuys 2008b for a discussion of these problems).

Another major criticism of the CSG is that it does not explicitly include a support component for the primary caregiver (normally the mother) of the children, and thus ignores the contribution of women towards childrearing (Goldblatt 2005). The advantage of the CSG is that it operates within the framework of 'Follow the child' hence can be accessed by a child's caregiver irrespective of whether they are the child's parent or not. However, the CSG cannot be accessed by primary caretakers who are less than 16 years old and with the high level of teenage pregnancy in South Africa, this age limit means that many needy single mothers and their children are currently excluded from the child grant system (Jewkes *et al.* 2009; Bonthuys 2008b). As discussed in section 2.3, the

grant does not currently cover children who are older than 15 and whilst the government intends rolling out the system so that it is available to all children under the age of 18, this process will take at least three more years to complete (ANC 2009). Again, this means that many needy South African children are not presently being assisted by the CSG system.

Other mechanisms designed to assist children and mothers include feeding schemes at schools as well as free healthcare provided to pregnant women and children under the age of seven (Bonthuys 2008b). Women are also entitled to four months of maternity leave, which can commence one month before their due date (Department of Labour 2009). Whilst these signify improvements to the system in that they recognize the role of women in childbirth and childrearing, they fall short of fully compensating mothers for their role in raising their children. For example, the South African Health Ministry recommends a mother nurses her child for the first six months without giving the child any other form of food or drink and that a child should be fed eight to 12 times a day (Department of Health 2009). Where a mother has to work, they recommend that the baby be given expressed milk. In giving mothers only four months of maternity leave, it would appear that the government has not accounted for the strain and fatigue that can be associated with nursing a child. Again, it is a function that a mother is just expected to perform, whilst simultaneously carrying out all other duties at optimal levels of productivity.

For many single mothers, the only way of obtaining ongoing financial assistance is via the private maintenance system. Many single mothers earn more than 28,000 Rands (the threshold amount to qualify for the CSG) but still struggle to support themselves and their children. This highlights the need for the rapid improvement of the private maintenance system. As noted by Lund (2008: 39):

“it is important to attempt to reform the system and to reach those who can afford support more effectively, as one way in which society signals that parenting carries financial obligations”.

2.6 Conclusion

In this chapter I have discussed reasons why women, on average, receive less income than men. These differences largely stem from the gendered division of labour within the household which, as explained by Becker (1985), has resulted in women being more likely to engage in household production whilst men further their careers within the job market. Lower rates of labour force participation and greater job discontinuity have resulted in female wage rates, levels of human capital investment and job opportunities, on average, being inferior to those of men.

Women in South Africa, on average, continue to have a lower economic status than men. Whilst there have been increases in female labour force participation, women are less likely to be employed, and to earn as much as males. Moreover, they are more dependent on grant income, the value of which tends to be substantially lower than market earnings. A major reason for a higher poverty rate among women is the growth of female-headed households, and the consequent lack of support from an income-earning male. Given these developments, single mothers in South Africa would be expected to be considerably worse off than their married counterparts who have a male partner to support the family.

Internationally, there has been an increase in single motherhood (Heuveline *et al.* 2003). Whilst the true extent of single motherhood in South Africa is unknown, research on fatherhood shows that an increasing proportion of children live without their father which suggests that growing numbers live only with their mother. In light of gender differences in access to resources, these women would require financial assistance to support their families. Many countries around the world have introduced programmes to increase single parents' income levels in order to try and smooth out disparities among different family types.

Nations differ in the support they offer to single mothers but a common characteristic is that single-mother families are generally worse off than other family types. The notable exception is Sweden where a relatively equitable labour market and well targeted social

welfare programmes have significantly improved the economic status of single mothers. The current mechanisms in South Africa appear to offer very little tangible support to single mothers. The little public assistance that is available benefits only those with relatively low income levels and the value of the grant is extremely small. The private maintenance system in South Africa is highly inefficient and in many cases the costs of engaging with the system outweigh the benefits. The lack of effective solutions in South Africa would suggest that single mothers are significantly worse off than married mothers.

Several studies have proposed changes to the South African maintenance system in order to improve its performance (Bonhuys 2008a; Lund 2008). One suggestion has been to introduce a set formula to determine maintenance. As discussed in section 2.4, an amount calculated via a formula is more objective and is more likely to be in line with a father's ability to pay. Forging closer links with the South African Revenue Service (SARS) would also greatly improve the maintenance office's investigative ability and powers of enforcement. The mere threat of a SARS investigation may provide sufficient incentive for a father to reveal his true income and pay the appropriate level of maintenance. Furthermore, the malfunctioning maintenance system could benefit from learning how SARS, as a relatively well-functioning government department, has managed to achieve its organizational efficiency.

Another remedy with regard to enforcement, would be to ensure that punishment for maintenance default is swift and severe. Thus, once an order is granted, a parent cannot reduce the amount paid unless they have obtained the court's permission to do so (for example in the event of unemployment). If they pay less maintenance without having approached the courts first, they should face harsh punishment either in the form of financial penalties, or imprisonment over alternate weekends. Section 31 of the Maintenance Acts specifically incorporates these types of penalties (see Appendix 2B) (Department of Justice 1998b). This may help to overcome the problem of fathers just stopping maintenance payments of their own volition as they know that they are unlikely to be punished. If a father knows that he faces harsh consequences if he halts

payment on all or part of his maintenance obligation, he may be less inclined to renege on his financial responsibilities.

A significant improvement to the system would be forcing fathers to pay in line with their ability to pay. This would ensure a child achieves a similar standard of living to what they would have enjoyed, had there been no separation or divorce. Forcing a father to pay according to his means would therefore ensure a child is not penalised by a relationship breakdown. As noted, fathers frequently pay for a smaller proportion of their child's expenses despite, on average, having far more resources than mothers (Bonthuys 2008a; Budlender 2005). Requiring fathers to pay to the full extent that they are able to pay will alleviate this unfair burden on mothers.

Reforming the private maintenance system will indirectly benefit those children whose parents are too poor to pay for them. These children rely on government programmes and as with all public interventions, these programme require funding. When fathers with means are forced to pay maintenance, this allows government to target programmes towards more needy children. A child whose father pays maintenance may be able to access education and health care in the private sector. More state resources will then be available to provide assistance - whether in the form of school feeding schemes, better quality education, improved health care services or otherwise - to those children whose parents cannot afford to pay. Fathers with means who do not pay for their own children effectively reduce state resources for those children who actually need them.

Government can try to overcome the maintenance default problem by continuously emphasizing and prioritizing the financial role a father plays in his child's life. This is particularly relevant in South Africa where women, on average, continue to earn less than men. Recent studies have sought to encourage a more engaged form of fatherhood, where men move beyond their roles as protectors and providers and also engage energetically and affectionately with their children (Morrell 2006). An unintentional consequence of this research may be that some fathers distort these efforts to underplay their roles as providers. They may attempt to create a façade of

caring by actively pursuing contact with their children whilst simultaneously exploiting the inefficiencies of the maintenance system to pay as little as possible for their children. The legal system unintentionally provides these fathers with the forum to do so by treating child contact as a separate issue from child maintenance.

Internationally, the trend towards shared custody has resulted in mothers receiving less financial support from fathers. As discussed in section 2.4, this is problematic in that women, on average, continue to have less access to resources than men, thus on average children will be economically disadvantaged when they are with their mothers. Moreover, if financial incentives are driving fathers to seek more contact with their children, this contact may not be in the best interests of their children.

A highly effective solution would be increasing the education of women not only in terms of increasing their skills level, but also in terms of advising them on what constitutes a healthy relationship. Alerting women to the potential consequences of a bad relationship may increase their chances of choosing a better partner and thereby reduce their likelihood of having to engage with the family law system. Advising women of the inefficiencies in the private maintenance system and the trends in child custody *before* they are in a position where they are forced to engage with these systems may prevent many women from entering unstable unions and then having to incur the numerous costs associated with a relationship breakdown.

In sum, income poverty has become an increasingly gendered phenomenon in South Africa since 1994 (Posel and Rogan 2009a). Furthermore, in light of the limited financial support provided to single mothers, it is likely these women will be particularly vulnerable to poverty and will therefore require carefully targeted interventions to improve their economic wellbeing. The next chapters explore the economic status of mothers by marital status, and in particular, whether single-mother families are indeed worse off than other types of families in South Africa.

Appendix 2A: Section 15 of the Maintenance Act 99 of 1998**“15 Duty of parents to support their children**

- (1) Without derogating from the law relating to the liability of persons to support children who are unable to support themselves, a maintenance order for the maintenance of a child is directed at the enforcement of the common law duty of the child's parents to support that child, as the duty in question exists at the time of the issue of the maintenance order and is expected to continue.
- (2) The duty extends to such support as a child reasonably requires for his or her proper living and upbringing, and includes the provision of food, clothing, accommodation, medical care and education.
- (3) (a) Without derogating from the law relating to the support of children, the maintenance court shall, in determining the amount to be paid as maintenance in respect of a child, take into consideration-
 - (i) that the duty of supporting a child is an obligation which the parents have incurred jointly;
 - (ii) that the parents' respective shares of such obligation are apportioned between them according to their respective means; and
 - (iii) that the duty exists, irrespective of whether a child is born in or out of wedlock or is born of a first or subsequent marriage.
- (b) Any amount so determined shall be such amount as the maintenance court may consider fair in all the circumstances of the case.
- (4) As from the commencement of this Act, no provision of any law to the effect that any obligation incurred by a parent in respect of a child of a first marriage shall have priority over any obligation incurred by that parent in respect of any other child shall be of any force and effect.”

Appendix 2B: Section 31 of the Maintenance Act 99 of 1998**“31 Offences relating to maintenance orders**

- (1) Subject to the provisions of subsection (2), any person who fails to make any particular payment in accordance with a maintenance order shall be guilty of an offence and liable on conviction to a fine or to imprisonment for a period not exceeding one year or to such imprisonment without the option of a fine.
- (2) If the defence is raised in any prosecution for an offence under this section that any failure to pay maintenance in accordance with a maintenance order was due to lack of means on the part of the person charged, he or she shall not merely on the grounds of such defence be entitled to an acquittal if it is proved that the failure was due to his or her unwillingness to work or misconduct.
- (3) If the name of a person stated in a maintenance order as the person against whom the maintenance order has been made corresponds substantially to the name of the particular person prosecuted for an offence under this section, any copy of the maintenance order certified as a true copy by a person who purports to be the registrar or clerk of the court or other officer having the custody of the records of the court in the Republic where the maintenance order was made, shall on its production be *prima facie* proof of the fact that the maintenance order was made against the person so prosecuted.
- (4) If a person has been convicted of an offence under this section, the maintenance officer may, notwithstanding anything to the contrary contained in any law, furnish that person's personal particulars to any business which has as its object the granting of credit or is involved in the credit rating of persons.”

Chapter Three

Data, definitions and descriptive statistics of mothers

3.1 Introduction

A key aspect to investigating poverty levels in South Africa is to determine the economic status of single mothers and their families. Internationally it has been found that these families are particularly vulnerable to poverty (see for example Philo *et al.* 2009; Christopher *et al.* 2002; Wong *et al.* 1993), so it is important for South African policymakers to know whether domestic single-mother families are similarly at risk. Chapter Three explores this issue by undertaking a descriptive data analysis which compares the wellbeing of single mothers to that of married mothers.

A major difference between these two groups of mothers is that married mothers are expected to benefit from the income of a male partner whereas single mothers are not. As discussed in Chapter Two, a reason why females in South Africa are economically worse off compared to males, is that females are less likely to live in a household that includes an income-earning male (Posel and Rogan 2009a). This finding would suggest that single mothers would be worse off compared to their married counterparts. In this chapter, I investigate descriptively whether the absence of an income-earning male partner has an adverse effect on the wellbeing of single mothers. This descriptive analysis will not be able to prove that single motherhood and the lack of an income-earning male partner *cause* a woman to be economically worse off, but it does provide important insights into this relationship.

In section 3.2 I discuss the data and sample used in Chapter Three, as well as the implications of the sample restrictions. Section 3.3 compares the individual and household characteristics of the sample of single and married mothers. In section 3.4 I summarise the findings and conclude the chapter.

3.2 Data and definitions

This study uses nationally representative household survey data to explore the economic status of women who are mothers. There are two methods by which mothers can be identified through information collected in household surveys. First, mothers can be identified via birth module information where women are asked whether they have had a live birth. This method would identify mothers with biological children, whether or not they are co-resident with their children. A second method would use household relationship questions. A person can either be asked to identify their mother if she resides in the household, or they may be asked their relationship to the household head which can reveal motherhood status. Using relationship questions would impose a co-residency requirement on motherhood hence only a subset of mothers would be identified.

In South Africa, the only nationally representative dataset released by Statistics South Africa which makes it possible to identify all biological mothers is the General Household Survey (GHS) 2002. The GHS 2002 contains a birth module which asked all women aged 12 to 50 about children ever born, the age and sex of children and the order of births. However, the GHS 2002 cannot be used for a study of the economic status of mothers. This is because the survey only collects individual information on income earned through employment, and it is not possible to identify the value of non-labour income received by individuals in the household. An important component of this non-labour income is social grant income. A distinguishing characteristic of the post-apartheid period in South Africa has been the dramatic expansion in the social welfare system, and in particular, the extension of the social pension and the Child Support Grant (Seekings 2007; Van der Berg *et al.* 2007).

For this reason, I do not use the GHS 2002 in this study. Rather, I use a more recent round of the General Household Survey, the GHS 2006, which has the considerable advantage of collecting information on the individual receipt of all grant income. The GHS 2006 collects binary information on whether individual household members receive

specific social grants. To generate grant income, I assign the maximum value of the grant to grant receipt. For example, the state pension, disability grant and care dependency grant were all valued at R820 in 2006, whilst the Child Support Grant was R190 and the foster care grant was R590.⁸

A problem with the GHS 2006, however, is that it does not have information on other sources of income such as private maintenance receipts and private pensions. This is particularly problematic when researching the economic status of single mothers as private maintenance payments would need to be included in the analysis. As discussed in Chapter Two, the South African maintenance system is notoriously inefficient and of relevance to this study is the extent to which maintenance receipts contribute towards the household income of a single-mother family. This, in turn, would provide insights into whether a single mother does indeed bear the financial burden of childrearing. To address this data limitation, I augment the measure of household income using information collected on household expenditure (see also Posel and Rogan 2009a). For households that report total household income which is less than their total household expenditure, I use household expenditure to approximate the household's total resources. The household's resources will be estimated to be the midpoint of the expenditure category within which the household's expenditure falls.⁹ This adjustment will estimate the portion of household expenditure funded by "other" income sources, for example, private maintenance receipts.

The GHS 2006 does not contain a birth module and therefore *all* women who are biological mothers cannot be identified. Rather, only a subset of mothers can be distinguished using a maternal relationship question. The GHS 2006 asks individuals to indicate the person living in their household who is their biological mother and

⁸ Incomplete information on the value of the "grant in aid" and "social relief" precludes the inclusion of these transfers within the analysis, but the number of recipients of these grants is very small and therefore is not expected to have much effect on results.

⁹ For households that report monthly expenditure greater than or equal to R10,000 – the highest expenditure category - and where this expenditure exceeds total household income, the household will be recorded as having income equal to R10,000.

accordingly, only women who are living in the same household as their biological children will be recognized as mothers.

Working with this sample will underestimate motherhood as it will not include mothers who are *not* co-resident with their children. Furthermore, because the maternal relationship question in the GHS 2006 enquires about biological motherhood, non-biological mothers, such as adoptive and foster mothers who are co-resident with their children, are also likely to be excluded from the sample.

3.2.1 The sample of mothers

In South Africa, many mothers, particularly African mothers, do not live with their children (van der Stoep 2008). Amoateng *et al.* (2007) explore the living arrangements of children under 12 using 1996 and 2001 Population Census data from Statistics South Africa as well as survey data. They find that about 90 per cent of White children lived with parents whilst only about half of African children lived with their parents.

A range of socio-economic, political and cultural factors have led to many African mothers not being co-resident with their children. Marital rates among African women are very low and have been declining in South Africa (Posel and Rogan 2009a; Kalule-Sabiti *et al.* 2007). This has resulted in many African mothers not having the financial support of a male partner. There is also evidence of the increase in female-headed households as well as the relative deprivation of these households (Posel and Rogan 2009a; Armstrong *et al.* 2008; Hoogeveen and Özler 2006; Budlender 2005; Rose and Charlton 2002; Woolard and Leibbrandt 1999). Lower levels of household income have necessitated many African mothers to become labour market participants. Magwaza (2003) finds that lower household income levels in African households compared to White households, have increased the need for African mothers to work, compared to their White counterparts.

African women have tended to be concentrated in domestic work (Casale and Posel 2005) which in many instances has led to mothers residing at their place of employment whilst their children have been cared for by other family members in their household of origin. This arrangement of domestic workers living away from their children is a legacy of South Africa's apartheid system where the Group Areas Act prohibited African women from settling in typically White areas with their children (Zulu and Sibanda 2005). Whilst these laws no longer exist, Posel and Casale (2006) find that there has actually been an increase in female migration in the post-apartheid period. This phenomenon of African female labour migration has therefore led to many African mothers not being co-resident with their children. Posel and van der Stoep (2008) show that in 2002, about 14 per cent of African mothers who were of reproductive age were not co-resident with at least one of their children. In contrast to this, only 4.5 per cent of mothers from other race groups were not living with at least one of their children.

Using data from the 1993 Project for Statistics on Living Standards and Development (PSLSD), and from the 1995, 1997 and 1999 October Household Surveys, Posel and Casale (2003) find that migrant African females are less likely to be married. Moreover, Amoateng *et al.* (2007) note the custom of young, urban, unmarried African women sending their children to live with their parents and grandparents in rural areas. Posel and van der Stoep (2008) analyse data from the GHS 2002 to confirm that not co-resident mothers are more likely to be unmarried. Given that their absence from the household of origin is often due to them seeking out better work opportunities, the labour force participation rate among not co-resident mothers would be expected to be relatively high. This is confirmed by Posel and van der Stoep (2008) who show that not co-resident mothers are much more likely to be labour force participants than co-resident mothers. Thus the sample of co-resident mothers identified in the GHS 2006 is likely to be a non-random sample of mothers that underestimates the labour force participation rate and income levels of mothers, in particular single African mothers.

Mothers who are not co-resident with their children are unlikely to have their labour force participation constrained by childcare commitments. Co-resident mothers, in contrast,

are more likely to have day-to-day childcare responsibilities that keep them out of the labour force, or that make it possible to engage only in part-time employment. Furthermore, given their childcare duties, co-resident mothers would be expected to have lower energy levels than not co-resident mothers. As noted by Becker (1985), childcare is effort-intensive and can drain a women's energy which would impact negatively on their labour force participation. Moreover, if co-resident mothers are in employment, lower energy levels due to their childcare duties may impact negatively on their productivity which would reduce their ability to find better-paying jobs and would reduce their promotion prospects. These factors would have an adverse effect on the income earned by co-resident mothers.¹⁰ The restriction on co-residency therefore makes it possible to compare how, among a group of mothers who face childcare commitments, the economic status of mothers differs by their marital status.

Unobservable characteristics, like motivation and talent, may also be displayed by a particular subset of mothers. Agüero and Marks (2008) note that these two factors may impact negatively on a woman's initial decision to have children as more motivated and talented individuals with greater professional aspirations may not want childrearing to interfere with their career. Similarly, these characteristics may influence a mother's decision not to co-reside with her children. Mothers with greater work ambitions and aptitudes may be motivated to move away from their children and household of origin, to seek better job opportunities. The implication of these unobservable characteristics is that a sample of co-resident mothers may have lower work aspirations and hence exhibit a lower labour force participation rate (or lower earnings if employed) than a sample which includes not co-resident mothers.

In sum, the group of co-resident mothers identified by the GHS 2006 is likely to be a non-random sample of mothers. Given the differences between co-resident and not co-resident mothers, the sample is likely to underestimate the labour force participation rate

¹⁰ As a counterargument, many South African households, particularly among Africans, consist of extended families, which can increase the number of potential caregivers for children (Amoateng *et al.* 2007; Bray and Brandt 2007; Magwaza 2003). Grand-parents, other relatives and even neighbours can care for children whilst a co-resident mother works. This may partially negate the negative effects of childcare on a co-resident mothers labour force participation, productivity and income-earning ability.

and income levels of all mothers. Moreover, as not co-resident mothers are more likely to be single and African, these variables are more likely to be underestimated for single African mothers.

A further implication of using the GHS 2006 is that it asks respondents to identify their “biological” mother which, by definition, would exclude foster or adoptive mothers. There may be instances where an enumerator did not make this explicit and respondents may have recorded a foster or adoptive mother as their biological mother. However, it is likely that many surrogate or foster mothers would not be identified as mothers in the GHS 2006. Again, this exclusion is likely to underestimate motherhood particularly among African women, and particularly in the context of the HIV/AIDS epidemic.

The data limitations, notwithstanding, the sample of mothers identified using the GHS 2006, can be used to gain important insights into the economic status of co-resident mothers, and in particular, to compare the wellbeing of mothers with childcare responsibilities by their marital status. The sample of co-resident biological mothers is restricted to those women aged 19 to 65. The younger age limit reflects the fact that South Africa experiences a high rate of teenage pregnancy (Jewkes *et al.* 2009; Wood and Jewkes 2006). These teenage mothers may still be living with their own parents and attending school, and as such would not be labour market participants. Co-resident children are restricted to the age group of 18 and younger. The focus of this dissertation is on mothers whose children are still dependent on them. Children older than 18 may actually be contributing income to the household and therefore are less likely to represent a pure economic cost to the household. Given this age restriction on children, older women form a very small percentage of the sample of mothers.¹¹

Table 3.1 shows the proportion and counts of all women aged from 19 to 65 with at least one co-resident biological child aged 18 or younger. For simplicity, I will refer to this subset of mothers as *co-resident mothers*. The proportion of women who are co-resident

¹¹ In 2006, less than one per cent of the sample of mothers aged from 19 to 65 living with at least one child aged 18 or younger, was older than 60.

mothers is calculated as (the number of co-resident mothers aged 19 to 65)/(total female population aged 19 to 65).

According to the weighted sample, in 2006, approximately 53 per cent of all women aged 19 to 65 were co-resident mothers.

Table 3. 1: The proportion and counts of co-resident mothers, 2006

	Unweighted	Weighted
Proportion	0.499 (0.003)	0.529 (0.004)
Counts of co-resident mothers	15,503 (88)	7,158,916 (71,100)
Counts of all women aged 19 to 65	31,042 (118)	13,526,607 (96,560)

Source: GHS 2006

Notes: Standard errors are in parentheses. Weighted estimates are obtained by accounting for clustering in the survey design. Accounting for clustering does not affect the magnitude of the weighted estimate but it affects the standard error.

In Table 3.2 I show a break-down of the weighted sample by race. I only include those mothers for whom race data are non-missing.¹² Coloureds and Africans report the highest proportion of co-resident mothers with approximately 55 per cent whilst Whites report the lowest with just under 41 per cent. Among Indian females in the sample, about 48 per cent are co-resident mothers. As noted earlier, the co-residency requirement for motherhood means that the incidence of motherhood will be underestimated particularly among African women due to the high level of female labour migration.

¹² Information on race is missing for approximately 5,829 (weighted) co-resident mothers. The reason for missing data may be enumerator error or mothers may belong to racial groups not specified in the questionnaire.

Table 3. 2: The proportion and counts of co-resident mothers by race, 2006

	African	Coloured	Indian	White
Proportion	0.545 (0.004)	0.550 (0.013)	0.481 (0.028)	0.409 (0.016)
Counts of co-resident mothers	5,676,526 (62,414)	706,299 (24,045)	176,032 (15,053)	594,230 (30,574)

Source: GHS 2006

Notes: Standard errors are in parentheses. Weighted estimates are obtained by accounting for clustering in the survey design. Accounting for clustering does not affect the magnitude of the weighted estimate but it affects the standard error. Estimates only include co-resident mothers for whom race information is non-missing.

In Table 3.3 I use the weighted sample to differentiate co-resident mothers by race and marital status. I exclude those mothers for whom race or marital status data are missing. Mothers who are identified as ‘married’ are those who indicated their marital status to be ‘married’ or ‘living together like husband and wife’, whilst ‘single’ denotes mothers who are reported as being either ‘divorced or separated’, ‘widowed’ or ‘never married’.

Table 3.3 shows that whilst co-resident mothers are more likely to be married, more than 44 per cent of co-resident mothers are single. These figures suggest that there is a high incidence of single motherhood in South Africa. Indian and White co-resident mothers are far more likely to be married with only about 11 per cent being single. In comparison to other race groups, Africans are the least likely to be married; indeed they are as likely to be married as unmarried. Furthermore, given the co-residency sample restriction, and the fact that not co-resident mothers are more likely to be single African women, the number and proportion of African single mothers is likely to be underestimated in this sample.

Table 3. 3: The proportion and counts of co-resident mothers by marital status and race, 2006

	Single	Married
	0.444 (0.006)	0.556* (0.006)
All	3,179,316 (43,700)	3,973,426* (55,860)
	0.498 (0.006)	0.502 (0.006)
African	2,826,646 (41,514)	2,849,535 (46,590)
	0.376 (0.016)	0.624* (0.016)
Coloured	265,885 (14,241)	440,415* (19,349)
	0.113 (0.026)	0.887* (0.026)
Indian	19,915 (4,759)	156,117* (14,260)
	0.113 (0.015)	0.887* (0.015)
White	66,871 (9,631)	527,359* (28,899)

Source: GHS 2006

Notes: Standard errors are in parentheses, counts are on the bottom half of each cell. Weighted estimates are obtained by accounting for clustering in the survey design. Estimates only include co-resident mothers for whom race and marital status information is non-missing.

* indicates a significant difference in proportions and counts across single co-resident mothers and married co-resident mothers using a 95 percent confidence interval.

The primary objective of this dissertation is to investigate whether the economic status of single mothers is different to that of their married counterparts. Political policies during apartheid were designed to benefit Whites, and therefore have resulted in an inequitable resource distribution with Africans, on average, being worse off than Whites. To provide a comprehensive overview of the economic status of single mothers, I investigate the African and White population groups, with the latter group expected to be better off. Also of importance, however, is to examine the effect of marital status on mothers *within* each population group to see if single mothers are worse off than their married

counterparts within these groups. For the remainder of this chapter, results are reported for the weighted sample of African and White co-resident mothers, excluding those for whom race and marital status data are missing. The weighted sample, therefore, consists of 5,676,181 African co-resident mothers of whom 2,826,646 are single and 594,230 White co-resident mothers of whom 66,871 are single.

3.3 Comparing the characteristics of single and married co-resident mothers

3.3.1 Individual characteristics of co-resident mothers by marital status

Table 3.4 shows the individual characteristics of African and White co-resident mothers. Single co-resident mothers from both racial groups on average, are younger and less likely to have tertiary qualifications than their married counterparts. This is consistent with findings by Pandey and Kim (2008) that single mothers in the USA tend to be younger and less educated than married mothers. A key aspect to comparing co-resident mothers by their marital status is to compare their labour market status and their average earnings. In this dissertation I use the broad definition of the labour force which includes the employed, the searching unemployed and the non-searching unemployed. The reason for this is that I recognize the possibility that there may be unemployed mothers who would be prepared to work but who have become discouraged because of very high rates of unemployment and hence have given up actively searching for work.

Among African women, single co-resident mothers are significantly more likely than married mothers to be unemployed. However, the difference in the proportions employed by marital status is *not* significant. This is perhaps surprising as a higher proportion of single mothers would be expected to be working compared to married mothers. Single mothers lack the financial support of a co-resident spouse and are more likely to be household heads than married mothers; hence, they would have a greater responsibility to earn income. Given that migrant mothers are excluded from the sample, however, the employment rate of African single mothers in particular, is likely to be underestimated. Another reason for the lower than expected employment rate among single mothers is

that compared to married mothers, there is a higher incidence of teenage pregnancy. Teenage mothers are more likely to be living at home and not working than older mothers. Furthermore, African single co-resident mothers may be living in households where other family members provide financial support. Table 3.4 shows that more than half of single African mothers are not the head of their household which may indicate that other family members are responsible for supporting the family financially.

The significantly higher unemployment rate among African single co-resident mothers may be explained by the fact that they do not have a live-in partner to assist with childcare duties. Childcare responsibilities may limit the employment opportunities available to these women. However, as a proportion of the unemployed, approximately 44 per cent of single co-resident mothers are non-searching, compared to just under 52 per cent of married co-resident mothers. This would suggest that childcare is a greater impediment to active job search for married co-resident mothers. This may be indicative of the fact that a single mother has a greater need to work and is forced to make alternative childcare arrangements to search for work.

African single co-resident mothers are more likely than their married counterparts to live in rural areas where traditionally job opportunities have been inferior to those in metropolitan areas (Burger and Woolard 2005). This may also explain the higher unemployment rate among single mothers. Moreover, this is likely to explain partially why employed married co-resident mothers earn, on average, over 34 per cent more than employed single co-resident mothers. Lower levels of tertiary education among single mothers, necessitating that they work in lower-paying jobs is another possible reason for this large difference in earnings. Again, it is important to note that not co-resident single African mothers are excluded from this analysis due to the sample restriction and for the reasons outlined in section 3.2.1, this may have resulted in the economic status of African single mothers being underestimated.

In contrast to African women who are co-resident mothers, single White women who are co-resident mothers are significantly more likely to be employed than White married co-

resident mothers. Among White women, the employment rate for single co-resident mothers is approximately 85 per cent, compared to just under 67 per cent for married co-resident mothers. Single co-resident White mothers are also less likely to be unemployed than their married counterparts, however, the difference is not statistically significant. Moreover there is not a significant difference in individual earnings among White mothers by marital status. White single co-resident mothers may earn the same or even slightly more, on average, than their married counterparts; however, they are also more likely to be the primary income provider in the family.¹³ The salaries of married co-resident mothers are likely to be complemented by the earnings of a partner.

A comparison of labour market indicators among African and White co-resident mothers reveals that White women are considerably better off than African women. This difference reflects the results of historical inequalities in educational and job opportunities due to apartheid-era policies. Whilst significant steps have been taken to redress these imbalances, inequalities still persist. Resource shifts to traditionally African schools have not succeeded in smoothing out quality differences in education between those and traditionally White schools (Van der Berg 2007). Furthermore, empowerment legislation designed to improve job prospects for all Africans has been criticized for only enriching a minority (Besada 2007). Africans therefore continue to have less access to resources, as evidenced by the significantly lower levels of employment and average earnings among African co-resident mothers compared to their White counterparts.

¹³ The head of the household is often the primary income provider (Posel and Rogan 2009a) and in 2006, approximately 60 per cent of employed White single co-resident mothers were household heads compared to just over seven per cent of their employed married counterparts.

Table 3. 4: Individual characteristics of co-resident mothers by marital status, 2006

	Single		Married	
	African			
Metropolitan area	0.248	(0.009)	0.291*	(0.010)
Age	33.532	(0.162)	37.053*	(0.171)
Proportion of mothers aged 19	0.018	(0.002)	0.006*	(0.002)
Proportion of mothers who are heads of households	0.445	(0.008)	0.201*	(0.007)
Highest level of education:				
No schooling	0.077	(0.004)	0.113*	(0.005)
Grade 1 to grade 7	0.208	(0.007)	0.260*	(0.008)
Grade 8 to grade 11	0.432	(0.008)	0.372*	(0.009)
Matric	0.219	(0.007)	0.160*	(0.007)
Degree or diploma	0.062	(0.005)	0.092*	(0.006)
Employment status and income:				
Proportion employed	0.315	(0.008)	0.314	(0.008)
Proportion unemployed	0.489	(0.008)	0.399*	(0.009)
Proportion of unemployed who are non-searching	0.436	(0.012)	0.518*	(0.015)
Average monthly earnings from employment	1860.812	(85.423)	2497.910*	(120.972)
	White			
Metropolitan area	0.659	(0.059)	0.559	(0.027)
Age	36.333	(1.408)	37.128	(0.437)
Proportion of mothers aged 19	0.000	(0.000)	0.000	(0.000)
Proportion of mothers who are heads of households	0.535	(0.072)	0.058*	(0.012)
Highest level of education:				
No schooling	0.005	(0.005)	0.000	(0.000)
Grade 1 to grade 7	0.007	(0.007)	0.012	(0.006)
Grade 8 to grade 11	0.259	(0.060)	0.187	(0.020)
Matric	0.450	(0.072)	0.456	(0.028)
Degree or diploma	0.279	(0.064)	0.342	(0.027)
Employment status and income:				
Proportion employed	0.854	(0.047)	0.669*	(0.026)
Proportion unemployed	0.042	(0.020)	0.094	(0.016)
Proportion of unemployed who are non-searching	0.389	(0.245)	0.529	(0.091)
Average monthly earnings from employment	8771.443	(2041.357)	8034.942	(497.466)

Source: GHS 2006

Notes: Standard errors are in parentheses. Weighted estimates are obtained by accounting for clustering in the survey design. Estimates only include co-resident mothers for whom race and marital status information is non-missing. The broad unemployment rate includes both the searching and the non-searching unemployed.

* indicates a significant difference in means and proportions across single co-resident mothers and married co-resident mothers using a 95 percent confidence interval.

3.3.2 Household characteristics of co-resident mothers by marital status

To gain greater insight into the economic status of co-resident mothers, it is necessary to look also at household characteristics. The size of a household relative to its total resources can be used to measure average access to resources in the household. African single co-resident mothers live in significantly larger households than African married co-resident mothers. Thus total resources in the households in which African single co-resident mother live would have to be shared among a larger group of people. With regards to White women, however, there is very little difference in household size when comparing the two groups of mothers. This is perhaps surprising given that single-mother households do not include a male adult partner. Further inspection of the data reveals that although, on average, there are significantly fewer men living in single co-resident mothers' households, there are significantly more adult females compared to the households in which married co-resident mothers live.

Table 3.5 shows that compared to married co-resident mothers, both African and White single co-resident mothers live with fewer employed males older than 18. This would be expected given that single co-resident mothers do not have a co-resident male partner. Single co-resident mothers also live with more women over 18 who are employed which would suggest that single-mother households are more dependent on women's earnings. This is reinforced by the fact that both African and White single mothers are significantly more likely to live in female-headed households than their married counterparts. Given that women, on average, earn less than men, living in a household with employed women may not provide the same level of financial security as living with an employed male partner, *ceteris paribus*.

African single co-resident mothers live in households that include a greater number of unemployed individuals – particularly unemployed women – than African married co-resident mothers. However, among White mothers, there is not a large difference in the number of unemployed household residents when comparing single and married co-resident mothers' households. The difference in the number of employed persons in

White and African households may be indicative of the racial differences in education levels and access to employment. Whilst both African and White single co-resident mothers have the same need to work, White women would have traditionally benefited from better employment prospects than African women.

In general, single co-resident mothers live with more pensioners which would suggest greater dependence on pension and grant income. Moreover, African single mothers are more likely than White single mothers to live with women and men over 59 and 64 respectively. This may indicate a greater reliance on pension income particularly in the households in which African single co-resident mothers reside.

Table 3. 5: Household characteristics of co-resident mothers by marital status, 2006

	Single		Married	
	African			
Proportion of households with female heads	0.801	(0.007)	0.250*	(0.007)
Household composition – Average:¹⁴				
Household size	6.073	(0.043)	5.278*	(0.039)
Number of women over 18	2.160	(0.018)	1.434*	(0.013)
Number of men over 18	0.772	(0.015)	1.153*	(0.013)
Number of employed women over 18	0.557	(0.012)	0.371*	(0.010)
Number of employed men over 18	0.194	(0.008)	0.627*	(0.010)
Number of unemployed women between 18 and 60	0.934	(0.015)	0.588*	(0.012)
Number of unemployed men between 18 & 65	0.330	(0.010)	0.290*	(0.010)
Number of women over the age of 59 in household	0.223	(0.007)	0.074*	(0.004)
Number of men over the age of 64 in household	0.065	(0.004)	0.048*	(0.003)
Number of children 18 and younger	3.139	(0.028)	2.688*	(0.028)
	White			
Proportion of households with female heads	0.717	(0.064)	0.062*	(0.014)
Household composition – Average:				
Household size	3.860	(0.237)	4.057	(0.052)
Number of women over 18	1.693	(0.105)	1.145*	(0.019)
Number of men over 18	0.659	(0.143)	1.083*	(0.019)
Number of employed women over 18	1.263	(0.115)	0.721*	(0.029)
Number of employed men over 18	0.460	(0.120)	0.981*	(0.018)
Number of unemployed women between 18 and 60	0.105	(0.041)	0.112	(0.017)
Number of unemployed men between 18 & 65	0.030	(0.016)	0.036	(0.010)
Number of women over the age of 59 in household	0.121	(0.043)	0.026	(0.007)
Number of men over the age of 64 in household	0.030	(0.017)	0.016	(0.005)
Number of children 18 and younger	1.508	(0.086)	1.829	(0.045)

Source: GHS 2006

Notes: Standard errors are in parentheses. Weighted estimates are obtained by accounting for clustering in the survey design. Estimates only include co-resident mothers for whom race and marital status information is non-missing. The broad unemployment rate includes both the searching and the non-searching unemployed.

* indicates a significant difference in means and proportions across single co-resident mothers and married co-resident mothers using a 95 percent confidence interval.

¹⁴ Estimates referring to women include the co-resident mother.

African single co-resident mothers, on average, live in households with significantly more children than their married counterparts. Furthermore, White co-resident mothers are likely to live with fewer children than African co-resident mothers, and there is little difference in the total number of co-resident children when comparing White mothers by marital status. Therefore, of all co-resident mothers analysed African single women would be expected to be the most disadvantaged as not only do they live with more children, but their overall household sizes are larger. Moreover, they are likely to live with fewer employed males and therefore be more dependent on the income of a woman. All of these factors would be expected to contribute towards them having less access to resources as shown in table 3.6.

Among Africans, single co-resident mothers' households are more dependent on pension and grant income than on earnings. In contrast, married co-resident mothers live in households in which wages and salaries are the main source of income. Married mothers are more likely to be able to pool their earnings with those of a male spouse which would provide a reason why salaries and wages are the primary income source in their households. As explained further on in section 3.3.2, female earnings, on average, make up less than 50 per cent of the total household income of 5,778 Rands which implies that the earnings of a married mother's spouse are likely to provide the primary financial support for the household. In contrast, single mothers do not benefit from the earnings of a co-resident male partner. Furthermore, given that single mothers, on average, live with more unemployed individuals than married mothers, single co-resident mothers would be expected to be more reliant on public transfers, as shown in Table 3.6.

For all measures of average monthly household income (total, per capita, and adult equivalent) excluding grant income, households in which African single co-resident mothers live have significantly lower levels of income than households in which African married co-resident mothers reside. Adult equivalent income is calculated by attaching a weight of one to an adult, and 0.5 to a child aged 12 or younger. The cost of a child to a household is widely acknowledged to be less than the cost of an adult (Woolard and

Leibbrandt 1999). For this reason, when calculating household adult equivalent income, a larger weighting is given to an adult than to a child.

If an African co-resident mother is employed then she is likely to be better off than a mother who is unemployed or economically inactive, regardless of her marital status. However, vast differences do exist when comparing African co-resident mothers by marital status. If an African married co-resident mother is employed, the per capita income, and adult equivalent income of her household are, on average, both over 90 per cent higher than those in an employed African single mother's household. When measuring the per capita and adult equivalent income for African co-resident mothers who are *unemployed or economically inactive* again these values are, on average, significantly higher – by at least 73 per cent - for married women. This would suggest that married co-resident mothers receive considerable financial support from other income earning individuals, most likely their male partner. When comparing the households in which single co-resident mothers live to the households of married co-resident mothers, the differences in per capita income are more pronounced than differences in total income.¹⁵ This indicates that African single co-resident mothers, on average, live in larger households than their married counterparts.

The main source of income for a White household, regardless of a mother's marital status, is salaries and wages. Only about five per cent of White households within the sample report other primary income sources. Like Africans, the households in which White single co-resident mothers live, on average, report less monthly income for all measures except grant income. When comparing employed White mothers, on average, per capita income is about 19 per cent higher, and adult equivalent income is about 31 per cent higher in married co-resident mothers' households. When White mothers are *unemployed or economically inactive*, differences are considerably larger: on average, per capita and adult equivalent income in married co-resident mothers' households are higher

¹⁵ Total household income for employed African married co-resident mothers is, on average, nearly 87 per cent higher than that for employed African single co-resident mothers. Total household income for unemployed or economically inactive African married co-resident mothers is, on average, just over 35 per cent higher than that for unemployed or economically inactive African single co-resident mothers.

by about 240 per cent and 245 per cent respectively. Unemployed or economically inactive married co-resident mothers are more than likely supported by their income earning male partner. The greater differences in adult equivalent income between single and married co-resident mothers, compared to the smaller differences in per capita income, indicate that White single co-resident mothers' households, on average, consist of more adults and fewer children than the households of their married counterparts. The vast differences in household income highlight the important role that earnings (particularly from income-earning males) can play in increasing the economic well-being of households in which single co-resident mothers live.

Table 3.6: Household income of co-resident mothers by marital status, 2006

	Single		Married	
	African			
Main source of income¹⁶:				
Salaries and wages	0.404	(0.008)	0.610*	(0.009)
Remittances	0.122	(0.005)	0.129	(0.006)
Pensions and grants	0.422	(0.008)	0.208*	(0.007)
Average monthly measures of household income if mother employed:				
Grant income	397.500	(15.076)	227.252*	(10.285)
Total income	3095.888	(116.436)	5777.660*	(290.485)
Per capita income	659.249	(27.336)	1271.397*	(66.199)
Income per adult equivalent	790.888	(35.131)	1512.902*	(80.457)
Average monthly measures of household income if mother unemployed/economically inactive:				
Grant income	733.685	(13.919)	436.502*	(12.724)
Total income	1678.995	(50.302)	2271.492*	(65.579)
Per capita income	273.614	(9.628)	479.459*	(15.569)
Income per adult equivalent	331.235	(11.280)	576.303*	(18.598)
White				
Main source of income:				
Salaries and wages	0.958	(0.017)	0.946	(0.011)
Remittances	0.008	(0.007)	0.002	(0.002)
Pensions and grants	0.019	(0.011)	0.007	(0.004)
Average monthly measures of household income if mother employed:				
Grant income	60.627	(35.509)	15.658	(5.364)
Total income	11348.540	(1695.910)	17699.290*	(937.721)
Per capita income	3863.561	(874.047)	4597.068	(243.750)
Income per adult equivalent	4155.614	(864.656)	5435.148	(303.589)
Average monthly measures of household income if mother unemployed/economically inactive:				
Grant income	232.805	(123.942)	52.010	(14.307)
Total income	4642.884	(1082.569)	14137.770*	(2532.801)
Per capita income	999.508	(279.332)	3399.547*	(572.460)
Income per adult equivalent	1214.073	(377.977)	4190.778*	(797.134)

Source: GHS 2006

Notes: Standard errors are in parentheses. Weighted estimates are obtained by accounting for clustering in the survey design. Estimates only include co-resident mothers for whom race and marital status information is non-missing. The broad unemployment rate includes both the searching and the non-searching unemployed.

* indicates a significant difference in means and proportions across single co-resident mothers and married co-resident mothers using a 95 percent confidence interval.

¹⁶ Three other sources of income: 'Selling farm products', 'Other non-farm income' and 'No income' are very small percentages hence are excluded from the table.

To further explore differences in the economic status of single and married mothers, I plot the kernel density of total and per capita household monthly income for co-resident mothers by their marital status. Income in South Africa is very unequally distributed (Van der Berg *et al.* 2009), thus a comparison of average income does not reveal the true extent of inequality. The kernel density plots highlight differences in access to resources along the distribution of income.

Figures 3.1 and 3.2 show that the total, and per capita, household monthly incomes of African single co-resident mothers are concentrated at around 800 Rands and 150 Rands respectively. These same diagrams illustrate the kernel density plots representing the incomes of African married co-resident mothers. These density plots spike at similar levels, but the proportion of married mothers receiving these incomes is far below that of single mothers. Beyond total and per capita incomes of about 2,000 Rands and 400 Rands respectively the kernel density plots representing household incomes of African married co-resident mothers lie above those of their single counterparts which illustrates that married mothers are far more likely to have greater access to resources.

In Figure 3.3, the kernel density plot which graphs the total household monthly income of White single co-resident mothers is at a maximum at about 5,000 Rands which is well below the 9,000 Rands at which the plot for White married co-resident mothers is approximately at its highest. Moreover, beyond 13,000 Rands the total income graph for married mothers lies above that of single mothers which shows that married mothers' households have far greater access to resources. A similar pattern is shown for per capita household monthly income in Figure 3.4 with the resources of single and married mothers being concentrated at around 1,000 and 2,000 Rands respectively. A comparison across graphs illustrates that African co-resident mothers are substantially worse off than White co-resident mothers. Furthermore, of the four groups of mothers, White married co-resident mothers are the most economically advantaged as they have far greater access to resources.

Figure 3.1 Kernel density plot of total household monthly income of co-resident African mothers by marital status, South Africa 2006

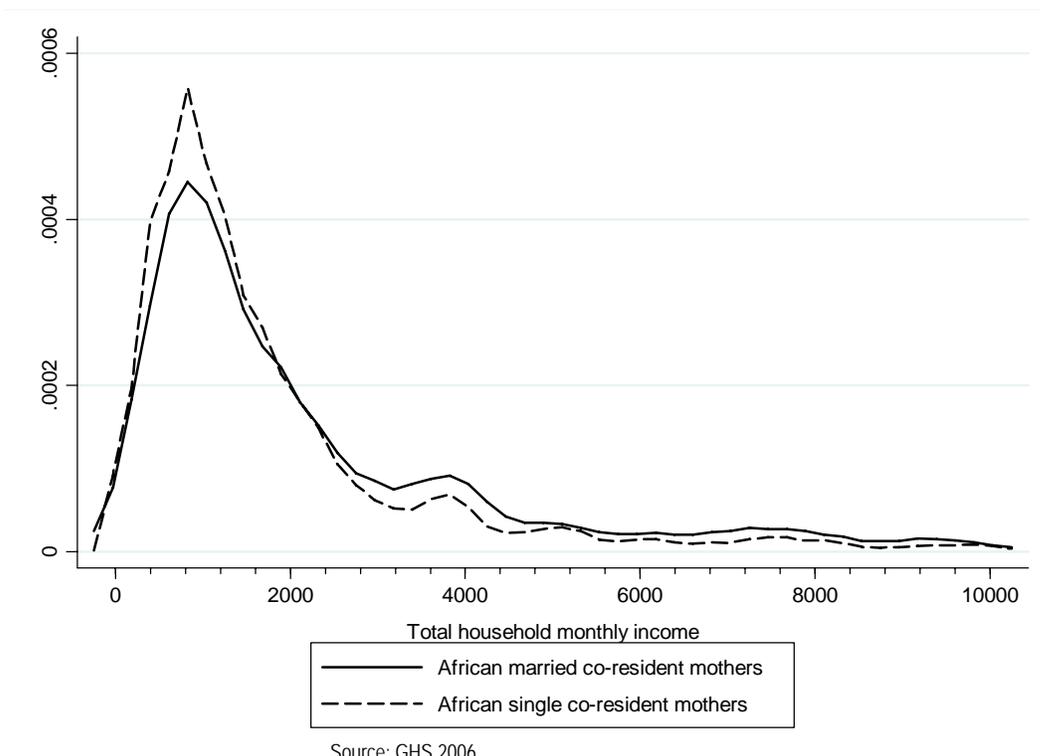


Figure 3.2 Kernel density plot of per capita household monthly income of co-resident African mothers by marital status, South Africa 2006

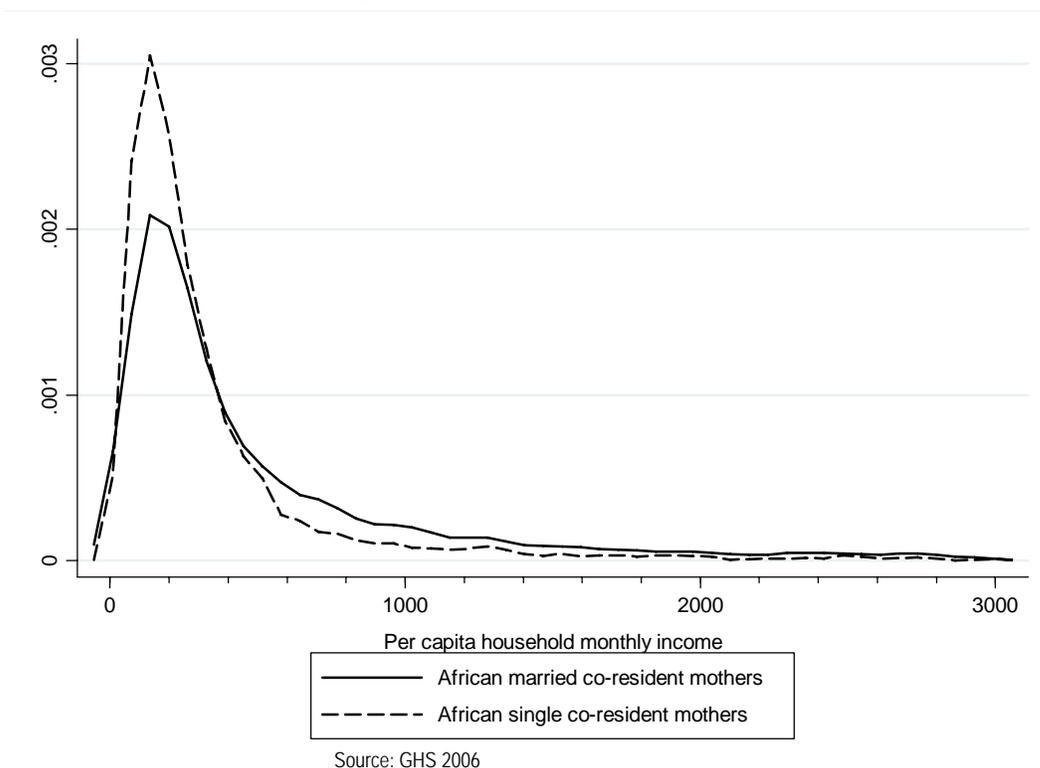


Figure 3.3 Kernel density plot of total household monthly income of co-resident White mothers by marital status, South Africa 2006

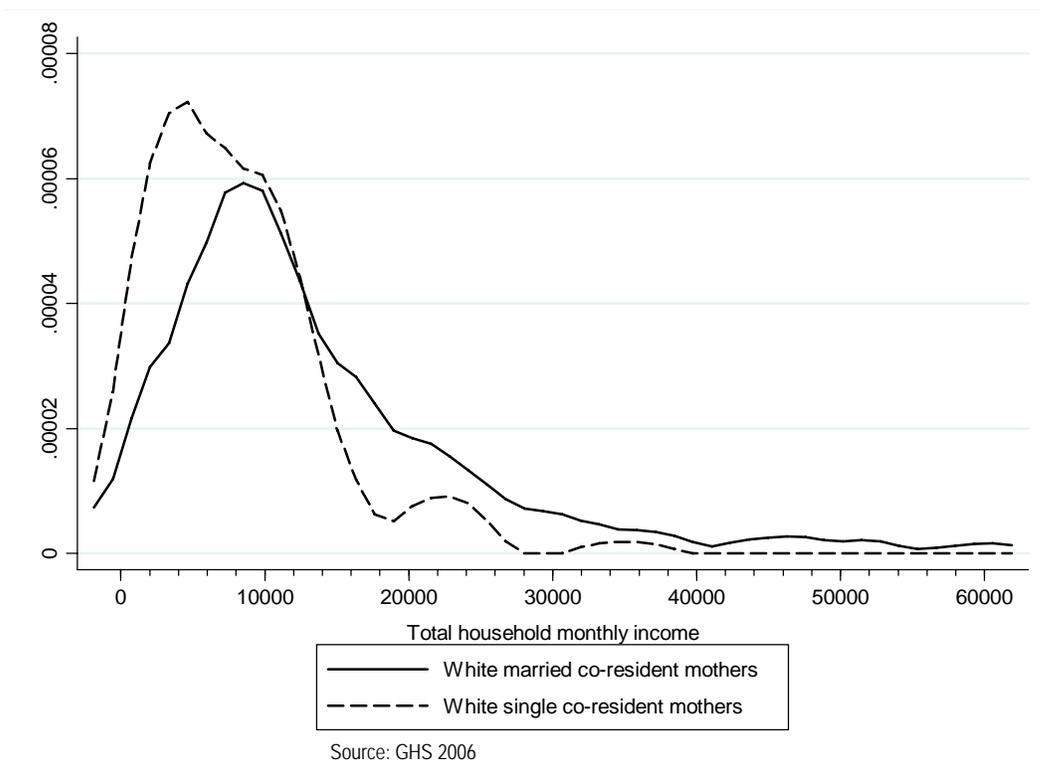
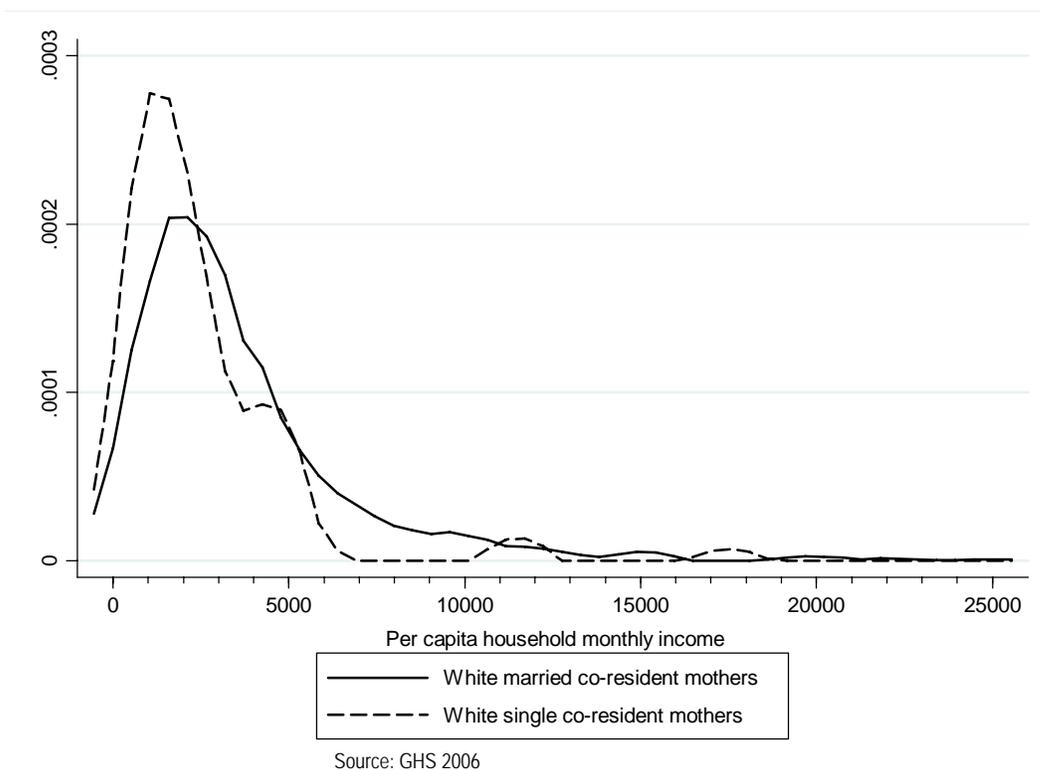


Figure 3.4 Kernel density plot of per capita household monthly income of co-resident White mothers by marital status, South Africa 2006



With the information in Tables 3.4 and 3.6, it is possible to calculate the extent to which a mother's salary supports her household. In African households, on average, the individual income of an employed single co-resident mother is 1,861 Rands and the income/expenditure of her household is 3,096 Rands. According to these figures, the household is supported 60 per cent by the mother's salary, 13 per cent by grant income (average grant income is 398 Rands) and 27 per cent by some other source of funding. The average earnings of an African married co-resident mother are 2,498 Rands which makes up a far lower 43 per cent of her household's total income of 5,778 Rands.

In White households, on average, the individual income of an employed single co-resident mother is 8,771 Rands and her household's income/expenditure is 11,349 Rands. According to these figures, the household is supported 77 per cent by the mother's salary and 23 per cent by another source of funding. In contrast to single African mothers, the support from grant income is small at less than one per cent. A White married co-resident mother, on average, earns 8,035 Rands which comprises 45 per cent of her household's total income of 17,699 Rands. This proportion is very similar to that of African married co-resident mothers.

The "other" source of financial support that is likely to fund African and White single co-resident mothers households by up to 27 per cent and 23 per cent respectively is private maintenance from the father of the child. It is important to remember that the GHS 2006 does not capture private maintenance receipts. To overcome this problem, I adjusted household income using expenditure data. This will not give an exact figure for private maintenance but it can give an indication of the extent to which fathers contribute towards their children's economic wellbeing.

Table 3.7 shows the average number of grants received by households and confirms that African households are more dependent on grant income than White households. Moreover, the households in which African single co-resident mothers live, on average, receive significantly more state pension payments, Child Support Grants and disability grants than the households in which African married co-resident mothers reside. This

would suggest that single African mothers are far more reliant on public sector assistance for their economic wellbeing. White co-resident mothers, on average, receive very few grants and the differences in mean proportions are not significant by marital status.

Table 3.7: Average number of grants received in co-resident mothers' households, by marital status of the mother, 2006

	Single		Married	
	African			
Type of Grant				
Pension	0.280	(0.008)	0.117*	(0.006)
Child support	1.478	(0.024)	1.023*	(0.021)
Disability	0.140	(0.007)	0.094*	(0.006)
Care dependency	0.009	(0.002)	0.009	(0.003)
Foster care	0.023	(0.003)	0.013	(0.003)
	White			
Type of Grant				
Pension	0.081	(0.038)	0.027	(0.008)
Child support	0.027	(0.018)	0.010	(0.004)
Disability	0.014	(0.009)	0.013	(0.004)
Care dependency	0.003	(0.003)	0.000	(0.000)
Foster care	0.000	(0.000)	0.000	(0.000)

Source: GHS 2006

Notes: Standard errors are in parentheses. Weighted estimates are obtained by accounting for clustering in the survey design. Estimates only include co-resident mothers for whom race and marital status information is non-missing.

* indicates a significant difference in means across single co-resident mothers and married co-resident mothers using a 95 percent confidence interval.

3.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have explained that the primary reason for using the GHS 2006 is that it includes data on grant receipts and this information is required when analysing the economic status of South African mothers. Public transfers, especially Child Support Grants, would be expected to contribute towards the welfare of mothers and their children, in particular, in single-mother families. I have also clarified that the limitation of using this dataset is that it is only possible to identify a sample of mothers who are co-resident with their children. The GHS 2006 does not contain a birth module hence it is only possible to identify mothers via household relationship questions which imposes a co-residency requirement on motherhood. I noted that the restriction on co-resident mothers is likely to underestimate the economic wellbeing of all mothers, principally

African single mothers, because many African single mothers are migrant labourers who have left their children in their household of origin to search for better work opportunities.

Despite this restriction, I have used data from the GHS 2006 to gain valuable insights into the welfare of co-resident mothers by marital status. I have shown that African and White single co-resident mothers are more likely to live in households with lower monthly incomes than their married counterparts. This can be largely explained by the fact that single co-resident mothers are likely to live with fewer employed men, thus they have less access to the income of an employed male. Moreover, I have calculated that when a single co-resident mother is employed, her household is very dependent on her income. In contrast to this, a married co-resident mother's earnings make up less than 50 per cent of her household's total income. Furthermore, African single co-resident mothers are more likely to depend on social grants, in particular state pensions and Child Support Grants for their economic wellbeing. As discussed in Chapter Two, a household with greater reliance on the earnings of a female and on grant income is expected to be worse off than a household that is supported by an employed man. In Chapter Three I have shown that married co-resident mothers, who are more likely to benefit from the income of a male partner, are indeed, on average, better off than their single counterparts.

In line with expectations, economic wellbeing differed along racial lines with White mothers, on average, being better off than African mothers. Using kernel density plots I was able to show that inequalities exist not only with regard to mean proportions but along the distribution of income as well. Moreover, inequitable income distributions were evident *within* both racial groups when comparing co-resident mothers by marital status with single mothers being concentrated in lower income brackets.

Using the GHS 2006, I have shown that there are many single co-resident mothers in South Africa. Indeed, nearly 3.2 million single mothers of all races were identified as living with their children. If *not* co-resident mothers were also included, the incidence of single motherhood would be higher. Given that, on average, they have access to fewer

resources, single mothers and their children would be expected to be far more susceptible to poverty than traditional two-parent families. To complete the investigation of economic status, a poverty analysis would need to be conducted to assess the vulnerability of single mothers and to identify which income sources are most successful in alleviating their situation.

Chapter Four

Comparing the socio-economic status of mothers by marital status

4.1 Introduction

Poverty levels in South Africa have been widely researched. Apartheid-era policies resulted in a very unequal allocation of resources with Whites being the primary beneficiaries of these laws and Africans being left considerably worse off (Seekings 2007). Given South Africa's racially segregated history, many poverty studies have focused on the racial distribution of resources (see for example Van der Berg *et al.* 2009; Van der Berg *et al.* 2007; Hoogeveen and Özler 2006). Other studies have explored the gendered access to resources (see for example Armstrong and Burger 2009; Posel and Rogan 2009a; Posel and Rogan 2009b; Bhorat and van der Westhuizen 2008; Budlender 2005). There has, however, been little work on poverty incidence among mothers, and in particular, on how the extent and depth of poverty varies by the marital status of mothers.

In this chapter I investigate poverty levels of African and White co-resident mothers by marital status. I calculate several poverty indices and I use a decomposition technique to determine the contribution made by various categories of income to poverty reduction. I also explore more qualitative measures of poverty by analysing various lifestyle indicators to gain an understanding of the quality of life experienced by single co-resident mothers compared to married co-resident mothers.

In section 4.2 I report the Foster-Greer-Thorbecke (FGT) measures of poverty for single and married co-resident mothers and I graph the Cumulative Distribution Functions (CDFs) of per capita household monthly income of co-resident mothers by their marital status. I then investigate the contribution that various income sources make to poverty alleviation in section 4.3. This is achieved by decomposing the FGT measures of poverty using the Shapley-value. In section 4.4 I analyse various indicators of wellbeing. The

areas that I explore are co-resident mothers' health status, their community welfare and their asset ownership. Section 4.5 concludes the chapter by providing a brief summary of the key findings.

4.2 Poverty estimates for single and married co-resident mothers

The first objective in conducting a poverty analysis is determining an appropriate measure of poverty. Traditionally, poverty has been measured using household data (Budlender 2005). Per capita (or per adult equivalent) income is measured by dividing total household income by the number of household occupants (or by a weighted number of occupants). An individual is then considered poor if this calculated measure falls below an individual (or adult) poverty line. A problem with this method is that it assumes that resources are distributed fairly and equally among household members, which is not always true (Lemke *et al.* 2003). If there is an unequal resource distribution with, for example a male household-head retaining more income for his own use, leaving a female occupant relatively disadvantaged, this measure of poverty will underestimate individual poverty levels (Posel and Rogan 2009a).

The availability of individual-level data would address this issue; however, the extra costs of gathering this information are likely to outweigh the benefits (Morduch 2005). Moreover, it is often impossible to apportion the various flows of income among household residents accurately. Consequently, individual-level data that correctly reflect intra-household resource allocation are seldom available and hence this inequality is often not accounted for in a poverty analysis (Ferreira and Ravallion 2008; Gibson 2005). Given the difficulties associated with accounting for disparities in intra-household resource allocations, I do not adjust for this in the analysis. However, I augment the measures of average poverty incidence by exploring various quality of life indicators in section 4.4.

A criticism of using a poverty line is that it is an unrealistic measure as, at the point where the line is positioned, one monetary unit separates a poor household from a non-

poor household (Woolard and Leibbrandt 1999). It is improbable that one monetary unit will lift a poor household out of poverty. Furthermore, conventionally a poverty line is developed by determining what constitutes the basic necessities of a household. The cost of all these items is added up and the poverty line is positioned at this total cost. A problem of subjectivity arises as one individual's needs may be very different from another's. In terms of basic food requirements, for example, one person may require fewer kilojoules daily in order to survive compared to somebody else (Morduch 2005; Woolard and Leibbrandt 1999). Deciding on a poverty line is therefore a normative issue and will depend on value judgments regarding what comprises basic needs, and what does not.

Despite these limitations, measuring poverty with a poverty line can be used to gain valuable insights into whether co-resident mothers and individuals in their households are maintaining a basic standard of living or not. Hoogeveen and Özler (2006) use the 'cost-of-basic-needs' approach to construct a normative poverty line. Using 2000 prices, they calculate a lower-bound poverty line of 322 Rands per capita per month. Following their approach but using 2006 prices I use a poverty line of 431 Rands per capita per month which factors in an inflation rate of 34 per cent from 2000 to 2006 (Statistics South Africa 2008). A co-resident mother is then classified as poor if she lives in a household where average per capita monthly household income is below this line. The advantage of using this approach is that this poverty line has been used in previous research in South Africa and therefore results can be broadly compared with other studies that have looked at gendered access to resources, and overall poverty levels (see for example Posel and Rogan 2009a; Posel and Rogan 2009b; Bhorat and van der Westhuizen 2008; Hoogeveen and Özler 2006).

Using the poverty line of 431 Rands, I report the Foster-Greer-Thorbecke (FGT) measures of the headcount rate, the poverty gap ratio and the poverty gap ratio squared. The FGT poverty measures can be written as (Woolard and Leibbrandt 1999):

$$P_{\alpha} = \frac{1}{n} \sum_{i=1}^q \left[\frac{z - y_i}{z} \right]^{\alpha} \quad \text{For } \alpha \geq 0$$

where

z is the poverty line

y_i is the standard of living indicator (for example income or expenditure measure) of the i th household

q represents the population that falls below the poverty line

n is the total population

α is the “aversion to poverty” parameter (as α approaches infinity it reflects the poverty of only the poorest individual)

The headcount rate (P_0) calculates how many individuals are below the poverty line. It measures the proportion of the population that is poor and is obtained by setting $\alpha=0$. A problem with the headcount index is that it violates the monotonicity axiom thus if the income of a person below the poverty line were reduced, this would not be reflected as an increase in this measure of poverty (Sen 1976). Consequently, P_0 does not give an accurate indication of the depth of poverty as it weights individuals very close to the poverty line the same as those individuals very far from the poverty line (Angeriz and Chakravarty 2008; Morduch 2005). A further limitation of the headcount index is that it does not satisfy the transfer axiom (Sen 1976). Thus, if income were transferred from a person below the poverty line to someone who is richer, although this would increase the severity of poverty within the population, P_0 would not increase.

The poverty gap (P_1) measures the average distance a poor person is from the poverty line and is obtained by setting $\alpha=1$. The poverty gap has the advantage over the headcount index that it satisfies the monotonicity axiom and therefore provides an indication of the depth of poverty amongst the poor. A problem with the poverty gap index is that it does not reflect the inequality among the poor and the measure therefore fails the principle of transfers (Angeriz and Chakravarty 2008; Sen 1976).

A third FGT poverty index is the poverty gap squared (P_2). This index provides a measure of the severity of poverty and can be written as (Woolard and Leibbrandt 1999):

$$P_2 = \frac{PG^2}{H} + \frac{(H - PG)^2}{H} CV_p^2$$

where

CV_p^2 is the squared coefficient of the variation of income among the poor

PG is the poverty gap index

H is the headcount index

This formulation of the poverty gap squared highlights that the measure depends partly on the poverty gap and partly on how income is distributed amongst the poor. The measure therefore satisfies the principle of transfers and as such, it is a comprehensive index that can be used in drawing comparisons over time, or across different policy options (Angeriz and Chakravarty 2008; Woolard and Leibbrandt 1999). Morduch (2005) clarifies that if the poorest individuals experience increased access to resources, then this will have the largest impact on the poverty gap squared index. It is the poorest people for whom the poverty gap is greatest; consequently closing this gap will have the largest effect on the index when it is squared. Similarly, if an individual experiences a drop in their standard of living from a lower base, then this will have a greater effect on P_2 than if an individual experiences the same absolute decline, but from a higher base (Woolard and Leibbrandt 1999).

Table 4.1 reports the three FGT poverty measures using per capita household monthly income of co-resident mothers. Estimates are calculated by race and by marital status. Co-resident mothers are poor if they live in households where the per capita monthly income is below the poverty line of 431 Rands (2006 prices).

The table shows that within both racial groups, a greater proportion of single co-resident mothers live in poor households, compared to their married counterparts. These differences are most pronounced and are statistically significant among Africans. Of African married co-resident mothers, approximately 58 per cent live in poor households, compared to just under 78 per cent of African single co-resident mothers who live below the poverty line. The table also highlights South Africa's unequal resource distribution, with White co-resident mothers (whether married or single) being far less likely to be poor than African co-resident mothers.

The depth of poverty is reflected in the poverty gap ratio (P_1) as it measures the average distance a poor person is from the poverty line. As with the headcount rate, the poverty gap is far larger for Africans than for Whites. It is also greater for single co-resident mothers than for married co-resident mothers. The poverty gap ratio for African single co-resident mothers is just over 0.43 compared to the significantly smaller ratio of about 0.30 for their married counterparts. The poverty gap for White single co-resident mothers is also slightly larger than the ratio for White married co-resident mothers, although the difference is not statistically significant.¹⁷

The poverty gap squared (P_2) gives an indication of the severity of poverty. This measure incorporates the distance of the poor from the poverty line, as well as the degree of inequality amongst the poor. Results are in line with those for the headcount rate (P_0) and poverty gap ratio (P_1). For Africans and Whites, poverty is more severe for single co-resident mothers than for married co-resident mothers. Furthermore, ratios are far larger for Africans than for Whites. For African single co-resident mothers, the poverty gap squared is about 0.28, compared to approximately 0.19 for African married co-resident mothers. The poverty gap squared for White married co-resident mothers is approximately 0.04, with the ratio being very slightly higher for White single co-resident mothers.

¹⁷ The sample of White mothers is substantially smaller than the sample of African mothers, and the standard errors are therefore far larger for poverty estimates among White mothers. This helps account for why differences among White mothers are not statistically significant

Table 4.1: Poverty estimates for co-resident mothers by marital status, 2006

	Single		Married	
	African			
Per capita household monthly income:				
Headcount (P_0)	0.777	(0.007)	0.582*	(0.009)
Poverty gap (P_1)	0.431	(0.005)	0.302*	(0.006)
Poverty gap squared (P_2)	0.282	(0.004)	0.192*	(0.004)
	White			
Per capita household monthly income:				
Headcount (P_0)	0.092	(0.043)	0.053	(0.011)
Poverty gap (P_1)	0.051	(0.031)	0.038	(0.008)
Poverty gap squared (P_2)	0.039	(0.029)	0.037	(0.008)

Source: GHS 2006

Notes: Standard errors are in parentheses. Weighted estimates are obtained by accounting for clustering in the survey design. Estimates only include co-resident mothers for whom race and marital status information is non-missing.

* indicates a significant difference in proportions across single co-resident mothers and married co-resident mothers using a 95 percent confidence interval.

It is important to bear in mind that the sample of mothers has been restricted to those who are co-resident with their children. Poverty levels of certain groups of mothers may therefore be over-estimated. As discussed in the previous chapter, mothers who are not residing with their children, in particular mothers who have migrated to other areas in order to find work, are excluded from the sample. This may result in the income levels of mothers, especially African single mothers, being underestimated. This, in turn, may lead to poverty measures of primarily African single mothers being over-estimated.

To further investigate the extent of poverty, I plot Cumulative Distribution Functions (CDFs) of per capita household monthly income for African and White co-resident mothers by marital status.¹⁸ For every level of per capita income shown on the horizontal axis, the CDF indicates the proportion of co-resident mothers who are likely to be living in households earning that level of per capita monthly income or less. The CDF therefore illustrates the probability of co-resident mothers living on or below the poverty line.

¹⁸ The samples of White and African co-resident mothers are restricted to those with per capita household monthly incomes equal to or less than 7,000 Rands or 3,000 Rands respectively. As a result of these restrictions, the poverty rates reflected in the Cumulative Distribution Functions will be higher than those measured for the full samples of all African and White co-resident mothers.

The CDF for African single co-resident mothers lies above, and therefore first order dominates the CDF for African married co-resident mothers for all levels of per capita household monthly income up to 3,000 Rands. The gap between the two groups of mothers is greatest for per capita income levels around the poverty line. At higher income levels, beyond approximately 1,500 Rands, the gap begins to narrow. African single co-resident mothers are therefore far more likely to live in households with lower per capita monthly incomes than their married counterparts. They are also more likely to live in households with per capita monthly incomes equal to or below the poverty line.

The CDF for White single co-resident mothers first order dominates the CDF for White married co-resident mothers for income levels from approximately 300 Rands up to 7,000 Rands. Like Africans, White single co-resident mothers are more likely to live on or below the poverty line than White married co-resident mothers. Moreover, White single co-resident mothers, on average, live in households with lower per capita monthly incomes compared to their married counterparts.

Figure 4.1 Cumulative Distribution Functions by marital status of co-resident African mothers, South Africa 2006

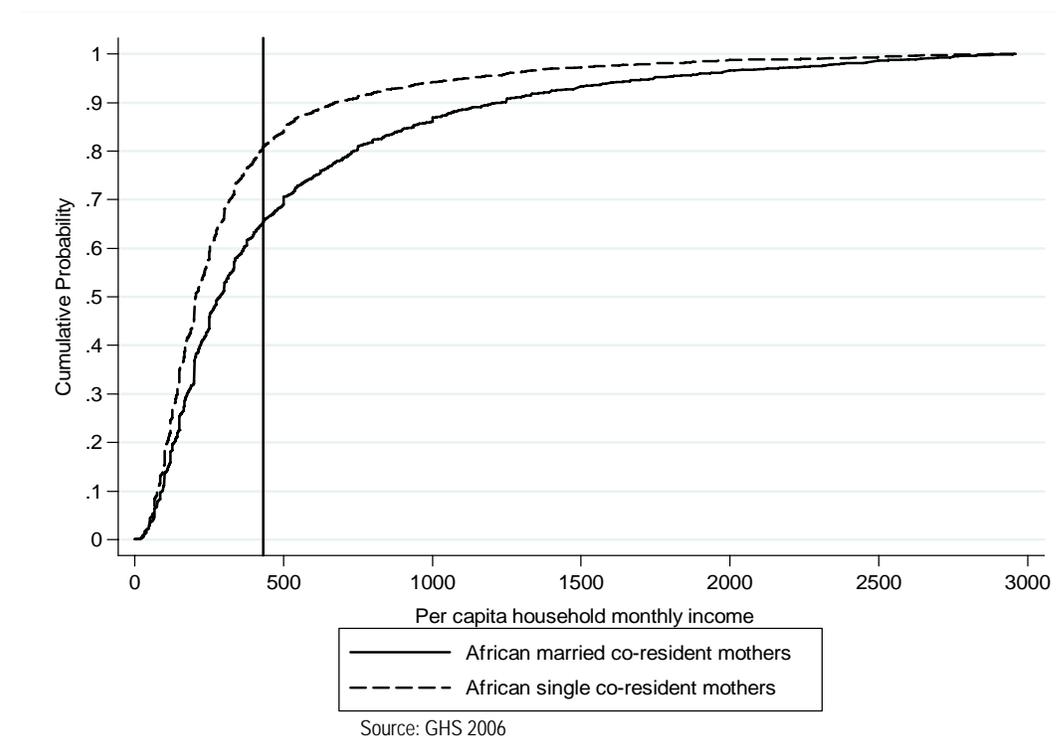
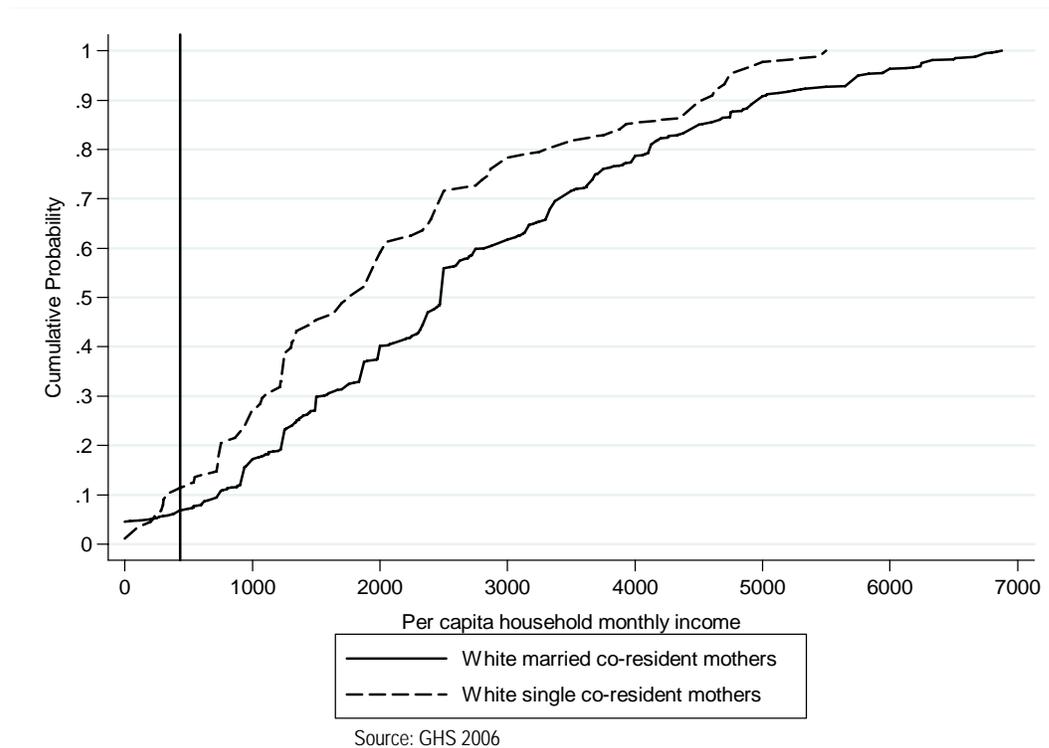


Figure 4.2 Cumulative Distribution Functions by marital status of co-resident White mothers, South Africa 2006



4.3 Decomposing poverty among single and married co-resident mothers

To explore the contribution made by various sources of income to poverty alleviation, I decompose the FGT poverty measures using the Shapley-value (Araar and Duclos 2009; Duclos and Araar 2006; Shorrocks 1982). The Shapley-value measures the extent to which the various sources of income contribute towards poverty reduction. I evaluate the impact of three categories of resources: earned income; grant income and “other income”. The latter category measures the difference between total household expenditure and total household income (where expenditure is greater than reported income) as explained in section 3.2. The poverty decomposition computes the degree to which the three income sources reduce the headcount ratio, the poverty gap ratio and the poverty gap squared ratio. In effect, it separates the total reduction of poverty (as measured by the FGT indices) into the sum of the contributions made by the various income categories (Araar and Duclos 2009). The advantage of the Shapley-value is that it calculates the average marginal effect of a component of income on poverty alleviation over all possible

distributions of income sources across individuals (Armstrong and Burger 2009; Posel and Rogan 2009b). It therefore overcomes the problem of having to specify the order in which the various types of income enter the model as the average marginal effect is calculated for all possible distributions of income categories.

A primary objective of this section is to assess whether social grants have been effective in reducing poverty among co-resident mothers, in particular single mothers and their children. As noted in Chapter Two, mothers and their children are the primary recipients of the CSG, and the income decomposition assists in evaluating the effectiveness of this, and other transfer programmes. For African co-resident mothers, the greatest contribution of grant income is in reducing the severity and depth of poverty. The poverty gap squared ratio for single and married mothers is reduced by about 43 and 24 per cent respectively and the poverty gap ratio by about 38 and 19 per cent respectively. Consequently social grants play a significant role in improving the economic wellbeing of African single co-resident mothers, in particular. Earned income still has the greatest marginal effect on the headcount rate and also plays a major role in reducing the depth and severity of poverty. The marginal effect of earnings on the poverty gap and poverty gap squared ratios, however, is greater for African married co-resident mothers, which indicates that earned income plays a much larger role than grant income in improving the welfare of this group of mothers.

Social grants play a relatively minor role in improving the economic status of White co-resident mothers. The income source that plays the most significant role in reducing the incidence, depth and severity of poverty for single and married mothers is earnings. For P_0 , P_1 and P_2 , earned income decreases the measure by at least 75 per cent. "Other income" also improves the economic status of White co-resident mothers with the marginal effect being slightly higher for White single co-resident mothers. This would suggest that there is an income source, not specifically accounted for by the GHS 2006 that plays a role in poverty alleviation. This income may be private maintenance, unemployment benefits, work pensions or gratuities; however from the available

information it is not possible to tell which is having the greatest effect on poverty reduction.

The contribution of maintenance payments towards poverty alleviation is a key factor when analysing the welfare of single-mother families. Given that the GHS 2006 does not include information on maintenance receipts, the contribution of this resource towards poverty relief among single co-resident mothers can only be approximated by analysing the effect of “other income”. Among White single co-resident mothers, “other income” decreases each of the three poverty measures by about 20 per cent. The effect of “other income” on the welfare of African single co-resident mothers is much smaller as it reduces the incidence, depth and severity of poverty by no more than 13 per cent.

Chapter Three highlighted that, on average, maintenance receipts would constitute a relatively small proportion of an employed single co-resident mother’s total household monthly income. The earnings of an African single co-resident mother, on average, account for approximately 60 per cent of her household’s total resources whilst the salary of a White single co-resident mother, on average, accounts for about 77 per cent of her household’s total income. Indeed, after accounting for grant income, maintenance receipts, on average, would at most constitute 27 and 23 per cent of the total monthly income of the households in which employed African and White single co-resident mothers live, respectively. These results suggest that, on average, an employed single co-resident mother bears the financial burden of childrearing with relatively little financial support from the father of her child. Thus, greater financial assistance from non-resident fathers could potentially make a larger contribution towards poverty alleviation among single-mother families. It is important to note however that the contribution of maintenance towards the total household monthly income of single co-resident mothers, and towards poverty relief among single co-resident mothers may be underestimated as a result of direct information on maintenance amounts not being available.

Table 4.2: Relative contribution of income sources to poverty alleviation for co-resident mothers, 2006

	Single	Married
African		
Headcount ratio ($\alpha=0$)		
Earned income	0.820	0.897
Grant income	0.122	0.052
Other income	0.058	0.051
Total	1.000	1.000
Poverty gap ratio ($\alpha=1$)		
Earned income	0.505	0.705
Grant income	0.380	0.191
Other income	0.115	0.104
Total	1.000	1.000
Poverty gap squared ratio ($\alpha=2$)		
Earned income	0.441	0.641
Grant income	0.431	0.239
Other income	0.127	0.120
Total	1.000	1.000
White		
Headcount ratio ($\alpha=0$)		
Earned income	0.788	0.830
Grant income	0.009	0.000
Other income	0.203	0.170
Total	1.000	1.000
Poverty gap ratio ($\alpha=1$)		
Earned income	0.762	0.816
Grant income	0.032	0.006
Other income	0.206	0.178
Total	1.000	1.000
Poverty gap squared ratio ($\alpha=2$)		
Earned income	0.753	0.811
Grant income	0.040	0.010
Other income	0.206	0.180
Total	1.000	1.000

Source: GHS 2006

Notes: Weighted estimates are obtained by accounting for clustering in the survey design. Estimates only include co-resident mothers for whom race and marital status information is non-missing. Proportions may not add up to 1.000 because of rounding.

4.4 Lifestyle indicators for single and married co-resident mothers

Measuring poverty using income and expenditure data provides a useful indication of the extent of poverty. However, poverty is a multi-faceted phenomenon that cannot be represented solely by quantitative measures. A more qualitative analysis should be included in a poverty study in order to gain an understanding of how poverty manifests

itself and affects individuals' quality of life (Higgs 2007). Moreover, the poverty line used in section 4.2 above, represents the cost of basic needs (Hoogeveen and Özler 2006). It therefore does not reflect individual perceptions of what is considered a desirable standard of living. Consequently, the poverty line cannot be used to show how many individuals have achieved their desired lifestyle, and how many have not. To compare the socio-economic status of co-resident mothers by their marital status effectively, it is therefore important to explore variables that reflect differences in living standards.

Tables 4.3 to 4.5 compare various lifestyle indicators for co-resident mothers by their marital status. Three broad categories of lifestyle indicators are investigated, namely physical and mental health status, community welfare and ownership of household assets. Within each category, several variables are compared to gain an overview of co-resident mothers' standards of living.

Table 4.3 shows that on average African and White single co-resident mothers do not report major differences in their general health levels compared to their married counterparts. White single co-resident mothers are slightly more likely to have had an illness or injury in the month preceding the survey, compared to White married co-resident mothers. African single co-resident mothers are marginally *less* likely to be ill or injured compared to African married co-resident mothers. These results are somewhat surprising as significantly higher levels of physical and mental ill-health may be expected among single co-resident mothers as they have less access to resources. Their lower income levels would suggest that they are less able to afford high quality health care. These results also conflict with Philo *et al.* (2009) who report on a comprehensive study of families with children in Britain. Philo *et al.* (2009) note that single mothers are far more likely to report suffering from ill-health compared to their married counterparts.

A possible reason why single co-resident mothers in South Africa do not report higher levels of ill-health than their married counterparts can be found in Nussbaum's (1997) review of "adaptive preferences". Nussbaum (1997) cites Sen's (1985) comparison of

the health status of widows and widowers in Singur, India in 1944 – a year after the Bengal Famine of 1943. Despite it being well-known that widows suffered from significantly poorer levels of health, they reported better states of health than widowers. Nussbaum (1997: 282) notes that:

“The likely explanation for this discrepancy is that people who have regularly been malnourished, who have in addition been told that they are weak and made for suffering, and who, as widows, are told that they are virtually dead and have no rights, will be unlikely to recognize their fatigue and low energy as a sign of bodily disease; but not so for males, who are brought up to have high expectations for their own physical functioning”.

Poorer individuals are also likely to be less health aware and may not report an illness or injury despite being observably in an adverse state of health (Woolard and Leibbrandt 1999). Thus, single co-resident mothers, on average, may not have as much knowledge on health related issues as married co-resident mothers, and they may have become accustomed to their relatively poorer states of health. For these reasons, they may not be reporting illnesses or injuries even though they may actually be suffering from them.

Certain sicknesses are strongly related to poverty, such as tuberculosis (TB), diarrhea and fever (Dong *et al.* 2007; Abu Mourad 2004; Woolard and Leibbrandt 1999). To ascertain whether co-resident mothers are reporting illnesses associated with poverty, I have compared the incidence of flu, TB and diarrhea amongst these mothers.¹⁹ African single co-resident mothers are more likely to suffer from TB and diarrhea (although they are slightly less likely to suffer from flu than their married counterparts). White single co-resident mothers are more likely to suffer from diarrhea and flu than White married co-resident mothers. The incidence of TB among both groups of White co-resident mothers is zero.

¹⁹ A comparison of the incidence all illnesses and injuries for single and married co-resident mothers is included in Appendix 4A

Differences in overall health status (in the month preceding the survey) therefore are very small between married and single mothers. However, there are larger differences in specific illnesses. In particular, single co-resident mothers are more likely than married mothers to report having had diarrhea in the last month, TB (among African mothers) and flu (among white mothers). To explore the health status of co-resident mothers even further, I analyse other variables related to quality of life which would be expected to impact negatively on their states of health.

One such variable would be an individual's exposure to violent crime. Levels of violence in South Africa are much higher than global averages; in particular the rate of homicide where women are the victims of intimate partner violence is six times the worldwide average (Seedat *et al.* 2009). The GHS 2006 asks respondents whether any household residents have been victims of violence or abuse (see Appendix 4B for questions). The identities of the victims are not revealed, but violent crime would be expected to impact negatively on a co-resident mother's psychological health irrespective of whether she is the direct victim or whether she experiences violence indirectly when a crime is committed against a household member.

In cases where the perpetrator is a household resident, African single co-resident mothers, on average, experience similar levels of violence in their households as African married co-resident mothers. Where the perpetrator is a non-resident, African single co-resident mothers, on average, experience slightly higher levels of violence in their households than their married counterparts.

White single co-resident mothers, on average, are exposed to similar levels of violence when the perpetrator is a household resident, as their married counterparts. Differences are more pronounced, however, when violence is committed by an individual who is not a household member. More than 17 per cent of White single co-resident mothers live in households where some form of violence was experienced among household members, compared to less than four per cent of White married co-resident mothers. Due to this significantly greater exposure to violence, White single co-resident mothers would be

expected to suffer from higher levels of general ill-health compared to their married counterparts.

Somewhat surprising is that the levels of reported violence are considerably higher in households in which White single co-resident mothers live compared to African single co-resident mothers. African women are exposed to high levels of violence, for example, they have a much higher risk of rape than other racial groups (Seedat *et al.* 2009). Their reason for reporting lower levels of violence is not clear, but it may be influenced by different perceptions of what constitutes violence. Moreover, a victim may have become accustomed to abuse and therefore does not recognize it as a crime. Another reason may be that a victim may be unwilling to report on this (particularly if the perpetrator is a partner or ex-partner). A respondent may not trust that the surveys are anonymous and confidential and may be fearful of the consequences of her abuser finding out if she admits to being a victim of the crime. As noted by Smyth and Artz (2005), a victim may be financially dependent on her abuser and cannot afford to lose that financial support. Furthermore instances of violence against particular household members may be unknown to the household's main respondent (especially in the case of sexual molestation). The victim may not be the household's principal respondent therefore the crime may not be reported. Moreover if the perpetrator of violence is the respondent then they are unlikely to report their acts of violence against other household members.

The above discussion highlights that data on violence and abuse should be used with caution. This is particularly relevant in the case of domestic violence which is notoriously under-reported and in many cases victims do not even seek treatment (Waters *et al.* 2004). Despite these potential problems, it is still useful to analyse the information gathered in the GHS 2006 to gain preliminary insights into which groups of co-resident mothers are more likely to experience some type of abuse, and consequently would be more likely to suffer from health problems and inferior quality of life.

A co-resident mother's experience of hunger would give an indication of her experience of extreme poverty. Just under 75 per cent of African single co-resident mothers'

households reported that adults and children never went hungry in the past year. African married co-resident mothers' households reported a significantly higher figure of nearly 82 per cent. Households in which White co-resident mothers live are far less likely to experience child or adult hunger. However, households with single mothers are more at risk of going hungry than their married counterparts.

Children in White households appear to face greater food insecurity than adults. This is consistent with previous research that has found that food insecurity for children can be greater than for co-resident adults (Lemke *et al.* 2003). Lemke *et al.* (2003) find that power relations within a household are significant in determining the level of food insecurity and that the risk is greatest for children in man-led households, compared to children in partnership and woman-led households. As shown in Table 3.5, White co-resident mothers are less likely to live in female-headed households compared to African co-resident mothers, which may partly explain why children in White co-resident mothers households are more likely to go hungry than adults.

Of further interest, is whether co-resident mothers use health care facilities in the public or private sector. Van der Berg (2006) notes that public health care is generally regarded as an inferior good, thus as incomes rise, individuals prefer to make use of health care services in the private sector. The high cost of health care would make private sector services unattainable for individuals without the necessary resources. However, Van der Berg (2006) notes that despite their substantially lower incomes, even some poor individuals make use of private health care services as they perceive these to be of much better quality than public sector services.

As would be expected, single co-resident mothers within both racial groups are significantly less likely to be covered by a medical aid, and are more likely to use public medical facilities than their married counterparts. This would suggest that, on average, married co-resident mothers are more likely to be able to enjoy a standard of living that includes private health care than single co-resident mothers. Single co-resident mothers are more likely to use public medical facilities as their lower incomes would prevent

them from accessing services in the private sector. Moreover, racial disparities can again be noted with White co-resident mothers (whether married or single) being more likely to use health care services in the private sector, and being more likely to be covered by a medical aid, compared to African co-resident mothers.

Table 4.3: Physical and mental health status of co-resident mothers, 2006

	Single		Married	
	African			
Mother has been ill/injured in past month	0.150	(0.006)	0.151	(0.006)
Mother had TB or severe cough with blood	0.074	(0.010)	0.043	(0.009)
Mother had diarrhea	0.043	(0.007)	0.040	(0.008)
Mother had flu or upper respiratory tract infection	0.513	(0.022)	0.522	(0.021)
Household member has been a victim of violence perpetrated by another household member ²⁰	0.020	(0.002)	0.020	(0.002)
Household member has been a victim of violence perpetrated by a person outside the household	0.055	(0.004)	0.042	(0.004)
Adults never went hungry in past year	0.744	(0.007)	0.818*	(0.007)
Children never went hungry in past year	0.749	(0.007)	0.819*	(0.007)
Mother is covered by a medical aid/medical benefit scheme	0.048	(0.004)	0.126*	(0.006)
Household members use public medical facilities ²¹	0.903	(0.005)	0.815*	(0.007)
	White			
Mother has been ill/injured in past month	0.146	(0.051)	0.129	(0.022)
Mother had TB or severe cough with blood	0.000	(0.000)	0.000	(0.000)
Mother had diarrhea	0.102	(0.099)	0.038	(0.025)
Mother had flu or upper respiratory tract infection	1.000	(0.000)	0.622	(0.098)
Household member has been a victim of violence perpetrated by another household member	0.011	(0.011)	0.009	(0.004)
Household member has been a victim of violence perpetrated by a person outside the household	0.171	(0.057)	0.035*	(0.009)
Adults never went hungry in past year	0.933	(0.032)	0.977	(0.009)
Children never went hungry in past year	0.862	(0.048)	0.930	(0.014)
Mother is covered by a medical aid/medical benefit scheme	0.413	(0.069)	0.672*	(0.026)
Household members use public medical facilities	0.243	(0.062)	0.141	(0.018)

Source: GHS 2006

Notes: Standard errors are in parentheses. Weighted estimates are obtained by accounting for clustering in the survey design. Estimates only include co-resident mothers for whom race and marital status information is non-missing.

* indicates a significant difference in proportions across single co-resident mothers and married co-resident mothers using a 95 percent confidence interval.

²⁰ Acts of violence include being harassed, threatened, sexually molested, beaten up, hurt and murdered.

²¹ Public medical facilities include a public hospital, a public clinic and 'other' in the public sector.

Access to basic services, such as electricity, clean water and sanitation positively impacts on an individual's health and quality of life. Not only does this access allow individuals to live in more sanitised environments but it allows them – in particular women - to save time as they do not need to collect water or wood (Klasen 1997). As with income inequality, studies that have explored unequal access to services and infrastructure have tended to do so along racial lines (see for example Leibbrandt *et al.* 2006; Van der Berg 2006). There does not appear to be much focus on the gendered access to services in South Africa which implies that little, if any, attention has been paid to comparing the access to basic services of single mothers relative to married mothers.

Table 4.4 shows that access to basic services is not that different when comparing single and married co-resident mothers within each racial group. The differences are greatest when comparing African co-resident mothers to their White counterparts. African co-resident mothers are far less likely to have access to piped water, to be connected to MAINS electricity and to have a toilet inside their dwelling than White co-resident mothers. Indeed, nearly all the households in which White co-resident mothers live have access to these basic services, regardless of the mother's marital status.

These disparities between the two racial groups are largely a consequence of apartheid-era policies which resulted in the White population having greater access to municipal services. When apartheid ended in 1994, the White population had universal access to piped water, whereas only a quarter of Africans had piped water in their homes (Hoogeveen and Özler 2006). Using data from the 1996 Census, Leibbrandt *et al.* (2006) show that Africans were far less likely to have access to electricity, piped water and flush toilets than all other population groups.

Since 1994, the government has made progress in targeting expenditure to assist the poorer sectors of the population which are comprised principally of Africans (Hoogeveen and Özler 2006; Van der Berg 2006). This may be a reason why, according to the GHS 2006, 67 to 69 per cent of African co-resident mothers live in households that have access to piped water, compared to 25 per cent of Africans in general having piped water circa

1994, as observed by Hooegeveen and Özler (2006). Nonetheless, persistent differences in access to services continue to be observed in 2006, when comparing the households in which White and African mothers reside, differences which suggest that more work needs to be done in reducing racial inequalities in access to basic services.

African co-resident mothers are also far more likely to live in communities with environmental problems than their white counterparts. Just over 57 per cent of African single co-resident mothers and nearly 56 per cent of African married co-resident mothers live in households that report environmental concerns. White married co-resident mothers are least likely to experience environmental problems with just under 26 percent reporting these issues. White single co-resident mothers are more likely to experience environmental troubles than their married counterparts with nearly 36 per cent living in households that have been exposed to these types of hazards.

Toxic environments are likely to have a negative effect on quality of life. Thus, White married co-resident mothers, on average, are more likely to enjoy higher living standards as they are least likely to be exposed to environmental hazards and toxins. In this regard, White single co-resident mothers, on average, are worse off than their married counterparts, and, on average, African co-resident mothers are worse off than their White counterparts.

Table 4.4: Welfare of communities in which co-resident mothers reside, 2006

	Single		Married	
	African			
Household has access to piped water	0.672	(0.007)	0.692	(0.008)
Household is connected to MAINS electricity supply	0.775	(0.007)	0.759	(0.008)
Household has toilet inside dwelling	0.196	(0.007)	0.239*	(0.008)
Community has environmental problem ²²	0.572	(0.008)	0.556	(0.009)
	White			
Household has access to piped water	0.978	(0.010)	0.946	(0.008)
Household is connected to MAINS electricity supply	0.972	(0.021)	0.990	(0.005)
Household has toilet inside dwelling	1.000	(0.000)	0.985	(0.006)
Community has environmental problem	0.357	(0.071)	0.258	(0.023)

Source: GHS 2006

Notes: Standard errors are in parentheses. Weighted estimates are obtained by accounting for clustering in the survey design. Estimates only include co-resident mothers for whom race and marital status information is non-missing.

* indicates a significant difference in proportions across single co-resident mothers and married co-resident mothers using a 95 percent confidence interval.

As a final indication of the quality of life enjoyed by co-resident mothers, I have compared household ownership of assets in Table 4.5. Among Africans, about seven per cent of single co-resident mothers' households own a car compared to about 17 per cent of married co-resident mothers' households. African single co-resident mothers are also less likely to live in a household that owns a television or books than their married counterparts. Among Whites, just over 76 per cent of single co-resident mothers live in a household that owns a car compared to 91 per cent of White married co-resident mothers. White single co-resident mothers are slightly less likely to own a television and slightly more likely to own books compared to their married counterparts. Overall, African co-resident mothers' households are less likely to own a car, television or books than White co-resident mothers' households.

Given that within both population groups, single co-resident mothers, on average, live in households with lower per capita incomes, they would be expected to live in households that, on average, own fewer assets. Items like cars and televisions would generally be perceived as luxuries, particularly among poorer individuals (Clark 2003). As married

²² Environmental problems include littering, water pollution, air pollution, excessive noise and land degradation.

co-resident mothers are more likely to live in households that own these assets this would suggest that, on average, they have access to a better quality of life than their single counterparts.²³

Table 4.5: Ownership of assets by co-resident mothers' households, 2006

	Single		Married	
	African			
Household has a car	0.071	(0.004)	0.172*	(0.007)
Household owns a T.V.	0.626	(0.008)	0.680*	(0.008)
Household owns books	0.524	(0.008)	0.540	(0.009)
	White			
Household has a car	0.763	(0.065)	0.910	(0.015)
Household owns a T.V.	0.968	(0.031)	0.991	(0.004)
Household owns books	0.961	(0.016)	0.934	(0.014)

Source: GHS 2006

Notes: Standard errors are in parentheses. Weighted estimates are obtained by accounting for clustering in the survey design. Estimates only include co-resident mothers for whom race and marital status information is non-missing.

* indicates a significant difference in proportions across single co-resident mothers and married co-resident mothers using a 95 percent confidence interval.

4.5 Conclusion

This chapter has investigated poverty rates and the standards of living of African and White co-resident mothers by their marital status. To quantify the extent and depth of poverty among co-resident mothers I calculated the Foster-Greer-Thorbecke (FGT) poverty indices. All these measures indicated that African co-resident mothers are more likely to be living in poverty than White co-resident mothers. Moreover, within both racial groups, single co-resident mothers are more likely to be poor, and to be living in more severe poverty, compared to married co-resident mothers.

The decomposition of the FGT indices revealed that earned income made the greatest marginal contribution to reducing the poverty rate for both African and White co-resident mothers. Grant income played an important role in reducing the depth and severity of poverty among African co-resident mothers, particularly single African co-resident mothers. Earnings played a substantial role in improving the economic status of White

²³ Differences in asset ownership may also reflect gender differences in consumption spending, assuming that male preferences are more apparent in households in which married co-resident mothers reside.

co-resident mothers regardless of the poverty measure used. “Other” income sources also contributed to raising the average standard of living of White mothers but to a far lesser extent than wages and salaries. As the GHS 2006 does not have data on private maintenance, private pensions, unemployment benefits and other transfers, it is not possible to identify which of these sources of “other” income is making the greatest contribution to poverty alleviation.

To augment the poverty study and to gain further insights into the standards of living of these different groups of mothers, I then examined various quality of life indicators. I explored differences in health status and community welfare as well as differences in asset ownership. Findings from this investigation mirrored the patterns identified in the poverty analysis. Most notably, White co-resident mothers are more likely to enjoy higher standards of living than African co-resident mothers. Furthermore, for both Africans and Whites, married co-resident mothers, on average, appear to enjoy a better quality of life than single co-resident mothers.

Differences in poverty levels and standards of living when comparing married and single co-resident mothers are more than likely a result of married mothers receiving more financial support from an income-earning male which in turn leads to a higher quality of life. As discussed in Chapter Two, a major reason why single co-resident mothers are less likely to have access to the income earned by a male is the malfunctioning of the private maintenance system. Even when a father has the means to support his former partner and their children, the private maintenance system has proven largely ineffective in ensuring he fulfills this financial responsibility. A consequence of this is that single co-resident mothers and their children, on average, have lower standards of living than their married counterparts.

Reforming the private maintenance system can contribute towards overcoming the problems of poverty and inequality in South Africa. Forcing fathers who can afford to pay maintenance to actually make these payments may result in substantial improvements in the quality of life of many single-mother families. Moreover, compelling these fathers

to pay may free-up state finances – for example if mothers switch from public to private health care – and these public resources can then be targeted to help other single co-resident mothers whose former partners are too poor to make financial contributions.

This chapter has shown that for Africans and Whites, the socio-economic status of married co-resident mothers, on average, is better than that of single co-resident mothers. This has been revealed using quantitative measures as well as a more qualitative analysis. It has also been shown that public transfers play an important part in poverty alleviation as without social grants, African single co-resident mothers, in particular would be much worse off than they currently are. The important role of earnings in reducing poverty has also been highlighted which emphasizes the need for women to be provided with childcare facilities so that they can gain access to employment. Providing women with greater opportunity for employment would be key to improving the economic status of single mothers and their families.

Appendix 4A: Type of illness or injury suffered by co-resident mother in month prior to survey.

Table 4.A: Illness or injury suffered by co-resident mothers, 2006				
	Single		Married	
	African			
Type of illness or injury:				
Mother had flu or upper respiratory tract infection	0.513	(0.022)	0.522	(0.021)
Mother had diarrhea	0.043	(0.007)	0.040	(0.008)
Mother experienced extreme trauma	0.037	(0.018)	0.023	(0.007)
Mother had TB or severe cough with blood	0.074	(0.010)	0.043	(0.009)
Mother abused alcohol or drugs	0.002	(0.001)	0.003	(0.002)
Mother had depression or mental illness	0.035	(0.007)	0.020	(0.005)
Mother had diabetes	0.052	(0.009)	0.049	(0.008)
Mother had high or low blood pressure	0.106	(0.012)	0.134	(0.014)
Mother had HIV/AIDS	0.048	(0.010)	0.016*	(0.005)
Mother had other sexually transmitted disease	0.008	(0.003)	0.002	(0.002)
Mother had other illness or injury	0.210	(0.018)	0.236	(0.018)
	White			
Type of illness or injury:				
Mother had flu or upper respiratory tract infection	1.000	(0.000)	0.622	(0.098)
Mother had diarrhea	0.102	(0.099)	0.038	(0.025)
Mother experienced extreme trauma	0.000	(0.000)	0.028	(0.021)
Mother had TB or severe cough with blood	0.000	(0.000)	0.000	(0.000)
Mother abused alcohol or drugs	0.000	(0.000)	0.000	(0.000)
Mother had depression or mental illness	0.000	(0.000)	0.009	(0.007)
Mother had diabetes	0.147	(0.135)	0.006	(0.006)
Mother had high or low blood pressure	0.147	(0.135)	0.006	(0.004)
Mother had HIV/AIDS	0.000	(0.000)	0.000	(0.000)
Mother had other sexually transmitted disease	0.000	(0.000)	0.000	(0.000)
Mother had other illness or injury	0.000	(0.000)	0.346	(0.099)

Source: GHS 2006

Notes: Standard errors are in parentheses. Weighted estimates are obtained by accounting for clustering in the survey design. Estimates only include co-resident mothers for whom race and marital status information is non-missing.

* indicates a significant difference in proportions across single co-resident mothers and married co-resident mothers using a 95 percent confidence interval.

Appendix 4B: Question 4.71 of the General Household Survey 2006

Question 4.71 is on page 46 of the General Household Survey 2006 and is posed to a responsible adult in the household.

4.71	<p>During the past 12 months, has any member of this household.....</p> <p>a) had things stolen?</p> <p>b) been harassed or threatened by a household member?</p> <p>c) been harassed or threatened by someone outside the household?</p> <p>d) been sexually molested by a household member?</p> <p>e) been sexually molested by someone outside the household?</p> <p>f) been beaten up or hurt by a household member?</p> <p>g) been beaten up or hurt by someone outside the household?</p> <p>h) been murdered by a household member?</p> <p>i) been murdered by someone outside the household?</p>	Yes	No
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Chapter Five

Conclusion

The primary objective of this dissertation was to evaluate the economic status of single mothers compared to married mothers. This information is particularly important given the focus of the South African government on poverty alleviation and its desire to assist the most vulnerable of population groups (Zuma 2009). In his 2009 State of the Nation address, the State President highlighted the plight of women and children in the struggle against resource deprivation and it is in this context that the particular difficulties faced by single-mother families need to be brought to light.

Economic theory predicts that women, on average, will earn less than men. This is largely on account of women having specialised in household production whilst men have had the opportunity to further their careers in the labour market (Becker 1985; Mincer and Polachek 1974; Becker 1965). Moreover, empirical evidence continues to show that internationally and in South Africa gender gaps in the labour market persist (Posel and Rogan 2009a; Muller 2009; Ntuli 2007; Woolard and Woolard 2006; Fortin 2005; Blau and Kahn 2000). In this context, single mothers who lack the financial support of a co-resident male partner would be expected to be worse off than married mothers who can depend on the income earned by their male spouse. International studies have confirmed that single-mother families are indeed among the most impoverished families (Philo *et al.* 2009; Christopher *et al.* 2002; Wong *et al.* 1993). However a lack of research in this area domestically has prevented robust conclusions being drawn regarding the economic status of the average South African single mother. The scarcity of studies in South Africa is largely due to the fact that historically it has been difficult for researchers to match women with their children. However, recent surveys have included data that have facilitated the identification of mothers.

Using the GHS 2006 I identified over seven million mothers aged from 19 to 65 who are co-resident with at least one of their children aged 18 or younger. Of this number, over

three million are single mothers. The lack of a birth module makes it impossible to identify all mothers as only women who are living with their children can be included in the sample via a maternal relationship question. Posel and van der Stoep (2008) calculate that in 2002 about 14 per cent of African mothers of reproductive age and 4.5 per cent of mothers from other race groups did not reside with at least one of their children. This would suggest that the incidence of motherhood, and single motherhood, in South Africa is actually much higher than that estimated by a sample subject to a co-residency requirement.

The disadvantage of using the GHS 2006, therefore, is that many mothers in South Africa who do not live with their children are excluded from the analysis. Given that the labour force participation rate among not co-resident mothers is higher than the rate among mothers who live with their children, the sample of mothers identified by the GHS 2006 will underestimate labour force participation, and hence income, among mothers (Posel and van der Stoep 2008). This is particularly relevant for African single mothers as Posel and Casale (2006) find that a significant proportion of labour migrants are African females. Furthermore, Posel and van der Stoep (2008) show that not co-resident mothers are less likely to be married. Although the subset of mothers identified by the GHS 2006 is a non-random sample of mothers it does allow an investigation of the economic status of mothers who live with their children and who therefore face comparable daily childcare commitments. Furthermore, it is possible to compare the economic wellbeing of these mothers by marital status.

The advantage of using this dataset is that it includes information on grant income. This is especially relevant when researching the welfare of mothers by marital status as international studies have shown that state transfers are instrumental in raising the economic status of women (Christopher *et al.* 2002). Moreover, given South Africa's relatively advanced social security system it is necessary to investigate whether grant income is assisting those individuals who need it most. The decomposition of the Foster-Greer-Thorbecke poverty measures shows that African single co-resident mothers are highly dependent on grants to reduce the depth and severity of poverty. Indeed over 42

per cent of the households in which African single co-resident mothers live rely on pensions and grants as their primary source of income. On average, African single co-resident mothers receive significantly more grants, particularly the Child Support Grant (CSG) than their married counterparts, as well as than White co-resident mothers.

Grant income does help to reduce the depth and severity of poverty among African married co-resident mothers, but the impact is smaller compared to their single counterparts. Public transfers, on average, have little effect on the welfare of White co-resident mothers. Earned income is most instrumental in reducing the depth and severity of poverty for White mothers. Wages and salaries also make a relatively large contribution to decreasing the poverty gap and poverty gap ratios for African mothers, particularly those who are married. For all four groups of mothers in the sample, earned income lowers the headcount rate by a minimum of 78 per cent. "Other income" contributes towards poverty relief among co-resident mothers but the contribution is far smaller than that of earned income, as well as that of public transfers (among African mothers). Included in "other income" may be private maintenance receipts, unemployment benefits, work pensions or gratuities; however from the available information it is not possible to divide this resource flow into the various categories.

It would appear therefore that African single co-resident mothers are most dependent on public funding to improve their socio-economic wellbeing. Of the four groups of mothers analysed, African single co-resident mothers, on average, had the least access to resources which would indicate that grant income is offering the greatest assistance to those who need it most. With public transfers placing financial demands on the government budget, however, it is necessary to investigate other mechanisms that can assist single mothers and simultaneously reduce the burden on state funds. Moreover, the value of the CSG is low and single mothers who earn more than 28,000 Rands per annum do not qualify for the grant and consequently they would need to rely on other mechanisms to obtain financial support for their families (Department of Social Development 2009). The private maintenance system is meant to ensure that a parent who is not co-resident with their child fulfills the duty that they have to financially

maintain their child. The failings of the system are well-documented, however, with the result being that many non resident parents are able to exploit the malfunctioning private maintenance system and thereby avoid paying for their children (Bonthuys 2008a; Bonthuys 2008b; Lund 2008; Triegaardt 2005). In these instances, it is usually the mother that disproportionately bears the financial responsibility of childrearing.

This dissertation has shown that when an African or White single co-resident mother is employed her salary accounts for approximately 60 and 77 per cent of her household's financial resources respectively. Furthermore, on average, 13 per cent of an employed African single co-resident mother's household income is from grants or pensions. This implies that, on average, the maximum assistance an employed White or African single mother can be receiving from her child's father accounts for no more than 23 and 27 per cent of her household's resources respectively. These statistics suggest that employed single co-resident mothers, on average, are primarily responsible for paying for their children with relatively little assistance from their child's father. A limitation of the GHS 2006 is that it does not specifically gather information on maintenance receipts. To address this issue, where expenditure exceeded income, I adjusted household resources to reflect the reported expenses of the household. This is not a perfect measure of "other" income (partly because it assumes no dissaving in households), but it does provide a useful indication of the value of other resource flows. Going forward, it would be of greater value if household surveys recorded the value of private maintenance receipts. These data can then be used to get a more accurate indication of the extent to which a non resident parent supports their child.

As discussed in this study, despite the South African government's stated intention to combat crimes against women and children (Zuma 2009), by allowing the private maintenance system to operate in its current inefficient form, the authorities are facilitating domestic violence in the form of economic abuse. Furthermore, children whose fathers are able to contribute towards their economic wellbeing are being denied resources due to the failings of the maintenance system. These children, who may have been able to access services in the private sector, may have to rely on the state to

subsidize them, for example, via public schooling and public health care. Had these fathers been forced to pay which may have resulted in their children not having to rely on state sponsorship, then this would have freed up government funds to pay for children whose parents cannot afford to maintain them. Thus fathers who default on maintenance are also responsible for denying poor children further state assistance. As noted by Budlender (2005: 34):

“In many cases there is a real problem in that the non-resident parent is unemployed and simply doesn’t have money to pay for the children. In this case, the resident parent – usually a woman – bears an unfair burden, as she can’t simply tell the children: ‘I have no money’. More serious are the cases where the absent parent does have money, but refuses to pay any of it to the mother and children, pays an inadequate amount, or pays very intermittently”.

Given the inefficacy of the private maintenance system and the limited value and coverage of the CSG, the critical question facing the South African authorities is what can be done to improve the circumstances of single mothers. This is an issue facing governments worldwide with some having found more effective solutions than others. Sweden is an example of a nation that has succeeded in combining public transfers, employment supports, guaranteed maintenance payments and a labour market characterised by fewer gender inequalities than in many other countries to make a significant improvement to the economic welfare of single-mother families. Moreover, Swedish mothers do not appear to be penalised if they are engaged in part-time work, thus allowing them more opportunity to care for their children.

There also does not appear to be a wage penalty to female part-time employment in South Africa (Posel and Muller 2008). However, South Africa fails to assist single mothers in ways in which other countries do. South African women, on average, still suffer from a gender gap in earnings and they are still over-represented in lower paying occupations. Moreover, the level of public sector assistance to single mothers

is markedly inferior to that offered by other countries, for example, Sweden and Norway, and the inefficiencies of the maintenance system are noted above.

South Africa is unlikely to have the resources to introduce all the mechanisms that exist in the Scandinavian countries; hence, the best way forward may be to harness and improve the institutions that are already in place. The reform of the private maintenance system has been a perennial theme in improving the welfare of single-mother families. Moreover the focus of the South African government on eliminating crimes against women and children necessitates the immediate improvement of this system. A rational way forward would be to develop an objective formula to calculate maintenance obligations. Whilst a father's income level is supposed to be formally considered when determining the value of maintenance, as noted by Bonthuys (2008a) in many cases the amounts are determined simply by asking the father how much he thinks he can pay. The success of an approach that uses a formula depends on the ability to accurately compute the father's true resource level. This is thwarted by fathers who deliberately conceal assets by, for example, 'selling' them to family members and family trusts. To overcome this challenge, synergies between the maintenance office and the South African Revenue Service (SARS) should be developed.

As discussed in Chapter Two, the malfunctioning maintenance system would gain from adopting efficient work processes developed by SARS. Furthermore, the results of investigations conducted by SARS could be used in maintenance enquiries that probe the true extent of fathers' resources. For example, a recent media bulletin has reported on lifestyle audits being conducted by SARS in Kwazulu-Natal in order to expose individuals guilty of tax evasion (Barbeau 2009). These audits can be extended to investigate fathers who lead expensive lifestyles yet conceal their resources when they are faced with a maintenance enquiry. Moreover, the possibility exists that fathers guilty of defaulting on maintenance are also the individuals who attempt to evade paying taxes. In such cases, two government departments can benefit

from one audit process which would increase the returns to the government from investing resources in the investigation.

The problem of enforcing maintenance orders would be addressed by making the punishment for defaulting on maintenance sufficiently severe. As noted in Chapter Two, fathers are seldom appropriately penalised for stopping maintenance payments and consequently they have great incentive to renege on their financial responsibilities towards their children. As highlighted in this study, the Maintenance Act specifically incorporates financial fines and imprisonment as penalties for default and the authorities should impose these punishments far more readily than they currently do.

Another focus of policymakers should be the education of women. There is evidence of an increase in female education (Casale and Posel 2005) in recent years which will improve women's prospects in the labour market. However, as noted by Christopher *et al.* (2002) merely increasing the employment rates of women will not improve the welfare of single mothers unless gender gaps are eliminated. Moreover, the effects on women of reducing their time with their children as they increase their hours at work has not been fully quantified in the South African context. Fortin (2005) shows that inner conflicts such as 'mother's guilt' impact negatively on labour market outcomes for women. This would suggest that there is an opportunity cost for some women to increased labour market participation in the form of foregone time parenting their children. South African policymakers would therefore need to account for these issues in devising the appropriate strategies to assist single mothers. Fortin (2005) highlights that policies designed to address the work-life reconciliation, like flexible work hours, maternity leave and on-site/affordable day-care have been shown to have a positive effect on women's employment rates. Thus along with aiming to secure full-time employment for single mothers, the authorities should consider alternatives that, for example, combine part-time employment with a better functioning maintenance system and improved public benefits for children. This option will allow a mother to assume greater responsibility for childcare without being penalised for doing so.

A further strategy would be to educate women on what constitutes a healthy relationship in an attempt to ensure they make good choices when selecting a partner. If women are advised of the consequences of a failed relationship and of the failings of the private maintenance system and of trends in child custody arrangements *prior* to having to engage with the legal system, this may incentivise them to avoid potentially unstable unions. Indeed, publicizing the inefficiencies of the maintenance system may be the act that motivates the authorities to finally reform the system. As noted by Mauldin and Mimura (2007: 580):

“programs that intervene prior to marriage, helping women understand the potential consequences of their choices might prove more beneficial than programs that intervene after a marriage has occurred”.

This dissertation has sought to address a gap in the economic literature and has shown that single co-resident mothers, on average, are worse off than their married counterparts. Furthermore, I have shown that children dependent on a single co-resident mother would comprise a substantial portion of the South African population. Single co-resident mothers in 2006 numbered over three million and each single co-resident mother has at least one child under 18. Thus the number of children supported by a single co-resident mother should be well over three million after accounting for all siblings. This would suggest that many single mothers and their children are affected by the adverse economic status of the average single-mother family. I have also highlighted the disparity in the access to resources when comparing African co-resident mothers with White co-resident mothers. Clearly the racial differences in income that became entrenched during the apartheid-era still impact upon the socio-economic landscape today.

The South African government needs to focus more attention on single-mother families of all races who, on average, will continue to suffer from an inferior economic status compared to traditional two-parent families unless the authorities place more emphasis on their plight. To ensure the credibility of its commitment to improving the economic status of South African women and children, this study has highlighted that the

government needs to focus immediate attention particularly on reforming an ineffective maintenance system. A qualitative enquiry into the experiences of women who have unsuccessfully navigated the system would further uncover the limitations of the system, and would help explain why maintenance income does not contribute more to the economic well-being of single mother-households.

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